

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 5 – Tŷ Hywel

HYBRID

Meeting date: 11 September 2023

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

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1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

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2 New Petitions

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2.2 P-06-1344 Moderate quality agricultural land (grade 3b) should be used for food security not solar farms

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- 2.8 P-06-1351 To bring in availability of heart-screening for all 11-35yr olds who play Sport
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Document is Restricted

Make the Senedd more representative of the Welsh population

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/5997/1

Petition Number: P-06-1334

Petition title: Make the Senedd more representative of the Welsh population

Text of petition: This petition is calling upon the Welsh Parliament to investigate the introduction of gender and ethnicity quotas within its electoral systems and calls for more representation of those from a disabled background. Furthermore, it requests what action has this Senedd and the previous five incarnations done to make the Senedd more reflective of Wales as a whole.



1. Background

Section 35 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 states that:

The Senedd must make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that Senedd proceedings are conducted with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people.

The Fifth Senedd's Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform said that while the Senedd has “performed relatively strongly” in terms of gender-balanced representation, “there has consistently been a lack of visible diversity in terms of ethnicity and disability”.

The boundaries of the Senedd’s legislative competence with regards to implementing measures to improve diversity is complex. This briefing will look at the current gender and ethnic make-up of the Senedd, as well as future reform plans.

1.1. Gender diversity

Since its creation, the percentage of women elected to the Senedd has always been above the global average. In 2003, the then National Assembly became the first legislature in the world to elect an equal number of men and women. Since then, the percentage of women Members has fallen, though it has always remained above 40%.

1.2. Ethnic diversity

At the 2021 Senedd Elections, three Members from an ethnic minority were elected. This was the same number as the 2016 election. Mohammad Asghar, elected in 2007, was the first Senedd Member from an ethnic minority background.

The below table shows the numbers of Members from an ethnic minority background elected at each Senedd/Assembly election. This refers to the figures elected, and does not include any changes in Membership during the Assembly/Senedd term. It does not account for by-elections.

Election	Members from an ethnic minority	Percentage
1999	0	0%
2003	0	0%
2007	1	1.6%
2011	2	3.3%
2016	3	5%
2021	3	5%

Sources: Senedd Research, *Senedd Election 2021: Research Briefing*, July 2021; National Assembly for Wales Research Service, *Research Briefing 2016 Assembly Election Results*, June 2016; Senedd Research, National Assembly for Wales Research Service, *2011 Assembly Election Results*, May 2011.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government announced its legislative programme for the upcoming year in June. The programme included two Bills on Senedd reform:

- A Bill to expand the size of the Senedd to 96 Members and implement other reforms; and
- A separate Bill to introduce gender quotas for candidates for election to the Senedd, “with the aim of making [the Senedd] more representative of the people it serves.”

Both Bills are expected to be introduced at some point in the autumn term.

Upon the publication of the Welsh Government’s legislative programme, the First Minister, Mark Drakeford, told the Senedd:

We will bring forward a Bill to introduce gender quotas for candidates elected to this Welsh Parliament.

We are confident that we have the legal scope here in Wales to legislate in this area, and we will bring forward a Bill confident of the basis on which we do so. But it is an area in which other views may be possible, and where a challenge might be mounted. In order to make sure that the main reforms are not vulnerable to challenge, we’ve severed the two aspects.

2.1. Access to elected office fund

On 15 February 2021, the pilot for the [Access to Elected Office Fund for Wales](#) opened for candidates standing in the Senedd elections in May 2021.

The second stage opened in October 2021, and was specifically targeted at supporting disabled candidates seeking election in the local government elections due to be held in May 2022. The fund was delivered by [Disability Wales](#) and was funded by the Welsh Government.

Candidates could apply for support with additional costs to overcome impairment related barriers that would impact participation in the election. These included:

- Assistive aids, equipment and software;
- Travel around the constituency if the candidate cannot use public transport; and
- Communication support workers such as British Sign Language, interpreters, palantypists and lip speakers.

[A review of the pilot](#) was carried out between November 2022 and March 2023.

[On 16 May 2023, the Counsel General, Mick Antoniw, said](#) that the Welsh Government intends to legislate to ensure that the fund is available for future elections.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The issue of introducing quotas in the Senedd has been addressed by successive committees.

3.1. Expert Panel

[The Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform](#) was established in February 2017 to provide advice on electoral reform of the then National Assembly. The Panel's scope included looking at diversity of representation in future parliaments. It argued that any future electoral system “should encourage and support the election of a body of representatives which broadly reflects the population”.

The Expert Panel recommended that gender quotas be integrated into future electoral systems used by the Assembly. However, it also acknowledged that there

were significant constraints on the then Assembly's competence to legislate in this area.

3.2. Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform

The Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform (CSER) was established in September 2019 to examine the recommendations of the Expert Panel. The CSER said:

[the Committee] strongly supports the principle that the Senedd should be gender balanced, and that its membership should be more diverse both in respect of ethnicity, disability and other protected characteristics.

However, it also said that it had “received legal advice which suggests that the Senedd’s legislative competence in respect of equality and diversity may be significantly constrained.”

It recommended that the Welsh Government should seek amendments to the Government of Wales Act 2006 to ensure that measures to encourage the election of a more diverse Senedd would be within legislative competence of the Senedd. It also recommended that:

A Sixth Senedd committee should undertake further work on diversity quotas in respect of characteristics other than gender to inform decisions on whether such quotas would be appropriate mechanisms to encourage the election of a more diverse Senedd.

3.3. Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform

The Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform was established in October 2021 with the aim of making recommendations for a Welsh Government Bill to reform the Senedd in time for the 2026 election.

The Committee recommended that the Senedd be elected with integrated statutory gender quotas. It also recommended that:

A relevant committee considers how further work can best be undertaken on examining the merits and implications of legislative diversity quotas for characteristics other than gender.

The Committee stated that:

Our Committee unanimously concludes that legislative integrated gender quotas and mandatory zipping should be developed as part of the new list system.

It further stated:

We recognise that the ability of the legislation to deliver on this recommendation, as with all recommendations, is whether it can be delivered within the constraints of the Senedd's competence.

In relation to all of the Committee's proposals on diversity, the report stated:

Any Bill introducing diversity measures would have to be drafted in a way that does not relate to any reserved matter, including the reserved matter of 'equal opportunities'.

We recommend that the Welsh Government takes appropriate steps to ensure that our recommendations on Senedd reform for 2026 are not put at undue risk of a Supreme Court referral.

The Committee also made other recommendations around diversity in the Senedd. These included:

- A legislative requirement should be placed upon devolved Welsh Authorities to collect and prominently publish anonymised candidate diversity data; and
- Provisions should be included in a Senedd reform Bill that encourage each political party standing candidates in a Senedd election to prominently publish a diversity and inclusion strategy.

3.4. Senedd debate on gender quotas

In the Senedd, members have discussed the issues of gender quotas and diversity in the Senedd on numerous occasions, including in a Plenary debate [on the Welsh Government's legislative programme on 27 June 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-06-1334
Ein cyf/Our ref FM -/00219/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair
Petitions committee
petitions@senedd.wales

19 June 2023

Hello Jack,

I am writing in response to your letter of 18 May regarding Petition P-06-1334: Make the Senedd More Representative of the Welsh Population.

Several committees and panels over recent years have concluded that gender quotas integrated within the electoral system could make a real difference in terms of women's representation in the Senedd. The Welsh Government's [Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru](#) includes gender quotas in relation to Senedd reform.

The [Expert Panel](#) which reported in 2017 concluded that improved representation in the Senedd across a much wider range of protected characteristics would enhance the operation of the then Assembly, and the way it represents and serves the people of Wales. The [Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform](#) came to a similar conclusion in 2020, outlining the benefits of a diverse Senedd, which properly reflects the population of Wales.

The Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform report [Reforming our Senedd: A stronger voice for the people of Wales](#), which was published in May 2022, made several recommendations to increase the diversity of the Senedd through legislative gender quotas and other measures relating to the publication of diversity data on Senedd candidates and diversity and inclusion strategies. These were endorsed by the Senedd on 8 June 2022. The committee did not recommend diversity quotas, saying further work was required "to inform decisions on whether such quotas would be appropriate mechanisms to encourage the election of a more diverse Senedd".

The Welsh Government is making good progress in translating the Special Purpose Committee recommendations into legislation. I have made two Written Statements to provide updates about the progress of Senedd reform: in [December 2022](#) and in [April 2023](#).

We are engaging with key stakeholders and delivery partners to understand the practical implications of implementing integrated gender quotas in our electoral system. In developing

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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.

legislative proposals, we are also carefully considering any new duties that may need to be introduced, where they are best placed and what their impact might be.

An increasing number of countries around the world are introducing various types of gender quotas for elections to their parliaments. Diversity can lead to better decision-making as a result of a greater variety of views and experiences, as well as better outcomes due to the improved scrutiny of policy, spending and legislation.

A Senedd which is fully representative of modern Wales will be a Senedd able to view the country through the lens of all its people, making decisions for the benefit of everyone. The more diverse elected members are, the more confidence and trust there will be in the Senedd as a legislature which genuinely represents the people and the communities it serves; equitably and fairly.

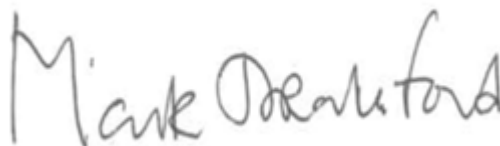
Although political parties are in a strong position to positively influence the diversity of the field of Senedd candidates, we must recognise that there are important contributions to be made by the Senedd Commission and by government in making it feasible for individuals who face certain barriers to remain in elected office. Important steps have already been taken, for example for Members with childcare or other caring responsibilities and those on parental leave, as well as the advantages in moving to hybrid working.

A pilot of the Access to Elected Office Fund was also established, to assist disabled people to stand for elected office with the additional impairment related costs that were a barrier to their participation in politics. Managed by Disability Wales, it was put in place to support candidates at the May 2021 Senedd elections and in the May 2022 local government elections. Arrangements for a future fund applying to both sets of elections are being considered.

A number of policy proposals aimed at increasing diversity in democracy were included in the consultation on the [electoral administration and reform white paper](#), which closed in January 2023.

The Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales have been awarded £82,000 over two years towards its Equal Power Equal Voice project, which will deliver a mentoring programme for people with protected characteristics across Wales. It will recruit and mentor diverse women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, disabled people and LGBTQ+ people to be involved in public life – whether standing for political office, serving on public boards, charity boards, or as school governors. It is a collaboration between WEN Wales, EYST, Stonewall Cymru and Disability Wales.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the petition.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD

P-06-1334 Make the Senedd More Representative of the Welsh Population - Correspondence from the Petitioner, 25.08.23.

The Senedd must reflect the diversity of the Welsh population to ensure that the laws and policies they create are fair and equitable for all. According to the Welsh Government's statistics, 5.2% of Wales is of ethnic minority background, however, this number has not reflected in the composition of the Senedd in the past. Only 43% of those elected to the Senedd are women which is an improvement from the previous elections when the 50% split was not remotely approached. However, there is still work to be done to increase the representation of other underrepresented groups. It is hard to believe that the first ethnic minority female member of Senedd was elected in 2021. There are only 3 members who are from an ethnic minority background with little to no representation of those with a visible disability. This adversely affects the lives of minority groups within Wales as their voices are not being heard. We need the representation of all populations in Wales as only people with experience can make a positive difference.

The Senedd plays a significant role in shaping the lives of Welsh citizens, and it is important that the members of the Senedd reflect the diversity of the people they represent. Diversity encompasses not only race and ethnicity, but also gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. When a diverse group of people work together, they bring a wider range of experiences and perspectives to the table, leading to more creative and innovative solutions to problems. Moreover, a diverse Senedd can lead to better representation of marginalized communities, who often face discrimination and exclusion in society. Members of marginalized communities are better equipped to understand the unique challenges and barriers faced by their communities and can advocate for policies that address their needs. Diversity in the Senedd can also promote public trust and confidence in government. When the Senedd reflects the diversity of the population it serves, people feel more represented and heard. This can lead to increased participation in the democratic process and a sense of ownership over the decisions made by the government.

Despite the importance of diversity in the Senedd, achieving it can be challenging. Structural barriers such as unconscious bias and discrimination can prevent underrepresented groups from running for office and being elected. Moreover, the political process itself can be exclusionary, with a focus on political experience and access to resources, which can disadvantage those from underprivileged backgrounds.

There are several steps that can be taken to increase diversity in the Senedd. Firstly, political parties should prioritize diversity when selecting candidates for elections. This can be achieved by actively seeking out candidates from underrepresented groups and providing them with support and training to enable them to stand for election. The Senedd should provide support and funding for underrepresented groups to enable them to stand for election. This could include training and mentoring programs to help individuals develop the skills and knowledge needed to run for office. Likewise, the Senedd should promote diversity through its outreach and engagement activities. This could include engaging with underrepresented communities to understand their needs and concerns and working to address these issues through policies and legislation.

In conclusion, diversity in the Senedd is crucial for creating fair and equitable policies and governance. A diverse group of policymakers can bring different perspectives to the table and ensure that the needs of all communities are represented. It is important as it ensures that the views and experiences of different communities are represented. While progress has been made in increasing the representation of women, more needs to be done to increase the representation of other underrepresented groups. However, achieving diversity can be challenging, and structural barriers must be addressed to ensure that all voices are heard. It is imperative that efforts are made to increase diversity in the Senedd to ensure that it is truly representative of the Welsh population it serves.

P-06-1344: Moderate quality agricultural land (grade 3b) should be used for food security not solar farms

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/5997-6

Petition Number: P-06-1344

Petition title: Moderate quality agricultural land (grade 3b) should be used for food security not solar farms

Text of petition: We must conserve 3b land to safeguard food security:

- Only 10-13% of Wales is Best & Most Versatile land (grades 1-3a). Climate change risks change to agricultural land grades
- 3b land supports crops
- Solar farms with 3a land within 3b land parcels are being approved (contrary to Welsh Government policy). Construction/decommission permanently damage land; 3a land will be lost
- Dual-purpose claims to offset land loss have no contractual obligation - sheep rarely graze under solar panels

Developers target Welsh Government's (WG) more permissive planning policies: WG decides proposals above 10MW, England & Scotland local planning authorities decide up to 50MW. Solar panels belong on brownfield sites, residential properties & commercial buildings: use existing grid connections, reduce local electricity bills and supply surplus electricity to the National Grid = less demand for grid electricity, and agricultural land (our food security) is maintained.



- Welsh Government Soil Policy & Agricultural Land Use Planning Unit 2018-19 Soil Policy Evidence Programme Feb 2020
- <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-05/agricultural-land-classification-frequently-asked-questions.pdf>
- PEDW DNS/3245065 Welsh Minister Decision 27/10/22
- PEDW DNS/3267575 2022-12-19 REPS009WGClimateChange

CAEVOD is against overdevelopment in East Vale of Glamorgan. We support renewable energy in the right location: carbon neutrality in Wales without destroying our countryside.

1. Background

1.1. Summary

The Welsh Government has no plans to review its policy on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land to include 3b land.

Its planning policy is to avoid development on Wales' BMV agricultural land unless there's an 'overriding need' for the development **and** there's no suitable alternative land available (see below).

BMV agricultural land is defined as grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system. This is 'good' to 'excellent' quality land. 3b land is considered 'moderate' quality and has more limited capability in the range of crops that can be grown.

The Minister's letter to the Committee on this petition contains technical detail on the ALC system and soil grade characteristics.

1.2. Planning policy

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 states:

Our productive land is a vital resource. Agriculture has shaped our landscapes and supported our rural and market towns for generations. We must continue to value and protect our agricultural land and ensure it can feed and support us.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) states:

3.55 Previously developed (also referred to as brownfield) land ... should, wherever possible, be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development.

and:

3.59 When considering the search sequence and in development plan policies and development management decisions considerable weight should be given to protecting such land [BMV agricultural land] from development, because of its special importance. Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a should only be developed if there is an overriding need for the development, and either previously developed land or land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable, or available lower grade land has an environmental value recognised by a landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation which outweighs the agricultural considerations.

1.3. Planning decisions

Renewable energy developments of 10 Megawatts (MW) or greater are considered Developments of National Significance (DNS). Applications for DNS are made to Planning Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) for decision by the Welsh Ministers.

The Welsh Government introduced the *Infrastructure (Wales) Bill* into the Senedd on 12 June 2023. The Bill establishes a new consenting system for large infrastructure developments, including renewable energy developments.

The Bill, as currently drafted, raises the lower threshold for decisions by the Welsh Ministers from 10MW to 50MW meaning that should the Bill become law in its current form, renewable energy developments of below 50MW would be decided by the Local Planning Authority.

1.4. The Agricultural Land Classification system

The ALC system provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland in Wales and England. It classifies land into five grades, with 1 being the best and 5 being the worst and grade 3 subdivided into subgrades 3a and 3b.

The current grading methodology is described in The Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land (MAFF 1988).

2. Welsh Government action

In her letter to the Committee on this petition, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, notes:

- She wrote to all Local Planning Authorities in Wales in March 2022 to reiterate national planning policy on protecting BMV agricultural land. The letter was specifically in the context of development of solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays: Best and most versatile agricultural land and solar PV arrays.
- The Welsh Government intends to publish an evidence review into 'The impact of solar photovoltaic (PV) sites on agricultural soils and land quality' during the summer. The Minister says she would be pleased to share this with the Committee once published.

The Minister also confirmed she has no plans to review the policy on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land to include subgrade 3b land.

3. Welsh Parliament action

This issue of including subgrade 3b land within the definition of BMV agricultural land hasn't previously been discussed in the Senedd.

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

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1344
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/01466/23

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

Dear Jack Sargeant MS,

Thank you for your letter of 18 May 2023 regarding the petition from Campaign Against East Vale Over Development (CAEVOD).

Renewable energy developments of 10MW or greater are considered Developments of National Significance (DNS). Applications for DNS are made to Planning Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) for decision by Welsh Ministers. As the Minister responsible for determining DNS applications, neither I nor my officials can comment directly on any particular scheme. To do so could leave any future decision open to challenge on the grounds of pre-determination. I therefore offer no comment on any current or future proposals.

A key message from Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 in respect of high-quality agricultural land is: -

'Our productive land is a vital resource. Agriculture has shaped our landscapes and supported our rural and market towns for generations. We must continue to value and protect our agricultural land and ensure it can feed and support us'.

Future Wales makes a clear statement on the importance of high-quality agricultural land as it is considered as a *'natural national resource'* under Policy 9.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the approach to be taken to managing our high quality or Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Paragraph 3.55 notes that previously developed (also referred to as brownfield) land should, wherever possible, be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development.

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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.

Paragraph 3.59 states that BMV agricultural land should only be developed if there is an ‘overriding need’ for the development and previously developed land or land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable, or available lower grade land has an environmental value which outweighs the agricultural considerations. I recently reiterated the national planning policy position and importance I place on protecting BMV agricultural land as a finite, national resource in my letter to Chief Planning Officers, dated 1 March 2022¹.

PPW defines BMV agricultural land as grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system. This is ‘good’ to ‘excellent’ quality land. As a resource, BMV land is considered to be the most flexible, productive and efficient and is most capable of delivering crops for food and non-food uses for the future. BMV agricultural land accounts for 10-15% of land in Wales.

The 10-15% range reflects some uncertainty in the Predictive Agricultural Land Classification Map. Certain site-specific limitations were not included in the production of the Map due to a lack of available data. These include frost risk, agricultural flood risk, pattern limitations, micro-relief limitations and chemical limitations. The severity of these limitations may limit some areas currently graded as predictive BMV agricultural land.

BMV land often contains lighter and easy to work soils, it requires fewer “passes” by agricultural machinery to establish seedbeds. The reduction in the amount of time machinery spends on the land helps reduce fuel, labour, and maintenance costs. It also reduces the potential for damage to soil organic matter. Horticultural and root crops grown on BMV land can also be harvested in a cleaner condition reducing loss of soil, water usage and crop wastage.

Non-BMV land tends to be made up of heavier wetter soils and those in colder wetter climatic zones which limit their workability and cropping potential.

ALC subgrade 3b accounts for an additional c.23%² of agricultural land in Wales and is considered ‘moderate’ quality. Subgrade 3b covers a very wide spectrum of land which has a much more limited capability in the range of crops that can be grown. The ALC grades definitions are published in the ‘*Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land*’ (MAFF 1988)³;

Subgrade 3b is defined as, “*land capable of producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, principally cereals and grass or lower yields of a wider range of crops or high yields of grass which can be grazed or harvested over most of the year*”.

ALC Grades 4 & 5, ‘poor’ and ‘very poor’ quality agricultural land, tend to be found in poorly drained or upland areas limited by soil depth, wetness, gradient and climate. These grades account for c.42% of agricultural land in Wales.

The table below illustrated the latest available data on the quality of agricultural land used for solar PV sites in Wales by area (hectares). This covers the period 2012-2020 and excludes DNS permissions.

¹ <https://www.gov.wales/best-and-most-versatile-agricultural-land-and-solar-pv-arrays>

² <https://www.gov.wales/agricultural-land-quality-statistics-planning-authorities-2020>

³ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5526580165083136>

Grade 1		Grade 4	
Area	%	Area	%
0	0	254.8	17
Grade 2		Grade 5	
Area	%	Area	%
268.1	18	116.3	8
S'grade 3a		Non-agri	
Area	%	Area	%
202.4	13	15.6	1
S'grade 3b		Urban	
Area	%	Area	%
660.8	43	3	0

The Welsh Government continues to ensure the Agricultural Land Classification System is fit for purpose. This includes the publication of the Agricultural Land Classification Technical Review report series:

[ALC Technical Review - Part 1 - Soil and Site Limitations](#)

[ALC Technical Review - Part 2 - Climate, Site and Interactive Limitations](#)

[ALC Technical Review - Part 3 - Droughtiness](#)

[ALC Technical Review - Part 4 - Chemical Limitations](#)

[ALC Technical Review - Part 4 - Soil Wetness](#)

[ALC Technical Review - Part 6 - Scoping Study](#)

Over the summer, Welsh Government will publish an evidence review into '*The impact of solar photovoltaic (PV) sites on agricultural soils and land quality*,' Report Code: SPEP2021-22/03. The report is in translation, and I would be pleased to share it with the Committee once published.

The development of BMV and non-BMV agricultural land and soils is identified in Planning Policy Wales⁴, Technical Advice Note 6⁵, Practice Guidance Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy⁶, and Future Wales, the National Plan 2040⁷. The Welsh Government supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales. Future Wales policies 17 and 18 set out the Welsh Government's policies for renewable and low carbon energy development, including the key criteria for the determination of DNS. These key criteria ensure that applications for DNS are rigorously assessed so that communities, designated areas, landscapes and natural resources are protected from unacceptable adverse impacts. Policy 18 also requires consideration of the cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes where this is appropriate as well as the provision for '*...effective restoration*'.

⁴ https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/planning-policy-wales-edition-11_0.pdf

⁵ <https://www.gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-6-planning-sustainable-rural-communities>

⁶ [Practice Guidance Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/practice-guidance-planning-implications-renewable-low-carbon-energy-development)

⁷ <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/planning-implications-renewable-low-carbon-energy-development.pdf>

I can confirm that there are no plans to review the policy on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land to include Subgrade 3b land.

Yours sincerely,

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

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

Compulsory conservation management plans for at-risk scheduled monuments

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: P-06-1345

Petition Number: P-06-1345

Petition title: Make conservation management plans compulsory for scheduled monuments at risk such as Ruperra Castle

Text of petition:

Built in Caerphilly, 1626, Ruperra Castle is significant in Welsh history, one of only a handful of Pageant Castles left in the UK. It was home to the Morgan family and played host to Charles I, and the military in WWII. In 1941 it was gutted by fire and it is still a ruin at risk. A scheduled monument and Grade II* listed building, yet it has deteriorated through private ownership. One of the towers has fallen and without considered intervention it will deteriorate further and soon be lost..

Scheduled monuments are protected to preserve archaeology and buildings so that future generations can learn from our past. Many monuments are stable, others need managing to slow or avoid the effects of natural deterioration. Cadw's website suggests owners may find it useful to draw up a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) to guide their decisions, but it's not a requirement. Welsh Government should make Conservation management plans compulsory for scheduled monuments at risk, to avoid neglect and subsequent loss. This includes identifying



significance, risks, and opportunities to conserve and improve the monument, so as not to damage what is special and guarantee we pass on what is valued to future generations. This will ensure monuments at risk like Ruperra Castle aren't neglected for another 80 years. It will also help alleviate worry about losing significant parts of our precious heritage and aid our wellbeing. The community has been trying to save it for 25 years <https://www.ruperracastle.wales/about.html>.

1. Background

1.1. Legislation

The main tools the Welsh Government has for protecting the historic environment are listing buildings and scheduling monuments. Scheduled monuments are protected archaeological sites and unoccupied historic ruins. They are selected to represent all human activities from earliest times to today.

There are around 4,200 scheduled monuments and 30,000 listed buildings in Wales. Of these, only about 130 monuments are owned and looked after by Cadw (the Welsh Government's historic environment division).

The principal pieces of primary and subordinate legislation that currently govern their protection and management are:

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
 - o Scheduling of monuments of national importance
 - o The control of works to scheduled monuments through the scheduled monument consent process
 - o Action against unauthorised works or deliberate damage to scheduled monuments
 - o The acquisition and guardianship of ancient monuments
- The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Amendments to the existing legislation, including:

- Consultation, interim protection and review of decisions to designate historic assets
- Extension of the definition of a scheduled monument
- Amendments to the criminal offences and defences for damage to scheduled monuments
- Introduction of enforcement and temporary stop notices for scheduled monuments
- Amendments to the scheduled monument consent process
- Power of entry for the archaeological investigation of ancient monuments in danger of damage or destruction
- Introduction of heritage partnership agreements (according to Cadw, “Heritage partnership agreements allow owners, consenting authorities and other interested parties to create long-term management plans for historic assets. The plans cover agreed programmes of works and can incorporate scheduled monument and/or listed building consents”).

The aim of scheduling is to preserve the archaeological evidence that survives within sites and monuments. This includes the physical fabric of the monument and any associated artefacts and environmental evidence, such as pollen or seeds.

This means that if the landowner wants to carry out work that would physically alter a scheduled monument they will probably need to apply to Cadw for permission known as scheduled monument consent. The scheduled monument consent process is intended to protect the monument, its setting and its features from unsympathetic works that could damage its national importance.

Cadw officers also visit scheduled monuments and their owners periodically to check the condition of the site and to offer advice on managing the monument.

There is no legal requirement on owners to maintain a scheduled monument in good condition or to produce Conservation Management Plans, even if the monument is at risk. Similarly, whilst good maintenance of listed buildings is encouraged by Cadw, there is no formal obligation for owners to do so.

1.2. Conservation Management Plans

As outlined by Cadw, a conservation management plan is

“a document which explains why a historic monument or place is significant and how [it is possible to] sustain that significance in any new use, alteration, repair or management.”

A conservation management plan aims to identify risks, explore opportunities for improvement, and highlight the significance of a monument. Conservation management plans are often a prerequisite for funding from bodies such as Cadw or the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

1.3. Ruperra Castle

Ruperra Castle is a Grade II* (particularly important buildings of more than special interest) listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument. Its grounds are listed on the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales. The castle was built in 1626, and has been in private ownership since 1998, with the current owner in place since 2014.

Pressure group Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust was formed in 1996, and has lobbied to “prevent inappropriate development and save Ruperra Castle”. Its main objective and timeline of opposition to developments at Ruperra castle can be found here. The Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust states:

“Our vision is to protect Ruperra Castle and the environmental surroundings of this historic site from inappropriate development. We want to own the Castle and use a range of funding streams to:

- Repair the Castle as a roofed ruin so that it can be preserved for future generations
- Manage the gardens, grounds and outbuildings with a live-in caretaker
- Use it as a base for heritage, archaeology, gardening, and skills training
- Commemorate key periods in its history
- Encourage sustainable public access

2. Welsh Government action

In its response dated 9 June 2023, the Welsh Government acknowledged that conservation management plans are “a useful tool used by owners and managers of heritage assets to set out the significance of a heritage asset, and how to conserve and manage the asset.” However, they do not support the implementation of compulsory conservation management plans.

The letter states:

“...it would not be appropriate to apply this methodology [compulsory management plans] wholesale to many smaller and simpler scheduled monuments at risk in Wales. Making such plans compulsory would also require new legislation. Extensive changes to the law to improve the protection for scheduled monuments were made in 2016 with the Historic Environment (Wales) Act. Despite extensive consultation there were no calls for compulsory conservation management plans. In fact, such a proposal would be disproportionate in scale and cost, and in many cases unachievable.”

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

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Ddirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1345
Ein cyf/Our ref DB/00349/23
Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
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09 June 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to comment on Petition P-06-1345 submitted by the Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust to make conservation management plans compulsory for scheduled monuments at risk such as Ruperra Castle.

Conservation Management Plans are a useful tool used by owners and managers of heritage assets to set out the significance of a heritage asset, and how to conserve and manage the asset. They help with the sustainable management of change to heritage assets and are often used to secure significant grant funding to undertake conservation work.

Scheduled monuments in Wales range from small Bronze Age standing stones to complex and extensive masonry ruins such as Ruperra Castle. There is no legal requirement on owners to maintain a scheduled monument in good condition or to produce Conservation Management Plans, even if the monument is at risk.

In its guidance, Cadw advises that conservation management plans provide a long-term, whole site approach to management. Their use can help owners to avoid inappropriate and unplanned changes. Cadw heritage specialists regularly work with owners of scheduled monuments providing advice on the content and means to produce conservation management plans. However, whilst their use is justified in some cases, for example for larger, more complex and sensitive proposals, it would not be appropriate to apply this methodology wholesale to many smaller and simpler scheduled monuments at risk in Wales. Making such plans compulsory would also require new legislation. Extensive changes to the law to improve the protection for scheduled monuments were made in 2016 with the Historic Environment (Wales) Act. Despite extensive consultation there were no calls for compulsory conservation management plans. In fact, such a proposal would be

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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.

disproportionate in scale and cost, and in many cases unachievable. For these reasons I do not consider it appropriate to make such plans compulsory.

Yours sincerely,

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

Dawn Bowden AS/MS

Ddirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism

P-06-1345 Make conservation management plans compulsory for scheduled monuments at risk such as Ruperra Castle – Petitioner to the Committee, 25.08.23

25 August 2023

Dear Petitions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We are pleased that the Deputy Minister agrees in principle that Conservation Management Plans could be made compulsory for larger, more complex and sensitive sites of Scheduled Monuments at risk like Ruperra Castle which is a very special place and the only example of a pageant castle in Wales. Cadw's designation description includes: *"Ruperra Castle is a rare example of a substantial Jacobean Renaissance mock castle... The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of post-medieval social, domestic, and political life and architectural design. Notably, the sophistication of Jacobean design at Ruperra was unprecedented at the time in Wales"*.

The issue behind the petition is the neglect - whether active or unintended - by owners of some of our nationally important scheduled monuments like Ruperra Castle, which we are at risk of losing. We suggested conservation management plans as the solution, as that is already recommended in the guidance to owners of scheduled monuments on Cadw's website:

A conservation management plan is based on an understanding of your scheduled monument and its significance. It offers a long-term, whole-site approach to management so that you avoid inappropriate and unplanned changes. Your plan should include a statement of significance, identify current and potential risks, and look for opportunities to improve the monument. Conservation management plans are best prepared by qualified and competent experts, especially for complex monuments.

For smaller monuments, a simpler plan, drawing on the principles of conservation management planning can be very helpful.

In all cases, conservation management plans should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the site. This means that they need not necessarily be long or expensive to produce, and the information they contain can be used as the basis for assessing the impact of any proposed work.

<https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/historic-assets/scheduled-monuments/looking-after-your-scheduled-monument#section-conservation-management-plans>

Historic Environment consultations and review

Conservation management plans were mentioned as part of the consultation as well as desires for the 2016 Historic Environment Bill to do more to protect our scheduled monuments and buildings – some examples:

- Ken Richards – “It is important to be aware of, and consider, the application of additional or alternative approaches and instruments to the management of the historic environment to deliver greater sustainability. There are effective instruments and practices in the field of resources and ecosystem management with the potential to support the protection and conservation and stewardship of the historic environment in Wales. Examples include

heritage impact statements, stewardship agreements and community based conservation/heritage plans.”

- Trysor – “believe that much more attention needs to be paid to informing landowners who have Scheduled Ancient Monuments on their property as to the expectations placed upon them. An “Owner’s Manual” or “Site Passport” which can be regularly checked and updated, and transferred to new owners at a point of sale, should be considered as vital to ensure that owners will not be ignorant of their roles and responsibilities in future, reducing the potential for damage to our most important monuments. It is our experience that many landowners have a vague understanding of their role in managing Scheduled Ancient Monuments at present.”
- Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings – “Ideally we would have hoped to see even greater change, including a duty of care placed upon the owners of designated structures.”
- National Trust Wales – “We are pleased to see the Bill’s provisions to lend greater protection to Listed Buildings, however, we would have wished to see far greater emphasis on Buildings at Risk in the Historic Environment Bill. We wish to see greater monitoring, greater intervention, greater reporting, and far more emphasis on reducing the buildings at risk in Wales. The Bill needs to stimulate a far more proactive approach to partnership solutions to Buildings at Risk in Wales, and a greater dialogue on solutions to loss of heritage.”
- Wales Heritage Group – “Introduction of enforcement and temporary stop notices for scheduled monuments: We would welcome the further development of stop notices for use in the context of active neglect of a monument/historic asset particularly when this becomes active damage.”

<https://business.senedd.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=176&RPID=637441&cp=yes>

Following this, in 2017 the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee also held an inquiry into Wales’s historic environment. This inquiry followed on from the Committee’s summer consultation in 2016 during which the public highlighted ‘preserving local cultural heritage’ as one of the key areas which the Committee should prioritise.

<https://business.senedd.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=19747&Opt=0>

This resulted in a report - Past and Present – Report of an Inquiry into the Historic Environment that recommended that the Historic Environment Bill should be kept under review. “Recommendation 5: The Government should keep the Act under review and formally review its impact after it has been in operation for five years.” The last update we can find on progress is from January 2021 where it says that: “Formal review will be undertaken when the significant provisions of the Act relating to heritage partnership agreements and the register of historic parks and gardens have been in operation for sufficient time to measure their effectiveness.” If our suggestion can’t be achieved as a one-off amendment to the Act we suggest that our request is considered as part of this upcoming review. It would be helpful to know when this formal review will take place.

<https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s115586/Welsh%20Government%20update%20on%20progress%20against%20recommendations%202021.pdf>

It is reasonable to request that legislation is reviewed if it isn’t working. Ruperra Castle is just one example of the large number of scheduled monuments at risk in Wales.

Of the 4,229 designated Scheduled Monuments in Wales, estimates provided from Cadw in May 2023 indicate that around 14%-14.5% are “at risk”.

Ruperra Castle is also a Grade 2* Listed Building. There are currently 30,093 designated Listed Buildings in Wales. Current estimates from Cadw indicate that between 8%-8.5% of these are “at risk”.

We also found a report which showed a breakdown of types of listed buildings at risk from 2015. It stated a significant increase in Grade 2* buildings "at risk" (of which Ruperra Castle is) from 7.56% to 11.61% in the surveys from 2013 to 2015 with the statement (in red in the box on page 3) that "Grade 2* buildings need to receive more attention..."

<https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/201905/20161206conditionandusesurveyoflistedbuildings2015.pdf>

It would be helpful to know if both the percentage of scheduled monuments and listed buildings in Wales has increased or decreased since the introduction of the 2016 Historic Environment Bill as a measure of its effectiveness.

Figures provided from Historic England earlier this year for scheduled monuments and listed buildings at risk show a lower percentage at risk in England – in April 2022 there were:

- 19,933 scheduled monuments in England of which approx. 11.4% were assessed as at risk.
- 22,516 secular listed buildings (of grades I and II*, NOT grade II) in England of which 3.4% were assessed as at risk.

Historic England publishes an annual heritage at risk register which was also a recommendation on the report of the inquiry into the Welsh Historic Environment in 2017. "Recommendation 7: Cadw should publish its survey of heritage at risk at the earliest opportunity and in the most complete way compatible with data protection requirements."

We eagerly await the publishing of the heritage at risk register in Wales so we can get a better understanding of our heritage at risk.

Historic England also produce much more extensive guidance on conservation management plans on their website with case studies and examples: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/parks-gardens-and-landscapes/maintenance-repair-and-conservation-management-plans-for-historic-parks-and-gardens/#Section4Text>

So do the Church of England: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/conservation-management-plans>

We still consider that requiring a conservation management plan for more complex Scheduled Monuments at risk would be fair and proportionate, and would be seen as such by every responsible owner.

Alternative ideas to legislative changes

Given that conservation management plans are advised by Cadw we suggest that - as an alternative to legislative change - the Deputy Minister could consider the option of issuing a policy statement to strengthen that policy for all scheduled monuments at risk on large, complex and sensitive sites, including Ruperra Castle. We are confident that Cadw could produce a list of such sites reasonably quickly and could fully justify the need for strengthened advice for such monuments in the light of recent statistics on increasing risk levels. Selecting these important complex sites would not lead to disproportionate scale and costs. We therefore request this is considered as an option which could lead to an improving situation for our significant heritage assets in Wales for the benefit of our sustainable tourism industry.

Alternatively, the policy statement could require a conservation management plan to be produced if any large, complex or sensitive scheduled monument - or its setting - is at risk of being affected by a planning or listed building application on an adjacent site.

Substantial controversy

The planning applications that were approved in January 2023 to convert two outbuildings next to Ruperra Castle into a private residential community with associated parking will harm the setting of the Castle, yet are in no sense “enabling development” and include no plans for conserving Ruperra Castle, a building of huge historical importance.

In February 2023, the situation at Ruperra Castle was declared a “national scandal” in an article by Country Life magazine:

“Certainly, I don’t regard the future of the castle — in the words of the minister’s letter — as a matter ‘not likely to cause substantial controversy beyond the immediate locality’. The abandonment of Ruperra Castle in return for vague promises ought to be a national scandal.”

<https://www.countrylife.co.uk/news/ruperra-castle-scandal-253330>

The concern reflected in that article is backed up by evidence from our petition, which drew support from well beyond the immediate locality of Ruperra.

Recent information provided by Cadw in July 2023 about the condition of Ruperra Castle revealed:

“The condition was last recorded on 28 June 2023. The condition trend was recorded as “worsened severe”, current condition as “unfavourable” with “high vulnerability” and the monument at risk level “high immediate”.

Cadw is in contact with the owner and his team of consultants. We have been encouraging the owner to record the structure and to commission a structural survey and options appraisal to identify conservation options to arrest deterioration.”

With these designations in place, we consider that the current system isn’t working when all that Cadw can do is “encourage” owners of nationally important scheduled monuments to prevent deterioration whilst the monument is in their care.

Hefin David Caerphilly MS has been an active supporter of the Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust for many years, and we are grateful for his continued encouragement. Several South East Regional and local MS’s have visited the area and are supportive, and shocked to hear that there is no current legislation to protect Ruperra Castle and other complex sites of significant historical interest from neglect.

Over 3,000 of the 10,500 signatures were collected at places and events in Wales in a matter of months and we also attracted international support. Many of those were surprised that conservation management plans weren’t required already. The strength of feeling from Welsh people was particularly felt when we collected signatures and spoke to young people at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Llandovery earlier this year.

We hope the Petitions Committee can progress our petition and secure a debate in the Senedd on the future of our Welsh heritage before another tower falls. 2026 will see Ruperra Castle’s 400th anniversary – let’s hope we can give it the protection it deserves so it is still standing, and we can all enjoy the celebrations together.

Yours faithfully,

Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust

P-06-1346 Provide free and accessible public transport for under 18s in Wales to lower carbon emissions and boost growth

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/6132-2

Petition Number: P-06-1346

Petition title: Provide free and accessible public transport for under 18s in Wales to lower carbon emissions and boost growth

Text of petition: Public transport plays a pivotal role in linking Welsh children to educational, social and work opportunities.

However, in light of the cost of living crisis, as well as the climate crisis, it is imperative that the Welsh Government incentivises public transport in order to lower carbon emissions and improve economic growth.

The ENYA conference in 2022, at which 2 young Welsh representatives were present, called on the Welsh Government to 'provide reliable and affordable public transport'.



1. Background

According to the [RAC foundation](#) UK rail fares are 35% higher, and coach and bus fares about 54% higher, than a decade ago while average wages have grown by just under 40%. It also indicates that the cost of motoring is about 43% higher.

A 2022 report from [Sustrans Cymru](#) found that the increasing costs of bus travel disproportionately affect young people, who are more reliant on public transport for accessing education, training, and employment opportunities.

In [2021 15% of Welsh greenhouse emissions](#) were from transport. The Welsh Government's second [Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget](#) aims to reduce this by 22% by 2025. It also aims increase the proportion of journeys made by public transport from approximately 5% to 13% by 2040.

Accordingly, the [2021 Transport Strategy](#) focuses on encouraging public transport uptake by improving infrastructure, reliability and traveller experience. However, the importance of affordability is also acknowledged. The Welsh Government's [National Transport Delivery Plan 2022-2027](#) commits to explore public transport concessionary schemes for young people, whilst its [2021-2026 programme for government](#) stated it would:

Explore extensions of the MyTravelPass for reduced-cost travel for young people.

The [16-21 MyTravelPass](#) gives holders a 30% discount on buses in Wales. For rail, TfW offers [free off-peak train travel for under 16s](#) accompanied by a paying adult, which extends to anytime travel for under 11s. Young people's rail discounts available across Great Britain include National Rail's [16-17 Saver](#) and [railcards](#), which offer 50% and 33% discounts respectively.

A range of other schemes are in place across Great Britain offering free or discounted travel for young people. These include TfL offering [free bus and tram travel for under 18s](#) living in London and free rail travel for under 10s. Notably, Scotland introduced [free bus travel for 5 to 21-year-olds](#) on 31st January 2022. [According to Transport Scotland](#), in May 2023 uptake was around two thirds of eligible users, and additional patronage has allowed some bus companies to increase service provision. However, some [media reports](#) blamed the scheme for increasing disorder on buses.

Means-tested help with education-related transport costs for under 16s is also available in England and Wales from local education authorities, whilst 16-18 years olds can apply for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

2. Welsh Government action

In a letter to the Petitions Committee Chair on 25 May 2023, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, acknowledged low bus fares can encourage more bus travel. He cited recent discounted travel initiatives such as a March 2022 free bus trial in Newport and the summer free bus scheme in Swansea. He also outlined measures being considered to make public transport more affordable in Wales, including:

...capped single fares, zonal fares, integrated bus and rail ticketing and enhanced young person's ticketing.

The Deputy Minister also pointed to proposed bus reforms. The Welsh Government's 'One network, one timetable, one ticket' white paper and accompanying 2022 Bus Strategy include proposals for franchising which, it says, could improve affordability by making transport operators:

... put people before profit and make buses as easy and attractive to use as we can.

Plans also included proposals to simplify the bus network and fares, so:

... all buses run on the same ticketing system, and people's tickets are based on their journey rather than the operator on whose route they happen to be.

The Deputy Minister stated that whilst the Welsh Government was keen to improve bus fare initiatives, funding is being prioritised for maintaining essential community bus services.

3. Welsh Parliament action

Following its 2022 inquiry into bus and rail transport, the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee's October 2022 report cited concerns from Professor Mark Barry that current bus concessions were not fair for young people. He advocated:

...providing a bit more support for younger people in a very uncertain work environment where travel costs make up a disproportionately high proportion of what people actually earn.

As a result, the report recommended that:

The Welsh Government should bring forward proposals as soon as possible to address transport poverty in Wales arising from the cost-of-living crisis, including subsidised fare pricing and other financial support.

The Welsh Government's response accepted this recommendation in principle. It reiterated its interest in building on the MyTravelPass scheme, but cited budget constraints as a limiting factor.

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.

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1346
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/01051/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

15 June 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 25 May regarding the Petition P-06-1346 which calls on the Welsh Government to provide free and accessible public transport for under 18s in Wales to lower carbon emissions and boost growth.

I recognise how current arrangements around public transport fares and ticketing are very complex and inconsistent across Wales. In order to make public transport more appealing and accessible, my officials have undertaken a comprehensive piece of planning work and reviewed a range of options to deliver a Fairer Fares offer for bus passengers in Wales. This includes the potential introduction of capped single fares, zonal fares, integrated bus and rail ticketing and enhanced young person's ticketing.

We are looking closely at recent free and discounted bus trials held over the last twelve months in Swansea, Newport, and Cardiff, including the trial for free weekend travel on the TrawsCymru network. These trials have shown that low bus fares can encourage more people to travel by bus.

We are closely monitoring developments in England, where the Department for Transport has provided funding to offer £2 flat fares until the end of October 2023, and in Scotland where free travel was introduced for young people aged 5 to 21. As soon as robust data is available from these initiatives, we will use this to inform our thinking on 'Fairer Fares' for bus travel in Wales to make bus travel more affordable and bus use more attractive to all in the community.

Unfortunately, we have been faced with a challenging funding settlement from the UK Government and have had to prioritise our bus funding to ensure essential bus services are maintained for communities as part of our Bus Emergency Scheme. As soon as the funding position improves, we are keen to progress our bus fare initiatives.

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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.

You will also be aware of this government's plans to reform the bus system through regulation as set out in our white paper *One network, one timetable, one ticket*. The current system allows operators to build their services around profitability rather than passenger need and puts barriers up between different operators which have nothing to do with the journeys people want to make.

Taking public control of the bus system through a franchised network will allow us to put people before profit and make buses as easy and attractive to use as we can. That means we can redesign networks around providing the best and most convenient range of connections we can, rather than overserving commercial corridors and underserving people in other areas.

It also means making tickets as affordable and simple as we can, so all buses run on the same ticketing system, and people's tickets are based on their journey rather than the operator on whose route they happen to be.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black 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

Review Additional Learning Needs Policies

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/5997

Petition Number: P-06-1347

Petition title: Review Additional Learning Needs policies & make compulsory to FULLY train all teachers and TAs in regulation techniques

Text of petition: A review of the ALN policies in schools and a huge increase in support for the 40% of children who are struggling daily is needed. They need to be taught regulation techniques from early years, creating happier, less disruptive classrooms & providing a tool box to take through life. Long term, decreasing mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse and lowering crime rates.

There are very few Welsh language Specialist Training Facilities discriminating against a right to Welsh medium education.

1. Teacher training in university should have a significant focus on ALN to ensure the ALNET act can be effectively rolled out. 40% of learners have some form of ALN. This should be compulsory and not optional! ALN strategies help all learners.

2. Neurodiversity Awareness campaign – ND affects at least 1 in 5 people in Wales. Awareness of ND and how it presents and affects people should be commonly understood to ensure an inclusive Wales.

3. Teaching Assistants support – TA's need to be valued, trained and paid properly



4. Funding for a ND specialist teacher and TA in each LA to support, guide and train staff in school.
5. Welsh medium provision for ALN is not as well supported as in English medium schools and this is not giving equality or inclusivity for Welsh learners.
6. 40-60% of pupils with General Learning Difficulties can now not be coded with the new ALNET code of Universal Provision.
7. Parent Support from trained staff who can sign post them to support for their child's needs.

1. Background

1.1. Additional Learning Needs Reform

The provisions of the [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#) (ALNET) are reforming the Special Educational Needs (SEN) system in Wales. The term 'Additional Learning Needs' (ALN) is replacing SEN, although essentially the same definition is retained, which is that learners:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age (that cannot be addressed solely through differentiated teaching), or
- a disability (for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010) which prevents or hinders them accessing education or training that is generally provided for others of the same age, and
- the learning difficulty or disability calls for Additional Learning Provision (ALP).

Instead of a three-tiered system, as with the SEN system (where only those with the most severe/complex needs have statutory statements), every learner with ALN will have a statutory Individual Development Plan (IDP) setting out their needs and what interventions they require.

The new ALN system is being phased in over a four-year period from September 2021 to August 2025. All newly identified learners with ALN are covered by the new system, while those already in the SEN system are transferring across

between January 2022 and August 2023, or between September 2023 and August 2025, depending on which year group they are in and whether they are currently supported under School Action or School Action Plus or have a statement of SEN. The time profile for transferring pupils with statements of SEN is generally later within the four-year period than those on School Action or School Action Plus. More information is available in [Senedd Research's article](#) (April 2023).

1.2. Initial Teacher Education

To become a teacher and teach in a maintained school in Wales, individuals need to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). This is done by meeting a set of [Professional Standards](#) that are set out in legislation. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers are responsible for designing their programmes so that trainee teachers can demonstrate that they meet the required standards. The content of the ITE programmes are at the discretion of the providers, but they must be accredited by the Education Workforce Council.

In the Minister for Education and Welsh Language's letter to the Committee, he states that under the [refreshed accreditation criteria for ITE programmes](#), (from September 2024) expectations for supporting learners with ALN as part of student teachers' core studies have been strengthened.

1.3. Professional Learning

All teachers and teaching assistants have a [National Professional Learning Entitlement](#). All education professionals are entitled to:

- an individual professional learning journey;
- well-designed professional learning that includes a blend of approaches and opportunities for reflection, enquiry and collaboration for learning; and
- to work in a school or setting, or organisation that sees itself as a learning organisation and uses professional standards in all aspects of professional development.

The [Welsh Government state](#) that when planning their professional learning practitioners should seek to include professional learning on:

- Curriculum for Wales
- additional learning needs

- embedding equity, well-being and the Welsh language across the whole-school community.

1.4. Support for teaching assistants

On 18 February 2022, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language issued a [written statement, Update on activities to support those assisting teaching](#). He said that a Task and Finish Group, which included Welsh Government, trade unions, local authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Education Workforce Council, teaching assistants and headteacher representation, had identified several key areas for attention:

- Deployment of teaching assistants
- Access to training and professional development –
- Standardisation of roles
- Pay.

1.5. Welsh medium

In his letter to the Committee, the Minister states that ensuring a supply of skilled, Welsh language teachers and teaching assistants is a key part of developing the Welsh language workforce. The [Welsh in Education Workforce Plan](#) (May 2022) sets out a number of actions including developing and promoting more pathways to becoming teaching assistants in Welsh-medium schools and developing specific and targeted professional learning for all teaching assistants to be confident to support learners to develop their Welsh language. The plan also notes:

the data analysis document shows that we have a particular issue in terms of teaching assistants, with numbers suggesting that we don't currently have a sufficient supply with Welsh language skills to fill roles in Welsh-medium schools

The Children's Commissioner for Wales and the Welsh Language Commissioner published a joint report [the Welsh Language and the Additional Learning Needs System](#) in June 2023. Included in its findings was that:

- Whilst some local authorities report that they can provide for all ALN needs through the medium of Welsh, most local authorities report that they cannot provide through the medium of Welsh for many additional needs.

- Several local authorities admit that ALN provision through the medium of Welsh does not meet the needs of learners. Either Welsh-medium learners must receive support through the medium of English, do not receive the support required, or, as in the case of some learners with more complex needs, choose English medium education from the outset, as they are already aware of the lack of Welsh-medium ALN support.

It identified two 'key challenges':

- The lack of a specialised workforce who have the requisite linguistic skills.
- Offering specialised Welsh-medium provision is difficult when the numbers likely to take advantage of such provision is comparatively low in many local authorities.

The [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#) (section 63) requires local authorities to consider the sufficiency of Welsh-medium provision in their area when fulfilling a duty to keep additional learning provision under review. Section 89 of the Act requires the Welsh Government to arrange for reviews of the sufficiency of additional learning provision in Welsh.

1.6. Data collection and coding

The Petitioner states that '40-60% of pupils with General Learning Difficulties (GLD) can now not be coded with the new ALNET code of Universal Provision'. The Minister states that 'universal provision' is not a term defined in law or referenced in the ALN Code. He states removing the GLD category appears to have led to many pupils being removed from the SEN register altogether since they could not be identified as having another category.

The Minister told the [Children, Young People and Education Committee in May 2023](#) that "the landscape has changed quite a lot" since the ALN reforms were first conceived and the more inclusive approach of the Curriculum for Wales means some learners with lower levels of ALN can now have their needs met through universal classroom provision in ways not previously feasible.

The number of learners identified with ALN has decreased by almost a third since the new system began being implemented (from 92,688 in 2021 to 63,089 in 2023). The Senedd Research article, [Identifying Additional Learning Needs: Has the bar been raised or was it previously too low?](#) (October 2022) gives more background on this shift.

The proportion of pupils who are identified as having ALN is 13% in 2023 (down from 20% in 2021). Over the previous decade, the rate had been between 20% and 22% (less than the 40% figure given by the petitioner).

2. Welsh Parliament action

2.1. Petitions Committee

In 2017, the Petitions Committee considered petition [P-05-707 Teachers' Training Must Include Statutory Training in Autism](#). At that time, Kirsty Williams, then Cabinet Secretary for Education said that the Welsh Government had launched a Learning with Autism Programme for primary schools and was extending it to secondary schools and Further Education. The programme aimed to increase the ability to recognise signs of autism at an earlier age. The Welsh Government was also consulting on the criteria for accreditation for ITE programmes. These criteria are currently being used, until September 2024. The Petition was closed in 2017.

On 27 February 2023, the Committee considered petition [P-06-1317 Recognise Teaching Assistants as an important asset to schools by raising wage](#). In light of the work already underway to address the issues (see paragraph 1.4 above) the Committee agreed to keep the petition open and seek an update from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language in January 2024.

2.2. Children, Young People and Education Committee

The Children, Young People and Education Committee are currently undertaking an inquiry, [Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?](#) The Committee is considering how children and young people who are neurodivergent, have physical, sensory or learning disabilities are able to access all aspects of education and childcare. The Committee will continue to take evidence in the Autumn.

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-06-1347
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/00920/23

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

12 July 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 25 May regarding issues raised in a petition received by the Petitions Committee from Clare Anna Mitchell.

The reforms Welsh Government are making to the education system in Wales have equity and inclusion at their heart. 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 ALN. The [Curriculum for Wales](#) has been designed to raise the aspirations for all learners. It sees every learner as an individual with different strengths and areas for development, who may progress in different ways and at different paces.

Alongside Curriculum reform we are phasing in a new ALN system which is gradually replacing the special educational needs (SEN) system. The ALN system changes both the legal framework, and practices to support children and young people so their needs are met in a more timely way. The new system ensures that learners aged 0-25, who require additional learning provision to meet an ALN, have that support properly planned for and protected in a single statutory plan called an Individual Development Plan (IDP). It also strengthens children's rights and ensures the views, wishes and feelings of the child and their parents are heard. The ALN system is underpinned by the ALN and Education Tribunal Act and the [ALN Code for Wales](#).

We recognise the importance of a skilled workforce to the success of our education reforms. In both Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and continuing professional learning for teachers in practice, meeting the needs of all learners is identified as a priority. Supporting learners with

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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.

ALN is part of a student teacher's core studies and professional standards for teaching and leadership make clear the responsibility on all teachers and leaders to ensure the needs of all learners are met, including learners with neurodivergent (ND) conditions. All staff who work with children and young people with ALN have a responsibility for ensuring that their learners' needs are identified and provided for.

The Programme of Professional Learning and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) has been designed to prepare student teachers to foster inclusive classrooms, so that teachers remain equipped to meet the needs of all learners. As part of a refresh of the accreditation criteria for ITE programmes, we have strengthened expectations for supporting learners with ALN as part of student teachers' core studies.

A key part of our work on implementing the new ALN system aims to help ensure teachers can develop the skills they need to meet the needs of learners with ALN so they can put in place differentiated teaching or other targeted interventions so children can learn more effectively, and to help make best use of the expert advice and support provided by specialists.

Teachers have responsibility for their own professional learning and development. To assist them and other practitioners, we have developed a national approach to professional learning and a professional learning entitlement which promotes the support practitioners, system leaders and advisors are entitled to.

As part of the professional learning available to all teachers we have developed an online national ALN professional learning pathway, which is available on [Hwb](#) in Welsh and English. The training is to help all teachers support learners with ALN, and especially ALN Co-ordinators (ALNCos) who have a strategic role in schools and are the first point of call for staff seeking advice and guidance on ALN. Key elements of this learning include person-centred and inclusive practice, the whole-school approach, and the effective coordination of additional learning provision across educational settings. We have also been working with the Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance to produce information for schools on certain types of learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Teachers who want to take their knowledge further can undertake the National MA (Masters) in Education (Wales) – ALN. This pathway is available in Welsh and English and gives teachers the opportunity to enhance their ALN professional knowledge, engage with research and improve their ALN practice.

We have developed [training](#) and resources to raise awareness of the new ALN system in general and have published guides to assist practitioners which detail effective interventions for learners with [sensory impairments](#), [autism](#) and [ADHD](#) in education settings. We also work with Wales' [National Autism Team](#) which helps raise awareness of ND conditions across all professions, with [dedicated resources](#) for practitioners.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) are a valued and integral part of the school workforce and have an important role as part of a high-quality education profession. Our existing TA Learning Pathway offers professional learning to support TAs throughout their career. We have established a Professional Learning Steering Group to look at all professional learning for TAs in Wales. The aim of this group is to ensure equality of access to targeted, high quality and consistent training for our TAs. An investment of £1 million per annum is made to help with the development and professional learning of all TAs in the system.

Ensuring a supply of skilled, Welsh language teachers and teaching assistants is a key part of developing our Welsh language workforce. Our [Welsh in Education Workforce Plan](#) sets out a number of actions including developing and promoting more pathways to becoming

teaching assistants in Welsh-medium schools and developing specific and targeted professional learning for all teaching assistants to be confident to support learners to develop their Welsh language.

Regarding Welsh language provision for learners with ALN, one of the core aims of the ALN Act is to create a bilingual system of support for learners with ALN. The ALN Act requires local authorities and education settings to consider whether additional learning provision (ALP) should be provided to children or young people in Welsh. Where a learner has a need for ALP in Welsh, this must be specified in their IDP, and all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that it is provided. Local authorities all have Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) in place which include an objective on how they are improving Welsh medium ALP within their areas.

We recognise there is a need to develop more Welsh language resources for learners with ALN. Through the newly established bilingual educational resources company, 'Adnodd', we aim to continue creating new Welsh-medium resources to support the teaching and learning of the Curriculum for Wales and identify and commission resources to better support learners with ALN.

Regarding data collection, there is no code in the Pupil Led Annual School Census (PLASC) for 'universal provision' which is not a term defined in law or referenced in the ALN Code. This term is one which schools and local authorities are using to include strategies, resources and adaptations to the curriculum and environment adopted by practitioners to remove barriers to learning for all children and young people.

The 'General Learning Difficulties' (GLD) code was also removed from the PLASC. Removing the GLD category appears to have led to many pupils being removed from the SEN register altogether since they could not be identified as having another category. This strongly suggests that many pupils categorised as having GLD did not in fact meet the legal definition of having SEN or ALN.

Changes to the ALN PLASC data collection is part of a longer-term piece of work to ensure it represents a robust data source on learners with ALN. A working group is being convened to plan and engage key stakeholders in any proposed changes to the data requirements for the January 2025 data collection. Until then no additional changes will be made in order to track and monitor a consistent data set for the remainder of the implementation period.

Regarding signposting for parents of learners with ALN, local authorities have a duty under the ALN Act to have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child and their parent; the importance of the child and their parent participating as fully as possible in decisions regarding their ALN/ALP; and the importance of the child and their parent being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions. This duty reflects the ethos of person-centred practice. We have published a [parents guide to rights](#) under the ALN system, and further information on involving and supporting children and their parents can be found in Chapter 4 of the ALN Code for Wales. Independent advice and guidance for parents is also available from [SNAP Cymru](#).

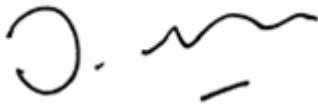
SNAP Cymru has been running a series of free face-to-face ALN reform awareness raising events for families of children with ALN across Wales and more events are planned. Information about these events will be posted on the SNAP Cymru website when it becomes available.

Through our ALN implementation programme we are working with the sector to ensure there is sound understanding of the ALN system and that learners with ALN are supported through a person-centred and needs-led approach.

A medical diagnosis is not required to access appropriate educational support to meet learner need and neither should support be delayed whilst learners wait for an assessment. As part of its work to build on the foundations of Wales' autism strategy and statutory code of practice for autism services, Welsh Government [announced](#) in July 2022 that it is investing £12 million in a new national improvement programme for neurodevelopmental conditions to 2025, and provided a progress [update](#) on 2 May. This programme is addressing immediate pressures on assessment waiting times and developing sustainable integrated needs led services with a skilled and resilient workforce, which includes supporting schools and teaching staff. It will also include additional advice and support services for parents and carers. In April this year we launched a pilot of an extension to the C.A.L.L. helpline, the Neurodivergence Listening Line which provides a safe space for neurodivergent people and their parents and carers to talk about their experiences (the contact telephone number is 0800 132737).

A [Neurodivergence Ministerial Advisory Group](#) has been established to provide advice to the Deputy Minister for Social Services on the progress of this programme, which includes representation from education and people with lived experience of neurodivergence. Our [National Autism Team](#) also provides expert advice, training and guidance on autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions. Their resources are available on the [AutismWales](#) website and on Hwb, the Welsh Government's online learning platform.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a wavy line and a short horizontal stroke.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

P-06-1347 Review ALN policies & make compulsory to FULLY train all teachers and TAs - Correspondence form the Petitioner to the Committee, 29.08.23

Dear Petitions Committee,

I am writing to provide a comprehensive response to the email sent by Jeremy Miles, the Education Minister of Wales, in relation to the pressing issue of **mandatory** neurodiversity (ND) training for education staff. I must emphasize that while Mr. Miles' email highlights various initiatives, it falls short of directly addressing the central demand of our petition: the need for **mandatory** ND training for all education professionals in Wales.

I would like to address several critical points raised in the email:

1. **Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Requirements:** The suggestion that teachers should have an "understanding" of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is insufficient. We advocate for thorough training, involving both experience and specialised training led by ALN specialists and individuals with ALN themselves.
2. **Challenges of Online ALNCo Training:** The proposal for online ALNCo training may overwhelm already overburdened professionals. Given their administrative duties, family interactions, and student support obligations, expecting ALNCo staff to engage in additional online courses is impractical.
3. **Workload and Time Constraints:** ALNCo professionals often support large groups of staff and students. With limited time available, expecting them to complete workbooks and assessments on top of their other responsibilities is unrealistic, especially considering the current strain on school budgets.
4. **Equity in Training:** While the national neurodiverse team focuses on professionals, it is essential to extend their efforts to the general public, ensuring broader awareness and understanding of neurodiversity.
5. **Effectiveness of the Response:** The email's tone is aspirational, but it falls short of adequately addressing the core concerns. To assess success, there must be clear metrics and accountability mechanisms in place, ensuring that Local Education Authorities (LEAs) fulfil their obligations.
6. **Guidance for ASD/ADHD Needs:** Clear guidelines must be provided to ensure that decisions made are driven by the needs of ASD/ADHD students.

The Equality Act's interpretation and guidance should be utilised to shape these decisions.

7. **Mandatory Training Necessity:**

A member of our campaign team, a parent governor went to school to talk about her experience of ADHD and ASD and spoke for 20 minutes to teachers and TA's who for the most part knew nothing about the difficulties we experienced as parents/children
This highlights the knowledge gap that exists within the education system. Compulsory training is vital to bridge this gap and provide essential learning.

8. **Importance of Diagnosis:** The concept of intervening without waiting for a diagnosis is flawed, as it fails to account for the diverse needs of each child. Diagnosis provides a personalised understanding that is crucial for effective interventions.

9. **Systemic Inefficiencies:** The current system's delays and lack of knowledgeable staff are impeding the timely support that neurodiverse students need. ALNCo professionals are overwhelmed, and the burden placed on them is unmanageable.

10. **Training for Teaching Assistants:** Training opportunities for Teaching Assistants (TAs) are lacking, and the process of diagnosis is too slow to enable timely interventions. Compulsory training could ensure that all staff members are prepared to support neurodiverse students.

11. **Scaling DARPL Initiatives:** Replicating DARPL initiatives for ALN training may not be effective, given the substantial disparity between the number of education staff and those reached by DARPL.

12. **Transparency and Funding:** The allocation and utilisation of the £12 million funding for neurodiversity training need clarification. Parents and students have yet to see the benefits of this allocation.

13. **Support for Individual Needs:** Without proper training, it's unclear who will identify, address, and support neurodiverse learners, as highlighted in the Minister's commitment to early intervention and support.

14. **Promoting Awareness:** I would like to propose the idea of a national campaign focused on neurodiversity awareness, involving televised initiatives and billboards. Such a campaign could significantly contribute to breaking stigma and promoting a truly inclusive society.

Furthermore, I've suggested the implementation of arena-style training days in each county. These events could feature neurodiverse speakers from various fields, inspiring educators to adopt effective teaching strategies for neurodiverse students. Such events could be both impactful and cost-effective.

I wish to reiterate the need for serious consideration by the Petitions Committee.

Our children are being failed by the current education system's lack of **mandatory** neurodiversity training. This deficiency in training impacts their education, their lives, and their futures.

The current variance in training from school to school perpetuates a postcode lottery, denying consistent, high-quality support to all students.

Teachers require regulated, evidence-based training, and universal provision must be clearly defined and consistently implemented across all schools.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Urgent action is required to ensure a fair and equitable education system for all.

Sincerely,

Petition Feedback from Grassroots



1. Why is ND training not compulsory?
2. My daughter is due to start nursery in September and worried is an understatement she is non-verbal doesn't show interest in anything and I just been told she has to attend a mainstream school first her assessment for ASD is a year away I feel so alone because I don't know where to start I let my son down when I sent him to a mainstream before he got moved in year 5 and now I feel I'm doing the same with my daughter.
3. To use Neuro affirming language. I'm fed up with the acronym ASD. I'm not a disorder. For training to be given by Neurodivergent people. Here's a blog <https://www.thepdaspaces.com/blog/neurodiversity-affirming-glossary-of-key-words-for-families-and-professionals>
4. I have been telling my child's school since nursery and they tell me he's disrupting the class and can't keep still it's 2 weeks now and he's finishing and going to comp and last week telling me they do see he's got a problem so now going to pass this problem. Over to comp I have told them I don't know how many times of what he's like and they really don't care I'm not getting anywhere.
5. Essential to create engaging training. Not just online. Needs to be mandatory!
6. Neurodiversity training for schools/teachers is an absolute must and it should be standard across the country. This should include how to work with parents rather than against them and to be completely inclusive of our children with ALN rather than creating/putting up constant barriers.
7. Being autism/ADHD affirming rather than trying to get our children to conform to neurotypical behaviours.
8. Maybe including parents accounts/views within the training to better educate schools on what it's really like to care for children with ALN 24/7 because I really think so many people have no awareness or appreciation of how tough things can be.
9. Why Primary schools only get a very limited amount of hours of Ed psych time rather than the amount of time needed? This leads to some children never getting the help needed as it has to be rationed. Education in Wales is failing our children.
10. Why children are not getting their 121 support because although statements (IDPs) are in place there is no additional funding.
11. Why children from a LAC background do not receive extra funding , as in England, thus making them second class compared to their English counterparts.
12. How they can say the ALN reforms are good when all it does is take children in need of support off the support list and into a so called "universal provision " which in reality doesn't work (I know this from experience in a professional capacity). These reforms are a cost cutting exercise.
13. Why the majority of home educated children in Wales are so because they have been failed by the ALN policy and autism policy? Then, why WG is making it more difficult to home educate when the state provision has already FAILED these children?
14. How can Welsh government ensure that schools and LA's are complying with this mandatory guidance... and can we make sure that it is co produced with disabled pupils, parent carers and disabled people? <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-04/planning-to-increase-access-to-schools-for-disabled-pupils.pdf>

15. I think neurodiversity training would be an excellent idea (I'm assuming they don't have any at the moment, since understanding is so godawful!)
16. The different ways that ND can present in women/girls/AFAB - it's not just boys with train obsessions!
17. Appropriate/Affirming, identity first language (use 'Autistic' as a default for example not 'on the spectrum' or 'has ASD' / definitely never say "suffers from...")
18. An awareness of masking, and the long term impacts on mental health and access to education (just because a kid seems 'fine' in primary school, it doesn't mean that the trauma isn't building up, leading to serious problems in high school).
19. If schools could just stop defaulting to a base layer of parent blame, that would be super! (Stop assuming that just because the kid is so well behaved at school that it means the parents are at fault!) most parents are excellent, and doing their best, and it's exhausting having to constantly justify ourselves.
20. It's (training) very much needed at some schools, particularly around masking and just how good some of them are at masking, but that it doesn't mean they're fine/coping, different presentation between girls and boys across ND too.
21. For primary, it needs to cover how more 'traditional' rewards aren't appropriate for ND kids. Ours had general policies apply to all, and then would adjust if necessary, but would be a more positive approach if they were just more inclusive to begin with. My 7 year old would really struggle to sit still and 'nicely' to get a dojo point, even though it would leave her dysregulated . Negative impact on self esteem not recognised.
22. Our ALNco hadn't realised that the ND team can support with OT assessments without a diagnosis, you just had to have a referral accepted. We also weren't made aware that the school can contact CAMHS for advice with anxiety. Both these things caused delay to support that we could have accessed. So think it needs better awareness of who/how to link in with support.
23. Also how important it is that other kids in the class are aware of ND and making sure it's a positive thing. I'm coming from experience of primary age kids not having any awareness and my 7 year old having to explain to friends when she was only starting to understand things herself.
24. Mandatory training for headteachers, governors and all staff in relation to the equality act 2010!
25. Unless evidence stating otherwise, parents should be listened to about concerns raised about their child and not told child is fine and parent blamed. This process adds months and months of upset anxiety and lack of education and trauma. Masking especially amongst girls is very common and school refusal in itself needs to be enough to warrant further investigation and referrals.
26. If you want some Wales specific research data to strengthen your case, feel free to quote some of the findings reported within the preliminary report considering 'The Education of Autistic Pupils in Wales' published in 2021.Steffan Davies Research @SDResearch - https://swanseauniversity-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/856614_swansea_ac_uk/EsLZBQ_6JRZGnkoH4VW4OvYBgFAGKgGRhBLWcx6IDXNGOA?e=B1ZVI9
27. Curriculum that includes inclusivity awareness, making children aware of neurodivergent conditions. It just seems that if a child acts out in school then other children are not aware of the possible reasons and will then go home and be told oh they are just a naughty child. I appreciate this is not the case for everyone but I do still hear it happening

and it makes me so sad because my own child was portrayed as a naughty child and left out of activities with her peers. Offer the opportunity to be informed to everyone.

28. I think the inclusivity training & awareness shouldn't just be making children aware of neurodiversity but their parents too - making it an open conversation within schools especially during welcome meetings/transition sessions when children first start. It would hopefully help to make it a less 'us & them situation' - I have seen plenty of neurotypical children behave badly but I always feel like my daughter will be more harshly judged if she does because she's ALN - if people were more educated generally then hopefully this would get better. I also know there are plenty of books aimed at children about neurodiversity that could be provided for parents to read to their children via school.
29. Will neurodiversity training also be for nursery/preschool teachers? Or at least for nurseries attached to a school? My sons nursery are lovely, but have been clueless with noticing any of his ND behaviours. Outreach from specialist schools had to come in to point things out.
30. Training is needed for ALL school staff not just teachers and heads. Training must include autistic traits in girls and pathological demand avoidance (these children have no understanding in schools at all and are seen as naughty with unacceptable behaviour)
31. My son has moderate dyslexia acknowledged and autism traits, on the waiting list for assessment. He cannot cope with mainstream. Why is he not meeting ALN criteria as told by his ALNCo? The mainstream 'universal provision' cannot cope with individual needs and reasonable adjustments fitted to the child. Why are children that were supported before criteria changed not being supported now?
32. Awareness of the right to education and the rights of people with disabilities, as well as the expectations of the new ALN framework/Act. teachers need to know the rules of the game have changed and ND kids are not meant to be shunted out.
33. I see more and more of parents being asked for medical evidence for their child. The attendance and wellbeing officer told me they should be getting marked in. Be great to clarify from them because doctors don't give medical evidence for children unless you pay for it.
34. To have an all Wales approach to supporting children with ALN, not each council making it up as you go along. Different levels of support are offered within each Local Authority. I know it will be due to funding but an all Wales approach needs to be implemented to make it fair for all.
35. Schools (Nursery) should be given the same funding and training as the staff at flying start - there seems more training is given in that setting than the teaching staff in schools.
36. My daughter has dyscalculia and we STILL can't get her statemented. We offered to pay for an assessment but they said they wouldn't accept it unless it was done by someone her school approved.
37. Why are they leaving children diagnosed with no IDP until they are left unsafe and struggling ? why are parents finding out years after diagnosis that they child has learning needs that need to be in special schools ? this is because the ipds are done before assessment of their needs by ep .these idps are a waste of time . Why are the schools saying no resources and lea saying they get the funding for 121 ? why are they sending children to year 7 with o support ? Why do panel not go and see the child suffer as they are the ones forcing parents to accept placements that are not suitable .Why are schools getting away with constant exclusions when it is them the ones failing a childs and setting them up to fail. What is the role of an ALN exclusions officer ?

38. LEA are causing our children trauma and Aces they know well the effects of ACES.
39. It is no wonder so many kids especially girls end up self harming, feeling alone and disconnected to their peers because their really brilliant brain works differently to what is expected. Can we put in a massive safeguarding referral because to me that's what it comes down to, the system as it stands is causing harm and neglecting those kids who are ND.
40. Intelligent, neurodivergent children struggling to attend school have no schools to support their needs.
41. Children being left with no education or setting because they don't fit into mainstream and don't fit into ALN school.
42. This is the situation with my middle child. 18 months now with no education.
43. Please mention the need for compulsory training in Initial Teacher Training programmes PLUS for established teachers, in how to set up environment and learning for ND pupils (which also aids neurotypical pupils). Most importantly, teachers & support staff need updated information about ASD and ADHD, including in girls and inattentive type, to dispel the myths about ADHD occurring mostly in 'bouncy boys'.
44. Why do we have a predominantly one size fits all high stakes exams system which does not capture what ND children know can do and care about?
45. Definitely a need for all teachers to have training. I find especially Welsh schools. They haven't been used to having ALN children but now more are going through them and they don't know what to look out for as much, I find.
46. Much more training for ALN needs to be part of the Teacher training courses
47. I agree the ALN training given in ITE (Initial Teacher Education) programmes in Wales isn't sufficient for what those teachers will encounter when they enter schools. One ITE provider I know has an ALN conference for one day during the whole ITE year and that is it really in terms of ALN training. During that conference they approximately 1 hour workshops on different types of ALN. I suspect similar anecdotal evidence can be found in other ITE providers.
48. To stop focusing so much on academic achievement and more on social and emotional welfare. Schools are judged on academic success so schools have to focus on that, time to focus on wellbeing. Also to listen to parents when they say their children are finding School hard even when they appear fine in school but behaviour at homes indicates they are not. To recognise private diagnosis when they are completed to the same and sometimes above NHS standards. Parents only go private through desperation to get help for their children.
49. The amount of schools not accepting private diagnosis' are shocking. Parents come to me desperate for help and wanting to go private but I have to warn them about this all the time.
50. One company I spoke to said according to the SEN act they legally can't say no. It is just so confusing. My son can have an operation done privately but can't have an autism assessment done, makes no sense.
51. It's actually saving the schools budgets... helping them out but yet wham another barrier to learning for these pupils is put in place.
52. We should be holistically all working together for what's best for the child and if that means private assessments (that parents can afford- another discussion needed for whether it should actually come to that - as for some parents this isn't an option) which parents are able to complete then these should 100% be accepted.

53. Why aren't parents views taken into consideration? My son masks in school and they won't refer him to be assessed because they don't see what we see!
54. Exactly when did these untrained teachers with so much power become doctors? Why do children with ASD diagnosis still don't get believed if they are high functioning and again no support.
55. we've been fighting for 5 years. Writing everything thing down, all our concerns and still he can't be referred. Parents should have rights too.
56. my 9 year old is excellent at masking I school, then either withdraws completely once home because she needs to reset or we have emotional dysregulation so intense sometimes that she cannot physically hold herself upright. I have had to explain so many times that she is masking and every single time they say we are struggling with her behavior - I don't understand how they can so blatantly disregard parents concerns and fob of with I being behavioural
57. my girl comes home and unload everything she found overwhelming and frustrating.
58. Training made compulsory for ALL staff in all conditions ADHD, autism, pda, pica, tourettes etc the Welsh government fund autism Wales to do training for neurodiversity awareness and hardly any schools have taken it up.
59. IDPS need to also include mental health/anxiety.
60. Parents listened to more of what their child needs not told no they don't get bothered by noise, it's not school causing anxiety, they said they will go on stage at a concert, etc when you know they have cried, had meltdowns, panic attacks and even self-harmed the night before anxious over it.
61. Masking needs to be recognised.
62. Parents observations also taken into account for an IDP not just the schools as masking children are getting missed and getting no support at all many end up so anxious they suffer long term mental health problems and self harming.
63. More EP places as children are being refused phase B as not enough slots.
64. More sensory rooms.
65. Better support while waiting for diagnosis (CAHMS refuse to support anyone on the waiting list and there's no service to replace them during this time) . Reduced waiting times for diagnosis.
66. Play workers in school specialising in ASD/ADHD
67. More specialised placements.
68. Stop penalising parents threatening them and giving them fines when their child is struggling to attend school and stop excluding students constantly for a medical condition they cannot help.
69. Consideration to autistic/ADHD needs to be given for discipline procedures like detention and shouting at children at it is not helpful and makes matters worse.
70. definitely need more ed psych phase b and c slots...unreal loads of diagnosed children don't ever get seen by an ed psych so how can an idp be weighted ?
71. My daughter has been refused an IDP on the basis she can cope academically and isn't disruptive in class. The fact she got so anxious and sat in class self harming and the supply teacher was oblivious to it and got shouted at for walking out of class to come and find me in the library doesn't matter. The fact she has panic attacks, makes herself so stressed she's physically sick don't matter, the fact she has violent meltdowns at home don't matter. Simply her mental health which 99% school cause doesn't matter.

72. Eating provisions for ALN in mainstream for those with high sensory needs ,so many ALN children school refuse at the thought of lunchtime overload.
73. I'd like to know why the ALN Act did not adopt any of the protections of the Children and Families Act 2014 (England) for children where attending a school would be inappropriate? English EOTAS law was significantly updated, Welsh law was not. Why?
74. A major step forward would be for schools to have dedicated Occupational Therapists alongside school nurses, especially for those kids that struggle prior to diagnosis. Also sensory stimuli should be available, as an example my 9 year old uses an exercise ball at home, we have one weighted with sand and a normal, she focuses amazingly using this, she also is sensory seeking so sitting still is unnatural for, dynamic cushions in class would make a lot of different for her as would sensory oriented play to support regulation. I am sure she is not alone in this. An OT with sensory integration training could support formulation of strategies specific to each child's needs.
75. Educational psychologist with a well trained support team in every secondary school is required now. Some primary schools are not referring pupils, they get to comp and are then disengaging from learning, 4+ year wait is ridiculous.
76. I'd like to see a more positive focus on nd. Not the superpower stuff but highlighting the positives of the individual. Give the children a sense of pride in their ND identity. The focus is too much on what they can't do, what's wrong with them. This leads to low aspirations their whole life.
77. I think it would be good to talk money to them. That's the language they speak. Unmet needs leads to traumatised children which costs a lot in MH support, lost earnings and tax from parents who can't work. Then when these children become adults without education and qualifications it costs a fortune in out of work benefits. If things were picked up so much sooner all this could be avoided.
78. School ALN budgets need to be protected so when a school is making cuts, the most vulnerable aren't the first to miss out.
79. There needs to be accountability for LA/schools who discriminate and delay our children getting the full time education they are entitled to. The system of complaining to the school who is causing the harm must be changed. Parent/school relationships are key to the child's needs being met. The current complaint system seriously damages this and it's too complicated for parents to navigate.
80. The language used in referring to autistic people must be right. All research done shows autistic people overwhelmingly prefer identity first language. I'm autistic, I don't have autism. Using the right language gives a sense of security that they have up to date information and have consulted with autistic people.
81. Autistic children will need specific education to help them succeed in life too. Things like, knowing their rights and where to get help if they are violated. How to advocate for themselves. What DWP access to work programme can do for them? How to spot red flags in relationships? How to set boundaries. We are more vulnerable to abusive relationships so these things are crucial.
82. Adequate compulsory training that is created by ND people. Across Wales not just pockets of schools who decide to take it up.
83. Early intervention and believing parents first concerns.
84. A website for each LA that shows ALL available provision and parents can easily find out what they need. It seems to be a dark secret that they deliberately hide when they don't want to pay for what the child needs.

85. Schools to understand that all behaviour is communication. Discipline and punishment doesn't work for our kids. They need understanding and help to get through the big emotions they experience. They don't need to be made to feel shame when this happens. This would help all children not just ND.
86. To start listening to the parents. they need to realise how these children masks their emotions in school and really try to confirm themselves to 'normality' that they overwhelm themselves and leave it all explode when home in their comfort space where there is no judgement, just love and understanding, how they try their best to keep up with others in work that they stress themselves over every subject.
87. all neurodiverse children are being left floundering in mainstream education because teachers and teaching assistants lack the reasonable training and our issues are being swept under the rug because they seem functional in school.
88. If the ALN act is up to age 25 why do the education tribunal not deal with cases of discrimination ETC at college?
89. What impact assessment has been conducted on the deliverance of provisions and also early identification of ALN pupils if teachers are not aware of behaviours displayed by pupils with neurodivergence conditions.
90. How do policy change the behaviour of ALN pupils with current use of sanctions / detention?
91. Are WG advising schools that a separate behaviour policy should be implemented regarding ALN pupils punishments and ALL staff dealing with ALN pupils during this should be FULLY trained in pupils suspected disability.
92. the diagnosis process is the real problem and ignorance to scientific facts with the chemical imbalance and people aren't trained properly these days to keep up with the modern ways of life.
93. I've got many points but I'd say it would be great to mention what several other comments have said around the ALN provision given to training teachers on Initial Teacher Education courses. I was on a PGCE primary course during the 2021-2022 academic year and the only ALN content was the one day ALN conference which back then was online and we had 1 hour sessions on different ALN with guest speakers. That was it. I had to drop out of the course but that is a whole other story! Thankfully I now have an ASD diagnosis.
94. When I then studied the ALN module on my Masters degree, the majority of the newly qualified teachers on the module agreed that this ALN training was not sufficient.
95. I work with early years, (0-4) and parents struggle to find any one to speak to if they have concerns about their child's development. They are told to talk to GP who directs them to health visitor who may send them back to GP, and so the cycle begins. Generally they pay for private support, increasing the gap between haves and have nots! We need to be putting support in place asap for all children and their families, not waiting for school to identify, assess, bring in outside agencies etc.. we all know this can take years, which equals a failed child and family!
96. I know what a hard time my mum's cousin had with her son between these ages. Just felt she was getting no where with schools/professionals/local authority for years...really impacted on her wellbeing.
97. Why do the GP's tell you that the school have to refer? They won't refer though just 'monitor' which they don't even do that. That was my GP's response just last Sept? Even if you are lucky enough for a referral the wait is 4+ years. How can a child go through 8

years of primary without being picked up with adhd? Why are our children being left with low self esteem due to not receiving correct support at school, why are teachers just punishing when there is clearly an unmet learning need?

98. I worked in a nursery and had concerns over a child, (ALN/sensory) I was told to not say nothing, it's awful.
99. School is the wrong place to ask, it needs to be multi disciplined approach. They are underfunded and simply can't afford to have a child diagnosed with anything that would require money thrown at it. Hence the "we don't see that behaviour here" routine. Without more funding in schools for additional needs we will never get fair play for our children.
100. My Grandson who has adhd regularly misses breaks for fidgeting. He even has been slapped by one TA and told to shut up!
101. Why has the WG behaviour policy for schools not been updated for over 10 years and does not incorporate ALN pupils? <https://www.gov.wales/behaviour-management-classroom-guidance-secondary-schools>
102. My son today had isolation, missed his lunch completely, told he was not allowed to eat his lunchbox items, got 9 sanctions and is having detention for these again tomorrow during lunch? How many punishments are enough?
103. why does the definition of ALN in the new system still contain words like 'deficit' 'significantly greater difficulty' 'prevents' 'hinders' - it's very medical in it's focus - there has to be problems in the child themselves. It's not very social model when this system is meant to be moving to a social model of disability.
104. In terms of teacher training there should be refreshers linked to understanding behaviours needs and how to teach for and when teachers know they have these needs in their classes - cannot possibly cover all needs in one course what can end up being years before knowledge is practically needed.
105. The amount of times I've been back and forth the GP with my son since the age of 3. 'go to the school' the school sent me to the GP, and it then became a vicious circle. My son told me aged 4 he wanted to kill himself. I phoned CAMHS, they said he isn't priority. So I phoned my GP. They told me to look online for a link. He's 9 on Wednesday and we are currently on the pathway after fighting for it. He has no support in school. He the 'naughty' child as far as they are concerned.
106. All school staff need training in neurodiversity. All TAs need to be highly trained as they are the people often assigned to help ND children.
107. Teaching assistants need to be well paid or they will keep leaving the jobs. What is the average lifespan of a TAs employment?
108. Much more training for primary school teachers needed. I went through teacher training and did additional module in SEN and still didn't recognise ADHD in myself! Much more awareness needed particularly in how girls present. Would love to see some kind of basic screening at primary level so children have chance of support and being able to reach their full potential rather than struggling all the way through education.

P-06-1349 No '15' or whatever minute Cities or Towns in Wales without holding a public poll.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/5997-9

Petition Number: P-06-1349

Petition title: No '15' or whatever minute Cities or Towns in Wales without holding a public poll.

Text of petition:

Those who believe these 'fluffy words' are sealing your own fate if you believe this isn't imprisonment! Once the infrastructure (barriers, cameras, new warders etc) are in place and the fines start dropping through the door- THAT WILL BE TOO LATE!

The next stage of our enslavement takes place - Health IDs, digital currency, electric cars, electric homes all of which can be controlled be the flick of a switch. Stan Says:- Lipstick on a Pig. Make no mistake about it - Those who believe these 'fluffy words' are sealing your own fate if you believe this isn't imprisonment!

It may not have fences or prison bars YET but how do you move around (FREELY) when (AT FIRST) your Council creates these zones but fixes no penalties - AND MEARLY STATES 'It's only guidance'!!



I can see a whole raft of people going along with it - Saying 'See nothing to worry about!' Once the infrastructure (barriers, cameras, new warders etc) are in place and the fines start dropping through the door- THAT WILL BE TO LATE!

The best stage of our enslavement takes place - digital currency, electric cars, electric homes all of which can be controlled be the flick of a switch. Good Citizen heat, food and limited travel. Questioning Citizen..

Everyone needs to resist this totalitarianism no matter how fluffy and colourful the gumph is.

https://tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final_20mnguide-compressed.pdf

1. Background

The Town and Country Planning Association [sets out](#) that:

The idea of '20 minute neighbourhoods' – sometimes called by other names, such as '[15 minute cities](#)' – has been gaining momentum for several years and is already being implemented in places such as Melbourne and Paris.

The concept is to create neighbourhoods where people can meet their everyday needs within a short walk or cycle. [Sustrans](#) highlights that:

An important objective of the 20-minute neighbourhood concept is to better align spatial and urban planning (i.e. what is in an area) with transport planning (transport infrastructure), to make it easier for people to walk, cycle and use public transport.

News headlines and plans in Oxford

The concept recently made news headlines linked to plans in Oxford.

Oxford City Council is in the process of developing a new [Local Plan](#) (the English equivalent of a [Local Development Plan](#)). The Council has published [preferred options](#) for the new plan and has identified a series of 'overarching threads' – one

of which is the concept of a 15 minute city “ensuring that local residents have access to all their daily needs within a 15 minute walk of their home”.

At the same time as the City Council consulting on these plans, Oxfordshire County Council **agreed to trial** the use of ‘traffic filters’ to create **low traffic neighbourhoods** and prevent private cars entering certain parts of the city. This led to **speculation on social media** that the city would be divided into areas with physical barriers preventing people moving from one neighbourhood to another.

In response, the City and County Councils issued a **joint statement** to explain the policies and address the speculation.

Local governments in other English cities including **Bristol**, and **Sheffield** have also proposed introducing elements of a 15-minute city.

Planning policy in Wales

The concept in its own right is not currently an adopted national planning policy in Wales – however national planning policy places a focus on reducing car dependency and creating neighbourhoods where services are located closer to where people live.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW), the Welsh Government’s national planning policy, includes “**national sustainable placemaking outcomes**” which “should be used to inform the preparation of development plans and the assessment of development proposals”. These outcomes include that places are “accessible by means of active travel and public transport”, are “not car dependent” and have “community based facilities and services”.

2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Chair dated 9 August 2023, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change says:

...the Welsh Government has no plans to introduce ‘15-minute cities’ in Wales.

The Deputy Minister also highlights the **Wales Transport Strategy** (WTS). The WTS outlines the Welsh Government’s vision for an “accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system”. The strategy identifies three priorities to achieve this

vision, one of which is to “bring services to people in order to reduce the need to travel”.

However, in his letter the Deputy Minister suggests:

...this doesn't mean preventing travel, or restricting freedom, it means planning ahead for better physical and digital connectivity and supporting access to more local services - including more home and remote working.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In June 2022, Janet Finch-Saunders MS tabled a written question asking how the Welsh Government is embedding “the 20-minute neighbourhood concept into local and national planning policy”.

In her response the Minister for Climate Change highlighted that policies in PPW “promote the development of compact and walkable places as part of a wider commitment to placemaking”.

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.

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1349
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/01054/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

09 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 25 May enclosing P-06-1349. I am sorry for the delay in responding but I can confirm that the Welsh Government has no plans to introduce '15-minute cities' in Wales.

I also reject the premise of the petition, which is typical of the misinformation we see purported by groups like 'Voice of Wales'. 15-minute cities and 20-minute neighbourhoods are not about restricting freedoms, introducing surveillance, or controlling people's lives and there is not a shred of credible evidence to suggest otherwise.

Llwybr Newydd, our Wales Transport Strategy, talks about bringing services to people to reduce the need to travel. This doesn't mean preventing travel, or restricting freedom, it means planning ahead for better physical and digital connectivity and supporting access to more local services - including more home and remote working. It is about investing in sustainable transport, so that people can choose to walk, cycle, or use public transport for some journeys.

And it is about making the right thing to do, the easy thing to do – so that transport can play its part in delivering on our net zero commitments in Wales.

If you have any further questions, I would be very happy to address them.

Yours sincerely,

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

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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.

Re-open Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/5997-10

Petition Number: P-06-1350

Petition title: Re-open Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital now

Text of petition: We are devastated by Betsi Cadwaladr's decision to 'temporarily' close the inpatient ward at Tywyn Hospital. We want it reopened now.

The action to close this ward without any consultation or notice is premeditated and lacks transparency; it is a misappropriation of our community's public service.

Staff and patients were told on Thursday that they would be moved to Dolgellau hospital by Tuesday. No notice, no consultation, no discussion, no rationale.

If staff didn't want to move to Dolgellau they would not have a job. Tywyn is a new hospital which has excellent equipment and facilities. Our hospital has superb staff working there. Our relatives and friends have been provided with the best possible care you could wish for.

The health board have said that it is unable to recruit sufficient staff to fill posts. We want to see what evidence the health board have to show that they ever actively recruited staff for our hospital.

This hospital is a vital resource in our community.



1. Background

On 20 and 21 April 2023, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (UHB) published [articles on its website](#) stating that the Health Board had temporarily closed Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital and consolidated the beds at Dolgellau Hospital to ensure more robust nursing cover. The decision is said to have been made to protect the safety of the inpatients until sustainable levels of nurse staffing can be achieved.

An official from the Health Board quoted in the article stated:

We have been working hard to recruit new nurses from the surrounding area and from further afield to work at Tywyn Hospital for some time but have now exhausted all recruitment options. Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to recruit adequate numbers of nurses to provide safe nurse staffing levels across both Tywyn and Dolgellau Hospitals.

The Health Board official stressed that the closure of the ward is a temporary measure and the arrangements would be under regular review. The official went on to say that the Health Board was doing all it could to recruit to the nursing posts required to reopen the ward, and the process is likely to take several months.

The Health Board was said to be working with its Trade Union partners to explore how a small number of affected staff could be temporarily redeployed to support other health services in the local area that have not been impacted by the temporary ward closure.

Nurse recruitment and retention is currently a widespread issue. More information can be found in a [Senedd Research article](#) published in February 2023.

2. Welsh Government action

Correspondence from the Minister for Health and Social Services to the Petitions Committee on 26 June 2023 states that Betsi Cadwaladr UHB continues to pursue all possible avenues to recruit into the positions required to enable it to safely run inpatient services at both Tywyn and Dolgellau hospitals.

In the meantime, some staff have been redeployed temporarily to other service areas which has enabled some new service developments to be put in place to

support care closer to home and increase service capacity locally. Other staff have supported the development of a Treatment Room service at Tywyn Hospital.

The Minister is said to have been assured by the Health Board that it is working with its partners on an “innovative new model of service for Tywyn, which will draw on staff currently working in the community as well as staff who will be based at the hospital, all with the shared aim to restore the service that has been temporarily withdrawn at the hospital”.

The Minister highlights that this is an operational matter for the Health Board and one in which Welsh Ministers cannot intervene. The Minister attended a meeting with representatives from the Health Board, Tywyn Hospital Action Group and Tywyn Town Council on 12 May 2023, where the opportunity was provided to express any concerns and hear directly from the Health Board about its plans for the hospital.

The Health Board is also said to have assured the Minister that engagement has taken place with the new Citizen Voice Body, Llais, and that regular meetings are taking place with local councillors where progress around recruitment and service developments and opportunities are shared and discussed.

The Minister states in the correspondence that:

The health board continues to keep these arrangements under regular review and will continue in its efforts to recruit to vacancies so that inpatient services at Tywyn Hospital may be restored safely as soon as possible. The timescale for re-opening the inpatient ward at Tywyn Hospital will also remain under review and will be updated to reflect progress of the recruitment process.

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-06-1350
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/01476/23

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

petitions@senedd.wales

26 June 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 25 May on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding the decision taken by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to close temporarily the Dyfi inpatient ward at Tywyn Hospital.

The health board took the decision to close the ward due to the significant ongoing staffing challenges being experienced at both Tywyn and Dolgellau hospitals, which were impacting on its ability to maintain safe staffing levels across the two sites.

In order to ensure those needing inpatient hospital care can continue to receive the care they need in a safe clinical environment, the decision was taken to temporarily close the inpatient ward at Tywyn Hospital, and staffing and resources were consolidated at Dolgellau Hospital to enable the health board to maintain patient and staff safety at this time.

The health board continues to pursue all possible avenues to recruit into the positions required to enable it to safely run inpatient services at both sites. In the meantime, some staff have been redeployed temporarily to other service areas which has enabled some new service developments to be put in place to support care closer to home and increase service capacity locally. Other staff have supported the development of a Treatment Room service at Tywyn Hospital, which [opened](#) earlier this month and offers all types of wound care, ranging from basic dressing changes, leg ulcers to compression bandaging, and will evolve over time to offer many more treatments.

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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.

While I can appreciate this is concerning for staff and the local community, this is an operational matter for the health board, and one in which Welsh Ministers cannot intervene.

The health board has assured me it is working with its partners on an innovative new model of service for Tywyn, which will draw on staff currently working in the community as well as staff who will be based at the hospital, all with the shared aim to restore the service that has been temporarily withdrawn at the hospital.

I attended a meeting with representatives from the health board, Tywyn Hospital Action Group and Tywyn Town Council on 12 May, at which all members were provided the opportunity to express any concerns and hear directly from the health board about its plans for the hospital.

I have also been assured by the health board that engagement has taken place with the new Citizen Voice Body, Llais, and that regular meetings are taking place with local councillors where progress around recruitment and service developments and opportunities are shared and discussed.

The health board continues to keep these arrangements under regular review and will continue in its efforts to recruit to vacancies so that inpatient services at Tywyn Hospital may be restored safely as soon as possible. The timescale for re-opening the inpatient ward at Tywyn Hospital will also remain under review and will be updated to reflect progress of the recruitment process.

I hope this information is helpful in your consideration of the petition.

Yours sincerely,

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

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

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

P-06-1350 Reopen Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital now

Comments from the Tywyn Hospital Action Group

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board chose to close Dyfi ward at Tywyn hospital almost 5 months ago. Staff and the public were neither consulted nor given any notice.

No objective evidence of the rationale to close the ward has ever been provided by the health board, who are in special measures, or by the Minister for Health and Social Services. No meeting minutes have been provided recording how and why this decision was made to close Tywyn hospital.

In discussions with the hospital staff it became clear that options were available which would have led to the ward staying open while vacancies were filled. An argument was put forward by the health board to consolidate services at Dolgellau hospital, and to close the ward at Tywyn. The number of beds in the inpatients department at Tywyn is 16, which can easily be increased to 19 and more. In fact, there were spare beds ready and available to be used at Tywyn hospital. There is much more space between beds and overall in Tywyn than Dolgellau. There are far better more modern and up to date facilities at Tywyn, for example specialist modern bathing facilities and gas piped to beds. Indeed, if there was space in Dolgellau at the time of the closure of Tywyn, then the beds from Tywyn did not need to have been moved to Dolgellau. Staff, beds and equipment, have been redeployed from a purpose-built modern facility to a cottage hospital built in the 1920's. If staff were to be redeployed then it was feasible to be from Bangor to Alltwnen, Alltwnen to Dolgellau, Dolgellau to Tywyn - not the other way around.

It is likely that closing the ward in Tywyn was a pre-meditated strategy by the health board based on fragile finances, and we are not satisfied by any of the explanations given. The 'critical incident' mentioned as the reason for closure was created by the health board themselves and used as a spurious reason to close the ward at Tywyn, following a tactic used in the recent past by health boards in the UK. The health board did not take ownership of the continued mismanagement and downgrading of the staffing of the ward at Tywyn, never having staffed to levels to open all 16 beds, and then using the understaffing of the ward as an excuse to close it.

Our petition has collected over 5500 signatures, which represents over 70% of the population of Tywyn and district. The petition has enabled the public to share their concerns and shows how upset people are. The response has been huge. We now hope that the Senedd will lend its support in reopening the inpatients ward at Tywyn hospital so that the healthcare needs of the local population can be professionally met by a properly managed and principled health board not in special measures.

We will continue our campaign until the inpatient ward is fully open and our health services are provided. The cuts in health services between 2017 and 2023 for Tywyn are unacceptable and are shown on the attached chart.

This petition is about the inpatient hospital ward being closed. Instead of focusing on how and when the ward will be reopened, and demonstrating strategies to do so, the board continually attempts to divert public attention through promoting peripheral services they have 'opened': the minor injuries unit (MIU) which has lately reopened part time from 9 to 4 on Tuesdays to Thursdays; a 2 hour 'wellbeing' group once a month; a 'dressings clinic' Monday to Friday, and 'Tuag Adref', where patients are visited in their own homes instead of being cared for at the inpatient ward. Redeploying nursing staff from the inpatient ward to 'Tuag Adref', 'dressings clinic' and MIU, creates further vacancies on the ward. Two band 5 overseas staff have been recently appointed to Dolgellau hospital, when none have been appointed to Tywyn; to add to our consternation BCUHB continue to state that they are unable to appoint to the 3 band 5 posts they require to open the ward at Tywyn and have stated that 'the appointment of two overseas nurses to work in Dolgellau does not impact the staffing levels in Tywyn, and we await an update on the next cohort of overseas nurses and are hopeful that we may attract another 2 to work in Tywyn. We do not have any timescales for this at the moment but we continue to pursue this line of enquiry'. This demonstrates yet again that Dolgellau hospital is being prioritised over Tywyn. We have never had an explanation for this discrimination.

In a reply to the request for comments about the petition on the 26th June the Minister for Health and Social Services was wrong to say that engagement had taken place with Llais, the citizen's voice. I spoke to them for the first time, 22nd August. The minister also states that she cannot intervene with operational matters of the health board, which is in special measures, and yet she continues to promote the health board's stance, without any objectivity or informed analysis, stating that 'the health board continues to pursue all

possible avenues to recruit to the positions required'. If the minister is unable to intervene with matters such as this, then it is difficult to understand what her function is. The minister also stated in her address at the National Eisteddfod that the Tywyn Hospital Action Group themselves are preventing staff from coming to work here which is insulting to the members of the group bearing in mind the history of understaffing and is a direct attempt to deflect the situation that the health board and minister have created. A factor in making and appointing staff is said to be that taking up a position with a health board in special measures, with a reputation for closing hospitals is hardly attractive for health professionals seeking to progress their careers.

We want the Dyfi ward, for in patients of all ages, to be reopened now. We want our beds, nurses, clinics, doctors and staff back. We want the whole ward open. We want the generous offers of accommodation by locals to be taken up and rented by the health board, who promised to do so at the public meeting of 4th May. It now appears that the details of accommodation that were prepared, updated and sent through to the health board have not been shared with appointed staff; and yet the health board state that availability of accommodation is another reason which prevents staff from coming to work here. We are upset by the lack of transparency, the lack of services and the lack of respect for our community. This is our health service, it ought to be managed with integrity for the local people. Faith in the management of our services must be restored.

Your sincerely

Jane Barraclough

Tywyn Hospital Action Group

Comparison of 2017 and 2023 Community Healthcare Services

2017 data from Cyngor Gwynedd Scrutiny Committee and 2023 Community Healthcare Services from BCUHB

SERVICES	DOLGELLAU 2017	TYWYN 2017	TYWYN 2023
24 Hours Onsite Medical Cover	Yes	Yes (GP-COH)	No
24 Hours Nursing Cover	Yes	Yes	No
Minor Injuries Unit	Yes (8-5)	Yes (10-6)	9-4pm 3 days a week
Radiography Cover	Yes - daily	Yes - 7 days	Thursday mornings
Beds Available	Yes - 20	Yes - 10 now 16	No
Out Of hours Treatment Service	Yes	No - Dolgellau	No - Dolgellau
Emergencies	Yes	Yes	No
Inpatient Alcohol Detox	Yes	No	No
Integrated Midwifery Service	Yes	Yes	No
Diagnostic Ultrasound Service	Yes	No	No
Palliative Care	Yes	Yes	No - District nursing Dolgellau
Terminal Care	Yes	Yes	No - District nursing Dolgellau
Minor Surgery	Yes	Yes	No
Podiatry	Yes	Yes	Yes
Physiotherapy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Speech and Language Therapy	Yes	Yes	No
Occupational Therapy	Yes	Yes	Yes
24 Hours PB Monitoring	Yes	Yes	Yes
Event Monitoring	Yes	Yes	No
Community Paediatric Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community Dental Service	Yes	Yes	No
Video Conferencing Facility	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visiting Services			
General Surgery Clinic	Yes	Yes	No
Audiology Clinic	Yes		Yes
Healthy Hearts Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Continence Promotion Clinic	Yes	Yes	
Eye Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chest Clinic	Yes		
Rheumatology Clinic	Yes	Yes	No
CKD Nurse Clinic	Yes		No
Diabetic Retinopathy Clinic	Yes		Yes
Tele Medicine Clinic	Yes		No
Peads Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes monthly
Diabetic Nurse Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes monthly
Orthopaedic Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Orthoptist Clinic	Yes	Yes	Yes

22nd August 2023

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

Glan Eifion
Seaview
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Gwynedd LL49 9TP

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P-06-1350 Re-open Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital now

Dear Mr Sargeant,

The Tywyn Hospital Action Group has been informed by your Committee’s deputy clerk that their petition, as above, is to be considered by your committee on Monday 11 September.

The Tywyn Hospital Action Group has been asked to submit any final comments to your Committee by Midday, August 25th. They have asked the Community Hospitals Association if it would submit observations on the situation. We receive such requests from community hospital users across the UK not infrequently and we are pleased to make the following general observations and some comments specifically about Tywyn.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Closure of services to “protect patient safety” is the most common reason we hear for decisions by healthcare management to suspend or remove services. There are no definitive measurable standards for “safe staffing of community hospital wards” in the UK. The view expressed by management on patient safety standards is judgemental, based on the mix of patient’s pathways supported by the ward, on the technology available, on the proximity of the ward to other healthcare services and a host of other factors.

Although considerations of patient safety will always be a factor and will be considered carefully by healthcare management, our experience is that financial issues are invariably a significant consideration also. In many cases where services have been suspended in a community hospital, we have discovered that the financial status of the healthcare provider is fragile and that the search for financial “savings” has been helped by withdrawing community hospital services.

The withdrawal of “closer to home services” from a community hospital, invariably leads to more community ill-health, but this usually only becomes visible to the public sometime after the healthcare service withdrawal event, when a public health study reveals the deterioration that has occurred in patient outcomes.

Our advice to “community hospitals action groups” is to seek regular and intensive engagement with the healthcare service provider to seek to restore appropriate local population services. When difficulties of recruitment are postulated as a reason for staff non-availability, the community often has greater experience of solving staff recruitment challenges, and more time and determination to succeed, than the often overworked NHS HR department.

COMMENTS SPECIFICALLY ABOUT TYWYN.

As we understand it, and as is stated in the Tywyn petition, engagement between the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and the Tywyn community prior to the removal of in-patient services has been very limited. The Tywyn community action group feels that they had no prior warning and no opportunity to discuss alternatives at all.

Perusal of BCUHB Board papers indicates that the current financial status of BCUHB is “fragile” and that there is limited confidence expressed in the Board papers that the “savings” that will be derived from the various service reductions will meet the Board’s planned “savings” figures. The suspicion exists in the Tywyn area, that it is financially convenient to BCUHB, for the Board to leave a modern 16 bed unit closed and idle.

The Minister for Health and Social Services has recently reset BCUHB’s special measures targets. Her May 2023 progress report lists one key area as “operational delivery” and includes elimination of 156 week (3 year) RTT waits. She requests that the Board recommences an effective implementation of “planned care”.

To leave a modern 16 bed unit unused in this period of NHS service delivery crisis reflects adversely on BCUHB management. The closed ward in Tywyn hospital, in just the 18 weeks since its closure, has lost the NHS more than 1,700 potential bed days of quality care. From a “whole healthcare systems” perspective this is a significant loss of healthcare capacity and will have impeded efforts to reduce waiting lists etc.

The Dyfi ward in Tywyn hospital was examined by Healthcare Inspectorate Wales just prior to the pandemic and found to be contributing positively to meeting the healthcare needs of the area. That positive contribution is no more. Tywyn is part of the very small “De Meirionnydd Cluster”. The Cluster’s most recent plan, does recognise that some staff recruitment for the hospital should be a priority in the area, but the Cluster does not include specific plans to resolve any ward staff shortage.

CONCLUSION

The continued closure of the Dyfi Ward in Tywyn is not only the deprivation of a “care closer to home” service to the residents of the Dyfi area, but a huge waste of modern resource by BCUHB while the NHS faces crisis level waiting lists and a growing unhealthy population.

In our view, it should be a BCUHB priority to work closely with the Tywyn community to develop a constructive path to the reopening of the Dyfi ward, within a few weeks.

Yours sincerely

Tom Brooks

Committee Member for Wales
Community Hospitals Association

Llais Rhanbarth Gogledd Cymru
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Parc Menai, Bangor, LL57 4FH

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Eich llais mewn iechyd | Your voice in health
a gofal cymdeithasol | and social care

23rd August 2023

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair – Petitions Committee
BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Jack

Dyfi Ward – Tywyn Hospital

The Tywyn Hospital Action Group have advised me that their petition will be considered by your committee on 11th September and I have asked that I write in support of their concerns.

I note that the Health Minister has said that Llais has been engaged with on the closure. Whilst we were notified of the closure as an urgent service change on the grounds of patient safety, it would not be accurate to say that we were engaged with. Llais does not have the powers formerly held by CHCs in relation to service change. Nevertheless, we informed Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board that we regarded this as a temporary closure only, that any plans for closure would require extensive consultation/engagement that fully meets the requirements of NHS guidance on service change and also of Gunning principles. As a CHC we would have brought the matter back to the statutory Joint Services Planning Committee for review every twelve weeks. Unfortunately this committee no longer exists following the abolition of CHCs at the end of March 2023.

We are aware that the Action Group is concerned that the hospital will not reopen to inpatients again. Experience shows that this is a reasonable

Cyfarwyddwr Rhanbarthol | Regional Director: Geoff Ryall-Harvey

Cadeirydd | Chair: **Professor Medwin Hughes, DL**

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Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg. Os byddwch yn ysgrifennu atom yn Gymraeg, byddwn yn ateb yn Gymraeg. Ni fydd hyn yn arwain at oedi wrth ymateb i'ch gohebiaeth.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English. If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.

concern and that the longer a hospital is closed, the less likely it is to reopen. The budgetary stringency for NHS Wales recently announced by Welsh Government means that there will be considerable pressure to save money by leaving this 16-bed unit closed.

We are hearing of schemes to provide “*Hospital at Home*” for those patients who would normally go to Tywyn. The Minister describes these as proposals to “*support care closer to home and increase service capacity locally*” in her letter. You will well recall that this was part of the Flint Hospital closure plan (*similarly for Ffestiniog*). The hospitals were closed and the “*Hospital at Home*” schemes came and went. The reality is that inpatient care will inevitably be far from home.

It is certainly difficult to recruit nursing staff at this time but it is not impossible. Many rural communities have been able to attract nurses using imaginative schemes in conjunction with town councils and housing associations. The key is usually providing accommodation and early support to establish them in the community. Overseas nurses have been successfully recruited to Dolgellau Hospital.

We are planning to arrange a public meeting with local campaigners, locally elected representatives and key BCUHB managers in late September and we would like to present the findings and discussions to the Petitions Committee.

Regards



Geoff Ryall-Harvey

Regional Director – Llais North Wales

Cyfarwyddwr Rhanbarthol | Regional Director: Geoff Ryall-Harvey
Cadeirydd | Chair: **Professor Medwin Hughes, DL**
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We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English. If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.

Heart screening for all 11-35yr olds who play sport

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/6132/3

Petition Number: P-06-1351

Petition title: To bring in availability of heart-screening for all 11-35yr olds who play Sport.

Text of petition: Out of 269 sudden deaths in young people, 49 occurred in competitive athletes with undiagnosed heart conditions.

It is important to note that heart-screening has been compulsory in all teenagers and adults competing in athletic sports in Italy since 1982, with other European countries offering similar screening. Wales and the UK lacks sadly behind here. It would be good to see Wales taking the UK lead in this.

Based on our current ECG heart-screening sessions, we found that 1 in 4 screenings revealed the need for further investigation with an Echo Cardiogram.



1. Background

Cardiac (heart) screening

Screening examinations are **tests performed to find disease before symptoms begin**. The goal of screening is to detect disease at its earliest and more treatable stage. Cardiac screening is a diagnostic test used to detect and evaluate heart disease. All screening tests have the potential to cause harm as they carry **a risk of false results**.

Routine cardiac screening to detect an underlying cardiac condition is not provided by NHS Wales. Some charities such as [Calon Hearts](#) offer cardiac screenings for people aged 16 years and upwards.

The screening to diagnose cardiac abnormalities is done by having an **ECG (electrocardiogram) test**, which records the electrical activity of the heart. If a more detailed image is required, an ultrasound scan of the heart - an **echocardiogram**, is needed. From this, measurements are taken which give a guide to heart muscle thickness and the size of the chambers of the heart.

Cardiac screening policy in the UK

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises Ministers in the four UK countries about all aspects of population screening. **Unselected whole-population screening to prevent sudden cardiac death in 12 to 39-year-olds has been considered by the UK NSC and is not recommended.**

Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD) is the sudden and unexpected death of a person caused by a problem with their heart. The causes in people under the age of 39 are often a thickening of the heart muscle or an electrical problem with the heart. In older people, it is more likely to be caused by a narrowing of the blood vessels that supply the heart.

The UK NSC concluded the harms of whole-population screening for SCD **currently outweigh the benefits**. There are uncertainties about the overall benefits of identifying people with risk factors; current tests are not reliable enough (many people would be missed and provided with false reassurance, and many would be given false positive results), and there is currently no agreed treatment for someone who has been identified at risk.

The UK NSC has published an [evidence summary](#) setting out the evidence on which its current recommendation is based.

The latest review was completed by the UK NSC in December 2019 and the **next review** is estimated to be completed in 2023/24.

2. Welsh Government action

The letter from the Minister for Health and Social Services to the Petitions Committee on 7 August 2023 states that given that the UK NSC does not recommend whole-population screening for SCD for 12 to 39-year-olds due to the inaccuracy of current testing, **the Welsh Government cannot introduce screening for all those in this age group.**

The UK NSC keeps all its policy positions under regular review and the Minister notes that the Welsh Government would consider its position if these were subject to change.

The Minister states that population screening programmes **should only be offered where there is clear evidence that screening will do more good than harm.** The Minister says in the letter:

Population screening programmes generally can save lives through early risk identification but can also do harm by identifying risk factors that would never otherwise develop into a serious condition or complication. Screening programmes may have false negative results, so do not guarantee protection. Additionally, receiving a low risk result does not prevent the person from developing the condition at a later date.

For families of individuals who have suffered sudden cardiac death, the Minister advises that they should be offered individual clinical assessments to assess their risk. Additionally, young people who have symptoms or concerns, particularly if they are very physically active, should speak to their GP who will be able to advise them as appropriate.

3. Previous Petitions Committee action

The Committee considered petition [P-06-1197 'Heart screenings free for all 11-35 year olds who represent their school or county in sport'](#) in November 2021 and the petition was considered to be completed at its meeting on 24 January 2022.

The Committee agreed that there was little more the Committee could do to take the petition forward and referred to the guidance issued by the UK NSC that it does not recommend the screening called for in 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-06-1351
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/01912/23

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

7 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 11 July 2023 on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding availability of heart-screening for all 11-35-year-olds who play sport.

This issue has been raised by the Petitions Committee previously and the advice remains extant. Population screening programmes generally can save lives through early risk identification but can also do harm by identifying risk factors that would never otherwise develop into a serious condition or complication. Screening programmes may have false negative results, so do not guarantee protection. Additionally, receiving a low-risk result does not prevent the person from developing the condition at a later date. Population screening programmes should only be offered where there is robust, high-quality evidence that screening will do more good than harm.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises Ministers in the four UK countries about all aspects of population screening. It brings academic rigour and authority to what is an extremely complex area and is a world leader in its field. Unselected whole-population screening to prevent sudden cardiac death (SCD) in 12 to 39-year-olds has been considered by the UK NSC and is not recommended. This recommendation has not changed.

The UK NSC concluded the harms of whole-population screening for SCD currently outweigh the benefits. There are uncertainties about the overall benefits of identifying people with risk factors, current tests are not reliable enough (many people would be missed and provided with false reassurance, and many would be given false positive results) and there is currently no agreed treatment for someone who has been identified at

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

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

risk. If a person is incorrectly identified as being at risk, they may become anxious about their physical activity and stop exercising regularly or be excluded from participating in sports, which could have a negative effect on their overall health. It could also potentially affect their ability to get life insurance. The evidence has been comprehensively reviewed and below is a link to the UK NSC review and recommendation: <https://view-health-screening-recommendations.service.gov.uk/sudden-cardiac-death/>.

Given that the UK NSC does not recommend whole-population screening for SCD for 12 to 39-year-olds due to the inaccuracy of current testing, the Welsh Government cannot introduce screening for all those in this age group. The UK NSC keeps all its policy positions under regular review and as a Government we will consider our position if these were subject to change.

I fully support the need to address the preventable causes of SCD; however, there is a balance to strike in the provision of health information to the public to ensure proportionality and accessibility in the messages being provided, without creating unnecessary anxiety. At a population level, it is beneficial for young people not to be discouraged from cardiovascular exercise – the benefits of which are well established.

Although whole-population screening is not beneficial, families of individuals with SCD should be offered individual clinical assessments to assess their risk. This is 'cascade' case-finding in a higher-risk population rather than whole-population asymptomatic screening. Additionally, young people who have symptoms or concerns, particularly if they are very physically active, should speak to their GP who will be able to advise them as appropriate.

Welsh Government has worked in partnership with the Wales Cardiac Network, Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust and the third sector to develop the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Plan published in June 2017. The aim is to increase survival from out of hospital cardiac arrest through optimising the "chain of survival".

We established the Save a Life Cymru partnership in January 2019 to bring together all the different pieces of the jigsaw in relation to encouraging public participation in taking action when faced with an out of hospital cardiac arrest.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Eluned Morgan AS/MS

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



White House Cottage
The Cathedral Green
Ar Lan Yr Afon
Llandaff, Cardiff
CF5 2EB

30th August 2023

The Deputy Clerk
Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament

Dear Deputy Clerk

Thank you for the Welsh Government's consideration of our *Petitions' Committee regarding the availability of Heartscreening for all 11 to 35 year-olds in Wales who represent their school or county in sport.*

We thank Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services, for her comments on this petition. We would, however, respectfully challenge the Minister's annotations and conclusions, as follows:

As the Minister rightly commences by saying, population screening programmes do indeed save lives through early risk identification but then refers to the UK National Screening Committee's findings that screening programmes may also do harm by identifying risk factors that would never otherwise develop into a serious condition or complication. However, I would argue this statement and refer to the findings in the New England Medical Journal which, in summary, states:

Of 269 sudden deaths in young people, 49 occurred in competitive athletes. The most common causes of sudden death in athletes were arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy (22.4 percent), coronary atherosclerosis (18.4 percent), and anomalous origin of a coronary artery (12.2 percent). Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy caused only 1 sudden death among the athletes (2.0 percent) but caused 16 sudden deaths in the non athletes (7.3 percent). Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy was detected in 22 athletes (0.07 percent) at pre-participation screening and accounted for 3.5 percent of the cardiovascular reasons for disqualification. The results show that hypertrophic cardiomyopathy was an uncommon cause of death in these young competitive athletes and suggest that the identification and

disqualification of affected athletes at screening before participation in competitive sports may have prevented sudden death.

Also, it is important to note that heart screening has been compulsory in all teenagers and adults competing in athletic sports in Italy since 1982. Many other European countries offer similar cardiac screening programmes including France, Greece, Spain, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Poland. Professional bodies such as FIFA and the International Olympic Committee recommend cardiac screening for all their sportsmen and women. The American Heart Association and European Society of Cardiology have prepared guidelines to facilitate this.

We acknowledge the reference to the National Screening Committee work. However, their most recent relevant review was mainly a literature review and was looking at the whole population cohort of 12-39 yr olds. As most of the literature it reviewed, in fact, looked at athletes, the NSC had concerns about the applicability of the data to the asymptomatic general population of that group, hence the inability to recommend screening at general population level.

What the review did report as a result of this was the documented differences between the hearts of athletes and non-athlete; differences in ECG patterns between athletes and non-athletes, such as that a higher proportion of athletes show ECG changes such as T-wave inversion and early repolarisation, whilst a higher proportion of non-athletes have a long corrected QT interval. This, we argue, means that the recommendation for no-screening for this age group at population level cannot be simply read across to be pertinent to this smaller cohort of athletes.

Based on our current ECG heart-screening sessions, we found that 1 in 4 screenings revealed the need for further investigation with an Echo Cardiogram. Even accepting a percentage of false positives, we consider these odds too high to ignore. While there will be a period of anxiety between initial screening and a clean bill of health for some, the reassurance is worth that. We do not accept the argument that they may develop a condition later and, therefore, are falsely reassured. If anything, the screening may be an opportunity to educate and inform of long-term risks to further minimise the current fatality statistics which, at present, are growing when we look at the population overall. **Conversely, where a risk is identified, the individual and their family have the opportunity to consider how to manage it. The Minister's assertion that there is no agreed treatment and, therefore, there is effectively no point in finding out, is rather worrying.**

We concede that this targeted screening does not offer a solution to the incidence of false negatives. However, the issue identified by NSC across almost all studies was the lack of follow-up in individuals who were categorised as screen-test negative, and that itself undermines the usefulness of the NSC review. It confirms that an "assumption was seemingly made that these individuals did not have a disease that may cause Sudden Cardiac Arrest. As such, for these studies, there was no method to determine if these individuals actually had the target condition, although it is acknowledged that the detailed follow-up of screen-test negative individuals is challenging due to the range of tests required to exclude all conditions

that may cause sudden cardiac death. For the majority of studies, this lack of follow-up precluded calculation of key outcomes, namely sensitivity, specificity, and negative predictive value. A systematic review, which reported data from 47.137 athletes across 15 studies was included. However, examination of the primary studies included in the systematic review indicate that these studies were at high risk of bias due to inadequate follow-up of screen-negative individuals. On this basis, data from the systematic review must be interpreted with caution.”

As this effectively admits that the review does not help in terms of reliable evidence in support of the Welsh Government’s present position on this, **we suggest that a way forward would be to acquire its own Wales-specific evidence.** This could be done by commissioning a longitudinal study on the back of an appropriate period of screening of sportspeople in the cohort referred to in the petition.

3This would give the opportunity to track young sportspeople’s incidence of (a) false positive and false negative test results; (b) physiological changes which would produce positive results mean that they had to change behaviour to manage risk and, possibly, prompt screening for family members.

We would like to take the opportunity of informing the Welsh Government that Calon Heart Screening & Defibrillators is very proud to have recently launched a mobile Heartscreening initiative, supported with funding from Loteri Cymru, which we are taking around the whole of Wales. **To date, we have screened the hearts of nearly 15,000 people, distributed 29,000 defibrillators and trained nearly 95,000 people in CPR and defibrillator use.** We are a small, hard-working and dedicated Cardiff-based charity, surviving solely by fundraising. We receive no Welsh Government financial support whatsoever. We understand the financial implications of initiating a heart health programme of this sort but we ask that this measured against loss of life, families without loved ones and an ever-growing heart health pandemic. We would say it becomes immeasurable. We are doing our bit to combat the aforementioned tragedies and we merely ask our ministers to do the same.

We thank the Welsh Government for recognising the importance of defibrillators and for addressing this potentially life-saving issue.

We respectfully request that the Welsh Parliament considers the foregoing and ask that our Petition is favourably accepted and implemented.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Owen

**Sharon Owen
Charity and Fundraising Director
Calon Heart Screening & Defibrillators**

P-06-1351 To bring in availability of heart-screening for all 11-35yr olds who play Sport, Correspondence – British Heart Foundation to Committee, 05.09.23

I'm just writing to send some evidence on heart screening which I hope will be useful to the committee in considering the above petition.

It is true that sudden cardiac death has a devastating impact on families across the UK. Unfortunately, heart screening is far too inaccurate and not yet at a scientific level of precision to accurately predict the risk of sudden cardiac death.

The UK National Screening Committee currently recommends a targeted genetic testing of family members of people at risk of sudden cardiac death. Effective implementation of this guidance may help to prevent sudden cardiac death in some groups of people who are at high risk.

The BHF is always reviewing the evidence on heart screening and will continue to keep the Committee informed of any developments. But unfortunately at the moment heart screening is just too inaccurate.

I have attached a fact sheet on heart screening for your information..

All the best,

Gemma Roberts

—

Policy and Public Affairs Manager

British Heart Foundation Cymru



British Heart
Foundation
Cymru

Heart Screening Factsheet



What is heart screening?

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) explains screening as a process of identifying healthy people to assess if they have a particular condition.¹ Therefore, heart screening would be the process of identifying apparently healthy people to ascertain if they have an undiagnosed heart condition. However, with current technology, this is not yet completely accurate and heart screening in the general population is not recommended anywhere in the UK.

Heart screening is too inaccurate

Sudden death in the population from undetected heart conditions has a devastating impact on families and communities. It is therefore understandable that people believe screening is key in avoiding such a tragedy. However, it is important to recognise that screening is not yet at a scientific level of precision whereby all people at risk of sudden cardiac death can be accurately predicted. The 2019 report from the UK NSC on screening for cardiac conditions concluded that there is currently guidance on possible genetic testing family members at risk of sudden cardiac death. **However, conditions thought to be associated with sudden cardiac death do not meet the prevalence criterion for justifying a population screening programme for this condition.**²

In 2016, the British Medical Journal (BMJ) found that up to 5% of healthy people aged between 14–35 could be incorrectly suspected of having cardiac disease after screening whilst 25% of people with a condition would not be identified.³

Research from JAMA Internal Medicine studied 6861 middle-aged participants to examine whether echocardiographic (echo) screening in the general population improves long-term survival or reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease. The study ultimately concluded that screening did not reduce the risk of death.⁴

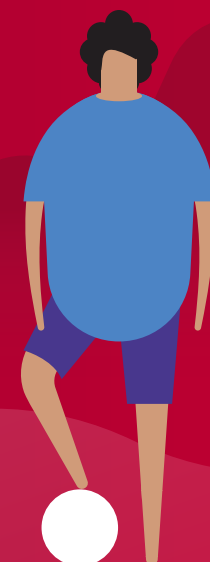
The UK National Screening Committee have concluded that several proposed ways of screening, such as electrocardiography (ECG), physical examination, family history analysis or a combination of approaches, on a large scale in the general population for cardiovascular disease, does not comply with the internationally recognised implementation criteria for screening programmes.⁵

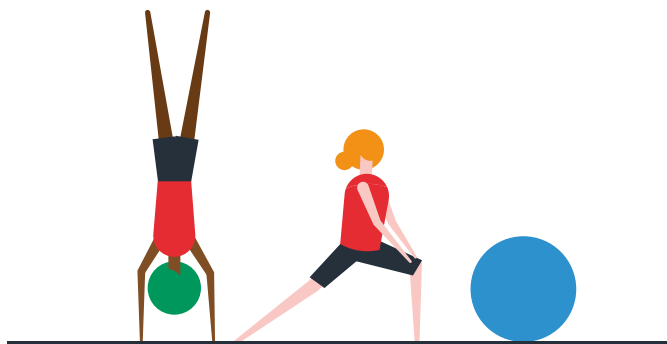
Case Study: The risks of heart screening in athletes

In young athletes, standard cardiovascular screening does not currently pick up most of the conditions that cause sudden cardiac death. Whilst signs of underlying risk of sudden death can be picked up by an echocardiogram (echo) or an electrocardiogram (ECG), this can be difficult to interpret, especially with young athletes who undergo different physiological changes that non athletes.⁶

Whilst sudden cardiac death is undoubtedly a tragic occurrence, it is necessary to understand the prevalence of the condition, which is one of the many factors considered in screening guidelines. The BMJ reported that only 4 out of 115 (3%) athletes that suffered from a sudden cardiac death and had a pre-participation medical evaluation were suspected of having a heart disease.⁷

A 26-year study in Minnesota by the Heart Rhythm Society found that in around 4.5 million athletes there were 13 incidences of sudden death and only 4 of these were attributable to disease that could be detectable by pre-participation screening.⁸





Heart screening can result in false positives which can ruin lives

The number of false positives related with screening tests such as the ECG is worryingly high. The 2019 report from the UK NSC found that screening for conditions associated with sudden cardiac death would cause many individuals to be incorrectly told they have a heart problem.⁹ This would ultimately lead to false positives in the UK population for cardiac conditions.

This is also true within other populations, according to the American Heart Association (AHA) the prevalence of sudden cardiac death in the USA population is low therefore heart screening will generate more false positives than true positives.¹⁰

The impacts of misdiagnoses can be huge. False positives associated with heart screening can result in secondary testing, meaning possible inappropriate medical treatment and psychological trauma. Other consequences include reduced employment opportunities, increased demand on secondary services and an impact on insurability.¹¹

The UK NSC does not recommend heart screening

Recommendations from the UK NSC on whether to screen for a condition are based on internationally recognised criteria and a rigorous evidence review process.¹²

The 2014 UK NSC *Screening for cardiac conditions associated with sudden cardiac death in the young* report did not recommend the screening of people under the age of 40 as it showed uncertainties surrounding number of people who have been gravely impacted by sudden cardiac death annually. The report concluded that there is currently no evidence to show that screening reduces the chance of a sudden cardiac death in the wider general population.¹³

The UK NSC considered new evidence in 2019 and once again recommended against screening of people for the detection of heart conditions. The report also demonstrates that such tests are not yet accurate enough to use on people to reduce the chance of sudden cardiac death.

The report also notes that both the American Heart Association and European Society of Cardiology do not currently support screening of the general population for sudden cardiac death.¹⁴

Recommendation

Welsh Government should continue to follow the guidance of the UK NSC relating to heart screening. The UK NSC currently states that there is guidance on genetic testing family members of people at risk of sudden cardiac death. Effective implementation of this guidance through a targeted screening programme may help prevent sudden cardiac death in some groups of people who are at high risk.¹⁵



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P-06-1352 Approve the construction of the third bridge over the Menai Strait.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/6132-4

Petition Number: P-06-1352

Petition title: Approve the construction of the third bridge over the Menai Strait.

Text of petition:

The Welsh Government's Road Review Panel has finally concluded that the Third Menai crossing should not be built due to concerns around Climate Change. Whilst we all understand and appreciate the issues surrounding the Climate, this decision is a huge blow for the residents of Anglesey and for anyone who regularly commutes across the Menai Strait.

The Third Menai Crossing has been a project proposal for many years with hope it would finally be built when the outcome of a consultation on the plans were published in 2018. However in 2021, this project (like other road projects in Wales) was frozen to be scrutinised by the Roads Review Panel.

Many arguments have been made about resilience, most recently during the recent closure of Menai Bridge which lasted 3 months, showing the nightmare of crossing Britannia Bridge with the increased traffic volumes, and should it have to close for any length of time then Menai Bridge certainly wouldn't be able to deal with the increased traffic volumes.



The review even stated that supporting the 3rd crossing would improve safety, resilience and active travel yet concluded the project shouldn't go ahead, which makes the decision even more confusing.

The construction of the Third Menai Crossing should be approved, doing so can be a great catalyst to Climate-friendly projects in the future.

1. Background

The Menai crossings are internationally significant infrastructure - part of the UK landbridge connecting Ireland to Europe. The A55 Britannia Bridge carries both rail and road traffic and is the only section of the A55 route which is single carriageway. The Menai Suspension Bridge provides another link between the mainland and Anglesey.

Plans for a third Menai crossing have been discussed since 2007 and the Welsh Government consulted on a number of options between December 2017 and March 2018. In October 2018 it announced its preferred option for a third crossing.

The December 2022 Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan project pipeline gave a start date of 2027 and an estimated delivery date of 2029/30 for the A55: third Menai crossing project.

Roads Review

In June 2021 the Deputy Minister for Climate Change announced that a roads review panel would be established to review planned Welsh Government road investments. The Deputy Minister announced a pause on all new road schemes while the existing pipeline of schemes was reviewed, except in cases where “there are currently diggers in the ground”.

The panel published its final report in February 2023 which included a number of scheme specific recommendations. The panel recommended the third Menai

crossing **should not proceed**. When questioned on the panel's recommendation **in Plenary**, the Deputy Minister said:

...At the moment, this is a £400 million scheme for which we do not have the funding. So, regardless of the recommendation in the review, it's a slightly academic point.

In response to the panel's findings the Welsh Government published a **new roads policy statement** and its **National Transport Delivery Plan** (NTDP) which sets out the schemes being taken forward.

Despite the panel's recommendation, the NTDP includes an action to "develop options to ensure the resilience of crossing the Menai Straights [in a way] that supports modal shift" and states that the Welsh Government has "asked the North Wales Transport Commission to make recommendations on how this is best achieved".

North Wales Transport Commission

The **North Wales Transport Commission** was established in March 2022 to make recommendations on creating an integrated transport system across North Wales. The Commission is chaired by Lord Burns who also chaired the **South East Wales Transport Commission** which considered alternatives to the M4 relief road.

As outlined, following the Roads Review the Welsh Government extended the Commission's remit to consider options for Menai.

The Commission published its **interim report** in June, and its final report is expected in the autumn. **Annex 1** of the interim report focuses on Menai and states:

... At this stage, and in keeping with our approach to make the infrastructure that is already available work better, it is the view of the Commission that the current bridges can be made more resilient, and we are looking at options that can achieve this.

Closure of the Menai Suspension Bridge

On 21 October 2022 the Menai Suspension Bridge was closed due to safety concerns. The Deputy Minister made a **Plenary statement on 25 October**. He explained that technical analysis following a 2019 Principal Inspection Report identified potential issues with the span hangers. Subsequent modelling

identified “serious risks” and the bridge was closed. This called in to question the resilience of the crossing, particularly in the event of the Britannia Bridge needing to close due to high winds.

The bridge reopened in February 2023.

In July 2023 a further programme of works on the bridge was announced. The work will see the bridge reduced to one lane between the hours of 7am and 7pm until summer 2025.

2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Chair dated 4 August 2023, the Deputy Minister refers to the work of the North Wales Transport Commission in considering options for Menai. He states that the Welsh Government’s response will be set out once the Commission publishes its final report.

3. Welsh Parliament action

Following the sudden closure of the Menai Suspension Bridge, the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee explored issues around maintenance and safety in a December 2022 scrutiny session with the Minister and Deputy Minister for Climate Change.

In March the CCEI Committee also scrutinised the Deputy Minister on the Roads Review following the publication of the panel’s final report. The Committee questioned the Deputy Minister on the decision to ask the North Wales Transport Commission to consider options for Menai.

The Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister also raised the issue in its July meeting focused on North Wales.

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

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

04 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 11 July regarding Petition P-06-1352 Approve the construction of the Third bridge over the Menai Strait.

When we published our [National Transport Delivery Plan](#) alongside the [Roads Review](#), we committed to develop options to ensure the resilience of crossing the Menai Straits in a way that supports modal shift, aligned to tests set out in Welsh Government's response to the review.

We have asked the North Wales Transport Commission to make recommendations on how this is best achieved and they published their [interim report](#) in June. Details for Menai can be found at Annex 1, page 34. I look forward to receiving the Commission's final report and recommendations later this year, which will include detailed consideration of options to improve the connections between Ynys Mon and Gwynedd. Following this, I will set out the Welsh Government's response.

With regards to the current works on the Menai Bridge, this second phase of work will see new permanent hangers installed, following a rigorous period of development and testing, as well as extensive paint work to the exterior of the bridge.

The start date has been chosen to minimise disruption over the summer holidays and work is expected to be completed the end of summer 2025 - ahead of the bridge's bicentenary in January 2026.

The programme of works will not mean full closure of the bridge and every effort is being made to minimise further disruption to communities on both sides of the bridge and we appreciate the patience they have shown.

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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 have published a list of frequently asked questions at [A5 Menai Bridge: frequently asked questions | GOV.WALES](#) and this will be updated regularly as the works progress.

Yours sincerely,

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

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

**P-06-1352 Approve the construction of the Third bridge over the Menai Strait –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 24.08.23**

Dear Clerk,

I would like to thank you for considering my petition to Approve the construction of the Third bridge over the Menai Strait for a discussion at the Petitions Committee and to also extend a thank you to the Deputy Minister for his response.

To begin, I would like to welcome his remarks about the improvements being made to Menai Bridge. These are much needed structural improvements that have been necessary for a very long time, and I am glad to see that work is finally starting on this. However, his response doesn't reference the period of closure that happened in October 2022, nor does it adequately respond to my petition as a whole.

My petition was very specific in that it is calling on the Welsh Government to approve the construction of the third Menai Crossing, as they promised countless times when the project received approval and a route was agreed. The Roads Review itself agreed that approving this project would improve safety, resilience and allow more provisions for active travel. Using Climate Change as the sole reason for cancelling any project is simply doesn't add up, especially when such projects can be catalysts in their own right to future climate-friendly proposals. We all agree that Climate Change needs to be addressed, but this does not and should not mean we can't use innovative solutions to tackle modern day problems.

Resilience is of course one of the main arguments used in support of a Third Crossing, and the resiliency improvements on Menai Bridge, as I mentioned earlier, are hugely welcomed, however this will not address the issue of what happens should Britannia Bridge have to close for any length of time, Menai Bridge will never be able to cope with this level of traffic. Current congestion levels across both bridges is the other factor at play. Nobody likes to be stuck in traffic, and the poor road designs that leads to either bridge is a major cause of the congestion levels seen on the two crossings.

A third crossing would have provided an effective way of not only eliminating the congestion across Britannia Bridge, but also could help to relieve much of the congestion across Menai Bridge and the surrounding areas of Porthaethwy and Upper Bangor, whilst also providing a brand-new connection to improve resiliency for those travelling between Ynys Môn and Gwynedd on a regular basis.

I also want to pay particular reference to the North Wales Transport Commission's report which the Minister referenced in his response. I do welcome the options being considered and I agree with the priorities of the commission, however some of the options being considered would very much require a Third Bridge to be built in some capacity. Provision for Active Travel across Britannia Bridge would be inappropriate without a Third Crossing to divert the A55 as it would be unsafe with the current traffic volumes. Increasing bus frequency would also be difficult without the additional capacity that a Third Bridge would inevitably release from the current crossings over the Menai.

We can use HS2 as an example in this regard where a new High-Speed rail network is being built to relieve congestion on the busy West Coast Mainline corridor and allowing more paths for local, regional and freight services whilst the faster traffic is diverted onto a new set of lines. This is exactly the model which a Third Crossing over the Menai can deliver by relieving the congestion the current Menai and Britannia Bridges are facing, allowing for more capacity for Active Travel by diverting the faster moving traffic.

I would love to see more Active Travel arrangements to connect Ynys Môn and Gwynedd, but by cancelling the Third Menai Crossing altogether, this really puts a question mark on many of these

proposals. I would also like to see a modal shift away from using personal transport to public transport, particularly towards rail travel, however this doesn't mean a Third Bridge shouldn't be built.

I understand the Roads Review Panel has also set out some conditions which road schemes should meet if they are to go ahead, and I would like to propose how a Third Menai Crossing can meet these:

- The scheme should minimise carbon emissions in construction.

We can refer back to HS2 and utilise some of the techniques adopted to build the Colne Valley Viaduct. The rail network can also be used to transport materials, and plenty of climate friendly construction techniques have been used on past projects that could be utilised.

- The scheme should not increase road capacity for cars.

Once a Third Bridge is built, Britannia Bridge could very easily be repurposed to solely be used for Active Travel and Public Transport. There would inevitably be some capacity increase, although this would not necessarily mean more cars will be on the road if a Third Bridge was built.

- The scheme should not lead to higher vehicle speeds that increase emissions.

By imposing a 50mph speed limit on the bridge, vehicle speeds would be no higher than the current allowed speeds on Britannia Bridge, although the reduced congestion would likely lead to lower emissions overall as vehicles wouldn't be idling for lengthy periods of time and journey times across the Menai Strait would be decreased as a result.

- The scheme should not adversely affect ecologically valuable sites.

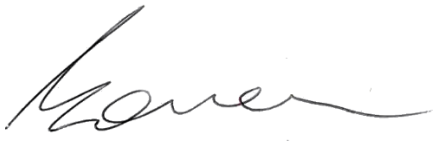
Whilst I'm not entirely sure what the impact on any ecologically valuable sites in the area would be, this could also be minimised if planned accordingly.

Given the overall benefits a Third Crossing can and would bring, I would like to know whether any solutions to the conditions outlined in the Roads Review Panel were investigated at length.

Whilst he is well intentioned, I believe the Minister has made a grave mistake in cancelling the Third Menai Crossing outright. I, therefore, urge the Minister to look more broadly at this scheme and consider more widely about approving its construction. I agree with his priorities to improve Active Travel and would like to see a bigger shift towards Public Transport, particularly through rail travel, but we need to look more constructively at this project than to simply say it should not go ahead.

I would like to once again thank the Petitions Committee on considering my petition for a discussion in the upcoming meeting on September the 11th and I'm personally looking forward to watching this. Please let me know if there is any more information I may need to provide and I will endeavour to return any correspondence at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

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

Emyr Owen

P-06-1354: The Welsh Government should support greyhound racing in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/6132-6

Petition Number: P-06-1354

Petition title: The Welsh Government should support greyhound racing in Wales

Text of petition: The Welsh Government are currently considering banning greyhound racing in Wales.

This potential ban has been brought on through a petition submitted by a charity. I believe the information used to create that petition was not factually correct and that they used massively inflated figures on the number of injured greyhounds with no supporting evidence. The charity has been asked for evidence on multiple occasions but refused. The petition gained 35k signatures but less than 19k of these signatures came from within Wales.

Banning greyhound racing would have an economic impact on individuals involved in the industry. There would also be a direct impact on the Valleys Stadium, and the medium and long term development of the Ystrad Mynach area.

There would also be a negative impact on the greyhound breed.

Valley Greyhound Stadium is currently in the process of becoming a GBGB registered track.



All tracks licensed by GBGB must adhere to the regulator's Rules of Racing which seek to uphold the very highest standards of greyhound welfare and integrity. There are over 200 rules covering all aspects of how the sport is run and regulated including how greyhounds are cared for when they are at the track, at home in their trainer's residential kennels, when being transported and into their retirement.

The Senedd currently has a cross party group to support horse racing in Wales, we ask that the same support is shown for greyhound racing.

1. Background

1.1. The greyhound track in Wales

Wales has one, privately owned, greyhound track, the Valley Greyhound Stadium, Ystrad Mynach, which typically holds weekly races.

The Valley Stadium is one of three independent race tracks in the UK, which are licensed by the local authority. A further 19 race tracks are licensed by the Greyhound Board for Great Britain (GBGB). GBGB tracks have additional rules designed to protect the animals' welfare (such as the presence of veterinary surgeons). In 2022, GBGB published a new strategic vision to "further promote and protect welfare across all stages of a greyhound's life".

The Valley Stadium track was acquired by Dave Barclay in November 2021. The intention is to run the track as a GBGB licensed racing track and for it to be licensed by January 2024. The stadium is undergoing development for it to be used as a GBGB racetrack. It plans to increase racing to four times per week. Planning permission has recently been granted to the Valley Stadium to extend its clubhouse for more hospitality and veterinary facilities.

The Petitions Committee has previously heard that although registration under GBGB industry standards is likely to result in improved welfare standards, welfare organisations are concerned the increase in the number of races may result in a rise in the number of surplus dogs and injuries.

1.2. Regulation

The *Animal Welfare Act 2006* (the 2006 Act) includes general animal welfare provisions. The 2006 Act allows action to be taken where there is evidence of cruelty to an animal or a failure to provide for an animal's welfare needs. These provisions could apply where greyhounds are at tracks or kept at trainers' kennels.

Section 13 of the 2006 Act provides the Welsh Ministers with powers to introduce licensing schemes to protect animal welfare.

In England, regulations have been made by the Secretary of State under Section 13 of the 2006 Act; *The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010*. These aim to protect racing greyhounds in England and provide that all operators of greyhound racing tracks must obtain a licence.

There are currently no specific legal protections for racing greyhounds in Wales.

Keepers of greyhounds are required to comply with the *Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007*. It is an offence to transport any animal in a way which causes, or is likely to cause, injury or unnecessary suffering to that animal.

1.3. Stakeholders' views

In September 2022 a number of animal welfare organisations - Dogs Trust, RSPCA, Blue Cross, Hope Rescue and Greyhound Rescue Wales - launched *Cut the Chase*, a new campaign to ban greyhound racing in the UK. They hope that Wales will set the lead for the other UK nations to follow.

The Senedd petition *P-06-1253 "Ban greyhound racing in Wales"* was considered by the Petitions Committee in 2022/23. The Committee collected evidence from animal welfare groups. A representative from Hope Rescue said:

Based on GBGB's own statistics for 2021, we're likely to see around 232 injuries if Valley goes ahead and becomes a GBGB track, and around 10 to 15 deaths every year. Now, that's a huge leap from the figures we're currently seeing at Valley.

The Committee also took evidence from the Valley Stadium, GBGB and Premier Greyhound Racing representatives. The former owner of the Valley Stadium, Malcolm Tams, said Hope Rescue's statistics were unfounded. He said:

We've been inspected by Caerphilly council eight times in the last 12 months, and the report is in here—they found nothing wrong with the track whatsoever. They brought an independent vet who inspected all the greyhounds and found them to be in good welfare conditions, totally in contrast to what was said by Hope—totally.

Caerphilly Council published [a masterplan for Ystrad Mynach](#) in 2019. With regards to the Valley Stadium it states:

It is ideally located to capitalise on the many visitors to the area and there is opportunity to expand and increase the potential of the site as a tourism destination. Furthermore, there is opportunity for spin-off between this site and potential hotel and restaurant development on adjacent land.

2. Welsh Government action

[In response to the Committee's report](#) on the petition P-06-1253 “Ban greyhound racing in Wales”, the Minister for Rural Affairs, Trefnydd and North Wales, Lesley Griffiths (‘the Minister’), said:

We intend to consult on proposals for the licensing of activities involving animals later this year [2023]. The consultation will also seek views on how to improve the welfare of racing greyhounds in Wales.

...

A question considering a phased ban will be included in the consultation. The outcome of the consultation and what action will be taken cannot be pre-empted.

The Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW) / Welsh Government [Voluntary Code of Practice for the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds](#) explains what keepers of racing greyhounds must do to meet the standards of care the law requires.

The AWW / Welsh Government [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs](#) applies to all dogs, including greyhounds. The Code is intended to encourage all those who are responsible for dogs to adopt the highest standards.

3. Welsh Parliament action

As discussed, the Petitions Committee considered the petition [P-06-1253 “Ban greyhound racing in Wales”](#). The Committee collected evidence and concluded in [its report](#) (December 2022):

After considering the evidence from animal charities and the industry, including the steps already taken and planned to improve animal welfare, our majority conclusion is to support the growing calls for a ban on greyhound racing in Wales.

While one Member had concerns about supporting a ban, we are all agreed that the Welsh Government should consider all options when consulting on future arrangements, to ensure that the welfare of greyhounds is paramount – at all stages of their lives.

The Senedd held a debate on this petition in [Plenary on 8 March 2023](#). The Minister responded to the debate:

I have committed to consult on proposals, which will include seeking views on licensing and prohibiting greyhound racing in Wales. We will explore all options and we will take into account the views of the public and all stakeholders. Whilst discussions around an outright ban are necessary and of course will attract headlines, it is imperative that we approach the topic in a reasoned and appropriate way.

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.

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1354
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00391/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee

8 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 11 July regarding Petition P-06-1354 – The Government Should Support Greyhound Racing in Wales.

Animal welfare is a priority for the Welsh Government. During this Government's term of office, we will introduce a broad range of policies to maintain the momentum of reform in animal welfare established since devolution of the relevant powers.

Our Animal Welfare Plan sets out the improvements we will make in Wales. It focuses on high standards, the adoption and sharing of best practice, engagement with key stakeholders, promotion of responsible ownership, and the development of effective enforcement.

Following the Petitions Committee's report to the petition calling for a ban of greyhound racing in Wales and the subsequent debate in the Senedd in March, I have committed to consulting on this issue before the end of the year.

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd

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

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

Hold a referendum seeking approval from the people to increase Assembly members by 36

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/6132/7

Petition Number: P-06-1355

Petition title: Hold a referendum seeking approval from the people to increase Senedd members by 36

Text of petition: While many are struggling to feed and heat themselves, politicians in Cardiff Bay are demanding that we taxpayers fund an extra 36 expensive Senedd Members, their additional staff and associated trappings of power.



1. Background

Since 2004, a series of reports have recommended that the size of the Senedd should increase from its current size of 60 Members.

The Wales Act 2017 gave the Senedd powers over its size and electoral arrangements without requiring a referendum. Any Bill introduced on Senedd Reform requires a supermajority (40 of the Senedd's 60 Members) to pass.

Section 64 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 gives the Welsh Government the power to hold a poll to ascertain the views of the people of Wales relating to functions of the Welsh Ministers. This is not a mechanism for a direct vote or direct referendum on a particular proposal.

1.1. Expert Panel on Electoral Reform

In February 2017, the Llywydd and Assembly Commission appointed an Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform to examine whether the Assembly needed more members to fulfil its scrutiny and legislative functions.

The Expert Panel recommended that the Assembly increase in size to at “least 80, and preferably closer to 90, Members”. It found that a 60 Member legislature was small compared to most similar legislatures, and that Members' time was severely limited due to a lack of capacity.

1.2. Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform

The Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform (CSER) was established to examine the findings of the Expert Panel, and to look at options for Senedd reform. The Committee published its findings in September 2020.

It recommended that the Senedd should increase in size to between 80 and 90 Members with effect from the 2026 election. It also recommended that the Single-transferable vote (STV) electoral system be used. The Conservative Party did not put forward a Member for the Committee. The Committee was also disrupted by Brexit Party Member, David Rowlands, resigning before it had concluded its work, as well as by the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.3. Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform

The Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform was established in October 2021, tasked with making recommendations for policy instructions for a Welsh Government Bill on Senedd reform.

The Special Purpose Committee recommended that the Senedd increase in size to 96 Members. It recommended that a closed list proportional representation system be introduced, and 16 new constituencies be created by pairing together existing UK Parliamentary constituencies. The Committee also said the new Senedd should include gender quotas, improved measures around collecting candidate diversity data and procedures for job sharing.

The Conservative representative on the Committee resigned before the Committee's report was agreed. Some of the key recommendations were agreed by a majority on the Committee but not by all Members.

2. Welsh Government action

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, and the leader of Plaid Cymru, Adam Price, issued a joint statement on 10 May 2022, arguing that the Senedd should have 96 Members and should be elected using a closed list proportional system.

In the Welsh Government's response to this petition, the First Minister said:

"A commitment to Senedd reform was included in the manifestos of Welsh Labour, Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Liberal Democrat political parties at the 2021 Senedd election.

The Wales Act 2017 devolved powers in relation to Senedd elections, including the electoral system, conduct, franchise and registration. This included power for the Senedd to legislate to change its size, and without requirement for a referendum.

Similarly, a referendum has not been required in the reduction of Wales's MPs from 40 to 32, as a result of boundary reform changes being introduced in Westminster. [...]

A clear and compelling case for Senedd reform has been repeatedly made in a series of expert panel and commission reports. [...] The roles and responsibilities of the Senedd have grown considerably [since its creation in 1999]. The Senedd now makes laws, sets taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account in some of the areas which have the greatest impact on people's lives.

It is essential that it is appropriately sized to be able to effectively carry out its scrutiny functions and hold the Government to account."

As part of its upcoming legislative programme, the Welsh Government has announced that a Senedd reform Bill will be introduced in the autumn. A separate Bill will be brought forward to introduce gender quotas for candidates for election to the Senedd.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Senedd debated the Special Purpose Committee's report on 8 June 2022. The Chair of the Committee, Huw Irranca-Davies, said:

"there is no one single unadulterated perfect package of electoral reform that will satisfy everyone. [...] Our committee set out [...] to find proposals that must win support across the whole Senedd, not to seek some vision of perfection, and thereby sacrifice practicality and delivery by 2026."

Mr Irranca-Davies said that the Senedd needed more capacity to meet additional responsibilities taken on since the Assembly was first established in 1999. These include primary law-making powers, tax-varying and borrowing powers, additional work created as powers return from the EU post-Brexit, heightened public awareness of the Senedd's responsibilities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the "not-unrealistic potential of additional future responsibilities".

Shadow Minister for Constitution, Darren Millar, criticised the proposals, arguing that it was not the right time for an increase in the size of the Senedd. Plaid Cymru's then spokesperson for the constitution, Rhys ab Owen, argued that a larger Senedd was necessary to "scrutinise the Welsh Government more effectively and more efficiently".

The Senedd **voted in favour** of the motion to accept the recommendations of the Special Purpose Committee's report, with 40 Members voting for the proposals and 14 voting against. This met the requirements for a 'supermajority' of two thirds of the Senedd to allow a Bill on Senedd reform to be introduced.

The Senedd will scrutinise the upcoming Senedd reform Bill, which is expected to be introduced early in the autumn term.

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-06-1355
Ein cyf/Our ref FM -/00393/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair
Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
petitions@senedd.wales

22 August 2023

Dear Jack,

I am writing regarding petition P-06-1355 to “Hold a referendum seeking approval from the people to increase Assembly Members by 36”.

A commitment to Senedd reform was included in the manifestos of Welsh Labour, Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Liberal Democrat political parties at the 2021 Senedd election.

The Wales Act 2017 devolved powers in relation to Senedd elections, including the electoral system, conduct, franchise and registration. This included power for the Senedd to legislate to change its size, and without requirement for a referendum to take place prior to the use of such power.¹ Similarly, a referendum has not been required in the reduction of Wales’s MPs from 40 to 32, as a result of boundary reform changes being introduced in Westminster.

A clear and compelling case for Senedd reform has been repeatedly made in a series of expert panel and commission reports. In 2004, the Richards Commission ([Report of the Commission on the Powers and Electoral Arrangements of the National Assembly for Wales](#)) concluded that maintaining the status quo was not an option and recommended a change in membership and electoral system.

In 2017, the [Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform](#) (the McAllister Report) made recommendations about the size of the Senedd and how Members should be elected. Its recommendations were subsequently considered by the [Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform](#), which reported in September 2020, and concluded that there was clear and compelling evidence that the Senedd is too small. The committee outlined that the majority


¹ By contrast s.A1(3) of GoWA, also inserted by the Wales Act 2017, includes explicit provision that the Senedd (and Welsh Government) cannot be abolished without a referendum.

of the evidence it had heard “expressed concern over whether a 60-member Senedd has sufficient capacity to fulfil its responsibilities effectively”.

The Senedd’s Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform published its report [*Reforming our Senedd: A stronger voice for the people of Wales*](#) in May 2022. Among its 31 recommendations, was the recommendation that the Senedd should have 96 Members.

The Senedd is the smallest of all the devolved legislatures in the UK and has remained the same size since the establishment of the National Assembly in 1999. The National Assembly, at that time, had no primary law-making powers and was not formally separated from the Welsh Government. The roles and responsibilities of the Senedd have grown considerably. The Senedd now makes laws, sets taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account in some of the areas which have the greatest impact on people’s lives. It makes decisions which affect the lives of every single person in Wales. It is essential that it is appropriately sized to be able to effectively carry out its scrutiny functions and hold the Government to account.

Investing in our democracy has a cost attached to it. The Welsh Government will publish detailed cost estimates alongside the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill. Members of the Senedd and the public will have an opportunity to consider both the detail of the legislation and associated costs when the Bill is introduced early in the autumn term.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD

P-06-1356 Introduce comprehensive safety measures at the A477 'Fingerpost' junction.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
Petitions Committee | 11 September 2023

Reference: SR23/6132

Petition Number: P-06-1356

Petition title: Introduce comprehensive safety measures at the A477 'Fingerpost' junction.

Text of petition: On Saturday 13 May 2023 Ashley Thomas Rogers tragically lost his life at the A477 'Fingerpost' junction travelling towards Pembroke. His death marked the third fatality on that stretch of road within the space of 12 years. Further, there have been innumerable near misses on what is known locally as a 'black spot' for road traffic accidents. Enough is enough. This petition calls upon the Welsh Government to do the right thing and prioritise human life over trivial budgeting pressure.



1. Background

The A477 fingerpost junction is the junction of the A477 with the A4075 turning for Pembroke.

Ashley Rogers, a 29 year old motorcyclist, lost his life on the morning of 13 May while travelling to work. The petition indicates that Mr Rogers is the third motorcyclist to be killed at the junction in 12 years. The letter from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change to the Chair also makes reference to further “collisions and near misses” at the junction.

The junction has long been a focus of calls for action on road safety. Steps to improve it were announced in 2012 following calls from the community and local politicians. Improvement works were completed in 2014, and were subject to subsequent Road Safety Audits..

However, calls for further action have continued since, including an earlier petition submitted in 2016 calling for construction of a roundabout (below).

The A477 trunk road is the responsibility of the Welsh Government and the South Wales Trunk Road Agent (SWTRA) – one of two agents which manage the Welsh trunk road on the Welsh Government’s behalf. The A4075 is a local road and is the responsibility of Pembrokeshire County Council.

2. Welsh Government policy and action

Currently speed limits on Welsh roads other than motorways are set using guidance published in 2009 known as Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales. The Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy, published in 2021, commits to review the approach to setting speed limits. The Welsh Government website makes clear that the guidance is being revised in light of its 20mph speed limit policy and “will take in to account policies such as Net Zero Wales and the Wales Transport Strategy”.

The Welsh Government published its Road Safety Framework in 2013. This set three targets to improve road safety so that by 2020, compared to the baseline average for 2004-2008, there would be:

- 40% fewer people killed and seriously injured on Welsh roads;
- 25% fewer motorcyclists killed and seriously injured on Welsh roads; and

- 40% fewer young people (aged 16-24) killed and seriously injured on Welsh roads.

The Welsh Government's statistical release on [police recorded road accidents 2020](#) (published 2021) described progress towards the three targets. This notes the likely impact of Covid-19 in lowering accident rates below what they would have been had the pandemic not occurred. Therefore, it considers average data for the period 2016-2019 in assessing progress, concluding that the target for total killed and seriously injured and for young people have been exceeded. However, "relatively little progress has been made towards the motorcyclists target".

The road safety framework was reviewed in 2018. The current [National Transport Delivery Plan](#) commits to:

... review our road safety framework to support our Vision Zero approach to road safety, based on the belief that no death or serious injury is acceptable on roads. This will support the delivery of our legal obligations on accessibility and safety as a highways authority and complement our work on active travel, road space reallocation and speed limits.

The timescale for the update is given as "2022 to 2024".

The final report of the Welsh Government's roads review panel was published in February. Its conclusions and the Welsh Government response [are summarised in this Senedd Research article](#).

The Welsh Government generally accepted the reports recommendations, including the two headline recommendations to establish a new set of purposes and conditions for future road investment. These have been included in its new [Roads Policy Statement](#).

The future purposes for road building will be limited to supporting modal shift, climate adaptation, supporting sustainable access to economic development sites, and to "improve [road] safety through small-scale changes".

The Deputy Minister's letter to the Chair says a report investigating collisions and near misses at the fingerpost junction has been produced by the Welsh Government and SWTRA. They have "committed to a programme of short and medium term measures at the junction in 2023/24".

In the short-term, SWTRA will implement signage / road marking changes and "possible minor junction layout changes" along with u-turn prohibitions. In the

medium term, the Deputy Minister says they will “assess the suitability and enforcement requirements of a speed restriction on this section and provide a business case for the introduction of traffic signals”.

The letter references both the review of speed limit guidance and the roads review. With regard to the roads review, it says:

Currently, the intention is to introduce small scale changes before committing to larger engineering measures so as to minimise future land take for highways, minimise carbon emissions, encourage modal shift and reduce dependency on the private car.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Petitions Committee considered a petition calling for a “roundabout for the A477/A4075 junction” between January 2016 and January 2020. This noted that “the current road configuration has not resolved the problems on this dangerous stretch of road”.

Committee correspondence with the Welsh Government highlighted an extensive Road Safety Audit undertaken following the 2012-14 junction improvement works. At the time, the Petitions Committee agreed to close the petition as “the junction is currently being actively reviewed”.

Mr Rogers’ death has been raised on a number of occasions in plenary by Sam Kurtz MS on 16 May, 6 June and 5 July. The Deputy Minister’s response to the question on 5 July sheds further light on the detail of the issues at the junction, the action taken in response and the implications of the roads review report:

In terms of the specific area that Sam Kurtz highlights, the Nash Fingerpost junction on the A477, the Welsh Government and the trunk road agents have investigated collisions and near misses at the site. Their study included CCTV monitoring, which captured driver behaviour and sought to establish if there were any issues with the junction's operation, as it is a standard-constructed junction. It was found, as part of the monitoring, that there are some instances of large vehicles blocking visibility, there are some vehicles using the junction for u-turns, and some vehicles are so-called overshooting the junction—that is to say they are turning right from the A4075 but stopping within the A477

westbound lane. The study has recommended infrastructure changes and is further investigating options.

In terms of the broader corridor, the roads review looked in detail at schemes to address safety. It strongly said that we should be looking at individual instances, and dealing with those, and that one of the main tools at our disposal was in fact lowering speed limits, rather than making engineering changes as a default. That, of course, has the advantage of being able to be done quickly, to be done cheaply, and with minimal carbon impact. That is now very much part of the suite of approaches we take to tackling areas of road safety, and I'll be happy to keep the Member up to date with the progress that we make with our studies.

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-06-1356
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/01413/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

02 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 11 July regarding Petition P-06-1356 Introduce comprehensive safety measures at the A477 'Fingerpost' junction.

I was extremely saddened to hear about the death of Mr Rogers and my thoughts and sympathies go out to his family.

A report has been undertaken by the Welsh Government and its South Wales Trunk Road Agent (SWTRA) to investigate collisions and near misses that have been reported at this site. We have committed to a programme of short and medium term measures at the junction in 2023/24.

SWTRA have been instructed to introduce the following short-term measures at the earliest opportunity.

- Signing, road markings and possible minor junction layout changes for enhanced visibility.
- The introduction of U-turn prohibitions at the junction.

Following a request by the Welsh Government, SWTRA has erected a number of "Ride Safely" signs in the vicinity of the junction. We have shared the design of these signs with Pembrokeshire County Council so that they can also be considered for the A4075 which they are responsible for.

In the medium term and following a period of monitoring, we will assess the suitability and enforcement requirements of a speed restriction on this section and provide a business case for the introduction of traffic signals.

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.

We are currently preparing new guidance on speed limit setting in Wales, which could help deal with inappropriate speed at isolated hazards such as junctions, but which the current guidance does not cover.

All future road schemes in Wales must be considered in line with the Roads Review report recommendations. Currently, the intention is to introduce small scale changes before committing to larger engineering measures so as to minimise future land take for highways, minimise carbon emissions, encourage modal shift and reduce dependency on the private car.

Yours sincerely,

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

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

**P-06-1356 Introduce comprehensive safety measures at the A477
'Fingerpost' junction - Correspondence form the Petitioner to Committee,
24.08.23**

THOUGHTS ON THE DOCUMENT

I have not been furnished with a copy of the letter referred to by Mr Waters dated 11 July 2023 - please provide a copy of that letter in early course.

The document itself is disappointingly political in parts.

Though it is appreciated that Mr Waters holds the position of Deputy Minister for Climate Change, the wording of the petition was very specific in stating that the Welsh Government should ***'prioritise human life over trivial budgeting pressure.***

I am in agreement that the climate is an increasingly prevalent issue in modern society but, as with budgeting considerations, the preservation of human life must supersede the relatively trivial short term output in emissions that would accompany the implementation of long term safety measures at the A477 junction.

DOES THE DOCUMENT ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THE ISSUES RAISED

- *Positives*

- o I am pleased that a report has been commissioned in response to the actions taken by myself and the many others who have supported the petition.
- o Though I do not feel that they go far enough, I am pleased to hear that there have been some soft measures introduced in a bid to improve the situation.
- o I am strongly in support of the introduction of traffic signals, with the caveat that this is only ***if*** the 'signals' referred to are specifically traffic lights.

- *Negatives*

- o Despite searching, I cannot find the SWTRA's report and so can only presume that it is not publicly available. I look forward to receipt of the same in early course. I would like to flag that I do feel hampered in my ability to properly respond to Mr Waters' letter in absence of this document.
- o There is no clarity as to what is meant by 'signalling, road markings and possible minor junction layout changes for enhanced visibility'. Presumably this is set out in

greater detail within the aforementioned report, however it certainly appears to fall short of the comprehensive measures called for by the petition.

o The 'Ride Safely Signs' are a welcomed measure, however I would advise caution in placing too much emphasis on this - I would respectfully remind Mr Waters that fault for the most recent collision has not yet been ascertained. The issue at hand is that the junction is clearly not fit for purpose.

o The letter demonstrates an overall reluctance to commit to long-term safety measures at the junction, which was the petition's overall purpose.

o I fail to understand why a period of monitoring would be required prior to the submission of a business case in support of traffic signals; multiple near misses, over 10,000 signatories and a number of fatalities are plainly sufficient grounds for action.

o The final two paragraphs are specifically disappointing and I refer to them individually as the 'Penultimate Paragraph' and the 'Final Paragraph' below;

§ **The Penultimate Paragraph:** The petition had a very specific purpose, which was to bring about much-needed change at a junction that is clearly dangerous. By referencing the preparation of new guidance on speed limit setting in Wales it suggests that the Welsh Government lacks the ability to consider nuanced instances of danger faced by constituent citizens. I live in hope that this is not the case.

§ **The Final Paragraph:** The overall sentiment of this paragraph echoes the penultimate paragraph. It suggests that the Welsh Government has seemingly limited itself in its ability to take important action on the basis of arbitrary red tape. I also have to question the evidentiary basis for the statements made by Mr Waters. Is he able to accurately provide answers to each of the following questions if the long-term measure implemented was, say, the immediate introduction of a traffic light system at the junction:-

1) What would be the overall increase in land take at the specific junction?

2) What would be the overall carbon emissions output?

3) How would the introduction of traffic lights at the junction encourage dependency on the private car?

Though I am admittedly not an expert in highway management, I would suggest that the answers to questions 1-3 would be either zero, negligible or not applicable.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

I would like complete clarity on the chronology of previous works done at the junction, costings and estimated emissions output for the same.

As someone local to the area, I am aware that previous works were carried out at the junction and I am concerned that such works may now be a factor in stifling necessary change.

It is appreciated that policy changes over time and that carbon emissions are more a more salient issue now than they were in the past. However, if something is unfit for purpose - which over 10,000 local people clearly consider this junction to be - following an attempt at change, then that should not be a bar to future improvement when human life is at stake.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

I look forward to receipt of the final agenda, the link to Senedd TV and ultimately to watching the Senedd's consideration of the petition on 11 September 2023.

Yours faithfully

Agenda Item 3.1

P-06-1269 Don't let the plan run out for dying people in Wales

This petition was submitted by Marie Curie & MNDA, having collected a total of 2,195 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Every year, thousands of people die in Wales having missed out on palliative and end of life care.

The end of life care plan for Wales was working towards fixing this, but in March it'll come to an end. Right now, there's no new plan ready to take its place.

We urgently need a timeline, funding and staff to deliver a new plan.

Don't let the plan run out with no replacement. Please sign today and help us make sure families in Wales aren't left in the lurch.

Additional Information:

We are grateful for Welsh Government's prioritisation of palliative and end of life care (EOLC) in the Programme for Government 2021-2026, but more must be done to ensure we see appropriate action.

The clinical governance structures of health and social care systems in Wales will soon be undergoing reorganisation. In March 2021, Welsh Government launched proposals for a new clinical framework and a new NHS Wales Executive; the clinical framework includes plans to develop a dedicated EOLC Programme and an EOLC Quality Statement. These new arrangements are set to replace the current End of Life Care Delivery Plan, which comes to an end 31 March 2022.

An EOLC Programme is welcome news, but poorly resourced infrastructure and limited programme personnel, combined with the pandemic, has impacted the ability to deliver the new programme at pace. With the end of March fast approaching and no EOLC Programme in sight, Wales looks to be without an EOLC plan for the first time in a decade.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff Central
- South Wales Central



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1269
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/01704/23

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

01 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 20 June on behalf of the Petitions Committee, enclosing further questions by the petitioner on Petition P-06-1269 - Don't let the plan run out for dying people in Wales.

I have responded to the questions raised below.

Seek assurances that the National Palliative and End of Life Care Programme will receive the appropriate resources to be able to undertake the ambitious programme of work as set out under the Palliative Care and End of Life Quality Statement.

The Welsh Government continues to invest £2m per annum to support the National Programme Board for Palliative and End of Life Care and has committed to this level of investment for the remainder of the current Senedd term.

This has enabled the palliative and end of life care programme workforce infrastructure to be strengthened and additional core staff, including project managers have been recruited. In addition, professional sessions have been secured from Nursing and Allied Health Profession leads to work with the programme and the sessions of the existing clinical leads have been increased. The Programme Board is also able to use its resources to invest in and commission expertise and leadership to support the work programme with both short and longer-term commitments. It also has the ability to flex the workforce to meet timelines or respond to developing work as needed.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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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.

Seek clarification on the development of ‘enabling plans’ to take forward the Palliative and End of Life Quality Statement as set out in the Minister’s correspondence to the Committee in August 2022.

The Programme team have developed an overall action plan to deliver the quality statement and have identified workstreams and cross-cutting themes. They are working with newly embedded expert advisory groups and clinical groups to agree ways to deliver the quality statement ambitions. Plans are emerging from these groups on early priorities and longer-term actions.

Receive an update on timescales for delivery of the Palliative and End of Life Quality Statement.

The early focus of the delivery of the quality statement is on accelerating effort to fill urgent gaps in workforce and infrastructure in order to improve out of hours end of life care provision. This includes the wider provision of care from district nurse teams, improving access to advice; for example, through 111, and improvements to access of medications.

The Programme Board is focusing on maximising engagement, for example, with the development of the ‘Offer for Wales’ about how end of life care services will need to look in the future to meet the changing needs of the population. An ambitious structure has been set out with 4 advisory groups to support the work, with relevant expertise and lived experience to gather views, opinions and evidence.

The Board is also engaging with key stakeholders, such as the Value in Health Centre, to lead and deliver on key areas of work, to help set the direction of travel and embed systems which will continue to respond to changing needs in palliative and end of life care.

In addition, the Programme Board is also focused on what resources will be needed to improve palliative and end of life care and to ensure the delivery of the quality statement over the coming years and how the newly developed patient outcome set will help measure areas for investment and improvement as we move to a value-based system.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Eluned Morgan AS/MS

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

**P-06-1269 Don't let the plan run out for dying people in Wales –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 01.09.23**

Many thanks for sending this on to us. Please can our following response be passed on to the Committee:

We welcome the response from the Minister and further detail about the End of Life Care Programme team's early work and focus. We are pleased that workstreams and expert groups are now in place and look forward to working with the Programme team to deliver on the aspirations of the Quality Statement. We hope to see co-production embedded throughout the Programme's work going forward. It is of urgent importance that an implementation plan is developed by the Programme on a similar footing to the Cancer Implementation Plan. This would provide the detail and clarity on how we transform palliative and end of life care in Wales in the longer term.

We still have questions about the implementation of the Quality Statement and how the Programme team's work will be effectively taken forward by Health Boards, particularly given the very challenging financial climate. However, we recognise that these questions of delivery and accountability are also pertinent to the wider system under the new NHS Wales Executive. As such they go beyond the scope of this petition. We therefore suggest closing this petition and thank the Committee for their continued support.

Please do let me know if you need these comments formally in writing, I would be happy to provide a letter if so.

Best wishes,

Agenda Item 3.2

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

This petition was submitted by Maya James, having collected a total of 604 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The recent Mynydd Mawr, Gwynedd, fire has highlighted the problem with so-called "controlled burning". This was lit within the allowed period (1st October to 31st March) despite recent dry weather and strong winds, and when many birds have already started nesting.

North Wales Fire Service described Mynydd Mawr as "quite devastated" by the fire. The smoke affected local residents, and the fire service described how valuable resources from as far as South Wales had to be enlisted to help.

Additional Information:

This fire covered an area of 100,000 sq m at one stage and is not an isolated incident.

Last year there were over 2000 grassfires in Wales; over 75% of these deliberately lit.

These fires cause:

- Risks to the health and safety of our fire crews, local residents and property
- Dangerous diversion and monopolisation of fire crews putting lives elsewhere at risk
- Unacceptable cost to taxpayers into the hundreds of thousands of pounds due to the high burden on fire crews
- Release of smoke and carbon at a time of a climate crisis
- Impact on nesting birds and other wildlife such as increasingly threatened adder during a biodiversity crisis. The 1st October to 31st March were colder wetter months in Wales but our climate is already changing with drier warmer weather shifting wildlife's emergence and breeding seasons. The RSPB has called for an end to upland peatland burning due to the conservation and climate concerns.

We call on the Welsh Government to stop "controlled burning" now.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Delyn
- North Wales

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1297
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/00999/23

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

07 July 2023

Dear Jack Sargeant MS,

Thank you for your letter of 18 April regarding Petition P-06-1297 Stop "Controlled Burning" in Wales. The letter explains that the petition committee have agreed to ask if there are any plans to review the statutory code and regulations on controlled burning in Wales.

As explained in the previous correspondence JJ/02250/22 the Heather and Grass Burning (Wales) Regulations 2008 and its accompanying Code are in place to ensure burning management is to be carried out in a planned, controlled, appropriate and safe manner which delivers environmental benefits and safeguards.

Burning is not allowed in the Code on sensitive areas such as deep peat and blanket bog. These areas should be highlighted in the Burning Management Plan. Reducing the definition of deep peat from 50cm to 30cm is unlikely to result in a reduction in the burn areas as it is often impractical to measure changes in peat depth in a variable environment. Burning on areas with a significant depth of peat are intentionally avoided by responsible organisations. Instead, they focus on flat dry heath with organo-mineral soils where dwarf shrub heath grows vigorously. Burning plans on many sites also prohibit burning on areas of peat to prevent damaging Sites Special Scientific Interest.

Burns are required to be manned by sufficient competent people. Most burns take place without incident. Unfortunately, many of the burns that get out of control are often those started by practitioners who do not follow the code. Other uncontrolled 'wildfire' burns caused by arson or negligence are an issue, especially on the South Wales urban fringe, but wildfire does not fall under Heather and Grass Burning Regulations.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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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.

The burning dates were set in 2008 after a full review of British Trust for Ornithology data for Wales at the time. In the experience of the Welsh Government's Heather and Grass Burning technical team, when they have licence applications to burn after the permitted date in the spring, they inspect the site thoroughly for bird activity and generally find it lacking. The Heather and Grass Burning team will not recommend issuing a licence if they see any displaying behaviour. There is no new Welsh data on nesting dates to prompt a review of the permitted burning dates at present. Please note that peregrine's prefer to nest on high cliff edges, meaning that their nests sites are unlikely to be burnt out from heather and grass burning.

Followed properly the heather and grass burning regulations allow periodic, controlled burning that can be beneficial for agriculture, game management, wildlife conservation and the wider environment. It can provide improved accessibility and better food value for grazing animals and produce a diversity of vegetation structure and composition suitable for a variety of wildlife and game including upland birds such as red grouse.

However ill-considered burning can be counter-productive: damaging valuable grazing, plants, animals, habitats and historic features; altering the physical structure, chemical composition and hydrology of the soil; affecting water quality and weakening the character of the landscape. In some circumstances burning may also be unsafe, damaging, or a waste of time and resources.

In these circumstances the regulations and Code can be difficult to enforce, particularly as cross compliance has a limited life due the proposed phasing out of the Single Farm Payment. In response the Welsh Government are developing National Minimum Standards and Civil Sanctions with the intention of ensuring a more robust process for those that disregard the regulations, which will then prompt any required changes to the Code.

Yours sincerely,



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

P-06-1297 Dod â "llosgi dan reolaeth" i ben yng Nghymru, Gohebiaeth - Deisebydd i'r Pwyllgor, 01.09.23

Annwyl Pwyllgor Deisebau

Nid wyf yn credu bod ymateb y Gweinidog yn rhoi digon o ystyriaeth i'r newidiadau hinsawdd a'r effaith ar y cyfnod a ganiateir (Hydref i Fawrth) a sut mae hyn yn newid yn y presennol ac yn newid yn gyflym yn y blynyddoedd i ddod (gyda sylw i lythyr blaenorol RSPB Cymru ar y mater). Wrth ddarllen y sylwadau am nythod Hebog Dramor mae'n anodd credu y bu'r gweinidog, fel llawer ohonom, yn dyst i dân sydd allan o reolaeth gyda'r mwg a difrod - ond rhaid pwysleisio, hyd yn oed heb ddifrod uniongyrchol i nythod mae llosgi'n sicr o gael effaith ar adar sydd yn nythu gerllaw. Yn ogystal ni chredaf fod digon o ystyriaeth i'r effaith ar greaduriaid eraill fel y wiber.

Mae torri yn opsiwn llawer llai dinistriol, gyda llai o risg, a llai o drawiad ar fywyd gwyllt a'r amgylchedd. Fel Gweinidog am Newid Hinsawdd mae'n synnu fi nad oes ystyriaeth i'r ffaith bod llosgi yn golygu rhyddhau carbon yn sylweddol. Hoffwn bwysleisio eto bod y CCC (Climate Change Committee) yn galw ar llywodraethau y DU i ddod a llosgi dan reolaeth i ben er mwyn gwarchod y "carbon sink" pwysig hon.

Anghytunaf yn gryf bod unrhyw fudd i losgi na allai gael ei gyflawni mewn ffordd llawer mwy cynaliadwy trwy dorri. Hwylustod i'r perchennog tir yn unig ac nid budd i fywyd gwyllt sydd wrth wraidd parhau'r ymarfer. Ac yn yr amser yma o argyfwng bioamrywiaeth, a hinsawdd, rhaid i ni weld heibio hyn. Mae'n deud llawer bod sylw i'r rugiar goch yn llythyr y Gweinidog - rhywogaeth sydd yn neud yn hynod o dda yn ein hucheldiroedd ac er yn anfanteisiol i weddill bywyd gwyllt mae'n cael gwarchodaeth oherwydd bod elw i'w wneud.

Yn gywir

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Agenda Item 3.3

P-06-1327 Leisure Centre amenities free for children

This petition was submitted by Tomos Michael Rogers, having collected a total of 371 signatures.

Text of Petition:

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

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff North
- South Wales Central

Ein Cyf / Our Ref: Petitions P-06-1327
Dyddiad / Date: 28 July 2023
Gofynnwch am / Please ask for: Sharon Davies
Llinell uniongyrchol / Direct line: 07917275203
Ebost / Email: Sharon.Davies@wlga.gov.uk

Dear Mr Sargeant,

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

Thank you for your letter of the 13th of June seeking the best estimate of the cost of providing free leisure centre services for young people, whilst considering the above petition.

The WLGA are supportive of the intention, however, it is a particularly tricky question to answer, but would offer the following observations:

- Providing activities free of charge will increase the number of people accessing leisure services. Any funding to cover use by children and young people would need to track the growth in their participation to ensure that costs are covered. Although numbers are increasing, many providers are still operating with levels of participation below where they were prior to the Covid pandemic.
- The true cost of providing leisure activities is higher than the price point of access, which are subsidised. To ensure such an offer was sustainable, then the principle of full cost recovery should be applied.
- Greater use of leisure assets will impact on their requirement for repairs, maintenance, and replacement. These impacts have a cost and should be factored into any funding equation.
- Any approved funding for this type of offer would need to be linked to annual budget pressures. It could not be a flat line such as the Free-Swimming Programme or the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS). This is

especially relevant with current pressure on leisure budgets where income is one of the key processes in dealing with financial pressure.

- Focusing on cost will not address all the barriers that determine whether a young person is physically active, consideration should also be given to:
 - a. Access to opportunities**
 - b. Facility provision particularly in a rural council**
 - c. Availability of transport**
 - d. Confidence to participate in activities.**

- To provide a “ballpark figure” it would be necessary to introduce some parameters so that there is an element of consistency to the information provided.

- We would like to offer the following parameters for consideration:
 - e. Clarification of what constitutes a “Leisure Centre,” does it include stand-alone Swimming Pools? What about the use of grass pitches and artificial turf pitches?**

 - f. Does the scope include leisure facilities outside the operation of local authorities e.g., Community operated facilities?**

 - g. Age range of the Young People being considered: is it 0-18 or 0-16 or 7-16 etc.?**

 - h. Grouping of Activities / Usage**
 - i. Activities Directly Delivered by the provider:**
 1. Learn to Swim
 2. Other Aquatic Activity
 3. Junior Activities (Pay & Play)
 4. School Holiday Programmes
 5. Junior Membership Packages
 6. Talented athlete support.

 - ii. Activities delivered by Community Groups / Facility Users**
 1. Facility Hire Charges.

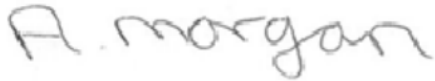
 - iii. Is school use of facilities included?**
 1. To support curricular activities.
 2. To support extra-curricular activities.

We welcome the Petitions Committee interest in this area and would welcome the

opportunity to provide the appropriate information once the above observations have been considered.

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

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "A. Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Cllr Andrew Morgan OBE
WLGGA Leader

Agenda Item 3.4

P-06-1336 Free Welsh lessons for everyone who wants to learn the language in Wales

This petition was submitted by Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, having collected a total of 858 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Many people in Wales are very keen to learn Welsh, and people who live here and people who move to our country want to see the language flourish and grow. But a great many people also find it difficult to afford Welsh lessons, and using Duolingo is not a suitable learning method for everyone. Therefore, we need to ensure that everyone has a fair opportunity to learn Welsh without having to worry about the cost, and that there is also an appropriate method for people to learn.

Additional Information:

In order to achieve a million Welsh speakers, we need to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn the language.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Dwyfor Meirionnydd
- Mid and West Wales

Jack Sargeant MP
Chair of the Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament, Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN
Petitions@senedd.wales

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Regarding: Petition P-06-1336 Free Welsh lessons for everyone who wants to learn the language in Wales

Thank you very much for your recent correspondence regarding the above petition.

Over 15,000 learners a year enjoy following the courses of the National Centre for Learning Welsh. Courses are available for people to learn Welsh in the community and the workplace. Specific programmes are also available for families, young people aged 16-25 and asylum seekers and refugees.

Courses are available in face-to-face and virtual classes. Online self-study resources and courses are also available, as well as a host of digital learning resources.

The Centre has created a digital platform - a kind of 'one-stop shop' - which contains information about all the services for learners: learnwelsh.cymru. On the platform, learners can use the 'course finder' to find a course, choosing the learning method, location, time and day, level and intensity that suits them. Recently, the Centre has introduced the 'Learning Wizard', a tool that helps a learner find a suitable course, by asking a series of simple questions.

Over 1,200 Learn Welsh courses are advertised on the platform. Each course is presented in a clear way along with essential information, including cost.



Cwrs Haf
Sylfaen 1 a 2 (Foundation 1 and 2) Dosbarth

Cyfeirnod y Cwrs: SCSI2D01	Hyd: 6 Wythnos	Cychwyn: 10/07/2023	Gorffen: 18/08/2023
Amser + Diwrnod: 09:30 - 14:30 Dydd Llun - Dydd Gwener	Ffrwd Dysgu: Prif Ffrwd	Tafodiath: De	Darparwr: Dysgu Cymraeg Coerdydd
Lleoliad Cwrs: Dysgu Cymraeg Coerdydd, Adeilad John Percival, Rhodfa Colum, Coerdydd, CF10 3EU			

£90.00 0 lle ar ôl | Ymrestru'n cou heddiw [Gwybodaeth](#) [Holwch](#)

There is information on the site about the different learning methods, and the learning levels. There is also information about the opportunities to support learning, including: access to Say Something in Welsh and Duolingo resources; the Centre's 'Siarad' scheme, which matches learners with Welsh speakers; and learner support activities such as walks and residential weekends.

In its inspection of the Centre in January 2021, Estyn noted,

'The Centre's officers have developed a digital platform over time to become a convenient and accessible medium for learners to use, for example to search for a course that is suitable for their linguistic level, to enrol and to pay. This supports learners effectively as they select a learning programme when beginning to learn Welsh and when choosing a progression route.'

The Centre was asked to draw up a case study for Estyn about the national digital platform.

Since 2019, due to the introduction of the Welsh Learning Fees and Discounts Policy, the cost of courses across Wales has been made consistent. The fee for each course is £90, and there are a series of discounts, including a discount for pensioners, students and adults on benefits. The policy is reviewed annually.

Current learners can take advantage of the Early Bird offer every year, when moving on to their new courses in September - courses will be available for £45 instead of £90.

There is a special offer on [new beginners courses in September](#) – these courses are also available for £45 instead of £90.

The following audiences are now able to enjoy a 100% discount on the courses, and therefore receive them for free:

- Asylum seekers
- Learners aged 18-25
- Education workforce
- Any adult attending a taster course for learners in the workforce

There is information about the Centre's [financial fund](#) available on learnwelsh.cymru. This is a fund that provides financial support to learners towards travel costs, childcare costs, resources etc. Around 35 learners have taken advantage of the fund in the last year.

Every year, the Centre conducts a 'Have your say' questionnaire with its learners, to ensure that we hear the voice of our learners when planning our services. This year, over 4,500 have responded to the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, there is a question on the ease of finding information and registering for Learn Welsh courses, and we are pleased to note that 91% answered positively.

99% said they enjoyed learning Welsh with us, and 93% described the learning experience as good or very good.

I hope the information above answers your question - I would be happy to provide more information if needed.

Yours sincerely



Donna Lewis
Chief Executive

Agenda Item 3.5

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

This petition was submitted by Andrew Jenkins, having collected 775 signatures online and 250 signatures on paper, making for a total of 1,025 signatures.

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.

Additional Information:

Buses are the most used form of public transport.

People use buses each day to get to and from work, schools, college or university, volunteering, shops and leisure amenities, doctors appointments and other key public services and more.

Buses are important in fulfilling Welsh Government aims of easing congestion, reducing carbon emissions, tackling loneliness, promoting social and economic wellbeing and improving access to services.

With the Welsh Government halting new road building, additional investment is needed in public transport.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Neath
- South Wales West

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1338
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/01426/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

24 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 July from the Committee regarding bus funding and "Petition P-06-1338 Extend the bus emergency scheme and develop national bus recovery plan".

I published a [statement](#) on 16 June with partners from the bus industry and local authorities setting out further information on our financial support to the industry for this financial year.

I also announced on Tuesday, May 23, the Welsh Government is making £46m available from bus budgets to support BES and the Bus Transition Fund (BTF) arrangements for the whole financial year. This funding will also keep the strategic TrawsCymru services running.

The BTF, which commenced on 25 July 2023 and developed collaboratively with Local Authorities, Welsh Government, Transport for Wales (TfW) and the industry has replaced the Bus Emergency Scheme which came to an end on 24 July. It will provide immediate financial support to bus operators in Wales so that those vital services can continue. It will also provide time for local authorities to undertake meaningful assessment of existing bus services across Wales through regional planning teams led by TfW, looking specifically at the future provision of bus services around new travel trends that have emerged since the pandemic within the budget envelope available.

Over the last few months, these Regional Network Planning Teams have been meeting regularly. My officials are also fully engaged in conversations with the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers and the WLGA.

The funding available will ensure that the majority of the current services will be protected across Wales. We have asked the Regional Planning Teams and TfW to prepare an overview of changes to services. Although some services may change to reflect different travel patterns following the pandemic.

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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.

We have also been discussing with TfW, industry partners and trade unions on how we can best shape a campaign to get people back onto buses. To start that work, we have been looking at market insights to try and determine where any campaign can have the greatest impact and encourage as many people as possible to use the bus.

The aim of a back to bus campaign will be to encourage previous users back to using buses as well as encouraging new customers. This work led by TfW will be introduced later this year.

My ambition is to bring stability to the bus industry following the pandemic as operational costs have increased against a decrease in overall patronage unfortunately. The work we have done and the relationships we have built in responding to this challenge have put us in a stronger position to get ready for franchising, and the issues it has highlighted make the case for reform unanswerable. This support is the next step in managing our path away from emergency funding and through an orderly transition towards a future franchised model. That will give us the platform to build a bus system based on the needs of people, not on the needs of the market. However, for it to be sustainable, we will still need more people using our buses, and will be working to encourage people to do so.

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

**P-06-1338 Extend the bus emergency scheme and develop national bus recovery plan –
Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 25.08.23**

To whom it concerns,

Thank you for sending me a copy of the letter from the Deputy Minister to the Chair of the Petitions Committee.

Can I thank Committee members for agreeing to send my follow up questions to the Deputy Minister following their last meeting.

A few days ago we heard news that up to 25% of bus routes in Wales may be lost, and that 10% have already been axed this summer. Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive of Age Cymru, released a statement the following day outlining the impact this level of cuts may have on older people in our communities.

Despite this stark reality facing bus users, the letter from the Deputy Minister reads as though we are not witnessing a crisis. He mentions funding, but we know this isn't enough. He mentions a campaign being planned, but we know this should have been started many months ago. He mentioned franchising, but the legislation hasn't even been introduced yet!

I catch the bus every day. I rely on adequate public transport. I don't have the luxury of alternatives or being able to wait for a campaign to eventually start or for legislation to be enacted.

I speak to people on my bus who fear what this may mean for their jobs, their ability to socialise, access services or attend education, training or volunteering. My usual driver said he fears what this will mean long term for his job as he thinks the service I get on every day won't be around much longer.

I could write about the impact buses have had on the wellbeing of my son and my own confidence for that matter, but I don't want to bore you.

I just ask that each committee member considers what more you can do to support bus services in your constituencies or regions - not just through questions to Minister's or statements in the Siambr, but by getting on your local buses now and then (if you don't already) and encouraging others to do the same.

In summary, I'm disappointed by the Minister's response but I am grateful for the way the committee has provided an opportunity for these questions to be asked.

Diolch yn fawr

Agenda Item 3.6

P-06-1340 Stop the change of speed limits to 20mph on 17th September

This petition was submitted by Benjamin James Watkins, having collected a total of 21,919 signatures.

Text of Petition:

This decision is not representative of the broader public opinion and as such, it is not democratic to implement the changes. An alteration to road laws on this scale should be subject to much more extensive polling or possibly as part of a Welsh referendum on the matter.

Additional Information:

The use of speed bumps and 20mph zones in built-up areas and near schools is a generally accepted practice for the safety of children and adults. The widening of these measures could lead to an increase in "road rage" incidents and currently appears to be nothing more than a revenue stream for people to pay fines when they are caught speeding (when they are traveling at a safe speed).

I am yet to see an opinion supporting the changes, I have asked multiple people locally and read the comments left by many people online. It was the negative response to the changes that prompted the creation of this petition.

The new speed changes will disproportionately affect the commute times of people traveling by road for work, especially in areas where most roads are currently 30mph and have no bypass roads with higher speed limits.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Rhondda
- South Wales Central

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