

# **Save Dinas Powys Woods AND Protect Homes from Flooding**

**BRIEFING – DECEMBER 2019**

*Save Dinas Powys Woods and Protect Homes from Flooding* is a campaign to protect ancient woodland on the edge of Dinas Powys in Wales. It is supported by a majority of the local population including the Community Councils, and many followers in South East Wales.

The woods are threatened by a proposal in 2017 by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to build a Dam measuring 3.5 to 4.5 metres high, and 120 metres long across a wooded field and the Cadoxton Brook, to address a perceived one in one hundred year risk of flooding to property in Dinas Powys.

The project would see the extraction of 21,000m<sup>3</sup> of earth from a local borrow pit, and 181m<sup>3</sup> of concrete and 880m<sup>2</sup> of asphalt and grasscrete imported – with associated approach roads, metal grilles, engineering and monitoring infrastructure, enclosed in high fencing. The natural riverbed will be transformed into a concrete culvert. It will damage the ecology and amenity of a much-loved natural area which enjoys thousands of visits per year. It is disproportionate to the actual flood risk, and there are alternatives.

We respect the need to protect local property and recognise that climate change will bring unwelcome consequences which need to be managed. This briefing note sets out our serious concerns about the proposal, and our suggestions for securing a more appropriate, sustainable and creative solution.



## **We are calling upon Welsh Government to:**

- Halt the current Options Appraisal, which relies overly on outmoded concrete engineering.
- Commit to gathering more meaningful data, using monitoring points through the Cadoxton's flow from its tributaries to Dinas Powys Moors.
- Clear obvious obstructions to flow, including bridge structures at Cross Common Road and Bryn-y-Don.
- Undertake a programme of Natural Flood Management in the Wrinstone and Bullcroft catchments (eg tree plantings, leaky dams) for up to five years.
- Then reappraise the flood risk and draw up plans that are based on actual evidence, locally acceptable, and appropriate to the site.

>>Over

# OUR POSITION

- **The construction of a Dam in a Specially Protected Area will impact the ecology and amenity of the area.**
  - It will permanently destroy ancient woodland in contravention of Welsh Government policy, and affect a larger area of woodland, including many ‘veteran’ trees. Most of the affected area is owned by the Woodland Trust.
  - It will impact invertebrate, fish and mammal populations, including the highly endangered dormouse.
  - It will reduce public access to the site.
  - Proposed mitigation will never replace the site’s ecology and environment.
  - It will impair Woodland Trust Wales’ income.
- **The original premise of the Project has changed.** It was originally scoped across the full catchment of the Cadoxton, from Michaelston le Pit to its outfall in Barry, and was designed to protect £20m of business premises in Barry. Alternative solutions have been found to protect these premises, leaving Dinas Powys with an over-engineered and disproportionate solution.
- **Current and future risks of flooding have not been accurately assessed**
  - There are 21 reports of homes being flooded in Dinas Powys since 1948 (all on Greenfield Ave and St Cadocs Avenue). Since flood alleviation works in 1998 five homes have been flooded (all in St Cadocs Avenue, or close by). Gardens flooded in 2012 and 2013. So flooding in DP is very localised.
  - NRW rely on anecdotal flood reports which lack detailed meteorological data and ignore the beneficial impact of past flood alleviation works.
  - The conclusions are not based on the Cadoxton’s actual flow levels or other real time observations. There is just one monitoring point in Dinas Powys, which was recently installed. JBA used the River Ely to do their model!
  - Instead, NRW use computer modelling to calculate flood scenarios, but NRW’s consultants themselves stress the uncertainties this creates.
  - NRW use “scaling factors” to approximate flood scenarios. These estimations have been questioned by the Woodland Trust hydrologist.
- Without disputing **the impact of climate change**, NRW’s 20-30% headline figure of flood risk misrepresents its impact over the next 20 years. Change will be slow at first and increase over time, reaching 30% in 100 years’ time. The existing threat of flood in DP up to 2040 is low, giving time to rethink and plan a sustainable solution.
- The potential for upstream **Natural Flood Management**, working with natural processes across the whole Cadoxton catchment hasn’t been properly investigated.
- There is potential for **river channel maintenance and local resilience** to reduce the threat of flooding throughout the course of the river.
- The **removal of known obstructions** downstream (such as the obsolete Cross Common Road Bridge and A4055 Bryn-y-Don Bridge) will reduce local flood risk in Sunnycroft – the most flood-threatened part of Dinas Powys.
- NRW have not been able to allay the local community’s concerns, nor have they been successful in engaging with the broad based wish to find a **sustainable, imaginative solution** that combines options short of a Dam.

# THE VISION

## A FORWARD-THINKING, CREATIVE, INCLUSIVE SOLUTION

On the back of its recent consultation on Flood Relief and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy, Welsh Government can demonstrate its vision for a creative, resilient and sustainable Wales by developing an imaginative solution to the threat to an area of great natural importance.

Local residents want to be safe – but they do not want their children and grandchildren to be dispossessed by wrecking the amenity and ecology of our beautiful woods.

Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales can help by developing an ‘equitable partnership’ with the local community and key stakeholders like the Woodland Trust. They can harness a range of experience and expertise to co-produce a creative solution, in line with the principles underpinning NRW’s Area Statements practice, and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

Dinas Powys is a resource-rich community, with numerous thriving wildlife groups and well used FaceBook Groups. Our own Group has over 1100 members, and we can generate a constructive conversation and genuine co-production. We can also promote volunteering on natural flood management activities like tree planting.

**Thus, Welsh Government has a golden opportunity to extend its leadership of the climate debate recently evidenced by decisions on the M4 Relief Road and Tyrpentwys Quarry, and to enhance natural, green, solutions with Community Support.**

### Further information:

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