# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Independent Commission and Review of the Water Sector** |
| **DATE**  | **24 October 2024** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister & Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs** |

I am pleased to inform the Senedd that, in collaboration with the UK Government Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, I have yesterday jointly launched an Independent Commission to review the water sector and its regulation. This will be the largest review of the industry since privatisation and will consider policy and regulation in the water sector on both sides of the border.

This vital review couldn’t come at a more urgent time for our water environment and water industry. It is a great example of the fresh approach of our two governments to cross-border cooperation on an issue which affects us all as consumers, investors and as stewards of the natural world. Our rivers and waterways cross borders, and water is a complex and highly sensitive aspect of the devolution settlement in Wales, which needs to be considered when developing future arrangements.

Former Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, Jon Cunliffe, will chair the Commission. The Commission will draw upon a panel of experts from across the regulatory, environment, health, engineering, customer, investor and economic sectors, as well as extensive public consultation. The Commission will report back next year with recommendations to the Government on how to tackle issues in the water sector to restore our rivers, lakes and seas to good health, meet the challenges of the future and drive green economic growth. The Commission’s recommendations will form the basis of further legislation to attract long-term investment and clean up our waters for good.

 We have clear priorities for reform and a shared sense of the work that will be needed across both countries’ policy and regulatory regimes to make this change happen. There will need to be a consensus for action, and this includes where distinctive solutions are needed in Wales and in England to deliver a reset and secure a resilient water sector and framework that will work for the long term. The Commission will consider the unique situation of the industry and policy approach in Wales and will include a dedicated representative of the sector in Wales and seek the views of Wales’ experts to ensure the Welsh perspective is considered at the highest level.

This crucial work will complement the wide range of work on water quality that is already underway in other areas, including the reviews of the Control of Agricultural Pollution regulations and of spreading of organic materials to land. I look forward to receiving the Commission’s report and to our continued collaboration with our counterparts in England on this vital issue.