

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Hybrid

Meeting date: 12 May 2025

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

Petitions@senedd.wales

1 Motion to elect a temporary Chair under Standing Order 17.22

2 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 22)

3 New Petitions

3.1 P-06-1501 Put rugby in the curriculum for Wales from primary schools through to secondary Schools

(Pages 23 – 28)

3.2 P-06-1502 Scrap Proposals for a Tourism Tax

(Pages 29 – 36)

3.3 P-06-1525 Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales

(Pages 37 – 50)

4 Updates to previous petitions

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

(Pages 51 – 55)

4.2 P-06-1444 Women of North Wales have the right to have a Menopause Services/Clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd

(Pages 56 – 66)



- 4.3 P-06-1472 Protect our wildlife...ban plastic grass in Wales!
(Pages 67 – 71)
- 4.4 P-06-1492 Maintain 24 hour access to the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli
(Pages 72 – 75)
- 4.5 P-06-1510 Direct NRW to revoke the environmental permit and ensure the closure of Enover's, Hafod Landfill Site in Wrexham
(Pages 76 – 77)

5 Papers to note

- 5.1 P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus
(Pages 78 – 79)
- 5.2 P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales (with exemptions for exceptional circumstances)
(Pages 80 – 86)

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the remainder of the meeting, and the next meeting on 2 June.

Document is Restricted

P-06-1501 : Put rugby in the curriculum for Wales from primary schools through to secondary schools

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 12 Mai 2025
Petitions Committee | 12 May 2025

Petition Number: [P-06-1501](#)

Petition title: Put rugby in the curriculum for Wales from primary schools through to secondary schools

Petition text: As a Coach of a under 10s rugby team. I have first hand experienced and witnessed the positive impact Rugby has on children in there sporting development, social skills, mental wellbeing and life skills.

*I have noticed during my time as a coach that very few primary schools in Wales offer rugby.

*Schools unfortunately do not prioritise rugby and is often an after thought.

*Children are not given the opportunity to fall in love with the sport from a young age.

1. The Curriculum for Wales

1.1. Overview

The Welsh Government and the education sector are rolling out a new age 3-16 curriculum, the 'Curriculum for Wales (CfW)'. The CfW began its roll out in September 2022 when it was introduced to primary schools. In September 2023, it became statutory for Year 7 and 8 in secondary schools before extending further as those cohorts progress through secondary school. The 2023/24 Year 8 cohort



became the first Year 9 cohort to study the CfW in 2024/25 and will be the first Year 10 and Year 11 cohorts to do so in 2025/26 and 2026/27 respectively. By September 2026, all compulsory school age year groups will be studying the CfW.

The CfW is intended to better equip young people with the knowledge, skills and experience they need for modern adult life, than the current/previous national curriculum established in 1988. It follows Professor Graham Donaldson's Successful Futures review in 2015, which adopted a starting point of what 16 year olds completing their compulsory education should look like and what attributes they should have, before deciding what the curriculum should provide.

1.2. Layers of requirements

The new curriculum is intended to be purpose-led rather than content-based, with a greater emphasis on skills and teaching what matters. Schools have the flexibility to design their own curriculum, within a broad national framework provided by the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 and associated codes and guidance. There are therefore several layers of curriculum requirements of the CfW, which make up this national framework.

The 2021 Act itself specifies:

- four purposes, one of which, as highlighted in the Cabinet Secretary's letter, is "to enable pupils and children to develop as healthy, confident individuals";
- six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs), one of which is "Health and Well-being";
- four mandatory elements (Welsh, English, Relationships and sexuality education (RSE), and Religion, values and ethics) and three mandatory cross-curricular skills (digital competence, literacy and numeracy); and
- general requirements that the curriculum must be broad and balanced, provide for appropriate progression, and be suitable for pupils, or children, of differing ages, abilities and aptitudes.

Beneath the purposes, AoLEs, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills, the detail of the CfW is provided in a statutory 'What Matters' Code, which sets out the key foundations of each AoLE through 27 'statements of what matters', and statutory guidance published on the Welsh Government website 'Hwb'.

The Welsh Ministers must keep the What Matters Code under review and may revise it ([section 6](#) of the Act). Before issuing a revised What Matters Code, the [Welsh Ministers must consult](#) the persons they think appropriate (if any) and lay a draft before the Senedd under the Negative procedure ([section 76](#) of the Act). The Welsh Ministers may also amend the statutory guidance it has issued, or issue new statutory guidance, on the detail of the CfW ([section 71](#) of the Act).

1.3. Relevant aspects of the CfW framework and guidance

The Welsh Government developed the statements of what matters and statutory guidance - essentially the detail of the curriculum framework - with the education sector and other stakeholders, [publishing it initially in May 2019](#) and [finalising it in January 2020](#).

One of the statements of what matters within the [Health and Well-being AoLE](#) is “Developing physical health and well-being has lifelong benefits”. The detail of the statement includes the following:

This [AoLE] can help learners to understand the factors that affect physical health and well-being. This includes health-promoting behaviours such as physical activity, including but not limited to **sport**; balanced diet; personal care and hygiene; sleep; and protection from infection. It also includes an understanding of health-harming behaviours. [bold is my emphasis]

The detail of what is taught within each statement of what matters is set out in ‘[Descriptions of learning](#)’, which make up part of the statutory guidance on the CfW. These are in the form of expectations of what pupils should have been given the opportunity under their school’s curriculum to attain at five ‘progression steps’, broadly corresponding to ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16.

“Rugby” is not specified within the Descriptions of learning, nor is any other individual sport. Sport and physical activity more generally are referenced as follows:

- Progression step 3: I can motivate myself to engage confidently in regular physical activity and sport, and am aware of my own progress.
- Progression step 4: I can engage in regular physical activity and sport with confidence, motivation and commitment.

- Progression step 5: I can value the benefits of participation in regular physical activity and sport, seeking opportunities to develop my expertise.

2. Senedd scrutiny

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is scrutinising the implementation of the CfW, along with the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system, as part of its scrutiny of the implementation of education reforms. However, this is not particularly looking at curriculum content.

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.



Ein cyf/Our ref LN/00386/25

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

22 April 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Petition P-06-1501 - Put rugby in the curriculum for Wales from primary schools through to secondary schools

Thank you for your letter of 28 March, and for the opportunity to provide my comments on the issues highlighted in the above petition which your committee recently received.

At the heart of the curriculum framework there are four purposes which are central to every decision made about the new curriculum. One of the four purposes is to support children and young people to become 'healthy, confident individuals'. The curriculum's mandatory Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience (Area) aims to ensure that school curricula build learning and support on physical, mental and emotional health, for all young people in Wales.

In the development of this Area, extensive consideration was given to learners' physical development and activity and the statutory guidance for the Area highlights the importance of learners experiencing a range of ongoing, daily opportunities to be physically active. This approach aims to support learners in developing healthy and active lifestyles which promote good physical health and well-being throughout their lives.

Different learners will have different needs and interests, and it is important that schools can select a variety of sports and activities that meet the needs of their learners. This enables schools to create enjoyable and meaningful sporting experiences that encourage all learners to develop the confidence, skills and motivation to be physically active for life. For many schools of course, rugby is likely to form part of that range.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Lynne.Neagle@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lynne.Neagle@gov.wales

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

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

In view of the petitioner's interest in physical education and sport amongst young people, you may be interested in this resource by Sport Wales – [Citbag](#) - an online learning hub which aims to support schools to design their curriculum and implement physical activity skills – a pre-requisite to progressing in any sport, including rugby

We continue to work closely with a range of partners and stakeholders to evaluate the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales and the Health and Well-being Area of Learning in order to assess what further support is needed for schools to design and implement this Area including further resources and professional learning opportunities.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Scrap Proposals for a Tourism Tax

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 12 Mai 2025
Petitions Committee | 12 May 2025

Reference: SR25/11287-3

Petition Number: P-06-1502

Petition title: Scrap proposals for a tourism tax

Text of petition: The recent proposals for a tourism tax in Wales are an ill thought out means of generating revenue for the Welsh Government, especially during a cost of living crisis.

This is fundamentally anti-business and counterproductive to the intent of the proposals as any tourism levy will lead to fewer tourists holidaying to Wales and less tax generated for the government.

Please sign this petition to indicate to the Finance Secretary the dissent of the public at these crudely drawn up plans.



1. Background

In its Programme for Government Update, the Welsh Government committed to 'introduce legislation permitting local authorities to raise a tourism levy'. The introduction of local tourism levies was also referenced in the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru in 2021.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language (the 'Cabinet Secretary'), Mark Drakeford MS, introduced the Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) Etc. (Wales) Bill ('the Bill') to the Senedd in November 2024. He stated:

As one of our Programme for Government commitments, the Bill is a step towards ensuring fairness in the funding of local services and infrastructure, which supports our thriving tourism industry. It paves the way for local authorities to introduce a levy on overnight stays in visitor accommodation, if they choose to do so.

2. Welsh Government action

The Bill would give local authorities in Wales the power to introduce a visitor levy in their areas. The levy would be a per person per night charge, applying to all people who pay to stay in overnight accommodation.

The Bill sets out the three rates of the levy:

- the lower rate is £0.75 - applies to stays in hostels and those staying in tents on campsites;
- the higher rate is £1.25 - applies to all other types of visitor accommodation e.g. hotels, bed and breakfasts etc; and
- the nil rate - applies to overnight stays provided or arranged by a local housing authority within visitor accommodation for those who are homeless.

However, during the Senedd's debate on the general principles of the Bill, the Cabinet Secretary proposed to bring amendments at Stage 2 to increase the lower rate to £0.80, and the higher rate to £1.30 per night (see section 3.4 for further detail).

The Bill further allows a council to add a premium rate to the levy rate.

The Bill also establishes a register of visitor accommodation providers operating in Wales. Providers are required to register, regardless of whether the local authority area they are operating in has implemented the levy, with the Bill allowing the Welsh Ministers powers to publish information from the register.

Our Bill Summary, gives further information on the provisions of the Bill and timescales for its scrutiny.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Bill was remitted to the Finance Committee which published its Stage 1 report on the legislation in March 2025. The majority of Committee Members agreed with the general principles of the Bill except Sam Rowlands MS.

The Committee made 17 recommendations to the Welsh Government. This section sets out some of the key areas identified in the Committee's report.

The Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee also scrutinised and reported on the Bill.

3.1. Additionality of levy revenue

One of the Committee's key findings was whether the revenue collected by the levy would create additionality (extra money) for the tourist sector instead of replacing funding already allocated to the sector by local authorities. The report cited the Professional Association of Self-Caterers UK (PASC UK) who said:

Although the funds are intended for destination management and improvement, we believe they will likely replace existing spending in these areas, freeing up resources to be used for unrelated purposes.

To mitigate this concern, the Committee recommended that the Welsh Government should bring forward amendments at Stage 2 requiring principal councils wishing to introduce the levy to establish a Visitor Forum, similar to the approach taken for the Scottish visitor levy.

This would enable stakeholders to engage in decisions around the use of proceeds of the levy, which would support the additionality of the levy.

3.2. Adding a premium to the levy

The legislation allows a principal council to apply a premium to the levy rate. Stakeholders giving evidence to the Committee were concerned about the level of information available relating to this premium, while the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) suggested that the application of a premium may be appropriate in certain circumstances such as during ‘major events’.

The Committee recommended that the Welsh Government should, in advance of the Stage 1 debate, provide more details relating to the introduction of a premium.

The Committee also focused on the flexibility of applying a premium by recommending that the Welsh Government should commit to considering alternative approaches to the charging of premiums in the context of the visitor levy, as part of any future assessment of the legislation.

3.3. Exemptions to the levy

Another key area highlighted in the Committee’s report is the absence of exemptions for under-16s, educational trips and bodies with charitable status.

3.3.a.Children and young people

Evidence submitted to the Committee highlighted that the majority of European visitor levies exempt children and young people with witnesses commenting on the lack of a sympathetic approach to applying a levy to small children.

However, the Cabinet Secretary referenced the potential impact on the overall amount raised by the levy, saying:

I think that our figures show that if you took all of those under 16, of compulsory school age and below, out of the levy, the £33.3 million that our modelling suggests that you would collect goes down to £21.3 million.

3.3.b.Educational trips

The Committee also heard that learners engaging in organised residential school trips in support of their education are not ‘tourists’ or ‘holidaymakers’.

It was felt that applying the levy to educational trips would create an additional barrier to attending residential / educational trips and deprive children and young people of the residential experience.

The Cabinet Secretary reiterated the impact of eroding the base on the amount of revenue that would be raised by the visitor levy.

3.3.c. Charitable status

There was also a call from the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) and the Children's Commissioner for Wales for bodies, such as not-for-profit, social enterprises and charitable organisations, to be exempt from charging the visitor levy.

However, although the Cabinet Secretary made the same argument about the amount of revenue raise from the levy, he went on to say:

... charities—it's a catch-all term for a very, very diverse sector with different legal bases and so on. It can sound straightforward and it can become very complicated when you actually have to, in legal terms, define who you mean."

The Committee recommended that, in advance of the Stage 1 debate, the Welsh Government should provide the Senedd with a summary of any analysis carried out regarding the potential exemption of under-16s, educational trips and bodies with charitable status.

3.4. Welsh Government's response

The Welsh Government responded to the Finance Committee's report on 28 March 2025. It accepted 13 recommendations and 4 in principle.

During the Senedd's debate on the general principles of the Bill, the Cabinet Secretary said:

I'm glad to have been able to respond positively to the committee's recommendation to provide the Senedd with data on this matter. However, I can inform Members this afternoon that, having read the committee's report and having considered again the evidence presented to it, I have decided to go further than the recommendation itself.

He added:

At Stage 2, I will bring forward a Government amendment to exempt under-18-year-olds staying at lower rated accommodation from the levy altogether.

To compensate for this exemption, the Cabinet Secretary said there would be an increase in the levy “on those on whom it will be charged from the 75p originally proposed to 80p, and from £1.25 to £1.30 per night for the higher rate”.

He also confirmed the “changes to the treatment of children are the only ones I intend to introduce”.

The Senedd agreed the general principles of the Bill on 1 April 2025. The Bill is currently at Stage 2.

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.



Ein cyf/Our ref MDFWL/00229/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

17 April 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 28 March regarding the visitor levy highlighted in petition P-06-1502 'Scrap Proposals for a Tourism Tax'. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to provide my views before the Committee's consideration.

As you will be aware, the Bill is currently before the Senedd for its consideration and scrutiny. On 1 April, the general principles of the Bill were debated by the Senedd, which voted to agree those general principles.

The Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) Etc. (Wales) Bill empowers local authorities to decide whether or not to introduce a visitor levy in their area, reflecting on local needs and circumstances. It delivers a commitment made in Welsh Labour's manifesto, reaffirmed in our Programme for Government.

The Bill is designed to strengthen the sector and to make sure that the things that make Wales attractive to visitors continue being attractive to those visitors in the future. The Bill aims to:

- Ensure a more even share of costs to fund local services and infrastructure that benefit visitors between resident populations and visitors.
- Provide local authorities with the ability to generate additional revenue that can be invested back into local services and infrastructure that can support tourism.
- Support our ambitions for more sustainable tourism.

The levy is generally set at a lower rate than levies applied elsewhere. It represents a modest contribution from people to take account of the impact that their visit makes on the place that they are visiting.

If all local authorities used a visitor levy it would generate up to an estimated £33 million per annum across Wales. Any revenues raised from the levy will benefit Welsh tourism longer-term, through supporting a more resilient, sustainable, and higher value set of visitor activities.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@gov.wales
Gohebiaeth.Mark.Drakeford@llyw.cymru

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In destinations that use visitor levies, tourism continues to thrive. I anticipate that this will be the case in Wales, with areas seeing a net benefit from using a levy.

There is no evidence to suggest that visitors would stay over the border in England to avoid paying the levy, as people visit Wales for more than just the price. We have a significant amount to showcase and offer visitors.

The Welsh Affairs Committee published their report 'Wales as a global destination' in July 2023. While the report raised concerns about the levy, they also acknowledged that there may be benefits that might accrue from the proposal and that decisions would be taken locally and based on local needs and circumstances. In addition, much has moved on since then. The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill was passed on 28 May 2024 and became an Act on 05 July 2024. Manchester has introduced a city charge and a number of destinations across the UK are looking to introduce similar charges.

I recognise that the visitor economy is a major source of jobs and economic growth across Wales. We have designed the visitor levy to be simple, straightforward, and easy to comply with for businesses and to make sure that the burden on the smallest businesses is the least it can be.

In summary, the Welsh Government's ambition is to grow tourism for the benefit of Wales by supporting local communities in a way that is sustainable for the land and environment of Wales, developing a framework which is mutually beneficial to both visitors and citizens.

I hope that you and the Petitions Committee find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Mark Drakeford AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language

Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales

Pwyllgor Deisebau | 12 Mai 2025
Petitions Committee | 12 May 2025

Reference: SR25/11287-7

Petition Number: P-06-1525

Petition title: Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales.

Text of petition:

The Mon and Brecon is one of the most picturesque and tranquil waterways in the UK winding through Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and through many rural and later urban communities as it makes its way from Brecon, through Talybont on Usk onwards through Goytre Wharf towards Newport. It provides the lifeblood to residents and communities in its path and attracts approximately 3 million visitors a year who make significant contribution to the local economy enabling these communities to thrive.

Since its inception by act of parliament in 1792 the canal has depended on water abstracted from the River Usk and its tributaries. The Usk at Brecon provides 80% of the water required. The water is not 'consumed' as it is returned to the river once it has travelled along the route. Until recently water abstraction did not require licences. For 200 years it has been free of charge. The canal, managed by the Canal and River Trust Wales (a charity), is now required by National Resources Wales to obtain a licence and limit water abstractions. Without a daily supply of water through its locks the canal will quickly become inoperable and closure will be inevitable. The consequences to the livelihood of our communities, natural environment and local economy are unthinkable. An unmanaged canal can lead to catastrophic failure and destruction of properties in its path. Dwr Cymru and NRW have indicated they will supply support water but at prohibitive cost which The Charity cannot afford.



1. Background

1.1. The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal runs from Brecon to Newport, through Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. A partially restored branch of the canal, the Crumlin Arm, runs alongside the Ebbw River from Newbridge, Caerphilly County Borough, to Newport. The canal was built in the 1790s, and was originally used to transport coal, limestone, iron ore, and agricultural produce. It fell into disuse and disrepair in the early 20th century, but large sections have been restored since the 1960s. The northern section of the canal is owned and managed by the Canal and River Trust (CRT), while south of Pontypool it is owned by the respective local authorities of Torfaen, Newport, and Caerphilly.

A section of the canal near Govilon sits within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.

1.2. Water abstraction licensing

Abstraction is the removal of water from a source of supply, such as surface or groundwater. The CRT relies on abstraction to supply the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal. It holds abstraction licenses to do this at seven locations:

- River Usk at Brecon;
- Trosnant Spring (near Pontypool);
- Cwm Crawnon;
- Llangattock;
- Castle Turn;
- Mill Turn; and
- Ochram Turn.

The first of these abstraction points is by far the largest, supplying around 80-90% of the canal's total water demands.

According to NRW's July 2017 River Usk Abstraction Licensing Strategy, 94% of licensed abstraction in the catchment supported the public water supply, managed by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW), 6% was for hydropower, and less than 1% for other purposes. The CRT's abstraction for the canal (which was then unlicensed) accounted for around 3% of all abstraction in the Usk catchment area. However, the proportion of the River Usk's flow it abstracted could increase significantly during droughts. Afonydd Cymru, a river charity, says the CRT abstracted up to 30% of the Usk's flow to maintain the canal during the 2022 summer drought.

In Wales, abstraction licensing is overseen by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). An abstraction licence is required for anyone removing at least 20 cubic metres of water per day from an inland waterway or groundwater, unless they hold an exemption. The CRT held exemptions prior to 2018, but these were removed following the issuance of new

Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales.

Regulations by UK and Welsh Ministers. Those who previously held exemptions had to **apply for a new transitional licence** by 31 December 2019 to continue legally extracting water. NRW outlines its approach to water management for the Usk in its Abstraction Licensing Strategy and 2022 **Core Management Plan**.

NRW issued the CRT with the seven transitional licences above in 2022. These licences included limits on permitted abstraction volumes. The conditions are intended to ensure compliance with *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* and to protect the River Usk Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Severn Estuary SAC. The River Usk's SAC is **designated for the habitat it provides** for nine nationally and internationally important species, including Atlantic salmon and European otter.

1.3. Licence appeals

In December 2022, the CRT appealed against two of the seven transitional licences – for the River Usk at Brecon, and Trostant Spring. These appeals concerned conditions of the licences that set daily and annual abstraction limits, and additional daily abstraction limits based on river flow volume.

Planning and Environmental Decisions Wales (PEDW) rejected both appeals in November 2024. **PEDW's decision report** says river flow is a critical component of protecting features of the River Usk and Severn Estuary SACs, including maintaining river levels high enough to allow seven migratory fish species to reach their spawning sites. The report acknowledged the potential economic impact of PEDW's decision, saying:

I do not make light of the impact of closing all or sections of the canal on tourism, local business and local economies or that long periods of drying out can lead to structural damage. However, the canal has not closed in recent years other than for maintenance and I am not persuaded the conditions would lead to closures or the impact of the conditions is likely to be as dire as the [Canal and River] Trust makes out. In any event, the importance of maintaining the integrity of the SACs and protecting the species that contribute to their special status must take precedence.

PEDW says its decision is “in compliance with the *Water Resources Act 1991*” and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*, and took into account “sections 3 and 5 of the *Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*.”

The CRT says it is now **exploring other water supply options**:

We've secured an emergency short-term supply of water from DCWW during the dry weather in April, however this is only for a short-term period and has seen us reallocate funding from elsewhere that will have consequences for our charity's programme of maintenance in other parts of our network.

2. Welsh Government action

The response from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies MS, outlines the changes to abstraction licensing

Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales.

and the CRT appeals detailed above. On the current situation, including the agreement between the CRT and DCWW for a short-term water supply, it says:

Although the Welsh Government is not involved in these commercial negotiations and abstraction licensing considerations, it remains cognisant of the situation and is actively monitoring it.

The letter also highlights funding for the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle project delivered through the Tourism Attractor Destinations (TAD) programme between 2017 and 2023. The TAD programme was funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and delivered through the Welsh Government. Torfaen County Borough Council led the Adventure Triangle project, which received £1.65 million TAD/EDRF funding and £2.65 million match funding. Project achievements are listed in the TAD evaluation report, and include making the canal fully navigable between Brecon and Cwmbiran, improving canal side facilities, and improving the towpath in Torfaen.

3. Welsh Parliament action

Delyth Jewell MS tabled a written question for the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS, on 7 March 2025 on this issue. The Cabinet Secretary answered on 19 March 2025:

The abstraction licensing regime in Wales is managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The licence restrictions were put in place to ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive and to protect the River Usk SAC.

I understand the licensing process was undertaken by NRW in accordance with the relevant regulations and the appeals process, which was heard independently and refused by Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW).

I would encourage any business which has been adversely affected by these changes to contact Business Wales, which can talk them through the range of support available.

On 11 March 2025, Peter Fox MS requested a statement from the Deputy First Minister on this issue. The Trefnydd, Jane Hutt MS, responded:

Obviously, we really value our canals, and the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs I think is aware of some of the challenges facing them, and I'm sure you've probably already discussed that with him. But it is important to share again, in terms of the impact of the water extraction from the Usk river. I won't go into it any further, because I'm not briefed fully enough to reassure you on this, but I was very interested.

Laura Anne Jones MS requested a statement on 1 April 2025 on the canal. She said:

The canal generates £26.5 million annually, 4.6 million people visit the canal every year, and there are 290 pubs, restaurants and cafes within a mile of the water that rely on the footfall the canal creates. The local councillor Jan Butler

has started a petition to protect the canal, which has now reached the 10,000 people mark, demonstrating the strength of local feeling about the issue, and I look forward to debating it in this Chamber soon.

So, can I please request an urgent statement from the Welsh Government on what discussions they're having with Welsh Water, the canal trust and other stakeholders? Because there is a solution that the water can be taken from the nearby Llandegfedd reservoir, which is owned by Welsh Water. This is a great historic and economic asset to my region. So, please can we have that? Thank you.

The Trefydd responded:

...I'm aware that the Deputy First Minister recently met with Lynne Neagle, in her Senedd capacity, and also with the leader of Torfaen council to discuss the challenges. I'm aware that there's an abstraction licence issue facing the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal.

The licence restrictions were put in place to ensure compliance with the habitats directive and to protect the River Usk as a special area of conservation river. And I understand the licensing process was undertaken by Natural Resources Wales, in accordance with relevant regulations, and the appeals process heard independently by Planning and Environment Decisions Wales. So, if a technical solution is available, it will require agreement between the Canal and River Trust and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. So, the Welsh Government have no part in this. But NRW have been engaged with both the Canal and River Trust and Dŵr Cymru regarding this solution, and they're prepared to continue with this engagement. So, we hope that all can be done to make water efficiency improvements to the canal to allow it to operate in line with the current licences.

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

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1525
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/00666/25

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

28 April 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter from the Petitions Committee regarding Petition P-06-1525 Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales. I am aware of the concerns expressed by the Canal & Rivers Trust (CRT) and users of the canal regarding limitations on abstracting water to feed the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal imposed by National Resources Wales (NRW).

The issues raised in the petition are longstanding issues which have developed over a period of years. In September 2019 the CRT applied to NRW for licences to abstract water from Troisant Spring at Pontypool and the River Usk Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Brecon to feed the Montgomeryshire and Brecon Canal. Licences were issued in December 2022 with conditions limiting the amount of water that could be abstracted.

The volumes licensed are in line with the findings of the Water Resources Modelling task and finish group (NRW, Wye and Usk Foundation, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and CRT) to protect the SAC. These volumes were lower than evidenced by CRT in their applications but were necessary to meet Habitats Directive requirements. Ensuring there is enough water in the Afon Llwyd and Usk to enable migratory fish to reach spawning sites is critical to maintaining the integrity of the Severn Estuary and River Usk Special Areas of Conservation.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
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.

Having completed a Habitats Regulation Assessment, NRW concluded the limitations on abstraction were necessary to protect our natural environment. The Canal & Rivers Trust appealed against the limitations, seeking to abstract more water than they had applied for. However, Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) refused the appeals as the Trust were not able to show doing so would not harm the River Severn Estuary and River Usk Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). These areas are critical habitats for various species, including migratory fish, and are protected under environmental legislation to maintain their ecological integrity.

The Welsh Government recognises the significance of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal and its benefits to the community. Through Visit Wales, it supported the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle project with £2.75 million of ERDF and Welsh Government funding from the Tourism Attractor Destination programme.

The project's aim was to enhance outdoor recreation, tourism, and leisure activities along the canal, including infrastructure improvements such as new moorings, towpath enhancements, and dredging in Torfaen and Caerphilly. Additionally, new lodges, an outdoor adventure play area, mountain bike cross-country trails, a car park, and lakeside improvements were developed at Cwmcarn Forest along the Crumlin arm of the canal. Improved footpaths on Mynydd Maen and Twmbarlwm were also established to link the two arms of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal.

NRW remains committed to balancing the ecological needs of the rivers with the operational requirements of the canals, ensuring sustainable water management for all stakeholders. Although the appeals were dismissed, it remains open to the Trust to look at all possible solutions including investment in infrastructure as well as working with Dwr Cymru Welsh Water on a potential solution.

I have noted that Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and the Canal and Rivers Trust have successfully reached an agreement on a short-term solution to the ongoing issue and are continuing their discussions. Although the Welsh Government is not involved in these commercial negotiations and abstraction licensing considerations, it remains cognisant of the situation and is actively monitoring it.

Thank you again for seeking my views on this petition. I understand it has now surpassed 10,000-signature threshold to be considered for debate in Plenary and I look forward to hearing from the Committee in due course.

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

P-06-1525 Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 5th May 2025

Response to the letter from Huw Irranca-Davies

Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Petition

- I note that CRT were first invited to apply for a licence in September 2019 and that limiting conditions came into force in December 2022.
- I note the findings of the Water Resources modelling task and finish group and the priority for water to allow migratory fish to reach their spawning sites.

Since its inception over 200 years earlier the canal system of the Mon and Brecon like other canals in the UK network has had mixed fortunes. The current 35-mile navigable stretch had until 2019 relied on its supply of water being free of charge. The Abstraction of Water Act being a more recent piece of legislation.

The dependency of Canal and River Trust on Government funding has decreased since its formation in 2011 although it continues to receive an annual fixed grant from DEFRA. Much of its income now comes from utilities, property rentals and boat and mooring licences.

It is now being told that it must pay for water abstraction by another Government department in the form of National Resources Wales a devolved government body. This is unfair. In simple terms this is robbing Peter to pay Paul. I therefore believe that NRW and possibly DEFRA have a role to play in finding a long-term solution.

Post Second World War the canal has evolved and developed into a place for many leisure activities and a plethora of businesses have grown up around it and our communities depend upon it. Much of the canal sits in the natural beauty of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and it is visited by 3 million people annually from around the world (a scroll through the petition data reveals how far and wide its beauty is known).

It's great to hear that WG through Visit Wales has supported the Mon and Brecon triangle project with £2.75 millions of funding to date.

But what will happen to our communities, our boat yards, marina's, pleasure craft, pubs, hotels and the very many associated tourist businesses if the canal is allowed to fail?

It is important to note that the Canal and River Trust holds responsibility over waterways but also holds guardianship over reservoirs and a wide range of heritage buildings. The lime kiln trail forms part of our World Heritage and its attractiveness as a destination should not be underestimated.

I am encouraged to note that NRW remains committed to balancing the ecological needs of the rivers with the operational requirements of the canal ensuring sustainable water management for all stakeholders.

The future health of the River Usk and Afon Llwyd and the protection of the Special Area of Conservation are of vital importance in maintaining the integrity of the Severn Estuary.

However, over time a secondary (manmade) but linked eco-system has developed in the shape of the Mon and Brec canal as it is today. It is important to note that water that enters the canal is not actually consumed but is returned to the rivers having followed a separate course. This does not permit the movement of migratory fish, but I would suggest is very much part of the essential ecology of the catchment.

What work has been done on the impact of failure of the canal both on flood management and the ecology of the wider Usk Catchment?

We are living through a period of spring and summer droughts followed by winter deluges. Climate data modelling suggests this is likely to worsen.

Does the canal have a wider role to play in flood management?

I was also very relieved to hear of the short-term agreement that has been reached between Dwr Cymru and CRT which may have saved this season but has done little to ease the anxiety of businesses and the wider economy going forward. A long-term solution needs to be found with some degree of urgency.

It is my understanding that various alternative sources of water are being considered including the Grwyne Fawr reservoir in Powys which has been decommissioned by Dwr Cymru as a source of drinking water due to the build-up of peat sediment.

Will this water which is brackish have a detrimental effect on the ecology of the canal and the river Usk if it is used?

Does NRW have a role to play here in the management of land surrounding the reservoir?

I have allowed the petition to continue to run since it reached the 10,000-signature threshold. Today it exceeds 13,790. The most important thing to note is that every area of Wales is represented and there are over 10,000 signatures from Wales. This should be a clear message to all MS's not only to those whose communities are directly affected.

I look forward to the petition being considered in due course and hope that this will be in a full debate allowing MS's from across the country to participate.

An urgent solution is needed.

Jan Butler

Submission by Mark Flood, Preserve & Protect the Mon & Brec Canal group for the Senedd Petitions Committee 12th May 2025

M. Flood

In respect of:

Open Petition 246570: Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales. Petitioner: Cllr Jan Butler

And Rejected (as a duplicate) Petition 246574: Preserve and protect the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for future generations. Petitioner: Mark Flood

Our response to the Cabinet Secretary Huw Irranca-Davies's letter to the Chair of the Petitions Committee dated 28th April 2025

Background: Preserve & Protect the Mon & Brec Canal (PPMB) is a non-political voluntary group which works to ensure that this beautiful and special canal remains in full and sustainable use for the benefit of all its users, wildlife, and visitors to the national park for generations to come.

We have representatives from canal boat hire businesses, local tourism businesses such as pubs, restaurants, hotels, B&Bs, and shops who all rely heavily on visitors to the canal. We also have representatives from the leisure boating community, and from boaters who have made the canal their home and live on their boats on the canal. We also have representatives from other canal user groups such as walkers, runners and angling.

The navigable Mon and Brec canal runs for 35 miles from Brecon to Cwmbran. 33 miles of the canal is owned and managed by Glandŵr Cymru (the Canal and River Trust in Wales) (CRT). 2 miles of the canal from Sebastopol to Cwmbran is owned and managed by Torfaen County Borough Council. The Torfaen CBC section of the canal is dependent on water from the CRT section of the canal.

Our response: Whilst we welcome the Cabinet Secretary's recognition of the significance and benefits of the canal to the community and to Wales, we disagree with many of his comments in his letter. We believe that the Welsh Government should be taking a more pro-active approach to resolve the issue. The Cabinet Secretary is relying on the Canal and River Trust (CRT) to find medium and long-term solutions. We feel that the Cabinet Secretary fails to recognise that:

- **The Short-Term Solution is Unsustainable** - as a charity with already tight finances and many demands on it across the whole of England and Wales, CRT will be unable to continue to buy extra water after this summer's season. Although the water costs are not publicly available there are reportsⁱ that CRT is paying up to £100,000 per week for water from Dŵr Cymru. Pressures on CRT from the other parts of CRT's network will force them to stop prioritising the Mon & Brec canal. They have said publicly that their budget for extra water is capped and that they cannot continue to pay for water at this rate. It may not last this summer. Unless a viable sustainable solution is found very quickly then these same problems will arise again in the spring of 2026 if not sooner.
- **Infrastructure Projects** – although possibly viable, any medium or long-term solution such as infrastructure projects will not happen quickly enough to save the many dependant businesses such as boat hire and other companies who are facing the

very real prospect of failing this year. Other dependant businesses such as pubs, B&Bs, shops and holiday rental businesses will also be seriously affected. There is also an assumption that Infrastructure Projects are feasible and will provide a solution. There is no guarantee that a technical solution can be found. Any solution will be expensive to implement requiring capital investment and will still come with an ongoing water charge to be paid to Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. CRT will still be expected to pay for water;

- **Social and Economic Impact (Welsh Government Areas of Responsibility)** - if the canal becomes unusable the impact on areas that the Welsh Government is responsible for, such as tourism, local employment, economic prosperity, sustainable travel such as National Cycleways, and the mental health and well-being of future generations could be catastrophic. It is not sufficient for the Welsh Government to just be “...actively monitoring it.”

Additionally, we feel strongly that the Cabinet Secretary’s letter fails to address:

- **Wider Problems on the River Usk** - the fact that the canal is being penalised to help address long standing issues with the River Usk such as pollution, abstraction for farm irrigation, and abstraction to supply Llandegfedd Reservoir. Previous work by the Usk and Wye Abstraction Group (UWAG)ⁱⁱ found that nearly all the demand for water for the river, drinking water and canal should be met from the existing river flows and network of reservoirs without breaching the tough rules imposed by the Habitats Directive. However, within a month of the licence being implemented the canal became so adversely affected that CRT had to issue a warning to canal-based businesses.
- **Demands on the River Usk** – There are many other significant abstractions of water from the River Usk. The Usk Reservoir (which previously fed the river) is now supplying the Swansea area’s needs. Also, without the Usk Reservoir water, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water continues to abstract water from the River Usk for Llandegfedd Reservoir which supplies much of Newport’s water.
- **CRT, a Charity, is now expected to pay for water** - water is available as long as CRT pays for it. This is not an issue of lack of water, except at very dry periods. This is now a financial issue for CRT. CRT has to pay huge sums to Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water for water that is available. Is it right that CRT, a charity, should be paying Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, a non-profit company, for water that is available? CRT paying Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water for water is not a commercial transaction. CRT will incur a significant expense but will not increase its income as a direct result of this investment.
- **The Catastrophic Effect on Businesses** – it is a significant issue that the many dependent businesses, especially the 6 hire boat businesses and the 2 trip boat businesses need certainty for long term business planning. Many hire boat customers book up to a year in advance. These businesses have already had many cancellations for this year. They need certainty to be able to plan for the future, and to make investments in their fleets. These businesses cannot wait beyond a few months for a long-term solution to be put in place. They cannot wait for “investment in infrastructure” which will take years to implement even if it’s technically and financially possible. They will have failed before that happens. Without the hire boat and trip boat companies the future of the canal will be severely threatened. The canal cannot survive on private leisure boats, cyclists and walkers alone.
- **The Impact on People who live in boats on the canal (“live-aboards”)** - there is also a catastrophic effect on those people who live on their boats on the canal. They now don’t

have any security, and if the water drops significantly their homes will end up tilted on the bottom of the canal. These people need an immediate solution to protect their homes and livelihoods.

- **The Impact on the Canal's Ecology** - the loss of water in the canal will have a devastating impact on the canal's biodiversity and ecology. The canal and river are alongside each other for much of the 35-mile length of the canal. The river wildlife is protected at the potential loss of the significant and currently thriving wildlife on the canal. The canal's wildlife includes a huge range of fish including roach, perch, bream, eels, gudgeon, dace, chub, carp, tench and pike. There are otters, and many birds including ospreys, kingfishers, mallard ducks, herons, swans, moorhens, mandarin ducks, swifts, and wagtails.
- **The loss of the Canal as a Historic Heritage Asset** - the many heritage assets such as canal wharfs, locks, bridges, aqueducts and lime kilns will all be lost or harder to access if the canal fails. The canal is also an important part of the Blaenavon World Heritage site.
- **Structural and other maintenance** – if the canal becomes disused its clay structure will be prone to decay. The structure is supported by substantial embankments for most of length. How will the structure be maintained to limit the risk of a breach affecting people and property below? Who will maintain it, and how will it be funded? The cost of maintaining an embanked disused structure could well be greater than the cost of providing water to keep it operational. Further, who would maintain the towpath and how could that be done safely? – thousands of walkers, cyclists and runners would lose this much-loved recreational asset.

We would also wish to highlight the following sections of the Cabinet Secretary's letter which we disagree with, or question:

- *“The Canal & Rivers Trust appealed against the limitations, seeking to abstract more water than they had applied for.”* We believe that is not correct – CRT appealed against the “Further Conditions” that the NRW licence contained. These Conditions restricted the abstraction amounts to significantly less than the maximum figure that CRT had originally asked for.
- *“Through Visit Wales, it supported the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle project with £2.75 million of ERDF and Welsh Government funding from the Tourism Attractor Destination programme.”* Whilst we recognise and applaud this funding, it did little to support the navigable canal from Brecon to Cwmbran. The Cabinet Secretary mentions projects in Cwmcarn Forest. This is well away from the canal. Caerphilly County Borough Council are still looking for funding for an outdoors activity centre on the non-navigable canal by Cwmcarn Aqueduct. The one point of the “Triangle” on the navigable canal was Pontymoile. The planned Canal Centre at Pontymoile was not built. Also, at Pontymoile the historic Junction Cottage and Toll House for the canal was recently sold by CRT to raise funds.
- The letter refers to the *“Water Resources Modelling task and finish group”*. We assume this means the “Usk & Wye Abstraction Group (UWAG)”.

Further Questions to the Cabinet Secretary

We feel it would be useful for the Cabinet Secretary to answer the following questions:

1. How will the Welsh Government ensure that NRW is committed to balancing the ecological needs of the river Usk with the operational requirements of the canal? How will the Welsh Government ensure that NRW provides tangible support to CRT in ensuring that the canal has sufficient water?
2. Given that the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) protects the ecology of the Usk and the Severn, how will the Cabinet Secretary ensure that the ecology of the canal, its heritage assets, tourism, outdoor education, and canal dependent businesses etc are also protected?
3. How will the Welsh Government ensure that NRW and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water are committed to balancing fairly the abstraction of water from the River Usk in a way that meets the needs of all stakeholders (including Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water itself and CRT)?
4. If CRT decides that, as a charity, it is unviable to keep the Mon & Brec canal operational is the Welsh Government prepared to let the beautiful and valued Mon & Brec canal become the first operational canal in England and Wales to be closed? Such a decision could be forced on the charity as soon as this coming winter.

Solutions

We ask the Welsh Government to consider the following possible solutions:

- To reconvene the Usk and Wye Abstraction Group (UWAG) water resources modelling exercise to determine why the canal ran out of water within 2 weeks of reopening in March 2025, to ensure that this will not happen again in spring 2026 or the future. If the new modelling exercise shows that the existing licence conditions are unrealistic, then NRW must review and amend the conditions as required.
- To instruct NRW to recognise that the Mon and Brec canal and the River Usk should be treated as one combined eco-system to protect both river and canal wildlife.
- To work with all partners to enable and support CRT in Wales with practical solutions to preserve the Mon and Brec canal (including financial grants to stop leaks, to dredge the canal, and to provide access to alternative low or no cost water sources including solutions through infrastructure projects).
- For Welsh Government to implement joined-up strategic water planning, across Wales as a whole and with a multi-sector approach (i.e. including key users such as inland waterways as well as water companies)
- To put a legislative duty on Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water to include navigable waterways in their strategic planning.
- To set up a new project specifically for the River Usk, similar to the current Upper Wye Catchment Restoration Project, to ensure there is a holistic view of water supply for the benefit of the ecology of the river and the canal.

ⁱ BBC - "Emergency water supply for at-risk canal costing £100k a week" <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c70z8rdw0lno>

ⁱⁱ Usk Fishing Association – Water Abstraction <http://uskfishing.org/issues/water-abstraction/>

Agenda Item 4.1

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

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

Text of Petition:

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

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

Additional Information:

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

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Swansea East
- South Wales West

**P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development
Kilvey Hill, Swansea - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 06 May
2025**

I've been asked for a response to the planning application on this case. I will do this but there is also the serious issue of Welsh government supporting gambling interests

There are serious issues on the granting of planning permission to the Swansea Skyline project due to Swansea Council's failure to conduct the planning process fairly and transparently. The Council has not upheld the Nolan Principles of Public Life particularly integrity, accountability, and openness—and has demonstrated clear bias from the outset, undermining public trust in democratic planning procedures.

At the heart of the matter is the council's dual role as both supporter and arbiter. The development is being advanced on land owned or managed by the council, with the potential for financial or political gain. Meanwhile, the council leader has taken an unusually visible role in championing the project, including speaking in favour of it publicly . This has only deepened fears that the outcome may have been entirely predetermined, undermining public confidence in the process.

The Council's public consultation was conducted in name only. It had already committed to supporting and funding the Skyline project before properly considering environmental objections or residents' concerns. This pre-emptive endorsement reveals a predetermined outcome and disregards genuine public input, rendering the process undemocratic.

Despite credible warnings from conservation groups, Swansea Council failed to request thorough ecological surveys for Kilvey Hill. Notably, the presence of records of the High Brown Fritillary butterfly which is a legally protected and critically endangered species in Wales was ignored. Proceeding without investigating the potential impact on such a species is a serious dereliction of duty that may breach legal protections under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the NERC Act.

In a move that defies transparency standards practiced by councils across the UK, Swansea Council removed records of public objections to the Skyline project from its website. This deliberate concealment of legitimate opposition makes it difficult for campaigners and residents to access essential information and raises alarming questions about what the Council may be trying to hide.

Kilvey Hill includes a legally designated Quiet Space, intended to safeguard local tranquillity and mental well-being. The Council has failed to properly assess how the Skyline development would impact this space. Concerns raised by residents and campaigners, including local advocate Ben Houghton, have been largely ignored. This failure demonstrates a lack of regard for community well-being and due process.

Throughout the planning process, Swansea Council has shown a consistent pattern of dismissing objections, ignoring complaints, and failing to address legitimate environmental and community concerns. This approach undermines confidence in the planning system and reinforces the belief that public voices are being sidelined in favour of corporate interests.

The projected figure of 450,000 visitors annually is highly questionable, particularly in comparison to established tourist attractions in Wales. There is a significant risk that the development will fail to meet these targets, leading to economic failure and leaving a lasting environmental and financial burden on the region. Instead of a successful investment, the project risks becoming an abandoned white elephant.

In addition to this, and specifically relating to the environmental assessments submitted by the development, the original ecological appraisal submitted in support of the development is fundamentally flawed. Basic factual errors, such as the claim that the River Taff is in Swansea and adjacent to the Landore Park and Ride Facility, demonstrate a lack of local knowledge and credibility.

This development meets the very definition of ecological vandalism. The Oxford English Dictionary, the definitive dictionary of English defines vandalism as the "ruthless destruction or spoiling of anything beautiful or venerable." The equivalent Welsh term, *fandaliaeth*, in the equivalent University of Wales dictionary has definition that is even more explicit in defining it as a lack of respect for the beauty of nature (*diffig parch at brydferthwch natur*). Approving this project would lead to irreversible environmental damage to a cherished Welsh mountain, depriving future generations of its natural beauty and biodiversity.

Skyline runs a casino in Christchurch, New Zealand, has interests in a casino in Dunedin and runs an online casino based in Malta.

When a government offers financial support to a private company to develop a tourist attraction, it is generally seen as an effort to boost local economic development, employment, and international visibility. However, when that company is known to operate casinos in other regions—and has no prior history in the country or continent in question—there is a pressing need to scrutinize the moral implications of such support, particularly if it paves the way for gambling infrastructure.

Casinos, by design, are establishments where the statistical odds are set up to favour the house. This is not a flaw; it is the business model. While some argue that adults should be free to choose how they spend their money, this assumes all participants understand the risks. In

reality, many people—especially those with poor education or limited understanding of probability and statistics—do not fully grasp how deeply the odds are stacked against them.

Casinos often attract individuals with dreams of changing their fortunes. But those dreams are, by and large, illusory. For individuals with minimal financial literacy, the notion of a "lucky win" can override sound judgment. This dynamic is not accidental; it is known, studied,

and often exploited through the use of psychologically manipulative design—free drinks, no clocks, flashing lights, “near misses,” and reward systems engineered to keep people playing.

When a government subsidises a company that could reasonably be expected to establish such operations, it is not a neutral act. It lends not only financial but moral legitimacy to an industry that thrives on extracting money from those least equipped to afford its costs. The social damage can be especially acute—gambling addiction, household debt, crime, and increased strain on social services often follow the introduction of casinos.

There is also a troubling asymmetry of power. A foreign company with vast resources and experience in gaming psychology is invited into a market where locals many without strong consumer protections such as high education levels, or economic resilience are its prospective customers. This raises uncomfortable parallels to predatory behaviour. It is one thing for a government to foster tourism through parks, museums, or cultural events. It is another to help build the foundation for a business model that profits only when people lose.

Public money should not support enterprises that rely on exploiting human cognitive limitations, especially when those affected are likely to be among the most vulnerable.

The projected figure of 450,000 visitors annually is highly questionable, particularly in comparison to established tourist attractions in Wales. There is a significant risk that the development will fail to meet these targets, leading to economic failure and leaving a lasting environmental and financial burden on the region. Instead of a successful investment, the project risks becoming an abandoned white elephant.

I implore you to listen to me and the other petitioners and to recommend that this project does not receive funding from the public purse.

Neil Jones

Agenda Item 4.2

P-06-1444 Women of North Wales have the right to have a Menopause Services/Clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd

This petition was submitted by Delyth, having collected a total of 1,347 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Not everyone can afford to travel to Wrexham.

Not everyone can afford to pay privately to go to a Menopause clinic.

Not everyone has the time to go to Wrexham, maybe they care for children and family members etc.

Everyone should have the choice.

This should be on our doorstep in Ysbyty Gwynedd with more specialist services local to North Wales including regularly updates for GP's, Gynaecologists, practitioners and employers supporting them on Menopause and the benefits of HRT.

Additional Information:

The health board expect women to travel to the nearest NHS menopause clinic in Wrexham, as they are cutting back the little support we have in Ysbyty Gwynedd, this is not acceptable and especially in the current financial crisis.

We need resource on our doorstep local to us; the health board do not meet the demands of women suffering the ordeal, misery, pain, and discomfort along with all the other symptoms of the Menopause and the impact on their family.

Welsh Government must invest more in menopause resources and services in Wales.

Women are struggling to stay in their employment, along with sometimes having caring responsibilities. Women leave work as they cannot cope with the some of the symptoms.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ynys Môn
- North Wales

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-06-1444
Ein cyf/Our ref SM/00083/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions committee

petitions@senedd.wales

12 March 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 5 February about Petition P-06-1444 Women of North Wales have the right to have a menopause services/clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd.

I note in your letter you are writing to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board about menopause services in North Wales.

I am aware that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has been progressing a number of improvements to its menopause services, including additional face-to-face and virtual clinics across its three main hospital sites, and investment in training – five consultants have completed the British Menopause Society certificate and a further five are due to complete it by the end of April. The health board is also exploring the option of introducing virtual sessions for GPs to support a clinical review of cases and provide specialist advice without the need to refer to secondary care.

Menopause is one of eight priority areas in the *Women's Health Plan*, with a number of key actions for delivery to improve the experience of women when accessing services across Wales.

I am pleased to confirm an Easy Read version of the Women's Health Plan has been drafted and is in the final approval stage. This will be published once that approval has been completed.

I am determined the *Women's Health Plan* will act as a catalyst for change in Wales and ensure that there are improved health outcomes for women.

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

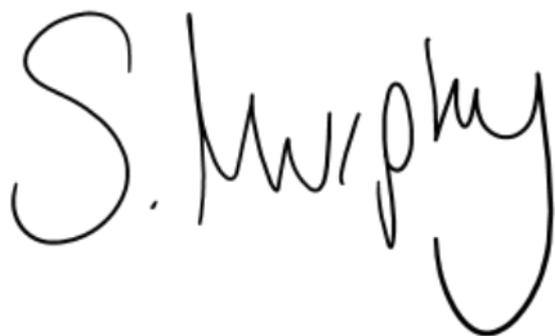
Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Sarah.Murphy@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Sarah.Murphy@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.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline for the "y".

Sarah Murphy AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

Bloc 5, Llys Carlton, Parc Busnes Llanelwy,
Llanelwy, LL17 0JG

Block 5, Carlton Court, St Asaph Business
Park, St Asaph, LL17 0JG

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

Ein cyf / Our ref: CS/PR(CE25/0110)

☎: 01745 448788 ext 6382

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Emma Hughes

E-bost / Email: emma.hughes19@wales.nhs.uk

Dyddiad / Date: 13th March 2025

Sent by email – petitions@Senedd.wales
A hard copy will not follow

Dear Chair,

RE: Petition P-06-1444: Women of North Wales have the right to have a Menopause Services/Clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Thank you for your letter of 6th February 2025, requesting additional information about the Health Board's plans to deliver menopause services closer to home for women living in North West Wales, following further consideration of the above petition on 20th January 2025.

I am pleased to confirm that we are progressing a number of actions led by our Clinical Lead for Women's Services and Menopause Specialists, which will result in an increasing number of women receiving specialist menopause support in hospital clinics held closer to their homes, including at Ysbyty Gwynedd. This includes supporting more of our Consultant Gynaecologists to undertake the British Menopause Society's Menopause Certificate that I referenced in my previous response.

To date, five consultants have achieved this qualification, with a further five due to complete this training by April 2025. After this point, we anticipate that these consultants will be able to manage 90% of referrals for menopause support, with patients seen in general outpatient gynaecology clinics, with dedicated slots reserved for menopause consultations.

Our three accredited menopause specialists will continue to triage all referrals, and they will provide specialist advice and support to the smaller number of women with more complex presentations.

As we operate a treat in turn policy, based on our Women's Services pan North Wales capacity, some women from Gwynedd and Môn will continue to be invited to appointments at hospitals in Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham, as this will ensure that they are seen more quickly. However, an increasing number of women will be able to receive specialist menopause care at clinics delivered from Ysbyty Gwynedd. The petitioner, Ms Owen, may be encouraged to learn that six of the ten consultants who will soon hold the BMS certificate are based within west of our region.

Cyfeiriad Gohebiaeth ar gyfer y Cadeirydd a'r Prif Weithredwr / Correspondence address for Chairman and Chief Executive:
Swyddfa'r Gweithredwyr / Executives' Office
Ysbyty Gwynedd, Penrhosgarnedd
Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2PW

Pack Page 60

Phone: www.pbc.cymru.nhs.uk / **Web:** www.bcu.wales.nhs.uk



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

In order to reduce appointment waiting times whilst training is being progressed, we have introduced additional face to face and virtual clinics across all three of our District General Hospitals. The service is also continuing to explore the option of introducing virtual sessions for GPs, in order to facilitate a clinical review of their cases and offer specialist advice, where appropriate, reducing the need for referral into secondary care.

Turning to your question about Welsh language service provision, I note Ms Owen's comments about not being asked about their language preference when attending appointments. This further highlights the importance of the ongoing monitoring exercise the service is undertaking to establish compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. As part of this exercise, the service will be working with the Health Board's Welsh Language Team to understand current compliance and any improvement actions that are required.

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an update on the Health Board's plans to improve its menopause service provision, and I fully acknowledge the strength of feeling about this issue among women in north west Wales.

I do hope that this response provides you and the petitioner with some reassurance about the Health Board's commitment to improving access to high quality menopause care, which is delivered as close to home as possible, in line with the recently published Women's Health Plan for Wales.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Shillabeer'.

Carol Shillabeer
Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive

P-06-1444 Women of North Wales have the right to have a Menopause Services Clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 05 May 2025

I am very grateful for the responses from Carol Shillabeer and Sarah Murphy AS/MS , however I feel that they both don't really answer the concerns again, it is a very good measured response again, but it's still does not answers the petitions concerns and it is also a very similar response to the previous response given.

I feel the main concern is still to be addressed, women of North Wales need a clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd, Deeside Hospital and Wrexham Maelor and Flintshire are not central to North Wales

My reply to both letters below:

Frist one Carol Shillabeer

Below my reply to : Sarah Murphy AS/MS

I am pleased to confirm that we are progressing a number of actions led by our Clinical Lead for Women's Services and Menopause Specialists, which will result in an increasing number of women receiving specialist menopause support in hospital clinics held closer to their homes, including at Ysbyty Gwynedd. This includes supporting more of our Consultant Gynaecologists to undertake the British Menopause Society's Menopause Certificate that I referenced in my previous response. This is great news, how are they going to achieve this, will they be able then to offer then the statistics of how many women have been given the support in Ysbyty Gwynedd? This is great news, and it is encouraging to hear that clinics will be held at Ysbyty Gwynedd.

To date, five consultants have achieved this qualification, with a further five due to complete this training by April 2025. After this point, we anticipate that these consultants will be able to manage 90% of referrals for menopause support, with patients seen in general outpatient gynaecology clinics, with dedicated slots reserved for menopause consultations. Where? Will some be based at in Ysbyty Gwynedd?

Our three accredited menopause specialists will continue to triage all referrals, and they will provide specialist advice and support to the smaller number of women with more complex presentations. Based where, I'm sure they can travel to Ysbyty Gwynedd

As we operate a treat in turn policy, based on our Women's Services pan North Wales capacity, some women from Gwynedd and Môn will continue to be invited to appointments at hospitals in Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham, as this will ensure that they are seen more quickly, Understand the need for patients to be seen quickly, this is important but I feel

that patients should be given a choice. Not everyone is able (for various reasons, access to transport, cost, logistics) to travel as far for an appointment and would like to reiterate that Ysbyty Gwynedd should be considered a key hub for this service. but why not in Ysbyty Gwynedd too?, would it not be better to cluster the women who need the service in North Wales to meet the "in turn policy "in Ysbyty Gwynedd, therefore taking to account the patients' needs into consideration and therefore only the one person to travel - the consultant, better for the women's health and wellbeing anxiety etc However, an increasing number of women will be able to receive specialist menopause care at clinics delivered from Ysbyty Gwynedd. How? The petitioner, Ms Owen, may be encouraged to learn that six of the ten consultants who will soon hold the BMS certificate are based within west of our region. So does this mean 4 consultants will be based at Ysbyty Gwynedd? This is good to hear, but how does this differ "to treat in turn policy, based on our Women's Services pan North Wales" mentioned above. This response from her is very confusing; I think she is stating that the 6 will be based West not very clear

In order to reduce appointment waiting times whilst training is being progressed, we have introduced additional face to face and virtual clinics across all three of our District General Hospitals. is this Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham, why not Ysbyty Gwynedd? Ysbyty Gwynedd is our central North Wales Hospital the others boarder England not central to North Wales , women have expressed to me that face to face appointments are needed initially and are the best option and maybe after the first appointment they may feel comfortable with a virtual service The service is also continuing to explore the option of introducing virtual sessions for GPs, in order to facilitate a clinical review of their cases and offer specialist advice, where appropriate, reducing the need for referral into secondary care. Virtual appointments do have a role to play and can be useful in terms of time efficiency both for the practitioner and the patient however, again offering the patient a choice is essential as quality of care is just as important as reducing waiting times and if people would benefit from face to face appointments then this should be strived for.

Turning to your question about Welsh language service provision, I note Ms Owen's comments about not being asked about their language preference when attending appointments. This further highlights the importance of the ongoing monitoring exercise the service is undertaking to establish compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. As part of this exercise, the service will be working with the Health Board's Welsh Language Team to understand current compliance and any improvement actions that are required. Simply to have a nurse present whose first language is Welsh would be adequate I feel

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an update on the Health Board's plans to improve its menopause service provision, and I fully acknowledge the strength of feeling about this issue among women in north west Wales. I ask that Ysbyty Gwynedd be put as part of the regional cluster of provision hospital in their pan North Wales capacity for the Women of central North Wales

I do hope that this response provides you and the petitioner with some reassurance about the Health Board's commitment to improving access to high quality menopause care, which is delivered as close to home as possible, in line with the recently published Women's Health Plan for Wales. This does not address the menopause care, which should be delivered as close to home as it should be, this still does not put the patient first

my reply to : Sarah Murphy AS/MS

I note in your letter you are writing to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board about menopause services in North Wales.

I am aware that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has been progressing a number of improvements to its menopause services, including additional face-to-face and virtual clinics across its three main hospital sites, and investment in training – five consultants have completed the British Menopause Society certificate and a further five are due to complete it by the end of April. The health board is also exploring the option of introducing virtual sessions for GPs to support a clinical review of cases and provide specialist advice without the need to refer to secondary care. I have already answered these points in the response to **Carol Shillabeer** ; Ysbyty Gwynedd needs to be included as a main hospital as it is geography central for the women of North Wales, Ysbyty Gwynedd needs to be encompassed as one of the main hospitals and not left out as it is Women need Face to Face for their mental health and wellbeing; patients need to be seen in person , it's difficult in establishing connection with the patients virtually and giving quality of care an empathy engagement face to face is so important , it will make a person feel valued and listened to , virtual consolations can miss signs in body language and reading a person's nonverbal experiences , face to face builds on a patients emotional state and trust in them feeling that they are in a safe environment to talk comfortable and not as an online patient which can build barriers in being able to be open in discussion especially if they have emotionally distressed especially if they don't feel comfortable sharing confidential information , they need to be mindful that not everyone can access to online services and also have limited if no skills on accessing , this again can be another barrier especially if they are anxious

Menopause is one of eight priority areas in the *Women's Health Plan*, with a number of key actions for delivery to improve the experience of women when accessing services across Wales. Yes Menopause is "mentioned" in the women's health plan

I am pleased to confirm an Easy Read version of the Women's Health Plan has been drafted and is in the final approval stage. This will be published once that approval has been completed. Can this draft be looked at first by the women it will be supporting? Can see and make recommendations on the content etc if needed to make sure it is public money well spent before it is published?

I am determined the *Women's Health Plan* will act as a catalyst for change in Wales and

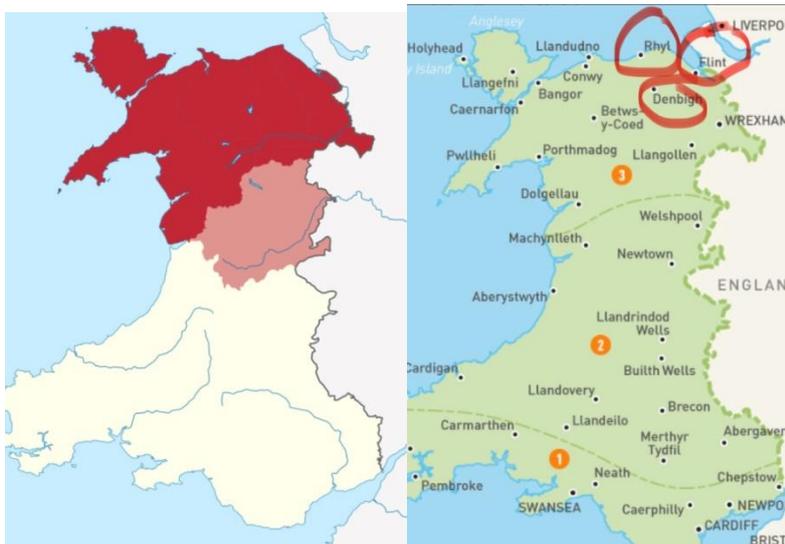
ensure that there are improved health outcomes for women. I feel it needs a lot more work on it if it is to help women of Wales, seems to brush around the edges and not fully embrace the need of women

Women's Health Plan for Wales.

- page 69 second paragraph, the wording to "manage women...." A better word and more respectful word to use would be "to support women's health "
- Page 70: who/what is FTWW women's health Network? Who represents the patients?
- Page 70: Will we have access to the measurable (outcomes/information) collected against the " women's health dashboard? Will it show region numbers?
- Page 70 : the research to improve the understanding – how will this be done? Will they work and engage with women and how? How will the collect the mapping of the impact not only on women but the family too?

North Wales maps : as members can see, the cluster of the hospitals they mention are far from central to North Wales patients. This is why it is so important to have Ysbyty Gwynedd as an equal partner and not as an after thought

I would suggest that Ysbyty Gwynedd to be the Central Hospital for North Wales Menopause clinic of North Wales and the others would be satellite hubs





Agenda Item 4.3

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

This petition was submitted by Robert Curtis, having collected 338 signatures.

Text of petition:

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

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

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

Additional information:

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

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

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

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

I have no doubt that once people are given the full facts about the damage artificial grass does to our Welsh wildlife they would choose to garden

sustainably. Wales could once again lead the way for future bans in the rest of the UK.

Senedd Constituency and Region:

- Vale of Glamorgan
- South Wales Central

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1472
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/00698/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

24 April 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your correspondence of 07 April regarding "Petition P-06-1472 Protect our wildlife...ban plastic grass in Wales!".

I welcome continued interest from the Petitions Committee in this important issue and I am pleased to provide an update on the microplastics event held in partnership with Environment Platform Wales.

[The Plastic in the Environment Knowledge Exchange Workshop](#) took place in December 2024 and was a productive and well-attended two-day event. Participants included academic researchers from Welsh and UK universities, representatives from the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Natural Resources Wales, Public Health Wales, and Welsh Government policy leads from a wide range of cross-cutting areas. We were also pleased to welcome key third sector and stakeholder organisations, such as Keep Wales Tidy, Afonydd Cymru, Friends of the Earth, the National Environment Research Council, Transport for Wales, and the National Federation of Women's Institutes.

A key outcome from the workshop was the establishment of a new 'Plastics in the Environment Group', formed by Environment Platform Wales in agreement with attending researchers. This group has committed to meeting regularly to share knowledge on current and future research projects and identify opportunities for collaboration to help inform policy development. The group held a second meeting in March.

The workshop highlighted several important priorities for future consideration and reinforced the need for an integrated approach across biodiversity, waste, water, and health policies, and helped identify where further scientific evidence is needed to support effective regulation and long-term environmental outcomes. The following report by UK Water Industry Research, is interesting to read and found that 99.9% of microplastics are removed from drinking and wastewater through water company treatment processes [Water Industry Research reports \(ukwir.org\)](#)

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
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.

As part of our broader commitments to address plastic pollution and the nature emergency, the Welsh Government continues to take action through our Circular Economy Strategy, the Beyond Recycling plan, and the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023. We remain committed to phasing out unnecessary plastics, promoting sustainable alternatives, and working with partners to build a more circular economy.

In addition, we continue to support public sector and land managers in adopting biodiversity-friendly practices, including alternatives to artificial grass. Our 'It's for Them' campaign and Bee Friendly Scheme continue to raise awareness about the benefits of natural habitats and sustainable land management.

I hope this update provides reassurance that Welsh Government is taking a comprehensive, evidence-informed and collaborative approach to addressing the concerns raised in the petition. We will continue to keep this important topic under close review and are grateful to stakeholders and the public for their continued engagement.

Yours sincerely,

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

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

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

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

P-06-1472 Protect our wildlife...ban plastic grass in Wales! - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 03 May 2025

Dear Members of the Petitions committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Ministers comments.

The Minister covers the micro plastic issues resulting from the sale of plastic grass but fails to cover the very real threat to biodiversity.

There is nothing sadder than watching a song thrush, bumblebee , butterfly or hedgehog trying to feed from sterile plastic grass.

Natural grass lawns provide food and shelter for a wide variety of insects, small animals, and birds, which contribute to biodiversity. Artificial grass replaces this habitat, reducing or eliminating the resources that these organisms rely on.

- **Impact on Soil:**

Artificial grass blocks the natural processes of leaf litter decomposition and nutrient cycling, which are essential for soil health. It also restricts access to water and air, which can harm the soil organisms that rely on these resources.

- **Limited Biodiversity:**

Natural grass supports a diverse array of life, including soil microorganisms, insects, and other wildlife. Artificial grass cannot support this same level of biodiversity.

If the Minister is unwilling to ban plastic grass then at least make companies selling this product Issue a warning to the public about the very real negative effects that plastic grass does to our Natural world.

Yours sincerely

Robert Curtis

Barry Action for Nature

Agenda Item 4.4

P-06-1492 Maintain 24 hour access to the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli

This petition was submitted by Alexander Bryant-Evans, having collected 969 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Hywel Dda University Health Board are proposing that the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Prince Philip Hospital (PPH) in Llanelli be downgraded to a 12 hour service from a 24 hour service.

Additional Information:

As the largest urban population in Carmarthenshire and one of the largest in the Hywel Dda University Health Board area, Llanelli requires, at the very least, 24 hour access to the MIU at PPH.

A reduction of services at PPH will see a greater number of people seeking treatment at the A&E services in Morriston and Glangwili Hospitals, resulting in longer wait times at both locations.

It is not acceptable for the health board to reduce this service to just 12 hours a day (8am – 8pm).

To ensure that the people of Llanelli receive access to the medical treatment they deserve and to prevent overcrowding at other A&E departments nearby, this change at PPH must not be allowed to proceed.

This petition is calling on the Welsh Government to intervene on the decision by the Health Board and prevent this change from happening at Llanelli, thus protecting and maintaining a 24 hour MIU service.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Llanelli
- Mid and West Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1492
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/00531/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions committee

petitions@senedd.wales

29 April 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 18 February about Petition P-06-1492 Maintain 24-hour access to the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli.

In my previous correspondence to you on 7 January, I outlined why the health board had introduced the temporary service change. My officials continue to monitor the situation.

I understand the health board has held a series of engagement sessions with a diverse group of stakeholders to determine a sustainable long-term solution. Together with the stakeholder group, the health board has worked through a list of options that was considered by the Board at its meeting on 27 March. The stakeholder group included nurses, clinicians, the ambulance service, out-of-hours GPs, campaign group representatives, and community members. The health board also held two drop-in sessions for the public on 6 and 17 March. The stakeholder group developed 12 options that were assessed against a set range of criteria to ensure that only viable and deliverable options would be taken forward. This led to four options being taken forward.

Following the Board meeting that was held on 27 March, the health board agreed to hold a 12-week public consultation on the four options that were agreed through the stakeholder panel. The consultation will run from the end of April or early May 2025.

The temporary change has not affected the acute medical assessment unit, and very unwell medical patients will be taken to Prince Philip Hospital, 24-hours a day, for assessment and treatment.

The health board continues to monitor the impact of the temporary closure and indications are that it has not had a major impact at other emergency departments in terms of additional attendances.

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Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

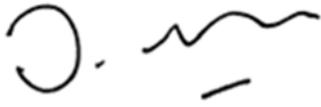
Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales

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

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

Yours sincerely,

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

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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

Agenda Item 4.5

P-06-1510 Direct NRW to revoke the environmental permit and ensure the closure of Enover's, Hafod Landfill Site in Wrexham

This petition was submitted by Steven Gittins, having collected 1,125 signatures.

Text of petition:

The Hafod Landfill Site has caused community distress for 18 years, making it Wales' longest running environmental campaign. Despite efforts by residents and elected representatives, the site continues to emit noxious odours, creating an unacceptable statutory nuisance. NRW are responsible for environmental protection and has failed to take meaningful enforcement action, relying instead on technical justifications and vague assurances. This is not just regulatory inertia, but governance failure.

Additional information:

In 2024, the odour and air pollution reached distressing and crisis levels. Families were unable to open their windows, children are forced to play indoors. If NRW regulatory framework allows a site to emit persistent and overpowering odours whilst remaining compliant, then the regulations are clearly not fit for purpose. Their own last Inspection reported key failings such as a non-operational gas engine, increasing the release of landfill gases. Temporary capping of landfill cells that fail to contain odours. Persistent leaks from multiple area of the site. Delays in infrastructure upgrades, leaving the site vulnerable to excessive emissions. In May 2020, a substantial fire broke out, burning for several days and producing thick black smoke. NRW recorded air pollution levels 14 times above the permitted level. If NRW cannot hold Enover accountable, and they have failed to do so in 18 years, then an independent inquiry into their effectiveness as a regulatory body is urgently needed.

Senedd Constituency and Region:

- Clwyd South
- North Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1332
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/00675/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

17 April 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 3 April 2025 with regards to the Petition P-06-1332 'Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus'.

In your letter, you asked for information on the following points on behalf of the petitioner:

1. Much more detail on 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 selected?
3. To explain why to date no officials have contacted the Wildlife Ark Trust which own the intellectual rights to the earlier attenuated pox vaccine research 2012/13.

In response to point 1:

Procurement is a complex process. This is to ensure due diligence is followed and public funds are allocated correctly. My officials are working on procuring a suitable supplier as soon as possible.

In response to point 2:

The tender will follow Welsh Government's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) process. As such, expression of interest will be sought from suppliers registered on [Sell2Wales](#). Invitees are selected based on their portfolio and nature of their services, and to ensure independent and objective review.

In response to point 3:

The aim of the feasibility study is to independently and objectively assess the prospect of research, manufacture, marketing authorisation, and deployment of the vaccine, as well as associated risks, benefits, and costs. It will be up to the appointed supplier to decide whom to contact in the course of the study.

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

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Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized representation of the name 'Huw Irranca-Davies'.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

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

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

Agenda Item 5.2

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

7 May 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for sharing the copy of your recent report regarding Petition P-06-1482 Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales (with exemptions for exceptional circumstances).

Over the past two years, we have engaged with the education workforce unions, Local Authorities, Schools, children and young people, families, and representatives from other sectors regarding the issues and impact smart phones are having in schools and on young people's behaviour. Your report clearly sets out the complexity of the issues at play, and the range of views on this matter.

I am due to meet with Ofcom shortly to further discuss mobile phone and social media usage. The Children's Commissioner for Wales also published the findings of research they carried out in October 2024 with children and young people for their thoughts about the use of smartphones in school which provided us with further valuable insight.

I have included with this letter our formal response to your report, and I am pleased to say we are fully accepting three of the recommendations in full. To enable this, I will be bringing together key partners and experts to look at these issues with the two remaining recommendations accepted in principle subject to their discussions.

I welcome the Committees continued work on these important issues.

Yours sincerely

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

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Lynne.Neagle@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lynne.Neagle@gov.wales

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

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



The Welsh Government petition response

To P-06-1482: Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales

16 April 2025

I am grateful to the Senedd Committee for inviting me to respond to their petition report. I welcome this opportunity to respond to their follow up report and recommendations in relation to the Committee's inquiry to Ban smartphones in all schools in Wales (with exemptions for exceptional circumstances).

The Committee has put forward five recommendations, which I have addressed below.

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1. Introduction

A petition on banning mobile phones in schools in Wales was submitted in October 2024 and closed on 7 January 2025. During the time it was open it collected 3,369 signatures, meaning it fell short of the number required to trigger a formal debate (10,000).

The full text of the petition was:

Inspired by the movements Smartphone Free Childhood and Delay Smartphones, as well as recent compelling research on the profound negative effects of smartphones on children, we call on Senedd Cymru to ban them in all schools in Wales, with exemptions for exceptional circumstances. Smartphone use poses significant wellbeing and safeguarding concerns. We are deeply worried about our children's social development and mental health and believe all pupils have the right to a smartphone-free school.

On 6 March 2025, the Chair of the Petitions Committee, Carolyn Thomas MS wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Education, enclosing a copy of the committee's report which set out five recommendations for the Welsh Government's consideration.

I thank the members of the Committee for their report in response to the petition. I have set out my response to the Committee's recommendations below.

2. Response to the 5 recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee Recommends that:

The Welsh Government should develop a national policy framework and associated guidance that all Welsh schools can use to amend or refine their existing policies on restricting use of smart devices in schools. The Committee strongly encourages the Welsh Government to work with the WLGA and ADEW to review existing policies and best practice.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of a national level policy framework and guidance on mobile phone usage within schools. While we have provided some information in the past, we recognise the need to keep pace with the evolving nature of technology and the increased range of online tools and sites phones enable access to. We have also seen growing calls for more advice.

This is a key area for consideration as part of the wider programme of work on behaviour in schools, being taken forward in support of our national behaviour summit. It is also important that the development of any framework or guidance is carried out in partnership with stakeholders. To enable this, and as part of that wider work programme, I will be bringing together key partners and experts to look at these issues and lead on the development of any guidance or framework, and any wider actions needed.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 2

The Committee Recommends that:

Terminology is important and Welsh Government should discourage use of the word 'ban' in favour of 'restriction(s)'. Describing 'no-phone schools' or using similar constructive language to explain restrictions is more likely to be something that learners, teaching staff and parents can all understand and support. A focus on "right time, right place" for use of smart devices should be emphasised, recognising the needs of students to safely harness digital technology as part of their education and development.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government agrees that the language used to describe policies and approaches is important and needs to be appropriate for the audience involved.

In this case, while any guidance may be aimed at schools, we need to ensure the terminology used is appropriate for children and young people, and parents, and that they understand what is being suggested and why.

We will ensure any future information or guidance we publish in this regard is informed by the views of stakeholders, and particularly the voice of children and young people, and framed appropriately.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 3

The Committee Recommends that:

Any framework and/or guidance introduced by the Welsh Government to support school leaders should take account of the need for exemptions for certain learners' needs, including how to mitigate against any negative impacts that restrictions could have in singling them out from their peers. It should provide clear advice based on best practice. Grounds for exemption should be clearly defined and explained. Before issuing a final framework/guidance, consultation should be undertaken with stakeholders representing neurodiverse learners and those with additional learning needs and/or medical needs, educational and health practitioners, and parents. However, the advice on exemptions should focus primarily on balancing the rights and best interests of learners with the needs of the school to deliver a safe and effective learning environment.

Response: Accept in Principle

The Welsh Government agree in principle with this approach. We will ensure that the information the Committee has provided is considered by the group of key partners and experts I am establishing to take forward any guidance or framework. However, as the Committee has highlighted, these issues can be complex and nuanced, and this means it may be challenging to set clear expectations nationally, when allowances have to be made in respect of local and individual needs and circumstances. Feedback from school leaders indicates that this should be a matter for school leaders who know their school communities best. We will also consider how best to take forward any consultation, subject to the outcome of the discussions with our partners and relevant experts.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 4

The Committee Recommends that:

Parental engagement by schools should be encouraged in the policy framework and guidance. It should clearly explain the rationale and evidence base underpinning it, to promote and encourage a 'whole school' and 'whole community' approach

Response: Accept in Principle

The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring parents are engaged in their children's education and with their school. We want all schools to be Community Focussed Schools, working with children and young people, their families and the wider community to fully support learning and development. Any framework or guidance will be developed in partnership with stakeholders. In working with our key partners and relevant experts, we will consider how best to support parental engagement by schools a part of that work, as well as consideration of teacher workload.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 5

The Committee Recommends that:

Any national policy framework/guidance should be reviewed regularly to take account of emerging empirical evidence about the impacts of smartphone use on learners in Wales. The Committee recommends that Welsh Government sets out how it will take account of evidence from Welsh schools and from other jurisdictions and parts of the UK where studies have been undertaken or are currently in development).

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government agree that policy frameworks and guidance should be reviewed regularly. In this context the continuously evolving nature of the technology means we will need to reflect on an appropriate schedule. We will ensure that our key partners and relevant experts have access to a range of evidence and data to support them in considering the evolving nature of technology.

Financial Implications: None

