



Eich cyf/Your ref CB50357
Ein cyf/Our ref LGRRS/05506/26
Chris Bryant MP
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July 2026

Dear Chris Bryant MP

Thank you for your correspondence regarding sewage discharges into rivers and coastal waters in Wales. I appreciate the concerns raised by your constituent and welcome the opportunity to set out the Welsh Government's approach.

Improving water quality is a priority for the Welsh Government. We recognise the public concern about pollution incidents and sewage discharges, and we are committed to delivering cleaner rivers, lakes and coastal waters through a combination of stronger regulation, targeted investment and reform of the water sector. This commitment is reflected in our wider programme of water reform, which places environmental improvement, public health and ecosystem resilience at the heart of decision-making.

Reducing sewage pollution requires both improved operational performance from water companies and sustained investment in wastewater infrastructure. Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water is investing more than £1.1 billion in environmental improvements between 2025 and 2030, including measures to reduce spills, improve wastewater treatment and enhance the resilience of sewerage networks. We expect the company to deliver these improvements and to demonstrate clear progress in reducing pollution incidents and improving its environmental performance.

Alongside investment, we are already strengthening oversight and transparency. Natural Resources Wales continues to monitor compliance, investigate incidents and take enforcement action where necessary, while water companies are expected to demonstrate measurable improvements in environmental performance. The Welsh Government has made clear that reducing pollution incidents, improving infrastructure resilience and delivering environmental outcomes must be central to future investment programmes.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn yr iaith honno 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.

Water companies are subject to oversight by a number of regulators. Natural Resources Wales regulates environmental performance and has powers to investigate incidents and take enforcement action where appropriate. Ofwat regulates the financial and operational performance of water companies, including the delivery of agreed investment programmes. The Welsh Government continues to engage directly with regulators and the water industry to ensure that environmental expectations are clear and that companies are held accountable for their actions.

Alongside these immediate measures, the Welsh Government is taking forward a significant programme of water reform. Building on the recommendations of the Independent Water Commission and responses to the Green Paper on the future governance of water in Wales, we are considering reforms designed to strengthen accountability, improve regulation, support long-term investment and create a more integrated approach to managing water quality. Our long-term ambition includes establishing a new Welsh economic regulator for water, with powers tailored to Welsh needs and priorities. We will take full control of water in Wales so decisions are made in Wales, for Wales.

The UK Government intends to introduce a Clean Water Bill, and we are working closely with them to secure the additional powers Wales needs to deliver a distinct Welsh approach. These powers will support future Welsh legislation and enable reforms that strengthen oversight of water companies, improve environmental regulation and provide clearer accountability for delivery. Current planning assumptions indicate that UK legislation would be taken forward first, followed by the publication of a Welsh White Paper and, subsequently, Welsh legislation. This is a long-term programme of reform which will be implemented over a number of years.

While meaningful improvements are already being delivered through ongoing investment programmes, the public should be realistic that fully addressing decades of underinvestment in wastewater infrastructure will take time. Nevertheless, stronger regulation, enhanced enforcement, continued infrastructure investment and the wider programme of water reform will help accelerate progress and ensure that water companies are better held to account for their environmental performance.

I hope this response is helpful and can be shared with your constituent.

Yours sincerely,

Llyr Gruffydd AS/MS

Gweinidog Cabinet dros Wydnwch Gwledig a Chynaliadwyedd
Cabinet Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability