

## Agenda – Petitions Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Hybrid

Meeting date: 24 March 2025

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

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

(Pages 1 – 22)

### 2 New Petitions

2.1 P-06-1491 We demand a fair deal for residents affected by the Arbed and CESP scheme

(Pages 23 – 31)

2.2 P-06-1498 Introduce a bus service from Abergavenny Bus Station to The Grange Hospital

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### 3 Updates to previous petitions

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

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

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3.3 P-06-1463 Continue to fund school police officers who educate children and support schools

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- 3.4 P-06-1475 Urgently improve the safety of the A458, Middletown, Powys in light of continuous dangerous driving  
(Pages 47 – 50)
- 3.5 P-06-1476 1000 meter mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries  
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- 3.6 P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus  
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#### **4 Papers to note**

- 4.1 P-06-1479 Stop the detention of learning disabled and autistic children, young people and adults in hospitals  
(Page 95)
- 4.2 P-06-1489 Legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales  
(Pages 96 – 97)
- 4.3 P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve  
(Pages 98 – 99)
- 4.4 P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres

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

#### **6 Draft short report: P-06-1380 Make Blue badge Applications Lifelong for individuals who have a lifelong diagnosis**

(Pages 100 – 102)

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# We demand a fair deal for residents affected by the Arbed/CESP scheme

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 24 Mawrth 2025  
Petitions Committee | 24 March 2025

Reference: SR24/10372-3

**Petition Number:** P-06-1491

**Petition title:** We demand a fair deal for residents affected by the Arbed/CESP scheme

**Text of petition:** In September 2012, residents in Caerau and other areas in Wales signed up to an energy efficiency scheme run by both UK and Welsh Governments.

The scheme provided internal and external wall insulation to houses involved and since the installation of the insulation, participant houses have suffered from damp and mould. This in turn has drained residents finances and negatively affected residents' mental health.

We entered these schemes in good faith, now we want that good faith returned in kind.

More details:

Involved in the works were internal and external insulation, new boilers, vents on the properties and rendering.

Since the works have been done, residents have had to live with extreme damp and mould. This has led to residents paying for work to put things right, such as paying for new kitchens, carpets, new paint, new blinds. This has been an ongoing issue for over a decade now. Some residents have unfortunately passed away having not seen these issues put right. Below are links to news stories that give further information:

<https://oggybloggyogwr.com/2021/11/the-caerau-insulation-scandal-a-timeline-of-shame/>



<https://oggybloggyogwr.com/2021/11/welsh-government-unenthusiastic-about-supporting-arbed-scandal-clean-up-in-caerau/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-60765932>

Damages to the property must be put right and residents compensated for putting the damages right themselves which has amounted to thousands of pounds.

## 1. Background

Arbed was a Welsh Government funded area-based energy efficiency scheme which started in 2009, running in several phases. Initially, the Welsh Government intended the last iteration of scheme to run from May 2018 to May 2021, with a total budget of £46 million and an option to extend the contract for up to a further two years. It extended the scheme until November 2021 but the contract has now ended.

Between October 2018 and March 2021, Arbed installed measures in 3,108 homes, of which 2,095 (67%) received a new heating system, with 1,777 (57%) homes receiving solar panels and 415 (13%) receiving loft insulation.

The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) ran from 1 October 2009 to 31 December 2012. CESP was part of the UK Government's Home Energy Saving Programme. CESP was designed to promote a 'whole house' approach and to treat as many properties as possible in defined geographical areas selected using the Income Domain of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in England, Scotland and Wales.

### 1.1. Caerau

In 2012-2013, many residents in Caerau, Bridgend applied to take part in a national energy efficiency programme which sought to provide better internal and external wall insulation for local homes, cut down on carbon emissions, and lower household fuel and energy bills.

This work was carried out under two schemes. A total of 79 properties received work under the CESP, which was sponsored by the UK Government using funding

from main energy suppliers, while 25 properties had work undertaken through the Welsh Government's Arbed scheme.

Shortly after completion of the works, some homes began to experience issues such as damp and black mould on internal walls. In 2019, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) commissioned Nuvision Energy (Wales) Ltd to carry out a **study** on a representative sample of homes and to produce a report outlining the issues encountered. 32 homes were surveyed – all of which were found to have issues with the work that had been undertaken.

## 1.2. Internal audit

In 2018, BCBC's Internal Audit Service reviewed the extent to which the Council's policies and procedures had or had not been applied in respect of the Arbed scheme between September 2012 to April 2013.

The **Internal Audit findings** highlighted a number of internal procedural issues related to the governance, decision making, procurement, monitoring and control aspects of the funding that the Council administered for the scheme at the time.

## 2. Welsh Government action

Jane Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government, wrote to the Committee on 26 February 2025. She says external wall insulation (EWI) installed under the CESP failed in 104 owner occupied homes in Caerau and that the original contractors "have ceased trading and no guarantees were issued when the works were completed".

She says the Welsh Government awarded £2.65 million capital grant funding to BCBC from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2025 to undertake remedial work on 79 homes, with a further 25 funded by BCBC.

The Cabinet Secretary also lays out measures BCBC is taking to engage with the local community. This includes weekly drop-in sessions for residents and regular communication on the progress of remedial work. She says BCBC has removed EWI from over half of the homes, and "designs for the reinstallation of EWI will be authorised in the next few weeks".

The Cabinet Secretary's letter does not mention the Welsh Government's Arbed scheme.

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

During Plenary in November 2024, Tom Giffard MS asked the Cabinet Secretary about the “implementation of the Arbed scheme in Caerau” and what lessons had been learnt. The Cabinet Secretary outlined Welsh Government grant funding to BCBC described above. She said past issues have informed the design of the Welsh Government’s new Warm Homes Programme, which includes “a higher standard of quality assurance”. The Cabinet Secretary further elaborated on assurance measures in the new scheme following a statement to the Senedd in January 2025.

Luke Fletcher MS asked about issues related to the Arbed scheme during Plenary in September 2024. The First Minister said:

This was not a model of how we wanted this particular project to work. It's a mechanism of insulating external walls; 104 homes were affected. It was because of poor workmanship, and that is not acceptable. I think it's probably worth underlining that, as a Government, there's no formal or legal responsibility for us to correct the situation, but the fact is that we have come forward with £2.6 million to help Bridgend council in order to make sure that people can get that work corrected. So, I know that the work has already started and there are opportunities for people to work with the council to make sure that they get the corrections that they need to their homes.

The Equality and Social Justice Committee is currently undertaking a follow-up inquiry into fuel poverty and the new Warm Homes Programme. While the inquiry does not focus on specific cases, such as the subject of the petition, the Committee has heard concerns over examples of poor workmanship in the past. It has also heard calls for a new area-based scheme, to replace Arbed. The Committee is expected to report in due course.

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-06-1491  
Ein cyf/Our ref JB/10570/24

Carolyn Thomas  
Chair, Petitions Committee

petitions@senedd.wales

26 February 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter concerning the petition of 5th of December on external wall insulation (EWI) in Caerau, Bridgend.

EWI was installed previously under the UK Government Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) scheme in 2012. The EWI has subsequently failed in 104 owner occupier homes in the Caerau area and has resulted in penetrating damp and extensive mould growth. The contractors who carried out the original work have ceased trading and no guarantees were issued when the works were completed.

Poor workmanship in fitting exterior wall insulation on these properties has caused distress and ill health for some occupants and all avenues for homeowners to seek recourse with installers were exhausted.

As a result of this, Welsh Government came forward to assist, despite having no legal obligation to the residents, and committed to fund the required remedial work to the EWI.

We have awarded capital grant funding to Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC). This amounted to £2.65m from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2025 to undertake remedial work on 104 owner occupier homes in Caerau; 79 of which are funded by Welsh Government and the remaining 25 have been funded by Bridgend County council.

Works are undertaken in accordance with PAS 2035 standards so that the most appropriate measures are applied to each household. This means every retrofit project is subject to monitoring and evaluation to determine whether the intended outcomes of the retrofit project have been realised. The speed of work to tackle the problems is subject to favourable weather conditions. (The PAS 2035 Standard is the official framework for whole-house retrofit in the UK, outlining the processes and best practices for the industry).

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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.

Alongside a technically competent contractor, the local authority has recognised the need for strong community engagement. Weekly drop-in sessions give opportunities for residents to provide feedback and raise any queries or concerns about progress. There is a community liaison manager on site during working hours. Local residents are being kept informed of progress. In addition, Warm Works (the installers) held a 'Meet the Installer' session for homeowners in December with another one planned for February.

My officials recently met with Bridgend Council and confirm the Council has made good progress with the removal of the EWI from over half of the homes. Retrofit designers and retrofit coordinators are currently onsite carrying out internal quality checks. The designs for the reinstallation of EWI will be authorised in the next few weeks.

My understanding is that feedback on site is mainly positive although a very small minority have been vocal over the time taken to complete the work and the need for compensation for homeowners to be provided.

Once again, thank you for writing to me I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely,

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

**Jayne Bryant AS/MS**

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

**P-06-1491 We demand a fair deal for residents affected by the Arbed CESP scheme - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 18 March 2025**

I'll update you on the background of our plight. Back in 2012, I and many other residents in Caerau were enticed into a government-backed scheme, which was funded by Arbed and Cesp. This scheme was sold to residents as the best thing since sliced bread, and it would make our homes energy-efficient and more economical to run. This involved installing external wall insulation, and where not possible on the outside, it would be installed internally. There were also boilers replaced in properties where the boilers were over a certain age.

The installers were Green Renewable Wales, a company set up by a councillor of BCBC and a subcontractor, Tower Energy. The tender for the job was handed to GRW without due process; this has been investigated by Audit Wales. Details of which can be found here : [arbed-scheme-caerau-findings-of-internal-audit.pdf](#)

Residents encountered multiple problems during the installation, including terrible workmanship, rude contractors, and misuse of people's properties.

When the contractors had apparently finished the project, issues started to appear, and multiple complaints were made to the company. Unfortunately, no resolution to these issues was made, and ultimately, GRW went into liquidation. Multiple residents kept on complaining and continued to complain to MP's Senedd Members, BCBC, and trading standards.

Our fight has been ongoing for many, many years. We are now 13 years later, and the condition of our homes that have been left in due to this insulation is absolutely disgusting! I alone have spent close to £20k or more over the 13 years trying to rectify issues and thrown money away. To put it in perspective, I replaced my kitchen in 2017 at a cost of £9k due to the previous one being ruined by the dampness, and this kitchen has gone the same way. I can't have open foods in the cupboards; tins rust. I've gone through multiple small kitchen electrical items due to rusting and failing. I am not the only one in this predicament. Other residents have also spent unscrupulous amounts of money trying to rectify the faults, and we cannot keep doing it. Some residents do not have the money at all to try to do this, and they live in derelict homes.

I appreciate that finally, after 12 years, work started to remove the faulty insulation; however, that is all that is being done. No rectification work is being done to our homes; walls are not being replastered, carpets and some furnishings are not being replaced, and there is no compensation!

After all we have been through as residents, such an arrangement is an insult. We are being left to recuperate the costs of a badly mismanaged energy scheme that should have been overseen correctly. Additionally, a while back, I requested information on Arbed, the contracts between WG and BCBC and the conditions that BCBC was meant to adhere to. There were significant failings.

I would also like there to be a public inquiry into what took place and how this was allowed to happen.

I want to thank you for taking the time to consider our petition, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Rhiannon Goodall

## P-06-1498 Introduce a bus service from Abergavenny Bus Station to The Grange Hospital

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 24 Mawrth 2025  
Petitions Committee | 24 March 2025

Reference: SR25/10746-1

**Petition Number:** P-06-1498

**Petition title:** Introduce a bus service from Abergavenny Bus Station to The Grange Hospital

**Text of petition:** When people are upset, anxious and extremely stressed, as either a patient or loved one, other options are not safe. Also we should be reducing car use to fight against Climate Change. Introducing vital services such as this, would be a good first step.



# 1. Background

The petitioner is calling for a bus service between Abergavenny bus station and the Grange hospital. Newport Bus currently operates a service linking the hospital with Cwmbran rail and bus stations, as well as Newport city centre where connections to Abergavenny can be made.

More detail on how the bus network is currently planned and funded is provided below.

## 1.1. Planning bus services

Bus services in Wales currently operate within a deregulated market meaning that, while operators receive some government support, the majority of local bus services operate on a commercial basis.

Although licensed bus operators are free to register any service they wish to operate, local authorities have a duty under section 63(1) of the Transport Act 1985 (the Act) to secure services to meet public transport requirements which would not otherwise be met through the commercial market. These are known as 'socially necessary services'. The Act also enables a local authority to enter a contract to pay a subsidy for services if the service would not otherwise be provided at all, or to a particular standard.

## 1.2. Welsh Government support

The Welsh Government's main bus service funding / subsidy mechanism is the Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG). BSSG comprises a Live Kilometre Support Grant which is paid to all operators for each kilometre driven delivering a registered service and constitutes about two thirds of the BSSG. The remainder is used by local authorities, along with their own budgets, to support socially necessary services.

The Welsh Government also provides additional funding, for example through support for concessionary fares schemes and the TrawsCymru long distance bus network.

## Emergency funding

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Following a collapse in passenger numbers as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Welsh Government has provided emergency support to the bus industry through a series of grants. The most recent iteration of this support is the Bus Network Grant (BNG) for local authorities to “secure bus services that they deem socially necessary that the commercial market will not provide”.

Announcing the BNG in March 2024, the Welsh Government said it will “act as a bridge from the emergency funding that has been provided to bus franchising”.

### 1.3. Plans for bus franchising

The Welsh Government plans to introduce legislation requiring bus franchising throughout Wales, and permitting the establishment of new municipal bus companies. Responsibility for planning most bus services would pass to Transport for Wales (TfW) and the Welsh Ministers.

TfW and the Welsh Government have published Our Roadmap to Bus Reform outlining how franchising would be implemented. Under these plans, the franchising authority (the Welsh Ministers) would specify the services and how they will run, including routes, vehicle standards, timetables and fares. Operators would then bid for contracts to run these services.

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, Ken Skates MS has said he intends to introduce the Bill in March 2025.

## 2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Chair dated 25 February the Cabinet Secretary states that “it is not always possible or feasible to provide direct bus links to the Grange Hospital from all communities”.

The Cabinet Secretary suggests that aside from the services currently operating “there is no evident interest from bus companies to introduce other bus services [to the hospital] on a commercial basis”.

The letter also outlines that:

Monmouthshire County Council...recently went out to tender to procure a bus service between Abergavenny and Pontypool, which included an

option for operators to extend journeys to the Grange Hospital. However, no operators submitted bids for the route extension to the hospital...

Last year we funded a trial bus service linking the Grange Hospital to Pontypool, Newbridge and Blackwood for a period of six months, but passenger use was modest, which demonstrated the challenges in establishing new direct bus links to The Grange on a sustainable basis.

The Cabinet Secretary also says he has asked TfW (working with local authorities and Corporate Joint Committees) to consider links to hospitals and key health care facilities as plans for the bus network under franchising are developed.

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

The issue of bus services linking communities with the Grange hospital has been raised on several occasions in Plenary, particularly in the lead up to the hospital opening in 2020 and in response to the trial service referred to in the Cabinet Secretary's letter (see above) being cut.

In October 2024, Laura Anne Jones MS asked the Cabinet Secretary about services between the hospital and Abergavenny in particular. In response, the Cabinet Secretary referred to this petition and stated he had asked "officials to take a look at the feasibility of such a route, of course, in the context of the availability of budgets".

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-06-1498  
Ein cyf/Our ref KSNWT/00210/25

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

25 February 2025

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter of 03 February, on behalf of Kathryn Lynch, regarding Petition P-06-1498 Introduce a bus service from Abergavenny Bus Station to The Grange Hospital, which you have provided prior to consideration by the Committee.

I am keen to work with Transport for Wales (TfW), local authorities and bus operators to improve bus service connections to key hospital sites and health care facilities. This financial year we have provided local authorities with £39m through the Bus Network Grant to enable them to maintain and improve bus services. As we take forward plans for bus franchising, TfW are working collaboratively with local authorities and CJs to develop bus network plans in all regions. We have asked them to examine the case for the provision of better links to hospitals and key health care facilities.

Major hospitals, such as the Grange Hospital, attract patients and staff from a wide catchment area. It is not always possible or feasible to provide direct bus links to the Grange Hospital from all communities. At present, Newport Bus operates the frequent commercial 29 service which links the hospital to Cwmbran rail and bus stations, as well as Newport city centre. There is no evident interest from bus companies to introduce other bus services on a commercial basis.

Monmouthshire County Council have advised that they recently went out to tender to procure a bus service between Abergavenny and Pontypool, which included an option for operators to extend journeys to the Grange Hospital. However, no operators submitted bids for the route extension to the hospital. At present, people living in the Abergavenny area need to travel to the Grange Hospital by catching either a bus or train to Cwmbran and connecting to Newport Bus service 29.

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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.

Last year we funded a trial bus service linking the Grange Hospital to Pontypool, Newbridge and Blackwood for a period of six months, but passenger use was modest, which demonstrated the challenges in establishing new direct bus links to The Grange on a sustainable basis.

South-East Wales regional bus managers have discussed opportunities to improve access to the Grange Hospital recently and will continue to look at different options to help improve public transport provision based on evidence of need and value for money.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke above the letters.

**Ken Skates AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

# Agenda Item 3.1

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

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

### **Text of Petition:**

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

### **Additional Information:**

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

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

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

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

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Wrexham
- North Wales

# Agenda Item 3.2

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

This petition was submitted by Angharad Cousins, having collected a total of 749 signatures.

**Text of Petition:**

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

**Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Caerphilly
- South Wales East

**Sarah Murphy AS/MS**  
Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant  
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1464  
Ein cyf/Our ref SM/00130/25

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

03 March 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 5 February about Petition P-06-1464 to allow Welsh families who have experienced baby loss before 24 weeks to obtain a certificate recognising this.

My officials are working closely with their UK Government counterparts on extending the scheme to Wales and are currently awaiting final proposals from the Department of Health and Social Care regarding options for extension and associated costs.

Yours sincerely,

**Sarah Murphy AS/MS**  
Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant  
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

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

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

## Agenda Item 3.3

### **P-06-1463 Continue to fund school police officers who educate children and support schools**

This petition was submitted by Cai Gleaves, having collected a total of 5,717 signatures.

#### **Text of Petition:**

School Beat Cymru allowed for 68 school police officers across Wales' four forces to deliver lessons on substance abuse, safety, safeguarding and behaviour.

But the Welsh Government is to stop funding the scheme in order to save £2m a year from April.

#### **Additional Information:**

This will negatively impact schools and police resources, which are already under significant pressure. In addition to educating pupils, school police officers respond to incidents which take place in schools. They have developed specific skills and knowledge to address issues within schools and built working relationships with staff and pupils. Without a specific police officer, schools will have to call 101, which could also overwhelm the communication centre and place additional demands on general response officers. This will further decrease resources to respond to other calls. Incidents in schools, particularly secondary schools are a regular occurrence, and having a dedicated officer, is a more effective and efficient way to address such situations.

#### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Carmarthen East and Dinefwr
- Mid and West Wales



Plismona  
yng Nghymru  
Policing in Wales



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair of the Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament

Dear Carolyn

**Re: P-06- P-06-1463 Continue to fund school police officers who educate children and support schools**

Thank you for your letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024, regarding the Petitions Committee considering the above petition. You stated that the Committee noted that these school programmes had been running for 21 years, and members had questions that relate to both the funding and operational outcomes. Therefore, contact was made with both the Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners for the four police forces in Wales, to ask:

1. Clarity on if and how your schools programme has changed.
2. The outcomes of the investment made over the past 21 years.
3. Views on the impact of the cut to Welsh Government funding.

Given that your correspondence was issued to all Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, it was agreed that a collective response from Policing in Wales would be appropriate. The most significant issue was the lack of any notice being provided to Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, of Welsh Governments decision to step back from the partnership and cease their funding commitment. This placed Policing in Wales in an extremely challenging position in having to make short term financial decisions that impacted on other areas of service delivery that could have been avoided by earlier engagement and discussion.

I would like to reassure you that all four forces are committed to providing the best possible response to supporting children, young people and schools across Wales and have continued to deliver a service since the funding for this key area was stopped.

**1. Clarity on if and how your schools programme has changed.**

The purpose of the funding for the Wales Police School Programme (WPSP) over many years has been to support primary and secondary schools, as well as Pupil Referral Units (PRU) across Wales to:

- a. Educate children and young people about the harm substance misuse can cause to their health, their families and wider community.

- b. Promote the principles of positive citizenship through the medium of education.
- c. Achieve a reduction in the level of crime and disorder within our young communities.

Since the announcement of funding withdrawal by Welsh Government, all forces have had to implement new initiatives. The sudden removal of the funding negatively impacted policing and left little to no time for stakeholder engagement and consultation, resulting in surprise and disappointment.

**North Wales Police** – have continued to deliver the ‘As was’ WPSP programme with all their 16 School Police Officers (SPOs). This has been subject to force review (supported by Force Optimisation Team) and through Force Budget Setting. A proposal was given to retain all SPO posts going forward but to revise the SPO role and responsibilities for modern day policing and to support the force vision. The proposal outlined how the 16 SPOs would continue to support ‘in school visibility and educational inputs’ but evolve to include responsibility for expanding the Mini Police Initiative and focused community engagement activity into their role.

**Dyfed Powys Police** – the WPSP was a highly valued and widely used service across the force. During an already challenging financial environment, the force has continued to provide a service to their schools. A decision to retain the 14 SPOs was approved by the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner, which provides a designated single point of contact for every educational establishment. A schools Service Manager police staff post oversees the tactical operational delivery of the SPO team, whilst collaborating with key partner agencies and stakeholders. Dyfed Powys Police are operating a new Police School Service based on local challenges, needs, and policing demands. Crime Prevention Education in primary and secondary schools reinforces the Chief Constables priorities and the Police and Crime Commissioners Crime plans.

**South Wales Police** – The service is now known as South Wales Police Youth Engagement Services (YES). The role of the SPO has been superseded by the new role of the Youth Engagement Officer (YEO). The force has retained the 25 officers that work within the education context and now more broadly with young people in the community who are at risk of criminalisation, exploitation and working with vulnerable families who are at risk of harm, delivering targeted interventions in line with policing priorities. These officers are divided across the 3 geographical areas, aligned to the Community Safety Partnership department, and play integral role in supporting our police youth volunteers. The force has additionally retained the WPSP Regional Manager, now known as Youth Engagement Services Manager (YESM), who has oversight of the work of the YEOs across the force and works at a strategic level with a range of partners around Policing Priorities as they pertain to the young. The South Wales YESM retains communication with the former WPSP managers in Dyfed Powys and North Wales Police to share best practice and resource materials being used by officers in schools and the community.

**Gwent Police** – have used the change in funding to develop a future school provision program facilitated by Neighbourhood Officers embedded within their communities. Gwent has retained guidance from former school liaison funded officers who are now operating in a coordinator role to ensure that Neighbourhood Officers are adequately trained to conduct this function. All schools have been appropriately risk assessed regarding the frequency of engagement required, and the force is monitoring this new model and will seek feedback throughout the academic year.

## 2. The outcomes of the investment made over the past 21 years.

The Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales (2019) sets out a strategy preventing children from entering the Criminal Justice System, minimising their contact with it and maximising opportunities for diversion to support them to lead crime free lives. The vision for the Youth Justice in Wales adopts a 'children first' rights approach, ensuring that efforts are child-centred rather than service-focused. Recognising that responding in this way is in the best interests of the child, to best meet their individual need.

School Police Officers (SPO) have been focused on building relationships with children as they progress through the school system. Previous reviews highlighted, Police Officers operating in schools were paramount in establishing productive and positive contact and was found to break down barriers particularly for hard-to-reach groups and communities which may have an inherent mistrust of authority.

The role of the SPO goes far beyond the delivery of crime prevention education in the classroom. During the 2022/23 academic year, officers reported to have collectively dealt with 4,826 crime incidents in schools across Wales involving children and young people. 1,067 Restorative Justice sessions were delivered, and 830 Safeguarding referrals were submitted by our Police operating in schools across Wales to protect and safeguard children and vulnerable families at risk.

All Wales Statistics, 2022/23:

- 17,816 Crime Prevention deliveries / lessons.
- 85% of schools accessed.
- 556,564 Number of Learner Contacts.

Over the past 21 years, every child in education within Wales has had access to this vital service and has given the children and young people a voice to report directly to the Police if they needed to. It has enabled public trust and confidence in the Police to develop from a young age and encouraged children to learn about the Law and consequences of breaking the Law through engaging inputs within their school environment.

Positive interventions have been delivered throughout Wales which are aimed at preventing the criminalisation of children. To deliver this effectively, police officers have worked with Education and multiple agencies to identify and support children and young people at risk of harm. The programme, has long provided dedicated SPOs, delivered crucial educational and wellbeing support to students aged 5-16 through a bilingual curriculum. It has ensured not only pupil and student safety but also contributed significantly to their development and pastoral care.

The key performance indicators, set by Welsh Government and reported regularly, highlight the impact the SPOs have across Wales, from Education Access, Safeguarding and Policing, Educational, and WPSP Core Delivery, and those figures have remained consistent throughout the past 10 years.

### **3. Views on the impact of the cut to Welsh Government funding.**

There was no consultation with Policing in Wales prior to the announcement to withdraw Welsh Government funding effective from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, nor was there any consideration of the impact this decision would have on Policing, Education, or other Strategic Partners. The Wales Police School Programme (WPSP) was firmly established within all four Welsh forces and very well respected by the school communities.

Stakeholders therefore had no opportunity to express how they might be affected by the loss of the services in the WPSP format. The removal of funding left policing with a collapsing time frame in which to conduct relevant stakeholder consultation to better understand the impact to schools and what kind of service was possible to be supplied by policing alone.

Schools throughout Wales had benefited from the quality and consistency in Crime Prevention and safety inputs delivered by specialist police experts. Teachers in their feedback to policing did not feel competent to deliver on such specialist topics and noted that they did not carry the gravitas necessary to have such a positive impact as that generated by police officers in classrooms.

The WPSP was jointly funded by Welsh Government and the four Welsh Police forces. Previous reviews of the Programme evidenced the value and positive impact of Police engaging with children in schools. The Schools Police Officer (SPO) role focused on fostering a safe and engaging environment that served as an outlet for young people to learn, share opinions and ask questions on important issues and topics affecting their lives and communities.

At the time of the Welsh Government announcement, the Programme was implementing the recommendations from the, 'Implementing the Vision of Wales Police Schools Programme' review (2023). This review was commissioned by Welsh Government and Policing in Wales, for the purpose of modernising and ensuring that the strategic aims were more aligned to strategic objectives and priorities. A National Change Manager had been appointed and was coordinating the delivery plan across Wales.

During the final review of the WPSP, the recommendations (which were in the process of being implemented before Welsh Government announced the finding withdrawal) had recommended that a more effective and rigorous Performance Framework be established, which better captured outcomes with regards to our service users, schools and children. Section 6 of the 'Implementing the Vision of the Wales Police Schools Programme Report', was dedicated to the proposed development of a new Outcome Performance Framework post its 2023 review. In this section it noted that this well-established programme had undergone five reviews, between 2006 and 2019 and that the Programme has been received positively. The reviews gathered qualitative evidence which indicated that the presence of SPOs in schools is welcome, positive and adds value. The challenge, however, was to evidence the positive contribution the programme made within the complete system. The report noted that there 'is a complexity of measuring the attribution of outcomes due to the environment in which the Schools Programme operates. SPOs did not of course work in isolation, there are other partners involved and there is the potential for joint enterprise and endeavour to influence results.'

It also, therefore, helps to identify key outcomes that partners themselves (schools) attribute to the existence of the WPSP, from more recent stakeholder's consultation. With a focus on how they as the recipients of the service identify and view the outcomes. Stakeholder's views were sought during the final term of the academic year, 2024. This was during a period where although the WPSP had ceased to exist, the four Welsh forces still delivered the same service up to the end of the summer term 2024.

Schools attested that the relationship between the SPOs and the school was invaluable in support of them as a community, and that collaboration was at the heart of the effectiveness of what they perceived was achieved through these services. Schools reported satisfaction with services performed by competent police officers regarding both crime prevention education engagement and supportive policing services. SPOs were credited for their collaborative approach to working with schools, and reciprocity was recognised as an important feature of the relationship between the partners. Schools recognised a raft of positive outcomes that were generated by the involvement of SPOs in their schools, and they experienced an alignment from these police services with their values and priorities, which they also recognised they often shared with policing.

Many case studies have been supplied over the years to Welsh Government with the quarterly reports with examples of specific outcomes for young people from Police interactions in the classroom and through the supportive policing services.

One of the key strengths of the Wales Police Schools Programme was its collaborative approach which ensured parity of services to schools. As a result of the withdrawal of funding and individual force choices there no longer exists consistent service across Wales.

Police forces in Wales now operate differing models of school engagement. All forces provide designated School Police Officer roles which continue to offer crime prevention education to schools based on policing priorities. These officers also provide a supportive schools policing service. Whilst some current approaches have been well supported, there also is not any security in the service long term should there be a change of direction from a new Chief Constable or Police and Crime Commissioners.

Yours Sincerely



**PCC Dafydd Llywelyn**  
**Chair, Policing in Wales**  
**Group**



**CC Amanda Blakeman**  
**Chair, Welsh Chief Officer**

# Agenda Item 3.4

## **P-06-1475 Urgently improve the safety of the A458, Middletown, Powys in light of continuous dangerous driving**

This petition was submitted by Amanda Jenner, having collected a total of 311 signatures and 107 signatures on paper, making for a total of 418 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Following many crashes & the tragic death of a local resident on the A458, Middletown (outside Bank Farm), the Community Council & Local Councillor has called for urgent safety improvements on this stretch of road to help prevent dangerous overtaking where there are two hidden dips. A recent response from the Minister for Transport states "we don't have any current plans for road safety improvements at this location". We cannot wait for another death. We urge the Welsh Government to act.

### **Additional Information:**

Local residents, as well as many other members of the public who regularly travel this road, are upset and frustrated that nothing more is currently being considered by the Welsh Government to improve the safety of the road in this area. The Cabinet Secretary should attend a site meeting to further discuss the concerns.

In order to improve this stretch of road, urgent consideration needs to be given to providing the following:

- A permanent speed camera
- The double white 'no overtaking' lines extended in both directions
- The road resurfaced, specifically the red tarmacked areas.
- A flashing light that indicates a driver's speed and saying there should be 'no overtaking'.
- A flashing light to highlight that there is a car in the hidden dip ahead.

As part of the road safety review, we would like the speed of the road to be taken into consideration and whether reducing the speed would help cease any future accidents.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Montgomeryshire
- Mid and West Wales

**Ken Skates AS/MS**  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1475  
Ein cyf/Our ref KSNWT/11003/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

25 February 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 13 December regarding Petition P-06-1475 Urgently improve the safety of the A458, Middletown, Powys in light of continuous dangerous driving. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The CCTV survey has been carried out and we are now in receipt of data that corroborates the anecdotal evidence highlighted by the petitioner.

As a result of this, we will be commissioning a study to investigate sufficient measures to prevent the overtaking from occurring. We will also share this data with Dyfed Powys Police and GoSafe, who can consider whether additional attendance is required for enforcement.

Yours sincerely,

**Ken Skates AS/MS**  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

**Back Page 50**  
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

**P-06-1475 Urgently improve the safety of the A458, Middletown, Powys in light of continuous dangerous driving – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 17 March 2025**

We are grateful for the further letter provided from the Cabinet Secretary.

I would like to ask the petitions committee to request the following from the Cabinet Secretary:

Can the time frames for the completion of the study be provided to the community and myself. Also will the public, myself and the community council be consulted as part of the study? Will the results/options which are then considered be shared with us? Is there an ultimate timeframe for implementing any proposed recommendations/ measures?

Kind regards

Amanda

# Agenda Item 3.5

## **P-06-1476 1000 meter mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries**

This petition was submitted by Monika Golebiewska, having collected 1,585 signatures online and 9,888 signatures on paper, making for a total of 11,473 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Ensure mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries in Wales. We propose at least 1,000.00 meters buffer zone from all residential areas, schools, hospitals, and care facilities. Currently the law allows for quarries to be located as close as 200 meters 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.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Cynon Valley
- South Wales Central



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair of Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

**Heidelberg Materials UK**

Craig-yr-Hesg Quarry  
Berw Road  
Pontypridd  
Mid Glamorgan  
CF37 3BG

27 November 2024

**Craig-yr-Hesg quarry**

Dear Carolyn

Following last week's Petition Committee at which our Craig-yr-Hesg quarry was discussed (Petition P-06-1476), I wanted to provide reassurance that Heidelberg Materials is committed to being a good neighbour and that we work hard to comply with the strict regulatory regime under which our sector operates.

We appreciate the work of the Petitions Committee is to consider petitions received, however, we would like to highlight that on-going quarrying at Craig-yr-Hesg is underpinned by a scrutinous planning process, as well as a Public Inquiry. The approvals granted also include detailed permitting conditions set to ensure that people, property and the environment are protected.

We recognise that many in the community are disappointed that the quarry extension was given the greenlight. Since 2015 we have taken numerous steps to form a local liaison group, but these have been widely and publicly rebuffed – including by invited local elected representatives. This year, ahead of work starting on the approved extension area, we stepped up direct engagement activity with the community with the aim of resetting relationships and developing dialogue going forward. We have hosted a drop-in event, developed a website with extensive FAQs, door-dropped information and set up a WhatsApp blasting notification service. We have also responded to over 100 separate residents' queries received via our 0800 number and email inbox.

We remain committed to setting up a liaison group and have been working with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in this regard. Our aim is to ensure a better flow of information with the local community as well as ensuring that our neighbours and stakeholders have a voice on issues such as quarry community support and donations, shaping amenity access etc. as well as being able to provide feedback on our operations which could help inform possible further mitigation where feasible.

We remain proud of our operations at Craig-yr-Hesg and the contribution it has made for over 100 years in supplying vital construction material for use in the building and maintenance of infrastructure,

homes and roads in south Wales and beyond. We understand that the Petitions Committee will be writing to us with specific queries, and we will be happy to respond to these in full. In the meantime, I attach a copy of the handout we shared at our June community drop-in as this sets out the strict regulations for Craig-yr-Hesg as well as the extensive mitigation measures in place to manage potential impacts.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Astrid Dahl', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Astrid Dahl**  
**Area General Manager**  
**Aggregates - South Wales**



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair of Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

**Heidelberg Materials UK**

Craig-yr-Hesg Quarry  
Berw Road  
Pontypridd  
Mid Glamorgan  
CF37 3BG

28 January 2025

**Craig-yr-Hesg quarry**

Dear Carolyn

Thank you for your letter following the Senedd's Petitions Committee's consideration of Petition P-06-1476 re mandatory buffer zones for all new and existing quarries. We respect the work of the committee and the role it plays within the Welsh Parliament and are pleased to respond to your request for further information about our approach at Craig-yr-Hesg quarry.

For ease I have used the same headings below in responding to the points you raise in your letter. However, firstly I want to stress that Heidelberg Materials is committed to being a responsible operator and we operate in full accordance with the strict regulatory regime that underpins modern quarrying. As you will be aware, mineral extraction at all our quarries in Wales is predicated on the detailed planning and permitting conditions in place. These have been shaped by statutory policy as well as the work of regulators and NGOs over many years – with the resulting regulations that we and others in our sector work to set to ensure that people, property and the environment are protected.

At Craig-yr-Hesg quarry, where approval for the 10 million tonne extension was granted by the Minister for Climate Change in 2022 following a Public Inquiry, our operations are subject to a comprehensive set of **57 modern planning conditions**. These have been set to mitigate the impact of quarrying and measures include extensive dust suppression activities, the construction of bunds to provide natural screening and noise attenuation, the planting of over 3,200 trees as well as both a Species Protection and Habitat Management Plan and a Tree and Woodland Management Plan, approved by the local authority - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC). Our operations are also subject to regular compliance reviews by the regulators.

We remain committed to playing our role within the local community at Craig-yr-Hesg. In addition to supplying local customers, supporting the local economy and contributing to local business rates, we also support community initiatives. This has previously included us enabling the part-funding of Glyncoch Community Centre via the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, as well as donating land for the Craig-yr-Hesg Nature Reserve. Going forward we will continue efforts to ensure the benefits of our operations to the local community are fully realised.

**Our response to requests for further information on quarry mitigation:**

- **Engaging with the local community**

Heidelberg Materials is committed to building a safe and inclusive future and this includes developing local community engagement plans at all our sites. Developing effective community liaison groups at key sites is also a priority and existing groups have not only led to our involvement in local schemes and community initiatives, including providing financial support, volunteering and material donations, but have also resulted in us responding to feedback by adapting operational practices, such as blast design, HGV routing etc.

As my colleague Astrid Dahl set out in her letter to you of 27 November 2024, since 2015 we have taken numerous steps to reform a liaison group for Craig-yr-Hesg quarry. Indeed the 2022 planning approval includes the requirement to develop a strategy for the setting up of a Community Liaison Group (CLG) and take steps for its implementation. However, our attempts until recently were unsuccessful – including being publicly rebuffed by invited local elected representatives. In recent months we have been fortunate to be able to draw on the support of RCTCBC in helping to shape a CLG. Ahead of the Christmas break an initial meeting hosted by RCTCBC took place – including participation from community representatives, us and other stakeholders. This marks a major milestone in this area, and we look forward to being able to build on this.

In addition to this, and as Astrid also detailed in her letter, last year also saw us stepping up direct engagement activity with the community with the aim of developing further dialogue. Activity included hosting a drop-in event, developing a website with extensive FAQs, door-dropping information and setting up a WhatsApp blasting notification service. Since June 2024 we have also responded to over 130 separate items of correspondence from 42 residents, received via our newly set up 0800 number and email inbox.

Last month we also door-dropped a further letter to the local community. This provided an update on the first phase of the quarry extension, including groundworks and soil stripping, which is now nearing completion. We'll continue to keep the community informed about developments at Craig-yr-Hesg quarry going forward and are hopeful that the new CLG will also work to ensure a better flow of information with local people.

- **Air quality**

The potential air quality and dust hazards from quarries are well understood and addressed through the stringent regulatory controls that are integral to a quarry's planning and permitting conditions. At our local community drop-in at Craig-yr-Hesg and via the FAQ section on our website we have sought to provide information to reassure the local community about this topic.

As set out above, fugitive, or nuisance dust, is managed by a range of measures. These include the use of bowzers, sprinklers and wheel washes to minimise dust, the creation of screening bunds and new woodland along the extension area boundary. These measures were agreed with RCTCBC as part of a Dust and Particulate Management Plan and Dust Monitoring Plan for the whole site and which will be reviewed by the council at regular intervals during our operations.

In addition, RCTCBC carries out air quality monitoring beyond the quarry boundary. Part-funded by Heidelberg Materials, this covers the measurement of levels of fine air-borne particulates, including PM10s and PM2.5s. The data is collected from a location in Garth Avenue, Glyncoch, and is available for public review in real time at: [www.airquality.gov.wales/air-pollution/site/RHD7#latestdata](http://www.airquality.gov.wales/air-pollution/site/RHD7#latestdata). It shows, in a full transparent way that annual average readings are well within the safe levels mandated by the UK's Air Quality Standards.

We recognise that some in the local community have expressed concern re potential links between quarrying with possible health risks including Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS) dust and/or silicosis. To provide reassurance a handout distributed at our June 2024 drop-in, and still available on our website, sets out information from the [IMA-Europe AISBL safe silica website](#). This states that:

“The body is only impacted by inhaling high levels of RCS over many years, meaning that only people working in the direct vicinity of industrial processes are at risk. There is a natural background level of RCS in the air, but the levels are so low that it poses no risk – and a quarry/factory/plant near you does not increase levels of RCS beyond that natural background level.

“Living near a quarry does not put you at any risk of getting cancer. Independent studies conducted notably in the UK by the government health and safety laboratory, HSL, on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) confirm that quarrying does not have any significant impact on air quality outside the quarry boundary. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest any link between quarrying and lung disease among members of the general public who live nearby.”

- **Noise Pollution**

Quarry noise conditions have been developed over many years in line with extensive primary and secondary legislation as well as guidance from the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) and other specialist NGOs. In Wales quarrying permitting conditions, including noise limits, are also informed by guidance from the Welsh Government (Minerals Technical Advice Note 1 [MTAN1]).

At Craig-yr-Hesg quarry limits on noise from our operations are set at six selected locations, also known as receptor sites. The daytime limits relate to background noise levels, with a maximum limit of 55 dB LAeq (average sound level over one hour) at any of these receptors. At night, between 19.00-07.00, the noise level from quarry operations cannot exceed 42 dB LAeq at any of these receptor properties.

On-going compliance with these regulations is regularly checked by the regulator, RCTCBC, with no concerns raised. The development of screening bunds and planting (as detailed above) around the quarry extension area will help to provide noise mitigation for near neighbours for the approved quarry extension area. (Please note information pertaining to quarry blasting is set out under the Risk of structural damage section below).

- **Protection of water resources**

Water management from Craig-yr-Hesg quarry forms part of the extensive quarry operating conditions and compliance with these are assessed by the regulator, Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

NRW conduct routine site monitoring, which involves testing water samples to assess the quality of the water discharged. In addition, NRW carries out periodic site inspections to ensure our compliance with all the relevant consents.

As in standard practice in the quarrying sector, any issues or concerns raised by the regulators during assessments are followed up by the site team and appropriate remedial steps taken – if any are required. In addition, you will be interested to know that Heidelberg Materials is committed to sustainable water management, and we have committed to a 10 per cent reduction in freshwater consumption by 2030 (on a 2020 baseline).

- **Preserving Property values**

Craig-yr-Hesg quarry has helped shape and support the development of the local area for over 130 years. We believe that there is no significant impact because of the approved scheme that would materially change the character of the neighbouring community or impact on the value of housing.

- **Ecosystem conservation**

Working sustainably is at the heart of everything we do. Our 2030 commitments set out our approach, including to being nature positive – contributing positively through our biodiversity programmes and sustainable water management (see our [website](#) for details).

As referenced above, our planning conditions at Craig-yr-Hesg quarry, require both a Species Protection and Habitat Management Plan and a Tree and Woodland Protection Management Plan, approved by the local authority, RCTCBC. These approved schemes along with the construction of the screening bunds have been designed to provide natural screening, noise attenuation, a physical barrier and, importantly, a wildlife/ecological corridor. As mentioned above, over 3,200 new trees will be planted on the main screen bund and around the eastern and northern boundaries of the extension area and this work has already begun. We have also already put up 20 bat boxes and 20 bird boxes as well as 50 dormice nesting boxes to increase the nesting and roosting opportunities across the site. Soils and overburden removed during the phased extraction of the extension area have either been used to create the perimeter screen bund or will be stored for use throughout the progressive restoration, which will see quarry faces in worked out areas restored to enhance the ecological and landscape value of the site.

Our overarching objective is to deliver biodiversity uplift through the positive management of the habitats currently found on site within the quarry and our wider landholding and the creation of a mosaic of woodland, grassland and heathland, reflective of the area's character.

Our site Biodiversity Action Plan is available to view in the documents section of our Craig-yr-Hesg community [website](#). You may also be interested to know that we have annual meetings with the County ecologist to review progress and future activity.

- **Community wellbeing and quality of life**

Heidelberg Materials places the health and wellbeing of employees, communities, and suppliers at the core of our business operations. This includes working to empower the communities where we operate.

As referenced above, many of our other quarries around the UK have well established liaison groups which have helped nurture dialogue and the implementation of meaningful action to the benefit of host communities. Unfortunately, our efforts at Craig-yr-Hesg quarry have previously been rejected, though we continue to work to set one up.

At Craig-yr-Hesg, in addition to actively supporting the development of the local community hall, activity in the community has also included staff volunteering and the donation of materials. For example, earlier this month we agreed to donate some fence posts to a local allotment group so that members can repurpose them to repair their fences after a series of break-ins. We recognise that there is more we can do in this area and our Craig-yr-Hesg community website contains details about our community assistance programme and how local people can make [applications for community support](#).

We are aware that some residents have expressed concerns about the perceived loss of amenity space. However, we should point out that there have never previously been any public rights of access over the quarry extension area, and it was 'first identified in the local authority's 2011 Local Development Plan which would have been consulted on. Nevertheless, to ensure local connectivity and amenity access we are creating a permissive path over land to the north of the extension area to provide pedestrian access from Glyncoch to the Lan Woods to the west.

In addition, as part of our planning application, we offered to gift 11.4 acres of land to extend Coed Craig-yr-Hesg woodland which forms the Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The 40- acre LNR was gifted by us to RCTCBC 1993, together with a sum to manage the woodlands. Although the council did not take us on this, we would be happy to revisit this offer.

- **Risk of structural damage**

As set out at our June 2024 drop-in and in the FAQ section on our website, the way in which a quarry blast is experienced can be shaped by a number of factors including geology, blast design, vibration, air pressure, frequency, distance from the blast quarry face and even the weather.

Quarry blasting in the UK is highly regulated: it has well-defined limits on ground vibration, based on peak particle velocity (PPV). Operating within these standards means that there is no risk of structural damage to nearby homes or buildings.

British Standard 7382: part 2 1993 underpins the stringent blasting regulations that we, like all operators work to. This standard is informed by research that blast vibration values in excess of 50mm/s PPV would be necessary to cause structural damage to homes. The permitted levels for Craig-yr-Hesg quarry allow blasts up to the regulatory limit of 6mm/s Peak Particle Velocity (PPV), at 95% confidence. This reflects planning guidance in Wales.

We are also required to monitor blast vibration in line with a Blast Monitoring Scheme approved by RCTCBC. The average PPV recorded for all blasts at Craig-yr-Hesg quarry since 2018 is below 3 mm/s PPV – so well within the permitted levels on this logarithmic scale. For reference, research has indicated people will generally become aware of blast induced vibration at around 1.5mm/s PPV, so this indicates that people can be aware of blast vibration even when associated vibration levels are low.

Details of forthcoming blasts at Craig-yr-Hesg quarry are posted on signage at the quarry gate and on our community website. Last year we also introduced a free blast notification service via WhatsApp for residents.

- **Planning and zoning consistency**

I am sure you are aware that every local authority is required to maintain supplies of minerals and local mineral plans are developed to ensure that minerals are extracted and used in a way that balances the needs of the economy and society with the impact on the environment. And, of course, minerals can only be extracted where they exist, and this is shaped by geology.

The Regional Technical Statement for Aggregates identifies a need for a minimum Local Plan allocation of 9.5 million tonnes of new crushed rock reserves over nearly 25 years. This was recognised in the adopted RCTCBC 2011 Local Development Plan (LDP) by the inclusion of an area of land adjacent to Craig-yr-Hesg quarry as ‘a preferred area of known minerals resources’. This was the only area identified within the LDP for new aggregates supply.

In May 2015 Heidelberg Materials UK (known as Hanson UK until October 2023) submitted a planning application for a 10 million tonne extension to Craig-yr-Hesg, located within this ‘preferred area’ referenced above. The application took over five years to get to planning committee but, despite policy support and a firm recommendation for approval from planning officers, the planning committee refused the application in July 2020.

An appeal was lodged against that refusal which was ‘called in’ for determination by the Minister for Climate Change and examined at a public inquiry held in June 2022. The Inspector concluded that the proposals, with their associated mitigation measures, would comply with the development plan and relevant Welsh planning policy. In making her recommendation that the appeal be allowed, the Inspector made it clear that she considered her decision to be in accordance with the sustainable development principle of the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Minister for Climate Change agreed with the Inspector and, as you are aware, allowed the appeal, granting planning permission in October 2022.

With regards to zoning, the creation of screening bunds and planting at Craig-yr-Hesg quarry will further help to provide clear delineation between the site and the surrounding area. It is also worth highlighting that we will continue to adhere to all the stipulated conditions, including, noise and blast vibration, regardless of the distance between the quarry extraction area and the key receptor sites within the community.

To conclude this point, the extension at Craig-yr-Hesg quarry was determined on the basis that it would operate within the existing planning regulatory framework with extensive measures and modern planning conditions in place to mitigate impact and ensure the community and

environment are protected. We are of course aware of proposals to change future and existing buffer zones around quarries debated both in Westminster and more recently in the Senedd. Our response to this reflects those of the Mineral Products Association in that, if imposed, this would be detrimental to ensuring secure supplies of aggregates in Wales. It would also lead to a loss of jobs and inward investment as well as the need to import materials for use in Welsh construction and maintenance projects.

I appreciate that is a lengthy reply to your letter – somewhat reflecting the extensive regulatory and planning regime in place for mineral extraction – and I hope that the above goes some way to providing reassurance. We would of course be happy to answer any further questions you may have.

Kind regards

*Simon Willis*

**Simon Willis**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Heidelberg Materials UK**



deunyddiau hanfodel  
atebion cynaliadwy

essential materials  
sustainable solutions

February 12, 2025

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair of the Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

**MPA Wales/Cymru**

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Dear Chair

**Petitions Committee debate on buffer zones**

Following the debate in the Senedd on 16 October last year, on proposals for a 1,000m buffer zone for quarries, and subsequent correspondence between the Petitions Committee and one of our members, we would like to address some of the general policy issues raised. MPA Wales represents the bulk of an industry that operates around 200 sites across Wales providing around 4,000 jobs. Very few quarries would not be affected by the proposed limit.

Members of the Senedd raised a range of concerns, including biodiversity, dust and silica, blasting impact and vehicular traffic. These are issues which are all regulated and controlled either through the planning system, through planning permissions and respective planning conditions, or through separate permits issued by Natural Resources Wales.

We welcome the recognition by some Members of the Senedd of the importance of the materials supplied by our members. Most aggregates quarries supply local or regional demand, so restrictions on quarrying in Wales would have serious impacts throughout the country affecting any aspirations for new housing, schools, hospitals, transport or green energy infrastructure and wider economic growth.

**Biodiversity**

The quarrying industry's biodiversity track record is outstanding and should be seen as a template for other industries. The MPA's Biodiversity Strategy<sup>1</sup> sets out the industry's commitments going forward, while our Fifty-Year celebration document showcases some of the best restorations done to date.<sup>2</sup> MPA members across Great Britain have created 83 square kilometres of priority habitat, with a further 110 square kilometres planned.

<sup>1</sup> [https://mineralproducts.org/MPA/media/root/Publications/2020/MPA\\_Biodiversity\\_Strategy\\_2020.pdf](https://mineralproducts.org/MPA/media/root/Publications/2020/MPA_Biodiversity_Strategy_2020.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://mineralproducts.org/Publications/Natural-Environment/Quarries\\_and\\_Nature\\_50\\_Year\\_Success\\_Story.aspx](https://mineralproducts.org/Publications/Natural-Environment/Quarries_and_Nature_50_Year_Success_Story.aspx)

The progressive restoration of quarries for nature creates incredible habitat, as part of the business-as-usual planning and permitting process. This is overseen by local authorities and Natural Resources Wales. MPA members work closely with environmental NGOs including the Wildlife Trusts and RSPB to restore and manage sites post extraction.

### **Dust and Silica**

Silica dust is tightly controlled and is strictly a workplace hazard affecting those working closely with the cutting and processing of extracted materials. To quote the UK Health and Safety Executive:

*“Silicosis is a disease that has only been seen in workers from industries where there is a significant exposure to silica dust, such as in quarries, foundries, the potteries etc. No cases of silicosis have been documented among members of the general public in Great Britain, indicating that environmental exposures to silica dust are not sufficiently high to cause this occupational disease.” (Our underlining)<sup>3</sup>*

We would hope that the debate in Wales on quarrying would reflect both the type of extraction done here, and the regulatory and planning systems in place. The debate cited the Environmental Working Group’s advocacy and research into open sand mines as operated in Wisconsin and Minnesota. These represent very different operations to the majority of quarries under consideration in Wales, comprising large scale extraction of shallow industrial sand deposits. It is further worth noting that an independent Health impact Assessment conducted by the Institute for Wisconsin’s Health concluded that:

*“Health effects from the impact of industrial sand mining on community-level air quality related to PM10 are unlikely. In addition, it is unlikely that community members will be exposed to respirable crystalline silica from industrial sand mining as currently regulated; therefore, health effects from exposure are unlikely.”<sup>4</sup>*

We would further add that both the environmental conditions and the regulatory and legal controls on operations in the UK are completely different.

### **Blasting**

Blasting is controlled through the planning system, following long-established principles. The levels of permitted ground vibration routinely stipulated in planning conditions are significantly below what would cause structural damage at a distance. The air pressure associated with blasting can rattle windows, depending upon the climatic conditions at the time of the blast, but at a strength similar to a strong wind. These planning conditions are also regularly reviewed through the statutory Mineral Review process. We would be happy to try to arrange a briefing for Senedd Members, as this is a highly technical area.

### **Vehicle movement and community engagement**

Vehicle movements to and from quarries are essential but their effects can be an issue for local communities. Again, where concerns have been raised vehicle movements are managed through the planning process, with the industry applying controls such as wheel washing to reduce inconvenience. We expect a high level of safety standards from the industry working with a range of partners including

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hse.gov.uk/quarries/silica.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/external-sites/health-impact-project/iwhi-2016-sand-mining-report.pdf>

Construction Logistics and Community Safety (CLOCS) and standards including FORS. MPA supports the work of the Mineral Products Qualification Council to ensure appropriate standards in the industry and publishes the Driver Handbook.

We expect local quarry operators, the local authorities and community representatives to liaise closely to minimise the impact of traffic movements. This usually works well where each side works openly and transparently, however, we are aware of a very small number of instances, where despite the quarrying company's best efforts, some communities or their local representatives will not engage in local community liaison groups. The industry works hard to use rail and water options where possible and would welcome the Senedd's support for growing our use of rail freight to reduce lorry movements where this is feasible.

### **Evidence and essentiality**

It was disappointing to see elected representatives allege health impacts and examples of structural damage without substantiating evidence. We are aware that fears may be whipped up in communities to oppose planning applications that are unpopular for other reasons, but this is not a basis for national policy formulation. The minerals industry invests millions of pounds in Wales providing essential materials for roads, houses, public services, transport, water and energy infrastructure, and provides thousands of well-paid, high-productivity jobs. Without local supplies of aggregates Wales would be reliant on external supplies, with higher carbon emissions from transport.

Great Britain as a whole is not replenishing its supplies of construction aggregates fully; over the last decade, for every 100 tonnes of crushed rock sold permission was granted for only 33 tonnes.<sup>5</sup> A functioning planning and permitting system is needed to make sure that the demand for construction aggregates for homes, infrastructure, public services, commercial and industrial uses can continue to be met in the long term.

Yours sincerely

**David Harding**  
**Secretary**  
**MPA Wales**

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<sup>5</sup> Mineral Products Association: Annual Mineral Planning System 2023;  
[https://mineralproducts.org/MPA/media/root/News/2024/AMPS\\_Report\\_2023.pdf](https://mineralproducts.org/MPA/media/root/News/2024/AMPS_Report_2023.pdf)

**Dewiswch iaith a diwyg eich dogfen | Available in alternative formats and languages**

Croesawn ohebu yn Gymraeg a fydd gohebu yn y Gymraeg ddim yn arwain at oedi. Rhowch wybod inni beth yw'ch dewis iaith e.e Cymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to a delay. Let us know your language choice if Welsh or bilingual



Carolyn Thomas MS,  
Chair Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

**CC:** Heledd Fychan MS; Rhys ab Owen MS; Andrew RT Davies MS; Joel James MS; Vikki Howells MS; Mick Antoniw MS; Hefin David MS; Llyr Gruffydd MS; Mark Isherwood MS; Delyth Jewell MS.

14 February 2025

Dear Carolyn,

**Re: Petition P-06-1476 1000-meter mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries**

Thank you for your letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 concerning the above petition, considered by the Petitions Committee at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

The petition proposes a mandatory buffer zone of at least 1000 meters for all new and existing quarries from all residential areas, schools, hospitals, and care facilities. This is a matter of planning policy and is reserved to Welsh Government to determine. As this is not a matter for this Council, I will confine my comments to your request for detailed information of what actions the Council is taking to deal with residents' concerns, engagement with the site operator and the arrangements for community liaison.

One of the key roles for the Council in terms of dealing with the concerns of residents who live in vicinity of Craig yr Hesg quarry is to ensure that the conditions imposed on the planning permission granted by Welsh Government are adhered to. A number of those conditions are imposed specifically to mitigate the impact of the quarry operations on the living conditions of residents. These conditions include matters relating to screening bunds, noise levels, light pollution, how and when blasting and excavation can be undertaken, how and when HGVs enter and leave the site, dust management plans, where and how crushing and screening machinery can operate, etc.

The Council has and will continue to actively monitor the site and works closely with the relevant consultants appointed by the quarry operators to ensure that all conditions are complied with. As of today, there are no breaches of planning control at the quarry and all relevant conditions are being adhered to.

It is also important that residents are given the confidence that these conditions are being complied with and officers of the Council have met regularly with residents to understand their concerns and provide information and assurances around how the conditions on the planning permission are being dealt with.

One of the requests from residents in these meetings was around the potential of some form of online portal being introduced that allowed them to see up to date information on the conditions and other planning issues. In response we have developed a bespoke webpage for the quarry development that residents can access at any time. The information on the webpages has been developed in consultation with residents and is now ready to go live. Examples of what is included are shown in the appendix to this letter. In addition, the Council has provided residents with a dedicated email address to send all queries they have on Craig Yr Hesg, which is then monitored by relevant officers.

In addition to its role in respect of compliance with the Quarry's planning consent the Council also has a regulatory role to ensure the operator of Craig Yr Hesg quarry achieves compliance with their environmental permit as well as a broader responsibility to monitor local air quality to understand the impact the quarry has on the air quality of Glyncoch.

With respect to its local air quality management obligations, the Council monitors, reports and undertakes the statutory assessment of ambient levels in outside air of Particulate Matter PM<sub>10</sub>. Investment by the Council in 2023 enabled the monitoring of both PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>, at a location within Glyncoch. The Council monitors and reports levels in outside air of Particulate Matter PM<sub>2.5</sub> at Glyncoch but the statutory assessment of PM<sub>2.5</sub> is undertaken by Welsh Government.

The Council currently undertakes the monitoring of Particulate Matter at a location along Garth Avenue, Glyncoch (site 130), with continuous results of the levels of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> provided in near real-time at <https://www.airquality.gov.wales/air-pollution/site/RHD7>. The Council routinely evaluates and assesses its air quality monitoring data to enable consideration of compliance to the relevant Air Quality Objective for PM<sub>10</sub>. The Council produces an annual air quality report which includes an analysis of monitoring undertaken at Glyncoch and the latest published report is available via the Council website at <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Business/LicencesandPermits/Pollutionrelatedlicences/RelatedDocuments/RCTCBC2023ProgressReport.pdf>. The 2024 Progress Report is currently going through the Council's approval process with a view to carrying out a public consultation in the coming months.

The selection process for the air quality monitoring equipment at Garth Avenue was made in line with the duty of the Council to consider compliance with the relevant Air Quality Objectives for PM<sub>10</sub> as detailed in the relevant Air Quality legislation/Statutory Guidance set by Welsh Government. With regards to the siting of monitoring location RCTCBC/130, Garth Avenue was identified as being an area likely representative of local conditions which were most consistently impacted by relevant activities associated with Craig Yr Hesg Quarry, particularly the operation of the primary crusher. On choosing this location regard was given to several factors set out in statutory guidance, including the presence of a relevant population, distance from and elevation to identified potential sources of PM<sub>10</sub>, topography of the urban environment, prevailing weather, logistical arrangements, and access requirements.

In respect to standards of the monitoring equipment used, the apparatus and method has been certified by Mcerts and is included on the 'UK Approval of Particulate Matter Monitoring Instruments' list, as a monitoring method that is equivalent to the European Reference Method which is a requirement the Council also needed to consider. The latest monitoring data indicates compliance with the current Air Quality Objective. Notwithstanding this, the Council will continue to monitor in Glyncoch and routinely reviews its air quality monitoring network to enable any required changes to the evolving air quality situation, whilst having regard to its statutory duties.

In respect of permitting requirements set by Welsh Government, the Council regulates the emission of pollution to air from certain processing activities at Craig Yr Hesg quarry via a Part B Environmental Permit. The Permit exists separately from any planning consent, which may be amended from time to time to reflect current practices and statutory guidance. The Council continues to engage with the Operator of Craig Yr Hesg quarry about environmental performance. This engagement may occur because of a specific concern that has been received via the Community or the Operator. In addition, visits take place because of a scheduled programme of inspections to check compliance with conditions of the environmental permit.

The situation at Glyncoch and the impact of Craig Yr Hesg Quarry on local air quality, remains of significant interest to the Council and the work that members of the community have been able to undertake to enable them to form their own independent understanding of the situation is acknowledged. Should a resident believe they are experiencing a direct dust disturbance as a result of a specific event or observed ongoing action, it would assist if as much detail as possible is sent to [EnvironmentalPollution@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:EnvironmentalPollution@rctcbc.gov.uk), whereby the Council can consider the matter further to determine if there are any relevant enforcement actions which could be progressed.

As you have alluded to in your letter, one of the conditions of planning consent requires the formation of a site liaison committee/group. The setting up of such a group has not been without its challenges and it has been necessary to first rebuild trust between the community, the quarry operators, and this Council.

To address this issue, and at the request of the local ward member, the Council has held a series of meetings with representatives of the community to respond to their concerns and to move towards a position where a community liaison group can be established. These meetings have been led by the Council's Chief Executive, supported by relevant senior officers of the Council and a Consultant in Public Health from Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB. In addition to community representatives, Elected Members and Members of the Senedd have been in attendance.

Significant progress has been made. On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024, the Council hosted a joint meeting with representatives of the community and, for the first time, officials from the quarry operator. There is now agreement on draft terms of reference for a site liaison group being formally established. We are therefore expecting a series of site liaison group meetings to take place on a quarterly basis going forward and arrangements are now being made for the appointment of an independent chair and for the first formal community liaison group meeting to take place.

I trust the above information provides the committee with assurance that the Council is taking its statutory obligations seriously in properly discharging its regulatory role. The Council acknowledges the distress and anxiety that the expansion of the quarry has caused the community of Glyncoch and is doing everything it can to work with the community, the quarry operator, community leaders and other stakeholders to address their concerns and establish effective community liaison arrangements at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

*A. Morgan*

**Andrew Morgan, OBE**

**Arweinydd ac Aelod o'r Cabinet ar faterion Isadeiledd a Buddsoddi**

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment

**Cynghorydd y Fwrdeistref Sirol dros Ward Aberpennar**

County Borough Councillor for the Mountain Ash Ward

Swyddfa'r Cabinet, 2 Llys Cadwyn, Stryd y Taf

Cabinet Office, 2 Llys Cadwyn, Taff Street, Pontypridd, CF37 4TH

Ebost/Email: [Andrew.Morgan2@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Morgan2@rctcbc.gov.uk)



**MAE EICH DATA O BWYS** [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/diogeludata](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/diogeludata)  
**YOUR DATA MATTERS** [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/dataprotection](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/dataprotection)



## APPENDIX 1 Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Webpages

See screen shots below. Each page contains:

- Blasting – an overview of what is allowed in terms of blasting and a copy of the blast spreadsheet provided by Heidelberg Materials
- Planning conditions – an overview of what is contained within a Live Decision Notice and links to the Inspectors report, Welsh Ministers decision and our Public Access where residents can view each Discharge of Conditions application and Live Decision Notice.
- Investigation updates – this page will contain details of issues raised by residents, what we have done in terms of investigating and the status.
- Air Quality – Links to <https://www.airquality.gov.wales/air-pollution/site/RHD7> and [https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Business/LicencesandPermits/Pollutionrelatedlicences/Airquality.aspx?\\_gl=1\\*\\_prqzxw\\*\\_gcl\\_au\\*MTI3Nzc1OTg5My4xNzMxMzI3NzMz](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Business/LicencesandPermits/Pollutionrelatedlicences/Airquality.aspx?_gl=1*_prqzxw*_gcl_au*MTI3Nzc1OTg5My4xNzMxMzI3NzMz)
- Community Liaison Group – Dates and times of meetings and minutes (where minutes are available)

### Craig Yr Hesg

Craig Yr Hesg Quarry is a long established quarry which commenced operations in the 1890's.

The quarry is located approximately 1KM north of Pontypridd, adjacent to the village of Glyncoch.

The site is has a two way access via the B4273 Ynysybwll Road adjacent to Rogart Terrace. Existing quarry operations are focussed on the western part of the quarry with operations progressing in a north westerly direction. The processing plant is located in the eastern part of the quarry.

Continuation of works at the existing facility and permission for the extension of the quarry was granted by The Welsh Ministers on 11th October 2022 following a Public Inquiry.



#### Blasting

Information about the monitoring of blasting at the quarry.

[Blasting](#)



#### Planning Conditions

View planning conditions that have been satisfied and discharged.

[Planning](#)



#### Investigation Updates

View latest investigation updates and details of how to report

[Investigation](#)



#### Air Quality

Provisional results of local air quality monitoring from Air Quality Wales along with The Council's annual air quality progress report.

[Reports](#)



#### Community Liaison Group

View minutes from past meetings and details of upcoming liaison meetings.



#### Debate on a Member's Legislative Proposal

A bill relating to planning processes for quarry development - [Plenary - Wednesday, 16 October 2024 13.307](#)

#### Contact us:

Email: [Craigyrhesg\\_planning@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:Craigyrhesg_planning@rctcbc.gov.uk)

# Blasting

In approving continued operations at the quarry, The Welsh Ministers were satisfied that blasting could be controlled so as to comply with the limits set out in current national planning policy Minerals Technical Advice Note (MTAN) 1: aggregates. This is achieved through the application of planning conditions setting upper acceptable limits for noise and vibration. Specifically, these require:

Blasting is only to take place at the quarry between 1000 and 1600 hours Monday to Friday and not at all on Saturday Sunday and Bank Holidays, (other than in an emergency).

Each individual blast is to be monitored in accordance with the agreed blast monitoring scheme with all monitoring undertaken in accordance with the terms of the scheme.

No secondary blasting is to be carried out at the site.

All individual blasts are to be designed managed and implemented to minimise the extent of air overpressure resulting from the blast. If air overpressure exceeds 120db, at any nearby sensitive residential property the Local Planning Authority are to be informed within 7 days and the design management and implementation of blasts to be reviewed prior to any further blasting taking place, with future blasting being undertaken in accordance with the findings of the review.

## **Please also note:**

- Blasting times are to be clearly advertised at the quarry.
- A warning audible at the site boundary shall be sounded before and after blasting.
- Blasting times shall be clearly advertised on the operator's website at least 24 hours in advance of blasting occurring
- Blasting shall be advertised on social media channels at least 24 hours in advance of blasting occurring.

## **Craig Yr Hesg Blasting Database (redacted)**

[View our Blasting Vibration Database](#)

# Planning Conditions

The Live Decision notice for Craig Yr Hesg details the original conditions of the appeal decision and includes details within it of each condition which has been satisfied and therefore discharged.

The details of the condition will look like the table below which shows:

Details agreed: Wording from the condition being discharged.

- Application number: this is the planning reference number for the discharge of condition application (you can use the first 6 digits of this reference to search for the application on the online register - Simple Search (rctcbc.gov.uk)).
- Decision date: the date the condition was discharged.
- Deciding Authority: the authority approving the discharge of condition.
- Revision Number: v.1 is the original consent. v.2, v.3 etc will follow on as conditions are discharged.
- Notes: this won't appear on all discharge of conditions but may appear to give additional information or clarification.

<b>Details agreed</b>	Scheme of seeding and woodland planting of the Northern Screening Landform and preparation of the Western Screen Bund
<b>Application Number</b>	23/0388/38
<b>Decision Date</b>	25/03/2024
<b>Deciding Authority</b>	Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
<b>Revision number</b>	v.2

Live Decisions are uploaded to the original application (in this instance 15/0666) and to the specific planning reference for the discharge of condition.

	<a href="#">Live decision notice (planning references 240487DIS, 240180DIS and 240388DIS)</a>  236 Kb
	<a href="#">Welsh Ministers decision letter</a>  451 Kb
	<a href="#">Inspectors Report</a>  1.42 Mb
	<a href="#">Refusal of Full Planning Permission</a>  116 Kb

# Investigation Updates

## Slow worms

The Council's Ecologist has been visiting the site to witness progress of the site's vegetation clearance, wall demolitions and start of site strip works, as they relate to the reptile mitigation requirement of the related discharged planning condition.

As a result, the Council's Ecologist has been emailed with progress updates by Heidelberg Materials (which have been copied to the Craig Yr Hesg RCT email and colleagues). Based on his site visit experience, and the email progress updates provided, he is confident that the reptile mitigation that was approved through planning condition has been implemented appropriately, but we will continue to monitor the welfare of the slow worms (and other species) throughout the development.

**Status: Case closed August 2024**

## Bunds

We are aware that construction of the bunds at the boundary of the site have been a recent cause for concern to residents and this issue is currently being investigated. Some concern has also been expressed that material from within the existing quarry has been used for the formation of the bunds. However, following investigations it has been established that it is within the terms of the permission granted.

Heidelberg Materials have advised that construction work on the bunds may result in limited access to the surrounding land for approximately four weeks.

**Status: Open. Checks to be carried out once the bunds have been constructed**

## How to report a planning breach?

If you think a problem exists you can report the issue to us online:

[VIEW OUR PLANNING ENFORCEMENT WEBPAGE TO FIND OUT MORE >](#)

## Air Quality

### [Airquality.gov.wales](https://airquality.gov.wales)

Up-to-date provisional results of local air quality monitoring on the external website Air Quality in Wales. (Please note this is provisional data, which may be subject to change as it is subsequently validated, ratified)

### [RCTCBC Air Quality Webpage](#)

The Council's annual air quality progress report.

## Useful links:

- [Craig-yr-Hesg quarry community webpage](#)
- <https://www.cleanairhub.org.uk/>
- [Statutory nuisance](#)
- [Environmental permitting](#)

### **The planning application submitted to Rhondda Cynon Taf Planning -**

- [15/0666/FUL](#) | Western extension to existing quarry to include the phased extraction of an additional 10 million tonnes of pennant sandstone, construction of screening bunds, associated works and operations, and consolidation of all previous mineral planning permissions at Craig Yr Hesg Quarry, including an extension of the end date for quarrying and an overall restoration scheme (additional information submitted "Wellbeing and Environmental Health Issues" report) | [Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Berw Road Pontypridd CF37 3BG \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Discharge of Conditions applications -**

- [24/1123/DIS](#) | Discharge of condition 23(d) Blasting. | [Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Berw Road Pontypridd Rhondda Cynon Taf CF37 3BG](#)
- [24/0487/DIS](#) - Discharge of condition 15 details of construction of the path (15/0666/10) | [Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Berw Road Pontypridd CF37 3BG \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](#)
- [24/0180/DIS](#) | Discharge of Conditions 31 Revised Noise Management and Monitoring Scheme, 37 Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation & 49 Scheme for seeding and management of soil storage bunds of previous planning permission 15/0666/10 | [Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Berw Road Pontypridd CF37 3BG \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](#)
- [23/0388/DIS](#) | Discharge of condition 7 Species Protection and Habitat Management Plan, 38, 38 (a) & 38(b) Habitat Protection plan ref EC1, Tree and Woodland Management Plan, 51 Interim Restoration Scheme, 56 Community Communication and Engagement Strategy (15/0666/10) | [Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Berw Road Pontypridd CF37 3BG \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](#)

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/10551/24

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

5 March 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter regarding the petition for a 1,000 metre mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries.

As I outlined during the legislative proposal debate back in October 2024, I do not agree that new legislation would be appropriate or effective as circumstances vary on a case-by-case basis. Planning policy is more nuanced than legislation and is capable of being locally placed based, and sensitive, reflecting local circumstances. Should evidence suggest policy or advice is no longer effective, consideration will be given to reviewing guidance. This would not be so easily achieved through the legislative route.

A mandatory buffer zone of 1,000 metres could bring about unintended consequences preventing the use of land for other purposes; prohibiting or adversely impacting on the provision of key infrastructure, for example.

The minimum distances of the buffer zones currently set out in Mineral Technical Advice Note 1: Aggregates (MTAN1) of 200 metres for hard rock and 100 metres for sand and gravel were arrived at through careful consideration and consultation.

If the minimum distance of a buffer zone were to be extended, sensitive land uses such as housing would still exist within the buffer zone. A blanket increase in the minimum size of a buffer zone could have wider implications by sterilising the use of the land for other purposes.

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

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Correspondence.Rebecca.Evans@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Rebecca.Evans@gov.wales)  
[Gohebiaeth.Rebecca.Evans@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Rebecca.Evans@llyw.cymru)

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.

of noise and dust, current and predicted vibration from blasting operations and availability of mitigation measures.

It is important to understand that buffer zones will of necessity vary in size depending on the mineral being extracted and the nature of the operation. All buffer zones must be clearly defined and indicated on the local development plan proposals map.

As Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out, it is also important to provide policies which safeguard potential mineral resources from other types of permanent development which would either sterilise them or limit extraction either now, or in the future as technology changes.

Where planning permission is granted, it will be subject to planning conditions which are monitored, and if necessary, enforced by the local planning authority. Planning conditions can impose, for example, an adequate and appropriate monitoring scheme of the environmental consequences of aggregates extraction. In some cases, periodic checks may be sufficient but in others, continuous monitoring and regular audit reports may be necessary. Access to monitoring locations must be available to the operator, and location of dust emission sources away from sensitive development.

Where quarry operators are found to be exceeding or otherwise breaching the conditions attached to a planning permission, LPAs have a number of powers to take enforcement action to ensure mining operations are brought back within the parameters set out in the consent.

A Breach of Condition Notice can put mine operators on notice that further exceedances of planning conditions would result in criminal prosecution and a serious breach of planning control can be addressed by a Court injunction.

Most breaches of planning control are addressed through the issue of an Enforcement Notice. In considering the merits of serving an Enforcement Notice, the decisive issue for an authority is whether the breach of planning control would unacceptably affect public amenity or the existing use of land and buildings meriting protection in the public interest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rebecca Evans AS/MS**

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio

**P-06-1476 1000 Meter mandatory buffer zone for all new and existing quarries - Correspondence from the Petitioners to the Committee, 14 March 2025**

Ref: P-06-1476

Petitions Committee.

I would like to make a short statement on some concerns regarding the current expansion of Craig-Yr-Hesg quarry in response to the letters received of the relevant parties.

First of all, with regards to the response off RCT stating that as of (14/02/2025) no breaches of planning controls at the quarry, I would like to mention that on Feb 2025 the AOP (Air over pressure) which has a planning condition limit of 120 db was independently measured at 124, which triggered RCT to notify Heidelberg and issue them a notice to review current blasting conditions to ensure the limits are not broken again, if continued to be broken then this could trigger other actions as detailed in their own correspondence.

I would like to state that independent monitoring of blasting was only started on 25/10 2024 and since then has seen one AOP above the limit.. Looking at past data supplied by RCT, it is evident that AOP has gone above the 120 limit a further 9 occasions from 16/08/2018. With this data now evident, how confident can we be with all breaches being reported and acted on.

DATE	AOP
16/08/18	127
10/09/18	126
04/01/19	127
08/01/20	125
27/01/20	125
25/08/20	125
24/10/22	121
20/12/22	125
11/01/25	120
28/02/25	124

Traffic Controls,

Whilst I appreciate controls are in place for vehicle movements, the data given is an the limit expected over 12 months and then averaged out, what it doesn't take into consideration is the influx of vehicles in a short space of time during early mornings and school transport hours, This is having a significant impact on the safety of pedestrians and fellow road users. On monitoring from members of the community we can now confirm that 40% of the vehicle movement allowance arrives between 07:00 & 09:00 Mon-Fri. Would also like to republish the fact that pavements along

the route to the quarry, in places only reach a width of 39 cms where the recommended safe width is 100cms, This is increasing the risk to public safety as far as pedestrians run the risk of travelling to Pontypridd by foot and passing a blind corner of a bridge at its narrowest point, We have had assurances in the past that this would be looked at but nothing went further and was found to be broken promises.

### Flooding

The recent events of flooding in Pontypridd yet again reached the media, I personally have been down to Berw Road on both occasions to help the people in need, to be honest with you, when I see people on their hands and knees trying to put garden chippings in recycling bags to use as sandbags is heartbreaking, During the floods, we saw several areas of the quarry flooding with water flowing down from the bunds at a fast rate and flooding the rugby pitch and nearing houses, This has never happened to this scale before. With quarry management stating that some parts of the bunds were 7 meters high but yet they advertise its only 3-5 meters high in Heidelberg's publications, it also begs the question???? Are we being told the truth?

The flooding also exposed a lot of dust material that went onto the public Darren ddu raod that RCT and NRW are looking at. We are starting to have issue after issue and when its stated that we cant have a road drainage plan because "they don't have one" is quite frankly worrying.

I welcome anyone to come up to the areas in question and I will gladly escort you around physically showing the communities concerns.

We need re-assurances that all is ok and the community will not be remembered as "Why didn't we listen to the community" if a devastating event happens in future.

Thanks very much

Chris Whiles

(Concerned Glyncoch resident)

## **Correspondence from an interested party**

I hope you could bring the attached letter to the attention of the Petition Committee considering the matter concerning boundary limits for quarry operations. I note that the current regulations stipulate 200 meters and would remind the committee that, at CraigrHesg, the quarry operations will be within 165 meters of schools and homes. I'd also point out that silica dust doesn't recognize boundaries and the wind direction and strength at the junction of two valleys (Taff and Rhondda) is somewhat different that what may occur in the safe confines of, let's say, Cardiff Bay.

There is also a perverted trust in the safety guidance given by the single air monitor situated far from the quarry operations - much further from the boundary than homes, childcare facilities and shops. In addition, analysis of weather patterns indicate that the wind generally travels in the opposite direction to the wind monitor. Dust has been collected from window sills on the edge of the boundary and have indicated levels of up to 51% silica dust. In addition, R-C-T's own studies in 2014 demonstrated 2.4 times more dust in the community at sites closer to the quarry than those several hundred meters away. Although this didn't seem to deter them from hastily agreeing to sell the 27 acres needed for the quarry extension for just £4k in that same year.

Finally, R-C-T have refused to investigate this further (as have PHW) both indicating that they rely primarily on a single air monitor to satisfy themselves on the safety of the air breathe - R-C-T have also stated that they are not legally obligated to evaluate the risks from PM2.5 sized dust particles (the most dangerous kind) and that's the responsibility of the Welsh Government. They have also suggested that anyone who believes they have suffered ill-health for the effects of the dust should report this to their health professionals. When you consider that these illnesses include kidney failure, COPD, cancer and heart failure - that's asking the local population to act as canaries - do we have to wait a generation before taking action ?

Regards,

Rob Peterson

## **The Glyncoch Quarry and Community Health Crisis**

The situation in Glyncoch exemplifies how vulnerable and underrepresented communities are often overlooked when it comes to holding local and national authorities accountable for public health concerns. Despite mounting evidence of health risks, regulatory bodies have failed to provide adequate oversight, leaving residents exposed to potential harm.

Pennant stone is undeniably a valuable resource, prized for its skid-resistant properties and its proximity to markets in South England. However, this stone contains approximately 70% silica, a substance known to pose severe health risks when airborne in fine particulate form.

Evidence confirms that silica dust from the quarry is infiltrating nearby homes. A 2014 study by the University of the West of England found that silica-based dust concentrations were nearly 2.4 times higher in homes close to the quarry boundary compared to those situated several hundred meters away. A 2024 dust analysis further revealed that up to 50% of dust samples collected near residential areas consisted of silica dust.

### **Regulatory Indifference**

Despite the overwhelming evidence, the seriousness of this risk is in question. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) maintains workplace exposure limits using time-weighted averages, yet does not consider monitoring general population exposure its responsibility. Quarry workers operate with protective measures, and facilities are strategically distanced from rock-crushing activities—yet many homes bordering the quarry are positioned closer than these protected facilities.

**Public Health Wales** presented a favorable air quality assessment during the appeal process but has since admitted to not retaining the data that supported their conclusions. The agency relied on local authorities for their information and has declined further involvement in evaluating the health risks.

**Rhondda Cynon Taf** (R-C-T) Council approved the sale of land for the quarry's expansion in 2014, despite being aware of the high silica dust concentrations near homes. In the 2022 appeal hearing, neither silica nor silicosis were even mentioned. The council now claims its hands are tied, deferring any health-related concerns from the 2024 study to public health professionals. Furthermore, R-C-T asserts that ensuring compliance with PM2.5 particulate matter regulations falls under the jurisdiction of the Welsh Government.

The **Welsh Government**, in turn, approved the quarry expansion while shifting regulatory oversight back to R-C-T. This bureaucratic deflection has left residents in a cycle of inaction, with no authority willing to take responsibility for comprehensively safeguarding public health.

### **A Known Hazard Ignored**

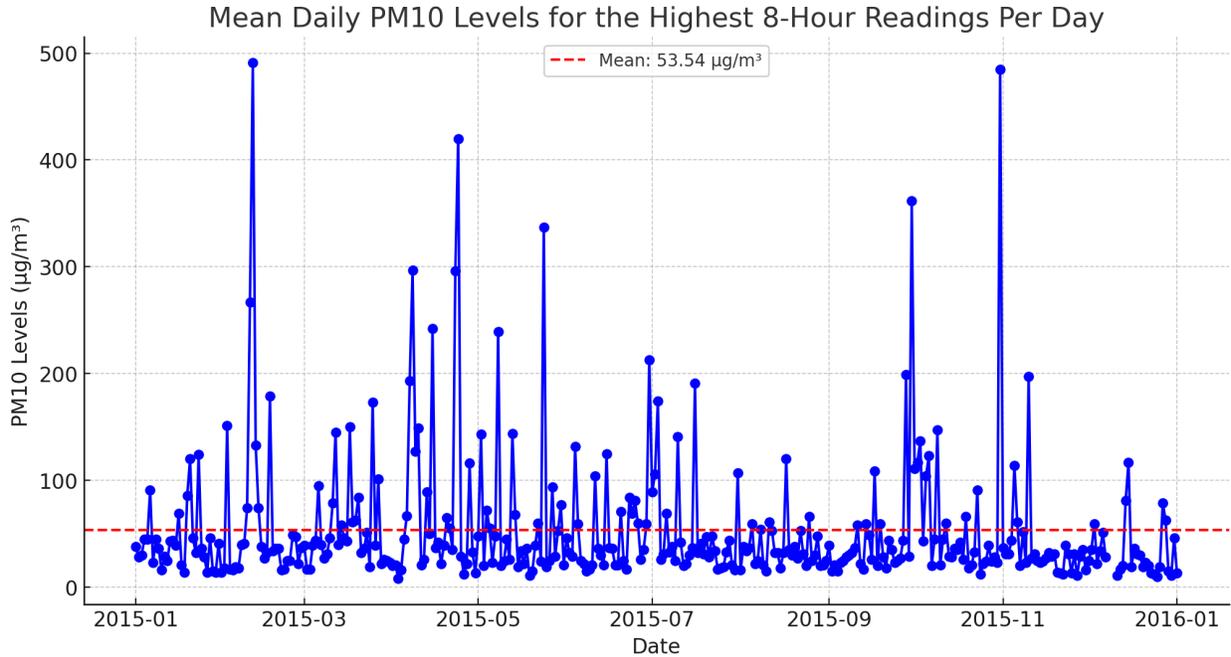
The dangers of silica dust exposure have been recognized for decades. The first recorded quarry-related silicosis fatality occurred at the quarry in 1947. Many nations, including Canada, Australia, India, Nigeria, and the United States, have enacted legislation to protect the general public by regulating proximity to quarry operations. The UK, however, has no such legislation—silicosis is not even classified as a recordable cause of death, meaning the actual mortality rate due to silica exposure remains unknown.

Wales, the world's first industrialized nation, frequently champions its green credentials and commitment to climate action. Yet, just 12 miles from its capital, children are being exposed to a deadly dust known to have afflicted their ancestors. The assumption that such occupational hazards ended with the closure of coal mines has proven dangerously naive.

## **A Community Under Siege**

The residents of Glyncoch have lived alongside quarry operations since the late 1950s. Over time, the quarry has expanded, encroaching ever closer to the community. Officials have long assured the public that dust mitigation measures have improved since the 1990s. However, with no historical data available, the true extent of past exposure remains unknown.

The first recorded dust monitoring data, collected since June 2014 by R-C-T, is unreliable—functional only 50% of the time, lacking PM2.5 measurements until 2023, and positioned upwind of quarry operations and further from the site than affected homes and businesses. It is unsurprising that R-C-T claims the air is safe, given that its monitoring system has been inoperative for significant periods, at times functioning for as little as six weeks in an entire year. The permitted levels of pollution (regardless of source) are also very favourable - keep in mind that the limits are based on a 24 hour average of pollution levels, but the quarry doesn't operate 24 hours a day so they can easily exceed certain limits during peak down but then rely on the remaining 16 hours of the day to allow the average to fall. This is what the maximum levels of dust looks like if only the top 8 hours of each day were recorded in 2015.



The community collected dust from doorsteps and windowsills in late 2024. The results were analyzed by an independent laboratory for silica content. The results are below, please allow yourself to imagine how this would feel if you had such accumulations on your own homes. Doesn't this deserve immediate action - R-C-T's response was less than convincing that they take these matters seriously and rely far too much on the flawed data of the single monitoring station.



CONTRACT NO: S44119  
DATE OF ISSUE: 22.10.24

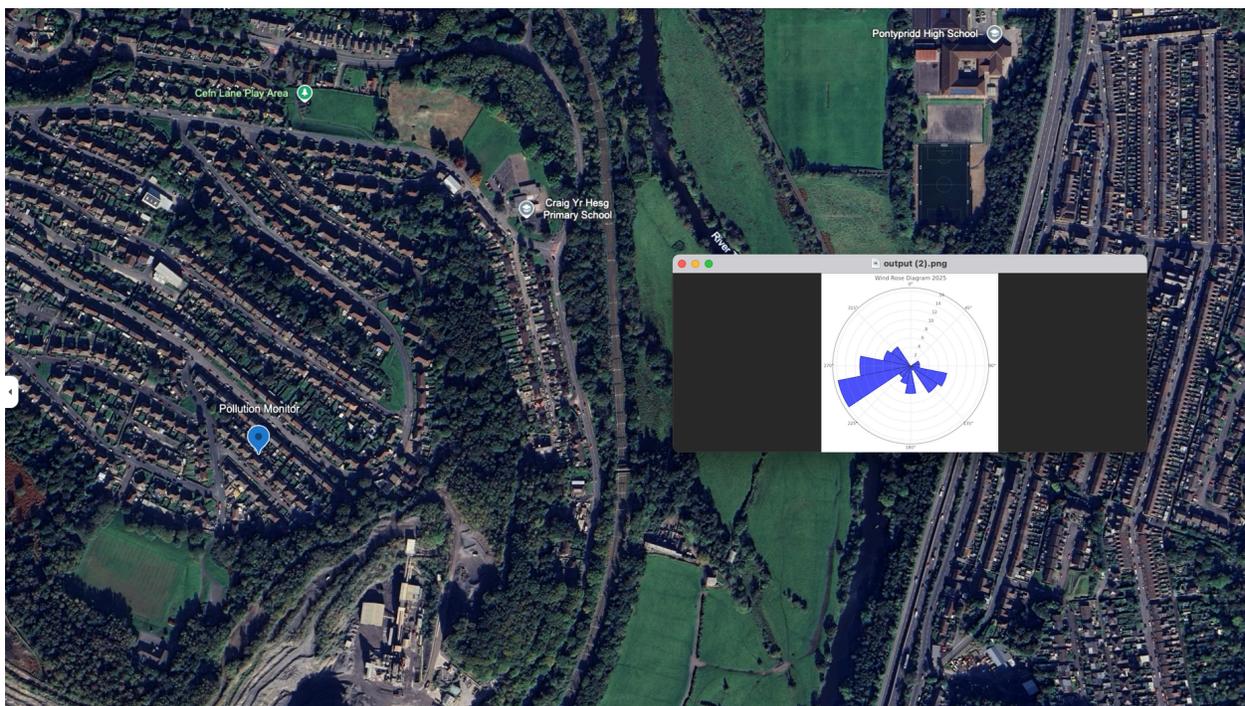
**RESULTS:**

Sample Number	Quartz %	Cristobalite %
MP5 – 5 & 6 Darren Court, Glyncoch	51.0	<0.3
MP6 – 113 Garth Avenue, Glyncoch	24.4	<0.3
MP7 – 129 & 133 Garth Avenue, Glyncoch	40.3	<0.3

Our detection limit for quartz and cristobalite in bulk samples by XRD is 0.3%.

## Wind Direction

Based on samples collected from local weather stations it appears that the wind is predominantly traveling to the east - that is away from the single pollution monitor - the one heavily relied upon to give the green thumbs up on the air quality in the area. In fact, it's traveling directly towards the site of the new "super" school, regardless of the risk to the children.



**View of Dust from Quarry operations (moving away from single pollution monitor)**



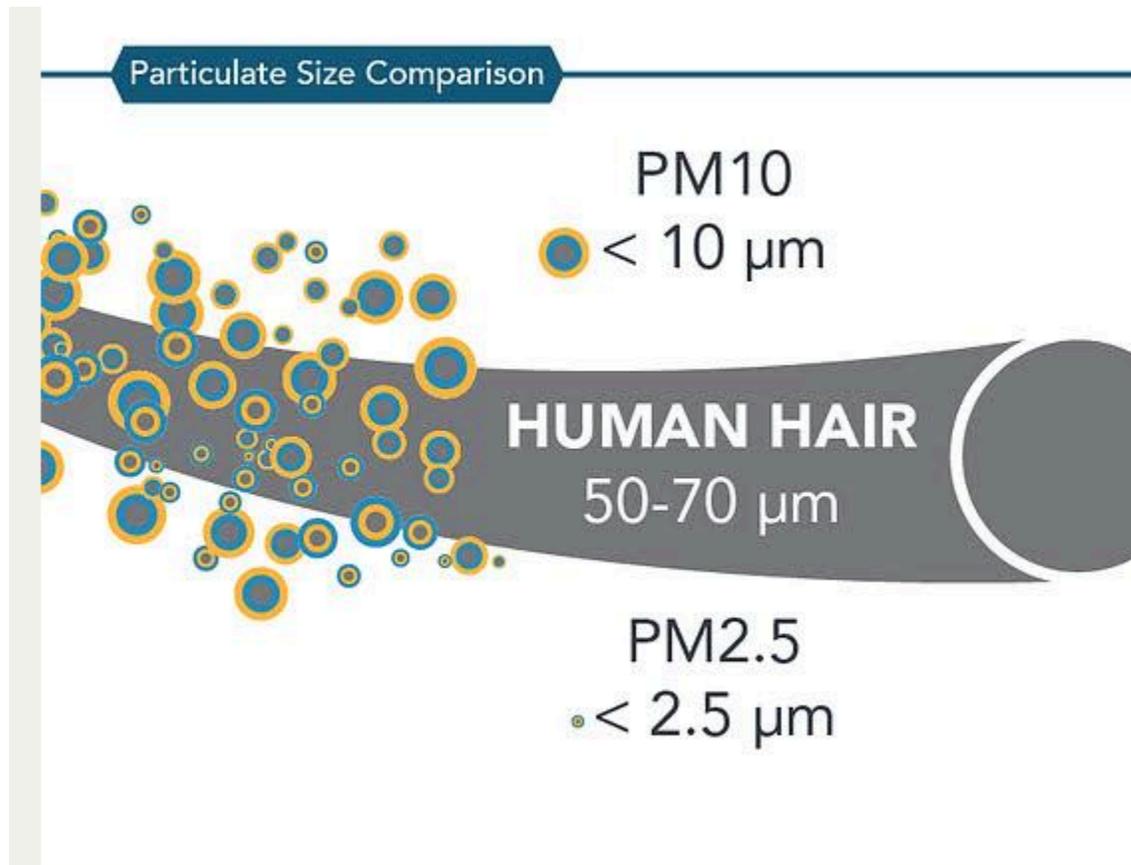
**View from Pontypridd High School**



## Conclusion

The health hazards of silica dust are well-documented, yet Glyncoch residents continue to be exposed to unacceptable risks due to governmental inaction. Regulatory bodies must take immediate steps to monitor and mitigate silica dust exposure before the next generation suffers the same fate as those before them. This quarry has been in operation since 1885 - hasn't this once pristine area given enough ? Incidentally, the quarry was established by the Crawshay family. Perhaps this current Welsh Government will go down in history with the same reputation as that infamous dynasty. Finally, once this situation is resolved, the Welsh Government can investigate the economics of R-C-T agreeing to sell the 27 acres of land for the quarry extension to the quarry company for £4k .

## Appendix: The Health Consequences of Silica Dust Exposure



Respirable crystalline silica (RCS) is a hazardous airborne contaminant linked to multiple life-threatening diseases, including:

1. **Silicosis** – A progressive lung disease caused by silica inhalation, leading to lung inflammation and scarring.
  - Chronic Silicosis: Develops over 10–20 years of low to moderate exposure.
  - Accelerated Silicosis: Develops within 5–10 years of heavy exposure.
  - Acute Silicosis: Occurs within months to a few years of extreme exposure.
  - Symptoms: Shortness of breath, coughing, fatigue, chest pain, and respiratory failure.

2. **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)** – Silica exposure increases the risk of chronic lung disease.
  - Symptoms: Persistent cough, mucus production, shortness of breath, wheezing.
3. **Lung Cancer** – Long-term exposure to silica dust is a known carcinogen.
  - Symptoms: Persistent cough, weight loss, chest pain, difficulty breathing.
4. **Tuberculosis (TB)** – Silicosis weakens the immune system, increasing TB risk.
  - Symptoms: Chronic cough, weight loss, night sweats, fever.
5. **Silica-Related Kidney Disease** – Long-term exposure has been linked to kidney failure.
  - Symptoms: Fatigue, swelling, high blood pressure, decreased urine output.
6. **Autoimmune Disorders** – Silica exposure is associated with lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.
  - Symptoms: Joint pain, skin rashes, inflammation-related complications.
7. **Respiratory Infections** – Increased susceptibility due to lung damage from silica dust.
8. **Silica-Related Pneumoconiosis** – A lung disease caused by inhaling mineral dusts.
9. **Chronic Bronchitis** – Long-term exposure leads to inflammation of bronchial tubes.
  - Symptoms: Persistent coughing, mucus production, difficulty breathing.

## Heledd Fychan

Aelod o'r Senedd dros

Ganol De Cymru

—

Member of the Senedd for

South Wales Central

## Senedd Cymru /Welsh Parliament

Swyddfa Ranbarthol / Regional Office

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01443 853214 

Dyddiad | Date: 18.3.2025

### **Pwnc | Subject: NDM8687 A bill relating to planning processes for quarry development**

Dear Petitions Committee members

#### **The Legislative Proposal**

This legislative proposal echoes similar proposals brought forward in Westminster by the Labour MP, Matt Western, in 2021, and the Conservative MP, Paul Holmes, in 2023. Both had similar experiences to many of us in this Senedd of supporting residents in their fight against either the opening of, or the extension, of a quarry near residential homes, schools and community facilities. Both also came to realise how inadequate and outdated planning legislation was when deciding on such developments. Communities are left having to fight against large multinationals with plentiful resources at their disposal to quash any local opposition. What's abundantly clear is that it isn't a fair fight.

The proposal aims to legislate a presumption against approving quarry development near settlements and establish a mandatory buffer zone of 1,000 m for all new and existing quarries. This would shift the burden of proof from residents having to make a case for objecting to quarry development to the planning process having different standards that would set new expectations.

These proposals aim to address the inadequacies and outdated nature of planning legislation regarding quarry developments near residential areas, schools, and community facilities.

#### **Case Study: Craig-yr-Hesg Quarry**

Craig-yr-Hesg quarry in Glyncoch has operated since 1885, providing high-quality skid-resistant surfacing aggregates. Despite promises to end operations by December 2022, the company sought to extend both the area and the life of the quarry. Over 400 objections were received, and the local planning authority rejected the applications due to health and well-being concerns. However, a planning appeal resulted in permission being granted by the Welsh Government.

The extraction and working of minerals or depositing mineral waste at the site was due to come to an end on 31 December 2022, followed by a restoration and aftercare programme. This was a commitment made to the local community when that planning application was made. However, that proved to be a broken promise. The company in charge of the quarry

subsequently put forward two planning applications, to extend both the area quarried as well as the life of the quarry.

Over 400 objections were received from local residents, Pontypridd Town Council, and many elected representatives – including myself and Vikki Howells. Indeed, so compelling were the arguments put forward that the local planning authority, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, rejected both applications on the basis of the impact of blasting on people’s health and well-being. The community breathed a sigh of relief. Sadly, this proved to be short-lived as a planning appeal was submitted to PEDW and in October 2022 the Minister for Climate Change Julie James upheld the appeal by Hanson Aggregates. (now Heidelberg Materials). The Minister cited the Future Generations Act in her ruling on the grounds that potential harms had been weighted against the ‘likely’ need for the minerals in construction, road building and maintenance and the plans wider ‘economic benefits’.

### **Proximity of Craig yr Hesg quarry to the local village of Glyncoch**

The quarry dominates the landscape next to the community of Glyncoch, and is in close proximity to a number of homes, a school and playing fields – in fact, a nearby estate is **less than the permitted 200m away from the boundary of the proposed extension area.**

Once a fortnight, the community suffers the impact of blasting on the site. For years, they have reported distress caused by the loud explosions to all members of the community but the children in particular. Recently a resident told me:

*“When the quarry blasts, movement can be felt in properties. It literally feels like an earthquake. Ornaments have been known to fall off shelves immediately during blasting. There is an astronomical amount of dust visible in properties which has resulted in people damp dusting. There are visible cracks internally and externally within the homes throughout the community.*

*Residents in the area have had issues with the drainage system. Pipes have cracked and collapsed. Welsh water is forever in the Glyncoch area carrying out repairs. The main area affected is bottom Garth Avenue the area in the vicinity of the Chinese Golden Dragon. Our major concern now is that there is every possibility a gas pipe could crack and cause an explosion and cause serious harm to members of the community”*

One resident, speaking at the appeal hearing stated the following:

*“My family has lived in the area for over 50 years. We have spent time and money on our home for it now to be damaged by blasting activities from the quarry. This includes damage to our boundary wall, the external walls of our house and internal walls. The floor in the lounge has also dropped leaving a large hole”.*

Many other residents provided similar testimony, accompanied by images. Yet, this was dismissed by PEDW as it had not been verified by experts.

### **Silica dust in the air - danger to health**

Dust is a major concern. Following blasting, huge clouds of dust can be seen travelling over the nearby community. This leaves a residue on homes and cars, and residents are concerned that the particles within the dust pose a risk to their health.

Aggregate quarrying, particularly when involving pendant stone, can produce silica dust. Silica is naturally present in rocks, sands, and clays. When these materials are drilled, cut, or chipped during quarrying operations, fine dust containing respirable crystalline silica (RCS) is generated. Inhalation of RCS can lead to silicosis, a serious and irreversible occupational lung disease.

According to the local councillor for the Glyncoch Ward, there are higher levels of cancers and poor health in the ward, which is one of the most deprived in Wales. He argues that this can only be explained by the dust from the quarry. The dust is seen on windows, solar panels and inside properties across worktops.

The current planning regime enabled barristers for the planning inspectorates to dismiss all evidence presented by local residents and elected representatives as 'unsubstantiated', overriding the overwhelming evidence presented by all who lived in this community.

*"Somewhat late in the day, it is now agreed that there is no risk to physical health. The assertion of mental health effects has not only been unsubstantiated, there has been no effort to substantiate it with evidence".*

The community has been priced out of providing evidence by a planning system weighted in favour of the multi-national developer.

The publication, the planner, covered this in an interesting article following the decision to allow the quarry to expand. They asked Estelle Dehon KC, a public law barrister at Cornerstone Chambers for her view on the issue of communities being priced out of providing evidence.

She stated: "It is the great difficulty in residents having to bring evidence to planning inquiry that a greater and greater standard is being required."

Glyncoch is in one of the 5% most deprived areas in the country and is made up of predominantly social housing. How is a community like Glyncoch able to compete with a multi-million-pound company?

### **Proximity of the quarry to children**

Cefn Primary School is only going to be **134 meters from the boundary line of the quarry**. The quarry will also be blasting **109 meters from Glyncoch Rugby field**.

This school has an additional learning needs unit contained within it. The staff at the school adhere to all the guidance and regulations of their profession to enable all children to access education. However, the disruption caused by the blasting at the quarry is significant. It is reported that the children are terrified when they hear the blasts and the earth shaking. The confusion is felt more by the children with greater additional needs and it takes a lot longer to calm them down after a blast has occurred.

One child asked a teacher if the dinosaurs had landed. Other children are distressed that the school is going to collapse or that it will fall into the big hole. Whilst the Cwriwcwlwm i Gymru states that 'learning is for everyone, and that the 'learning environment should be well lit, comfortable, quiet and suitable for all the pupils learning needs'. The proximity of this school to the quarry and the impact of the explosions makes this impossible.

### **Transportation of the aggregates**

Large lorries travel off the A470 and over the old bridge in Pontypridd and down Berw Road. The impact on traffic is considerable, as the road is unsuitable for such heavy traffic. Residents must live with endless stream of large lorries passing within a few feet of the homes leaving a residue of dust in their wake and vibrating their homes and windows.

A survey conducted by local residents last in October 2024 found **70 HGVs**, used the road - 34 of them between 7 and 9 am, causing significant pressure on the roads during peak hours. The quarry itself acknowledged this danger, as outlined in their High Court injunction. The agreed limit is supposed to be **5 HGVs per hour**.

I have seen for myself the cracks in windows and walls, which residents insist is linked to the lorries. Given that the traffic has impacted the flood defence wall nearby, it is a likely explanation.

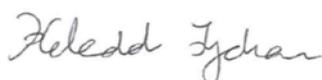
### **Nature and Biodiversity loss**

Possibly the most detrimental aspect of the development for the residents of Glyncoch has been the loss of their community green space, treasured by the whole community. Paths, trees, hide and seek dens, pet gravestones and childhood memories have been destroyed, fenced off and replaced with a black barren soil subjected to fortnightly explosions. This land had been used by the community for centuries. The trauma that this has caused the local community is unmeasurable. The loss of biodiversity habitats has also been upsetting, and the destruction of slow worms, bats, nesting birds and century old trees was not seen as a significant impediment to the quarry expansion by PEDW inspectors.

Glyncoch is not the only community in this position in Wales, and there are other communities fighting similar battles, all desperate to know if they are safe living in their homes. They should be supported in their efforts, and the Welsh Government should revise legislation and regulations to ensure that companies extracting minerals in Wales are held to the highest possible standards to ensure that people and nature cannot be harmed by the extraction of minerals in close proximity to homes.

It is time to prioritise future generations and protect people's rights to a safe home free from pollutants, as well as protect the vicinity of human habitation from the damaging effects of industrial extraction of minerals on their doorsteps.

Yours sincerely,



Heledd Fychan AS/ MS

# Agenda Item 3.6

## **P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus**

This petition was submitted by Craig Shuttleworth, having collected a total of 11,306 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Squirrelpox virus is carried and spread by grey squirrels. It doesn't harm them. When red squirrels are infected they develop open extensive skin lesions and die a painful death within 2 weeks

In North Wales, 70–80% of the Gwynedd red population was lost in a 2020/21 outbreak <https://theconversation.com/squirrelpox-outbreak-detected-in-north-wales-without-a-vaccine-the-disease-will-keep-decimating-red-squirrels-196811>

Promising research by Moredun Institute into a vaccine ran out of funds.

### **Additional Information:**

The Wales Red Squirrel Conservation Plan (Page 9) highlights that most Welsh red squirrels are in forests inhabited by grey squirrels. Pox virus is thus a major threat in Wales.

<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/691092/eng-red-squirrel-conservation-plan-for-wales.pdf>

In Bangor, there have been repeated Squirrelpox virus outbreaks in the period 2017–2022. Dead red squirrels have been found in woodland close to the Britannia Bridge and Telford's Suspension Bridge. It is only a matter of time before the infection is spread across the Menai Strait and onto Anglesey. The island contains the largest red squirrel population in Wales.

The infection causes graphic symptoms:

<http://www.britishredsquirrel.org/red-squirrels/disease/>

We need Welsh Government to commit to funding research such as the stalled vaccine research of Moredun/Wildlife Ark Trust:

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/red-squirrel-vaccine-under-threat-2540293>.

**Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Arfon
- North Wales

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

Your ref P-06-1332  
Our ref HIDCC/00213/25

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

10 March 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 03 February 2025 with regards to Petition P-06-1332 'Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus.'

My officials have been working on preparing a call-off specification for an independent Squirrelpox vaccine feasibility study. The study will assess the prospect of research, manufacture, marketing authorisation, and deployment of the vaccine, as well as associated risks, benefits, and costs.

My officials will be shortly approaching potential suppliers to seek expression of interest in this work.

Once again, thank you for writing to me on this important topic. I hope this information is helpful to you or goes some way in answering your query.

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

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

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

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

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

Dr Craig Shuttleworth  
Honorary Visiting Research Fellow  
Bangor University

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

Your ref P-06-1332

11th March 2025

Dear Carolyn,

**Petition P-06-1332 'Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus'**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs letter (HIDCC/00213/25) to the Petitions Committee dated 10 March 2025.

It is to the credit of the Minister and the Welsh Government that they alone amongst the four UK administrations have had the courage to look seriously at this issue.

I would though like to raise some points for your consideration.

As you know, 11,300 people signed my petition from its launch in January 2023. The Senedd then debated the petition on 27<sup>th</sup> September of 2023. And almost eight months later the Cabinet Secretary announced on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 [that they had],

*'... agreed to the recommendation to carry out a feasibility study to assess the prospect of the research, manufacture, marketing authorisation, and deployment of a squirrelpox vaccine for red squirrels, and associated risks, benefits and costs. The Cabinet Secretary also agreed to outsource the feasibility study to an external provider.'*

The additional nine months delay since suggests departmental officials are perhaps not fully aware of the growing urgency regarding the epidemic. Meanwhile squirrelpox is spreading north in Scotland and has obliterated key populations in northern England so that many at on the conservation front line are suggesting extinction without a vaccine.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/nov/16/red-squirrels-to-vanish-from-england-unless-vaccine-against-squirrelpox-funded>

I'd ask the Petitions Committee to consider writing to the Deputy First Minister asking:

- (1) For much more detail regarding what is currently and vaguely described as a 'shortly' timeline.
- (2) To clarify whether the tendering process will be open to any party to express an interest or if it will be invitation only in which case how are invitees being selected?
- (3) To explain why, as is my understanding, to date no officials have contacted the Wildlife Ark Trust which own the intellectual rights to the earlier attenuated pox vaccine research 2012/13.

Kind regards

Craig

Dr Craig Shuttleworth  
Petitioner P-06-1332

<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/staff/sens/craig-shuttleworth-082156/en>

# Agenda Item 4.1

## **P-06-1479 Stop the detention of learning disabled and autistic children, young people and adults in hospitals - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee - 6 March 2025**

Stolen Lives are human rights defenders.

We welcome that the Welsh Government 'supports the principle that a hospital bed is not a home.' However, the inclusion of the words 'whenever practical' gives health boards and local authorities the excuse they will be looking for to maintain the status quo.

People with learning disabilities are not detained in secure hospitals because of the Mental Health Act but because of inappropriate provision and poor care, as exemplified this week by the ITV news investigation which uncovered allegations of multiple failings at residential and supported-living homes run by Lifeways, which operate in England, Scotland and Wales.

People with learning disabilities from Wales are being held in secure hospitals in breach of their human rights and there is no evidence of a human rights-based approach to end this practice.

The minister says she 'committed to reducing the number of people receiving their care, long-term in a hospital setting and when they are admitted, their hospital stay is for no longer than is absolutely necessary.'

No person with a learning disability should be locked up in a hospital. To do so is a failure to uphold the right to independent living in terms of Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Furthermore, the failure of the State to provide social care support should not be considered appropriate criteria for admission and sustained detention. Allowing the detention of people with learning disabilities and/or who are autistic without therapeutic benefit places the Welsh Government at risk of breaches of the ECHR.

When the recommendations from the Task and Finish group are submitted, we urge the Welsh Government to focus on urgent progress and reform.

While Stolen Lives awaits change, our relatives continue to live in hospitals without choice and control.



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair of Petitions Committee  
Senedd  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

6<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Dear Chair,

## **Petition regarding mandating swift bricks in all new buildings in Wales (P-06-1489)**

As you will be aware, RSPB Cymru is supporting the petition (P-06-1489) which calls on the Welsh Government to mandate the instalment of Swift Bricks in new builds.

We have been advised that the petition is likely to be discussed imminently in the Committee and we wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the urgency of this issue with the Committee.

We welcome the Committee's consideration of this issue. Swifts are now the most steeply declining bird species in Wales. Populations have dropped by 76% since 1995, and although there are thought to be a number of contributing factors to their decline, the loss of suitable nesting sites is one we can and must address. Without more nesting options, Swifts will disappear from our skies. Swift Bricks are a simple and effective means of supporting Swifts when so many nesting sites have been lost. But there is a need for urgency in addressing

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Mae'r RSPB yn rhan o BirdLife International, rhwydwaith o gyrff angerddol, sy'n cydweithio i achub byd natur ledled y byd.

The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, a network of passionate organisations, working together to save nature across the world.

this issue for Swift populations, as each year of delay to implement this measure will leave more Swifts without nest sites. More than three-quarters of Wales' breeding Swifts have been lost since 1995.

In light of recent reports from the Climate Change, Environment & Infrastructure Committee and Audit Wales, highlighting the urgent need to prioritise action for Welsh biodiversity, and given the strong support for this petition from the public (10,934 signatures), we hope it will warrant debate in the wider Senedd.

We would welcome this letter being considered alongside the petition when the Committee next discusses the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Julian Hughes  
Head of Species

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The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, a network of passionate organisations, working together to save nature across the world.

Your Ref: P-06-1447 and P-06-1474  
Our Ref: CX24-130 and CX24-154

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

By email only: [petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

4 March 2025

Dear Carolyn,

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

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

Thank you for your letter dated 7 February regarding the above petitions, which have been considered by the Petitions Committee. I appreciate your confirmation that the Committee has decided to close both petitions.

In respect of the Committee's enquiry about the duties of our visitor centre staff, I can confirm that the visitor centre staff are not responsible for managing the land in and around the site, nor are they responsible for the conservation of any wildlife habitats and geological features. This is the responsibility of our Land Management staff.

We acknowledge however that some of the duties carried out by visitor centre staff are not purely retail and catering – for example, some staff at Bwlch Nant yr Arian assist in feeding the red kites. Our teams are currently working through a process to ensure that all statutory and essential functions are delivered by other staff across our Land Management and Facilities teams. It is also possible that some of the additional responsibilities currently undertaken by visitor centre staff could be included in the final lease agreements for Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin. Negotiations on this would likely form part of the procurement process when it takes place. Our aim in the discussions will be to secure the greatest benefit for users, local businesses and the community.

Ynyslas will continue to be managed as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) in line with the other NNRs we manage across Wales that do not have visitor centre provision. Our Land Management and Commercial teams are looking at how we deliver statutory services at the NNR in the long-term, with this change. While the NNR Officer is ably supported by a

wider team of conservation and land management experts, we have accepted that some things will no longer be available or will have to change as a result of the Case for Change. Nevertheless, the continuation of the NNR and the conservation of the local environment, including the Ringed Plover Project, remain our priority.

All paths, trails, car park and toilets facilities will remain open at Ynyslas, Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin and we will continue to maintain the sites to ensure public access continues.

I trust this response assists with the Committee's enquiry, however if it has any further questions or would like clarification on this or any other issue please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ceri Davies', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Ceri Davies**

Prif Swyddog Gweithredol Dros Do  
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hynny arwain at oedi.  
Correspondence in Welsh is welcomed, and we will respond in Welsh without it leading to a delay.

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