



Welsh Affairs Committee

Thursday, 5 December 2024

Cllr Andrew Morgan OBE
Leader
Welsh Local Government Association

Dear Andrew,

The Welsh Affairs Committee, which I chair, will hold an oral evidence session on December 18 examining the recent floods that occurred in Wales as a result of Storm Bert. The session will also look at how the UK and Welsh Governments, and other parties such as the Met Office and local authorities, can better work together in light of climate change and the increased likelihood of severe weather events.

Given the key role local authorities have in flood management and responding to emergencies, I am writing to you to ask for the WLGA's views on the following:

- How can emergency flood plans be future proofed?
- Are local authorities sufficiently resourced to deliver their flood and coastal risk management functions, in light of our changing climate?
- Is the data and evidence that local authorities use to inform flood and risk management sufficient?
- How different local governments cooperate during the planning and execution of flooding protocols?
- Can other agencies, such as Natural Resources Wales and the Met Office, work better with local authorities in flood prevention and preparation?

With apologies for the short notice, I would be grateful if you could provide a response by Wednesday 11 December.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee



Dr Chris Llewelyn

Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive

**Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru
Welsh Local Government Association**

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Date: 11th December 2024

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Ruth Jones MP
Welsh Affairs Committee
House of Commons
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Dear Ruth Jones

Many thanks for your recent query to the Welsh Local Government Association in relation to your forthcoming oral evidence session examining the recent floods that occurred in Wales as a result of Storm Bert.

- *How can emergency flood plans be future proofed?*

It is our understanding that emergency flood plans only exist for a few communities across Wales. This is mainly due to the resources required to set up these plans, and ongoing support required to keep communities engaged and prepared in case of an event. A research project from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) concluded that investing resources in developing community emergency plans was not the best way to increase communities' resilience and was unsustainable for public bodies, including councils.

County borough-wide emergency plans do not exist due to the complexity of creating plans that would be applicable to all areas, communities, and flood events. However, there are a range of other plans created by Welsh councils and NRW which set out frameworks on how these organisations should manage flood and coastal risks. In addition, Local Resilience Forums will have protocols in place to deal with circumstances *before and during* flood events.

- *Are local authorities sufficiently resourced to deliver their flood and coastal risk management functions, in light of our changing climate?*

Historically, resourcing for flood and coastal risk management functions has been driven through a combination of risk, corporate priorities, and funding availability. The decade-long period of public sector cuts has seen cuts falling disproportionately on environmental services. This has resulted in many local authorities now being under-resourced and predominantly reactive. The movement of the Welsh Government's Flood and Coastal

Erosion Risk Management Grant into the Revenue Support Grant from 2024/25 is in line with the WLGA's policy of non-hypothecation. However, it does come with the risk that those funds will not always be allocated to flood risk management, given other pressures that councils face.

In terms of being resilient to a changing climate and predicted increase in climate impacts, we acknowledge that a huge amount of work remains to be done. It is also important to note that underinvestment in other sectors and in infrastructure, highways for example, are interconnected with flooding. Resourcing alone will not be sufficient to increase resilience. Recruitment, training and retention of staff with experience in this area is also a challenge for councils.

Councils and NRW continue to invest in defences which have helped reduce the scale of flooding across Wales. However, the level of investment required to keep up with climate change will continue to grow.

• Is the data and evidence that local authorities use to inform flood and risk management sufficient?

We believe the data and evidence available to local authorities to inform flood risk management is sufficient and getting better year on year, through continuous updating. We have some really good examples of how the data and evidence are being used by some councils to inform their activities and investment, including my own authority. However, it is worth noting that modelling is only as good as the data provided to inform it and there needs to be a certain skills level to analyse and use this data effectively. Unfortunately, many councils do not have this expertise in-house and therefore do not make the most effective use of the data and modelling.

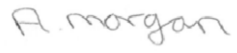
• How different local governments cooperate during the planning and execution of flooding protocols?

Wales has only unitary authorities and collaboration and support in times of crisis is generally positive, with examples of mutual aid being provided. During the 2020 floods, for example, a number of councils supported my authority with equipment and operatives. Although this works well in the case of localised events, there would certainly be challenges when there are more widespread impacts, and all councils' resources are stretched. Having good information about the location of key buildings and assets is important when outside assistance is called upon.

• Can other agencies, such as Natural Resources Wales and the Met Office, work better with local authorities in flood prevention and preparation?

These organisations already work together under the Civil Contingencies Act and a Memorandum of Understanding between NRW and the Welsh Local Government Association. However, there are always ways to improve collaboration and joint working. Importantly, accurate and timely updates are needed from NRW and the Met Office before and during major storm events as local authorities rely on these to gauge continually the level of response and resource required. Furthermore, improvement in liaison with councils over forecasts and flood warnings can help ensure that local evidence and intelligence is fed into the process. This requires relationship building between organisations so that there is a good network of contacts in place to respond to situations quickly.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Andrew Morgan OBE
Welsh LGA Leader