

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
29 Madoc Street
Llandudno
LL30 2TL

16 February 2021

Dear Janet,

RE: NRW & the dredging of River Conwy

Thank you for your letter of the 9th February 2021 raising the issue of dredging of the river Conwy.

We have recently seen a number of large events on the river Conwy where flood warnings have been issued. Existing flood risk measures including the Conwy Valley flood alleviations scheme has continued to perform well in protecting people and property from flooding from the main river Conwy and we continue to work successfully with the National Trust to develop the Uwch Conwy project promoting the sustainable management of rivers by encouraging the retention and restoration of natural processes wherever possible.

Dredging deepens and widens watercourses beyond their natural state. This is potentially environmentally damaging and may be in breach of environmental legislation without necessary mitigation measures in place. It may not necessarily increase the capability of a watercourse to convey flows or reduce flood risk and it can also be counterproductive by reducing the river energy and slowing the river flow this can lead to increased sediment accumulation, creating an unsustainable management requirement. Dredged rivers will naturally accumulate sediments as the river returns to its natural equilibrium and therefore is generally an unsustainable management practice.

This is very evident in locations such as around the Pont Fawr bridge in Llanrwst where gravel was removed in 2016 in response to the impact it was having on the instrumentation supporting the flood warning service in the Conwy Valley. Since then we have seen a gradual return of gravel and we are monitoring the impact this is having again on our instrumentation in this location. We will take a decision in early spring as to whether gravel management works are required here.

If it is decided that we need to proceed with this work, we will need to secure funding and the required permissions/exemptions to carry any works involving the removal and/or reuse of any gravel in the river. Work such as this would take place between April and October and would be dependent on weather and river conditions.

In your letter you have asked us to set out our justification process for not dredging the river Conwy. Given that we have seen some significant named storm events resulting in record river

levels but with no reports of flooding of property from the Conwy, we cannot justify using our limited resources in determining the impact of widespread dredging, particularly as funding of our maintenance programme is based on its impact on flooding to people and property. All of our flood risk management activities must be prioritised and justified technically, environmentally and economically and we will continue to respond to increased flood risk on a site-specific basis using specialist knowledge and evidence of how each river might respond to sediment removal, to ensure the most efficient use of resource.

The Conwy Ganol Advisory Group (on the Internal Drainage District) meet twice a year – usually December and May unless the Group requests additional meetings. The group has 13 members. The last meeting was held on 5th Dec 2019. There were not any direct face to face meetings in 2020, due to the Covid Crisis. The programme of work did continue. Discussions have been held since with some landowners and Farmers Unions informing of any issues/concerns. These includes, Bank erosion following floods, scours, trees restricting flows etc.

I trust this provides the update you are looking for on these issues but please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours Sincerely



Siân Williams

**Pennaeth Gweithrediadau y Gogledd Orllewin /
Head of Operations North West**