

## Petitions Committee

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Meeting Venue:

**Committee Room 1 – Senedd**

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Meeting date:

**3 February 2015**

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Meeting time:

**08.45**

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Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



For further information please contact:

**Steve George**

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## Agenda

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- 1 Introduction, apologies and substitutions**
- 2 Evidence Session – P-04-597 Protect the future of Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales** (Pages 1 – 8)  
  
Catriona Williams OBE – Chief Executive, Children in Wales  
  
Lynne Hill – Policy Director, Children in Wales  
  
Ed Janes – Development Officer (Participation), Children in Wales
- 3 New petitions**
  - 3.1 P-04-612 Nationalised Bottled Water** (Pages 9 – 10)
  - 3.2 P-04-614 Support the Arriva Trains Wales First Class Service** (Pages 11 – 14)
  - 3.3 P-04-615 A Fair Student Loan Payment in the Final Year of Training** (Pages 15 – 18)

**3.4** P-04-616 Please Prevent Fireworks From Being Sold to the General Public  
(Pages 19 – 23)

## **4 Updates to previous petitions**

### **Health**

**4.1** P-04-448 Improve Sexual health services for Western Vale (Pages 24 – 28)

### **The following three items will be considered together**

**4.2** P-04-466 Medical Emergency – Preventing the introduction of a poorer Health Service for North Wales (Page 29)

**4.3** P-04-479 Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray & Minor Injuries Unit Petition (Page 30)

**4.4** P-04-564 Restoration of Inpatient Beds, Minor Injuries Cover and X-Ray Unit to the Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital (Pages 31 – 44)

**4.5** P-04-570 Inequitable Access to Treatments That Have Not Been Nationally Appraised in NHS Wales (Pages 45 – 50)

**4.6** P-04-604 Regarding the closure of Diabetes Patient Reference Groups and the cancellation of meetings of the Diabetic Planning and Delivery Group in Powys. (Pages 51 – 54)

### **Public Service**

**4.7** P-04-602 Personalisation of Graves (Pages 55 – 57)

### **Education**

**4.8** P-04-522 Asbestos in Schools (Pages 58 – 65)

**4.9** P-04-581 Opposition to cuts in provision for learners of English as an Additional Language (Pages 66 – 69)

### **Natural Resources**

**4.10** P-04-537 Planting Trees to Reduce Flooding (Pages 70 – 72)

**4.11** P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Planning Applications (Pages 73 – 75)

## **Economy, Science and Transport**

**4.12** P-04-393 Llanymynech and Pant Bypass Action Group (Pages 76 – 80)

### **The following three items will be considered together**

**4.13** P-04-475 Wanted – Buses for Meirionnydd (Page 81)

**4.14** P-04-513 Save the Wrexham/Barmouth X94 bus service (Page 82)

**4.15** P-04-515 Increase Funding for Welsh Bus Services (Pages 83 – 92)

**4.16** P-04-468 Road Safety Concerns A48 Chepstow (Pages 93 – 94)

**5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:**

Item 6

**6 Forward Work Programme**

## **P-04-597 Protect the future of Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales**

### **Petition wording:**

We, the undersigned, call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to protect the future of Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales by restoring core funding. Wales must have an independent, youth led, publically funded, national platform for children and young people, democratically elected at a local level, to give voice to their views and opinions and to hold the Welsh Government to account. The national platform must be empowered to work with all elected members to further children and young people's issues and to report directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as Funky Dragon did so successfully in 2008.

Funky Dragon still believes that:

1. Young people, democratically elected at a local level, should have a National Platform to voice their views and opinions.
2. That platform should be called The Youth Assembly for Wales.
3. It should be able to work with all Elected Members including Assembly Members and Members of Parliament to further young peoples issues.
4. It should be supported to allow Welsh young people to report directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in commenting on the last UK State report stated: Concluding observation 33. That governments' 'Support forums for children's participation, such as the United Kingdom Youth Parliament, Funky Dragon in Wales and Youth Parliament in Scotland should be implemented.



**Petitioner :** Catherine Patricia Jones

**First considered by the Committee:** 23 September 2014

**Number of Signatures:** 1,212 electronic signatures and 429 paper signatures. Total 1,641

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

Document is Restricted

# Agenda Item 3.1

## **P-04-612 Nationalised Bottled Water**

We, the undersigned, beseech the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to create a Wales-owned not-for-profit Bottled Water Company. This would remove the corporate middle-men making a profit from what should be free as our birthright as Welsh citizens: our own water.

### **Additional Information**

Wales is abundant in natural resources, particularly water – and we call upon the Labour-led administration in the Assembly to do something vaguely socialistic and offer Welsh citizens a source of bottled water that does away with the profit motive.

**Petitioner :** Plebeian Laboratories

**First considered by the Committee:**

**Number of Signatures:** 25

Carl Sargeant AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol  
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-612  
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/05775/14

William Powell AM  
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales  
Chair - petitions committee  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

14<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Dear Bill

Thank you for your letter of 22 December 2014, regarding a petition to create a Wales owned not for profit Bottled Water Company. At present the Welsh Government has no plans to establish a Nationalised Bottled Water Company.

A key aim in Wales' Programme for Government is to be a 'One Planet Nation', putting sustainable development at the heart of Government. The provision of a nationalised water product which uses non or limited reuse plastic bottles, taken from source to consumer, makes this a non-sustainable activity, which would be in direct conflict with the Programme for Government.

Access to high quality drinking water for everyone in Wales is a key priority for Welsh Government. We work closely with the Drinking Water Inspectorate and water companies in Wales to ensure that the people of Wales have access to a high quality drinking water source from their tap. Most of the drinking water supplied in Wales is derived from surface water, which is not suitable for bottling.

Yours sincerely

**Carl Sargeant AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol  
Minister for Natural Resources

# Agenda Item 3.2

## **P-04-614 Support the Arriva Trains Wales First Class Service**

It is believed that Arriva Trains Wales will soon announce their intention to cease the first class service which forms part of their flagship 'Premier Service' which runs each weekday between Holyhead and Cardiff.

This will likely be a response to the Welsh Government's decision to end their funding for this service in early 2015.

This petition urges the Welsh Government to reconsider their decision to withdraw funding for this valuable and well-loved service, or to at least encourage Arriva Trains Wales to continue the service as best they can via other means.

### **Additional Information**

The Arriva Trains Wales 'Premier Service' (also known as Y Gerallt Gymro, or 'Gerald of Wales', and now affectionately known as Gerald) is one of the few fine dining experiences left on a scheduled rail service running on the British railway network.

The loss of this service would be a great shame, not only for passengers, but for the staff and train crew who have worked so hard to make this train the well regarded experience that it is.

**Petitioner :** Gareth Peate

**First considered by the Committee:**

**Number of Signatures::** 54

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-04-614  
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/06506/14

William Powell AM  
Chair - petitions committee  
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

13 January 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 22 December regarding petition P-04-614 supporting the Arriva Trains Wales first class service from Holyhead to Cardiff.

I have considered options regarding the future of this service and I wrote to all Members on 1 December outlining the improvements which will be made. I enclose a copy for ease of reference.

*Edwina Hart*

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



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

All Assembly Members

01 December 2014

Dear Assembly Members

I am writing to inform you about changes to the provision of First class on the North–South Wales Premier Express rail service.

We have been working with Arriva Trains Wales to improve the catering provided on this service. From 15 December, 2014, first class will be rebranded to business class with a catering service in keeping with the needs of business travellers. A range of hot meals will be served by a travelling chef and will be available for all passengers using the service. There will be a new, more extensive and flexible menu range and three course meals will be available in the evening and either a continental breakfast or hot breakfast rolls provided in the mornings.

Business class passengers will have their meals served at their table, as part of the ticket price. Standard class passengers will be able to purchase any of the food options, as at present. Standard class passengers will also be able to pay a supplement to upgrade to the business class carriage.

Arriva Trains Wales have provided assurance that there will be no staff redundancies as a result of these changes, and it will improve the marketing and promotion of the service to generate additional patronage.

*Edwina Hart*

## Agenda Item 3.3

### **P-04-615 A Fair Student Loan Payment in the Final Year of Training**

Payment for midwifery and health care students in the final year is reduced dramatically as it does not take into account the extra weeks studying or in placement in August. This loan payment is repaid when in employment but affects the final year by as much as £150 per term. Healthcare is a completely different degree in relation to theory and placement and continues into August when other courses have broken up for summer holidays.

We would like the student loan system to take the third year course content into account and this be reflected in the student loan payments made to midwifery students and healthcare students alike

**Petitioner :** Maryanne Bray

**First considered by the Committee:**

**Number of Signatures::** 47



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



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-615  
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/05685/14

William Powell AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee

[committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk)

12 January 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 22 December on behalf of the Committee about student loan payments in the final year of training.

I can confirm that support for healthcare students is tailored to include funding for any additional weeks of study specific to their course. Although these students are only entitled to a reduced rate of maintenance loan this is because they are eligible to apply for a means tested NHS bursary. The NHS bursary takes into account the length of the course in each academic year, including periods of practice placement for all NHS students, and is increased for each week over and above the standard 30 weeks of study. This means that most students would receive an additional £83 per week for each week over 30 weeks.

The student finance arrangements take account of a number of factors when considering eligibility for loan payments, including the award of NHS bursaries. It is worth noting that students on NHS funded courses do not have to pay tuition fees and are also eligible to apply for non means-tested help with travel costs.

You will be aware of the ongoing Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales (Diamond Review), due to report next year, and the Health Investment Review which will be reporting shortly. It is likely that both these reviews will consider student finance arrangements, although of course it will be for panel members to decide those areas on which they will concentrate. They are cognisant of each other's work and I will ensure that your letter is brought to the attention of both Panel chairs.

Yours sincerely

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff

Page 16

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

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Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400  
Correspondence: [Huw.Lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Huw.Lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

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**P-04-615 A Fair Students Loan Payment in the Final Year of Training (Wales) Bill – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 26 January 2015**

**Dear Committee Members**

**Thank you for taking the time to consider my petition in relation to fairer student loan payments in the final year of study. This relates to my experience and the experience of others as a third year student midwife and the loan payments we are entitled to in relation to this.**

**When first applying for a student loan to help with costs and living expenses to study midwifery it is automatically taken into account that you may be entitled to a NHS means tested bursary which is not repayable. You are only entitled to the maintenance loan element of this student loan as tuition fees are not payable on healthcare courses.**

**The student loan is repayable and as from study starting in 2012 (when I proceeded with this degree) this is repayable after earning £21,000..**

**In my first year I received three payments based on “term” dates in the sum of £766.92, £766.92 and £790.16. In my second year I received three payments in the sum of £832.26, £832.26 and £857.48. My final year payments are £655.38, £655.38 and £675.24. These payments are made in September, January and April. As you can see there is a difference every year in the payments made but in the final year of study the loss of between £91.68 and £176.88 per term is a huge loss.**

**Term dates in relation to midwifery do not exist as per normal degree studies and I understand that these have to be set by the student loan company to streamline payments.**

**Midwifery students and other healthcare students work extremely hard. At any one time we are preparing assignments, studying for examinations, being assessed on scenario based work and presentations all whilst attending a full time Nursing and Midwifery Council accredited course or long placements which include 12 hour shifts working during daytime, night time and weekends.**

**The final placement on the course starts in July and finishes at the end of August where we are then assessed to proceed to be included into the Nursing and Midwifery Council register. This is not utilised as “summer holidays”.**

**I have received correspondence from the Students Finance Wales who have responded as follows:**

**“Good morning Maryanne, Many thanks for your patience in responding to this email. The reason that your maintenance loan is less in your final year is because you leave higher education at the end of the summer term and are therefore not entitled to financial support over the summer holiday; this is normal and applies to all students who are in their final year.”**

**This is not the case in the final year as midwifery students as we continue to study throughout this period and our midwifery course does not finish until 22 September 2015.**

**Midwifery is a lifelong dream of mine. Having a family to support and children to provide for the acute drop in the student loan has been a shock to me. Losing as I have stated above the amount of money at every instalment has been a struggle.**

**This student loan is repayable by all students who continue into employment and earn over the threshold that has been set. I and all my student midwife colleagues hope to work in the National Health Service in Wales and utilise our training to the fullest extent and benefit the women and families of Wales and “repay” the funding that has been provided for our studies.**

**I would ask that the student loan is looked into for healthcare students to allow the actual “term” times to be assessed and payments made accordingly.**

**Yours sincerely**

**Maryanne Bray  
Third Year Student Midwife**

# Agenda Item 3.4

## **P-04-616 Please Prevent Fireworks from Being Sold to the General Public**

We want to request a change in legislation so that only licensed events with can organise firework displays and use fireworks. We want to ban the sale of any fireworks to the general public. We want to ban the use of fireworks by the general public. As we all know, since the Millennium, fireworks are no longer a 'once a year' event. Every year fireworks are going off more than a week before November the 5th and generally continue in spits and spats until the New Year celebrations start them off in full swing again. Every year, children and adults are injured by fireworks that have been set off by the general public. The use of fireworks in a domestic setting which has no regulatory control or qualified professional in charge of the fireworks can be, and has proven to be, fatal. On top of this, the poor defenceless animals need to be taken into consideration. According to the RSPCA U.K's pet figures of 2013, there are around 22 million household pets in the U.K – averaging about 1 in every 2 houses. Any pet owner can understand the terror caused by fireworks being set off at the end of a neighbours garden where there is no control. Fireworks can be brilliant and something to look forward to. As it stands, many people dread and fear a time that was once a much celebrated time of year. Please help us and our pets feel safe again.

**Petitioner :** Kathy Peart

**First considered by the Committee:**

**Number of Signatures::** 110

Leighton Andrews AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus  
Minister for Public Services



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04 - 615  
Ein cyf/Our ref LA -/05365/14

William Powell AM  
Chair, Petitions Committee  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

[Petition@Wales.gov.uk](mailto:Petition@Wales.gov.uk)

8 January 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 22 December regarding a petition from Ms Kathy Peart calling on the Welsh Government to prevent fireworks being sold to the general public.

The sale of fireworks is not a devolved matter. It is governed by the Fireworks Act 2003 and regulations made under it by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. Those regulations restrict the sale and use of fireworks, for instance by prohibiting their sale to children and requiring retailers to be licensed; but neither I nor the Assembly could ban the sale of fireworks completely in Wales.

However, the Welsh Government has funded the Fire and Rescue Service to improve firework safety. For instance, the Fire and Rescue Service works in partnership with the Police to carry out Operation BANG (Be A Nice Guy) which aims to reduce anti-social behaviour and dangerous use of fireworks. I am happy to support these initiatives, but could not commit to the complete ban which your petition advocates.

Yours sincerely,  


Leighton Andrews AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus  
Minister for Public Services

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)  
Pack Page 20

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

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# Agenda Item 4.1

## **P-04-448 : Improve Sexual health services for Western Vale**

### **Petition wording:**

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to increase funding to the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. This increased funding should be directed towards improving sexual health services for the Western Vale.

### **Additional Information:**

Currently only one clinic is held once a week every Friday lunchtime in Llantwit Major. This clinic serves the whole of the Western Vale. This clinic gives sexual health advice and family planning services. This service is not adequate to meet the needs of this large geographical area. The town of Barry alone has 3 clinics/week. Help us to improve the sexual health of many young and vulnerable people who are often unable to travel 10 miles or further to a local clinic. These clinics offer the vital information/education/support/medical treatment that young people need. Improving sexual health services can help guide, support and care for the most vulnerable groups within our society. Please help us make a difference. Although teenage pregnancy rates are declining, abortion rates are rising (as cited by Helen Rogers Director of the Royal college of midwives, source BBC Wales 29/03/12) WAG in response to this report promised increased funding via public health Wales to improve access to integrated sexual health centres (BBC Wales 29/03/12) These vulnerable young people often from households which are deprived, do not receive the care they need. Had these young people lived in Barry, they would have received a much improved service. The rural vale is often dismissed as being "affluent" real pockets of socio-economic deprivation exist within this area. More clinics are needed. Wales wants a "World Class Health Service" built for the future. These young people are our future. Teenage pregnancy/abortion can have wide reaching detrimental effects on our young people. Sexually transmitted diseases are preventable if people get the right information.

**Petition raised by:** Rebecca Lowrie

**Date petition first considered by Committee: 29 January 2013**

**Number of signatures: 16**





**GIG**  
CYMRU  
**NHS**  
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Caerdydd a'r Fro  
Cardiff and Vale  
University Health Board

**Ysbyty Athrofaol Cymru**  
**University Hospital of Wales**  
**UHB Headquarters**  
Heath Park  
Cardiff, CF14 4XW

Parc Y Mynydd Bychan  
Caerdydd, CF14 4XW

Eich cyf/Your ref:  
Ein cyf/Our ref: AC-ns-01-4367  
Welsh Health Telephone Network:  
Direct Line/Llinell uniongychol: 02920 745681

**Adam Cairns**  
**Chief Executive**

20 January 2015

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

Dear Mr Powell

**RE: P-04-448 – Improve Sexual Health Services for Western Vale**

Thank you for your recent correspondence concerning sexual health services provided by Cardiff and Vale UHB. I apologise for the length of time that it has taken me to reply and for failing to acknowledge your previous letters.

In my letter to you of 13 March 2013 I indicated that the UHB was undertaking a review of the service. This review concluded in the Summer of 2013 but did not take the form of a paper. Instead, the review concluded with an action plan which provided a baseline for the development of a wider service, workforce and financial review to be undertaken by the new management team. Due to the volume of changes required to modernise the service, much of the most recent work has prioritised development of the service on the Cardiff Royal Infirmary site where, in July 2014, we opened a new purpose-built clinic facility.

During 2015, the service will be focusing on access arrangements across its community sites. Our aim is to standardise the set up of these clinics and to ensure the same level of staff are present each day. We intend to simplify access for patients and ensure the maximum number of clinics provide an appropriate full range of sexual health services. There will be public engagement on these plans but it is not anticipated that there will be any plans to change the clinic at Llantwit Major.

I hope I have been able to provide you with an appropriate explanation in respect of your concerns. Should you have any further queries or concerns or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Adam Cairns**  
**Chief Executive**

cc Mark Drakeford AM



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

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# Agenda Item 4.2

## **P-04-466 Medical Emergency – Preventing the introduction of a poorer Health Service for North Wales**

### **Petition wording:**

We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the proposals contained within the Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board consultation– Health Care in North Wales is Changing does not result in poorer health provision and unnecessary deaths and suffering.

The proposals will have a detrimental effect on most areas of health provision and emergency services and in no way can the proposals be an improvement as is intimated. Already experiencing meltdown, the Health Service in Wales will head towards collapse, if these proposals are implemented in their present form

The current BCUHB consultation proposals in relation to Health Care in North Wales appear to be detrimental to general health provision and the safety of our communities. Accessibility, X-ray provision, Minor Injuries ,Mental Health, the Ambulance Services, the Out of Hours service and the ability of GP' s to deliver an integrated service are going to be particularly hard hit by the proposals – as they are diametrically at odds with the Welsh Govt's vision in relation to the documents Together for Health, Setting the Direction, and Delivering Emergency Care Services – it appears also to be at odds with the Compact announced by the Health Minister on the 25th of September 2012.

**Petition raised by:** Mike Parry

**Petition first considered by Committee:** 19 March 2013

**Number of signatures:** 306

# Agenda Item 4.3

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

### **Petition wording:**

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

**Petition raised by:** Tywyn & District Health Care Action Group

**Date petition first considered by Committee:** 14 May 2013

**Number of signatures:** 4486

## Agenda Item 4.4

### **P-04-564 The Restoration of Inpatient Beds, Minor Injuries Cover and X-Ray Unit to the Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital**

**Petition wording:**

Until the Health Minister has had time to consider Prof Marcus Longley's recommendations on rural healthcare in Wales – a study that was commissioned by the Minister himself in January of this year – we, the undersigned, call on the National Assembly of Wales to urge the Welsh Labour Government to delay decision on Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's Business Case aimed at downgrading our Memorial Hospital to a mere 'Memorial Centre'.

**Petition raised by:** Geraint Vaughn Jones

**Date Petition first considered by Committee:** 17 June 2014

**Number of signatures :** 2,754

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## **P-04-570 Inequitable Access to Treatments That Have Not Been Nationally Appraised in NHS Wales**

### **Petition Wording**

We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to review the use of the "exceptionality rule" in determining whether a patient can access a treatment through the Individual Patient Funding Request process.

**Additional Information:** To access treatments through the IPFR process, a patient population must demonstrate its exceptionality. For common illnesses, it may be possible to identify a subset of patients within the larger population who are more likely to respond to a particular therapy. For rare disease patients, demonstrating that you are a unique patient when you are part of a small group of patients whose condition is considered rare is practically impossible. The exceptionality criteria place an onus on clinicians to provide evidence that the patient's clinical condition is significantly different to the general population of patients with the same condition and is likely to gain significantly more benefit from the intervention than might normally be expected. This evidence requirement is too onerous to apply to patients with rare diseases due to small patient numbers within rare disease populations. Patients with great clinical need are prevented from accessing life-changing/ life-saving treatments.

**Petition raised by:** Genetic Alliance UK, Tuberous Sclerosis Association, Association of Glycogen Storage Disorders

**Date Petition first considered by Committee:** 15 July 2014

**Number of signatures:** 1089





**William Powell AM  
Chair of the Petitions Committee**

15 January 2015

Dear William,

**P-04-570 Inequitable access to treatments that have not been national appraised in Wales**

Thank you for your letter of December 2014, received on 9 January 2015, about the above petition.

In the light of the Health and Social Care Committee's existing policy and legislative scrutiny commitments, it is unlikely that it will have capacity to undertake a specific inquiry into the use of the 'exceptionality rule' in the Individual Patient Funding Request ("IPFR") process. However, the petitioners may be interested to note the following recent work undertaken by the Committee.

**Inquiry into progress made to date on implementing the Welsh Government's Cancer Delivery Plan**

The Committee took evidence in relation to the IPFR process during its inquiry into progress made to date on implementing the Welsh Government's Cancer Delivery Plan. In its [report](#), published in October 2014, the Committee noted that it shared the concerns of many of those who gave evidence to the inquiry about varying interpretations of 'exceptionality', the lack of flexibility to respond to cohorts of patients seeking to access new treatments, inconsistencies in clinicians' willingness to engage with and access the IPFR process, and inconsistencies in the decisions made by local panels. The

Bae Caerdydd  
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CF99 1NA

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[SeneddHealth@Assembly.Wales](mailto:SeneddHealth@Assembly.Wales)

Trydar / Twitter: [@seneddiechyd](https://twitter.com/seneddiechyd) / [@seneddhealth](https://twitter.com/seneddhealth)

Committee indicated in its report that it believed that to ensure equity of access to novel and innovative treatments, a national panel should be established for the purpose of considering and making decisions about individual patient funding requests. To this end, recommendation 8 of that report recommends that:

“to ensure that there is consistency and equity across Wales, the Minister for Health and Social Services establishes a national panel to consider and make decisions about Individual Patient Funding Requests”.

The Welsh Government indicated in its [response to the Committee’s report](#) that it did not accept the Committee’s recommendation. The Minister for Health and Social Services said that the review of the IPFR process, commissioned by the Minister in October 2013, had concluded that:

“the IPFR process supports rational, evidence based decision making to access medicine and non–medicine technologies that are not routinely available in Wales”.

He went on to say that the Review Group had made a number of recommendations to strengthen the process, improve transparency and inter–panel consistency. He said that once the revised arrangements had bedded in, he intended that the IPFR process would be reviewed again.

During the [Plenary debate on the Committee’s report](#) on 10 December 2014, I noted the Committee’s disappointment that the Welsh Government had not been able to accept the Committee’s recommendation. I reiterated the Committee’s concerns, including the interpretation of ‘exceptionality’, and asked the Deputy Minister for Health to ensure that the review of the revised IPFR arrangements would take them into account.

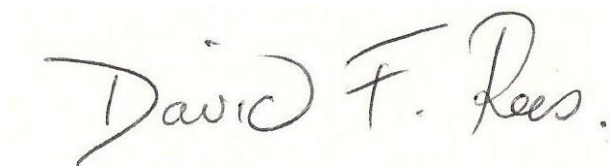
### **Inquiry into access to medical technologies**

During its [inquiry into access to medical technologies](#), the Committee heard concerns about the operation of the IPFR process in relation to new medical technologies, with witnesses referring to the difficulties associated with assessing exceptionality. The Committee did not make an explicit

recommendation about the IPFR process as it had already done so as part of its work on the implementation of the Cancer Delivery Plan, however its [report](#) did make a number of recommendations to address what it concluded was variable service provision across health services in Wales. The Welsh Government's response to the report is due in February 2015 and is expected to be debated by the Assembly shortly thereafter.

I hope that this information is of interest to you and the petitioners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David F. Rees." The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered on a light yellow rectangular background.

**David Rees AM**

Chair, Health and Social Care Committee



**Genetic Alliance UK**  
Supporting. Campaigning. Uniting.

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Mr William Powell AM  
Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales  
Chair Petitions Committee  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

28 January 2015

Dear Mr Powell,

[Response to letter from David Rees AM, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, regarding the Petition P-04-570 – Inequitable access to treatments that have not been nationally appraised in NHS Wales](#)

The petitioners extend thanks to David Rees AM for his response to the request to review the current 'exceptionality' criteria within the IPFR process and acknowledgement that the Health and Social Care Committee has limited capacity to conduct a review of this criteria.

In his written statement on next steps following a review of the Individual Patient Funding Request (IPFR) Process dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the Minister for Health and Social Services, Mark Drakeford, outlined that, 'it is not appropriate to routinely use the IPFR process to determine access to orphan and ultra-orphan medicines'. The petitioners support this statement, as it is recognised that the exceptionality criterion is a barrier that prevents patients being able to access these medicines due to deficiencies within the rest of the system. We are committed to working with the All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Committee (AWTTC) to ensure that the new process for appraising these medicines is timely and robust, drawing on both clinical and patient expertise. It is also critical that mechanisms for developing patient cohort policies are developed by the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee (WHSSC) to ensure that the current gaps in process are addressed.

In response to a written question by Darren Millar AM on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014, Mark Drakeford stated that he expected work on the revised process to be completed in full by September 2015. It is essential that interim commissioning measures are put in place to enable access to orphan and ultra-orphan medicines for patient cohorts whilst new processes are in development. Patients with great clinical need are currently being denied access to life-enhancing treatments because they have no route of access to these medicines. They are denied access through the IPFR process as they are not considered 'exceptional', even though their clinician agrees that they require access to the therapy.

The petitioners request that the Minister outlines timescales for developing interim commissioning policies for patient cohorts who are currently denied equitable access to potentially life-saving therapies. It is critical that patients receive interim decisions whilst processes are developed. This issue affects two groups of patients. Firstly, patient cohorts who are denied access to therapies as a result of insufficient routes to make them available to the patient community. Secondly, those patients who

are at risk of withdrawal of treatment received via compassionate grounds from pharmaceutical companies.

Denial of access to or withdrawal of a therapy for a patient with a rare disease often results in an immediate decline in the health of the individual and has a significant, detrimental impact on the patient and their family. It is therefore essential that interim measures are put in place to prevent decisions based on inappropriate and inequitable processes and, to ensure that therapies are available to those who need them.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alastair Kent".

Alastair Kent OBE, Director of Genetic Alliance UK and Chair of Rare Disease UK

[Genetic Alliance UK](#) is the national charity working to improve the lives of patients and families affected by all types of genetic conditions. We are an alliance of over 180 patient organisations. Our aim is to ensure that high quality services, information and support are provided to all who need them. We actively support research and innovation across the field of genetic medicine.

[Rare Disease UK](#) is a multi-stakeholder campaign run by Genetic Alliance UK, working towards the delivery and implementation of the UK Strategy for Rare Diseases, which was published by the Department of Health in November 2013.

## **P-04-604 Regarding the closure of Diabetes Patient Reference Groups and the cancellation of meetings of the Diabetic Planning and Delivery Group in Powys.**

### **Petition wording**

We the undersigned call upon the Minister for Health and Social Services to require Powys LHB to immediately re-establish the Diabetes Planning and Delivery Group and the local Diabetes Patient Reference Groups.

The closure of diabetes Patient Reference Groups in April 2011 and the cancellation of the statutory Diabetes Planning and Delivery Group (DPDG) in June 2013 denies the patient input defined in the 'National Service Framework for Diabetes in Wales'(NSF) and the 'Guidance on Involving Adult NHS Service Users and Carers'.

The closure of the DPDG is in direct contravention of instructions set out in correspondence from the Minister for Health and Social Services to Chairs of all Local Health Boards and from the Chief Executive NHS Wales to the Chief Executives of the Local Health Boards in June 2010. The correspondence states:-

."Each DPDG should take responsibility for leading, managing and reporting to the LHB Board and to the Chief Executive of NHS on progress with the delivery of the NSF." .....and....."The DPDG will need to ensure effective engagement with service users and is an integral part of the LHB structures underpinning the implementation of the CCM (Chronic Conditions Management) policy agenda." (There are patient representatives on all the Diabetes Planning and Delivery Groups)

### **Additional Information**

In June 2013 the Welsh Assembly Health and Social Care Committee reported on the outcome of their 'Inquiry into the implementation of the National

Service Framework in Wales and its future direction'. They concluded at Recommendation 5:-

"We recommend that the forthcoming diabetes delivery plan should ensure that local Diabetes Planning and Delivery Groups' relationships with health boards are formalised. Health Boards should demonstrate how they take account of DPDG recommendations and fully engage with their work. Arrangements should be put in place to adopt a national approach for DPDG's, to include national terms of reference for their operation and a requirement to meet with each other to share best practice."

In October 2013 – 'Together for Health – A Diabetes Delivery Plan' was launched by the Welsh Government. At Chapter 10. "LOCAL PLANS – LOCAL ACTION" it states:-

....."LHB's need to achieve full compliance with the Diabetes NSF, and this Diabetes Delivery Delivery Plan. LHBs will support their Diabetes Planning and Delivery Groups (DPDG) to review, update and publish detailed local diabetes delivery plans. The LHBs will support and enable the DPDGs to deliver the Diabetes plan, report progress, publish six monthly updates on their websites and contribute to the annual all Wales report to be published by the Welsh Government."

Simply stated there is now no possibility of diabetes patients in Powys to input or obtain basic information about service planning or delivery. We have been disenfranchised and denied the stated aim of the Welsh Assembly Government:-

....."to ensure that people who use NHS services.....are genuinely and constructively involved in all aspects of the service."

**Petitioner** : Robert V Wright

**First considered by the Committee:**

**Number of Signatures:** 40 electronic signatures

**P-04-604 Diabetes Patient Reference Groups / Diabetic Planning and Delivery Groups in Powys – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Chair of the Committee, 13.01.2015**

In response to the attached letter from William Powell AM I would be obliged if the following could be brought to the attention of the Petitions Committee.

Dear Mr. Powell,

Thank you for your letter of December 2014 detailing the Petitions Committee consideration of my submission. As is stated in the attached letter from Mr. Mark Drakeford AM, Minister for

Health and Social Services, the Powys Diabetic Planning and Delivery Group has now met and I am pleased to report that future meetings, on a quarterly basis, are now planned and a commitment has been given to re-establish the local Patient Reference Groups.

Given assurances that the prescribed channels of patient input into the diabetes planning and delivery process are to be re-established I am content that the Committee will be minded to close the petition.

On behalf of diabetes patients here in Powys I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the Committee for taking on board the issues I raised and particularly the support I have received from yourself and my local AM Mr Russell George.

Yours sincerely,

Robert V.Wright.



## **P-04-602 Personalisation of Graves**

### **Petition wording**

We the undersigned, call upon Welsh Government to review the central policy with a view to bringing in new legislation/regulations so that there is consistency across local authority areas in Wales on the personalisation of Graves, particularly the graves of babies and children

**Petitioner :** Elizabeth Haynes & Catherine Board

**First considered by the Committee:**

**Number of Signatures:** 120 electronic signatures and 1,486 paper signatures collected. Total: 1,606

Leighton Andrews AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus  
Minister for Public Services



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref LA -/00047/15

William Powell AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

20 January 2015

*Dear William,*

Thank you for your further letter on the petition your Committee has received calling on the Welsh Government to amend legislation relating to Local Authorities' cemeteries in respect of the personalisation of graves.

I remain sympathetic to the situation experienced by the petitioners and agree people who are bereaved should have clear and consistent rights to place appropriate tributes on graves provided, of course, these do not pose a health and safety risk or impede the maintenance of the cemetery.

However, following review, I have concluded the law governing the management of cemeteries is clear and does not need reform at this time. It is for each Local Authority to develop and justify their own approaches to their communities, just as with any other service.

I would expect all Local Authorities to be clear on what is and what is not allowed in their cemeteries, and to ensure this is communicated clearly. The rules and regulations should clearly set out the process for inspection of cemeteries for unpermitted items, including a reasonable period of notice, and the action which would be taken to remove them.

I intend to write to all Local Authorities about this particular issue, in order to convey this expectation and ask them to ensure they have clear rules and regulations for the management of their cemeteries in place which are kept up to date and enforced consistently. I will also be asking them to ensure they have an appropriate communication policy in place.

*Yours sincerely,  
Leighton Andrews*

**Leighton Andrews AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus  
Minister for Public Services

# Agenda Item 4.8

## **P-04-522 Asbestos in Schools**

### **Petition wording:**

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to put measures in place to ensure that parents and guardians of children across Wales can easily access information about the presence and management of asbestos in all school buildings.

Given the health risks associated with the presence of asbestos in public buildings, we believe parents and guardians across Wales have the right;

- to know if asbestos is located in their school;
- to know whether, where asbestos is present, it is being managed in line with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012;
- to access that information easily online

**Petition raised by:** Cenric Clement-Evans

**Date Petition first considered by Committee:** 10 December 2013

**Number of signatures:** 448



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-522  
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/00062/15

William Powell AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee

[committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk)

21 January 2014

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of January 2015 in respect of asbestos management in schools in Wales. You asked for my views on further correspondence received and discussed at your meeting on 21 October, and the reasons for not conducting a public consultation in Wales.

I refer to my previous letter to you whereby I informed you that I will consider the findings of the consultation carried out by Department for Education and decide if any action is appropriate in Wales. I am aware that the consultation process ended in March 2014 but to date no outcome has been published. I therefore do not intend to consider this matter further at this time.

Although health and safety is a top priority, asbestos is safe if undisturbed so there is not necessarily a need for a programme to remove asbestos from all schools. It is safer to leave undamaged asbestos in situ and subject to regular assessment, rather than creating additional fibre or dust disturbance through its removal. The presence and removal of asbestos in schools will be addressed when schools are replaced or refurbished as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme.

All schools are required to have an asbestos management plan in place, but I do not intend to impose a duty on them to inform parents annually about the presence of asbestos as this would increase the administration burden.

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

## **P-04-522 Asbestos in Schools – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Chair, 28.01.15**

Dear Chair,

I would first of all like to thank you and all the members of the committee for the work carried out in scrutinising the petition and matters arising there from. It has given me an additional insight into the work of Assembly Members and the work that the Committee does is an important part of the democratic process here in Wales.

I have been asked to comment upon the letter of the Minister for Education and Skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015.

### **Responsibility for asbestos policy**

In the course of the Petition a crucial, and potentially dangerous, constitutional matter has been highlighted, namely that no-one accepts that they have overall responsibility for asbestos policy in Welsh Schools.

The UK Government states the responsibility is that of the Welsh Government, whereas the Welsh Government states the responsibility lies with the HSE. The very people the Minister relies upon to set asbestos policy for his schools, the HSE, have clearly stated that they advise and regulate but do not hold the responsibility as that lies with the Welsh Government. The matter has been raised with the Minister on a number of occasions over the course of more than a year but his letter has failed to resolve the issue.

It is essential to have a clear statement from the Minister that he accepts that the Welsh Government is responsible for asbestos policy in Welsh Schools.

### **Review of policy of managing asbestos in schools**

Welsh Government has not formally accepted responsibility for policy for asbestos in schools in Wales. It follows that Welsh Government cannot have formulated any formal policy on the issue. I would repeat therefore my request that Welsh Government consult on the issue in order to formulate policy to ensure the safety of children and staff from asbestos in our schools.

The Minister's counterpart in the Westminster Government has accepted that he is responsible for asbestos policy in English schools, which is why he is conducting a review. The Minister states that he will wait for the outcome of the DfE review before he considers the matter further. As he is aware the review is of the 'policy of managing asbestos in schools.' However rather than waiting, he has pre-empted the conclusion by stating that it is safer to leave undamaged asbestos in situ and manage it rather than removing it. This is a remarkable statement when the two major asbestos incidents that have occurred in Welsh schools have proved that the policy has failed.

## **Incidents in Welsh schools show system of management has failed**

**In 2006 tests were carried out in six CLASP schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf that showed that there was a significant release of asbestos fibres when doors were slammed, walls and columns hit and even when people sat on window sills. The schools and local authorities thought the asbestos was being safely managed as it was either painted or enclosed, and yet cumulatively dangerous levels of amosite fibres were released from normal classroom activities. The tests confirmed ones carried out in 1987 that showed amosite fibres can be released from asbestos insulating board (AIB) walls when doors are slammed or the walls are hit, and that was despite the fact that the walls appeared to be in good condition.**

**An additional problem that was discovered is common with many system built schools. The structural columns are clad in AIB or sprayed asbestos and significant levels of amosite fibres can be released when the columns are hit or vibrated by slamming doors or windows. This is a particular concern as the asbestos was thought to be safe as it was enclosed in a non-asbestos casing, which is a method of management recommended by HSE – however it had not worked, but because it was hidden nobody had realised that asbestos fibres were being released.**

**The resultant asbestos remedial work in this one local authority cost in the order of £5.3m and resulted in disruption and stress for children and staff when at least nine schools were closed for a prolonged period of time.**

**The other major incident occurred in 2012 at Cwmcarn High School which resulted in anxiety and disruption with the school being closed for more than a year. Two firms of asbestos consultants, the Council and an independent expert considered that the school was unsafe. There was widespread asbestos contamination with AIB debris and amosite fibres in the ceiling voids, heaters, classrooms and corridors. Tests showed that, when disturbed, the heaters emitted amosite fibres. The leaking roof couldn't be repaired, and the electrical systems could not be checked or maintained because of the presence of the asbestos contamination.**

**The system of management was the one advocated by the Minister. The asbestos was left in place and managed. There were extensive AIB walls in places vulnerable to damage from children. They were disturbed and damaged on numerous occasions when children jostled down the corridors, kicked the AIB beneath their desks or threw a cricket ball into a wall. The AIB was not removed but it was managed with the numerous scuffs and scrapes being filled and painted each time they occurred. Accordingly the system of damage didn't prevent damage, it concealed it.**

**Caerphilly Council spent more than £2m in remediating and removing the asbestos before the school was safe to reopen. It was from bitter experience that the Council realised that the policy of managing asbestos had failed. So that it does not happen again the Council have now adopted a policy of removing all AIB that is accessible to children from their schools.**



## **Labour Party in England would adopt a long term policy of removal**

**It is noteworthy that in England the Labour party are taking the issue of Asbestos in our public buildings including schools very seriously and have reviewed their asbestos policy. I refer to the recent article in SHP on line when Stephen Timms MP Shadow Minister of State for Employment was interviewed on the subject. (It is pertinent that he would be the Minister responsible for the HSE.) He argued passionately that the next government should introduce and establish a strategy for the removal of asbestos from the built environment. "That is not going to happen in the course of one parliament but we think it is time for a strategy with a timetable for removing the asbestos," he says. <http://www.shponline.co.uk/banging-health-safety-drum/> I would commend such a strategy to the Welsh Government.**

## **Teachers' mesothelioma deaths increase**

**The latest statistics for mesothelioma deaths in the Education sector have been obtained under the FOI. They show that the numbers of school teachers' deaths continue to increase. 291 have died since 1980, with 158 dying in the last ten years. In 1980 they were dying at a rate of 3 a year and now they are dying at a rate of 19 a year. School caretakers, cleaners, secretaries, cooks and former pupils are also dying. For every teacher there are 20 to 30 children, and they are more vulnerable to exposure to asbestos. A leading epidemiologist estimated that between 200 and 300 former pupils would die each year because of their asbestos exposure as a child at school. Because of Government policy most of the asbestos remains and the evidence is that it is being frequently damaged. The deaths will therefore continue unless long term strategic policies are adopted to remove the potential for exposure. (See: <http://www.asbestosexposureschools.co.uk/pdfnewslinks/INCREASING%20MESOTHELIOMA%20DEATHS%20AMONGST%20SCHOOL%20STAFF%20AND%20FORMER%20PUPILS%20%2017%20JAN%2015.pdf> )**

**There is evidence that the policy of managing asbestos in schools has failed. A future UK Labour Government would aim for a long term strategic policy of removing asbestos from buildings, including schools. This policy has already been adopted by at least one Welsh local authority. It is recommended that the Minister reviews his policy, and that of others, and reconsiders his policy that children and staff are safer if the asbestos in their schools is managed rather than removed.**

## **Asbestos major expense in 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme.**

**The Minister has delayed setting policy for more than a year to see what his counterpart in England will do. He states that the presence and removal of asbestos will be addressed when schools are replaced or refurbished as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. The Programme was announced in 2011 at a cost of £1.4billion. It therefore seems remarkable that such a decision has not already been made as asbestos remediation or removal can be a major expense in maintaining, refurbishing or demolishing a school.**

**The Programme is a collaboration between the Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and local authorities. It is therefore recommended that the policy advocated by the Minister of managing rather than removal should be reviewed without further delay in light of at least one**

of those local authorities adopting a policy of removing all AIB accessible to children from their schools. If financial forecasts are to be sound he will also need to establish the extent, type and condition of asbestos in schools. If he does not then the forecasts will be meaningless.

Telling people what asbestos is in their school and how it is being managed.

Turning to the Minister's final comments:-

"All schools are required to have an asbestos management plan in place, but I do not intend to impose a duty on them to inform parents annually about the presence of asbestos as this would increase the administration burden"

May I first of all refer to the wording of the petition itself. Whilst informing parents and guardians annually of the presence of asbestos in schools may be commendable, it was not what was sought. I refer to the words of the Petition which speak for themselves:

"We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to put measures in place to ensure that parents and guardians of children across Wales can easily access information about the presence and management of asbestos in all school buildings.

Given the health risks associated with the presence of asbestos in public buildings, we believe parents and guardians across Wales have the right;

- to know if asbestos is located in their school;
- to know whether, where asbestos is present, it is being managed in line with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012;
- to access that information easily online"

Schools have a legal requirement to comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. They have a duty to share asbestos information with workers who may be affected. Putting the information on line would not be an administrative burden as the information is already there. In essence the petition is simply asking that the information be made available to those responsible for those most at risk, namely the children of Wales.

The HSE no longer carry out proactive inspections to assess the standards of asbestos management in schools. If parents were aware of how asbestos was being managed in their children's school then they would ensure that it was being managed effectively. It would act as a cost effective system of self regulation. In the USA there has been such a policy since 1986, parents have not over reacted and the policy of transparency has worked well.

Transparency and Accountability.

The Welsh Government advocates a policy of transparency and accountability. Their Programme for Government states "This annual report puts transparency and accountability at the heart of what we do as a Government. This is because the people of Wales should know what their Government is doing on their behalf."

I ask that the Minister follows his Government's policy of transparency and accountability.

**I ask that he accepts the responsibility for asbestos policy in schools is his and that he should review that policy and inform parents and guardians as to what is that policy**

**I ask that he makes the information available to parents and guardians so they that they know what asbestos is present in their children's schools and what measures are in place to manage it.**

**Asbestos is a hidden killer. Surely the people of Wales have a right to know about its presence in the schools of our nation.**

**Cenric Clement-Evans  
28<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

# Agenda Item 4.9

## **P-04-581 Opposition to cuts in provision for learners of English as an Additional Language**

### **Petition Wording:**

We, the undersigned, call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reconsider its cuts to pupils acquiring English as an Additional Language (EAL) in schools. Additional funding is required to prevent the marginalisation of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds in schools through specialist support which aims to raise educational standards and ensure equality of opportunity for all.

The reduction in the MEAG grant impacts exclusively upon ethnic minority pupils at a time when unprecedented numbers of EAL learners are in our schools. Lack of consultation fails to examine the scale, scope and impact of our support upon individuals, their families and whole school achievement.

### **Additional Information:**

The reduction in the MEAG grant impacts exclusively upon ethnic minority pupils at a time when unprecedented numbers of EAL learners are in our schools. Lack of consultation fails to examine the scale, scope and impact of our support upon individuals, their families and whole school achievement.

**Petition raised by:** Helen Myers

**Date Petition first considered by Committee:** 23 September 2014

**Number of signatures:** 37

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



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-581  
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/00014/15

William Powell AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

14 January 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter dated 30 September on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding Petition P-04-581 from Helen Meyers about the reduction in the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG).

The Welsh Government supports local authorities through the administration of the MEAG, which helps raise the educational attainment of children from minority ethnic backgrounds. The MEAG is provided to reimburse local authorities for eligible expenditure to support children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds who are learning English, or Welsh, as an additional language and to improve standards of achievement for pupils from minority backgrounds who are under achieving, or at risk of doing so, for reasons other than language acquisition.

I do recognise that pressure on services will continue to grow as the numbers of minority ethnic learners increase, and that there will be a disproportionate impact on some areas of Wales. That is why we need to be considering the focus of the grant and ensuring that funding is directed at areas of need where its impact will be greatest. There are significant pressures on a range of funded programmes and it is right that we look critically at both existing and future budgets. In that context, we must be prepared, collectively, to consider how we might continue to live within the tight financial constraints while delivering better, and more effectively targeted, services to improve outcomes for all learners, including those with more diverse needs.

In 2014-15, the Welsh Government does need to make some reductions in our education funding, whilst continuing to deliver against our commitment to protect schools funding by 1% above the rate of change to the Welsh block. My officials have been working with colleagues in local government to identify how we can best achieve these reductions. I have written to local authority Chief Executives on this matter. One of the areas identified where there has been an impact is the MEAG. However, our approach has been to seek to work with Chief Executives in identifying how additional flexibility around a number of grants might enable authorities and consortia to identify alternative areas to make the required savings to lessen the impact on schools and learners. The proposals I have approved go some way to lessen the impact on schools and learners and the resulting changes will be reflected in the second supplementary Budget. My officials continue to work with officers in Swansea City Council to examine how the savings which are required might be delivered.

Yours sincerely



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

**P-04-581 Opposition to Cuts in Provision for Learners of English as an Additional Language – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 28.01.2014**

Many thanks for your recent email informing me of the discussion of my petition.

As you will be aware, since the submission of my petition, the MEAG, which had provided ring fenced funding for the support of pupils in the process of acquiring English as an Additional Language (EAL), no longer exists. Resourcing for EAL learners is now drawn from the Education Improvement Grant (EIG).

While I am unaware of new arrivals data across Wales, the withdrawal of the MEAG has coincided with an unprecedented number of new referrals to Swansea's EMLA Service– an average rate of six new referrals per day, or over 500 pupils across both primary and secondary phases since the beginning of the Autumn Term, 2014.

Can the Welsh Government guarantee that adequate priority is given to EAL learners given the multiple demands on the E.I.G., and ensure that areas with the greatest need– Cardiff, Newport and Swansea LAs are targeted?

Regards,

Helen Myers

# Agenda Item 4.10

## **P-04-537 Planting Trees to Reduce Flooding**

### **Petition wording:**

We call on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to reduce flood risk to thousands of homes across the country by supporting the planting of at least 10 million trees over the next 5 years, creating hedges, tree belts and wooded areas targeted where they will best help soak up rainfall and slow down water runoff. This tree planting will count towards the 100,000 hectare tree planting target the Welsh Government has already set, to soak up CO2 from the atmosphere.

**Petition raised by:** Coed Cadw

**Date Petition first considered by Committee:** 18 February 2014

**Number of signatures:** 2708



Date: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015

By e-mail: [angharadevans@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:angharadevans@woodlandtrust.org.uk)

Dear William Powell AM,

## Response to correspondence received by Minister For Natural Resources

Apologies in the delay in getting back to you on this matter. May we thank you and the Committee for giving us the opportunity to respond to this letter formally and to share some of our thoughts on the matter for your consideration at your next meeting.

Coed Cadw broadly agrees with the letter the Committee received for the Natural Resources Minister, in the sense that the degree to which trees and other 'natural' flood defences are effective does depend on the location. We think the key issues are that;

- Trees and other natural solutions must be an integral part of decision making around flood defences solutions, and
- That the wider benefits of trees and natural solutions (for biodiversity, air quality, landscape etc.) are also factored in when making decisions on the most cost effective approach.

There is nothing ostensibly incorrect in the letter and much of it indisputable – trees are just one of many measures, their use for natural flood risk management needs to be assessed depending on location, topography etc. so it is right that we can't set a deterministic target for a certain number of trees across Wales to deliver reduced flood risk by a certain per cent.

However, we wish to highlight the fact that the influence of trees is real and supported by research and that assessing the cost efficiency of flood alleviation schemes needs to factor in the multiple benefits that land management based flood risk measures can deliver. Currently the calculations do not take these benefits into account when deciding on a traditional versus natural approach.

Secondly, we need to ensure that when any flood alleviation scheme is being considered – standard or natural – that the whole catchment's impact on the flood risk is taken into account. This could highlight the considerable ameliorating impact that land management measures may have downstream rather than dealing with the problem only through hard engineering closer to a town/city. The way in which the management of flood risk is considered in the first place is key to ensure natural approaches feature in thinking at the outset.

We would be interested in knowing whether the Welsh Government are working with other advocates of land management approaches to flood amelioration in Wales and whether there is sense that NRW are fully embracing more naturalistic measures when considering flood risk schemes? We need the flood risk teams in NRW to fully assess and incorporate such measures into their thinking regarding flood risk alleviation i.e. we need the portfolio of options to be expanded to include land management and tree planting measures, and we also need the rules governing public spending on flood risk to change to fully recognise the multiple benefits that natural flood risk measures can bring.

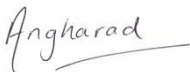
We are aware of two innovative projects lead by NRW in relation to natural flood risk management for the Clwyd catchment in North Wales which will support and enhance improved flood defences, particularly in relation to coping with future climate change and also contribute wider ecosystem services, in particular clean water and sustainable livestock production, both identified by stakeholders in the catchment as being the key priorities to stakeholders, in addition to flooding. We understand that the results/reports from these by will be available soon.

Lastly, the mapping reference at the end of the letter refers to revised woodland opportunity map. This will help identify areas where NRW can focus its efforts regarding supporting tree planting but ground truthing of the mapping and working closely with flood risk specialists and land owners will be required in order to fully understand where trees will deliver any flood risk benefit. Coed Cadw will be pleased to help facilitate such work.

Coed Cadw would like to see a commitment from the Minister promising that trees and the natural environment considerations will continue to be advocated and incorporated and even undertaken where it is appropriate. We suggest that a target is adopted to ensure that this process happens. The Welsh Government is the party that can direct NRW in the approach it takes and can approve and fund planting, and will be able to influence and advise others to do so, and therefore it would be better to see a stronger commitment to use its influence to ensure approaches that more sustainable and support multiple benefits.

We look forward to observing the next discussion on the matter.

Yr eiddoch yn gywir,



Angharad Evans  
Swyddog Ymgyrchoedd / Campaigns Officer

## **P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Planning Applications**

### **Petition Wording**

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to call in all opencast mining planning applications over 10 years duration or over 350 hectares in size because the implications of these developments are far reaching and long standing with effects beyond the immediate locality.

**Petition raised by:** United Valleys Action Group

**Date Petition first considered by Committee:** 15 July 2014

**Number of signatures:** 130 – An associated petition relating to a specific planning application collected in excess of 6500 signatures

**Y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd**  
**Environment and Sustainability Committee**

Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru  
National  
Assembly for  
Wales



William Powell AM  
Chair of the Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
[petition@assembly.wales](mailto:petition@assembly.wales)

19 January 2015

Annwyl William

**P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Planning Applications**

Thank you for your correspondence in relation to the above petition, which was drawn to the attention of the Environment and Sustainability Committee as a paper to note on 13 November 2014.

We have noted the issues raised by petition P-04-575 'Call in All Opencast Mining Planning Applications'.

We are unable to undertake any further work in relation to this petition due to pre-existing work programme commitments.

Our current work programme has been agreed to the end of 2015. Whilst we have no plans to look at this issue at the present time, should we decide to consider this issue in the future I will inform you.

Yn gywir

**Alun Ffred Jones AM**  
**Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee**

Bae Caerdydd  
Caerdydd  
CF99 1NA

Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
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Ffôn | Tel: 0300 200 6565  
E-bost | Email: [SeneddEnv@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddEnv@assembly.wales)

Steve George  
Clerk to Petitions Committee  
Welsh Assembly Petitions Committee  
Welsh Assembly  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

**Re-United Valleys Action Group (UVAG) Views to Petitions Committee,  
With regards to Environment & Sustainability Committee reply on  
P-04-575 Call in on all Opencast Mining Applications over  
10 years Duration or 350 Hectares in Size.**

**Petitions Committee**

**UVAG are very disappointed with the reply from the Environment & Sustainability Committee, UVAG was hoping for a favourable response from them because it is fact that coal is not sustainable in the long term and therefore would support our petition.**

**UVAG would like the Petitions Committee to accept their earlier submissions to enable the petition to go to plenary, as stated in earlier submissions, the Wales planning bill actually supports our petition because they propose to take all energy planning applications including opencast mining away from local authorities.**

**Please find attached the earlier submissions from UVAG**

**Terry Evans  
Chair, United Valleys Action Group (UVAG)**

# Agenda Item 4.12

## **P-04-393 Llanymynech and Pant Bypass Action Group**

### **Petition wording:**

We call upon the Welsh Government to reinstate plans for the bypass of the villages of Pant and Llanymynech which straddle the English/Welsh border. 15,000 cars and lorries a day pass through these two villages, and it will only increase once the plans for the wind farms get the go-ahead. We call upon the government now to proceed with their plans, or at least open up talks on the bypass and have a full debate, listening to our needs and the voices from our community on how this road is affecting us and our quality of life. We hope, by doing this, that the English government will then take note and proceed with plans on their side. We would like a full and open debate on the need for a bypass for the villages of Pant and Llanymynech, which then, will develop into the actual construction of the bypass once funds are available.

We are fed up of the noise, the pollution, the fact that we cannot walk our children to school, walk to the shops, or walk our dogs along the road. Road improvements such as widening, will not work here. The road was initially designed as a single track lane for horses and carts. The houses on both sides of the road often touch the edge of the road, and there are many lanes which feed onto the A483, which will again make it unsuitable for improvements. A bypass is the only option we feel, taking the road from Llyncllys (which is absolutely deadly) around the villages of Pant and Llanymynech and joining the new bypass by the edge of Llandysilio. This is the main trunk road between Manchester and Swansea, and it is not fit for purpose. We have many MPs and AMs on our side and we are determined to get this done, and have a full debate in the Assembly on the subject.

**Petition raised by:** Duncan Borthwick

**Date petition first considered by Committee:** 29 May 2012

**Number of signatures** 84

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-04-393  
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00168/15

William Powell AM  
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

21 January 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter received on 13 January regarding P-04-393 Llanymynech and Pant Bypass Action Group.

Please find enclosed a copy of my letter to the Secretary of State for Transport and his response.

My officials held a teleconference with their counterparts in the Department for Transport on 8 January to discuss cross border schemes. A schedule of meetings has now been established, which will include the Highways Agency, to consider how we can best work together to take forward discussions.

*Edwina Hart*

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



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport

TransportSecretary@dft.gsi.gov.uk

13 October 2014

Dear Patrick

I have received a number of representations recently about the importance of improving our cross border road links in Mid Wales.

Our departments have worked together in the past on plans for a bypass of the communities of Pant and Llanymynech on the A483 in Powys.

As we have now completed works to improve the A483 at nearby Four Crosses, I would be very grateful if we could reopen discussions to explore whether this bypass scheme could now be progressed.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Wales.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwina Hart'.





Department  
for Transport

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC/AM  
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport  
Welsh Government  
Cardiff Bay  
CARDIFF CF99 1NA

From the Secretary of State  
The Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin

Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 020 7944 3011  
Fax: 020 7944 4399  
E-Mail: [patrick.mcloughlin@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:patrick.mcloughlin@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

Web site: [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft)

Our Ref: MC/117702

11 NOV 2014

*De Edwina*

Thank you for your letter of 13 October, about representations you have received about improving cross border road links in Mid Wales.

I understand the importance of cross-border investment proposals for the Welsh Government, and have been clear that Ministers and officials here are more than happy to discuss any such proposals.

In terms of investment planning, the Highways Agency (HA) are completing a programme of Route Strategies covering all of the English strategic road network. These strategies are the process by which future investment needs and plans for the network will be identified and evaluated, and I know the HA had invited Welsh Government officials to specific stakeholder events for those routes that contain cross-border roads.

Where there are priorities for investment identified by the Welsh Government on roads which have cross-border aspects, I am more than happy for the Department to work closely with the Welsh Government. In terms of the specific investment proposals for the A483, as with all our investments, there will of course need to be a strong value for money case for investment.

Could I suggest that in the first instance, your officials make contact with Elliot Shaw, Deputy Director in Strategic Roads (020 9744 4508) to arrange to explore during the next week or so, the details of the proposed investment and the Highways Agency's route strategy investment planning work.

I hope this is helpful and I have copied this letter to the Secretary of State for Wales.

*y-e  
Patrick*

THE RT. HON. PATRICK McLOUGHLIN

## **P-04-475 Wanted – Buses for Meirionnydd**

### **Petition wording:**

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

- Review the funding for rural bus services to ensure adequate levels of service for the whole of Gwynedd but particularly south Meirionnydd.
- Consider funding to be ensured for additional services to improve access to health services, education, and employment, and thus support the economy and tourism of the area.

**Petition raised by:** Barbara Snowball

**Date petition first considered by Committee:** 30 April 2013

**Number of signatures :** 174

# Agenda Item 4.14

## **P-04-513 Save the Wrexham/Barmouth X94 bus service**

### **Petition wording:**

Arriva Buses has announced that they will cut the X94 service which links the towns of Barmouth, Dolgellau, Bala, Corwen, Llangollen and Wrexham and 5 other bus services on December 21st this year. All of these bus services connect communities across Wales from north to south and east to west. We call on the Welsh Government to investigate how cutting these bus services might be avoided and what is the best way of securing and promoting national bus services that link the regions of Wales, especially where there is no equivalent railway service.

**Petition raised by:** Karen Dunford

**Date petition first considered by Committee:** 11 November 2013

**Number of signatures:** 494

## **P-04-515 Increase Funding for Welsh Bus Services**

### **Petition wording:**

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to provide increased funding to bus services so that it adheres to its own policy aims of reducing poverty and exclusion, ensuring that people across Wales are not socially or economically disadvantaged by their location.

Additional information: This petition aims to increase the level of funding given to hard to reach, and disadvantaged areas of Wales. A number of local authority areas have had to reduce the frequency and range of bus routes since the Regional Transport Services Grant was introduced. This has left some residents isolated, especially on weekends and bank holidays.

**Petition raised by:** Daniel Thomas

**Date petition first considered by Committee:** 26 November 2013

**Number of signatures:** 246

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-040475/513/515  
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00166/15

William Powell  
Chair - Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

23 January 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your further correspondence regarding the Petitions Committee Inquiry into Bus and Community Transport Services.

I attach a detailed response to the questions put by the Committee, in addition to some further, supporting background information.

*Edwina Hart*

## PETITIONS COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO BUS AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

### A Current levels of public financial support for bus and community transport services

I am satisfied that the current levels of public funding to support bus and community transport services are sufficient to secure an efficient network. Despite severe pressure on the Welsh Government's budget as a result of decisions by the UK Government, the following evidence of substantial investment demonstrates my commitment to this in the current financial year.

Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG)	£25m (maintained at 2013-14 levels)
Mandatory concessions reimbursement	£67.75m
Local Transport Fund	£4.8m
Local authorities concessions administration	£2.2m (estimated)
Traws Cymru network	£1.8m
Bwcabus	£120,000
Traveline Cymru	£1m
Integrated transport pilots in the Vale of Glamorgan and Ceredigion	£200,000
Cardiff Airport Express (T9)	£312,000
Cardiff Airport Shuttle	£128,000
Bus Users' Cymru	£230,000
Community Transport Association	£200,000
Metro Phase 1 (bus priority corridors)	£13.1m
Metro Phase 1 (Newport bus station)	£3.0m
Metro Phase 1 (Merthyr bus station)	£800,000
Metro Phase 1 (Integrated ticketing)	£800,000

In addition, the £4.3bn local authorities have received in 2014-15 includes unhypothecated local government revenue funding to enable them to support bus and community transport services, and to support concessionary travel. I will continue to urge local authorities to protect the funding that they allocate in support of bus and community transport, in particular, but those are decisions for each authority to take.

As far as each of our Programme for Government objectives for the bus and community transport sectors are concerned, I would refer the Committee to the published updates.

**B The effect of recent changes, and proposed future changes, in public funding levels and mechanisms on bus and community transport services**

One of my key objectives for the bus network is that it should be helped to reduce what has become a significant dependency on public funding.

In Wales, just under three quarters of local bus services are provided by private and municipal bus companies on a commercial basis. While they need to make sufficient, appropriate profits from their operations to enable them to invest in improving the services that they provide, those profits also need to reflect the fact that they receive taxpayers' support.

Given the low pressures we see on wage inflation and fuel, it would be surprising if those factors were to play a significant part in influencing operators' network decisions for the foreseeable future. It is more difficult to estimate changes in insurance and other costs, but I believe that overall there is little if any fare inflation currently in the Welsh bus market. The most recent figures show that between 2013 and 2014 bus fares rose in Wales by, on average, 1.6%. This was a lower increase than elsewhere in Great Britain, and a fall in real terms. A report by the TAS Partnership has identified that profit margins for six operators assessed in Wales were 8.3% overall.

In addition to our core funding of the Community Transport Association (CTA) in Wales, community transport projects benefit from local authority decisions arising from their BSSG allocations and authorities' own budgets. My officials review the performance of the CTA at regular intervals with the CTA and annual funding decisions are based on detailed Business Plans. Ahead of decisions about funding for 2015-16, the CTA has been asked to produce an updated "State of the Sector" report to highlight current issues. That report will help to inform future funding decisions and my officials have been advised that the CTA will publish it soon.

I am keen that future public investment in the bus network, in particular, should be coordinated with operators' own investment. In that way, we and our partners will achieve the maximum positive impact. It is for this reason that I am exploring the potential for route-based investment partnerships where we have identified the greatest potential for increasing the number of passengers. The longer-term viability of the bus industry will depend especially on attracting more fare-paying passengers and reducing the industry's dependence on public funding.

**C The social and economic impact of recent and proposed future changes, in public funding levels and mechanisms for the bus and community transport sectors**

In November 2014 the Public Policy Institute for Wales published its report "A fare deal? Regulation and Financing Bus Services in Wales". That exercise looked specifically at the impact of deregulation in Wales. The report identifies that fares have increased in Wales while operators' costs have reduced, and notes that "As a result, Wales is paying higher subsidies than the rest of Great Britain outside London without any noticeable added benefit". Though in part this reflects the more rural nature of Wales, meaning that buses carry fewer passengers for longer distances than elsewhere in Great Britain, I am pleased that the report endorses my emphasis on statutory Partnerships between local authorities and bus operators.

Inevitably, the Welsh Government and local authorities sometimes need to make difficult decisions about the level of services that can be supported. For my part, those decisions only follow careful review of the proposals and competing demands for funding. Where appropriate, Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken. As far as the funding that I provide to local authorities is concerned, I require that their decisions are taken only after their detailed consideration of local circumstances and priorities. In the same vein, I wish to encourage bus operators to consult the travelling public before implementing changes to their timetables and networks.

Local authorities are responsible for reimbursing operators for concessionary journeys undertaken on local bus services, and ensuring compliance with the legal obligation that operators are "no better or no worse off" as a result.

Work carried out in 2013-14 with local authorities and the bus industry to identify a new three-year funding package for the scheme established that £67.75m would be sufficient in 2014-15 to meet this obligation based on approximately 50m concessionary journeys a year.



The Welsh Government recently announced that, from September 2015, we will provide a discounted travel scheme for young people on buses. Detailed work is being taken forward on that. It is vital that we target public funding for this sort of initiative and at the same time encourage the private sector to work with us to grow the fare-paying part of the market.

The Welsh Government has funded Traveline Cymru since 1999 to provide public transport information through a variety of media including a contact centre, website and mobile telephone applications.

**D The steps the Welsh Government should take to support bus and community transport services, given the overall reductions in Welsh Government budget since 2009-10**

My future decisions will be aimed at helping to provide a period of stability within difficult funding constraints to enable the industry to develop and deploy its commercial acumen to grow the number of fare-paying passengers, and the proportion of those within the overall total. That is why I consider the use of statutory agreements between local authorities and bus operators to be so important.

The Metro initiative in south east Wales illustrates our commitment to provide integrated solutions. This will increase and improve access to education, healthcare and employment, supporting increased economic activity. The first phase of the project includes an investment of £13.1m to help the reliable movement of buses, including bus priority measures between Cardiff and St. Athan – Cardiff Enterprise Zone. Such initiatives will make bus travel more attractive to the public, and reduce operating costs and therefore subsidy through the more effective and efficient use of the network. In addition, £3.8m has been allocated to enhance bus interchanges at Newport and Merthyr Tydfil, and provide suitable waiting facilities.

An effective, integrated public transport network comprises several strands, and must achieve a balance between modes. For example, it would not be possible to carry all train passengers on buses or vice versa without unaffordable expenditure on their respective infrastructures. Nor would I wish to see either of those modes surrender its market to the other. The important thing is that public funding is affordable, effectively targeted and avoids costly duplication, offering people a number of practical and affordable alternatives.

The ability to facilitate integration between different modes and services will increase the geographical coverage of the public transport network and link desired origins and destinations.

I would like to see more local authorities considering the potential for voluntary agreements with bus operators, statutory bus Quality Partnership Schemes or Quality Contracts. One of the benefits of a binding, statutory scheme is that local authorities and operators would be required to deliver their commitments and investments. I would like to see Welsh Government funding for the bus network increasingly to be linked to statutory Partnerships so that, in perhaps five years, BSSG would be allocated only in support of those services which were in a Partnership.

From September 2015 I will have secured powers to enable the Welsh Government to contract direct with bus operators for subsidized services, rather than going through a local authority intermediary. I am confident that this will provide me with greater influence over which bus services are publicly funded and, as a result, what sort of bus and integrated public transport networks we have in Wales.

The ability to travel seamlessly between services is often determined by the availability of joint tickets, the primary example being the All-Wales concessionary bus travel scheme. This enables pass holders to travel on any local bus service anywhere in Wales. The deregulated market results in several commercial and practical constraints which have, historically, limited opportunities to provide fully integrated commercial ticketing. Notwithstanding these, progress is being made to implement smart ticketing, initially in the Metro area, to reduce complexity for bus users.

In addition, under Section 135 of the Transport Act 2000 a local authority or two or more authorities may make a ticketing scheme covering the whole or any part of their area, or combined area. I would like more local authorities in Wales to explore the potential for such schemes.

Bus passenger satisfaction levels are pleasingly high. Data for 2010 shows that Wales compared well with a representative selection of areas across England. In particular, across Wales:

- 88% of bus passengers were satisfied with their bus journey;
- 61% of fare-paying passengers were satisfied with the value for money of their journey; and
- 76% of bus passengers were satisfied with the punctuality of their bus service.

For a number of years the Welsh Government has funded Bus Users' Cymru to represent the interests of bus passengers. I am extremely pleased with the work that Bus Users' Cymru does, including its input to policy development and in organizing around 20 bus passenger surgeries throughout Wales. Bus Users' Cymru also employs three full-time Bus Compliance Officers (BCOs) funded by me to monitor the industry's performance so that more potential failures are prevented, and acted upon promptly where they exist.

The BCOs work closely with the Traffic Commissioner for the Wales Traffic Area, who is responsible for taking action against errant bus operators, and who may impose financial penalties – payable to the Welsh Government – where significant failures are proved.

You will remember that in April 2014 capital funding via the regional transport consortia ceased and was replaced by the Local Transport Fund, which is paid directly to local authorities to deliver schemes that are aligned to Welsh Government priorities. In 2014-15 the Local Transport Fund is supporting a number of public transport schemes across Wales, including in Newport, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire and Powys. These schemes will provide enhanced interchange and bus stop facilities for both local bus services and regional services such as TrawsCymru.

### **E Recent trends in bus and community transport in Wales**

Almost half – 44% - of all local bus journeys in Wales are undertaken by some 725,000 concessionary pass holders, and that is not financially sustainable when compared with the rest of Great Britain, where the equivalent figure (also including travel by young people) is around 35%. That is not to say that I do not wish to see older or disabled pass holders make the most of their passes by getting out and about at every opportunity. I certainly do, knowing very well how important a contribution they make to wellbeing and establishing and maintaining social contacts. But we need to work with local authorities and the bus industry to increase the number of fare-paying journeys.

The recent decline in the number of bus passenger journeys in Wales is certainly disappointing, though not unique to Wales, as there have been similar falls in the past two or three years across the North of England and the Midlands.

### **F Potential impact of changes in levels of funding available**

While it is true that, before last year, there was a 17% reduction in the Welsh Government's funding for subsidized services, it is not always possible to avoid difficult decisions. In addition, when determining the services that they wish to support using their own or Welsh Government funding, local authorities tend to prioritize those services that require the least subsidy. The most vulnerable subsidized services will be those that carry fewest passengers and therefore require the greatest subsidy for each passenger journey.

Nevertheless, my guidance to local authorities on spending BSSG allocations recommends that they should seek to ensure a minimum standard and frequency of service to all communities, and not concentrate simply on the largest and therefore least expensive settlements. Currently, each local authority is responsible for making those decisions.

It is easy but unhelpful to attempt to compare and contrast the level of public subsidy provided to the rail industry with that to the bus industry. There are significant differences between the funding and business models of these sectors. For example, the average journey length of train trips is significantly greater than that for buses, which also benefit from our investment in the road network.

### **G Development of Welsh Government bus and community transport policy**

Increasingly, the public money that is spent in support of bus services must be linked to the delivery of specific quality outcomes. For example, improved driver training, enhanced audio visual announcements and better accessibility generally, the offer of discounted travel, and minimum standards of information. This approach is reflected in the work of my Bus Policy Advisory Group, which is advising me on future strategic priorities for the bus and community transport sectors.

I would also remind you that the new National Transport Plan is currently out to public consultation. The draft plan contains a number of interventions that clearly demonstrate my long term commitments to support and enhance bus and community transport services and facilities. The new National Transport Plan will be complemented by the new Local Transport Plans being developed at the same time by local authorities. The draft National Transport Plan can be found via the following link - <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/transport/draft-national-transport-plan/?lang=en>

I am pleased to be providing an office for the Traffic Commissioner in Wales to help his work with local authorities, bus operators and others based here.



# Agenda Item 4.16

## **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

Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00167/15

William Powell AM  
petition@wales.gov.uk

21 January 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter received on 13 January regarding P-04-468 road safety concerns on the A48 Chepstow.

My officials have now completed the speed limit review of all trunk roads within Wales. The results will be available shortly.

*Edwina Hart*