# WRITTEN STATEMENT

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# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Flood Impacts following Storm Kathleen** |
| **DATE**  | **17 April 2024** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs** |

On 6 April, Storm Kathleen arrived in Wales bringing strong winds and heavy rainfall, coinciding with spring tides. The stormy conditions particularly affected western and northern parts of Wales, including along the coast. During peak impact on 9 April, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) issued several flood warnings for Llanfairfechan, Penrhyn Bay, Llanddulas, Kinmel Bay Promenade and Sandy Cove, Prestatyn Beach Road, Ffynnongroyw Frontage and the community of Ffynnongroyw.

I know the impacts of flooding can be devastating – on homes, livelihoods and lives – and my sympathies go out to all those affected by the recent flood events following Storm Kathleen. The full detail of impacts on communities in Wales is still emerging and officials are in contact with local authorities across Wales, as is usual after such events. As of Tuesday 16 April, current indications from local authorities suggest 35 properties (**33** **residential** and **2** **businesses)** have experienced internal flooding across Conwy (20), Ceredigion (8) and Torfaen (7). Officials will continue to receive further information in the coming days and weeks.

Nevertheless, although several locations reached flood warning levels, our existing network of flood defences prevented flooding in many areas. For example 73,000 properties across Wales benefit from NRW’s flood defences on an ongoing basis. Our existing forward work programme is also targeting those areas affected last week. I am grateful to colleagues in NRW, local authorities, emergency services and many others for their efforts over the last week to minimise the impacts on communities where possible. Officials and NRW have also been working very closely with Local Resilience Forums.

This winter season yet again demonstrates that with the changing climate, we face more extreme weather events on a regular basis. I echo the points made by my predecessor the Minister for Climate Change; we know it is impossible to stop or prevent all flooding, but we can and are indeed taking steps to reduce the consequences and help to create more resilience across Wales. I am pleased that in 2024-25, despite immense pressure on the public purse, Welsh Government is maintaining record levels of funding for flood risk management, and we have again allocated £75m in Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) in Wales. We have also made over £5M from our main capital investment programme, and over £800k from our Small-Scale Works Grant available to support schemes in Conwy, Flintshire, Denbighshire County Council’s and Cynor Gwynedd, reducing risk to more than 2000 properties.

We will also be investing £14.1m in Kinmel Bay, Conwy, £3.4m in Barmouth Viaduct Gardens, Gwynedd and £3.4m in Llandudno, Conwy through our Coastal Risk Management Programme (CRMP). Notably, these are all areas that were affected following Storm Kathleen. Once completed, the CRMP programme will have funded 15 schemes across Wales worth £240m, benefitting almost 14000 properties.

Our FCERM programme also recognises the crucial role that nature-based solutions will play in alleviating flooding in the future. Following a successful pilot scheme, the Natural Flood Management (NFM) Accelerator Programme was launched in October 2023 and will see a further £4.6m invested in nature-based solutions throughout Wales. The programme demonstrates our commitment to working with Welsh farmers, landowners, and third sector organisations throughout Wales. It will work with natural process to improve our natural environment, increase the amount of wetland and woodland habitats, and reduce flood risk to up to 2,000 properties. It will fund 23 projects spread across 8 different Authority areas.

We have made significant progress championing NFM interventions across Wales. From works undertake in the Dwyran, Isle of Anglesey, which has developed a wet/dry nature reserve which will increase storage capacity and support better drainage to reduce risk of flooding to properties. To works in Knighton, Powys which is an exemplar collaborative NFM pilot scheme, working with landowners to identify methods of NFM suitable for their land. The scheme has seen the planting of 11,850 young trees planted as riparian woodland and to create new hedges to intercept water flow from the hills to the river Teme and its tributaries. Over 10.8 kilometres of streams and brooks have had 250 leaky dams constructed 14 ponds, scrapes and bunds to store water.

Additionally, the Wnion catchment scheme in Gwynedd is an excellent example of collaboration between Snowdonia National Park Authority and with Cynor Gwynedd (Gwynedd Council). This project demonstrates how sustainable land management actions such as planting trees, restoring wetlands and peatlands, planting, bank stabilization and restoring rivers, all contribute to reducing the risk of flooding to properties within the Wnion catchment in the villages of Rhydymain and the town of Dolgellau.

We continue to engage and promote NFM with RMA’s, and there are currently schemes within the development stages that include NFM within traditional engineering solutions, such as Lower Priory – Havens Head in Pembrokeshire, Gwyrfai catchment in Gwynydd and Peat Bog restoration and attenuation ponds in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

We must all continue to be ready to deal with more frequent and severe flood events. Preparedness is critical. NRW has practical guidance on what to do [**before, during and after a flood**](https://naturalresources.wales/flooding?lang=en) which has been shared with Members following previous named storms this winter season. I urge everyone to make use of this support.