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Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/00065/22

Elinor Weekley
Director
Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW)

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27 January 2022

Dear Elinor,

Thank you for your letter of 6 January regarding your concerns over the delay of new developments in certain Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) catchments and the urgency to find solutions.

I am very concerned that many of Wales' riverine SACs fail to meet the revised phosphorus (P) targets adopted by NRW last year. Resilient SAC rivers are essential for enhancing Wales' biodiversity, enabling more recreational use and securing wider benefits to society and our economy, including building more affordable housing.

The causes are complex and no single measure will solve the issue. Natural Resource Wales' (NRW) initial assessment of P levels in our river SACs indicates that the reason for waterbodies failing P targets are from a diverse range of sources. Reductions in nutrients entering the rivers need to be sought in a wide range of sectors across the catchment.

My officials are driving this cross-sectoral approach forward via the work of the SAC Rivers Oversight Group, which is chaired by the Deputy Director of Water, Flood and Coal Tip Safety. The Group has representatives from all relevant sectors in Wales and will provide strategic direction to expedite a number of key areas. This includes looking at the feasibility of shorter-term solutions, such as chemical dosing, to relieve the pause on certain developments in certain river SAC catchments.

NRW has set up a project board to investigate and tackle phosphorus pollution. Dealing with the issue is part of their Corporate Plan for 2021-22. The Welsh Government is funding Habitats Regulation Assessment training for local authority officers and this is another element of the management solution. Officials are currently undertaking the tendering process.

NRW is calibrating and quality assuring Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's modelling data, which apportions sources to pollutants on a sub-catchment level. This will help determine a plan of action, specific to each failing SAC catchment. The non-technical report for the River Wye is

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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.

expected to be completed within the next few weeks. The report for the Afon Teifi and the other four failing SAC rivers will also be released shortly.

Nutrient Management Boards will be key in driving local catchment based solutions. I understand that NRW recently met with representatives from each of the Nutrient Management Boards (Cleddau, Dee, Teifi and Usk) in an attempt to finalise their governance arrangements. NRW is already a member of the Wye Nutrient Management Board and representatives from their Mid-Wales team attend on a regular basis. NRW officials have also been holding regular meetings with the Senior Specialist Water Quality Advisor at Natural England to share information regarding approaches to the issue.

Ultimately, there needs to be a fair balance between our economic goals and the environment upon which they depend. We need to act decisively to tackle the climate and nature emergency so that people can go on treasuring Wales' rich natural resources for generations to come. I will continue to work with all stakeholders to develop solutions to this complex issue.

Yours sincerely,



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