# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Update on flooding events and the performance of defences**  |
| **DATE**  | **05 November 2019** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs** |

This Written Statement provides an update on the recent flooding and outlines how this Government’s ongoing investment has ensured we remain resilient to flood events. It also considers the long-term implications of climate change on Welsh communities.

During the last month, we have witnessed consistent heavy rain and high spring tides. Throughout the period, our river and coastal assets have performed as expected and helped to prevent thousands of properties from flooding.

I greatly sympathise with people who were unfortunately affected. Local Authorities reported flooding to properties in Bridgend, Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Vale of Glamorgan, and more recently in Powys and Monmouthshire. However, numbers were low and not related to any failure of our network of defences.

My thanks go to the hard work of officers in our Local Authorities, the emergency services and Natural Resources Wales, who were working in atrocious conditions, ensuring those defences did their job and helping residents who were affected.

Flood and coastal risk management remains a priority, with over £350 million being invested over the life of this Government. It also demonstrates we are taking the appropriate measures in response to the on-going threat of flooding and climate change.

When our planning, response and recovery capabilities are tested following flooding events, it is vital we look at what went well and what lessons can be learned to improve. The following examples demonstrate where our investment in flood alleviation has made a real difference:

* The St Asaph scheme, opened in 2018, continues to perform well in response to the recent high rainfall events.
* Conwy County Borough Council’s new remote monitoring systems have enabled their officers to identify blockages and potential issues then act quickly to prevent flooding from the watercourses to nearby homes.
* During the recent high tide events, Newport Council effected the road closure at Caerleon to enable NRW to erect their new temporary defences, which had previously only been tested for exercises.  The defence performed well and protected properties as water levels reached the road through the town.

Whilst such reports alongside our continued investment give reason for optimism we cannot afford to be complacent. Climate change will bring more intense storms and greater risk of tidal surges combined with rising seas. However, it will not only be coastal areas at heightened risk but all of our communities, with an increased chance of flash flooding from surface water and rivers.

There are a number of communities where difficult decisions need to be made.  Such conversations need to be led at a local level, with the involvement of residents and businesses. The Welsh Government has been supporting our Local Authorities by providing funding for flood alleviation and adaptation, alongside research to help understand the impacts of climate change and how communities can be supported now and in the future.

I will shortly publish new research, exploring the issues facing Fairbourne, a community facing up to climate change and helping shape their own future. This will accompany Gwynedd’s own plan, supported by our Flood programme, [Fairbourne: A Framework for the Future](http://fairbourne.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Fairbourne-AFrameworkfortheFuture.pdf) which was published on 10 October.

Climate Change is at the forefront of my agenda and I fully acknowledge how flooding and coastal erosion are two of the most direct consequences of sea level rise and increasing storm intensity, not only on wellbeing but wider economic, environmental and social factors. Our emphasis will remain on those communities directly affected by all types of flooding which carry a risk to life.

Work is continuing across Government and later this year I will publish our new climate change adaptation plan, ***Prosperity for All: A Climate Conscious Wales***. The plan will set out how we are preparing for the risks from climate change across all sectors, including our commitments to support our communities, recognising how the effects of flooding and climate change have wider implications across all of our portfolios.