

Sustainability Committee

SC(3)-08-09 (p1): Letter from Val Lloyd, Chair of the Petitions Committee

<p>Y Pwyllgor Deisebau Petitions Committee</p>	
<p>Mick Bates AM Chair Sustainability Committee National Assembly for Wales Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA</p>	<p>Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA Our ref: P-03-118 21 April 2009</p>

Dear Mick

Report of the Petitions Committee's short inquiry into Access Along Inland Water

I have pleasure in sending you a copy of the Petitions Committee's first inquiry report, Access along Inland Water, which we published on 15 April.

The short inquiry was our response to a petition we received from the Welsh Canoeing Association (now called Canoe Wales) that called for legislation to establish a statutory right of public access to and along non-tidal water in Wales, along the lines of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 ('the Act'). The inquiry consisted of two discrete case studies: a fact-finding visit to the River Teifi to establish the key issues involved with different uses of the water; and a formal meeting in the Scottish Parliament to take evidence from Scottish organisations on the effectiveness of the Act.

I would like to draw your Committee's attention in particular to our conclusions (paragraphs 46 to 54) and our two recommendations (paragraphs 55 and 56). It was our view that the complex and confusing situation in Wales regarding the many and different rights of access is untenable and unworkable, especially in view of the growth in water recreation, but we believe that this could be clarified through a new statute. We therefore recommended that the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides a useful basis from which a unique Welsh model could be developed.

We also recommended that in order for a statutory right of access to work and be regulated in practice, it would require a mandatory code of conduct, including some attempt to develop an identification system for regular water users.

We are conscious, of course, that standing orders do not allow the Petitions Committee to bring forward new legislation ourselves, but we can refer the issue to the relevant scrutiny committee. We are therefore writing to both you and the Chair of the Communities and Culture Committee to ask whether access along inland water is an issue that you would consider for a future scrutiny inquiry, with the possibility of bringing forward legislative competence in this area.

During the course of our inquiry we received a significant response from a number of organisations wishing to provide written or oral evidence to a more wide-ranging inquiry. If you are indeed minded to take this matter forward, then we would be happy to provide your Committee with their contact details.

I am grateful to you for your consideration of this request, and would be pleased to offer any further information you require.

Yours sincerely



Val Lloyd

Chair, Petitions Committee