# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Wastewater Monitoring in Wales** |
| **DATE** | **03 November 2023** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Wastewater monitoring for COVID-19 provided valuable intelligence because it can measure levels of SARS-Cov2 in our communities. The programme was delivered through a successful partnership with a consortium led by Bangor University.

Earlier this year I made the difficult decision to halt the wastewater monitoring programme because of the impact of tough financial pressures on the Welsh Government budget. In making this decision I remained committed to continuing work on the future utility of wastewater monitoring for SARS-CoV2, alongside other hazards that could impact on the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales.

Our integrated surveillance system is a critical element of our public health respiratory framework, which includes monitoring respiratory viruses in hospitals and other healthcare settings. My officials have been working closely with Bangor University and Cardiff University to understand how wastewater monitoring could add value to our integrated surveillance system at a revised scale. The data from wastewater monitoring can potentially provide us with an early indication of changes in circulating SARS-CoV2 as we prepare and plan for an uncertain winter.

I have agreed a proposal that will resume wastewater monitoring in Wales. It will provide additional intelligence and surveillance on COVID-19 transmission in our communities as well as levels of other viruses like Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus.

Our new approach still delivers significant financial savings, and reflects how we have begun to live with COVID-19 by maintaining an appropriate level of surveillance to detect and monitor the virus in the community, enabling us to intervene in a timely and evidence informed way.

I am grateful to both Bangor University and Cardiff University for working constructively with us in the development of this revised approach. I am pleased that we can continue to support this initiative over the winter and into next year.