

## Agenda – Petitions Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 4 November 2024

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

[Petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:Petitions@senedd.wales)

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### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

### 2 New Petitions

2.1 P-06-1430 Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers

(Pages 1 – 14)

2.2 P-06-1460 Explore options for transferring ownership of historical assets from Crown Estate to Welsh Government

(Pages 15 – 17)

2.3 P-06-1464 Allow Welsh families who have experienced Baby loss before 24 weeks to obtain baby loss certificate

(Pages 18 – 22)

2.4 P-06-1465 Make Pet Abduction a Specific Criminal Offence in Wales

(Pages 23 – 28)

2.5 P-06-1471 Outlaw Ambulances from being used as extra beds for Hospitals

(Pages 29 – 36)

2.6 P-06-1472 Protect our wildlife...ban plastic grass in Wales!

(Pages 37 – 44)

### 3 Updates to previous petitions



- 3.1 P-06-1329 Set an ambition and a clear timetable to give every child in the country Welsh-medium education  
(Page 45)
- 3.2 P-06-1387 Provide humanitarian aid to Gaza  
(Pages 46 – 49)
- 3.3 P-06-1395 Halt significant new development on the Gwent Levels SSSIs  
(Pages 50 – 53)

**The following two petitions are grouped together for consideration**

- 3.4 P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres  
(Page 54)
- 3.5 P-05-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve  
(Pages 55 – 57)

**Bus Transport**

- 3.6 P-06-1346 Provide free and accessible public transport for under 18s in Wales to lower carbon emissions and boost growth  
(Pages 58 – 59)
- 3.7 P-06-1264 For school transport guaranteed for all comprehensive children  
(Page 60)
- 3.8 P-06-1343 Provide free public transport for all secondary school pupils  
(Pages 61 – 62)
- 3.9 P-06-1372 Save our fflecsi bwcabus service  
(Page 63)

- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the remainder of today's business:**

Document is Restricted

# P-06-1430 Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 04 Tachwedd 2024  
Petitions Committee | 04 November 2024

Reference: SR24/8813-3

**Petition Number:** P-06-1430

**Petition title:** Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers

**Text of petition:** Teachers of the Deaf play a vital role in supporting the language and communication development of deaf children. They provide advice to families of deaf children, visiting them at school or college – supporting their education and provide guidance to mainstream teachers on deaf awareness.

But Wales has lost one-in-five Teachers of the Deaf since 2011. There are around 2,300 deaf children in Wales.

I am mum to 5-year-old Lola, who is profoundly deaf and 2-year-old Rudi, who is severely deaf.

More Details: Deaf children living in a hearing world need ongoing support. But Lola and Rudi currently receive just one hour of support a week from a Teacher of the Deaf. Calculated over a year, during school time, that's 37 hours, which does not even equate to my working week. I believe all deaf children should see a Teacher of the Deaf at least once a week regardless of level of deafness.

Lola is in a mainstream primary school, which is right for her, but had she gone to a special provision, she would be seeing specialists and other deaf



children every day. Her progress is aspirational but if the technology fails, we have very little to fall back on.

I believe there is also a vital need for more targeted support for the parents of deaf children. More than nine-in-ten deaf children are born to hearing parents, with no experience of deafness. When we discovered Lola was deaf, I was shellshocked. I was also oblivious to my complete lack of deaf knowledge.

## 1. Background

There are around **2,260 deaf children** living in Wales ([Consortium for Research in Deaf Education \(CRIDE\) survey 2023](#)). The term deaf is used to refer to children with all levels of deafness, from mild through to profound, including deafness in one ear or temporary deafness such as glue ear. Some deaf children, especially those with temporary hearing loss, may not be included in the CRIDE figures for Wales.

Wales has **no specialist schools** for deaf learners. 81% of deaf children attend **mainstream schools**, whilst 8% attend mainstream schools with resource provisions, 9% attend special schools and 1% are home educated. Deafness is not a learning disability, and with the right support deaf children should be able to achieve on a par with their hearing peers. However, around a quarter (24%) of deaf children have an identified Additional Learning Need.

**Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (QToD)** are teachers who have completed a postgraduate level course which is either self-funded or funded by the local authority or school. These courses are run by universities located in either England or Scotland.

The [British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People](#) provide information and support for the [specialist role of the QToD](#).

### In Wales:

- QToD numbers have **reduced by 1 in 5 (20%)** since 2011.
- In 2023 there were 65 QToD posts in Wales with **2% vacancies**.

- The number of QToDs working in a **peripatetic role (generally, peripatetic (or advisory) QToDs work for local education authority advisory and support services for deaf children and young people)** has increased by 3% since 2022 and fallen by 17% since the survey began in 2011.
- 36% of peripatetic QToDs (working in resource provisions or schools/colleges not specifically for deaf children) are aged 50 or over and likely to retire in the next 10-15 years.

## 1.1. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

Under the provisions of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, every learner with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) should be given a statutory **Individual Development Plan (IDP)** setting out their needs and the interventions they require. The Welsh Government issued the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales in 2021, which sets out the detail of how schools, colleges, local authorities and health boards should, and must, meet their responsibilities under the Act.

The National Society for Deaf Children Cymru have proposed that **virtually all deaf children** should **routinely be regarded as eligible for an IDP**. However, they report that in their members survey conducted in 2022 only **a quarter of families of deaf children said their child had an IDP** and professionals reported **ongoing confusion** over eligibility.

## 1.2. GCSE British Sign Language

Qualifications Wales has announced the development of a 'Made-for-Wales' GCSE in BSL with the first teaching to commence in **September 2027**.

The Senedd Cross Party Group on Deaf Issues wrote to the Children Young People and Education Committee (CYPE) stating that the British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People Cymru have noted that teachers of deaf children and young people are already receiving requests for teaching resources, and there is a need to establish foundational support for deaf learners before introducing the GCSE in Wales. There is concern that the new GCSE will put further pressure on the QToD workforce and that hearing teachers who are not QToD and who therefore could lack the requisite levels of BSL skill, could be recruited to teach the language.

The National Deaf Children's Society said in their [response to Qualifications Wales' consultation](#):

we strongly support Qualification Wales' intention to ensure there are opportunities to learn BSL and to introduce the BSL GCSE currently being developed in England to Wales.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government commissioned a [Rapid Evidence Assessment of the effectiveness of educational interventions to support children and young people with hearing impairment](#) (2019) and summarised the evidence as guidance, [Support for children and young people with hearing impairment in educational settings](#). The report makes this comment on professional roles:

Specialist staff are needed to undertake and/or advise on additional learning provision and inclusive practice and differentiation. [...]in England and Wales the traditional coordination of this complex arrangement of educational support is generally undertaken by qualified ToD. Given deafness is a low incidence need, mainstream education practitioners are unlikely to develop or retain specialist knowledge through their ongoing practice (as they will only rarely come across a deaf child). This makes the advice on interventions they receive from ToD especially important.

## 3. Welsh Parliament action

### 3.1. Children, Young People and Education Committee

On 16 July 2024, the Children, Young People and Education Committee published its report, [Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?](#)

The Committee's inquiry considered childcare and education access for disabled children and young people. It included a recommendation that:

The Welsh Government sets out a clear delivery plan for addressing gaps in specialist teaching posts, for Teachers of the Deaf, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired, to ensure that all children and young people can access this support when needed. This delivery plan should have clear

targets, deliverables and timeframes so it can be monitored and scrutinised.

## 3.2. Petitions Committee

A petition, [P-04-628 To improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language](#), was considered by the Petitions Committee in March 2015. The Committee's [subsequent report](#) (October 2018), recommended:

that the Welsh Government continues its engagement with the Welsh Local Government Association on Workforce Planning for SEN specialist services, with a particular focus on teachers working with Deaf and hard of hearing children and young people. This should include consideration of the longer term sustainability of these services.

The [Welsh Government responded](#) in November 2018 stating:

We are fully committed to supporting the training of teachers of the Deaf. This year we have allocated a total of £289,000 over three years to support professional training of the local authority based sensory workforce. This funding includes training in British Sign Language (BSL) at various levels, and post-graduate training for six teachers of the Deaf.

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.

**Y Grŵp Trawsbleidiol  
ar Faterion Pobl  
Fyddar**

Senedd Cymru  
Bae Caerdydd  
Caerdydd CF99 1SN

**Ebost:** [rob@robwilks.com](mailto:rob@robwilks.com)  
(Rob Wilks, Ysgrifennydd)

**Cross-Party Group on  
Deaf Issues**

Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff CF99 1SN

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(Rob Wilks, Secretary)

# GOHEBIAETH CORRESPONDENCE

**Recipient Name:** Members of the Petitions Committee

**Address:** Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
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**Email:** [Petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:Petitions@senedd.wales)

**CC:**

12 November 2023

Dear Members of the Petitions Committee

## **Deaf education and Petition for a Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People Workforce Strategy**

At the Cross-Party Group for Deaf Issues (the Group) meeting on 26 October 2023, it was agreed that the Chair would write to you on behalf of the Group to seek your support for Rosamund Hannam's petition (No: 245870), asking for a financial commitment from the Welsh Government to restore Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (ToD) numbers in Wales. The petition has, at the time of writing this letter, collected 464 signatures.

Hazel Badjie, Head of Policy and Influence for Wales at the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) delivered a presentation at our recent meeting. She alerted the Group to alarming inadequacies in specialist education support for deaf children, with a mere 37 hours per year per child being allocated. This insufficient provision is compounded by an ongoing reduction in the numbers of ToDs over the past decade, constituting a 20% decrease or a concerning 1 in 5 ratio. She believes that this critical shortage impedes the ability of deaf children to access timely and comprehensive support. Equally troubling is the issue of family engagement, where parents often face overwhelming decisions without adequate information and support. The importance of early intervention cannot be overstated, as it is crucial for nurturing child development, supporting language and communication skills, and enabling deaf children to achieve their full potential. As aptly articulated by Ms Hannam, 'deaf children must thrive, not simply cope.' Unfortunately, family

experiences often include isolation, shock, and a lack of awareness about deaf-related knowledge, underscoring the urgent need for a more robust and accessible support system. We believe that addressing these issues is integral to ensuring that every deaf child in Wales has the opportunity to thrive in their educational journey.

I raised this matter in the Senedd on 3 May 2023. In response, the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language referenced the workforce strategy, highlighting that the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms and Code specifically include references to ToDs. Local authorities and schools were urged to consult to meet the learning needs of deaf students, and a financial commitment was made toward the postgraduate funding route. We would appreciate an update on these efforts.

The Group's members emphasised the specific need for more deaf ToDs, noting that the current route/pathway is not nurtured, resulting in a workforce that lacks diversity and fails to represent the people it serves. This issue demands immediate attention to ensure that the educational needs of deaf students are adequately addressed by a qualified and diverse workforce.

In light of the above, we would be grateful if the Petitions Committee could recommend that the matter be debated in the Senedd, to ensure that the shortage of ToDs and the state of the deaf education system in Wales is at the forefront of the Welsh Government and Members of the Senedd's minds.

Thank you for your time and consideration. The Group looks forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully

*Mark Isherwood*

**Mark Isherwood MS**

**Chair of the Cross-Party Group on Deaf Issues**

Lynne Neagle AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1430  
Ein cyf/Our ref LN/05450/24

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

June 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 23 May regarding Petition P-06-1430 which calls upon the Welsh Government to support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers.

I am committed to delivering for children and young people in Wales. Having the right support in place at the right time is essential to ensuring children and young people, including deaf children, can access and enjoy learning and reach their potential. This is the aim of our Curriculum and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms which are supported by a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

The Curriculum for Wales is designed to break down barriers for all learners, giving teachers more flexibility to best meet the individual needs of each child, and the ALN statutory framework ensures additional learning provision for ALN learners is planned and protected. Both these reforms are supported by a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Skilled education practitioners are crucial to the success of our reforms. Teachers of the Deaf and other specialists are an essential part of this workforce, providing schools, teachers, learners with hearing impairments and their families with a range of professional support and advice. It is important that the education workforce has the right balance of knowledge, skills and expertise to ensure that all learners, including those with hearing impairments, have access to support that is appropriate to their needs.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
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[Correspondence.Lynne.Neagle@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Lynne.Neagle@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 ALN Act requires local authorities to keep their arrangements for ALN under review and this includes the specialist workforce. The ALN Code for Wales identifies Teachers of the Deaf as among those whom the local authority might consult to obtain views on emerging and patterns of need, the suitability of skills and expertise available in the workforce to support learners with hearing impairment, and to contribute to decisions on the sufficiency of arrangements and reasonable steps needed to remedy insufficiencies in provision for children and young people with hearing impairment.

Whilst the responsibility for workforce planning of local specialist ALN services lies with local authorities, the Welsh Government is committed to developing the skills of the education workforce, including teachers of deaf children, to provide effective support in the classroom. This is why in 2018 as part of our ALN Transformation Programme, we distributed nearly £300,000 over three years to local authorities in Wales to support the post-graduate training of local authority-based specialist and advisory teachers of learners with sensory impairment. This included training for Teachers of the Deaf and training in British Sign Language (BSL).

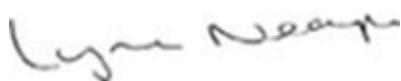
The Welsh Government continues to invest significantly in ALN. In the 2024-25 budget we protected the core local government settlement, which funds schools, and the additional investment of over £56 million on ALN implementation and ALN provision in both pre and post 16 education. We have increased resources in schools to implement the ALN system and lead whole-school strategies to embed inclusive education. The funding we have made available for ALN provision in the Local Authority Education Grant (LAEG) can be used for the professional training of specialist teachers, including Teachers of the Deaf, where this addresses additional pressures.

We have published [guides](#) on effective interventions for learners with sensory impairments in education settings, and in addition to developing a [national ALN professional learning pathway](#) to support ALNCoS and other practitioners develop their skills to support all learners with ALN. We have worked with the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) to develop an e-learning unit on '[supporting deaf learners](#)'. This unit is part of a collection aimed at supporting practitioners to enhance their knowledge and understanding of different types of learning difficulties or disabilities. To help raise awareness we are developing a campaign to promote the collection of learning available to the sector, and highlight the role of teachers of the deaf in our ALN bulletin.

Parents play a crucial role in helping their child to achieve their potential and this is recognised in the ALN Code for Wales. When carrying out their responsibilities under the ALN Act schools, local authorities and others have a duty to involve and support parents as well as children and young people. The ALN Code includes information on considerations when involving and supporting parents.

We are determined to create an inclusive education system and remain committed to working with the sector to help them understand and respond to the needs of all learners, including deaf children and their families.

Yours sincerely



**Lynne Neagle AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg  
Cabinet Secretary for Education

**P-06-1430 Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 24 October 2024**

Thank you for your recent communication regarding the above petition and for sharing the response received from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Lynne Neagle, regarding the same petition.

I am aware that you have received a response from the National Deaf Children's Society and I would like to take the opportunity to echo what they have said. In my opinion the response from Lynne Neagle doesn't sufficiently address the significant issues that deaf children in Wales are currently facing and will continue to face for years to come unless positive changes and financial commitments are implemented.

As Hazel Badjie clearly highlighted in her response, the number of Teachers of the Deaf in Wales is falling and will continue to do so as a large proportion of the work force are nearing retirement age. As a parent of two deaf children, it is extremely disheartening, in fact devastating, to think that deaf Welsh children are not going to get the support they need to fulfil their potential. The relationship both my children have formed with their specialist support is wonderful to watch and the highly specialised support and guidance offered to mainstream teachers from the Sensory Support Service is invaluable.

As a mainstream educational practitioner of 17 years, I find myself in a very interesting position. I am acutely aware of the lack of deaf awareness and deaf education training that mainstream teachers receive whilst studying on a PGCE course, but also as part of any CPD programme or inset training. Historically, I have taught several deaf students in my own mainstream setting and will admit to having had no prior understanding of the barriers they face every day, as well as having no experience of suitable strategies to fully support their education. Obviously, that has changed significantly since my two children were identified as deaf. Having the experience of a frankly underprepared mainstream teacher and a parent of deaf children has clearly indicated the gaping chasm and lack of supportive scaffolding for deaf children compared to their hearing peers.

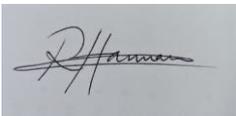
Bearing this in mind I was devastated to hear that my government recently rejected recommendation 32 from the CYPE Inquiry which called for a clear delivery plan to address the gaps in specialist teaching posts for ToDs. If you saw the new mother and father in tears over the diagnosis of deafness followed by the hope and relief offered from the specialist team for not only that deaf child, but their entire family, you would not be satisfied with the response from Lynne Neagle either. With this in mind, I urge, no I beg you and the committee to keep the petition open and ask more questions of the Welsh Government. How do the Government intend to support deaf children in Wales? How do they intend to support an adequate

supply of specialist Teacher's of the Deaf when we are seeing dropping numbers and an aging workforce?  
How are Welsh Assembly Government planning to support my children to ensure that they are not disadvantaged compared to their hearing peers? Will you choose to support Lola and Rudi? Or will you choose to let them down?

Our family currently feel incredibly lucky to receive the wonderful support that our sensory service provides, but I fear that things won't always be this way. In the last 6 years the service has had vacant teacher of the Deaf posts which were not allowed to be advertised due to financial issues. How many other local authorities are facing the same problems? How many deaf children are affected by this vacant post?

I recently read the Misson: Probable white paper and I would like to share something from it that resonated with me. "Excellent listening and spoken language outcomes are probable for children with hearing loss when we do what it takes. Hearing healthcare professionals and families should shoot for the moon." As petition committee chair you have a chance to keep the petition open, push Welsh Assembly Government to answer some tougher questions and to help all deaf children in Wales and their families shoot for the moon, why would you not?

Yours ever hopefully,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be 'Ros Hannam' written in a cursive style.

Ros Hannam

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



23.10.2024

## **National Deaf Children's Society response to the Petitions Committee**

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your communication of 18.10.24 regarding Petition P-06-1430 and sight of the letter you have received from Lynne Neagle, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, dated June 2024. On behalf of the National Deaf Children's Society, we are concerned the response from the Cabinet Secretary for Education does not adequately address the petition call for financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers.

We would urge the committee to keep the petition open and ask further questions of the Welsh Government about how they intend to maintain an adequate supply of specialist qualified teachers to support deaf children in Wales. A Wales-wide workforce strategy will be vital in ensuring deaf children's right to access an education is upheld and we are keen to work with Welsh Government to achieve this.

The number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf (ToD) in Wales working in a peripatetic role has fallen by 17% since 2011. Furthermore, 36% of peripatetic TODs are aged 50 or over, hence are likely to retire (fully and/or phased retirement) over the next decade or so (CRIDE report, 2023-24)<sup>i</sup>. The investment in 2018 of £300,000, mentioned by the Cabinet Secretary in her communication whilst most welcome and valued, was relevant to an operating context 6 years ago and assumed a workforce analysis approach to support succession planning. This plan has not even sustained the status quo and has burdened individual local authorities to deal with their workforce challenges in silos. We believe it is essential a national specialist teaching workforce strategy is now developed to sustainably restore and grow this workforce to meet the demands of the current operating context.

There are at least 2,260 deaf children in Wales and 81% of school-aged deaf children attend mainstream schools. The success of their education placement relies heavily on the support of peripatetic qualified Teachers of the Deaf, who are teachers with an additional qualification to offer direct teaching interventions with deaf children according to their mode of communication (English, Welsh, BSL or a combination of all) and to maximise their use of assistive listening technology where appropriate. Qualified ToDs plan and oversee bespoke intervention strategies both at school and with families of deaf children, support with the assessment of learning and progress via specialist and/or differential assessments and offer tailored advice to schools to use technology and help build capacity on the ground.

Therefore, mainstream class teachers, ALNCo's, deaf students and their families alike rely heavily on the skills, knowledge and expertise of the Teacher of the Deaf to ensure their local

education offer is inclusive and supportive of individual deaf children's learning. However, challenges continue for families of deaf children in Wales. Parents/carers tell us;

- Their deaf child is experiencing delays in their development, specifically concerned with language, communications, social development, making friendships and with family relationships.
- Parents tell us their deaf child is always playing catch up in school: *...'Socially xy finds it hard to play with friends her age and gets very shy. Since having her Cochlear Implants I have seen an improvement in her confidence, but this is not on par with other peers her age. She is also educationally well behind her peers so she has the added element that she has to try and catch up, if she can...'*
- Families tell us they need more help to develop and support communication in their home. Siblings cannot communicate with their deaf sibling. Some families are paying to learn how to communicate with their deaf child. *...'We have ongoing challenges with xy regarding communicating with him. I (Mum) had to learn BSL very quickly and undertook a year's course to complete some more learning of this. This was extremely hard for us as a family, and xy depended on me every night for bed but when I was not there at bed time he would get upset. I also had to pay for this myself until I got a grant...'*
- For others, delays to accessing free BSL support is costing their deaf child and denying their human right to develop language (oral and/or signed) at the earliest stage.
- One family with deaf twins have developed multiple language modes in their home. This include BLS for one twin and oral Welsh for the other twin. However, the QToD support is delivered in English.
- Parents seek NDCS support as some deaf children feel so lonely and isolated in school, they have developed mental health problems and are at risk of becoming school refusers. Some deaf children are giving up on their education before age 16 years old.
- Families tell us about the lack of suitably qualified support in school, e.g., teaching assistants with BSL level 1 are requested to work with a deaf child who communicates using BSL level 3. This equates to communicating with a secondary school age pupil, using infant-age sign language. Often deaf learners must go without adequately qualified communication support, meaning they miss out on the more academic and challenging aspects of the curriculum, thus limiting their life chances.

We believe deaf children need increased amounts of support from their specialist ToD. We've submitted evidence to the CYPE Inquiry *'Do disabled children have equal access to education and childcare?* (July 2024) and were instrumental to the development of the MS's recommendation 32 that states: *'The Welsh Government sets out a clear delivery plan for addressing gaps in specialist teaching posts, for Teachers of the Deaf, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired, to ensure that all children and young people can access this support when needed. This delivery plan should have clear targets, deliverables, and timeframes so it can be monitored and scrutinised'*. However, we learned earlier this month of the Welsh Government's rejection to this recommendation, citing the same reasons that have been used to inform this response to the Petitions Committee.

We suggest the approach shown by Welsh Government is in danger of letting deaf children down. Coupled with the recent withdrawal of the Welsh BSL GCSE, the emerging narrative suggests deaf education is not making headway and is at risk of falling behind other developments in education. Ultimately, we're concerned that deaf children will pay the long-term price for any short-sighted decision making.

We believe with the right support local authorities can be enabled to cohesively meet the education needs of all deaf learners. In her communication, the Cabinet Secretary mentions there is opportunity to align ALN reform investments and LAEG monies into supporting the professional training of specialist teachers where this addresses additional pressures. We suggest the current operating context reinforces the benefits of a national workforce strategy which is supportive of all local authorities and integral to the delivery of an inclusive education system in Wales. For example,

- ToDs in training currently access both study and placement experience in England or Scotland, however the development of a new training pathway in Wales could bridge this gap and introduce efficiencies.
- Additionally, in line with the aspirations of the Welsh Language and Education Bill it is essential the Welsh speaking ToD workforce is grown (currently only 25% representative) to ensure support for deaf children can be delivered in the Welsh medium.
- Furthermore, planned changes in health services will incrementally increase the demand for more ToDs. The approved policy change to the NewBorn Hearing Screen Wales (NBHSW) programme will achieve earlier identification across all thresholds of deafness, prompting an increased demand for peripatetic ToD support at pre-school age, working across more Early Years settings and the home environment.
- Additionally, current work to include paediatric audiology in the *Future Approach* framework is underway, highlighting unacceptably long waiting times in paediatric audiology. In some cases, young deaf children are waiting for an appointment for half of their current lifetime. Suggested ways forward include increasing the workforce, expanding the offer of clinic appointments into the community and integrated working across health and education systems. A fault line in the number of QTODs will inevitably negatively impact on these plans and intentions, and ultimately fail deaf children.

We would be keen to work with the Welsh Government to consider and develop the elements of a national workforce strategy, to maximise the intentions and aspirations of the ALN reform and Curriculum review. We would proactively seek to achieve synergy with planned changes in other parts of the system, seeking to ensure no deaf child is left behind.

We urge for the Petitions Committee to commit to keeping this petition open and to commit to monitoring closely the changes across the systems that will impact deaf children, alongside the response in education to ensure an adequate Teacher of the Deaf workforce is in place to meet the learning needs of all deaf children.

Yours sincerely

*Hazel Badjie*

Head of Policy and Influence  
National Deaf Children's Society  
[Hazel.Badjie@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:Hazel.Badjie@ndcs.org.uk)

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/professionals/research-and-data/cride-reports/>

# Agenda Item 2.2

## **P-06-1460 Explore options for transferring ownership of historical assets from Crown Estate to Welsh Government**

This petition was submitted by Arfon Jones, having collected a total of 1,612 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

The castles at Caernarfon, Harlech and Denbigh as well as Tintern Abbey are owned by the Crown Estate. These buildings are iconic Welsh buildings closely associated with events in Welsh History especially Harlech Castle and Owain Glyndwr.

These buildings are important to our national identity and national memory and Welsh Ministers should explore options for transferring the ownership of these buildings from the Crown Estate back to the people of Wales.

### **Additional Information:**

FOI request to CADW shows that Caernarfon, Harlech and Denbigh Castles along with Tintern Abbey are owned by the Crown Estate.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Wrexham
- North Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1460  
Ein cyf/Our ref JS/10086/24

Carolyn Thomas AS/MS  
Chair — Petitions Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

14 October 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Chair of the Petitions Committee and thank you for the letter from the Committee sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip on 06 September regarding Petition P-06-1460 — Explore options for transferring ownership of historical assets from Crown Estate to Welsh Government. I am replying since the matter now falls within my Ministerial portfolio.

The Crown Estate's interests in Wales are extensive. It controls the seabed out to the twelve-mile limit, manages around 65% of the foreshore and tidal riverbed, including several ports, and is responsible for over 50,000 acres of common land. The management of the Crown Estate is, therefore, a wider issue for the Welsh Government, not least because of the implications for our energy policies. The Programme for Government includes a commitment to pursue devolution of powers needed to help reach net zero, including management of the Crown Estate in Wales. The Crown Estate is devolved in Scotland and we see no reason why the same powers should not be available to Welsh Ministers.

The Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales recommended that the Crown Estate should be devolved and we are committed to working with the UK Government to implement the Commission's recommendations. We recognise that the devolution of further powers would create additional resource requirements in Wales, since there is not an established Crown Estate function operating in Wales. We also need to understand how the Welsh Government's funding would need to change in response to any direct flow of revenue from Crown Estate assets in Wales.

The four historic sites — Caernarfon, Harlech and Denbigh Castles and Tintern Abbey — that are the subject of Petition P-06-1460, although owned by the Crown Estate, have been in State care for decades. Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment service,

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[Correspondence.Jack.Sargeant@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Jack.Sargeant@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.

therefore, maintains, conserves and manages the four sites and provides public access to them. Cadw pays nothing to the Crown Estate for the four historic sites.

As the petitioner notes, a transfer of these great medieval sites from the Crown Estate to the Welsh Government would have symbolic resonance, but I should like to stress that it would make no practical difference to the conservation, management or presentation of the properties. We do not, therefore, intend to take this forward independently of the Welsh Government's efforts to resolve the matter of the Crown Estate.

I look forward to hearing the outcome of your formal consideration of this petition and the next steps the Committee wishes to take.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JACK SARGEANT". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the name.

**Jack Sargeant AS/MS**

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership

Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol

**P-06-1460 Explore options for transferring ownership of historical assets from Crown Estate to Welsh Government - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 21 October 2024.**

Thank you for copying me in to the Minister's response, which as with all government responses on devolving the Crown Estate is disappointing. I appreciate that Welsh Government support the devolution of the Crown Estate but the response of Labour peer, Lord Livermore to Peter Hain, Dafydd Wigley, Carmen Smith and Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd give me little confidence that the UK Government are on the same wavelength as the Welsh Government. Whilst it is desirable for a big bang devolution of the CE the intransigence of their colleagues in Westminster this will not happen soon. However this is not a reason to give up as the Crown Estate is a political hot potato for a substantial cross section of the Welsh population who desire to see it devolved. The campaign will continue as will the pressure on the Welsh Government to make more positive noises rather than roll over for unelected people like Lord Livermore. My ask for the Petitions Committee is for positive support for devolution of bite size chunks of the CE like the castles; this is not about monies paid to the CE but the actual principle of Welsh historical assets being owned by the Crown Estate is pretty ironic bearing in mind the history. As a native of Harlech it really grates on me that Owain Glyndwr's castle is owned by the power that subjugated us as a nation. I very much hope that the Committee will record their support notwithstanding the Minister's response.

Diolch

Arfon Jones.

## Allow Welsh families who have experienced baby loss before 24 weeks to obtain a baby loss certificate

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 4 Tachwedd 2024  
Petitions Committee | 4 November 2024

Reference: SR24/9547/8

**Petition Number:** P-06-1464

**Petition title:** Allow Welsh families who have experienced Baby loss before 24 weeks to obtain a baby loss certificate

**Text of petition:** The UK government have introduced baby loss certificates for families in England who have lost babies prior to 24 weeks. This doesn't apply to Welsh families. Let's get this changed!!

### 1. Background

The UK Government launched a scheme on 22 February 2024 to enable parents whose baby died before 24 weeks of pregnancy to apply for a free certificate to provide recognition of their loss. Applicants must be at least 16 years of age and live in England. The certificate is an official but not legal document.



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The certificate was originally available to any parent who has experienced a loss since 1 September 2018, but the UK Government has now removed this cut-off date.

Campaigners are calling for a similar scheme in Wales.

In Scotland, parents who have experienced pregnancy and baby loss prior to 24 weeks can already apply to have their baby recorded in the Memorial Book of pregnancy and baby loss, and will receive a commemorative certificate of their entry.

## 2. Welsh Parliament action

Members of the Senedd have questioned the Welsh Government on this issue on a number of occasions.

On 23 April 2024 in response to a written question, the then Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care said:

On 22 February, the UK Government launched a voluntary scheme to allow parents whose baby died before 24 weeks of pregnancy to apply for a free certificate to provide recognition of their loss. This is currently available to any parent who has experienced a loss before 24 weeks in England since 1 September 2018. The UK Government plans to extend the eligibility criteria and remove the existing time limit when it is able to do so. My officials are working closely with their UK counterparts to explore how the scheme could be extended to Wales.

Currently, all families who experience pregnancy loss at maternity units in Wales are supported by bereavement midwives and, in conjunction with the Sands charity, are offered memory boxes, which include a commemorative “birth certificate”. We are also collaborating with parent organisations, including Sands and experts in this area, to implement the National Bereavement Care Pathways across Wales specifically for miscarriage, stillbirth and pregnancy loss.

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### 3. Welsh Government response

In response to the petition the Welsh Government repeats that officials are working closely with their UK Government counterparts to explore how the scheme operating in England could be extended to Wales. It goes on to say:

We recognise there are improvements to be made to the bereavement care and support available across Wales, including for early pregnancy loss. We have provided funding to the NHS Executive to work with organisations, including Sands and experts in this area to implement the national bereavement care pathways across Wales specifically for miscarriage, stillbirth and baby loss.

Earlier this year, we commissioned Sands to undertake a series of listening events across Wales with bereaved families and staff who have supported and cared for them. The information gathered will support the development of a Wales-specific national bereavement care pathway. We expect phase two - the development and rollout of the pathways for pregnancy and baby loss - will start in the coming months.

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-06-1464  
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/10082/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair  
Petitions committee

[petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

08 October 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 17 September about Petition P-06-1464 to allow Welsh families who have experienced baby loss before 24 weeks to obtain a certificate recognising this.

I recognise that baby loss at any stage of pregnancy is incredibly distressing, and has an impact on the whole family. The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring every family is appropriately and compassionately supported and we understand the importance for parents to have their pregnancy loss formally recognised.

We want everyone in Wales who has been bereaved to know that help is available to them, and we are working on a number of initiatives to improve support for children, young people and adults in Wales.

Our [national bereavement framework](#), which was published in October 2021, sets out how we can respond to those who are facing, or have experienced, a bereavement. It includes core principles, minimum bereavement care standards and a range of actions to support regional and local planning.

The UK Government launched a voluntary scheme on 22 February 2024 to enable parents whose baby died before 24 weeks of pregnancy to apply for a free certificate to provide recognition of their loss. This is currently available to any parent who has experienced such a loss since 1 September 2018 and are resident in England.

My officials are working closely with their UK Government counterparts to explore how this scheme could be extended to Wales.

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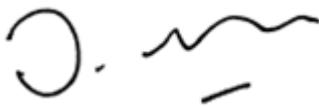
Currently, all families who experience pregnancy loss at maternity units in Wales are supported by bereavement midwives, and in conjunction with the Sands charity are offered memory boxes, which include a commemorative “birth certificate”.

We recognise there are improvements to be made to the bereavement care and support available across Wales, including for early pregnancy loss. We have provided funding to the NHS Executive to work with organisations, including Sands and experts in this area to implement the national bereavement care pathways across Wales specifically for miscarriage, stillbirth and baby loss.

Earlier this year, we commissioned Sands to undertake a series of listening events across Wales with bereaved families and staff who have supported and cared for them. The information gathered will support the development of a Wales-specific national bereavement care pathway. We expect phase two – the development and rollout of the pathways for pregnancy and baby loss – will start in the coming months.

Sands has recently recruited a project officer for Wales who will be responsible for establishing a shared practice network and workshops for healthcare professionals, as well as a parent advisory group.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a circular mark followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke.

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

# P-06-1465 Make Pet Abduction a Specific Criminal Offence in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 04 Tachwedd 2024  
Petitions Committee | 04 November 2024

Reference: SR24/9547-9

**Petition Number:** P-06-1465

**Petition title:** Make Pet Abduction a Specific Criminal Offence in Wales

**Text of petition:** Pets are family. Their abduction a traumatic experience. Despite this, stolen pets are regarded as personal property, with sentences dependent on monetary value.

In England and Northern Ireland, the Pet Abduction Bill 2024 will recognise the emotional and welfare impacts this crime has on people and pets. Dog abduction and cat abduction will become offences carrying a maximum prison sentence of five years. The Dog Abduction (Scotland) Bill is also being considered.

Wales has chosen not to introduce a pet abduction offence. Stolen dogs and cats will continue to be low priority as property theft in Wales. If caught, the sentence will generally be a small fine or suspended sentence.

We urge the Senedd to enact Pet Theft Reform in Wales by introducing a specific 'pet abduction' offence.

With the introduction of more specific penalties in England and Northern Ireland, pets in Wales risk becoming greater targets for thieves. We must offer our pets and their families the same level of security as other parts of the UK.



# 1. Background

## 1.1. Current legislation

The [\*Pet Abduction Act 2024\*](#) (the 'Act') introduced a new pet abduction offence, making the abduction of dogs and cats in England and Northern Ireland a specific criminal offence. Convictions can result in either a fine and/or up to five years in prison. The Act also confers powers to make corresponding provision relating to the abduction of other animals commonly kept as pets.

A [\*House of Commons Library briefing\*](#) provides further information on the abduction offence.

This new offence replaces pet theft law under the [\*Theft Act 1968\*](#) for England and Northern Ireland. Under the 1968 Act animals are defined as 'property' and the theft of a pet carries a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment. However, sentencing is dependent upon the monetary value of the animal, thus, sentences for pet theft are [\*commonly less stringent\*](#).

The pet abduction offence under the new Act does not apply to Wales. In Wales and Scotland, the theft of a pet remains a criminal offence under the 1968 Act.

You may wish to be aware, in Scotland there is a [\*Proposed Dog Abduction \(Scotland\) Bill\*](#) which seeks to make dog abduction a statutory offence. The Bill has secured the right to be introduced as a Members Bill but has not yet been formally introduced to the Scottish Parliament.

## 1.2. Background to the Pet Abduction Act

The UK Government [\*set up the Pet Theft Taskforce\*](#) (the 'Taskforce') in May 2021 in response to public concerns surrounding rising pet theft during the Covid-19 pandemic. There were concerns that an increase in demand for pets, resulting in increased prices, was driving a reported increase in thefts. Evidence collected by the Taskforce suggests [\*around 2,000 dog and 400 cat thefts\*](#) in England and Wales were reported to the police in 2020. The Taskforce emphasised that "pets are not mere property but sentient beings".

[\*The Taskforce's conclusion\*](#) was that a new offence, 'pet abduction', should be created that "could switch the focus from the loss to the owner to the welfare of the animal" when sentencing.

Campaigners called for legislation that reflected the emotional value of pets to their owners, as well as the distress, to both owner and animal, associated with their theft.

The UK Government introduced the *Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill* in 2021. It included provisions to create an offence of taking a pet without lawful authority in England. However, the Bill was withdrawn in June 2023.

The *Pet Abduction Bill* was subsequently introduced to the House of Commons on 6 December 2023 with provision to make pet abduction a crime in England and Northern Ireland. The Bill was a Private Member's Bill sponsored by Anna Firth MP and Lord Black of Brentwood and supported by the previous UK Government. It received Royal Assent on 24 May 2024.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies MS (the 'Cabinet Secretary'), wrote to the Committee regarding this petition.

The letter starts by acknowledging that "pet abduction or the loss of a pet is exceptionally upsetting and distressing for owners" and appreciates owners' desire for action.

The letter highlights that the Welsh Government has decided to prioritise delivering existing commitments for animal welfare, which it believes "will positively impact thousands of animals across Wales". The Welsh Government's current commitments for animal welfare are included in the *Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021 to 2026*, they do not include plans for introducing a pet abduction offence.

The Cabinet Secretary goes on to say that "whilst the theft of a pet is already a criminal offence under the *Theft Act 1968*, the Welsh Government retains the right to legislate on this area in future, should this be necessary." He then emphasises the Welsh Government's intention to continue to provide education to help owners to protect their pets.

## 3. Welsh Parliament action

The issue of pet abduction has been raised in Plenary.

On 27 March 2024, Andrew R.T. Davies MS asked the Cabinet Secretary what consideration had been given to adopting the Pet Abduction Bill. The Cabinet Secretary responded:

The theft of a pet is a criminal offence under the non-devolved Theft Act 1968 and the maximum penalty is seven years' imprisonment. I appreciate the loss of a pet can be distressing and officials are in dialogue with Local Authorities and the police regarding a range of matters around dog ownership. We are working to provide education for owners to help them protect their animals. For example, ensuring microchipping data is current, not tying pets up outside shops, not leaving them unattended in gardens if not secure and not letting pets roam out of sight when out walking, all of which will feature in the ongoing work on Responsible Dog Ownership.

After careful consideration it has been decided to prioritise resources to existing commitments for animal welfare in Wales at this time and therefore Wales will not be included in the UK Government Private Members' Bill on Animal Abduction.

On 16 September 2024, Mabon ap Gwynfor MS asked what impact the *Pet Abduction Act 2024* will have on Wales, and what consideration the Welsh Government has given to introduce a similar Bill to Wales. The Cabinet Secretary responded with similar comments to those above.

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.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1465  
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10256/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

08 October 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your email dated 17 September regarding a petition to make pet abduction a specific criminal offence in Wales.

From the outset, I am keen to stress that I acknowledge that pet abduction or the loss of a pet is exceptionally upsetting and distressing for owners and I appreciate their desire for action.

After careful consideration, the Welsh Government have decided to prioritise delivering existing commitments for animal welfare, which we believe will positively impact thousands of animals across Wales. Subsequently, Wales was not included in scope of the UK Parliament's Animal Abduction Private Members' Bill (now the Pet Abduction Act 2024).

Whilst the theft of a pet is already a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968, the Welsh Government retains the right to legislate on this area in future, should this be necessary.

Please be assured, we continue to look at ways to provide education to help owners to protect their animals. This includes ensuring microchipping data is current, not tying pets up outside shops or leaving them unattended in gardens if not secure and not letting pets roam out of sight when out walking.

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[Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@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.

Once again, thank you for writing to me on this issue and I hope this response provides some reassurance that we do take this issue seriously.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

# Outlaw ambulances from being used as extra beds for hospitals

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 4 Tachwedd 2024  
Petitions Committee | 4 November 2024

Reference: SR24/9547

**Petition Number:** P-06-1471

**Petition title:** Outlaw Ambulances from being used as extra beds for Hospitals.

**Text of petition:** People are dying NEEDLESSLY due to the unavailability of Ambulances because they are being used as extra beds outside A&E Hospitals across Wales.

'It can't continue like this': Paramedics in Wales warn patients are waiting up to 26 hours to get into hospital.

Chief executive of the Welsh Ambulance Service, Jason Killens, [told Sky News](#) that 38% of his ambulances were unavailable during December due the lengthy delays getting patients into hospitals.



# 1. Background

Ambulances are not officially used as extra beds for hospitals, however the issue of ambulances having to wait outside emergency departments due to delays handing over patients to hospital staff has grown since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Handover delays occur when ambulance crews are unable to respond to new calls while waiting to handover patients to emergency departments. In some cases, this means that the patient is left to wait in the ambulance, whereas in other cases the patient might be moved into the emergency department, but the ambulance crew remain unable to complete the handover process.

NHS Wales guidance says that the handover of care of patients from an ambulance crew to hospital staff for triage or assessment should occur within 15 minutes. The percentage of handovers successfully occurring within 15 minutes of arrival at hospital has been falling since the Covid-19 pandemic. It reached a low in April 2024, when just 14.8% of handovers happened within 15 minutes.

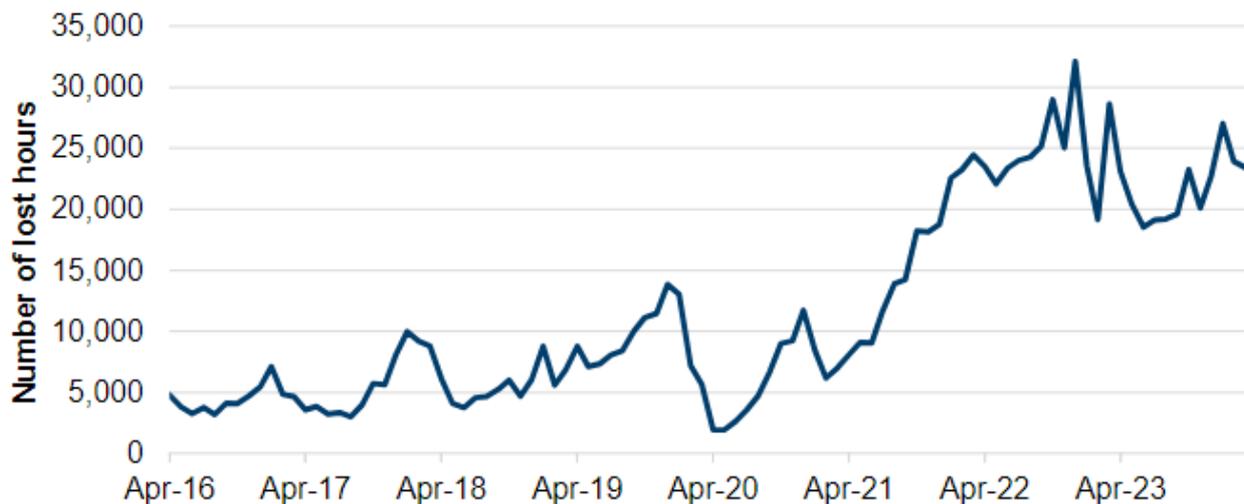
## Percentage of notification to handover within 15 minutes of arrival at hospital



Source: Monthly Ambulance Service Indicators, NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee

Welsh Government statistics show that the number of hours of ambulance time lost to handover delays has significantly increased in recent years, with just under five times as many hours lost in 2023-24 compared with 2016-17. There was a substantial increase in the number of hours lost following the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Number of lost hours for the ambulance service following notification to handover at emergency departments



Source: Trends in NHS urgent and emergency care activity: as at March 2024, Welsh Government

A clinical review by the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives, which looked at a sample of handover delays over an hour that occurred in England in January 2021, found that a significant proportion of patients experienced harm as a result. It found that 8/10 experienced some harm, while 1/10 experienced “severe harm.” They describe this finding as “extremely concerning” and say that “it presents a position that is totally unacceptable to all involved in patient care.”

## 3. Welsh Parliament action

Throughout this Senedd term, the Health and Social Care Committee has been exploring how patient flow through hospitals can be improved. A short inquiry focusing on hospital discharge and its impact on patient flow through hospitals was held 2022. The Committee found that delayed discharges of patients from hospitals were having an affect on ambulance services, as demonstrated by the

large numbers of ambulances seen queueing outside A&E departments across Wales.

Jason Killens, Chief Executive of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST), told the Committee:

In December, 25 per cent of our available capacity, our fleet, was lost in delayed handover in emergency departments. Of course, that's a direct consequence, as colleagues have already said, of pressure across the system and delayed discharge. What that means for us, of course, is that we've got patients and our crews waiting at the emergency department to enter the hospital and continue treatment, but, importantly [ ] there are patients in the community that we are unable to respond to as a result of [ ] that capacity, being held at the emergency department.

He said,

I'm clear that the level of service that we're offering to those patients is unacceptable, and we're doing everything we can to improve that.

The Health and Social Care Committee held a follow-up general scrutiny session with WAST in May 2024. Jason Killens told Committee that handover delays at emergency departments are the "single biggest challenge" for the ambulance service.

He described the pressures being felt across the system:

what causes the response delays is our inability to hand over patients at the emergency department, and what causes that problem is the fact that there's a problem with flow through the hospital, through the emergency department into the hospital and back out into the community, particularly in adult social care. So, at any one time, there are something in the order of between 1,200 and 1,500 patients in beds in our hospitals across Wales who could be back in our communities. And we can't get those patients safely back into communities because of problems, particularly in adult social care, with capacity, availability and so on.

## 4. Welsh Government Action

In response to this petition, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Jeremy Miles MS, said:

The Welsh Government has been explicit with health boards that it is not acceptable for people to be kept waiting long periods in ambulances outside emergency departments.

The response highlights that the Welsh Government are investing more than £180m this year “to support health boards and regional partnership boards to safely manage more people in the community” and claims that this “will help to unlock ambulance capacity and improve responsiveness.”

In 2021, in recognition of the “ongoing and exacerbated pressure on the urgent and emergency care system and the associated risk of harm to patients and staff,” the Welsh Government developed the [six goals for urgent and emergency care](#) and announced £25m recurring national funding to support Health Boards and NHS Trusts to deliver them.

An [accompanying policy handbook](#) was published in February 2022 and includes the target:

Improving ambulance patient handover, ensuring no one arriving by ambulance at an Emergency Department waits more than 60 minutes from arrival to handover to a clinician – by the end of April 2025. The number of people waiting over this period for ambulance patient handover will reduce on an annual basis until that point.

The [Quality Statement for Care in Emergency Departments](#) was published by the Welsh Government in March 2024.

There has been some improvement reducing handover delays. The [2023/24 six goals programme update](#) highlights that Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has significantly improved ambulance handover performance over the past 18 months; eliminating 4-hour ambulance delays and reducing the number of 2-hour delays to less than 1 per cent of arrivals through a new onboarding process and Rapid Assessment Treatment Zone.

The then Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Eluned Morgan MS, in a [statement on the update](#), said:

However, there is unwarranted variation in performance across Wales, with issues intrinsically linked to challenges in supporting timely discharge of patients from hospital to home.

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-06-1471  
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/10084/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair  
Petitions Committee

[petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

08 October 2024

Dear Carolyn,

**Petition P-06-1471 Outlaw Ambulances from being used as extra beds for Hospitals**

Thank you for your letter of 17 September regarding the above petition.

The Welsh Government's has been explicit with health boards that it is not acceptable for people to be kept waiting long periods in ambulances outside emergency departments.

Ambulance handover delays can impact on patient experience and the ability of ambulance crews to respond to calls in the community. Health boards have plans in place to reduce the number of handover delays supported by additional funding from the Welsh Government.

But ambulance handover delays are often symptomatic of delays elsewhere in the healthcare system. We must see further action from health boards and local government to reduce the number of people who are experiencing delayed discharges from hospital as this will help to improve the flow of people through the health and care system and in turn reduce delays at front door of the hospital.

Our national *Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care* programme is developing alternative community pathways and services to ensure people receive the right care in the right place first time, which doesn't always mean they will go to an emergency department.

We are investing more than £180m this year to support health boards and regional partnership boards to safely manage more people in the community. This will help to unlock ambulance capacity and improve responsiveness. We are monitoring progress made by health boards very closely and have observed improvement over recent months. We expect to see further improvements in reducing the longest delays over the coming weeks and months.

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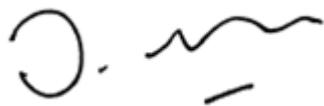
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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

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**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

# Protect our wildlife...ban plastic grass in Wales!

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 4 Tachwedd 2024  
Petitions Committee | 4 November 2024

Reference: SR24/9547-16

**Petition Number:** P-06-1472

**Petition title:** Protect our wildlife...ban plastic grass in Wales!

**Text of petition:**

Watching a Blackbird or Song thrush searching for worms and invertebrates on artificial grass must be one of the saddest sights in nature!

No insects can live there and no seeds or flowers are produced and so you remove the food source for birds, hedgehogs, shrews, frogs, bats, moles, butterflies, bees and many more species.

Add to this the fact that artificial grass does not soak up carbon dioxide and will eventually end up as yet more plastic rubbish taking thousands of years to biodegrade.

As our country side is increasingly converted to intensive farming, our Welsh wildlife is becoming more and more reliant on our gardens for food.

The groundbreaking "State of Nature" report ([stateofnature.org.uk](http://stateofnature.org.uk)) clearly warned us that we need to change the way we run our lives if we are going to reverse the dramatic drop in our wildlife numbers.

There are very real concerns about the negative effect plastic grass use will have on both micro plastic pollution and the risk of future flash flooding events.

Manufacturers will argue that artificial grass does not need to watering or use the use of chemical fertilisers but in Wales you should rarely need to water a lawn and there are organic fertilisers which can be used and maintained with



electric mowers using renewable energy.

I have no doubt that once people are given the full facts about the damage artificial grass does to our Welsh wildlife they would choose to garden sustainably. Wales could once again lead the way for future bans in the rest of the UK.

## 1. Background

Plastic/artificial grass, or turf, consists of man-made fibres made to look like natural grass.

Research by UK insurer Aviva found that a fifth (21%) of UK homeowners have already replaced or plan to switch their natural lawn with artificial grass, and that many are unaware of the associated increased flood risk from such lawns. Reasons for homeowners choosing plastic grass include that upkeep is easier, it doesn't need to be mowed or watered, and it's resilient to heavy use.

However, the University of Plymouth said "the environmental issues caused from choosing an artificial lawn far outweigh any of these potential benefits", and discussed how plastic grass is harmful to the environment, including that it:

- does not provide any food for living creatures;
- restricts access to the soil beneath for burrowing insects and to the ground above for soil dwellers such as worms;
- restricts access to natural materials;
- reaches significantly greater temperatures than those reached by natural grass under the same weather conditions;
- absorbs significantly more radiation than living grass;
- displaces living plants that could remove carbon dioxide;
- creates a large carbon footprint during a journey that includes the manufacturing, transportation and installation; and
- is more likely to cause surface run off after significant rainfall which may contribute to flooding.

## 1.1. State of Nature report

The [2023 State of Nature Report](#) highlighted that 18% of 3,897 species in Wales are threatened with extinction, and that 42% of Wales' plant species are found in fewer places than before.

This [Senedd Research briefing](#) explores the benefits of, and pressures on, biodiversity. It also looks at what is being done to protect biodiversity and what further action is being called for.

## 1.2. Microplastics

Artificial grass is made from polyethylene, a common plastic, and [fragments from this material can make their way into the soil](#), and beyond, in the form of microplastic pollution.

Microplastics are plastic particles which are just a few millimetres in size, less than 5mm in any dimension.

A 2017 report by OSPAR, [assessment documents of land-based inputs of microplastics in the marine environment](#), showed that 'artificial turf and infill' is the cause of some of the highest emissions of microplastics in OSPAR countries.

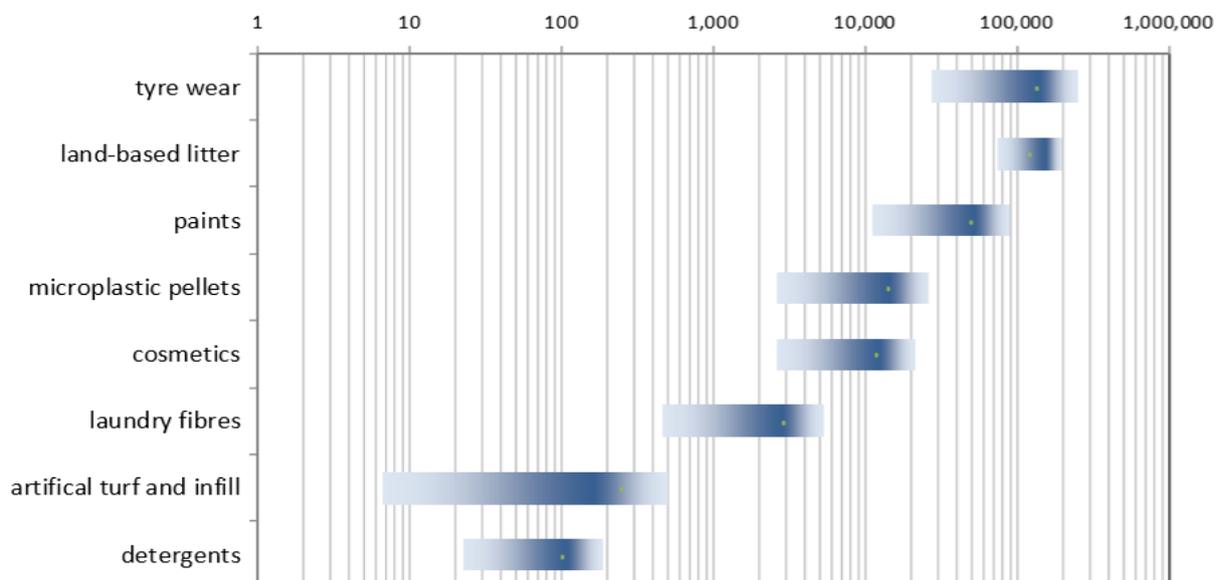


Figure 1. Estimated emissions of microplastics in OSPAR catchments (tonnes/year) [Source: [OSPAR](#)]

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government has introduced a number of measures aiming to curb plastic pollution, including:

- introducing a [charge on single-use carrier bags](#);
- banning [microbeads in wash-off personal care products](#); and
- banning [commonly littered single-use plastic products](#).

In June 2023, the then Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, told the Senedd she wanted to “[explore whether our new single-use plastics \[Act\]](#)” could be used to ban artificial grass, but [back-tracked only days later](#).

In response to this petition, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies MS, says that as microplastics come from various sources, the Welsh Government has “several existing strategies... committed to taking a focussed and evidence-based approach to tackling the issue”.

He highlights the Welsh Government’s Circular Economy Strategy [Beyond Recycling](#) explaining that a circular economy is where plastic pollution, together with other forms of waste, is avoided and resources are kept in use as long as possible. He says through this approach it is “vital to consider the whole lifecycle of products such as artificial grass”. [Senedd Research’s 2023 article](#) looks at ways the Welsh Government is tackling plastic pollution through Beyond Recycling, and this [2024 article looks at progress](#) against the targets set out in the strategy.

In his response, the Cabinet Secretary said he had asked [Environment Platform Wales](#) to organise a microplastics event to understand what research is being undertaken. An event has been [scheduled for March 2025](#).

He also highlights the role of [Planning Policy Wales](#) in “securing positive biodiversity outcomes when new development is proposed and to promote more sustainable behaviours and outcomes wherever possible”. He says that further actions to tackle the nature and climate emergencies will be set out in upcoming “legislation to include a framework to set detailed statutory nature recovery targets”, which is discussed in [this Senedd Research article](#).

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

The Fifth Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs committee undertook an inquiry into reducing plastic waste, where it looked at the sources and impact of microplastic pollution.

The increased flooding implications from plastic grass were discussed by the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee in February 2022. This was in reference to increasing pressures on Wales' sewerage system.

The use of plastic grass in public spaces was discussed in Plenary in June 2023, following a question from Sioned Williams MS on 'Improving the Urban Environment'.

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.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1472  
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10183/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

30 September 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your correspondence of 06 September regarding "Petition P-06-1472 Protect our wildlife...ban plastic grass in Wales!".

I share the concerns outlined in the petition in relation to microplastics. I believe it is imperative that societal use of plastics is reduced to help protect the environment, biodiversity and human health. As microplastics originate from a range of different sources, including industrial and domestic activities, we have several existing strategies (NB - some of these are referenced in the email response you attached - Circular Economy Strategy for example) committed to taking a focussed and evidence-based approach to tackling the issue.

To help coordinate our response to these challenges and to inform future Welsh Government policy, I have asked my officials to work with Environment Platform Wales to organise a microplastics event this Autumn. Our aim is to bring together scientific expertise in this area to help us understand what research is being undertaken and to identify any existing gaps in knowledge.

Our aim is to move towards a more circular economy in Wales, where plastic pollution together with all other forms of waste is avoided and resources are kept in use as long as possible as a key part of our action on the climate and nature emergency. In doing so, it is vital to consider the whole lifecycle of products such as artificial grass. In bringing forward Extended Producer Responsibility for products like packaging, we are emphasising the role that improvements in design and the materials used can help to improve resource efficiency, reduce pollution, and support the remanufacture and recycling of materials. Our Beyond Recycling strategy also includes commitments to reduce to zero the amount of plastic disposed of in landfill and to also reduce the amount of plastic waste that is sent overseas. The Welsh Government is committed to tackling the Nature Emergency and enhancing biodiversity which underpins our health, economy and wellbeing. Planting mixed-species

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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.

grass instead of using artificial grass, would help to absorb carbon and provide habitat for wildlife.

It is important to build understanding and raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the impact of specific actions. This is recognised in our legislative and policy approach to biodiversity as, for example, one of the primary objectives of our Nature Recovery Action Plan is to improve understanding and raise awareness of biodiversity. This is also a key aim of the Section 6 [Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty](#) introduced by the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which requires public authorities to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into all of their functions and activities. The section 6 duty applies to public authorities, but through their functions, they can have a major influence on the private and third sector, such as in determining planning applications. In addition to the general application of the duty, the requirement to incorporate biodiversity into decision-making is specifically re-enforced through Planning Policy Wales. This states “development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity” (para. 6.4.5). Therefore, the planning system has a key responsibility in securing positive biodiversity outcomes when new development is proposed and to promote more sustainable behaviours and outcomes wherever possible.

Looking ahead, actions to encourage behaviour change and raise awareness of what organisations and individuals can do to help biodiversity will form part of the action plan to implement the Deep Dive Recommendations (a set of collective actions we can take in Wales to support nature’s recovery). Also, we are currently developing primary legislation to include a framework to set detailed statutory nature recovery targets which will further strengthen our actions to tackle the nature and climate emergencies.

Welsh Government is encouraging organisations who manage grassy areas such as verges and parks to take a more sympathetic approach to mowing. We have worked with yourself and a subgroup of the Action Plan for Pollinators to develop the ‘It’s for Them’ campaign to explain that changing mowing of green spaces can create a better habitat for ‘Them’: invertebrates, birds, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. The campaign toolkit pack includes an infographic, Frequently Asked Questions and sign templates that organisations can customise with their logos and contact details. There is also an education pack containing colouring-in sheets and activities to help children learn about some of the animals and plants that could live and feed in these areas.

The [Bee Friendly Scheme Planting for Pollinators booklet](#) has useful tips on how people can help pollinators including how to maintain lawns and other grassy areas.

Yours sincerely,



**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

# Agenda Item 3.1

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

This petition was submitted by Luke Johns, having collected a total of 1,505 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

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

### **Additional Information:**

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

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

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

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Torfaen
- South Wales East

# Agenda Item 3.2

## **P-06-1387 Provide humanitarian aid to Gaza**

This petition was submitted by Sam Swash, having collected a total of 1,795 signatures.

### **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.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Alyn and Deeside
- North Wales

Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair  
Petitions Committee

22 July 2024

## **Re: Petition P-06-1387 Provide humanitarian aid to Gaza**

Dear Jack,

I write to you following our [evidence session](#) on international relations with the First Minister on 19 June 2024, to update you on matters relating to [Petition P-06-1387 Provide humanitarian aid to Gaza](#).

The First Minister reconfirmed the position that, if an appeal is launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee ("DEC"), the Welsh Government would expect to contribute.

He was asked whether the 17.6 per cent cut to the Welsh Government's international development budget will affect its ability to donate. The First Minister responded that any budget reductions:

*"...would affect our ability to provide money to this or any other DEC appeal. [...] We don't know when an appeal might be launched. So, the honest truth is it will affect our ability, but I couldn't tell you how much or when, and that's because we don't yet know when a DEC appeal will be launched as well. That is part of the wider reality of our budgetary position."*

Members asked whether consideration had been given to benefits in kind that could be contributed, such as expertise. The First Minister responded that no detailed conversations had taken place but that, in previous situations:

*"...in a range of areas, we've provided benefits in kind that aren't always about money—sometimes it's about equipment, sometimes it's about expertise. So, I'd*

*want to look at what we can do in a positive way. And this all comes back to when there is a period in time when we're able to do that, because at the moment, there isn't a permanent or sustainable ceasefire."*

I hope this provides a useful update to your consideration of the petition.

Yours sincerely,



**Delyth Jewell MS**  
**Committee Chair**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

**P-06-1387 – Provide Humanitarian Aid to Gaza - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 29 October 2024**

I understand that the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) has now launched a Middle East humanitarian appeal, and that the Welsh Government has made a donation of £100,000, which is most welcome.

Given the dire, and continuing, humanitarian crisis in Gaza, do the Welsh Government have any plans to provide further humanitarian aid in addition to the £100,000 donation to the DEC Middle East humanitarian appeal?

Further, in the document sent by Delyth Jewell MS to Jack Sargeant MS regarding an international relations evidence session with the First Minister on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024, the then First Minister, Vaughan Gething MS, stated that the Welsh Government had previously provided benefits in kind, such as equipment or expertise, but that ‘no detailed conversations had taken place’.

In light of the fact that the conflict started over a year ago, why is it that no detailed conversations have taken place in relation to benefits in kind which the Welsh Government can provide to the Palestinian people, and why is that that support seems to be conditional upon a ‘permanent of sustainable ceasefire’?

It would be useful for the new Welsh Government, and First Minister, to outline their position on this matter.

Further, it would be useful if the Welsh Government could outline their position on broader commitments to assisting both financially, and with benefits in kind, to the rebuilding of Gaza, a task which will require significant finances, expertise, and equipment as a result of the total obliteration of the vast majority of Gaza and its civilian infrastructure.

# Agenda Item 3.3

## **P-06-1395 Halt significant new development on the Gwent Levels SSSIs**

This petition was submitted by Deborah Joanne Munton, having collected 4,567 signatures online and 1,146 signatures on paper, making for a total of 5,713 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

The Gwent Levels is an ancient landscape, rich in culture and important for biodiversity, recreation, flood alleviation, carbon storage and food production. It is now facing multiple, adjacent, enormous solar proposals amongst other development proposals. The Welsh planning system in its present form is unable to control development, and the destruction which these will cause under present arrangements would mean the end of this beautiful, fragile and complex wetland.

### **Additional Information:**

There is growing pressure for further, vastly accelerated solar and other development (such as business parks) on the Gwent Levels SSSIs and a systemic and longstanding failure to control it. For example, efforts to remove or even mitigate for serious damage from the only constructed solar farm there (Llanwern), via the use of planning conditions, have failed. Pollution levels in and near the site may well have increased. Lapwing, a scarce and declining breeding bird in Wales have been driven to extinction there. Climate change is the main threat to biodiversity globally. Concerted action is needed in all policy areas, including renewable energy – but this mustn't come at the expense of biodiversity. SSSIs are jewels in our nature crown: UK-nationally important sites, statutorily designated for wildlife. Covering just 12% of Wales, they should not be targeted for major built developments, when thousands of hectares of land and rooftops throughout Gwent and Wales are much more suitable.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Monmouth
- South Wales East

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1395  
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10099/24

Chair - Petitions committee  
[Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales](mailto:Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales)

10 September 2024

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June 2024 to the then Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning, Julie James MS regarding the petition P-06-1395 which calls for a Halt regarding significant development on the Gwent Levels. Responsibility for the planning system in Wales now falls within the portfolio of Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning. The petition subject matter however covers part of the Cabinet Secretary's constituency. Therefore, on this occasion the matter has been passed for me to respond to as Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

I provide further clarification as requested with regards to the questions raised by the Committee as set out in your letter.

I reiterate the earlier advice given by Julie James MS in that Planning Policy Wales (PPW) provides a clear and robust position on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Therefore, we do not consider that a CPO letter or a broadening of the proposed guidance on net benefit for biodiversity as suggested by the petitioners is necessary. PPW states that development in SSSIs is considered to be unacceptable as a matter of principle, and this policy position should inform any site selection process. The definition of exceptional circumstances in PPW is limited and rests on being established in advance through a development plan. For these reasons, I do not consider that the policy position in Chapter 6 on SSSIs requires further clarification at this time.

The Welsh Government provides clear and comprehensive national planning policy on renewable energy projects at Policies 17 and 18 of the National Development Framework: Future Wales. The next review period for Future Wales will commence in 2026, as part of the five year review cycle for the National Development Framework. Future Wales was devised through an extensive programme of engagement, consultation, assessment, evidence gathering and scrutiny. Any potential revisions identified as part of the review process would therefore need to follow the same extensive programme. In determining renewable energy projects, Future Wales should be considered alongside PPW, with all

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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.

relevant aspects of policy considered during the decision-making process. Significant changes were made to PPW in October 2023 strengthening the policy approach in relation to SSSIs. I do not consider it necessary therefore at this stage to further refine Future Wales.

Thank you again for writing on this important topic. I trust that this response addresses the questions raised by both the Committee and the petitioners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

# Agenda Item 3.4

## **P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres**

This petition was submitted by Gareth Jones, having collected a total of 13,245 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Closure of these centres runs contrary to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.

The closure of these visitor centres would have a far-reaching negative impact on the local economy, environment, and community well-being.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Ceredigion
- Mid and West Wales

# Agenda Item 3.5

## **P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve**

This petition was submitted by Kim Williams, having collected a total of 2,422 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

It has come to the attention of the local community that NRW are planning to close the Visitor Centre at Ynyslas at the end of this year. This is taking place with no consultation, no provision of alternative protection for the nature reserve and the loss of local jobs.

NRW is the organisation that should be protecting our wildlife and communities not destroying them.

### **Additional Information:**

The visitor centre at Ynyslas is critical in managing the 400,000 visitors a year that use the site. The wildlife and the habitats of the nature reserve are fragile and need protecting from this large number of visitors, vehicles and dogs if we are to avoid further biodiversity loss in Wales.

The year round presence of NRW staff at the reserve mean that there is a natural deterrent to antisocial behaviour (lighting of fires, fly tipping, vehicle access) and that any incidents that do occur are dealt with quickly and efficiently.

The centre provides information and education to all visitor so that they understand why the place is special and what impacts their actions have on it. It is also a place of social contact for the local community and is a place where nature is accessible to those with limited mobility.

Effective visitor management at Ynyslas is essential for the protection of the Nature Reserve and its wildlife.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Ceredigion
- Mid and West Wales

**P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve - Correspondence from the Petitioners to the Committee, 29 October 2024**

Dear Petitions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments once again.

At this time I would ask that the committee continue impress upon NRW the importance of engaging actively with the community groups involve in all 3 centres and to progress at speed with their consultation processes with clear communications about what is happening and when.

It is imperative that there is no closure of any of the centres and that NRW express explicitly that they will work to retain staff and facilities in any hand over process to community running of the centres.

I would also ask that the committee asks NRW to share not just the financial records for the 3 centres but also its visitor management plans and ecological impact assessments for public access.

There remains a large discrepancy between what NRW are saying to Welsh Government that they are doing and what is actually happening in the communities of the centres. There has yet to be any meaningful engagement or announcements as to when this will be happening.

Thank you for your continued involvement in this issue and your help to amplify the voices that have so far being ignored.

Diolch

Kim

---

Dear Kayleigh

I think Kim has covered off most I wanted to say.

However, I want to ensure that the Committee is aware that NRW has received substantial pay and pension benefit rises in a year when they say there is no money. Also, there have been significant write-offs. (images attached). This does not seem fair or just (particularly considering the Welsh Government has recently had to bail NRW out for a considerably huge IR35 tax bill).

## Executive Team's remuneration

Executive Team Member	Salary		Benefits in kind		Pension benefits <sup>1</sup>		Total	
	(£5,000 range)		(nearest £100)		(nearest £1,000)		(£5,000 range)	
	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23
Clare Pillman <sup>1</sup> (Chief Executive)	150-155	145-150	0	0	40,000	(10,000)	190-195	135-140
Rachael Cunningham <sup>1</sup>	125-130	115-120	0	0	46,000	21,000	170-175	140-145
Ceri Davies <sup>1</sup>	125-130	115-120	0	0	37,000	(2,000)	160-165	115-120
Prys Davies <sup>1</sup>	105-110	100-105	0	0	30,000	10,000	135-140	110-115
Sarah Jennings <sup>1</sup>	130-135	120-125	0	0	51,000	49,000	180-185	170-175
Gareth O'Shea <sup>1</sup>	115-120	110-115	0	0	32,000	(48,000)	145-150	60-65

## Losses and special payments by category

The table below provides the number of write offs and special payment requests approved in the year.

Category or type of loss	2023/24 Number	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 Number	2022/23 £'000
Write-off of irrecoverable debts	70	80	161	222
Loss of assets	3	16	10	44
Other losses (cash losses, fruitless payments, unenforceable claims, or gifts)	15	241	5	49
Special payments	7	71	8	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>378</b>
Waiver of income*	9	164	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>378</b>

\*Waiver of income mostly relating to future sales and does not relate to credit notes to be raised against historical invoices.

In addition, I would like the Petitions Committee to be aware that NRW did just close the visitor center at Cadr Idris, and there seem to be no plans to reopen it, despite

this being an essential place for tourism and where visitors might need assistance and refreshments. We cannot allow this to happen at Ynyslas. I reiterate that this is precisely what they planned to do when they notified staff of the planned closure of Ynyslas Visitor Centre in writing last November.

Finally, on behalf of our group and supporters at Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin, we would like to understand why so much credence was given to NRW's assurances by the Minister during the Senedd debate when all the evidence points to them saying one thing and doing another?

Thank you for your continued attention on this matter

Best regards

Polly

# Agenda Item 3.6

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

This petition was submitted by Charlie Steven Evans, having collected a total of 381 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

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

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

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

### **Additional Information:**

The Welsh Government must 'Provide reliable, frequent, available, accessible, safe and affordable public eco- friendly transport to all areas, including rural areas.' (ENOC: <https://enoc.eu/wp-content/uploads/ENYA-2022-FORUM-REPORT-FV.pdf>)

Germany's 9-Euro-Ticket Scheme which provided passengers with unlimited transport in regional and local areas saved 1.8 million tonnes of CO2. The scheme also led to a 80% increase in train trips to rural tourist areas.

(Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9-Euro-Ticket#cite\\_note-16](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9-Euro-Ticket#cite_note-16))

Public Transport is unaffordable, as Rail, Coach and Bus tickets have risen between 33% and 74% in the past decade. This is worrying, considering 23%

of Wales, as well as the majority of under 18s don't have access to a car. Young people are also more at risk of experiencing transport poverty, proving a barrier to accessing educational, employment and social opportunities . (Sustrans:

[https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/10425/transportpovertypaper-sustrans\\_eng.pdf](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/10425/transportpovertypaper-sustrans_eng.pdf)).

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Ynys Môn
- North Wales

# Agenda Item 3.7

## **P-06-1264 For school transport guaranteed for all comprehensive children**

This petition was submitted by Emma Jane Granville, having collected a total of 181 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

There are at least 27 children ages 11-12 that have been refused transport to their local comprehensive school. Some of these young children have medical illnesses like asthma, autism and at least 1 child has epilepsy and is expected to walk to school in all weather. These children have been separated from friends who have been able to get a bus pass, and there are only a limited number of children that have been left out. It's disgraceful.

### **Additional Information:**

There is only a limited number of children that have been excluded from receiving a bus pass due to laws that were brought in by the Welsh government, a government that is supposed to put child welfare at the forefront. There are 16-year-old young adults getting a pass because they were in the school before this law was changed, so while they are mature enough to find alternative transport 11- and 12-year-old children are walking in appalling weather along dangerous roads. Education is compulsory in this country and so should transport be if the comprehensive is not in the village you live. We all pay taxes, including community payments and there should not have been cuts in education provision. Children getting to school safely, securely and dry should be a must. It is sheer cruelty making young children walk 3 miles in all kinds of weather getting soaked and sitting all day long in lessons.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Bridgend
- South Wales West

# Agenda Item 3.8

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

This petition was submitted by Elin Wyn Davies, having collected a total of 349 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

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

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

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

### **Additional Information:**

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

Thanks for signing.

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

## **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Cardiff West
- South Wales Central

# Agenda Item 3.9

## **P-06-1372 Save our fflecsi bwcabus service**

This petition was submitted by Michael Iwan Morgan, having collected 1,783 signatures online, and 1,276 signatures on paper, making for a total of 3,050 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

fflecsi Bwcabus is a fully accessible local bus service, which operates within specific areas in Wales, providing a mixture of both fixed route services and bookable journeys. fflecsi Bwcabus is designed to help people make local journeys and connections to main line bus services. A bus picks you up at your request, changing its route so that all passengers can get to where they need to go.

### **Additional Information:**

Fflecsi bwcabus was created to replace local community bus services. People in rural communities rely on this service to get them to doctors' appointments, work places, for shopping and to meet up with friends. This service is a vital part of our rural communities and for a lot of people it is their only means of getting out and about and many elderly people would be isolated if this service does not continue.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Carmarthen East and Dinefwr
- Mid and West Wales