



To:
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment and
Infrastructure Management

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Date 30 October 2018
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Summary: This is a letter from the Local Flood Risk Management Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management following the meeting of the Working Group on 8 October 2018. It is about progress on the recommendations made at the last meeting in February 2018.

Dear Cllr Thomas

The Local Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Working Group met on 8 October to receive an update on progress made on the recommendations from the Working Group's last meeting on 20 February. It also received a presentation on nature based flood management solutions. This letter provides you with feedback from that meeting.

We would like to thank you and Mike Sweeney for attending to present the update and to answer our questions and Sion Brackenbury for his presentation. We appreciate your engagement and input.

Whilst the Working Group found the meeting informative and interesting, it did have some concerns and we would like to make the following comments.

The Working Group discussed nature based solutions to flood risk management:

- We heard that Welsh Government is currently consulting on land management post Brexit. We expressed concern about how this will be funded. The consultation closes on 30 October 2018 and we feel the Authority should respond to it. As a working group, we want to give maximum support to the Public Goods scheme in chapter 6 of the WG consultation document 'Brexit and our land: securing the future of Welsh farming'. Such a scheme will likely enhance nature-based solutions to flood risk management.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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- We feel that there is a huge opportunity for the Authority to encourage strategic planting in new developments. The WG has legislated with the Wellbeing of Future Generations and Environment Acts. The task is for the Authority to enforce the legislation regarding nature-based solutions to flood risk management.
- We were informed that from January 2019 developers will have to meet Welsh standards for drainage schemes which concern SuDS requirements. We were very pleased to hear this as it hopefully help reduce local flooding problems.
- We were informed that it is possible to monitor the benefits of natural solutions. We heard that Cheltenham has done some excellent work and that Port Talbot also has examples which it would be useful to see. You expressed an interest in finding out more about this work and possibly visiting some local examples. Sion agreed to provide you with contact details.
- We feel it is worth investigating if Building Controls can be used to prevent the use of non-permeable materials in people's gardens, such as paving, on existing domestic properties. You agreed to check if the Authority can legislate on this.
- We were pleased to hear that there are opportunities to use nature based solutions in urban environments such as the outskirts of Swansea.

Working Group members picked up on issues from the previous meeting in February 2018:

- We were informed in February that a new statutory duty was commencing in May 2018 and that there would be a new Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) Approving Body. We heard that this has been delayed by Welsh Government until January 2019.
- We heard that there are resource implications for delivering SuDS, as it is the Authority's responsibility and that a report has been drafted proposing 4 new members of staff are employed. You informed us that you support this in principle but it is an extra cost and the Authority will have to find innovative way to do it. We heard that there will be income to support it in 2 to 3 years and the Authority will charge for the service. We also heard that developers are not responding well to the change and the Authority is expecting a surge in applications before January 2019.
- We were pleased to hear that the Flood Risk Leaflet has been reviewed and updated and that it is available on line and in hard copy at some community buildings. We suggested that advice on permeable materials and soak away could be included in the leaflet. You made an alternative suggestion, that a section titled 'Help us prevent flooding' be added to the website, which can include advice on tree planting, use of materials etc.

We then moved on to discuss the progress update:

- We were pleased to hear that the Authority has received £25,000 from Welsh Government for an advanced warning system on a road near Scurlage.
- We were also pleased to hear that the Authority has allocated more money to improving gully schemes.
- We were informed that the maintenance schedule of watercourses has been circulated to councillors and that 7 or 8 councillors have responded regarding

concerns within their ward. These will be investigated and if applicable added to the list of assets to maintain.

- We agreed with your comment that the Authority should have a consistent approach to maintenance of water course and gullies as currently different departments are responsible for different areas, for example, on school land; in parks.
- We heard that money is very tight as there are fewer funding streams available. We were not surprised to hear this but it is a concern.

The Working Group discussed progress and came to the following conclusions:

1. We are pleased that progress has been made on our recommendations from the meeting held in February 2018 including the publication of an updated flood risk leaflet and provision of information on watercourses and gullies to councillors.
2. We feel there is a huge opportunity for the Authority to encourage strategic planting in new developments and the Working Group would like to see the Authority take advantage of this.
3. We would like to see the Authority use more nature based solutions to flood risk and recommend this opportunity is explored further.
4. We feel the Authority should look into whether it can legislate on use of non-permeable materials in domestic gardens.
5. We would like an update at our next meeting on the proposals to employ 4 new members of staff for the delivery of SuDS
6. The Working Group would like confirmation at its next meeting that a section titled 'Help us prevent flooding' has been added to the webpages.
7. We would like to see a consistent approach to maintenance of water courses and gullies across the Authority.
8. The Working Group will meet again in 4 to 6 months for its annual update on Local Flood Risk Management.

Your Response

We hope that you find this letter useful and informative. We are interested in hearing your thoughts about the issues raised and would ask that you respond by 20 November 2018.

Yours sincerely

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