



**Welsh Affairs
Committee**

Tuesday, 21 July 2026

**Stephen Kinnock MP
Secretary of State for Wales
Wales Office
London
SW1A 2AY**

Contaminated land and transparency with the public in Wales

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your predecessor's response to our correspondence on the environmental and economic legacy of Wales' industrial past.¹ On Wednesday 1 July we held a further one-off evidence session focused on the environmental impact of metal mines, the associated risks of metal mine pollution and, accordingly, wish to bring a number of concerns to your attention.

In areas where there is an industrial history, such as metal mines, there may be serious human and environmental consequences as a result of contamination.² We are concerned that across the UK there has been a failure to fully understand where contamination exists in the environment, such as in rivers and soil. As a result, people in Wales do not know the full extent of the risks to human health.³ Even where the potential risks posed by contamination, are known, there is insufficient accessible information to enable communities to make informed decisions and take appropriate steps to mitigate risks to human health, animals, livestock and food production. To assist us in our continued scrutiny of this matter, I would be grateful if in your response to this letter you could address the following questions:

Testing

Samantha Power, former U.S Ambassador to the United Nations and head of USAID, has said that you cannot "change what you cannot measure" and that countries with stretched finances should begin to address the problem of lead pollution arising from industrial legacy with testing.⁴ Although there has been a pilot testing programme in Leeds⁵, there is no long-term, UK wide coordinated approach from Government to test children for elevated levels of lead.⁶

¹ Welsh Affairs Committee, [Correspondence to the Secretary of State on the Environmental and economic legacy of Wales' industrial past](#), 20 April 2026 and [Correspondence from the Secretary of State for Wales](#), 19 June 2026

² [\(MMP0009\)](#) Dr Sartorius, [\(MMP0005\)](#) Mining Remediation Authority

³ [\(MMP0009\)](#) and [Q3](#)

⁴ Financial Times, [Untold: Toxic Legacy](#), 4 May 2026

⁵ The UKHSA, [UK's first citizen-led study on childhood lead exposure begins](#), November 2025

⁶ [Q11](#) and [Q14](#)



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1. Does the UK Government intend to establish a coordinated four-nation approach to testing children in areas with historical industry such as metal mines?

- **If so, please set out how you intend to work with Welsh Government to establish a standardised approach.**

Food produce

The World Health Organisation said that there is no level of lead which is considered safe.⁷ However, in the UK we heard that, approximately, only the equivalent of one supermarket shelf worth of produce is tested every year in the UK.⁸ This is despite there being concerns raised regarding levels of lead in cows, eggs and other produce. We heard that when these instances occur there is limited support for farmers and no further requirements from Government for farmers to stop selling the produce.⁹ Witnesses said that there is a reluctance from Government to engage with this problem and prevent items like toxic eggs from being sold in local farmers markets, for example.¹⁰

2. Why is such a small amount of food tested every year, and why for example, do we not have a standardised lead threshold for testing eggs?

3. What support can the UK Government offer to farmers if their food produce or livestock is at risk of contamination?

Transparency with the public

The public in Wales needs to be better informed about the risk from our industrial past so that they can make informed choices to protect their health. Communities living near these sites should not be left to manage their risk without support.

Although we appreciate that efforts have been made to put information into the public domain, there remains a challenge translating information from technical maps into an indication of risk from contamination and, subsequently, into relevant information that people can follow to mitigate and manage their risk.¹¹

4. Does the Government have any plans to undertake joint work with the Welsh Government to establish a thorough, but proportionate, communication strategy with these communities?

Remediation

⁷ World Health Organisation, [No safe level: act now to end lead exposure](#), 17 October 2025

⁸ [Q16](#) for example, in evidence we heard that it is estimated that around 33,000 products; 450 of them are tested for metals including lead and Financial Times, [Risk of lead contamination in UK food chain should be assessed, says senior scientist](#), July 2024

⁹ [Q16](#)

¹⁰ [Q16](#)

¹¹ For example, the Mining Remediation Authority provides public maps showing areas of former mining sites. Mining Remediation Authority, [MAP viewer: Terms and Conditions of Use](#), (accessed 14 June 2026)



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During our visit to west Wales on Monday 29 June we saw firsthand what good remediation work can look like in Cwmnewyddion Valley, Ammanford and Duffryn Rhondda.

However, we are concerned that open spoil tips in Wales, do not have 'interpretation panels' to communicate not only the history of the site but also the contemporary health and environmental risks. It is our view that all former sites with known contamination should be marked as a potentially hazardous.

We accept that there is no quick fix to remediation. Complicated projects to remediate contaminated land can span a number of parliaments and funding cycles. It is imperative that Governments, now and in the future, work to provide reliable and adequate long-term funding which allows the MRA, NRW and other relevant bodies such as Local Authorities, to complete their work.

Although we understand that Government(s) are under financial pressure, the priority of any government is the safety of its citizens. As it stands, the people in affected areas of Wales do not have sufficient support and information to make informed choices to mitigate the risks associated with contaminated land and lead poisoning.

We are dismayed that the legacy of metal mine pollution has been left unaddressed for so long. To begin to tackle the problem, in the first instance, a coordinated approach to testing, which is backed by adequate funding and communication with these communities, must be established. Although we are not prescriptive about who should finance this work, we are aware that some of these areas are devolved. However, we also appreciate that some of the contamination from historical industry pre-dates the devolution settlement. Therefore, the UK Government should liaise with the Welsh Government to deliver a targeted programme of testing without undue delay.

I would be grateful a full response to the issues we have raised by Monday 7 September 2026. If it is not the Government's intention to take forward our proposals, please could you provide an explanation of the reasoning behind the Government's policy approach in your response to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee