

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Committee Room 1 – Senedd	Gareth Price – Committee Clerk
Meeting date: 18 November 2024	0300 200 6565
Meeting time: 14.00	Petitions@senedd.wales

- 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

(Pages 1 – 31)

- 2 New Petitions**
 - 2.1 P-06-1457 Re-introduce the right to buy Scheme

(Pages 32 – 41)
 - 2.2 P-06-1462 Scrap all Welsh Government policies from Agenda 21 /Agenda 2030/Sustainable Development including Net Zero

(Pages 42 – 52)
 - 2.3 P-06-1476 1000 meter mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries

(Pages 53 – 69)
 - 2.4 P-06-1478 Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales

(Pages 70 – 77)
 - 2.5 P-06-1485 Introduce a network of Toy Libraries around Wales

(Pages 78 – 86)
 - 2.6 P-06-1486 Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence

(Pages 87 – 95)

- 3 Updates to previous petitions**

- 3.1 P-06-1303 Create, fund and sustain sufficient affordable nursery and childcare places for all working parents
(Page 96)
- 3.2 P-06-1335 Welsh Government should take steps to ensure vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay with cash
(Pages 97 – 99)
- 3.3 P-06-1396 Introduce a vape licence for dedicated vape shops
(Pages 100 – 104)
- 3.4 P-06-1400 Fair and Adequate Resourcing of General Practice in Wales
(Pages 105 – 108)
- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the remainder of today's business:**

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Reintroduce the Right to Buy scheme

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 18 Tachwedd 2024
Petitions Committee | 18 November 2024

Reference: SR24/9561-1

Petition Number: P-06-1457

Petition title: Reintroduce the Right to Buy scheme

Text of petition: Reintroducing the Right to Buy scheme in Wales would stimulate economic growth and empower citizens. By providing individuals with the opportunity to purchase their homes at a discounted rate, the scheme fosters a sense of ownership and financial responsibility. This would lead to increased investment in property maintenance and improvements, revitalising communities in Wales.

The scheme might contribute to a more dynamic housing market, attracting potential buyers and encouraging a healthier balance between renting and owning. Ultimately, the Right to Buy scheme could be a catalyst for positive change, both for individuals and the overall housing landscape in Wales.



1. Background

The Right to Buy (RTB) was introduced by the *Housing Act 1980*. It gave tenants in social housing the right to purchase their home at a discount on the market value. Tenants were initially entitled to a minimum discount of 33% where they had been a secure tenant for at least three years and up to 50% if they had been a secure tenant for four years or more. The discount was capped in cash terms at £25,000. By the end of the first quarter of 1981 some 28,000 people in Wales had applied to buy their own home under RTB.

For housing association tenants, RTB was known as the 'right to acquire' (RTA), introduced by the *Housing Act 1996*. While based on the RTB, the RTA was less generous in its discounts and excluded some types of property.

While RTB allowed many families to become homeowners, it was criticised for its part in reducing the availability of social housing. Between 1980 and 2018, when RTB was ended in Wales, the total number of Welsh **social homes** fell from over 300,000 to around 230,000. While new social homes were built, almost exclusively by housing associations, they were not built in sufficient numbers to replace the stock that was sold through RTB.

2. Welsh Government action

Local authorities may have wanted to build new homes with RTB receipts, but the way local authority housing was financed (via the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy system or HRAS) meant it did not happen. Under the HRAS, local authorities were required to give around **£73 million of their income** from RTB sales and rents to HM Treasury every year. This changed with the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014*, which allowed local authorities to exit the HRAS. However the Welsh Government went ahead with abolishing RTB, **stating that:**

'...the argument for using receipts from Right to Buy discounted sales to build more social housing is undermined by the fact the finances mean they only allow the building of a lower number of replacement dwellings due to the cost of replacement social homes being higher than the value of sales. The net impact would therefore be a continued reduction in the social housing stock.'

The *Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Act 2018* received Royal Assent on 24 January 2018. The Act abolished the RTB and the RTA in Wales on 26 January 2019.

When the RTB was ended, tenants had a twelve-month notice period to consider purchasing their home under RTB, apart from in the seven local authority areas where RTB had already been suspended.

The Welsh Government's stated purpose of the Act was to safeguard Wales's existing social housing stock for people who are unable to acquire homes through the housing market, and also to encourage local authorities and housing associations to invest in new social housing.

There is clearly high demand for social housing. Social housing waiting list information is not collected centrally in Wales, but a Freedom of Information request by the BBC in 2023 found that 139,000 people were on a waiting list for social housing.

To put that in context, the latest affordable housing provision statistics from the Welsh Government show that 3,013 additional affordable homes were 'delivered' in 2022-23 across Wales, 69 per cent by housing associations. 'Delivered' means that the unit is completed and available for occupation.

Recently the Welsh Government has been providing financial support to social landlords to buy back properties formerly sold under the RTB and RTA. The Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme grant was established in 2022-23, receiving £163m in its first two years.

Prior to abolishing the RTB, the Welsh Government had already taken steps over a number of years to disincentivise RTB to protect the social housing stock from further reduction. Discounts were reduced to a maximum of £8,000. Also, seven local authorities across Wales had opted to suspend the RTB using powers under the *Housing (Wales) Measure 2011*.

The Welsh Government's response to this petition states that the Welsh Government provides funding for several home ownership schemes for people who would like to own their own home but need financial assistance to be able to do so. The suite of housing schemes available can be found on the Your Home in Wales website at the following link <https://gov.wales/your-home-in-wales>.

3. The Right to Buy in England and Scotland

Wales has followed Scotland in abolishing RTB, but devolution has highlighted a clear divergence from England where, since 2012, there has been a policy to continue the RTB. The maximum RTB discount in England currently stands at £102,400, except in London where it's £136,400.

Recent research by the Local Government Association found that nearly six out of ten homes sold under the English RTB won't be replaced, as the discounts are leaving local authorities unable to afford to build. The LGA stated that 'RTB can enable families to get on the housing ladder and own their own home, but every home sold that isn't replaced risks pushing more families into the private rented sector, driving up housing benefit spending and rents, along with exacerbating our homelessness crisis.'

On 7 May 2024 the then Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning Julie James MS made a plenary statement about delivering affordable homes. In response to a question from Jenny Rathbone MS, the Cabinet Secretary said that the RTB was one of the factors behind low rates of housebuilding in England because 'as fast as you build them, they're sold off':

'We stopped that, and you can actually see the exponential growth in the build from the point we stopped it, so there's a quite clear cause and effect going on there. That's not because we don't want people to own their own homes, but it's because we don't want people to be in temporary accommodation. In an ideal world, where we were building absolutely enough and you could walk up and ask for your social home, then it would be great to do that, but we're not in that ideal world.'

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-06-1457
Ein cyf/Our ref JB/10158/24

Carolyn Thomas MS (AM)
Chair - Petitions committee

24 October 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 5 September regarding Petition P-06-1457 on re-introducing the Right to Buy scheme.

As of 30 June 2024, 11,301 individuals were in temporary accommodation, a 4% increase from 30 June 2023. Consequently, the demand for social housing remains very high, not least due to the volume of the social housing stock that was lost during the period the Right to Buy was in force in Wales. Therefore, the current position remains that there are no plans to reintroduce the Right to Buy in Wales, as we want to ensure a sufficient stock of social housing remains available for those people that need it.

The voluntary sale of a home by a social landlord is not prevented and tenants would need to discuss this further with their landlord. However, due to the shortage of social rented properties and the need to ensure that there is a sufficient supply for those who need them, landlords might be unwilling to sell. There may be exceptions to this if, for example, the property was deemed surplus to requirements and its sale met a strategic business need, or the structure or maintenance of the property made improvements to reach the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (that social landlords must work towards meeting) not viable.

The Welsh Government does provide funding for several home ownership schemes for people who would like to own their own home but need financial assistance to be able to do so. The suite of housing schemes available can be found on the Your Home in Wales website at the following link <https://gov.wales/your-home-in-wales>. Local authorities may also offer their own schemes. Whilst our focus is on increasing social housing in Wales, this suite of housing products remains an important part of the toolkit to ensure people and families have the home that is right for them.

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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.

In situations where tenants of social housing do not wish to move, but are unable to buy their current home, then they will continue to retain the benefit of a secure lifetime tenancy and affordable rents.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jayne Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'J' and 'B'.

Jayne Bryant AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai
Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the chance to respond to the recent letter from Jayne Bryant AS/MS regarding the petition to reintroduce the Right to Buy scheme in Wales. While I appreciate the thought given to the current housing challenges, I feel the response doesn't fully address the concerns raised or the need for social housing tenants in Wales to have a renewed pathway to homeownership.

The letter focuses on the high demand for social housing and the potential strain that reintroducing Right to Buy could put on housing stock. While I understand these challenges, I believe a balanced approach could allow tenants the chance to own their homes without compromising the stability of social housing. Right to Buy has, in the past, offered people the opportunity to invest more fully in their homes and communities. With targeted protections, I believe it could again be a tool for empowerment rather than a threat to social housing resources.

Although the letter explains the decision to keep Right to Buy out of policy, it doesn't address the limitations this places on tenants' long-term options and goals. Many tenants are deeply committed to their communities and would love the chance to take ownership of the homes they already cherish. The existing homeownership assistance programs mentioned don't fully address this aspiration, as they don't allow tenants to buy the homes they've built a life in. I believe reintroducing Right to Buy, with reasonable conditions, could give tenants a path to homeownership without depleting essential social housing resources.

The experience of Right to Buy in England shows how powerful this policy can be for individuals and communities. In England, many social housing tenants have successfully transitioned to

homeownership, which has fostered greater pride and investment in local areas. While this did reduce social housing stock, recent policies have used proceeds from Right to Buy to fund new social housing, replenishing the supply. This shows that, with the right structure and reinvestment plan, Right to Buy can be a path to homeownership without harming future social housing availability. I believe Wales could adopt a similar approach to give tenants this opportunity while safeguarding the housing supply.

To find a balance between maintaining social housing stock and giving tenants a chance at ownership, I'd like to suggest a more conditional approach to reintroducing Right to Buy. Some possible ideas include:

Testing a Pilot Program: Could we try a pilot version of Right to Buy to see its effects in action? For example, the program could focus on long-term tenants or properties that are costly to maintain or upgrade. This would allow us to gather insights while limiting impact on the housing stock.

Reinvesting Sale Proceeds into New Social Housing: Could proceeds from Right to Buy sales be dedicated to building new social housing? This would let tenants achieve ownership while ensuring that the broader social housing demand is still met.

Setting Conditional Discounts or Capped Pricing: Reintroducing Right to Buy with capped discounts or conditional pricing could make homes affordable without diminishing social housing resources. Such measures would strike a fair balance between affordability and supply.

Long-Term Economic Benefits of Homeownership: Owning a home provides families with financial stability and reduces

long-term reliance on social housing. I encourage the Committee to consider how homeownership might help Welsh families achieve greater financial security while alleviating long-term demands on social housing.

I respectfully ask that the Committee consider these suggestions and explore ways to reintroduce a flexible, conditional Right to Buy scheme that meets the immediate and future needs of Welsh tenants. With careful planning, I believe we could bring back Right to Buy in a way that preserves social housing while helping tenants achieve the goal of homeownership.

Thank you for considering these additional perspectives. I look forward to further discussions on how best to address housing needs for all residents in Wales.

Sincerely,
Ryan Hamill

Scrap all Welsh Government policies on sustainable development and net zero

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 18 Tachwedd 2024
Petitions Committee | 18 November 2024

Reference: SR24/9547-6

Petition Number: P-06-1462

Petition title: Scrap all Welsh Government policies from Agenda 21/Agenda 2030/Sustainable Development including Net Zero

Text of petition:

Net Zero, as one example, is a destructive, unethical, extremist and anti-farming policy which also hinders everyone's right to live off Welsh land. Other examples from these Agendas include 15 minute cities and the clamping down on car travel and our personal freedom to travel as and when we want.

Agenda 21 / Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development are plans created and carried out by unelected globalist bodies to control all resources and people on earth, over which the citizens of Wales and elsewhere have no say or democratic voice. This is very wrong and a serious threat to democracy and our unalienable rights and freedoms as free people.



1. Background

Wales' sustainable development and net zero targets are set out in both legislative and non-legislative commitments. These commitments sit within a wider global and UK sustainable development framework.

1.1. Well-being of Future Generations Act

Wales has made significant commitments to sustainable development, primarily through the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*. This world-first legislation aims to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales.

Well-being Goals: The Act sets out seven well-being goals that public bodies must work towards:

- A prosperous Wales;
- A resilient Wales;
- A healthier Wales;
- A more equal Wales;
- A Wales of cohesive communities;
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and
- A globally responsible Wales.

Sustainable Development Principle: Public bodies are required to act in a manner that ensures the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This includes considering long-term impacts, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement.

Future Generations Commissioner: The Act established the role of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, whose role is to support public bodies in working towards the well-being goals and monitor their progress.

1.2. Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive, non-binding action plan developed by the United Nations to promote sustainable development globally, nationally, and locally. It was adopted by more than 178 governments at the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992.

The plan is divided into four main sections:

Social and Economic Dimensions: Focuses on combating poverty, changing consumption patterns, promoting health, and achieving sustainable population and settlement patterns.

Conservation and Management of Resources for Development: Includes atmospheric protection, combating deforestation, protecting fragile environments, conserving biological diversity, and managing biotechnology and radioactive wastes.

Strengthening the Role of Major Groups: Emphasises the roles of children and youth, women, NGOs, local authorities, business and industry, and workers - as well as indigenous peoples and their communities.

Means of Implementation: Covers science, technology transfer, education, international institutions, and financial mechanisms.

1.3. Agenda 2030

Agenda 2030, also known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is a global plan adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. It aims to achieve peace and prosperity for people and the planet by 2030. At its core are the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, which address a wide range of global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.

As part of Agenda 2030, all 193 UN Member States are required to produce at least one Voluntary National Review, a report in which they assess and present progress they have made towards achieving the SDGs. In 2019, the UK produced its first **Voluntary National Review** and presented it on 16 July to the UN High Level Political Forum.

The Welsh Government publishes supplementary reports to the UK's Voluntary National Review of progress towards the United Nation's [SDGs](#). These reports outline the progress made, policy changes, and areas for improvement. The [most recent](#) was published in July 2019.

1.4. Wales' net zero commitments

Wales has a [legislative commitment](#) to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, with interim targets for 2030 (63% reduction) and 2040 (89% reduction).

The Welsh Government published [Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 \(2021-25\)](#) ("the Net Zero Plan") on 28 October 2021. It sets out how Wales will meet its [second carbon budget](#) (CB2), and build the foundations for Carbon Budget 3 (CB3) and the 2030 emissions reduction target, as well as net zero by 2050. The targets and budgets are summarised in this Senedd Research article on the [Path to Net Zero](#).

The Net Zero Plan fulfilled the Welsh Minister's statutory duty (under the [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)) to prepare and publish a report, before the end of 2021, setting out the policies and proposals for meeting CB2. It contains 123 policies and proposals across all ministerial portfolios. The plan follows the low carbon delivery plan (LDCPI) for Carbon Budget 1 (CB1), [Prosperity for All: A low carbon Wales](#), published in March 2019.

Progress against commitments is monitored and reported on by the UK Climate Change Committee. The [most recent progress report](#) was published in June 2023.

2. Welsh Government action

The Cabinet Secretary's response to the petition states the Welsh Government shares the ambition of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and that through the Well-being of Future Generations Act "*we are proud of the ambitious steps we have taken to legislate for future generations*".

The response also outlines the role of the Welsh Government's new [Sustainable Farming Scheme](#) in helping Wales achieve its net zero ambition, saying it has been "*designed to support the ongoing sustainable production of food at the same time as taking action to address the climate and nature emergency*". It

restates the commitment to working with and supporting farmers and land managers through this transition. It says:

Indeed, our high standards in food and farming are key to our response to the climate emergency, and our plans for enhancing biodiversity will help ensure a thriving sector for both now and future generations.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Welsh Parliament has been central in legislating for sustainable development and net zero. The Well-being of Future Generations Bill received cross-party support during its passage through the then National Assembly for Wales. There have been no calls in the Welsh Parliament for either net zero or sustainable development commitments or targets to be scrapped.

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-06-1462
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10176/24

Chair of the Petitions Committee

29 October 2024

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter of 6 September regarding Petition P-06-1462 to Scrap all Welsh Government policies from Agenda 21/ Agenda 2030/ Sustainable Development including Net Zero.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out an ambitious agenda for creating a more sustainable world. We share this ambition in Wales, and we are committed to making our contribution to the goals through our Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Act connects social, environmental, economic, and cultural well-being and looks to solve complex issues through better decision-making with the aim of creating a more sustainable future. We are proud of the ambitious steps we have taken to legislate for future generations.

Welsh agriculture is at the heart of many of our rural communities, therefore, it is imperative we ensure a thriving sector for future generations who will be farming in much more challenging conditions. We must act today to adapt and mitigate for this.

In 2021, the Welsh Government published its [Net Zero Wales Plan](#), setting out how we will meet Carbon Budget 2 (2021-25) and set the foundations for transitioning to a net zero economy by 2050. It describes how the actions of many will not only help us deliver net zero but also create a greener, stronger, fairer Wales.

Transitioning to net zero in agriculture is a technical, cultural and societal challenge and the sector will need significant support to ensure it is equipped with the skills and knowledge to enable a just and timely transition within the rural community.

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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.

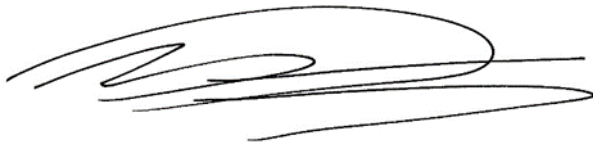
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

One way in which we are helping the sector to adapt to Net Zero, is ensuring the voices of farmers and key industry stakeholders are considered in the final design of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). The Scheme, which is underpinned by the Sustainable Land Management objectives established in the Agriculture (Wales) Act, is being designed to support the ongoing sustainable production of food at the same time as taking action to address the climate and nature emergency. Through the Ministerial Roundtable we continue to work with key stakeholders to consider the scheme design before any final decisions are made by Welsh Ministers.

The Welsh Government is committed to working with and supporting farmers and land managers through this transition and I welcome the excellent work already being done by farmers to decarbonise their farms. Indeed, our high standards in food and farming are key to our response to the climate emergency, and our plans for enhancing biodiversity will help ensure a thriving sector for both now and future generations.

The challenge of climate change requires everyone to work together across geographic and sectoral boundaries, and collaboration is essential if we are going to be successful. I am proud that other nations and regions across the world are looking to Wales as an example of global leadership on sustainable development.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping loops and lines, positioned below the text '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

Re: Petition number P-06-1462 including a response to Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca Davies AS/MS

November 12, 2024

Annwyl Gadeirydd ac oll ar y Pwyllgor Deisebu / Dear Chair and all on the Petitions Committee,

Thank you for sending me the letter sent by Deputy First Minister, Huw Irranca Davies AS/MS and for the invitation to supply a response and further information. I will do this here and will try to keep it as short as is possible which is not always easy with such subjects alas.

I'm grateful to Mr Davies for taking the time to write his letter whilst I also fear that Davies has failed to understand the core issues raised in the petition. His letter simply regurgitates the government line on the subjects raised without welcoming an open discussion on this very important subject. I'll try to cover and enhance a bit on this here.

The first problematic issue is that Agenda 21 / Agenda 2030 / Sustainable Development / Net Zero have all been created and pushed by unelected globalist bodies such as the UN and WEF and no one in Wales have voted in the people behind these policies or indeed have voted on the policies themselves. This is an instant problem and a democratic vacuum that all members of the Welsh Government and Parliament should stand against these unelected bodies or be held accountable if they are interested in keeping their trust and integrity with all the citizens of Wales. The fact that the Welsh Government is carrying out policies created by unelected, faceless and unaccountable bodies is of genuine concern. We know that these unelected bodies will also try to use emotional blackmail and pressure on governments that question these policies being pushed on them from outside. But that is what governments including the Welsh Government must do. Only policies created from scratch in Wales by elected representatives in the Welsh Parliament and Government should have validity. Any policies originating from or guided by outside of Welsh democracy have no legitimacy. And those that, however well meaning and sincere they may believe themselves to be, promote these policies have to be accountable for their actions.

Next we come to the alleged science and the actual unelected powers behind Agenda 21 / Agenda 2030 / Sustainable Development / Net Zero. As mentioned these have all been created and pushed on to governments by unelected, unaccountable bodies affiliated with multinational corporations. I'm sure I don't need to remind anyone of the imminent danger that occurs when corporations and unelected bodies start to dictate government policy. It's known that net zero will be a disaster for Welsh farms and will drive many Welsh farmers to sell their farms.

The genuine worldwide movement to protect the environment has been hijacked by corporations and unelected billionaires. This new faux green movement is about power and control over the world's resources and people, not about protecting the environment. And it is about huge profits for a select few. For example, the person that came up with carbon credits is alleged to be behind junk bond schemes and is the inventor of financial derivatives.

Stopping man made global warming' will cost \$50 trillion dollars apparently. But who will get all this money? It will be a select few global corporations – they are the ones that create the alleged issue and hysteria around man made climate change and they will be the ones that benefit from the resulting mass spending in the goal for net zero, renewables and other such programmes, helped and facilitated by governments. These companies which are believed will benefit massively from zero carbon hysteria are alleged to include fossil fuel companies such as Shell and Exxon. Others are believed to include SunPower, General Electric, Huaneng Renewables are some of the bank's top picks. Tesla, VW, Panasonic, Albemarle, Bloom Energy, Chevron, BP, Air Liquide, Siemens and

Alstom.Neste, Sao Martinho, and Valero Energy.

In other words this is a racket. For more details on this please follow this link:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sergeiklebnikov/2019/10/24/stopping-global-warming-will-cost-50-trillion-morgan-stanley-report/#21c87c3551e2>

In terms of the claimed science behind this all, let's look at that.

The crisis according to many is that the climate is changing and that this 'needs to be stopped'. When considering the true meaning of these words and sentiments every reasonably sensible person should at least be able to consider that such a statement is meaningless and absurd.

The climate has always changed and changes in temperature are a natural part of this change. Trying to stop that is like trying to stop rain from falling or dogs from barking.

And history shows that the world has been much hotter and colder than it is at this point, and that these climate changes come and go in different times and cycles over time.

Of course the narrative behind all this is that it's the effects of CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide) output from human activities that are causing the world temperature to change. Or at least that was the narrative.

The script was changed after this narrative was challenged and defeated by a huge number of scientists who have argued effectively that there is no credible evidence that man or nature's CO₂ increases temperature. In fact, most evidence shows that the temperature first rises and that CO₂ levels then follow that temperature rise.

The famous hockey stick graph by Michael Mann used by the UN's IPCC which predicted an unprecedented peak in the late 20th century. Below that, Dr Tim Ball's graph (based on that o

So the narrative that global warming was caused by man's (and woman's) CO₂ output was stopped some years ago. In its place came the even more bizarre narrative that 'climate change needs to be stopped'. This is the latest non-sensical narrative to be pushed on us non-stop, especially on children.

What exactly is the evidence regarding climate change and mankind's impact on it? Below are hopefully a few helpful pointers:

1. Not only is there no credible evidence that CO₂ causes global temperatures to rise, but CO₂ is one of the essential gases of life. Zero net plans therefore are not only absurd and extremist but are also dangerous to life on earth. Without CO₂, no plant or tree would grow and therefore there would be no food for us and we would all eventually die. Plants will start to die once CO₂ in the atmosphere starts to go below around 180ppm. It can be argued therefore that those calling for a zero carbon future are calling for an end to life – a form of a death cult.

2. Of all the gases in the environment as a whole, the total amount of CO₂ is about 0.04%. Of this 0.04%, man's output is thought to be around 4%. So, from this, it can be said that the percentage of man's CO₂ output out of all the total gases in the environment is about 0.0016%. This is negligible and insignificant in scientific terms.

3. By now a huge cohort of scientists have stated that there is no credible evidence to show that the CO₂ from man or nature is causing temperatures to rise. Indeed, most evidence shows that CO₂ levels increase as a result of rising temperatures rather than causing temperatures to rise. One of the tests that attests to this are the Vostock ice tests which show that CO₂ follows temperature rises and not the other way round.

The IPCC admits that the Milankovitch cycles (solar activities) drove the ice age cycles and that

CO2 followed temperature change “with a lag of some hundreds of years”

4. The statement that ‘a consensus of 97% scientists agree with man made global warming has been discredited and shown to be incorrect. This misleading figure mostly comes from a major online investigation of 11,994 papers on the topic of global warming led by John Cook from the University of Queensland in 2013. Out of the 11,994 papers, only 32.6% supported the theory that global warming is due to CO2 from man. 0.7% rejected the theory and 0.3% said the cause of warming was uncertain. However, 66.4% did not express any opinion whatsoever on the subject. Very big questions have also been raised about the validity and methodology of the research in general. But even in the face of such information that dispels the myth of ‘97% of scientists’ consensus’ this is all still meaningless because science is not based on consensus or lack of consensus anyway but rather on presenting empirical evidence that is always open to challenge or correction.

5. It’s therefore thoroughly dishonest and misleading to state that there is a consensus among scientists that global temperatures are rising because of CO2. The mainstream press and media never mention the tens of thousands of scientists who have clearly stated that they do not believe in the narrative that man and CO2 are causing the temperature to rise. More than 31,487 scientists have signed a petition refusing this theory in the USA alone. Of these, 9,029 had a PhD. It’s claimed that this is 15 times more scientists of quality or qualification than those believed to be working seriously on the IPCC project. In Canada in 2007 68% of over 51,000 scientists surveyed stated that the science of global warming was not settled.

Similar results have been seen across the world, from Germany to Russia, India and more. These claims and petitions are often conveniently dismissed as the work of ‘the oil industry’ or other such bogeyman tropes. But the truth seems to be that the globalist conglomerates are only interested in power, profits and control, and will use any vehicle that can fulfill their own needs, whether they’re deemed ‘green’ or not. Regardless, real empirical science seems to have no place in this equation. What looks to be the overwhelming independent voices and findings of real scientists which fail to keep to the predetermined script are seemingly ignored across the world.

The uncomfortable truth is that these great number of scientists shows that there is an overwhelming majority and consensus of scientists who **do not** believe that global warming/climate change is created by man’s CO2 output. Again, that is if consensus was relevant in science. As mentioned science is not based on consensus anyhow, but rather on evidence and empirical proof.

To end I would implore those on the petitions panel and all members of the Welsh Parliament and Government to watch these two very well researched and presented videos on this subjects - which help to explain how true environmentalism has been captured and hijacked by groups and corporations which are using environmentalism to gain control over all of the world's resources and also our freedoms and rights as people and as a humanity. Please watch them with an open mind – they are not of any particular ideology – left or right – but are rather about getting using evidence and excellent unbiased research to get to the truth:

Rosa Koire: Agenda 21. Open Mind Conference
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ykELwj1Ta8>

'Stakeholder Capitalism Episode 1 (40 mins)' – by Richard Jeffs
<https://yellow.forum/t/stakeholder-capitalism-episode-1-40-mins/1454>

Many thanks for taking the time to look at this and consider all the points made.

Pob diolch,

G. Meredith

P-06-1476: 1000 metre mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 18 Tachwedd 2024
Petitions Committee | 18 November 2024

Reference: SR24/9617-3

Petition Number: P-06-1476

Petition title: 1000 metre mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries

Text of petition: Ensure mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries in Wales. We propose at least 1,000.00 metres buffer zone from all residential areas, schools, hospitals, and care facilities. Currently the law allows for quarries to be located as close as 200 metres away from residential areas and schools. This is affecting people's health and causing damage to property. The bigger buffer zone we can have the better.

1. Background

Welsh national planning policy is set out in [Planning Policy Wales \(PPW\)](#). PPW says development plans should clearly identify buffer zones around existing and proposed minerals sites where new development which would be sensitive to adverse impact, including residential areas, hospitals and schools, should be resisted.

Paragraph 5.14.45 of PPW says the maximum extent of the buffer will depend on a number of factors:



... the size, type and location of workings, the topography of the surrounding area, existing and anticipated levels of noise and dust, current and predicted vibration from blasting operations and availability of mitigation measures.

Paragraph 5.14.46 says: “Buffer zones will of necessity vary in size depending on the mineral being extracted and the nature of the operation, ...”

The PPW paragraphs relating to buffer zones are reproduced in full in the annex to this briefing.

PPW also refers to the minerals technical advice notes. Minerals technical advice note (MTAN) Wales 1: aggregates says that the minimum distance from a hard rock quarry should be 200 metres, and for sand and gravel (and others where no blasting is permitted) it should be 100 meters.

MTAN 1 also says:

The buffer zone should be defined from the outer edge of the area where extraction and processing operations will take place, including site haul roads, rather than the site boundary, as there may be land within site boundaries where mineral activities are limited or no operations are proposed so that the impact of the proximity of such land is negligible.

2. Welsh Government action

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS, wrote to the Committee in relation to this petition on 7 October 2024. She reiterated the Welsh Government’s policy, as set out above:

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Minerals Technical Advice Note 1 Aggregates (MTAN1) contain comprehensive planning policy which is robust about controlling the impacts of quarrying.

The primary purpose of buffer zones is to limit the impact of mineral working and to protect land uses that are most sensitive to the impact of mineral operations by establishing a separation distance between potentially conflicting land uses.

The 200m buffer zone outlined in national policy is a minimum distance and the buffer zone should be defined from the outer edge of the area where extraction and processing operations will take place, including site haul roads, rather than the site boundary.

The maximum extent of the buffer zone would depend on a number of factors: the size, type and location of workings, the topography of the surrounding area, existing and anticipated levels of noise and dust, current and predicted vibration from blasting operations and availability of mitigation measures.

Buffer zones will of necessity vary in size depending on the mineral being extracted and the nature of the operation but must be clearly defined and indicated on development plan proposals maps.

3. Welsh Parliament action

On 16 October 2024 the Senedd debated a Member's Legislative Proposal on Bill relating to planning processes for quarry development. The proposal was brought forward by Heledd Fychan MS and worded as follows:

To propose that the Senedd:

1. Notes a proposal for a Bill on introducing a presumption in planning processes against approving quarry development in close proximity to settlements.
2. Notes that the purpose of the Bill would be to:
 - a) require the risks of proposed quarrying sites to the environment and biodiversity, and to public health, to be assessed as part of the planning process;
 - b) set a mandatory buffer zone of 1,000 metres for all new and existing quarries; and
 - c) provide that the decision on a planning application for quarry development may only be made by the relevant Welsh Government Minister, with consideration given to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Cabinet Secretary said in the debate she doesn't agree that new legislation would be appropriate or effective, as circumstances vary on a case-by-case basis. She believes planning decisions relating to quarries are localised and best dealt with through the policies in Local Development Plans. She also said:

Introducing a mandatory buffer zone of 1,000m could bring about some unintended consequences, which would prevent the use of land for other uses, prohibiting or adversely impacting on the provision of key infrastructure, such as house building, for example.

A number of Members raised concerns during the debate, including Heledd Fychan MS who asked whether current policy reflects latest World Health Organization advice and the aims of the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024. Hefin David MS highlighted that MTAN 1 had not been updated since 2004 and asked if there was merit in reviewing it.

The Cabinet Secretary responded to these concerns saying she'll consider reviewing the guidance should evidence suggest it was no longer up-to-date.

The Senedd rejected the motion for the debate: For: 14, Against: 18, Abstain: 15.

4. Annex – PPW wording

Buffer Zones

5.14.44 There is often conflict between mineral workings and other land uses as a result of the environmental impact of noise and dust from mineral extraction and processing and vibration from blasting operations. Buffer zones should be used by planning authorities to provide areas of protection around permitted and proposed mineral workings where new development which would be sensitive to adverse impact, including residential areas, hospitals and schools, should be resisted. Within the buffer zone there should be no new mineral extraction or new sensitive development, except where the site of the new development in relation to the mineral operation would be in a location remote from the active mineral site or on the far side of an existing built up area which already encroaches into the buffer zone. Other development, including industry, offices and some ancillary development related to the mineral working, which are less sensitive to impact from mineral operations, may be acceptable within the buffer zone on a case by case basis.

5.14.45 To avoid conflict between mineral workings and other land uses buffer zones should be identified in development plans around existing or proposed minerals sites. The maximum extent of the buffer zone would depend on a number of factors: the size, type and location of workings, the topography of the surrounding area, existing and anticipated levels of noise and dust, current and predicted vibration from blasting operations and availability of mitigation measures.

5.14.46 Buffer zones will of necessity vary in size depending on the mineral being extracted and the nature of the operation, but must be clearly defined and indicated on development plan proposals maps. This will ensure that there is unequivocal guidance on the proximity of mineral operations to sensitive land uses and that the potential impact of existing and future mineral workings is recognised and planned for in the area around the mineral operations. Further guidance on the factors that should be taken into account when defining buffer zones for particular minerals is provided in the MTANs. Whilst the primary purpose of buffer zones is to limit the impact of mineral working their wider beneficial role as part of green infrastructure provision and protecting and enhancing biodiversity should be explored.

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.

Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1476
Ein cyf/Our ref RE/10069/24

Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

7 October 2024

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter from the Petitions Committee regarding a petition concerning buffer zones for quarries.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Minerals Technical Advice Note 1 Aggregates (MTAN1) contain comprehensive planning policy which is robust about controlling the impacts of quarrying.

The primary purpose of buffer zones is to limit the impact of mineral working and to protect land uses that are most sensitive to the impact of mineral operations by establishing a separation distance between potentially conflicting land uses.

The 200m buffer zone outlined in national policy is a minimum distance and the buffer zone should be defined from the outer edge of the area where extraction and processing operations will take place, including site haul roads, rather than the site boundary.

The maximum extent of the buffer zone would depend on a number of factors: the size, type and location of workings, the topography of the surrounding area, existing and anticipated levels of noise and dust, current and predicted vibration from blasting operations and availability of mitigation measures.

Buffer zones will of necessity vary in size depending on the mineral being extracted and the nature of the operation but must be clearly defined and indicated on development plan proposals maps.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio

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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.

P-06-1476 1000 Meter mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries, Correspondence from the petitioner, 14 November 2024

Petition Regarding Concerns About the Impact of Quarry Operations on Glyncoch and Surrounding Areas.

Dear petitions committee,

I am writing on behalf of the residents of Glyncoch and the surrounding areas to formally express our deep concerns regarding the ongoing and future impact of the quarry on our community (Craig Yr Hesg) operated by Heidelberg Materials UK.

As the proximity of the quarry moves closer to our homes (*within 150 meters & within 100 meters of dust crusher to properties*), we are increasingly alarmed about several critical issues that we believe will be exacerbated if not addressed immediately.

These concerns include:

Dust Pollution: The levels of dust produced by the quarry are a serious health and environmental concern for the community. Previous monitoring of air quality by Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Council has been incomplete and lacking in substance, leading to a significant underestimation of the impact on residents' well-being. On investigation, we have found that some years where data has been extracted from for planning approval purposes, the one monitor that's used was non-operational for a number of months over 80% of the year.

After seeking expert advice, we have collected dust samples from various parts of the mountain including dust that gathers on the communities properties and sent these samples away to be analysed by accredited organizations with the results very concerning of the composition of the material (Quartz & Cristobalite). The question is when and if this dust has been analysed in the past, obviously with the new area of extracting the aggregate, has this area been tested. These samples were collected from members of the community window sill.

Visual of sample stations are enclosed in this pack, where you can see just how close properties are to the quarry and why the concern.

Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Traffic:

The small B road (B4273) servicing the area is already overwhelmed by the high volume of HGV traffic from the quarry. This has raised safety concerns and disrupted daily life in Glyncoch, a problem we fear will worsen with the planned extension. Application stated that approximately there will be 140 HGV movements per day for aggregates, basic surveys has

been done by the appropriate authorities however, the real issue if safety has not been addressed, We have conducted a number of surveys at the entrance of the amount of HGVs arriving and have found that in the first 2 hours of operation (07:00-09:00) we were having on average 90 HGV vehicle movements, therefore over 64% of the vehicles are arriving during the busiest time of the day, ie Rush hour and school transport, this heightens the risk of accidents to the public and children trying to get to school safely. Past surveys off the authorities have not looked at the timings of transport just overall average. The road is narrow and numerous times a day HGVs are having to mount pavements to get passed.

Ground Vibrations and Property Damage:

Residents have experienced vibrations from blasting operations at the quarry, leading to concerns about the structural integrity of homes in the area. Complaints of property damage have been repeatedly overlooked by both Heidelberg (Previously Hanson) and RCT Council, which is unacceptable given the potential risk to homeowners. We believe these issues, which directly impact the health, safety, and quality of life of our community, have not been adequately addressed by those responsible for the quarry's operations. Recent blasts have been felt over 2 miles away with no warning, including Maesycoed, Graigwen, Pontypridd, Trallwn, Cilfynydd & RCTCBC Head Offices by senior members of council.

Over the years, complaints and concerns raised by the community have been ignored or not properly documented, reinforcing a perception of complacency and disregard for public opinion. After investigations we have found flaws in the reporting of complaints process by both Heidelberg & RCTCBC and only now after highlighting the flaws RCTCBC are moving forward and reviewing/improving the procedure. We have evidence right up until August of this year of a number of complaints off the public which was not recorded and acted on. No complaint references were ever given so no traceability, No simplified version of how the public could raise their concerns and how to, and also RCTCBC who "police" the quarry relies on all information coming from Heidelberg which this could be perceived as not "policing" at all.

In light of these ongoing issues and the potential for even greater harm with the quarry's expansion, we have petitioned for a 1000 metre buffer zone to be considered for all existing and future quarries, with immediate action to address our concerns. With 13000+ signees, this shows how much it means to the local communities and we are all genuinely scared for our health.

October 21st 1966 was a Sad day for Wales where we lost 144 lives (116 children) in the Aberfan disaster.... We are frightened that Craig Yr Hesg quarry will end up being taught in

school to our great-grandkids due to another disaster of a similar scale if not more deadly, with questions being asked "How did we let this happen?"

Please don't let this happen!

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to a meaningful response that acknowledges the community's concerns and works towards a solution that ensures the safety and well-being of all affected residents.

Please take the time to read the following statements from members of the community of all ages.

Resident's Impact Comments

"Gutted my mountain has been taken away, We are left with a boggy path to take our dogs for a walk, memories of my childhood have been taken away and I would've liked to have made memories with my boy. A massive hole will be left in our lives."

Keanan aged 26

"I miss the mountain being green and open, The blasts are loud and scary and there's always so much dust"

Hadley aged 6, Glyncoch

"I hate the Quarry, fed up of having to fill in the cracks all the time, My husband has rebuilt the back wall 3 times, I make sure my granddaughter is not here when they blast as she gets so frightened, If I could afford to move I would. I lost my husband 3 years ago and flew birds of prey up there and would be able to find all sorts of animals like voles and lizards, My friend is also scattered up there, I can no longer visit her and the birds aren't as plentiful now, It's no longer a Happy place"

Denise, Glyncoch

"During COVID, my mum had a terminal cancer diagnosis. We couldn't visit her in hospital. Walking the mountain, sitting beneath the Bonsai trees helped me through it, I felt so close to her there. I am devastated by the loss of ALL of them"

Paula

" I sold my house in 2016 to my son, they have recently relocated to the other side of the world, We are trying to sell the house but after 3 estate agents have been involved the valuation has dropped by £65k due to people being interested but then pulling out when they find out about the quarry expansion, we will just lose money that no-one can afford to do"

Loretta

" staff members of the school next door, cleared an area in the woods next to fence and created a makeshift campsite with boulders around in a circle and logs in the middle, classes would then be timetabled to spend some time out there each week in the outdoor area, kids loved it, playing, exploring, drinking hot chocolate. It's so sad future generations won't have the opportunity of such a unique experience"

Debbie

"Air pollution is known to cause airway diseases including COPD & Asthma, of which I have now been diagnosed with, what it will also cause is fatal strokes and heart attacks, British Heart Foundation says roughly 40 people a day will die from heart and circulation problems caused by toxic air, having a quarry less than 145 meters from a deprived residential area shows complete disregard for people's health & welfare and should be stopped"

Douglas H Williams. County Borough Councillor for Glyncoch

"Dydw I ddim yn cael lle i gymryd fy nghi mas am dro. Mae'r bws ysgol yn mynd yn sownd mewn traffig oherwydd mae'r loriau yn trio mynd heibio I fynd i'r chwarel. Rydw I'n teimlo yn nerfus pan welaf gonfoi o loriau yn mynd heibio fi yn y bore"

(I don't have a place to take my dog out for a walk. The school bus gets stuck in traffic because the lorries try to get past to go to the quarry. I feel nervous when I see a convoy of lorries go past me in the morning.)

Skye Whiles, aged 15, Glyncoch

"I'm really astounded and concerned about the possible health impacts on the residents of Glyncoch which appears to have not been given due consideration during the planning appeal hearing or by Welsh Government"

Anon

"The mountain means a lot to me, my family and friends, My Dad used to take me and my brother up when we were younger, we'd watch the sunset under the trees, have picnics, make Dutch arrows and run around playing.

Now we can't even walk the mountain without security machines going off or security following us.

A safe place that I could go and sit to watch the sunset and remember my Dad as he passed away is now gone and is being destroyed in front of us daily.

How can anyone say they care about our mental health when a beautiful place has been ruined, its breaking my heart watching it become nothing.

Years of memories are being taken away by greed."

Aaliyah Addis

Aged 14

What the expansion means to me? Our way of life has been stripped and our home is about to be destroyed by dynamite. Our future has been blasted, while our hopes and dreams are crushed. The future generations act, clean air bill and such policy's that promise people matter have been replaced with particulate matter. We are ignored and drilled about decibels when all we can hear is hells bells. We have been and are being injured mentally and

physically both directly and indirectly. We are living in fear with broken hearts in a challenging environment that threatens our community cohesion, suffering reduced quality of life with mental wellbeing in decline. We were a ruby in a gravel pit, the ruby snatched, now just a gravel pit. A mean reality replaces amenity. Memories, heritage and homes shaking at the foundations, anxiety and depression served. I am personally grieving the loss as are we all. Won't you help?

Ian, Glyncoch

Closing Personal Statement

I would just like to thank you for considering this petition, with over 13,000 signatures, it shows how much of an impact Craig-Yr-Hesg quarry is having on the community. I don't usually open up, I'm more of an individual who observes and tries to help where I can to people in need.

I have lived in Glyncoch for 15 years, and whilst I do not have the memories of my childhood at the mountain, I want to make memories with my children for the future. What I have witnessed with the Glyncoch community is completely inspirational, This is a community with limited knowledge and skills on this process, this is a community frowned upon by other communities in Wales, this is a community in the bottom 5% of deprived areas... but yet with all this negativity, I've seen a community grow, I've seen a community proud of where they live, proud of their land, and proud to be Welsh. I have seen individuals break down in distress due to everything going on whilst having comments of their children if it's safe and if the school will fall down. I think in the last 12 months I have seen every campaigner break, including myself... But then something special happens,,,,, the community sticks together and supports each other which in turn lights the fire in our bellies again to continue fighting.

Why keep on fighting??? Because if we don't, who will? Our children?

I can honestly say I am proud to say I'm from Glyncoch and will always teach my children to fight for what they believe in.

Dust Sample Results



Sample Number		Quartz %
Samples 1	Darren Court, Glyncoch	51.0
Samples 3	Garth Avenue, Glyncoch	24.4
Samples 2	Garth Avenue, Glyncoch	40.3



Like Comment Send Share







1000 metre buffer zone for new and existing quarries.

To whom it may concern

I urge you to consider the proposal of the petition for a mandatory 1000-metre buffer zone around quarries is crucial to protecting public health, property, and the environment, and would isolate activities at quarries that do not support the policies and legislation implemented by the Welsh Government. It promotes sustainability by balancing economic benefits with the well-being of affected communities and natural ecosystems. Implementing a mandatory 1000-metre buffer zone around existing and new quarries is important for several reasons:

1. **Health and Safety to the surrounding areas:** Quarry operations release dust and particulate matter, which can include silica and other harmful substances. These particles pose serious respiratory risks to nearby residents, including asthma, bronchitis, and other long-term health issues. A buffer zone reduces direct exposure to these contaminants, protecting public health.
2. **Noise Pollution Reduction:** Quarries are associated with high noise levels due to blasting, drilling, and transportation activities. Prolonged exposure to such noise pollution can lead to hearing loss, stress, and sleep disturbances. A 1000-metre buffer reduces the impact of these disturbances on nearby communities.
3. **Protection of Water Resources:** Quarrying activities can disrupt local hydrology, affecting groundwater levels, quality, and nearby water bodies. A buffer zone provides a safeguard against contamination or depletion of water resources that local communities rely on for drinking, agriculture, and recreation.
4. **Preserving Property Values:** Properties located close to quarries often experience a decrease in value due to noise, dust, and the visual impact of quarrying activities. A buffer zone can help maintain property values by creating distance and minimising the quarry's impact on the local landscape.
5. **Ecosystem Conservation:** Quarries can harm surrounding ecosystems, impacting local flora, fauna, and habitats. Dust, noise, and vibrations disrupt wildlife, while the removal of vegetation for quarrying can lead to soil erosion. A buffer zone can provide a protective margin for local ecosystems, preserving biodiversity and reducing environmental degradation.
6. **Community Well-being and Quality of Life:** The presence of a quarry near residential areas affects residents' mental and emotional well-being. Concerns over noise, dust, and potential property damage from vibrations can contribute to stress and reduce overall

quality of life. A 1000-metre buffer helps create a safe distance, fostering a better living environment for nearby communities.

7. **Risk of Structural Damage:** Blasting and heavy machinery used in quarries can create vibrations that, over time, may damage nearby structures. A buffer zone minimises this risk, protecting homes, schools, and other buildings from potential structural harm.
8. **Planning and Zoning Consistency:** Establishing a mandatory buffer zone aligns with best practices in urban planning and zoning regulations, which aim to separate industrial activities from residential and environmentally sensitive areas. This consistency strengthens regulatory frameworks, benefiting communities and local authorities.
9. **Precedent for Responsible Resource Management:** Setting a 1000-metre buffer zone demonstrates a commitment to balancing resource extraction with community and environmental welfare. This proactive approach can set a benchmark for responsible resource management in other industrial sectors as well.

Regards

Selena Young. Glyncoch resident

P-06-1478 - Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 18 Tachwedd 2024
Petitions Committee | 18 November 2024

Reference: SR24/9803-1

Petition Number: P-06-1478

Petition title: Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales

Text of petition: For more than a decade, I believe that the agency mandated to protect the Welsh environment has seen a decline in its capacity to undertake its statutory purpose.

Polluted Welsh rivers (the arteries of the natural world) should be rescued and given a new lease of life.

A comprehensive review of failing prosecutions and inaction needs to take place in order to protect Wales for future generations.

The vast majority of NRW staff work diligently to protect the Welsh environment with the resources they have.

Over complicating matters and undertaking unnecessary projects leads to reduced financial means and a lack of action in priority areas.

We call on the Welsh Government to undertake a comprehensive review of how projects are resourced and to eliminate wasteful spending to maximise results on the basic issues we face in the Welsh environment today.

This includes, but is not limited to, the protection and restoration of Welsh river systems for the benefit of the natural world and the people who enjoy them.



1. Background

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) was established in 2013 following the merger of the Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales and Forstry Commission Wales.

It has a wide range of operational and regulatory responsibilities, and is the principal Welsh Government adviser on natural resource issues. As a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, it is accountable to the Welsh Ministers through the Sponsorship Minister – currently Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs Huw Irranca-Davies MS.

1.1. Criticism of NRW

NRW has faced recent public criticism on a number of aspects of its work.

This includes its response to issues at Whithyhedge landfill site, where gas emissions have impacted communities living around the site. NRW has been criticised for its approach to enforcement, including by Channel 4's Dispatches programme in June. NRW has published information and regular updates on its investigation of issues at the site

Similarly, two former NRW employees spoke to the S4C programme Y Byd ar Bedwar (broadcast in July 2024) about their experiences working for the regulator and concerns about monitoring and enforcement of river pollution incidents. The former employees alleged multiple failings by the regulator.

NRW has faced criticism of how it responds to and investigates water pollution incidents. In response it has published information on its approach to managing water quality.

In July, NRW said it is “pursuing several formal investigations, including potential prosecutions relating to incidents and issues of [water industry] permit compliance”. It provided evidence to the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee in October.

1.2. Reviews of NRW and its activities

NRW has undertaken, or been subject to, a number of reviews of its activities since its establishment.

In 2015 the Welsh Government commissioned the then **Better Regulation Delivery Office** to undertake **a review of NRW against the 'principle of good regulation'**,

The organisation also undertook a review of its response to **storms Ciara and Dennis**, which hit Wales in February 2020 causing widespread flooding. The outcome of the review **was published in October 2020**.

In 2022, the Welsh Government **told the CCEI Committee** that it had asked NRW to undertake a fundamental baseline review of its resources against its statutory functions and Programme for Government commitments. Subsequently, **in January 2023**, the then Minister for Climate Change, Julie James acknowledged that this had identified "a gap in NRW's funding". NRW's **Annual Report and Accounts for 2022-23** set out how the baseline review had been used to develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in ten key areas identifying the resources required for service delivery. NRW recently told the CCEI Committee that SLAs will no longer be taken forward, and it is now **focusing on developing 'multi-year plans'** instead.

Most recently, in July this year, **NRW launched a consultation** with its trade unions on proposals for changes to its staffing structure. Referred to as the 'case for change'.

The NRW board met on 5 November to make the final decision on the outcome, with staff informed on 6 November. NRW also **published details of the outcome**. This includes achieving savings of £12m, scaling back some services such as closing its **library, as well as cafes and shops** at visitor centres and removing 233 posts (113 of which are unoccupied currently).

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government provides the majority of NRW's funding through Grant in Aid and other grants. In 2022/23 **59% of NRW's income** came from the Welsh Government, with the remainder raised through charges (17%), commercial/other income (21%), and European/external funding (2%). Its total expenditure of £272m in 2022/23 exceeded its income of £234m, implying a £38m deficit.

As noted above, gaps in NRW funding have been identified and work undertaken to consider how these might be managed. However, information published by NRW (and subsequently removed following the 6 November announcement) estimated a funding gap of £9m in 2024/25, which will "grow by circa £4m in

2025/26 to £13 million, with a further £4 million added in 2026/27. This means that by 2026/27 the gap will exceed £17 million if we take no action.”

On 21 October the Welsh Government issued a written statement highlighting that NRW’s Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24 include details of HM Revenue and Customs’ (HMRC) investigations into NRW’s historic compliance with off-payroll working requirements. The accounts make clear that a “without prejudice” payment of £19m has been made to HMRC in relation to potential liabilities “following HMRC’s ongoing enquiry”.

The Cabinet Secretary’s letter to the Chair regarding this petition notes that Welsh Government officials meet NRW regularly to monitor and analyse performance.

3. Welsh Parliament action

NRW’s performance has been discussed extensively in the Senedd. In particular, CCEI Committee undertakes and reports on annual scrutiny of the regulator, as well as one off sessions in response to specific topical issues.

Most recently, in early October the Committee held a short evidence session with NRW on water company environmental performance and potential prosecutions, the issues raised in Y Byd ar Bedwar and the ‘case for change’ work.

The recent ‘case for change’ proposals have been the subject of two recent Plenary debates; one in response to the CCEI Committee’s NRW annual scrutiny report, and the second in response to a petition calling for a stop to the closure of NRW visitor centres.

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-06-1478
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10356/24

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

29 October 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 4 October seeking my views as Cabinet Secretary with lead responsibility for Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on issues raised in Petition [P-06-1478](#), asking to “Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales”.

As you have noted, there is no doubt that the professional and passionate staff within NRW work hard every day to help to protect our natural environment. Welsh Government officials meet with NRW on a regular basis to monitor and analyse NRW’s performance in achieving agreed aims and objectives, particularly in relation to the delivery of its statutory duties and functions.

In addition, you will also be aware the Senedd’s Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee also scrutinises NRW’s performance on an annual basis. Its last report (Annual Report on Natural Resources Wales (NRW) 2023-24) published on 21 May 2024 and was debated in the Senedd on 2 October 2024

Once again, thank you for writing to bring this petition to my attention. I hope this information is helpful to you in your role as Petitions’ Committee Chair.

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

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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.

Alun Phillips

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate
Change and Rural Affairs

Your ref HIDCC/10356/24

11 November 2024

Dear Huw,

Thank you for your letter in response to the petition calling for a comprehensive review of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and its ability to meet its statutory obligations to protect Wales.

It is with regret that I have come to learn about the recent decision to reduce NRW staff levels and close visitor centres across Wales. These centres and the dedicated staff supporting them are integral to protecting our natural landscape for future generations, as well as serving as key points for public engagement and education. The closures will deprive the public of essential resources, information, and a personal connection to conservation efforts that only face-to-face interaction can offer.

You acknowledged the hard work and passion of NRW staff. I agree—there is indeed much dedication within the organisation. However, recent financial strains, the need for a £19 million HMRC bailout, a £12 million savings target, and the elimination of more than two hundred roles all point to significant challenges and failings at the management level. In light of these issues, I wonder if you could clarify whether there will be any action to review the leadership, particularly CEO Claire Pillman's role? In the private sector, underperformance of this nature often results in leadership restructuring to ensure accountability and organisational improvement.

The petition ultimately seeks meaningful government action to safeguard our environment. Yet NRW is rarely recognised for positive environmental contributions and, unfortunately, is more often noted for failings in the media and through perceived inaction. Publications by the CEO suggest that she believes prosecutions for environmental offences are ineffective. If this is the position of NRW's leadership, I must ask: how does the Welsh Government intend to penalise persistent environmental polluters such as Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, where taxpayers have funded over 250 investigations, with only a handful of successful outcomes? If NRW, the agency mandated to prosecute, is failing to do so, what incentive remains for companies who repeatedly pollute our rivers and countryside, seemingly with little accountability? Without robust enforcement, we risk enabling ongoing environmental harm and eroding public trust in NRW's mission. As environmental matters are devolved, would you agree that a sensible approach would be that any and all fines for environmental pollution

in Wales are kept in Wales for investing back into the environment directly, rather than being sent to the UK treasury?

Given that Welsh Government has oversight of NRW's spending, how can it justify these inactions, reported cuts and the recent tax-funded bailout, particularly when other public sector bodies are also struggling and facing significant reductions in spending? How were NRW's executives allowed to exhibit such levels of financial mismanagement and inefficiency? It is difficult to understand how these issues were permitted to escalate to this point, given the oversight mechanisms in place. Will you be happy to assure the public of future protections put in place to prevent this situation reoccurring?

Furthermore, I would like to ask if the Welsh Government is considering action to split NRW back into its original components—the Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales, and the Forestry Commission Wales—to enable a more focused approach to environmental protection? Eleven years since the merger, the outcomes appear increasingly unfruitful, and many now view NRW as a bureaucratic entity, struggling to meet its original aims. With so many concerns raised by the public, it would seem prudent to reassess NRW's structure and consider a return to a more streamlined, environment-centric model, one that prioritises environmental integrity and avoids further embarrassment and a waste of public money.

I hope you will take these concerns seriously and consider the steps necessary to restore public confidence in NRW's role. I look forward to your response regarding the potential for a senior management review and any measures the Welsh Government might take to improve NRW's effectiveness and focus.

Yours sincerely,

Alun Phillips

Introduce a network of Toy Libraries around Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 18 Tachwedd 2024
Petitions Committee | 18 November 2024

Reference: SR24/10008

Petition Number: P-06-1485

Petition title: Introduce a network of Toy Libraries around Wales

Text of petition: Children's toys can be expensive, are often used only for a short time, can add to the clutter in homes and often end up thrown away, even if they aren't broken.

Toy libraries are an established way of helping provide access to lots of toys that children might otherwise not encounter due to cost or even space limitations at home. They offer cost-effective alternatives to buying new toys, can act as community hubs to bring parents and carers together and can help reduce our use of resources.

Parents and carers spend on average around £300 on toys every year. Lots of these are made from plastic. With most plastic being made from oil, it is estimated that unless we do something about it, by 2050, plastic could account for around 20% of all global oil consumption.

Toy libraries have their part to play in reducing waste, reducing plastic use, reducing climate emissions and also saving parents, carers and families money. They would help deliver on Welsh Government's focus on a child's 'right to play' and the 'circular economy'.

We ask that Welsh Government work with all relevant groups in Wales to introduce a nationwide network of toy libraries.



1. Background

The first toy libraries opened in the 1960s and 1970s to support families of children with special educational needs. Since then, they have expanded to serve broader communities.

Research in 2007 by the National Foundation for Educational Research, [a treasure chest of service: The role of toy libraries within Play Policy in Wales](#) found that as well as toy and resource loaning to children, families and childcare providers, toy libraries can provide family support services and specialist support to families with children with special educational needs. These included:

- providing and encouraging creative play opportunities for all children, regardless of ability;
- supporting families and providers; and
- overcoming disadvantage caused by poverty and lack of opportunity.

2. Welsh Government action

Under the provisions of the [Children and Families \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#), local authorities have a duty to provide sufficient play opportunities for children living in their areas and to provide local people with information about what is available.

In July 2014, the Welsh Government published [Wales: A Play Friendly Country](#). This statutory guidance to local authorities sets out how they should assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. The Minister for Children and Social Care's letter to the Committee states that this guidance is currently being 'refreshed'. Local authorities must undertake a Play Sufficiency Assessment every three years, the next of which is due to be submitted to the Welsh Government in June 2025. Local authorities determine their own priorities for securing sufficient play opportunities within a Play Action Plan in line with their sufficiency assessment.

The Minister's letter sets out the sources of funding available to local authorities through the Children and Communities Grant. This funding can be used for local authorities to work with partners to provide play resources.

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-06-1485
Ein cyf/Our ref DB/10164/24
Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
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04 November 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 16 October regarding your committee's current consideration of the petition from Bleddyn Lake, which asks the Welsh Government to work with all relevant groups in Wales to introduce a nationwide network of toy libraries.

The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in our society. Wales was the first country to legislate, guaranteeing children's right to play in Wales. Under the legal duty, local authorities assess the sufficiency of play opportunities and secure, as far as is practicable, sufficient and inclusive play opportunities for children. Local authorities must undertake a Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) every 3 years and work with their partners to secure sufficient play opportunities that meet the needs of families in their areas, including those living in areas of deprivation and with diverse needs.

In accordance with [The Play Sufficiency Assessment \(Wales\) Regulations 2012](#), local authorities must include an action plan as part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment process. Where their assessment identifies an insufficiency in play opportunities for children in their area, they must set out what steps need to be taken to improve the opportunities for children to play or where sufficiency is identified, set out what steps need to be taken to maintain opportunities for children to play. The next full 3 year PSA is due to be submitted to the Welsh Government in June 2025.

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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.

In response to recommendations made within the Ministerial Review of Play [report](#), we are working with Play Wales and the Local Authority Play Sufficiency Network in reviewing and refreshing the '[Wales - a Play Friendly Country](#)' Statutory Guidance. The guidance and accompanying toolkit support local authorities in assessing and, as far as is reasonably practicable, securing sufficient opportunities for children to play in their areas.

Each local authority will determine its priorities in securing sufficient play opportunities within its Play Action Plan in line with the Play Sufficiency Assessment process, which includes consultation with children, young people and their families.

In reviewing local authority Play Sufficiency Play Action Plan Progress Reports, there are examples of collaborative work between local authorities and their partners to support the availability of play opportunities, resources and equipment. Across Wales, partnership work is being undertaken to provide materials for play. This mainly includes the provision of resources in communities, childcare settings and schools. Most of these projects are providing what are known as 'loose parts', which are described in the Statutory Guidance as "natural and man-made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished". Such materials are cheap and accessible and can include sand, water, shells, fabric, buckets, boxes, rope, tyres, bottles, wood and scrap materials of all kinds that can be used to facilitate and encourage play.

The many benefits for children of playing with loose parts include increasing their levels of creative and imaginative play and helping them to be more physically active. Additionally, providing these everyday objects can help divert reusable waste away from landfill, whilst improving opportunities for play and creativity.

The Welsh Government provides a number of grant schemes, including the Childcare and Play Grant and the Playworks Holiday Project within the flexible funding Children and Communities Grant, which local authorities can access to work with partners to provide play resources, including toys. One example relates to a local authority supporting and promoting a play lending library as an active resource for play for families, professionals and the wider community through the use of the Childcare and Play element of the Welsh Government's Children and Communities Grant.

The Committee may also wish to note that since [Beyond Recycling](#) was published in 2021, the Welsh Government has invested over £4million through the Circular Economy Fund (CEF) to repair and re-use projects across Wales in collaboration with local authorities and third sector partners. This funding was awarded to build on previous successful rounds of CEF funding and has supported the creation of over 50 hubs, which includes those located in town centres.

We have also made significant investments into community organisations such as Benthg Cymru, which has enabled a broadening of their network of 'Libraries of Things' to 23 sites across Wales. They have leased items over 15,000 times leading to estimated carbon savings of 180,000 kg of CO₂e. The vast majority of items they stock are second-hand donations or purchases, meaning they are both diverting valuable material from landfill and replacing purchasing from new.

We are currently evaluating the CEF funding provided to date, which will allow us to accurately determine the impact of this and future interventions in Wales.

I hope the Petitions Committee will find this reply helpful.

Yours sincerely,

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

Dawn Bowden AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Minister for Children and Social Care

**P-06-1485 Introduce a network of Toy Libraries around Wales -
Correspondence from the petitioner, 12 November 2024**

Dear Senedd Petitions Committee,

Many thanks for forwarding the reply from Welsh Government's Minister for Children and Social Care.

Whilst taking into account the Minister's points, I must say that the response seems to confuse different issues. What we are asking for is for Welsh Government to investigate the possibilities of creating a nationwide network of toy libraries in Wales. We are not commenting on the Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012. This can be found here - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2012/2555/made> . This governs the play opportunities in a given area, including things like playgrounds, clubs and youth groups, holiday play schemes and leisure centres.

The issue of toy libraries is different. There are, I believe, less than 5 in Wales but over 1000 in the UK, mostly in England.

This blog covers some of the issues in more depth - <https://foe.cymru/how-can-play-become-accessible-and-sustainable>

Maia Banks who runs the Honeycomb Toy Library in Cardiff has also written an interesting blog on her experiences - <https://foe.cymru/starting-toy-library-its-easy-if-you-try>

Toy libraries have many benefits and have been proven to work across many years and in many countries around the world. It seems inexplicable that we in Wales have so few, especially given the fact that immediately across the border, there are so many. We don't have any similar equivalents either. It's very much a missing link both in early years provision but also in the circular economy.

A few of the benefits of toy libraries are:

- They can provide more children with a greater variety of toys and games to experience which can help them with their learning and development
- They can help families save money (the average child can have as many as 493 toys by the age of 13 - <https://www.plasticboxshop.co.uk/research-reveals-average-child-will-own-493-toys-i98?srsId=AfmBOoqMg6xGviTrUaA67MDd8OYhZr00X4SuNK55ER8YVlf8g-RAm7Dk>) and the average family can spend around £300 per year on toys in the UK (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/514480/toy-spend-per-child-great-britain-uk/#:~:text=This%20statistic%20illustrates%20the%20average,pounds%20per%20child%20per%20annum.>)

- They can be a very valuable local community networking opportunity, helping to bring together the parents, families and carers of young children
- They can help reduce the amount of plastic we use. Lots of toys nowadays are made from cheap plastic and can often break or be discarded too easily.
- By reducing the amount of plastic, they can, even if only in a very small way, help reduce our climate emissions (with most plastic being made from oil)
- They can help reduce the amount of clutter in people's homes
- If held in a local community hall or as part of book lending library, they can help support these institutions with extra visitors thereby helping support and maintain other community resources and venues

We have a great deal of accumulated knowledge amongst organisations and individuals in Wales who are all keen to work together and support this idea. Welsh Government however have the levers and framework necessary to make this happen and all we ask is that they bring together the relevant experts in Wales to investigate how this could work.

The Minister also mentions Welsh Government's Beyond Recycling Strategy and the Circular Economy. We are of course very well aware of both of these, having long been proponents of action on waste issues, the circular economy and taking action on plastics. The Minister also mentions schemes such as Benthyg.

There are still however many improvements we can make to the circular economy. It most certainly isn't the case that it is complete and that we can't add anything else. We feel toy libraries would be a valuable addition and logical next step, particularly as they cut across many other issues such as the cost of living crisis, supporting communities and the benefits of helping provide children with access to more and different toys which can help stimulate their learning and development.

Benthyg is a great addition to the circular economy but toy libraries are somewhat different. Toy libraries in other parts of the UK and the world, act as community resources, they can help support local community centres for instance or can help support local book lending libraries if held there. We know book libraries are always at risk under local authority spending cuts so toy libraries could actually act as a source of extra support for book libraries if combined.

Toy libraries are not just simply a place to drop off a toy and pick another one up either. They can be a valuable social and networking opportunity for parents and carers of young children to come together, to stay and chat and share a cuppa whilst their children play with some of the toys too. This is especially valuable in rural areas where there simply aren't as many community networking opportunities and resources for those with young children. Toy libraries shouldn't be seen as just simply another Bentyg. They are different and fulfil different needs. Both have their place in a circular economy. The fact that Bentyg's already exist shouldn't mean that toy libraries are not considered.

It is interesting to note the Minister's response stating that: **"The next full 3 year PSA is due to be submitted to the Welsh Government in June 2025"**. Now then would seem like a perfectly reasonable and logical time to be discussing toy libraries in this context. We also note that there is currently even more of a focus within Welsh Government from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change, to look at the reuse and repair angle of the circular economy. Having a wider discussion now on toy libraries is therefore timely and relevant.

As mentioned above, toy libraries would play a valuable role in the circular economy whilst having numerous other benefits. What a nationwide network might look like and how they might work alongside book libraries, Bentygs and other early years provision, would then be for existing practitioners and experts to help formulate. The expertise is already there in Wales. There is a golden opportunity here for Welsh Government to bring people and organisations together to work out a plan.

Yours sincerely

Bleddyn Lake

Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 18 Tachwedd 2024
Petitions Committee | 18 November 2024

Reference: SR24/10008

Petition Number: [P-06-1486](#)

Petition title: Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence

Text of petition: The British National (Overseas) visa, launched in January 2021 after the National Security Law in Hong Kong, offers a pathway to UK citizenship for Hongkongers. Many BN(O) visa holders and their dependents have since moved to the UK, including Wales. While the UK Government calls this visa a reflection of its "historic and moral commitment" to Hongkongers, classifying BN(O) students as international students undermines this, as they face higher tuition fees and financial barriers to education.

Here in Wales, the Senedd can do more to create a welcoming environment for those from Hong Kong. In Scotland, BN(O) Hong Kong students are granted home fee status after three years of residence. In contrast, in Wales (and other UK countries), BN(O) Hongkongers are only eligible for home fee status after five years of residence, once considered "settled." The Senedd has the power to grant exemptions for groups like Afghan and Ukrainian students, and we urge the same for BN(O) Hong Kong students.

This petition calls for the Senedd to grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence, or adopt a more progressive measure. Currently, while the home fee in Wales is capped at £9,000 per year, international fees, set by universities, can be double or more, creating a significant financial burden. Without access to student finance due to the



"settled status" rule, many BN(O) students face insurmountable barriers to higher education.

1. Background

1.1. Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas)

People from Hong Kong were able to register as **British Nationals (Overseas)** before 1 July 1997. As a result, they and their family members may be eligible for a **British National (Overseas) visa**, or BN(O) visa, which would allow them to live, work, and study in the UK.

BN(O) visa holders can apply to stay in the UK for either:

- Two years and six months
- Five years

They can **extend their visa once they are in the UK** if they want to stay longer. After they have lived here for five years, BN(O) visa holders can apply for 'settlement' to remain in the UK indefinitely.

1.2. Home fee status

Across the UK, higher education providers allocate their students a fee status that determines how much they pay for tuition. The Welsh Government determines who pays 'home' fees for higher education courses in Wales. The categories that qualify for home fee status are set out in Student Support regulations. Higher education providers assess the fee status of their students following these regulations.

In Wales, **tuition fees for full time undergraduate courses are capped at £9,250** per year in 2024/25 for 'home' students. Fees for 'international' (or 'overseas') students are determined by providers and vary by course and can often be much higher.

In general, individuals must be resident and 'settled' in the UK on 'the first day of the first academic year' of their course to be eligible for home fee status and

student support. They must also have been 'ordinarily resident' in the UK for the three years before that date.

A settled person is someone ordinarily resident in the UK without any immigration restrictions on the length of their stay. Students with indefinite leave to remain or granted the right to stay in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme will meet the criteria.

1.3. BN(O) visa holders in Wales

Someone with a BN(O) visa has restrictions on their stay in the UK and can only study and work for either two years and six months or five years. This means they are not settled, and so in Wales (and in England and Northern Ireland) they are not eligible for home fee status or publicly funded student support.

After they have lived in the UK for five years, they can apply to live in the UK permanently, and so would become eligible for home student status.

There are exceptions for some groups of students, such as those who have been granted leave to enter or remain in the UK:

- Under the Ukraine Family Scheme;
- the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme;
- the Ukraine Extension Scheme;
- the family member of someone who has and those who have been granted leave under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP);
- the Afghan Citizen's Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or are the family member of someone who has.

There is no similar exceptional category for people with BN(O) visas in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

2. Position in Scotland

In Scotland, those holding BN(O) visas will be eligible for home fee status if they meet the three-year residency criteria. In June 2023, Graeme Dey the Minister for Higher and Further Education said:

From Academic Year 2023-24 all students who meet the following criteria will be eligible for home fees status and student financial support in Further Education and Higher Education:

- Ordinarily resident in the UK for three years prior to the relevant date;
- Ordinarily resident in Scotland on the relevant date; and
- Granted a form of leave to enter or remain in the UK, where that leave has not expired.

As the British National (Overseas) visa would be considered a form of leave to enter or remain in the UK, a student holding this visa would be eligible for support in the event that they satisfy the remaining criteria.

3. Further information

There have been a number of petitions to the UK Parliament in relation to home fee status for BN(O) students:

- [Grant University Home Fee Status to Holders of British National Overseas Visas](#) (2021) attracted 1,863 signatures.
- [Grant Home Fee status for all who are in the UK under the BNO visa](#) (2023) attracted 6,342 signatures.

The most recent, [Home fee status for BN\(O\) students after 3 years continuous stay in the UK](#), attracted 14,827 signatures and closed in May 2024.

As part of its response, the UK Government said:

Under existing legislation in England, HK BN(O)s would qualify for home fee status and financial support once they have acquired settled status in the UK, provided they also meet the three-year ordinary residence requirement. This is in line with how the majority of persons [on] a five-year route to settlement are treated. This also applies to any dependants of HK BN(O)s.

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.

Vikki Howells AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1486
Ein cyf/Our ref VH/10071/24

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

05 November 2024

Dear Carolyn

Thank you for your letter of 16 October to Lynne Neagle MS, Cabinet Secretary for Education, regarding '*Petition P-06-1486 Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence*'. I am responding as ministerial responsibility for further and higher education resides with me.

Matters of residency and immigration are complex and eligibility for student support and tuition fee protections are governed by legislation. Care is always taken to ensure eligibility for those resident in Wales is as fair as possible, and policy is under continual review. Our legislation ensures a wide range of students are eligible. However, not all persons with leave to enter or remain are eligible. In general terms, eligible persons are those who have settled status in the UK, EU nationals with either settled or pre-settled status, refugees, and certain persons with leave to enter or remain, and their family members.

I am able to inform you that we are reviewing the position with respect to holders of the HKBN(O) visa. This will include a review of eligibility for both tuition fee protections and student support. Our review will take place ahead of the 2026/27 academic year. There are no plans to make those with this visa eligible any earlier than 2026/27, and eligibility thereafter is subject to our review findings. Holders of this visa will in any event become eligible once they are settled in the UK after five years.

Yours sincerely,

Vikki Howells AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education

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Back Page 92
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P-06-1486 Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 14 November 2024

Annwyl

I am reaching out to express my appreciation for your response regarding the review of tuition fee protections and student support for holders of the Hong Kong BN(O) visa. While I welcome the Welsh Government's attention to this matter, I have concerns regarding the proposed timeline, which indicates that any changes would likely take effect in the 2026/27 academic year.

For many students currently on the BN(O) visa, this timeline presents significant challenges. Waiting until 2026/27 means that several cohorts of students will continue to face high international tuition fees, which may severely limit their access to higher education in Wales. Many of these students are already residing in the UK and are eager to pursue their studies, but the cost of international fees is often a prohibitive factor. A delay until the 2026/27 academic year would result in missed opportunities for these students, adding financial and emotional strain on them and their families.

I kindly request that you provide further details on the current review process and an explanation of why it cannot be conducted sooner. Understanding the factors contributing to this timeline would be immensely helpful, as it would allow students and families to plan accordingly. Additionally, if there are specific legislative or procedural hurdles causing the delay, I would be grateful if you could share these insights, as they may help us advocate for adjustments to expedite the review process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I am hopeful that with your support, we can work toward a more immediate resolution that ensures equitable access to higher education for BN(O) visa holders in Wales.

Confirm Garau

Melody Lin

There are also some additional information below, I hope it'll help in the meeting.

1. On 6 June 2023, Scottish Government Minister for Higher and Further Education, Graeme Dey confirmed that BN(O) Hong Kong students would be eligible for home fee status after three years of residence.
<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-18389>
2. Since its introduction in January 2021, there have been 182,600 applications for the BN(O) visas to migrate to the UK (up to the end of June 2023, according to the UK Government).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-june-2023/how-many-people-come-to-the-uk-each-year-including-visitors#british-national-overseas-bno-route>
3. For quotes that the then UK Government said regarding the BN(O) visa:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hong-kong-bno-visa-uk-government-to-honour-historic-commitment>
4. In a rejected Westminster petition calling for home fee status for BN(O) students, the Department for Education responded that: "Higher Education in the UK is devolved, with the result that the Devolved Administrations may choose to take different approaches to student eligibility."
<https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/petitions/653888/home-fee-status-for-bno-students-after-3-years-continuous-stay-in-the-uk>
5. The Welsh Government has granted exceptions for certain groups of students to be eligible for home fee status, for example refugees, people granted humanitarian protection, and those under the Afghan and Ukrainian schemes.
https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/eligibility-for-home-fee-status-and-student-support-in-wales/?_gl=1*tt7u4j*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTYzNjUwNjI3OS4xNzI2NDk0NTA5*_ga_14RSNY7L8B*MTcyNjQ5NDUwOS4xLjAuMTcyNjQ5NDUwOS4wLjAuMA..*_ga_9684J19FT4*MTcyNjQ5NDUwOS4xLjAuMTcyNjQ5NDUwOS4wLjAuMA..
6. Currently, the maintenance help for students whose home is in Wales is the most generous one among the UK nations. Yet, being "non-settled" means that many BN(O) Hong Kong students are not eligible for this financial help.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-62241512?xtor=ES-208-%5B77364%5D-NEWS%5D-20240916-%5Bbbcnews%5D-studentloansexplainer%5D-newseducation%5D>

Agenda Item 3.1

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

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

Text of Petition:

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

Additional Information:

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

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ceredigion
- Mid and West Wales

Agenda Item 3.2

P-06-1335 Welsh Government should take steps to ensure vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay with cash

This petition was submitted by Mencap Cymru, having collected 1,926 signatures online and 578 signatures on paper, making for a total of 2,504 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Mencap Cymru is concerned that the move to a cashless society will leave behind disabled people who cannot have access to electronic forms of payment.

In recent months people with a learning disability have been unable to pay for goods and services and have had to leave businesses empty-handed. Support workers are not permitted to use their own cards, and nor should they be.

This means they do not have equal access to goods and services with many businesses and organisations moving to cashless transactions.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cynon Valley
- South Wales Central

A Cashless Society? P-6-1335 Welsh Government should take steps to ensure vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay with cash: Closing Comments from Mencap Cymru

Mencap Cymru would like to thank the Senedd's Petitions Committee for undertaking this inquiry following our petition calling for the Welsh Government to take action to ensure that adults with a learning disability and other vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay for goods and services with cash.

The campaign started following a conversation with a person who we supported who told us how he had been unable to buy a rugby shirt with birthday money given to him by his parents as the shop attached to a leading WRU rugby club which had adopted cashless payments for all goods and services.

This led to a nation-wide conversation with people with a learning disability, families and support workers contacting Mencap Cymru and members of the Wales Learning Disability Consortium to report their experiences of cashless venues.

We were grateful for the invitation to provide [oral evidence](#) to the Committee in October 2023, alongside Dot Gallagher, Janet Jones and Steven McGee from Mencap Mon, and would like to thank the Committee and its staff for meeting with members from Mencap Mon when launching the report in the Senedd during Learning Disability Week in June this year.

We believe that the Welsh Government's written response to the Committee's recommendations were disappointing; the decision to reject Recommendation 1 regarding publicly funded venues failed to recognise the very real impact that the issue of being unable to pay for goods and services with cash is having on people with a learning disability across Wales and the aspirations of the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) of voice, choice and control.

Access to venues for people who do not have digital forms of payment can be as great as a barrier as physical access for those with physical impairments and the social model of disability must be the basis of provision of such services by venues who are in receipt of public funds. We feel the Government's response missed the core aspect of the campaign; this is not about access to cash but ability to spend cash in venues which have moved to digital forms of payment and the resulting sense of exclusion felt by disabled people as a result. Moving to cashless payments simply because of convenience for a publicly funded venue should not be acceptable.

Mencap Cymru believe that there is a need for further research to give us a clearer picture of the scale of the issue in Wales and the impact on Welsh citizens. Research should explore the experiences of people with a learning disability and other vulnerable adults in different parts of the country set against the aspirations of the [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act](#); are publicly funded organisations considering the impact of future generations of decisions they are taking to move to cashless payments. We also believe that there is a lack of data available capturing the scale of financial exclusion for people with a learning disability in Wales.

We were pleased to be able to watch the debate in the Senedd in October alongside Elaine and her son Niall. We would like to thank Carolyn Thomas MS as the Chair of the Petitions Committee for meeting with us ahead of the debate, and to Members of the Senedd for their contributions. We would also like to thank the Cabinet Secretary, Jane Hutt MS, for responding to the debate and for

asking to meet with us on the 27th November to discuss the issue of publicly funded venues further, and how Welsh Government can utilise its powers under existing equality legislation to ensure that venues that they fund aren't creating further barriers to inclusion for a section of society who are already excluded.

We welcome the announcement from the Treasury Committee that they will be [asking for evidence](#) regarding whether rules are needed to govern the acceptance of physical cash in the UK. Mencap Cymru will be submitting evidence to the inquiry highlighting how people with a learning disability are disproportionately impacted by the move to cashless, and would urge the Welsh Government and the Petitions Committee to engage with this inquiry as it progresses.

“It’s just another way society puts up barriers for our sons and daughters with a learning disability” Dot Gallagher, parent carer Ynys Môn.

Agenda Item 3.3

P-06-1396 Introduce a vape licence for dedicated vape shops

This petition was submitted by Claire ford, having collected 541 signatures online and 8,494 signatures on paper. Making for a total of 9,035 signatures collected.

Text of Petition:

Lack of training and a licence can cause unsuitable products and illegal devices to be sold, which can be dangerous and hinder the chances of becoming a non-smoker. There are also fake and illegal vape products that are not compliant with UK regulations in circulation, which is a danger to the public. Licenced premises authorised to sell vape products should lower this as they buy directly from licensed suppliers, so they won't be fakes, bought cheaply on the black market to make a quick buck.

Additional Information:

We want Vape products to be sold by licensed vape dedicated shops with trained staff who specialise in vape products, all aspects of vaping, NRT (Nicotine Replacement Therapy), including product knowledge to enable them to work with the public to ensure a more successful quit smoking rate.

Currently Vape shops are compliant and meet Trading Standards requirements to trade. Many staff are qualified NCSCT Non Smoking Practitioners to ensure a working knowledge of all NRT and advise accordingly

Parents are unhappy as some retailers are selling vape products to under 18s. This hinders the vape industry as they work towards a smokefree Wales. Vaping is a stepping stone from smoking, it's not something they should be introduced to at such a young age.

With such a high success rate in the vaping industry helping people quit smoking, the industry needs to be recognized and a licence needs to be introduced to ensure safety is met and vapes are sold responsibly.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Blaenau Gwent
- South Wales East



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **The UK Tobacco and Vapes Bill**

DATE **05 November 2024**

BY **Sarah Murphy MS, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Today, the Tobacco and Vapes Bill has been introduced into the UK Parliament. An earlier version of the Bill was introduced by the last UK Government on 20 March, but its progress was halted when Parliament was dissolved on 30 May ahead of the General Election.

Like the previous version, the new Bill seeks to change the age of sale for all tobacco products, cigarette papers and herbal smoking products so anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 will never legally be able to buy these products. It also makes it an offence to purchase these products on behalf of children and changes warning notices in retail premises. The provisions in the Bill will apply to Wales and the wider UK.

The Bill has been strengthened so the restrictions on selling vapes to under 18s now include non-nicotine vapes and other nicotine products. There are also provisions banning the free distribution of vapes for promotion purposes.

The Bill proposes introducing regulation-making powers to restrict flavours, point of sale displays and packaging for vaping products (nicotine and non-nicotine) as well as other consumer nicotine products.

This new version of the Bill has also been strengthened so vapes and other nicotine products can be prevented from being deliberately branded and advertised to children. The Bill introduces a ban on vape vending machines and powers for Welsh Ministers to expand our existing smoke-free restrictions to include vaping and heated tobacco-free products, thereby enabling the creation of vape-free and heated tobacco-free places.

The Bill includes provision for a retail licensing scheme in Wales for the sale of tobacco products, herbal smoking products, cigarette papers, vaping or nicotine products. Other provisions include a ban on oral tobacco products and strengthening of enforcement procedures to include fixed penalty notices for a wider range of offences. There are also provisions to restrict advertising and sponsorship of a wider range of products, including vaping and nicotine products.

If the Bill becomes law, we will work closely with our partners in Wales and across the UK to progress the measures available.

Separate to the UK Tobacco and Vapes Bill – and as part of our efforts to reduce environmental impact and support a circular economy in Wales – we are committed to banning [single-use vapes](#). We will continue to work closely with the UK Government and devolved governments to co-ordinate the coming into force of date on 1 June 2025.

I am committed to taking all measures necessary to address the health impacts of tobacco and am determined to do all we can to prevent young people from using vapes in Wales.

As the Bill makes provision in relation to Wales regarding devolved matters, a legislative consent memorandum will be laid in due course. I look forward to scrutiny of the Bill by Members, and to hearing the views of all our partners during the legislative process.

[Tobacco and Vapes Bill 2024: creating a smoke-free generation and tackling youth vaping](#)

P-06-1396 Introduce a vape licence for dedicated vape shops – Correspondence form the petitioner to the Committee, 06 November 2024

Hi

Nicotine vaping and tobacco smoking are completely different products.

I think we should first of all separate nicotine vaping and tobacco smoking products.

Smoking is an addiction to tobacco which has cancer causes properties. Vapes are a way to immediately reduce the risks associated with smoking with a view to reducing nicotine levels to eventually give up altogether.

Dedicated vape shops should at least be ncsct certified non smoking practitioners and be on the NCSCT register

I agree there should be liscence for selling vape products but only for dedicated vape stores and a complete ban from all other retailers.

The whole point of vape products is to help people to stop smoking .

I also believe having tobacco smoking products and vape products under the same licence umbrella will cause major issues for trading standards to police.

If lisencing for tobacco smoking is needed . It's counter active to be included under the same liscence. Although not a medical non smoking cessation it is currently the most successful product in switching people from tobacco smoking.

This doesn't need to be complicated to introduce a liscence or check conditions are met.

Shop must predominantly sell vape products. And obtain the NCSCT certificate and be on the NCSCT non smoking practitioners register. The course is free and packed with knowledge.

I have attached a few certificates of the free courses available

Claire Ford

Agenda Item 3.4

P-06-1400 Fair and Adequate Resourcing of General Practice in Wales

This petition was submitted by Lewis Williams, having collected a total of 21,620 signatures.

Text of Petition:

General Practice in Wales is under significant and growing strain. GP numbers are declining, demand is rising, and practices are struggling to recruit and retain staff.

General practice is being forced to try and cope with inadequate resources, an unsustainable workload, and a workforce under pressure across the whole of Wales, with some areas in crisis..

Additional Information:

Current inadequate capacity is a product of longstanding workload, workforce, and well-being issues, which correlate to the chronic underfunding of general medical services.

BMA Cymru Wales's Save Our Surgeries campaign asks Welsh Government to commit to a rescue package for General Practice, to provide GPs and their patients with the support they need.

By taking one minute to sign this petition, you can amplify our calls for the Welsh Government to provide a rescue package for General Practice.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff South and Penarth
- South Wales Central

BMA Cymru Wales comments on debate held on Petition [P-06-1400 Fair and Adequate Resourcing of General Practice in Wales](#)

Introduction

The BMA is a professional association and trade union representing and negotiating on behalf of all doctors and medical students in the UK. It is a leading voice advocating for outstanding health care and a healthy population. It is an association providing members with excellent individual services and support throughout their lives.

Comments

We are pleased to see this petition debated in the Senedd, and are grateful to the Petitions Committee for its work on the petition to date. Furthermore, we are delighted that the Health and Social Care Committee will hold a Senedd Inquiry on the topic in 2025.

We thank all those who supported and signed this petition. We thank Members from across the Senedd for their contributions to the debate, and it was encouraging to hear some acceptance from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care of the concerns illustrated by the BMA Cymru Wales's Save our Surgeries campaign, on behalf of GPs, their staff and patients across the country. However, there was little to suggest Welsh Government will be taking any meaningful action within the required timeframe to safeguard the future of General Practice given the focus remains on prioritising funding of secondary care and waiting lists. This is regrettable and may destabilise the entire foundation of an effective NHS, free at the point of use in the future, if not addressed urgently.

Two further issues have arisen over the last fortnight which regrettably will further impact on the financial viability of GP practices in Wales.

1. Rejection of GMS Contract offer

The Committee will be aware of the recent news that BMA Cymru Wales' GP committee, GPC Wales voted unanimously to reject the Welsh Government's GMS Contract offer for General Medical Services (GMS) for 2024/25. GPs in Wales will now be given the opportunity to vote on whether to accept or reject the contract in a referendum which will open later this month.

- Read our press statement [here](#)
- Read Dr Gareth Oelmann's open letter to GPs in Wales [here](#).



2. Impact of National Insurance Employer Contributions upon GMS practices

Following the announcement of the latest UK Government Budget, the GPC Wales has commented on the detrimental impact increasing employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) will have upon GMS services in Wales. On Friday 8 November, Dr Gareth Oelmann, Chair of GPC Wales wrote to the Cabinet Secretary to raise this issue. Read the letter [here](#).

Unfortunately, if not addressed, the above issues will result in wider matters raised by the petition getting worse. As such, the BMA Cymru Wales and GPC Wales will continue to call on Welsh Government to address the ever-increasingly urgent concerns raised in the Save our Surgeries campaign to prevent the further practice closures and restore and sustain general practice in Wales to support a Healthier Wales. We would wish to see a continued political focus on the plight of General Practice and thank the petitions committee for prioritising the petition for a debate.

The BMA Cymru Wales will continue to keep the Committee, and its members informed of our ongoing work in this area and would welcome any opportunity to further brief Members of the Senedd who would like to support our campaign and amplify our calls to Welsh Government.

Comment on the debate response from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

We acknowledge the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care's comments on the petition, in particular his recognition of the 'concerning aspects' highlighted by the Save our Surgeries campaign.

The Cabinet Secretary stated surgeries in Wales see around 1.5 million people every month. It is in fact over 1.6 million appointments per month the equivalent of 50% of the population of Wales will receive an appointment at their practice each month.

This contrasts with a monthly average of just 11,000 patients receiving care at the 16 Urgent Primary Care Centres (UPCCs) across Wales. In contrast to the UPCC initiative, which has received significant funding over recent years yet is not available in all parts of Wales and remains unevaluated, GMS provision offers universal, unfiltered, holistic and equitable care with the added value of improved continuity and relationship-based care. This undoubtedly adds value for money to investment in longitudinal GMS care.

The staggering number of appointments being provided reflects delivered activity only and does not represent the totality of patient demand. Practices handled 29.1m telephone calls – approximately 120k per working day – and 5.1m digital requests during 2023-24. Equally, it does not reflect the crucial business and educational functions practices must provide.

While the BMA supports the important role of the multi-disciplinary team, and the investment which the Cabinet Secretary pointed out, we still need to train higher numbers of GPs to deliver upon the policy goals of A Healthier Wales, to deal with patient demands, and to accommodate the increased preference for less than full time working and portfolio careers. Compared to other NHS staff groups and other branches of medical practice, the relative headcount of fully qualified GPs has stagnated since 2009. There has only been a 1.8% increase in GP headcount since 2009, compared to a 44% increase in the total consultant headcount. As of January 2024, Wales needs 718 extra GPs to match the average number of GPs per 1000 population in other European countries. Restoring appropriate levels of funding and resourcing to General Medical Services, and ensuring we are recruiting and retaining GPs to work in Wales is a cost-effective investment into a sustainable general practice and the future of the Welsh NHS.

The lack of direct investment into GMS has meant that since 2012, the total headcount of GPs has only gone up by 2%, with 23% fewer full-time equivalent GPs working at practices in Wales. Despite

the figures, general practice has had to cope with a 35% increase in the number of patients per full time GP.

Finally, due to the time restrictions on the plenary schedule, the Cabinet Secretary appeared to be cut off from finishing his response to the debate. We would welcome an approach to the Cabinet Secretary from the Petitions Committee to enquire as to whether there were other remarks he wished to make but did not have the opportunity to do so.