

# CAROLYN THOMAS

## MS FOR NORTH WALES / AS DROS GOGLEDD CYMRU

Eluned Morgan MS  
First Minister

Ken Skates MS  
Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport & North Wales

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

Dear Eluned & Ken,

### **Re: Carbon Capture and Storage – HyNet’s Plans for North Wales**

I write to formally raise my concerns with you in relation to HyNet’s plans for carbon capture and storage (CCS) in North Wales. HyNet is an umbrella group of global organisations such as ENI, Essar, INEOS, and Cadent.

HyNet’s ‘blue hydrogen’ plans intend to ‘capture’ carbon dioxide created by land-based industrial plants in the North West, before transporting the captured carbon through cross-county underground carbon dioxide pipelines to the Point of Ayr. This carbon dioxide will then be ‘stored’ in depleted gas fields off the North Wales coast.

I have a significant number of concerns with these plans which I wish to bring to the attention of the Welsh Government. The CCS industry has a long record of failure. To date, barely a single CCS scheme worldwide has collected as much carbon as promised. For example, the United States oil and gas giant Chevron has publicly acknowledged that its flagship CCS project off Australia’s north-west coast is operating at just a third of its capacity, with the facility beleaguered with problems. Similarly, the Petra Nova coal plant in Texas, once the poster child for carbon capture, is now shut for good.

In Satartia, Mississippi, more than 200 people were the victims of mass poisoning caused by the [rupturing of a carbon dioxide pipeline, leading to 45 hospitalisations](#). The medical response itself was significantly hampered by the immobilisation of emergency vehicles, caused by the carbon dioxide leak. Researchers for the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis have stated that trapped carbon dioxide will need to be monitored for centuries to ensure it does not leak into the wider atmosphere. Despite this, ENI have said that they will only monitor their carbon dioxide reservoirs off the North Wales coast for 20 years. Just last year, ENI were responsible for an 80,000 litre oil spill off the North Wales coast.

Already, the increased amount of carbon dioxide in our oceans is having a major debilitating impact on animal life due to the acidification of the water, as well as the global rise in sea temperatures. I am deeply concerned that HyNet’s plans will exacerbate these problems.

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The project will require the installation of 31km of new pipelines, crossing 26 waterways and the River Dee, which will lead to significant disruption to local communities and businesses. We have no National Underground Asset Register, which brings into question the ability of such large-scale pipeline installation succeeding without impacting significantly on existing infrastructure, biodiversity, and vital local ecosystems.

The previous Conservative-led UK Government set aside £20bn of taxpayers' money to be spent on carbon capture projects, tens of millions of which is due to subsidise HyNet's plans. This is a staggering amount of public money to spend on an industry with a track record of abject failure. The truth of the matter is, the reason why fossil fuel companies are so keen on CCS is because they believe it can provide them with a lifeline to continue to extract fossil fuels for longer.

One of the key arguments which the case for blue hydrogen is built upon is that blue hydrogen is necessary as a transition to green hydrogen. This argument posits that because green hydrogen is not currently cost-competitive, blue hydrogen should be used in the interim. Fundamentally, this fails on the basis that blue hydrogen is not possible without CCS technology, and CCS technology, as the evidence clearly shows, does not work in successfully capturing carbon at the scale required. Green hydrogen does not require CCS technology, which means the scale of green hydrogen projects, and the cost of the associated infrastructure, will be far smaller than that of blue hydrogen projects such as HyNet. Much of the cost of 'blue hydrogen' comes with the extensive and expensive infrastructure which must go with it - infrastructure which will not only fail to capture the carbon promised, but also become obsolete once green hydrogen becomes cost-competitive.

As Sir Keir Starmer and Eluned Morgan have quite rightly identified, Wales is uniquely positioned to benefit from the transition to green energy. Instead of spending billions of pounds on failed CCS, that money could be invested into: true renewables such as wind, solar, and tidal; into Great British Energy; into upgrading the National Grid, and/or; into a mass home insulation programme. All of these choices would help to lower energy bills, bring about a green energy transition, and tackle the climate crisis.

In 2021, the head of the UK Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association, Chris Jackson, resigned stating: "I believe passionately that I would be betraying future generations by remaining silent on the fact that blue hydrogen is at best an expensive distraction, and at worst a lock-in for continued fossil fuel use that guarantees we will fail to meet our decarbonisation targets." It is my firmly held belief that HyNet's carbon capture plans fail to comply with both the ethos or the objectives of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

I would appreciate, if, in response to this letter, you could outline the Welsh Government's position on CCS, and join with me in asking the UK Government to cancel plans for carbon capture and storage in order to invest that money into genuinely workable solutions to the climate crisis.

Yours Sincerely,



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