



To:
**Councillor Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member
for Service Transformation**

**Councillor David Hopkins, Cabinet Member
for Corporate Service and Performance**

**Councillor Andrew Stevens, Cabinet
Member for Environment and Infrastructure**

Please ask for:
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22 December 2022

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

Summary: This is a letter from the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel to the relevant Cabinet Members following the meeting of the Panel on 9 November 2022. It covers Water Quality and Management and Climate Change and Nature in Swansea.

Dear Cllrs Lewis, Hopkins and Stevens

The Panel met on 9 November 2022 to discuss the Role of the Climate Change and Nature Panel, receive a briefing on Water Quality and Water Management and an Overview of Climate Change and Nature in Swansea and agree the draft Work Programme 2022-23.

We would like to thank you, officers and representatives of Natural Resources Wales for attending to present items and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learned from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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Matters Arising

We raised a query in relation to Minute 78. Regarding Action 2, we wanted to know if the Councillor training had been set up and were informed the online e-learning training programme had been developed and would go live after a report goes to Cabinet in December 2022.

Water Quality and Water Management

We queried if there had been any major incidents locally with sewerage getting into the sea after storms. We were informed by NRW there are storm overflows in Swansea around the coast and near rivers designed to spill excess water, which gets into the sewerage system during heavy rainfall, into the environment to stop homes getting flooded. We were pleased to hear that lots of work has been done over the last 10 years, and on our most valuable stretches of coast, overflows only spill in extreme conditions. We heard the next stage is to identify which problem overflows still exist and to prioritise with Welsh Water and OFSTAD which of these get investment for improvement.

We queried who is responsible for sewerage discharge into the sea and were informed NRW is responsible for discharges into controlled waters ie rivers, most lakes and sea. We heard that NRW works with the Council on public health impacts of some of the discharges, but NRW has primary responsibility for responding to pollution incidents. We also heard Welsh Water have a responsibility to stay within permit limits and will be informed if there are any issues relating to their assets, NRW will follow up enforcement of this if needed. We noted there is a pollution hotline and details of this are on the NRW website. People should ring this number if they see any pollution incident affecting rivers or sea.

We queried how effectively agricultural pesticide runoff is monitored in Swansea and heard from NRW that the main problem due to agriculture throughout Wales is runoff with regard to slurry and nutrients. Agriculture is not the biggest issue in Swansea regarding water quality but it is monitored and if necessary followed up.

We queried if Caswell is one of the trouble sites with regards to discharge into the sea, how many trouble sites we have and how we compare to similar authorities. We heard from NRW that there are emergency overflows at both Caswell and Langland. There have been some problems with flooding in the system particularly at Caswell which has led to overflow alerts being triggered in the past, however volumes discharged at both beaches are very small. We also heard that Caswell has been a concern because of the pumping station getting overwhelmed and the valley tends to get flooded in storm conditions, however, the Council, Welsh Water and management of Caswell Valley been working on this, and the situation has significantly improved, and risk is a lot lower. We were informed that Welsh Water will release results of water quality on 25 November 2022, but they expect Langland and Caswell to come out very well. We were pleased to hear this.

We wanted to know if infrastructure improvements are planned or needed in the area and were informed by NRW they would always be looking for infrastructure in

Swansea to be investigated and improved if needs be. They will be asking for improvements on high spillers in Swansea area, which tend to be on the Tawe rather than Mumbles. We heard NRW and Welsh Water will be monitoring the situation in Langland. The pumping station there might need maintenance, but it is not a storm discharge.

We queried how we are going to future proof the sewerage/drainage system. We heard from NRW that we are likely to get more intense storms in future which will put pressure on any drainage system and that Welsh Water are taking this into account in their forward planning. We also heard Welsh Water has a 25-year plan (Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan) which can be accessed on their website and does address climate change. If it is delivered it will be a significant step forward.

We asked NRW's views on septic tanks in urban areas and were informed they would rather not see them in urban areas and would rather properties be connected to main drains. We noted that NRW cannot stop people applying for a septic tank permit and they cannot control the planning process.

We queried the involvement NRW has with building sites regarding silt. We were informed that building sites should not result in silt pollution in rivers. We heard there is currently a problem in Penllergaer, that NRW is working with the house developer to try and manage the situation better and is monitoring the situation. NRW stated they need to work better in future with Planning and developers. They would like to see much better phasing of building sites and developers working in a cleaner way.

We mentioned that Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) regulations are now in place and asked if this helped at all. NRW felt it is a significant step forward but there are limits to what any legislation can do. We heard that SUDS are more about drainage on the finished development and that NRW want to get better at preventing pollution from building activities.

We asked about private drinking water supplies and how often risk assessments and monitoring is carried out. We heard that for private drinking supplies, there is an annual check from the Council if it is a commercial or shared supply and a 5-yearly check if it is a single supply. We were pleased to hear that officers are confident they are on top of this and everything within the area is captured.

Overview of Climate Change and Nature in Swansea

We asked about mini hydro power across Swansea and wanted to know if the Department had done an audit of potential sites across Swansea, if the Council could potentially take advantage of these stations and if there is anywhere we can put them. We were informed the Council is working with neighbouring authorities on development of a regional energy development plan. We heard it deals with how we can 'green the grid', more towards the 2050 target than 2030 target but there has been a recent procurement exercise funded by Welsh Government to enable the authorities to collectively appoint consultants. This will enable the Authority to generate a local energy development plan, feeding into the wider region. We heard this has only just started and there is a huge amount of work to be done in terms of opportunities/stakeholders etc. We noted that it is a scoping exercise in the first

instance to see how it can be taken forward and you will then look at all opportunities when it comes to generation of renewables, which should follow in 2023 and will be reported back to the Panel. We heard officers will give an update at the Panel meeting in January 2023 when you have more idea of timescales.

We are aware it will be extremely difficult to achieve Net Zero by 2030 and queried if the Department is confident the Council will even achieve it. Officers confirmed it will be incredibly difficult and the Council is being led and advised by Welsh Government as it is a whole Wales approach.

We queried what is meant by 'Fairer Parking', mentioned on page 36 of the report. Officers agreed to provide this information following the meeting and this information has been received.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, however in this instance, a formal written response is not required.

Yours sincerely

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