



Ein cyf/Our ref WQ83784/83785/83786

Huw Irranca-Davies MS  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Huw.Irranca-Davies@senedd.wales](mailto:Huw.Irranca-Davies@senedd.wales)

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Dear Huw,

I am writing in response to your written questions:

- WQ83784; What investment is being made in the water and sewer system in Wales to avoid discharge of sewage and foul water into rivers and coastal areas?
- WQ 83785; What progress has been made on the implementation of sustainable drainage systems in a) Ogmere and b) Wales?
- WQ83786: What further measures will Welsh Government take to avoid the discharge of sewage and foul water into rivers and coastal areas? WQ83786.

Wales has the best bathing water quality in the UK - all of our designated bathing waters meet the environmental standards, and the vast majority exceed them.

Between 2020 and 2025 Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water are investing £101 million to upgrade their wastewater management network to reduce discharges into waterways as part of a wider investment package of £765 million to protect the environment. Hafren Dyfrdwy will invest almost £17m on waste and environmental improvements including £7.6m on improving river water quality, and £3.3m on waste network and treatment works enhancements.

This includes investing over £40m in the Storm Overflow Assessment Framework (SOAF) which will prioritise wastewater assets for improvement, to reduce both the number and volume of storm water discharges to the environment. This will improve both watercourse amenity value and water quality overall. NRW will help ensure this investment is targeted appropriately so that the framework aligns with the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources principles, as set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

There are tight regulatory controls over the number and volume of discharges from Combined Storm Overflows (CSOs) located near coastal bathing waters. They are only permitted to discharge when the sewer network has reached capacity due to heavy rainfall and where there is a risk of sewage backing up into properties.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Julie.James@gov.Wales](mailto:Correspondence.Julie.James@gov.Wales)

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.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) have identified and reduced the spill frequency of all storm overflows which could affect designated bathing water sites.

The Welsh Government collaborated with the water industry, regulators and UK and devolved Governments via the 21st Century Drainage Programme, to improve long-term planning for drainage and wastewater management. The programme secured agreement on a framework for Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMPs), which includes technical guidance, evidence gathering and collaboration. This will form the basis for DWMPs being put on a statutory footing in Wales.

As a first step, water companies in Wales are preparing DWMPs on a non-statutory basis. These will be published for public consultation in 2022. They will help identify where investment should be prioritised from 2025, and the best method to do this.

The Programme for Government commits us to improving inland waters and strengthening river water quality monitoring. We need to consider all pressures on our waters and are adopting a collaborative multi-sector approach to secure sustainable solutions which deliver not only the water quality improvements we need but also positive outcomes on biodiversity, net zero and climate adaptation.

It also contains a commitment to legislate to strengthen the requirements for the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) that provide wildlife habitat.

The most recent data on SuDS applications supplied by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) accounts for the period of 7 January 2019 to 6 January 2020. For the Neath Port Talbot area in which Ogmore is located, 8 applications were approved out of a total of 222 approvals for the whole of Wales.

The National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales reiterates our commitment to commence a review of the effectiveness of the SuDS legislation before the end of this year, and we have begun work internally towards delivering this. The WLGA has also undertaken a review of how the SuDS regime is being implemented, from the point of view of the Local Authorities, and its recommendations will be considered as part of our own. I would be happy to share the findings of the Welsh Government review once completed.

We are supporting the WLGA to deliver a pilot scheme with Local Authorities to improve the integration of the planning and SuDS approval processes. We continue to work with all Local Authorities, stakeholders and partners to deliver a consistent approach to the SuDS regime drawing on emerging good practice.

Yours sincerely



**Julie James AS/MS**

Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd  
Minister for Climate Change