

Mr David J Rowlands
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

By email: SeneddPetitions@Assembly.Wales

21 June 2018

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 4 June 2018 about our Roath Flood Scheme in Cardiff and the petition to save trees and ground in Roath Brook Gardens and Roath Mill Gardens, as further discussed by the Petitions Committee on 15 May 2018.

I appreciate you sharing the Roath Brook Trees campaign group's latest letter with me. We continue to have productive discussions with the group to find a way forward during the agreed pause, whilst also continuing to receive correspondence from residents who wish us to progress and implement this scheme. We intend to engage, in July, with the property owners who would benefit from the Phase 3 works.

As an update of our discussions with the campaign group, we have received the campaign group's hydrologist's initial report and upon review we found there was an error in the consultant's flow calculation. Having amended this their consultant's work is within the tolerance of such a hydrological assessment compared against ours. Therefore, we remain confident that our original flow data is accurate.

We believe this helps verify that the flood risk is real and that our intervention to reduce it is necessary. The campaign group is currently seeking their hydrologist's advice on whether this tolerance is acceptable to them or whether they believed that reviewing the hydrological assessment further is warranted. We mirror the group's hope that both parties pay due regard to other professionals' opinions.

The campaign group is also reviewing our options appraisal. We welcome scrutiny of the options process and believe the group has contacted Dwr Cymru Welsh Water regarding

Llanishen Reservoir and Cardiff Council regarding Roath Park Lake, both upstream storage options we discounted for what we consider to be valid reasons in our appraisal.

Raising or lowering the water level in Roath Park Lake presents many challenges. We discussed the option with Cadw and Cardiff Council during the appraisal and the following issues were identified to conclude that the option was strongly not preferred. Works would be required to the dam embankment and/or the offtake weir and spillway, which are Listed structures, so consent may not be granted.

The Lake itself is within a Conservation Area and is Grade I listed, and changing water levels would alter its appearance, potentially by an unacceptable degree. The Lake also provides high amenity value for Cardiff residents and visitors, whose use, and enjoyment would be affected by varying water levels. Changing the water level would also affect the entire shoreline of the lake, with possible bank stability issues in some locations and impacts to trees. We recognise that many of these impacts apply to the Park Gardens, but alongside the environmental implications, one must also consider the technical viability, residual flood risk across the scheme, operational requirements, costs and risks. Our option, in our view, is the most viable.

The campaign group has informed us that they require an extension to the agreed pause timeline, which we are currently discussing with them.

We have provided the group with updated ecological surveys we have recently undertaken in Roath Brook Gardens. These surveys support our previous surveys and assessments, and the campaign group's independent water vole survey, regarding the habitat and species present.

I trust the above provides you with an update on the current position.

In relation to the points raised by the campaign group repeat below in italics, we make the following comments:

- 1) *"We accept that NRW are planting 200 saplings at Roath Park. However, their broad generalisation that the removal of up to 38 mature trees is made up for by the planting of 200 saplings in Roath Recreation Ground only evidences once more NRW's failure to recognise the genuine concerns of residents."*

We do not believe that planting 200 saplings in Roath Recreation Ground makes up for removing trees from the Park Gardens. We recognise the benefits trees provide, especially in an urban environment, and considered this in our appraisal and design. We have tried throughout the project to avoid and then minimise tree loss. Where loss does occur, we are replanting replacement trees at the specific location in a high quality bespoke designed arboricultural scheme.

- 2) *"The campaign group did not request that the flood risk be recalculated by itself (as suggested in NRW's response 1)"*

Our response is valid as we were responding to the Committee's question "Your response to the petitioners' proposal that the current risk of flooding should be recalculated following the completion of Phase 1 and 2 works".

Regarding recalculating the Roath community's position on the Communities at Risk Register, after other parts of the project have been completed, we are discussing this with the campaign group. However, as explained in our reply to your question 4 of 9 March 2018, flood risk prioritisation and investment is not solely or simplistically based on the Communities at Risk Register.

The entire Roath project and all of its constituent parts remain fully justified based on the appraisal study undertaken and the detailed business case produced. We maintain the position that the project continues as a single scheme due to the flood risk throughout the area.

It is not acceptable, in our view, to have one part of the community protected to a lower standard of protection compared to the rest, when we consider that flood risk to be unacceptable. Any other approach would in our view be divisive to the community, when we aim to make Roath a cohesive community through a common level of protection to flood risk.

- 3) *"We continue to believe that the option appraisal process was entirely flawed as, whilst it assessed the benefits, costs, impact and risks of each option it completely failed to take into account the environmental impact and cost of the option chosen."*

Our options appraisal did consider the environmental impact of each option and this is recorded in our appraisal and the environmental impact assessment. A variety of both quantitative and qualitative assessment tools exist, including the iTree methodology, but we believe that our environmental impact assessment and arboricultural impact assessment adequately incorporate this issue to the appraisal and subsequent scheme design.

- 4) *"NRW have been asked on numerous occasions through formal FOI requests to set out, by reference to their "Key Consultation Events" the actual flood risk communicated to the public at those events. NRW have repeatedly refused the request to do so. It is submitted by the Campaign Group that this is because of the vague unspecified nature in which the risk was presented."*

We believe we have answered the campaign group's Freedom of Information requests as best we can with the data we hold. It is unfortunate we cannot reply to their requests in the detail they desire, this is not a refusal but an inability to do so from the records we hold. We believe that the information we have provided demonstrates the extensive and lengthy consultation we undertook when developing the scheme, with different levels of flood risk clearly presented across areas of the community.

- 5) *“Whilst NRW have accepted an error existed in some materials between October 2016 and March 2017 the extent of such an error has still not been acknowledged, despite numerous requests. By way of example the campaign group have recently discovered that a letter written to a significant number of local residents on behalf of NRW in September 2016 also contained a similar error about the extent of the flood risk.”*

We have acknowledged the extent of the error in consultation material that we are aware of and have provided evidence of how and when the error arose. We would welcome details, from the group, of the letter on behalf of NRW to which they refer.

It is important to reiterate that for several years prior to September 2016 the data in the consultation was correct, including the information that went through the planning process and received planning consent.

- 6) *“NRW have also accepted that at no time did they ever communicate the discrete flood risk relating to Phase 3 works (on which they now rely at section 1 of their letter) to residents.”*

We have not accepted “that at no time did we ever communicate the discrete flood risk relating to Phase 3 works” as claimed by the campaign group. We strongly oppose this statement, as we have explicitly communicated this risk to residents via the flood risk map. We have advised the campaign group of this in our FoI request response. This is demonstrated in various consultation materials, such as the Roath project webpage

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/flood-scheme-projects/roath-flood-risk-management-scheme/?lang=en>

at the May 2014 drop in event, as demonstrated in the subsequent newsletter

<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/680965/roath-flood-scheme-news-issue-2-june-2014.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=131552110950000000>

at the October 2014 drop in event and the subsequent newsletter

<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/679494/roath-newsletter-october-english.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=131499382550000000>

and at the July 2015 consultation event

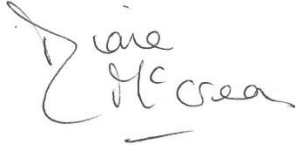
https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/679202/july-2015_public-consultation-posters_english-and-welsh.pdf

Despite the flood risk remaining as ‘medium’ for some properties, there remains a tangible reduction in flood risk from the scheme, irrespective of the flood risk banding (which are relatively broad).

In summary we believe there is an unacceptable flood risk to those properties in Alma Road and Cressy Road. Our option, although not without any impact, presents the most viable solution. We do recognise the concerns that the campaign group have but believe that we have been through a thorough and comprehensive process to find a solution that protects people and property and at the same time reduces to a minimum the impact on the environment.

I hope that these responses give you the answers you were seeking. We would of course be happy to answer any further questions.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane McCrea". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Diane McCrea MBE
Cadeirydd, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Chair, Natural Resources Wales