

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue: Committee Room 3

Meeting date: 15 May 2023

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price

Committee Clerk

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Petitions@senedd.wales

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions – Petitions Committee

(Pages 1 – 25)

Attached Documents:

Chair's brief

2 Evidence session 1 – P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

(14:00 – 15:00)

Neil Kenward, Ofgem

3 Evidence session 2 – P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

(15:00 – 16:00)

(Pages 26 – 27)

Chris O'Shea, Centrica

Dhara Vyas, Energy UK

Andrew Ward, Scottish Power Retail

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from Centrica, 4 May 2023

4 New Petitions



4.1 P-06-1324 BCUHB has failed the people of North Wales and should be disbanded into smaller units

(Pages 28 – 35)

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Correspondence from the Minister for Health and Social Services, 30 March 2023

4.2 P-06-1327 Leisure Centre amenities free for children

(Pages 36 – 41)

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Correspondence from the Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Chief Whip, 28 March 2023

4.3 P-06-1328 Ensure that all social care workers in Wales are paid the new Real Living Wage (£10.90) immediately

(Pages 42 – 47)

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Correspondence from the Deputy Minister for Social Services, 29 March 2023

4.4 P-06-1329 Set an ambition and a clear timetable to give every child in the country Welsh-medium education

(Pages 48 – 54)

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Correspondence from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, 27 April 2023

4.5 P-06-1330 We call on the Welsh Government to reject their proposals for a council tax revaluation

(Pages 55 – 66)

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Correspondence from the Minister for Finance and Local Government, 27
March 2023

Correspondence from the Petitioner, 10 May 2023

4.6 P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus

(Pages 67 – 76)

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Correspondence from the Minister for Climate Change, 28 April 2023

Correspondence from the petitioner, 3 May 2023

5 Updates to previous petitions

5.1 P-05-1106 Introduce Personal Health Budgets and Personalised Care in Wales

(Pages 77 – 80)

Attached Documents:

Cover sheet

Correspondence from the Deputy Minister for Social Services, 18 April 2023

5.2 P-06-1213 Ban leisure use of Seadoo/jet ski in Cymru. Except in strictly controlled designated areas

(Pages 81 – 84)

Attached Documents:

Cover sheet

Correspondence from the Minister for Climate Change, 5 April 2023

Correspondence from the petitioner, 2 May 2023

5.3 P-06-1247 We call on the Welsh Government to lead the way by supporting trials of a four-day week in Wales

(Pages 85 – 89)

Attached Documents:

Cover sheet

Welsh Government Response to Committee Report, 10 March 2023

5.4 P-06-1294 Don't leave metastatic breast cancer patients in Wales behind

(Pages 90 – 91)

Attached Documents:

Cover sheet

Correspondence from the Minister for Health and Social Services, 13 April 2023

5.5 P-06-1303 Create, fund and sustain sufficient affordable nursery and childcare places for all working parents

(Pages 92 – 94)

Attached Documents:

Cover sheet

Correspondence from the Deputy Minister for Social Services, 28 March 2023

Correspondence from the Petitioner, 3 May 2023

5.6 P-06-1325 Lower the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn

(Pages 95 – 98)

Attached Documents:

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Correspondence from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, 2 May 2023

Correspondence from the Petitioner, 8 May 2023 (Only available in Welsh)

Correspondence from the Petitioner, 08 May 2023 (Only available for Members)

6 Papers to note

6.1 Paper to note – P-06-1161 Routine collection and publication of data of how many babies/children return to their care experienced parents care at the end of a Parent and Child Placement

(Pages 99 – 101)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from the Chair of the Children Young People, and Education Committee, 5 April 2023

6.2 Paper to note – P-06-1272 Ban the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy agreements in Wales

(Pages 102 – 103)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from the Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee, 6 April 2023

6.3 Paper to note – P-06-1297 Stop "Controlled Burning" in Wales

(Pages 104 – 110)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from the Wales Wildfire Board, 30 March 2023

6.4 Paper to note – P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

(Pages 111 – 115)

Attached Documents:

Correspondence from Citizens Advice Cymru to the Minister for Social Justice, 31 March 2023

7 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting

8 Discussion of evidence – P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

9 Annual Report: Outline structure

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 3

P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales, Correspondence – Centrica to Chair, 04.05.23

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Given my upcoming participation at a session of the Petitions Committee on 15 May on prepayment meters, I wanted to share the findings from our internal investigation into the conduct of British Gas' warrant activity. A copy of the report is available [here](#) - but I also wanted to highlight the key findings and actions that we are taking to improve our approach and protect our customers.

By way of background, our investigation, overseen by independent regulatory compliance consultancy, Promontory Financial Services, looked at the facts of the individual cases that were raised with us, as well as examining the systems and controls our third-party contractor Arvato had in place and finally, the inquiry looked at Centrica's own governance and oversight processes in relation to the management of Arvato.

The investigation concluded that there were no systemic issues in the way we handled the fitting of prepayment meters under warrant, but it did find evidence that in a small number of cases, we have got things wrong. Today we are taking immediate action to address the issues that the report has identified, indeed we've already started making the changes. The details of the hundreds of difficult cases we have reviewed as part of this process has also reinforced the need for a broader debate on the underlying issue of affordability. This is critical, as the struggle millions of consumers face to pay bills is not going away anytime soon.

Investigation findings

- As well as reviewing the cases reported in the media, we have reviewed a statistically robust sample of 321 cases:
 - Of these 321 cases, the investigation found two customer cases where the investigation team considered that a PPM was not appropriate because of the personal circumstances of the customers.
 - The investigation team found 13 cases where the Arvato warrant officer proceeded with a PPM installation without sufficiently recording how previously known vulnerability considerations had been considered contrary to our policies and procedures. British Gas is currently looking into these cases to determine whether new facts emerge that would point to a change in payment type.
 - The investigation found a further 13 cases where there was insufficient data available for the investigation team to conclude whether the PPM installation had been carried out in line with our policies and procedures
 - The remaining cases were found to be compliant with the obligation to ensure that installations were safe and reasonably practicable for the customer.
- In those cases where the investigation team considered that a PPM was not appropriate, we have contacted the customer and have offered compensation and to change the meter.
- The report identified a number of opportunities and areas for future improvement in systems and controls, including:
 - More integrated governance arrangements; incorporation of complaints data into the review of PPM installations; insufficient detail captured in the records of customer interactions in a limited number of cases; and areas for improvement in the calibration session involving both British Gas and Arvato.

- The report also found that remuneration and incentives did not seek to attach greater weight to the volume of installations of PPMs, and quality assurance checks were frequent and extensive.

Actions

On the back of these findings British Gas has committed to the following actions and support for customers:

- We have decided that British Gas will permanently cease all warrant-related work with third party contractors such as Arvato given the complexity and sensitivity of the activity in question; as and when PPM warrant installations resume, this work will now be carried out in-house. This will give British Gas more direct oversight of the process. Agents will also benefit from training at British Gas' award-winning academies, creating a highly skilled workforce that will work across this sensitive issue.
- Introduce parity between the cost of energy for PPM customers and the cost of energy for direct debit customers, earlier than mandated (from 1 April).
- Continue to support customers with a £10 million fund to directly support PPM customers who are in debt by providing a non-repayable credit up to £250. This fund has already helped over 50,000 PPM customers this winter.
- Commitment to Ofgem's voluntary Code of Practice on involuntary PPM installations.
- In addition to these commitments, we will work with others in the sector, and beyond, to push for better data sharing in relation to customers who are either physically or financially vulnerable on an industry-wide basis, drawn from sources such as the Department of Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs, as well as third sector organisations. We would be grateful for your support for such a data sharing initiative.

Tackling energy affordability

While we must take action to get things right and ensure vulnerable customers receive support, our own investigation has reinforced that changes to prepayment meter processes alone will not address the underlying problems around affordability for many customers. We believe it is also vital to look at the wider issue of long-term affordability of energy. The UK Government has confirmed they are looking carefully at long term energy support, including potentially a social tariff, from April 2024. This is welcome news for those on the lowest incomes but there are some tough policy choices about how this is paid for.

I look forward to joining the upcoming session of the Petitions Committee on 15 May.

Best wishes,

Chris O'Shea
Group Chief Executive

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has failed the people of North Wales and should be disbanded into smaller units

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Mai 2023
Petitions Committee | 15 May 2023

Reference: SR23/5478-1

Petition Number: P-06-1324

Petition title: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has failed the people of North Wales and should be disbanded into smaller units

Text of petition:

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) (Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Betsi Cadwaladr) is the LHB of NHS Wales for the north of Wales. It is the largest health organisation in Wales, providing primary, community, mental health, and acute hospital services for a population of around 694,000 people across the six principal areas of north Wales (Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham) as well as parts of Mid Wales. It has been in and out of special measures since 2015.

BCUHB has had a series of chief executives and executives who have without exception failed to grapple the huge organisational disaster that is Betsi care. Vascular services, stroke services, disastrous Accident and Emergency waits, Mental Health and crippling waiting times for planned surgery are not being dealt with sufficient urgency. The people of North Wales have been let down. The scrutiny of board decisions go unchallenged and patients are suffering unnecessarily.

It's time to admit that the organisation is far too big and unwieldy to respond



to the challenges it faces and break it up into smaller geographical units that respond to the needs of their local populations.

1. Background

Concerns about Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) date back to its earliest years following NHS reorganisation in 2009, with a number of subsequent reports raising serious concerns about the quality and safety of care provided in some of the services. Some of the subsequent chronology is set out on the [BCUHB website](#) and in the Fifth Senedd's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report [Governance Review of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board: Lessons Learnt](#) (May 2019).

More recently, the Sixth Senedd's Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee (PAPAC) has undertaken [follow-up work on governance issues in BCUHB](#), including taking detailed evidence from BCUHB on [9 March 2022](#), correspondence with both BCUHB and the Minister for Health and Social Services, and on [10 November 2022](#), the Committee took [evidence](#) from the North Wales Community Health Council.

The Committee agreed to review and revisit progress being made by the Board in Autumn 2022 but [postponed this work](#) following the qualification of the Health Board's 2021-22 accounts and the errors identified in them by the Auditor General, which are subject to further investigation. The Committee has said that it will continue to closely monitor issues relating to the health board and will conduct its own comprehensive scrutiny of these matters in a timely manner.

2. Escalation and intervention

In June 2015 BCUHB was **placed in Special Measures** – the highest level of escalation under the [NHS Wales Escalation and Intervention Arrangements](#). There were five key areas identified in which improvement was needed; governance, leadership and oversight in the health board; mental health services; maternity services; primary care, especially out of hours; and public engagement.

In February 2018 Maternity services were de-escalated from special measures, followed by GP out of hours services in February 2019.

In November 2020 the then Health Minister announces that BCUHB would be **de-escalated from special measures** to targeted intervention with immediate effect. This was to be supported by a further £82m per year over three-and-a-half years. In March 2021 Welsh Government published the Targeted Intervention Framework, indicating the areas for improvement expected of BCUHB.

On 23 February 2023, Audit Wales published a public interest report: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board – Review of Board Effectiveness. Audit Wales stated that:

Through routine audit work undertaken at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, growing concerns were uncovered regarding the cohesiveness of the board and working relationships at senior level. The extent and nature of these concerns led to the Auditor General for Wales completing an urgent and focused review of the collective effectiveness of the board at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

The Auditor General's report in the public interest has found that the breakdown in working relationships within the board at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is fundamentally compromising its ability to tackle the numerous challenges the organisation faces. The report also found that without some form of intervention to establish a more unified Executive Team and wider board, the current situation is unlikely to be resolved.

The report also identifies immediate actions Audit Wales believe are needed to address the concerns raised in the review and notes the significant turnover within the Executive Team. The report highlights the delay in recruiting a replacement for the substantive Chief Executive who left the organisation at the end of October 2022, "creating some immediate challenges for the organisation in terms of continuity and stability of Executive Team leadership".

Following the publication of the report, on 27 February the Minister for Health and Social Services announced that BCUHB will be put into special measures "because of serious concerns about performance, leadership and culture". The Minister also stated that "the Chair, Vice Chair and independent members of the Board have agreed they will step aside" and that a number of direct appointments to the Board had been made by the Minister to ensure stability including Dyfed Edwards

as the new Chair of BCUHB. The Minister also reported that the health board would be supported by an intervention and support team and made an oral statement to Plenary on 28 February in which she confirmed that this team will initially be contracted for six months, and will support the health board on board governance and other issues related to special measures.

3. Organisational structure of BCUHB

BCUHB states on its website that:

We are the largest health organisation in Wales, with a budget of **£1.87 billion** and a workforce of over **19,000**. The Health Board is responsible for the delivery of health care services to more than **700,000 people** across the six counties of north Wales (Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham). The Health Board coordinates the work of **97 GP practices**, and NHS services provided by **82 dental and orthodontic practices**, **72 optometry practices** and opticians and **150 pharmacies** in North Wales.

For comparison, Cardiff and the Vale UHB employ approximately 14,500 staff, and spend around £1.4 billion every year on providing health services to a population of around 472,400 people in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan as well as serving a wider population across South and Mid Wales for a range of specialties.

There have previously been questions raised about the size of BCUHB and whether it should be separated out into smaller bodies. In October 2020 Plaid Cymru called for a “new health and care landscape in north Wales describing the existing system as “too big and cumbersome”. In 2015 the then First Minister said there was an issue over whether “one single board is the way forward for the whole of the north”. The current First Minister also acknowledged in 2019 that he had considered whether to split the board up but concluded that another reorganisation would be a barrier to progress. However he noted this is kept under review and “if we thought the answer to Betsi's problems was a reorganisation we wouldn't stand back from doing it”.

Following a critical report into vascular services in BCUHB in March 2022 the outgoing Public Services Ombudsman for Wales said it could be the time to ask whether the north Wales health board was too large or could continue in “its current structural form”. There were calls from Plaid Cymru in Plenary in May 2022 - rejected by Welsh Government - for the health board to be “broken up”,

although the Plaid spokesman acknowledged “that a reorganisation is a big and complicated process”.

The call for breaking up the health board into “smaller, more manageable parts” was repeated in Plenary on 28 February 2023 (para.227). The Minister responded that “I want to make sure that people in north Wales can get the service they require, and I don't think that a massively distracting reorganisation is going to help in that task”. (para.234)

4. Welsh Government response

In her response the Minister for Health and Social Services states that:

I am not of the view that we should consider breaking the health board into smaller units. The health board is the largest in Wales and I believe that it benefits significantly from its scale. Its size means that it can deliver consistent services to the population of North Wales, by managing a single patient waiting list. It can sustain the critical mass required for most specialist services even as advances in professional standards lead to greater sub-specialisation, and it should therefore be able to deliver more resilient specialist services through working across locality boundaries as a single body.

Any significant organisational change or attempt to disband the health board into smaller organisations would only lead to further disruption in a health and social care system still recovering from the impact of the pandemic and may detract from my objectives of delivering improvements in care. It would also create additional management costs at a time when finances are tight.

What is important is to ensure there is appropriate leadership and infrastructure within the health board to meet the demands placed upon it. Therefore, it is essential that we support the health board to drive forward transformation and not undertake a disruptive re-structure that diverts resources from patient care.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these

P-06-1324 Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has failed the people of North Wales and should be disbanded into smaller units

briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1324
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/00506/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

30 March 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 15 February on behalf of Stefan Coghlan regarding a petition to disband Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board into smaller units.

I am not of the view that we should consider breaking the health board into smaller units. The health board is the largest in Wales and I believe that it benefits significantly from its scale. Its size means that it can deliver consistent services to the population of North Wales, by managing a single patient waiting list. It can sustain the critical mass required for most specialist services even as advances in professional standards lead to greater sub-specialisation, and it should therefore be able to deliver more resilient specialist services through working across locality boundaries as a single body.

Any significant organisational change or attempt to disband the health board into smaller organisations would only lead to further disruption in a health and social care system still recovering from the impact of the pandemic and may detract from my objectives of delivering improvements in care. It would also create additional management costs at a time when finances are tight.

What is important is to ensure there is appropriate leadership and infrastructure within the health board to meet the demands placed upon it. Therefore, it is essential that we support the health board to drive forward transformation and not undertake a disruptive re-structure that diverts resources from patient care.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I hope this is helpful to your petitioners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

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

P-06-1327 Leisure Centre amenities free for children

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Mai 2023
Petitions Committee | 15 May 2023

Reference: SR23/5702-1

Petition Number: P-06-1327

Petition title: Leisure Centre amenities free for children

Text of petition: The students members of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan's Senedd strongly believe that Leisure Centre amenities should be free for children in Wales. This would help us keep fit and lead healthy lives.



1. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government's response to this petition summarises its policies for providing free access to sports for young people. These include:

- The Welsh Government provides funding, through Sport Wales, for local authorities to offer free swimming to children and young people aged 16 and under. The scheme provides a free splash session every weekend in every pool and two additional sessions in the summer holidays. Local authorities also provide targeted support to encourage young people from areas of deprivation to participate in the Free Swimming scheme.
- £7m in one-off funding towards the Summer of Fun 2022, which formed part of a wider package of support to help with the cost-of-living crisis facing families across Wales. The initiative built on the previous Summer of Fun 2021 and the Winter of Wellbeing, which were also one-off funding initiatives aimed at recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Welsh Parliament action

Concerns about the impact of the increased cost of living on leisure facilities have been raised in the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee (during its work on [the impact of increased costs on culture and sport](#)) and Local Government and Housing Committee (in its work on [local authority library and leisure services](#)).

2.1. Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee

During its work on the impact of the increased cost of living on culture and sport, the Committee heard that increased costs would lead to activity restrictions, price increases and possible closure of leisure services. In November 2022 it recommended the Welsh Government provide “additional targeted funding to the sports and culture sectors to help venues and organisations that face closure but have a sustainable future beyond the immediate crisis.”

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation. In its response it highlighted an additional £3.75 million for culture and sport during the 2022-23 financial year to help with “exceptional inflationary pressures to utility costs and costs of living pressures at the arm's length bodies and also local sector

organisations". This extra funding has not led to targeted funding to help organisations survive the period of increased costs, as the Committee called for.

During the inquiry, Andrew Howard from the Welsh Sports Association described the particular vulnerability of swimming pools, which have high energy bills, and have experienced other shocks, such as increased costs for cleaning chemicals.

The Committee reiterated its call for additional support for sport and leisure facilities, and in particular, swimming pools, in a [letter to the Welsh Government](#) in April 2023. This followed the announcement of £63 million of support for swimming pools in England in the UK Government's Spring Budget.

2.2. Local Government and Housing Committee

On 29 March 2023, the Welsh Sports Association and Swim Wales stressed the need for additional funding whilst giving [evidence to the Local Government and Housing Committee](#). Fergus Feeney from Swim Wales referred to the scale of funding needed: "Just outlining the gap, we think between £10 million and £12 million, best case. But we start at about £30 million. So, this is a significant problem."

Mr Feeney described the impact of price increases on children learning to swim:

The average lesson pre COVID was £6.50 for a swimming lesson, and post-COVID, in the current environment across Wales, the average cost of a swimming lesson is £12.50. So, we've nearly doubled the cost of a swimming lesson. Those children in those harder-to-reach areas, underserved areas, socially and economically deprived areas, have no chance, and that's why school swimming is so important. We celebrate the 150,000 who are in those lessons—that's fantastic—but they're the ones that can afford it. We're going to have a situation very soon where, dare I say it, white middle-class children will be able to swim and the rest won't.

2.3. Petitions Committee

The Committee previously considered a [petition](#) calling for:

...the Senedd and Welsh Government to recognise the vulnerability of swimming pools by providing a ring-fenced package of financial aid

above and beyond the Final Local Government Settlement to ensure swimming pools remain open.

The Committee considered the petition on 27 February 2023. It noted that, whilst it's disappointing that funding will not be ring-fenced for leisure centres, the petitioner found a recent meeting with the Minister helpful and will now focus their ongoing campaign with the UK Government. In light of this Members agreed to close the petition and thanked the petitioner for highlighting this important issue.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau a Chwaraeon, a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1327
Ein cyf/Our ref DB/00180/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru

28 March 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter dated 14 March 2023 regarding Petition P-06-1327: Leisure Centre amenities free for children.

The Welsh Government provides funding, through Sport Wales, for local authorities to offer free swimming to children and young people aged 16 and under. The scheme provides a free splash session every weekend in every pool and two additional sessions in the summer holidays. Local authorities also provide targeted support to encourage young people from areas of deprivation to participate in the Free Swimming scheme - to have fun, learn a life skill and to enjoy the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of an active lifestyle.

The Welsh Government also provided £7m in one-off funding towards the Summer of Fun 2022, which formed part of our wider package of support to help with the cost-of-living crisis facing families across Wales. The initiative built on the success of the previous Summer of Fun 2021 and the Winter of Wellbeing, which were also one-off funding initiatives aimed at recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Summer of Fun 2022 aimed to provide all children and young people aged 0–25 in Wales with the opportunity to access free activities aimed at supporting their development and wellbeing. Further engagement with play, sporting and cultural activities at a wide range of venues, including leisure centres, has enabled children and young people to continue their recovery from the pandemic restrictions, with the added benefit of supporting families with the costs of activities over the summer holiday period.

The programme supported a universal entitlement to free at the point of entry play, sporting and cultural activities for all children and young people aged 0-25 to help towards reducing the cost of living for families across Wales. It also supported the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of participating children and young people aged 0-25, enabling them to better engage with learning and to re-engage with wider society following the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Activities were delivered between 1 July and 30 September 2022 inclusive. £5.5m of funding was channelled through local authorities across Wales, with the remaining £1.5m allocated between a number of organisations with a track record of working with children and young people. It is hoped this funding provided further sustainability for the providers operating in this space, to move towards a more sustainable footing both financially and in terms of what they can offer to children, young people and their families.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

Dawn Bowden AS/MS

Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau a Chwaraeon, a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip

Real Living Wage for Social Care Workers

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Mai 2023
Petitions Committee | 15 May 2023

Reference: SR23/5702-2

Petition Number: P-06-1328

Petition title: Ensure that all social care workers in Wales are paid the new Real Living Wage (£10.90) immediately.

Text of petition: The Welsh Government made a pledge to pay social care workers in Wales the REAL living wage which was £9.90. In September, the Real Living Wage set by the Real Living Wage Foundation (RLWF) increased to £10.90. Social care workers are trying to make ends meet in a cost-of-living crisis. They are seeing RLWF accredited workers getting at least £1 per hour more for far less skilled jobs. They will soon be leaving the sector!

<https://gov.wales/implementing-real-living-wage-social-care-workers-wales>

Funding needs to be aligned to the Real Living Wage Foundation implementation date (November each year), else social care workers will be feeling even more disgruntled when it goes up again next year. Social care workers are feeling very undervalued and let down by the Welsh Government.



1. Background

The Real Living Wage is an hourly rate of pay set independently and updated annually and is different to the UK Government's National Living Wage. It is calculated according to the basic cost of living in the UK, and employers choose to pay the Real Living Wage on a voluntary basis.

The Welsh Government introduced the Real Living Wage for social care in April 2022.

In September 2022, the Living Wage Foundation announced that the Real Living Wage will rise to £10.90 per hour outside London. The Living Wage Foundation encouraged its accredited employers to implement the pay rise as soon as possible, but by 14 May 2023 at the latest.

The Real Living Wage rates for 2022 were brought forward in recognition of the sharp increase in living costs over the previous year.

2. Welsh Parliament action

During Plenary on 5 October 2022, Mark Isherwood MS referred to a care home director who had raised with him that the Welsh Government had not made funds available to providers via the local authorities to enable them to pay the increase in the Real Living Wage announced in September 2022. The care home director feared that more care workers could leave the sector as a result of the lack of increase in wages.

In Plenary on 19 October 2022, Mark Isherwood MS also asked when the increase in the Real Living Wage (to £10.90 an hour) would be made available to providers via local authorities. The Deputy Minister for Social Services responded by saying the uplift to the Real Living Wage was being considered by the Welsh Government and said:

Of course we want to pay it, but I think you will be aware that the financial circumstances at the moment are not very encouraging. But this is something we would certainly want to do. [para 397]

It was highlighted in the media in February 2023 that a local authority transferred funding to a private care company in April 2022 to increase wages to pay the Real Living Wage, however the private care company didn't increase the wages until the October.

The Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee referred to the Real Living Wage in its report on Hospital discharge and its impact on patient flow through hospitals (June 2022). It states that while the Welsh Government's investment in the social care workforce and its commitment to deliver the Real Living Wage was widely welcomed, many respondents, including BMA Cymru, felt it did not go far enough. The WLGA and ADSS Cymru's written evidence to the inquiry states:

“[...] it is becoming increasingly clear that our ambition must go beyond this if we really want to be able to offer 'fair pay' for those who are undertaking some of the most important roles in society. There is also a need to take immediate action – the workforce challenges are already with us, and so there is a need to do all we can to increase social care workers pay now, there is simply no room to delay.” [para 105]

The Welsh Government acknowledges that delivering the Real Living Wage for social care workers alone is not enough to address staffing shortages and says the Social Care Fair Work Forum is working on further proposals for improvements.

3. Welsh Government action

In the letter to the Petitions Committee dated 29 March 2023, the Deputy Minister for Social Services states that the Welsh Government is committed to improving employment terms and conditions in the social care sector. The Deputy Minister goes on to say that the Welsh Government is aware of the urgent need of support to address pay, recruitment and retention issues, exacerbated by the challenges presented during the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, and in April 2022 it provided £43m of funding for 2022/23, which provided a wage uplift to a group of key workers.

The letter states that the Welsh Government is providing an estimated £70m in 2023/24 to pay the Real Living Wage uplift of £10.90 an hour, **with workers feeling the benefit by June 2023**.

The Deputy Minister notes that budget planning in Welsh Government is agreed in the Autumn for the following financial year, and:

As it stands we are not in a position to implement an uplift or commit to any further funding as we do not have any in year reserves to be able to implement the uplift any earlier.

The Welsh Government's immediate priority, in the context of the wider pressures that the social care sector is facing, is said to be getting "the funding we have already committed into workers pockets". The Deputy Minister highlights that as there are several hundreds of employers in social care, this is a "significant and complex commitment".

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1328
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/00158/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

29 March 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 14 March regarding the petition (P-06-1328) to ensure that all social care workers in Wales are paid the new Real Living Wage of £10.90 in line with the Real Living Wage Foundation implementation date.

As you are aware, the Real Living Wage is independently calculated by the Resolution Foundation and overseen by the Living Wage Commission, as part of an annual process. This year the Living Wage Foundation announcement came a month earlier on 22nd September, due to the cost of living pressures, and they encourage all accredited employers to uplift the RLW to staff as soon as possible, however the deadline remained for the uplift to be paid by May 2023.

Welsh Government is committed to improving employment terms and conditions in the social care sector. We are aware of the urgent need of support to address pay, recruitment and retention issues, exacerbated by the extreme challenges presented during the Covid pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis, which is why in April 2022 we were pleased to be able to provide £43m of funding in 2022/23, which provided a vital wage uplift to a group of key workers.

We were delighted that we are able to maintain this commitment to social care workers with an estimated £70m in 2023/24 to pay the Real Living Wage uplift of £10.90 an hour, with workers feeling the benefit by June 2023. Budget planning in Welsh Government is agreed in the Autumn for the following financial year. As it stands we are not in a position to implement an uplift or commit to any further funding as we do not have any in year reserves to be able to implement the uplift any earlier.

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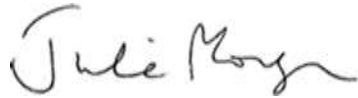
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Our immediate priority, in the context of the wider pressures that the sector is facing, is to get the funding we have already committed into workers pockets. There are several hundreds of employers in social care and this is a significant and complex commitment. We were proud to be able to provide this additional funding to give social care staff across Wales a much needed pay rise.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services

P-06-1329: Set an ambition and a clear timetable to give every child in the country Welsh-medium education

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Mai 2023
Petitions Committee | 15 May 2023

Reference: SR23/5702-3

Petition Number: P-06-1329

Petition title: Set an ambition and a clear timetable to give every child in the country Welsh-medium education

Petition text

We believe the Welsh Government should include in upcoming legislation a statutory aim that every young person in Wales will be educated through the medium of Welsh, building up to this over time, to ensure more and more young people in the future become fluent and confident in the language.

More details

We believe that Welsh belongs to all the people of Wales, and that everyone, whatever their background, has the right to the language.

The evidence shows that the way to ensure young people become fluent in the language is Welsh-medium education, but only around 20% of young people are given this opportunity at present.

We believe there should be significant and sustained growth in Welsh-medium education, building up to universal Welsh-medium provision to ensure access to the language for all young people.



1. Summary

- Currently, around 23% of school pupils receive their education through the medium of Welsh.
- Education has a **pivotal role** to play in the Welsh Government's aim of reaching its target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. It has incremental targets aimed at leading to a position whereby 40% of pupils are educated through Welsh by 2050 and 70% can speak Welsh by the time they leave school.
- The Welsh Government is **proposing new legislation** in this Senedd term to replace the current system of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). A consultation on a White Paper is currently open until 16 June 2023.
- A **Senedd Committee inquiry** has recently been undertaken into WESPs and is to report soon.

2. The current position regarding Welsh-medium education

At the time of the [2021/22 school census](#) (taken in February 2022), 109,331 of 471,131 pupils were taught in a Welsh-medium school, equating to 23%. Of the 1,470 schools, 439 were Welsh-medium, bilingual or dual-stream schools, equating to 30% ([StatsWales](#)). [2022/23 school census data](#) is due to be published on 25 May 2023.

People's development and acquisition of Welsh language skills through the education system is [expected to have a pivotal role](#) in working towards the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

2.1. The Welsh Government's targets

The [Cymraeg 2050 strategy](#), published in 2017, sets **targets** that the proportion of each school year group receiving Welsh-medium education **increases from 22% in 2017, to 30% in 2031, and to 40% in 2050**. It also seeks to transform how Welsh is taught to all learners, including those in English-medium schools, with a **target of 70% of school leavers by 2050** reporting that they can speak Welsh.

Increasing the number of young people acquiring the language through education on this scale requires a considerable increase in the Welsh in Education workforce capacity. The Welsh Government has a 10-year plan to do this.

2.2. Legislative position

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires local authorities to have a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) setting out how they will improve and develop Welsh-medium education provision in their area.

Originally, WESPs were set for three years and reviewed annually. However, they are now on a ten-year cycle. In 2017, the Welsh Government commissioned a 'rapid review' of the current system for Welsh language education planning, with the aim of recommending how to improve the WESPs system.

The Welsh Government committed in its Programme for Government (2021-26) and Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru (December 2021) to introduce a Welsh Language Education Bill to the Senedd.

3. Recent Welsh Government action: the White Paper

The Welsh Government published a White Paper for a Welsh Language Education Bill on 27 March 2023, alongside a Ministerial statement. It is consulting on the White Paper until 16 June 2023. The proposals include:

- Placing the Cymraeg 2050 target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 in law – on the face of the Bill.
- Considering increasing the target of 40% of all learners receiving their education through Welsh by 2050 to 50%.
- A statutory target of all pupils leaving compulsory education to be at a level equivalent to level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
- Statutory language categories for schools (currently, these are non-statutory).
- Increasing, over time, requirements for how much of each school week is devoted to Welsh language provision, by the language category of the school.

- A statutory Welsh Language Skills continuum, describing different levels of proficiency, which would be used as the basis for designing and improving the provision of lifelong Welsh language learning.
- A Statutory National Plan for the acquisition and learning of Welsh, which will provide direction for local authorities' local plans (the current WESPs). The National Plan will include national targets for teacher numbers.
- Renaming WESPs as Welsh Education Implementation Plans (WEIPs) to reflect a shift whereby the Welsh Government will set local authorities' strategic aims for planning Welsh-medium education and will set local authorities' targets.
- The Welsh Ministers will have greater powers to direct local authorities in how they should plan Welsh-medium education – they will be able to commission an external independent review of a local authority's draft proposed WEIP and be able to require the local authority to submit a new WEIP for approval. Estyn will be involved in carrying out rapid reviews of WESPs.
- Local authorities will be under duties to promote Welsh-medium education and to plan their workforce on the basis of their WEIP.
- Specialist support for life-long Welsh learning, including schools, will be centralised and the role given to the National Centre for Learning Welsh, which was established in 2015 to strategically lead the Welsh for Adults sector (as it was then known) at a national level.

4. Senedd action

The Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations (CCWLSIR) Committee has recently undertaken an [inquiry into the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision](#), i.e. the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs), which local authorities are required to have in place.

The CCWLSIR Committee's report is due to be published soon. This will feed into the broader Welsh Government consultation on its White Paper (discussed above).

5. Political debate in the Senedd

An exchange in [Plenary on 6 December 2022](#) between the First Minister and the Leader of Plaid Cymru demonstrated a difference in their parties' positions:

Adam Price MS: "Don't we now need to recognise that the actions are not sufficient to reach the target by 2050? As with climate change, goodwill is not the same as delivering against targets. So, wouldn't the most positive response to today's news be to ensure that the proposed Welsh language education Bill would provide Welsh-medium education for all children in Wales within a clear and adequate timetable?"

First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS: "Well, I don't agree with the final point that the leader of Plaid Cymru raised. I don't think that people in Wales will be willing to support the point that he made, and I think that the most important thing about the Welsh language is to maintain the support of people in Wales for everything that we're trying to do. We've succeeded in doing that. There is a strong feeling for the Welsh language in every part of Wales, and we want to use that goodwill that exists to continue to have more people learning Welsh and using Welsh, and so forth."

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1329
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/00465/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair – Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
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petitions@senedd.wales

27 April 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter dated 14 March asking me to respond to the petition regarding Welsh-medium education.

You will be aware that we have published a White Paper on 27 March including proposals that will be the basis for a Welsh Language Education Bill. I attach a link to my [written statement](#) detailing the main proposals of the White Paper.

Our proposals include enhancing Welsh language education provision over time. The White Paper also notes our vision of enabling every pupil in Wales to become a confident Welsh speaker by 2050, and these issues are raised directly in the petition. This is an ambitious vision, and we ask questions that will steer our considerations in drafting the Bill.

We're seeking the views of stakeholders and the public on our proposals, and we would therefore be glad to hear the views of the petitioner. I encourage him to respond to the [questions included in the White Paper](#), which is available on the Welsh Government's website.

The consultation will run until 16 June.

Yours Sincerely,

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We call on the Welsh Government to reject their proposals for a council tax revaluation

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Mai 2023
Petitions Committee | 15 May 2023

Reference: SR235702-1

Petition Number: P-06-1330

Petition title: We call on the Welsh Government to reject their proposals for a council tax revaluation.

Text of petition:

Monmouthshire residents face astronomical council tax hikes if proposals to revalue homes go ahead.

A revaluation of all 1.5 million properties in Wales is being suggested in a Welsh Government consultation. Under 'A Fairer Council Tax' – new bands would be created and new tax rates for each band would be set.

Included in the consultation are links to reports by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and University of Sheffield estimating the extra costs people will face in different parts of Wales.

This consultation shows that nearly 4 out of 10 homeowners in Monmouthshire will move up a band and face paying £100s more each year in council tax, while less than 1 out of 10 would pay less by moving down a band.

Residents already face an unfair council tax burden because it is the lowest funded local authority area in Wales. The shortfall between what is received from the Welsh Labour Government and what the council spends is made up by council tax.



Monmouthshire is likely to be a net loser from these proposals potentially pushing hard-pressed families into much higher council tax bands, making it even more expensive and for some local people unaffordable to live here at a time when many are struggling with the cost of living.

I urge Monmouthshire residents to sign this petition so that action can be taken by the Senedd to influence the policy of Welsh Government.

www.david-davies.org.uk/news/monmouthshire-residents-face-council-tax-bombshell-under-welsh-government-plans

1. Background

Outline to council tax reform

In January 2017, the previous Welsh Government outlined its approach to reforming the local government finance system in Wales. Its aim was to 'enable local government to become more sustainable and self-sufficient'. One key objective of reforming local government finance systems was to make 'council tax fairer'. The statement noted that this would:

involve considering broad questions such as what proportion of our tax revenue is based on **property**, on **income**, on **transactions** or on other factors. We will consider whether different approaches to property valuation are viable, whether they might be fairer and whether there would be **any benefits for public services** and the economy in Wales.

In its 2019 update, the Welsh Government stated that it had begun the process of commissioning research and expertise to develop knowledge and data on potential models for reforming council tax. This included research to establish a model of council tax based on land values in Wales, undertake a simulated revaluation of all 1.4 million domestic properties, and research on whether the council tax could be based on household income.

In May 2021, the Welsh Government published a summary of its findings on the research it had commissioned. It concluded that:

The most progressive option would be to base local revenue-raising on taxpayer incomes, but its practical implementation is the least understood and it carries higher avoidance risks, particularly in relation

to offshore or hidden wealth. A local land value tax appears promising compared with existing systems, if the data infrastructure requirements could be met. Revaluation and rebanding of council tax could achieve a less regressive or more proportional position with respect to property wealth rather than incomes.

In November 2021 the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru agreed to cooperate on 46 policy areas which included:

- **Council tax reform** – Reform one of the most regressive forms of taxation – which disproportionately impacts poorer areas of Wales – to make it fairer.

The Welsh Government's Programme for Government was updated in December 2021 following the agreement, which re-stated its commitment to this programme of reform.

Local Government Settlement

The Welsh Government allocates funding to local authorities through its Housing and Local Government Main Expenditure Group (MEG). The main element within the MEG is the general revenue funding. In the Final Budget 2023-24, the Welsh Government allocated a little over £4.5 billion in general revenue funding for local government.

The Final Local Government Settlement, which is published alongside the budget, includes the total amount of funding local government will receive for the financial year. It also shows how funding will be distributed to each local authority based on a funding formula agreed with local government. The formula consists of a variety of indicators which consider characteristics of a local authority such as; population, sparsity and deprivation among other data.

Local Authority Distribution 2023-24

As a result of the overall increase of 8.1 per cent in the settlement, no authority received less than a **6.6 per cent increase** in its allocation for 2023-24. The overall increase is lower than that received for the 2022-23 financial year however, when authorities received an overall increase of 9.4 per cent on a like-for-like basis.

Monmouthshire received the biggest uplift in its allocation (9.5 per cent), followed closely by Cardiff (9.2 per cent) and the Vale of Glamorgan (9.1 per cent). Blaenau Gwent will receive the lowest increase at 6.6 per cent. .

The table below shows the amount each local authority will receive in Aggregate External Finance (the combined total of Revenue Support Grant and Non-Domestic Rates) for 2023-24, and the percentage difference compared to 2022-23. It has been ranked in order, from highest to lowest for ease of reading.

Table 1b: Change in Aggregate External Finance (AEF) plus floor funding, un-adjusted for transfers, by Unitary Authority (£000)

Unitary Authority	2022-23 Final Aggregate External Finance	2023-24 Final Aggregate External Finance	Percentage difference	Rank
Monmouthshire	112,020	122,675	9.5%	1
Cardiff	543,810	593,605	9.2%	2
The Vale of Glamorgan	185,931	202,797	9.1%	3
Newport	265,502	289,522	9.0%	4
Powys	210,090	228,665	8.8%	5
Carmarthenshire	311,585	338,410	8.6%	6
Wrexham	207,279	224,836	8.5%	7
Flintshire	232,336	251,995	8.5%	8
Ceredigion	119,238	129,198	8.4%	9
Denbighshire	173,596	188,024	8.3%	10
Conwy	183,608	198,598	8.2%	11
Swansea	386,852	418,282	8.1%	12
Pembrokeshire	196,776	212,675	8.1%	13
Isle of Anglesey	114,490	123,665	8.0%	14
Bridgend	232,109	250,182	7.8%	15
Torfaen	160,218	172,405	7.6%	16
Neath Port Talbot	258,174	276,696	7.2%	17
Merthyr Tydfil	110,704	118,614	7.1%	18
Gwynedd	212,840	228,036	7.1%	19
Caerphilly	317,789	339,960	7.0%	20
Rhondda Cynon Taf	441,596	471,317	6.7%	21
Blaenau Gwent	131,057	139,730	6.6%	22
Total unitary authorities	5,107,603	5,519,889	8.1%	

The Welsh Government also publishes details on *per capita* spend, that is, the amount of core funding allocated per person by authority area. The per capita figures below are based on the average of 2023 population from the 2018 based local authority population projections and Census 2021 population data.

Table 1c: Aggregate External Finance (AEF) per capita, by Unitary Authority, 2023-24

Unitary Authority	2023-24 Final Aggregate External Finance Funding (£000)	Final Aggregate External Finance per capita (£) [Note 2]	Rank
Blaenau Gwent	139,730	2,049	1
Merthyr Tydfil	118,614	1,978	2
Rhondda Cynon Taf	471,317	1,960	3
Denbighshire	188,024	1,958	4
Neath Port Talbot	276,696	1,927	5
Caerphilly	339,960	1,898	6
Gwynedd	228,036	1,877	7
Torfaen	172,405	1,848	8
Newport	289,522	1,816	9
Ceredigion	129,198	1,815	10
Carmarthenshire	338,410	1,791	11
Isle of Anglesey	123,665	1,783	12
Powys	228,665	1,721	13
Swansea	418,282	1,713	14
Conwy	198,598	1,702	15
Pembrokeshire	212,675	1,702	16
Bridgend	250,182	1,702	17
Wrexham	224,836	1,656	18
Cardiff	593,605	1,623	19
Flintshire	251,995	1,612	20
The Vale of Glamorgan	202,797	1,511	21
Monmouthshire	122,675	1,300	22
Total unitary authorities	5,519,889	1,756	

These figures do not take into account other local authority funding or income streams, such as council tax revenue, specific grant funding or other funding streams via UK Government.

2. Welsh Government action

On 12 July 2022, the Minister for Finance and Local Government, Rebecca Evans MS gave an oral statement in Plenary. She stated that in order to reach the aims set out in the cooperation agreement, in the short-term, a property revaluation and changes to council tax banding would need to be undertaken:

It is this Government's view that a revaluation should take place, and we should aim to implement a new structure for council tax based on up-to-date values.

It is proposed that these changes are implemented by April 2025, using property values as at 1 April 2023. The Minister stressed that research undertaken suggests that “up to 75 per cent of households would either be unaffected or would see their bills reduce” as a result of the revaluation and banding change. The Minister also stated that the purpose of the revaluation was not to “increase the total

amount raised from taxpayers, but to redistribute the burden to ensure the fairness and integrity of the system.”

The Minister updated Members on progress with council tax reform in [Plenary on 2 May 2023](#). During the statement, the Minister noted that some members of the public had expressed concerns that “this exercise was about raising more tax through the reforms.” Responding to these concerns, the Minister said:

So, I want to be absolutely clear today: this is not about raising a single penny more in overall revenue. It’s about ensuring that the money that we do raise is raised as fairly as possible, based on the ability to pay for essential public services that benefit everyone in Wales.

The Minister confirmed that the Welsh Government has commissioned the Valuation Office Agency to “undertake revaluation work, using the latest technology to assess property values”. The Minister also confirmed that she will “bring forward legislation in due course to set regular revaluation updates on a statutory footing.”

Nevertheless, the Minister also stated that the proposed reforms would create some “winners and losers”, but that every year under current arrangements brings “more unfairness, often experienced most acutely by the poorest households.”

In a letter to the Chair of the Petitions Committee, the Minister for Finance and Local Government states that:

A revaluation would enable the Welsh Government to create new bands and choose new tax rates for each band, to create a fairer tax. This could include adding bands at the top and bottom ends of the scale to distribute properties in a more detailed way. While most properties will have increased in value over the last 20 years, this doesn’t necessarily mean that council tax bills will increase.

The Minister notes that in order to make the local tax system “more progressive”, that “some people will need to contribute more.” The Minister’s response to the petition also highlights that the Welsh Government will “consider the need to mitigate the impact for households which may be adversely affected by the reforms.” This may include “targeting transitional arrangements for people who may need time to adapt to any changes.”

3. Welsh Parliament action

The [Local Government and Housing Committee undertook an inquiry to gather evidence on council tax reform in December 2022](#). The focus of the inquiry was to look at:

- The potential impact of a council tax revaluation and revised council tax bands on local government finances and administration.
- The potential benefits and disadvantages of regular property revaluations on local government administration, and the impact on those liable to pay council tax.
- The effectiveness of the framework for council tax discounts and exemptions, and how the system could be developed and improved.
- The case for changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which supports the most vulnerable low-income households, and scope for improving the system.

The Committee also undertook a consultation on the matter, and [responses can be found on the Committee's webpage](#).

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-06-1330
Ein cyf/Our ref: RE-00107-23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair – Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

27 March 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter regarding the petition P-06-1330 about the Welsh Government's plans to reform council tax. I welcome the opportunity to outline the plans in more detail and reaffirm my commitment to tackling wealth inequalities in our communities through our reforms.

Council tax provides a significant annual revenue stream of over £2bn, which helps to fund some of our most essential public services – educating our children, caring for our loved ones, keeping communities safe, and recycling our waste, to name a few. While it has many advantages as an efficient local tax, we believe the system could be more progressive in its design and that it could be modernised, having existed in its current form since 1993.

Aims

The Programme for Government and the Co-operation Agreement commit to a fairer and more progressive council tax. The aims are for a reformed system which:

- Has a less regressive tax burden on households;
- Has in-built regular updates to keep the tax fair in the future, using modern data-driven technology;
- Continues to fund vital services that benefit everyone, but helps those in need;
- Is more transparent for taxpayers to interact with; and
- Remains a tax that connects people with local communities.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Background research and scope

The scope of proposed reforms is based on extensive considerations over the previous Senedd term (2016-2021). The Welsh Government published a [Summary of Findings](#) in February 2021, which brought together a comprehensive suite of research conducted by various experts, to set out the potential options for reforming local government finance in Wales. It concluded that council tax is a highly efficient and stable revenue stream for public services, with low administrative costs, and due to its longevity, it is generally well understood. However, the band and tax rate structure is regressive, requiring significant mitigating actions for less well-off households. The tax-base is twenty years out of date and the legislation predates devolution. Other approaches considered, such as land value tax and local income tax, were found to bring benefits in terms of being more progressive ways of raising local revenues, but with major implementation obstacles or administrative drawbacks, meaning implementation would be a two-term endeavour.

Our ambition therefore is to achieve meaningful reform to council tax over the course of this Senedd term – developing the system so that it is more progressive and contributes to the delivery of other commitments in our Programme for Government, particularly towards a more resilient, equal and a more prosperous Wales. I conducted a [Phase 1 consultation](#) last summer seeking views from members of the public and stakeholders on the broad scope of changes, including:

- a revaluation of all 1.5 million domestic properties in Wales. The tax bands are nearly twenty years out-of-date, based on 2003 information.
- creating new bands and choosing new tax rates for each band, to create a more progressive tax. This may include adding bands at the top and bottom ends of the scale to distribute properties in a more detailed way.
- future-proofing the fairness and accuracy of the system by putting rolling revaluation cycles on a statutory footing.
- reviewing the suite of discounts, disregarded persons, exemptions and premiums to ensure they remain relevant to today's policy ambitions.
- reviewing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as the main support scheme for low-income households.
- continuing in parallel to explore alternative approaches for longer term consideration, such as a local land value tax or unbanded systems.

A summary of the responses has been [published](#) and I intend to outline detailed proposals for a reformed system in a Phase 2 consultation later this year.

Revaluation and new bands

There are around 1.5 million domestic dwellings in Wales liable for council tax. Each property is placed in one of nine tax bands, A to I, on the basis of property values on **1 April 2003**, the last time the council tax-base was updated in Wales. The Welsh Government is considering a revaluation of all 1.5 million properties in Wales to update and rebalance the system to reflect today's property values.

Having undergone a revaluation exercise in 2003, Wales is the only part of the UK which has revalued its council tax base since the tax was introduced. We are therefore in a better position than England and Scotland where council tax is charged on the basis of property values from 1991, however, this does not provide a rationale for standing still.

It is unfair and inaccurate to continue basing council tax bills on property valuations from twenty years ago. The homes we live in are an important indicator of wealth and affordability. The composition and distribution of the tax-base has changed since 2003. Without an exercise to revalue the 1.5 million domestic properties in Wales, we are constrained in our ability to make fundamental changes to council tax which could help to make the system fairer and more progressive.

A revaluation would enable the Welsh Government to create new bands and choose new tax rates for each band, to create a fairer tax. This could include adding bands at the top and bottom ends of the scale to distribute properties in a more detailed way. While most properties will have increased in value over the last 20 years, this doesn't necessarily mean that council tax bills will increase. The system we design will remain a relative one. We are committed to analysing the impact closely, and where necessary, targeting transitional arrangements for people who may need time to adapt to any changes.

Impact on Local Authorities

The reforms outlined would change the nature of the tax-base in each local area. The ability of each local authority to raise council tax from its tax-base differs significantly between high and low tax-base areas. The Phase 1 consultation therefore recognised that annual local government funding settlements for local authorities would need to be distributed on the basis of the most up-to-date information about local tax-bases. The long-standing principle of grant redistribution is one which local government collectively supports.

The setting of budgets and council tax remains a matter for each authority, taking account of all the sources of funding available to it and its local priorities for service delivery. I do not intend to remove the autonomy of local authorities to set annual council tax levels in their areas. That function is a key expression of local democracy in action. The Welsh Government understands that authorities will still need to make difficult choices in setting their budgets and council tax each year and, in doing so, they will need to engage meaningfully with their local communities as they consider their priorities. Welsh local authorities are able to use the revenue they generate through council tax for any purpose in line with their local priorities. Authorities in Wales are not required to ring-fence the income for particular services.

I continue to engage with leaders in local government and have had very productive and positive discussions about how the reform work is taken forward. This is a task of significant scale taking a number of years to complete, with much of the operational and technical work being undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency. Local authorities will also need to be directly involved in implementing any reforms.

Changes to bills

I have made clear the aim of reform is not to raise more revenue in total from council taxpayers in Wales. The purpose of reform is to make the system fairer, more progressive, and reflective of economic circumstances. We recognise that to make the system more progressive, some people will need to contribute more. The reason for valuing property for tax purposes is because it is an immovable fixed asset which links a taxpayer to the place where they live and use services, and it is a reliable broad indicator of relative wealth and income between households. However, council tax also has significant elements which take account of ability to pay, including the suite of discounts, exemptions and reductions – nearly half of households in Wales receive some form of reduction on their bill. In reviewing aspects of the system, we remain open to all ideas and will consider how best to reflect ability to pay going forwards.

We will consider the need to mitigate the impact for households which may be adversely affected by the reforms. However, there will be no immediate changes to the bills people receive. Council tax bills for the year ahead have been set by local authorities in the usual way.

Cost of living

The petition highlights many people are struggling with the rising cost of living. Delivering a reformed council tax is a substantial undertaking, however, the evidence and experts agree it is one of the most beneficial actions the Welsh Government can take to reduce wealth inequalities. But as council tax reforms would not happen for a number of years yet, it is not an immediate solution to the current cost-of-living crisis faced by many households today.

I hope this information helps the Committee's consideration of the petition.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Evans AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Cyllid a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Finance and Local Government

P-06-1330 We call on the Welsh Government to reject their proposals for a council tax revaluation, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 10.05.23

Thank you for your email and for giving me the opportunity to comment.

Having read the attached document, it would appear this is a fait accompli as the Welsh Government seems determined to push ahead with its plans to reform council tax. I am grateful to everyone who signed the petition to challenge what I consider to be an ill-thought-out policy and ensure Monmouthshire's voice is heard.


We have a right to know what the impact of a revaluation will be before any decisions are taken. Monmouthshire residents already face an unfair council tax burden because it is one of the lowest funded out of the 22 local authorities in Wales. Before the Minister for Finance and Local Government even considers a revaluation, she should bring forward a fairer funding formula and look at immediately assisting councils who generally throughout the years have not received their fair share of Revenue Support Grant.

Some local authorities in Wales have three-figure millions in reserves due to years of more generous funding per head of population. Yet Monmouthshire, which is really struggling with its budget, has only had a limited opportunity of accumulating money for its reserves.

It is totally unfair to push hard-pressed families into much higher council tax bands, potentially making it even more expensive and unaffordable for some local people to live here at a time when many are struggling with the cost of living. Nearly four out of 10 homeowners in Monmouthshire will face paying hundreds of pounds more each year by moving up a council tax band, while less than one in 10 would pay less by moving down a band.

We need a full and proper debate in the Senedd.

Regards David Davies

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David T. C. Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Rt Hon David T C Davies MP
Member for Monmouth

P-06-1332: Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelepox virus.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Mai 2023
Petitions Committee | 15 May 2023

Reference: SR23/5702-6

Petition Number: P-06-1332

Petition title: Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelepox virus.

Text of petition: Squirrelepox virus is carried and spread by grey squirrels. It doesn't harm them. When red squirrels are infected they develop open extensive skin lesions and die a painful death within 2 weeks

In North Wales, 70-80% of the Gwynedd red population was lost in a 2020/21 outbreak <https://theconversation.com/squirrelepox-outbreak-detected-in-north-wales-without-a-vaccine-the-disease-will-keep-decimating-red-squirrels-196811>

Promising research by Moredun Institute into a vaccine ran out of funds

The Wales Red Squirrel Conservation Plan (Page 9) highlights that most Welsh red squirrels are in forests inhabited by grey squirrels. Pox virus is thus a major threat in Wales. <https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/691092/eng-red-squirrel-conservation-plan-for-wales.pdf>

In Bangor, there have been repeated Squirrelepox virus outbreaks in the period 2017-2022. Dead red squirrels have been found in woodland close to the Britannia Bridge and Telford's Suspension Bridge. It is only a matter of time before the infection is spread across the Menai Strait and onto Anglesey. The island contains the largest red squirrel population in Wales.



The infection causes graphic symptoms:

<http://www.britishredsquirrel.org/red-squirrels/disease/>

We need Welsh Government to commit to funding research such as the stalled vaccine research of Moredun/Wildlife Ark Trust:

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/red-squirrel-vaccine-under-threat-2540293>

1. Background

The threat to red squirrels from squirrelpox

Red squirrels were once widespread across Wales. However UK populations have suffered significant declines following the release and spread of the North American grey squirrel in the 19th century. This is due to the spread of disease (predominantly the squirrelpox virus) and competition for resources.

According to the Wildlife Trusts, in about 150 years, red squirrels have declined from around 3.5 million to 140,000 across the UK. In 2020 the Mammal Society released a Red List for British Mammals, highlighting species most at risk. The red squirrel is classified as 'Endangered' and is one of the 19 species considered at risk of extinction in Britain.

The three focal populations of red squirrel in Wales are on Anglesey, in the Clocaenog Forest in north Wales, and Clywedog in mid Wales.

The squirrelpox virus is carried by the invasive, non-native grey squirrels without impacting their health (greys have developed immunity to the disease having been exposed to the virus for centuries), but it is fatal to red squirrels. The first squirrelpox case was detected in a red squirrel in Norfolk in 1980, but the virus may have been present, but undetected, in the population for a number of years. By 2018, 525 cases had been detected across the UK.

The Wildlife Trusts report that recent studies have shown up to 100% of grey squirrels in an area can be carrying the virus. Population decline in red squirrels is estimated to be 17 to 25 times higher in regions where the virus is present in greys (compared to competition from greys alone). Study of a population in northern

Gwynedd showed that in 2020/21, the disease caused a loss of 70%-80% of its red squirrel population.

Other threats to red squirrels include predation by domestic cats and dogs, roadkill and habitat loss and fragmentation. There is increasing awareness of the emergence of other disease risks. In particular, adenovirus has been recorded in dead red squirrels at locations across the UK.

Actions to tackle squirrelpox

Squirrelpox vaccine

A few years ago the Moredun Institute began work on a vaccine for squirrelpox. The Wildlife Ark Trust charity provided funding for the squirrelpox vaccine development programme. Insufficient funding meant this research stopped.

Challenges in developing the vaccine included identifying protective forms of the virus for vaccine development and finding ways of delivering the vaccine. The ideal delivery mechanism is orally, so that the vaccine can be incorporated into food sources. The Moredun Institute said although oral vaccines currently exist for some wildlife species, for example rabies vaccines for foxes in the EU, vaccines for oral delivery pose biological and logistical challenges. Dr Colin McInnes, who led the original research programme, said there was "still quite a bit of work to be done".

Dr Craig Shuttleworth, of the Red Squirrel Trust Wales, said "Of all the current conservation initiatives, I consider the squirrelpox vaccine research the one most likely to prove to be the saviour of the red squirrels." Dr Shuttleworth estimated tourists coming to see the red squirrels on Anglesey is currently worth about £1m a year and added "What about the wellbeing value?"

The 2018 Red Squirrel Conservation Plan for Wales, prepared by the Wales Squirrel Forum (made up of statutory, non-statutory organisations and local squirrel groups) provides an update of actions set in 2009 (Annex 2). Action 5.4 (page 26) is "Research into squirrelpox virus" described as "Promote the need for funding into squirrelpox virus research and vaccine development, and facilitate co-operation between the relevant departments of the different UK administrations". **It highlights funding to support research as a constraint.**

In 2015, DEFRA Minister, George Eustice, told the UK Parliament "Defra is contributing a total of £50,000 between 2014 and 2016 to research into the

Squirrel Pox Vaccine that will help to secure the long term future of red squirrels in the UK”.

The issue was discussed in the Scottish Parliament in 2013. The (then) Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, told the Parliament that (then) Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) contributed funding to the Moredun Research Institute to develop the vaccine. He went on to say:

The institute has costed the next phase of further exploring attenuation and dosage at approximately £160,000. It is likely that the cost of developing and trialling a vaccine for use in the field would be a further £500,000 and that it would take five to 10 years. The trials will also require wild-caught red squirrels.

The Scottish Government and SNH have not yet been approached for funding for the next phase of the trial.

Grey squirrel population control

Controlling the key vector of squirrelpox, the grey squirrel, has helped tackle squirrelpox in red squirrels in some areas.

The Wales Squirrel Forum’s Red Squirrel Conservation Plan for Wales and the Welsh Government’s Grey Squirrel Management Action Plan for Wales describes various methods including culling, fertility control of grey squirrels and reinstating natural predators, including pine martens.

Legal protections for red squirrels and control of greys

Red squirrels receive protection in the UK under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Grey squirrels are listed on Schedule 9 of this Act, which makes it illegal to release a grey squirrel or allow it to escape.

Red squirrels are on the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Section 7 list of species deemed “of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity” in Wales. Under the Act Welsh Ministers must “take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance the living organisms” on that list and “encourage others to take such steps”.

EU Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Alien Species (the IAS Regulation) requires a list of invasive alien species of Union concern to be drawn up. Member States

must put in place management measures for the eradication, control or containment of listed species. Grey squirrels are on the [Invasive Alien Species of Union concern](#) list. The [Welsh Government's Grey squirrel management action plan for Wales](#) addresses the requirements of the IAS Regulation in an aim to control grey squirrels.

2. Welsh Government action

[Welsh Government's Grey Squirrel Management Action Plan](#) (2018) aims to develop an integrated approach for managing grey squirrels and meet obligations under the Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Regulations. The Wales Squirrel Forum is the steering group that co-ordinates, supports and provides advice on the Action Plan.

The Welsh Government's [Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales](#) aims to 'reverse the decline in biodiversity, for its intrinsic value, and to ensure lasting benefits to society'. The [2020-21 Plan](#) lists the Wales Squirrel Forum's [Red Squirrel Conservation Plan](#) as a programme under the objective of "Maintaining and enhancing species of principal importance for Wales for their intrinsic value and to ensure the resilience of ecosystems".

3. Welsh Parliament action

There have been two Senedd petitions to protect red squirrel populations in recent years, however they did not relate specifically to the squirrelpox vaccine:

- [P-06-1208](#) 'New laws to protect rare red squirrels from habitat loss which causes population decline' (completed in 2022); and
- [P-06-1225](#), 'Make Natural Resources Wales undertake and publish annual wildlife surveys before felling woodland' (completed in 2022).

In 2021 the [Senedd declared a 'nature emergency'](#). This was in recognition of human induced declines in biodiversity. It called on the Welsh Government to:

- introduce legally binding requirement to reverse biodiversity loss through statutory targets; and
- legislate to establish an independent environmental governance body for Wales.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1332
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/00785/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

28 April 2023

Dear Jack Sargeant MS,

Thank you for your letter of 29 March regarding a petition for Welsh Government to fund development of a vaccine for squirrel pox.

Welsh Government welcomes the important work being carried out by all squirrel groups in Wales for red squirrel recovery, particularly by reducing the range and effect of squirrel pox carried by the non-native invasive grey squirrel.

We are grateful for the expert advice of the Wales Squirrel Forum to help us ensure precious species like the red squirrel are given the chance to thrive. The initiators of this petition have places on the Forum.

Yours sincerely,

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

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Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.James@gov.Wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 03.05.23

Dr Craig Shuttleworth

Honorary Visiting Research Fellow
School of Natural Sciences
Bangor University
Bangor

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Date 3/5/23

Dear Mr Sargeant,

P-06-1332: Petitioner's Submission for Petitions Committee Meeting 15th May 2023

Thank you for the email from the Committee Clerk dated 2nd May 2023. I note the enclosure of a letter dated 28th April 2023 to you from Julie James, Minister for Climate Change (Ref: J/00785/23).

My petition was signed by over 11,000 people and calls for the Welsh Government to fund research into a squirrelpox vaccine.

The Minister's letter kindly acknowledges the work undertaken by the 'Squirrel groups' which would include both Clocaenog Red Squirrels Trust (RSTW) (Charity 1186829, registered 2019) and Red Squirrels Trust Wales (Company Limited by Guarantee 06248674, registered 2007).

The letter goes on to state that, '*We [Welsh Government] are grateful for the expert advice of the Wales Squirrel Forum to help us ensure... red squirrels are given the chance to thrive.*'

Although the letter does not expressly state that the Welsh Government see the Wales Squirrel Forum as the setting for discussion and subsequent advice to them on vaccine, it would appear to be suggesting this course.

This would be far from satisfactory.

Petitions arise from a public recognition of, for example, a failing, an omission, an opportunity, a call for change. It would be very easy for Government to respond to virtually every imaginable petition call by simply referring the matter to an existing advisory group and making no wider response.

Wales Squirrel Forum

The Wales Squirrel Forum is chaired by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and has representatives on it from Welsh Government. It has had over a decade to move vaccine research on and has not done so. It has had over a decade to develop a strategy for managing squirrelpox outbreaks and has yet to do so.

The reality is that national understanding of squirrelpox in Wales, and our evolving regional response to outbreaks has come about via collaborative scientific research outputs produced through Bangor University partnerships and not those of the Forum. This research has relied upon volunteers monitoring red squirrels, collecting bodies, responding to reports of sick animals, posting bodies to pathologists etc. I suspect these individuals would be deeply disappointed in a letter from the Minister that appears so singularly non-committal.

Further, volunteers have raised the majority of the funding for red squirrel conservation in North Wales for the 2020-2025 period: NRW North East will contribute £50K, Clocaenog Trust £30K and RSTW £150K and this is matched by £500K from Heritage Fund (HF). The HF element was a three year application process again shouldered by volunteers. They invested hundreds of hours of personal time to create the 'Magical Mammals' project. During the application process there was a massive squirrelpox outbreak in Gwynedd which killed 70-80% of the animals. Volunteers saw much of their hard work in restoring red squirrel undone but were undaunted because they have no choice but to be stoic.

I mention the above as important context because there was huge support for the petition from volunteers on Anglesey and in North Wales. I was also struck by the how many volunteer led red squirrel conservation groups in England shared and signed too. These groups undertake 90% of the grey squirrel control in England to save red squirrels.

Vaccine

As I wrote recently in 'Bylines Cymru' (27/3/23):

[<https://bylines.cymru/environment/squirrelpox-endangers-red-squirrels-and-livelihoods/>]

'In 2017, the Director of the UK Squirrel Accord, an umbrella body of 41 conservation and forestry organisations, Government agencies, and companies, with links to voluntary red squirrel conservation groups, stated publicly that they had secured £250,000 of funding to restart research. It was suggested that half the funds had been pledged by **UK Governments**.

So what happened next? Well, it appears that very little happened. In fact, talk of vaccine development virtually ceased. Outbreaks of SQPV, however, continued to affect regional populations in England, Scotland, and Wales. Animals developed symptoms and died, post mortem tests were undertaken, the virus was confirmed as the cause, and the whole sorry process would repeat.'

It would be interesting to know whether Welsh Government committed funds to this research in 2017 and if so, what and who they would have been funding; why no research occurred and what happened to committed funds.

I would be grateful if the Petitions Committee could ask the Minister to provide a full response to my petition.

Kind regards

Dr Craig Shuttleworth
Petitioner P-06-1332

<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/staff/natural-sciences/craig-shuttleworth-082156/en>

Agenda Item 5.1

P-05-1106 Introduce Personal Health Budgets and Personalised Care in Wales

This petition was submitted by Rhys Bowler having collected a total of 779 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Rhys has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and lives in daily fear for his life, left alone for hours hoping the ventilator he needs to breathe doesn't break. He must choose between poorly funded social care and an NHS Continuing Healthcare package that takes away his choice over who cares for him.

If Rhys lived in England he would have a personal health budget, allowing him to use NHS Continuing Healthcare while still being able to choose who cares for him. This is not available in Wales

Additional Information:

I'm Rhys, 33 and living with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy in Pontypridd, Wales. I have extremely limited mobility and need a ventilator to breathe.

I've employed my own care assistants for decades and have a lot of experience of training and employing them. I've had bad experiences using agencies and not having a say in who cares for me. I want to choose the care assistants I want. I want to know who is coming in my home to help me with my intimate personal care, and I want them to be people I trust and have trained in how best to provide my care. Don't let my experience go to waste!

I want a Personal Health Budget so I can have both 24 hour care and a choice over who my care assistants are. This has been available in England since 2014, it's time Wales took this seriously and started giving people real choice and control about the care they receive.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Pontypridd
- South Wales Central



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1106
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/00035/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

18 April 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter, dated 18 January 2023, regarding **Petition P-05-1106 – ‘Introduce Personal Health Budgets and Personalised Care in Wales’**, in which you request a further update regarding the progress being made.

In my previous correspondence, dated 6 July 2022, I referred to the specific commitment to ‘Improve the interface between Continuing Health Care (CHC) and direct payments’ which has been included within our Programme for Government (PfG).

In line with this commitment, the revised ‘*Continuing NHS Healthcare – the National Framework for Implementation in Wales*’ was published in 2021 (operational as of April 2022) setting out the policy for eligibility for CHC and the responsibilities of NHS organisations and local authorities.

The framework includes a range of options and measures to ensure voice and control for individuals, including:

- health boards contracting with an Independent User Trust (IUT), potentially set up by a family member of the person receiving care, to manage that person’s care and provide specified health and social care services for the individual
- health boards employing personnel (either directly or via an agency) who were previously employed by the individual via direct payments

The options noted here are potential interim measures permissible under the current legislative structure. These mechanisms would go some way to support voice and control, however many individuals would regard these arrangements as inferior to direct payments or Personal Health Budgets (PHBs).

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

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Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We have seen a growing call to introduce a form of direct payments in the form of PHBs for individuals in Wales who are eligible for CHC, similar to the current system in England which has been operational since 2014. Many believe that this would allow disabled people to maintain voice and control over their care and retain their independence when eligible for CHC.

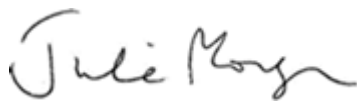
A public consultation was held between 17 August and 7 November 2022, on some proposed changes to primary legislation, including the proposal to introduce access to direct payments for Continuing NHS Healthcare. There was a strong response on this issue. The responses to this consultation exercise are currently being analysed by officials and once this is completed, we will publish a summary of responses.

A CHC/direct payments Working Group has been established which involves key stakeholders including disabled people, Disabled People's Organisations, health boards, local authorities, and Welsh Government officials. The group has been addressing issues regarding both the interim and longer-term deliverables in the CHC National Framework to support enhanced voice and control.

In addition, a drafting group has been established to co-produce Guidance with a range of stakeholders on the interim mechanisms such as Independent User Trusts (IUTs). This work is proceeding at pace and will continue over the coming months.

When this work has been developed further, we would welcome the opportunity to return to the Committee to update members on the progress made.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Morgan', written in a cursive style.

Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services

Agenda Item 5.2

P-06-1213 Ban leisure use of Seadoo/jet ski in Cymru. Except in strictly controlled designated areas

This petition was submitted by Richard Jenkins, having collected a total of 1,432 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Our wildlife and their habitats are already under savage attack from creeping civilisation, resource exploitation, pollution and climate change. To allow the uncontrolled use of these noisy, dangerous, polluting leisure vehicles, to add to that damage is irresponsible! They offer no other service to mankind other than a fleeting spasm of excitement. This is both wasteful and irresponsible.

Additional Information:

There are daily recorded and unrecorded occurrences of disturbance, aggression and harm to both other sea users and wildlife. Many instances of physical harm and even death to both animals and humans. The recreational use of these dangerous high powered vehicle is almost completely uncontrolled. They must be banned from all areas excepting possible specific small areas set aside for these selfish people to damage themselves alone. This may prove too difficult. In that case ban them completely from Cymru.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Bridgend
- South Wales West

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1213
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/00653/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee

05 April 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 16 March regarding Petition P-06-1213 Ban leisure use of Seadoo/jet ski in Cymru. Except in strictly controlled designated areas.

Wales is recognised internationally as having some of the best beaches and water quality in Europe and I am keen to protect this special achievement. High bathing water quality is important for supporting valuable outdoor water recreation opportunities and helps contribute to the objectives set out in the Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: A healthier Wales. These high bathing water quality standards demonstrate what can be achieved where strong collaborative working between government, regulators and communities is in place.

The use of jetskis and seadoos is an unregulated leisure activity. However, there are marine codes of conduct on the use of personal water craft aimed at preventing disturbance to protected species which cover most of the seas around Wales.

I note that Local Authorities have the power to regulate jet skis through byelaws. And the Department of Transport is currently consulting on [strengthening enforcement of the dangerous use of recreational and personal watercraft](#) (UK Government website) within the scope of the Merchant Shipping Act – which is not a devolved issue. Although the issue lies outside my own portfolio remit, I can advise that any new responsibilities for local authorities would need to be accompanied by recognition of the need for additional resources.

Recognising there has been a rise in incidents involving watercraft such as jet skis impacting marine wildlife, the MPA Network Management Action Plan contains specific measures to tackle disturbance such as raising awareness and behaviour change through marine codes of conduct, the introduction of the Wales Coast Explorer app and targeted interventions with North Wales Police.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.James@gov.Wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy sets out the expectations for improving cetacean populations in the UK. Following the consultation, it is anticipated a targeted action plan for specific pressures such as wildlife disturbance will be produced.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

P-06-1213 Ban leisure use of Seadoo/jet ski in Cymru. Except in strictly controlled designated areas, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 02.05.23

Dear/Annwyl Chair & Petitions committee,

Many thanks for forwarding the reply from the Minister for Climate change.

It seems that, sadly, the minister is abdicating responsibility for this & falling back on the 'not devolved' excuse.

Bluntly but I hope not rudely, I find her reply to the committee, pathetic, mealy mouthed & issue dodging nonsense.

I fervently abhor the fact that, in effect, the Minister is happy to rest on an updated MSA1995, the not fit for purpose local authority by laws & the Marine code of practice, when what is needed is a single all Cymru solution.

However, as noted, Westminster will amend MSA 1995 to include PWC's in its legislation. How sad it is, that we couldn't raise the will to bring in more effective legislation ourselves?

The legislation itself is an improvement on the Status Quo but that's a low bar and will do little to stem the irresponsible behaviour of the minority who abuse their privilege

I would like to thank the chair & members of the petitions committee for your diligence but I'm disappointed that we fail to bring in legislation to control this serious & dangerous nuisance.

Cofion,
Richard Jenkins

Agenda Item 5.3

P-06-1247 We call on the Welsh Government to lead the way by supporting trials of a four-day week in Wales

This petition was submitted by Mark Hooper, having collected a total of 1,619 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Moving to a four-day working week boosts productivity & workers' wellbeing.

After successful trials of a shorter working week in Iceland - with no reduction in pay - governments in Scotland, Ireland & Spain are all devising their own four-day week pilots that are scheduled to begin next year.

There's also serious moves towards a four-day week taking place in Belgium, New Zealand, Germany & Japan.

We call on the Welsh Government to lead the way by supporting trials of a four-day week in Wales.

Additional Information:

When Microsoft trialled a four-day week with no loss of pay in their Japan office, productivity went up by 40%.

(<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/nov/04/microsoft-japan-four-day-work-week-productivity>)

According to the Health & Safety Executive, 55% of all sick days taken last year were a direct result of work-related stress, depression or anxiety.

Moving to a four-day week would dramatically reduce mental health issues in Wales.

A study by the environmental organisation Platform London found that the introduction of a four-day week with no loss of pay would shrink the UK's carbon emissions by 127m tonnes, a reduction of more than 20%.

(<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/may/27/four-day-working-week-would-slash-uk-carbon-footprint-report>)

Four-day week 'an overwhelming success' in Iceland

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-57724779>.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Vale of Glamorgan

- South Wales Central

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the Petitions Committee Report - From Five to Four? P-06-1247 Support trials of a four-day week in Wales

Recommendation 1.

The Welsh Government should develop a pilot to reduce working hours within the devolved public sector, with no loss of pay for employees. This pilot should be targeted at parts of the devolved public sector where it is more realistic to expect productivity will not be negatively impacted by reducing working hours of staff.

Response: Accept in principle

There are no current plans to deliver a pilot in Wales, but this does not mean that it is something we would not consider in future. We are interested in pilots that are either in development or which have taken place elsewhere and we are reviewing the evidence and absorbing the lessons Wales can learn. Consistent with our social partnership way of working, it is important that our approach is informed by the views and considerations of social partners and that is why we will seek the agreement of the Workforce Partnership Council to establish a working group on the 4-day working week.

Financial implications

If a pilot were to be implemented there are likely to be financial implications. The scale of those financial implications are unknown at this stage and would be dependent on a number of variables. These would include the depth and breadth of the pilot, the cohorts of workers and employers it would capture, and the timeframe over which it would run. As an indication, the Spanish pilot is a three year €50million project, whilst Scotland initially announced plans in 2021 for a £10million pilot which has yet to be developed.

Recommendation 2.

In developing this pilot, the Welsh Government should liaise with organisations that have run pilots to reduce working hours, and organisations that have implemented them for their own staff.

Response: Accept

While there are no current plans to deliver a pilot in Wales, we are examining the lessons Wales can learn and this involves liaising with relevant organisations, the Scottish Government who are committed to develop a pilot, and importantly with social partners who represent the views of employers and workers. We will continue with that engagement.

Financial implications

No financial implications since discussions with relevant organisations and with social partners are part of our broader work.

Recommendation 3.

If the Welsh Government decides to run a reduced working hours pilot, it should require devolved public sector organisations who wish to take part in a reduced working hours pilot to:

- Take a flexible approach to how employees reduce their hours, while ensuring that organisational needs and levels of service to the people of Wales can continue to be met.
- Develop plans to show how they have taken into account the possibility of reduced working hours unwittingly leading to employees being overworked, and how they will mitigate against this risk.
- Set out plans they have put in place to meet the practical challenges associated with participating within a reduced working hours pilot.
- Secure agreement from recognised trade unions, or employee representatives where there is no recognised trade union, and involve the workforce throughout the development of proposals.

Response: Accept

It is for reasons like those included in this recommendation which underline the importance of social partners informing any steps that we decide to take. That is why we are seeking the agreement of the Workforce Partnership Council to establish a working group on the 4-day working week.

Financial implications

As above, if a pilot were to be implemented there are likely to be financial implications. The scale of those financial implications are unknown at this stage and would be dependent on a number of variables. These would include the depth and breadth of the pilot, the cohorts of workers and employers it would capture, and the timeframe over which it would run.

Recommendation 4.

If the Welsh Government opts to develop a reduced working hours pilot, it should ensure that a robust and impartial assessment of this pilot is undertaken, which includes analysis of the economic, social and environmental impacts of the pilot.

Response: Accept

In the event that we decided to proceed with a pilot, the issues raised in this recommendation around independent and impartial assessment and evaluation are amongst those we would need to consider.

Financial implications

There are likely to be financial implications in procuring independent and impartial evaluation of any pilot and/or procuring independent and expert advice in the design phase of any pilot. These financial implications are unknown at this stage and would be dependent on a number of variable, not least the scale of any pilot.

Agenda Item 5.4

P-06-1294 Don't leave metastatic breast cancer patients in Wales behind

This petition was submitted by Tassia Haines, having collected a total of 14,106 signatures.

Text of Petition:

People living with metastatic breast cancer (MBC) in Wales are being badly let down by the system. Currently, Wales has just one dedicated secondary breast cancer clinical nurse specialist (CNS), a situation that leaves potentially hundreds of people without adequate support. We need to know how many people are living with MBC to improve services. And we want improve quality of life outcomes by raising awareness of MBC red flag symptoms.

Additional Information:

We are calling for:

1. Every person with Metastatic breast cancer (MBC) in Wales to have access to a dedicated secondary breast cancer clinical nurse specialist.
2. A collection of data of those living and being treated for MBC in Wales.

We have written an open letter to the Minister for Health and Social Services on behalf of metastatic breast cancer patients and their carers to show the need for improved quality of life and more support for those living with MBC.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Aberavon
- South Wales West

Eluned Morgan AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1294
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/00724/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

petitions@senedd.wales

13 April 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 7 March on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding Petition P-06-1294: Don't leave metastatic breast cancer patients in Wales behind.

The Wales Cancer Network, in collaboration with Macmillan Cancer Support, presented a paper, to its Board on 27 January regarding NHS service provision for people with metastatic breast cancer.

The Board approved the development of a series of nationally agreed clinical pathways for people with metastatic cancer, beginning with metastatic breast cancer. This will be developed by the clinical experts of the Breast Cancer Site Group of the Wales Cancer Network to reflect current professional guidance and evidence-based practice. This is the same process that has been used to develop 21 national pathways for primary cancer.

This work must be delivered alongside the Cancer Network's existing commitments and I expect progress to be made during this year.

Thank you for writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Eluned Morgan AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Eluned.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Eluned.Morgan@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Agenda Item 5.5

P-06-1303 Create, fund and sustain sufficient affordable nursery and childcare places for all working parents

This petition was submitted by Gill Byrne, having collected a total of XX signatures.

Text of Petition:

Too many parents with young families are prohibited from taking up opportunities in employment, education and training due to the lack of affordable local childcare. This is keeping children and families in poverty, reducing choice for employers, and negatively affecting the wellbeing of families and the economy of Wales. It needs intervention at a political level to ensure this situation is addressed.

Additional Information:

As a former childcare development officer I can confirm the situation is worse now than it was 10-15 years ago with a huge reduction in childcare places for babies to older children. As part of a commitment to children and families in Wales the Welsh Government needs to urgently consider options to make affordable childcare a right for all families in the same way education is, and even consider siting nurseries and childcare on school grounds particularly for new builds or where space allows on existing school sites. Parents I know are unable to take up opportunities that would benefit their families because either they cannot afford childcare or more often there is no childcare available. There needs to be sustained investment at Welsh Government level both in providing and subsidising childcare places – let's lead the way for the rest of the UK!

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ceredigion
- Mid and West Wales

Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1303
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/00139/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

28 March 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 7 March 2023 regarding Petition P-06-1303 - *Create, fund and sustain sufficient affordable nursery and childcare places for all working parents*. You asked on behalf of the Committee what assessment has been made of the most recent Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs), and what they reveal about the state of childcare provision in Wales.

An independent review to assess the 2022 CSAs has been commissioned and is currently taking place. The aim of the project is to review the 2022 CSAs as completed by all 22 Local Authorities and the data that informed them. This will include an assessment of coverage of the CSAs as well as identification of any gaps CSAs against the statutory guidance.

The review will provide feedback to the Welsh Government on how each individual local authority has met its statutory duties in respect of the 2022 CSAs. It will also include a summary of important thematic findings from the review of the CSAs, which will help inform our understanding about provision of childcare across different parts of Wales. We are looking to publish the summary later this Spring.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

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Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

P-06-1303 Create, fund and sustain sufficient affordable nursery and childcare places for all working parents, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 03.05.23

My response is that the issues raised in the petition are not being addressed by the Ministers responses. I have worked in the childcare sector since 1990 and am still involved today, and I can confirm that childcare is scarce, not increasing and in fact decreasing in availability in Ceredigion, and that the Childcare Sufficiency duty is not having an impact in increasing the availability of affordable accessible childcare. I personally know many parents whose lifestyle choices are severely restricted through lack of childcare with an impact on family finances. The petition is asking for a completely radical overhaul of how we provide childcare in Wales and the Minister's responses do not respond to this request. The setting up of new childcare and the running of existing childcare is overly bureaucratic and involves an overly lengthy process, it can easily take up to 12 months from the initial decision to create a CIW registered childcare provision, of any kind, including childminder or nursery, or out of school childcare, and if you want to move a registered childcare provision to a new location or take on an additional premises the regulations involve a completely new application or at least a very lengthy bureaucratic process.

The petition is asking for Welsh Government subsidised childcare provision, and for childcare to be available in the same free education for children is provided, and for education sites to also include childcare provision as the norm across Wales. This would improve families lives and have the added bonus of giving a massive boost to the economy and move many childcares and families out of poverty. This investment from Welsh Government would pay off over time with a reduction in benefits paid to families, a reduction in referrals to support systems as families moved out of the stress of living in poverty, and a more healthy vibrant economy. It would be a win win situation for everyone.

I would be grateful if this response could be relayed back regarding this petition.

Agenda Item 5.6

P-06-1325 Lower the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn

This petition was submitted by Gwennol Ellis, having collected 154 signatures online and 117 signatures on paper, making for a total of 271 signatures.

Text of Petition:

We are calling for a speed limit of 30mph to be set on the A5 through the village of Glasfryn as a matter of urgency and before someone is killed.

Families live on the edge of this busy and dangerous road. Businesses are conducted very near to the road and farmers and contractors use the road daily to conduct their businesses.

Over the years, there have been a number of serious accidents including one fatality and several near misses. This is an urgent matter as it is only a matter of time before another serious incident occurs.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Clwyd West
- North Wales

Lee Waters AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref LW/00804/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

02 May 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your further letter of 18 April regarding Petition P-06-1325 to Lower the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn.

The most recent speed limit review at Glasfryn was carried out in accordance with the current [Setting Local Speed Limits guidance](#) and was informed by all the available evidence at the time, including historical casualty and speed data.

As explained previously this review and the guidance itself, pre-dates [Llwybr Newydd:the Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#)

New setting local speed guidance is therefore currently being drafted, which should be available before the end of the year. The guidance will adopt a new approach which is fully aligned to the aims and objectives of the new transport policy which Councillor Ellis refers to.

Once the new guidance is available, my officials will make conducting a review of the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn a priority.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Waters AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Gohebiaeth.Lee.Waters@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lee.Waters@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

P-06-1325 Gostwng y cyfyngiad cyflymder ar yr A5 drwy Glasfryn, Gohebiaeth - Deisebydd i'r Pwyllgor, 08.05.23

Annwyl Bwyllgor Deisebau

Dyma fy ymateb i'r ddogfen anfonwyd ataf.

Mae'r ddogfen yn cydnabod fod sail gryf gan drigolion Glasfryn i alw am ostwng y cyflymder gyrru trwy'r pentref ond gan nad yw'r canllawiau newydd wedi eu cyhoeddi, nad yw'n bosib gwneud dim ar hyn o bryd. Nodir, 'Unwaith y bydd y canllawiau newydd ar gael, bydd fy swyddogion yn blaenoriaethu cynnal adolygiad o'r terfyn cyflymder ar yr A5 drwy Lasfryn'.

Pe bai hyn yn wir, yna fyddai dim cyfyngiadau cyflymder yn cael eu rhoi mewn grym nes fod y ddogfen wedi ei chyhoeddi. Er hynny, mae cyfyngiadau newydd wedi eu gosod unwaith eto yn yr ychydig fisoedd diwethaf naill ben i bentref Glan Conwy yng Nghyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol Conwy ar yr A470, sydd fel yr A5 o dan reolaeth y Llywodraeth. O gyfeiriad Llanrwst, mae'r arwydd 40mya tua hanner milltir cyn cyrraedd y pentref; hyn, tra mae cerbydau'n parhau i gael gyrru ar 60mya trwy bentref Glasfryn. Does dim cysondeb na thegwch yn y modd y mae'r mater yma'n cael ei drin.

Rwyf yn gofyn eto i Lee Waters AS ddod i fy nghyfarfod yng Nglasfryn i weld pa mor beryglus ydi'r ffordd yma.

Yn gywir

Gwennol

Cynghorydd Gwennol Ellis
Councillor Gwennol Ellis

Document is Restricted

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair of the Petitions Committee

5 April 2023

Response to Petitions Committee report recommendation

Dear Jack,

I and my fellow Committee members welcome the Petitions Committee report 'Supporting care experienced parents', published in March 2023. The report was a powerful and analytical consideration of some of the most important challenges facing care experienced birth parents.

In the report you make the following recommendation:

Recommendation 6. The Children, Young People and Education Committee should regularly monitor progress against the Programme for Government Commitment to improve children's social care.

Our response: accept

As you will know, the Children, Young People and Education Committee is currently carrying out a far-reaching inquiry into the Welsh Government's Programme for Government commitment to "Explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers." We have therefore started the important work of monitoring the Welsh Government's oversight of children's social care in Wales, and we commit to continuing to do so once we have completed this inquiry as part of our ongoing focus on implementation and policy delivery.

Our report is scheduled to be published in May 2023. The report will set out priorities for radical reform, and will draw on your findings and recommendations as part of our evidence gathering.

We also await with interest the Welsh Government's response to your report, which we understand is due shortly.

If you, or your petitioner, would like any more information about our work please don't hesitate to contact the Committee clerks (SeneddChildren@Senedd.Wales).

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.





—
**Local Government
and Housing Committee**

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru

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—
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0300 200 6565

6 April 2023

Dear Jack,

Petition P-06-1272 Ban the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy agreements in Wales

As you will be aware from my previous correspondence to you dated 17 March, I stated that the Committee had no further plans to look specifically at the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy agreements.

However following that letter, at the Committee's meeting on 23 March we agreed terms of reference for an inquiry into the private rented sector. As part of these terms of reference, Members decided to include a reference to pets, which might be of interest to the petitioner, specifically:

"Barriers to accessing the private rented sector including challenges facing young people and people with pets".

The full terms of reference can be found [here](#).

I have asked my clerk to ensure that your clerk is kept informed as our inquiry progresses.

Yours sincerely



John Griffiths MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 6.3



Deputy Chief Fire Officer Iwan Cray
Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Lime Grove Avenue
Carmarthen
Carmarthenshire
SA31 1SP

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

30 March 2023

Petitions@senedd.wales

Dear Mr Sargeant

Petition P-06-1297 Stop "Controlled Burning" in Wales

I write in my capacity as Chair of the Wales Wildfire Board (WWB) following the recent Petition Committee at the Senedd where a petition on putting a stop to controlled burning was discussed. The WWB formed during 2022 following a meeting of the Strategic Arson Reduction Board (SARB) to look at redefining the approach to tackling wildfires across Wales. The issue of uncontrolled burning and wildfires has become an increasing challenge for several organisations hence the agreement to form the WWB last year. The balance between proactive preventative measures and reactive response measures are very fine and the influence that climate change predictions present are accepted to be exacerbating the problem.

The national picture of wildfires across the UK in 2022 was stark with around a thousand incidents meeting one or more of the following criteria having occurred by September of that year, with approximately 25% of the UK activity occurring in Wales alone.

- More than 10,000 square meters
- More than 4 fire appliances
- More than 6 hours in duration of firefighting
- Flame length of more than 1.5m
- Serious risk to life, environment, infrastructure, property

We can recall the devastating footage of last summer's wildfires across the UK with homes being lost and hectare upon hectare of uncontrolled fires spreading across the landscape. A similar picture is being seen internationally and examples of good practice are being sought from across the globe, but it is clear that no one single approach can address this multi-faceted issue.

The WWB identified an opportunity to move toward a more inclusive, longer-term approach based around commitment to a Wildfire Charter for Wales. The WWB intend to formally launch the Charter

at the 2023 Royal Welsh Show, but a version is attached to this letter for your reference which I'm sure you'll agree includes a wide-ranging focus.

There are many examples of partnership work realising some considerable successes in incident reduction, community engagement and improving the way that organisations work together. It is the wide-ranging membership of the WWB from Emergency Services, Natural Resources Wales, Farming Unions, Met Office, Public Health Wales, Professors from academia, National Park Authorities and others that is its strength, and which should allow for a progressive and considered route forward for us to tackle Wildfires here in Wales.

One of the main purposes of the WWB is to provide strategic leadership for the delivery of proactive and reactive intervention methods for dealing with wildfires throughout Wales, based on threat, harm and risk and a standing item on the meeting agenda is the regulatory and legislative approach in Wales. On this matter, some Board members recently met with policy makers from Welsh Government to discuss opportunities to include measures for tackling wildfires within the new Sustainable Farming Scheme proposals in Wales.

The WWB was encouraged to note the recommendation from the Petitions Committee to the responsible Minister for a review of the Heather and Grass Burning Code for Wales 2008 as the position has shifted over the 15 years that have since elapsed. Whilst it is accepted that different groups in society will hold different opinions on the topic of controlled burning it is important to note that it will take a full range of measures to address the matter in hand, as identified by the RSPBs response to yourself setting out their approach to using controlled burning on South Stack and Ramsey.

The matter of burning over peatland however deserves far greater attention as set out in a recent article referring to a 10 year study by researchers at the University of York - No 'one size fits all' heather management method for protecting carbon-rich peatlands.

It is the WWBs opinion that controlled burning, compared with uncontrolled burning, does have a place in the armoury for us to collaboratively tackle the issue of wildfires in Wales going forward. Ultimately there is no one management system that all landowners should use, various research is showing us that there is a choice and evidence to support those choices, which has been lacking previously, is now coming to the fore.

I thank you for taking the time to read the letter and would respectfully request that the support of the WWB for a review of the Heather and Grass Burning Code for Wales can be included as part of the recommendation from the Petitions Committee. The WWB would of course welcome and appreciate an involvement in any forthcoming review and would be able to contribute wide ranging knowledge and understanding held by Board members on the topic area.

Your Sincerely



Iwan Cray

Chair

Wales Wildfire Board

Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK

BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK

Pori Natur a Threftadaeth

Cadw

ferries

Met Office

GIG CYMRU NHS WALES
Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru
Public Health Wales

#DAWNSGLAW

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales

CrimeStoppers.
0800 555 111
100% anonymous. Always.

Llethrau Lion
Healthy Hillside

NFU CYMRU #NiWfFermioCymru #WeAreWildFireFarmers

FUW

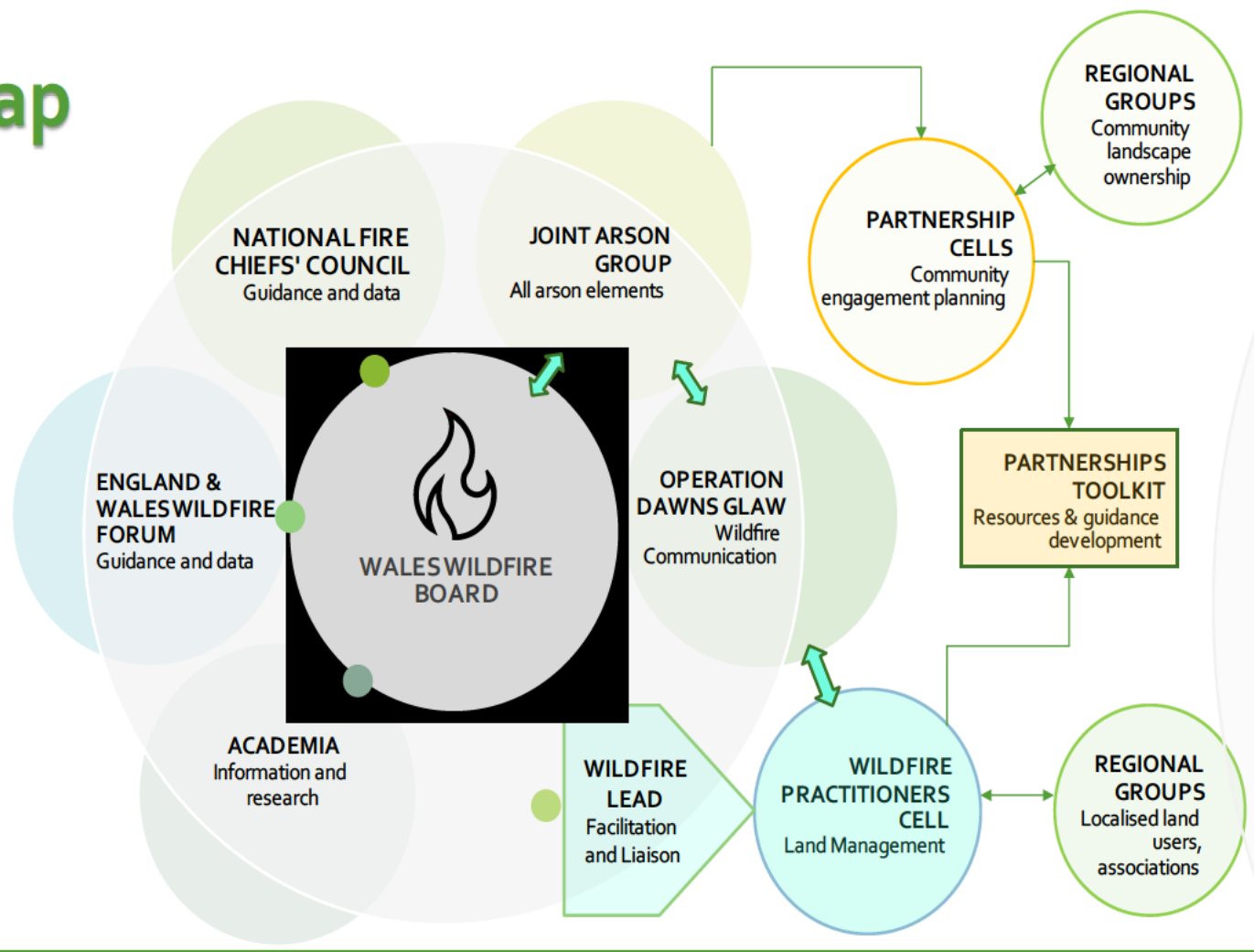
Wales Wildfire Charter Draft
Wales Wildfire Board 2022

Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub Fire and Rescue Service

Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Group Map



DRAFT

Wales Wildfire Charter

By working together we commit to:



DRAFT

Partnership

Through an evolving partnership approach, we will:

Bring together Emergency Services, Public and Private Organisations, Landowners and Land Users to manage and develop our landscape.

Through leadership and communication we will:

Understand and recognise each others impacts to develop a range of early interventions

Deliver a one voice approach to wildfire messaging, awareness and education across Wales

Have a better understanding of wildfire risk management across Wales

Change perceptions and create a wildfire wise Wales

Wales Wildfire Charter

By working together we commit to:



DRAFT

Environmental & Community Resilience

We will contribute to management of our landscape to:

Protect wildlife, forestry, and livelihoods, improve wellbeing, health, and amenity, facilitate sustainable food production and create sense of place and community ownership.

We will enhance our Welsh landscape by :

Managing the number, scale and severity of wildfire incidents

Adapting to nature and climate developments and restoring connections to green space and community

Supporting deaner air and protecting natural and heritage resources

Protecting our carbon sources in soil and woodlands

Wales Wildfire Charter

By working together we commit to:



DRAFT

Prevention & Protection

We will work together to:

Implement a diverse range of management techniques to reduce the impact of wildfire in the Welsh landscape and on our communities

We will do this collaboratively to:

Adopt and support a Landscape Management approach to Wildfire Risk Management

Share knowledge and provide training through a Wales wide collaboration network

Create a multi-functional Fire Risk Map and a toolkit for preventative land management techniques

Reduce uncontrolled wildfire numbers and severity by sharing resources and implementing prevention measures



ebost/email: [REDACTED]

31 March 2023

To: Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice

Dear Minister

RE: Ministerial meeting with energy companies

I write following your latest meeting with energy companies on 30 March 2023. I'm grateful for the invitation to listen to the companies as they explained the steps they are now taking following our shared concerns over the treatment of vulnerable people. As you made clear to those present, the scandal of forced installation of prepayment meters has shaken faith in the ability of suppliers to look after their customers. It has also raised serious questions around their regulation, licences and use of debt collectors.

It is our view that prepayment meter households have too often been treated as second class citizens within the energy market. Ofgem and suppliers have repeatedly failed to prioritise this group when rolling out sector wide improvements - even though they often have the most to gain. Ofgem has been too slow to step in to protect prepayment meter customers from harmful practices.

There is a clear disconnect between the stated policies of energy companies and the reality for the people we support through Citizens Advice Cymru. In the meeting, suppliers said that they had extensive safeguards to protect vulnerable customers. However a short review of cases through our service quickly identified that vulnerabilities are not being adequately assessed. These cases exist across suppliers and across Wales. I have included a series of case studies (Appendix A) to illustrate these points.

As it stands, suppliers work on the assumption there's no vulnerability in the household until proven otherwise. We believe this should be reversed. Suppliers should assume there is vulnerability in the household until they can be confident there isn't.

In seeking to redress the forced prepayment meter scandal, the current pause in forced prepayment installations should last as long as is needed until new protections are in place, and



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market conditions ensure no detriment to customers. Action should be taken swiftly to compensate people if they were wrongly moved onto prepay through their smart meters or by installation by warrant.

Households which remain on prepayment meters must be offered a quick and straightforward route to securing additional support (eg. emergency fuel vouchers, additional credit & practical debt remedies like debt holidays).

Ofgem and industry must go further to ensure that appropriate safeguards and support are in place to ensure disconnection - by whatever means - is kept in the past. Disconnection in water was banned two decades ago because of health and safety concerns. Disconnection of energy supply to households on credit meters is also effectively banned. But we know when people are struggling to afford to top-up their prepayment meters or are worried about energy costs, disconnecting themselves from an energy supply is commonplace. This simply passes off the responsibility for disconnection from energy suppliers to consumers - the impact is the same.

Considering action we could take in Wales specifically, it feels an opportune time to explore what can be done with the Welsh Government's housing-related powers to ensure tenants, particularly those who prepay for their energy, maintain the 'right to an energy supply'.

As you know, we remain concerned about energy and living costs continuing to remain high while government support is reduced throughout 2023. The Welsh Government's Wales Fuel Support Scheme assisted hundreds of thousands of households this past winter. We would urge the Welsh Government to begin preparations to offer support to low income households next winter. Addressing broader reform of the energy market to help low income households, we believe the UK Government should introduce an energy social tariff by Spring 2024, as part of a new policy framework to support people struggling in what could be a decade of high energy bills.

While we have pointed to areas above for exploration in Wales, many aspects are responsibilities that sit with the Ofgem, energy suppliers, and the UK Government. There are questions that remain unanswered by suppliers and the regulator. Your convening power to bring these parties together to answer questions on behalf of people in Wales is valuable, and appreciated.

We are determined to continue working with you and your colleagues in the Senedd to ensure



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lessons are learned.

Yours sincerely,

Luke Young

**Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol / Assistant Director
Citizens Advice Cymru**

CC:

Chair of Petitions Committee

Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee

Party spokespeople for social justice and equalities

Chair CPG on Fuel Poverty

Appendix A

Stacey's Story

Stacey is a single parent of two young children. She lives in a housing association property in South Wales. Stacey is a young care leaver with little support from social services. She's reliant on benefit income and due to rising costs is struggling to keep up with bills. Her energy supplier wrote to her to say she owes £5,000 on her gas bill. She's unsure how this amount built up.

Stacey has smart meters and these have since been switched to prepay mode, she was unaware this was happening at the time. It appears **[Supplier] failed to carry out any of the required checks to ensure having her meters switched to prepay mode was an appropriate method of payment.** There is also a debt recovery rate of £18 per week being taken from the credit she puts on her meter. She's now finding it very difficult to top up. Our adviser gave her a fuel voucher and talked through other support she may be entitled to and steps she could take with her energy supplier to reduce the high debt recovery rate.

Liz's Story



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Liz is a single parent with a young child. She lives in a housing association property in South Wales. Her electricity smart meter was switched to prepay mode due to disputed arrears. Liz has anxiety and depression which can make it difficult for her to cope with everyday tasks. Her child also has significant health issues which means she needs to keep their room consistently warm. The only notice she received for the switch was a single text, sent just two days before the switch was made. **[Supplier] did not take the required steps to check for customer vulnerabilities.** Due to the minimal notice, Liz was unable to budget for the change to prepay mode. She has continued to have issues with this way of paying, which has caused her to lose supply for over 50 hours since the switch.

Mary's Story

Mary is widowed with adult children. She lives alone in a housing association property in South Wales. Her energy supplier has recently switched her smart meters to prepay mode for outstanding energy debts. Mary didn't realise any debt had accrued on her account. She cannot remember receiving any notification from her supplier that the switch was going to happen and said no other debt repayment options were discussed before they took this action.

Mary has multiple vulnerabilities, including physical and mental health conditions. She does not have access to the internet and isn't confident using the telephone to speak with their energy supplier. She is subsequently struggling to raise these issues independently. She is unsure how she will afford to top-up her meters and make debt repayments and is very worried this will mean she will be without gas or electricity.

Acting on Mary's behalf, one of our advisers emailed [supplier] to check the status of her energy accounts, whether debt repayment options were discussed prior to the switch and whether she is on their Priority Services Register (PSR). Over a month later they had still not received a reply. When our adviser was finally able to speak to someone at [supplier] they confirmed that Mary has been on their PSR since 2010. In spite of this it appears **they didn't take account of her vulnerabilities before making the switch to prepay.**

Sian's story



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Sian has multiple health conditions, both physical and mental. She struggles to manage her finances and has a number of debts including considerable arrears on her energy bills. Her energy supplier has attempted to install a PPM on a number of occasions in the past due to the outstanding debt, but this hasn't happened previously due to Sian's health. She is on their Priority Services Register.

In February she received a letter from [Supplier] once again **threatening to get a warrant to install a PPM if the debt wasn't paid, despite the temporary hold on the forced installations of PPMs being in place**. She contacted her supplier, who agreed to put a 30 day hold on the account but she is worried about what will happen once this is lifted. Our adviser contacted [supplier] who confirmed there are no plans to install a PPM at the property at this time. However, the whole experience just added to Sian's worries and anxiety.