# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Riparian Ownership: Maintaining Watercourses** |
| **DATE** | **07 February 2024** |
| **BY** | **Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change** |

Our [National Flood Strategy](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/the-national-strategy-for-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-in-wales.pdf) highlights that across Wales, more than 245,000 properties are at risk of flooding on an ongoing basis from rivers, the sea and surface water. As our climate changes, we can expect the frequency and severity of flooding to increase, along with the threat of river erosion.

It isn’t possible to prevent all flooding, but we can, and are, taking steps to build more resilient communities across Wales. We are working closely with our risk management authorities, such as local authorities and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to progress and deliver our Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) programme. This financial year alone we allocated a record £75m to the programme – the highest spend in a single year to date.

Effective flood risk management requires collaboration between public authorities and private landowners. Risk management authorities only have permissive powers relating to the management of flooding; they do not have powers to intervene when river erosion occurs – this is the responsibility of the riparian landowner. To help us collectively build the greatest flood resilience, riparian landowners have a vital role to play.

Anyone who owns land or property, which either contains or is next to a river, stream or ditch is a riparian landowner. The principals of riparian ownership have been established in common law for more than 200 years, but recent discussions around flood risk management in the Senedd suggests many landowners are unaware of their responsibilities.

NRW has produced a [guidance document](https://naturalresources.wales/media/680422/living-on-the-edge-final-jan-2017.pdf) which explains to landowners how riparian ownership works, and how it might affect them.

I strongly encourage Members to share NRW’s guidance with constituents so riparian landowners are fully informed about their role in managing flood risk. This will help to improve our collective resilience to flooding by ensuring our watercourses and their associated assets are maintained to the best possible condition.