

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 – Senedd

Hybrid

Meeting date: 3 July 2023

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

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Petitions@senedd.wales

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

2 Petition of the year

The Chair will announce the Petition of the year.

3 New Petitions

- 3.1 P-06-1338 Extend the bus emergency scheme and develop national bus recovery plan

(Pages 1 – 9)

- 3.2 P-06-1339 Require all new Welsh homes to be fitted with solar panels as a condition of planning permission

(Pages 10 – 18)

- 3.3 P-06-1342 Fund more specialist school places and staff for children with additional learning needs in Wales

(Pages 19 – 25)

- 3.4 P-06-1343 Provide free public transport for all secondary school pupils

(Pages 26 – 32)

- 3.5 P-06-1348 Commission suitable NHS services in Wales for people with EDS or hypermobility spectrum disorders

(Pages 33 – 40)



4 Updates to previous petitions

- 4.1 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 41 – 47)
- 4.2 P-06-1232 Stop the proliferation of intensive poultry units (IPUs) by legislating and introduce a moratorium until this can be achieved
(Pages 48 – 53)
- 4.3 P-06-1287 Investigate C&V UHB's refusal to keep north Penarth's surgery, allocating patients to distant GPs
(Pages 54 – 56)
- 4.4 P-06-1291 Hold an enquiry into the corporate takeover of the veterinary profession in Wales
(Pages 57 – 58)
- 4.5 P-06-1306 More protection for ancient & veteran trees in Wales. Old Trees can be relocated. Stop The Chop
(Pages 59 – 60)
- 4.6 P-06-1313 Allow exemptions to the 182-day occupancy rule to reduce harm to real Welsh self-catering businesses
(Pages 61 – 64)
- 4.7 P-06-1317 Recognise Teaching Assistants as an important asset to schools by raising wage
(Pages 65 – 67)
- 4.8 P-06-1319 Provide a pedestrian crossing on A4042 at Goytre Arms crossroads and reduce the speed limit to 20mph
(Pages 68 – 71)
- 4.9 P-06-1320 Allocate additional funding to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to ensure its sustainability
(Pages 72 – 73)

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

(Pages 74 – 75)

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

(Pages 76 – 81)

Petitions outstanding from the 5th Senedd

4.12 P-05-859 Provide Child Houses in Wales for victims of child sexual abuse

(Pages 82 – 83)

4.13 P-05-914 Equal Access to Health Care for the Disabled

(Page 84)

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

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P-06-1338 Extend the bus emergency scheme and develop national bus recovery plan

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 03 Gorffennaf 2023
Petitions Committee | 03 July 2023

Reference: SR23/5996-6

Petition Number: P-06-1338

Petition title: Extend the bus emergency scheme and develop national bus recovery plan.

Text of petition: During the pandemic the Welsh Government launched the bus emergency scheme (BES) to safeguard the bus network.

The Welsh Government are now looking to bring this scheme to an end, despite passenger numbers not recovering to pre-pandemic levels.

We want to see both the funding secured for this financial year, and a national bus recovery plan co-produced with bus operators, passengers, local authorities and others, in order to build more comprehensive, sustainable bus services.



1. Background

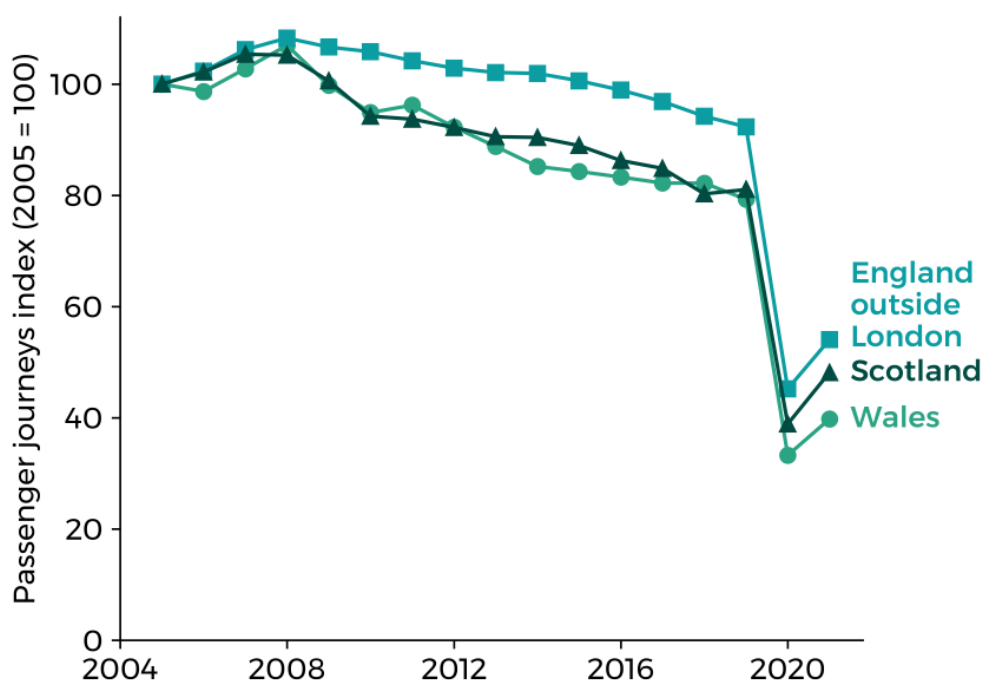
As the chart below shows, passenger numbers have been declining across Great Britain, outside of London, for a decade – part of a much longer downward trend.

Many factors are behind this trend, like increased online shopping, alternatives to bus travel, and changing public attitudes. Increased congestion is also key factor affecting bus service viability.

However, the chart also illustrates the profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Demand has remained low following initial health concerns and advice against using public transport.

Index of passenger journeys on local bus services by country and year (excluding London)

Source: Department for Transport



Source: Department for Transport

Public transport in general, and bus services in particular, are widely recognised as important not only for addressing climate change, but also to address transport poverty.

2. Welsh Government action

Modal shift and decarbonisation targets

The Welsh Government aims for 45% of journeys to be made by sustainable modes (public transport or active travel) by 2040. It estimates 32% of journeys are currently made this way.

Net Zero Wales aims for the most polluting 50% of buses to be replaced by a zero tailpipe emission bus fleet by 2028.

The Welsh Government has said meeting its modal shift and net zero targets present “a big challenge”.

Funding for bus services

The Welsh Government provides a range of financial support to the bus industry. In January, it provided a paper to the Senedd’s Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee outlining its 2023-24 Climate Change Department draft budget allocations. This includes a five-year breakdown of all funding for bus services through various channels (see pages 15 and 16 of the paper).

The Welsh Government provided significant support to bus services during the pandemic through the establishment of the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES). This has remained in place in one form or other since early 2020. The draft budget paper indicates that over £150m has been allocated to the BES between 2020-21 and 2022-23.

The paper also shows that £28m of BES funding was initially included in the Welsh Government’s draft budget for 2023-24. This matched funding provided in 2022-23.

However on 10 February, less than three weeks after CCEI Committee’s 25th January draft budget scrutiny session with the Climate Change ministers, the Welsh Government indicated that the future of this funding was in doubt.

It announced a three month “transitional period” from April 2023 before the scheme would be withdrawn. It said this would allow “short term stability” while government and operators “work together on planning bus networks which better suit the new travel patterns we have seen since the end of the pandemic”.

In a statement in March 2023 the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, said the scheme would “now run until 24 July 2023” – a three week extension allowing school transport to “continue as normal”. The statement continued:

I have asked TfW, local authorities and the Community Transport Association to establish regional network planning teams to understand the impact of the ending of BES and to resolve the network issues that are likely to arise from the change in funding regime. This will help optimise the network and maintain as much reach and access as possible.

The statement also announced establishment of an expert panel to advise on implementing the Welsh Government’s 2022 bus reform White Paper.

On 23 May the Deputy Minister made a further statement giving an update on bus services. He said, “we have nearly reached a solution that will allow us to make further funding available to protect as much of the network as we can for the remainder of this financial year”. The Welsh Government would make £46m available “from bus budgets to support BES and successor arrangements for the whole financial year” in addition to concessionary fares funding and other “regular support” for services.

However, he said the “challenge” is now to design a network “that can best serve passengers in the time we have available to plan, and within the funding that is available to us”.

Responding to a question from Jack Sargeant MS the Deputy Minister said, “I do hope that, by the end of this, we’ll be able to reassure Jack Sargeant’s constituents that many, if not most of the services, will still be there”.

The Deputy Minister’s letter to the Chair responding to this petition predates the 23 May statement. The statement represents the most up to date position.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The future of BES has been discussed extensively in Plenary, including in a Plaid Cymru debate on the issue on 22 March. A number of written questions have also been tabled.

The CCEI Committee took evidence on 11 May from Welsh local authorities and representatives of the bus industry on the sustainability of bus services following the announcement. This evidence stressed the scale of the challenge in

responding to the funding reductions, but also highlighted that discussions are on-going with the Welsh Government.

This evidence session followed on from the Committee's inquiry into bus and rail transport in Wales which reported in January 2023. The inquiry considered how bus and rail services should be supported to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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-06-1338
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/00843/23

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

10 May 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 April regarding a petition the Committee has received from Andrew Jenkins on future bus funding.

Thanks to UK Government's economic mismanagement we're facing unprecedented financial pressures and difficult choices on funding allocations.

As you will be aware, the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) has kept vital bus services running throughout the pandemic. The scheme had been due to end in March 2023, but following extensive discussions, we announced in February that it would be extended for an initial transitional period of three months to the end of June 2023.

Following further conversations BES has been extended for a further three-week period to the end of this academic year, 24th July 2023 ([Written Statement: Bus Emergency Scheme and Franchising Expert Panel \(31 March 2023\) | GOV.WALES](#)). This will mean that school transport will continue as normal. It will also provide further stability for the industry while we work on the transition away from emergency style funding to plan bus networks which better suit the new travel patterns we have seen since the end of the pandemic.

Regional Planning Teams have been set up to assess the likely impact on our bus networks when BES funding ceases on 24 July. We are presently working closely with these teams to plan and prioritise the services that will best serve our communities within the funding available beyond this point.

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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.

We've seen permanent changes in travel patterns, whereby passenger numbers simply haven't recovered. We've recognised that emergency support for the industry has been crucial, but clearly the network will need to change in future.

Working collaboratively with key partners is critical as we now consider transitional options away from bus emergency funding within the budgets available. My officials and I continue to meet regularly with the industry and local authorities.

Alongside this work we are also in discussion with the bus industry and their trade organisations in developing a 'back to bus' marketing campaign that will promote the merits of bus travel.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Lee', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

Subject: Petition P-06-1338

Dear Jack Sargeant MS,

Firstly, I would like to thank the Petitions Committee and staff for considering this petition.

Our democratic institutions work best when all people are given the tools they need to highlight issues of importance to them, to influence decision makers and play an active role in how policy is formed, services delivered and change achieved. This is a point I will return to later in this response.

I also would like to thank the Deputy Minister for his response to the Petitions Committee Chair. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide my observations for the attention of the committee.

The Deputy Minister's response outlines the current position very well. Public transport was effectively shut down during the pandemic, with very few services running in order to provide transport for some key workers. Through 2020 and 2021, even when not in lockdown, the advice stressed to the public was to stay away from public transport.

As someone reliant on buses, I actively avoided buses for quite a while after the advice against buses ceased. Only when my son started school and it was necessary for me to once again get on the bus did I do so.

My point here is that despite being a thirty-something year old man in good health, I was reluctant to go back to buses due to the strength of the public health messaging. For those who have poorer health than me, it is not surprising that many of them continue to have concerns about the safety of buses. While I welcome the Deputy Minister's comment about a "back to bus" campaign, I would like to know why such a campaign is only now being discussed. After two years of telling people not to use the bus - why did no one in government think that the opposite message needed to be delivered in equally strong terms once things were safer?

In a matter of weeks services will be reduced - thankfully not to the extent originally feared when I started this petition - but with funding reductions due the network will be smaller. Cuts will still take place, services will be reduced or removed entirely. This will have an impact on people, an impact that could have been avoided.

For much of the last year there has been references in Senedd committees, Cross Party Groups, and in the Siambr (sometimes by the Deputy Minister and First Minister) that the lack of passenger number recovery was putting services at risk and putting a strain on public funds. There have also been, in recent years, a number of campaign weeks or months (*Catch the Bus Week/Catch the Bus Month*) that have provided opportunities for the Government to highlight the contribution that buses make and how important they are to our community wellbeing.

That's is why I put in my initial petition that we need a recovery plan, co-produced by those within the bus industry and passengers (and even passengers who have not yet returned), to assess the problem with numbers and work towards getting numbers back up. This was going to be a difficult task with the current level of service, but with funding cuts and a smaller, less comprehensive and convenient network, I fear this task is now even more challenging.

The Deputy Minister's response also refers to stakeholders that have been involved in discussions, and will be involved in designing the campaign. Going back to my point earlier about public involvement and influence, what role does the Deputy Minister have in mind for passengers? They are the most important stakeholder in this process but have been notably absent.

That is why I would appreciate the Committee, when considering this petition, do not think the matter is resolved simply because some funding will continue and a campaign will - at some point - begin.

We need funding guarantees and we need a plan that involves all stakeholders - especially bus users (regular passengers, not just the organisation Bus Users UK) - in order to address the long term managed decline of bus services in Wales.

Buses currently provide an essential service. They connect our communities and improve the health, wealth and wellbeing of our nation. The support the Welsh Government has shown in recent years should be recognised and applauded, so too should the references to public transport in the travel hierarchy and the ambitions of the *One Network – One Ticket* white paper, but there is a lot more work that needs to be done to build a sustainable, comprehensive network. With a legislative solution still years away from being realised, effort is needed now.

Buses cannot continue to be low down in priorities of politicians. As a bus user who has seen the dreadful impact loss of services can have on people, I ask for leadership and I ask for bus users to be included - we want to help. I ask the Petitions Committee to ask the following;

- What is the suggested timeline for a Back to Bus campaign?
- What are the key outcomes and targets of the campaign?
- How are bus passengers involved in the design and delivery of this campaign?
- What immediate guidance or materials can be given to bus operators, local authorities and members of the public to start promoting bus journeys right now?
- Will we see members of the Government use every available and appropriate opportunity to promote buses and highlight their safety?

Thank you once again for your consideration and for allowing me to provide this additional submission.

Kind regards
Andrew Jenkins

P-06-1339 Require all new Welsh homes to be fitted with solar panels as a condition of planning permission

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Gorffennaf 2023
Petitions Committee | 3 July 2023

Reference: SR23/5997-2

Petition Number: P-06-1339

Petition title: Require all new Welsh homes to be fitted with solar panels as a condition of planning permission.

Text of petition:

The world is facing an urgent energy crisis and we are all facing a daunting climate and nature crisis. This is why it is so important that the Welsh Government should lead the way in securing future renewable energy sources.

This is why all new industrial, commercial and domestic builds (who are not shaded or north facing) should include solar energy as part of their planning consent.

The sun produces more than enough energy to meet the whole world's energy needs and it's not going to run out.

Solar panels have several benefits for the environment due to their green energy and lack of emissions when running:

1. Cuts down the energy you use from the National Grid. Reducing energy poverty and helping to keep our lights on.



2. No emissions. It can reduce the carbon footprint of your home by 80% in one year.
3. It's renewable. Solar energy is a form of renewable energy. This means that there is plenty of it to go around because it is an energy source that won't run out (not for another few billion years anyway). Fossil fuels are a finite source of energy, and one that we damage the planet with when we mine and distribute it.
4. They last a long time and require little to no maintenance. Conventional heating methods require relatively regular replacement and maintenance, which can cause a lot of environmentally unfriendly waste, as well as increase the need for more units to be made. Solar panels last about 50 years, so you shouldn't need to replace them for a long time.

1. Background

Wales has declared a climate emergency and the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee has heard private housing described as "the elephant in the room" for reaching the Welsh Government's target of net-zero by 2050. While that particular reference focused on the need to retro-fit existing homes to improve energy efficiency, the efficiency of new homes will also play a key role.

The UK Climate Change Committee's June 2023 progress report on reducing emissions in Wales found that Welsh renewables capacity has increased over time but the rate of solar power installation has slowed since 2016.

There is currently no requirement on developers to fit new build properties with solar panels, however there are mechanisms designed to enable and promote installation.

Permitted Development Rights

Some types of development are defined by planning law as being ‘permitted’ and are therefore automatically granted planning permission, this includes a number of common household projects meeting certain criteria.

There are permitted development rights that allow for the installation of micro-generation equipment, including rooftop solar panels on domestic and non-domestic properties in Wales, without having to make a planning application. Where certain criteria is not met a planning application would be required.

Senedd Research has published a small-scale renewable energy schemes planning quick guide which provides further information.

Building Regulations

The Building Regulations are made under the *Building Act 1984*. They govern the way in which buildings should be constructed by setting minimum standards for design, construction and alterations. Technical guidance on how to comply with the Building Regulations is provided within 'approved documents'.

Part L of the approved documents relates to the conservation of fuel and power.

In 2022 the Welsh Government completed a review of Part L. This introduced higher minimum energy efficiency standards for all new homes than were previously required. However the Building Regulations generally do not prescribe specific forms of heating or energy generation to be used to meet standards.

A further review of Part L is due in 2025.

Other countries

The European Union has proposed making solar panels mandatory on all new buildings in the EU. Its “solar rooftop initiative”, part of the European Commission’s REPowerEU plan would see a requirement to install solar panels on new residential, public and commercial buildings.

Japan has already passed regulations requiring solar panels on all new houses built in Tokyo by “large-scale homebuilders” after April 2025.

2. Welsh Government action

In her letter to the Chair dated 7 June, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, says she fully agrees with the petitioner “on the scale and urgency of the climate and nature crisis we face”.

While the Minister says the “proposition that all new buildings be fitted with solar energy panels, is in principle a good suggestion”, in her view there are several reasons why she does not believe it should be mandated at this time.

In her letter, the Minister suggests:

- the Welsh Government’s overall approach to Building Regulations, the amendments it has made and intends to make are the right steps to achieve carbon neutrality over time;
- existing permitted development rights strike “an appropriate balance” to allow solar installations while considering neighbouring properties;
- solar panels may not be suitable for every property – the Minister makes reference to the direction properties face, whether properties are located in protected areas, are listed buildings and potential specific issues for certain building types;
- potential issues with the supply of solar panels should demand increase; and
- that the mandating of a single technology may delay the emergence of new technologies and more efficient energy solutions.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Fifth Senedd’s Petitions Committee considered a very similar petition to this one. At that time the Committee closed the petition noting there was little action they could take on the matter.

In June, the Minister referred to the issue of requiring solar panels in response to questions from Senedd Members on the UK Climate Change Committee progress report referenced earlier in this briefing.

It's also worth noting the issue has been raised in the House of Commons. In 2022 it considered a [similar petition](#). The UK Government's response referred to the existence of permitted development rights and Building Regulations.

Also at a UK level, an [amendment](#) to the [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill](#) calling for all new homes in England to be fitted with solar panels from 2025 was tabled by Conservative MP John Stevenson but was not put to a vote.

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-06-1339
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/01461/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
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7 June 2023

Dear Jack Sargeant MS,

Thank you for your letter of 18th May 2023 regarding a petition seeking to ensure that all new buildings incorporate solar panels.

I have considered the petitioner's request: -

The world is facing an urgent energy crisis and we are all facing a daunting climate and nature crisis. This is why it is so important that the Welsh Government should lead the way in securing future renewable energy sources.

This is why all new industrial, commercial and domestic builds (who are not shaded or north facing) should include solar energy as part of their planning consent.

I agree fully with the petitioner on the scale and urgency of the climate and nature crisis we face. I don't underestimate the scale of the challenge or the necessity for action. My colleagues across government are of the same view and we are open to all ideas and suggestions on how to best meet these challenges.

The issues we face are complex and multi-faceted. As we all understand, they are the product of many generations of choices, habits, technological and social changes. Many of the decisions we made in the past on where we live, how we generate energy, how we travel and how we use our natural resources, whilst made in the best interests of society at the time, now provide us with a significant challenge to deliver the best possible future for the generations that follow.

The solutions are complex too and will require co-ordinated action at all scales as we determine how best to meet the challenges we face. We have already made tough decisions on how places should change, the standards we want new buildings to be built to, road and rail infrastructure and how we want to protect and manage our natural environment. There are many more important decisions ahead.

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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.

The proposition that all new buildings be fitted with solar energy panels, is in principle a good suggestion. There are extensive roofscapes around us, we are becoming more familiar with solar panels in the environment and the technology is proven. There are however important reasons why I do not believe the Welsh Government should mandate the requirement for solar on all new buildings at this time, and these are as follows: -

1. Approach taken by Building Regulations

Building regulations in Wales are, in general, technology and fuel neutral. They do not prescribe or prohibit any particular form of heating or energy generation. The intention is to ensure maximum flexibility in meeting energy targets, utilising the best and most appropriate solutions in each individual case, and to avoid inadvertently creating a barrier to new innovation by determining that one technology be installed instead of any other. Part L of the Building Regulations 2022 amendments do not, therefore, mandate a particular technology (such as solar PV). They do however include solar PV within the notional dwelling specification which sets the energy target. This in turn encourages the use of renewable energy in new dwellings.

The Welsh Government completed a review of Part L of the Building Regulations in 2022. This review introduced a significant uplift in minimum energy efficiency standards for all new homes. The 2022 amendments introduced a 37% reduction in carbon emissions for new dwellings (compared with previous standard). In addition, all new homes will need to be future-proofed, to make it easier to retrofit low carbon heating systems.

The 37% reduction is intended as a steppingstone towards the next Part L changes in 2025 when it is planned that all new homes will produce a minimum of 75% less CO₂ emissions than ones built to previous Part L (2014) requirements. Our vision for the Part L 2025 standard is designed to shift to low-carbon heat sources for heating and hot water. This means that new buildings constructed to the standard will be able to become carbon neutral over time as the electricity grid and heat networks decarbonise.

I am therefore confident that the overall approach to Building Regulations, the amendments we have made and the amendments we intend to make are the right steps to achieve carbon neutrality over time.

2. Availability of Permitted Development Rights

Both domestic and non-domestic buildings benefit from existing permitted development rights which allow the installation of solar PV (electricity) and solar thermal (heat) panels subject to certain conditions. In most cases this means there is no need to submit a planning application for installation. Some limitations and conditions do apply so that, for example, panels are appropriately located on a building. Solar panels should be sited so as to minimise their effect on the external appearance of the building or amenity of the wider area. Where a planning application is required, this is not a negative judgement on a proposal to install solar panels, but to ensure that the amenity of neighbouring properties and the wider area are fully considered by the local planning authority.

Under the permitted development rights, domestic properties can install solar panels up to 50kw of electricity generation or 45kw of heat. For non-domestic properties there is no upper limit meaning that significantly scaled roof solar schemes can progress without the need for the submission of a planning application.

I am satisfied that our existing permitted development rights strike an appropriate balance between permitting domestic and non-domestic solar installations against the need to ensure that the amenity of neighbouring properties and the wider area are appropriately considered.

3. Other Considerations

It will be the case that solar panels may not be suitable for every property. Greatest efficiency and energy generated is provided by installation on a south facing roof where the roof is pitched. East and west facing roofs can be 15-20% less efficient, north facing roofs will be less efficient again. Shading by natural features, such as trees, or from taller buildings and structures may also have detrimental effects on efficiency and energy generation.

Other technologies such as domestic and non-domestic ground source, water source and air source heat pumps, and wind turbines may provide more efficient and more effective solutions. Energy efficiency measures such as insulation should also form a substantial part of the solution alongside any renewables. At a neighbourhood scale, district heating networks and community ownership initiatives should also be a consideration with the potential to provide more efficient and cost-effective solutions.

Issues of visual amenity may arise in historic and protected locations where separate consenting regimes may also apply, such as Listed Building Consent. The existing non-domestic permitted development rights do not permit the installation of solar panels within 3km of the perimeter of an airport or aerodrome, also solar panels so far as practicable should be sited to minimise any impacts from 'glint' and 'glare'. Any new regime would need to explore how these issues would be addressed and managed.

There may be issues of viability, installation and maintenance costs, specific implications for different building types (e.g. flats vs houses). The mandating of a single technology may also delay the emergence of new solar and other technologies and more efficient energy solutions. There may be issues of availability of solar panel supply to meet increased building demand. Any new regime would need to consider these and other potential issues.

For these reasons, whilst I am very supportive of the installation of solar panels on buildings, I do not believe it is appropriate to mandate the installation of solar panels on all new properties.

Yours sincerely,



Julie James AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

P-06-1339 Require all new Welsh homes to be fitted with solar panels as a condition of planning permission, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 27.06.23

Dear Senedd members,

Thank you for the opportunity to reply to the Ministers comments concerning my petition. I welcome her support for the general thrust of my petition but I do not believe, however, that the three reasons she lists for not supporting this policy change could not be overcome given enough commitment, determination and political will.

Declaring a Climate emergency means we now urgently need radical and effective action not more nice words and neverending reports.

The Ministers explanation of the Building regulations is interesting but is not certainly not a reason why including solar PV in future builds cannot be adopted.

Similarly the information on permitted development rights is interesting but does not address my suggestion that solar PV can effectively help us tackle both climate change and the energy crisis and fuel poverty.

Installing solar panels on every house in the UK would provide 60.52% of our total domestic electricity consumption. Between April and September, solar generation would exceed all domestic electricity consumption.

With more solar panels on roof tops here in the UK than ever before, solar panels are becoming less of an eye sore and more of a statement of change. By installing solar panels on new builds we are effectively increasing the awareness in the technology and making renewable energy more of the norm. This is a great way to continue to encourage the UK's transition towards Green energy.

Finally "other considerations" informs us that solar PV is not suitable in all locations but I have already accepted that fact in my petition.

Once again I believe that Welsh Government can lead the world in finding solutions to both climate change and the energy crisis but what is lacking is the political will to make that change!

Thank you/Diolch

Robert Curtis

P-06-1342: Fund more specialist school places and staff for children with additional learning needs in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Gorffennaf 2023
Petitions Committee | 3 July 2023

Reference: SR23/5997-4

Petition Number: P-06-1342

Petition title: Fund more specialist school places and staff for children with additional learning needs in Wales

Petition text

To look at funding provided for specialist provisions in Wales for children with additional needs it's far from acceptable children with a high level of need being forced to stay in a mainstream environment due to spaces in schools and schools being underfunded and understaffed!

More details

Specialist schools and unit base provisions throughout Wales are already full to capacity and the ones who aren't yet will not be far behind. Schools are understaffed, staff are overworked already, ALN children are unable to receive the education and support they so rightfully deserve from the start, in many cases early intervention is extremely important and these chances are being taken away from children due to the crisis we are facing within our education system



1. Additional Learning Needs reform

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 established a new system to meet children and young people's Additional Learning Needs (ALN), as is now the legal term, to replace the existing/previous system for Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The new ALN system is being introduced on a phased basis over four years (September 2021 to August 2025). All learners newly identified with ALN come under the new system, while those already supported with SEN are transferring over in different years, depending on their year group and level of intervention (whether or not they have a statement of SEN).

As such, both the existing/previous SEN system and new ALN system are operating side by side, until August 2025.

The definition of ALN is materially the same as that for SEN. Learners judged to have ALN are eligible for a statutory Individual Development Plan (IDP).

2. Placement of learners in specialist provision

The 2018 Act requires a presumption of placement of learners with ALN in mainstream education, unless certain criteria apply. This is the same as in the case of the existing/previous SEN system. However, a further criterion added by the 2018 Act was whether placement in specialist provision would be in the best interests of the learner.

The Additional Learning Needs Code provides statutory guidance to those implementing the ALN system. Chapter 23 of the ALN Code concerns the preparation and maintenance of an IDP and its content. Paragraph 23.97 restates section 51(1) of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, which places a duty on local authorities to place a child in a mainstream school, rather than a special school, unless one of the following applies:

- (a) where educating the child in a mainstream maintained school is incompatible with the provision of efficient education for other children;
- (b) where educating the child otherwise than in a mainstream maintained school is appropriate in the child's best interests and compatible with the provision of efficient education for other children;

(c) where the child's parent wishes the child to be educated otherwise than in a mainstream maintained school.

However, just because a child's parent(s) wishes for their child to be educated in a special school, the local authority does not have to comply with that preference although they must have regard to those wishes of the parent(s) (section 51(4) of the Act and para 23.102 of the Code). The local authority would take its decision based on the criteria set out above.

In addition, under section 55 of the Act (and stated in para 23.113 of the Code), the local authority may only place a child in a special school if:

- (a) the school is included in the register of independent schools in Wales, and
- (b) the local authority is satisfied that the school can make the additional learning provision described in the child's or young person's IDP.

3. Capacity in specialist provision

The Minister for Education and Welsh Language's response to the petition acknowledges there are capacity issues in specialist education provision:

We know that schools are facing an unprecedented on-going demand to cater for a much wider than usual range of need across all age groups, particularly in relation to social and emotional well-being of learners, and in some areas the current increased demand for specialist placements exceeds current capacity.

This reflects what the Minister told the Children, Young People and Education Committee (para 2.56) in May 2023:

A reduction in school budgets is believed to have exacerbated the situation as schools report that they no longer have the capacity to meet such increased demands. All LAs report that there is an increased demand for specialist placements which far exceeds current capacity.

In his letter to this Committee, the Minister points to additional funding the Welsh Government has provided local authorities for ALN provision, including £20 million in 2022 to support the improvement and creation of inclusive spaces and facilities in schools to enable learners' needs to be met. He also refers to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, through which the Welsh

Government funds major improvements to education estates, including new special school and specialist resource base provision.

4. Scrutiny and debate in the Senedd

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is scrutinising the implementation of the new ALN system. Budget pressures have been cited as a risk to the successful delivery of the ALN reforms.

There was a Plenary debate on 14 June 2023 about implementation of the ALN reforms, which included a focus on the availability of specialist provision. In response to a call for an urgent review of implementation of the ALN reforms, then Minister pointed to a thematic review Estyn is undertaking, which is due to report in September 2023.

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-06-1342
Ein cyf/Our ref: JMEWL/00882/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
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9 June 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 18 May regarding issues raised in a petition received by the Petitions Committee from Stevie Pyne.

Equity and inclusion are at the heart of the reforms the Welsh Government is making to the education system in Wales and we are committed to delivering a system where individual needs are identified early, addressed quickly and all learners are supported to reach their potential.

Our education reforms include changing the Curriculum in Wales and introducing a new system to support learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The [Curriculum for Wales](#) has been designed to raise the aspirations for all learners, including those with ALN. It sees every learner as an individual with different strengths and areas for development, who may progress in different ways and at different paces. The 'Enabling Learning' section of the Curriculum for Wales guidance in particular supports practitioners working with learners with ALN. Key to this is guidance on the five development pathways which ensure learners are supported to make progress at their own pace and in their preferred learning environment.

Alongside Curriculum reform we are phasing in a new ALN system which is gradually replacing the special educational needs (SEN) system. Early identification, intervention and prevention is a key aim of the ALN system which changes both the legal framework, and practices to support children and young people so their needs are met in a more timely way. The ALN and Education Tribunal Act and ALN Code for Wales will help ensure that learners aged 0-25 who require additional support to meet an ALN have their support properly planned for and protected in a single statutory plan called an Individual Development Plan (IDP). The Act and Code also ensure the views, wishes and feelings of the child and their parents are heard.

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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.

Back Page 50
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.

To support implementation and delivery of the ALN system, we have developed training programmes and professional learning for teachers. This includes an online ALN professional learning programme for ALN Co-ordinators (ALNCos) in schools who have a strategic role and provide teachers with professional advice and support on ALN. [Guidance](#) on the new system and on parents' rights is also available for practitioners, parents, children and young people.

We have received positive feedback regarding the ALN system, particularly regarding the person-centred approach, and this year we have nearly doubled the funding available to schools and local authorities to support implementation of ALN reform. As well as monitoring how implementation is progressing, we are working closely with partners to help ensure all learners continue to have access to the support they need during the implementation phase.

Moving children and young people to the ALN system in a way that maximises the benefits is a significant undertaking. In March this year, we extended the implementation period of the ALN Act from three to four years to respond to workload pressures, create more flexibility, and protect quality of practice, plans and provision that meets the needs of learners.

We also recognise the increased workload placed on ALNCos during the implementation phase and have increased ALN funding to schools this year, to ensure schools can provide sufficient support to their ALNCos. Two task and finish groups have also been established to review and provide recommendations on ALNCo pay and non-contact time, and to look into issues relating to Teaching Assistants, including workload and responsibilities and a move towards common pay scales across Wales. Both groups will have reported by December 2023.

Regarding funding, the Welsh Government funds local authorities via the Revenue Support Grant, which is set out annually in the [Final Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlement. The settlement for 2023-24](#) (the Settlement) can be found [here](#). This funding is un-hypothecated and once distributed local authorities are responsible for setting budgets for their schools and the local provision they support. As part of their role in ensuring that needs are matched by appropriate provision, all local authorities are expected to ensure that their school funding arrangements are effective in supporting and raising the achievement of all learners with ALN.

In addition, over £62 million of revenue grant funding has been invested between 2020 and 2023 and we increased the ALN implementation grant by £5.4m across Wales for 2023-24. This additional grant is intended to increase the resources for schools to implement the ALN system and lead whole-school strategies to embed inclusive education.

Regarding ALN provision, local authorities have a duty to ensure suitable education provision for children and young people in their area, including those with ALN. Under the ALN and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, they also have a duty to keep their arrangements for children and young people with ALN, and those of their maintained schools, under review. This review is a key part of local strategic planning and decision making and will enable local authorities to assess current and likely future needs and secure sufficient provision and services to meet those needs. Further information about this duty is available at Chapter 7 of the [ALN Code for Wales](#).

The Welsh Government makes a significant investment in the school estate across Wales and the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme represents the largest investment in our education estate since the 1960s. We are currently in our second wave of

funding, which started in 2019, and will see £2.3 billion investment. The Programme has played a major role in improving education infrastructure across Wales, including new special school and specialist resource base provision in some areas. It is taken forward in collaboration with delivery partners in local authorities and further education institutions. As local authorities have the best knowledge of what is needed in their area, they set the priorities for investment and the pace of delivery of those projects.

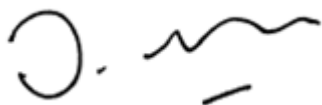
In addition to this programme, we made an additional £20 million available in 2022 to local authorities to support the improvement or creation of inclusive spaces and facilities to ensure all learners are taught in classrooms and spaces with the technologies and facilities they need.

We know that schools are facing an unprecedented on-going demand to cater for a much wider than usual range of need across all age groups, particularly in relation to social and emotional well-being of learners, and in some areas the current increased demand for specialist placements exceeds current capacity. We have been able to maintain a £9.1 million local authorities grant for 2023-2024 and 2024-25 to respond to additional pressures and social and emotional issues of ALN learners. However, we are of the view that the only sustainable way of responding to rising demand and the multifaceted nature of mental health support is to ensure prevention and early intervention, coupled with good universal support and good access to specialised services which is why we are adopting a whole system approach to service provision in Wales.

We have developed the [NYTH/NEST Framework](#) as a planning tool for Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) to implement a Whole System Approach in their areas. We have recently appointed a NEST Implementation Lead who is working across Government, with RPB's and external stakeholders to embed NYTH/NEST in children and young people policy. This compliments our whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing and the statutory guidance we published in March 2021. We provided £12.2 million funding in 2022-23 to support schools to embed the guidance and develop a school ethos with wellbeing at its heart. Funding has been used to appoint implementation coordinators embedded within the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes; implement a range of universal and targeted wellbeing interventions in schools; train teachers and other school staff on wellbeing; and ensure all-Wales coverage of the CAMHS school in-reach service, which sees dedicated mental health practitioners in schools.

The reforms to the education system are challenging and will take time to embed, however, together with the sector, we are steadfast in our ambitions to deliver an inclusive education system where all children and young people can reach their full potential.

Yours sincerely,



Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Provide free public transport for all secondary school pupils

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Gorffennaf 2023
Petitions Committee | 3 July 2023

Reference: SR23/5997-5

Petition Number: P-06-1343

Petition title: Provide free public transport for all secondary school pupils

Text of petition: I believe that all children in secondary schools in Wales should have the right to free public transport so that they can travel to their catchment area secondary school* safely.

We live 2.4 miles from our children's secondary school but our council states that free transport is only available to those who live 3 miles (or further) from their catchment secondary school. Walking to school would take between 50 minutes and an hour from our house along busy and congested roads. There is no safe cycle path.

As a family we spend over £80 a month on bus tickets for our 2 children. It's money we really can't afford but for some parents finding £40 a month (per child) is impossible and so their children are forced to walk along dark, busy, dangerous and polluted roads to get to the school. This is unfair and discriminates against the poorest children in society.



The Welsh Government published a review (March 2022) of the 'Learner Travel Measure (Wales)' and in June 2022 Mark Drakeford said there will be a 'comprehensive engagement programme which will ensure that all of our stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to the subsequent wider review'.

*A catchment area secondary school refers to the KS3/4 education location of the child/young person including the Welsh-medium Schools, English-medium Schools, Bilingual Schools, Faith Schools, Special Schools, Pupil Referral Units, EOTAS provision (Education Other than School) and so forth.

1. Background

1.1. Current entitlement to free home to school transport

Under the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, local authorities are required to provide free home to school transport to learners of **compulsory school age** if they live certain distances from their nearest suitable school. The distances, known as walking distances, are set out in the Measure. The statutory distances are two miles for primary school pupils and three miles for secondary school pupils.

The entitlement to free school transport and statutory walking distances originate in the Education Act 1944 which set out walking distances as two miles for compulsory school age pupils aged 8 years old and younger, and three miles for older pupils.

1.2. Assessing learner's needs

Under the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, local authorities are required to assess the travel needs of learners who are aged under 19 in their area. This includes those who they are legally required to provide transport for and those for whom they may wish to provide discretionary transport. An authority is also required to have regard to:

- The needs of disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties;

- Any particular needs of learners who are 'looked after' or learners who have formerly been looked after by a local authority;
- The age of a learner;
- The nature of the route that the learner is expected to take between home and the places where they receive education or training.

1.3. Available routes

The Measure states that the walking distance should be measured by the 'shortest available route'. It sets out that a route is considered to be available if it is safe (as far as reasonably practicable) for a learner without a disability or learning difficulty to walk the route alone or with an accompanying adult if the learner's age and levels of understanding requires this.

If a route is not 'available' and there is no alternative 'available' walking route within the distance threshold, the learner cannot be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school, even though the distance from home to school is less than the distance limit that applies to the learner's age. In such cases the local authority has a duty to provide the learner with free transport to and from their nearest suitable school.

1.4. Discretionary provisions

As well as statutory provision, local authorities have discretionary powers to provide home to school transport for other learners living or studying in the authority's area. However, if a local authority does make use of its discretionary powers, the authority must ensure that the policy applies to all learners in similar circumstances living in that authority's area. While local authorities are not required to offer free transport, examples of where discretionary transport provision might be used include:

- Children under the age of five;
- Welsh medium schools that are not the nearest suitable schools;
- Faith schools that are not the nearest suitable schools;
- Post-16 learners who continue their studies in mainstream further education or training.

2. Welsh Government action

In November 2019, the previous Welsh Government undertook to review the Learner Travel legislation in relation to post-16 learners. In a joint Cabinet Written Statement, the Ministers for Education; International Relations and Welsh Language; Housing and Local Government and the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, said that the transport arrangements for those of statutory school age were ‘generally working well’.

A Cabinet Statement in August 2020 said that the review was being extended to include the 4 – 16 year-old age group and the current mileage threshold for free transport. The review was expected to be concluded by the end of March 2021, but the review was not published due to the pre-election period leading to the Senedd elections that took place in May 2021.

The interim report of the review from March 2021 was published on 31 March 2022. The interim report, which is written in a format from Welsh Government officials to Ministers, presents two options for consideration:

- option 1: to take forward changes to the Measure in the next Legislative Programme as outlined in the original scope of the review.
- option 2: to take forward a wider programme of work that encompasses consideration of a complete revision of the Measure alongside work to;
 - improve operator provision and the environment in which it can deliver greater provision under the measure; and
 - consider better integration with related policies, such as the needs of ALN pupils and provision to Further Education establishments.

Officials recommended option 2 and suggested it could be combined with other policy work in the area of public transport.

In a Written Cabinet Statement (31 March 2022), the Deputy Minister for Climate Change said that the Welsh Government would, that year, take forward a wider programme of work that encompasses consideration of a complete revision of the Learner Travel Measure. He also said:

In taking forward this work we will be engaging with stakeholders to develop the evidence base to support any proposed changes to ensure that they are fair, proportionate, and affordable. We will be consulting on this work later this year.

In answer to a Written Question (12 April 2023), the Deputy Minister for Climate Change:

An initial review of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure took place in 2020/2021. From the initial review it was a clear that a more detailed review of the Measure was required due to the complex nature of learner's travel needs.

Work has now commenced on this wider review of the Measure which, working in partnership with local authorities, the industry as well as children and young people, will identify the barriers as well as opportunities and innovative approaches to learner travel. Key findings, learnings and examples of innovative good practice from local, national and international research will inform advice due to be submitted for me to review this summer.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In 2017, the Petitions Committee in the Fifth Senedd considered a petition, [Free School Transport for All Children in Wales](#). The Committee received correspondence from Ken Skates, then Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure and sought the views of the Petitioner, but following an inability to contact them, the petition was closed.

A further petition, For school transport guaranteed for all comprehensive children was considered by the Committee on 25 April 2022. In light of the Welsh Government's review, the Committee agreed to 'keep a watching brief' on the petition.

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-06-1343
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/01005/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

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15 June 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 18 May to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language on behalf of the Elin Wyn Davies regarding Petition P-06-1343 to provide free public transport for all secondary school pupils. I am responding due to my portfolio responsibilities.

One of the key aims of the Welsh Government's Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, is to reduce the cost of sustainable travel for everyone in Wales, including young people, and we are currently looking at a range of options to make travel by public transport and active travel choices easier and more affordable for all in the community.

Unfortunately, we have been faced with a challenging funding settlement from the UK Government. Following the Covid pandemic, we have had to prioritise our bus funding to ensure essential bus services are maintained whilst keeping fares as low as possible through the conditions set out in the Bus Emergency Scheme, that has successfully sustained the bus industry over the past 2 years. These financial pressures alongside the current complex, fragmented system of fares and ticketing on local bus services across Wales, due to the deregulation of the bus industry, is limiting our influence on fares as they are currently set by the operators themselves on commercial services or by terms of contract, as stipulated by local authorities on tendered services.

We do however fund and provide the MyTravelPass scheme ([Home ♥ mytravelpass | Welsh Government](#)) for 16 to 21 year olds which provides approximately 1/3 off the cost of bus travel. There are also a number of bus network tickets available across Wales. Details can be obtained from the following web link: [Bus Fares \(traveline.cymru\)](#).

The proposed Bus Bill, which we will be bringing to the Senedd in early 2024, will provide us with the opportunity to look a fresh at bus service delivery across Wales, fairer fares and ensure that school transport is aligned with the public transport offering. As our aims are ambitious, these reforms will take time, but it is vital that we get this right to support learners and our wider reform programme.

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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.

As you are aware, the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 places duties on local authorities to assess the travel needs of learners in their areas, and to provide free transport for learners aged 5-16 who live more than 2 miles (if at primary school) or 3 miles (if at secondary school) from their nearest suitable school on the basis of age, distance, aptitude and safety.

An initial review of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure took place in 2020/2021 which concluded that a more detailed review of the Measure was required due to the complex nature of learner's travel needs.

Work has now commenced on this wider review of the Measure which, working in partnership with local authorities, the industry as well as children and young people, will identify the barriers as well as opportunities and innovative approaches to learner travel. Key findings and examples of good practice from local, national and international research will inform advice due to be submitted for me to review this summer. It is vital that we take the time to gather the evidence and work with partners to develop sustainable and affordable policy options for all learners in Wales.

Elin raises some very important points in the petition and I have asked officials to ensure that her concerns are fed into the review of learner travel.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

Commission suitable NHS services in Wales for people with EDS or hypermobility spectrum disorders

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 03 Gorffennaf 2023
Petitions Committee | 03 July 2023

Reference: SR23/5997-8

Petition Number: P-06-1348

Petition title: Commission suitable NHS services in Wales for people with EDS or hypermobility spectrum disorders

Text of petition: Historically those showing signs of Ehlers-Danlos syndromes (EDS) or HSD have been referred to rheumatology departments. In 2021, they were directed to stop seeing these patients in favour of their diagnosis and management in primary care, which is not currently equipped for this role. A unique tertiary service in England has also closed to out of area patients. This situation has led to inequalities in access to healthcare for those with EDS and HSD in Wales resulting in unacceptable suffering.



1. Background

Ehlers-Danlos syndromes (EDS) and hypermobility spectrum disorders (HSD)

Ehlers-Danlos syndromes (EDS) are a group of genetic disorders which affect the body's connective tissue. Connective tissue links and supports other tissues and organs of the body. There are 13 types of EDS, most of which are rare, with hypermobile EDS (hEDS) being the most common. The condition can be inherited but an individual with no family history can also possess the genes responsible.

People living with EDS can experience a variety of symptoms, due to connective tissue being positioned throughout the body. These include excess joint mobility, known as hypermobility, and stretchy or fragile skin. Symptoms can also extend beyond the skin and joints, with some patients experiencing chronic pain and fatigue, dizziness and digestive problems, amongst others. Some types of EDS, such as vascular EDS, can be life-threatening.

Additionally there are other conditions which affect joint mobility but do not meet the clinical criteria for EDS. These are referred to as hypermobility spectrum disorders (HSD) and have similar symptoms to hEDS.

A study from 2019 which investigated the prevalence of these conditions in Wales found that there was an estimated 1 in 500 people in Wales with a diagnosis of EDS or HSD on their medical records in Wales in 2016/2017. 70% of these cases were women. However, men in Wales were diagnosed with EDS an average of 8.5 years earlier than women.

This petition is part of Ehler-Danlos Support UK's #EnoughIsEnough campaign, calling for governments across the UK (through petitions and community engagement) to fund suitable NHS services for diagnosis and treatment of hypermobile EDS and HSD.

Support and treatment for EDS and HSD

There is no test available for hEDS or HSD, however the rarer types of EDS can be diagnosed using genetic testing through a genetics specialist. The NHS 111 Wales website states that patients who are suspected to have rare EDS types can be

referred to a specialist EDS service in England, either Sheffield or London, for diagnosis.

There is no specific treatment for EDS or HSD, instead care is focussed on helping people manage their symptoms. For example, physiotherapists can help patients with symptoms like joint pain whilst counsellors can offer help dealing with long-term pain.

2. Welsh Government action

The Minister for Health and Social Services, Eluned Morgan, states in response to this petition:

The Welsh Government is committed to improving the lives of those impacted with a Rare Disease in Wales and recognises the substantial challenges, including equity of care, management and if available, treatment faced by people.

The Minister notes that the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee (WHSSC) plans and secures services for people with rare conditions and it is the responsibility of health boards to manage the access and referral to services as appropriate.

The Welsh Government has developed Wales Rare Disease Action Plan 2022-2026 which forms part of the UK Rare Diseases Framework. This plan aims to help provide the best care to and improve the lives of people living with rare diseases, of which EDS and HSD are included. The four key priorities of the plan are:

1. Helping patients get a final diagnosis faster.
2. Increasing awareness of rare diseases amongst healthcare professionals.
3. Better conditions of care.
4. Improving access to specialist care, treatment and drugs.

The plan has a strong focus on the use of genome sequencing to improve genetic testing for rare diseases. It announces the development of a three-year genomics delivery plan (2022-2025) for Wales, which intends to roll-out whole genome and exome sequencing to patients with a suspected rare disease.

The Rare Diseases Implementation Group oversees the delivery of the Rare Disease Action Plan in Wales and monitors its progress annually. A senior clinician was appointed in 2022 as Clinical Lead and Clinical Champion for rare diseases to work with the group "to raise the profile of rare diseases and initiate appropriate workstreams in discussion with partners".

The Minister reported in her response to the petition that the Rare Diseases Implementation Group has "made progress with all priorities" in the last year. Looking to the future, she also said:

[...]there are ongoing investigations regarding the opportunity for a virtual health hub/Wales Rare Disease centre that will provide remote support to those with Rare Diseases.

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-06-1348
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/01475/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
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19 June 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 25 May on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding services for people with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS) and hypermobility spectrum disorders (HSD).

I am aware that EDS and HSD are classed as rare conditions. The Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee (WHSSC) plans and secures services for people with rare conditions and it is the responsibility of health boards to manage the access and referral to services as appropriate.

The Welsh Government is committed to improving the lives of those impacted with a Rare Disease in Wales and recognises the substantial challenges, including equity of care, management and if available, treatment faced by people.

The Wales Rare Diseases Action Plan 2022 - 2026 - NHS Wales Executive sets out a number of priorities that aim to improve the accessibility and quality of care individuals receive, and these priorities are aligned with the rest of the United Kingdom. They include:

- Priority 1: Helping patients get a final diagnosis faster
- Priority 2: Increasing awareness of rare diseases amongst healthcare professionals
- Priority 3: Better coordination of care
- Priority 4: Improving access to specialist care, treatment, and medicines

The Rare Disease Implementation Group is working towards the delivery of these objectives, and in the last year have made progress with all priorities. In addition, there are

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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.

ongoing investigations regarding the opportunity for a virtual health hub/Wales Rare Disease centre that will provide remote support to those with Rare Diseases.

I hope this information is helpful.

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



Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
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27 June 2023

RE: Your reference P-06-1348

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Thank you for sharing the letter, dated 19 June 2023, from Eluned Morgan AS/MS, Minister for Health and Social Services, in response to our petition about NHS services for people with Ehlers-Danlos syndromes (EDS) and hypermobility spectrum disorders (HSD).

While the true prevalence of EDS and HSD is unknown, the conditions are likely to affect between 600 and 6,400 people in Wales¹.

We are pleased to hear that the Welsh Government is committed to improving the lives of those impacted with a rare disease in Wales and recognises the substantial challenges, including equity of care, management and if available, treatment faced by people.

We welcome the Wales Rare Diseases Action Plan 2022 - 2026 and are pleased to hear that The Rare Disease Implementation Group has made progress with all of its priorities in the last year. We would be grateful for more information on how and when this work will impact those with EDS and HSD in Wales and would be pleased to attend a meeting with the Department of Health and Social Services to discuss further.

The current experiences of our members indicate that people with EDS and HSD in Wales do not have access to any 'services for people with rare conditions', which Ms Morgan stated as being the responsibility of The Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee (WHSSC). Their website lists 'Rare Diseases' as a commissioned service but the location(s) of this service and the pathway to access it is unclear for people with symptoms of EDS or HSD. It would be helpful for our helpline staff and volunteers in Wales to learn about the commissioned rare disease services so that they can signpost patients accordingly.

¹ Demmler JC, Atkinson MD, Reinhold EJ, *et al*

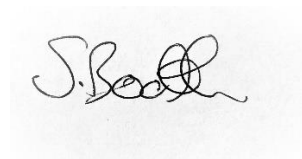
Diagnosed prevalence of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome and hypermobility spectrum disorder in Wales, UK: a national electronic cohort study and case-control comparison
BMJ Open 2019;**9**:e031365. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2019-031365

If the rare disease service is based on a genomic medicine service, it is unlikely to be of benefit to those with hypermobile EDS (hEDS) or HSD at present, as a genetic basis for these conditions is yet to be identified.

It is our experience that health boards are not commissioning appropriate community-based or secondary care EDS and HSD services at present. In line with the Welsh Government's 'A Healthier Wales' plan, hospital-based rheumatology departments are specifically declining referrals for patients with 'hypermobility' (which includes those with most types of EDS and HSD) in favour of management in primary and community care. This includes those with complex needs. This is slowing down the time to diagnosis of EDS and HSD, which goes against the Wales Rare Disease Action Plan. We would like to understand what alternative pathways are available to these patients with complex needs.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Booth
Chief Executive Officer



Natasha Evans-Jones
Lead Engagement Volunteer for Wales

Agenda Item 4.1

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

This petition was submitted by Nicola Jones, having collected a total of 60 signatures.

Text of Petition:

We believe that many care leavers walk out of their placements because little thought is given to their previous experiences or to their mental wellbeing even though a baby has the right to stay with its parent/s if it is safe to do so.

Additional Information:

Many care leavers have social services intervention, when they give birth. This is often due to their history and/or lack of their own parental guidance. These care leavers will undoubtedly have experienced trauma in their childhoods and often suffer from anxiety into their adult lives. They have often never felt safe in their homes as a child and having their own space has been their only safe haven where they are totally relaxed. Currently, if there is any concern, a parent is taken away from their home, family and friends then placed in a foster home or residential home to be assessed with little thought to the parents triggers and mental wellbeing. We believe that this often causes a roller coaster of emotions and parents then walk away from placements only to forever regret a rash decision made in a moment of anxiety that wouldn't have happened if the situation had been dealt with more empathically. We want to fact find to see if a better solution for parent and child is needed.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff West
- South Wales Central

**Written Response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Petitions Committee report entitled Supporting care experienced parents:
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.**

A key element of the Welsh Government's vision for the future of children's services in Wales is that we want young people leaving care to feel supported to start to live independently when they are ready and to plan for their future. This future includes when they are ready to start a family themselves.

Our Programme for Government contains 8 commitments, which taken together provide the framework for our vision to radically transform Children's Services through a dedicated Transformation Programme. The delivery of these commitments will effect change across the whole system in Wales and align to our [Children and Young People's Plan](#). This work will consider the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act, to ensure we improve provision for all Children and Young People (CYP) so they can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances and the publication of the revised Child Poverty Strategy planned for the end of the year. The voice and rights of CYP are the heart of all we do. Both these commitments and the Plan will be delivered over this whole Senedd term.

We know that projects such as Project Unity plays a valuable part in providing emotional and practical help to care experienced mothers and the Welsh Government has been able to provide annual funding of £340,000 for the programme until 2025 reflecting our commitment to supporting care experienced mothers and to keeping families together wherever possible.

In addition, the Welsh Government recognises Baby & Me's use of a multi-disciplinary, relationship-based approach, to work with families in a flexible, trauma informed way to support parents to overcome barriers to successful parenting.

Both of these approaches align with the Welsh Government's wish to see more use of early intervention services where it is appropriate to do so.

I would like to thank the members of the Petitions Committee for their supporting care experienced parents. The Committee's report's recommendations along with the forthcoming report from the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into services for care experienced children will inform the delivery of the Transformation Programme for Children's Services in Wales. I have set out my response to the Report's individual recommendations below.

Detailed responses to the recommendation are set out below:

Recommendation 1.

The Committee recommends that:

Welsh Government should mandate the adoption and monitoring of the corporate parenting good practice charter co-produced by CASCADE and care experienced parents and organisations which support them. All Heads of Social Services have expressed their support for this charter, and it would be a positive step forward for each local authority and other public bodies to adopt the charter to demonstrate their commitment to provide holistic support to care experienced parents.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government supports the corporate parenting good practice charter aimed at “Supporting Parents in and leaving care” co-produced by CASCADE, care experienced parents and organisations which provide support to these parents. We welcome support from Heads of Social Services for the Charter and understand that all local authorities have now signed up and would encourage other public bodies to do so.

The Committee will be aware of the Welsh Government’s commitment to transform children’s services in Wales. Central to this programme is the delivery of eight Programme for Government commitments, one of which is to strengthening public bodies in their role as ‘corporate parent’. A Corporate Parenting Implementation Group whose membership includes local authorities, Voices from Care Cymru, CASCADE, the Children’s Commissioner’s office, the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), Children in Wales, National Adoption Service, and Public Health Wales as well as care experienced young people themselves. The Group aim has been to deliver a Corporate Parenting Charter for all care experienced children and young people.

This Charter will be published in June initially on a voluntary basis with local authorities and wider public bodies will be encouraged to sign up and become “corporate parents”. Whilst monitoring adoption of the Charter, Welsh Government will be working to strengthen corporate parenting guidance through a revision to the Part 6 Code of Practice for Looked After and Accommodated Children. In addition, work will be undertaken across Government to identify existing guidance which could also be strengthened to support delivery of the Charter by wider public bodies.

The Charter will reinforce the delivery of the Vision of the Care Leavers Summit declaration which is due to be signed on 10 May by the First Minister.

Financial Implications: None, any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 2.

The Committee recommends that:

Welsh Government should ensure that data is routinely collected in relation to how many young people in care or who have left care (up to the age of 21) become pregnant, and how many of their children remain with their parent/s, placed in foster care or with family members or placed for adoption. Learning about the outcomes for families is important to inform our understanding in order to further develop support systems and plan services accordingly. In the interim we welcome the Deputy Minister for Social Services' offer to undertake a snapshot survey of experienced care parents across all local authorities.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government does not currently have in place the data sources to collate data outlined in the Committee's recommendation. The Welsh Government will actively explore availability of the data with the Knowledge & Analytical Service and local authorities. In addition, the Transformation Delivery Group will consider the collation of this data as part of its work on metrics for children's services.

Financial Implications: None, any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 3.

The Committee recommends that:

Welsh Government should continue to support edge of care multi-agency services such as Baby and Me, Jig-So and Reflect which are making a difference in supporting vulnerable parents through trauma informed and strength-based approaches. There should be similar services available throughout Wales.

Response: Accept in principle

Welsh Government accepts and acknowledges the positive work being undertaken by Edge of Care Services such as Baby & Me, Reflect and Jig-So and the benefit that these programmes have on new parents including care experienced young people. The Welsh Government will review the evaluation of these projects when deciding on next steps and future roll out.

Financial Implications: Yes, the continuation of Welsh Government support of these projects will require financial review.

Recommendation 4.

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should update legislation to ensure all care experienced parents have a statutory right to an intensive, wrap around preventative support

service to keep families together regardless of how recent their care experience. It should include specialist parental advocacy to navigate the social care and family courts systems and be modelled on evidence-based services such as Project Unity.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government has, and will continue, to prioritise early intervention and prevention as part of the work of both the Children's Board and the Transformation Programme of Children's Services in Wales. The Welsh Government accepts the recommendation in principle and will consider and explore its asks as part of the delivery of this Programme.

Financial Implications: Yes, such costs would need to be scoped and could be considerable.

Recommendation 5.

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should ensure that every care experienced parent has suitable housing provision. Lack of appropriate housing within their community has a significant impact on keeping families together.

Response: Accept

In order to improve the transition from care into independent living, we will shortly be publishing a refreshed version of the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support framework, which was developed specifically for young people leaving care in Wales. The framework is designed to ensure that care leavers have the flexible support they need so that no care experienced person falls through the cracks.

The accommodation offer for care leavers and young people more generally is a key aspect of our work to ensure everyone in Wales has a decent affordable home. As part of our published [Ending Homelessness Action Plan](#) (EHAP) and overall strategic approach, there are youth-focused housing and support actions.

As part of our existing work, over 20 projects providing new and innovative housing and support approaches to young people are operational across Wales as a result of our investment of over £3.1m in the Youth Homelessness Innovation Fund. Many of these projects are supporting care leavers. These projects are currently undergoing external evaluation to identify good practice in the delivery of support for care leavers.

An Expert Review Panel has been established to review existing homelessness prevention legislation and to develop recommendations for reforms by August 2023. The panel will consider a number of areas including the allocation of housing and the availability of housing for those leaving care.

Financial implications: None, any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 6.

The Committee recommends that:

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

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government has recently submitted written evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into services for care experienced children: exploring radical reform. The Deputy Minister for Social Services met with the Committee on the 9 March to provide oral evidence and update on delivery of the eight Programme for Government commitments which focus on improving children's services. The Welsh Government awaits the publication of the Committee's final report from the inquiry which is due to be published in May.

In order to ensure, the Welsh Government fully achieves the ambitions of reforming Children Services it has reviewed the Governance structure and put in place a 3-tiered approach to governance to provide the right level of direction and scrutiny:

- A new Ministerial Oversight Board to oversee the Transformation Programme, providing political leadership and direction, and support in delivering the programme.
- The Eliminating Profit from the care of looked after Children Programme board will continue to provide their invaluable expertise as we collectively consider evidence and develop proposals for implementing this high-profile commitment.
- The new Transformation Delivery Group (formally the Oversight Board) has a sharper focus on driving programme implementation and delivery of the Transformation Programme, working in co-production with our partners, with the rights and voice of children and young people at its heart.

The Transformation Programme has a delivery roadmap in place which sets out current anticipated timelines for progress with and delivery of our Children's Services Programme for Government commitments. A copy can be found at **Annex A**.

Financial Implications: None, any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Julie Morgan, MS
Deputy Minister for Social Services

Agenda Item 4.2

P-06-1232 Stop the proliferation of intensive poultry units (IPUs) by legislating and introduce a moratorium until this can be achieved

This petition was submitted by Eleri Lewis, having collected a total of 267 signatures.

Text of Petition:

There are many intensive poultry units in Wales. Powys has the unfortunate reputation of being one of the IPU hot spots. There have been 147 IPU applications granted by PCC. IPUs bring with them many issues including pollution of rivers and land, smell, ammonia, traffic, 24x7 noise and light. To many, the practice of intensive poultry production is cruel and unnecessary. Despite many villages being blighted by these units there is still nothing being done to stop them. We need our politicians to act.

Additional Information:

Another small village in Powys is the latest in a long line to be threatened by the building of an intensive poultry unit. This is a rural area, the roads are walked regularly by the people of the village and visitors. The landscape is stunning, there is no light pollution and the silence is, wonderfully, deafening. The River Cain runs through the Village and close to the site feeds into the River Severn.

Despite many villages being blighted by these units there is still nothing being done to stop them. We need our politicians to act. So, this petition is about getting the politicians to legislate; they have promised this for years; they accept this is a serious issue but still the legislation is missing.

A TAN (Technical Advice Note) regarding IPUs was promised in 2019. Lesley Griffiths, the Agriculture Minister has stated that something must be done, particularly with regard to the smaller units. But still nothing.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Montgomeryshire
- Mid and West Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-06-1232
Ein cyf/Our ref: JJ/00647/23

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

2 June 2023

Dear Jack Sargeant MS,

Thank you for your letter of 25 October requesting an update following the River Pollution Summit at the Royal Welsh Show and an update on the Technical Advice Note for intensive agricultural development.

The First Minister chaired the second River Pollution Summit on the 8 March. A written statement was issued that set out the discussions which took place and the commitments made by the organisations taking part. The statement can be found on the Welsh Government website at: <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-second-river-pollution-summit>

The summit endorsed an action plan 'Relieving Pressures on SAC River Catchments to Support Delivery of Affordable Housing'. The Action Plan includes the production of various guidance to help address the problems caused by phosphorus levels, and this is also available on the Welsh Government website at: <https://www.gov.wales/relieving-pressures-special-areas-conservation-sac-river-catchments-support-delivery-affordable>

The summit recognised there is no single measure which will solve this problem and even a contribution of measures will take time to undo the cumulative harm of the past. One theme the action plan includes is the need to work constructively with the agriculture sector to find solutions to reduce and address excess nutrients in the soil and SAC rivers of Wales. I expect this work to include a contribution from the poultry sector.

I recognise new poultry developments have the potential to increase nutrient levels within river catchments, so I am giving careful consideration to a request received to call in all planning applications for poultry units currently before Powys County Council. Holding directions preventing the Council from approving the applications have recent been issued by officials. I will notify you of my decision on whether to call in the applications in due course.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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.

I am pleased to confirm work is progressing on the procurement of an All Wales Nutrient Calculator, intended to help local planning authorities and applicants determine the level of phosphorus mitigation needed to enable development to progress in SAC river catchments. Contractors have just been appointed to deliver a working calculator by July and subsequently deliver a training programme.

In addition, a review of guidance relating to private treatment plants in areas with public sewers is currently being undertaken. This work is considering whether there are any short-term measures which could be implemented whilst long-term solutions to phosphorus levels are developed by Nutrient Management Boards, established to drive local measures to help improve the quality of SAC river catchments.

A Town and Country Planning Intensive Agriculture Working Group was established in 2019, comprised of stakeholders from public sector, farming unions and environmental groups. The Working Group was set up to contribute to a proposed new Technical Advice Note relating to planning for intensive agricultural developments, however, this was paused due to the pandemic. While it is the intention to return to this work, priority has been given to progressing the All Wales Nutrient Calculator and reviewing guidance relating to private treatment plans.

Yours sincerely,



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

P-06-1232 Stop the proliferation of intensive poultry units (IPUs) by legislating and introduce a moratorium until this can be achieved, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 27.06.22

Could you please confirm that the previous communication responding to PCC is also considered as, at the last meeting, this was deferred until a response from the Minister was received. There are a number of questions from myself that have not yet been responded to.

I am concerned that the focus of this petition has not been addressed in this response. While PCC are on hold regarding poultry unit planning applications there is no clear timeline, nor commitment to any decisions regarding the TAN and a moratorium.

Responses to letter from Julie James inline in black italics.

“Thank you for your letter of 25 October requesting an update following the River Pollution Summit at the Royal Welsh Show and an update on the Technical Advice Note for intensive agricultural development.

The First Minister chaired the second River Pollution Summit on the 8 March. ***Could the year please be included in date references.*** A written statement was issued that set out the discussions which took place and the commitments made by the organisations taking part. The statement can be found on the Welsh Government website at: <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-second-river-pollution-summit> ***This does not refer to the TAN for intensive agricultural development but talks to affordable housing. IF agriculture, and specifically Intensive Poultry Units are included in this context could you confirm this and ensure it is obvious, not assumed.***

The summit endorsed an action plan ‘Relieving Pressures on SAC River Catchments to Support Delivery of Affordable Housing’. The Action Plan includes the production of various guidance to help address the problems caused by phosphorus levels, and this is also available on the Welsh Government website at: <https://www.gov.wales/relieving-pressures-special-areas-conservation-sac-river-catchments-support-delivery-affordable> ***As above, the questions raised in the petition are not addressed in this Action Plan. Where is the lack of TAN being addressed?***

The summit recognised there is no single measure which will solve this problem and even a contribution of measures will take time to undo the cumulative harm of the past. One theme the action plan includes is the need to work constructively with the agriculture sector to find solutions to reduce and address excess nutrients in the soil and SAC rivers of Wales. I

expect this work to include a contribution from the poultry sector. ***When will this expectation be confirmed, and what form will it take?***

I recognise new poultry developments have the potential to increase nutrient levels within river catchments, so I am giving careful consideration to a request received to call in all planning applications for poultry units currently before Powys County Council. ***What is the timeline on this consideration?*** Holding directions preventing the Council from approving the applications have recent been issued by officials. I will notify you of my decision on whether to call in the applications in due course. ***Please define due course.***

I am pleased to confirm work is progressing on the procurement of an All Wales Nutrient

Calculator, intended to help local planning authorities and applicants determine the level of phosphorus mitigation needed to enable development to progress in SAC river catchments.

Contractors have just been appointed to deliver a working calculator by July and subsequently deliver a training programme.

In addition, a review of guidance relating to private treatment plants in areas with public sewers is currently being undertaken. This work is considering whether there are any short-term measures which could be implemented whilst long-term solutions to phosphorus levels are developed by Nutrient Management Boards, established to drive local measures to help improve the quality of SAC river catchments.

A Town and Country Planning Intensive Agriculture Working Group was established in 2019, comprised of stakeholders from public sector, farming unions and environmental groups. The Working Group was set up to contribute to a proposed new Technical Advice

Note relating to planning for intensive agricultural developments, however, this was paused

due to the pandemic. While it is the intention to return to this work, ***What is the status of this work and the timeline for returning to it?*** priority has been given to progressing the All Wales Nutrient Calculator and reviewing guidance relating to private treatment plans.

Agenda Item 4.3

P-06-1287 Investigate C&V UHB's refusal to keep north Penarth's surgery, allocating patients to distant GPs

This petition was submitted by Max Scott-Cook, having collected 266 signatures online and 82 on paper, making for a total of 348 signatures collected.

Text of Petition:

We call to account UHB officials and politicians colluding with closure of Albert Rd surgery (north Penarth), allocating patients to Sully and Dinas Powys, and grossly overloading Stanwell surgery (Penarth Healthcare). We believe the local MS Vaughan Gething knew of the plan and he could have highlighted the concerns to the relevant Ministers and commissioners for Older Persons, Children and Future Generations, to uphold the principle of healthcare services close to home. The system has failed us.

Additional Information:

C&V UHB rejected buying the Albert Rd premises when warned, years ago, the GP's lease was due to expire. Their plan to instead provide new premises far away in Cogan was publicly rejected. It failed their principle of health services close to home.

Successive UHB designs for a Wellbeing Hub at Cogan ignored the poor accessibility. Their choice of site discriminated against the elderly and mobility limited persons. While declining to help Albert Rd continue, the UHB offered funds to GPs in Sully, Penarth and Dinas Powys to expand to take the 7000 patients. The UHB did not consult on this plan. The overload at Stanwell (Penarth Health Care) surgery has worsened the standard of care. We believe that there are only 7 GPs for 17 000 patients. The UHB pursuit of (newbuild) premises in the wrong place is at fault.

They could still recognise their error and buy the Albert Surgery from the property developer.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff South and Penarth
- South Wales Central



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1287
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/01219/23

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

24 May 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 26 April on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding Petition P-06-1287 Investigate C&V UHB's refusal to keep North Penarth's surgery, allocating patients to distant GPs.

Thank you providing me with an update on this Petition and I appreciate the additional concerns raised. I hope you can understand that I am unable to intervene in this matter as it remains the responsibility of the health board.

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 4.4

P-06-1291 Hold an enquiry into the corporate takeover of the veterinary profession in Wales

This petition was submitted by Dr Linda Evelyn Joyce-Jones, having collected a total of 308 signatures.

Text of Petition:

In 1999 legislation was changed by the UK Government which allowed veterinary practices to be owned not just by qualified veterinary surgeons. This paved the way for private equity stakeholder corporates to buy into this market. These profit driven organisations have changed the profession so that it is barely recognisable. In many parts of Wales, it is virtually impossible to find an independently run veterinary practice. The corporate buyout now extends to out of hours provision, referral practices as well as general practice. The corporates also own laboratories, drug companies, pet crematorium as well as shares in many pets' food companies. Such a monopoly makes the few remaining independently run practices presence virtually untenable. From vet school to recruitment through to practice the corporates have the advantage. Set in this context their influence on bodies such as the RCVS and BVA is predicable.

Additional Information:

For those of us with companion animals this monopoly has had devastating consequences. From lack of choice in finding an independent practice, seeing the same Veterinary Surgeon for continuity of care through to cost. But most of all clinical decisions being made with the policies of the corporate's taking centre stage.

My experience with My Cat Rosa sadly means I will always mistrust some within the profession. Companion animals are part of people's families. Covid, the isolation and mental health issues have made these relationships even more precious.

I dread to think (but have been informed) how the animal rescue sector in Wales copes. Because they must deal with some of the most abused and clinically challenged animals who have significant and often complex medical needs.

Despite numerous petitions to the UK Government, Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs etc have failed to take any action whatsoever. Cymru has led the way before on animals and their welfare, so we ask our Senedd to do so again.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ynys Môn
- North Wales

Agenda Item 4.5

P-06-1306 More protection for ancient & veteran trees in Wales. Old Trees can be relocated. Stop The Chop

This petition was submitted by Nicholas Bounds, having collected a total of 480 signatures.

Text of Petition:

1960's tree felling laws are out of date. Current planning policy allows for the chopping down of ancient & veteran trees.

We call on the Welsh Government to amend Planning Policy in relation to Tree Protection Orders (TPO's). More protection is required, the laws are far too relaxed.

Planning policies for both small & large-scale developments allow property developers/land owners to apply for a Tree Felling Licence via Natural Resources Wales.

Stop The Chop of ancient & veteran trees.

Additional Information:

Additional Information:

Reference Videos on how to move a tree without felling it: –

– How to Transplant and Move Large Trees Featuring an Air Tool:

<https://youtu.be/rMlbv6cdAsk>

Tree Moving Machine:

<https://youtu.be/9TtzQtVga7Y>

What does it cost to move a Large Tree:

<https://www.greerbros.com/greerblog/cost-to-move-a-large-tree>

Why allow for an Ancient or Veteran Tree to be felled? It is simple, instead of felling relocate the tree. Therefore, planning policy should be amended to the following extent:

“No felling of Ancient / Veteran Trees, all developers must uproot and move the trees to a very close by location”.

This in turn would not only save the trees but in addition create jobs throughout Wales.

Save ancient and veteran trees.

Stop the Chop!

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ynys Môn
- North Wales

Agenda Item 4.6

P-06-1313 Allow exemptions to the 182-day occupancy rule to reduce harm to real Welsh self-catering businesses

This petition was submitted by Linda Suzanne Davies, having collected a total of 1,750 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The Trade Associations that represent genuine self-catering businesses in Wales (Wales Tourism Alliance, UK Hospitality Cymru and PASC UK Wales Branch) will meet Welsh Government with a view to agreeing mitigation measures to reduce the harm that the introduction of the 182-day occupancy rule will cause real Welsh-owned self-catering businesses. These are not second homes or casual lets. Over 30% of these businesses have said that they will have to close or sell without these exemptions.

Additional Information:

The Body of Evidence of harm: <https://www.pascuk.co.uk/wales-182-days-reports/>

KEY ASKS

- The day count not to start from April 22, ie retrospectively.
- An appeal process

EXEMPTIONS

- Lets limited by planning permission
- Lets that lie within the curtilage of a primary residence
- Multiple units on one site can average occupancy across the units.
- Where the units are not housing stock withdrawn from the market but can be proved through recorded planning and building control that they have been created from vacant commercial or agricultural buildings or farm diversification.
- The property is run by a charity
- Weeks given by owners to charities should count towards days let.
- If your short-let business is VAT rated

- Review of 182 days if Wales officially goes into recession, pandemics or forced local closure.
- Period of grace for new business entrants

DISPENSATION

Account taken of days to carry out repairs/property improvements or for ill-health or caring responsibilities.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Montgomeryshire
- Mid and West Wales

Written Statement: Council Tax Premiums: Guidance for Local Authorities and Regulations to Extend the Exceptions from Premiums

Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government

Today, I am pleased to announce the outcomes of two further consultations on the use of council tax premiums in Wales.

On 11 November 2022, I announced [the steps being taken by the Welsh Government](#) following our [consultation on local taxes for second homes and self-catering accommodation](#). I also issued two technical consultations seeking views on draft Regulations to extend the exceptions to council tax premiums and on revised guidance on the implementation, administration and enforcement of premiums.

These consultations were issued in preparation for the changes to local taxes that will be in force from 1 April 2023, namely the amendment of the criteria which determine whether self-catered holiday lets are listed for non-domestic rates rather than council tax, and the increase to the maximum council tax premiums which councils can charge on second homes and long-term empty dwellings.

The latest consultations form part of our ongoing work to ensure property owners make a fair contribution to the communities where they own homes or run businesses. This, in turn, contributes to the Welsh Government's three-pronged approach to addressing the impact that large numbers of second homes and holiday lets can have on communities and the Welsh language.

The draft Regulations would extend the existing exceptions to premiums to apply to properties with a planning condition which specifies that a property may only be used for short-term holiday lets or which prevents its permanent occupation as a person's sole or main residence. Such properties would become liable for council tax at the standard rate if they do not meet the letting criteria for classification as non-domestic property, but they could not be charged a premium. This is consistent with our policy view that property owners should make a fair contribution to local communities either through local taxation or through the economic benefit they bring to an area.

Responses to the consultation on the draft Regulations raised a minor point of technical clarity and an amendment has been made to the draft legislation to remove the reference to 'short-term'. This will ensure that properties which do not have a length of time specified in their holiday let planning condition are excepted from the premium.

As well as publishing the summary of responses to the consultation on the legislation, I am pleased to confirm that the Welsh Government will proceed with making [the Council Tax \(Exceptions to Higher Amounts\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2023](#). The intention is that they take effect from 1 April 2023, applying the new exceptions from that day onwards.

I am also publishing today [the outcome of the consultation on the revised guidance for local authorities on council tax premiums on long-term empty dwellings and dwellings periodically occupied \(second homes\)](#). This provides additional guidance on the administration and enforcement of council tax premiums. It also highlights the additional options available to local authorities where self-catering properties not restricted by planning conditions do not meet the letting criteria. In addition, from 1 April 2023, local authorities will be encouraged to publish on their websites, details about the revenue generated from charging a premium in the previous financial year. The revised guidance will be published shortly and apply for practical purposes with immediate effect.

As part of the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, we are committed to taking immediate action to address the impact of second homes and unaffordable housing in communities across Wales, using the planning, property and taxation systems. This includes greater powers for local authorities to charge council tax premiums.

First published

28 February 2023

Agenda Item 4.7

P-06-1317 Recognise Teaching Assistants as an important asset to schools by raising wage

This petition was submitted by Caroline Hugill, having collected a total of 1,405 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Teaching Assistants (TA) are an extremely important part of the running of schools in Wales but are not currently recognised as this by our government when reflecting on the wage.

Additional Information:

Without Teaching Assistants, schools wouldn't be able to cater to the high number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) students. They work hard and are discriminately underpaid for the work they do. A Teaching Assistant's role is demanding, and the workload they face in current times is massive. Duties include, but are not limited to, supporting SEN students (often on a one-to-one basis), teaching groups of children and sometimes even a whole class to cover teachers, lesson planning, organising extra curricular activities, making sure that every child reaches their full potential. Sadly, as the wage is so low, this is not a job many TAs can afford to keep, and a huge number of highly skilled TAs are being forced to find other jobs. This needs to change.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ynys Môn
- North Wales

Ein Cyf / Our Ref: Petitions P-06-1317

Dyddiad / Date: 16 May 2023



Dear Mr Sargeant,

Petition P-06-1317 Recognise Teaching Assistants as an important asset to schools by raising wage.

Thank you for your letter of the 26 April regarding questions from the Petitions Committee whilst considering the above petition.

The WLGA understands the important role Teaching Assistants play in helping to educate learners. They play a key role in supporting the learning to ensure that all learners get the maximum benefit from their planned learning activities taking place in and out of the classroom. We also recognise the vital role that Teaching Assistants played during the COVID 19 pandemic in supporting learners and are thankful for their commitment and contributions during the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

The WLGA is one of the key partners at the Schools Social Partnership Forum (SSPF) alongside Trade Unions Representative's and Welsh Government and are absolutely committed to the promotion of social partnership.

In January 2021, the Schools Support Staff Task & Finish Group was set up as a subgroup from the SSPF with the aim of reaching a position of parity across Wales for support staff in relation to:

- Pay & Deployment,
- Access to training & professional development; and the
- Standardisation of roles.

Membership of the group includes WLGA officers, LA HR officers, WG colleagues, and representatives from Trade Unions, the Education Workforce Council (EWC), Headteachers and Teaching Assistants. Timely updates are fed back to the SSPF

main meetings at intervals throughout the year and are fed back to the WLGA Executive Board via the Education Spokesperson. The Minister for Education and Welsh Language chairs the SSPF meetings and is very supportive of the continued efforts of the Task & Finish Group.

To date, WG have led on the access to training & professional development priority, and there are now national networks in place which is ensuring equity on the professional learning offer for all teaching assistants across Wales which also includes the development of resources for school leaders and governors on the deployment of teaching assistants. The WLGA is fully supportive of these activities.

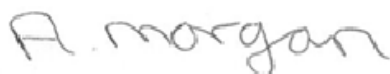
The Task & Finish Group are currently working on the standardisation of roles in developing national job descriptions for teaching assistants to be used within all LAs across Wales. Close engagement with LA HR officers and teaching assistants is essential to ensure the improvement of the working conditions for teaching assistants is secured. The aim is to have draft copies to present to the SSPF by the end of the year. The WLGA is fully supportive of this work and recognises the need for consistency and equity within these roles.

Ongoing discussions are taking place through the Task & Finish Group on how best to improve pay conditions for teaching assistants. The WLGA recognises the need for consistency and equity regarding pay conditions for teaching assistants, as LAs are the employers (and adhere to the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions for Support Staff (The Green Book)), and we recognise that there are different approaches within LA pay structures that reflect local considerations.

However, the WLGA recognises there is a need for a greater discussion with WG on increasing LA budgets to enable LAs to effectively address some of the challenges and complexities surrounding pay conditions for teaching assistants, as well as other staff members of the LA workforce. As you know, LAs are facing huge financial pressures across all services under the current climate with the cost-of-living crisis, and therefore the importance of continued discussions with WG is key in securing increased funding that not only supports workforce priorities and pressures but enhances pay and working conditions for its workforce, which includes teaching assistants.

I hope this is helpful to the Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely,



Y Cyng Cllr. Andrew Morgan OBE
Arweinydd CLILC
WLGA Leader

Agenda Item 4.8

P-06-1319 Provide a pedestrian crossing on A4042 at Goytre Arms crossroads and reduce the speed limit to 20mph

This petition was submitted by Janet Butler, having collected 423 signatures online and 233 signatures on paper, making for a total of 656 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Make it safe for residents of Penperlleni to cross the A4042 at the Goytre Arms crossroads by providing a pedestrian crossing and extending the existing 20mph speed limit in the village to include this section of the A4042.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Monmouth
- South Wales East



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1319
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/00860/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

23 May 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 26 April regarding Petition P-06-1319 - Provide a pedestrian crossing on the A4042 at Goytre Arms crossroads and reduce the speed limit to 20mph, and also enclosing further information the Committee has received from the Petitioner.

A pedestrian crossing assessment has already commenced at Penperlleni. The threshold for a crossing has been met and this work will establish the most appropriate form of crossing provision based on constraints at the site, such as junctions.

My officials will add the request for a pedestrian crossing near the bus stops at Llanover to the list of future schemes for consideration.

As previously advised we are updating the Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales guidance to reflect current Welsh Government policy including the national roll-out of [20mph speed limits](#) and to meet the ambitions highlighted in [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#). The new guidance will be published later this year and the work may see a change in the criteria for lower speed limits in Wales. The Welsh Government will review the speed limits across the Trunk Road Network following publication of the guidance and this will include the A4042.

Regarding the introduction of the 20mph speed limit, we are continuing to gather data from the first phase settlements. I recently issued a [written statement](#) with the first interim monitoring report from these areas and the very early data is extremely encouraging.

You can keep up to date with all of the latest information on our website at:
[Introducing 20mph speed limits: frequently asked questions | GOV.WALES](#)
[20mph speed limits | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES](#)

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1SN

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.

Turning to bus services, the X3 bus service is operated commercially by Stagecoach South Wales, who have confirmed they will not be altering the X3 service in the short term as they will need to evaluate the entire network as part of the end of the Bus Emergency Scheme funding in July 2023. My officials have asked the Company's senior management team to consider the request to extend the 17.15 and 18.16 service X3 departures from Cardiff to serve Goytre Fawr in their longer-term plans.

I have asked Transport for Wales, local authorities and the Community Transport Association to establish regional network planning teams to understand the impact of the ending of the Bus Emergency Scheme and to resolve the network issues that are likely to arise from the change in funding regime.

We are proposing a new model for bus services in Wales, which will allow us to work with local authorities to design the bus networks their communities need and put contracts in place to deliver them.

This is the most far-reaching plan across the UK, and a vital step to reverse the damage of deregulation. We must make sure people have a bus service they can rely on, which is easy to use, and puts people before profit.

Legislation doesn't happen overnight, so, in the meantime, we're working with the industry to explore what quick improvements can be made to passenger's experience of our buses. We have also published [Bws Cymru](#), our bus plan which sets out some of these steps.

Rail infrastructure such as the re-instatement of stations is a reserved matter for the UK Government. Despite the compelling case for the full devolution of responsibilities for rail to the Welsh Government, alongside a fair funding allocation, the UK Government has refused Welsh Government calls for this. Full devolution will enable the transformational development of the railway across Wales needed to deliver the vision for rail set out in Llwybr Newydd, our Wales Transport Strategy, providing passengers with an accessible integrated and sustainable public transport system.

However, we and the UK Government currently do not have any plans for the reinstatement of a Station at Goytre.

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) have identified a future cycle route in their recently published Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) connecting Little Mill with Penperlleni. There is yet no planned alignment for this route and it is unknown whether this route will interact with the trunk road. MCC would need to be contacted for further information, however, it is noted that the scheme is classed as low priority on the ATNM.

Regarding a cycle connection between Penperlleni and Llanover, this is also indicated on the MCC ATNM as a medium priority route. Again, no decisions have yet been taken regarding the alignment, though it is shown as following the A4042. This scheme is not currently a priority route for the Welsh Government and there are no current plans to develop an Active Travel scheme.

Yours sincerely,



Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd

Deputy Minister for Climate Change

P-06-1319 Provide a pedestrian crossing on A4042 at Goytre Arms crossroads and reduce the speed limit to 20mph, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 28.06.23

I note the comments from Lee Waters to Jack Sargent. I also note in separate correspondence from Lee Waters, that a light controlled crossing for the Goytre Arms crossroads is in the future work programme and I sincerely hope this work will be carried out in 24/25.

It is also encouraging to note that a crossing on the A4042 Llanover is also now being reconsidered. As residents pointed out to me only this week: 'There may only be a handful of houses on the southbound side but we all have to cross back over when we return from Abergavenny.' A crossing here would be greatly appreciated.

Drop kerbs continue to be an issue for mobility users and a more urgent approach to fixing this would be appreciated.

As regards the Stagecoach X3 service, I feel confident usage will increase once residents at both locations feel safe to cross the road.

I am hoping that the petitions committee will now turn their attention to the speed limit at the Goytre Arms. I will remind you that our Primary School, Community Centre, Village Hall and the Hospital at Aderyn are all within 100 metres of the crossroads.

I believe precedent has already been set on the A40 in Abergavenny and ask again that the speed limit here be reduced to 20mph. The remainder of the village will be 20mph from September as planned and I am raising awareness of the change amongst villagers in both Penperlleni and Llanover. Responses are largely positive.

Villagers continue to run their Go safe campaign. Speeders are being reported and overall there has been positive effect on slowing traffic down.

I am continuing to raise the profile for including us in the active travel network with MCC.

As regards the rail network and future plans. There is growing momentum from villagers who have set up a petition to 'Reopen the station at Nant-y-Derry' which is currently live. Indications seem to suggest that the 250 vote mark is likely to be reached. I think it is time to bring this conversation forward in Welsh and UK government.

I look forward to watching on 3rd July.

Best Wishes,

Jan Butler

Agenda Item 4.9

P-06-1320 Allocate additional funding to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to ensure its sustainability

This petition was submitted by Mark Fisher, having collected a total of 1,893 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The sustainability of the local government services delivered across Neath Port Talbot will be significantly challenged if additional Government funding is not provided. The ongoing impact of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine are creating an unprecedented demand on already strained council services. We estimate a shortfall of £5million for 2022-23 and a further £20million for 2023-24. Our communities are struggling with the cost of living crisis and any increase in council tax must be avoided.

Additional Information:

We require sufficient additional resources for the Council to continue to support our communities through these crises, maintain the essential services that people rely upon and to bring about long term improvements in the environmental, cultural, social and economic wellbeing of our residents. Without these monies, the only alternative is to cut jobs and services, undermining democratic accountability if services are lost to the private or third sectors and depleting reserves. After over a decade of austerity measures, there are no soft options left. The education of our children and young people, care and support for children and vulnerable people (including those who are homeless, refugees or asylum seekers), maintenance of the public realm and wider Council services will be degraded. Local government terms and conditions will fall further behind public and private sector comparators compounding the challenges of resourcing our organisation in a highly competitive labour market.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Aberavon
- South Wales West

Agenda Item 4.10

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

Centrica

Chris O'Shea

6 June 2023

Dear Mr O'Shea

Petition P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

Thank you for coming to give evidence to the Committee last week. I indicated at the hearing that we might wish to follow up on a couple of points, and I am writing to seek further information on debt collection.

During the session you said that Centrica would no longer use debt collection agencies, and that you would bring the function in house in order to have greater control.

Please could you elaborate on how this will work and in particular what kind of training will be provided to your debt collection teams, and what monitoring you intend to put in place to ensure that all staff have received it?

Thank you again for your engagement in the Committee's work. I look forward to reading your response.

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales.

If you have any queries, please contact the Committee clerking team at the e-mail address below, or on 0300 200 6454.

Yours sincerely



Jack Sargeant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Scottish Power

Andrew Ward

6 June 2023

Dear Mr Ward

Petition P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

Thank you for coming to give evidence to the Committee. I indicated at the hearing that we might wish to follow up on a couple of points, and I am writing to seek your response on two matters.

First, you said in the session "Every day, we have thousands of people who just decide they would prefer to go on holiday rather pay for their energy, or prioritise something else."

I was curious, what is the evidence behind this statement? Is it possible for energy suppliers to know the choices that consumers are making?

Secondly, I wanted to clarify the use of debt collectors going forward. During the session you said that Scottish Power would continue to use debt collection agencies, with whom you have a long-term relationship, to recover debts. You said that you "make sure those agencies are trained sufficiently".

Please could you elaborate on this and let us know what kind of training is provided and what monitoring is in place to ensure that all staff have received it?

Thank you again for your engagement in the Committee's work. I look forward to reading your response.

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales.

If you have any queries, please contact the Committee clerking team at the e-mail address below, or on 0300 200 6454.

Yours sincerely

Jack Sargeant MS

Jack Sargeant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Mr Jack Sargeant MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1SN

19 June 2023

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Thanks for your follow up letter after your committee's evidence session on Monday 15th May 2023 on the use of Pre-Payment Meters (PPMs) by energy suppliers. I've set out below responses to each of your queries.

I referenced some customers prioritising other things above paying for their energy bills, of course, you are right, I can't know the choices that every customer is making but I do draw on personal experiences and the conversations I have with people where it is clear that a small minority of customers are making such decisions over payment of their energy costs. There is no suggestion that has any relation to those financially vulnerable customers who are clearly making very difficult day to day decisions on what costs to prioritise to protect their families. However, what I can confirm is that we do see customers who can pay for their energy choosing not to, and we're concerned that the pause of use of prepayment is creating increases in these "won't pay" rather than "can't pay" customer groups, with early data suggesting that this is indeed the case. We are concerned that the lack of a PPM option for those customers will lead to significant increases in debt costs to all customers and will add to the impact to those customers already struggling with their bills.

With regard to our use of debt collection agencies (DCAs), we undertake a range of activities to ensure they are suitably skilled to work on our behalf, which includes the training we referenced at the hearing, but also our ongoing monitoring and assurance processes and our contractual controls.

Our training includes a comprehensive set of training material, and all agents must complete the course before undertaking any work on our behalf. The training covers a range of activities and topics, including those relating to visits to a customer property, identification of customer vulnerabilities, safe and reasonably practicable checks and the process for switching to prepayment meter. Alongside classroom training, we also utilise training activities that ensure agents gain "on-the-job" experience including shadowing of experienced team members. New agents are then subject to assessment by experienced team members via observation to ensure that they are following the correct processes.

Our monitoring and controls cover a range of actions to support us in ensuring agents are suitably trained, and that we have ongoing oversight of agent activity and customer experience to support quick action where we identify any issues. This includes:

- Weekly engagement with DCAs via reporting and meetings
- Regular review and updates of training and process/policy materials being shared with DCAs and tracking to ensure training is completed in timely manner
- Weekly call monitoring by both ScottishPower and the DCA
- Quarterly Field audits undertaken by the DCA

- Quarterly on site reviews by ScottishPower account managers and annual audits validating policies and procedures

I hope this provides you with the additional information you need, but I would be happy to follow up on any area if you have further questions.

Regards,



Andrew Ward
CEO, ScottishPower Retail

Energy UK

Dhara Vyas

6 June 2023

Dear Ms Vyas

Petition P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

Thank you for coming to give evidence to the Committee, and for providing further information on 16 May. I indicated at the hearing that we might wish to follow up on a couple of points, and I am writing to seek further information regarding debt collection.

We heard different perspectives from Centrica and Scottish Power during the session, and I've asked them both to provide further details of the training they provide to those tasked with collecting their debts.

On behalf of Energy UK, is there any such thing as 'best practice' or guidance on how best to go about it, that the Committee should be aware of in our discussions? I appreciate the answer may be 'no' in this case.

Thank you again for your engagement in the Committee's work. I look forward to reading your response.

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales, if possible within 14 working days.

If you have any queries, please contact the Committee clerking team at the e-mail address below, or on 0300 200 6454.

Yours sincerely



Jack Sargeant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Agenda Item 4.12

P-05-859 Provide Child Houses in Wales for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse

This petition was submitted by Mayameen Meftahi, having collected 227 signatures.

Text of Petition

The child house concept is based on best practice learned from the USA and Scandinavia. Recognising the vulnerability of the child victim and the harm caused to the child by multiple interviews, the child house uses a child-friendly response to child sexual abuse (CSA).

In the UK, 2 child houses are available in the city of London, in Wales there is none.

As a child, you do not know who and where to run to, you do not know that there is any support available, if we can offer Child Houses across the UK, we can save children.

Continuation of Refuges for Domestic Violence, there should be Child Houses for children suffering child sexual abuse.

We know that many children who are suffering child abuse will at some point try and escape, they will want to free themselves, but they have nowhere to go. They will be returned back home, back into the arms of their abuser.

Providing a safe house, that is child-friendly, that can open the way for disclosure and safeguarding.

In Iceland, the 'Barnahus' model has been in place since 1998, and offers in one place, forensic interviews, making court statements, medical examinations and access to therapeutic services. We should make this available like we do a domestic violence refuge. Since the Barnahus model was established in Iceland, the number of child victims of CSA coming forward for help has more than doubled per year, indictments have tripled, and convictions have doubled. This is enough evidence to show they are crucial.

Not only should we be providing child houses, but we should continue this

with educating children that these options are available. Please join us in the Campaign to address this issue and let's make a push for the Welsh Government to provide a Safe House in Wales, we surely cannot expect children to get to London, if they are even aware such houses exist. Sadly this is currently not the case.

Additional Information

Our children need somewhere to run to, they need to be safe and they need to have access to the correct support to save themselves from the life sentence of child sexual abuse.

Please sign this petition and start to make movements!

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Swansea East
- South Wales West

P-05-914 Equal Access to Health Care for the Disabled

This petition was submitted by Tracy Locke having collected a total of 121 signatures.

Text of Petition

We call on the Welsh Government to ensure that it is a legal requirement for all GP surgeries to have wide, adjustable treatment beds and hoists available for the use of disabled patients, so that they can be examined whenever there is need.

I was born with Spinabifida in 1970 and as a survivor of this condition I am paralysed from above the waist down and use a wheelchair full time. In 2017 I was diagnosed with stage 4 bladder cancer. It cannot be legally proven but it is my sincere belief that had I been examined earlier in the years before in my GP surgery on an a wide, adjustable treatment bed, perhaps with the aid of a hoist, then my cancer would not have been diagnosed at such an advanced stage. Since I've been looking into this issue, many disabled women have spoken to me about how they do not have equal access to smear tests because of this issue too. Often people think that disabled access is just about lifts and ramps but in health care, it is so much more complex. Let's join together to make access to health care equal for all people.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Preseli Pembrokeshire
- Mid and West Wales