

Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date:
14 May 2013

Meeting time:
09:00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Agenda

- 1. Introduction, apologies and substitutions 9.00**
- 2. New petitions 9.00 – 9.15**
 - 2.1 P-04-478 A simple info pack for all the people of Wales explaining how they can stand as candidates (Page 1)
 - 2.2 P-04-479 Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray & Minor Injuries Unit Petition (Pages 2 – 4)
 - 2.3 P-04-480 Address Private Sector Student Housing Standards (Pages 5 – 35)
 - 2.4 P-04-481 Close the Gap for deaf pupils in Wales (Pages 36 – 47)
 - 2.5 P-04-482 Public noticeboards across Wales notifying the public of who all their political representatives are (Page 48)
 - 2.6 P-04-483 A plain English /Cymraeg clir policy for all Welsh Assembly and Government communications (Pages 49 – 52)
- 3. Updates to previous petitions 9.15 – 9.45**
 - 3.1 P-04-462 Ban the flying of Union flags from official Welsh buildings (Pages 53 – 54)

Economy, Science and Transport

- 3.2 P-04-319 Newtown traffic petition (Pages 55 – 56)
- 3.3 P-04-426 Introduce a mandatory 40mph speed limit on the A487 at Blaenporth Ceredigion (Pages 57 – 60)

- 3.4 P-04-459 A direct rail connection from Cardiff Airport to Cardiff central and west Wales (Pages 61 – 64)
- 3.5 P-04-468 Road Safety Concerns A48 Chepstow (Pages 65 – 66)

Natural Resources and Food

- 3.6 P-04-398 Campaign for a Welsh Animal Offenders Register (Pages 67 – 81)
- 3.7 P-04-399 Slaughter Practices (Pages 82 – 83)
- 3.8 P-04-433 CCTV in Slaughterhouses (Pages 84 – 85)

Local Government and Government Business

- 3.9 P-04-402 Council Prayers (Pages 86 – 89)

Health

- 3.10 P-04-400 NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health (Pages 90 – 93)

The following five items will be considered together

- 3.11 P-04-367 Save our Hospital Services (Page 94)
- 3.12 P-04-394 Save our Services – Prince Philip Hospital (Page 95)
- 3.13 P-04-430 Proposed closure of Tenby Minor Injuries Unit (Page 96)
- 3.14 P-04-431 Against Health Cuts from the Residents of Pembrokeshire (Page 97)
- 3.15 P-04-455 Save Prince Phillip Hospital A&E (Pages 98 – 100)

Housing and Regeneration

- 3.16 P-04-417 Save Morfa Beach and Prevent the Closure of Public Footpaths 92 and 93 (Pages 101 – 102)
- 3.17 P-04-461 Save Ponty Paddling Pool (Pages 103 – 114)

Evidence Sessions

- 4. P-04-472 Make the MTAN law: Evidence Session 09.45 – 10.15**
(Pages 115 – 118)

Dr John Cox, Petitioner

Lynne Neagle, Assembly Member

5. P-04-442 Guarantee good support close to home for disabled children and their families: Evidence Session 10.15 – 10.45
(Pages 119 – 122)

Ian Thomas, Director in Wales, Scope

Agenda Item 2.1

P-04-478 A simple info pack for all the people of Wales explaining how they can stand as candidates

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to send out a clear understandable leaflet to all people of voting age in Wales, explaining how they can stand in local, national or Britain wide elections if they so wish.

Petition raised by: Sovereign Wales

Date petition first considered by Committee: 14 May 2013

Number of signatures : 11

P-04-479 Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray & Minor Injuries Unit Petition

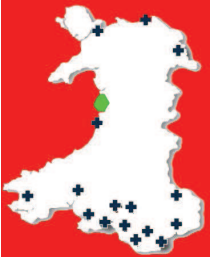
Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to stop the withdrawal of X-ray facilities & the reduction in provision of services by the Minor Injuries Unit as a matter of urgency.

Petition raised by: Tywyn & District Health Care Action Group

Date petition first considered by Committee: 14 May 2013

Number of signatures: 4486



TYWYN & DISTRICT HEALTH CARE ACTION GROUP. GRWP GWEITHREDU GOFAL IECHYD TYWYN AR CYLCH

1st May 2013

Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray & Minor Injuries Unit Petition

The reasons for the petition.

To call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to stop the withdrawal of X-ray facilities & the reduction in provision of services by the Minor Injuries Unit as a matter of urgency.

To enable all interested residents & visitors the opportunity to express their views about the proposed closure of the X-ray unit & the reduction of staff & hours in the Minor Injuries Unit in Tywyn Memorial Hospital. To make those views available to the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Government and the Health Minister.

To call upon all authorities to ensure equality of health care provision in our rural mid-Wales area.

Background.

As a result of considerable concern in the local population about current & future Health Care in the Tywyn & District area, an action group was formed in 2012. We are a non-political group and aim to represent the interests of all age groups in this largely rural area in mid-Wales. Since our formation we have been active in participating in the Betsi Cadwaladr & Hywel Dda Health Board Consultations and expressing the views of the local population to Betsi Cadwaladr CHC, the Minister for Health & Social Services, the Chief Executives of BCUHB & Hywel Dda Health Board.

Although Tywyn & District falls within the BCUHB area, our nearest General Hospital is Bronglais, Aberystwyth (see our map Logo), in the Hywel Dda area, 35 miles & at least one hour travel from Tywyn. Some residents in the surrounding area have to travel even further and the bridge at Machynlleth may be closed through damage or flooding which periodically gives rise to a considerable detour. The "Golden Hour Rule" can probably only be met by paramedics or Air Ambulances.

The locality is very rural and Tywyn Memorial Hospital serves a wide area, not just the town itself but other towns & villages around. There is also a very considerable increase in population in the summer. Many people visit the area in the months April to October and have holiday homes, chalets & caravans locally. The supporters of both the written & online parts of the petition reflect this. Many of the visitors have availed themselves of the local health service provisions and understand it's efficacy & importance in a rural area. Some of them do voluntary work in the area e.g. on the Talyllyn Railway.

Public transport is extremely sparse & reduces year by year with no prospect of improvement.

X-ray Unit.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board have plans to close the X-ray unit and reduce the staff and hours of availability of the Minor Injuries Unit in Tywyn Memorial Hospital. The Community Health Council has expressed its objection to the plans for South Gwynedd which also affects North Powys & North Ceredigion. We believe that if the plans go ahead the people of South Gwynedd are not being treated on a fair and equal basis with other parts of Wales.

We believe that the statistics used to argue for the closure of the X-ray unit in Tywyn are inaccurate. Target figures have been used which are impossible to meet in a unit which is only open on a few occasions in the week. The argument to use a unit elsewhere (Dolgellau, which is North of Tywyn, whereas our General Hospital is South), which will provide more hours of service does not hold water, unless you have a car available & can drive, because of the distance and lack of public transport. The alternative X-ray services offered involve round trips of 30, 40 & 60 miles (more for people who have to travel to Tywyn in the first place).

Please stop the closure of the X-ray Unit and at least maintain the level of availability.

Minor Injuries Unit.

We object to the available hours for the MIU being reduced which seems to fly in the face of the object of treatment being available nearer to home. It is self-evident that minor injuries occur more frequently than serious injuries or illness & should be dealt with as close as possible to the place where the need arises. Early diagnosis & treatment is the most efficient method & prevents further costly complications arising. The welfare of the patient is important! Travelling to an alternative MIU is difficult in an area with sparse public transport & where older, injured, ailing & frail patients are not able to use their own transport.

We believe that, because of the inadequacy of present out-of-hours GP service, the lack of transport in a very rural area and the distance/time element of getting to an alternative treatment centre, more patients will use the 999 service which will put even more pressure on the Ambulance Service and A & E departments. Diagnosis & most treatment in a locally available MIU with trained staff is surely preferable and less costly.

The Minor Injuries Unit, however, is even now being dismantled, in spite of the fact that the Community Health Council has objected to the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board plans for the South Gwynedd area and in particular Tywyn. This gives great concern since well trained & skilled staff are being lost to the unit and with the staff being reduced to two we are concerned how they will provide a service to patients and cover for staff illness & holidays. The team who have trained & worked well together for some years will no doubt be very demoralised. They have developed the ability to assess, diagnose, treat or refer patients speedily but with reductions of staff & hours of availability their effectiveness will be reduced.

Please at least maintain the staff level & hours of availability for the Minor Injuries Unit.

Tywyn Memorial Hospital

There are proposals for the development of Tywyn Hospital site as an integrated primary care resource centre. BCUHB is awaiting a decision on the business case from the Welsh Government which they say they expect in early 2013 but there is no date as yet for implementation. The original building design included an X-ray Department. In the light of such a development, where is the logic in closing the X-ray Unit & running down the MIU now?

Brian Mintoft
Secretary T&CHCAG.

Agenda Item 2.3

P-04-480 Address Private Sector Student Housing Standards

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to investigate the problems raised in the recent Aberystwyth Housing Survey Report 2012 which has raised concerns about the poor standard of student accommodation and the correspondingly poor treatment of students in the private rented sector. Furthermore, we call on the Welsh Government to engage in a full and frank consultation with the affected communities on this neglected issue while ensuring that current housing legislation and new measures by the relevant authorities are properly observed to help raise standards in the private rental sector.

Student housing has been a constant issue in Aberystwyth for many years. A report published in December 2012 surveyed students on their housing experiences and details the issues that they have been facing.

Petition raised by: Aberystwyth Student's Union

Date petition first considered by Committee: 14 May 2013

Number of signatures: 188



Student Housing Survey Report: 2012



CYMORTH
SUPPORT

Contents

- 3. Introduction – Laura Dickens, Student Support Officer
- 5. Comments on the Report
- 6. Findings
- 7. Estate Agency Cost Breakdown
- 8. Estate Agency Results Breakdown (A breakdown of each Estate Agent is on each page)
- 21. Other Letting Agencies
- 23. Private Sector Renting
- 24. Comments on the Private Sector
- 27. Observations
- 29. Conclusions
- 30. Appendix I

Introduction

This report has come about as a result of an increase of issues with Aberystwyth Private Sector Accommodation. The initial focus of this survey was on costs, such as high admin fees, and deposit protection scheme registration fees, which students were finding hard to afford on top of the other living costs.

It was essential for us to see how much rent per week students are actually paying, after a BBC Article quoted the average cost from 2011, to be £62.01 (Article found in Appendix 1), which did not correlate to a lot of the agreements we had seen. It was also important to establish what people had included in their average rents, and we have broken this down accordingly in the next few pages.

The release of the NUS Housing survey gave 156 student views on Housing in Aberystwyth and went into a lot of detail on costs, deposits and condition of properties. As there are around 6000 students in the Private Sector, it was important for us to conduct more investigations to get a wider picture. We received 308 valid responses, meaning that the figure is more representative of the situation, however is still only 5.13% of private sector responses. However, it is to be noted that a considerable amount of students filled out the survey on behalf of their households, making the Report a more accurate account of the current Housing situation in Aberystwyth.

Last year 2011-12 saw students queuing around the block for some letting agencies and messages received from students saying they needed rooms urgently. It also saw bunk rooms introduced into University Halls due to oversubscription. This put gigantic pressure on an already limited market to house the extra students and led to the campaign of 'Don't Panic - Fools Rush In'. In the survey, we see students referring to this *panic* and how they felt under pressure to sign contracts due to feeling that there wasn't enough accommodation in the town to house them.

With the introduction of a new fee structure of £9000 per annum in place for University, there has been a decline in the intake of students to the University, as well as the introduction of several new housing developments, such as the Old Crown Buildings and the University's new accommodation for 2014. This, and other planned developments, will see poor quality accommodation drop off the radar and standards increase, as a result, and hopefully the escalated prices that the survey has seen will fall.

It is important to note that this survey contains reviews of up to 18 Letting Agencies and a considerable number of Private Landlords, therefore when looking at the pie charts it is important to observe that the low number of reviews received about each company can affect the pie chart's negative/positive score which they received and is not necessarily a full picture of what the Agency is like.

The table of scores on the number of positive, neutral and negative results received does not mean that the Students Union is more favourable to particular letting agencies or against others. This survey was conducted in the matter of gathering information, therefore bias should not be given to certain agencies. The comments chosen for each agency reflect the comments received by other students, and full comments for each agency have been individually sent to them. A full copy of comments can be requested by emailing the address detailed below.

Leaving a comment in the comment box was optional and means that some students who were satisfied with their accommodation did not put a comment, and thus were regarded as neutral.

The end of this report shows our observations and conclusions of the Housing situation in Aberystwyth, and how we intend to address the issues raised in the report. It is hoped that we can work together with the County Council, Letting Agencies and Private Landlords to ensure that students are being treated fairly, and living in a better standard of accommodation in the future.

I hope you find the survey insightful, and if you have any observations or comments you would like to make, or you would like to discuss any housing issues, then please do not hesitate to email union.support@aber.ac.uk

Laura Dickens
Student Support Officer
Aberystwyth Students Union

Comments on the Report

With accommodation costs as high as those in Westminster, students in Aberystwyth deserve better. Having lived here for two years it is explicitly clear that there is a housing crisis - which the University, the Guild, and Local Government need to recognise.

Students are a vital part of the local economy, yet at present are being exploited by the local letting agents and landlords, and this simply cannot continue if Aberystwyth hopes to prosper in the future.

Greg Dash, Co-Founder Aberystwyth Student Housing Union

“The Aberystwyth Student Housing Union has seriously struck a chord with many students here, and as a former student myself in the town, I know how critical this is. I welcome the work being done and am hopeful that it goes a long way in improving what can be a very distressing and stressful situation across Aberystwyth each year.”

“My own casework has involved a great deal of work in the local housing situation as it affects students, and I welcome the dialogue between students and the council.”

Mark Williams, MP for Ceredigion

It's encouraging to see such a strong response from the students to this survey, however it shows that private housing is a huge concern for those living here, not only before they have signed a contract, but throughout their time as a student and resident. Responses to the survey show that the quality of landlords varies wildly across Aberystwyth, however we hope it will go a long way towards encouraging others to join us in working with landlords to improve the quality of housing for the benefit of current students, and the many that will choose to study here in the future.

Robert Hardware, Representative Aberystwyth Student Housing Union



The Findings

The survey received **308** valid responses, with **116** about Private Landlords and **193** about Letting Agencies.

The Average price of Rent per week, **excluding bills** is **£81.74**, with the cheapest being **£48.00** and the most expensive being **£187.50**.

The Average price of Rent per week, **including some bills** is **£80.25**, with the cheapest being **£50.00** and the most expensive being **£127.00**.

The Average price of Rent per week, **including all bills** is **£91.21**, with the cheapest being **£69.50** and the most expensive being **£160.00**.

Estate Agency Costs Breakdown (£s)

Estate Agents	Rent Per Week	Deposits	Admin Fees	Other Costs
AI	62.50-100	150-450	50-150	-
ABA	70-105	200-450	10-50	-
Aber Letting	61-187.50	270-750	10-45	22-50
Aber Student	75-100	100-650	-	-
Alexanders	61.25-175	360-950	40-150	30-100
ALP	70-110	280-700	50-132	35-50
GD Lettings	75-85	250-350	25-40	-
MS Properties	50-110	200-450	10-200	100-120
Padarn	69-82	150-330	40-70	100
Philip Evans	73-150	100-625	20-100	-
Seafront Student	70-80	100-500	-	-
I Stop Lettings	105-127	425-550	15	

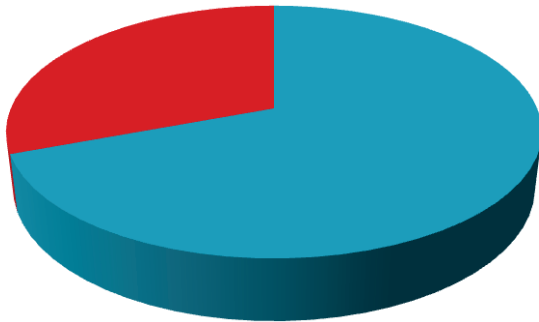
This information was taken from the figures provided to us by Students. Some did not specify if the rent included a deposit, or if the rent covered 2 persons, so this could account for higher variations. The figures also differ due to the size and standard of property.

Estate Agency Results Breakdown

Letting Agency	Positive Reviews	Neutral Reviews	Negative Reviews
A1	0	9	4
ABA	4	4	4
Aber Letting	3	8	1
Aber Student	3	2	1
Alexanders	0	6	12
ALP	2	17	6
GD Lettings	0	2	6
MS Properties	2	13	6
Padarn	5	8	4
Philip Evans	3	28	11
Seafront Student	0	2	3
1 Stop Lettings	1	2	0

AI Property Management

Feedback



- Positive and Neutral
- Negative

Out of 12 results received

Comments

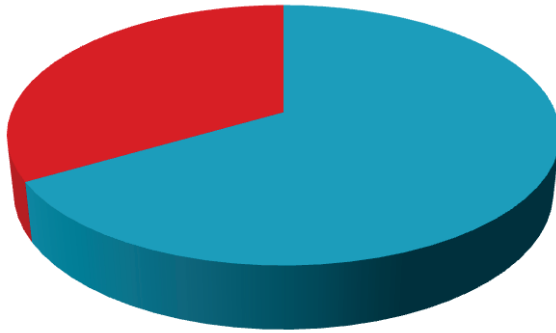
“The quality of the accommodation is poor all over town so I have ended up in expensive and poor accommodation but at least I have a sea view!”

“In my opinion AI property letting used an imposing tactic when it comes to students. I believe they use so called professionalism as a tactic that scares students to the point that they see them as the dominant force.”

“Full rent through summer even though we were not living there.”

ABA Property Management

Feedback



■ Positive
and
Neutral
■ Negative

Out of 12 results received

Comments

“He has been fantastic, any problems I've phoned (even at 8pm) and he's been over in 5minutes or less. So friendly and helpful :)”

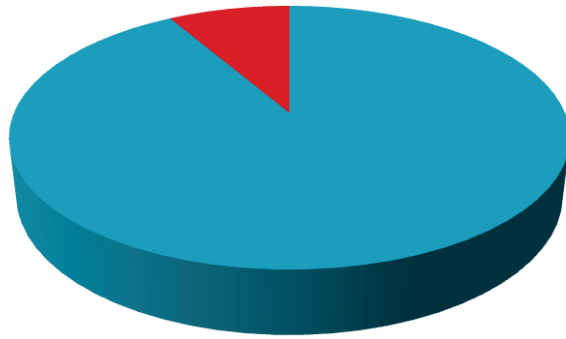
“Very friendly and very professional. When we first moved into the property we were given a list of services available if needed in an emergency which is very handy and helpful.”

“Rent is high for very little. Very small attic rooms for the same price per week as ground floor rooms 3 times the size and with high ceilings.”

“Not very good security on flat and landlord took months to fix things.”

Aber Letting

Feedback



- Positive and Neutral
- Negative

Out of 12 results received

Comments

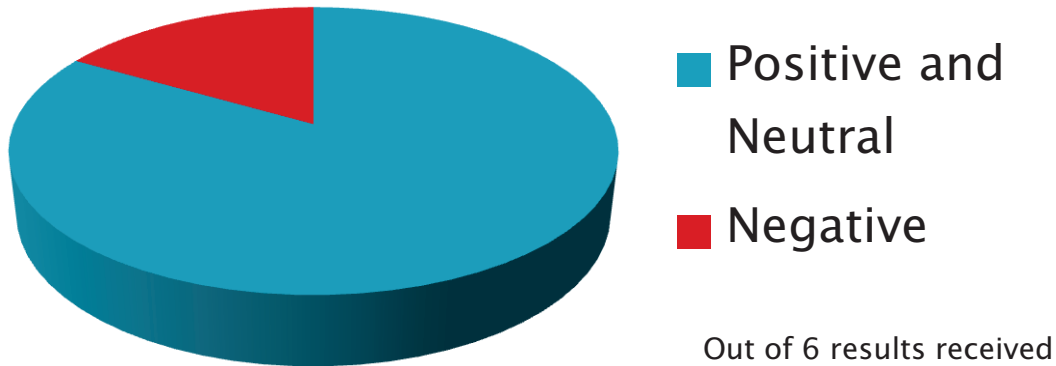
“Hated how early the flat started, wasn't told would start that early when signing, said it could be between 1st July - 1st September”

“Very happy with Aber Letting. Good contact all through the year, prompt fixing of things. Flat in good condition, contract coherent and fairly standard.”

“It's expensive and I have to get a job for it but it is really nice accommodation.”

Aber Student

Feedback



Comments

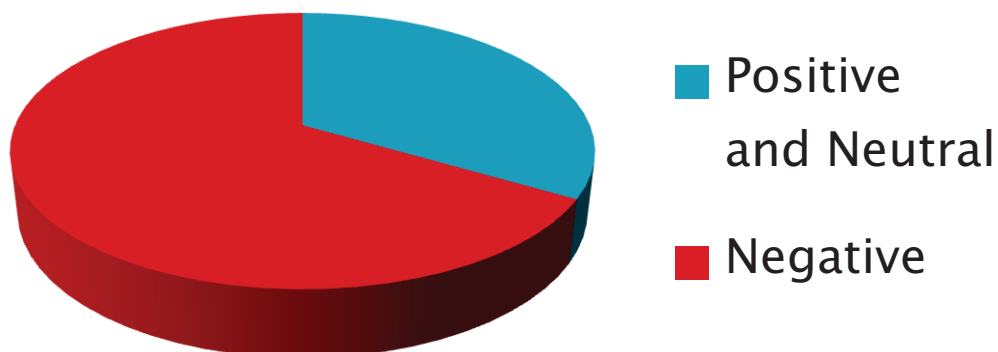
“Whilst everything is inclusive aside from electricity, and my landlord is very efficient compared to my previous landlady who was HORRIBLE, I still feel that what I am paying too much for what is essentially a 2 bedroom flat.”

“Large amount of space for pay.”

“I consider myself very lucky as Mr Johnson has always been reliable in explaining legalities such as the deposit protection scheme and has made time to ensure all issues for example a failing lock are fixed very quickly.”

Alexanders

Feedback



Out of 18 results received

Comments

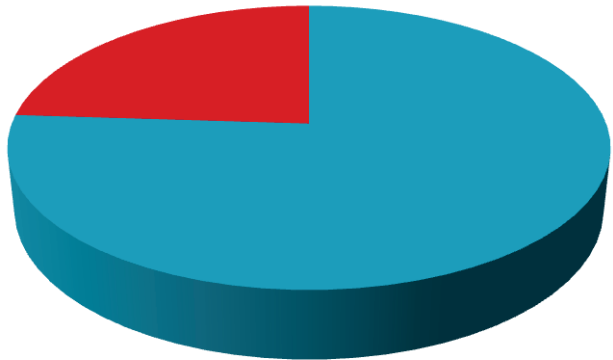
“So far so good, Alexanders staff have been helpful and polite, but require a bit of nagging to get stuff done.”

“Despite asking continuously for her curtain rail to be fixed the curtain rail in one of my housemates rooms came down and injured her boyfriend, luckily not seriously. Also mould was present in the house on arrival and the house was not ready to live till around 1 1/2 weeks after the tenancy started.”

“They also wanted you to sign the agreement straight away when we complained we wanted to carefully read through it all we got two days, which gave no time to post it to parents if needed.”

ALP Property Management

Feedback



- Positive and Neutral
- Negative

Out of 25 results received

Comments

“They are slow to fix anything in the house, however really good when you are going to be late on your rent, as long as you tell them.”

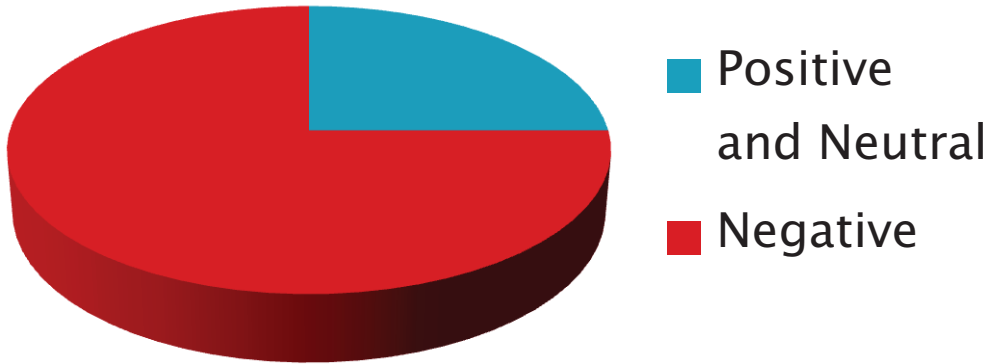
“We contacted them about the various problems with our flat (the locks on the front door are broken, the oven door fell off, the flat has damp, to name a few) and was told that we ‘complain too much’”

“ALP have had loads of bad reviews. But they're easy to deal with and they're decent people.”

“£50 "admin fee" per person, but I think it was partly the deposit protection scheme. We weren't told what it was for.”

GD Lettings

Feedback



Out of 8 results received

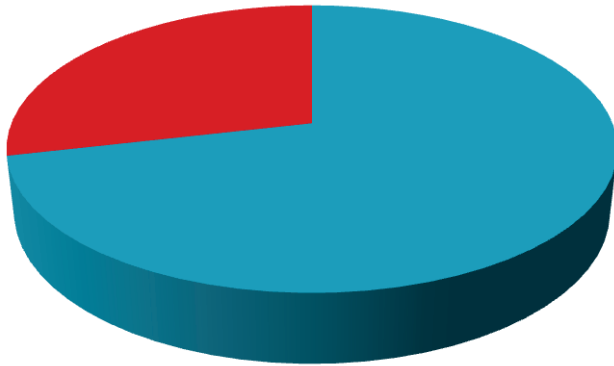
Comments

“Flat was not cleaned when the tenancy started. It was not even in a liveable state.”

“The accommodation is never an acceptable standard in my experience.”

MS Properties

Feedback



- Positive and Neutral
- Negative

Out of 21 results received

Comments

“Feel like a number, not an individual paying a lot of money for a house, better customer service needed.”

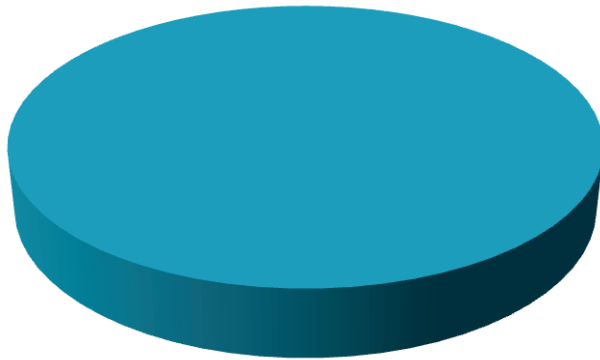
“MS properties seems to be a good agency. The owner is friendly and they repair things if broken quite fast.”

“We get cheaper rent over the summer because of building work that SHOULD be getting done.”

“Fully Furnished' in contract - includes bed, desk, chair, wardrobe, bedside table. Have to buy own book shelves. Have to buy own microwave, toaster, lamps.”

I Stop Lettings

Feedback



- Positive and Neutral
- Negative

Out of 3 results received

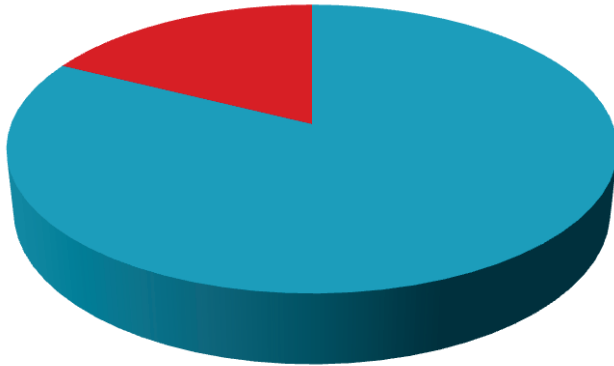
Comments

“I stop are by far the most student friendly in Aberystwyth.”

“£15 for background/credit check”

Padarn Lettings

Feedback



■ Positive and Neutral

■ Negative

Out of 17 results received

Comments

“A very nice letting agency and always easy and good to deal with. Nothing but praise for my letting agents and landlord!”

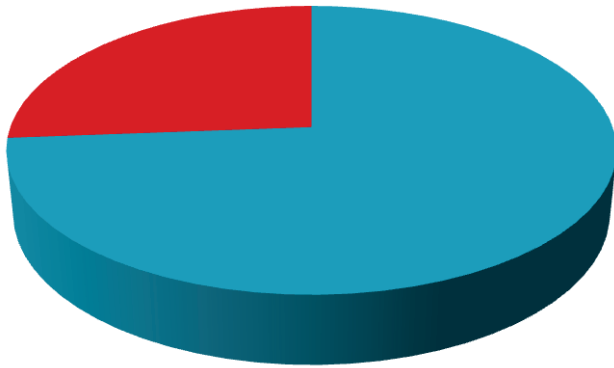
“A helpful letting agency, they did not rush us, I am looking forward to living in the town for my second year.”

“Deposit was a bit steep. Also, communications breakdown made moving in a bit touch-and-go because there was confusion over when I was allowed to move things in and live. Otherwise I've had few problems with Padarn, although sometimes they could be faster with maintenance issues.”

The letting agency are very pushy, and frequently disregard our privacy.

Philip Evans Estates

Feedback



- Positive and Neutral
- Negative

Out of 42 results received

Comments

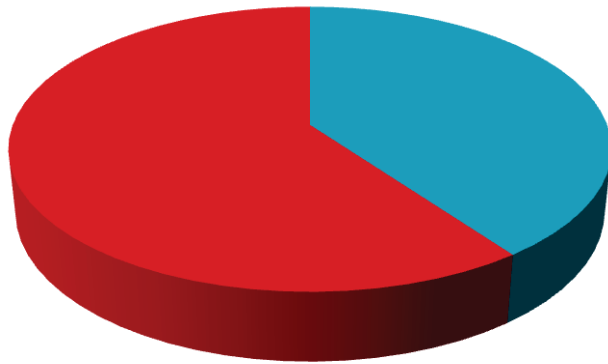
“Communication between landlord and estate agent seems very slow but repairs have generally been dealt with quickly (but at cost to us)”

“Estate agents have been brilliant. If anything's been broken or we've had any queries they've always been really helpful.”

“The mad dash to get accommodation sorted meant that we've ended up paying ridiculous rent with no bills included although we were with philip evans last year and they were pretty good when we had problems with the flat just don't be afraid to be pushy with them.”

Seafront Student

Feedback



■ Positive
and Neutral

■ Negative

Out of 5 results received

Comments

“Deposit required very early (December/January) which is extremely early and doesn't take student loan release dates into account. Rent due dates are prior to loan release from the student loans company which makes it very difficult to secure finance to pay the rent.”

“As the lists were staggered, it meant that everyone was fighting for the same houses - hence the problem. Scare tactics obviously worked by the letting agencies.”

Other Letting Agencies

For the smaller Letting Agencies and private style Halls, we received a small number of reviews, which are listed below:

Aled Ellis

“The contract was 30 pages long and we didn't read it very well so damage caused by the weather such as broken roof tiles or pipes damaged by freezing will be charged to us.”

(1 review received – 1 Neutral)

The Cambria

“Rent was increased unilaterally from £80 a week to £100 for the next academic year with no real explanation ('everyone is doing it'). Contract signing was rushed. Facilities poor, yet heavily policed with weekly inspections.”

“I am disappointed with the work of the cleaners, they do not do their jobs and leave the place just as dusty, dirty and grimy as they found it. For this to be included in rent yet the service is not fully provided is terrible.”

(4 reviews received – 2 Neutral, 2 Negative)

Other Letting Agencies

Jim Raw Rees

“They weren't a student letting, so they were expensive, but at the same time, they actually cared. Couldn't fault the letting agents.”

“Advertised as "Bills included except for electric"

Everything in the house run on electric! Internet not installed when we moved in, had to pay to get it installed by BT and was of course not included in the 'bills included'”

(3 Reviews received – 2 Positive, 1 Negative)

Lloyd Herbert & Jones

“Rent is ridiculously expensive in Aber and there is a distinct lack of student housing.”

(2 Reviews received – 2 Neutral)

Look Letting (Westerly Ltd)

“Letting agency has no office.”

(2 Reviews received – 2 Neutral)

The Marine Hotel

“£600 to hold the property even though it was being let out as a holiday cottage and £200 Refunded deposit

..I would give the marine hotel 1/10 such bad landlords kicked us out 4 months early do they could make more money from holiday makers and then tried keeping our rent!”

(1 Review received – 1 Negative)

Rees Property Management

(1 Review received – 1 Neutral)

Private Sector Renting

The Average rent in the Private sector

No bills – £81.20 per week, with the cheapest being **£48.00** and the most expensive being **£112.00**.

Some bills - £80.58 per week, with the cheapest being **£50.00** and the most expensive being **£105.00**.

All bills - £94.33, with the cheapest being **£70.00** and the most expensive being **£160.00**.

Bills included:

Out of **116** Private Rented properties, **51** included water, **15** internet, **3** electricity, **13** gas and **2** TV licenses.

Comments on the Private Sector

Of the comments received on the Private Sector, there were:
7 Positive, **84** Neutral and **25** Negative

Positive Comments:

“My landlady is really good, she tries to keep costs to a minimum and she seems very fair. I haven't had to pay over the summer which has been a real bonus. I just wish that other people could have the same experience that I have had over housing!”

“Nice guy, will see what happens.”

“The rent is £355 p/m in an 8 bedroom seafront house, with living area, 2 kitchens (small!), 3 toilets and 3 showers. Our Landlord Brian is very fair and down to Earth, and easy to get a hold of and kind when you do. I would recommend him and his girlfriend Jennifer Thomas as Landlords who you don't make you resent your rent payments.”

“Friend's parents bought a house and are letting it to us, very easy and smooth process.”

“The house I rent is in Waunfawr - Rhoshendre. I highly recommend going private if possible. This landlord let us keep the house for second and third year and we've had absolutely no problems with her or anything in the house. Any problems, she's come and sorted within a week.”

“My landlady is very helpful and kind.”

Neutral Comments

“Be careful renting, even with a contract you can still get diddled.

Be aware that water, gas, electric, internet, phone line, TV license (along with your own mobile phone bill, travel expenditure, food etc.) all add up. The best advice I can give is to at least TRY and negotiate, try and get the water in with the rent (for the same price - or marginal increase) as an example. Also, watch those 12 month (or longer) contracts with the likes of BT, make sure you really need it.”

“In general, there seems to be a lot of competition for housing in Aberystwyth and a lot of it seems quite expensive for student housing especially during the summer months. I would imagine that the rent would be very reasonable during the summer seeing as there are not many students left in Aberystwyth but it doesn't seem to affect price at all.

My current accommodation expenses are not too bad as we received a discount due to the house being in need of renovation during the summer. Still I know of other people who are paying more rent for accommodation that is not of a particularly high standard

Also the university could do more to provide housing during summer as many students involved in masters courses wish to stay until the end of summer.

Students who go into halls for the summer have to leave by the end of August which for many students is long before their dissertation work is due.”

“Gas and electric not included - costs paid on a meter. Shared cost between 3 people around £7 - £10 per week on electric and £5 - £7 per week on gas.”

“Landlady is very nice and helpful and the house is beautiful, but still all very expensive.”

Negative Comments

“Nope, just that's its damn expensive for the ridiculous states some of the housing is in, but because Aber is so small, you literally have no other choice. I've visited Newcastle University, and my friends have a brand new flat all newly renovated, double beds in every room, smells like fresh white paint. Amazing steel kitchen, really spacious, 3 bathrooms. About 20 minutes from the centre of Newcastle, and they pay £80 a week, which includes water as well. It's just the unfairness sometimes.”

“The rent is way to expensive, there is no washing machine, the flat is small - just 3 rooms with kitchen and bathroom, and we were forced to take it because there were no other places available. A lot a houses were free, but not for students.”

“I paid £90 per week in my third year, for a tiny room in a flat with no social living area, and a kitchen which you literally could not swing a cat in!!! In my second year I paid £70 per week for a house which was too big, with no central heating, therefore I froze during winter and spring!!! Aberystwyth student housing is a disgrace!!!”

“We only found a house by talking to a third year who was leaving next year. Terrible housing situation in Aber. Applied for and turned down by uni for uni accommodation. Went around all 15 letting agents we could find in Aber, none had any houses. This was in January. Went to Alexander's, who said they'd have a new list on 1st February and said to turn up any time because they were only booking viewings, not renting the houses at that stage. Turned up at 9AM on 1st February, apparently students had been queuing since 5AM and all the houses were now gone.”

“We received our first months rent back as the landlord had been letting other people live here, which we found out when we moved in and had nowhere to sleep/put anything.”

“House was wrecked and massive mess was left by the previous students.”

Observations

From the report, several key themes came out from the responses, which I think are important to explore:

High Rents are a big focus of this survey, and the prices that have come out over the course of the research have been quite astounding. When we compare what the BBC polled as the average of £62.01 per week (found in Appendix 1) and what we see the actual costs coming out as, shows that prices have inflated significantly over the past few years. However, up until this academic year, the demand for Private Sector properties was high due to the University taking on more students than it could accommodate, and this has meant that prices were able to rise. Now, there are once again more properties than students, and with more new student developments on the way, we will once again see competition drive down the price of rents.

Some private sector landlords compare their prices to those offered by the University, but it is key to remember that the University offers a lot of services in the inclusive price, such as site security, electricity, water and so on. Therefore, a repeated comment in the survey was to question why the rent was so high and to comment on paying too much for a little.

A concern, if prices do not go down, is that students will not be able to afford the high rents, especially with the way that Student Loans are rewarded in a means tested capacity. Therefore, they will have a shortfall, which will either mean entering high levels of debt, or relying upon parents to make up the shortfall, or the contingency fund from the Welsh Government which can be applied for, and both of these cannot be guaranteed to bridge the gap.

Full Summer Rent being charged, with the student not being allowed to live there, or discovering that the landlord is double-renting the room. is a further concern. We are actively encouraging students to ask why they have to pay so much, and why they can not occupy their rooms if full rent is being charged over summer. It is illegal to be double renting a room, and if students discover that this is the case, we actively encourage them to take legal action.

High Admin fees are a big concern to students. Some have experienced up to £200 worth of admin fees, and a lot of the time, the fee is non-refundable and it is questionable what the high price goes towards. The price of admin, as seen in this report, vary between the different agencies. However, it is a concern when the fees are high, as students are expected to pay a lot of money in a short amount of time when it comes to housing, and this can leave them with a significant shortfall and/or relying on parents or others to cover the cost.

Deposit Protection Scheme fees are a concern. Some students are being charged up to £50 per person in order to see their deposit placed within a deposit protection scheme, and every little cost adds up in the grand scheme of housing. With the deposit protection schemes available, it is not as expensive as that. The scheme 'mydeposits' charges £30 for the household, or £17.50 for registering online. Even inclusive of VAT, it is the price to store a household's deposit, and therefore students should not be paying more than that amount between them. Therefore it is important that students question why they must pay a high cost, and why the cost is inflated from the price given on the schemes' websites.

Condition of Properties are another concern. Students commented about how upon moving into their properties, the condition was not what they were expecting, and a lot of students commented on having problems with damp. Damp is a contentious issue as a lot of the properties in Aberystwyth are old and suffer from bad ventilation, but it is imperative to keep putting on heating and opening windows and not doing things such as drying washing on radiators. However, where the student has done their part, and the damp is still present, it is vital that landlords are keeping their properties up to scratch.

The lack of accommodation for students in Aberystwyth, up until this year, has meant that poor quality accommodation has been allowed to exist, and students have had to accept lower standards in order to have a roof over their heads. Now, with the increase in accommodation, the sub-standard conditions will not be accepted, and bad accommodation will drop off.

Pressure to Sign Contracts was a common concern, especially amongst this survey and the other feedback we have had back from last year when the 'Don't Panic – Fools Rush In' campaign was ongoing. Instances of people being told that they better sign quickly before it's all gone led to rushing to sign a contract, and accepting sub-standard accommodation. The Housing Crisis Centre in July 2012, managed to find 170 bedrooms in its first day, showing that the shortfall of accommodation to be far less than expected, and meaning this year that those who rushed in to contracts with sub-standard accommodation are now stuck with it until the end of the academic year. Now that there is enough accommodation and more choice, students need not feel that they have to rush to put pen to paper, until they are 100% happy with their choices. They have been advised that if they are being pressured to sign, and not being given enough time to properly read through the terms, then they should definitely consider other options, as it is better to be educated in your agreement.

Other concerns that were raised focused around the time taken to make repairs, or instances where repairs were not addressed at all, communication between landlord and tenant, and the need for better communication on move in dates and clarification of things not in contract and the slow return of deposit protection fees.

Conclusions

This report has highlighted a need for the University and Students' Union to work together to provide more support and training for students when it comes to the private sector. The more educated students are when it comes to housing, then the better the treatment they are likely to receive.

The standard of accommodation which has been portrayed to us, and the standard we have seen when investigating student cases has been shocking, and often could have been avoided with better investment in properties and maintenance. It is my intention to ensure that future accommodation campaigns focus on the standard of accommodation and that we maintain a good working relationship with Ceredigion County Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The high rent and other fees being charged to students is a large concern to me, especially in a time when living costs are high. A lot of pressure is put on parents to make up the shortfall, and although there is the Financial Contingency Fund, it is limited to how much the University is allocated each year and is not open to all students. Hopefully, now that the competition will be decreased by fewer students using the Private Sector and an increased supply of accommodation, this will naturally lead to more competitive and lower rents, and also lower admin and other fees which are passed on to students. We will still encourage students to question why they have to pay every fee they incur and what it goes towards.

In the long term, as mandated by the recent Student Assembly, we will be working towards a Union Letting Agency, by starting to look into a form of Union Accreditation for Letting Agencies. At present, we do not recommend agencies over one another in the interests of fairness, we can only report back what we have found in this survey and then the student can make their own judgements. The Union Letting Agency coming onto the scene, we can hope, will lead to better standards of accommodation, better working relations with the Private Sector and lower rental prices.

In the second semester of this academic year, we intend to hold a new 'Landlord Awards' in order to commend the good landlords and to give landlords something to aspire to. Far too often in Aberystwyth, we hear more about bad instances and bad cases, and this can be an extremely negative situation to content with.

Ultimately, we will be looking into all of the negative comments that have come out of this survey, so we can work with the local authorities, Letting Agencies, Private Landlords and students to ensure that these are addressed. We welcome responses from Landlords and Letting Agencies on any comments they would like to make on the report and how they feel things could improve.

We are always open to new developments, and to working with landlords and letting agencies to adjust to what students want, and we are happy to listen to where they think things can also improve. Our seat on the Landlord Steering Group is extremely important as an instrument for maintaining these relationships, and I hope this will be continued for the future.

Appendix I

BBC NEWS

WALES

22 August 2011 Last updated at 07:24

Wales' university students face rental price hike

Students in Wales are facing an increase of up to 11% in rental charges for private university accommodation, according to a survey.

Four out of the six main towns and cities show students will have to pay more per week on average, Accommodation for Students website say.

The biggest Welsh rise comes in Bangor where last year's average weekly rent has risen from £59.22 to £65.87.

The figures do not include university-owned accommodation.

But Newport students will not pay any more on average than last year while those living in Pontypridd will see a drop.

Luke Young, president of NUS Wales, said a rise in the cost of accommodation was "deeply worrying" at a time when students are already feeling the pinch.

"As the cost of private accommodation rises, students will be actively comparing prices to see what they can afford," he said.

"The immediate concern is that for some students it may mean choosing poor quality housing to keep budgets under control.

"Students are already feeling the pinch, so we need to be aware how price rises will have an impact."

Cardiff students will see an average £3.59 per week rise to £61.07 while those in Swansea will have to pay £2.42 more on average at £60.17.

Students in Aberystwyth will have a very small rise at £62.01 per week with Newport seeing the status quo maintained at £60.93.

Pontypridd rental prices have dropped from an average of £46.15 a week last year to £45.74.

Simon Thompson, co-founder and director of Accommodation for Students, said: "The rent increases for some cities reflect two key factors.

"One is the changing nature of accommodation coming on the market. The trend is for hi-spec, better quality student accommodation, and some locations are leading the way in this area.

"The other key factor is the popularity or desirability of attending some universities that puts pressure on the accommodation available and hence, the charging of higher rents.

"With such financial pressure being put on students with fees, the cost of accommodation is a real factor in university choice."

'Financial pressure'He added: "Either way, students who are going through the current clearing process are unlikely to be able to find university accommodation for their first year and so it is really helpful to know precisely how much they will have to pay for private rented accommodation.

"With such financial pressure being put on student with fees, the cost of accommodation is a real factor in university choice."

The increase in fees are mirrored across the UK.

Students in London face the highest rental charges averaging £108.33 per week with Exeter, Uxbridge, Guildford and Cambridge having to pay in excess of £90.

Middlesbrough is the cheapest place to be a student where they are charged an average £43.68.

Sourced: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-14590301>

P-04-481 Close the Gap for deaf pupils in Wales

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to develop a national strategy to Close the Gap in educational attainment between deaf pupils and their peers.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Cymru presents this petition today as it is both Deaf Awareness Week and two years since 55 AMs pledged to take action to Close the Gap for deaf pupils.

Still, Welsh Government statistics demonstrate significant attainment gaps between deaf pupils and their peers. In 2012, deaf pupils were 26% less likely to achieve 5 GCSEs at A*-C, and 41% less likely to achieve A*-C passes in core subjects English/Welsh, Maths and Science.

Our video petition asks the experts (deaf pupils themselves) what matters most. They told us:

- We need appropriate support in school and college
- We need all classrooms to have good acoustics
- Some of us use sign language. Help us encourage our hearing peers and teachers to learn sign.
- We need more teachers and pupils to be deaf aware.

Too many deaf pupils are facing barriers in these areas. A national strategy is needed to address the barriers and Close the Gap!

Additional Information

Our video petition and an accompanying report can be downloaded at www.ndcs.org.uk/ClosetheGapWales

The video petition was produced with the help of eight deaf young people outlines the four things that they feel are most important to deaf pupils at school and college.

The accompanying report outlines the barriers that many deaf pupils in Wales are facing in these areas. It also makes suggestions on how a strategy could help to overcome these barriers.

Petition raised by: NDCS

Date petition first considered by Committee: 14 May 2013

Close the Gap Petition

Introduction

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Cymru presents our **Close the Gap!** petition to the Petitions Committee on behalf of deaf children and young people throughout Wales. We present the petition today (7 May 2013) as it is both Deaf Awareness Week and two years since 55 of the 60 current Assembly Members pledged to take action to *Close the Gap* in educational attainment between deaf pupils and other children.

Still, too many deaf children and young people are not reaching their full potential. Welsh Government statistics (first published in 2009) demonstrate that there is a significant attainment gap between deaf pupils and their peers at every Key Stage. In 2012, deaf pupils were 26% less likely to achieve 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, and **41%** less likely to achieve GCSE higher grade passes in core subjects English/Welsh, Maths and Science.¹

This gap in attainment is not acceptable. Our petition is calling for a strategy to address the barriers that deaf children and young people face at school and college and to **Close the Gap!**

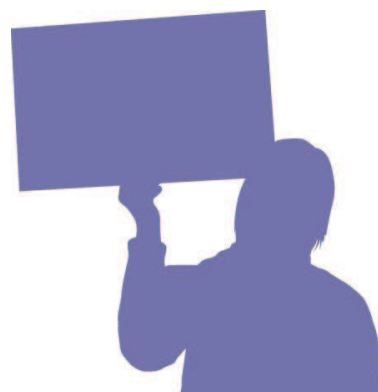
NDCS Cymru has asked the experts – deaf young people themselves – to tell us about what key points must be included in a strategy.

Our experts identified four key points, which are outlined in our accompanying video:

1. We need appropriate support in school and college.
2. We need all classrooms to have good acoustics.
3. Some of us use sign language. Help us encourage our hearing peers and teachers to learn sign.
4. We need more teachers and pupils to be deaf aware.

Too many deaf children and young people in Wales are facing barriers in these important areas and are, therefore, not reaching their full potential at school and college.

This short paper provides more background information on the topics identified by the experts in our video. It outlines the different types of barriers that deaf young people face within these areas and makes suggestions on how to develop a strategy to address these barriers.



To watch our video and find out more information, please visit www.ndcs.org.uk/ClosetheGapWales

1. We need appropriate support in school and college

The young deaf people who feature in our video each access different types and levels of support, yet they all wanted to tell us how important their support is to them.

I want to show the Welsh Government how hard it is in school for young deaf people.
- Jodie

I want to tell the politicians why deaf people need better facilities in schools in Wales.
- Daniyaal

The background

Every deaf child is different. Some deaf children and young people use assistive listening devices like hearing aids or cochlear implants, others do not. Some deaf children and young people use speech and lip-read, some sign and others may do all of these things.

As there are no specialist schools for the deaf in Wales, some attend specialist schools across the border, but the vast majority of deaf children in Wales attend mainstream schools. Some attend mainstream schools with a specialist resource base for deaf pupils, while others may be the only deaf child in the whole school.

Deafness affects children and young people in different ways. As a result, the support a deaf pupil requires will depend

on his/her individual needs. Deaf children may need a range of different types of support. The following types of support should be available:

- **Teacher of the Deaf.** These professionals specialise in ensuring that the curriculum is accessible to deaf children and young people. They may advise mainstream teachers and may also provide direct support to a deaf child.
- **Speech and language therapist.** These professionals can help deaf children and young people who may experience difficulties in speech development due to limited access to sound.
- **Technology.** Many deaf children rely on the sounds that they can access to help them communicate. Assistive listening equipment, such as radio aids or sound field systems can be important for these pupils.
- **Communication Support Worker/Interpreter.** These professionals are distinctly different from a Teacher of the Deaf. They are not teaching professionals, rather they specialise in communicating/translating what is said in the classroom and can be imperative for deaf young people who sign.
- **Note-taker.** Many deaf young people at college require a note-taker. This is because it is not possible to simultaneously lip-read/watch an interpreter and take notes.

What are the barriers?

Deaf children and young people are often not receiving the support they need at school or college. Without appropriate support, deaf children and young people face significant barriers in accessing the curriculum and in reaching their full potential.

Accessing support can be difficult in Wales for a number of reasons. Firstly, Teachers of the Deaf are often stretched to capacity and limited in number. NDCS Cymru is concerned that this situation is likely to worsen as local authorities face difficult budgetary decisions.

Secondly, local authorities can experience difficulties in recruiting Communication Support Workers, especially those with an appropriate level of sign language. A survey conducted by the Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) in 2012 revealed that there are only 6.5 full time equivalent Communication Support Workers in post across the principality.ⁱⁱ It is not uncommon for a deaf child to be supported by a Communication Support Worker, or even a teaching assistant, who has only a very basic level of sign language. NDCS Cymru is concerned about the impact that this has both on a pupil's access to the curriculum and on the pupil's ability to further develop his/her preferred language.

Deaf children and young people should be entitled to a personalised plan outlining their support requirements for school (either an Individual Education Plan or a Statement, depending on their level of need.) However, in practice, many deaf children and young people are either not receiving such plans, or receive plans which lack specific detail on the level of support they require. NDCS Cymru is keen to ensure that any changes within the planned ALN reform will work effectively for deaf children and

their families. However, having seen the current proposals, we are concerned that these issues could continue under the reformed system. We are particularly keen to ensure that under the new system:

- It is clearly stated that deaf children and young people are entitled to a support plan.
- Appropriate specialist professionals are identified to contribute to a deaf child's support plan.
- The new support plan provides clear information on the type and level of support that the child or young person will receive.
- Deaf children, young people and their families have appropriate rights to challenge the support they are given. We consider that ensuring such rights are in place does not necessarily increase the number of appeals, but rather encourages compliance with the Code of Practice.

We also have concerns around securing specialist support for post-16 students in Wales. The Welsh Government is devolving funding for placements at specialist colleges to local authorities as part of the Revenue Support Grant. In addition, funding for the support of students in mainstream colleges which was previously allocated centrally through the LLDD Supplementary Fund is set to be devolved to Colleges. Although NDCS Cymru is not against the devolution of this funding, we urge that monitoring measures are put in place to ensure that local authorities and Colleges meet their new responsibilities in this regard.

NDCS Cymru is also concerned about whether or not schools are appropriately held to account in relation to the support that they offer deaf pupils. Indeed, under

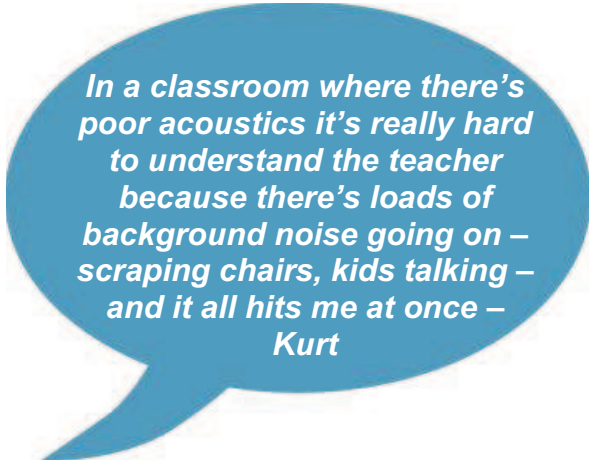
the current Estyn inspection system, there is a lack of information and emphasis on special educational needs.

Suggestions

- That the Welsh Government reviews whether the availability and skill set of key specialist professionals (as outlined above) are appropriate to the needs of the young deaf population in Wales.ⁱⁱⁱ Such a review could consider whether national standards and further training opportunities are required to improve the availability of such support.
- That the Welsh Government works with NDCS Cymru to overcome our concerns in relation to the ALN Reforms. In particular, we would welcome assurances around the right of appeal and the development of disability specific pathways. Originally, it was proposed that specific guidance would be made to outline referral pathways and clarify how the new system would apply to different groups of children and young people. We understand that the proposals may now be dropped. We urge that the Welsh Government goes ahead with producing a provision pathway for deaf children and young people, so that there is clarity over type of support deaf children may need and which professionals should be involved in assessing their needs.
- That, in devolving funding to support post-16 students with special educational needs, the Welsh Government puts in place monitoring measures to ensure local authorities and colleges appropriately meet their responsibilities to support these students.
- That the Welsh Government encourages Estyn to consider how inspections of schools with deaf pupils on roll, and of local authority specialist support services could include an improved examination of the support that is provided to deaf children and young people.

2. We need all classrooms to have good acoustics

Most of the experts in our video use hearing aids, cochlear implants or radio aids. They talked about how difficult it can be to concentrate in noisy classrooms.



In a classroom where there's poor acoustics it's really hard to understand the teacher because there's loads of background noise going on – scraping chairs, kids talking – and it all hits me at once –
Kurt

The background

Many deaf children and young people use the sound they can access to help understand what is being communicated. This can be a difficult skill to develop, requiring a lot of concentration. In rooms where there are poor acoustics, it can be even more difficult for deaf children to access sound.

It should be acknowledged that while many children use assistive listening devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, these devices are not a “cure” for deafness. They do not restore “typical” hearing levels. In fact, in rooms where there are poor acoustics, these devices can be rendered useless. Hearing aids tend to amplify all noises, so deaf children and young people have told us that they turn their aids off in classrooms with poor acoustics. Other technological devices, such as soundfield systems, also require a good acoustic environment to be effective.

It should be noted that good acoustics are also important for many other vulnerable groups of learners, including the 80% of all children who experience temporary hearing loss through glue ear.^{iv}

NDCS Cymru has been campaigning on the issue of school acoustics, along with the support of ten other organisations,^v and is pleased that the issue has received cross party support. In total, 39 Assembly Members have shown their support for good acoustics in school, college and nursery buildings.^{vi}

What are the barriers?

Although building regulations stipulate that new school buildings must meet a minimum acoustic standard, these standards are often ignored as there is no mandatory requirement for demonstrating compliance with the standards.

Our survey of local authorities in Wales highlighted that of the 262 schools built between 2003 and 2010, only 11% had been tested for compliance with acoustic standards and only 31% had involved any consultation with an acoustician.^{vii}

NDCS Cymru is pleased to have worked with the Welsh Government in relation to schools built under the 21st Century Schools Programme. Schools built under this programme are now contractually obliged to demonstrate compliance with acoustic standards. We consider that this has been a positive step forward in putting acoustics on the agenda. However, we are aware that this will only affect schools funded in this way and are conscious that our research revealed unwillingness among officials to meet standards where it was not considered mandatory.

Now that building regulations have been devolved, we are urging the Welsh Government to go one step further. Ensuring that the same requirement is placed into statutory regulations will mean that all schools can *sound good* regardless of how they are funded.

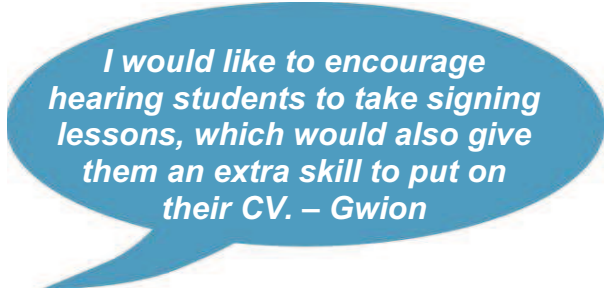
We are also conscious of steps that could be taken to improve acoustics in existing school, college and nursery buildings and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Welsh Government to promote our toolkit for schools looking to improve the acoustics in their building.

Suggestions

- That the Welsh Government uses its powers over building regulations to strengthen acoustic standards. This will ensure that all school, college and nursery buildings are required to demonstrate compliance with acoustic standards – regardless of how they are funded.
- That the Welsh Government works with NDCS Cymru to raise awareness among head teachers about some of the measures they can take to improve the acoustics in pre-existing school buildings.

3. Some of us use sign language. Help us encourage our hearing peers and teachers to learn sign

Our group of experts communicate in different ways – speech, sign, or a mixture of both.



I would like to encourage hearing students to take signing lessons, which would also give them an extra skill to put on their CV. – Gwion

The background

Deaf children will communicate in different ways. Some deaf young people use sign language as their first and preferred language.

Recognised as an official language in Wales in January 2004, British Sign Language (BSL) is distinctly different from English. It is a language in its own right with its own vocabulary and grammatical structure. For some deaf people, BSL is also closely interlinked with Deaf culture. Many deaf young people who are not first language signers may choose to use sign language socially. For these young people sign language can be a way of connecting with a deaf identity and/or the deaf community.

Some deaf children and young people communicate with Sign Supported English/Welsh, which uses BSL signs in conjunction with the grammatical

structure of the English or Welsh language.

What are the barriers?

Since there are no schools for the deaf in Wales, the vast majority of deaf pupils attend a mainstream school or a mainstream school with a specialist resource base. Being surrounded by hearing pupils can mean that deaf young people are vulnerable to feelings of isolation.

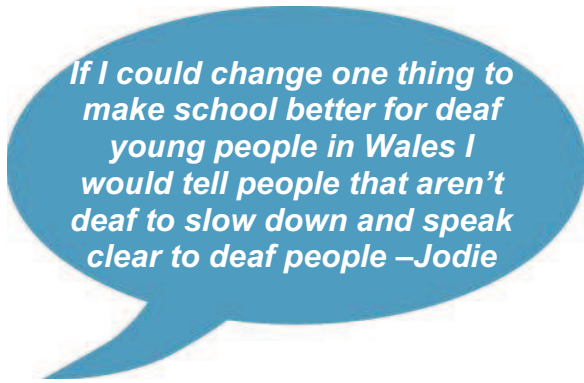
Ensuring that other young people in the school can use sign language helps deaf young people who use sign to feel more included. It is also good practice for staff other than the specialist support teachers to learn some basic sign. The idea behind this is not to replace the need for specialist support teachers, as a high level of sign is required to appropriately support a BSL pupil (see section one of this paper). Moreover, the idea is around ensuring that deaf young people are encompassed in all aspects of school life.

Suggestions


- NDCS Cymru would urge the Welsh Government to encourage more teachers and pupils to learn to sign.
- NDCS Cymru would welcome a review of the availability of BSL courses in Wales and consideration of how access to such classes could be improved.

4. We need more teachers and pupils to be deaf aware.

Deaf awareness is about understanding how difficult communication can be for deaf people and knowing some simple but effective ways of ensuring that deaf people are included in conversations and activities. Our experts highlighted how important this is for all deaf children and young people.



If I could change one thing to make school better for deaf young people in Wales I would tell people that aren't deaf to slow down and speak clear to deaf people –Jodie



I would like to make people aware that I am the same as everyone else, being deaf is no big deal – Ryan

The background

Across the UK, deaf young people often tell us that they need more teachers and pupils to understand what it is like being deaf so that they can communicate more easily with everyone at school.

A lack of deaf awareness can affect a child's ability to access lessons. For example, if a teacher is facing away from the class when talking, deaf

children and young people will miss what is being said.

A lack of deaf awareness is also a barrier for deaf children and young people in social situations at school. For example, it may be difficult to lip-read in a group discussion and deaf young people will miss out on some information that others may over-hear. Also, without appropriate awareness, games such as football can be difficult if the deaf young person cannot hear instructions or the referee's whistle.

What are the barriers?

In an environment where teachers and pupils are not deaf aware, deaf children and young people can experience access difficulties both inside and outside the classroom. This leaves deaf young people more vulnerable to low educational attainment, feelings of isolation and experiences of being bullied.

In some instances, deaf awareness is not just about including a deaf child, but can also be about acknowledging that a child has a hearing loss in the first place. Many deaf young people use assistive listening devices and attend a mainstream school where they may be the only deaf pupil on roll. Generally, there is a lack of awareness that assistive listening devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants do not restore "typical" hearing levels. Therefore, it is often not acknowledged that a deaf child requires any additional communication support.

It should also be noted that 80% of all children will experience a temporary hearing loss through glue ear at some point before they reach the age of ten.^{viii} For many children, this period of temporary hearing loss can be repeated or sustained, and can have a serious

impact on their access to lessons. Ensuring that teachers are aware of glue ear and basic deaf awareness tips would help to minimise the impact of glue ear for these children. Potentially, with a greater level of awareness, teachers can also play a role in helping to identify children who are experiencing a hearing loss. Hearing loss can all too often be misinterpreted as shyness, a short attention span, or general misbehaviour.

Suggestions

- Given the high incidence of temporary deafness and the fact that the vast majority of deaf children in Wales attend mainstream schools, we consider it imperative that teachers receive a basic level of deaf awareness training. We recommend that the Welsh Government considers including basic information on deafness within the ITT, NQT or the new Masters in Education course. NDCS Cymru has worked on some resources for newly qualified teachers with Bridgend County Borough Council and would welcome the opportunity to provide some similar resources and information on a Wales-wide basis.
- NDCS Cymru is disappointed that, as we understand, the new training for ALNCos (Additional Learning Needs Coordinators) that has been developed as part of the ALN reforms does not include any information on deafness. We strongly urge the Welsh Government to reconsider this point. ALNCos play an important role as the central contact in a school for special educational needs. It is imperative that they are aware of the fact that deaf young people can face substantial barriers, and that they know how to access further

information to ensure their school is inclusive of a young deaf person.

- NDCS has worked with deaf young people to develop our UK-wide “Look Smile Chat” resources. These resources aim to help schools teach their pupils about deaf awareness. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Welsh Government to encourage schools throughout Wales to use these resources.

More information

Thank you for reading this paper and for watching our video petition. We hope that the Welsh Government will work with us to take action on these barriers for deaf children and young people all over Wales.

For more information please contact campaigns.wales@ndcs.org.uk, or call 029 20373474.

Thank you.

Annex

Attainment Gap statistics

Key Stage 4

Data on the attainment levels of deaf pupils is available from 2005. It demonstrates that the gap in attainment between deaf pupils and their peers is relatively consistent. Although, the gap dropped significantly in 2011, we are disappointed that this gap has again widened. In 2012, deaf pupils were 26% less likely to achieve 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C than other children.

We are even more concerned that the gap in attainment for higher grade passes in core subjects English/Welsh, Maths and Science has widened to 41%. This is the highest it has been since records began.

Year	Attainment gap for achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (%)	Attainment gap for achieving A*-C grades in English/Welsh, Maths and Science (%)
2012	26	41
2011	12	19
2010	29	33
2009	15	13
2008	30	27
2007	27	27
2006	26	38
2005	29	36

Key Stages 1- 3

We are pleased to have seen some improvement over the past few years in the attainment of deaf pupils at Key Stages 1-3. However, we remain concerned that the gap in attainment is still unacceptably high for deaf pupils at every Key Stage level.

In 2012:

- Deaf pupils at Key Stage 1 were 15% less likely to achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator
- Deaf pupils at Key Stage 2 were 15% less likely to achieve the Core Subject Indicator
- Deaf pupils at Key Stage 3 were 19% less likely to achieve the Core Subject Indicator.

* Please Note:

All figures show how much less likely it is (as a percentage) that deaf children will achieve as well as their hearing peers.

The data specifically excludes special educational need (SEN) types other than deafness in order to draw the simplest comparison. It compares the attainment of deaf pupils who have no other additional SEN with the attainment levels of pupils who have no registered SEN.

The “Foundation Phase Indicator” refers to reaching the expected level or above in English/Welsh, Personal and Social Development and Maths.

The “Core Subject Indicator” refers to achieving the expected level or above in English or Welsh (first language), Mathematics and Science in combination. The expected level of the majority of pupils is level 4 at Key Stage 2 and level 5 at Key Stage 3.

More detailed information on this attainment data is available at www.ndcs.org.uk/ClosetheGapWales

References

ⁱ For more information on attainment data, please visit http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/national_data/education_data_in.html.

ⁱⁱ The CRIDE (Consortium for Research in Deaf Education) report on 2012 survey on educational provision for deaf children in Wales is available at http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/national_data/uk_education.html.

ⁱⁱⁱ Data on the numbers of specialist professionals working across Wales is available from the Consortium of Research into Deaf Education and could be utilised in such a review.

^{iv} Clinical Guideline, National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (2008), *Surgical management of otitis media with effusion in children*, page 1, section 1.1.

^v These organisations include: Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, Afasic Cymru, Autism Cymru, BATOD, Deaf Access Cymru, Down's Syndrome Association, National Autistic Society Cymru, North Wales Deaf Association, RNIB Cymru, SENSE Cymru.

^{vi} For more information, visit http://www.ndcs.org.uk/about_us/campaign_with_us/wales/sounds_good/index.html

^{vii} NDCS Cymru (December 2011) *Let's Make a New Year's Resolution that Sounds Good!*

^{viii} Clinical Guideline, National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (2008), *Surgical management of otitis media with effusion in children*, page 1, section 1.1.

Agenda Item 2.5

P-04-482 Public noticeboards across Wales notifying the public of who all their political representatives are

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to develop a national system of placing large public notice boards (of 5x4 foot or so as an example) across all the local authorities and electoral wards of Wales, clearly notifying everyone who their local Councillor/s and AM's are, together with clear information on how, where and when all of these can all be contacted and met and with regular and updated information on when and where all local council meetings are held.

There is a real need for people to be clearly notified of who their political representatives are at all levels, with clear well laid out informative notice boards centrally placed in all the local authorities and electoral wards of Wales. Consideration could also be given for surgery hours and locations, and possibly council meetings, to be standardised around Wales (e.g. 1-3pm of every first Saturday of the month at local community centres all across Wales as a generic example) so that people can interact and connect with their representatives more effectively. This will all encourage the citizens of Wales to have better involvement in the democracy of their country and communities

Petition raised by: Sovereign Wales

Date petition first considered by Committee: 14 May 2013

Number of signatures: 11

P-04-483 A plain English /Cymraeg clir policy for all Welsh Assembly and Government communications

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to develop a plain English/Cymraeg Clir policy for all their communications, and separately call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to develop such a policy so that the language used is clear and understandable at all times.

Double speak, unnecessary lawyer speak and the use of acronyms and unintelligible jargon, both in written form and verbally in the Senedd chamber, discourages politics in Wales from being as inclusive and accessible as it should be. A plain language policy would help to encourage more interest and participation in the politics of Wales by all. The policy should also apply to legal documents/bills/acts as long as they remain legally sound. As a good example of clear understandable communication, Canolfan Bedwyr's Cymraeg clir template could be used as the Welsh language equivalent to the plain English template, so that the use of Welsh, whether in original reports or as translated material, is relevant, modern and understandable, and not merely a literal unintelligible slavish dictionary translation of the English version. There is a duty on the Assembly and Government of Wales to make sure all governing decisions affecting Wales are understood by all, whatever language is used.

Petition raised by: Sovereign Wales

Date petition first considered by Committee: 14 May 2013

Number of signatures: 11

P-04-483 A plain English /Cymraeg clir policy for all Welsh Assembly and Government communications – Supporting information from the petitioner to the clerking team, 05.05.2013

Thank you, Sian.

The following are general examples of writing/translation by the Government that I have picked out quickly and that are unacceptably unclear, in my opinion. This is not specifically about the words used, but about the lack of plain and clear speaking, which means that the information is not conveyed to the public as effectively as it could be. There are only three examples here, but I hope that the general point about the need for a policy on using plain language comes across:

1. The text below, with more available through the following link [*English version also included for reference*]:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/education/inductionregulations/?lang=cy>

"Ymgynghoriad ar ddiwygiadau i'r rheoliadau ymsefydlu yng Nghymru"
Yn y ddogfen ymgynghori hon nodir y cynigion ar gyfer y rheoliadau newydd i ymsefydlu athrawon newydd gymhwysu yng Nghymru.

Dechrau'r cyfnod ymgynghori: 03/04/2012

Diwedd y cyfnod ymgynghori: 29/05/2012

Mynegodd y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau ei fod yn bwriadu adolygu ymsefydlu statudol yng Nghymru ym mis Chwefror 2011. Diben yr adolygiad hwn yw datblygu ymagwedd gadarn o ansawdd uchel sy'n gyson ar raddfa genedlaethol tuag at ymsefydlu'r holl athrawon newydd gymhwysu ar draws Cymru, a rhoi mwy o hyblygrwydd er mwyn caniatáu i athrawon llanw gwblhau eu cyfnod ymsefydlu yng Nghymru."

"Consultation on amendments to the induction regulations in Wales"

This consultation document sets out the proposals for the new induction regulations for newly qualified teachers in Wales.

Start of consultation: 03/04/2012

End of consultation: 29/05/2012

The Minister for Education and Skills set out his intention to review statutory induction in Wales in February 2011. The purpose of this review is to develop a robust, high quality and nationally consistent approach to induction for all newly qualified teachers across Wales, and to provide greater flexibility in order to allow supply teachers to complete their induction period in Wales.

2. The text below, taken from the following link [*English version also included for reference*]: <http://wales.gov.uk/legislation/?lang=cy>

"Mae'r ddeddfwriaeth a gyflwynir gan Lywodraeth Cymru yn ddarostyngedig i weithdrefnau gwahanol ac mae'n bosibl y bydd angen i Gynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru graffu arni a'i chymeradwyo."

"Different types of legislation put forward by the Welsh Government are subject to different procedures which may require scrutiny and approval by the National Assembly for Wales."

3. The final example is an excerpt from the following English report on economic development:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/det/report/110330erpframeworken.pdf>

"Assessing Progress & Summative (evaluation)

As commitments are delivered, then focus will in time move from monitoring activities and implementation to measuring the benefits of what is being achieved i.e assessing how well the Assembly Government is intervening. Regular stakeholder surveys will be a key input, and improvements to the business environment a key consideration. Activities delivered against the five Economic Renewal priorities will be evaluated, and when appropriate, an overall summative evaluation will be undertaken to understand the cumulative impacts of intervention.

Tracking & Outcome Indicators

In Economic Renewal, a commitment was made to track the progress of the Welsh economy through a broad suite of indicators. A move away from an approach characterised by an excessive and sometimes unreflective focus on Gross Value Added was also suggested. The tracking and outcome indicators should not be regarded as identifying those areas upon which Government alone can seek to have direct, attributable or significant influence, but they are important to understanding the wider context within which the Assembly Government intervenes. Baselines will be established, and indicators disaggregated by geography and demography where possible and appropriate."

I hope that this will be of use in relation to the petition on a policy of using plain Welsh and English.

Regards,

Gruff

P-04-462 Ban the flying of Union flags from official Welsh buildings

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ban the flying of the British union flags outside official Welsh government buildings.

This embarrassing display of insecurity and submissiveness by the Welsh government and our local council officials is a disgusting colonial habit that should have died alongside the 'British Empire' many years ago.

Petition raised by: Plaid Glyndwr

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 March 2013

Number of signatures: 200



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-04-462
Ein cyf/Our ref: FM/00331/13

William Powell AC /AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
Naomi.stocks@wales.gov.uk

10 April 2013

Dear William,

I am writing in response to your letter dated 21 March 2013 about the petition from Plaid Glyndwr considered by the Petitions Committee on 19 March.

Our policy is to fly the Red Dragon, Union Flag and European Union flag together every day on buildings in the Welsh Government administrative estate. This reflects the governance of Wales as a nation within the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carwyn Jones'.

CARWYN JONES

P-04-319 Newtown Traffic Petition

Petition wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to:

1. Install a roundabout at the Kerry road junction and, if flow improves, reinstate a permanent roundabout.
2. Issue an early start date for construction of a Newtown Bypass and for works to be fast-tracked through to completion.

Petition raised by: Paul Pavia

Petition first considered by Committee: June 2011

Number of signatures: 10 (an additional petition collected approximately 5,000 signatures)

Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-319
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00822/13

William Powell AM
Chair of Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

24th

April 2013

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 8 April 2013.

I can confirm that construction is programmed to commence in early 2015 subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory processes and availability of finance.

I will update the committee on any development.

P-04-426 Introduce a mandatory 40mph speed limit on the A487 at Blaenporth Ceredigion

Petition wording:

We, Aberporth Community Council call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to introduce a mandatory 40mph speed limit on the A487 at Blaenporth Ceredigion.

Supporting Information:

Background: -

Blaenporth village straddles the main South/North coastal road; the A487. Roughly two thirds of the village live to the South of the main road; the remainder of the population are mostly clustered around the local Church to the North. As far as Aberporth Community Council can ascertain this village is the only one without a mandatory speed limit from Fishguard in the South to Porthmadog, Gwynedd in the North, the length of Cardigan Bay.

Historic Data to April 2012: -

Numerous letters and e mails have been sent to the Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (MWTRA) and Ceredigion County Council (CCC).

Submissions to the MWTRA elicited no replies. Ceredigion Highways Department letters and e mails replies but no support for the change.

October 2009 came the Welsh Government Circular 24/2009; Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales. For 2 years CCC did nothing and then in a Cabinet Meeting 25/10/2011 a moratorium on the introduction of new speed limits was put to CCC cabinet members this was Page 8 of 9 being considered by Cabinet, a fait accompli! CCC Officers decision to start the process 2 years after the date of the circular and then take 3 years (until December 2014) to implement it seems to stretch the credibility of the process.

This decision prompted Aberporth Community Council to write to the Chief Executive of CCC, the reply just supported "The Party Line".

During this period Ceredigion AM Elin Jones was also attempting to implement a mandatory speed limit with no effect.

May 2012 Onwards: -

After the May Local Elections Aberporth Community Council felt it had a fresh mandate from the electorate to try once again for the mandatory speed limit at Blaenporth.

The start of the campaign was a site meeting with CCC Cabinet Member for Transport Cllr Alun Williams who supported our case and emailed CCC Highways Department and the Go Safe initiative.

The chair of Aberporth Community Council Highways Committee met with Ceredigion's MP Mark Williams and he also offered full support.

The opportunity was also taken to "Copy In" Mid and West Wales Regional Assembly Members. Rebecca Evans AM, finally had a reply from Mr Deio Evans MWTRA with the same mantra i.e. end of December 2014 before new speed limit decisions will be made. William Powell AM had suggested the petition's committee as a place of last resort.

Addition Safety Information: -

At the end of Summer Term 2012 CCC closed the local school; Blaenporth CP along with several other schools and opened a new school T Lewis Area School at Brynhoffnant Ceredigion, some 5 miles North on the A487.

As stated in the background paragraph two thirds of the homes in Blaenporth are on the south side of the village. These pupils and their parents have two options open to them for their children to attend their new school.

1. Take their primary school children in the morning across the road to the Bus Stop in what is an advisory speed limit with a legal speed of 60mph (more than half the traffic is estimated to exceed this National Limit). School pick up times also coincide with commuter traffic. or
2. Take them by car to the now closed Blaenporth School car park so that they can safely get on the bus. This option also has risks in that there is a finite time window to meet the school bus unlike previously when the School was open.

Of course children on the North side of the village will then have to cross this dangerous road at the end of school.

This situation has been highlighted in the local press Tivy-Side Advertiser 25th September 2012 edition.

Summary: -

Aberporth Community Council is at a loss to why there is no mandatory speed limit in Blaenporth and the lack of support by MWTRA and CCC to implement one. Ceredigion is not a large County and 3 years to check speed limits on Class A and B Roads seems an extraordinary amount of time for this exercise.

Just one village with no speed limit on the A487 within the County should be relatively easy to implement.

Petition raised by: Aberporth Community Council

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 October 2012

Number of signatures: Aberporth Community Council

Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-426
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00598/13

William Powell AM
Chair of the Petitions
Committee

naomi.stocks@wales.gov.uk

16 April 2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 27 February regarding the Petitions Committee's request for an update on the speed limit review on the A487 through the village of Blaenporth.

The review of the A487 is due for completion by the end of June. I will write to you again in July.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence.edwina.Hart@Wales.gsi.gov.uk
Printed on 100% recycled paper

P-04-459 A direct rail connection from Cardiff Airport to Cardiff central and west Wales

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government develop a direct rail connection from Cardiff Airport itself to Cardiff central and west Wales.

There is a substantial need for a fast direct rail route straight from the actual Cardiff International Airport itself directly into Cardiff Central train station (and westwards to west Wales) so that national and international visitors are properly serviced and catered for at our National Airport. There is already a railway stop at Rhoose which is less than a mile away from the airport. It is a wasted opportunity not to extend this line to Cardiff International Airport itself so that travellers from all over the world, straight from their flight, can jump straight on to a train that takes them to the capital city of Wales and beyond.

Petition raised by: Sovereign Wales

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 March 2013

Number of signatures: 39

Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00821/13

William Powell AM
Chair of Petition Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

24 April 2013

Dear William,

Petition Request for a Direct Rail Route to Cardiff Airport

Thank you for your letter of 8 April on behalf of the Petitions Committee about the petition from Sovereign Wales making the case for a direct rail connection to Cardiff Airport.

The South East Wales Integrated Transport Task Force has been looking at plans for the development of the region's public transport network. The Task Force submitted a report to me on 28 March, which I am considering.

I will be updating members in due course.

**Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes
Enterprise and Business Committee**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



William Powell AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Cyfeirnod/ref P-04-459

Dear Bill

I am writing with regard to your letter dated 8 April 2013 about the following petition from Sovereign Wales:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to develop a direct rail connection from Cardiff Airport itself to Cardiff central and west Wales.

As you mentioned, the Enterprise and Business Committee made the following recommendation to the Welsh Government in its report on international connectivity through Welsh ports and airports, which was published in July 2012.

Recommendation 6. *Explore the business case for a frequent, direct train service to Cardiff Airport, should this be supported by the independent assessment suggested in Recommendation 4.*

As you also noted, this recommendation was accepted in principle by the Welsh Government in its following response to the report:

Response: Accept in Principle

We accept this recommendation in principle. The Welsh Government's prioritised National Transport Plan for Wales commits us to consider increasing services on the Vale of Glamorgan line to half hourly, which would double the number of services that call at Rhoose (Cardiff International Airport) station. This will be possible following the completion of Network Rail's Cardiff Area Signalling Renewal programme, which is due to be completed in 2015. In addition, we are continuing to fund the popular shuttle bus service between Rhoose (Cardiff International Airport) Station and Cardiff Airport, and the service has recently been extended to the St Athan Enterprise Zone.

Bae Caerdydd
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Clerc/Clerk: Dr Siân Phipps, Ffôn /Tel: 029 2089 8582
E-bost /Email: enterprise.committee@wales.gov.uk

In addition to this, in January of this year, the Committee held a follow-up scrutiny session with the First Minister, Carwyn Jones, on Cardiff Airport.

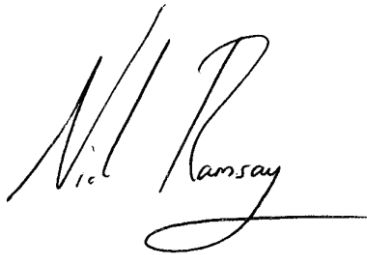
In response to Members' questions regarding the rail services to and from Cardiff airport, the First Minister noted that, in time, he would have to consider improving connections to the airport, but that his priority was to ensure that the airport continues to exist in the first instance.

He confirmed that establishing a rail spur into the airport with possibilities of improving access to and from Rhoose station was one proposal that could be considered, but that there were also other proposals that could be considered in time, such as building an interchange closer to the Porthkerry viaduct. He also reiterated the fact that rail connections would improve as a result of re-signalling work in the Cardiff area from 2015, which would lead to a half-hourly service between Cardiff and the airport.

He also said that consideration would have to be given to developing a rail service between the airport and London.

The Committee will continue to keep a watching brief on this issue. In the meantime, I hope that this response will assist you in your discussions on this petition.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Ramsay'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Nick Ramsay AC / AM
Cadeirydd / Chair

P-04-468 Road Safety Concerns A48 Chepstow

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reduce the speed limit on the A48 Bridge at Chepstow from 50mph to 30mph.

Petition raised by: Chepstow Town Council

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 March 2013

Number of signatures : An associated petition collected 1,000 signatures

Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-468
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00648/13

William Powell AM
Chair of the Petitions
Committee

naomi.stocks@wales.gov.uk

16 April 2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 22 March regarding a petition received from Chepstow Town Council about the speed limit on the A48 Chepstow Bridge.

I appreciate the depth of feeling from the Town Council and the pupils of Wyedean School wanting the speed limit reduced to 30mph on the bridge and safety barriers erected on the pavement.

It is not possible to erect barriers on the pavement, as this would restrict the use of the pavement due to the narrow width of it.

The Wye Bridge forms the border with England so I cannot unilaterally reduce the speed limit. However, we are conducting a speed limit review of all our trunk roads and completion of the A48 review is due by the end of June.

I will write to you with an update in July.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence.edwina.Hart@Wales.gsi.gov.uk
Printed on 100% recycled paper

P-04-398 Campaign for a Welsh Animal Offenders Register

Petition wording:

Please sign in support of a 'Animal Offenders Register', a central Welsh database which will consist of name, address and convictions of people who have been convicted of any form of animal cruelty and abuse within Wales. Breeders / sellers of animals will be required to check this central database before allowing any animal they own / bred to go to a prospective owner / new home; if it is found that someone who has been convicted of animal cruelty or abuse has an animal the supplier / breeder will be held liable and prosecuted. At the moment there is no law to stop anyone who has been convicted of animal cruelty from moving a few miles up the road and then obtaining another animal to inflict further abuse on. Stricter laws need to be implemented to help protect animals, heavier fines and longer prison sentences as well as a Animal Offenders Register.

New York City and various states in the USA have already implemented this law, what is there to stop Wales taking the lead in the United Kingdom? You've heard of Sarah's Law, designed to keep sex offenders from striking again. Now we hope for a law created in the hope of preventing animal abusers from inflicting more cruelty, or moving on to human victims. Research has shown that there is a very strong correlation between animal abuse and domestic violence. Many murderers start out by torturing animals, and we could end up also protecting the lives of people.

Petition raised by: Mari Roberts & Sara Roberts

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 June 2012

Number of signatures: 69



Ref: P-04-398
Attention of:
Committee Clerk
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA
E-mail
petition@wales.gov.uk.
naomi.stocks@wales.gov.uk

Dear Mr Powell

**Petitions committee consultation: Animal Offenders Register
Response by Cats Protection: March 2013**

Thank you for consulting Cats Protection with regard to this petition under cover of your letter of 27 February 2013, addressed to Peter Hepburn our Chief Executive. He has passed this to me as Advocacy Manager to collate our submission. We are pleased to submit our response as below to the consultation questions.

Introduction

Cats Protection (CP) is the UK's leading feline welfare charity. We have approximately 7000 cats in our care at any one time across the UK. Our work is centred on homing, neutering and education and is supported by 252 voluntary branches, and over 8700 volunteers and supporters. CP has 20 centrally run and staffed Adoption Centres, 5 staffed Branch Adoption Centres and 5 unstaffed Branch Adoption Centres. The majority of our Adoption Centres are staffed with the support of volunteers. In 2011 CP rehomed and reunited 48,000 cats.

In Wales we have 7 volunteer branches plus 2 Adoption Centres (Bridgend and Wrexham). We also run 3 branch shops in Llandudno, Swansea and Wrexham. In Wales we helped just over 13,400 cats in 2011.

We welcome any deliberations and policy proposals aimed at improving animal welfare and deterring animal cruelty offences in Wales. We are pleased to submit our views on a potential animal offenders register for Wales as the issue of animal welfare, and preventing any occurrence or reoccurrence of cruelty to an animal, is of great concern to CP and its volunteers and supporters, both in Wales and across the UK.

CP's rehoming work is done through its Adoption Centres and a UK network of branches. The branches are entirely volunteer run and the majority of Adoption Centres are staffed with the support of volunteers. Currently our staff and volunteers have no formal way of checking whether someone who comes to adopt a cat from us has been convicted or cautioned regarding an animal welfare offence. We ask questions of all adopters to determine their suitability to home a cat (past experience, current home environment, other pets, children) to

determine if they could offer a long term suitable home. Our process involves taking steps to match a cat to a suitable environment so that the chance of the cat coming back into our care is limited.

Our Adoption Form also asks the adopter to confirm and declare that they have never been convicted of an animal welfare offence. It is a term of the adoption agreement that this is the case and we consider it a breach of that agreement if the adopter does take a cat under false pretences. In such cases we would ask for the cat to be returned to us.

As an animal welfare charity we sympathise with the intention of this petition entirely. RSPCA Wales statistics show that in 2011 84 people were convicted for animal cruelty in Wales, a rise of 31 % from the 2010 figures. It is concerning that offences are on the rise. We agree that it would be desirable to reduce these offences and therefore a Welsh offenders register would be desirable if it helped ensure such a reduction. The intention of this proposal is that breeders and sellers would check an animal offenders database to find out if a person who had a conviction and/or ban from keeping animals was seeking to obtain another animal. If the register showed the person was an offender then the sale would be refused. In theory, a register acting in this way would not only prevent offenders obtaining animals and reoffending but the existence of the database might also act as a disincentive – thus also helping to reduce the number of animal cruelty incidents occurring throughout Wales.

As outlined in the submissions of Blue Cross and RSPCA Wales, we can see the merits of the proposed database system; including the wider animal welfare benefits. However, we also have a number of concerns relating to the practical implications of this proposal, potential administrative burden on users, costs and workability of such a system. We hope the comments below are helpful.

Committee questions

The risks and benefits of creating an Animal Offenders Register for Wales.

Benefits

The very existence of an animal offenders register might serve as an additional deterrent for convicted offenders considering obtaining another animal and then reoffending. However, the extent to which it did act as a deterrent may be hard to assess. There will be those offenders who avoid the register in some way, a point we return to later. In theory our Adoption centres and branches would be able to use the database as part of the assessment of an adopter's suitability but, in practice, this may not be possible across CP's network for a range of resource, training and operational reasons which we detail below.

Risks

Currently the deterrent for an animal welfare offence leads to a range of penalties including a conviction and/or a ban on keeping animals, imprisonment or a fine. However, those cautioned, (47 in Wales in 2011) would not be on the proposed register (which relates only to convictions) so it would have no bearing on them "offending".

RSPCA Wales have clarified that their main goal for severe cases of animal cruelty is to secure a ban on an offender keeping further animals (to prevent re-offending) and a custodial sentence if appropriate. If this proposal were taken further we would recommend further research amongst offenders into effective deterrents and whether making it harder to obtain another animal is an effective deterrent for someone determined to reoffend. We suspect that if a person is determined they would find a way to avoid the register – for

example by asking a third party to obtain an animal for them from a breeder or seller or elsewhere.

A major risk of the proposal in this petition is the risk, and potential likelihood, of mechanisms being created to avoid the register so as to make it less effective.

We support the comments made by RSPCA Wales that if the proposal in this petition were taken forward it would be illogical to confine its application to pet shops or breeders. If the intention is to ensure that those who have committed an offence against an animal are stopped, insofar as is possible, from obtaining another animals to which they may do harm, the register would need to be extended to all those places where animals could be obtained (and this would include animal rescues and charities). Even with this extension of the proposal there would still remain the opportunity for a determined person to obtain an animal via the internet and/or a private transaction or from a friend or neighbour. This brings into question the effectiveness of a register.

Another risk, identified by other respondents to the petition, is that of vigilante attacks on identified offenders. Much would depend on how much information was divulged from a search of the offenders register – and we would agree that if a search simply produced a result i.e. offence yes or no, then this would avoid risks of personal data being used by vigilantes.

Another risk which we identify is that many breeders or sellers would perhaps breach the duty to check the register on sales; perhaps not intentionally but due to computer crashes, shortage of staff or ignorance of the requirements of the register. There will also be breeders who deliberately fail to check the register. Any system to spot check compliance risks being disproportionate, through expense or burden on the organisation charged with checking.

The legal and practical implications of placing a duty on sellers/breeders to consult a register

Legal

We agree that if any register were maintained it is right for it to focus on convictions. Clearly as a matter of law, a person cannot be barred from obtaining another pet based on having been investigated and/or cautioned. Other respondents (particularly RSPCA and Blue Cross) have questioned how breeders and sellers would be checked for compliance with their legal duty to check the offenders register. We agree with the points they raise, particularly regarding the potential costs, and indeed efficacy, of “spot checks” on breeders and sellers. Also, it would be imperative that the register were maintained and regularly updated to prevent challenges in cases where, for example, a person was refused an animal and disputed the fact of his conviction and entry on the register.

Placing a legal duty on CP staff, but more particularly its volunteers, to consult a register would, we feel, be disproportionate and unworkable for the practical reasons below.

Practical issues

CP operates its rehoming through its Adoption Centres and volunteer run branches – of which there are 252. Branches either foster cats for adoption in their houses, and/or pens in their garden. Our cats are therefore homed from literally hundreds of sites of varying types. Although many branch fosterers do have computers in their homes they are not necessarily used for CP business. Some of our volunteer fosterers may not have access to a computer at home at all and/or might not be familiar with using computers.

If CP were obliged to provide all volunteers with access to an online system this would necessitate significant costs and potentially provision of literally hundreds of computers or a system of phone calls to get a colleague to do a register check. It would necessitate briefing and training all volunteers about how to search the register, what to do with search results and so forth. We know that currently branches use their own common sense when rehoming, asking questions about an adopter's reasons for adopting or home circumstances. All adopters complete an adoption form at the point of adoption. Our adoption form asks the adopter to confirm and declare that they have never been convicted of an animal welfare offence. It is a term of the adoption agreement with adopters that this is the case.

The alternative to an online register system would be some sort of paper based system and as Blue Cross point out this may well be impractical due to it being slow and overburdening with regard to administration, completion, postage, return. It also would be unduly cumbersome. With only 84 convictions and 47 cautions in Wales in 2011 it needs to be borne in mind that in terms of animal welfare the greater good may well be achieved by not placing a disproportionately administrative and burdensome offenders register system in place. Resources might be better spent elsewhere in animal welfare, for example on securing more prosecutions for animal welfare offences.

In addition to the costs issue we support those who express concerns about how and who would fund the checking of the register itself. We agree with comments that to ask the adopter to pay a checking fee is unworkable. Our adoption fees do not cover all of the costs which the charity expends (vet care, neutering, microchipping, cat care) in caring for our cats up to the point of adoption. If we were to pass on the additional cost of arranging for our staff and volunteers to check the offenders register to the adopter we would risk making our adoption fees even less proportionate. An increased fee risks deterring adopters from adopting a cat from us and from other welfare charities operating similarly to ourselves. If adopters were deterred this would in turn create longer waiting lists for cats coming into our care (because we would have no space for them). Currently, for every call CP receives to our National helpline seeking to adopt a cat we have 10 calls asking us to take in a cat. Our Bridgend centre is full to capacity. If an enhanced fee were introduced there is a significant risk of CP rehoming far fewer cats in Wales.

If the costs of compliance with the database were to be borne by animal welfare charities themselves another option would be for CP and others to absorb the costs rather than pass them onto the adopter. Again this would reduce funding available for our core work of homing, neutering and education and seriously undermine our capacity in Wales

Policing, ensuring compliance to consult the register

Whilst it is important to try and ensure the register is used as intended, we question whether there will be 100% compliance. Policing and ensuring compliance will require resources and risks likely to be disproportionate to the benefits of consulting the register.

In the case of pet shops the duty to check compliance might fall to Local Authorities and be linked to renewal of pet shop licences etc. Local Authorities will no doubt have views on the feasibility of this given their stretched and declining local authority budgets.

Expenditure on compliance may be missing the core point that a determined animal cruelty offender, if declined an animal from a pet shop or breeder, may then simply obtain an animal from elsewhere, for example from a friend, relative, pick up a stray cat, go on the internet and buy privately.

It is arguable that public resources may be better spent on carrying out more investigations into cruelty complaints and increasing potential for cautions and prosecutions. Other respondents have also mentioned that criminological research into the benefits of rehabilitating offenders and possibilities for restorative justice may be a more effective use of funds and better deliver the objective of reducing instances of offenders re-offending.

Penalties for non-compliance (offenders and sellers/breeders)

See our earlier comments regarding non-compliance with the duty on sellers/breeders to check the register.

CP is not in a position to comment on appropriate penalties other than to say that if the obligation to consult the register is extended to animal welfare charities then fines (for failing to consult) would seem potentially disproportionate and unfair on charities. Such fines would take away much needed resources from charities and harm their key work.

If an offender is subject to a ban and tries to purchase an animal an appropriate penalty for the offender would need to be considered but we defer to the enforcement agencies and courts to advise on this.

Cross border

We welcome the initiative taken by the Welsh Assembly to investigate the feasibility of an offenders register. This is an important issue in Wales and across the UK and it is important to seek views on solutions including the potential of an offenders register. The Welsh Government has been especially ground breaking on many animal welfare issues, most recently with its proposals regarding the control of dangerous dogs with regard to attacks on other animals including cats. We welcome the leading and pioneering role that the Welsh Government is taking with regard to animal welfare issues.

Blue Cross and others have referred to several potential cross border issues related to a register in Wales with which we agree. A person convicted of an animal welfare offence may then cross the border from Wales to deliberately avoid being picked up by the Welsh register when they purchase another animal.

Also, if a person were to purchase a pet in Wales who has been convicted of an animal welfare offence in another part of the UK then this person would not be recorded on the Welsh register. This may be an issue that could be overcome if information were exchanged cross border between enforcement agencies.

Conclusion

CP understands and supports the desired outcome of the proposed animal cruelty offender register as outlined in this petition. As a welfare charity we support any measures that would reduce animal suffering through cruelty or a breach of the duty of care. However, we have significant concerns about whether the proposal in this petition would achieve the desired objective, chiefly because of the numerous ways an offender could avoid the register if he or she were determined to obtain an animal and then reoffend. We are also concerned that the mere existence of the register would not necessarily serve as any significant deterrent to a determined person.

Animal welfare charities would logically need to be subject to the duty to inspect any offenders' register in order to make the register truly effective and to seek to limit offences against animals. However, a key concern is that the practical effect of including animal

charities (both large and small) in these proposals appears disproportionate given the numbers of convictions for offences against animals in Wales and risks placing undue stresses and administrative burdens on charities to the detriment of their core work to protect and rehome animals. If fewer animals were taken in and rehomed by charities as an indirect result of the duties placed on them under these proposals, there is the further risk that those excess animals may be abandoned and/or mistreated.

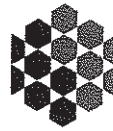
We have considered whether a register would be workable for CP if the duty to check a register were extended to animal welfare charities such as ourselves. We are of the view that for us, as a charity with high numbers of volunteers doing day to day homing and adoption work in multiple locations, the proposals would risk being unworkable. Implementation would also risk being disproportionately costly in terms of administration and resources relative to the potential benefit for cat welfare overall in Wales. We would welcome, and would be pleased to input into, further consideration by the Assembly of any future proposals or initiatives to reduce animal offences in Wales.

For further information about this submission or any aspect of our work please do not hesitate to contact us.

Jacqui Cuff
Advocacy Manager
Cats Protection
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RH17 7TT
Jacqui.cuff@cats.org.uk
01825 741294

5 April 2013

From the Office of the Minister
Michelle O'Neill MLA



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

AN ROINN

**Talmhaíochta agus
Forbartha Tuaithe**

MANNYSTRIE O

**Fairms an
Kintra Fordèrin**

William Powell AM
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Our Ref: COR/136/2013

Your Ref: P-04-398

23 April 2013

William, a chara

Thank you for your letter of 27 February 2013 regarding the petition calling for the creation of an Animal Offenders Register which would include the names and addresses of people convicted of animal welfare offences both here and in Britain. I understand that the intention of the database is that breeders and sellers of animals would have to check the database before transferring ownership of an animal to another person and should they supply an animal to a person convicted of animal cruelty they would be guilty of an offence.

Animal welfare in the north of Ireland is protected by the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. The Act is enforced by a number of agencies: my Department (DARD) in respect of farmed animals; District Councils in respect of non-farmed animals; and the PSNI regarding animal fighting and baiting. I believe it is important that each agency has ready access to up-to-date information in order to check if a person has been disqualified from keeping animals or has any previous animal welfare related convictions. To this end, officials from my Department will be engaging with the Department of Justice, the PSNI and Councils to discuss issues around the access to information relating to animal welfare court cases and the sharing of such information between enforcement bodies. Officials will be exploring the possibility of a joint database, open to all three animal welfare enforcement agencies with the Department of Justice, who is currently responsible for maintaining details relating to animal welfare convictions and penalties. Such a database would be for enforcement purposes only and would not be accessible by the public, animal breeders, sellers or charities.

Following a high profile welfare case here last summer, the idea of a publicly facing register of animal welfare offenders that pet shops and animal breeders could access before transferring ownership of an animal to another person was considered. However, legal advice on this matter

If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the textphone on 028 9052 4420




INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

suggests that there are very significant human rights and data protection issues that would have to be taken into consideration in the first instance. There are also significant resource implications to be considered in maintaining the database. For these reasons I have not pursued the idea of a publicly facing animal offenders register for the north of Ireland at this time. In view of the factors that I have outlined above I would not be in favour of having a joint north of Ireland /British database.

I would however, be keen to be kept informed of any developments that are made on this issue.

I have also emailed a copy of my reply to your Clerk, Naomi Stocks.

Is mise le meas



MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development





Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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William Powell AC/AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Your ref: P-04-398
Our ref: PO303416/MP

2013
March 2013

The Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP
From the Secretary of State

Thank you for your letter of 27 February about a petition received by the National Assembly for Wales in support of the creation of an Animal Offenders Register.

The Government has no proposals to introduce a database of animal abusers, which I consider would raise civil rights and data protection issues. I am also unsure how such a system would be enforceable, given how easy it is for animals to change hands.

The police already have access to a national database of offenders. The courts have the power to ban anyone who has been convicted of causing unnecessary suffering to an animal from keeping animals for as long as they consider is appropriate. Anyone who is found to be in breach of an order prohibiting them from keeping animals would be committing an offence.

THE RT HON OWEN PATERSON MP

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Cùisean Dùthchail agus na h- Àrainneachd
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment

Ridseard Lochhead BPA
Richard Lochhead MSP

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Mr William Powell AC/AM
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



70th March 2013

John Williams

Thank you for your letter dated 27th February 2013 regarding a petition that your Committee is considering that calls for an animal offenders register.

You specifically asked whether Scotland is considering a similar provision, which would require a central database holding the names, addresses and convictions of people convicted of any form of animal cruelty, and make it an offence for such people to purchase animals, or for vendors to sell animals to such people. As there is no offence for animal cruelty *per se* it is not clear from your letter whether the register is intended only for the more serious offences of unnecessary suffering and animal fighting, or for any animal welfare offence. However, I can confirm that we are not currently considering any such provisions in Scotland.


Under current legislation in Scotland, unless a person has been banned from keeping animals there is no legal way of preventing them buying or keeping another animal. The decision of whether to ban the keeping of animals when convicting a person of an animal welfare offence is for the Courts to make based on the nature and severity of each individual case. Where courts in any administration impose a ban on keeping animals, this applies throughout GB. However, many welfare breaches arise due to lack of education, or personal problems, and if the situation is resolved appropriately, a ban may be disproportionate. In addition, any bans imposed would not apply to other members of a household – unless they were also convicted.

The enforcement of any ban in Scotland is the responsibility of the Local Authority, and there might be some merit in considering a central database of current bans to aid that enforcement. However, consideration would need to be given as to whether such information could, and indeed should, be released to third parties such as pet vendors, bearing in mind data protection legislation and the personal safety of those people convicted and others in their household.

In terms of prison sentences and fines, which your petitioner suggests should be increased, maximums in Scotland are set under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. Most welfare offences under the Act attract maximum penalties of imprisonment for up to 6 months and/or a fine up to level 5 on the standard scale (currently £5,000). Offences relating to unnecessary suffering or animal fighting, taking account of their very serious nature, attract maximum penalties of up to 12 months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £20,000. These maximum penalties are considered proportionate; however, again, it is for the Courts to decide on the precise penalties issued in relation to individual cases.

I note that your petitioners also mention a link between animal cruelty and domestic violence and murder. They may already be aware of the work of the LINKS group, a multi-agency group Chaired by Dr Freda Scott Park that works to break the link between animal abuse, child abuse and domestic violence. Further information can be found at <http://www.thelinksgroup.org.uk/index.htm>. While I am aware that there is increasing research and clinical evidence suggesting inter-relationships between the abuse of children, vulnerable adults and animals, the precise nature of that link and how consistent it is remains, it appears, a matter for debate. I would suggest that any decision on whether or not to put in place an animal offenders register should be made on the basis of what is in the best interests of animal welfare, taking into account the potential impact on those people concerned, and data protection and human rights legislation.

I hope that this information is of help.



RICHARD LOCHHEAD



22 March 2013

Mr. William Powell AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
petition@wales.gov.ie

Our Ref: 2013/46509P
Your Ref: P-04-398

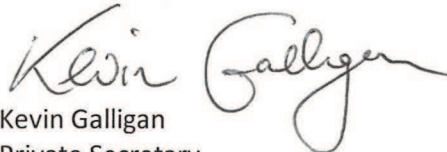
Dear Mr Powell

Thank you for your letter in connection with the possible establishment of an animal abuser's register.

I am grateful for this cross border consultation. However, based on relevant enquiries I would remain to be fully convinced that an animal abuser's register represents the singular appropriate solution. An automatic disqualification in all instances may not represent an appropriately balanced response.

The new Animal Health & Welfare Bill which is currently before the Irish Parliament provides that, where a case of animal abuse is found to be serious by the courts, the offender can be disqualified from animal keeping under Section 59. Furthermore Section 61 provides that where a person shows an incapacity for animal keeping the courts may prevent, or limit, them from keeping animals.

Yours sincerely


Kevin Galligan
Private Secretary

Our Ref/Ein Cyf:
Your Ref/Eich Cyf:
Date/Dyddiad:
Please ask for/Gofynnwch am:
Direct line/Llinell uniongyrchol:
Email/Ebost:

9th May 2013
Simon Wilkinson
02920 468 657
simon.wilkinson@wlga.gov.uk



Mr W Powell AM
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Mr. Powell,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to the Petitions Committee regarding an "Animal offenders register".

Whilst in principle the WLGA would agree that the establishment of a register would be a useful tool to identify those who have committed animal offences, there would be a number of concerns regarding the proportionality, cost, parameters, and logistics of setting up and maintaining such a register.

The obvious benefit of a database would be that it would enable breeders, sellers, and enforcement agencies to check for convictions and hopefully reduce the number of future incidents of animal cruelty.

The WLGA understands there are around 80 convictions per year of this nature in Wales. Whilst this is a not a small number, we would imagine the cost of setting up and maintaining a register may be disproportionate to the benefit gained.

From a practical perspective we would have a number of concerns:

- How would the database be funded? It would be very unlikely that the cost would be covered by a levy against those who are convicted (bearing in mind the low numbers). In the current financial climate – would Welsh Government be able to find suitable funding?
- Would only responsible sellers / breeders make use of the register? How and who would be able to police this? What sanctions could be applied? Would the cost of applying those sanctions through a criminal (or possibly civil sanctions) procedure be justified?
- Who would be able to access the database? Animal cruelty is an emotive issue. The data would need to be widely available and readily accessible. This data in the wrong hands could be dangerously abused.
- A paper database would be inaccessible and unwieldy; a secure accessible electronic database would be costly in terms

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- of dealing with the scale of the problem
- Any database would need to be regularly maintained and updated, there is a significant resource attached to this to ensure the ongoing usefulness of the database
 - Which convictions and what animals would be within scope for the database?
 - The Wales /England border issue needs to be considered – sellers / buyers / enforcers etc and those effects on the effectiveness of the database

The WLGA does consider there is merit in establishing a national database that would encompass all offences against animals (including farmed animals) relating to all animal health and welfare legislation. This information would be available to agencies such as DEFRA, WG, AHVLA, RIW and Local Authorities. We would however have similar concerns regarding proportionality, costs etc as outlined above.

Although only an idea, and as an alternative and less costly approach, would it be feasible to make it a duty on sellers / breeders to undertake some form of due diligence process. This could be an intelligence gathering tool, it would be easier to maintain control of the information, and would also act as a deterrent to those who are not eligible to purchase or have ownership of animals?

For example should sellers / breeders etc be required to only sell to those who can produce photographic ID, and to then record details of names and addresses of purchasers, what animals have been purchased, and require the buyer to sign a declaration of some sort?

This information could be made available to regulatory bodies periodically – for example at times of licence renewal, inspections etc. This evidence could then be used as the basis of formal action against the individual if necessary.

Again as an alternative policy – it is probably without doubt that the majority of animal owners are responsible and wish to care for their animals in a responsible way. Should more attention be paid to those who have been convicted to ensure that if disqualification orders or other conditions have been applied, that they are adhered to? This of course carries its own set of problems in terms of how that would be policed and by whom, but it is likely to cost less, and target enforcement activity in a more intelligence led way.

Hopefully this information is of some use to you while discussing this petition further.

Regards, Simon.



Simon Wilkinson
Policy Officer Regulatory Services

Agenda Item 3.7

P-04-399 Slaughter Practices

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to ban the practise of slaughtering animals without pre-stunning them.

Petition raised by: Royce Clifford

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 June 2012

Number of signatures: 400



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-399
Ein cyf/Our ref AD-/00370/13

William Powell AM
AM for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petition's committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Bill,

19 April 2013

Petition to ban the practice of slaughtering animals without pre-stunning

Thank you for your letter of 8 April concerning petition number P-04-399.

My officials are continuing to work with Defra to finalise the new domestic legislation required to implement and enforce Regulation 1099/2009. The new domestic legislation is expected to be in place by this autumn.

The practice of non-stun slaughter will be given further consideration once EU Regulation 1099/2009 has been implemented by the Welsh Government and I will keep you abreast of any developments.

*Yours ever
Alun*

Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food

Agenda Item 3.8

P-04-433 : CCTV in Slaughterhouses

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to introduce mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses to help vets with better regulation and monitoring, to provide footage for training and retraining, to deter some of the animal welfare abuses filmed by Animal Aid, and to provide evidence for prosecutions should they be necessary.

Petition raised by: Animal Aid

Date petition first considered by Committee: 6 November 2012

Number of signatures: 1066



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-433
Ein cyf/Our ref AD-/00373/13

William Powell AM
AM for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petition's committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Wm Bill,

28 April 2013

Petition calling for the compulsory installation of CCTV in Welsh slaughterhouses

Thank you for your letter dated 8 April concerning petition number P-04-433.

My officials are continuing to work with Defra to finalise the domestic legislation required to implement and enforce Regulation 1099/2009. The new domestic legislation is expected to be in place by this autumn.

The issue of unobserved monitoring and compulsory installation of CCTV in slaughterhouses will be given further consideration after EU Regulation 1099/2009 has been implemented by the Welsh Government. I will keep you updated with any developments.

Yours sincerely
Alun

Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food

Agenda Item 3.9

P-04-402 Council Prayers

Petition wording:

We the undersigned call upon the Welsh Government to amend the Local Government Act 1972 to afford each local authority in Wales the opportunity to decide whether it would like to hold council prayers during each council meeting and have it formally recorded on the official business agenda.

Petition raised by: Rev Alan Hewitt

Date petition first considered by Committee: 2 July 2012

Number of signatures: 155

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Busnes y Llywodraeth
Minister for Local Government and Government Business



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-402
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/01257/13

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

9 April 2013

Dear Bill

Thank you for your letter of 27 February addressed to my predecessor, Carl Sargeant, including the response by the WLGA to your correspondence regarding the holding of prayers as part of official council business.

My Officials are in the process of considering whether clarification or guidance in relation to holding prayers as part of official council business is necessary or appropriate. Therefore, I will forward a further response in due course.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Busnes y Llywodraeth
Minister for Local Government and Government Business

Mr William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

25 April 2013

Dear Mr Powell

Petition: Prayers at Councils Meeting

I write with reference to your letter seeking views on the petition your committee has received requesting amending the Local Government Act 1972 to enable local councils in Wales to hold prayers at Council meetings as part of the official business agenda should they so wish to do so.

We have sought the views of the National Executive Committee members of One Voice Wales and sought legal advice on this matter which is set out below and which we are using for the purposes of advising our member councils.

“s.111 of the 1972 Act does not give a parish (community) council the power to:

- hold prayers as part of a council meeting or
- summons councillors to attend a council meeting at which prayers are on the agenda or
- include prayers in the summons to councillors or in the agenda.

Before a council meeting, it would not be unlawful for councillors, if they so wish, to get together for quiet reflection or saying prayers or other religious worship.”

It is One Voice Wales view that it is sensible for there to be a clear separation in terms of timing, place and purpose between (i) an informal gathering which is voluntary for councillors to attend for saying prayers and at which the public is not present and (ii) a formal council meeting which councillors are required to attend and at which the public is present. If councillors choose to say prayers etc in the council chamber or meeting room, there should be a distinct break before the formal council meeting commences.

If a council provides a room or other facilities for councillors to say prayers before a meeting, then it should ensure that it does not discriminate against a councillor on the basis of his or her religion (or a lack of religion) or religious or philosophical belief (or lack of belief).

Although the facts in the claim against Bideford Town Council did not result in a finding of indirect discrimination or an infringement of Convention rights, councils are reminded that they are subject to obligations in the Equality Act 2010 and that they are public authorities subject to the Convention rights.

One Voice Wales National Executive Members considered the correspondence of the Minister for Local Government Prayers at Council Meetings and indicated that they felt that individual councils should consider the issue from their own perspective. The consensus of opinion was that prayers could be held just prior to the formal commencement of a meeting. However there is not a defined position across the community and town council sector and as such it would be considered helpful if Welsh Government could provide guidance based on its own legal advice to enable individual councils to determine the most appropriate course of action moving forward.

I trust you will find our comments helpful.

Yours sincerely



Mr Lyn Cadwallader
Chief Executive
One Voice Wales

Cc Cllr Mair Stephens, Chair One Voice Wales

Agenda Item 3.10

P-04-400 NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health

Petition wording:

We urge the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to adopt and implement the NICE quality standard for service user experience in adult mental health in its entirety.

We hope with this petition to put the humanity of the person as the focus of mental health. This requires changes in the services, treatment and interventions currently used in Wales. Following two training sessions organised by Sefyll at the Senedd to inform mental health service users of the scope and powers of the Welsh Assembly and Government, a group of us attended a further meeting with the Petitions Clerk to word this petition. As the Welsh Government is currently reviewing the ADULT MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN FOR WALES, this is an opportunity to make a difference by influencing and raising awareness of mental health issues to Assembly Members and Ministers. The NICE Standards (2011–2013) www.nice.org.uk/guidance have been developed for the NHS and social care sectors in England – they are not applicable in Wales – but are illustrations of best practice: Putting the service user experience at the centre of all treatment and interventions. Making staff in mental health services accountable for their actions. The NICE guidelines are already in practice in England. In total there are 15 Quality Statements. The following two are illustrations of the overall ethos and approach: “People using mental health services, and their families and carers feel they are treated with empathy, dignity and respect”. Quality Statement 2 “People in hospital for mental health care, including service users formally detained under the Mental Health Act, are routinely involved in shared decision making”. Quality Statement 11. In addition to this e-petition, a paper version is available on request. Please contact us at the following e-mail address: MHPetition2012@gmail.com. If you can help in any way with this campaign, please also contact us at the above email address. To view all 15 quality standards go to: <http://publications.nice.org.uk/service-user-experience-in-adult-mental-health-improving-the-experience-of-care-for-people-using-cg136/quality-statements>.

Petition raised by: Action for Mental Health

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 June 2012

Number of signatures: approx. 200

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-400
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/00450/13

William Powell AM
Chair Petition's committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

22nd April 2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 8 April regarding petition P-04-400 on the adoption and implementation of the *NICE Quality Standard for Service User Experience in Adult Mental Health*.

NICE Quality Standards, including in this specific instance, reinforce recommendations made in previous NICE guidance and the NHS should already be taking account of them in the routine delivery of services to their patients.

The consideration of one *life area* as a minimum standard in care and treatment planning under the *Mental Health (Wales) Measure (Part 2)* was set to acknowledge plans designed to address need might, in many instances, be relatively uncomplicated: depending on an individual's circumstances, a plan might not need to address more than one area.

It is important therefore the planning process is not unnecessarily burdensome or bureaucratic if resources are not to be diverted from actual treatment and care. It is, therefore, important to strike a balance between adherence to a process and the realisation of meaningful outcomes for service users. The setting of this minimum requirement does not in any way prevent Care Co-ordinators from considering the fullest range of issues that might impact on an individual's mental health.

The service user experience will inform any potential changes and as part of the duty to review the *Mental Health (Wales) Measure* it is our intention to assess the service user experience of care and treatment planning, specifically whether Care And Treatment Plans (CTPs) satisfactorily address all eight *life areas* and are proven to be sufficiently outcome- and recovery-focussed. Similarly, the review will consider evidence of meaningful engagement with, and consultation of both service users and their carers – and evidence of active service user involvement in the co-production of CTPs. We will also consider whether the need to address any additional *life areas* has regularly arisen.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (Page 90)

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Please note an inception report has also been produced which describes in some detail how the review will take place, and a copy of this document is available at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/reports/inception-report/?jsessionid=61EA3F2C23C8CF9825035427580BEB9A?lang=en>

The final report will be produced before January 2016.

Finally, the composition of NICE Advisory Panels is a matter for NICE itself to determine and neither the Welsh Government, nor the Department of Health in England, have any influence over these matters.

Best wishes

Mark.

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

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

P-04-367 Save our Hospital Services

Petition wording:

- We the undersigned want to see ALL of our local health services maintained and protected at Prince Philip Hospital.
- We oppose the downgrading of our hospital.
- We ask the Health Minister and the Welsh Labour Government to review their plans as a matter of urgency.

Petition raised by: Rhydwyn Ifan

Date petition first considered by Committee: 28 February 2012

Number of signatures: Approximately 9,000 signatures

Agenda Item 3.12

P-04-394 Save our Services – Prince Philip Action Network

Petition wording:

We the people of Llanelli, the town with the largest population within the Hywel Dda area demand Prince Philip Hospital be restored to a fully functioning District General Hospital with the return of major elective surgery, including gastrointestinal, vascular, urology, gynaecology and trauma, with support from the original 5 ITU beds fully staffed, which would support a fully staffed, consultant led Accident and Emergency Department, providing support for the physicians.

Petition raised by: Prince Philip Action Network

Date petition first considered by Committee: 29 May 2012

Number of signatures: 24,000 (approximately)

P-04-430 : Proposed closure of Tenby Minor Injuries Unit

Petition wording:

We the undersigned strongly object to the proposals in the Hywel Dda Health Board Document Your Health/ Your Future, referring to closure of the Minor Injuries Unit in Tenby. We call on the National Assembly of Wales to ensure the proposals set out in the Hywel Dda Health Board Document are not carried out and that the MIU in Tenby remains open.

Petition raised by: Andrew James Davies

Date petition first considered by Committee: 6 November 2012

Number of signatures: 157 Associated petitions collected over 581 signatures

Agenda Item 3.14

P-04-431 : Against health cuts from the residents of Pembrokeshire

Petition wording:

SWAT (Save Withybush Action Team) have fought for the retention of safe, effective and accessible secondary health care services for the people of Pembrokeshire since 2005.

On behalf of SWAT I call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the plans for Secondary Healthcare provision currently being consulted on in the Hywel Dda Health Board area will maintain the present level of services available at Withybush Hospital. The 14000 signatories on the petitions delivered to your office by SWAT do not agree with the preferred option of the Hywel Dda health Board to centralize most inpatient services on the Glangwili site. It is quite clear to the people of Pembrokeshire and elsewhere who have signed these petitions that if centralization of services is required then Withybush should be the preferred site. This would provide an equitable, accessible, safe and sustainable Secondary Healthcare service for the whole of the Hywel Dda Health Board area whereas centralizing services on the Glangwili site would seriously disadvantage the people of Pembrokeshire.

Petition raised by: SWAT (Save Withybush Action Team)

Date petition first considered by Committee: 6 November 2012

Number of signatures: Associated petition collected approximately 14,000 signatures. Associated petition collected approximately 14,000 signatures. Of these 14,000 signatures, over 10,000 signatures were collected for a petition which specifically called for the Special Care Baby Unit at Withybush to be saved, and 4,000 signatures for petitions which called for all services at Withybush to be protected.

P-04-455 : Save Prince Phillip Hospital A&E

Petition wording:

Hywel Dda Health Board is planning to downgrade or close A&E services at Prince Philip Hospital. This is an essential service for Llanelli and the surrounding communities and the community needs to act to save our A&E. Please sign this Petition to prevent the closure of this essential service, and to ensure lives are not put at risk.

Petition raised by: Angharad Howells

Date petition first considered by Committee: 29 January 2013

Number of signatures: 1038

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/00449/13

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

18th April 2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 8 April concerning four petitions relating to Hywel Dda Health Board's proposals for service reconfiguration in West Wales.

As you are aware, the Health Board published its final proposals on 15 January, and the plans were referred to my predecessor by Hywel Dda Community Health Council (CHC) for determination on 25 February. Following due consideration was determined that the CHC's submission failed to satisfy key requirements of the *Guidance for Engagement and Consultation on Changes to Health Services*.

The guidance makes clear that Health Boards and CHCs must work together to ensure safe and sustainable services are provided across the whole of their area. The CHC is obliged to recognise maintaining the status quo may not be an acceptable response and must work with the LHB to agree how such services can be maintained within available resources. Local resolution must be sought wherever possible and referral to Welsh Ministers should only be made as a last resort. Where particular proposals are judged not to be in the best interest of health services in the area, the CHC must propose alternative solutions for providing safe and sustainable services to their local community.

The CHC's submission did not satisfy these key requirements and my predecessor wrote to its Chair on 14 March, requesting the Council resume its dialogue with the Health Board. Following a request from the CHC, I agreed to extend the deadline for referral of any outstanding issues to me to 19 April. I also asked Professor Marcus Longley to work with the Health Board and CHC to help facilitate these discussions and bring the matter to a conclusion.

Best wishes

Mark

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

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

Agenda Item 3.16

P-04-417: Save Morfa Beach and Prevent the Closure of Public Footpaths 92 and 93

Petition wording:

Morfa Beach is a stretch of coastline lying between Port Talbot Steelworks and Sker Beach, adjacent to Kenfig Nature Reserve. Access to the beach is only possible on foot or bicycle, so it has become a precious place of peace and solitude. In 2011 the community group, Save Morfa Beach (Friends of Morfa), was formed in response to a threat via TATA Steelworks seeking to discontinue access to the beach. This includes the closure of two historically significant & well used public footpaths that lead to the beach: Footpath 92 from Longland's Lane in Margam & Footpath 93 from Kenfig Nature reserve.

Support the campaign of the Save Morfa Beach (Friends of Morfa) organisation to preserve the rights of way along footpaths 92 and 93 & maintain access to Morfa Beach. We ask the Welsh Assembly & Neath Port Talbot Council to preserve and maintain all rights of way on Margam Burrows, & to liaise with Tata Steel to ensure that public access to the beach is continued.

Supporting information: Whether rights of way cross private or public land, Neath & Port Talbot County Borough Council and the Welsh Assembly are ultimately responsible for ensuring they are protected, available and fit for purpose. We are therefore involved in lobbying, but as an organisation we are not party-political. A Facebook Group (www.facebook.com/groups/SaveMorfaBeach/) has been created as the public profile of the organisation.

Petition raised by: Save Morfa Beach (Friends of Morfa)

Date petition first considered by Committee: 2 October 2012

Number of signatures: 1191

P-04-417: Save Morfa Beach and Prevent the Closure of Public Footpaths 92 and 93 – Correspondence from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Dear Naomi,

I write following receipt of a letter from William Powell AM, dated 8th April 2013 regarding the above. He has requested details of the date of the Inquiry and the decision made and that the response should be sent direct to you.

For background purposes, I would advise you that on the 18th August 2011 the Authority published 3 rights of way orders. One order is to extinguish Footpath 92 Port Talbot that leads down to Morfa Beach, one order is to divert Footpath 93 Port Talbot, the other is to create a new right of way.

The aim of the orders is to have a new path that will form part of the Wales Coastal Path that will connect with Bridgend via a new bridge that will span the River Kenfig.

Morfa beach is in private ownership and the Footpath 92 Port Talbot, as depicted on the Definitive Map and Statement, stops short of the beach and as far as anyone can ascertain there is no legal access onto the beach.

We've had approx 370 objections to the extinguishment order and approx 9 objections to the diversion order (not including petitions).

The Legal Department submitted the legal orders to the Planning Inspector (PINs) on the 3rd April 2013 and we're currently awaiting formal acknowledgment. This is unlikely to be received until PINs are satisfied with the submission, as a rigid process with strict timescales will immediately follow the acknowledgement. PINs may be able to give you additional details in relation to the current position as far as they are concerned, should you wish to contact them direct. The objectors will be advised of the date of the Inquiry following its receipt from PINs. Given that the Inquiry has not yet commenced, I am unable to confirm the decision made.

I trust that this clarifies the queries raised however should you require additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Nicola Pearce

Head of Planning

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Agenda Item 3.17

P-04-461 Save Ponty Paddling Pool

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to designate the paddling pool at Ynysangharad war Memorial Park as a Grade 2 listed building, as is the Lido, on the grounds of its historic importance as part of the Park.

Petition raised by: Karen Roberts

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 March 2013

Number of signatures: 1212



Mr William Powell AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Fax/Ffacs: 01443 407725

My Ref/Fy Nghyf:	Your Ref/EichCyf:	Date/Dyddiad:	Please ask for/ Gofynnwch am:
	P-04-461	9 th April 2013	Jane Cook (01443 490406)

Dear Mr. Powell

**PETITIONS COMMITTEE – YNYSANGHARAD WAR MEMORIAL PARK
PADDLING POOL**

I refer to your letter of 21st March 2013 to Keith Griffiths, Chief Executive. He has asked me to reply to you directly. Following the Petitions Committee meeting on the 19th March 2013 I understand that you would like the Council to clarify why the paddling pool has not been included in the redevelopment plans for the lido.

The grade II listed lido lies within the heart of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, which is undoubtedly the jewel in the crown of Pontypridd. Much effort and success has been achieved in regenerating Pontypridd in recent years, with significant investment from the Council, Welsh Government, Europe, and the private sector, allowing a range of important projects to be delivered. Unfortunately the dilapidated state of the lido has constrained such regeneration of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. Therefore the Council was delighted in February 2013 when a £6.3M funding package was secured to restore the lido, with contributions from the Welsh Government through the European Regional Development Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund, alongside contributions from the Council and Cadw. I enclose images of the current dilapidated lido, and the exciting restoration proposals.

The Council have developed the restoration proposals for Ynysangharad War Memorial Park lido, working closely with the scheme's funders, which includes the Welsh Government. The proposals include restoring the historic grade II listed lido to a high standard, reopening the lido as a heated facility with three pools for different uses, constructing a café, a visitor interpretation space and viewing gallery, and creating a state of the art adventure dry play facility.

In developing these plans the full range of issues were carefully considered. This included ensuring the proposals have a clear economic impact, and importantly that the scheme is sustainable in the future. Clearly the proposals need to also meet the criteria of the funding bodies. A deliverable scheme has been developed that ensures the requirements associated with the grade II listed lido building are met, alongside attaining the quality associated with a prestigious regional visitor attraction.

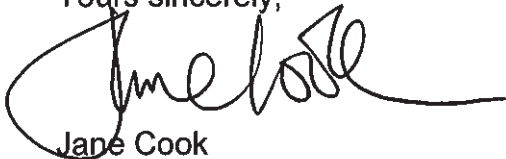
A number of different options were assessed as part of the project's development. The retention of the paddling pool is an expensive option that has clear implications for the overall sustainability of the project. The Council gave full consideration to retaining the existing paddling pool, and it decided that its retention would put the whole scheme in severe jeopardy. It is important to see this decision not only in terms of the Council's not insignificant investment into the lido restoration scheme, but also in the context of current extreme public sector budget pressures. The Council is clearly now having to make difficult choices in relation to the facilities and services it offers across the County Borough.

I would like to refer you to the Rhondda Cynon Taf Council Borough Council Cabinet report on the lido restoration project, which was considered on 30th July 2012. The report is available publically on the Council's website, but I have enclosed a copy for case of reference as it provides more detail on this matter.

The paddling pool has already been determined not to be a listed structure, and this is a matter that the Council and Cadw have previously discussed in some detail. I also refer you to correspondence received from Cadw regarding the listed status of paddling pool, which may be of assistance.

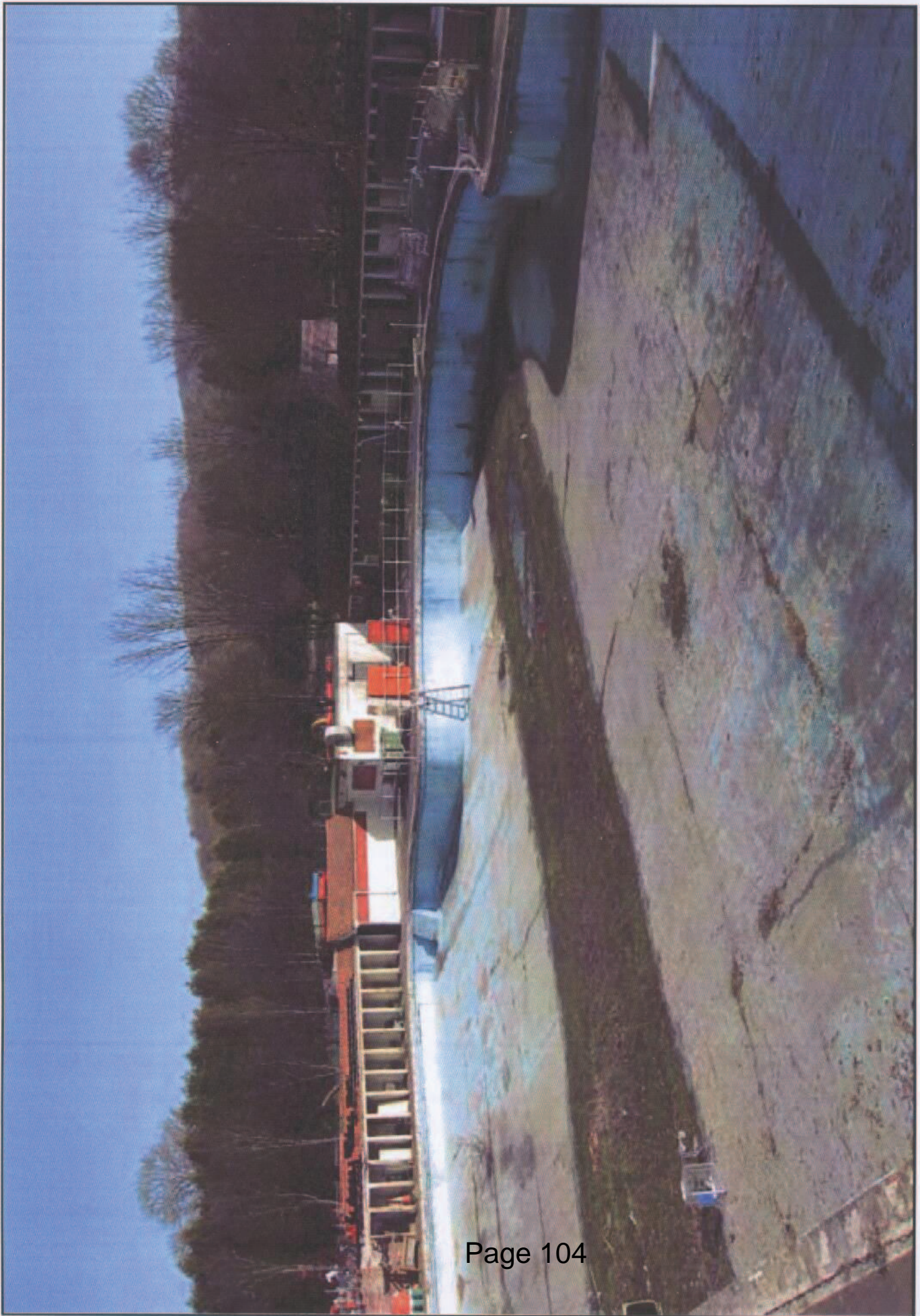
Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information or background regarding this project.

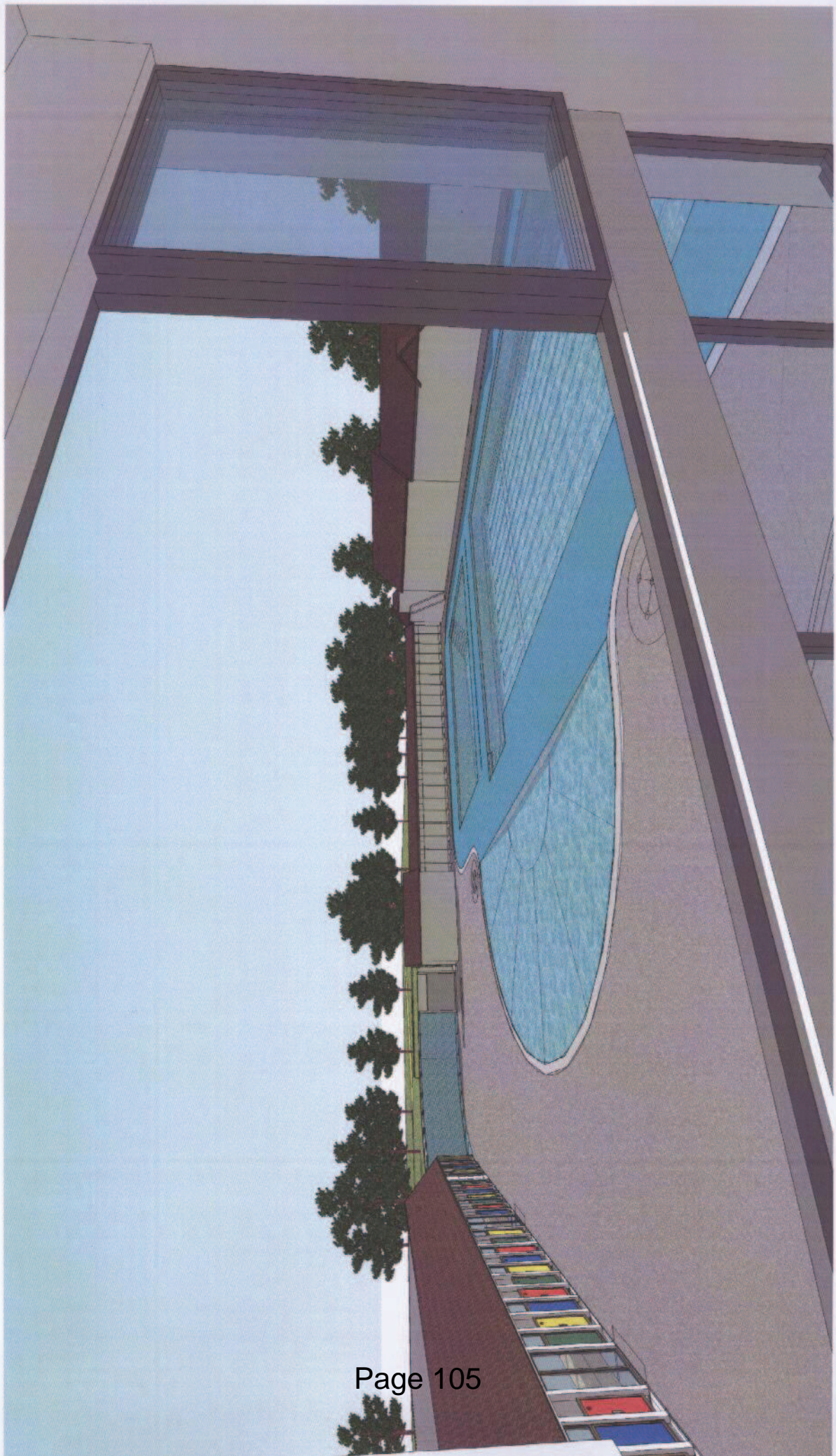
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Cook', written over a large, stylized flourish.

Jane Cook

Director Regeneration and Planning





RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

30TH JULY 2012

JOINT REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES/DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION & PLANNING/GROUP DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Author: Jane Cook

PROPOSALS FOR THE REGENERATION OF YNYSANGHARAD WAR MEMORIAL PARK LIDO

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the capital and revenue implications of the proposals for the regeneration of the Lido.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That subject to no adverse responses from the Trustees of the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park to:
- a) approve the scheme as detailed in 4.6 of the report and its projected costs, the additional running costs, together with the proposed funding package.
 - b) authorise the Director of Regeneration & Planning to make amendments to that package, providing they have no significant impact on its composition.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In October 2009 Cabinet approved the components of the Pontypridd Business Case, which included the Lido Restoration project. Approval was also given to the submission the necessary funding bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Cadw, and Welsh Government.
- 3.2 Phase 1 of Pontypridd regeneration was subsequently approved by the respective funders in July 2010, focusing on public realm and townscape enhancements to the value of £10.5M. This regeneration work is now well underway.
- 3.3 Since the phase 1 approval of Pontypridd regeneration, development of further phases have been progressed. These include preparing detailed proposals for the lido, along with the preparation of the required funding bids.

4. LIDO PROJECT PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The lido project proposals have been developed to not only ensure that the project is of a high quality in its own right, but also to attract funding, with long term sustainability, funder eligibility, and economic benefit all critical to its success. To ensure that the regeneration proposals for the lido successfully meet all these criteria, the schemes development has been overseen by a project group led by Regeneration and Planning, and involving senior officers from across the Council including: Leisure Parks and Countryside; Finance; Procurement; and Strategic Projects Unit. This group has developed and tested a number of models and options for this project to ensure it meets each of the factors critical to its success, namely, fundability, economic impact, and sustainability, which collectively result in a deliverable scheme.
- 4.2 **Fundability** - The regeneration of the lido is dependent on securing external funding, in particular from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO). Each of the funders have very specific criteria on which funding applications are assessed, and if a project does not satisfy these criteria then funding applications will not be approved. The factors of great importance to the HLF are heritage conservation, educational benefit, and value for money. The factors of great importance to WEFO are economic impact, long term sustainability, and visitor appeal. The project also needs to contribute towards achieving the core improvement themes of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Strategy.
- 4.3 **Economic Impact** - In order to demonstrate value for money to WEFO, and to attract funding, projects need to demonstrate a clear economic impact, and achieve corresponding economic outputs. The lido is eligible activity due to its integral role in contributing towards the regeneration of Pontypridd. To secure funding the lido regeneration must also achieve high levels of outputs, namely attract significant visitors numbers to the lido facility, as well as creating jobs. A reduction in these outputs would reduce or remove the funding contribution from WEFO. This would mean that the scheme could not then go ahead.

The following benefits and outputs are expected to be generated as a result of the project:

- Create a regional tourist attraction that attracts increased numbers of visitors to Pontypridd.
- Create jobs directly in the lido itself, and indirectly in town centre businesses.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the investment already being made in Pontypridd, through the various public and private sector led regeneration schemes.
- Act as a catalyst for further future regeneration activity in Pontypridd.
- Improve a dilapidated listed building that is constraining further improvements to Ynysangharad Park.

- 4.4 **Sustainability** - A thorough business plan has been completed to assess the operating costs of the lido. The figures detailed within the business plan have been based on the analysis of over 40 operational lidos in the UK, and other comparable facilities and attractions. A detailed analysis and methodology is provided for every cost and income source within the business plan.
- 4.5 The business plan also includes full details of the physical specification, visitor numbers and admission costs. These are clearly all interdependent and also related to other facilities and attractions. The costs and benefits need to be balanced to achieve the best solution, one that is economically beneficial, sustainable and fundable.
- 4.6 The deliverable scheme will ensure the requirements associated with a listed building are met, alongside meeting the quality associated with a prestigious regional visitor attraction, whilst meeting all funding criteria, achieving the required economic outputs, and achieving long term sustainability. To ensure deliverability the regeneration of the lido will result in an optimum scheme which:
- Restores the grade II listed lido to a high standard.
 - Reopens the lido as a heated facility, with three pools for different uses: a main pool, an activities pool, and an attractive semi circular splash pool for small children.
 - Constructs a café to serve both the lido and wider park.
 - Constructs a visitor interpretation space, viewing gallery, and classroom/meeting facility.
 - Constructs a new changing block in line with modern expectations.
 - Converts the paddling pool to a state of the art adventure dry play facility.
 - Implements an activities programme, which will include learning, volunteering, and community initiatives.
- 4.7 A number of different options have been fully assessed. The retention of the existing paddling pool is an expensive option which has clear implications for the business plan in terms of capital and revenue costs. It also impacts on the future sustainability of the lido project which in turn severely impacts on the external funding of the project. In short, having given full consideration of this option, it is considered that the retention of the existing paddling pool in any form would put the whole scheme in severe jeopardy.
- 4.8 The provision of a splash pad play facility has also been assessed. This has very substantial capital costs and also revenue implications. It also has similar limitations in terms of seasonal usage. The cost of this compromise option is not considered to be proportionate to the actual benefit, and again would risk the amount of external funding needed to progress the project.
- 4.9 The provision of a high quality adventure play facility will attract visitors to the park over the whole year. Those children (and supervisory adult) who want to enjoy wet play will have the benefit of a unique lido facility with splash pool, entirely free of charge.

- 4.10 The addition of a new paddling pool facility within the new Lido will offer better quality facilities for young children than the current one provides. It is also proposed that the use of this paddling pool inside the new Lido will be free for children under 12 and a accompanying/supervisory adult ensuring free paddling pool facilities within the park are retained and improved.
- 4.11 Having considered all the options, there is only one option which delivers the economic benefits, is sustainable into the future and fundable, but also provides residents with better free facilities than are currently available. This does have an additional annual revenue cost of £74K.

5. PROJECT COSTS AND FUNDING

5.1 The total project costs have been calculated following the completion of a detailed cost plan and are estimated to be £6.319M:

5.2 The project is proposed to be funded utilising the following funding sources:-

• HLF	£2.300M
• WEFO	£3.000M
• Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC	£0.902M
• Cadw (approved in principal)	£0.100M
• Volunteer in-kind contributions	£0.017M
	<u>Total</u>
	<u>£6.319M</u>

5.3 The HLF application has been submitted, with a decision set to be made in July 2012. A WEFO application is being prepared, and is intended to be formally submitted once a decision has been received on the HLF application. An approval in principal has been received in relation to the Cadw grant. The Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC contribution is in place.

6. PROJECT TIMESCALE

6.1 If approval is given to progress with the project on the basis of the capital and revenue implications, the regeneration of the lido will be subject to the following indicative timeline:

Summer 2012 – Decision on HLF stage 2 funding application

Autumn 2012 – Decision on WEFO funding application

Autumn/Winter 2012 – Technical design commences

6.2 As part of the technical design detailed work will be undertaken to complete a construction project programme, including identifying all works that are dependent are the season (such as ecology works), procurement timescales, mobilisation timescales, restoration and construction works, and facility testing and training.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The regeneration of the lido provides an opportunity to further strengthen the significant regeneration investment presently taking place in Pontypridd, and to act as a catalyst for further regeneration activity.
- 7.2 The introduction of free access for under 12s to the new paddling pool within the Lido development ensures that no existing facilities are lost within the park and that 21st century facilities are created for all user groups within the park.
- 7.3 A unique and time limited opportunity exists to secure a full funding package for the scheme, with the majority of the project costs covered by the HLF and WEFO, and the project proposals have been carefully developed to maximise the funding potential and within available Council funds.



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Gwefan www.cadw.cymru.gov.uk

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Tel 01443 33 6000 Fax 01443 33 6001
Email cadw@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Web www.cadw.wales.gov.uk

Ms J Cook
Director of Regeneration and Planning
Rhondda Cynon Taf
Level 5, Unit 3, Pennant House
Catherine Street
Pontypridd
CF37 2TB

Eich cyfeirnod
Your reference

Ein cyfeirnod
Our reference

Dyddiad
Date **29/11/2012**

Llinell uniongyrchol
Direct line **01443 33 6065**

Ebost
Email: **julie.osmond@wales.gsi.gov.uk**

Dear Jane

Paddling pool, Ynysangharad War Memorial Park – Listed status

Thank you for your letter of 12 November in follow up to our recent meeting to discuss the listing status of the paddling pool.

Cadw has reviewed its advice on whether the paddling pool forms part of the curtilage of the listed Lido and is now of the view that, on balance, there is sufficient evidence to support your conclusion that the paddling pool does not form part of the listing. I should add, however, that the question of whether a building or structure is within the curtilage of a principal building, unless specifically included in the listing, is ultimately a matter for the courts.

In reaching its view, Cadw has carefully considered the additional evidence you have submitted against the tests set out in paragraphs 87-90 of Welsh Office Circular 61/96. In particular, Cadw is of the view that the information you have provided on the historical independence of the paddling pool from the Lido demonstrates that the paddling pool and Lido were operated as independent entities and that there was no functional relationship between the two. The paddling pool appears to be a facility in its own right, rather than ancillary to the listed Lido. This is strengthened by your evidence that users of the paddling pool were prevented from using the Lido and its amenities such as changing rooms, through the use of turnstiles. These turnstiles were the only means of accessing the Lido so there was no opportunity to move freely between the paddling pool and the Lido and thus no cross migration of user groups..

A matter that we did not discuss when we met was the need for Conservation Area Consent for works to the paddling pool. You will be aware that conservation area consent is required for the demolition of buildings within conservation areas, subject to the exemptions set out in paragraph 31 of the above circular. On the face of it, it would appear that none of these



exemptions apply in this instance so I would be grateful for confirmation on what conclusion you have reached on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Julie Osmond
Head of Policy and Protection

Agenda Item 4

P-04-472 Make the MTAN law

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make the MTAN Guidance Notes, notably those relating to a 500 metre buffer zone around open cast workings, mandatory in planning law for Wales.

Additional information:

On 20th January 2009, Jane Davidson, the Minister for the Environment, introduced newly published Coal Minerals Technical Advice guidance Notes (MTAN) for Wales, and stated: “.. the Coal MTAN will fulfil the pledges (in 2008) to introduce Health Impact Assessments for coal applications, together with buffer zones, and with an emphasis on working closely with local communities. It reaffirms the commitment (in 2008) to a 500m buffer zone.” In 2009 the Welsh Government did not have the power to make its planning guidelines law. It does now.

Petition raised by: Dr John Cox

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 April 2013

Number of signatures: 680. Associated petition collected 330 signatures.

P-04-472 Make the MTAN Law

Oral submission to Petitions Committee: 14th May 2013

by (Dr.) John Cox

BACKGROUND

On 20th January 2009, Jane Davidson, the then Minister for the Environment, introduced newly published Coal Minerals Technical Advice guidance Notes (MTAN) for Wales, and stated: “.. *the Coal MTAN will fulfil the pledges (in 2008) to introduce Health Impact Assessments for coal applications, together with buffer zones, and with an emphasis on working closely with local communities. It reaffirms the commitment (in 2008) to a 500m buffer zone.*”

In January 2011, Torfaen Council rejected an application to opencast for coal (at Varteg Hill)¹ because, in the opinion of the Council, it conflicted with these MTAN guidelines – notably in that there are houses and a primary school less than 100 metres away². The Applicant lodged an Appeal (held in January 2012) and, in February, we learnt by letter that the Planning Inspector had recommended that the Appeal should be upheld. Meanwhile, the Minister is yet to announce a decision on this application.

This petition is a response from our community and others who had hoped that the MTAN would indeed “*protect communities*” in the way promised³ by the Welsh Government and National Assembly. But the petition does **not** refer to the Planning Application for Varteg Hill that occasioned it. Irrespective of whether the Minister is to rule in favour or against the Appeal or whether this takes place before or after the Petitions Committee reaches its conclusion, the petition is concerned with the long-term and on-going contradiction between:

- 1) Local Authorities being obliged to conform to these MTAN guidelines,
- 2) Planning Inspectors being allowed to reinterpret the MTAN guidelines.

Our petition is focussed on the legislative status of the MTAN Guidelines and does not mention the Varteg Hill situation. It reads:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make the MTAN Guidance Notes, notably those relating to a 500 metre buffer zone around open cast workings, mandatory in planning law for Wales.

Whilst we are yet to see the Planning Inspector’s report for Varteg Hill and we thus cannot comment on his reasoning, he did reveal during the hearings that he did not feel he was obliged to conform to the MTAN Guidelines as, in his opinion, these were “policy” aspirations (devised by politicians) and that he only had to take account of “planning law” (as had been interpreted by professionals such as himself).

He also stated that he considered he had authority to interpret the Guidelines as he thought they should have been worded. On one occasion, he even suggested that a paragraph had been “wrongly referenced” – although, in this specific instance, even the Counsel for the Appellant disagreed with his interpretation.

We doubt whether anyone anticipated that an Inspector might imagine he had the authority to dismiss a decision of a Local Authority based on his personal views of what should have been decided by the National Assembly. The petitioners believe that Planning Inspectors are servants of the process and as equally obliged as are the Local Authorities to conform with the MTAN Guidelines.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PLANNING AUTHORITY

The First Minister has stated without equivocation that “*it is a matter for the local planning authority to determine what it does in its own area.*”⁴ He quite clearly did not anticipate that a Planning Inspector might selectively interpret the Guidelines that were agreed after 10 years of public consultation and endorsed unanimously by the Assembly Members. In reply to William Graham in April 2010, the First Minister stated that ‘*planning guidance is there to be observed*’.

In view of this context, Torfaen County Borough Council believed it had no option but to refuse the Varteg Hill application. If the Planning Inspectors are not also obliged to conform to these rules, the costs to Torfaen Council (and others in future) could run into £millions in lost Appeals and the MTAN will be worthless.

THIS ORAL SUBMISSION

For this evidence-gathering session of the Petitions Committee, we have two speakers available to answer your questions about our petition and all the associated issues arising.

Lynne Neagle is the Assembly Member for Torfaen and took part in the discussions in the National Assembly that led to the adoption of the MTAN Guidelines. She has been closely involved in the many discussions that have taken place in relation to the Varteg Hill proposal and is well-placed to explain the expectations of her constituents and their dismay if the MTAN Guidelines are not respected.

John Cox chairs a local residents committee and on their behalf submitted objections to the Varteg Hill application for the determination meeting of Torfaen Council and at the Appeal. This submission was not challenged at either hearing – which, in legal / quasi-legal proceedings, normally should mean that a submission has been accepted.

FOOTNOTES (for the information of the Petitions Committee)

¹ Excerpts from Torfaen Council’s rejection of the Application (emphases added)

“The main thrust of Welsh Assembly Government guidance on coal working is reflected within MTAN2. It appears that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, the Welsh Assembly Government’s position is that the 500m separation distance referred to strikes the correct balance between protecting the amenity of local people in the community, on the one hand, and society’s need for coal on the other. The application as amended, has sought to divorce the coal extraction area by 200m from the residential properties and by so doing claim that they are complying with the statement in the MTAN2 that working area should not come within 200m of a settlement, this argument is considered to be flawed and the reduction in the coal extraction area cannot be logically claimed to comply with the guidance contained in the MTAN2 when the proposal still has **major work within 200m of residential properties** namely the construction and removal of the eastern overburden dump and baffle mound.

“From the comments of the Councils Environmental Health Officer it is considered that the construction and removal of the bund would create noise and dust problems that would be detrimental to the amenities of those residents in the vicinity of the site, particularly Pembroke Place, Pembroke Terrace and Salisbury Terrace. **The Environmental Statement (ES) recognises that the noise levels would exceed the maximum levels recommended in MTAN2.**

“If the Council were to accept the flawed logic of the argument that the amended plan complied with the MTAN2 guidance, in that there was no working within 200m of the settlement, the proposal would still need to be considered against the general presumption of against coal working within 500m of a settlement unless there is justification in terms of exceptional circumstances as laid out in the MTAN2. It is considered that the benefits in terms of landscape, safety and regeneration are, at best, marginal. In order to recommend approval for an application in such close proximity to residential properties there would have to be clear, substantial and proven benefits. **It is considered that no overriding significant benefits would arise from the proposal which would justify its approval as such benefits do not exist.**

“In addition the application presents the scheme as the only method of dealing with the legacy of the previous coal workings, however it is considered that the ES does not present any quantifiable analysis with regard to the costing of the scheme put forward or any alternative schemes that may deal with the legacy of the previous coal mining operations affecting the site.

“IT IS RECOMMENDED: Refuse for the following reason(s):

“Given the site’s proximity to residential properties, the nature, scale and duration of the operations proposed would give rise to unacceptable impacts upon the amenities of local residents in relation to noise and dust. The proposal is therefore considered to be in conflict with Policy M1 of the Adopted Gwent Structure Plan and furthermore there are no exceptional circumstances presented in the application, of sufficient weight, which would override the general policy presumption in Minerals Technical Advice Note 2: Coal that surface working of coal should not occur within 500m of a settlement.”

² Distances are measured “boundary to boundary” - as specified in the MTAN paragraphs 29, 30, 32, 40 and 49-51, <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/policy/090120coalmtanen.pdf> Paragraph 51 requires the applicant to provide supporting evidence to justify anything other than boundary-to-boundary measurements – which was not done in this case.

³ First Minister in answer to Lynne Neagle AM, 6th March 2013,

⁴ First Minister in answer to Bethan Jenkins AM, 6th March 2013.

Agenda Item 5

P-04-442 : Guarantee good support close to home for disabled children and their families

Petition wording:

We, the undersigned, call on the Welsh Government to guarantee good support close to home for disabled children and their families.

In order to achieve this, we call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make sure the new Educational (Wales) Bill includes a 'Provide Local' principle in the Bill that will:

- ensure inclusive and accessible services in the local area, and
- put a duty on local agencies to introduce new inclusive and accessible services if they don't exist, through better planning, partnership and the involvement of local parents.

Petition raised by: Scope Cymru

Date petition first considered by Committee: 4 December 2012

Number of signatures: 2,606



For the consideration by the Petitions Committee: P-04-442

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Petition raised by: Scope Cymru

Date petition first considered by Committee: 4 December 2012

Number of signatures: 2,415

Why this is needed

There is a critical shortage of services for disabled children and their families

Many of the parents Scope Cymru talk to want to use services that most families take for granted such as: childcare to support their child's development and so that parents can work; short breaks that enable a disabled child or young person to enjoy a leisure activity; or the right educational setting that supports their child to learn and reach their potential.

However Scope Cymru's research¹ has found that many of these families with disabled children and children with SEN are struggling from a lack of help and support in their local area.

- 64% said that the services that they and their children need are not available in their local area.

As a result, families tell us that getting the support they need is an enormous battle, and many are forced to travel outside of their local area – sometimes considerable distances – to get the help that their children need.

- The average distance travelled by families accessing services is over 4000 miles a year, or 80 miles a week.
- Four in ten disabled children live in poverty in the UK², with direct extra costs such as travel directly contributing to this³.
- Families in Wales who access short breaks services will travel for an average of 289 miles or 18 hours a year getting to and from these services.
- Only one in ten families (11%) said they could access all the services they need locally.

¹ Unpublished: 61 parents and carers of disabled children took part in our survey during August 2012. The sample covered a good range of geographical regions and types of area, as well as impairment type. The most common impairments were learning, understanding or concentrating (74%), social or behavioural (67%) and intellectual delay (67%). Respondents were mostly female (92%) and in the lower income brackets (12% £0 – 9,999, 29% £10 – 19,999, 27% £20 – 29,999).

² The Children's society (2011) 4 in every 10 Disabled Children Living in Poverty; <http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/news-views/press-release/four-ten-disabled-children-are-living-poverty>

³ Contact a family (2012) Counting the Costs, <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/professionals/research/reducing-poverty/>

Some families have told us that they have no choice but to struggle on without any help, while others are faced with the difficult decision to send their children away from home so that they can receive appropriate support.

The lack of support is pushing families to breaking point

Scope Cymru's research found that the lack of support for disabled children and their families in their local area is pushing them to breaking point.

- 67% said that the shortage of local services caused them anxiety and stress.
- 39% said that the shortage of services impacted on their working life.
- Half said that they miss out on family activities such as days out or birthdays as a result.
- 31% said it put pressure on their relationship with their partner.
- 21% said that it puts financial pressure on their family.

How can the Welsh Assembly address this problem?

The Education (Wales) Bill

The Welsh Government has recognised the need to improve the experience of young people with 'additional needs' and plans to introduce the Education (Wales) Bill to improve provision, largely through creating integrated 'Individual Development Plans' which will replace Statements of Special Educational Need.

The decision by the Welsh Government to delay the legislative reform in order to "work through the proposals with key partners" is welcome and is an opportunity for the Welsh Government to ensure that the Bill sufficiently meets the needs of disabled children, young people and their families.

Scope Cymru welcomes a number of measures contained in the consultation on the Bill, including:

- The intention to create an integrated, person centred approach which will look at the holistic needs of a young person, rather than just their educational needs, and create partnerships between health, social services and education.
- Plans to create regional consortia and 'Support Panels' to look at joint strategic planning and commissioning processes, including duties on agencies to collaborate on additional needs.
- The intention within the consultation that needs should be met "wherever possible within their local community"⁴.

However, the current proposals risk failing to improve the provision of local services for families with disabled children for the following reasons:

- Scope Cymru is concerned that, even when working in collaboration, Local Authorities will only offer what they are already planning to do, with no duty to make vital universal services inclusive or deliver the services that families with disabled children need.
- That despite the intention in the consultation to meet needs in the community, there is no duty or guidance to ensure that this is the case. The consultation already highlights that consortia could fund placements "in, or out of, the consortium area"⁵

The Welsh Government must introduce a 'Provide Local Principle' in Education (Wales) Bill

Scope Cymru's petition '*P-04-442 : Guarantee good support close to home for disabled children and their families*' is therefore calling on the Welsh Government to introduce a 'Provide Local Principle' in the Education (Wales) Bill. The principle will ensure that:

1. Services in a local area are inclusive and accessible.
2. Where services for disabled children do not currently exist, local authorities must guarantee their delivery.

⁴ Welsh Government, Forward in partnership for children and young people with additional needs - Proposals for reform of the legislative framework for special educational needs, June 2012

⁵ Ibid.

3. Disabled children and families will be included as partners throughout the commissioning process, ensuring that local authorities do not waste resources by providing services that disabled children and their families do not need.

Accessible services are not just those which contain wheelchair ramps. For example an inclusive and accessible school will be able to meet the whole educational need of the pupil, which can be very complex, involving support workers, an adapted curriculum or specialist technology. The lack of an accessible school can mean young people have to travel to a specialist school, which may be further from their home.

The types of services that would be included under the 'Provide Local Principle' are those amenities that provide a public service, such as childcare or playgroups, schools and colleges, day centre's or children's centres, leisure services such as sports centres, swimming pools and short breaks and healthcare services such as GPs clinics, health Centre's and hospitals.

What difference will this make to disabled children and their families?

The introduction of the 'Provide Local Principle' would make a real difference to the services available to families with disabled children. Specifically, it would mean that:

- Families with disabled children are able to use more universal services locally, because they will be inclusive and accessible;
- Families with disabled children will not have to battle for the support they need from services; and
- Families with disabled children will not need to travel so far from where they live to access them.

These duties would ensure that local agencies consider the wider needs of children and families when making decisions on services and ensure families are able to access inclusive, accessible local services-

When services that are provided within a local area are not deemed to be sufficient for disabled children, young people and their families, local agencies would be under an enhanced duty to re-assess local service provision until it is deemed sufficient by consulted parties and local family representatives. This would require supporting guidance to be produced by the Welsh Government to detail how local authorities should determine whether the services they are providing are sufficient, as well as the requirements on how they should consult with local family representatives.

We believe by adding this principle, forthcoming legislation and resulting framework for those with additional needs will better meet the aims of the Welsh Government of creating an inclusive system, with fewer barriers to inclusion and more individuals being enabled to access services in their communities.

About Scope Cymru

Scope Cymru works with disabled people and their families at every stage of their lives. From offering day to day support and information, to challenging assumptions about disability and influencing decision makers - everything we do is about creating real and lasting change.