



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd **The Environment and Sustainability Committee**

Dydd Iau, 19 Gorffennaf 2012
Thursday, 19 July 2012

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Yn y golofn chwith, cofnodwyd y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi. Yn y golofn
dde, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

In the left-hand column, the proceedings are recorded in the language in which they were
spoken. The right-hand column contains a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mick Antoniw	Llafur Labour
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Vaughan Gething	Llafur Labour
Llyr Huws Gruffydd	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Julie James	Llafur Labour
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd dros dro) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Temporary Chair)
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Antoinette Sandbach	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Prys Davies	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr, Is-adran Ynni, Dŵr a Llifogydd, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Director, Energy, Water and Flood Division, Welsh Government
Nicola Edwards	Pennaeth y Tîm Rheoli Perygl Llifogydd ac Erydu Arfordirol, Llywodraeth Cymru Head of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Team, Welsh Government
John Griffiths	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy) Assembly Member, Labour (The Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development)

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Lara Date	Clerc Clerk
Alun Davidson	Clerc Clerk
Michael Lewis	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.58 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.58 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the final meeting of this term, and a particular welcome to the Minister and his team. We have received an apology from Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, who has a long-standing engagement in north Wales; there is no substitution this morning. Are there any declarations of interest? I have not been advised of any and I see that there are not.

9.59 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Ddiogelu'r Arfordir—Tystiolaeth gan Weinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy Inquiry into Coastal Protection—Evidence from the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development

[2] **William Powell:** We are very pleased to welcome the Minister, John Griffiths, and his team. We took an extensive body of evidence in our most recent meeting from a wide range of stakeholders, and we all agreed that it was a very rewarding day. Subsequently, we had an excellent trip to the Newport wetlands; I thank the whole team for making that possible, as it gave us some really good insights into the practicalities. Minister, would you like to make some opening remarks, before we move to questions?

[3] **Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a The Minister for Environment and
Datblygu Cynaliadwy (John Griffiths): Sustainable Development (John Griffiths):**
Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd. Thank you, Chair.

[4] I am very pleased that the committee visited Newport wetlands, which is in my constituency of Newport East; I am sure that it was interesting and informative. I thank the committee for inviting me here today to give evidence to your inquiry into coastal protection because these are important matters and I welcome the committee's focus on them.

10.00 a.m.

[5] Our coastline provides an opportunity to experience a variety of environments, ranging from busy industrial landscapes and major ports to seaside resorts and much quieter coastal paths. It plays a significant part in the economic, social and environmental life of Wales and all of us would be familiar with that.

[6] Coastal erosion and flooding provide very real risks to this environment, with the possibility of devastating consequences, which we have seen at times, although, thankfully, not for some time now. However, it is a serious risk that we have to take adequate measures to address. Coastal erosion is progressive and causes permanent, irreversible loss of land, property and infrastructure. Welsh coastal flooding will eventually recede; nonetheless, that could also cause major loss and would undermine the viability of coastal communities and have significant impacts on the local economy.

[7] With that background, as I said initially, I very much welcome this inquiry and any recommendations that may be forthcoming, because I think that we all want the same thing, which is to better manage the risks that exist.

[8] **William Powell:** Thank you for those opening remarks. A consistent message that we picked up from the various witnesses that we met a fortnight ago were problems of funding constraints in relation to taking forward coastal protection in Wales. What is the Government

doing to address the difficulties around funding in this area?

[9] **John Griffiths:** First, the Welsh Government very much agrees that we need to continue this drive to find as much resource as possible to address flood risk and coastal flood risk and protection from Welsh Government and other sources. We have been engaged in that effort for quite some time—since there has been an Assembly and a Welsh Government.

[10] Prior to the UK Government's budget cuts, we had increasing funding for flood management year on year, but, as we all know, we are now in a difficult general financial situation as a result of the cuts in our funding from the UK Government. However, we have been successful in levering in funds from the European funding programmes and from central Welsh Government sources and we will continue with that effort.

[11] We will also look to place a greater focus on this by working together with the Environment Agency and local authorities to understand what the most appropriate prioritisation may be, so that we can have a single investment fund in Wales for coastal protection work. As part of that, we will look to lever in other moneys from outwith the public purse. So, there has been a pretty reasonable picture in terms of the flood defence works that we have been able to take forward. We will continue with our efforts to maximise available funding because we very much agree that there is an obvious need to do that.

[12] **William Powell:** One message that is very much in our minds, following last week's visit, is the potential contribution that coastal risk management can make to tourism and economic development, which is also underscored in the paper that was provided by your colleague the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science. What discussions have you had at a Cabinet level with colleagues regarding the possibility of pulling together funds from various other sources to maximise the benefit of what we can achieve as an Assembly?

[13] **John Griffiths:** We have discussed these matters in Cabinet and I have made the case for a cross-cutting approach that understands the risk to all Welsh Government activity in terms of coastal protection and the risk of coastal flooding and erosion. Those discussions have taken place and my officials have worked, and do work, very closely with their counterparts across the Welsh Government to make sure that we have a Welsh Government-wide understanding of the risks and the work that needs to take place. For example, I know that my officials have worked very closely with officials in regeneration. If you look at the west Rhyl scheme, for example, the next phase of that is very much a joined-up approach that understands the wider impacts of coastal flooding and the need to take that joined-up governmental approach.

[14] **William Powell:** Thanks very much for that.

[15] **Russell George:** Good morning to you and your colleagues, Minister. In your budget evidence paper to this committee last month, the total allocations for flood and coastal erosion risk management showed an overall reduction for 2013-14 and 2014-15 compared with 2012-13. In your written evidence paper for this inquiry, you have identified the overall core budget for 2013-14 and 2014-15 as higher than in previous years. Can you clarify that position, please?

[16] **John Griffiths:** Yes, I think that we have presented the information in different forms. It may be that what would be most useful to the committee would be a separation of funding figures for the core budget—the Welsh Government core budget within my department for flood works—and then the picture regarding central Welsh Government funding, which is what we have been successful in adding from the central pot, as it were, and then the European funding. I think that that information would be quite useful to the

committee, and perhaps we could provide it in a table, Chair. The previous figures were not as useful as they might have been in order for the committee to understand the Welsh Government element of this compared with those other aspects. In particular, the European funding, which I think we mentioned in a previous committee meeting that I attended on the budget, can skew the figures and make one year's total much greater than another. It is to do with drawdown and the readiness of the schemes to progress, so it can be misleading. Therefore, if we were to separate clearly core funding from the Welsh Government in terms of my department, additional resource from central Welsh Government funds and the European element, I think that that would be clear and useful to the committee.

[17] **Russell George:** So, both sets of figures are correct—

[18] **John Griffiths:** Yes—

[19] **Russell George:** It is just a different presentation.

[20] **John Griffiths:** Yes.

[21] **David Rees:** On that point, Minister, those figures would be very helpful because I notice that, for this year, we have gone from original proposals of £15 million to £20 million, an increase of £5 million, but that next year's projected figures are back down to £10 million, in line with the cuts in capital that we get from the UK Government. Are you able to make that up with European funding? I would like to know where that £5 million came from this year. Was it from the Welsh Government or from European funding? Where did it come from?

[22] **John Griffiths:** Sorry, are we still talking about the point that Russell mentioned?

[23] **David Rees:** It is a similar point. The figures that I have are that capital in the final budget in November was £15.8 million, but the supplementary budget put it up to £20.8 million.

[24] **John Griffiths:** Nicola, do you want to take this? I am sorry, but I am not quite with you on this point, David.

[25] **Ms Edwards:** Yes. The supplementary budget adjustment is additional funding from the central Welsh Government capital budget approved by the Minister for Finance. This is the very point that we are making. We get a core budget allocation at the start of the year and, in-year, we might receive additional funding from the central Welsh Government budget. Due to the fact that that then gets moved into this part of the supplementary budget, it makes the overall budget look much larger than it necessarily was. Therefore, looking at next year, we only have the core budget at the moment because the discussions about any additional funding have not yet taken place or been completed. So, we also have bids in for additional funding for next year, which would once again make the budget look larger than the core agreed original budget would have been.

[26] **David Rees:** Will these include the European figures?

[27] **Ms Edwards:** No; the European figures are separate again. If we provide you with a table that sets out the core capital, core revenue, additional capital and then the European figures quite plainly, quite simply and in a straightforward manner, you will be able to see exactly what we are talking about.

[28] **William Powell:** That would be helpful. That would clarify things.

- [29] **Ms Edwards:** I have to say that it is very confusing.
- [30] **David Rees:** In that case, are there any changes in the EU rules that might impact upon EU funding as a consequence?
- [31] **Ms Edwards:** When you say ‘changes in the EU rules’—
- [32] **David Rees:** It has been suggested that EU spending rules place additional constraints upon these projects.
- [33] **John Griffiths:** The constraints, really, are those that apply generally to European funding. We know that there is a strict approach in terms of compliance and monitoring. Obviously, that is absolutely right. The main constraint, really, would be around match funding and the availability of match funding within particular years, because that is a constraint on what can go ahead in any particular year. Everything else is just in the generality of the European structural funding schemes.
- [34] **Julie James:** Thank you for that, Minister. I just want to follow up that point, because we have had a variety of evidence on European-funded projects. As you know, it is a bit of a hobby-horse of mine. One of the things that are being said is that, because of the strict timescales for spend on the projects, some of the schemes that are then put in place are not optimum. We have had several witnesses saying that the scheme that is eventually arrived at is less optimal than it would have been had they had longer to spend the money, longer to plan it, or longer to bring in other aspects of it and so on. I just wondered whether you would like to comment on that.
- [35] **John Griffiths:** I think that Nicola may well want to come in here, Julie, but I think that the general picture is around the match funding aspects. If, for example, it is Welsh Government money that is matching the European money, we have certain capital budgets available on an annual basis. There are UK Treasury rules in terms of not being able to carry forward and so on, so that is a constraint. We would very much look to work with those who are proposing schemes and to make clear what the timescale and the funding structure is, along with the need for the scheme at the outset to factor in those limitations. However, as ever with major works, many complications and other factors come into play as you actually start the work. I do not know whether Nicola might want to add to that.
- [36] **Ms Edwards:** This particular European funding round was for 2009 to 2015, and the money has to be completely spent and drawn down by 2015, which means that the scheme has to be delivered in that period of time. For some of these larger coastal schemes that we are talking about, some of them have been on the books for decades, and some only had the funding allocated in 2009. If we had not had the European funding, we would not have been able to take those schemes forward. So, they have gone from having something that had been burning around on the books for decades to suddenly being told, ‘Actually, you have to build it within the next six years’. That is quite a large construction enterprise for some of them, and quite a big call on the local authorities in terms of their resources, expertise and funding. When we are talking about not the optimum solution, we strive very hard in terms of the design and development to make sure that what we provide provides the optimum level of protection in terms of flood and erosion risk, but also provides a solution that is acceptable for the local community. We are not in the business of whacking up giant concrete walls that cut people off from the beach. We want to make sure that they can still access their local amenities and that they can still make use of them, and that while we are protecting the infrastructure and economic delivery, we are also enhancing where we can and where it is appropriate. Sometimes, it does not meet the requirements of everybody, but we try to do what we can for the majority. I also take your point that, sometimes, in terms of the materials that we use, people might have preferred a smaller type of shingle or a different coloured type

of sand, but we have to make use of what we have available at the most effective price to provide the best level of protection that we can. Nothing is ever perfect, but we try to do what we can within the constraints that we have.

[37] **Julie James:** Okay; thank you.

[38] **Antoinette Sandbach:** You said, Minister, that you wanted to lever in funds, effectively, from outside the Welsh public purse, if you like. Is that, in effect, European funding that you are talking about?

10.15 a.m.

[39] **John Griffiths:** No. We will look to continue to access European funding, which is a very important part of the funding that we have available, but we would also look to those that are benefiting from the protection provided, for example, in relation to infrastructure. Where schemes will clearly protect Welsh Water infrastructure and Network Rail infrastructure, for example, it is not unreasonable to explore with those organisations a possible contribution from them as well.

[40] **Antoinette Sandbach:** In terms of flood protection, what happens inland can very often affect what happens further downstream. Are you anticipating that that sort of ecosystems approach will lead to a change of approach from Welsh Government in how it deals with these types of issues? If you are, where is that going to go and where will the funding come from in relation to that shift in approach?

[41] **John Griffiths:** There is an increase in awareness of the value of the natural environment ecosystem services in terms of flood protection in general. The single body and the consultation responses to 'Sustaining a Living Wales' will be important for us to take forward, because it will very much be about that integrated approach in terms of looking at what the natural environment can provide, including addressing flood risk. If we can be smarter and more intelligent in our approach in terms of how we use the natural environment, then that would be a great benefit to Wales. There is increasingly a view that, rather than having major engineering works, it may be possible to use the natural environment a lot more to deal with water issues generally, including flood risk. So, we will see quite a lot of development in that regard as we move forward with 'Sustaining a Living Wales' and the single body.

[42] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Are you anticipating compensating, as it were, for that, for example if you are talking about uplands being flooded or allowing fields effectively to be flooded further upstream in order to protect property or business downstream? At the moment, the Environment Agency approach is that, unless there is an immediate risk to property, those upstream works will not be permitted. Would you be looking to change that approach?

[43] **John Griffiths:** We will look at the responses to the consultation on 'Sustaining a Living Wales', and the single body, when it comes into being, will want to look at all of these issues and develop a vision for the first year of its operation and then, beyond that, a five-year time span perhaps. Those will be matters for the single body, but I am sure that it will look carefully at those issues, because if we are going to integrate our effort in terms of understanding what the natural environment has to offer and integrate organisations as well, then that points clearly in the direction of looking at ecosystems services in the round. An increasingly important aspect of that is how flood risk can be dealt with.

[44] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, is it your view that the response to 'Sustaining a Living Wales' will inform this inquiry, and, if so, when do you anticipate making your response to

the consultation, which closed on 31 May, known to this Assembly?

[45] **John Griffiths:** We anticipate publishing a summary of the responses to ‘Sustaining a Living Wales’ in the autumn, and we will abide by that timescale.

[46] **William Powell:** Vaughan Gething will now move the focus back on to the coastal management aspect.

[47] **Vaughan Gething:** Minister, paragraph 17 of your paper talks about having a national funding policy and prioritisation methodology, also known as the single investment programme. This point was raised with us in the fascinating evidence given by the engineers who came to talk to us. They said that, as present, there is a system to try to prioritise investment in England, but we do not have one here yet, so I assume that this is it. I would like you to confirm whether that is the case, Minister, along with the timescale by which you see this being introduced and the level and type of consultation there will be about the methodology. To be fair, the engineers who gave evidence said that not every aspect of the English guidance or methodology was completely transparent and easy to understand, but allowed quite a lot of wriggle room in terms of moving priorities around; that was essentially what they were saying. So, I would be grateful if you could clarify this aspect before I move on to another.

[48] **John Griffiths:** We intend to have a single investment programme with a prioritisation methodology, so it would rank areas of Wales in terms of priority and that would be based on risk and then feed through to the investment programme. The Environment Agency’s existing communities-at-risk register would be a base for the methodology and that has weighting for economic, social and environmental concerns, so it is very much in line with our sustainable development approach, although we would want to look at that weighting when arriving at a new methodology. We have, in fact, established an advisory group to take this work forward, with representatives from the Welsh Local Government Association, the Environment Agency and local authorities. So, we will work with that expertise to come to the best system, and we will have a public consultation on the methodology early next year. That is our target date.

[49] **Vaughan Gething:** That is interesting, Minister, because I am interested in how this links to those communities that are already at risk. I am pleased that you mentioned that risk is the overriding point, but economic and social factors have to be taken into account, because we know that some of these communities are significant economic assets not only for the individual community, but for a much wider area. I am interested in that engagement with the public and whether you will target some of that consultation towards some of the more at-risk communities and, in terms of how a new methodology is managed, whether you will set it out in a way that members of the public can understand. Part of what I found concerning about the evidence that we had from a range of people in the first session was that tens of thousands of residences are potentially at risk in the medium term and there is then an issue about what happens to those communities in terms of their sustainability moving forward, whether we are looking at moving elements of those communities or whether we can have a programme of flood defences that keeps them where they are. This is an issue for a number of communities along the whole of the coastline of Wales, and I did not get the impression that there was real public engagement from those communities in what is a clear risk to their future in immediate terms.

[50] **John Griffiths:** Those points are well made, Vaughan, and they are points that I very much understand. We would want to ensure that, in the public consultation, those communities that were particularly at risk were clearly identified as needing to be aware of the importance of their responding to the consultation and being part of it. So, that would very much be our approach. I would be interested in what the committee might recommend in the

fullness of time, after you have completed your inquiry on these matters, because it is important that we get the balance right. Engagement with communities is important to us and a lot of work has gone on around awareness of risk, with some good work by the Environment Agency. So, there is a base on which we can build in order to have that engagement around the single investment programme and the methodology, but you have to keep working at it in terms of working with communities and people. I understand the factors that you have mentioned. In England, they have had particular problems around coastal erosion when it comes to people having to move, and people will have to move. Thankfully, we do not have those problems to the same extent in Wales, but it shows the importance of working with people and making them aware of the risk involved.

[51] **William Powell:** To pick up that point, the gentleman from the National Trust emphasised the scope for education to play a role in this area. Some examples of pilot projects were quoted that have yet to be evaluated but which have taken place in England to try to get the message across to younger people. What scope do you think that has to play a useful role?

[52] **John Griffiths:** We are very interested in the pathfinder projects in England and, along with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, we are assessing the lessons to be learned from them. A lot of it is about communities adapting in terms of the risk involved. Also, as I mentioned just now, part of it has been about people moving and how that is best taken forward—obviously, that is a very sensitive matter and it has to be addressed in a very sensitive way. We would therefore be very interested in the lessons to be learnt as to how you work with communities, and any aspects of education that are relevant we would be very interested in also.

[53] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Roeddwn yn nodi rhai o'r sylwadau sydd wedi cael eu gwneud yn gyffredinol ynglŷn â chyllidebu a neilltuo adnoddau at amddiffyn arfordirol ac yn y blaen. Sylwais i Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd ddweud os yw'r gyllideb yn aros yn statig, yna mae potensial i orfod gwario tair gwaith yn fwy dros y 25 mlynedd nesaf. A ydych yn cydnabod mai hynny a fyddai'r sefyllfa? Hynny yw, a yw hynny'n rhywbeth yr ydych chi'n ei dderbyn yn realiti?

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: I noted some of the general comments about budgeting and earmarking resources for coastal defence and so on. I noted that the Environment Agency said that if the budget remains static, then it may become necessary to spend three times as much over the next 25 years. Do you acknowledge that potential situation? That is, do you accept that as a reality?

[54] **John Griffiths:** In accordance with our sustainable development approach as a Government—it is our central organising principle, of course—we take a long-term view, and I think that that is very applicable to flood risk, coastal flood risk and coastal erosion. We do have to take that long-term view. So, whenever there is a case to maximise spending in the short term to save money in the long term, we would want to do that, but over and above the financial aspects, it is very much about providing protection for people, businesses and property. We would therefore take the long-term view on that basis.

[55] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Gwnaethoch sôn am ddefnyddio agweddau mwy holistig wrth edrych ar yr amgylchedd naturiol a gweithredu ymhellach i fyny'r dyffrynnoedd efallai o ran rheoli llifogydd. Rwy'n tybio eich bod yn rhagweld yn hynny o beth fod y rheini'n ddatrysiadau mwy cynaliadwy, ac felly'n ddatrysiadau sy'n cynnig mwy o werth am arian.

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: You mentioned adopting more holistic approaches in considering the natural environment and taking action further up the valleys perhaps with regard to flood management. I am assuming that you anticipate that such actions will prove more sustainable solutions, and therefore solutions that offer better value for money.

[56] **John Griffiths:** Absolutely. Sustainability is a very important aspect of flood defence work, and the more that we can use the natural environment, the more sustainable policy will be.

[57] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Gan glymu hynny wrth rai o'r sylwadau a wnaed yn gynharach ynglŷn â risg a'r angen i godi ymwybyddiaeth, a chan ddod yn ôl at y pwynt yr oedd Antoinette yn ei wneud, rwy'n tybio bod darn mawr o waith i'w wneud o safbwynt codi ymwybyddiaeth o'r rôl y gall pobl mewn ardaloedd nad ydynt dan risg ei chwarae i sicrhau bod unrhyw risg ymhellach i lawr y dyffryn ac ati yn cael ei lleihau. Sut ydych yn gweld y bydd modd creu'r ymwybyddiaeth honno ymhlith pobl efallai nad yw llifogydd yn effeithio arnynt?

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: Tying that in with some of the comments made earlier with regard to risk and the need to increase awareness, and returning to the point that Antoinette made, I assume that there is a big job of work to do in raising awareness of the role that people in areas that are not at risk can play in ensuring that any risk further down the valley and so on is reduced. How do you anticipate that it will be possible to generate that awareness among people who perhaps are not affected by flooding?

[58] **John Griffiths:** That is a very good question. There is a big job of work to be done, but I guess that, basically, we have to work with landowners and farm businesses, because a lot of the land in question that might provide better protection against flood risk, through use of the natural environment, is in the ownership of private landowners and farming businesses. Obviously, there is a job to be done, and the single body, along with taking forward 'Sustaining a Living Wales', will offer big platforms to work with the farming industry to discuss how schemes might play a part in taking the work forward. Also, of course, there is a lot of recognition already in terms of agri-environment schemes in terms of the wider environmental picture. So, again, there is a base we can build upon.

10.30 a.m.

[59] **Mick Antoniw:** Minister, in your answer, you touched upon some of the areas of privatisation that I was concerned with. Just to expand on that a little and to look at the other side of the coin, we know that funding for protection programmes and so on around the whole of the UK is massively under threat. I think that 300 projects have been cancelled in England alone because of the problems there. We know also that there will be areas where, quite frankly, there is little that we can do. Can you expand a bit on the strategy that you have in terms of managing expectations, particularly in those areas where there is, frankly, little that we can do, and where it is unlikely that there will be the resources to do anything? I suppose that it is really about not only the management of expectations, but acceptance of the inevitability over the long haul, rather than the King Canute approach that I think some people have—that is, it is just a matter of time before something is done and it will be okay. What is the strategy for those areas?

[60] **John Griffiths:** The national flood risk management strategy that we launched in November of last year is a holistic strategy that is very much about working with communities and raising understanding of the issues involved, because you are absolutely right—it is a crucial part of the necessary effort around these issues. The Environment Agency has done some very good work with its flood awareness Wales campaign, and a lot of the communities particularly at risk would have been part of that. However, some of the areas that you mentioned that are perhaps lower risk in terms of people and property might not have the same level of awareness of the approach that the national strategy sets out. Again, it is something that we have to keep working at as we go forward. That national strategy is obviously fairly new—dating from November last year—but a lot of effort predates that in terms of working with communities and getting key messages across. We work with all our

partner organisations—local authorities, the Environment Agency and the single body, when it comes into being—to take that message out there to a greater extent and make sure there is wider awareness.

[61] **Mick Antoniw:** Do you think that message is clear enough for people, and open and honest enough about the limitations of what realistically can be done in certain areas?

[62] **John Griffiths:** That is an interesting question, Mick. Government and agencies at one stage talked a lot about managed retreat; that set alarm bells ringing in a number of communities, and then there was a sort of withdrawal from that terminology. You are right: you have to be open and honest. However, you also have to be sensitive to language that is used that might unnecessarily alarm people. There is a balance to be struck there, and I hope that our new national strategy does that effectively.

[63] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Minister, you spoke about looking at communities at risk; obviously there are a lot of rivers that come out of Wales and go across the border. How are you looking at the cross-border issues in relation to flooding, and how are you identifying communities that may be at risk in England as a result of rivers that start their journey in Wales?

[64] **John Griffiths:** Two of the four shoreline management plans are cross-border, so they do look at these issues. The current Environment Agency is very much a cross-border body. In taking the single body forward, we would want to maintain those strengths of cross-border working. So, that is factored into the schemes that deal with coastal flooding and protection, because, as you say, natural elements do not respect borders, so obviously we factor that in and will continue to do so.

[65] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So your vision of sustainability and economic and social risk factors will apply equally across border as within the border. There are identical factors that you will be considering.

[66] **John Griffiths:** We have to take into account those cross-border factors in all aspects of policy.

[67] **Keith Davies:** Rydym wedi derbyn tystiolaeth sy'n dweud bod angen diwygio TAN 14 a TAN 15. Beth byddech yn ei wneud i ddilyn hynny i fyny? A ydych yn credu y dylent gael eu hadolygu?
Keith Davies: We have received evidence that states that technical advice notes 14 and 15 need to be revised. What would you do to follow that up? Do you believe that they should be revised?

[68] **John Griffiths:** Diolch yn fawr, Keith. We are, of course, taking forward a great deal of work with regard to the planning system and we keep the technical advice notes under constant review. The same is true of 'Planning Policy Wales'. That is our general approach. When we have the four shoreline management plans in place and approved—I hope that that will be towards the end of this year—and when the single body is up and functioning, I think that that will be a better time to look at these matters, because there are other important aspects, such as marine planning, which are very relevant. I think that it is important to have all of the pieces of the jigsaw in place before we review TAN 14 or TAN 15. However, they provide a pretty robust system in terms of providing the protection that is needed. I know that, as ever, there will be various views around in terms of their efficacy, but, in terms of the evidence, we consider them to have been effective.

[69] **Keith Davies:** Efallai y byddai pobl yn Llanelli yn anghytuno â hynny. Er enghraifft, rhoddwyd caniatâd i adeiladu tai
Keith Davies: Perhaps people in Llanelli would dispute that. For example, permission was given to build houses on Stradey park.

ar barc y Strade. Ceisiodd y bobl leol The local people tried to defend the site by
amddiffyn y safle drwy ddefnyddio TAN 14, using TAN 14, but they were not successful,
ond nid oeddent yn llwyddiannus, ac mae'r and the permission still exists.
caniatâd yn bodoli o hyd.

[70] **John Griffiths:** As ever, Keith, it is not wise for me to discuss any particular development. [*Interruption.*] Yes, I just said that. However, the policy is there and it applies to development on a floodplain so that, if that is to take place, there has to be work to address the flood risk, which normally involves raising the land. However, with any particular development, there are various views. I understand that and that will always be the case with the planning system.

[71] **Keith Davies:** Rydych yn gwybod **Keith Davies:** You also know, because you hefyd oherwydd eich bod wedi ateb cwestiwn have answered a question in a committee this mewn pwyllgor yr wythnos hon ynglŷn â'r week regarding what Welsh Water and the hyn y bydd Dŵr Cymru ac Asiantaeth yr Environment Agency will do in Llanelli in Amgylchedd yn ei wneud yn Llanelli er order to ensure, perhaps, that the fields do not mwyn, efallai, sicrhau na fydd llifogydd ar y flood.
caeau.

[72] **John Griffiths:** I was very pleased to visit the Llanelli area with Welsh Water and I was very impressed by the extent of the work that it plans to do. To come back to some of the issues that we raised earlier in terms of surface-water flooding, for example, there is a big programme of investment to build on what has already happened. I hope very much that that will alleviate the risk to a very considerable extent.

[73] **William Powell:** Moving across the Loughor bridge, I will move to Julie James. Llyr Huws Gruffydd has also indicated.

[74] **Julie James:** I just wanted to follow that up a little, Minister, because we have heard from Welsh Water in this forum and many others about some of the alleviation measures that could be built into the built environment—I am sorry, that is a very clumsy way of putting it, but you know what I mean—that are not currently being built into that environment, even in new developments. So, we still do not have ground-water capture, for example, on some developments in my constituency, as well as Keith's, with all of the consequent problems associated with that. We do not have reed-bed developments at the mouths of rivers where those would be preferably sustainable and would form a natural flood barrier. One of the flood risks in my constituency is the tidal flow coming up the river mouths. Is there something that we can do about that both in the short term and in the forthcoming planning Bill?

[75] **John Griffiths:** Those are matters that we will look at very carefully, Julie, because it is very much in line with using the natural environment ecosystems approaches that we have discussed today already. Some good work has gone on in terms of trying to ensure that absorbent surfaces are not replaced by hard surfaces through the planning system. However, as ever, I am sure that more can be done. When the built environment is built, it is there for a long time, and it is really important that we get this right in order to future-proof. These are matters that will be addressed as we move forward.

[76] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Mae'n ddrwg **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** I am sorry—I missed gennyf—collais ddiwedd cwestiwn Julie. the end of Julie's question. I presume that Rwyf yn tybio eich bod wedi cyfeirio at y Bil you referred to the planning Bill. That was cynllunio. Dyna roeddwn am ofyn amdano also what I was going to ask about, because hefyd, achos yn eich ateb blaenorol ynglŷn â in your previous answer regarding TAN 14 and TAN 15, it did not sound as if there was TAN 14 a TAN 15, nid oedd yn swnio fel

bod rhyw awydd mawr i newid pethau'n a strong desire to change things substantially.
 sylweddol. Sut rydych yn rhagweld y How do you foresee that the planning Bill
 byddai'r Bil cynllunio yn diwygio'r systemau will revise the systems for coastal protection?
 sy'n ymwneud ag amddiffyn arfordirol?

[77] **John Griffiths:** We have a lot of processes to go through before we get to the planning Bill. Quite a lot of work is already taking place. There are various work streams, and the independent advisory group's report will be published in the autumn. That will be very important in terms of the evidence base for the Bill. We are very concerned with structures in terms of delivery of the planning system. There are many other factors involved as well in terms of coastal protection, as you mentioned, Llyr. There will also be ample opportunity as we take this forward to feed in views as to exactly what the planning system could better deliver. All the natural environmental stuff is very relevant to 'Sustaining a Living Wales' and the single body. So, there is a lot of opportunity to take forward improvement, and I hope that people in organisations use these opportunities to feed in their views.

[78] **William Powell:** Minister, one aspect that was raised with us in our previous evidence session was the unevenness of involvement by local authorities. Is that an issue of any concern to you, and do you think that there would be a useful role for co-ordinating activity through the Welsh Local Government Association or similar bodies?

[79] **John Griffiths:** We are very keen to work with the Welsh Local Government Association and to make sure that any patchiness in local authorities is addressed. Obviously, there will be differences in terms of coastal protection, depending on whether a local authority has any coast in its area, for example. [*Laughter.*]

[80] **William Powell:** It is always a factor.

[81] **John Griffiths:** We are very keen to work with all local authorities in Wales in terms of general flood risk—they all have issues in that regard, obviously, and, in terms of coastal flooding, with those local authorities that have coastal areas. The WLGA is very significant in this, and we are always looking to ensure that there is sharing of good practice, collaboration and a coming together to share expertise and resource. That general picture is one that we would very much want to bring to this work.

[82] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Minister, in terms of cross-departmental working and also working with local government or local authorities, can you tell us more about the green sea partnership? There seems to be quite limited information about that on the Welsh Government's website. How is your department working with the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science on the green sea partnership?

[83] **John Griffiths:** We have good cross-departmental working with that department, and there is discussion at ministerial and official level. I do not know whether Nicola would have been party to—

[84] **Ms Edwards:** No, it would probably have been Julia.

[85] **John Griffiths:** Yes. Perhaps we could write to the committee if you would like to have detail about how that relates more specifically to this particular piece of committee work.

[86] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I am trying to see what the level of integration is between, for example, the approach to coastal tourism and the approach to coastal protection, particularly given that 44% of visitors to Wales effectively visit the Welsh coast. It seems to me that there needs to be some very strong integration between the two pieces of work, in order to ensure

that one does not adversely affect the other.

10.45 a.m.

[87] **John Griffiths:** I very much accept that, and it is part of the approach that we touched upon earlier here today in terms of Cabinet discussions and officials and Ministers working together to have that wider understanding of the importance of coastal protection. It is obviously very relevant to tourism. There are some aspects of particular flood defence schemes that are beneficial, such as the one in Borth for example, which incorporates a reef that is beneficial for surf and surfers. Obviously, if you protect the beach and the quality of the beach, that is very important for holidaymakers as well. Those connections are made, and as you say, are important parts of the picture.

[88] As a slight digression, Nicola was telling me earlier that, in Borth, we identified a version of flood-defence spotting as compared to train spotting, with apparently hundreds of people coming to watch the rocks being put in place. They spoke about the wonders of rock tipping, which is apparently a new phenomenon—an unexpected aspect of the tourism benefit of flood defences.

[89] **Mick Antoniw:** On that point, we learned at the Newport wetlands that there is an interesting group of people who are pylon spotters as well.

[90] **William Powell:** I look forward to taking up the issue that you mentioned in Borth, Minister, with my colleague Mark Williams, the MP for Ceredigion, who is also a local resident in Borth.

[91] Moving back to another aspect of our visit last week to the Newport wetlands, we had the opportunity to speak to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and other stakeholders about possible impacts of any barrage development in the Severn estuary. In that connection, I am looking at the habitats directive. How confident are you that the habitat creation programme for Wales, as it currently exists, would be able to offer sufficient compensatory habitats to mitigate the current predicted impact of the shoreline management plans?

[92] **John Griffiths:** I am reasonably confident, Chair, that the programme will identify the necessary habitat. I guess that the general picture is the one that is very relevant to Newport wetlands, in terms of the compensatory habitat possibly being some distance away from the works concerned, as we saw with the Cardiff bay barrage and Newport wetlands being provided as a compensatory habitat. There has been much conjecture about whether birds can read signposts and that sort of thing. It is obviously a case of the closer, the better, but sometimes there might be a little distance involved.

[93] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Ar y nodyn hwnnw, mae rhywbeth newydd fy nharo. Mae hyn yn ymwneud â'r gwahanol elfennau o fewn Llywodraeth sy'n ymwneud â'r môr, pysgodfeydd, parthau cadwraeth, perygl llifogydd ac yn y blaen. A oes un tîm, un man neu un ffocws penodol ar gyfer tynnu'r holl linyddau hyn at ei gilydd o fewn Llywodraeth Cymru? **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** On that note, something has just struck me. This deals with the various elements within Government that are related to the sea, fisheries, marine conservation zones, flood risk and so on. Is there a single team, a single location or a single focus for drawing all these strands together within the Welsh Government?

[94] **John Griffiths:** We have a marine unit, Llyr, which looks at marine policy, and obviously the relevant officials are contained within my department. Fisheries are slightly different, because that issue comes under Alun Davies's portfolio, as Deputy Minister, but we

have regular meetings to discuss that. If you look at the marine conservation zones, for example, which are very relevant in terms of the marine environment and fishing interests—we had a very good presentation and meeting here yesterday on that front—they show the importance of joining up, and we have done that and will continue to do so.

[95] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I will just follow up on that answer, Minister, because it sounded as if the officials working in the fisheries sector are separate from your marine team and from the environment sector. Is any consideration being given to making sure that any team dealing with marine issues is a single marine team that advises your Department for Environment and Sustainable Development? That team should have an overall holistic approach—an ecosystems approach even—to the marine environment, so that it is looked at in the whole rather than departmentalised, with your department dealing with flooding and coastal erosion and the Department for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science dealing with fisheries. Is any thought given to bringing that ecosystems approach into the heart of Welsh Government and to how your civil servants approach this?

[96] **John Griffiths:** How Government is structured is always interesting, in terms of possible change and the different ways of structuring it. You could carve it up in a million different ways, and it does change from time to time. However, the scope of fisheries is much wider than just marine issues and there are many important aspects to fisheries policy that are outwith the marine side of things, which would have to be borne in mind. I am sure that fishing interests would make those points strongly—I am looking at Bill now in terms of Powys, for example.

[97] **William Powell:** Is there a final message that you would leave us with as we prepare to come together later to consider our overall response to coastal management? Is there something that you would like to emphasise or that you feel that we have not yet addressed this morning?

[98] **John Griffiths:** As I said initially, Chair, I very much welcome this work by the committee, because it is an important area. I am mindful of the risks posed to life, limb and property by flooding. Thankfully, we have not seen coastal flooding in Wales since Towyn in 1990, but that was a clear example of the risks that we face, so I very much welcome your work and focus on this.

[99] **William Powell:** Diolch yn fawr, **William Powell:** Thank you, Minister, for Weinidog, am y sesiwn y bore yma. this morning's session.

[100] It has been a useful session for us to draw together the strands of our work, and we look forward to liaising further with you in the next session.

[101] I propose that we have a five-minute comfort break and reconvene just after 11.00 a.m..

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.53 a.m. ac 11.02 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.53 a.m. and 11.02 a.m.*

Y Bil Menter a Diwygio Rheoleiddio—Cynnig Cydsyniad Deddfwriaethol Dŵr Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill—Water Legislative Consent Motion

[102] **William Powell:** We have all had an opportunity to study the paper that has been provided by the clerk and his team. I welcome any views from Members.

[103] **Vaughan Gething:** I am content, Chair. It sets out the purpose of the Bill and how it

affects Wales. I am pleased that we have had the opportunity to look at it, but I would be disappointed if it took a whole hour to dispose of the matter.

[104] **William Powell:** I think that we are adopting a precautionary approach.

[105] **Julie James:** No concerns have been raised by any stakeholders and the Government has no concerns in relation to it, so it does not seem controversial.

[106] **William Powell:** I think that we have an unanimous view here, so the committee is minded to approve of it.

[107] **Antoinette Sandbach:** It is a procedure that is useful for us to adopt.

[108] **William Powell:** It is a good template for the future.

11.03 a.m.

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[109] **William Powell:** We have papers to note regarding the meetings held on 21 and 27 June and, more recently, on 5 July. Do Members agree to note them? Are there any issues? The papers are noted.

11.04 a.m.

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

[110] **William Powell:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi).

[111] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11.04 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11.04 a.m.*