Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/TO/HIDCC/00267/26

[redacted]

16 March 2026

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your emails of 19 February and your follow-up email of 20 February to the Deputy First Minister regarding your concerns about pollution incidents affecting the River Towy (Afon Tywi) in Carmarthen, including the video footage you have shared. I have been asked to reply on the Deputy First Minister's behalf.

The work of local river groups and members of the public in reporting incidents is appreciated, and the strength of feeling about the potential impacts on wildlife, fish stocks and the wider river environment is recognised.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is the independent environmental regulator in Wales and is responsible for regulating permitted discharges and investigating and enforcing pollution incidents. While the Welsh Government sets the policy and legal framework, it is not appropriate for Ministers to comment on the specifics of individual regulatory investigations or potential enforcement action.

Mekatek operates under environmental permit EPR YP3937SH, issued in 2006 following modifications made by the operator to treat industrial effluents at the site. Effluent is treated through multiple stages, including biological (aerobic) treatment, before being discharged to the Afon Tywi via an authorised emission point.

The permit requires the operator to monitor the discharge for a range of parameters (including nitrate and phosphate) at frequencies from daily spot samples to monthly flow-proportionate composite sampling, with results submitted to NRW quarterly. NRW reviews these returns and publishes compliance information on the NRW public register: https://publicregister.naturalresources.wales/

NRW notes that the discharge can sometimes appear visually unsightly (discoloured and with slight odour). However, appearance alone does not necessarily indicate pollution or a breach of emission limit values. NRW has also explained that some community test kits can report results in different units to those used in permits, which can complicate comparisons.

In response to the recent complaint and social media footage, NRW contacted the operator, who reported no operational issues on the day in question or in the preceding days, and described accepted waste streams as typical. NRW has also audited the site's 2025 waste

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.

return submissions and found no issues with the codes or tonnages reported against the permit requirements.

NRW has restarted a 12-month unannounced monitoring programme for the Mekatek discharge during 2026 (building on a previous programme in 2019). NRW reports that initial results from this programme appear satisfactory. NRW has also indicated the operator is willing to participate in a public liaison meeting, including a site tour, to explain the treatment process and address community concerns.

On the agricultural incident(s), NRW has viewed the footage and believes it relates to an incident attended by local Environment Officers. Evidence has been gathered and the investigation is ongoing. As this may lead to enforcement action (ranging from advice and guidance through to prosecution), NRW cannot provide further details until the case is concluded.

The Welsh Government expects all farms to comply with the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021. This includes requirements for slurry storage capacity (including a minimum of five months' storage for the anticipated volume produced during the storage period) and for slurry produced to be contained.

Where stores are at risk of overtopping, farms can contact NRW for advice on managing excess slurry in the lowest-risk way available. This may include temporary storage or limited spreading to lower-risk land, where appropriate. Allowing stores to overtop can cause unacceptable environmental harm and can significantly increase the risk of structural failure of the store.

The Welsh Government has increased the inspection programme for enforcement of the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations. We have committed £1.58m to support NRW's enforcement of the Regulations in the 2025-26 financial year, targeting high-risk agricultural activities. This approach is helping to drive improvements in compliance, though we recognise there is more to do.

Because the main reasons for non-compliance can relate to farm infrastructure, rectifying issues appropriately can take time. A strong regulatory and enforcement approach helps farms achieve compliance within appropriate timescales and supports the outcomes the Regulations are designed to deliver.

I would encourage you and your groups to continue to report suspected pollution incidents to NRW, providing as much detail as possible, including dates, times and locations, so that the regulator can assess and prioritise appropriate action.

More broadly, the Welsh Government shares your ambition for healthy rivers and is advancing a multi-sector programme to improve river water quality, including work with regulators, local authorities, farmers, developers and communities.

Thank you again for taking the time to write, and for highlighting these concerns. I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Water Branch
Climate Change & Rural Affairs Group
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