

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/01158/25

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

July 2025

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 June on behalf of your constituent regarding sewage pollution in Wales.

Ensuring our water is of the highest quality is a vital part of making Wales a prosperous, happy, and healthy place to live in, which is why improving water quality is a key priority for this government. Our water is under immense pressure from climate change as well as population growth. The Welsh Government-funded Water Quality Capital Programme is empowering Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to tackle some of the key issues that threaten the water environment, providing an investment package of £56 million to improve water quality in Wales since 2022, which will go a long way to ensure high water quality in Wales for current and future generations.

Water quality is a truly cross-sectoral issue which needs concerted engagement and action from a variety of sectors, that is why we are working closely with Wales' water companies, regulators and the relevant sectors to identify and implement sustainable solutions that not only deliver on desired water quality for improvement outcomes, but also support climate change adaptation, improved biodiversity and deliver against our net zero target.

Six Minister-led River Pollution Summits have been convened since July 2022, bringing together industry stakeholders to discuss and advance strategies for addressing water quality issues. At the most recent Summit on 15 May the focus was on proactive measures and investments by water companies to reduce sewerage impacts and improve water quality in Wales.

The previous Summit process delivered significant progress in driving action to reduce phosphorus pollution. This collaborative approach was crucial in creating and implementing our Action Plan to relieve pressures on Special Area of Conservation (SAC) river

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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.

catchments. As part of the Action Plan, we established Nutrient Management Boards and commissioned them to produce actionable and deliverable Nutrient Management Plans for failing SAC rivers. To support this work, we have provided over £1.7 million funding to date since 2022.

Following Ofwat's final determination of water company business plans for 2025-30, as part of the Price Review 24 (PR24) process, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) will directly invest £184 million and Hafren Dyfrdwy will invest £8 million to prevent nutrient pollution in Wales over the next 5 years.

DCWW's not-for-profit model ensures that all financial surpluses are reinvested for the benefit of customers and communities and not paid in dividends, and PR24 has led to DCWW committing a total investment package £6 billion in Wales during Asset Management Period 8 – 2025-2030. This includes £2.4 billion on new infrastructure, which will go a long way in delivering improvements for our water environment.

We are working closely with water companies and NRW to tackle pollution from storm overflows and build long-term strategies that will improve water quality across our waterways. I welcome DCWW's commitment to investing £140m between 2020-2025 and a further £1.1 bn between 2025-30 to tackle storm overflows and help ensure that they all have 'no or very low environmental impact' by 2040.

We are also making sustainable drainage systems mandatory on almost all new building developments to help relieve pressure on the network by redirecting and slowing down the speed at which surface water enters the sewer system. It will help ensure storm overflows are only used as a last resort.

The Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 will give regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action against water companies when they fail in their responsibilities to their customers and the environment.

The Act introduces new measures, several of which we have agreed to extend to Wales, including enhanced enforcement powers; a ban on water company executive bonuses; giving regulators the ability to use penalties more readily; and independent monitoring of sewage outlets. This is a landmark development in both governments' long-term approach to tackling the systemic issues facing the water sector.

In October 2024, the Secretary of State for DEFRA and I jointly commissioned the most extensive independent review of the water sector in England and Wales since privatisation. The Review, led by Sir Jon Cunliffe and in close conjunction with the Welsh Government, focussed on restoring the health of rivers, lakes, and seas, ensuring long-term sustainability, and driving economic growth. The final report was released on 21 July we will consider its recommendations closely.

Additionally, in the interest of increasing transparency, DCWW have installed Event Duration Monitoring on over 99% of its storm overflow assets, which provides data on the length, duration and location of SO discharges. You can learn more about Event Duration Monitoring on their [website](#). Additionally, DCWW has recently established a [Storm Overflow Map](#), which provides near real-time information on SO activity.

Once again, thank you for relating your constituents' correspondence to me, and I hope they find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

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a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

PLEASE LEAVE BLANK

To: Huw Irranca-Davies MS (DFMCSCCRA)
From: [REDACTED]

[Ref] HIDCC/01158/25
CC: [REDACTED]
WaterFlood

Date: July 2025

Sewage pollution

1. Stephen Doughty MP wrote to you on behalf a of constituent concerned about sewage pollution in Wales. Specifically, they echoed a call from Surfers Against Sewage to reform the water industry, and that reform to be “guided by 5 key principles” of:
 1. **Protect Public and Environmental Health** – End the routine pollution of our waters. People and nature must no longer be put at risk from failing infrastructure and corporate negligence.
 2. **Democratise Decision Making** – Give communities, citizens, and experts a real voice in the governance of water systems. Local and national decisions must reflect public interest, not shareholder profit.
 3. **Strengthen Independent Regulators** – Equip regulators with the authority, independence, and resources they need to hold water companies accountable and enforce environmental protections without political interference.
 4. **Operate for Public Benefit** – The water industry must work in the interests of people and planet, not profit. Reinvestment in infrastructure, innovation, and sustainability must be prioritised.
 5. **Ensure Transparency** – Full access to data, decisions, and accountability mechanisms must be guaranteed. The public has a right to know when and where sewage is being discharged.
2. A draft response has been provided for your consideration.