



**Welsh Affairs
Committee**

Friday, 7 February 2025

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

Rebecca Evans MS
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning
Welsh Government

Subject: Welsh Affairs Committee invites views from the Welsh Government on Wales' industrial past

Dear Cabinet Secretaries,

Shortly before Christmas, the Welsh Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into the environmental and economic legacy of Wales' industrial past.

We want to consider the impact that heavy industry has had on Wales, including the challenges and potential opportunities that coal tips and metal mines present. The inquiry will also examine how deindustrialisation has shaped the Welsh economy and what the implications may be for Wales' transition to green and digital economies.

The Committee would welcome written evidence from the Welsh Government as part of its inquiry, so we can reflect on the Welsh Government's experiences, including how it works with the UK Government to build on Wales' industrial legacy.

The Committee would be grateful for any evidence that the Welsh Government can provide before the call for evidence closes on 2 February 2025.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee



Ein cyf/Our ref RE/00051/25

Ruth Jones MP
Member of Parliament for Newport West and Islwyn
House of Commons

Ruth.jones.mp@parliament.uk

03 February 2025

Dear Ruth,

Thank you for your letter regarding Wales' industrial past and for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry.

The move from resource extraction (mining & quarrying) and processing/manufacture (copper, steel etc) has left many Welsh communities without the industries that spawned them. These communities have been left with some of the post-industrial issues (including pollution) associated with these industries. As time has gone on many of these problems have been addressed and the general environment is greener and healthier.

Metal mine pollution in Wales is a significant environmental concern, however, primarily due to the presence of approximately 1,300 abandoned metal mines across the country. These mines are a major source of metals such as cadmium, lead, zinc, and copper, which leak into rivers, streams and lakes, causing severe water pollution.

Elevated levels of these metals have been found to reduce fish populations and the diversity of invertebrate fauna, making it a high priority for national action to clean up Welsh rivers. The pollution from these abandoned mines is the principal cause of waterbodies in Wales failing to meet the European Water Framework Directive (WFD) regulations standards.

The Welsh Government, in collaboration with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Mine Remediation Authority (MRA), has established the Metal Mine Programme to address these issues.

The programme involves a rolling multi-year schedule of assessments and surveys to identify and quantify sources of pollution. Where feasible, it undertakes the design and implementation of intervention works, such as surface water and spoil management and mine water treatment schemes

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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.

The Programme is funded as part of the £40m package for water quality improvements between 2022 and 2025. The 22 local authorities in Wales also have a duty to identify contaminated land in their areas, including metal mines, and ensure it is managed appropriately.

Another consequence of Wales' mining past is the significant number of coal tips located across Wales, particularly concentrated in and around the south Wales coalfield. There are currently 2,573 recorded coal tips in Wales, which have been identified, mapped and categorised, and the locations of these tips are available on the Welsh Government's website at: [Find disused coal tips | GOV.WALES](#).

A high priority for the Welsh Government is to ensure our coal tip communities are safe, both now and in the future, and that is why we have invested more than £100m in coal tip safety in this Senedd term. Furthermore, on 9 December the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs introduced modern legislation to the Senedd. The Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Bill is currently going through Stage 1 scrutiny and is the first of its kind in the UK - to prevent disused coal and non-coal tips from being a threat to human life. If passed, the new legislation will establish a new public body that has functions in relation to the assessment, registration, monitoring and management of disused tips. The new public body will be established in April 2027.

Meanwhile, disused coal tips are now being monitored and maintained significantly more than before the landslide in Tylorstown in February 2020. The Welsh Government has commissioned the MRA to undertake ongoing inspections until the new statutory regime is in place. This includes all category D tips being inspected twice a year and category C tips being inspected once a year. We also continue to work with partners across Wales to inspect sites, including additional checks during extreme weather events such as the recent Storms Bert and Darragh. More than 2,200 inspections of disused coal tips have now been completed since 2020.

I welcome the £25 million allocation for coal tip safety included in the Chancellor's recent Autumn Budget, and we will of course continue our discussions on funding needs with the UK Government in future rounds of the spending review.

At the present time, our primary focus is to ensure that disused tips are safe and to deliver a modernised, fit-for-purpose regulatory regime. Once the Bill has been implemented, it will then be important to focus on developing resource capacity and capability as well as developing a more detailed strategic approach to mining and industrial legacy in Wales.

With its abundant natural resources and people looking for economic opportunities, Wales is well placed to be an exemplar of transition to new green industries. Wales' abundant natural resources provide opportunities for renewable energy, especially hydro power, wind energy and solar energy. There is a potential economic ecosystem of businesses that could provide economic growth and job opportunities in these areas - from design, manufacture, maintenance and repair through to decommissioning and recycling.

Key opportunities to enable Wales to fully engage with this economic transition include training of the workforce for the jobs of the future and mobility of the workforce (with appropriate transport infrastructure). Its potential will be influenced by the strategic approach of Welsh Ministers and public sector bodies as well as readiness of the private sector to invest.

Wales' economy of the future will include the adoption of new technologies, including those that reduce carbon emissions. This includes digital infrastructure, renewable energy, low emission vehicles etc. The opportunities are enormous and with co-operation across sectors and the wider economy Wales is well placed to transition to a green economy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Evans AS/MS

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio