

Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date:

11 March 2014

Meeting time:

09.00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Agenda Item 1

By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 2

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 Gwnewch y Nodyn Cyngor Technegol Mwynau yn ddeddf:
Sesiwn Dystiolaeth gyda'r Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio**

**P-04-472 Make the MTAN law: Evidence Session with the Minister for
Housing and Regeneration**

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da, **William Powell:** Good morning,
Weinidog. Minister.

[2] Welcome also to your team. I also welcome Mike Hedges, who is acting as substitute for Joyce Watson for this section of the meeting. I also welcome colleagues from Westminster, who are joining us shortly in the public gallery. We are joined by the Right Honourable Andrew Lansley, who is the Leader of the House of Commons, and his deputy, the Right Honourable Tom Brake. We are very pleased that they are able to join us this morning for this section of the meeting.

[3] This agenda item is in respect of petition P-04-472, Make the MTAN law. Minister, I will give you the opportunity of making a short initial statement, if you would like to take that up. We are very grateful to you for joining us this morning. I know that, on a couple of previous occasions, you have been constrained by due process in terms of appearing before the committee. The situation has moved on somewhat, and we very much look forward to this important evidence session. Over to you.

[4] **The Minister for Housing and Regeneration (Carl Sargeant):** Good morning, Chair, and good morning, committee. Thank you for the opportunity to come to speak to you this morning. I start by saying that it is a very important process, as you said, Chair. We have been constrained by the process, as I am formally the decision-making body, in that some of the applications may cross my desk. In terms of today's session, I will be guarded in some of my responses in terms of no trick questions—I am sure that there will be none, Chair—and in terms of any of the detail about any specific applications that may be attributed to a site previously or in the future. I will make my contributions purely on current policy around MTAN 2. I have brought part of my senior team here in terms of planning, and they will give me advice on the process, so that we do not get caught up inadvertently with some of the decisions or questions and responses that you may get from me today.

[5] **William Powell:** Excellent. Perhaps your team would like to briefly introduce themselves for sound levels, and for the Record.

[6] **Ms Thomas:** I am Rosemary Thomas, chief planner in the Welsh Government.

[7] **Ms Smith:** I am Joanne Smith. I work for Rosemary, particularly on minerals, waste and environmental issues in the planning division.

10:30

[8] **William Powell:** Let us kick off with an initial question, Minister, to seek your views on how a consistency of approach can be achieved in considering the application of national planning guidance, particularly through the technical advice notes. It is that area of consistency of approach and fair treatment that concerns all of us, particularly in the context of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, on which a couple of members of this committee sit. That is something that we hear very much from developers, but also from communities. Could you address that initial question, please?

[9] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course, Chair; thank you. I will take that question in two parts. Broadly, the issue around consistency of approach in planning terms is something that is important to me and my department. You will see, through the new planning Bill that we are bringing forward and the associated positive planning documents, that we are looking to ensure that we get a more consistent approach across the 25 local planning authorities that we currently have in Wales. We have some evidence of variability in terms of the decision-making processes—I say ‘processes’ as opposed to ‘decisions’—and how they are delivered. It is something that I am looking at very closely to make sure that we have some consistency across planning authorities.

[10] In terms of the specific question around MTAN 2, I do not see this as being any different from any other mineral technical advice note that we have in place in terms of determination by local authorities. I believe that they are professional bodies that have the ability to observe what the technical advice notes say and put that into practice. The only thing that I would suggest is that, when we are talking about MTAN, particularly the minerals coal extraction element, the number of cases that we have, and applications, in Wales is very small. So, the ability to have consistency is there, in a smaller

field, but the experience in that process is lower because there are fewer applications.

[11] **William Powell:** Just developing that point a little, do you think that there would be merit in building up greater expertise on some of these highly complex applications, and maybe having a central team that could assist planning authorities to deliver a more consistent approach? You said there that it is an issue of capacity, but that it is also an issue of having sufficient practice in these rather more specific and technical areas. It is rather akin to what we often hear quoted in the health service, in terms of consultants and surgeons being in a position to deliver the best outcomes.

[12] **Carl Sargeant:** Let me be clear, Chair, if I was not clear in my first response: I do not think that there is an issue about determination in the skills base of this. Of course, there are issues about making sure that authorities are able to make the appropriate decisions on this, but it would be wrong for me or any other to suggest that they are incapable of doing that professionally in any of the determinations that they make.

[13] **Bethan Jenkins:** Minister, I hear what you are saying but there is ambiguity on the ground, and local authorities are making decisions on different bases. You say in your submission that

[14] 'national planning policy and technical advice notes are not prescriptive documents but are among the 'material considerations' to which a planning authority should have regard when making a decision'.

[15] Do you believe that this has created confusion among many local authorities, which believed that the MTAN was supposed to be rigorously adhered to by including it in local development plans?

[16] **Carl Sargeant:** I do not recognise the issue of ambiguity. As I have tried to outline, Chair, I believe that all planning authorities are asked to act professionally in their determinations. I have not received information about any such cases; perhaps you would like to offer some evidence of where you think a determination has been made incorrectly or by a different method other than as prescribed by MTAN or the planning process.

[17] **Bethan Jenkins:** In the Court of Appeal ruling on the extension to Margam opencast mine issued in October 2001, Lord Justice Pill said that he was somewhat disturbed by the approach adopted on behalf of the Ministers.

He went on to say that the impact of the 500m buffer zone in MTAN 2 and development plans presented problems for planning authorities and planning inspectors, and provided them with a dilemma. He said that that was exacerbated by evidence on behalf of the Ministers before the court, and he stated that MTAN 2 is not a source of relevant national policy. He also said that further guidance would have been useful.

[18] So, in spite of that ruling, your submission appeared to be asserting the same point or certainly one that is very similar.

[19] **Carl Sargeant:** I do not have anything to offer on that question, Chair.

[20] **William Powell:** Minister, we respect that—

[21] **Carl Sargeant:** It was case specific, Chair, and I hope that you understand the process.

[22] **Bethan Jenkins:** The problem is that it creates a precedent for the ambiguity that exists within the system in relation to the MTAN, Minister, and I would have thought that you would have an opinion on that.

[23] **Carl Sargeant:** If I may, in a broader context, Chair, offer some thoughts around process, as I said earlier, I do not recognise that there is ambiguity on the determination of this. I would welcome, if the committee has evidence specific to an application, past or present, that would suggest that a planning authority is acting inappropriately in its determination of any application that is presented before it, that it shares it with me.

[24] **William Powell:** Thanks for restating that, Minister. Russell George has some issues to raise that relate to the—

[25] **Russell George:** They follow on from your questions, Chair. May I ask, Minister, what recourse is there within the planning system to deal with planning decisions by local authorities that are contrary or even consistently contrary to national planning guidance?

[26] **Carl Sargeant:** While the questioning is related to MTAN2, I do not see MTAN2 as being any different from the process that is delivered by the planning system across Wales. I think that we can attribute that question to the broader issue of planning. I believe that the determination of applications is best placed at a local level, and that is why we have planning authorities

across Wales. Indeed, I know that members of this committee also have involvement in that process at a local level. Determination is important there. Subject to that process, whether an application is successful or otherwise, there is a planning process through the appeals system in order to test that mechanism. What I do not wish to do is be the arbiter of or to police a system that is actually a devolved function of local planning authorities. Again, we are looking closely at the system in terms of performance and how that performance operates, but I do not have any knowledge that a planning authority operating in Wales is breaching any conditions that are applied and given to it as a planning authority. It would be wrong for anybody to suggest otherwise without evidence.

[27] **Ms Thomas:** Just to pick up and add to what the Minister has said, one of the mechanisms that we use to do exactly what you said, that is, to monitor how things are going, is, from time to time, to commission research to assess whether policies have been effectively delivered across Wales, and we have done that recently with the renewable energy consenting process and with the housing consenting process. That is the mechanism that we have for identifying whether things are appropriately interpreted and delivered by local authorities and other statutory agencies.

[28] **Russell George:** May I ask what is meant by the Welsh Government's intention to reduce

[29] 'reliance on national planning policy where more appropriate tools are available'?

[30] That is stated in 'Positive Planning'. Could you just expand on that?

[31] **Carl Sargeant:** 'Positive Planning' is a consultation document, and the consultation closes on 26 February, I believe, Chair. What we are trying to do is to get views from interested parties, professional bodies and other interested agencies, about what tools they think are the most appropriate to make a determination. For clarity, what I have tried to explain in the launch of the draft Bill and 'Positive Planning' is that that is a structured approach to change in the planning system. It is not a policy development change in terms of that; they are very separate, and I do not intend to put policy into structure position. I think that what we have to be able to do is to make sure, and I suppose that this relates to your very first question, Chair, and is not specific to MTAN2, but about the general principles of planning, that, wherever you are in Wales, there should be a consistent approach and an

understanding that you are given a fair determination based upon the planning policy that is in place in Wales. At the moment, with 25 planning authorities, that is variable in terms of how that operates in terms of the timeline and other activities. What I am trying to do is to get a consistent approach to the delivery of policy, which is consistent wherever you are in Wales—it is just the way that it is implemented.

[32] **William Powell:** Minister, if I may just pick up on that last answer, to what extent do you feel that the schemes of delegation to planning officers are a valuable tool in achieving consistency, as opposed to major applications being considered by a designated planning committee, mainly of locally elected members, although, obviously, in the three national park authorities, you also have those appointed members, who play an important role?

[33] **Carl Sargeant:** Two points. On the issue around delegation, we did some research around that, and I will ask Rosemary to pick up the points on the research in just one second. If I may make a broader point, again, Chair, the difficulty with democracy is giving people a choice in terms of determination. The worst thing about planning systems is politics, wherever you are, and that is not party specific. However, it is a problem, and that is something that we are also trying to look at in terms of scoping. We have some planning authorities that are made up of the planning committees, which have every member of the council on, as a planning decision process. How they get agreement through that is interesting. However, there are some that have a more structured approach, and we are looking, within the planning Bill, to give some consistency around decision-making processes so that it is fair for the authority, as a planning authority, and for the people who are making applications, so that they know exactly what the system will be, ensuring that you will get fairness wherever you are in terms of that determination. That does not detract from the fact that the policy is the policy, and that should be applied wherever you are, whatever the situation that currently exists within the local planning authority.

[34] I will ask Rosemary to expand on determination.

[35] **Ms Thomas:** The Minister is referring to research that we asked the Royal Town Planning Institute to commission on our behalf. That was really interesting, and very revealing. There are 25 local planning authorities in Wales, and there are 25 different ways of organising your scheme of delegations, your committee arrangements, site visits, and the whole panoply

of things that relate to planning. As the Minister said, through the planning (Wales) Bill, we will be tackling some of that.

[36] However, in terms of the issue of delegation, I think that we are proposing that we have a national scheme of delegations, so that we do eliminate some of the vagaries of the current system. We certainly encourage local authorities to have high levels of delegation. The vast majority of applications are of a local scale—small-scale applications—and those are quite appropriate for professional officers to deal with. Where you are into the level at which applications should be referred to the committee, that is where there is a range of different approaches in Wales, and we think that there should be a more consistent approach. So, we will see what we get back in terms of the consultation responses, and that will be an area where we will be taking action in future.

[37] **William Powell:** That is very helpful. Thanks. Bethan Jenkins is next.

[38] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wondered whether we could see that research, because I think that it would be useful for those who are living in areas where open-cast mining is a scar on their lives to be able to understand who makes the decision and when. In many instances, when it is a council officer deciding on it, they feel that they are even more removed from the process democratically. I know that you will not speak about certain instances, but we have an instance in East Pit, in Cwmllynfell, where 14 months have gone by without planning consent, and they are still continuing to open cast, and that is unacceptable. So, I think that we need to have a consistent approach across Wales, so that we can fully understand what people's rights are in the planning process.

[39] **Carl Sargeant:** I listened carefully to the Member's questioning. On the determination, the research is available on the Welsh Government website, but we will give that some further thought, in making sure that you have a web link or something posted to committee, if that is helpful. I agree with the Member that determination is important, and transparency around that process and understanding that for the citizen is an important process, which we need to make sure is effective in terms of communicating that to the broader public.

[40] **William Powell:** I believe that you have some questions on the LDP process, Mike. As a former leader of Swansea council, I know that you have seen that from a number of different angles.

[41] **Mike Hedges:** Yes. Do you consider the LDP process to be well understood and accessible to communities and the general public? May I also just pick up a point that was made about delegation? I have called in planning applications twice, as a local councillor, because the planners said, 'This is not in keeping with the area.' When we have gone on the site visit, we have seen that exactly what was in the application has been done to the house next door. So, will you also accept that there are dangers in delegation, because planners seem to work from maps rather than from the street scene?

10:45

[42] **Carl Sargeant:** There were two questions. I will take the latter on delegation first. Of course there are risks involved in what is determined by a professional planner in an office-based situation to the local member. That is why we have local members, so that we have the facility to ask for a call-in process, because, generally, they would know and understand the people and the area better. There is a professional context that all planners operate in and I would again urge you, if you are suggesting that that is not happening in terms of a particular planner or system, to let me know about that in more detail. That would be important for me.

[43] In terms of the LDP process, engagement is always difficult, is it not? People tend to engage when there is a direct effect on them, most of the time. The only time when anybody is interested in planning is when there is a direct impact, and then everybody becomes a professional planner in their own right. If I had a magic wand in order to get engagement on planning, there are many other things that I would use that for too in terms of community engagement. I think it is a challenge, but I think that, on balance, local authorities do have a process where there is community engagement. However, as I said, trying to get people excited about planning is a challenge.

[44] **William Powell:** Bethan Jenkins is next.

[45] **Bethan Jenkins:** I must be an anorak then. [*Laughter.*] I have the questions on exceptional circumstances. I remember, when Jane Davidson was passing this through the Assembly initially, that we had a debate about the exceptional circumstances and the potential loopholes that these would allow for. I am sure that you would disagree with my thinking that it would be a loophole, but I do think that.

[46] In your submission, I thought that it was interesting that you said that:

[47] 'An exception is not about allowing unacceptable impacts on communities as any impact must always be acceptable.'

[48] Does that mean that you think that the impact on communities from sites given permission to come within the 500m buffer zone is in fact acceptable? Is that what you are saying in that particular sentence?

[49] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, I do not believe that you can take a single issue on a planning application as read. You have to take it as a part of a process. Planning, as you fully understand, is site specific, and it varies with every application. There are many factors that apply to an application, including exceptions, which may give or detract from the ability to have a positive planning approval process. However, it would be wrong of me to suggest that just one single issue around an exception was the only factor in determining whether it is acceptable or not.

[50] **Bethan Jenkins:** Do you think that the exceptions within paragraph 49 of the MTAN are detailed enough? What we find is that, once an open-cast mine has started, the company will put in for an extension and could use that criterion for enhancing their works. I am just curious as to whether you think that it is strong enough, because we have had this MTAN for a few years now, and whether there would be a need to review any of the exceptions at any given time or whether you are happy with the current situation.

[51] **Carl Sargeant:** I think the Member poses a fair point in terms of what our policies do or do not say across the whole raft of technical advice notes and MTANs. We constantly review our MTANs to ensure that we believe that they are most appropriate for the delivery of the policy through advice. I would like to put this into context in terms of open cast and mineral applications. Since 2009, we have had approximately 100,000 planning applications submitted to planning authorities. In terms of open cast, we have had fewer than half a dozen. So, this, in context, is small—high impact, I accept—but a smaller number.

[52] Do I think that MTAN 2 is the appropriate tool and gives the right advice for determination? Yes, I do. Is it prohibitive for me to say that I am not constantly looking at MTAN 2 and all of the others? No, because we are constantly reviewing to see whether there are other circumstances that may

give us a different policy outcome to benefit our communities. At the moment, I am not conducting a review of MTAN 2.

[53] **William Powell:** Minister, to round off, the positive planning consultation that is currently under way, which you said ends on 26 February, proposes that ‘Minerals Planning Policy Wales’ and the overall ‘Planning Policy Wales’ should be merged. Do you feel that that could potentially have an impact on the buffer-zone approach and that it will be of merit? Secondly, how frequently do you believe that technical advice notes need to be revisited and refreshed in the light of emerging evidence and other circumstances for them to remain valid?

[54] **Carl Sargeant:** As regards the first point about the merger of the two documents—‘Minerals Planning Policy Wales’ and ‘Planning Policy Wales’—it is my intention to do that. Will that have an effect on buffer zones? No. That is not the reason why I am doing that. It is just to make a document that is easier to read and more relevant today in terms of planning policy. As regards your second point—sorry, what was it?

[55] **William Powell:** It was on how frequently the technical advice notes should be revisited.

[56] **Carl Sargeant:** The point that I was hoping to make in responding to Bethan Jenkins’s last question was that we constantly review how relevant our policy is. My officials advise me on whether, at a place in time, they think that there is something changing in systems, the environment or otherwise that means that we need to make amendments to our technical advice notes. We do not have a timeline on this, but they are constantly under review because we are using them on a regular basis. There is no fixed timeline noting that MTAN 2 or any other technical advice note will be reviewed at a certain time, because it may be required beforehand or maybe it would be more appropriate to do so at a later time.

[57] **Bethan Jenkins:** I appreciate what you are saying but a Minister in the UK Parliament has said that coal will not be needed in the near future. I wonder whether that is true, for a start, and whether you can say with any substance that you will just review on a regular basis, when we might know sooner than that whether we need coal for the future or whether we will be looking at alternatives. For example, I visited Aberthaw last week and they are looking at potential challenges and how they can change for the future. All I would ask of you is this: if you are looking at it in a broader, strategic

way, how can we understand what your reviews will mean to wider Government policy?

[58] **Carl Sargeant:** I will give you an example of how we would determine this, if I may. I pay tribute to the Member, who I know is a vociferous campaigner on this issue and has been very balanced in her questioning this morning in terms of not putting me in a difficult place in responding to her questions.

[59] **Bethan Jenkins:** You would just ignore me anyway.

[60] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes. [*Laughter.*] One example is that we know that coal pricing has changed significantly because of economics and what is happening in the United States. That is one factor that we consider. We also look at issues around site refurbishment: so, after the extraction, what does that mean for the ability to re-establish a site in a place that the community would find acceptable? These are things that we have to consider when the application comes forward. We believe that, through a process of consistent monitoring of technical advice notes and planning policy, we are in the right place to determine whether we need to refresh completely or whether we have to make amendments. However, that is not something that I would like to apply a timeline to in case there was an event that meant that we had to make adjustments. It would be foolish to rely on a time capsule, as opposed to being nimble enough and having the flexibility to be able to make policy changes should we wish to do so.

[61] **Bethan Jenkins:** You will know that in many areas, the bond is not sufficient to redevelop the area, and that in many areas the company will not reclaim the land. That is something that you, as Minister, have to be looking at across the board in Wales, because we know for a fact that communities are still being blighted by opencast, when they have been told that the void would be filled, but the void is still not being filled. That is something that, really, you as Minister should be looking to review in the very near future.

[62] **Carl Sargeant:** We have commissioned a report specifically on site refurbishment, and what that means in the long term for sites that are already active and others. However, it is not site-specific, Chair. I take this into consideration, subject to it being a determining factor, if I have to make a determination on an application in the future.

[63] **Bethan Jenkins:** When you say that you have commissioned a report,

what does that mean?

[64] **Carl Sargeant:** We have commissioned a report to look at the implications of bonds and other methods to refurbish sites.

[65] **Bethan Jenkins:** Will you be publicising that?

[66] **Carl Sargeant:** That will be available at some point. I cannot give the committee a timeline right now, but I will—

[67] **William Powell:** Minister, we would be very grateful if you could alert us, as a committee, to the publication date of that report, because it is highly relevant to the consideration of this petition and other related petitions.

[68] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes. Respectfully, Chair, I do not think that this will be available for your determination in this committee, but I am sure that we will be able to apply a timeline of when we think that we will get that report back, which might give you an opportunity to review it in the future.

[69] **William Powell:** I appreciate that. I have the final question; I am conscious that time is pressing this morning. Minister, have you considered strengthening the wording of the Town and Country Planning (Notification) (Wales) Direction 2012, which would specifically require local planning authorities across Wales to notify Welsh Ministers of any minerals application that they are minded to approve that falls within a designated buffer zone?

[70] **Carl Sargeant:** We believe that there is enough scope within the guidance issued to local planning authorities in order for them to make that determination, apply the actions and inform us, subject to a planning application not being in accordance with one of the provisions of the development plan. So, we already believe that that is in place.

[71] **William Powell:** Diolch yn fawr **William Powell:** Thank you for the am y sesiwn diddorol y bore yma, interesting session this morning, Weinidog. Minister.

[72] Thank you very much indeed for the candour of your answers, given that you were constrained by the considerations that you outlined at the start of the meeting. We are grateful for your time this morning.

P-04-472 Make the MTAN law, Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Chair, 27.02.14

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee,
National Assembly.

27 February 2014

Dear William,

Make the MTAN law ! petition

I listened with concern to the “evidence” session with the Minister at your last meeting and I have spoken at length with Steven since. I write now to confirm that I fear the Minister’s negative attitude calls into question whether there is any value in anyone presenting a petition on this topic in future.

I deduce, from the Minister’s written submission and the proceedings, that he and his Advisors did not read the evidence presented last May or, if they had done so, they decided to not acknowledge that they had done so. Their official excuse for their non-response to our submissions is that they claim they may not refer to “specifics” – even the specifics of planning applications that are now dead and buried history.

The first point to be said about this is that, supposing for the sake of argument that this excuse is 100% valid, this means that the Minister could have answered the same questions in July – instead of postponing this non-event, pending his decision on the Varteg Hill planning appeal. This was a gross discourtesy to the committee and has prevented consideration of the petition for over six months.

A more plausible scenario is that his excuses from July to the February had validity and it is only this latest excuse that is false, dreamt up specifically to avoid answering anything arising from the now dead Varteg Hill appeal. I suggest that your committee ask the Minister to produce the legal advice he received that justifies his refusal to refer to the lessons from this or any other past planning application.

In any event, the Minister made no reference whatsoever to the submissions made by Lynne Neagle AM and myself in May. In our submissions we had made it clear that we were not asking for planning

law to be changed – what we did ask, and repeated several times in several ways, was that all persons involved in the planning process should “sing from the same hymn sheet”.

Given all these references (paragraphs §194, 195, 199, 200, 208, 211, 212, 214, 220, 225, 226), it is disingenuous of the Minister to suggest that we were asking for a change in the law rather than, as the transcript demonstrates, implementation of the existing law. I prefer to believe that he was misinformed by his Advisors on this.

I reiterated all these points in the written supplementary I made after reading the Minister’s written submission to your committee – but clearly this also was not seen by the Minister. The point we have made throughout is that the MTAN policy guidelines – whether treated as policy or guidelines or both – should be given equal weight by all organisations and people, including the Planning Inspectors.

I suggest that the next step for the committee should be to invite the Planning Inspectorate to appear before the committee to answer the questions not answered by the Minister. Would that be feasible?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Cox", with a stylized flourish underneath.

John Cox (Dr.)
Lead Petitioner

P-04-538 Involving lecturers to ensure a Further Education Inspection Framework that is fit for purpose

Petition wording:

We believe that: 1. The inclusion of the views of lecturing staff, in the early decision making process would be of great benefit to the development of an inspection framework that is fit for purpose; 2. Due to the increased emphasis there will be on soft skills, professional input from those who understand and work with the complexities of balancing pedagogy, with the demands of students, employers and Welsh Government priorities, it would seem prudent to include those that are at the heart of delivering this agenda; 3. Education services in Wales should be seen as part of a wider family, but are concerned that the FE sector and in this case in particular, FE lecturers are rather excluded from this family and are not being afforded the professional respect that they deserve.

Additional Information: 1. As the largest Union representing Further Education lecturers in Wales, the University and College Union has been excluded from the Estyn Advisory Group that has been set up to develop the new inspection framework for Further Education Institutions in Wales; 2. The Advisory Group currently consists almost entirely of Principals or Vice Principals and representatives of Estyn; 3. The University and College Union has been excluded from being involved in the Advisory Group despite making numerous requests to Estyn to be involved.

Petition raised by: Ian Whitehead-Ross

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 11 March 2014

Number of signatures: TBC

Agenda Item 3.2

P-04-539 Save Cardiff Coal Exchange

Petition wording:

This petition seeks a commitment from the Welsh Government to set up a public enquiry into the events surrounding the Coal Exchange and to support public opinion which seeks to protect and conserve the building.

The Coal Exchange is one of Cardiff's most important buildings and one of the finest buildings in Wales. It's where the world's first million pound deal was struck during the city's industrial heyday (equivalent to over £100m today). Yet far from cherishing this building, Cardiff council proposes to demolish the main body of the building, keeping only the facades.

If this happens, then the magnificent interior with its immense historical significance will be lost forever. This grade 2* listed building deserves better, and the views of the public need to be heard.

The Council have been claiming for the past year that it is on the point of collapse. No works have been done, yet there is no apparent evidence that the building is about to collapse. It is questioned if Cardiff Council were able to use section 78 powers under the building act to progress their plans, and this needs to be investigated openly.

So much of Cardiff Bay's social and built heritage has already been destroyed; it seems inconceivable that more can be cast aside with cynical abandon.

It's unclear why the council refuses to see the value of restoring the Coal Exchange to protect this iconic building for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

The issues are of the highest level of public interest, and it is considered essential that an open public consultation occurs to review matters.

Petition raised by: Jon Avent

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 11 March 2014

Number of signatures: TBC

SAVE

Cardiff Coal Exchange



Achub

Cyfnewidfa Glo Caerdydd

Contents

- 1.0 Background
- 2.0 Summary of Issues
- 3.0 Cardiff Coal Exchange
- 4.0 The Architect Edwin Seward
- 5.0 The Coal Exchange in 2014
- 6.0 Some Recent Photographs
- 7.0 How Much Have Cardiff Council Spent?
- 8.0 Petition *(2700+ signatures)*

1.0 Background

The Coal Exchange is one of Cardiff's most important buildings and one of the finest buildings in Wales. It's where the world's first million pound deal was struck during the city's industrial heyday (equivalent to over £100m today). Yet far from cherishing this building, Cardiff council proposes to demolish the main body of the building, keeping only the facades.

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It's unclear why the council refuses to see the value of restoring the Coal Exchange to protect this iconic building for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

The issues are of the highest level of public interest, and it is considered essential that an open public consultation occurs to review matters.

This petition seeks a commitment from the Welsh Government to set up a public enquiry into the events surrounding the Coal Exchange and to support public opinion which seeks to protect and conserve the building.

Mae'r Gyfnewidfa Lo yn un o adeiladau pwysicaf Caerdydd ac yn un o'r adeiladau gorau yng Nghymru . Yn y Gyfnewidfa Lo cafodd y cytundeb miliwn o bunnoedd cyntaf cael ei wneud yn ystod oes aur ddiwydiannol y ddinas (mae hyn yn cyfateb i dros £ 100m heddiw). Ymhell o archu'r adeilad arbennig hwn, mae cyngor Caerdydd yn cynnig i ddymchwel prif gorff yr adeilad, gan gadw dim ond y ffasadau.

Os bydd hyn yn digwydd, yna bydd y tu mewn godidog gyda'i arwyddocâd hanesyddol aruthrol yn cael ei golli am byth . Mae'r adeilad radd 2 * rhestredig hyn yn haeddu gwell , ac mae rhaid i barn y cyhoedd gael ei glywed.

Mae'r Cyngor wedi bod yn dweud yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf ei fod ar fin cwmpo. Nid oes unrhyw waith wedi cael ei wneud, ond nid oes unrhyw dystiolaeth amlwg bod yr adeilad ar fin cwmpo. Mae yna amheuaeth os byddai Cyngor Caerdydd yn gallu defnyddio pwerau 78 o dan y ddeddf adeiladu i ddatblygu'i cynlluniau, ac mae angen ymchwilio hyn yn agored.

Mae gymaint o dreftadaeth gymdeithasol ac adeiledig Bae Caerdydd wedi cael ei ddinistrio.

Mae'n anglur pam y mae'r cyngor yn gwrthod weld y gwerth o adfer y Gyfnewidfa Lo i warchod yr adeilad eiconig hwn ar gyfer defnydd a mwynhad cenedlaethau'r dyfodol.

Mae'r materion o ddiddored mawr i'r cyhoedd, ac mae'n hanfodol bod ymgynghoriad cyhoeddus agored yn digwydd i adolygu y materion.

Mae'r ddeiseb yma yn gofyn am ymrwymiad gan Lywodraeth Cymru i sefydlu ymchwiliad cyhoeddus i'r digwyddiadau o amgylch y Gyfnewidfa Lo ac i gefnogi barn y cyhoedd sy'n ceisio diogelu a gwarchod yr adeilad.

2.0 Summary of Issues

- The Coal Exchange is Grade 2* Listed which puts it in the top 8% of all listed buildings in the UK
- The Coal Exchange is recognised as being one of the finest buildings in Wales
- The Coal Exchange is the work of local architect Edwin Seward
- The Coal Exchange is an historical record of the industrial heritage of Cardiff Bay, and a focal point of the coal trade in south Wales in the early c20th
- The Coal Exchange has global significance as the trading venue where the first £1m deal was struck (£100m in today's money)
- Cardiff Council have been planning to remove the majority of the core of the Coal Exchange to progress their plans for the building without any public consultation.
- Cardiff Council have developed the 'cover' of a dangerous building on the brink of collapse without putting forward any evidence to support this, and have used this to restrict access to the building
- Cardiff Council have misused section 78 of the building act to further their own development plans and hidden agenda for the building which has been progressing over the past year, and most probably longer.
- Cardiff Councils use of section 78 of the building Act strays well beyond what this section of the act allows.
- Aspects of council documentation relating to the Coal Exchange remain restricted, and it has to be asked why this is the case.

3.0 Cardiff Coal Exchange

Designed by Cardiff architect Edwin Seward this elegant and distinctive building operated as one of the economic centres of world trade and is of international significance. Yet Cardiff Council are planning to support the demolition of the entire core of the building, losing all the principal elements of this magnificent structure.



The story of Cardiff's development from small fishing village to the largest and busiest coal exporting dock in the country is well known. Such developments reached their heights in the closing decades of the 19th century when the 'black gold' of the Rhondda became one of the most prized and valuable commodities in the world.



Train loads of coal poured in a never-ceasing stream, down the valleys into Cardiff. And that was where most of the deals were carried out, a shipment bought here, tons of coal ordered there. Fortunes were made and lost every single day.

Cardiff had developed from a market town of 10,000 people into the central hub of commerce on the world stage at this point. Unfortunately, in the early years of the town's prosperity there was no central point where all of the various negotiations could take place. Merchants simply chalked up the price they were offering or willing to pay on boards outside their offices and businessmen met in the quiet corners of public houses and taverns to fix prices and buy and sell the coal that was rapidly making Cardiff the greatest trading port ever seen. It was a situation that could not last.

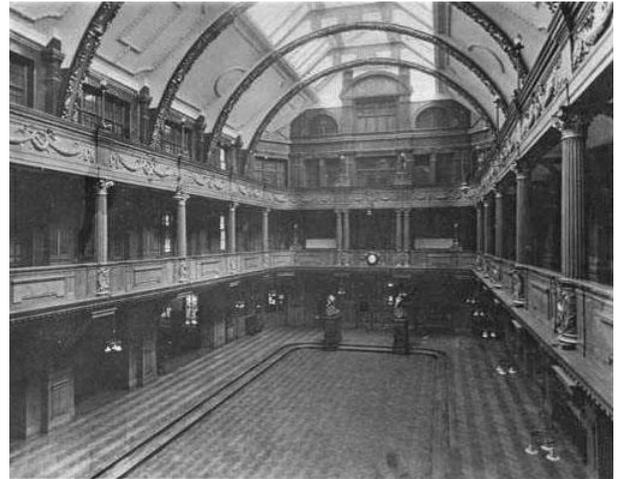


In an attempt to provide a formal centre for the coal trade, Cardiff Coal Exchange was designed and built between 1883 and 1886. It was situated in Mount Stuart Square, within walking distance of Bute Docks, in what had previously been a quiet residential square, complete with a central garden. The design was by the architects James, Seward and Thomas and the building was formally opened on 1 February 1886.

Now, at last, Cardiff businessmen had a place to go each day. It was estimated that as many as eight or nine thousand people passed through the Coal Exchange each day with the hour between noon and 1pm being the busiest trading period.

The Coal Exchange was where the leading businessmen of the south Wales area - ship owners, shipping agents, mine owners - met to fix deals, to buy and sell coal and, of course, to make themselves fortunes.

The Coal Exchange was also the place where, in 1901, the first ever £1 million deal was struck; equivalent to over £100 million in today's money. In the closing years of the 19th century it was where every businessman with pretensions of grandeur and success needed to be seen.



The Coal Exchange has retained much of its fine and elaborate internal features which richly illustrate the history and the purpose of the building. The wood panelling on the trading wall, the oak balcony and the Corinthian columns all remain



4.0 The Architect Edwin Seward

Edwin Seward (1853-1924), trained in Yeovil and came to Cardiff as an assistant to G.E. Robinson. By 1875 he was a member of the firm James, Seward & Thomas that went on to build some of Cardiff's most notable public buildings in the late 19th century. These included the Free Library in the Hayes (1880-82), the vast Coal and Shipping Exchange (1884-88) in Mount Stuart Square and a couple of the shopping arcades in the city centre.



Edwin Seward played a major role in pushing forward the extensive programme of public building that made Cardiff a world-class capital city.



He became one of its most prominent spokesmen. He was the Honourable Secretary of the Cardiff Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition in 1881, and his name crops up repeatedly in reports of proceedings of societies like the Cardiff, South Wales, and Monmouthshire Architects' Society, the Cardiff Naturalists' Society; the South Wales Art Society and Sketching Club (which he promoted, becoming its Vice-Chairman in 1888); the

Royal Cambrian Academy (of which he became a committee member); the Camera Club, and so on.

He also proposed and supported a National Institute for Wales in 1887 to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, and was one of the art adjudicators at the National Eisteddfod in 1889. His practice flourished and he became a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1889, and President of the Cardiff Architects' Society in 1894.



5.0 The Coal Exchange in 2014

Far from cherishing this building, Cardiff council proposes to demolish the main body of the building, keeping only the facade.

If this happens, then Cardiff and Wales will lose the magnificent interior with its immense historical significance. Surely the grade 2* listed Coal Exchange deserves better?

The Council have been claiming for the past year that it is on the point of collapse. No works have been done, yet there is no evidence that the building is about to collapse. The photograph below was taken recently and shows all the roof areas predominantly intact, with very little evidence of imminent collapse. In fact there is no substantial evidence of the imminent catastrophic building collapse that the council claim.

So much of Cardiff's social and built heritage has already been destroyed; it seems inconceivable that more can be cast aside with cynical abandon.

It's unclear why the council cannot see the value of restoring the Coal Exchange, and why this iconic building, that symbolises a key point in our history, is being degraded in this way.

Public support can change attitudes.

- What are Cardiff Council trying to hide ?
- Why are Cardiff Council so afraid of public consultation on this internationally important building ?

Save Cardiff's Coal Exchange from Demolition

Public Enquiry Now !

6.0 Some Recent Photographs

....a building in need of care and maintenance...

NOT demolition !













7.0 How Much Have Cardiff Council Spent?

The attached document illustrates the works that Cardiff Council have spent around £900,000 of local tax payers money on the pretence of protecting the Coal Exchange.

However there has been no apparent works carried out to protect the building.

All the simple and cheap tasks that anyone interested in protecting a building would do.....simple maintenance

- Clearing blocked gutters
- Removing intrusive vegetation
- Patching holes in roof and slipped slates
- Netting or repairing broken windows

None of these simple, minimal cost, tasks have been carried out.

Yet 6-figure sums have been spent on consultants progressing a demolition scheme.....

.....and Cardiff Council claim these are all recoverable as part of work carried out under section 78 of the building act.....unlikely !

Facade Retention,
The Coal Exchange,
Cardiff

Final scheme
up to 22.11

Demolition Scheme



Project: Facade Retention, The Coal Exchange, Cardiff
Client: The County Council of the City and County of Cardiff
Document: Emergency Works and Mount Stuart Square Development Cost Report
Prepared By: Faithful+Gould
Date: 18/12/2013
Version: 1.0

REF.	ITEM	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL REGULATORY	Contract Admin/ Costs	Demolition Scheme	Iteration Scheme	Final Scheme up to 22.11	TOTAL	COMMENTS
PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR									
1.00	M. Smith Facade Retention Works	Budget Cost only	£ 35,000.00		£ 35,000.00			£ 35,000.00	
1.02	Sundry Work to Facades	Budget Cost only							
1.03	Inspections / monitoring	Budget Cost only							
1.04	M. Smith Preliminaries	Budget Cost only							
1.05	Planting	Budget Cost only							
1.06	Groundworks	Budget Cost only	£ 3,750.00		£ 3,750.00			£ 3,750.00	
1.07	Groundwork concrete pile cap	Budget Cost only							
1.08	Willmott Dixon Staff Costs	£ 191,121.22	£ 74,428.43		£ 195,549.65			£ 195,549.65	
1.09	Willmott Dixon Staff Costs	£ 60,281.08			£ 60,281.08			£ 60,281.08	
1.10	Willmott Dixon Staff Costs	£ 5,831.82			£ 5,831.82			£ 5,831.82	
1.11	Willmott Dixon Staff Costs	£ 3,297.19			£ 3,297.19			£ 3,297.19	
1.12	Willmott Dixon Staff Costs	£ 13,618.98			£ 13,618.98			£ 13,618.98	
1.13	Willmott Dixon Staff Costs	£ 11,898.08			£ 11,898.08			£ 11,898.08	
1.14	Scaffolding								
1.15	Advance for temporary property								
1.16	Temporary Storage								
1.17	Delivery								
1.18	Delivery								
1.19	Delivery								
1.20	Harris Fencing to site & disconnected parking machines								
SECTION SUB-TOTAL			£ 302,479.01	£ 80,000.00	£ 383,479.01			£ 383,479.01	
STATUTORY UNDERTAKINGS									
2.00	Water	Budget	£ 15,000.00		£ 15,000.00			£ 15,000.00	
2.01	Gas	Budget							
2.02	Electricity	Budget	£ 31,290.00		£ 31,290.00			£ 31,290.00	
2.04	LI	Option not received	£ 21,631.00		£ 21,631.00			£ 21,631.00	
2.05	LI	Option not received	£ 5,745.00		£ 5,745.00			£ 5,745.00	
2.06	LI	Option not received	£ 1,600.00		£ 1,600.00			£ 1,600.00	
2.07	LI	Option not received	£ 66,950.81		£ 66,950.81			£ 66,950.81	
SECTION SUB-TOTAL			£ 150,816.81		£ 150,816.81			£ 150,816.81	
CONSULTANTS									
COSTS									
RWV CONSULTING									
3.00	RWV	Geotechnical / Ground Investigation	£ 106,554.00		£ 106,554.00			£ 106,554.00	
3.01	RWV	Topographical / elevation survey	£ 13,845.00		£ 13,845.00			£ 13,845.00	
3.02	RWV	Services Surveying	£ 3,600.00		£ 3,600.00			£ 3,600.00	
3.03	RWV	Strategic	£ 1,900.00		£ 1,900.00			£ 1,900.00	
3.04	RWV	Strategic	£ 2,200.00		£ 2,200.00			£ 2,200.00	
3.05	RWV	Strategic	£ 5,010.00		£ 5,010.00			£ 5,010.00	
3.06	RWV	Survey Report of Internal Structures	£ 13,850.00		£ 13,850.00			£ 13,850.00	
3.07	RWV	Survey of windows and surrounds	£ 20,000.00		£ 20,000.00			£ 20,000.00	
3.08	RWV	Services Surveys - Sums	£ 2,600.00		£ 2,600.00			£ 2,600.00	
3.09	RWV	Photographic Survey	£ 4,188.00		£ 4,188.00			£ 4,188.00	
3.10	RWV	Red Survey (Photographic)	£ 1,524.00		£ 1,524.00			£ 1,524.00	
3.11	RWV	Provision of attendance	£ 1,371.00		£ 1,371.00			£ 1,371.00	
3.12	Assessors	Testing / monitoring - say	£ 5,690.83		£ 5,690.83			£ 5,690.83	
3.13	Assessors	Removal (as necessary for facade supports) - say	£ 2,664.99		£ 2,664.99			£ 2,664.99	
3.14	Assessors	Ball Survey - External visual survey							
3.15	Ball	Pre contract costs							
3.16	Ball	Commercial management (IE), 40%							
3.17	Ball	Cost Management (PD/BW), 50%							
3.18	Faithful+Gould	On-site commercial / programmes support (TH), 100%							
3.19	Faithful+Gould	DDM-G (DW), 10%							
3.20	Faithful+Gould								
3.21	Faithful+Gould								
SECTION SUB-TOTAL			£ 89,347.13	£ 5,000.00	£ 94,347.13			£ 94,347.13	
OTHER PROJECT COSTS									
4.00	Project Office	Included above							
4.01	Project Office	Costs							
4.02	Project Office	Support							
4.03	Project Office	Support							
4.04	Project Office	Support							
4.05	Project Office	Support							
4.06	Project Office	Support							
4.07	Project Office	Support							
4.08	Project Office	Support							
4.09	Project Office	Support							
4.10	Project Office	Support							
4.11	Project Office	Support							
4.12	Project Office	Support							
4.13	Project Office	Support							
4.14	Project Office	Support							
4.15	Project Office	Support							
4.16	Project Office	Support							
4.17	Project Office	Support							
4.18	Project Office	Support							
SECTION SUB-TOTAL			£ 710,000.00	£ 80,000.00	£ 790,000.00			£ 790,000.00	
TOTAL			£ 710,000.00	£ 80,000.00	£ 790,000.00	£ 20,000.00	£ 20,000.00	£ 810,000.00	

Blacked out by
Cardiff Council in
FOI release.
Why ?????

£159,554
total expended on
unspecified works which
includes at least £25k on
demolition scheme and
other works all
progressed prior to end
of 2013, which Cardiff
council don't want
anyone to know about....

£25,000

£900,000 spent by
Cardiff Council on
the project

NOTE:
The expenditure cost report excludes:
Any loss of Revenue from car parking
Any CCC Staff time (PDR, JS, CM, RS)
Cost of any ongoing consolidation inspections and building monitoring
Cost of any future additional scaffolding / shoring due to building structural instability
Further administration / legal costs in respect of notices and approvals

8.0 Petition

The following petition was stated on the 20th February 2014 inviting support for the protection of the Coal Exchange and speaking out against the planned demolition.

The following signatories total over 2700 and are in addition to the National Assembly for Wales ePetition.

These objections to the planned demolition of the historic core of the Coal Exchange have come in a very short period of time and demonstrate the mass support for the protection of the building.

Save Cardiff's Coal Exchange from Demolition

Public Enquiry Now !

P-04-540 Stop Sexism In Domestic Abuse

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to stop Domestic Abuse (DA) by treating it as a gender inclusive and human phenomenon in which many men and women share both suffering and responsibility.

Practical NOT Politics

The current proposal blames men, and only men, for all violence and puts a radical gender based prejudice before the real needs of women, men and children and where 97% of men do NOT fit this profile.

Fear of repercussions and lack of publicity in Wales have prevented open and vocal dissent.

This Petition invites an alternative approach that recognises that 86% of DA is the responsibility of both women and men. It also offers greater protection to children and removes the discrimination that arises solely from radical gendered prejudice against those people in same sex female relationships.

Petition raised by: Healing Men

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 11 March 2014

Number of signatures: 238

Agenda Item 4.1

P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute

Petition wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to investigate the potential for and practicality of Wales having a Peace Institute concerned with Peace and Human Rights, comparable with those supported by state governments in Flanders, Catalonia and elsewhere in Europe

Petition raised by: Welsh Centre for International Affairs, Cymdeithas y Cynod, Cynefin y Werin and CND Cymru

Petition first considered by Committee: November 2009

Number of signatures: 1525

P-03-315 New Dyfi River Crossing

Petition wording

We, the undersigned, are in favour of and support, any proposition to create a new crossing of the Dyfi River (or the re-routing of the A487) linking South Meirionnydd with Powys, Dyfed and Ceredigion, to accommodate and suite the demands of modern day traffic and urge prioritisation of funding and action. We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to create this crossing as a matter of priority.

Petition raised by: South Meirionnydd Older People's Forum

Petition first considered by Committee: February 2011

Number of signatures: 3204



Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-315
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/04319/13

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@wales.gsi.gov.uk

04 February 2014

Dear William,

In my letter of 6 January I committed to provide the Petitions Committee with quarterly updates on progress in relation to improvements at Dyfi Bridge and the surrounding area.

Following a recent site visit and a review of options previously identified, I can confirm that I intend to provide funding to progress work to develop options for a new crossing upstream of the existing bridge. This will not include a bypass of Machynlleth.

I also enclose an updated annex showing current progress on the potential short term interventions.

I will write again with a further update at the end of March.

Appendix 1: Dyfi Bridge Actions

Short Term			
	Activity	Progress Report	Date Complete
1	Inspect drainage on the A487 in and around Machynlleth.	Inspection completed and trunk road drainage was found to be relatively clean and fully operative	December 2013
2	Availability of CCTV:	A fault causing the lack of cameras has been identified. Cameras now operational	January 2014
3	The short term study will consider the anecdotal evidence that the River Dyfi used to be dredged and this might be an option for the future	My officials will contact Natural Resources Wales.	Will be completed February 2014
4	Steel barriers at Dyfi Bridge	Historically during closures some road users have chosen to remove signing/coning and to cross the bridge at their own risk. Following the catastrophic failure that occurred in Workington, Welsh Government officials instructed the provision of a physical closure system to protect road users and workforce. This closure is effected by Powys CC workforce. No further action.	
5	Strategic diversions and the use of Variable Message Sign (VMS) at Cross Foxes.	My officials met with Snowdonia National Park officers in December in an attempt to have them remove their objection to the VMS. They would not and having exhausted the consultation route we will now confirm in	Will be completed February 2014

		writing that we intend to proceed with the installation of the sign in the interest of public and road worker safety.	
6	Network Rail Bridge condition.	My officials will investigate the condition of the bridge and provide a report.	Will be completed March 2014
7	Remove from the current scope the investigation into benefits of raising the existing road between the Eco Park and Dyfi Bridge.	This short term measure does not address the issue of the bridge. See longer term options below.	December 2013
8	Temporary pump/storage drainage system for the low spot beneath the rail bridge.	My officials will complete an immediate investigation into the viability of the proposal. Ongoing – looking at temporary pumps and longer term potential for a permanent pumping station.	Will be completed March 2014
Longer term			
9	New bridge option	Identify by end January 2014 options for a new bridge upstream of the existing Dyfi Bridge. The majority of attendees at the meeting showed a preference for a new bridge upstream of the existing bridge. The Eco Park business owners suggested a down stream option. The options would not include a bypass.	
10	Observations during flooding events.	My officials will contact Mr Laughton to discuss his concerns and observations during flooding events	

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 CStJ 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/00009/14

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

09 January 2014

Dear William,

Thank you for your further letter of 16 December regarding road safety on the A48 bridge at Chepstow.

As promised, I will update you with the findings of the feasibility study once I have had an opportunity to consider them. This will take place in the 2014/15 financial year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwina Hart', written in a cursive style.

CHEPSTOW

Town Council

Historic Chepstow: *The Way to Wales and the Wye Valley*
See The Chepstow Web Site at www.chepstow.co.uk
e-mail: clerk@chepstow.co.uk



My Ref: SB/29012014
Your Ref:

William Powell AM
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 INA

29 January 2014

Dear Mr Powell

**Safety on the A48 Bridge at Chepstow – Petition from Wyedean school children
Minister’s response of 1st November 2013 to the Petitions Committee**

Thank you for your letter of December 2013 giving Chepstow Town Council the opportunity to comment on the Transport Minister’s letter of 1st November 2013 regarding the dangerous pavement on the A48 Bridge at Chepstow which was the subject of a petition to you.

Chepstow Town Council met on the 22 January 2014 and was disappointed and surprised by the response from the Minister.

1. The Minister offers a ‘*feasibility study*’ to look at pedestrian guard railings and traffic signs sometime in the 2014-15 financial year. This could mean at least a year of waiting for essential safety work and that is assuming that in the coming financial year the Department concludes that there is a case for railings. The Town Council and pupils of Wyedean School are very concerned and feel that this is too long a timetable for such a dangerous situation on this road. Locally it is felt that at school arrival and departure times the speed limit should be 20 mph with railings. Railings are needed now, within a few months, not 2015 or 2016.
2. The Council was disappointed and surprised that the Minister’s response did not consider any reduction in the speed limit from 50mph to 30mph. It is a fundamental principle of traffic law in Wales and England (and this short bridge is in both) that any urban road with street lights is a restricted 30mph zone in order to protect pedestrians from the very situation which exists on the A48 bridge at Chepstow.
3. For exceptional reasons it is possible for the Government to ‘de-restrict’ an urban road with street lights from 30mph- such as for large urban motorways or dual carriageways where there is segregation of traffic from pedestrians but the A48 Bridge has none of the characteristics of ‘de-restricted’ roads described in Appendix C of the Welsh Government Guidelines of 2009 - it is an ordinary urban

The Gatehouse, High Street, Chepstow NP16 5LH
Tel 01291 626370 Fax 01291 628102 Town Clerk Sandra Bushell

road with pedestrians and school children inches away from fast moving traffic, but in 1987 it was 'de-restricted'.

4. It is difficult to understand why Chepstow school children cannot be protected now by this fundamental principle of traffic law (30mph in urban areas) when it applies everywhere else in Wales and UK, and everywhere else in Chepstow. School children shouldn't have to petition for 30mph in urban areas.
5. It is also difficult to understand why the Transport Department appear to be insistent on holding on to a 50 mph speed limit for this clearly very dangerous stretch of road as there is no benefit to the economy or to motorists in being allowed to reach 50mph on this stretch of road but there are great dangers to pedestrians and school children in allowing them to do so.
6. The stretch of road in question is only 420 metres long. It is a bridge over a river. It has narrow carriageways which encourage heavy goods vehicles to drive very close to the pavement with their wing mirror structures often over- hanging the narrow pavement full of school children walking 3 or 4 abreast. The children can't move away from the traffic because there is a concrete wall and an 80 feet drop into the river. There is no way off the bridge except at either end. No sideways escape for some distance if there was an incident on the bridge. What could be more demanding of protection by the nationally accepted 30 mph restriction on urban roads throughout the UK?
7. Drivers do not expect go more than 30 mph on this bridge as they know from the Highway Code and their driving tests that any road in an urban area with street lights at regular intervals is automatically at 30mph limit. It does not make sense to invite drivers to accelerate from 30 mph to 50 mph on this very short stretch of clearly dangerous road? Vehicles can go 50 mph just 420 metres later so why endanger hundreds of school children for that 420 metres? If there was no 50 mph sign on the bridge it would automatically be a 30 mph zone and every driver would know that from their Highway Code.
8. The Minister's letter was misleading in the third paragraph. The letter gives the impression that the 50 mph speed limit was recently put into place following consultation and agreement with the Police. The Order referred to in 2011 was not an Order to raise the speed limit from 30 mph to 50 mph but an Order to 'reduce' the speed limit from 60 mph (which the bridge automatically became after it had been 'derestricted') to 50 mph bringing it into line with the Gloucestershire section of the A48 . The Police and those consulted all agreed with 'reducing' the speed limit. This was not an endorsement of 50 mph being the right speed but acceptance that 50 mph was better than 60 mph. There was a consultation exercise in 2010 on this Order. No-one objected to the Order because it was a reduction of speed and heading in the right direction.
9. No-one knew then what our school children were experiencing on the bridge. The school children themselves have told us through their petition in 2013 how dangerous the situation is and this was checked and photographed at those

The Gatehouse, High Street, Chepstow NP16 5LH
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P-04-504 A483 Maerdy bridge Road Junction safety

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly of Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve the safety of the Maerdy Bridge Road junction on the A483 by adding a central reservation and by the installation of street lighting.

Petition raised by: Llandrinio & Arddleen Community Council

Date petition first considered by Committee: 8 October 2013

Number of signatures: 740



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-504
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00015/14

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

09 January 2014

Dear William,

Thank you for your further letter of 16 about lighting at the Maerdy Bridge junction on the A483.

Trunk road junctions that do not serve an adjacent built up area are generally not lit. The majority of the accidents in this location have occurred during the hours of daylight. There are concerns that lighting the junction may increase vehicle speeds and reduce drivers' perception of the potential hazard.

Nonetheless, I take road safety issues on the trunk road network very seriously. I have already committed to implementing a number of improvements to the traffic signs in the vicinity of the junction this financial year. In addition to this, the junction will be re-surfaced and the hatching and white lining refreshed.

My officials will monitor the situation over the coming months to identify if further intervention, such as lighting, would provide additional improvement.

P-04-525 Funding for CREST Awards in Wales

Petition wording:

We, the undersigned, call on the Welsh Government to reinstate the required funding for the Crest Awards in Wales, and want the National Science Academy to recognise the value of the Crest Awards to primary and secondary education, and the requirement of funding for the Crest Awards to continue.

Additional information:

CREST is a project-based awards scheme for the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths). It links students to curriculum-based learning. Last year over 30,000 CREST Awards were undertaken in the UK giving 5-19yr olds opportunities to explore real-world projects in an exciting way. Over 10% of the Awards in the UK were awarded to pupils in Wales. The success of the increase in number of CREST Awards in Wales has been achieved with funding from the Welsh Government (NSA) to coordinate and increase activities in Welsh schools. This has enabled the scheme to be offered bilingually, subsidised the pupils' registration fee, provided grants and other supportive structures provided through See Science. CREST Awards have brought considerable benefit schools and the implications of the withdrawal of funding will be felt directly by the pupils and teaching staff. CREST Awards are recognised by all Universities in the UK and provides strong evidence of contextual data

Petition raised by: See Science – British Science Association

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 21 January 2014

Number of signatures: 210

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-525
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00459/14

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

11 February 2014

Dear William,

I note the petition submitted by See Science requesting that the Welsh Government's National Science Academy reinstate required funding for the CREST Awards in Wales.

In accordance with my instructions, featured in my response to the Written Assembly Questions (WAQ65918, WAQ65919 and WAQ65920) of the 21 November 2013, my officials have been in discussions with the British Science Association. Officials are currently awaiting, from the British Science Association, a fully worked-up business case to support provision of funding.

Once received, the funding application will be considered in line with the Welsh Government funding protocol on the provision of a robust business case; evidencing clear, credible and achievable outputs while representing value for money.

P-04-531 Renaming Cardiff Airport after Welsh Icon

Petition wording:

We call on the Welsh Assembly Government to rename Cardiff Airport the Robert Owen International Airport of Wales after the Welsh hero of the Co-operative Movement.

Additional information: For Wales to become truly international a modern airport is essential. If the airport and surrounding enterprise zone marketed itself under the Robert Owen brand it could have global appeal and significantly boost the surrounding area by creating jobs and increasing trade.

Petition raised by: Mr. Justin Lilley

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 21 January 2014

Number of signatures: 11

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-531
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00471/14

William Powell AM
Chair,
Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

12 February 2014

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 31 January regarding the petition you have received from Mr Justin Lilley to rename Cardiff International Airport the Robert Owen International Airport of Wales.

There are currently no plans to change the name of Cardiff Airport.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwina Hart', written over a faint circular stamp.

P-04-422 : Fracking

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development to produce a Ministerial Interim Minerals Planning Policy Statement as well as a new technical advice note to strengthen the precautionary principle with regard to planning applications for onshore oil and gas, including fracking. All reasonable scientific doubt that there is any risk of adverse impacts must be eliminated, and strongest consideration must be given to the urgent need to mitigate climate change.

Petition raised by: Friends of the Earth Cymru

Date petition first considered by Committee: 2 October 2012

Number of signatures: Approximately 1000

William Powell
Cadeirydd Pwyllgor Deisebau
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd

Gareth Clubb
Cyfarwyddwr
Cyfeillion y Ddaear Cymru
33 Castle Arcade Balcony
Caerdydd



19aw Rhagfyr 2013

Annwyl Bill,

Many thanks for allowing Friends of the Earth Cymru this opportunity to comment on the correspondence received by the Petitions Committee from the Welsh Affairs Committee and the Minister for Natural Resources and Food.

As you are aware, Friends of the Earth Cymru submitted both written and oral evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee in its appraisal of unconventional gas in relation to Wales. Issues raised by both the Minister in his correspondence, and that are not raised by him but are of interest to the Welsh Affairs Committee and which have significant implications for Wales, include:

Regulation

In their written evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee, Natural Resources Wales stated that they “would welcome further guidance and a policy framework from the UK and Welsh Governments”. This seems to indicate that in NRW’s opinion there is no policy framework and insufficient guidance, which would hardly be an appropriate basis on which to regulate a new industry in Wales.

The WLGA concurs, stating in evidence to the Petitions Committee: “The view from local planning authorities is that there is a lack of Planning Policy Guidance/Technical Advice Note/Best Practice notes etc with regard to fracking and assessing planning applications for that form of development”.

The Environment and Sustainability Committee recently stated “We believe it is important that NRW urgently clarifies its position on the permitting, regulating and monitoring of UCG sites”.

Perhaps surprisingly, industry also requests better regulation, with an industry spokesperson stating: “Regulation is to be welcomed and will not add any significant costs”.

Better and stronger regulation is required and requested from the industry, minerals planning authorities, the National Assembly and the public. The only organisations not in favour of better regulation appear to be the UK and Welsh Governments.

Furthermore, the Environment Agency says it does not have the resources to monitor impacts if the industry develops to scale. The Minister’s letter seems to indicate that NRW will be dependent on the EA for advice and support on regulatory and technical matters. How this will take place with the EA already stretched, losing 10% of its headcount, and potentially beyond capacity in the near future remains unresolved.

NRW doesn't believe that Environmental Impact Assessments are necessary for exploratory drilling, although it does require Mineral Waste Permits and Radioactive Waste Permits. It's difficult to reconcile the idea that there would be minimal risk of environmental impacts given the other permits that are required.

Employment

An engineering consultancy (AMEC) advising DECC has put the figure of jobs associated with shale gas at 1/4 of the Prime Minister's estimate (anything from 16,000 to 24,000). So on a per capita basis you might expect several hundred jobs in Wales. These would be short-term (according to AMEC), from four to nine years, and in Lancashire only 17% of those jobs went to local people. Again, on a pro-rata basis, we would be looking at fewer than 200 jobs for Welsh people, for a period of four to nine years. We do not underplay the importance of those jobs to the individuals concerned, but we do question whether or not the price is worth paying for the level of employment envisaged.

There are also no studies on jobs lost as a result of shale gas exploitation – whether in the agriculture, tourism or renewables sectors.

On community benefits – which is at least tangentially related to employment. We have done some calculations relating to the community benefits available for communities subject to shale gas extraction. While something, of course, is better than nothing, our calculations indicate that the benefits generally available for wind farms are in the region of four times as generous as those for shale gas.

We would very happily furnish you with greater detail on these aspects if you would find that helpful.

Letter from the First Minister

Finally, I thought I should send you a copy of a letter from the First Minister I received today. It reiterates the Welsh Government's unshakeable faith in the current regulatory structures which, as we have already seen, have been called into question by everyone other than the Welsh Government and its statutory environmental regulator.

Yr eiddoch yn gywir,



Gareth Clubb

Cyfarwyddwr – Director

Friends of the Earth Cymru

P-04-422: Fracking – Correspondence from the First Minister to the Petitioner

Dear Gareth,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the Welsh Labour Government's position on shale gas.

As you are aware, oil and gas licensing is a matter for the UK Government. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) issues Petroleum Exploration and Development licences (PEDLs) through licensing rounds which enables a developer to pursue exploration for certain conventional and unconventional oil and gas including shale gas.

Prior to any drilling in Wales, a developer would require the appropriate planning consent and the necessary regulatory permissions including those undertaken by Natural Resources Wales and the Health and Safety Executive.

In Wales, planning responsibility for mineral development including shale gas is devolved and falls initially to Local Planning Authorities to determine applications in accordance with their development plan and national planning policy. Our current national planning policy advocates a precautionary approach for mineral development and the overriding objective set out in Minerals Planning Policy Wales (MPPW) is to provide a sustainable pattern of mineral extraction.

Our 'Energy Wales – a Low Carbon Transition' document of March 2012 sets out our ambition to create a low carbon economy that delivers jobs long term wealth and benefits to the people of Wales. Energy Wales recognises the essential role of gas in that transition as a flexible, responsive and reliable energy source with lower emissions than those from coal – subject to the method of extraction.

The Welsh Labour Government believes that further research is required to understand the unconventional gas resource in Wales and the impacts associated with its exploration and potential development. We are supportive of the robust regulatory processes that apply to shale gas exploration and development which, together with our precautionary planning approach to minerals development in Wales, should ensure the appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the environment and society.

In the run up to the next General Election, Ministers in the Welsh Labour Government will of course be discussing policy positions on a range of issues with our shadow cabinet colleagues, ahead of the UK election manifestos.

Best wishes,

Carwyn Jones

Dear Kayleigh,

I'm aware I haven't talked much about the impact of unconventional gas on human health, but perhaps it is worth pointing members of the Committee to this article.

“The uncertainties surrounding the health implications of unconventional gas, when considered together with doubts surrounding its greenhouse gas profile and cost, weigh heavily against proceeding with proposed future developments”.

Yn gywir,

Gareth

Harms unknown: health uncertainties cast doubt on the role of unconventional gas in Australia's energy future

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doi: 10.5694/mja13.11023

Australia has significant reserves of unconventional gas, with combined estimated reserves of coal seam, shale and tight gas amounting to over three and a half times those of conventional gas.¹ The industry is undergoing rapid growth as a result of advances in gas extraction techniques — most notably the widespread adoption of hydraulic fracturing (commonly known as fracking), which involves injecting large quantities of water, chemicals and proppants (materials like sand intended to keep fractures open) into gas reservoirs to open fractures and allow the gas to flow more readily. While coal seam gas (CSG) has been the focus of much public debate in Australia, it is the nascent shale gas industry that is likely to be responsible for the biggest expansion of hydraulic fracturing in the coming decades.

The promise of reliable and affordable energy, the potential windfall from exports, and claims that it is less damaging to the climate than coal have become major selling points of unconventional gas for its proponents. However, the industry has been beset by controversy over its potential negative health, social and environmental impacts.

Fears over the potential health implications of hydraulic fracturing led over 100 medical practitioners to request the Obama administration to halt the construction of new liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals on the basis that “[t]here is a growing body of evidence that unconventional natural gas extraction from shale ... may be associated with adverse health risks through exposure to polluted air, water, and soil”.² There are also environmental, social and psychological factors that have more indirect effects on health, and important social justice implications arising from the distribution of health burdens.

While there is a dearth of conclusive evidence about the health and environmental effects of fracturing, there is an emerging body of evidence on the areas of greatest potential risk and uncertainty in regards to water, air and social pathways. When taken into consideration along with concerns about the level of fugitive emissions and the potential effect on the development of renewable energy, these health concerns make unconventional gas a doubtful saviour for Australia's energy needs.

Wastewater is a greater hazard than fracturing fluids

The risk of fracturing chemicals directly contaminating water used for drinking or irrigation has been one of the

Summary

- There is a push to increase production of unconventional gas in Australia, which would intensify the use of the controversial technique of hydraulic fracturing.
- The uncertainties surrounding the health implications of unconventional gas, when considered together with doubts surrounding its greenhouse gas profile and cost, weigh heavily against proceeding with proposed future developments.
- The health and environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing have been the source of widespread public concern. A review of available literature shows a considerable degree of uncertainty, but an emerging consensus about the main risks.
- Gas is often claimed to be a less climate-damaging alternative to coal; however, this is called into question by the fugitive emissions produced by unconventional gas extraction and the consequences of its export.
- While the health effects associated with fracturing chemicals have attracted considerable public attention, risks posed by wastewater, community disruption and the interaction between exposures are also of concern.
- The health burdens of unconventional gas are likely to fall disproportionately on rural communities, the young and the elderly.
- While the health and environmental risks and benefits must be compared with other energy choices, coal provides a poor benchmark.

main sources of public concern. While the risk of well casing failure, spills and other accidents cannot be dismissed,^{3,4} these can be mitigated (though not removed entirely) by proper regulation and the move towards “safer” fracturing fluids. However, although any exposure would likely be to heavily diluted chemicals, the toxicological effects of some chemicals in their dilute form are not well understood.^{5,6} In particular, chemicals affecting the endocrine system — such as ethoxylated 4-nonylphenol, which has been used in Australian operations⁶ — can affect humans at extremely low quantities.⁷

The fate of stranded fracturing fluids (those remaining underground) has also not been well established, and there is a significant failure rate for abandoned wells in the United States, leading to materials leaking into the surrounding areas.⁸ Additionally, while the minor seismic activity caused by fracturing is unlikely to result in earthquakes of a magnitude that can be felt, it introduces a further risk of damage to well casings.

However it is wastewater, which contains naturally occurring contaminants that are difficult and costly to

remove (as well as fracturing and drilling fluids), that poses a greater human and environmental health risk.^{4,8} There are many documented and anecdotal cases of spills, failures of holding dams, and the accidental and planned release of contaminated wastewater in Australia and the US.⁹⁻¹¹ Natural contaminants present in wastewater can include heavy metals and radioactive materials, which have serious and well known health effects.⁸ Uranium and heavy metals have been shown to be mobilised by fracturing and drilling chemicals.¹²

Unconventional gas developments create air pollution

One of the clearest health benefits of gas over coal is the fact that it is responsible for significantly less damaging particulate matter (PM) than coal.¹³ However, unconventional gas extraction is responsible for air pollution from diesel fumes from infrastructure development and stationary equipment, gas processing, venting and flaring. Fugitive methane emissions can catalyse development of ground level ozone and combine with PM to form smog, both of which contribute to respiratory disease, among other health effects, and damage to crops — gas-field haze is a well known effect in the US, with such pollution capable of travelling substantial distances.¹⁴ Shale gas extraction can also involve the flaring or venting of “associated” gases, which can become hazardous air pollutants.¹⁵

The cumulative risks from these sources are difficult to estimate, however one study calculated the cumulative cancer risks for residents of Battlement Mesa, Colorado, to be “6 in a million for residents > 1/2 mile from wells and 10 in a million for residents ≤ 1/2 mile from wells”, also noting other symptoms reported by residents “consistent with known health effects of many of the hydrocarbons evaluated”.¹⁶

It is likely that the distance of most Australian operations from densely populated areas at present makes the health impacts of air pollution less pronounced than in the US, although this may change as the industry fights against current setback restrictions. Although not conclusive, findings from an investigation of “downwinder’s syndrome” in Queensland suggested no direct link to air pollution,¹⁷ and pollution can also be reduced by improvements to equipment. However it is becoming apparent that *any* level of such air pollutants can have health implications at a population level.¹³ Further, given the opportunity to move to far less polluting alternatives such as renewable energy, the reduction of PM compared with coal is not enough to recommend further gas developments.

Moreover, air pollution remains a potentially serious health issue for workers. Although the nature of risks to workers is unclear, potential exposures include toxic materials and chemicals, airborne silica from sand used as a proppant, and radon. A significant number of air samples collected in the US exceeded the recommended exposure limits for airborne silica, with one report claiming the potential of developing silicosis to be a significant known health hazard to workers involved in hydraulic fracturing.¹⁸

Social impacts exacerbate other health effects

Gas developments can have numerous and considerable social and psychological effects, which may exacerbate more direct health risks. Although there are potential benefits to communities, and effects are likely to be mixed,¹⁴ a study of the impacts of mining and CSG operations on the mental health of landholders in Queensland concluded that these operations placed rural communities “under sustained stress”, with study participants perceiving that these operations “significantly impacted or exacerbated issues such as the health, social fabric and economy of the community”, and the authors noting that local health services faced “unsustainable pressure”.¹⁹

Unconventional gas developments in Australia also make use of fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workforces. While these arrangements have some benefits, they have come under scrutiny for their negative influence on community cohesion, increasing the cost of living, and their association with high levels of alcohol and drug use, mental health issues and violence (although these latter are also more generally associated with the demographic of young men who make up most of these workers).²⁰

Social justice implications require more attention

Inequity can be an indirect cause of ill health, and the development of unconventional gas resources threatens to distribute health burdens in an unfair way. Most of the potential health hazards are likely to be felt by groups such as the elderly, children and the poor because of their vulnerability to the hazards involved, those living in rural, agricultural and Indigenous communities because of the location of operations, and future generations — the same groups liable to bear significant costs of climate change — while the financial benefits will accrue to the predominantly foreign owners of the resources.

Australia must also take responsibility for the moral implications of our role as one of the world’s largest exporters of gas, with exports expected to reach nearly 70% of gas production by 2035. The emissions from the combustion of exported gas are not included in our national inventory; however it is plausible that countries have a *prima facie* responsibility for at least part of the harms caused by their exported emissions. According to the International Energy Agency, “Only one third of the carbon contained in proven reserves of fossil fuels can be released into the atmosphere by 2050 if the world is to achieve its under 2°C goal”.²¹

It is clear that, insofar as we need to extract and use fossil fuel resources, this needs to occur in a controlled and fair way, but there are currently no such constraints on our development of new sources of gas.

The question of fugitive emissions

A further health issue raised by any proposed energy source is its contribution to climate change, which has the potential to reverse gains in global health, for example by exacerbating illnesses and causing deaths through undernutrition,

extreme weather conditions and disease.²² The combustion of gas produces about 40% of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of coal, which has been offered as a reason to support the industry's expansion, either as a "stepping stone" towards renewables or as an end point in itself. However, this proposed benefit is called into serious question by the level of fugitive emissions (emissions that are not captured for use) produced by its extraction and transport. There is considerable disagreement about the extent of these emissions, with estimates ranging from 0.1% to 9% of gas produced (with current US Environmental Protection Agency estimations at about 2.4%).²³⁻²⁶ Notably, there are as yet no reliable figures for Australian operations,²⁷ and regardless of how it compares to coal, unconventional gas is responsible for large quantities of GHG emissions in absolute terms.

Unconventional gas is predominantly methane, which is estimated to have a global warming potential 25 times greater than carbon dioxide over a 100-year period, and 72 times greater over a 20-year period.²⁸ The nature of climate change and the possibility of "tipping points" in the short term make it important to consider this perspective, with several reports estimating fugitive emissions from unconventional gas to be of a level (between 2% and 3.2% of production) that would likely undermine its climate benefits compared with coal in this time frame.^{29,30} The effects of climate change, such as increased floods and drought, can be expected to exacerbate many risks, and are also likely to disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. This highlights the importance of considering the short-term global warming potential of methane and the social justice implications of energy choices.

Increased gas production may also displace emerging renewables markets in export countries and impair the growth of the renewables sector in Australia. In addition, the technology used for generating energy from exported LNG cannot be assumed to be of comparable efficiency to that deployed in Australia.³¹

Implications of the health impacts of unconventional gas

The current evidence does not provide a clear picture of the health implications accompanying the proposed expansion of Australia's unconventional gas industry. In some cases, this is because of gaps in our knowledge that could be rectified, while other risks are inherently uncertain because they involve complex systems and interacting health pathways.

It is important to note that the absence of concrete evidence of harm does not equate to evidence of its absence. The uncertainty over the health implications of unconventional gas is greater than that surrounding any other energy choice, and suggests that adopting an attitude of precaution — such as that employed with the introduction of a new drug — is justified on the basis of health risks alone.

However, as with decision making in a clinical setting, appeals to precaution need to take place in a broader assessment of risks and benefits. In the case of unconventional gas, this includes its implications for climate change, which — as argued above — also indicate its

unsuitability. Further, while it is commonplace to compare gas with coal, coal is known to inflict serious damage on human and environmental health,³² making it a poor benchmark and obscuring unfavourable comparisons with renewable energy choices.

It is clear that Australia must quickly move beyond its reliance on coal for health and environmental reasons. However, when taking into consideration the uncertainties over health risks, the unfavourable comparisons with other energy options, the climate risks associated with fugitive emissions, the moral obligations Australia faces as a gas exporter, the potential displacement of renewables and doubts raised over the claim that gas will prove to be a cheap energy option,³³ the scale is firmly tipped against the further development of unconventional gas.

Acknowledgements: We would like to acknowledge support by a grant from Kindness House and an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant to Jeremy Moss (Egalitarian Responses to Climate Change).

Competing interests: This work was made possible by grants from the Social Justice Initiative, the Melbourne Energy Institute and the Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute at the University of Melbourne, and Kindness House. Grant Blashki is a former board member of the Australian Conservation Foundation and chairs the Environmental Working Party of the World Organisation of Family Doctors.

Provenance: Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

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P-04-500 Call For Regulation of Animal Welfare Establishments in Wales

Petition wording:

We the undersigned, call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to regulate Animal Welfare Establishments and legislate for compulsory requirements be met by all animal rescue establishments in line with the report produced by the AWW Animal Welfare Establishments Working Group October 2012. The Welsh Government need to put in place legislation for Wales under the Animal Welfare Act(2006), to protect animals from neglect and abuse.

Additional Info:

More and more animals are suffering abuse, neglect and are being bred from in unregulated establishment who advertise as a Rescue Center, and we call upon the Welsh Assembly to legislate under the Animal Act 2006 to try and stop this from continuing.

Petition raised by: Lisa Winnett

Date petition first considered by Committee: 24 September 2013

Number of signatures: 265

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 4.9

P-04-450 : Barry & Vale needs a fully functioning hospital.

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that Barry Hospital has a fully functioning minor injuries unit that is open to patients 8 hours a day, 5 days a week.

Supporting information: We call on the Welsh Government to stop sitting on their hands and intervene in the way the Cardiff & Vale NHS trust are running Barry Hospital. For too long the trust have sold the Barry & Vale people down the river! With excuses such as staff sickness and operational pressure. The Barry & Vale people need a fully functioning Minor Injuries unit. This is unacceptable for a hospital with a catchment area the size of Barry and the Vale of Glamorgan. The reasoning behind these problems are that 'the Minor Injuries Unit at Barry Hospital is a very busy service which is currently under significant operational pressure because of staff sickness and maternity leave. As a result, and for safety reasons, the Unit will run on a reduced hours basis until further notice. It will open at 8.30am, and will close to new patients at 2pm. This means that, after 2pm, we will only treat those patients who are already waiting'. (quote from official website)

This is unacceptable for a hospital with a catchment area the size of Barry and the Vale of Glamorgan. The reasoning behind these problems are that 'the Minor Injuries Unit at Barry Hospital is a very busy service which is currently under significant operational pressure because of staff sickness and maternity leave. As a result, and for safety reasons, the Unit will run on a reduced hours basis until further notice. It will open at 8.30am, and will close to new patients at 2pm. This means that, after 2pm, we will only treat those patients who are already waiting'.(quote from official website)

Petition raised by: Jeffrey Heathfield

Date petition first considered by Committee: 29 January 2013

Number of signatures: 50

Agenda Item 4.10

P-03-150 National Cancer Standards

Petition wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to investigate whether Local Health Boards have the necessary strategies and action plans in place to deliver the target to comply with the National Cancer Standards by March 2009 in RCT and throughout Wales, as a matter of urgency.

Petition raised by: Rhondda Breast Friends

Date petition first considered by Committee: 9 July 2008

Number of signatures: 43. In addition Rhondda Breast Friends have developed a charter regarding improvements required to cancer care services, supported by 1,475 signatories.



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales

Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru

14 Ffordd yr Eglwys Gadeiriol, Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Public Health Wales

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Huw George

☎ Direct Line / Llinell Uniongyrchol: 029 2082 7652

Email / Ebost: Huw.george2@wales.nhs.uk

Ref: P-04-150
HG/JL

14 February 2014

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

Dear Mr Powell

I am replying to your letter to Bob Hudson, dated 26 June 2013, asking for clarification of Public Health Wales' role in relation to patient information about cancer services. Bob Hudson, as you will know, has moved on so I am replying in his place.

Firstly, please accept my most sincere apologies for the long delay in replying. The response got lost in our system and it was only your reminder which has alerted us to the fact.

A core function of Public Health Wales laid out in the establishing legislation is the requirement "to develop and maintain arrangements for making information about matters related to the protection and improvement of health in Wales available to the public." Please note that this relates to information about health, rather than services; and to the public, rather than patients.

In terms of cancer information, Public Health Wales produces comprehensive public information on its cancer screening programmes via its Breast Test Wales, Cervical Screening Wales and Bowel Screening Wales websites and via a range of other media such as social media and leaflets. Screening information is available in a variety of different languages. Specialist information materials are also available to support people with learning disabilities.

....2/

The Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit (WCISU) is part of Public Health Wales. WCISU is the National Cancer Registry for Wales and its primary role is to record, store and report on all incidence of cancer for the resident population of Wales wherever they are treated. WCISU publishes information relating to its function on its website.

Additional information on reducing the risk factors for developing cancer and limited information on skin and testicular cancers are also available on the Health Challenge Wales website, which we manage.

In addition to providing information on cancer prevention, Public Health Wales is currently working in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support to host and deliver a national strategic cancer information project. The project is exploring how personalised cancer information can be developed in Wales from the point of diagnosis onwards. It fits with the Welsh Government commitment, in the 2012 Cancer Delivery Plan, to provide personalised information to cancer patients in Wales.

The first stage of the project was a service review to inform the direction of the project. There were three key stages to this review:

- A needs assessment;
- A literature review on the patient information needs of people with cancer and the effectiveness of interventions to meet these needs; and
- A review of current cancer information services in Wales.

Recommendations were discussed at a number of workshops with professionals and people affected by cancer across Wales to be taken forward in phase 2.

The Public Health Wales and Macmillan Partnership Project have also linked in with the Macmillan National Cancer Patient Experience Survey in terms of supporting the development of survey questions with regards to cancer information provision. The survey results will enable us to better understand the extent people affected by cancer in Wales are currently given the information that they require, in a format which meets their needs. They will also help measure progress on this area in the future.

Yours sincerely



Huw George
Interim Chief Executive, Public Health Wales

P-03-150 National Cancer Standards – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking Team, 04.03.2014

Kayleigh Driscoll
Petitions Committee
4/3/14

Hi Kayleigh,

Petitions Committee 11/3/14

I refer to your Email received 26th February, 2014 and the attached document from Public Health Wales.

The petition has always been about improving services, support and information for people affected by cancer and those who care for them. This was initially progressed by seeking compliance of Health Boards with the patient centred Cancer Standards and subsequently the Cancer Delivery Plan.

Information

First, I will comment on the response from Public Health Wales (PHW) to inform us and the minister about their involvement in providing information for people affected by cancer.

We are informed that a key function of PHW is to provide public information that will protect and improve health in Wales. We can see from their correspondence that specifically regarding cancer this information has been extremely limited, excluding the needs of people re. early detection (signs and symptoms) , GP referral, diagnosis, treatment, side effects, re-occurrence, rehabilitation and/ or palliative care , support organisations etc,

I am very pleased to be informed that the [Wales National Strategic Cancer Patient Information Project](#) was set up when in 2010 the Health Minister supported a proposal by Macmillan to explore how tailored cancer information could be developed in Wales through a national strategic information project hosted and delivered as a partnership arrangement between Macmillan Cancer Support and Public Health Wales. Unfortunately the project **does not** encompass public awareness of pre- diagnosis information on signs and symptoms. The project commenced in September 2012 and will end in March 2015.

- *Just a recap for new members, I came into the cancer arena in 2001 when ignorant of all cancer matters, my daughter aged 25 found a lump. It took a year to diagnose and two more years for her to die. Rhondda Breast Friends was set up in her memory, to strive to ensure information and support was available from prevention & early detection onwards, allowing patients to make informed choices that were right for them. Our conference and subsequent Charter of Rights formed the basis and evidence for this petition.*
- *In 2007 I approached the Cancer Network regarding information provision and I was told there was an information project underway only it was on hold as the co-ordinator had resigned.*
- *Then the North Wales Cancer Network came up with their information portfolio for all newly diagnosed patients which was held as best practice and the two Macmillan Nurses responsible were appointed to look at information throughout Wales on a three year project....*
- **November 2008...Enter [The All Wales Patient Information Project](#)** funded by Macmillan Cancer Support and supported by the three Cancer Networks across Wales. The result was draft information pathways (Eg [Breast Cancer pathways](#)) which were circulated in 2013 to Macmillan Information Facilitators within each Welsh Cancer Network for consultation with patients and carers.

October 2010...Enter the [National Strategic Cancer Information Project 2012-2015](#) (see above)

My point? 2001.....2015.

Fourteen long years will have passed since I first looked for information. The Government is committed to providing patient centred information as shown in the Cancer Standards(2005) but it is taking its time to reach patients. More people are receiving good quality information, but there are still gaps and inconsistencies.

[2013 Wales Cancer patient Experience survey](#) showed that although patients

are happy with the clinical care they received, they do not feel they are receiving the emotional, practical and financial support and information they require.

I applaud the Government, Cancer Network, PHW and Macmillan for all their work in this area. The two national strategic projects together provide recommendations for a national, tailored cancer information service in line with the Cancer Delivery Plan. Questions still have to be answered on how the projects recommendations will be implemented and funded? Will it be left up to individual Health Boards? Or lottery funding? Or will the government allocate additional money? How will compliance be measured?

What is the **timescale** for the promised tailor made patient information? How long will it take to make a difference to the people currently being diagnosed and those down the line? Those without key workers or Cancer Nurse Specialists? Those supported (or not) by a patchwork, postcode lottery of Charity Information professionals, trained benefits advisers, Counsellors, therapists etc. without the guarantee of sustainability. These questions still need answers and I believe the answer is that ultimately more professionals will need to be employed and funded.

Part 2: Early detection & waiting time to treatment.

(This area is not covered by the new partnership project).

The earlier cancer is detected and treated the better the outcome. People diagnosed at stage 1 and 2 have a better chance of survival. Waiting time targets aim to expedite the time from referral of Urgent Suspected Cancer to starting treatment.

The Together for Health – [cancer delivery plan – annual report 2013](#) highlights the progress the Welsh Government have made in cancer services over the past 12 months and identifies areas for future improvement. Whilst many improvements have been shown, Wales's cancer survival is lagging behind a number of other European countries. Performance against the 62 day target, for urgent suspected cancer patients referred and diagnosed to start of treatment, remains an area of concern as this target has not been met consistently across Wales for some considerable time.

As a delay in diagnosis and starting treatment can affect outcomes, I am also concerned about how long someone who has been referred for non urgent cancer has to wait for a consultation. I cannot find a maximum waiting time target or statistics. This would include those people referred by their GP as urgent suspected cancer and then downgraded by the consultant to non – urgent, often because of age.

As an illustration, I include a case study I have received in a request for help from a panic stricken 34 year old young lady who has given me permission to use her story.

Case Study

Face Book message , **Thursday 27th February 12:37pm**

1. Hi Diane I'm sian. Ah where do I start I'm having hell, I've had the pain for just under a year but had 4 miscarriages in the last year also so put the pain down to hormonal changes so many times in the past year, I have 4 children breast fed them all and had mastitis, blocked milk glands, cysts etc over the years and pain is nothing like the above, anyway after my breast hurting so much one day around 6 weeks ago I began massaging it to ease the pain and that's when I found the lump about the size of a 10p not sore to touch but horrendous pain in my back behind the breast, armpit, neck, also discharge from the nipple. I went to an appointment for my gyni problems and explained these pains to the consultant and she referred me as urgent to breast clinic while I was there, hadn't heard anything off them so rung to be told I'm not deemed as urgent because of my age even though my symptoms are alarming, I was told to go to my doctors for them to "bump" up my appointment. After examination my doctor saw for for an urgent mammogram within 10 days having not heard anything I rang them yesterday to be told that doctors surgeries are not allowed to refer anyone under the age of 35 so I'm now back in the same boat of being on the waiting list for 8 weeks in, now on week 3 of waiting and pain is horrendous the last 5 days pain is going into my kidney and more up my neck I'm going out of my mind and just don't know what to do I'm contemplating going to a&e this evening to be seen as I cannot handle the pain anymore, I have family history of breast cancer (nan and aunt) and cancer of the cervix myself. Any advice would be fab.x

2. **Thursday 8:32pm**

3. **Friday 12:21am**

4. Well u dont do things by half do you?
5. Not sure what Mags has told you but my daughter had a late diagnosis at 26 after being told the previous year she was too young to get breast cancer. First, how old are you?
6. Second, please disregard the comment GPs cannot refer anyone under 35. They should refer anyone that fits the guidelines for referral for breast cancer recommended by NICE and the Royal College of Surgeons.
7. Check out the following guidelines from Nice:

8. Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer in Adults and Children [Internet]. Show details NICE Clinical Guidelines, No. 27. Clinical Governance Research and Development Unit (CGRDU), Department of Health Sciences, University of Leicester. London: Royal College of General Practitioners (UK); 2005 Jun. Specific Recommendations 5. A woman's first suspicion that she may have breast cancer is often when she finds a lump in her breast. The primary healthcare professional should examine the lump with the patient's consent. The features of a lump that should make the primary healthcare professional strongly suspect cancer are a discrete, hard lump with fixation, with or without skin tethering. In patients presenting in this way an urgent referral should be made, irrespective of age. [C] 6. In a woman aged 30 years and older with a discrete lump that persists after her next period, or presents after menopause, an urgent referral should be made. [C] 7. Breast cancer in women aged younger than 30 years is rare, but does occur. Benign lumps (for example, fibroadenoma) are common, however, and a policy of referring these women urgently would not be appropriate; instead, non-urgent referral should be considered. However, in women aged younger than 30 years with: [C/D] • a lump that enlarges, [C] or • a lump that has other features associated with cancer (fixed and hard), [C] or • in whom there are other reasons for concern such as family history. [D] an urgent referral should be made 8. The patient's history should always be taken into account. For example, it may be appropriate, in discussion with a specialist, to agree referral within a few days in patients reporting a lump or other symptom that has been present for several months. [D] 9. In a patient who has previously had histologically confirmed breast cancer, who presents with a further lump or suspicious symptoms, an urgent referral should be made, irrespective of age. [C] 10. In patients presenting with unilateral eczematous skin or nipple change that does not respond to topical treatment, or with nipple distortion of recent onset, an urgent referral should be made. [C] 11. In patients presenting with spontaneous unilateral bloody nipple discharge, an urgent referral should be made. [C] 12. Breast cancer in men is rare and is particularly rare in men under 50 years of age. However, in a man aged 50 years and older with a unilateral, firm subareolar mass with or without nipple distortion or associated skin changes, an urgent referral should be made. [C] Go to: Investigations 13. In patients presenting with symptoms and/or signs suggestive of breast cancer, investigation prior to referral is not recommended. [D] 14. In patients presenting solely with breast pain, with no palpable abnormality, there is no evidence to support the use of mammography as a discriminatory investigation for breast cancer. Therefore, its use in this group of patients is not recommended. Non-urgent referral may be considered in the event of failure of initial treatment and/or unexplained persistent symptoms. [B (DS)] .
9. In Wales it appears to be under 35 not 30 as shown above. It gives the symptoms for urgent referral you can check against to see if you comply. As far as 8 weeks is concerned that is a long time even if they meet the limit. What consultant have they referred you to? I will see if I can find the waiting time standard for non-urgent referrals. I understand your concern and it is frightening facing the waiting game but if you fit the bill you can go back to your GP /consultant with the evidence from official guidelines to get you in. let me know how you get on.

10. Friday 8:38am

11.

12. Hi Diane thank you for the info I'm 34, my gynaecologist referred me from her clinic as urgent 4 weeks ago I rung to find out after 2 weeks as I thought 2 weeks was the urgent time scale to be told because of my age I wasn't deemed as urgent urgent and had to wait 8 weeks and told to go t Back to my doctor to see if they could bump up my appointment which I did and after my doctor examined me he wanted and urgent mammogram done and faxed it to then while I was there and said I should be seen within 2 weeks the 2 weeks were up on weds so I rang to find out what was happening to be told my doctors can't refer me for a mammogram because I'm under 35, I took myself to a&e last night because the pain is unbearable only to be told again they can't do anything because I'm under 35 and no breast doctor was available to see me and to go back to my doctors but what's the point if they can't refer me it's ridiculous I'm now on week 4 of waiting I'm not sure who I was referred to only that it's to breast clinic in royal glam??

13. Friday 3:15pm

14. Stop concentrating on the mammogram. You may not be eligible for a mammogram but even under 35 the guidelines suggest that urgent referral is recommended: if you have a hard lump or one which has got bigger, have symptoms present for several months (pain), family history of bc, bloody nipple discharge. The first step is to get an appointment. It is then up to the consultant to decide investigations. The standard says a triple assessment is recommended – 1. Physical examination, 2. Imaging, could be ultrasound, mammogram, MRI etc. 3. Biopsy. I have been speaking to a young lady today , same problems as you, downgraded to non urgent by consultant. Went back to GP who was angry and referred her to another hospital who diagnosed her bc. She thinks this has to be in the same health board so perhaps your GP could try referring you to Merthyr if willing? (or perhaps another consultant in RGH, I believe you have the right to choose your consultant). I am not a medical professional but you can speak to a cancer nurse on tenovus cancer support line 0808 8081010 who can also counsel you (over phone). Breast cancer care helpline 0808 800 6000 Macmillan helpline 0808 808 0000 If you want to ring me –01656 783241

15.

16. I don't care what I have done to me I just need a specialist to look at me 3 doctors have examined me, all felt the lump and all know my symptoms all have sent referrals to breast clinic in royal glam in the last 4 weeks, I've apparently been down graded and been told the waiting list is 8 weeks. My doctor has today faxed an expedite letter to the breast clinic so I will again ring Monday morning to see what's being done. So the young lady is a typical example that age is not a factor. I will let you know my out come on Monday thank you for your help.

17. I am quite angry about your experience. How would you feel about me using your experience as an example of the hurdles younger women (and GPs) have to get an urgent referral for under 35s (I can keep it anonymous). I am about to write to the Welsh Government about cancer standards compliance. Please don't feel pressurised, it's ok to say no. In the meantime, I hope u get an outcome on Monday. Let me know x

18. And try and find out when u ring who you have been referred to if you can x

19.

20. Yes of course I was going to do something myself but wasn't sure which avenue to go down but yes by all means if it can help and I don't mind you using my name. I sure will

on Monday. Can you tell me how long the other lady had to wait?? If I don't get any joy at the royal then will ask for another hospital. Many thanks again.

21.

22. Oh my gosh how weird appointments have just rung I've got an urgent appointment in llwynypia tues morning with rhodry Williams.

23.

24. I'm so grateful for the advice you gave me I would never have had this appointment sorted without your advice thank you so so much I feel a weight lifted off my shoulders already. Thank you so much. And if you still are going to write to the government then please add my story in so something can be done because by the looks of things It's happening more than it should. Many thanks.xx

25. She had pain & lump. referred to breast consultant, rang after 2 weeks, had been downgraded, she said had to wait months, saw the consultant who prodded around collar bone and told her nothing wrong, no ultrasound or anything. Went back to doc who made new referral to another hospital urgent. Saw & diagnosed with bc.!!! -So don't forget the triple assessment. fingers crossed it's all sorted out, but yes, it is a huge weight to carry until it's sorted.

26. Let's hope it's just something minor hey. Thanks again Diane.x

My concerns are that in the above 2 cases and my daughter's, it is concerning that the reason for downgrading appears to be age rather than symptoms. As a mammogram is not usually given under 35 then the medical staff appeared to disregard the symptoms and the GP's opinion. It is also interesting that one hospital downgraded and another accepted as urgent. I can't help thinking it could be a capacity issue. With breast screening, referral is to a shared a pool of consultants from neighbouring hospitals and Health Boards.

The questions the case study poses is as follows:

- What information and procedures are available to inform the public of signs and symptoms for referral to the GP, (including under 35s) and empower them to know their rights to referral as urgent suspected cancer,
- Is there a protocol for these people to be notified that they have been downgraded and a reason given, not just left glued to the phone. They already know the GP has referred them urgently so the psychological effect and fear is massive.

- Is there a maximum waiting time for non-urgent suspected cancer and /or those downgraded to non urgent? I cannot find one.
- Are the number of non-urgent cancer cases and waiting times collated?
- If urgent suspected cancer waiting time targets are persistently being missed and the consultant has more patients than (s)he can deal with, what then?

Is there a procedure for referral of patient overflow to other hospitals?

What rights does the potential cancer patient have regarding changing consultant and or hospital and finding out about consultant's waiting lists /waiting times and capacity. What information is routinely available to the public regarding signs and symptoms to referral and their rights along the way. Cancer is still a fearful business and the psychological distress and support needed should not be underestimated.

Part 3 – Matters outstanding

Cancer Nurse Specialists and/or Key Workers

A number of issues have been previously raised regarding the fact that not everyone has a Cancer Nurse Specialist and/or Key Worker and that the key worker's role had yet to be confirmed. As major providers of information and support, this leaves some patients unsupported.

In the 2013 cancer patient experience survey: 88 per cent of respondents were given the names of their clinical nurse specialist, 66 per cent of patients confirmed that they were given contact details of their key worker and 58 per cent of patients said they had been offered the opportunity to discuss their needs and concerns. There was wide variances and inequalities across cancer sites from 30-70%.

Care Plans

The Cancer Delivery Plan has set a target that everyone with a diagnosis of cancer should have a care plan. The 2013 Annual report showed only 22% of patients had been offered a written care plan.

Part 4 – Summary

I have to praise the Government and Macmillan for the amount of work it has carried out in partnership to put in place the strategic plans and service recommendation for a tailored patient information service as promised in the Cancer Delivery Plan. This has been done with the consultation of cancer professionals and patients to highlight good practice and identify shortfalls for future action.

Support NOW

I still have my reservations that the information service has to be set up and delivered and the timescale and funds needed for this to happen. Meanwhile, as shown in the patient survey, there is currently inequity and inconsistencies across cancer sites and many people are not receiving the promised information and support, key workers and care plans promised and this is needed NOW, as people are being diagnosed on a daily basis. A phased implementation is needed to provide at least a basic information and signposting to a support service for everyone, now.

Early detection – urgent / non-urgent and/ downgraded urgent suspected cancers.

I ask that any information available on the questions posed on page 5 be provided .

Once again thank you for your time, understanding and patience. So much good work is going on and it is humbling that we are able to help so many people across Wales because of the work of the Petitions committee.

It is hard to keep up with all the developments but I have tried.

Best wishes,

Diane Raybould

Rhondda Breast Friends

Agenda Item 4.11

P-04-530 Bilingual Labeling

Petition wording:

Like all self-respecting officially bilingual countries, (such as Canada), Wales needs legislation to ensure that all food products sold in Wales be labeled in both Welsh and English. We therefore demand that the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government enact said legislation without undue delay.

Petition raised by: Simon Foster

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 21 January 2014

Number of signatures: TBC

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-04-530
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/00725/14

William Powell AM

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

19 February 2014

Dear William

BILINGUAL LABELLING PETITION

Thank you for your letter addressed to Alun Davies, AM, Minister for Natural Resources and Food, seeking his views on the petition from Simon Foster urging the Welsh Government to enact legislation to enable bilingual labelling of all food products sold in Wales.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has policy responsibility for food labelling and standards matters in Wales, and I am responding as Welsh Government Minister with portfolio responsibility for FSA Wales.

Food information and labelling legislation is largely a matter of EU competence. The legislation sets clear requirements for food businesses on what information they must provide consumers, and how to present it, which helps consumers understand what information they can expect to be provided with to inform their food purchasing decisions.

The relevant EU Directives in relation to food labelling (Directive 2000/13, 90/446/EEC, and their forthcoming successor EU Regulation 1169/2011) provide that Member States may stipulate that food labelling particulars shall be given in one or more languages from among the official languages of the EU.

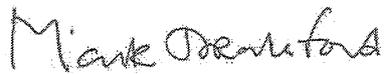
The official languages of the European Union are listed in the European Council Regulation No.1 of 15 April 1958, as amended. Although Welsh does have official status in Wales as confirmed in section 1 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, it is not an official language of the EU as provided in the 1958 Regulations.

Each individual piece of EU legislation carries its own requirements which must be transposed into domestic law by the Welsh Ministers. It is therefore not possible for domestic legislation to impose a blanket requirement that all food labelling is to be in English and Welsh, instead each piece of EU legislation (both current and future) needs to be considered on an individual basis to ascertain whether bilingual labelling is permissible.

Where food businesses voluntarily provide food labelling information in non-EU official languages, such as Welsh, the Welsh Government is keen to encourage them to do so.

I trust this helps clarify the legal framework around food labelling legislation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

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

P-04-476 Restructuring in National Museum Wales

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reconsider its funding settlement for National Museum Wales, with a view to protecting the Museum's services and the jobs, pay and conditions of its staff.

The freezing of the National Museum's grant by the Welsh Government has led to cuts of up to £2.5 million being announced, along with restructuring proposals, which would see the loss of some 35 posts, potentially detrimental impacts for more than 160 staff and the possible loss of allowances, resulting in a 20 per cent cut in take-home pay, for some of the Museum's lowest-paid employees. We believe that the proposed cuts threaten not only the living standards, jobs and security of the National Museum's loyal staff but the unique services that they offer to the people of Wales and the one and a half million visitors that come every year, including school and educational visits

Petition raised by: PCS Union

Date petition first considered by Committee: 30 April 2013

Number of signatures : 1617

Agenda Item 4.13

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



William Powell
Chair of the Petitions Committee
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

02/09/2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter and additional information regarding the petition calling for the provision of an info pack for all the people of in Wales explaining how they can stand as electoral candidates.

I believe that the petition's aims are worth supporting, ie how to encourage more people to take part in the democratic process as representatives of political parties or independent candidates.

Although the idea of sending a pack to every house in Wales has its merits, I believe that further consideration is required of the existing obstacles that prevent more people from taking part in the democratic process and putting their names forward as candidates, particularly among underrepresented groups.

There is a need to gain a better understanding of the current impact of such obstacles, eg the financial/time pressures faced by potential candidates who are serious about standing for election. This is by no means an exhaustive list but the effects of factors such as the candidate's deposit, petrol costs, childcare costs, the flexibility of current employers and understanding of electoral law all need to be considered. These can pose a substantial obstacle when trying to ensure that a broad cross section of people stands for election, without mentioning the unfairness of the present electoral system.

I certainly believe it would be worth considering producing a leaflet for every young person in Wales before they turn 18 to explain the democratic system and how they can take part in the democratic process.

We have recently made an effort to advertise opportunities for members of the public to stand as Plaid Cymru representatives. We have also recently made an effort to attract more people to express an interest in standing as candidates for the National Assembly and Westminster using Twitter and Facebook. This has had a positive impact on the number of people expressing an interest in standing as candidates.

I would be happy to work with the appropriate body to discuss this further; I assume that the relevant body would be the Electoral Commission along with the Assembly Commission.

Rhuanedd Richards,

Chief Executive
Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru
Tŷ Gwynfor
Marine Chambers
Cwrt Anson Court
Glanfa'r Iwerydd / Atlantic Wharf
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William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

18 September 2013

Dear William,

Reference P-04-482 and P-04-478

Thank you for writing to seek the views of the Electoral Commission on these two petitions. I apologise for the slight delay in responding.

Firstly with reference to Petition P-04-4782, any suggestion relating to the placing of a large public notice board containing details of elected members, including dates and times of council meetings should be the responsibility of the local electoral officer who has a statutory duty to "encourage the participation by electors in the electoral process in the area for which he acts"¹.

Most local authorities and elected members already provide this information at a local level either on notice boards or through the press and there is a wealth of information available online, although we recognise that not everyone in Wales will have access to this type of resource.

We therefore believe that the local electoral officer (rather than Welsh Government), in consultation with relevant elected members / organisations, would be ideally placed in taking a decision as to the feasibility of such a piece of work at a local level.

Turning to Petition P-04-478, the Electoral Commission already provides comprehensive and independent guidance for candidates and agents standing in all elections in the UK, so we would consider that the type of resource suggested by the petitioner, although not a leaflet, does already exist.

¹ Section 69, Para 1 Electoral Administration Act 2006

The Electoral Commission
Companies House
Crown Way
Cardiff CF14 3UZ

Y Comisiwn Etholiadol
Tŷ'r Cwmnïau
Ffordd y Goron
Caerdydd CF14 3UZ

Tel/Ffôn 029 2034 6800
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Putting voters first
Rhoi pleidleiswyr yn gyntaf

An independent body established by Act of the UK Parliament
Corff annibynnol a sefydlwyd gan Ddeddf Seneddol y DU

■ We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English



This guidance is widely used, partly as a result of it being available through the Commission's website (www.electoralcommission.org.uk) and also due to its dissemination through a variety of networks, including each relevant democratically elected body.

It is a matter for the individual local authority, Parliament or Assembly to encourage individuals to stand as a candidate in any given election.

Yours sincerely,



Kay Jenkins

Head of Electoral Commission Wales and English Regions

02920 346800

kjenkins@electoralcommission.org.uk

P-04-478 A simple info pack for all the people of Wales explaining how they can stand as candidates – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Clerking Team, 26.02.14

Thank You Kayleigh,

It is very encouraging to see support to the idea and I hope very much that the Assembly will be able to come up with a way of creating simple brochure for everyone in Wales before every Welsh election for each person over 18 and across all cross-sections of society.

Thank you very much for letting know about the latest developments here,

Many thanks

Gruffydd Meredith

P-04-487 A Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh home buyers

Petition wording:

We call on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to offer an annual deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh house buyers and/or renters.

It is proposed that Welsh mortgage companies would also need to take part in this scheme and agree to ask for no more than 5% of a deposit on any suitable property (as well as offer a low interest own what you pay for mortgage). This for example would all mean that up to 15,000 Welsh first time house buyers (first time buyers whose earnings are below a certain threshold and have lived or worked in Wales continuously for at least 10 years, or have full time business links to Wales) could be helped annually with a deposit loan of around £7,500 each for an averaged priced house, with the loan back payments deferred for at least one year. Once sellers and buyers agree to the scheme, the property in question would keep its eligible occupancy clause, as happens with similar schemes in the Peak District and North York Moors National parks.

Supporting information:

Although the Welsh Government can't interfere with private properties, owners including second homeowners could be encouraged to consider selling through the scheme if they decide to sell their property. First time renovators of derelict properties/farmhouses should also be eligible for the scheme. It's proposed that Welsh estate agents and the house sellers would be paid a monthly fee (paid for by the interest on the deposit loans) for taking part in the voluntary scheme by agreeing to only advertise, sell or rent within Wales and to eligible Welsh citizens for the first 6 months of a property being put on the market – after which time it would be open to anyone.

This scheme would help to give families and individuals a chance to live and work within their own areas and not be priced out of the market by

unreasonable average wage to property price ratios, whilst also ensuring more money stays within local economies, boosting a more sustainable and productive Welsh economy in general.

Petition raised by: Sovereign Wales

Date petition first considered by Committee: 18 June 2013

Number of signatures: 17

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-487
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/02110/13

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions committee

14 January 2014

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter dated 16 December 2013.

As of 2 January 2014, the Help to Buy – Wales Shared Equity Scheme has been made available to eligible buyers in Wales, giving them access to a similar level of support as offered in other parts of the UK.

However, as you mention, there are other initiatives that could be considered to address market failures in the housing sector. In accordance with your petitioner's comments, I am particularly conscious of the challenges facing first time buyers in Wales, specifically around deposit requirements and the difficulties many people are facing in securing affordable lending.

In relation to your deposit scheme proposal, I'd be interested in seeing further details on the initiative, especially around the requirements placed on first time buyers using the scheme and their contribution to the property purchase.

Please pass on my regards to your petitioner.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration

P-04-487 – A Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh home buyers – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Clerking Team, 27.02.14

Dear Kayleigh,

Thank you. It is not clear from Mr Sargeant's response whether he is considering looking into this or whether he wants more information. It can be seen from the petition how I propose the scheme would work – if there is any specific question about this I would be delighted to give further details. I look forward to hearing from you,

Gruff

A Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh home buyers

We call on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to offer an annual deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh house buyers and/or renters. It is proposed that Welsh mortgage companies would also need to take part in this scheme and agree to ask for no more than 5% of a deposit on any suitable property (as well as offer a low interest own what you pay for mortgage). This for example would all mean that up to 15,000 Welsh first time house buyers (first time buyers whose earnings are below a certain threshold and have lived or worked in Wales continuously for at least 10 years, or have full time business links to Wales) could be helped annually with a deposit loan of around £7,500 each for an averaged priced house, with the loan back payments deferred for at least one year. Once sellers and buyers agree to the scheme, the property in question would keep its eligible occupancy clause, as happens with similar schemes in the Peak District and North York Moors National parks.

Supporting information:

Although the Welsh Government can't interfere with private properties, owners including second homeowners could be encouraged to consider selling through the scheme if they decide to sell their property. First time renovators of derelict properties/farmhouses should also be eligible for the scheme. It's proposed that Welsh estate agents and the house sellers would be paid a monthly fee (paid for by the interest on the deposit loans) for taking part in the voluntary scheme by agreeing to only advertise, sell or rent within Wales and to eligible Welsh citizens for the first 6 months of a property being put on the market – after which time it would be open to anyone.

This scheme would help to give families and individuals a chance to live and work within their own areas and not be priced out of the market by unreasonable average wage to property price ratios, whilst also ensuring more money stays within local economies, boosting a more sustainable and productive Welsh economy in general.

P-04-521 Regulating Caravan Sites

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to investigate whether legislation relating to safety of holiday and residential caravan parks in Wales is adequate and/or properly enforced. If not, we urge the Welsh Government to take appropriate action. We are especially concerned about the following safety hazards:

1. The space between caravans;
2. The storage of bottled gas; and
3. The siting of caravans and other combustible structures in the 3 metre clear area round the site boundary.

All of these examples present safety risks which do not appear to be adequately enforced at present.

Petition raised by: Brian Silvester

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 10 December 2013

Number of signatures: 37

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-521
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00009/14

William Powell AM
AM for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petitions committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

January 2014

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of the 16 December on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding the petition from Mr Brian Silvester which calls for the Welsh Government to investigate whether legislation relating to the safety of holiday and residential caravan parks in Wales is adequate and properly enforced. The concerns of the petitioner particularly relate to safety around:

1. The space between caravans
2. The storage of bottled gas
3. The siting of caravans and other combustible structures in the 3 metre clear area round the site boundary.

The Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013 provides Welsh Ministers with the power to specify model standards for the layout and provision of facilities, services and equipment for regulated sites. The model standards for residential mobile homes were updated in 2008 and in 1989 for holiday caravan parks. Both include guidelines for the spacing between caravans, the storage of bottled gas and the siting of caravans and combustible structures in the 3 metre area around the site boundary.

The 2008 Model Standards for residential mobile home parks issues the following guidelines with regard to the issues raised by the petitioner:

1. Section 2 – ‘Density, Spacing and Parking Between Caravans’ states in subsection (i) “[...] every caravan must be spaced at a distance of no less than 6 metres (the separation distance) from any other caravan which is occupied as a separate residence.”

2. Section 8 – ‘Supply & Storage of Gas etc’ states in subsection (i) “Gas (including natural gas) and oil installations and the storage of supplies must meet current statutory requirements, relevant standards and codes of practice.” In subsection (ii) it also states “Liquefied Petroleum Gas cylinders must not be positioned or secured in such a way as to impede access or removal in the event of an emergency.”
3. Section 1 – ‘The boundaries and plan of the site’ states in subsection (ii) “Caravans or combustible structures must not be positioned within 3 metres of the boundary of the site.”

These guidelines are to be taken into consideration when local authorities issue site licenses for mobile home sites.

In relation to the specific issues raised by the petitioner on fire safety, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) applies. The order:

- tell businesses what they need to do to comply with fire safety law
- help businesses carry out a fire risk assessment
- help businesses identify the general fire precautions they need to have in place

The RRO issues specific guidelines for fire safety on caravan sites relating to the spacing between caravans and the safe storage of bottled gas in the guidance ‘Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Sleeping Accommodation’.

It is an obligation under the RRO that all businesses carry out a fire risk assessment to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations, and make that assessment available to inspectors. Failure to comply with any duty imposed by the order, or any notice issued, is an offence. The Fire and Rescue Authority are the main enforcers of the RRO and have the powers to check that sites are compliant.

I am not aware of any evidence that the regulations governing fire safety on holiday or residential mobile home sites is either inadequate or not being enforced. It should though, be noted by the Petition Committee that the specific issue of fire safety does not fall under my portfolio and that the Minister for Local Government and Community, under whose area this falls, may have a better idea of any shortcomings in this area.



Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

Huw Williams

Pennaeth y Gwasanaethau Ffordd o Fyw /

Head of Lifestyle Services

Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron, SA46 0PA

www.ceredigion.gov.uk



Mr B J Silvester
Braeside
Clarach Road
Borth
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY24 5LP

Dyddiad
Date

10th February 2014

Gofynnwch am
Please ask for

Mr H Williams

Llinell uniongyrchol
Direct line

01545 572151

Fy nghyf
My ref

HW/SEJ

Eich cyf
Your ref

Ebost
Email

Dear Mr Silvester

'Y Fron' Caravan Park, Borth, Ceredigion

I refer to a communication from Mr Mark Williams MP outlining your concerns in relation to the above caravan park.

Mr David Lloyd Roberts, Consumer Services Manager, wrote to you on 8th November, 2012. In that letter he makes it clear that the matter is now considered closed insofar as the Authority is concerned.

I am aware that the letter refers to joint working between our Health and Safety and Licensing teams and the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue. I would like to reassure you that in the interest of public safety this will continue and officers from the County Council will always provide feedback to the Fire and Rescue Service where appropriate following an inspection. However, officers from this Authority will be guided by the adequacy or otherwise of the business's risk assessment in relation to fire safety matters, as determined and interpreted by Senior Fire and Rescue officers. As outlined in Mr Roberts's letter to you, their assessment of the fire risk assessment in relation to 'Y Fron' was deemed to be adequate.

I hope that this explanation clarifies the matter for you.

Yours sincerely

Huw Williams
Head of Lifestyle Services

c.c. Mark Williams MP

Cellir ateb yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg You may reply in Welsh or English

Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive :
Cyfarwyddwyr Strategol / Strategic Directors :

Page 146

Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive :
Gwyn Jones Adnoddau Corfforaethol / Corporate Resources
Huw Morgan Cymunedau Cynaliadwy / Sustainable Communities
Eifion Evans Dysgu a Phartneriaethau / Learning and Partnerships
Parys Davies Cofal, Amddiffio a Ffordd o Fyw / Care, Protection and Lifestyle

P-04-529 A Letting Agents Ombudsman for Wales

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to give the people of Wales a 'Letting Agents Ombudsman' by including it within their Housing Bill.

An ombudsman will give people guidance, issued by the Welsh Government, of what their rights are as a tenant. It will tell them how to complain directly through the agents' complaints procedure and when all avenues are have been exhausted, they can ask the Ombudsman to step in and take action.

Additional Information:

We very much welcome the regulation of letting agents and landlords set out in the Bill – this has been urgently needed for years. Students and young professionals are being robbed time and time again with invented letting agent fees and even invented letting agents and these need to be held to account now. There is not enough being done to help tenants against landlords – regulation will help, but there will always be bad landlords and letting agents that slip through the cracks and their tenants need someone on their side.

We need a Letting Agents Ombudsman. Letting agents and landlords are exempt from many of the regulations that estate agents have to follow. And many young people renting are straight from home or university and are vulnerable to their methods. They end up paying fees because they had no idea they had an option not to.

England has the 'Housing Ombudsman Service' that has worked effectively and provides a defence and a right to complaint for tenants all over the country. Wales needs one too.

Petition raised by: Let Down in Cardiff

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 21 January 2014

Number of signatures: TBC

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-S29
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00188/14

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

 February 2014

Dear Bill

Many thanks for your letter of 31 January requesting my views on the petition submitted by the group *Let Down in Cardiff*, which calls for a Letting Agents Ombudsman for Wales.

Whilst I sympathise with their plight, I do not think that their proposals would add anything to what is already available in terms of support for tenants who have been the victims of bad practice by landlords and agents.

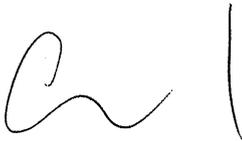
Letting agents are already covered by The Property Ombudsman. The Ombudsman provides a free, fair and independent service for dealing with unresolved disputes between letting agents who have joined the scheme, and landlords or tenants of residential property in the UK. The Ombudsman's role is to reach a resolution of unresolved disputes in a full and final settlement and, where appropriate, he will make an appropriate award of financial compensation, or other relevant reparative action.

The petition mentions the Housing Ombudsman who covers England, and helps to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. Whilst I have no doubt that this scheme has helped many people, I would argue that the fact that the Ombudsman is unable to intervene if the landlord is not a member of the voluntary scheme, does indicate that he is unlikely to be able to achieve resolution in the most extreme cases of bad practice by landlords, as the perpetrators are unlikely to be a member of the scheme in the first place.

It is unclear how disputes between landlords and tenants would be dealt with through a Letting Agents Ombudsman. This is where the Welsh Government's proposed landlord and agent registration and licensing scheme will step in. The scheme will require the landlord of every single property on the private rented market to become registered. Landlords will then have a choice to go on to become licensed, which will mean that they can manage the letting of their own property, or they can choose to delegate the management to a licensed agent or responsible person.

All licensed individuals or agents licensed on the scheme will have to abide by a code of conduct. Failure to adhere to the code will be dealt with by local authorities who will have a range of tools at their disposal. Ultimately, it can mean the withdrawal of their ability to manage the letting of privately rented property in Wales.

I am pleased that *Let Down in Cardiff* have warmly welcomed the Welsh Government's proposed scheme for regulation in the sector, and I hope that this letter makes it clear that the scheme offers the same protection for tenants, if not more than, the proposal for a Letting Agents Ombudsman.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Carl Sargeant', written in a cursive style.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration

P-04-529 A Letting Agents Ombudsman for Wales – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking Team, 03.03.2014.

Dear Kayleigh,

Many thanks for your email and for the correspondence from the Minister. We very much welcome his comments and the fact that Councils may be able to act as a kind of ombudsman to ensure best practice. We've noticed a similar petition from Aberystwyth Students Union

(<http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=6519>) with regards to the private rented sector and thought it might be appropriate to group ours with theirs, as we'd be very interested in the outcome of their consultation. Whilst ours isn't just about students, we've found through our website that they're the most vulnerable to bad landlords and tend to be more restricted in terms of choice, area and money (so do not always have the luxury of actively pursuing a well-recommend letting agent).

All the best,

Liz

P-04-518 Universal Free School Lunches

Petition wording:

We the undersigned call on the Welsh Government to introduce a free hot lunch scheme for all children in reception, year 1 and year 2.

Additional Information:

A number of studies have shown that hunger affects concentration, and that children who are well nourished perform better at school. Extending free school meals will also help families meet the cost of living as it has been estimated that the average school meal costs parents £437 per year for each child. The UK Government has announced that all five-to-seven year-old pupils in English state schools will receive free school meals. We believe the Welsh Government should do likewise.

Petition raised by: Jane Dodds

Date petition first considered by Committee: 26 November 2013

Number of signatures: 14

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-518
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/02031/13

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

2 January 2014

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 16 December 2013 in which you enclose a petition on the provision of free school meals.

We believe in providing free school meals to those who need them most and encourage those eligible to take them up. Free school meals are an important aspect of our anti-poverty agenda and a means of reducing health inequalities due to poor diet.

It is important to remember that Wales led the way in the UK by introducing free breakfast in primary schools in 2004; a scheme which is now well established. Due to recent changes in legislation, local authorities now have a statutory duty to provide free school breakfasts to all children of primary school age.

Furthermore, in September this year, the Welsh Government introduced the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013, which set out the types of food which can and cannot be provided during the school day, and defines the nutrient content of school lunches. The Welsh Government has also recently amended legislation which allows local authorities to charge flexibly for school lunches.

With these changes, we aim to provide free meals to those most in need, allow local authorities the freedom to price their meals more competitively and ensure the food provided is nutritionally balanced.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis'.

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills