Wales Climate Change and Resilience Summit – 22 October 2026

Chaired by the First Minister of Wales, Rt Hon Rhun ap Iorwerth MS

In attendance:

Rt Hon Rhun ap Iorwerth, MS	First Minister of Wales
Llyr Gruffydd, MS	Cabinet Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability
Sian Gwenllian, MS	Cabinet Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning
Nerys Evans, MS	Deputy Minister for Public and Preventative Health
Professor Isabel Oliver	Chief Medical Officer for Wales
Emma Pinchbeck	Chief Executive, Climate Change Committee
Sebastien Penzini	Regional Deputy Chief , United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
Dawn Docx	Chief Fire Officer, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (FRS)
Fin Monahan	Chief Fire Officer, South Wales FRS
Craig Flannery	Chief Fire Officer, Mid and West Wales FRS
Chris Allsop	Assistant Chief Constable, North Wales Police
Chris Truscott	Assistant Chief Constable, South Wales Police
John-Paul Wade	Assistant Chief Constable, Gwent Police
Gareth Tovey	Fire Brigades Union
Ade Robinson	Fire Officers Association
Andy Elliott	Fire and Rescue Services Association
Kim Dowsett	Climate Change Committee
Ceri Davies	Natural Resources Wales
Alun Shurmer	Dŵr Cymru
Cllr Anthony Hunt	Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
Chris Llewelyn	WLGA
Cllr Menna Trenholme	WLGA lead for social justice, spokesperson for Fire and Rescue Services, and Deputy Leader, Gwynedd Council
Sumina Azam	Public Health Wales
Kevin Eadon-Davies	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park
Jonathan Cawley	Eryri National Park
Tegryn Jones	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Colonel Sion Walker	Ministry of Defence
Dr Matthew Hort	Met Office
Abi Reader	National Farmers Union Cymru
Ian Rickman	Farmers Union of Wales
Fraser McAuley	Country Landowners Association
Dennis Matheson	Tenant Farmers Association

Elaine Heckley	Confederation of Forest Industries (Confor)
Nigel Pugh	Woodland Trust
Peter Lanfear	Commons Association
Derek Walker	Future Generations Commissioner
Professor Paul Lewis	Clean Air Advisory Panel
Arfon Williams	RSPB Cymru
Sophie England	Strategic Roads Network
Jonathan Hughes	National Trust
James Hitchcock	Rewilding Britain (representing Wales environment link)
Joe Wilkins	Wildlife Trusts Wales
Christina Harrhy	Disused Tips Authority
Sam Ward	Climate Cymru
James Bourne	Blorenge Commoners Association
Camilla Curry	Maximising Adaptation to Climate Change Hub

Agenda item 1 – Open remarks from the First Minister

1. The First Minister opened the summit by acknowledging the devastating summer wildfires and thanking the Fire and Rescue Services, partners and communities for their response. He highlighted climate change as a driver of growing wildfire risk and called for urgent practical action on prevention and swift incident response. He urged partners to learn from this year's events, focus on solutions rather than blame, and agree shared priorities and a commitment to delivery, with the summit marking the start of sustained collective engagement.

Agenda Item 2 – The context of climate change and its consequences

2. Emma Pinchbeck, Chief Executive of the Climate Change Committee, delivered a presentation, highlighting the need for the UK to prepare for a dramatically changing climate, with more extreme heat, drought, flooding and wildfire, while managing the growing risks to health, communities, infrastructure and the economy. She also emphasised the need for urgent investment in adaptation, clear objectives and coordinated action across government, businesses and households.

3. Sebastien Penzini, Regional Deputy Chief of the United Nations (UN) Office for Disaster Risk Reduction delivered a presentation, highlighting that wildfire risk was increasing faster than capacity to respond, driven by climate change, fragmented responsibilities, limited investment, changing land use and an over-reliance on fire suppression. He stressed the need to prioritise prevention through integrated governance, better risk data, sustained investment, improved land and fuel management, public awareness, community involvement, early warning systems, stronger preparedness and recovery promoting the Sendai Framework.

Agenda Item 3 – Underlying causes of wildfire, land use and agricultural issues

4. The Cabinet Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability, acknowledged the pressures on farmers and land managers, outlining financial and contractual

flexibilities and support for recovering damaged land, including additional Natural Resources Wales assessments of affected Sites of Special Scientific Interest. He stressed the need to build resilience to wildfire and other climate pressures through locally appropriate land management, highlighting peatland restoration, targeted grazing and vegetation management. He announced rapid reviews of land-management evidence and the Heather and Grass Burning Code, inviting practical experience to identify effective approaches, barriers and evidence gaps through continued collaboration beyond the Summit.

5. In discussion, organisations represented at the summit made the following points:

- **Natural Resources Wales** set out three priorities. Firstly, it was vital to work with rural communities to devise and implement effective preventative actions; the Healthy Hillsides Partnership had been a good example of that. Secondly, there was potential for landowners to build wildfire resilience into how they managed land, whether or not they were part of the Sustainable Farming Scheme; NRW was taking the same approach with its forestry estate in particular. Finally, there was a need for effective co-ordination between emergency responders, both in dealing with incidents directly and in supporting recovery.

- **The National Farmers Union Cymru** emphasised that the farming industry was ready and willing to play a full role in addressing wildfire risks. Farmers should be seen as partners in designing and delivering risk reduction, rather than just being asked to take on more responsibilities. For example, there was clear scope to increase grazing in upland areas, particularly by cattle, to improve vegetation management. But for that to happen, more farmers needed to be supported to stay on the land and to join the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Other measures around issues such as water quality and control of bovine TB would also assist.

- **Eryri National Park Authority** noted that national parks covered approximately 20% of Wales and were well placed to co-ordinate community-level efforts in those areas. However, there was currently a lack of strategic co-ordination of activity; the Wales Wildfire Board was the obvious means for addressing this. It also highlighted the potential for schemes such as Ffermio Bro to support this work strategically, particularly in areas where common land presented complex land-management challenges.

- **RSPB Cymru** observed that there was a delicate balance to be struck. On the one hand, upland fuel loading presented a severe wildfire hazard; but on the other, that same vegetation supported biodiversity, stored carbon and mitigated flood risks. It should be possible to devise measures which reduced wildfire risk without compromising wider environmental objectives, but doing so would require careful multi-agency consideration and a robust evidence base. RSPB Cymru also highlighted practical work already under way across its sites, including wildfire risk mapping, strategic firebreaks, visitor awareness, landscape response planning and research, and offered to share this work with partners.

- **The Woodland Trust** believed there was an opportunity to make much more use of improved mapping and data to support land management and wildfire resilience, including thermal targeting and overland hydrological flow mapping. These could be used to retain water at strategic locations so as to minimise wildfire risk. However, the planning system was often an obstacle to this approach, meaning that works could take years to implement.

- **The Blorenge Commoners Association** described the direct effects of the wildfire above Blaenavon in Torfaen. Many sheep had been killed in the fire, while others were still dying of pneumonia; and there was uncertainty about how the fire would affect the fertility of ewes and thus the long-term viability of flocks. The Association felt that farmers should not have to deal with such hazards alone, and that financial support for affected farmers was essential. In the longer term, help was needed to control bracken, to make more practical use of controlled burning and to encourage grazing of common land. This would only happen if farmers and commoners were fully represented in future discussions. He also described the personal wellbeing impact of dealing with the fire and its aftermath.

- **The Future Generations Commissioner** strongly supported the Association's comments and noted the work they had done to support local communities. The Commissioner also felt that more could be done to plan the use of land in ways which mitigated risk; and that public service boards could and should undertake climate risk assessments in their areas. There could, however, be a need to review board membership to that end.

- **The Welsh Local Government Association** echoed the support for the work of the Blorenge Commoners. The Association believed that this reflected a wider need to utilise the knowledge of farmers and landowners to mitigate risks at the local level – but that relied on upland farming remaining a viable business. The Association and its members were ready to help with that, and welcomed involvement in future work in this area.

- **The Farmers Union of Wales** echoed previous comments about the importance of listening to farmers and landowners who had been directly affected – and of involving them in mitigating risk. Controlled burning needed to be re-evaluated, and more could and should be done to increase stocking rates in upland areas. Planning requirements were also highlighted alongside water quality regulations and bovine TB as potential barriers to the effective management of land for grazing and wildfire resilience.

- **Climate Cymru** supported the wider calls for engaging with communities and individuals affected by wildfires in developing means of mitigating risk. It was, they felt, a matter of investing in sustainable solutions, not of making sacrifices. The scale and scope of the issues created an argument for improving co-ordination within government too.

- **The Tenant Farmers Association** believed that targets for tree planting should be revisited in light of the wildfire outbreaks. There were, the Association felt, other less risky means of capturing carbon than afforestation in the context of wildfire.

- **The Commons Association** believed that requirements around controlled burning were too limiting and too complex. While the long-term solution might well be to increase grazing of commons, the obstacles to do so were significant, particularly where cattle were involved. This was further hampered by farmers leaving the industry or diversifying away from grazing. The Commons Association also highlighted the use of firebreaks as one means of managing wildfire risk on common land.

6. In closing the discussion, the Cabinet Minister for Rural Resilience and Sustainability thanked all participants and noted the wide range of positive suggestions made. They represented a challenge not only to government but to all present; the Cabinet Minister echoed the need for greater coherence and collaboration between all involved.

Agenda Item 4 – Immediate causes of wildfire, human behaviour and health issues

7. The Deputy Minister for Public and Preventative Health called for shared action to shift from crisis response to prevention, linking climate adaptation and the new national Public Health Strategy with wider plans, including the Climate and Nature Action Plan. She invited proposals on education, community involvement, clearer messaging and possible restrictions on high-risk activities in high-risk areas. In developing these proposals, she highlighted the need to protect communities and emergency responders from heat and smoke, address health inequalities, support affected farmers' and landowners' mental health and wellbeing, and share experience and good practice. In support of that, the Chief Medical Officer would review UK and international evidence on firefighter health and report by the end of 2026.

8. In discussion, organisations represented at the summit made the following proposals:

    - **NFU Cymru** supported strengthening of the Wales Wildfire Board as a priority, with refreshed membership to include the necessary expertise, particularly farmers, foresters and commoners. The Board needed clear terms of reference, defined responsibilities and clear accountability to support effective national co-ordination of wildfire prevention, preparedness, emergency response and recovery.

    - **Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority** noted that some behaviour which created fire risks reflected a lack of understanding rather than deliberate intent; burying used barbecues in sand dunes was one example. It felt that targeted messaging was needed, supported by a national awareness campaign and local work with communities, tourism businesses and supermarkets. The Authority saw a role for the Wales Wildfire Board in co-ordinating this activity. The Authority also

questioned whether prohibitions on selling disposable barbecues should extend to their use, and emphasised the importance of community-level prevention.

- **The Woodland Trust** emphasised raising young people's awareness of wildfire risks and supporting them as community advocates, noting that people, including young people, caused the overwhelming majority of fires, accidentally or deliberately. As an example of its work with young people, the Trust cited its recruitment of wildfire prevention ambassadors across its estate. Its head of Health and Safety also chaired the Wildfire Forum for England and Wales, whose expertise the Welsh Government could draw on should it wish to.

- **RSPB Cymru** noted that different causes and seasons of wildfire required different responses. Fires in March and April could result from controlled burns escaping, while summer fires could be accidental or deliberate, and therefore, prevention measures and messaging should reflect those distinctions. It also felt that the Wales Wildfire Board should revisit its purpose and stakeholder representation, while ensuring that wildfire prevention formed part of a wider approach to ecosystem resilience. Without this wider perspective, there was a risk that measures to address one problem could create difficulties elsewhere. A balanced approach was therefore needed, recognising that vegetation did not generally ignite without an accidental or deliberate source.

- **Public Health Wales** described its role across prevention, response and recovery, and called for an integrated approach to environmental and human factors and their effects on health and wellbeing. It believed that behavioural science could help shape campaigns using real-life impacts and trusted voices; poorly designed messages could have unintended consequences. Public Health Wales could help identify the specialist capabilities, policy measures and research needed, particularly to understand inequalities and protect those most vulnerable to wildfire impacts. It also agreed that the Wales Wildfire Board offered a means of co-ordinating partners and strengthening preparedness, including the resilience of schools, to reduce disruption to families, workplaces and communities.

- **Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service** emphasised that prevention was the most effective means of reducing harm, echoing the UN's comments in their presentation. The prevention work undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Services over the past two decades had brought significant benefits to communities. The Service noted that the Wales Wildfire Board already brought together the Fire and Rescue Services, the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, landowners and local authorities and its Wildfire Charter, provided a shared framework which placed prevention, preparedness, adaptation and collaboration at the heart of Wales' response to climate change. It believed that lessons from this year's wildfire season should therefore inform improvements to the Board's structure and reach, rather than the creation of a new framework.

- **The Fire Brigades Union** supported youth engagement, warning that declining community provision such as library, sports clubs, and youth clubs, undermined prevention. The FBU welcomed the Chief Medical Officer's forthcoming year-end

report and cited research showing increased cancer, cardiovascular and stroke risks, associated with firefighting. Noting the World Health Organisation's recognition in 2022 of firefighting as a carcinogenic occupation, the Union called for stronger health monitoring and for lessons to be drawn from countries with presumptive legislation. Prolonged wildfire deployments increased exposure and limited decontamination; protection should address skin absorption as well as inhalation, supporting fair and decent work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

- **Dŵr Cymru** supported co-ordinated campaigns and education across sectors, citing its joint campaign with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution which showed how consistent messaging across partners could increase impact. It was also supportive of reviewing the Wales Wildfire Board. The effects of fires could continue for months or years, affecting mental and physical health, water quality and catchments; a broader group of partners should consider those longer-term consequences.

- The **Welsh Government's Clean Air Advisory Panel** emphasised the significant health effects of air pollution and the need to assess and reduce exposure to wildfire smoke, particularly in deprived areas. The summit's attention was drawn to the 2035 air quality targets and the need for a strategy informed by existing resources, expertise and scientific evidence to reduce exposure and health impacts; the Clean Air Advisory Panel had the ability to review evidence on smoke, health effects and prevention which could inform public awareness campaigns. The Panel proposed building on the Promoting Awareness of Air Pollution in Wales Delivery Plan to strengthen public communication, education and engagement with schools.

- The **Met Office** noted that wildfire smoke could affect health far from fires, compounding urban air pollution and overlapping with heat and allergy risks, making public messaging more complex. It called for co-ordination through the Wales Wildfire Board and wider groups such as the UK-wide Natural Hazards Partnership, and greater use of the existing UK-wide wildfire forecasting service. It believed that partners should build on existing UK good practice in local community engagement and education, including games and tools for schools and youth groups covering wildfire alongside other hazards because preparing for one hazard could also strengthen preparedness for others. The Met Office offered to support this collaborative work.

- **The Ministry of Defence** drew on its work with South Wales Fire and Rescue Service over the summer to highlight opportunities to strengthen community resilience. It believed that local sports clubs and other community organisations could provide support currently undertaken by soldiers, drawing on their knowledge of the area. Youth groups, including cadets, could also support education and wider participation. A national defence and resilience force was suggested as a possible longer-term approach. It also highlighted the scope to draw on the defence growth deal and defence and security cluster to develop technology for wider resilience needs. One company had modelled wind changes

at Llangynidr using artificial intelligence, illustrating how mapping could help inform preventative action and deployment. A competition planned in October 2027 would invite emergency services and communities to identify practical problems for industry to address, benefiting rural and urban areas rather than focusing solely on defence.

- **The Fire and Rescue Services Association** highlighted the mental health effects of wildfire on firefighters, citing international reports of rising suicide rates in wildfire-prone areas and the trauma of being unable to protect their own communities. The Association supported targeted education: a Dorset programme established in 2000 used professional educators to reach every junior and secondary school was cited as an example, achieving a sustained 60% reduction in unwanted ignitions within four years. Firewise UK also helped households and neighbourhoods improve resilience around homes and gardens adjoining rural land; national support was needed to extend this work.

- **The Chief Executive of the Climate Change Committee** noted that wildfire, extreme heat and drought could coincide, placing simultaneous pressures on emergency and health services through poor air quality, heat-related illness and reduced access to water. Early summer heatwave data, available only for NHS England, showed a record 8,800 calls to NHS call centres relating to respiratory and other heat-related illness, including wildfire risks—exceeding the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a likelihood therefore, that health services might face both summer and winter demand peaks, with summer staffing and capacity potentially requiring a response comparable to that during the pandemic. Co-ordinated planning across emergency and health services was needed, alongside preventative measures such as cooling care homes and older people's homes, strengthening community spaces and local response capacity, and improving information-sharing with individuals. Wildfire should be addressed within this wider, increasingly challenging set of risks rather than in isolation.

- **Natural Resources Wales** supported addressing wildfire alongside other hazards. Work leading to the Healthy Hillsides partnership had shown how fires could destabilise land, increasing the risk of landslips and soil and debris being washed downhill during heavy winter rainfall. Recent fires had left large areas of Wales vulnerable to these effects for years. It too felt that a reinvigorated Wales Wildfire Board could help ensure that campaigns and preparedness work addressed these wider, longer-term risks.

- **The Tenant Farmers Association** noted that almost all wildfires resulted from human activity, and that many began when controlled burns escaped. Anyone undertaking a controlled burn needed sufficient people, appropriate equipment and adequate resources to manage it safely. Historical examples showed that poorly managed burns could cause substantial damage from which land took years to recover. As such, the Association called for incentives to support effective land management, including suitable stocking levels and productive grazing, and for farmers and gamekeepers to work together in sufficient numbers.

- **Wildlife Trusts Wales** emphasised the need for decisions which addressed interconnected challenges rather than individual issues in isolation. It believed that reducing the spread of wildfire required consideration of the whole system, including the growing challenge of retaining water in the landscape. It also believed that preventative health and land management affected many of the same people and should be considered together and that decisions should support the functioning and adaptation of whole ecosystems, including nature-based solutions developed with farmers.

- The **National Farmers Union Cymru** called for a proactive national campaign to promote responsible countryside access, particularly during hot, dry weather. The risks and consequences of careless and deliberate fire-setting should be made clear, supported by effective enforcement and restrictions or bans on activities and equipment which posed a fire risk during high-risk periods.

9. In closing the discussion, the Deputy Minister for Public and Preventative Health thanked all participants and noted the wide range of contributions. The Deputy Minister drew together the main themes and echoed the need for greater coherence and collaboration between all involved. The Deputy Minister highlighted the following priorities:

    - Refresh the Wales Wildfire Board and review its responsibilities.
    - Better co-ordinate campaigns and education, sharing resources to extend effective local activity. Address the fragmented responsibilities highlighted in the UN's presentation so a national strategy which supports local delivery.
    - Consistently consider health inequalities and impacts on small communities when developing responses.
    - Build on local authorities' community resilience work, drawing on the experience of Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen, where the Marmot approach to health inequalities helped communities adapt their flood-response capacity to other incidents. Public services could apply these principles more widely to strengthen community resilience.

10. The Deputy Minister endorsed the Climate Change Committee's comments on health service pressures, noting similar evidence in Wales. Although July's statement focused on winter, the Minister had made clear that preparedness was becoming year-round, requiring resilient service capacity and estate, including in summer.

Agenda Item 5 – Firefighting response to wildfire and wider emergency co-ordination

11. The Cabinet Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning thanked firefighters and partners for their response to the summer's wildfires, noting both the devastation and positive and effective collaboration witnessed during a visit to the Rhinogydd fire site. With further wildfires expected, the Minister emphasised the need for learning lessons across the Fire and Rescue Services and partner agencies. Following the strategic partners' wildfire debrief on 8 September, the Cabinet Minister confirmed she had asked the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and Inspector to

review the response arrangements during the summer and overall wildfire capacity. She confirmed that discussions with the UK Government and devolved administrations on aerial support were continuing as a UK wide issue, alongside planned exchanges with Australian experts, but stressed that aerial support was only one part of the response and that this needed to be better understood.

12. In discussion, organisations represented at the summit made the following reflections and proposals:

- **South Wales Fire and Rescue Service** noted significant capacity pressures during the summer's wildfires. Despite substantial expertise and assistance from 22 UK fire and rescue services, simultaneous incidents limited mutual aid. Firefighters were recalled on rest days and military assistance requested for water logistics to release specialist crews. The service believed that the UK response capacity assumptions introduced in the 2010s needed reviewing as climate change increased wildfire frequency, with similar pressures possible in flooding and other major emergencies. Priorities included greater surge capacity, adapted personal protective equipment, UK-level aerial firefighting investment, and drones and satellites for prevention, prediction and arson deterrence. Prevention, including school engagement, needed better integration, particularly on arson. Firefighter numbers were expanding incrementally within local authority levy limits; investment was needed, but inaction was considered more costly. They called for open public discussion of risks and learning from Sweden's integrated approach to preparing society for crises and war.

- **North Wales Fire and Rescue Service** described an unprecedented summer, with six simultaneous wildfires and a major incident declaration underlining the need for resilient services. On-call firefighters provided over 50% of emergency cover in Wales, combining primary employment with voluntary commitments to train, carry pagers and respond locally. The response showed the value of combining wholetime and on-call firefighters, with on-call crews repeatedly balancing prolonged deployments with jobs, businesses and family commitments. The service reflected that successful prevention work had significantly reduced accidental dwelling fires over the years, but that the resulting fall in fire attendance had also been accompanied by reductions in firefighter numbers and resources during austerity around 2010. Climate change and new technology now increased incident frequency, duration and complexity, requiring large crews for days or weeks while maintaining emergency cover across North Wales. Recent wholetime and on-call recruitment had strengthened rural cover, including through two new wholetime stations opened the previous year. People continued to come forward: the challenge was funding, training and resilience to deploy them effectively, rather than recruitment. Resources needed to match incident scale and complexity; the service hoped the summit would initiate meaningful action to provide firefighters with the necessary resources, training and support.

- **Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service** covered almost two-thirds of Wales, including remote rural and agricultural communities, national parks,

forestry and environmentally significant landscapes. Of its 56 stations, 52 had on-call components, with staff balancing primary employment and emergency response. On-call and wholetime firefighters, officers, fire control and corporate staff met exceptional, prolonged wildfire demand. Farmers provided access, equipment and water, and supported affected or displaced communities. The Service supported a wider resilience role and ongoing UK-wide dialogue, noting that Welsh fire and rescue services' statutory duty to respond to flooding and water rescue since 2017 underpinned their wider climate role. Recent wildfires highlighted the need for specialist equipment, better access to remote areas and greater firefighter protection. With particular regard to firefighter protection, the Service welcomed the work being undertaken by the Chief Medical Officer. The Service believed that prevention must complement response, with investment in communities, public services and partnerships to strengthen resilience and support climate adaptation.

- **The Fire Brigades Union** emphasised that prevention should complement, rather than compete with, response. It believed that reductions of 400 firefighters in Wales and 12,000 across the UK since 2010 had left services unable to meet demand, creating unacceptable risks to firefighters and the public. Climate change was making established tactics less reliable and increasing risks to firefighter welfare and safety. Staffing shortages also limited training and the ability to increase capacity during major incidents. The Union called for prompt investment in staffing, training and equipment to meet year-round risks, drawing on its ten UK-wide wildfire demands. It supported community resilience, but stressed that this should not substitute for adequately funded public services.

- **The Met Office** emphasised that prevention, preparedness, response and recovery were interlinked. Climate change was increasing demand throughout the year, raising concerns about resource exhaustion. Better use of weather forecasts, climate projections and observation data could improve planning and efficiency, alongside additional resources. The Met Office offered support in accessing and using its data, which ranged from immediate forecasts to projections for the end of the century. It acknowledged the limitations of that data and highlighted opportunities to improve it through closer collaboration and a better understanding of users' needs. Sharing information collected by partners, including drone imagery showing the extent of fires, could improve modelling and support wider uses at little additional cost.

- **RSPB Cymru** acknowledged the work of fire and rescue services over the summer, including protecting its sites and reserves. Experience on some of its UK reserves highlighted difficulties in securing contractors with suitable equipment at short notice to create emergency firebreaks. Despite advance planning, changing conditions could require urgent work on the ground, making access to suitably equipped contractors important.

- **The Confederation of Forest Industries** proposed a nationally co-ordinated volunteer service to complement, not replace, the three fire and rescue services as large, complex wildfires became more frequent. Based broadly on mountain

rescue, it would bring together trained wildfire marshals from forestry, farming and other land management organisations, operating under recognised incident management arrangements. Their local knowledge of terrain, access and water sources, supported by a register of privately owned equipment available through pre-agreed arrangements, could enable faster access to remote incidents and support prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The service could have regional teams, standardised training and formal agreements with emergency services. Public funding would be needed for preparedness and specialist equipment, alongside other funding sources; those requesting activation would meet their own costs. Pilots were suggested in the Mid Wales uplands, Bannau Brycheiniog and the Cambrian Mountains. The organisation also suggested that the Wales Wildfire Board could contribute to developing solutions.

- **The WLGA** thanked organisations for supporting communities during the summer's wildfires and offered to help address resource pressures where it could. The Association highlighted the vital contribution of upland farmers, whose local knowledge had helped limit the duration and impact of fires in difficult terrain. It suggested joint training for farmers and fire and rescue staff to make better use of that knowledge and strengthen future responses.

- The **National Farmers Union Cymru** highlighted farmers' role in supporting emergency services through first aid, access for fire engines and water supplies for firefighting. Keeping farmers on the land was essential to maintaining that support. Wildfire plans and permissions needed to be in place in advance; planning approval for ponds could take over two years. The organisation called for better co-ordination between emergency services and land managers across preparedness, response and recovery. Local emergency plans should involve farmers and landowners, using mapping, data and early warnings to identify water supplies, access routes and firefighting resources. Recovery support should restore damaged land and infrastructure and help affected businesses return to productive use.

- **Dŵr Cymru** noted that exceptional summer demand had strained water distribution and brought some communities close to losing supplies, despite adequate reservoir levels. Daily demand had risen from 850 million litres to just under 1.1 billion litres for 40 consecutive days. It called for operational improvements and joint planning with emergency partners to identify firefighting water sources without compromising public supplies. It also questioned whether the £11 billion climate adaptation estimate was sufficient. Despite investing £1 billion annually, meeting current requirements remained challenging; partners needed to prioritise affordable investment to protect communities and the environment as climate pressures increased.

13. In closing the discussion, the Cabinet Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning thanked participants for their contributions and acknowledged the capacity pressures facing the Fire and Rescue Services. The Cabinet Minister reiterated that a review would be commissioned to examine the services' capacity and draw lessons from the summer's response.

Agenda Item 6 – Summary and closing remarks

14. In closing the meeting, the First Minister thanked all participants for their contributions and welcomed the range of perspectives shared. He noted the common purpose evident throughout the discussion and summarised the emerging themes and areas of consensus on next steps:

    - Strengthen the all-Wales Wildfire Board, reflecting the clear need identified during the discussion.
    - Move quickly to improve understanding of the role of land management in addressing wildfire risk, including the Heather and Grass Burning Code, while ensuring a balanced approach.
    - Give greater emphasis to wildfire prevention, drawing on fire and rescue services' success in reducing house fires through preventative methods.
    - Build national resilience to wildfires through collective action, engaging and involving the people of Wales.
    - Support fire service visits to schools to discuss prevention as part of wider, collective work to strengthen resilience, building on the positive ideas emerging from the discussion.
    - Address capacity pressures through the planned review of the Fire and Rescue Services response over the summer which will establish the groundwork for future improvements. With resources finite and expected to fall in the following year, priorities would need to be agreed, including where activity could be reduced to protect the most important work. Partners should consider how to prepare for improvements if resources became less constrained in subsequent years.
    - Develop a better understanding of the wider capacity available across communities, agriculture and local government, including practical support such as supplying water for firefighting. Bringing together this capacity was vital to meeting the challenge collectively, with everyone having a part to play.

15. The First Minister welcomed the shared sense of purpose among participants, who had contributed to the discussion, listened to one another and made a collective call for action. He acknowledged his own role and that of his Ministers, while stressing that all partners shared responsibility for taking this work forward. The First Minister emphasised that the meeting marked not the end of the process, but an opportunity to accelerate engagement across partners. He thanked everyone for their contributions and looked forward to that continued engagement.