



Welsh Affairs Committee

16 December 2025

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs
Welsh Government

Follow up questions from Rebecca Evans MS's appearance before the Welsh Affairs Committee on 10 December

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am writing to you today following our session on 10 December with Rebecca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning. During that meeting, the Cabinet Secretary said that several questions relating to our inquiry into *the environmental and economic legacy of Wales' industrial past* fell within your ministerial portfolio. Therefore, we would appreciate the opportunity to follow up in writing to request this additional information from your office.

Would you be able to provide us with your views on the following questions:

1. What is the Welsh Government's current estimation for the projected costs of the remediation of all coal tips in Wales?
 - a. How confident is the Welsh Government that the necessary funding will be secured, in collaboration with the UK Government, to successfully remediate all coal tips in Wales?
 - b. Does the Welsh Government anticipate any future challenges in securing the necessary level of funding?
2. What specific outcomes does the Welsh Government expect from the new Disused Tips Authority for Wales, when it becomes operational in April 2027?
 - a. How will the new Authority collaborate with Natural Resources Wales and the Mining Remediation Authority?
3. Does the Welsh Government have plans to introduce legislation similar to the Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Act to address contaminated land sites in Wales?
4. What developments have occurred since May 2024 in efforts to identify and remediate environmental damage caused by pollution from historic metal mines?
5. What challenges or successes has the Welsh Government experienced in applying the "polluter pays" principle when assessing liability for the costs of remediating contaminated land sites in Wales?
 - a. What proportion of remediation costs for contaminated land sites in Wales is currently recovered from original polluters under this principle?

I would be grateful to receive your reply by **Monday 19 January**.

Yours sincerely,



**Welsh Affairs
Committee**

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet
dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/02262/25

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee

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26 January 2026

Dear Ruth,

Thank you for your letter regarding follow up questions following my colleague Rebecca Evans MS appearance before the Welsh Affairs Committee on 10 December.

The Welsh Government recognises the potential environmental impacts associated with our industrial past and we are committed to tackling legacy pollution issues and safeguarding our environment and communities.

Coal Tip Funding

Dealing with the consequences of our industrial past has been a priority of this Government. In line with our programme for government commitment, the Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 11 September 2025. This modernised legislation will ensure the long-term effective management of disused tips and reduce the threat to public safety and will establish a new public body, the Disused Tips Authority for Wales (the Authority), that has functions in relation to the assessment, registration, monitoring and management of disused tips.

However, we acknowledge that addressing the threats associated with coal tips will need a sustained programme of investment, and we should not bear this responsibility alone. Recognising this, the Welsh and UK Governments have provided over £230 million which will help safeguard hundreds of communities living in the shadow of these sites. Approximately £143m of this funding was provided by the UK Government which was the full amount we requested as part of the most recent budget announcement. This funding will support delivery of a multi-year programme of work up to 2029 to deliver improved management, maintenance and where necessary remediation of tips across Wales. The funding will be used to prioritise interventions based on the level of risk involved and will vary depending on the remediation or management requirements of individual sites.

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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.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge there is a limit to the amount of work that can be carried out, and the capacity and capability of partner organisations in this area is finite. Therefore, the current funding secured is envisaged to be sufficient to implement the tip safety regime over the next three financial years. The funding will also be used to help develop expertise in this area, creating skilled jobs and building local capacity which will support the management of disused tips beyond the existing funding period. We are confident that a sufficient level of financial commitment will be achieved in the future to continue and build on the disused tip safety improvements currently being delivered across Wales and safeguarding communities in the future.

The Disused Tips Authority for Wales and Collaboration with Natural Resources Wales and The Mining Remediation Authority

From the 1 April 2027 the Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Act 2025 will establish the Disused Tips Authority for Wales - a public body that will take responsibility for checking, recording, monitoring and managing tips - the first organisation of its kind in the UK. It will continue to build upon the existing partnerships and ongoing collaboration that has been established since 2020 between the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the Mining Remediation Authority (MRA) and local authorities, as well as many others. The Authority will lead and drive the established programme, and several functions of the current programme will transfer to it, including administration of the Coal Tip Safety Grant Scheme, and the existing relationships and mechanisms which have developed during this time will continue to operate effectively. It is also our intention that the Authority is added as a Category 2 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act which will require them to cooperate and share information with Category 1 responders.

Welsh Governments Coal Extraction Position

As a Government we are keen to avoid adding to our mining legacy responsibilities and meet our climate change commitments. It is the established policy of the Welsh Government therefore to bring to a managed end the extraction and use of fossil fuels. Our coal policy statement issued 22 March 2021, and Planning Policy Wales, the national policy framework that guides planning decisions in Wales, strongly presume against the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels. Welsh Ministers do not intend to authorise new mining operation licences or variations to existing licences unless in wholly exceptional circumstances

The coal policy statement applies to all coal extraction, including any secondary coal products produced during mining operations. Therefore, coal extraction from disused tips, including where no licence from the MRA is required, is already captured by the policy (and the presumption against extraction).

Contaminated Land Legislation

In relation to the Committee's questions relating to contaminated land legislation, I can confirm that contaminated land in Wales is dealt with under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and implemented by Local Authorities and NRW. Currently, there are no plans to introduce further legislation to either replace or amend the existing regulatory regime.

Remediation of Contaminated Land the Polluter Pays Principle

Identifying, assessing risk and, where necessary, remediating sites impacted by contamination is the responsibility of local authorities as regulators under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The 'polluter pays' principle is usually applied where, after determining a site as 'contaminated land', the regulators attempt to identify those responsible for the pollution to remediate it. The Welsh Government has provided Statutory Guidance to help support local authorities, in their roles as regulators, in this process.

Natural Resources Wales' 2016 State of Contaminated Land Report reported that 71% of remediation projects taken forward by local authorities under Part 2A were paid for with funding from the Welsh Government's Contaminated Land Capital Fund. In terms of liability involving the original polluter, the Class A (polluter) appropriate person(s) has paid for remediation at 22% of appropriate sites whereas Class B (landowner) appropriate persons has paid for remediation at 1% of appropriate sites. In addition, of the two "Special Sites" dealt with by NRW from this, one was paid for by direct funding from the Welsh Government (provided to Natural Resources Wales) and the other by a Class A appropriate person.

Given the historical nature of the pollution at these sites (for example, lead contamination from lead smelting), the original polluter is often no longer in existence. This often means that responsibility for any remediation costs has defaulted either to the present landowner or more commonly the public purse.

Importantly the Natural Resource Wales' 2016 report also estimated that 5,506 sites impacted by historical contamination (commonly described as 'brownfield sites') were remediated through the planning regime between 2001 and 2013. Under this mechanism, developers are required to ensure the site is investigated, risk assessed and, if necessary, remediated often through conditions attached to planning consent to safeguard future end users.

Pollution from Historical Metal Mines

In addition to our coal mining legacy, we recognise that historical metal mining has also created pollution issues. Of 1,300 abandoned metal mines in Wales approximately 220 are estimated to be having a significant impact on water quality and the ecology of over 700 km of watercourses. Funded by Welsh Government, NRW and the MRA are working together to tackle this pollution and mitigate other hazards at these mines. We are actively working on 25 projects in the programme. These are at different stages of development and delivery, and some cover more than one mine site, where there are physical or hydraulic connections above or below ground.

Overall, these interventions at abandoned metal mines have delivered the improvement and protection of approximately 60km of watercourse. Approximately 1000m³ of contaminated mining waste material prevented from being mobilised by erosion across multiple sites with the risk of a catastrophic discharge from Cwm Rheidol has been minimised, reducing the risk of flooding, mobilisation of contaminated sediment and a serious pollution incident. Further works are planned in 2025 and 2026 to manage surface water and reduce erosion of contaminated waste materials at multiple sites including the maintenance and refurbishment of assets which were constructed 30 to 40 years ago and have degraded with time.

Engagement with local communities, landowners and stakeholders is an essential part of the programme to enable their involvement in the decision-making process. Face to face community events, circulation of newsletters, sharing of evidence, hosting site visits by interested parties, and local or national elected representatives have all proved valuable as the projects progress.

Thank you for writing to me on these important matters. I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs