

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 29 January 2024

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

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1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

2 New petitions

2.1 P-06-1381 Reject all plans for Road User Payments, Congestion Zones and Workplace Parking Levies in Wales

(Pages 1 – 7)

2.2 P-06-1382 Ban Balloon Release

(Pages 8 – 14)

2.3 P-06-1387 Provide humanitarian aid to Gaza

(Pages 15 – 21)

2.4 P-06-1388 Remove the requirement for farmers to have at least 10% tree cover to access the new Sustainable Farming Scheme

(Pages 22 – 30)

2.5 P-06-1389 Introduce a 30mph limit on the trunk road through the villages of Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais

(Pages 31 – 41)

2.6 P-06-1390 Stop all subsidies on food in the Senedd and for Welsh Government staff in general

(Pages 42 – 44)

2.7 P-06-1393 Empowering Parental Choice: Opt-Out Rights and Inclusive Involvement in the RSE Program

(Pages 45 – 55)



3 Updates to previous petitions

- 3.1 P-06-1353 Devolve responsibilities and budgets for trunk roads in North Wales to North Wales
(Pages 56 – 58)
- 3.2 P-06-1345 Make conservation management plans compulsory for scheduled monuments at risk such as Ruperra Castle
(Pages 59 – 62)
- 3.3 P-06-1348 Commission suitable NHS services in Wales for people with EDS or hypermobility spectrum disorders
(Pages 63 – 67)
- 3.4 P-06-1352 Approve the construction of the Third bridge
(Pages 68 – 71)
- 3.5 P-06-1357 Draw up a new Microplastics Action Plan for Wales
(Pages 72 – 80)
- 3.6 P-06-1366 Reinstate funding for Taf Valley Coaches 351 (Tenby to Pendine) and 352 (Tenby to Kilgetty) services
(Pages 81 – 82)
- 3.7 P-06-1370 Save overnight minor injuries provision at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny
(Pages 83 – 85)
- 3.8 P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development Kilvey Hill, Swansea
(Pages 86 – 90)

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

Document is Restricted

P-06-1381 Reject all plans for Road User Payments, Congestion Zones and Workplace Parking Levies in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Ionawr 2024
Petitions Committee | 29 January 2024

Reference: SR23/7337-3

Petition Number: P-06-1381

Petition title: Reject all plans for Road User Payments, Congestion Zones and Workplace Parking Levies in Wales

Text of petition: At a time when people are struggling with the cost of living it is simply not feasible for people to incur more cost simply for needing to travel between and across the towns and cities of Wales. Schemes like the one being considered in Cardiff, for example, will disproportionately affect those already struggling, despite claims that people in poorer areas are less likely to own a car. The people of Wales would like it known that we categorically DO NOT support their implementation. Road charging, Congestion Zones, and workplace parking levies are nothing short of a money making scheme.

Here is a link to the proposed plans for Cardiff which clearly show the intention is put yet another charge onto road users.

<https://keepingcardiffmoving.co.uk/project/cardiff-road-user-payment-scheme/>



1. Background

The introduction of road user charging as tool to increase modal shift away from private cars has been discussed extensively. The [Wales Transport Strategy](#) commits to developing a “fair and equitable road user charging” framework with the [National Transport Delivery Plan](#) (NTDP) giving a timescale of 2022-2026 for this work.

The Welsh Government previously commissioned an [independent review of road user charging in Wales](#), which considered the case for and against.

In its 2020 report, '[Covid-19 Recovery: Renewing the Transport System](#)', Campaign for Better Transport calls for “new sources of raising revenue such as workplace parking levies and road use charges to support the shift to sustainable transport”. More recently, the Centre for Cities 2023 report on [Understanding transport in Wales' cities](#) recommends the use of a congestion charge or workplace parking levy in Cardiff, and a workplace parking levy in Swansea, Newport and Wrexham to encourage modal shift.

The petitioner argues against motorists incurring additional costs given current cost of living issues. As explored in this [2020 Senedd Research article](#), Members of the last Senedd (then Assembly) expressed concern over plans in Cardiff at that time.

Welsh Government powers

The Welsh Government currently has powers under the [Transport Act 2000](#) (the 2000 Act) to introduce charging schemes on the [trunk road and motorway network](#) in very limited circumstances. [The Environment \(Air Quality and Soundscapes\) \(Wales\) Bill](#) (the Bill), passed [by the Senedd](#) in November but not yet in force amends the 2000 Act to enable schemes to be introduced for the purpose of reducing or limiting air pollution.

The [Explanatory Memorandum](#) (the EM) to the Bill also outlines the Welsh Government's intention to commence relevant provisions under the 2000 Act to enable local authorities (either by themselves, or in a regional partnership) to fully implement charging schemes on local roads.

Clean Air Zones

The EM refers to the powers being used to create charging Clean Air Zones (CAZs) where drivers of certain vehicles could be charged for entering a defined zone. During the stage four debate on the Bill, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS stated:

...any such schemes would provide a measure of last resort to tackle localised air-quality issues ... Such zones will only be introduced where evidence makes a sufficiently compelling case for schemes to address persistent air pollution problems, and where other means have not been sufficient to deliver compliance.

There are currently seven CAZs in England and four Low Emission Zones (LEZs) (where access to a certain area is restricted for the most polluting vehicles) in Scotland.

Most breaches of statutory air quality limits within the UK are a result of roadside NO₂, 80% of which comes from road transport. The burden of poor air in the UK is estimated to be the equivalent of between 29,000 and 43,000 deaths per year.

In 2018, the Welsh Government was taken to court for breaches of NO₂ and has subsequently introduced 50mph speed limits at five sites on the trunk road and motorway network. It's previously been reported in the media that CAZs could be introduced at two of these sites (the M4 in Newport and the A740 in Pontypridd) if the reduced speed limit does not lower pollution.

Workplace parking levy (WPL)

WPLs charge businesses for their parking spaces. To date there is only one WPL being used in Great Britain in Nottingham.

The South East Wales Transport Commission (the Burns Commission) recommended the use of a WPL in Cardiff and Newport “once new transport options exist and an overarching policy framework is in place”. Meanwhile the North Wales Transport Commission (also chaired by Lord Burns) suggests a WPL “would not be appropriate in north Wales at the current time due to the lack of alternatives to the car”.

Plans in Cardiff

The petitioner refers specifically to plans in Cardiff for a road user payment scheme. Cardiff Council says it “wants to look at a range of schemes including, but not limited to, road user payments, congestion zones, clean air zones and

workplace parking levies”. It suggests any such scheme would be implemented from around 2027.

Plans for road user charging were initially proposed in the Council’s 2020 Transport White Paper. The proposals prompted the Welsh Government to commission its independent review of road user charging discussed earlier.

2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Chair dated 12 January, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, states the use of charging CAZs would be a “last resort”. He outlines that CAZs “have been identified as ‘precautionary retained measures’ for A470 Pontypridd and M4 Newport” as discussed earlier in this brief.

The Deputy Minister states that discussions have been held between the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council on its plans.

While the letter suggests that schemes could be used to deliver against modal shift targets and to provide funding for “significant public transport improvements”, the Deputy Minister acknowledges that:

...road user charging schemes need to be carefully designed to avoid adverse unintended consequences, including increasing barriers to employment and disadvantaging those on low incomes.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The use of road user charging has been discussed in the Senedd on many occasions, including during scrutiny of the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill as discussed above.

In October 2023 Sam Rowlands MS asked the Minister for Finance and Local Government, Rebecca Evans MS about WPLs. The Minister responded that she was not currently in discussions with any Councils on WPLs.

In November 2023 Andrew R.T. Davies MS asked whether the Welsh Government had plans to adopt any of the Centre for Cities report recommendations (outlined earlier in this brief). The Welsh Government responded it had “no plans to take forward its recommendations on congestion charging, road user charging, speed limits for buses or workplace parking levies”.

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-06-1381
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/02766/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

12 January 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 26 October enclosing P-06-1381 - Reject all plans for Road User Payments, Congestion Zones and Workplace Parking Levies in Wales.

The power to implement universal road charging and to receive any revenue is retained by the UK Government's Secretary of State for Transport. The Transport Act 2000 provides powers enabling Welsh Ministers to introduce trunk road charging schemes under limited circumstances. The Environment (Air Quality & Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill expands the circumstances under which trunk road charging schemes may be introduced, enabling schemes for reducing or limiting air pollution in the vicinity of the road.

There are no plans in place to introduce charges for motorists on the Welsh Government managed trunk road network and schemes would be considered as a last resort to tackle persistent air pollution hot spots. Clean Air Zones have been identified as 'precautionary retained measures' for A470 Pontypridd and M4 Newport in our Supplemental Plan to the UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations 2017.

We have set out in Llwybr Newydd – the Wales Transport Strategy and our National Transport Delivery Plan, that we will support fair and equitable road user charging systems that deliver benefits for our society, environment and economy. Road user charging has the potential to make more efficient use of the road network, reducing congestion and pollution. However, road user charging schemes need to be carefully designed to avoid adverse unintended consequences, including increasing barriers to employment and disadvantaging those on low incomes.

The impact of road user charging on the economy will depend both on the form such charges take and how the resulting revenues are used. Road user charging is often presented as inequitable. However, ONS data shows that the average Welsh household with a car has an income 69% above a similar household without a car, so charging that supports improving non-car modes is progressive and supports those on lower incomes.

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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.

Welsh Government Officials meet regularly with Cardiff Council to discuss their plans for improvements to transport in Cardiff. This has included discussions on road user charging. Cardiff Council is considering the potential for a 'road user payment' scheme to help reduce the harmful effects of air pollution, support action on climate change, and tackle congestion. Through the Transport Act 2000, Welsh Ministers can provide powers to local authorities to implement local schemes. The Act also enables local authorities to introduce licensing schemes for imposing charges on the provision of workplace parking. Such charges may be absorbed by employers or passed onto staff using the parking spaces.

Local road user charging schemes, and workplace parking levies, could deliver against our modal shift targets and provide funding for significant improvements in public transport and active travel as the local authority would receive the revenue. These potential future revenue streams must be used on local transport priorities and could make a significant contribution to the expenditure needed to make major transport infrastructure improvements or to provide cheaper fares.

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

Ban Balloon Releases

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Ionawr 2024
Petitions Committee | 29 January 2024

Reference: SR23/7337-4

Petition Number: P-06-1382

Petition title: Ban Balloon Releases

Text of petition: Balloon releases seem to be ever more common despite the harm they cause. They kill animals, litter and harm our environment. There are other less harmful ways people can honour lost loved ones. Even where bans exist, local authorities seem afraid to act on this.

1. Background

Balloon releases are usually done as part of a commemorative or celebratory event. However once the balloon is released it cannot be controlled, and becomes litter. Balloon litter can also pose a hazard to livestock and wildlife.

Research by Keep Wales Tidy explains that balloon litter can be mistaken for food, block digestive systems and cause animals to starve, and that string on balloons can entangle or trap animals.

Similarly, the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) says balloon litter can “be eaten by marine life, entangle turtles or sea birds and may result in premature death by choking, starvation or strangulation”. The Co-op Funeralcare highlights that whilst balloons made of plastic, rubber or foil will break down, “their particles can remain in the environment for decades”.



In October 2023 it was reported that a seal pup in North Wales died after being entangled in a balloon string on a beach.

A recent article by Natural Resources Wales highlighted the “unintended and severe consequences for wildlife and their habitats” from balloon releases:

Over the past year we have received several reports of balloon releases taking place on or near some of Wales’ Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI). These are areas that provide habitats to some of our rarest and most threatened wildlife.

The MCS highlights that littering on the ground can result in a fine, however “letting go of a balloon or a lantern, which is just as problematic, isn’t treated in the same way”.

1.1. Local authority action

A number of Welsh local authorities have banned the release of balloons on their land. However it’s been reported that local authority officials are “wary of sending staff to confront those who are grieving because of the sensitive nature of the occasion”.

1.2. Alternative options

The Co-op Funeralcare and MCS highlight that ‘biodegradable’ or ‘environmentally friendly’ balloons can take years to break down in the environment. Both organisations give suggestions for alternatives to balloon releases including:

- Planting trees or flowers;
- Blowing bubbles;
- Wildflower seed bombs; and
- Lighting candles.

2. Welsh Government action

In response to this petition, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS says she “does not believe introducing legislation to prohibit releases would be proportionate nor in the public interest”:

Rather, we continue to work with others to encourage alternative, more sustainable forms of commemoration as appropriate. For example, with our partners we promote commemorative woodlands as part of the Wales National Forest project. We have also previously written to several charitable organisations requesting they consider the wider impacts, for example littering, resulting from balloon releases at their events.

The Minister said the Welsh Government will continue to work with environmental organisations “to identify additional ways of raising awareness of the littering issues associated with balloon releases, accompanied by promoting alternatives to this practice whilst noting inherent sensitivities”.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In 2012, the fourth Assembly’s Petitions Committee received petition P-04-385, which called upon the then National Assembly for Wales to “legislate against the intentional release of balloons and Chinese (or air) lanterns into the air”. The petition was raised by the Cardiff Regional Eco-committee, a group of pupil-representatives from Cardiff Green Flag Eco-schools, and received 564 signatures.

The Petitions Committee contacted the responsible Minister, the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, John Griffiths MS. In his reply, the Minister recognised the potential risks of balloon and lantern releases, and said that his department would develop an evidence base on the impact of lantern and balloon releases.

In a November 2023 written question, Darren Millar MS, asked whether the Welsh Government has considered “banning the release of balloons outdoors, given the adverse impact on wildlife and the environment”. The Minister for Climate Change answered:

The Welsh Government has no plans to introduce legislation to ban balloon releases.

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1382
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/02803/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
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20 December 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 26 October regarding Petition P-06-1382 relating to balloon releases.

Whilst I acknowledge the concerns around the environmental impacts associated with balloon releases, such events are sensitively used to commemorate the loss of loved ones. The Welsh Government is mindful of such sensitivities and consequently, does not believe introducing legislation to prohibit releases would be proportionate nor in the public interest to do so. Rather, we continue to work with others to encourage alternative, more sustainable forms of commemoration as appropriate. For example, with our partners we promote commemorative woodlands as part of the Wales National Forest project.

We have also previously written to several charitable organisations requesting they consider the wider impacts, for example littering, resulting from balloon releases at their events. A similar approach was adopted with Welsh Local Authorities and most now operate a voluntary policy of discouraging the release of balloons and sky lanterns from Local Authority owned land.

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We will continue to work with environmental organisations such as Keep Wales Tidy to identify additional ways of raising awareness of the littering issues associated with balloon releases, accompanied by promoting alternatives to this practice whilst noting inherent sensitivities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

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

P-06-1382 Ban Balloon Releases - Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 17 January 2024

Good afternoon,

In response to the attached document I have to disagree with points raised.

I am aware that balloon releases are sensitive and are generally held to commemorate people. However, this does not justify the harm they cause. There are many alternatives including lighting candles. When people can receive fines for feeding pigeons on the street as this could be classed as littering then it is absurd that hundreds of balloons can be released on a single occasion.

Balloon releases seem to be gathering momentum at a time when the impact of such events is being realised. Many people in the general public do not agree with such releases and there needs to be a cultural change.

It takes bravery to make changes but in recent years Wales has seemed to be very forward thinking in terms of animal welfare and the environment. Balloon releases do not benefit anyone and contradict this progress.

Many thanks for considering the petition.

Yours sincerely,

Humanitarian aid for Gaza

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Ionawr 2024
Petitions Committee | 29 January 2024

Reference: SR24/7752-1

Petition Number: P-06-1387

Petition title: Provide humanitarian aid to Gaza

Text of petition:

Gaza and the Palestinian people are facing a humanitarian crisis as bombs rain down indiscriminately on residential buildings, schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, and refugee camps. Thousands of innocent civilians, including more than 3,500 children, have been killed, with many more seriously injured or displaced. The Welsh Government has previously provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine following the Russian invasion in 2022. It should now do all it can to provide aid to the Palestinian people.



1. Background

The Welsh Government has previously provided humanitarian aid in response to international appeals, such as a £100,000 payment to the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) [Pakistan flood appeal](#) in 2022-23 and [£300,000 to the DEC's Türkiye and Syria Earthquake Appeal](#) to people affected by earthquakes in February 2023.

As the petition acknowledges, the Welsh Government has also provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine following Russia's invasion on 28 February 2022. On 1 March 2022, the First Minister announced [£4 million in "financial and humanitarian" aid](#). He also advised the Welsh Government was:

- Assessing what surplus medical equipment could be usefully provided;
- Ready to welcome people who need and want to leave Ukraine;
- Urging the UK Government to make it easier for Ukrainians to come to the UK; and
- Encouraging anyone who can to donate to the British Red Cross, UNICEF UK or to the UNHCR UK.

To date, the Welsh Government has not provided a financial contribution of humanitarian aid. Its response has focused on providing community cohesion support, and in exploring potential routes to the UK for British nationals caught up in the conflict [in intergovernmental meetings](#).

On 14 November 2023, the Welsh Government voted in support of a [Senedd motion to consent to UK Government regulations](#) extending UK housing benefits eligibility to those fleeing the conflict from Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights or Lebanon (conditions apply).

According to the [House of Commons Library](#), the UK Government has committed £87million for 2023-24 to the Occupied Palestinian Territories which includes £60 million announced throughout October and November 2023. The [Scottish Government has provided £750,000](#) to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) [Flash Appeal](#).

2. Welsh Government action

2.1. Response to Plaid Cymru calls to provide aid

During [First Minister's Questions](#) on 17 October 2023, Leader of Plaid Cymru, Rhun ap Iorwerth MS, asked if the Welsh Government would make a “contribution, including a financial contribution, to that humanitarian effort in Gaza”.

The First Minister described the Welsh Government response, including potentially using its [Faith Communities Forum](#), and that it is “eager” to help people in Wales and to support UK-level action. He did not specifically address making a financial contribution.

On 24 October 2023, Mabon ap Gwynfor MS [repeated Plaid Cymru's call](#) for the Welsh Government to provide humanitarian support, and asked for assurance that it is “using all of its powers” to call for a ceasefire. Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd, Lesley Griffiths MS, responded:

I can assure you that Welsh Government is taking the steps to which you refer.

She reiterated that the Welsh Government is in contact with faith groups in Wales to provide support. In response to [Nation.Cymru coverage](#) following the exchange, a Welsh Government spokesperson said:

The First Minister has strongly condemned the appalling attacks carried out by Hamas and expressed his deep concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. He has called on the international community to come together to work again for a lasting peace.

During the Plaid Cymru [debate on the conflict in Israel and Gaza](#) which culminated in a vote in favour of a ceasefire, the Minister for Social Justice outlined the support being provided by the Welsh Government:

The Welsh Government is committed to discharging the responsibilities in our hands by doing all we can to support community safety and promote cohesion.

This includes:

- Meetings held by the Minister and First Minister with representatives of Muslim and Jewish communities in Wales.

- meetings with representatives of the Faith Communities Forum and visiting places of worship to hear directly from members of affected communities in Wales.
- Being clear that “there is no place for hate in Wales, and we must all play our part in standing against prejudice”. The Minister explained steps taken with the Minister for Education to discuss with faith leaders how the Welsh Government can do more to promote understanding and tackle antisemitism, Islamophobia and all forms of faith-based hate in education settings.
- The Minister outlined how Wales’s hate support centre, run by Victim Support Cymru, is working alongside the four police forces to monitor spikes in antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime in Wales.
- Activities carried out as part of the Welsh Government’s community cohesion programme, such as monitoring community tensions and connecting with faith leaders.

2.2. Response to the petition

Responding to the petition on 17 January 2024, the Minister for Social Justice said:

The Welsh Government believes that there must be a renewed sense of urgency among the international community to deliver a full and permanent ceasefire, to end the intolerable levels of violence and human suffering as soon as possible. This cessation of violence must be the essential platform for a longer-term and determined political process towards which we can work to establish a two-state solution based on a sovereign Palestinian state and a secure Israel.

Referring to the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza, the Minister confirmed that, in the past, the Welsh Government has donated to a number of appeals run by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC). The DEC is monitoring the humanitarian situation in Gaza and is assessing whether it meets its three key criteria for launching an appeal. The Minister highlighted one key criteria, that:

... member agencies can effectively spend money raised and they believe that only a lasting ceasefire would allow them the opportunity to effectively provide the desperately needed aid to the Palestinians living in Gaza.

The Minister said the Welsh Government will “continue to be focused on those responsibilities in our hands”, including tackling Islamophobia and antisemitism,

“to ensure all communities can live together in Wales peacefully and with mutual respect”.

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.

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a'r Prif Chwip
Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1387
Ein cyf/Our ref JH-/01071/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
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17 January 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 19 December regarding a petition that you have received on the Provision of Humanitarian Aid to Gaza.

The Welsh Government believes that there must be a renewed sense of urgency among the international community to deliver a full and permanent ceasefire, to end the intolerable levels of violence and human suffering as soon as possible. This cessation of violence must be the essential platform for a longer-term and determined political process towards which we can work to establish a two-state solution based on a sovereign Palestinian state and a secure Israel.

There can be no security for anyone in Israel and Palestine without a long-term peace, which is fair to both Israelis and Palestinians. I have met Muslim leaders from across South Wales and attended the public menorah lighting outside the Senedd for the seventh night of Hanukkah. It is clear the events in Gaza and in Israel are having a direct impact on Muslim and Jewish communities in Wales. The Welsh Government will continue to be focused on those responsibilities in our hands, particularly in tackling Islamophobia and antisemitism, to ensure all communities can live together in Wales peacefully and with mutual respect.

The Welsh Government has, in the past, donated to a number of appeals run by the Disasters Emergency Committee DEC on behalf of 15 global humanitarian organisations. We also provide funds to enable the DEC to work more effectively in Wales. The DEC launches an appeal for a disaster or humanitarian crisis when a number of criteria have been reached.

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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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One of those criteria is that member agencies can effectively spend money raised and they believe that only a lasting ceasefire would allow them the opportunity to effectively provide the desperately needed aid to the Palestinians living in Gaza.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first letter of "Jane".

Jane Hutt AS/MS

Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a'r Prif Chwip
Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip

P-06-1388 Remove the requirement for farmers to have at least 10% tree cover to access the new Sustainable Farming Scheme

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Ionawr 2024
Petitions Committee | 29 January 2024

Reference: SR24/7752-5

Petition Number: P-06-1388

Petition title: Remove the requirement for farmers to have at least 10% tree cover to access the new Sustainable Farming Scheme

Text of petition: Welsh Government is designing a new scheme to support farmers called the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). The most controversial Universal Action needed to join the scheme is the requirement for a farmer to have 10% tree cover, excluding hedgerows, plus 10% habitat. Many farmers for various reasons cannot plant 10% of their land with trees. The percentage of tree cover required to enter the scheme should be lowered to an attainable level to allow as many farmers as possible to be able to join.

More details

Reducing the area of productive farming land will decrease food production. This will affect all industries that serve the agricultural sector.

A low level of uptake of the scheme will be economically detrimental to the rural economy of Wales. Many farmers who presently receive BPS and cannot receive SFS will struggle to survive.

The increased levels of tree cover could be included in the Optional Actions (OAs).



1. Background

The Welsh Government is developing a new agricultural policy – the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). Since EU-exit the Welsh Government has maintained the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) system of support in Wales. However, from 2025 it is anticipated that the SFS will be introduced, and the CAP system phased out.

The SFS proposals are currently under consultation (due to close on 7 March). Under the proposals, farmers would be rewarded for actions above the minimum legal requirements, supporting farmers in terms of environmental, animal welfare and social outcomes.

All farmers participating in the SFS (as proposed) would be required to carry out a suite of ‘Universal Actions’ for which they would receive the ‘Universal Baseline Payment’. Building on this, non-compulsory ‘Optional’ and ‘Collaborative’ actions would then be available for additional reward.

The current plans follow several consultations (most recently the draft Sustainable Farming Scheme in 2022) and a co-design project where farmers have fed into the scheme design.

Note this petition was submitted prior to the latest proposals which are detailed below.

2. Welsh Government action

During the development of the SFS, a key area of contention has been the proposed Universal Action for farmers to have at least 10% tree cover on their farm, managed in line with the UK Forestry Standard. Existing trees and woodland would be counted towards this minimum requirement.

This requirement was proposed in the 2022 consultation (page 38) as an avenue to work towards the target to create 43,000ha of new woodland by 2030 to help mitigate climate change. This 10% tree cover requirement was alongside another Universal Action for farmers to manage at least 10% of their land to maintain and enhance semi-natural habitats.

There was concern from farmers that this Universal Action would not be feasible, and would therefore preclude participation in the SFS. Environmental groups welcomed the requirement while emphasising the 'right tree in the right place' principle to ensure the environmental benefits.

Arguments against the 10% tree cover requirement included:

- it will be difficult for some farmers to achieve if their land is not suitable for tree planting e.g. upland and coastal farms;
- it may not be possible for common land farmers and tenant farmers to achieve due to restrictions in their contracts;
- it would take land out of production with associated concerns regarding business viability and food security;
- trees planted in the wrong places e.g. on peatland could have a detrimental environmental impact; and
- a lack of local native tree nurseries to provide saplings could risk disease spread if trees need to be imported.

The benefits identified included:

- shelter belts;
- animal shelter;
- biosecurity (distance between neighbouring farms);
- water quality protection and buffer strips;
- biodiversity enhancement; and
- climate change mitigation.

More can be read in the analysis of feedback to the outline scheme proposals and the co-design report.

Following the stakeholder concerns, the Welsh Government announced that changes were being explored so the tree cover requirement would not be 10% of the entire holding, but 10% of the remaining area once unsuitable areas have been identified.

The proposals were updated and the final SFS consultation was published on 14 December 2023. The Universal Action on tree cover has been amended (page 41 of the consultation) from the 2022 design:

We have refined this minimum tree cover requirement to address the concerns you raised about unplantable areas. For example:

- Some tenant farmers may not be able to plant trees or manage existing woodland due to the tenancy agreement.
- Permanent features such as roads, yards, hard standings, ponds cannot be planted.
- It would not be appropriate to plant trees in priority or high-quality habitats such as peatland.

This means the 10% tree cover requirement will not be calculated on the whole farm area, rather it will be calculated on the remaining area once these unplantable areas have been removed from the calculation.

The consultation also includes reference to other sensitivities which will be considered on a farm-by-farm basis to determine if an area is suitable for planting. It considers how best to address exposed high altitude or coastal locations.

NFU Cymru remains concerned that the minimum 10% tree cover scheme rule is likely to “prove a barrier to entry for many businesses”.

The Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd, Lesley Griffiths, highlights in her paper on this petition that:

Unlike the current Basic Payment Scheme, trees and woodlands will be included in the land area which generate farmers’ payments, so I hope farmers can once again learn to value the multiple benefits provided by trees.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The 10% tree cover requirement has been discussed in Plenary on several occasions with questions from several Members. For example, you can read the discussions and Minister’s responses in the transcript from 11 July 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-06-1388
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00797/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

10 January 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 18 December, regarding Petition P-06-1388 to remove the requirement for farmers to have at least 10% tree cover to access the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

I published the final consultation on the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) on 14 December which contains the most recent iteration of a wide range of proposed actions, including tree cover requirements.

I would like to clarify some points regarding the proposed 10% tree cover requirement:

Existing trees and woodland would be counted towards this minimum requirement. We do not propose each farmer would need to plant an additional 10% over and above the trees they already have.

Within this consultation we have proposed amendments to how the 10% could be calculated. For example, it is not feasible for tenant farmers to plant trees if their tenancy agreement precludes it, and it would be ecologically inappropriate to plant on priority habitats. Therefore, we propose to adapt the requirement so it is no longer 10% of the entire farm, but 10% of the area remaining once the unplatable areas have been removed from the calculation.

Unlike the current Basic Payment Scheme, trees and woodlands will be included in the land area which generate farmers' payments, so I hope farmers can once again learn to value the multiple benefits provided by trees.

We continue to explore with the farming industry how additional trees can be integrated in a way they become an asset such as providing shade and shelter to livestock from increasingly erratic weather, or as biosecurity barriers on farm boundaries. In this way trees can contribute to food production and the overall resilience of the farm business. It does not need to be a stark choice between trees or food production.

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

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

The tree cover requirement should not be considered in isolation. It is one component of a scheme designed to address the climate and nature emergencies alongside the ongoing sustainable production of food. In this way we can help our farmers become more resilient to the impact of climate change.

This petition was not based on the updated proposals. I urge all farmers to respond to the current consultation.

No final scheme design decisions, including on tree cover requirements will be made until the conclusion of this consultation. The consultation will close on 7 March.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping 'L' and 'G'.

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

P-06-1388 Remove the requirement for farmers to have at least 10% tree cover to access the new Sustainable Farming Scheme – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 22.01.24

Alex Higgs MA BA Cantab

I farm in the uplands of Mid Wales, with my husband, producing Farm Assured Beef and Lamb for 2 prestigious producer groups. The farm has won environmental awards and been undertaking enhanced biodiversity projects for 35 years.

I also farm in South Wales, with my son, on the coast producing annually 80 to 90 of tonnes of beef for a producer group, and 100s of tonnes of wheat, barley and oats for home use and sale to merchants. On the farm is a Pick your Own enterprise selling tonnes of strawberries and raspberries direct to the public. The farm has a large area of cliff land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB) over which thousands of people walk monthly. This is managed for habitat and wildlife.

Both farms employ labour and contractors and put thousands of pounds into the rural economy.

My Reply To Lesley Griffiths' Letter:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to give my thoughts on the response to my petition from Lesley Griffiths.

It is positive that existing trees and woodland would be counted towards the minimum requirement for farmers to have 10% trees as one of the 17 Universal Actions proposed to be able to access the Sustainable Farming Scheme. I believe that most farmers are aware that this will be the case.

It is also positive that trees and woodland will generate payment within the new scheme after the many years they have not been valued within the subsidy system.

As suggested trees are beneficial as shelter, shade and as biosecurity boundaries and many farms have miles of hedges which have this affect but do not count towards 10% trees in the present SFS consultation.

It is also positive that tenant farmers will have a derogation if their tenancy agreement precludes tree planting and it would be ecologically inappropriate to plant trees on valuable habitat land.

It is still proposed that 10% trees will be required on remaining land, which will be 'productive land'. Lesley Griffiths states 'that the tree cover should not be considered in isolation'. The problem is that a farmer would not be able to access the scheme as described in the present consultation if he/she did not have 10% trees or was intending to plant trees on productive land in the next 6 years.

My reasons for establishing the Petition:

Farmers and land owners have replied to the previous consultations and also stated in numerous co-design meetings that the idea of 10% trees will prohibit a lot of farmers from being able to join the Sustainable Farming Scheme, as Welsh Government continually propose. As you can observe from the number of farmers who signed the petition many of them will find it impossible to achieve 10% trees and therefore will not be able to access the SFS. These tend to be the highly productive farmers who use their land efficiently to produce food. Of course other farmers will have 10% of their land as trees or may be happy to plant trees to attain the level.

Why is Welsh Government not listening to the consultation replies? It appears that Welsh Government is determined to solve a lot of the Carbon balance problems of Wales by making farmers plant their land with trees to capture Carbon.

When the UK was part of the EEC farmers received money from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP was a partnership between society and agriculture that ensured a stable food supply, safeguarded farmers' incomes, protected the environment and kept rural areas vibrant.

It would be hoped that the new Welsh Sustainable Farming Scheme would have the same aims. (Indeed, in the Welsh Government's own words, 'The Welsh Government re-stated its commitment to affect a **Just Transition** away from the fossil-fuelled economy of the past to a new low carbon future. Delivering a just transition will mean, as we move to a cleaner, fairer Wales **we will leave no-one behind**' It should be possible for all farmers to join the scheme, but if thousands of farmers are barred from joining the scheme because of the 10% tree requirement, we in Wales will have failed to design a scheme accessible to all, and it will be in direct conflict with the Welsh Government's commitment to 'leave no-one behind'. It will be very disappointing but also mean that the vision of Welsh farming as 'progressive and environmental' will be very much diluted as these farmers will not engage with the other 16 universal actions, the majority of which will benefit the industry and environment.

Why are some farmers resistant to the requirement for 10% trees as a Universal Action (UA)?

-Planting trees is almost irreversible. It has a risk of unintended long term or irreversible damage to farms, agricultural business and local Welsh economies -i.e. a threat to **Just Transition**. In the early 1960s Beeching's report on the railways of Great Britain on how to stem the large losses of the nationalised railway resulted in the closure of 4500 miles of railway which included 2500 stations with the loss of over 65,000 jobs. By 1968 the railways had not been restored to profitability and miles of railway had sadly been lost for all intents and purposes irreversibly. Wouldn't it have been positive for Climate change if some of these lines were still running now? It is important to be mindful and careful before losing thousands of acres for food production.

-Fixed overheads and Interest on loans. Farming has high general fixed farm costs (insurance, accountancy, paperwork) machinery costs and in many cases labour costs. These costs are divided by the area of production. If a 100-hectare farm is reduced to 80 hectares, 10 hectares to habitat and 10 hectares to trees, the burden of fixed costs per hectare will increase dramatically. I hear Welsh Government saying 'we will encourage farmers to be more efficient and increase productivity'. Many of the farms who are resistant to 10% trees are already the efficient highly productive farms. Planting trees on farm land (change of land use) will immediately reduce the value of the land by thousands of pounds per acre. Many farmers borrow from lenders using land as collateral. Lenders will not be happy if land is planted and devalued and may want more land as collateral. This may restrict the extent of future capital available and hence reduce capacity to invest in these farming businesses and as such in Wales.

Food Production and food security Farmers primarily produce food. The definition of a farmer is a person who works on a farm growing vegetables, grains, fruit and/or raising animals for milk, eggs or meat. Food is a basic requirement and not since the second world war has there been greater threat to national and international food supplies.

-Taking 20% of land out of production (10% habitat plus 10% trees) in Wales will threaten supply. Farmers have contracts to supply product i.e. milk, lamb beef. Losing area to trees will compromise these contracts. A decrease in product will affect processors who will have to buy in stock from England or Scotland to maintain capacity and viability, and might even move out of Wales.

-This decrease in Welsh stock, and hence production, will have an effect on the Welsh balance of payments.

The basic feasibility of growing trees. -Growing trees like growing anything is not easy:

- Weather affects young plantations. A long dry spell in the summer after planting leads to high mortality of saplings.

-Diseases have become more prevalent in the past years e.g. ash die back, acute oak die back, dutch elm disease, eight toothed spruce bark beetle, great spruce bark beetle, oak processionary moth, pine processionary moth, sweet chestnut blight and many more. (see Woodland Trust key tree pests and diseases)

-Conifers are often the easiest and fastest growing species to plant, but do not provide a very diverse habitat and are not reflective of the native habitat in Wales. The pasture land of Wales captures Carbon. It is full of earthworms essential for a healthy soil. Planting trees changes the ph (acidity) of the soil. Conifers particularly acidify the soil which kills earthworms leading to degradation of the soil and loss of Carbon and also leads to increased acidity in the water. Trees also use large volumes of water which affects the water table.

-Rabbits, hares, voles, mice and in some cases deer are prevalent and can destroy young saplings in days. Tree guards are expensive and usually made of single use plastic.

-Fencing is expensive and not long lasting (15-20 years)

-Planting near the coast in the teeth of the wind is nearly impossible. It has been suggested that farmers should plant in sheltered areas of land on these farms. This land is invaluable for shelter for stock and for arable crops. Salt wind can destroy an arable crop, such as barley, after planting in a weekend. Wind close to harvest can cause cereals to lodge, shed grain and be very difficult to harvest leading to significant decrease in yield.

-The payment available at present is realistic for flat easy plantings but the 12-year payment although initially reasonable is not inflation linked. After 12 years there will be no income until the wood is ready to harvest.(this will be a long time for hardwood plantations) The trees will still need managing until mature. At this point there may be a glut of timber if everyone plants in the next 6 years. Will there be enough demand and will there be labour to harvest? Have these key considerations been contemplated?

Positive suggestions:

-Decrease the percentage of trees required as a Universal Action so that most farmers are not restricted from joining the scheme by this action.

- At the same time make the payment for riparian strips around water courses attractive to also protect water courses from soil contamination. In these situations, advise shrubs which enhance the biodiversity as well as trees in these areas.

- Some farmers may be interested in significantly increasing the area of trees, well above 10%, on their land if they are incentivized by significant payments. This could be in the Optional Actions.

- Instead of just thinking the blunt tool of trees is the answer to Carbon capture in Wales farmers should be helped financially to assess the baseline emissions and capture on farms.

-Perhaps Wales should look into the Arc Zero project in Northern Ireland chaired by Prof John Gilliland which has pioneered a more precise Carbon measurement system for farms than just a basic carbon audit. It has looked into Carbon sequestration using new technologies: Aerial LiDAR showing 3D images of the farm from above which can be used to create a carbon asset register for your farm and they have pioneered a machine which can easily measure carbon stocks to 1 meter depth. Farmers could then be encouraged to increase Carbon sequestration in crops such as trees, willow, miscanthus and soil.

As all patients using the NHS are not prescribed the same prescription, possibly the prescription for our unique farming situations: geographies, habitats, livelihoods and the local communities within which they sit, should not be prescribed such a blunt remedy.

Alexandra Higgs MA BA Cantab

Introduce a 30mph limit on the trunk road through the villages of Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Ionawr 2024
Petitions Committee | 29 January 2024

Reference: SR20/7752-6

Petition Number: P-06-1389

Petition title: Introduce a 30mph limit on the trunk road through the villages of Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais

Text of petition: Many residential areas in Wales now benefit from a 20mph speed limit, with a strong evidence based rationale from Welsh Government. We do not feel it is safe that our villages of Eglwys Fach & Ffwrnais still suffer a 40mph limit.

For over 30 years we have been campaigning for safer pedestrian access in these villages, with 2 fatalities during that time. We want Welsh Government to review the 40mph limits through the villages to enable residents to walk safely and improve well being.

The villages sit along the main A487. The majority of the road has no pavement so our residents, including children and young people catching school buses, residents visiting neighbours or attending events, older villagers catching the bus, all have to walk ON the main A487. In some places there is insufficient room for 2 cars to pass on the road so motorists have to slow down to a halt to avoid these walkers.

The rationale of the Welsh Government for the 20mph limits through residential areas is: "The evidence from around the world is very clear – decreasing speeds will reduce collisions, save lives and reduce injuries –



helping to improve quality of life and make our streets and local communities safer for all."

Given the evidence we feel strongly that the speed limit through the villages of Eglwys Fach & Ffwrnais should be reviewed and reduced from 40mph.

1. Background

Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais are villages in Ceredigion on the A487. The A487 is part of the trunk road network of strategic routes.

The Welsh Government is the Highway Authority for the A487. The road's day to day management is delegated to the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent.

As the petition suggests, residents of the villages have been calling for road safety improvements for many years. In November 2023, residents held a march calling for a speed limit reduction and the construction of footways alongside the road. A similar march was held in 2014 – at that time including residents from the neighbouring village of Glandyfi. Calls for action have continued in the intervening period.

£10m was spent on improvements to widen the A487 at Glandyfi, with work completed in 2013.

2. Welsh Government action

The petition references the Welsh Government policy on reducing the default speed limit on restricted roads - those with streetlights no more than 200 yards apart – from 30mph to 20mph. The stretch of the A487 at Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais is not a restricted road and so was not affected by this policy.

The Welsh Government issued guidance on setting local speed limits in Wales (SLSLiW) in 2009. This applies to all roads in Wales except motorways. The guidance is currently being reviewed to reflect the 20mph speed limit policy, with the process for setting exceptions to the 20mph limit currently addressed through guidance published as an addendum to the 2009 document.

In discussing considerations in setting speed limits, SLSLiW says, “A study of road traffic collisions and casualties should indicate whether an existing speed limit is appropriate for the type of road and mix of use by different road users”. It also says:

The underlying aim should be to achieve a ‘safe’ distribution of speeds which reflects the function of the road and the impacts on the local community. The needs of vulnerable road users and communities must be fully taken into account.

The Welsh Government is currently consulting on a **new road safety strategy for Wales**.

The letter from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, highlights that the process for changing the speed limit on this road is set out in SLSLiW. He says:

Publication of the new SLSLiW guidance is being coordinated to ensure alignment with the new Road Safety Strategy. The new guidance may see a change in the criteria for lower speed limits in Wales. The Welsh Government will review the speed limits across its Trunk Road Network following publication of the guidance including this section of the A487.

3. Welsh Parliament action

While the issue of speed limits has been discussed extensively, it does not appear that the speed limit at Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais on the A470 has been raised.

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

Ein cyf/Our ref LW/03246/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

16 January 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 15 December enclosing petition P-06-1389 regarding the introduction of a 30mph limit on the A487 trunk road through the villages of Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais from Catherine Ruth Stevenson.

You will be aware of the introduction of the 20mph initiative in Wales. The 20mph national roll-out was limited to roads which were 30mph. For all roads outside this, such as the A487 Eglwys-fach, the process for changing speeds is dependent on updating the [Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales guidance \(SLSLiW\)](#), to reflect current Welsh Government policy including the national roll-out of [20mph speed limits](#) and to meet the ambitions highlighted in [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#). Publication of the new SLSLiW guidance is being coordinated to ensure alignment with the new Road Safety Strategy. The new guidance may see a change in the criteria for lower speed limits in Wales. The Welsh Government will review the speed limits across its Trunk Road Network following publication of the guidance including this section of the A487.

The petitioner(s) may wish to comment on the consultation for the Welsh Government's new Road Safety Strategy online at [Road safety strategy | GOV.WALES](#) which is available until 31 January 2024.

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.

Dear Petitions Committee

Thank you for email of 16th January regarding our Petition for a 30mph limit through our villages of Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais. You suggested that we respond on the following issues:

What are your thoughts on the attached document:

The attached letter from Lee Waters suggests that a review of speed limits will be undertaken on the A487 through our villages of Ffwrnais and Eglwys Fach following the publication of the new Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales (SLSLiW) Guidance. As a community who have been fighting to reduce speed limits through these villages for nearly 50 years, we welcome this review. However, having read the SLSLiW currently in place, and a number of other existing Strategies and Policies we consider that the Welsh Government is **NOT** meeting its commitments to its **current** Policies and Strategies, let alone any updated ones. We have explained why below. We are prepared, as a community, to take this to judicial review if the evidence is not used appropriately to make the decision on a speed limit reduction.

Our Community Council and others in the community have responded to the Road Safety Strategy consultation which states that roads should be safe for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, wheelchair users as well as car drivers- all of which are *unsafe* currently on the main road through our villages.

Does it adequately address the issues that you raised?

No, we do not think it adequately addresses the issues that we raised, against current or emerging future policy.

Further questions

Please see below our evidence to illustrate that the current situation does not meet Policy requirements. Our questions to Lee Waters are *‘Why can our 30mph speed limit request not be considered under current policy requirements? Why does it have to wait until new guidance is in place? Further, we would ask Lee Waters “Would you consider that the road situation in the villages of Ffwrnais and Eglwys Fach meets current Policy requirements?”*

Evidence

1. Safety

These villages are cut through by the A487. The speed limit is 40mph and 60mph in places, but cars and lorries often go faster than this. There is no pavement through the majority of the village.

We have a number of vulnerable users of the road in the village, including children, the elderly and wheelchair users, though the nature of the road makes all pedestrians and cyclists vulnerable.

There are 3 bus stops in the villages for the school bus. Each of these requires children to walk ON the main road on stretches with no pavement, with traffic travelling at 40mph, and in some places 60mph. They also need to cross the A487 to access the bus stops.

Everyone, including the elderly has to walk ON the main road to get to the community centre (the Iron Room - where a number of events are held each week), bus stops, and church, and to see friends in the village. Many older people choose to drive within the village because walking is not safe. The community centre in particular, is on a blind summit.

There have been 3 fatalities and 1 life changing injury within the village due to fast traffic since 1982: this includes the death of a child, an older resident trying to drive his car out of his drive, and a motorbike rider. A resident in his 30's suffered life changing injuries whilst trying to get to his car on the main road outside his house. He can no longer engage in his work as a builder and joiner.

Over 100 people came out to protest about the road on Saturday 18th November 2023.



The above situation contradicts the following policies: (italics added)

- **SLSLiW** Section 3.5 The following factors should be assessed “The conditions and facilities for *vulnerable road users*, *the level of public anxiety* “*the potential collision and casualty savings*”.
- Section 3.6 “the underlying aim of speed management policies should be to achieve a safe distribution of speeds which reflect the function of the *road and the needs of the local community*”.
- Section 3.7 “the estimated *collision and injury* savings should be an important factor when considering changes to a local speed limit”.

- Section 3.8 “the characteristic of the road, including its geometry ...should be a key factor when setting a speed limit”.
- A number of points of section 3.9 are also contradicted. E.g. the following factors are important: “road users’ composition (including existing and potential levels of pedestrian, cyclist, horse rider,” “road geometry (width, sight lines, bends level of adjacent development”
- 3.10 – the *needs of vulnerable road users* must be fully taken into account in order to further encourage their mobility and improve their safety “

The above situation also conflicts with the ambitions of **the Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021:**

- pg 26 Confidence and safety- “we want everyone to feel *confident safe, secure* and welcome using the sustainable transport mode of their choice”.
- pg 18 “upgrade our existing infrastructure to meet our legal obligations on *accessibility and safety...*”

2. Community Coherence, Wellbeing, Isolation and Anxiety

The A 487 currently cuts through our community, and residents are unable to walk safely to visit friends and neighbours within the villages, attend community events in the community centre or church. This seriously curtails community cohesion and means that there is little interaction. Older community members in particular feel isolated and are unable to walk, even to their relatives’ a few houses up the road. When they are unable to drive, this isolation becomes extreme. Some residents with small children have moved out of the village due to the dangerous road.

This situation contravenes the following policies:

SLSLIW

- 3.5 and 3.9 Important factors include the need to satisfy the following: “the level of community severance by moving traffic”.

The Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021:

- pg 24 “transport services and infrastructure accessible and inclusive by aiming to remove the physical, attitudinal, environmental, systemic, linguistic and economic barriers that prevent people from using sustainable transport.”
- pg 32 Cohesive communities: “ensure that planning and transport solutions are tailored to the needs of different communities and different parts of Wales *including rural communities*”.

3. Healthy living

Residents cannot walk or cycle safely from their houses in their village. As a result, they get in their car if they have one, or if able to drive. There is no safe cycling or walking route to the bus stops or to the local train station (Dovey Junction).

Whilst the Active Travel Fund was utilised recently to provide a safe walking/cycling route from Waun Fawr to Commins Coch (Also on the A487), we feel our community is being left out.

This situation contravenes the following policies:

Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021:

- pg 23 A transport system that contributes to a more equal Wales and to a healthier Wales, that everyone has the confidence to use.
- pg 25 Health: We will contribute to higher activity levels through more people walking and cycling.

4. Sustainability

Residents will get into their cars rather than walk e.g. to the community centre within the village as there is no safe passage. This creates greater CO2 emissions and other pollution.

This situation contravenes the following policies:

Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021:

- pg 28 Greenhouse gas emissions – “we will deliver a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport”.
- pg 17 “.....Actively aim to achieve a shift away from private car use to more sustainable transport modesthat enable more people to walk, cycle and use public transport ...”
- pg 19 the sustainable transport hierarchy of a) walking and cycling, public transport, ultra-low emissions vehicles, other private motor vehicles.

The above situation also conflicts with the law enshrined in the **Well Being of Future Generation Wales Act (2015)** particularly around the requirements of decisions that support cohesive communities, a healthier Wales and a Globally Responsible Wales.

We look forward to your response

Yours Faithfully

Dr. Ruth Stevenson (on behalf of the Eglwys Fach and Ffwrnais communities)

P-06-1390: Stop all subsidies on food in the Senedd and for Welsh Government staff in general

Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Ionawr 2024
Petitions Committee | 29 January 2024

Reference: SR24/ 7752-7

Petition Number: P-06-1390

Petition title: Stop all subsidies on food in the Senedd and for Welsh Government staff in general

Text of petition:

Given the recent announcement that Welsh Government is considering removing certain items from meal deals, in a bid to force the Welsh public what to eat, this petition calls for an end to subsidising food for Welsh MSs and their staff.

Why should the people of Wales have to suffer financially when those in the Senedd and Welsh Government enjoy a cheap meal?

People in Wales are sick and tired of the constant infringement on our lives by the busy bodies in the Welsh Government who want to tell us what and what not to eat while they enjoy subsidised food and meals.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/390-fry-up-welsh-politicians-26304030>



1. Background

Catering services in the Welsh Government and Senedd estates are provided by external contractors through separate catering contracts.

In a [Freedom of Information request response in July 2023](#), the Welsh Government said the All Wales Catering Contract (AWCC) “provides catering services to its administrative estate only. The contract is outsourced and does not include concessions”.

In another [response to a Freedom of Information request in June 2022](#), the Senedd Commission (Commission) confirmed that “specific catering services are not based on price subsidies for items for sale but on the basis of the total contract costs and budget to provide the range of services required in the outlets”.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government provided AWCC revenue and subsidy figures for the financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23 which are included in the table below.

Location	2021-22		2022-23	
	Net Income	Net Subsidy	Net Income	Net Subsidy
Aberystwyth	£19,167	£48,154	£26,885	£49,352
Bedwas	n/a	£379	n/a	n/a
Carmarthen	n/a	£363	n/a	n/a
Cathays Park	£132,325	£198,560	£221,987	£182,832
Llandrindod	n/a	£113	n/a	n/a
Llandudno Junction	£15,652	£63,635	£27,786	£63,995
Merthyr Tydfil	£15,876	£52,112	£25,540	£41,330
Penllergaer	n/a	£136	n/a	n/a
Treforest	n/a	£310	n/a	n/a
Hospitality (Primarily Cathays Park)	£6,769	£35,684	£49,824	£23,761
Central Shared Costs	n/a	£39,635	n/a	£34,929
Total	£189,790	£439,078	£352,022	£396,200

3. Welsh Parliament action

The cost of providing the total range of services on the Senedd estate is included in the Commission's published Annual Budget. For 2023-24, the total budget for catering services is £430K and includes labour costs, food costs, supplies costs, equipment costs and a management fee.

It allows the range of services on the Senedd estate to be resourced and run, including the public café, staff restaurant, Members' Tea Rooms and Restaurant as well as all of the hospitality services for meetings and events.

The Senedd's annual budget for catering services is detailed in the [Annual Budget for 2023-24](#) table below.

Table 5: Analysis of Accommodation and Facilities costs

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Rent and rates incl. car parking	£2,007	£1,895	£1,923	£1,951
Maintenance and works	£1,030	£1,035	£1,035	£1,035
Security	£773	£773	£773	£773
Utilities	£582	£1,251	£1,276	£1,301
Cleaning	£533	£560	£572	£584
Catering	£399	£430	£438	£447
Photocopier Rentals	£105	£65	£65	£65
Furniture and Fittings	£60	£60	£60	£60
Total	£5,489	£6,069	£6,142	£6,216

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.

Empowering Parental Choice: Opt-Out Rights and Inclusive Involvement in the RSE Program

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Ionawr 2024
Petitions Committee | 29 January 2024

Reference: SR24/7752

Petition Number: P-06-1393

Petition title: Empowering Parental Choice: Opt-Out Rights and Inclusive Involvement in the RSE Program

Text of petition: This petition advocates for parental choice and inclusive involvement in the Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) program. It highlights the importance of respecting diverse beliefs, safeguarding parental rights, and enabling an opt-out option. The petition aims to foster understanding, respect, and prevent discrimination. This petition to ensure parental choice and promoting inclusive involvement in the RSE program. It recognizes the diverse beliefs held by parents and emphasizes the importance of respecting their rights. Also, address concerns regarding the lack of an opt-out option, which may infringe upon parental autonomy. By opt-out choice, parents can align their child's education with their religious or personal convictions. This approach fosters a more inclusive environment that respects the values and beliefs of all families involved. Also, the significance of open dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for diverse perspectives within the RSE program. It advocates for an educational framework that avoids discrimination, upholds parental rights, and encourages active parental involvement in their child's education. By striking a balance between inclusivity and parental autonomy, the RSE program can provide a more comprehensive and respectful approach to relationship and sex education.



1. Background

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a mandatory element of the new age 3-16 Curriculum for Wales, which was established by the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#). The Curriculum for Wales was introduced in primary schools in September 2022, before being rolled out to Year 7 and 8 in September 2023, and each additional year group until it reaches Year 11 in September 2026.

RSE replaces sex and relationships education (SRE). SRE was a compulsory part of the basic curriculum in secondary schools, whilst primary schools had the opportunity to teach it but were not obliged to. RSE is mandatory in primary schools as well as secondary schools, with the 2021 Act requiring that provision be “developmentally appropriate”.

Previously, parents have had the right to withdraw their child from sex education that was not part of a national curriculum subject. Under the new curriculum, parents are not able to withdraw their child from RSE. The Welsh Government set out its rationale for this when it consulted on [Ensuring access to the full curriculum](#) (2019). In its consultation document, it said:

We believe there is a strong principle-based case for all school learners to be guaranteed access to RE and RSE. For learners to fully benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum, they must be able to access all parts of the curriculum.

2. Welsh Government action

Schools’ provision of RSE is guided by a statutory code, the [Relationships and Sexuality Code](#), which was approved in Plenary on 14 December 2021. The content of the Code is set within the context of broad and interlinked learning strands:

- relationships and identity;
- sexual health and well-being;
- empowerment, safety and respect.

The Welsh Government's statutory guidance on RSE states:

Schools and settings should have clear lines of communication in relation to RSE and should engage with learners, parents, carers and the wider community, offering them the opportunity to engage with learning and teaching in RSE.

Communicating effectively with parents and carers on an ongoing basis is an important way to foster positive relationships in order to engage them in purposeful and meaningful dialogue.

The guidance also states that RSE must be objective, critical, and pluralistic as to its content and manner of teaching. It states:

By pluralistic we mean that that where questions of values are concerned, schools and settings must provide a range of views on a given subject, commonly held within society. This also means providing a range of factual information on RSE issues. In all schools, where they explore specific beliefs or views, this must include a range of other faith and non-religious views on the issue.

A legal challenge brought by parents from Public Child Protection (Wales) to stop compulsory lessons in RSE was heard in the High Court in November 2022. The High Court ruled on 22 December 2022 that the lessons were lawful. Welcoming the decision the Minister for Education and Welsh Language said:

Parents can expect schools to engage with them about their plans for teaching RSE and to be able to raise any constructive questions or anxieties they have about those plans.

3. Welsh Parliament action

3.1. Children, Young People and Education Committee

The fact that RSE would be compulsory for all learners from age 3 and that parents would not have a right to withdraw their child from its teaching was considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in its scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill (see chapter 6 of its Stage 1 report on the general principles of the Bill). The Committee's view was that all children should have full access to learning about relationships and sexuality. In their view,

including even a limited right to withdraw risks undermining this approach. Their support was predicated on RSE being:

- developmentally appropriate;
- objective, critical and pluralistic;
- delivered in accordance with detailed and clear statutory guidance, constructed by experts, practitioners and children and young people themselves; and
- underpinned by the necessary professional learning, resources and expert.

3.2. Petitions Committee

A petition, [P-05-1096 Remove RSE from the mandatory element of the Curriculum Bill 2020](#) was considered by the Petitions Committee in 2021. In light of the scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill by the Children, Young People and Education Committee and in the Stage 1 debate in Plenary, as well as the opportunities that would be available to Members to amend the Bill, the Committee agreed to maintain a watching brief on the petition. The petition was closed by the Committee as part of a review of all petitions that were under consideration at the Petitions Committee's final meeting of the Fifth Senedd, in light of the forthcoming election and the consideration given to this issue up to that date.

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-06-1393
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/02094/23

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

12 January 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 15 December to inform me of *Petition P-06-1393 - Empowering Parental Choice: Opt-Out Rights and Inclusive Involvement in the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Program*, which is currently collecting signatures.

The Welsh Government's responsibility is to ensure that young people, through public education, have access to learning that supports them to understand and discuss their rights and the rights of others. We want education to help our children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready for the next chapter in their life after school.

Why RSE Is Mandatory?

RSE is a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales because it is central to keeping them safe and healthy. All young people should have the right to access information that protects them and keeps them safe from harm. This includes learning about healthy relationships; keeping safe online and offline; anti-bullying; learning about violence against women and being confident to raise issues with responsible adults. This is critical to building a society which treats others with understanding and empathy, whatever their ethnicity, religion, social economic background, disability, sex, gender or sexuality.

Parents have a central role to play in supporting their children. There is also a crucial role for schools: in a world where there is so much incorrect and misleading information and harmful material circulating online, schools are teaching children and young people about the importance of building healthy relationships and self-esteem; encouraging learners to value themselves; recognise and communicate their feelings and form friendships.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@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 statutory guidance is very clear that we expect schools to work closely with parents and carers to make sure they understand what their children are learning. It states that schools and settings should have clear lines of communication in relation to RSE and should engage with learners, parents, carers and the wider community, to engage with learning and teaching in RSE. It should be ensured that all resources to be used in schools and settings are relevant, reputable, developmentally appropriate, inclusive and sensitive to learners' needs, and materials can be shared with parents in advance.

Respecting Diverse Beliefs

Learning is also legally required to be objective, critical and pluralistic as set out in the Statutory Guidance:

'By pluralistic we mean that that where questions of values are concerned, schools and settings must provide a range of views on a given subject, commonly held within society. This also means providing a range of factual information on RSE issues. In all schools, where they explore specific beliefs or views, this must include a range of other faith and non-religious views on the issue.

For example, schools may include learning about current tensions, disagreements or debates within society, or they may explore different perspectives within faiths on issues. Developing this pluralism is important in ensuring learners develop as informed citizens who are aware of and sensitive to a range of different opinions, values and beliefs. This supports them to engage with and navigate potential tensions.

A good understanding of learners' views, emerging values and backgrounds is central to developing this pluralism. Positive relationships with wider communities can help to create a constructive context for exploring aspects and tensions in a sensitive way'.

Inclusivity is also a key principle that underpins our vision within the new curriculum. Learning should be underpinned by a collective whole-school approach that is inclusive to ensure all learners see themselves and each other in what they learn. The RSE guidance, which all schools must consider, specifically highlights the importance of children's right to follow their religion.

Engagement with Parents and Carers and Right to Withdraw

We expect schools to keep parents and carers fully aware of what is being learned and why, with opportunity for questions and clarification. The RSE Code has been published to give parents and carers clarity and transparency about what their children will learn and when. A well-supported, proactive approach by schools should help dispel any legitimate concerns that parents and carers may have in relation to RSE provision. This will also help to reassure them of the positive nature of RSE by setting out the proposed learning and resources to be used at the different developmental phases.

The RSE Code is also clear that learning must be developmentally appropriate for every child; which means learners must not learn about subjects that they're not ready for. Schools should only introduce learning when they are confident that it is developmentally appropriate for learners.

The Curriculum for Wales requirements and the decision to remove the right to withdraw were the subject of extensive consultation. Since 2018, RSE has been through full and wide-ranging consultation and through the scrutiny process in the Senedd.

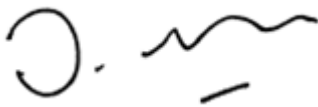
During the judicial review into RSE in 2022, the High Court rejected the characterisation of the RSE curriculum by the claimants, and it found in favour of the Welsh Government on all counts. Throughout the development of this policy, we have been clear that RSE is intended to keep children safe and to promote respect and healthy relationships and this was affirmed by the court. In particular, the judge said:

- *“...In my judgment, both the Code and the Guidance reflect the general spirit of the (European Convention of Human Rights) as an instrument designed to maintain and promote the ideals and values of a modern liberal democracy, including the values of tolerance, respect and equality.”*

We continue to work with local authorities, school improvement services and schools to support them in rolling out this aspect of the new curriculum and to help them engage with parents, carers and communities, including with resources to support teaching and learning. This includes the [RSE toolkit](#) on Hwb that has information in twelve languages.

In summary, we are clear that mandatory RSE is about keeping children safe from harm and protecting their mental and emotional well-being. RSE is legally required to be pluralistic, meaning schools must provide a range of information that is factual and reflects the range of views commonly held in society - the High Court ruled that the RSE Code is consistent with this. Finally, schools are expected to work closely with parents as they develop and deliver RSE and parents should be able to see materials being used. If they have any concerns, schools should have clear processes in place to address and respond to these issues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

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

P-06-1393 Empowering Parental Choice: Opt-Out Rights and Inclusive Involvement in the RSE Program - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee

January 17, 2024

Petitions Committee, Welsh Parliament
Senedd, Pierhead St, Cardiff CF99 1SN

Dear Petitions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further comments on Petition P-06-1393 in the context of the document provided by the Welsh Government.

Our primary concern remains the alignment of the Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum with the principles of modesty in various religious and cultural contexts, including Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and other ethical frameworks. Modesty, or Haya, in an article published on the "SalamIslam" website in Islam, is a comprehensive virtue encompassing behavior, speech, and interactions, particularly relevant in the context of sexual education. It is a principle that emphasizes dignity, respect, and self-restraint, transcending mere dress and appearance to include conduct before God, in society, and even in private. It highlights the importance of modesty as a pivotal ethical principle in Islam, emphasizing dignity, respect, and self-restraint, which is crucial in the context of sexual education (1). Modesty also holds significance in Judaism (2) and Christianity (3), as well as in various cultural and ethical frameworks.

The current RSE curriculum, as implemented, does not seem to sufficiently respect these principles and the diverse perspectives on modesty, culture, and ethical frameworks. There is a significant discrepancy between the Welsh Government's policy of working collaboratively with parents and its actual implementation. Many parents from various communities have reported that the schools are enforcing materials that conflict with their religious beliefs regarding modesty and cultural values. This enforcement not only disregards the cultural and religious sensitivities of students but also potentially exposes children to content for which they are not developmentally ready.

Research underscores the risks of exposing children to sexual content prematurely. A systematic review and meta-analysis involving 16,200 participants indicated a strong association between exposure to sexual content and the likelihood of engaging in problematic sexual behaviors in children and adolescents (4). Early exposure to sexual content can lead to early sexualization, high-risk sexual behaviors, and even the development of sex, love, and relationship addictions, as discussed by Psychology Today (5). The National Sexual Violence Resource Center also highlights the impact of exposure to sexually explicit and exploitative materials on children, emphasizing the need for preventative measures (6).

To address these concerns, we respectfully suggest the following steps:

- Formation of school-based voluntary committees upon the request of parents, with diverse membership representing the community.
- These committees would "supervise" the implementation process and ensure that it aligns with the values and beliefs of our community.
- Committees would actively engage with the school board to collaboratively build the RSE curriculum.
- Prior to any release of these materials to the pupils, we suggest that the unanimous agreement of this committee should be considered essential, as it would reflect the collective wisdom of the community.
- These committees would not only oversee the content but also guide the delivery process to ensure transparency and inclusivity.
- We are also open to the possibility of an in-person meeting to further share our point of view and discuss how we can work together for the benefit of our children.

We strongly emphasize the need to respect children's religion, culture, age, and readiness when delivering RSE content. Parents should have the opportunity to preview materials to ensure they align with their values and beliefs. Many parents have reported that they only see a title before the content is delivered, and

in some cases, the content has been very explicit.

We urge the Committee to consider these aspects in revising the RSE curriculum to ensure it is effective, respectful, and inclusive of all students' cultural and religious backgrounds, with particular attention to the principles of modesty in various religious and cultural contexts.

On behalf of more than 100 concerned families, we request your attention to these important matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Mostafa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Dr Mohamed Mostafa
Mohamed Mostafa BSc(Hons) PhD MBCS
Data Scientist and AI Engineer
Former Senior Lecturer in Data Science and Program Director

*References

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- [6] National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.nsvrc.org>

Agenda Item 3.1

P-06-1353 Devolve responsibilities and budgets for trunk roads in North Wales to North Wales

This petition was submitted by Askar Sheibani, having collected a total of 330 signatures.

Text of Petition:

At the moment all the roads, except large trunk roads, come under the responsibility of the six local authorities in North Wales. Including the trunk road networks within the responsibility of the six local authorities in North Wales will lead to much more relevant and pragmatic decisions, as local authorities are far more in tune with local businesses, communities, and the economy.

Additional Information:

North Wales has some of the largest industrial parks (such as Wrexham and Deeside) in the UK. There are many internationally known companies that have made North Wales their home. It has one of the biggest manufacturing jobs concentrations in the UK. Holyhead, two international airports (Liverpool & Manchester) make it easy to promote North Wales as a great place for investment. Unfortunately, its road network is outdated and is therefore preventing the region from achieving its potential for economic growth. These roads including the trunk roads must be planned and designed together in consultation with the local communities and businesses to achieve the best return on investment. This will address local needs such as easy access to employment. Only a locally based decision will address North Wales' road transport needs. The voice of local businesses and communities needs to be heard.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Alyn and Deeside
- North Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1353
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/02550/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

11 January 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 6 October regarding Petition P-06-1353 Devolve responsibilities and budgets for trunk roads in North Wales to North Wales.

Please see below responses to the petitioner's questions.

1. Has the Deputy Minister discussed devolving responsibilities and budgets for North Wales Trunk Roads with regional leaders?

No. Regional leaders have not raised this with me and I have not raised it with them, because it is not Welsh Government policy for the reasons outlined in my previous letter.

2. Has the Deputy Minister told the North Wales Transport Commission that he will reject such a recommendation, should the Commission make it?

No. I have not given any steers to the Commission beyond the terms of reference.

3. Is spending on the Strategic Road Network available by region, in the interests of transparency?

Please see below table for the spend (capital and revenue) on the Strategic Road Network for this Senedd term.

	North Wales	Mid Wales	South Wales
2020/21	£115m	£40m	£134m
2021/22	£98m	£45m	£136m
2022/23	£46m	£36m	£102m

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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.

4. In principle, does the Welsh Government support the notion that people in North Wales should determine investments in all roads in North Wales?

Yes, and people in North Wales do determine investments in all roads in North Wales by electing representatives to local authorities and the Senedd.

5. Has the Welsh Government ruled out devolving responsibilities for trunk road investment to the Corporate Joint Committee?

Yes, for the reasons set out in my previous letter.

6. Would the Welsh Government agree to at least consult with the people of North Wales over the devolution of responsibilities for trunk roads?

Not at present, because de-trunking roads in North Wales is not Welsh Government policy.

Yours sincerely,

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

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

Agenda Item 3.2

P-06-1345 Make conservation management plans compulsory for scheduled monuments at risk such as Ruperra Castle

This petition was submitted by Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust, having collected 7,469 signatures online and 3,086 signatures on paper, making for a total of 10,555 signatures.

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...

Additional Information:

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 CMPs 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>.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Caerphilly
- South Wales East

Dear Petitions Committee

Following on from the Senedd debate on 18 October 2023 asking for conservation management plans to be made compulsory for scheduled monuments at risk like Ruperra Castle, we met with Deputy Minister Dawn Bowden in November to discuss Ruperra Castle and the petition.

You will probably all be aware of the very good news that Cadw is part funding a structural survey and level 4 historic building record for Ruperra Castle to take place before March 2024. We are delighted and wanted to thank Dawn Bowden and Cadw, plus all the members of the petitions committee for their support by recommending a plenary debate and raising awareness of the situation at Ruperra Castle, and other nationally important scheduled monuments at risk in Wales.

We were also pleased to hear that Cadw will ensure appropriate conservation management plans are submitted in support of any future applications for Cadw grant support for Ruperra Castle. This shows the importance that Cadw places on conservation management plans and we hope that the owner will be encouraged to put a future plan in place.

Whilst assessing the current state of the monument it is a positive first step for Ruperra Castle, the castle will still be at a high risk of being lost. Since the plenary debate, in November 2023 Caerphilly County Borough Council published a Buildings at risk register and strategy, which places Ruperra Castle as the highest priority for action. Ruperra Castle was described by Cadw inspectors as "structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term".

<https://democracy.caerphilly.gov.uk/documents/s46909/Appendix%201.pdf>

There are still 14% of nationally important scheduled monuments in Wales that we are at risk of losing which was the focus of the petition.

The letter from the Deputy Minister said: 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." However, there were several suggestions we sent in August 2023 in response to the Deputy Ministers letter which could provide opportunities to look at complex sites at risk:

1. Formal review of the Historic Environment Bill

In 2017 the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee 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/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=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>

2. 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.

Kind regards

Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust

Agenda Item 3.3

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

This petition was submitted by Natasha Evans-Jones, having collected a total of 1,125 signatures.

Text of Petition:

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

Additional Information:

Ehlers-Danlos syndromes are genetic connective tissue disorders with body-wide symptoms which can be disabling, affecting all aspects of life. One type is life-threatening. Symptoms of most types include musculoskeletal problems, chronic pain and fatigue, gastrointestinal disturbance, fragile skin, pelvic and bladder problems, autonomic dysfunction and anxiety. Twelve of the 13 classified types can be diagnosed via genetic testing. There is no single test for the most common type (hEDS) or for the related hypermobility spectrum disorders (HSD) which makes diagnosis challenging. Together, hEDS and HSD are fairly common. A study in 2019 using data from Welsh hospitals and GP records found that 1 in 500 people are affected (Demmler et al, <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/9/11/e031365>).

The situation in Wales is causing suffering for those waiting for diagnosis, those on inappropriate treatment pathways, and their families.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Vale of Clwyd
- North Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1348

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

20 December 2023

Dear Jack,

The Petitions Committee wrote in October regarding healthcare for people living with Ehlers-Danlos syndromes (EDS) and Hypermobility spectrum disorders (HSD) in Wales. I advised I would ask my officials to review the additional queries provided by Ehlers Danloss Support UK (EDSUK) regarding access to healthcare for EDS and HSD patients.

EDSUK challenged whether appropriate referrals to rheumatology were being made and the status of EDS and HSD as rare diseases. I have sought further determination from the national clinical leadership in both rare diseases and musculoskeletal conditions.

In the absence of NICE or BSR guidance in this area, the EDS toolkit provided by Ehlers-Danloss Support UK advises that *“the key role of the GP at this moment in time is in diagnosing hEDS/HSD, validating the patient’s symptoms and co-ordinating care”*. This is completed through a thorough person-centred assessment as there are currently no specialist or specific medical tests for hEDS or HSD. It describes a range of interventions that should be available within the primary care team such as pharmacology and therapies.

In relation to referrals to secondary care, the toolkit describes criteria for escalation to secondary care genetic or rheumatology services when either the diagnosis is less clear or for consideration of the other, rare forms of EDS. These escalation criteria are consistent with the referral thresholds agreed by the all Wales medical genetic service. We fully expect these referral criteria to be considered.

The NHS Executive in Wales will soon consist of a National Strategic Network for musculoskeletal conditions and a rare disease implementation network. These networks will work collectively to explore how care pathways can be improved. The clinical leadership has advised they would be looking to work with the British Society of Rheumatologists, Ehlers Danlos Support UK and community pathways teams to productively consider these issues.

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

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

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

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

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

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



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1348
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/01941/23

22 January 2024

Dear Eluned,

Thank you for your letter of the 20 December 2023 with your carefully considered response concerning our petition for better care for those with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome/hypermobility spectrum disorder (EDS/ HSD) in Wales. Thank you also for the opportunity to put comments through the petitions committee, both of which we warmly appreciate.

We welcome the reference to our GP toolkit hosted until recently by the RCGP, which we know has helped GPs using it. The toolkit is now available on our website <https://gptoolkit.ehlers-danlos.org/> We also welcome the opportunity to work with National Strategic Network for musculoskeletal conditions and the rare disease implementation network collectively, to explore how care pathways can be improved. We are delighted that the clinical leadership will work with ourselves, the British Society of Rheumatologists and community pathways teams to productively consider these issues. This is great news.

We have the following questions in response to your letter.

1. How will we move this important discussion forwards? How can we engage with the other specialists within the multidisciplinary team across primary and secondary care that are involved in managing EDS/HSD? It is critical that the people involved in this pivotal discussion fully represent the complexity and multisystemic nature of the condition. We need to have representation from other specialists including physiotherapists, gastroenterologists, neurologists, gynaecologists etc. Will the clinical leadership you have sought further determination from, set a date for us to meet? What is the timeline for the change to a National Strategic Network?
2. Whilst we wait for this important discussion, our GP toolkit, in the absence of NICE or BSR guidance in this area, is the only tool available and therefore the only way of aiding accurate and timely diagnoses and effective treatment plans. Will there be opportunities to formalise links to it to ensure that all healthcare professionals and not only GPs are aware of the toolkit? Is there funding available to help promote it and host it on relevant Continuing Medical Education platforms?

Thank you again for your looking into this issue and for the committee's ongoing support. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Natasha Evans-Jones (She/her)
Lead engagement and community volunteer for Wales
Area coordinator for North Wales

The Ehlers-Danlos Support UK is a Charity registered in England and Wales (No. 1157027) and Scotland (SCO46712). Registered Company No. 8924646. Registered Address: Devonshire House, Manor Way, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire WD6 1QQ

Agenda Item 3.4

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

This petition was submitted by Emyr Owen, having collected a total of 362 signatures.

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.

Additional Information:

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.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Wrexham
- North Wales

Dear Clerk,

Thank you for the advanced notice that my petition will be considered again at the next meeting of the Petitions Committee.

I would like to start by welcoming the long-awaited report by the North Wales Transport Commission on Menai Strait transport connections, and the recommendations do adequately address some of the current issues with crossing the Menai Strait.

I would like to make particular comments on Recommendations 3-5 about studying and potentially redesigning the junctions before and after Britannia Bridge – from personal experience, these junctions have often caused problems with traffic flow across the bridge so I believe the Welsh Government should indeed look at these as a priority.

I would also like to pay attention to Recommendation 7 to increase the frequency of trains calling at Llanfair PG. As a strong advocate for rail travel, I believe this would be hugely beneficial to promote a modal shift towards public transport, especially by rail, which would ultimately have a positive impact on climate change.

On the points the Commission made specifically on the Third Menai Bridge, I would like to thank them for including this in their report and particularly that they do see there may be reasons to renew the scheme in the future, with reference to potential developments at Wylfa Newydd which I would like to add my own support to as I strongly believe Nuclear Power is going to be vital to decarbonising electricity production. I understand that any new bridge will need to meet the Welsh Government's 4 tests for road building, and should this be considered in the future I would like to refer to my personal solutions to meeting these points that I mentioned in my response to the Deputy Minister.

I strongly hope that the Welsh Government will carefully read the recommendations of this report and work should begin in earnest to implement them.

Whilst outside the general scope of my petition, I would however like to make a small comment regarding the North Wales Transport Commission's final report, specifically on their points about rail travel.

In Page 36 of the report, they make the comment "We do not support reinstating rail lines in north Wales at present." I believe this is a hugely disappointing comment made by the Commission and I would like to ask the Welsh Government if they agree with this particular point. Amazing work by volunteers has already been undertaken to clear the old line between Amlwch and Gaerwen on Anglesey, therefore I find the comments made by the Commission that they would support this valuable asset being turned into an Active Travel route very disappointing.

Likewise, the point made that they do not support opening any new stations in North Wales, aside from the station in Deeside, is equally disappointing, as many communities across North Wales have no easy access to the national rail network. Comments like these only strengthen the belief that money is spent in South Wales whilst the North is left out of good investment opportunities.

Whilst these points are separate to what my initial petition is about, I do believe it important that they are addressed in some form as the report as written could potentially lead to missed investment opportunities in North Wales.

I look forward to watching the debate in the Petitions Committee on the 29th of January.

Yours sincerely

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

Emyr Owen

Agenda Item 3.5

P-06-1357 Microplastics Action Plan for Wales

This petition was submitted by Friends of the Earth Cymru, having collected a total of 3,259 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Microplastic particles have been found from the highest mountain tops to the deepest oceans and plastic microfibres from the clothes we wear are estimated to make up about 35% of the entire plastic pollution in our seas and oceans.

Microplastics have been found to be toxic to marine life and growing evidence suggests they are harmful to life on land, including ourselves.

We call on Welsh Government to draw up a new Microplastics Action Plan to protect life in our seas and on our land.

Additional Information:

Microplastics are thinner than a human hair but they are causing big problems for life in our oceans and on our land

They come from many sources including plastic bottles, vehicle tyres and even from paints on buildings and road markings

They are also in the air and in our food chain. Fragments have even been found in the blood in 8 out of 10 people with as yet unknown health effects <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/24/microplastics-found-in-human-blood-for-first-time>

Welsh Government has a strong record of action on plastics but there is scope for increased action on microplastics.

We ask that Welsh Government work with relevant organisations and experts to draw up a Microplastics Action Plan to include things like addressing plastic microfibre release and microplastic pollution on land and in water courses around Wales and the provision of education about these issues in schools.

Microplastic pollution is a big problem in Wales – we must address it.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff West
- South Wales Central



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1357
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/02776/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

22 November 2023

Dear Jack Sargeant,

Thank you for your letter of 6 October regarding Petition P-06-1357 which asks whether the Welsh Government plan to work with relevant organisations and experts to draw up a Microplastics Action Plan for Wales, and also consider the establishment of an expert group to advise on the issue of microplastics.

I am equally concerned about the impact microplastics are having on our environment, health, and biodiversity. As explained in my previous response, we are fully committed to tackling plastic pollution and we're proud of the measures we have in place, such as our Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023, and also some of the newer measures we have on the horizon such as the Workplace Recycling Regulations which will come into force in April 2024, and the work we are continuing to do to introduce a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers.

As you are aware from my previous response, we have also worked across governments to develop a British Standard to prevent the loss of plastic pellets to the environment during the production and transport phase of the plastics lifecycle, and we continue to work with the UK and Devolved Governments to develop a microplastics indicator for our seas. Additionally, we are also looking for opportunities to influence the negotiations taking place at the United Nations to develop a global treaty on plastics.

I appreciate that my previous response was limited to the actions within my Ministerial portfolio. I am pleased to now give you an update on activities across the Welsh Government. For ease of reference, there are listed in the order they appeared in the petitioner's correspondence:

Microplastic pollution of farmland

The Welsh Government is working with the other governments of the United Kingdom on the development of a revised fertilisers regulatory regime, which will give consideration to controls on microplastics in materials which are to be applied to land. This work is being carried out under the Fertilisers Common Framework. The Fertilisers Common Framework was drafted to support the effective regulation of fertilisers across the UK following the

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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.

United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. Notably it supports the functioning of retained EU legislation, domestic legislation, as well as communication and decision-making processes between the four governments of the UK in relation to fertilisers. This work includes but is not limited to consideration of the controls introduced in the European Union in relation to plastics with materials applied to land, including Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 laying down rules on the making available on the market of EU fertilising products.

Lack of testing for microplastics in Wales

Microplastics have an eco-toxicological impact on aquatic life and they also negatively impact on the wider environment. Understanding the presence of microplastics in potable water is a concern and it is considered in policy development by the Welsh Government. The most comprehensive UK report on microplastics in drinking water was published by the UK Water Industry Research (UKWIR) in 2019 and is available to view at [https://ukwir.org/view/\\$NvDnwfm](https://ukwir.org/view/$NvDnwfm). The UKWIR research found that more than 99.9% of microplastics are removed from drinking water and waste water through water company treatment processes. Nevertheless, we recognise that more research is needed to understand the full impact of plastic pollution on human health and the environment.

There is currently no statutory requirement to test microplastics in waterbodies in Wales. However, the Emerging Chemical Threats to Water Quality group, managed by Welsh Government, is considering the role of microplastics as part of their wider objective to identify chemical substances and associated issues which present a threat to water quality in Wales.

Washing machines

Any decision to follow France and legislate on the production of washing machines with microplastic filters would rest with the UK Government.

Education sector

The Welsh Government statutory guidance provides that all schools should ensure that arrangements are in place so that second-hand school uniforms are available for pupils to acquire. Second-hand uniforms can benefit all parents, particularly those on low incomes. In addition, by extending the life of garments, schools can encourage sustainability and its wider benefits.

Schools should promote the sustainability and environmental benefits of recycling uniform items when advertising their second-hand uniform arrangements.

We recently held a consultation on school uniform policy regarding proposed changes to our statutory guidance here in Wales. The consultation received an extremely high number of responses from stakeholders.

Responses from the consultation showed a considerable call for uniforms to be retained as school uniform can provide a sense of identity, community and cohesion within the school. However, the majority of those who responded to the consultation agreed that logos should not be required. Nearly 90% of respondents also felt that schools should avoid single supplier agreements; and there was almost universal consensus that schools should operate uniform exchange or recycling schemes.

Community enterprises

Re-use and repair has an important role to play in achieving our zero waste ambitions as outlined in our circular economy strategy [Beyond Recycling](#), with the potential for saving hundreds of thousands of tonnes of waste.

We have also set up a re-use and repair programme, through which the Welsh Government is working to support the development of a universal culture of re-use, repair and remanufacture within our communities and town centres.

Through this programme we support a number of initiatives that enable local communities to repair, recycle, re-purpose, and rent items to keep them in use for as long as possible, as such as Repair Cafes, re-use facilities and Libraries of Things. This reduces the volume of raw materials and energy needed to manufacture new products and hence carbon emissions, while also building skills, strengthening community resilience, and helping to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

Business support and alternative materials

Business Wales offers a wide range of advice and support on green policies, practices and resource efficiency as well as workshops. [Decarbonisation](#) Advisers are available to support businesses to adopt or improve environmental strategies, and work with businesses towards creating a resource efficient and resilient business. The [Green Growth Pledge](#) is part of the specialist sustainability support available through Business Wales and is open to all Welsh SMEs regardless of their industry sector. It provides a practical way for businesses to demonstrate their positive impact on the people and places around them and join a growing community of forward-thinking organisations.

The Business Wales Green Ambition campaign helps businesses to improve their knowledge and understanding of resource efficiency. The [campaign](#) encourages businesses to take action to mitigate their impact on climate change and supports the Welsh Government ambition towards net zero economy. It provides a practical way for businesses to demonstrate their positive impact on the people and places around them and join a growing community of forward-thinking organisations. A [cost of doing business zone](#) on the Business Wales website brings together existing content and tools available to support businesses to reduce their use of resources and costs. This zone will act as the focal point for any future advice and support for businesses.

Other sources of plastic

Microplastics can arise from a variety of sources, including from the breakdown of larger products. To tackle this, on 30 October 2023, bans on commonly littered single-use plastic products are scheduled to come into effect including:

- Single-use plastic cutlery
- Single-use plastic plates
- Single-use plastic stirrers
- Single-use plastic drinking straws – this product has an exemption for health needs
- Single-use plastic stemmed cotton buds
- Single-use plastic balloon sticks
- Expanded and foamed extruded polystyrene fast-food containers
- Expanded and foamed extruded polystyrene cups.

This is the first stage of our plans to tackle plastic pollution by phasing out unnecessary single-use plastic products.

We are currently seeking views on proposals to introduce similar bans for wet wipes with plastic content in a UK-wide public consultation. This is due to close on 25 November 2023.

We are also planning to introduce bans on polystyrene lids for cups and fast-food containers, thin plastic single-use carrier bags and products made of oxo-degradable plastic by spring 2026.

We are also working with governments across the UK to develop an environmental policy on disposable vapes, which are also frequently littered.

Marine plastic

The Welsh Government are working with UK Government to develop a microplastics indicator for the marine environment which will be the first of its kind. This indicator will form part of our assessment for marine litter levels in the marine environment and our ability to achieve Good Environmental Status.

Wales was the first country in the UK to introduce an end-of-life fishing gear recycling scheme which now operates at a number of ports. This scheme allows for fishers to sustainably dispose of their gear and any ghost gear which may have been collected at sea. This reduces the risk of gear being lost and abandoned at sea resulting in the further breakdown of gear into smaller parts or microplastics.

Finally, I acknowledge and understand the petitioner feels there are more things we need to consider to tackle the issue of microplastics. I agree that a call for evidence could be useful to identify the various sources of microplastic pollution and to help propose solutions and remedies.

The Welsh Government is committed to taking a focussed and evidence-based approach to the problem. At this time, I believe that continuing to focus on delivering practical action, as set out in this letter, will have more tangible impact than developing an Action Plan. I have asked my officials to arrange a meeting with the petitioner to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely,



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

P-06-1357 Draw up a new Microplastics Action Plan for Wales – Correspondence from the Petitioner to Committee, 22 January 2024

Dear Senedd Petitions Committee,

Many thanks for the opportunity to comment further on the Minister's latest response to our Microplastics petition and our request to them to facilitate an expert group in Wales to help draw up a new Microplastics Action Plan for Wales.

We would first like to acknowledge that Welsh Government has done, and is also doing, some good things around waste management, plastics and also microplastics, either at a Wales level or as part of wider UK level initiatives.

We would however also suggest that the Minister's delay in replying in detail, whilst she and her officials gather evidence from other departments, highlights our point exactly. Responsibility for different plans, strategies, work streams and initiatives which all have an impact on microplastics release, rests across many different Welsh Government Departments and Divisions. We would argue that the issue of microplastics is such an important one, both environmentally and also from a human health point of view, that a co-ordinated plan and approach are needed across Welsh Government that would allow the issue to be dealt with in a strategic and joined up way, rather than being left to a wide variety of different Departments and strategies to 'hopefully' cover most of the issues.

One key point that the Minister admits, and one which we know as result from Freedom of Information requests is that there is no statutory requirement to test for microplastics in water bodies in Wales. We would strongly suggest that this is of utmost importance to establish what exactly the scale of the problem is, where the microplastics are coming from and to therefore establish a baseline against which we can then test in future to see if we are being successful in reducing the release of microplastics to the environment in Wales.

A new Microplastics Action Plan for Wales would go a long way to ensure that this would be a part of a more joined up and thought through strategic look at microplastics and would establish targets and milestones and cross departmental working.

There are also some other key points to draw out of the Minister's response.

Again, we do of course welcome the positive initiatives and strategies that Welsh Government are working on but we would like to make the point very clearly that there are an awful lot of other things we feel that Welsh Government can do on microplastics. This is why an expert group of organisations such as Welsh Water, National Federation of Women's Institutes Wales and many others, as well as prominent academics active in the field in Wales would be of huge benefit in helping draw together a more comprehensive plan.

Just to highlight one or two, the Minister mentions fertilisers. We know through work Cardiff University has done (<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/view/2623372-european-farmland-could-be-biggest-global-reservoir-of-microplastics,-study-suggests>) that farmland can contain huge amounts of microplastics derived from sewage sludge. Fertilisers are a devolved issue (Page 1 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61fa82c9d3bf7f78dc2cd9de/fertilisers-provisional-common-framework.pdf>) so we in Wales could develop our own

standards of testing and regulating microplastic content in sewage sludge applied to farm land in Wales for example. This may or may not be done anyway but again, further highlights the need for a wider ranging new Action Plan.

The announcement that schools will be encouraged to provide a school uniform swap shop to pupils throughout Wales is a very positive one which we campaigned for. We have, since the announcement was made, been trying to contact Welsh Government officials to follow up on this announcement to offer our help and enquire how exactly the scheme will work. We have yet to receive a response unfortunately.

The Minister's response also mentions community schemes which are all very positive and really good to see but there are also other community schemes which could be supported, trialled and scaled up to cover all of Wales such as the excellent Play it Again Sport scheme in RCT.

In our original recommendations report (<https://foe.cymru/sustainable-fashion>), we also highlight the type of support that Welsh SME sustainable fashion businesses would like to see offered. An action plan would allow some of these to also be considered as to how they are able to help reduce microplastic pollution.

We know for example that there is a wonderful opportunity in Wales to encourage the use of Welsh wool in sustainable fashion. Wool is a sustainable material and is produced in Wales, helping to sustain farming and rural economies and culture. We also know unfortunately that the wool industry has been struggling in recent years and needs help. Surely, part of some overall joined up thinking should be to look at how we can support farmers and the Welsh Wool industry to supply quality wool to sustainable fashion businesses and thereby create a win-win situation.

Another alternative material that needs to be investigated is Hemp. It can be grown in Wales, has a huge variety of positive uses and is an excellent sequester of CO2 too. If we are being truly forward thinking, we should really be looking in to how we could support farmers to diversify into hemp if they wish and to then supply that hemp to sustainable fashion businesses in Wales. It is all part of the same issue as these alternative materials don't in turn then release plastic microfibrils.

The Minister also mentions that they have trialled an end-of-life fishing gear scheme. This was a trial in 6 harbours (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/marineandfisheries/information-and-statistics/marine-litter#:~:text=End%20of%20life%20fishing%20gear%20scheme,associated%20with%20applicable%20gear%20types>). Whilst this is obviously a great initiative, it is important that this is rolled out further across Wales, beyond the original 6 harbours, and supported. Again, this is exactly why an overarching Microplastics Action Plan is needed to help bring together all the findings, set targets and assess success rates in a joined-up way alongside all the other strategies and initiatives. Otherwise it risks being a stand-alone piece of work.

Lastly, we would like to again make the point that microplastics (and nano plastics) are increasingly found in humans with associated health concerns (<https://weather.com/science/environment/news/2024-01-19-some-microplastics-travel-farther-in-atmosphere>), (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2024/01/12/microplastics-fish-chicken-tofu-protein/>),

(<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2412529-fertilisers-are-a-major-source-of-microplastic-pollution-in-soil/>), (<https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/plastic-pollution-food-fish-meat-b2476377.html>), ([Doctor says he won't drink bottled water over plastic health fears - Wales Online](#)).

In fact, there are now just so many news articles, stories and academic studies on the issue that national governments need to realise the scale of the issue and work in a more co-ordinated way when assessing and planning for all the various solutions.

This is probably THE key issue - as it is such a constantly and quickly evolving area of work, having an expert group of Welsh academics, relevant organisations and others, helping bring together all the latest evidence and helping formulate longer term strategies and plans across a wide range of different areas, would surely be a common sense and timely initiative?

We realise that Welsh Government are short on capacity but an expert group could really help in this regard and help with the necessary work.

Given the obvious scale of the problem, we feel that asking Welsh Government to facilitate a new expert group on microplastics and asking them to work with Welsh Government on a new co-ordinated Microplastics Action Plan is both a relevant, timely and proportionate ask.

Yours sincerely

On behalf of Sustainable Clothing and Textiles Cymru

Agenda Item 3.6

P-06-1366 Reinstate funding for Taf Valley Coaches 351 (Tenby to Pendine) and 352 (Tenby to Kilgetty) services

This petition was submitted by Melanie Mallin, having collected a total of 1,697 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Taf Valley Coaches have successfully ran the 351 and 352 services since June 2016. They have been supported from Welsh Government funding to cover financial short falls. Sadly, this funding is now being withdrawn, making the services financially unsustainable. Additionally, an open top double decker bus, from a large national bus operator, can operate between Tenby & Saundersfoot on a commercial basis every day from Easter to end of Summer, directly impacting on the small family local business.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Pontypridd
- South Wales Central

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1366
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/03095/23

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

15 January 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your further correspondence of 28 November regarding 'Petition P-06-1366 Reinstate funding for Taf Valley Coaches 351 (Tenby to Pendine) and 352 (Tenby to Kilgetty) services'.

I am pleased to report that Pembrokeshire County Council have made arrangements to provide an alternative bus service under contract linking Tenby to Pendine via Saundersfoot, and this is numbered 351. The service operates weekdays over the winter months, but during the summer additional journeys are provided on Saturdays.

In the meantime, Transport for Wales are also continuing to work with Pembrokeshire CC and the neighbouring local authorities across southwest Wales to develop a regional bus plan to further improve services across the region.

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.

Agenda Item 3.7

P-06-1370 Save overnight minor injuries provision at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny

This petition was submitted by Richard John, having collected a total of 5,182 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board has set out plans to close its Minor Injuries Unit at Nevill Hall Hospital overnight. This will mean that between 1am and 7am in the entire health board area, there will be just one open Minor Injuries Unit – at the Royal Gwent Hospital in Newport.

This change would significantly increase travel times for residents in Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Torfaen and parts of Caerphilly. The change would make the Royal Gwent and the Grange even busier.

Additional Information:

The health board has opened a consultation on the proposal:

<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/about-us/engagement/public-engagement-consultation/current-opportunities/provision-of-minor-injury-unit-services-8-week-engagement/>.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Monmouth
- South Wales East

Ann Lloyd CBE, Cadeirydd | Chair

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✉ Ann.Lloyd@wales.nhs.uk

Nicola Prygodzicz, Prif Weithredwr | Chief Executive

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**GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES**

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Our ref: **ABUHB 23-131**

Your ref: **P-06-1370**

22 December 2023

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair of the Petitions Committee

Sent by email: petitions@senedd.wales

Dear Jack Sargeant MS

Petition P-06-1370 Save overnight minor injuries provision at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny

Thank you for your email of 29 November 2023, which outlines that you are currently considering the above petition. As requested, I write to confirm the timescales for decision making that we will be taking following the public engagement on the proposals.

Providing that we receive feedback from Llais on the proposals in line with Welsh Government's guidance on changes to health service, we expect to take this matter to the Board for a decision at its meeting of 24 January 2024. If the feedback is not received in time for that meeting the matter will be considered by the Board at its meeting in March 2024.

I trust that this response is helpful. However, if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Prygodzicz
Prif Weithredwr | Chief Executive

P-06-1370 Save overnight minor injuries provision at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny - Petitioner to Committee, 24.01.24

I note that the health board is meeting this morning to make it's decision about the future of the minor injuries unit at Nevill Hall and considering a recommendation for overnight closure. I'm appalled at the decision, taken in the face of considerable public opposition, but I suppose this means the end of the campaign to keep it open.

I'm very grateful for the time and consideration of members of the Petitions Committee and to all those Senedd Members who offered their support to the campaign to keep it open. I am disappointed that the Welsh Government has failed to intervene and I remain concerned that this will have harmful consequences for residents in north Monmouthshire as well as in neighbouring local authorities.

Thank you once again to committee members for their support.

Best wishes,

Agenda Item 3.8

P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development Kilvey Hill, Swansea

This petition was submitted by Neil Jones, having collected 2,109 signatures online and 942 signatures on paper, making for a total of 3,051 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The plans for a skyline involve privatising a public open space for a project of very uncertain success. The shareholders of this private firm will benefit from this large injection of cash but there is a risk of major environmental damage with no guarantee of success in the long term.

It means the loss of a much used local nature amenity. Better action: Use existing plans to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of this wild part of Swansea. A big cash grant for no certain benefit is unwise.

Additional Information:

Toxic pollution from Swansea's heavy metal industrial past turned our hill into a barren wasteland until in the 70's a partnership of our council and the university began its slow transformation into a pine woodland, the only species that could thrive . Involvement of the local community and schools began then and has continued till today with a volunteer group helping NRW rewild the woodland so that native species and creatures are now thriving. We are proud our woodland is known as the finest example of regenerated urban woodland in Wales and it has a special place in the hearts of local people for enjoyment of a green lung for the city's Eastside. It is also an outdoor classroom for local schools. If money is to be spent, let's have woodland management, trails, maintained paths, rangers, none of which we've had for 25 years!

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Swansea East
- South Wales West



Jack Sargeant MS

VIA EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Rob Stewart
Direct Line: 01792 63 6366
E-Mail: cllr.rob.stewart@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: RS/CM
Your Ref:
Date: 29th December 2023

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Re: Petition P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development Kilvey Hill, Swansea

Thank you for your letter dated 29 November 2023, regarding consideration being given by the Senedd's Petitions Committee to the abovementioned petition.

After reading the correspondence from the Petitioner (attached), I don't think there is anything here for the Council to answer, the content of the petition is directed purely at Welsh Government. The petitioner is requesting that the Welsh Government undertakes a re-evaluation of the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board's (31) report on the proposed Skyline Development. Furthermore, the petitioner is requesting that Welsh Government finds a better, more collaborative approach to find a sustainable path for Kilvey Hill that respects both community desires, environmental imperatives, and the well-being of the community in this area of high deprivation.

As an update the Council has agreed in principle to provide a serviced site and provide grant funding to Skyline for the Project, subject to internal and external governance, and the Council's terms being met. Going forward in the New Year the Council will progress the Public Open Space Notice for an area of land on Kilvey Hill that will be required to facilitate the Project.

Concerns have been raised about access to Kilvey Hill once the Project is completed, but to negate any misinformation free and unhindered public access to the hill will remain. All current walking and mountain bike tracks will remain as they are with improvements made to those existing paths and trails. The scheme will allow for increased access to the hill's peak through wheelchair and pram accessible Gondolas.

Skyline has advised the cost of the Project has increased to £40m, this has not dissuaded Skyline from pushing forward with the Project and now has a



live planning application, which can be found by following this [link](#). The all-weather facility will operate throughout the year, creating a 100 jobs in the first year and providing both local people and visitors to Swansea the opportunity to enjoy the thrills of these gravity based rides, which will include 1.5 miles of luge tracks, zip line and sky swing.

What may be of assistance to you is a recent Skyline Update Report prepared for The Service Improvement, Regeneration and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 14 November 2023, the report can be found by following this [link](#) and then go to Agenda Item 33. In addition, please see the links to the Council's and Skyline's FAQs, <https://swansea.gov.uk/skylinefaqs> / <https://www.skylineswansea.co.uk/> (scroll to the bottom of the Homepage).

Yours sincerely



**Y CYNGHORYDD/COUNCILLOR ROB STEWART
ARWEINYDD/LEADER**

P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development Kilvey Hill, Swansea – Petitioner to Committee, 23 January 2024

Dear Kayleigh Imperato and Members of the Petitions Committee,

We have reviewed the response received from Swansea Council. While we acknowledge the information provided, we find it lacking in substantial engagement with the core issues raised by our committee statements to ask Swansea council for details on acknowledgement of skyline opposition and how Swansea council they intend to engage. It is imperative that the council recognises the significant opposition to the Skyline project and the profound concerns we have regarding its potential environmental, social, and economic impacts.

In light of this, we respectfully request that the council be asked again to:

Recognise and Acknowledge Opposition: Explicitly acknowledge the extent of community opposition to the Skyline project, as demonstrated by the petition and various community surveys and consultations.

Engagement and Consultation Plans: Clearly outline their intentions and plans for engaging with the opposition. This should include specific strategies for how they intend to address the concerns raised, particularly regarding environmental preservation, community access to Kilvey Hill, and the long-term sustainability of the project.

We believe that only through genuine and constructive engagement can a resolution be found that respects the community's needs, the environmental importance of Kilvey Hill, and the principles of sustainable development.

It also must not be forgotten that the petition was raising concerns at Welsh Government money being spent on this and the relevant people there also need to be asked to justify their attitudes in regard to public opposition.

We look forward to the opportunity to present our concerns at the meeting on 29 January and hope for a meaningful dialogue with both the council and the committee.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.
Yours sincerely,

Neil Jones
Biodiversity Campaigner
Swansea Friends of the Earth