



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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Chris Franks AM
National Assembly for Wales
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Dear Chris

During the First Minister's question time on 23rd September you mentioned flooding in South Wales areas and I undertook to respond to you on that.

The recent flooding was similar to last summer's events and was caused by intense rainfall resulting in localised flooding of properties across South Wales. Given the nature of these events and the rapid onset of flooding, it is not possible to warn everyone of the impending flood. However it is possible to improve our preparedness for such events. I understand from feedback received from the operating authorities that the work undertaken following last summer's floods did help in improving our preparedness for this more recent flooding event in Barry.

The pilot study that the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, Jane Davidson AM, commissioned into last summer's flooding in Barry aimed at improving our response to future events. It involved a detailed assessment carried out in conjunction with all of the relevant operating authorities of the flooding problems and existing drainage systems which serve the Coldbrook catchment. The result has been a much better understanding of local drainage issues and this has been shared with the representatives of the local community sitting on the study group. I understand that the close engagement with the local public has resulted in valuable contributions to the development of local improvements. My officials will be using the experience from this exercise to inform improvements in the way we manage such risks across Wales in the future.

As a result of these investigations, a range of specific improvements have been carried out within the catchment. Robust maintenance regimes for the existing watercourses and culverts have been established, blockages in the systems have been identified and removed and entrance conditions to sections of the culvert have been improved. Improvements have also been made to potential overland flood routes, ensuring that under extreme events such floodwaters are directed away from property where possible.

The next stage of the project will be to identify other areas for improvements focussing particularly on those actions such as improved resilience and awareness.

While these works have improved the capacity and efficiency of existing systems, flooding will never be completely eliminated within the catchment. Unfortunately this is the inevitable consequence of carrying out development in flood risk areas. It is possible however to improve our preparation for such events and I understand that preparations were put in place ahead of the flooding which assisted in reducing potential impacts. Operational staff were made aware of the flood risk and put on standby, watercourses were inspected and debris cleared from vulnerable areas. Sandbags were made available and assistance was provided where appropriate. While further improvements can still be made I understand that the response to the recent flooding was better informed, planned and co-ordinated and that our existing drainage systems, particularly in the Barry area, operated more effectively than last summer.

In the light of the recent floods I understand that the local authority plan to review its flooding priorities in the near future and I am sure that this review will take account of the lessons they have learnt from the study at Barry. The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to support local authorities across Wales to address such flooding problems.

You will be aware of Sir Michael Pitt's review of last summer's floods, which was published during the summer. My officials are currently considering the implications of this review to Wales and Jane Davidson plans to write to all Assembly Members in late November indicating how the findings of the review will be implemented in Wales.

To date, no approaches have been made to the Welsh Assembly Government from any local authority seeking financial aid arising from the recent flooding.

I hope this is helpful.

