



To:
Councillor Andrew Stevens, Cabinet
Member for Environment and Infrastructure

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

Please ask for: Scrutiny
Gofynnwch am:
Scrutiny Office 01792 637314
Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrchol:
e-Mail scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk
e-Bost:
Date 13 April 2023
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure following the meeting of the Panel on 8 March 2023. It covers Local Flood Risk Management.

Dear Cllr Stevens

The Panel met on 8 March 2023 and received its annual update on Local Flood Risk Management.

We would like to thank Cllr David Hopkins, Stuart Davies and Mike Sweeney for attending to present the item and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate their 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.

Local Flood Risk Management

Mike Sweeney, Team Leader Highways and Transportation updated us on this issue including the roles and duties of the Council in this area. We heard that the Council currently needs to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and combine this with a Flood Risk Management Plan.

We requested an update on progress with the business cases for Welsh Government grant supported schemes awarded to flood affected areas including Killay. We were

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GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

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informed they are taking longer to complete that anticipated and that once complete they will be compared against other schemes in Wales to decide which ones will be taken forward based on factors against risk to property. We noted that the Department is aware of problems in the Killay area and have enhanced maintenance activities.

We queried if Swansea is more at risk of flooding than other parts of Wales and heard flood risk is a challenge for all local authorities across Wales and there is a need to plan ahead to mitigate against the effects of climate change.

We asked about the Blackpill scheme and if Dwr Cymru's objection to the plan had been rectified and heard that discussions are taking place. We also queried if any work was scheduled to keep the outflows clear at Blackpill as there was an issue with sand blocking them. We heard the Department is aware the outflow tends to block with sand, that it has been cleared in the past and that you will do so again if it needs doing. We noted there are concerns along Swansea Bay as a whole and this needs to be considered going forward.

We mentioned new houses being built in Penllergaer area and queried if there will be regular checks in future on the issue of further surface water being discharged into a system which has had significant challenges already. We were informed that when the Council assesses planning applications on larger scale developments it uses a national standard so they do not impose flood risk to existing infrastructure. Officers confirmed you will continue to monitor the Penllergaer situation going forward. We also heard that with the introduction of SUDS legislation you will control it and put certain conditions on developers to make sure there is no increased run off in the lower catchment.

We queried what plans are in place to improve older infrastructure given current challenges and were informed that asset data is collected which the Department thinks is important to flood risk, checking on its condition, and if there is a flood event, to try and understand the cause of it, and if it is down to capacity of the system you take further steps to find a solution.

We asked about the effect of gardens being paved over or tarmacked, astro turf and resin drives on run off and if there are any plans to bring in legislation going forward to make people require planning to do it. We heard there is currently no legislation to support intervention but that on new developments you are trying to get most of the water to go to ground if possible. If not, you look at attenuation and storing water on developments, so there are ways to reduce run off for new applications but not older developments. Cllr Hopkins added how closely the Department works with Planning on developments. We feel SUDS legislation is an improvement but needs to be aesthetically pleasing and that engineers need to work with landscape gardeners to achieve this.

We also feel it would be useful to know what attenuation ponds are and have some understanding of SUDS and its impact on new developments. We are concerned attenuation ponds are dangerous and need to ensure safety is the main concern and they are managed correctly. We discussed a training package which is currently being put in place on SUDS which it would be useful for Panel Members to attend and agreed that further discussion on this would take place outside of the meeting.

We heard SUDS legislation was brought in by Welsh Government who are keen to promote sustainable features, which provide multiple benefits to a development, and means a lot of drainage features will be above ground which creates biodiversity improvement to the area. Officers reassured us on the issue of SUDS and that ponds are all designed to guidance so health and safety has been very much considered. We heard they have all got gentle slopes, so if anyone does go into a pond there are straightforward routes to get out. We were pleased to hear that all staff involved are fully embedded in this as it's a duty put forward in legislation by Welsh Government.

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 required by 4 May 2023, to the following:

- Information on SUDS training to be provided to Panel Members.

Yours sincerely

HANNAH LAWSON
CONVENER, CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE SCRUTINY PANEL
CLLR.HANNAH.LAWSON@SWANSEA.GOV.UK