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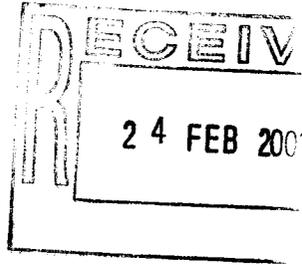
Jane Hutt AC/AM

**Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills**

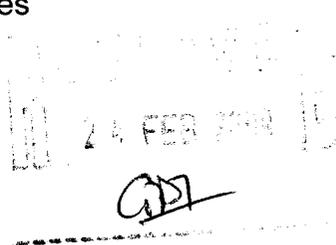


Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref PET-03-081
Ein cyf/Our ref JH/00202/09



Val Lloyd AM
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1NA



February 2009

Thank you for your letter of 3rd February 200 from the Petitions Committee concerning the course exemptions list in the current student support regulations which allows those students already possessing an honours degree to qualify for a maintenance loan.

Phase 1 of the Review of Higher Education in Wales reported their findings to me on 1 October. I am very grateful to Professor Jones and members of the Group for meeting the extremely tight timescale which has enabled us to consult on proposals to refocus higher education student finance with a view to making changes for new full time undergraduate students from the start of the academic year 2010/11. In his letter to me, prefacing the Report, Merfyn Jones records "The timing has unduly constrained the breadth of our discussions".

In Phase 2 of the review, the task and finish group is considering the mission, purpose, role and funding of higher education in Wales. The breadth of this review means that it is considering the broad direction, processes and principles which should govern future policy, rather than examining individual cases on a subject by subject basis. In this context, among its deliberations, the group has been considering how best the Assembly Government can respond to promote higher education in subject areas identified as priorities; how to ensure support for students is focused on where it is needed most; how the sector in Wales can best sustain viability, performance and growth; and how it should best work in collaboration within and beyond Wales. Merfyn Jones will be reporting his findings to me at the end of March.

Whilst I will look to the HE review to advise me on key priorities and underpinning principles, I would suggest that of more immediate relevance to the issues raised in the petition is the Modernising Pharmacy Careers Board established by the Department of Health which will be looking at the content and length of the MPharm course. Our Chief Pharmaceutical Adviser will be attending as an observer and the Board will be meeting for the first time next week. My officials will liaise with officials in Health regarding the implications of the outcomes of the Board

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My officials are also in contact with colleagues in DIUS who are currently working on a review of course eligibility. The review is in its early stages and the issue of Optometry/Pharmacy and other undergraduate degree courses which are mandatory legal prerequisite for qualification and registration in a given profession has been identified as an area to explore further.

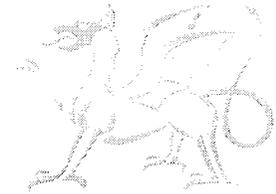
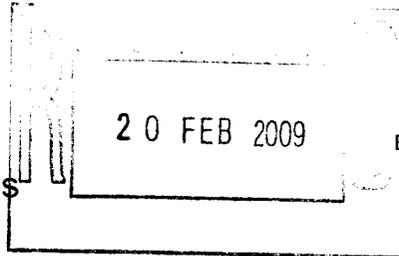
I will ensure that your committee is kept informed of any outcomes from the review of course eligibility in England.

Edwina Hart AM MBE

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Our ref: EH/00469/09
Your ref: PET-03-085

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Re: Val

20 FEB 2009
CP

19th February 2009

Thank you for your letter of 3rd February asking about progress on the viability of a Primary Care Resource Centre being developed on land adjacent to Flint Community Hospital.

Flintshire Local Health Board (LHB) has established a Project Steering Group made up of the LHB, Trust, County Council and Community Health Council. The Group agreed Terms of Reference, met twice and established a Project Team to undertake the detailed work.

Before the Project Team could begin work in earnest the NHS in North Wales resolved to review 'Designed for North Wales' with a view to preparing and agreeing a new clinical futures strategy for the region. This new strategy would seek to explain more clearly the balance of care between secondary, community and primary care. Given the importance of first establishing this strategic and planning context the local planning of Flint services has been put on hold.

The planning timeframe for developing the new North Wales clinical futures strategy will allow the Flint Project Steering Group to recommence local planning in May.

[Handwritten signature]

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12 Mawrth, 2009

Annwyl Siân,

Deiseb P-03-107 Papur Newydd Dyddiol yn yr iaith Gymraeg

Diolch yn fawr am eich llythyr dyddiedig 12 Chwefror. Rwyf wedi addasu papur Saesneg sydd gennym ar eich cyfer sydd yn crynhoi'r gwaith "Ymchwil Farchnata" a wnaed mewn perthynas â'r papur dyddiol Cymraeg, a gobeithio y bydd hyn yn ateb eich cwestiynau. Yr oedd yr holl ymchwil ar gael i Dr Bianchi wrth iddo baratoi ei adroddiad er nad oeddem yn gallu rhoi caniatad iddo gyhoeddi'r holl ddata manwl am resymau cystadleuaeth – sydd yn dal yn ddilys, wedi i gyfranddalwyr Dyddiol Cyf benderfynu yn ddiweddar aros yn gwmni fydd o bosibl yn cyhoeddi papur newydd rhywbryd yn y dyfodol.

Mae croeso i chi gysylltu os oes cwestiynau pellach gennych wedi i chi ddarllen y ddogfen amgaeëdig.

Gyda phob dymuniad da,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ned Thomas". The script is cursive and fluid.

Ned Thomas
Cadeirydd Dyddiol Cyf

Market Research on the viability of a daily newspaper in Welsh

1. The company Dyddiol Cyf was established as the result of a two-year research project into the viability of a Welsh-language daily newspaper. At that initial stage the project was coordinated by the Mercator Centre at the University of Aberystwyth, which specializes in media in minority languages. Some of the work was conducted internally, other elements were commissioned from outside companies and individuals. At a later stage, when the company had been established, some aspects of the research were updated or confirmed and new work was done with focus groups. The original research project was funded by the European Commission, the WDA, the University of Aberystwyth and the Welsh sub-committee of the UK Committee of the Bureau of Lesser-Used Languages of the European Union.
2. The different strands of the research were conceived as being inter-related, building on each other, and were carried out as follows:
 - (a) Scoping the Market – Beaufort Research – a polling company based in Cardiff
 - (b) Refining the Beaufort findings in the light of the National Census figures – Professor Harold Carter, an acknowledged expert on the Welsh Census.
 - (c) The Mercator Centre prepared an extensive questionnaire internally which was very widely distributed and had a good uptake.
 - (d) A shorter questionnaire was also prepared by the Mercator Centre, relating to young people's use of mobile phones to access news. This was distributed to a smaller sample and uptake was only fair.
 - (e) The questionnaires were analyzed by post-graduate students working for an MSC in Entrepreneurism at the University of Aberystwyth as part of their project work.
 - (f) Case studies of a number of stand-alone daily newspapers in minority languages within the EU were carried out by staff of the Mercator Centre.
 - (g) Research on the advertising spend in Wales. This was originally undertaken internally and later confirmed by an outside consultant (Elis Evans) on the advice of the WDA. Updated from time to time..
 - (h) At a much later stage we commissioned an outside consultant (Richard Houdmont, currently Wales Director of the Institute of Marketing)) to do marketing work for us. This included meeting with focus groups North and South.
3. Although every one of the strands listed above contained elements that could be termed market research, the background to the request of the Petitions Committee leads me to concentrate on (a) (b) (c) and (h).

Scoping the Market

The aim here was to find out who would be the most likely customers for a daily newspaper in Welsh with as much market segmentation as Beaufort's methodology in its Welsh-Language Omnibus Survey permitted. The following question was included in that survey: **A fydddech â diddordeb i ddarllen papur newydd dyddiol yn Gymraeg? (Would you be interested in reading a daily newspaper in Welsh?)**

The Beaufort Welsh Language Omnibus Survey questions a balanced sample of 1000 Welsh-speakers and the results are broken down by area of Wales, age-group, gender, social category (as defined by Beaufort) and ability to read Welsh. To qualify for the sample it is enough for the respondent to perceive themselves as *speaking* Welsh. Some

later reply **No** when asked whether they *read* Welsh. Respondents were recorded either as giving a definite **Yes** to the cited question, or alternatively a conditional **Yes – maybe when I see the paper**.

Overall across Wales 33% of those in the sample answered a definite **Yes** (37% of those who *read* Welsh), with a further 10% registering a conditional **Yes**. While the Beaufort survey was a rough guide to the size of the total addressable market, its main interest for us was the market segmentation which showed, among other things, that the strongest interest lay within the ABC1 social groups. The regional variation was also interesting, as were the results by age and gender. Although time has passed, the detail of this information is still commercially valuable and sensitive.

Extrapolation

For a variety of technical reasons, it was not a simple matter to extrapolate from the Beaufort data to the whole Welsh-speaking and Welsh-reading population, particularly in relation to some of the sub-categories. Some of the Beaufort methodology was particularly well-suited to identifying our target market – for example, they interview no-one under 16 and never more than one person from the same household. On the other hand the social group categories used by Beaufort do not fit exactly with those used by the National Census. This is why we needed to commission Professor Harold Carter to do further work. The upshot was that he identified a core group of 47,000 ABC1 households containing one or more persons over 16 reading Welsh and showing definite interest in reading a Welsh-language daily newspaper.

Other groups offered a potential upside: ABC1 households expressing a *conditional* interest, C2DE groups expressing an interest in a daily paper, though probably not in the same model of paper; and Welsh-speakers outside Wales, estimated on the basis of BBC regions and work done for S4C as around 200,000 individuals, about whom we know little except anecdotally. The next stage of our research concentrated on the core group only.

Learning about the target audience

An eight-page questionnaire in Welsh was widely distributed. The uptake was good and the regional variation in uptake reflected very closely the regional variation in expressed interest shown by the Beaufort data. We worked with an eventual sample of over 1400 questionnaires from within the ABC1 groups and by definition able to read Welsh.

Much of the questionnaire was qualitative market research and related to the kind of content people wanted to see in a daily paper, but one section was quantitative and related to the respondents' willingness to subscribe and even to recruit others to subscribe. On the basis of the findings we thought it reasonable and even conservative to aim at sales to one in three of the target households over a period of five years, that is to say an eventual circulation of 15,000. Our business plan projected sales of 7000 by the end of Year 1, 10,000 (with break-even) at the end of year 3 on the way to an eventual 15,000. The experience of new minority newspapers is quite different from the launch of new titles in established state languages, and shows that in the early years you have to contend with established linguistic habits in newspaper-reading in the older population and have to build circulation progressively.

Focus groups

By the time the work with focus groups north and south was carried out, we had appointed an editor, we were able to show the design of the newspaper, and a pricing structure for subscriptions in print and web-only was open to discussion. One of the things we learnt from the groups was that considerable work was needed to explain a voucher subscription model to our target audience. While long familiar in continental Europe, this model has not been common in the UK until recently, though it has now become an option with almost all quality dailies published in London.

Market Research and Market Testing

These two quite different things are sometimes confused. With many consumer products it is possible to go beyond research and to test the market by offering a prototype for sale at a given price in a limited geographical area or set of outlets, so as to gauge the response to the product. As Dr Bianchi noted in his report, we had neither the staff nor the money resources to write, produce and distribute a full newspaper for a significant period to test what the take up would be. But even if we could have afforded it, it would have had a very limited validity. This is not the way newspaper launches are done. You can get responses to the design, you can ask people what regular features they would like to see in their paper, but as products with a changing content in reaction to a changing scene, and a quality of reporting and scrutiny only brought out by events, newspapers are only really tested after launch, with a full staff in place and over a considerable period.

In 2000 the Environment Agency should have been well aware of the community concerns over the potential damage to the SSSI/SAC. Residents of Johnstown and Ruabon North were eagerly awaiting the designation of the SAC in the belief that it would stop the landfill.

With regard to the PPC permit, Environment Agency officers told some of our group at a Liaison Meeting that they had eventually issued the permit "because they could not afford not to".

Re "the decision to allow a landfill to be constructed lies with the Local Authority". No engineering plans for current workings have ever been passed by Wrexham County Borough Council Planning Committee.

The engineering plans have always been held by the Environment Agency and are not available in Planning. Meanwhile landfill continues

Only Phases A and B are permitted at the moment under the 1995 permission and have no accompanying engineering plans. Current plans are under discussion with Wrexham County Borough Council.

There was no objection from the Environment Agency to construction of a 30 m long bund and a temporary road on top of the SAC site.

85% of GCNs are in this area.

CCW1.

1. Stryt Las a'r Hafod Special Area of Conservation is known to be one of Britain's most important sites for great crested newts. There are 500 ponds which are suitable habitats for GCN in Wales, 400 of which are in North East Wales and 200 of these being in Wrexham.
2. Mitigation land is immediately adjacent to the Hafod Claypit/landfill site and consists of the Vauxhall Colliery Site to the south and a coal spoil heap to the north.

Numbers of newts declined after translocation (1995, 1999,2001). Did CCW only realise how many newts there were when they started translocating the newts?

The translocation in 2004 and 2005 were after designation as a SAC. Surely this was illegal unless the site was designated as of national importance. Since Hafod is not a site of National Importance, why have proximity principles never been applied? The site is not required by North Wales. - see Regional Waste Plan, it is/was not required by Wrexham nor clearly by Merseyside who have now sold it.

3. Only the 'great majority' of the GCNs had been removed under licence. Why was landfilling allowed to go ahead in 2006 with GCNs in the quarry area.
4. Item 4 states the physical barriers as 'roads and fast flowing rivers'. What fast flowing rivers or roads? - It is in fact a railway.
5. Conclusions - sentence beginning "Consequently" what does that mean?
6. The Chief Executive has made no mention of the damage to the SAC as a consequence of landfill operations.
7. A 30 metre bund was built on top of the site, along with a temporary road, with all the attendant damage to the surrounding SAC for which CCW conducted no appropriate assessment.

We enclose a copy of our submission to Europe relevant to this issue. The Habitats Directive on page 1 is particularly relevant.

In other parts of the country, e.g. Malham Cove, SAC sites are treasured, truly protected and explained by visitor centres and displays. Stryt Las a'r Hafod is trashed and ignored. Please see attached photographs.

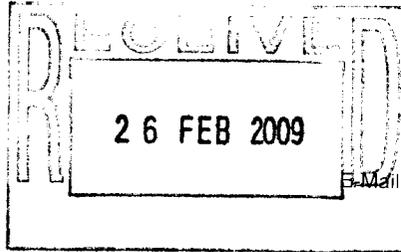
Edwina Hart AM MBE

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Our ref: EH/00608/09

Your ref: PET-03-137

Val Lloyd AM
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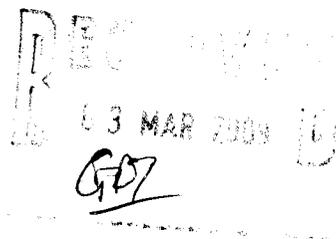
26 February 2009

Thank you for your letter dated 13 February about the development of clinical guidelines for the assessment and management of hypothyroidism in Wales.

Decisions about the most appropriate clinical intervention are a matter for professional judgement based on clinical evidence. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) develops clinical guidelines for the NHS in Wales and England on the care and management of a range of conditions. It currently has no plans to develop guidelines for hypothyroidism, but it is open to anyone to suggest a topic for NICE guidance. Further details on how to do this are available on the Institute's website: www.nice.org.uk. There are other sources of clinical evidence available to professionals including the Cochrane Library and the BMJ publication 'Clinical Evidence'. I understand both have described the current state of the evidence on this condition to assist professionals.

The National Public Health Service undertook a review of the evidence around treating sub-clinical hypothyroidism and I attach a website address for your information

http://www.attract.wales.nhs.uk/question_answers.cfm?question_id=1719



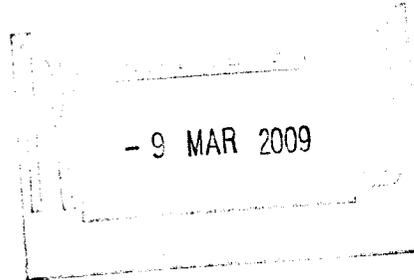
Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/00337/09

Val Lloyd AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly For Wales
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09 March 2009

Dear Val

Thank you for your letter of 3 February to Jane Davidson AM in relation to a briefing note that you have received from the Department for Transport, following a petition that was received from the Guide Dogs for the Blind. I am responding to your latest letter as I feel this now sits more comfortably within my Transport Portfolio.

I am very grateful that you have brought this matter to my attention. It is imperative that shared space is accessible and practicable for all road users. I am aware of the proposal by the Department for Transport to undertake a comprehensive research project on shared space aimed at informing future policy and guidance. I will ensure we are actively involved in this research project and officials are currently considering an invitation to sit on the steering group for the project.

*Yours
Ieuan*

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport



Written Response to the Committee

Enterprise and Learning Committee

Report of Committee's consideration of the Fuel and Road Haulage Petition

January 2009

Executive Summary

I am very grateful to the Enterprise and Learning Committee for their work and helpful recommendations on the competitiveness and sustainability of the Welsh Road Haulage industry.

There are particular challenges in the haulage industry in competitiveness as the economic climate affects not only the industry but the widespread customer base that in turn uses haulage in every aspect. This is allied to the very need of the sector to adopt sustainability as a core element of their approach toward servicing their customer base.

Since the original petition was presented the changes in the economic environment has seen the Welsh Assembly Government respond positively to support small business enterprises. This forms an overarching approach to support industry as a whole which will subsequently benefit the haulage sector. We have identified eco-driving / SAFED as one of the areas that we will be pursuing in the context of the National Transport Plan and the carbon reduction target.

The Wales Transport Strategy identifies Ports that have the capacity to realise their potential and better improve their access to the haulage industry.

As indicated below, I have accepted two of the recommendations and accept in principle the two other recommendations.

Detailed Responses

Detailed responses to the report's recommendations are set out below:

The Committee recommends that:

1. The Welsh Assembly Government, given the current economic downturn considers a further extension of the categories of business which would be covered by the small business relief scheme and to use all available levers on rates to support business at this difficult time.

Response : Accept

I accept this recommendation on the basis that on 1st December 2008 the Non-Domestic Rating (Small Business Relief) (Wales) Order 2008 came into force and which extend the small business relief scheme. Particularly relevant are plans to:

- increase to £6,500 the current rateable value threshold of £5,000 for most business hereditaments in Wales that are eligible for 25% rates relief and
- provide 25% relief to most retail premises (shops, public houses, restaurants and petrol filling stations) with a rateable value between £6,501 and £9000 until 2012.
- We will also retain the 50 per cent relief for businesses with a rateable value of £2,000 or less;

Financial Implications – None over and above the provision in existing budgets.

The Committee recommends that:

2. The Welsh Assembly Government informs the forthcoming review of Welsh ports by the Welsh Affairs Select Committee of the need for a survey of Welsh ports to determine where additional capacity can be found to improve access to freight and to promote the operation of the road haulage industry in Wales.

Response : Accept

I accept this recommendation in part. The Wales Transport Strategy and Wales Freight Strategy recognise the role of Welsh ports in increasing the use of short sea crossings for freight. Whilst we will give evidence, if called upon, to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, it is for the Welsh Assembly Government to take forward its strategy and consider any recommendations made by the Select Committee

The Welsh Assembly Government regards partnership working as essential to the delivery of all freight services in Wales, whatever the mode and particularly multi-modal operations.

Financial Implications – The costs of implementing the Wales Freight Strategy and subsequent action plans are unfunded.

The Committee recommends that:

3. The Welsh Assembly Government uses the forthcoming road policing manifesto to make known its strategic policy decisions on road safety.

Response: Accept in Principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. Road safety and the reduction of road casualties in Wales is a priority for the Welsh Assembly Government particularly on the motorway and trunk roads for which it has highway authority responsibilities. We will continue to work closely with the Police and VOSA to see how the specific issues related to the A55 can be improved. I am awaiting sight of the road policing manifesto. I will then be able to consider how the manifesto can contribute to strategic policy decisions on road safety.

Financial Implications – None over and above the provision in existing budgets.

The Committee recommends that:

4. The Welsh Assembly Government provides adequate funding to ensure that SAFED training can be delivered in Wales.

Response: Accept in Principle

I accept this recommendation in principle. I believe that a more co-ordinated approach is needed to take forward eco-driving techniques and standards across the whole of the transport sector. Our overall aim is not only to encourage better driving standards but also to encourage more freight to be transported by sustainable modes such as rail.

Driver training is available commercially and advice on eco-driving can be accessed through the Energy Saving Trust's website. Local authorities and the wider public sector should consider the potential for including eco-driving training and techniques as part of the development of work placed travel plans.

In addition, I want to explore how we might be able to take forward the Freight Best Practice Programme in Wales and how we can work with our partners to encourage eco-driving practices through their own work programmes.

Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving (SAFED) is seen as an element of a more co-ordinated and overarching approach that encourages the freight operator and other stakeholders. However, I am not in a position to commit funding to SAFED training at the present time.

Financial Implications – No funding exists in future transport spending plans to take forward SAFED in Wales.

**Ieuan Wyn Jones AM,
Deputy First Minister**

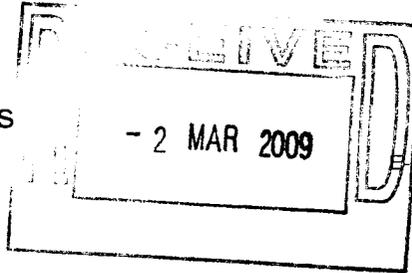
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Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Our ref: EH/00634/09

Your ref: PET/03/150

Val Lloyd AM
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Ben Vell

3rd March 2009

Thank you for your letter of 16 February on behalf of the Petitions Committee, asking to be informed of Local Health Board (LHB) implementation of the National Cancer Standards, once the March 2009 deadline has been reached.

LHBs have action plans in place on the implementation of the Standards and are working with the Regional Cancer Networks to achieve these Standards by March 2009. Progress against action plans is being carefully monitored by the Regional Offices.

In April 2009 the NHS will complete a detailed self assessment of its compliance with the National Cancer Standards. Detailed reports on compliance will be provided for the LHBs by the three Regional Cancer Networks, working with the Cancer Services Co-ordinating Group (CSCG), commencing in June. The CSCG will prepare an all-Wales summary report for me in July. I have also asked CSCG to look at how I can present the outcome of this exercise to assess compliance with the Standards to the public in a meaningful way.

Edwina Hart

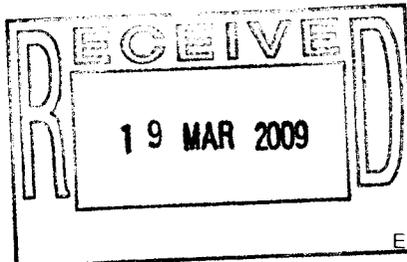
RECEIVED
EDWINA HART
CSCG

Edwina Hart AM MBE

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Our ref: EH/00943/09
Your ref:



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Welsh Assembly Government

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Dear Val

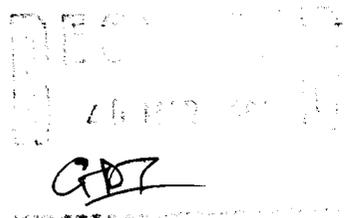
18th March 2009

Thank you for your further letter of 6 March about sleep apnoea services and its related petition.

As you will be aware from my previous letter, an audit was carried out in September 2008 of all Local Health Boards' progress in implementing the Respiratory Directives, including those for sleep apnoea. Results indicated a variation in progress across Wales and as a result we will be repeating this audit in September 2009. I will expect all LHBs to have care pathways in place for sleep apnoea and other respiratory conditions by this time.

I also explained that in the light of the NICE guidance published in March 2008, any patient prescribed a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine to assist their breathing should receive one. Patients however must be treated according to clinical need and it is a matter for clinicians to decide on appropriate treatment for their patients.

Edwina Hart



25 January 2009

Dear Sir

RE: P-03-163 Improvements to the A487 near Aberystwyth

With reference to the above petition I was delighted to hear that the Welsh Assembly Government are in the process of extending the speed limit between Waunfawr crossroads and Maeshendre. I am also extremely pleased that the WAG are planning to provide a new roundabout at Dorglwyd junction, Comins Coch. I am convinced that this will be a major contribution to road safety.

I am disappointed though that WAG have not seen it necessary to put two extra lamps just above Waunfawr crossroads whilst they are at present upgrading the whole lighting issue on Penglais hill. Also, between Maeshendre junction and the proposed roundabout at Dorglwyd there are continuing accidents occurring on Rhiw Sion Saer, Comins Coch where two accidents occurred within yards of each other on the bend which does look as if the camber of the road is actually pulling traffic doing over 50 into the corner.

Once again I am grateful that you have decided to push forward with the roundabout and I am sure that the 800 people who signed the petition will also feel that they are being listened to.

Diolch yn fawr iawn.

Yours faithfully

John E. Roberts (Cllr. Faenor Ward) Aberystwyth

Ieuan Wyn Jones AM
Deputy First Minister
Welsh Assembly Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

13th March 2009.

PETITIONS COMMITTEE WELSH ASSEMBLY

Ref: P-03-166.

Dear Petitions Committee,

Further to the additional signatures for this petition of 1,873 names sent to your office 29th September 2008. One must realise how our community is feeling about the loss of our community hospital; Abertillery @ District Hospital, Aberbeeg.

You have no adequate services in our community for respite care. The reason why patient Numbers dropped in Aberbeeg Hospital was because patients were placed in the private sector; costing the earth for families.

Surely, in this day and age with our country of Wales in such a state of collapse and is now the poor relation of the U.K. we need to keep our hospital open?

We require our hospital at Aberbeeg for our people to have excellent nursing care in their own environment. We feel it is NHS madness to close Abertillery Hospital which is set in its own grounds away from the hustle and bustle of today's modern environment.

Abertillery Hospital is a priceless commodity that will be needed now while your new hospital in Ebbw Vale is being built and won't be ready in the near future.

We have been informed that the NHS can now only claim so much of the money. Why should anyone claim money that in our opinion should come back to the people of Abertillery and Blaenau Gwent.

If what you are saying the NHS can only claim 500,000 of the sale, where is the rest of the money going?

Shouldn't all of the money be given to the people of Blaenau Gwent from the sale of Abertillery Hospital. The money was raised by the miners and railway workers sacrificing so much per week for the building. Families had to go without to be able to pledge pennies a week out of their meagre wages.

The 1,900 signatures are a sign of the way the people of Abertillery are taking this outrageous sale of a Hospital that has been in the community since 1900's.

Rumours are running wild about low cost housing is to be built on the site. How can this be when the bottom has fallen out of the housing market and at this time there are hundreds of houses throughout the Borough in Blaenau Gwent lying empty which includes Council and private dwellings.

If our Hospital has to be sold to plough money into the Ebbw Vale project it is a sorry state of affairs here in Wales, selling off perfectly good assets to fund what the NHS should be paying for through the Assembly funds.

At this particular moment our Doctor on call service has been stopped. It used to be worked from Abertillery @ District Hospital. This was a service that is needed in the area, but it's gone like everything else.

Your sincerely Mirren Martha Lowman (Mrs)

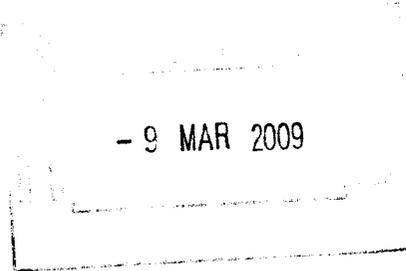
leuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref PET-03-172
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/00275/09

Val Lloyd AM
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



09 March 2009

Dee Val

Thank you for your letter of 4 February and for attaching the copy of Associated British Port's response to the Petitions Committee.

My officials have met with representatives from ABP and remain in regular contact regarding their efforts to reinstate the ferry service. They will continue to offer every support that is available.

*Yours
Deua*

leuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

DEU JONES
16 MAR 2009
GDZ

Sian Phipps
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF
CF99 1NA

You're Ref PET-03-184

14th February 2009

Dear Sian

Petition P-03-184 Concessionary Bus Fares

Thank you, for your letter of 4th February 2009. You asked in your letter for my response to the Deputy First Minister on the above situation.

I feel, as do many other local people very let down by our local council. An agreement was made with Silcox and the council to just have 2 buses a week running on route from Pembroke Dock to Carmarthen Town. I can understand the situation Wilcox is in, as no company is expected to run a business at a loss.

I think Pembrokeshire County Council needs to think of their Senior Citizens a lot more that what they do. With just 2 buses per week traveling into Carmarthen town, there has been no room for some passengers on route as the bus is full. Carmarthen County Council also needs to think of the revenue they are losing, especially with the credit crunch, I would have thought they needed as many customers as they can get to spend their money.

It's been suggested that there are alternate routes, which is by traveling to Haverfordwest and then changing buses to get to Carmarthen. This is very unsuitable for the more elderly travelers.

I realize that both Pembrokeshire and Carmarthen County Councils have their priorities with their funding, but surely if they both reached a settlement figure between them, something could be arranged to get the one bus daily running again.

It seems we are asking for the moon, and not for just ONE bus a day!

Yours sincerely



Anne Price (Mrs)



Penallta House,
Tredomen Park,
Ystrad Mynach,
Hengoed.
CF82 7PG

Tŷ Penallta,
Parc Tredomen,
Ystrad Mynach,
Hengoed.
CF82 7PG

Ms Val Lloyd
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF
CF99 1NA

**Chief Executive
Stuart Rosser**

Prif Weithredwr

Your Ref/Eich Cyf:

Our Ref/Ein Cyf:

Contact/Cyslltwch â:

Telephone/Ffon:

E Mail/E Bost:

Date/Dyddiad:

CE/SBT

Stuart Rosser

01443 864410

stuartrosser@caerphilly.gov.uk

13 March 2009

Dear Ms Lloyd

PETITION – BUS SERVICE BETWEEN THE RHYMNEY VALLEY AND CARDIFF

Thank you for your letter of 12 February 2009, concerning the petition received by the Petitions Committee calling for the restoration of the direct bus service between Bargoed and Cardiff (service X38). I can also confirm that the Council has received a number of representations for the restoration of this bus service. Whilst I recognise that you are simply referring this to the Council for consideration, I have set out below the Council's position on this for information.

The X38 route to Cardiff was a wholly commercial service provided by Stagecoach that operated from Bargoed via Pengam, Penpedairheol, Gelligaer and Nelson with most journeys operating via Pontypridd. The service operated mostly every hour and required 3 buses to maintain the timetable and had been losing money for some time - the company initially approached the Council over a year before the changes were made last October to advise that the service was losing money and considered a number of options, with the worse case being the complete withdrawal of the service. As a comparison with the X4 service (Heads of the Valleys - Merthyr - Pontypridd - Cardiff), the X38 carried 39,300 passengers on each of the three buses operating the service to Cardiff - the X4 service carries on average 73,700 passengers on each of the 15 buses required to operate this route (figures from 2007/08).

The service had been affected by the improved train service from Bargoed, Pengam and Ystrad Mynach Stations - the standard pattern timetable introduced 4 trains per hour from March 2006 providing a shorter and more consistent journey time and with competitive fares meant the bus service lost a significant amount of fare paying passengers. The service also paralleled a number of other services on sections of its route and suffered reliability problems because of traffic congestion at Pontypridd and Cardiff, which has a greater impact on the reliability of this service compared with routes as there was generally only the one departure each hour.

Cont/d

**Chief Executive: Stuart Rosser
Prif Weithredwr: Stuart Rosser**

Following service changes in the Merthyr area, Stagecoach registered a revised X38 service from 6 October that offered an improved timetable between Bargoed and Pontypridd – there is now to be a consistent hourly timetable throughout the day previously there were some gaps in the timetable particularly in the afternoon. The service now operates with low floor buses, which was not the case previously.

From Pontypridd, Stagecoach provide three main routes to Cardiff - the X4 and X32 operate directly to Cardiff via the A470 with 5 combined departures each hour, the other route (the 132) provides another 4 departures each hour on a more indirect route. Stagecoach offer through tickets for travel to and from Cardiff for the X38 passengers and these are be no more expensive than the current direct fare.

The Local Transport Services Grant (LTSG) allocated to the Council from the Assembly has been in existence for a number of years and has been fully utilised by the Council during each financial year. Most of the funding received is spent directly on subsidising local bus services through long term contracts with bus operators and as the allocation from the Assembly does not rise significantly each financial year (generally it increases in line with prevailing inflation rates), there is no new money to fund the direct replacement of a significant service change such as the withdrawal of direct journeys to Cardiff on the X38 service. Stagecoach have confirmed it would cost around £100k per annum to reinstate the previous level of service and whilst the Council spends around £1.2million each year subsidising bus services (including £500k through LTSG), it would not be possible to fund the reinstatement of the former X38 route without making significant cuts to other established subsidised bus services.

Whilst I accept the comments from the Minister confirming that the decision to subsidise a route rests with the local authority, they do not acknowledge the fact that the Council is dependent on the Assembly Government for over 40 % of the revenue budget available for subsidising bus services, through the allocation of LTSG. Unless the Assembly Government plans to significantly increase the Council's allocation of LTSG for the next financial year, with funding from both budgets committed to existing contracts (and under pressure as operational costs continue to escalate), there is simply no available revenue funding to reinstate the X38 as a through route to Cardiff.

In summary, bus operators are finding it increasingly difficult to run certain longer distance services commercially - particularly where there are rail services running along part of the route, where fares, journey time and reliability tend to be competitive or in the case of the latter two much better than the bus can achieve. The X38 is one of two routes connecting the county borough with Cardiff that have been curtailed during the past six months (the other was service X16 which lost most of its passengers following the reinstatement of the Ebbw Valley train service). The cost to reinstate these types of service is high and cannot be met from our existing subsidy budgets. In the regional context, Sewta has aspirations through the Bus Prioritisation Programme to improve the operating environment for buses into major centres such as Cardiff and Pontypridd - this will allow operators to run more efficiently and compete better on journey time and reliability and will hopefully result in an improved bus network and the reinstatement/development of longer distance routes to major centres such as Cardiff.

Cont/d

I would clearly like this information passed on to the lead petitioner but I understand that it is not appropriate for you to release the address. I would therefore be grateful if you would forward a copy of this letter to the lead petitioner.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Rosser', written in a cursive style.

**STUART ROSSER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**