Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/00348/26

Stephen Doughty MP
Member of Parliament for Cardiff South and Penarth
House of Commons
London
sw1a 0aa
stephen.doughty.mp@parliament.uk

March 2026

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your correspondence of 05 March regarding role allocations in Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. I appreciate the concerns you have outlined on behalf of your constituents, particularly given the wider public debate on sector performance and the need to maintain confidence in environmental regulation.

Welsh Government expects water companies to provide the highest standards of service to customers and protect the environment. In 2022 the then Minister for Climate Change issued our Strategic Priorities and Objectives Statement to Ofwat. It makes it clear that water companies should anticipate disruption, maintain services for people and protect the natural environment, now and in the future. I and my officials engage regularly with Ofwat to set out Welsh Government strategic priorities and ensure the water companies are being held to account.

Appointments to senior roles within Dŵr Cymru are solely a matter for the company's Board. As a not-for-profit provider of essential public services, Dŵr Cymru is responsible for ensuring that its recruitment processes meet all governance and probity standards, including the proper management of any actual or perceived conflicts of interest. The Welsh Government does not have a role in approving or scrutinising individual appointments of this nature.

Former civil servants and public office holders are subject to the rules of the UK Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOBA). Where relevant, ACOBA provides independent advice on conditions that should apply to post-employment roles, including cooling-off periods and restrictions on contact with former departments or regulated bodies.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Any advice issued by ACOBA is published on its website, and it is for the appointing organisation to ensure that any conditions are fully complied with.

However, I recognise, the broader point you raise about public trust. Confidence in the independence and effectiveness of environmental oversight is essential. In Wales, we continue to work closely with Natural Resources Wales, Ofwat, and other partners to strengthen regulatory assurance, improve transparency, and ensure that environmental standards are enforced robustly. This includes work to expand the monitoring of discharges, support stronger enforcement action where necessary, and drive long-term improvements to wastewater infrastructure and river health. Through the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 regulators were given new powers to take tougher and faster action against water companies when they fail in their responsibilities to their customers and the environment. These measures include enhanced enforcement powers and the ability to ban water company executive bonuses and penalties more readily.

The Welsh Government remains committed to ensuring that the governance of the water sector in Wales is transparent, resilient, and capable of maintaining public confidence. I will continue to prioritise measures that support stronger oversight and ensure that environmental protection remains central to the sector's operations.

Thank you for writing to me on this matter and I hope that your constituents find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

PLEASE LEAVE BLANK

To: Huw Irranca-Davies
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs

[Ref] HIDCC/00348/26
CC: Chriss Jones DD, Mining Legacy, Water & Flood
Mailbox Mining Legacy, Water and Flood

From: [redacted]
Water Industry, Regulation and Consumers Branch
Ext: [redacted]
Date: 05/03/2026

Re Welsh Water and Sir James Bevan

1. Stephen Doughty MP has written to you on behalf of his constituents who have raised concerns regarding the appointment of Sir James Bevan to the Board of Dŵr Cymru following is tenure as Chief Executive of the Environment Agency.
2. This follows the broadcasting of Channel 4's recent *Dirty Business* docu-drama. The programme highlights deeply concerning cases of sewage pollution, regulatory failures and governance issues within parts of the water industry. While the documentary focuses primarily on events in England, it has prompted wider questions about environmental protection and the role of regulators across the UK.
3. In particular, a constituent raised 4 questions they wished to have answered:
    - What safeguards were in place to prevent conflicts of interest in this case?
    - Was this appointment reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, and if so, on what basis was it approved?
    - Do you believe current "cooling-off" rules are sufficient to prevent regulatory capture?
    - What steps will you support to restore public trust in environmental oversight?
4. As Dŵr Cymru is a not-for-profit company operating independently from government, board appointments are a matter for the company itself.
5. A draft response is provided for your consideration.