

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 21 March 2017

Meeting time: 08.50

For further information contact:

Graeme Francis – Committee Clerk

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Informal pre-meeting (08.50 – 09.00)

1 Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 21)

2 New petitions

2.1 P-05-745 Increased provision for off road motorsports

(Pages 22 – 29)

2.2 P-05-746 Free School Transport for All Children in Wales

(Pages 30 – 33)

2.3 P-05-747 TB testing of cattle

(Pages 34 – 43)

3 Updates to previous petitions

Health

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

(Pages 44 – 49)

3.2 P-05-697 45000 Reasons Wales Needs a Dementia Strategy

(Pages 50 – 51)

3.3 P-05-732 Unacceptable Waiting Times for NHS patients in A & E

Wreccsam/Wrexham Maelor Hospital

(Pages 52 – 54)



Education

3.4 P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time
(Pages 55 – 56)

3.5 P-04-628 To improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language
(Pages 57 – 62)

3.6 P-05-727 Funding for the Education Workforce Council Registration (EWC) Fee for Learning Support Workers in Schools
(Pages 63 – 69)

Economy and Infrastructure

3.7 P-05-701 Road Safety Improvements Along the A487 Trunk Road between Cardigan and Aberystwyth, to Include Passing Places
(Pages 70 – 72)

3.8 P-05-721 Penegoes Speed Limit Petition
(Pages 73 – 74)

Communities and Children

3.9 P-05-734 Ban Letting Agent Fees to Tenants
(Pages 75 – 76)

4 Evidence Session – P-05-710 Ensure Disabled People can Access Public Transport As and When They Need it
(Pages 77 – 90)

09:20 – 10:00

Panel 1 – Rail Service Operators

- Great Western Railway – Joe Graham, Business Assurance Director.
- Arriva Trains Wales – Barry Lloyd, Head of Customer Experience and Geraint Morgan, Community Affairs Manager.

- Network Rail – Margaret Hickish MBE, Access and Inclusion Manager.

10:05 – 10:45

Panel 2 – Bus Service Operators and Industry Representatives

- Confederation of Passenger Transport Cymru – John Pockett, Director.
- First Cymru – Justin Davis, Managing Director.
- Cardiff Bus – Cynthia Ogbonna, Managing Director.

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Agenda Item 2.1

P-05-745 Increased Provision for Off Road Motorsports

This petition was submitted by Jonathan Barrett, having collected 318 signatures.

Text of the Petition

We call upon the Welsh Assembly to provide more support through Natural Resources Wales in making provision for off road motorcycles. We further ask that the Assembly provides direction for local authorities and the police in line with the Welsh Off Road Motors Steering Group (WORMS). We lastly ask that Ministers meet with some of those involved in off road provision to discuss the support that we seek.

Additional Information

The issue of "off road motorcycle" use in Wales has been one that has often polarised views with those in support against others. This has resulted in many legitimate off road users being demonised, treated unfairly and being tarred with the same brush as those that do ride anti-socially.

The issue of off road vehicles in Wales is worth many millions of pounds to the Welsh economy every year. In 2002 the Auto-Cycle Union (ACU) carried out a survey on behalf of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and it was estimated there were 10,000 off road bikes and vehicles in use in that one council area. Local businesses are seeing constant increases in bike use year on year. Most of those involved in the sport do try and engage legally, however with very few venues and a reduction in the amount of available Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS) more and more are falling short of the law. Whilst this is ongoing the police are often targeting off road users including those that are conducting themselves legally and responsibly.

The Welsh Off Road Motors Steering group which advises the Welsh Assembly, as well as all 22 local authorities and 4 Welsh police forces, concludes that the only way to stop illegal activity is through a three pronged approach of education, enforcement and provision. Whilst education and enforcement are regularly carried out, it seems little is done in the way to provide for off road users. In South Wales there is currently one motocross track that is open to the general public which is simply not enough and only caters for motocross riders. Many of the BOATs are being closed or put under Traffic Regulation Orders and initiatives to make provision are being stopped by the police or National Resources Wales.

The issue of anti-social use of motorcycles could be massively reduced by making areas which could be used for off road motorcycling. In Merthyr Tydfil, a dedicated mountain biking track has been created by NRW, attracting 66000 visitors in its first year.

Assembly Constituency and Region.

- Bridgend
- South Wales West

Petition: P-05-745 Increased provision for off road motorsports

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 21 Mawrth 2016
Petitions Committee | 21 March 2016

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-745

Petition title: **Increased provision for off road motorsports**

Petition text:

We call upon the Welsh Assembly to provide more support through Natural Resources Wales in making provision for off road motorcycles. We further ask that the Assembly provides direction for local authorities and the police in line with the Welsh Off Road Motors Steering Group (WORMS). We lastly ask that Ministers meet with some of those involved in off road provision to discuss the support that we seek.

Additional Information

The issue of "off road motorcycle" use in Wales has been one that has often polarised views with those in support against others. This has resulted in many legitimate off road users being demonised, treated unfairly and being tarred with the same brush as those that do ride anti-socially.

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22 local authorities and 4 Welsh police forces, concludes that the only way to stop illegal activity is through a three pronged approach of education, enforcement and provision. Whilst education and enforcement are regularly carried out, it seems little is done in the way to provide for off road users. In South Wales there is currently one motocross track that is open to the general public which is simply not enough and only caters for motocross riders. Many of the BOATs are being closed or put under Traffic Regulation Orders and initiatives to make provision are being stopped by the police or National Resources Wales.

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Background

Wales Off-Road Motors Steering Group

The Wales Off-Road Motors Steering (WORMS) Group is administered by [Natural Resources Wales \(NRW\)](#) and is made up of off-roading interests, including motorcyclists, and representatives from local authorities, national park authorities and other interested parties. The group meets to share experience and best practice in relation to three main issues:

- Effective enforcement of existing laws;
- Provision/management of appropriate opportunities; and
- Responsible use and education.

The NRW website says the group meets a number of times a year, whereas the Cabinet Secretary's letter (see below) says the group has not met since 2014.

Byways Open to All Traffic

Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS) are public rights of way which are open to walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, horse-drawn vehicles and motor vehicles.

The *Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984* enables local authorities to restrict, prohibit or regulate the use of highways (including rights of way) through Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). TROs can be permanent, temporary or experimental, and can apply all year round or at specific times of the year.

NRW's position on making provision for off-road motorcycling

NRW's [Outdoor Recreation and Access Enabling Plan, Action Plan 2015 - 2020 \(PDF 496.0 KB\)](#) states:

We will continue to develop our position on motorised recreational activity on our own managed land ... Encompassing our continuing work with the Motor Sports Association, Wales Rally GB etc, and the feasibility of new opportunities.

Welsh Government action

Consultation on outdoor access

The Welsh Government consulted on a Green Paper in 2015 entitled '[Improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation](#)' (PDF 318KB) in 2015. The consultation included a question on how legislation could strike a better balance between the demands of motorised users, landowners and the natural environment.

The Welsh Government later published a [summary of responses](#) (PDF 123KB) to the consultation. On motorised vehicles, it says:

The majority of responses that stated a view on motorised access off-road and on public rights of way were negative. However, of these very few differentiated between legal and illegal vehicular use. **A number suggested segregating motorised and non-motorised users, for example, restricting use to NRW managed land, in particular, forestry areas.** [Research Service emphasis]

On 13 February 2017, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths AM, issued a Written Statement on '[Improving opportunities to access the outdoors for recreation](#)'. In the statement she said that following the Green Paper consultation she would consult further on improvements in 'key areas', including:

- Achieving consistency in the opportunities available for participation in different activities and how activities are restricted and regulated; and
- Improving existing advisory forums and how access rights and responsibilities are communicated to all interests.

No indication was given for when the consultation will take place.

Cabinet Secretary's letter

The Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Committee on 15 February 2017. She said that off-roading is a very emotive issue and described the provision of access for off-road motorcycles as follows:

Provision in Wales is limited due to a number of factors, including opposition to planning applications for managed tracks and to the recording of rights of way for motorised users. However Natural Resources Wales (NRW) already provides access to many parts of its estate for use by a range of users, including motorcyclists and other off-road vehicles as long as they are road legal, taxed and insured as required.

She also said that:

- The WORMS Group was a very useful group that provided advice and expertise to both the Welsh and UK Governments, but it has not met since 2014;
- The WORMS Group contributed to guidance on regulating off-road motoring published in 2005. The law on off-roading has not changed since then but the Cabinet Secretary said her officials will review the guidance to ensure it is up to date; and

- Her officials will meet the petitioners to discuss their concerns and listen to suggestions for increasing provision for off-roaders.

National Assembly for Wales action

This issue has not yet been considered by the Assembly.

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

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-745
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00246/17

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15

February 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 31 January, regarding the petition to increase provision for motorsports – Ref. P-05-745.

Off-roading is a very emotive issue. Whilst I am aware of the problems caused by illegal off-road motoring in the countryside I am also mindful of the many responsible users who drive and ride on legitimate routes and are considerate to other users.

Provision in Wales is limited due to a number of factors, including opposition to planning applications for managed tracks and to the recording of rights of way for motorised users. However, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) already provides access to many parts of its estate for use by a range of users, including motorcyclists and other off-road vehicles as long as they are road legal, taxed and insured as required.

With regard to the Wales Off-Road Motors Group (WORMs), this was administered by NRW and attended by a range of off-roading interests, including, representatives from local authorities and National Parks, motorised user groups and motor trade bodies. It was a very useful group when it was established in 2004, providing advice and expertise to the Welsh Ministers and Department for Environment and Rural Affairs. However, the group has not met since 2014.

The WORMs group contributed to guidance on regulating off-road motoring in the countryside published in 2005 by Defra, in partnership with the Welsh Government. Whilst the law regarding off-roading has not changed I will instruct my officials to review this existing guidance to ensure it is up to date.

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

Pack Page 28

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

I will ask officials to meet with those responsible for the petition to discuss their concerns and to listen to any suggestions they may have for increasing the provision for off-roaders.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

Agenda Item 2.2

P-05-746 Free School Transport for All Children in Wales

This petition was submitted by Rachel Griffiths, having collected 194 signatures.

Text of the Petition

I am setting this petition up for all children in Wales to receive free school transport to and from school where they fall within the catchment area.

Additional Information

To give an example, due to UK Government cuts to public sector funding and the resultant need for the council to make substantial savings, Rhondda Cynon Taff council now want to make charges from September 2016 of £285 per annum per child for transport to and from school or £95 for those receiving free school meals. Cuts could be made elsewhere e.g. are plants in the community really needed?

Assembly Constituency and Region.

- Pontypridd
- South Wales Central

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-746

Petition title: **Free school transport for all children in Wales**

Petition text:

Due to UK government cuts to public sector funding and the resultant need for the council to make substantial savings Rhondda Cynon Taff council now want to make charges from September 2016 of £285 per annum per child for transport to and from school or £95 for those receiving free school meals

I am setting this petition up for all children in Wales to receive free school transport to and from school where they fall within the catchment area, and for cuts to be made elsewhere from the council. I. E plants in the community is that really needed?

Legal background

The [Learner Travel \(Wales\) Measure 2008](#) sets out the legal requirements for local authorities providing home to school transport. The Welsh Government has also published [Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance](#) (June 2014).

Section 444 of the *Education Act 1996* creates the offence on the part of a parent of failing to secure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil. Section 20 of the *Learner Travel (Wales) Measure* amends section 444 to provide that a parent will have a defence to a prosecution if a local authority has failed to discharge, where required, their statutory duties under the Measure to make travel arrangements to facilitate the attendance of their child at school.

Statutory and discretionary provisions

As set out in the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure's letter to the Committee, local Authorities **must** provide free home to school transport if a pupil is living either at, or further than specific distances from the nearest, suitable school. The distances are 3 miles or further from a pupil's nearest, suitable secondary school and 2 miles for primary schools.

Local authorities also have **discretionary powers** to provide free home to school transport. Section 6 of the Measure gives local authorities the power to make any arrangement they think fit to facilitate the travel of learners to and from a place where they receive education or training. The power applies in relation to a learner living or studying in the authority's area.

However, due to budgetary pressures, a number of local authorities in Wales have reviewed their non-statutory free home to school transport provision in recent years.

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Between 2 June –28 July 2015, [Rhondda Cynon Taf consulted upon proposed changes to its home to school transport policy](#). On 8 September 2015, Rhondda Cynon Taf's Cabinet agreed to begin charging **for the discretionary elements** of their home to school transport service with effect from September 2016. However, on 16 March 2016, [this decision was overturned](#) by the Leader of the Council.

Statistical information

There are no centrally published statistics on the numbers of pupils who currently are entitled to free home to school transport or those who are not. In 2016/17, [the total budgeted outturn cost of home to school transport](#) by local authorities in Wales was £101,910,000.

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

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref KS/00397/17

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14 February 2017

Dear *Mike,*

Thank you for your letter of 1 February regarding the petition from Rachel Griffiths about free school transport for all children in Wales. I am replying in view of my portfolio responsibilities.

Children receiving primary education at the categories of educational establishment set out in section 3 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 are entitled to free home to school transport if they live 2 miles or further from the nearest suitable school. Secondary learners are also entitled to free home to school transport if they meet the specific eligibility criteria: that they live 3 miles or further from the nearest suitable school or, that the walked route to school is unsafe (even if the learner lives below the statutory distance criteria between home and school).

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 sets out the legislative framework governing the provision of home to school transport in Wales. Local authorities are responsible for deciding which school is the nearest suitable school having considered a range of specific criteria, such as age, ability, aptitude, including any learning difficulties. Funding is provided to local authorities through the Revenue Support Grant however it is the responsibility of the local authority to decide how much funding is allocated to each service area, and therein to decide how much funding they allocate for transport services.

Yours ever,
Ken

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure

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

Agenda Item 2.3

P-05-747 TB Testing of Cattle

This petition was submitted by Nigel Bowyer, having collected 309 signatures.

Text of the Petition

We, the undersigned, object to the proposal by the Welsh Assembly, to reduce the interval for routine TB testing of cattle in designated areas of Wales from 12 months to 6 months.

Action petitioned for: withdrawal of this proposal, and maintain the status quo.

Assembly Constituency and Region.

- Monmouth
- South Wales East

Bovine TB Testing

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 21 Mawrth 2017

Petitions Committee | 21 March 2017

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-747

Petition title: Bovine TB Testing

Text of petition: We, the undersigned, object to the proposal by the Welsh Assembly, to reduce the interval for routine TB testing of cattle in designated areas of Wales from 12 months to 6 months. Action petitioned for: withdrawal of this proposal, and maintain the status quo.

Background

Bovine TB (bovine tuberculosis) is an infectious and chronic disease caused by *Mycobacterium bovis* and usually affects the lungs and lymph nodes of cattle. In most cases infected cattle are able to transmit the disease before they show signs of being unwell, which may be many months after they are infected. Controlling TB therefore depends on detecting and eliminating infected cattle as early as possible.

The [Welsh Government's TB Dashboard \(PDF 1.2MB\)](#) reports the following figures for Wales for Quarter 3 of 2016:

- 95.3% of Welsh herds were TB free;
- 11, 675 "live herds" in Wales;
- 136 new incidents of TB;
- 205 TB incidents closed;
- 547 open TB incidents (69 fewer than in the previous quarter); and
- 1,894 disclosed animals testing positive to the tuberculin skin test ("reactors").

There was a peak in new herd incidences in 2008–9 with a general downward trend since then. The number of cattle slaughtered has also declined since 2009, but has been increasing since 2013. The [latest statistics for Wales](#) show that in the 12 months to November 2016 9,954 cattle were slaughtered as a result of the disease (compared to 7,658 in the 12 months to November 2015), while 689 herds suffered from a new breakdown (compared to 852 to November 2015).

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs [in a written statement](#) (16 January 2016) attributed the rise in the number of cattle slaughtered because of bovine TB as being due to the increased use of the gamma–interferon blood tests. This gamma test is used to complement the other main cattle screening test – the skin test. The gamma test has a high level of sensitivity and is designed to improve detection and elimination. The Cabinet Secretary stated “t is my aim to keep the number of cattle slaughtered because of TB to the minimum...We will continue to use the gamma test strategically where we can make the best use of it to complement our other controls”.

Welsh Government Consultation

The Welsh Government has recently consulted on '[A Refreshed TB Eradication Programme](#)'. The consultation ran from 18 October 2016 to 10 January 2017. Amongst a suite of proposals, the Welsh Government set out its new regionalised approach to tackling bovine TB. In the consultation the Welsh Government set out that a regional approach would allow it to:

- Apply different controls in different areas depending on the disease situation and risk in that area; and
- Set realistic targets by which each area can progress towards achieving Officially TB Free (OTF) status.

The consultation document stated that Wales can be divided into three broad TB incidence categories; low, intermediate and high (see figure 1 below taken from the consultation document). The criteria for each area are:

- Low TB Area: The area where less than 0.2% of herds have had a TB incident in a year;
- Intermediate TB Area: The areas where less than 5% but more than 0.2% of herds have had a TB incident in a year; and
- High TB Area: The areas where more than 5% of herds have had a TB incident in a year.

Wales TB Regionalisation

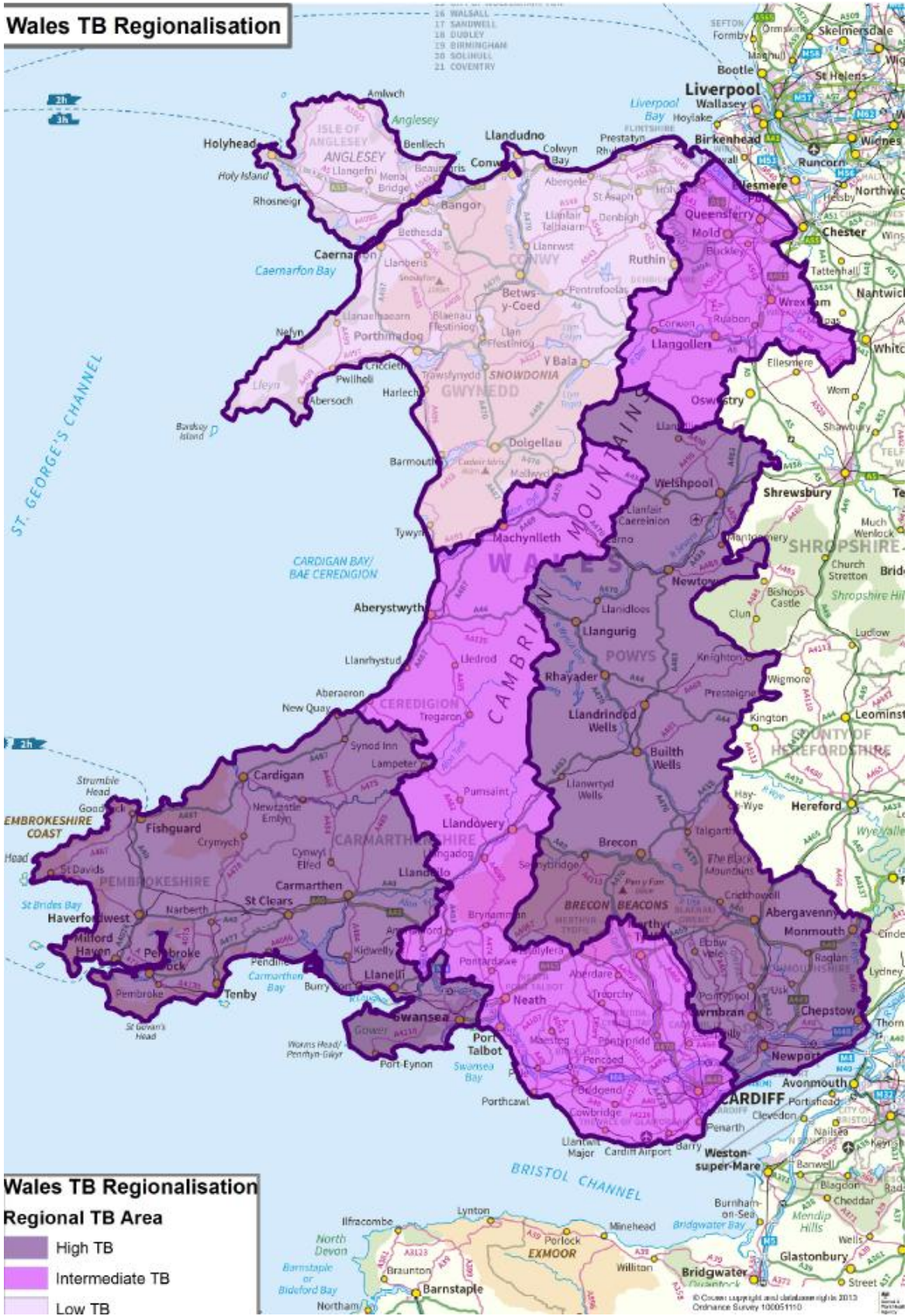


Figure 1: Welsh Government proposed regional TB areas
 Source: Welsh Government Consultation on A Refreshed TB Eradication Programme

In evidence to the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 14 December 2016, the Cabinet Secretary stated that the regionalisation concept was not being consulted upon as it is an evidence-based approach.

In relation to **cattle measures**, the consultation states that these are aimed at limiting and mitigating against the spread of infection between cattle. The proposed surveillance and control measures, e.g. movement testing and restrictions, can be seen in the table below that summarises all proposed action in each of the three TB areas.

	Low TB Area	Intermediate TB Area(s)	High TB Area(s)
Surveillance testing	Annual (high risk herds- 6 monthly)	Annual (high risk herds- 6 monthly)	Six monthly
Pre-Movement Testing (PrMT)	No	Yes	Yes
Post-Movement Testing (PoMT)	Yes	Yes	No
Mandatory Interferon Gamma Testing (IFN-y)	New breakdowns	New breakdowns	Chronic breakdowns
Standard Inconclusive Reactor (IRs) (in OTFW¹)	Re-tested using IFN-y, clear tested animals restricted to their herd	Re-tested using IFN-y, clear tested animals restricted to their herd	Slaughtered as reactors
Severe IRs (in OTFW)	2 x IRs slaughtered as reactors	2 x IRs slaughtered as reactors	2 x IRs slaughtered as reactors, clear tested restricted to their herd
Breakdown management	No change	No change	Clearing test not to be used as PrMT

¹ Officially TB Free Withdrawn

Biosecurity Improvement Notices	No change	No change	OTFW breakdowns
Approved Finishing Unit (AFUs)	Not permitted	Indoor only	Indoor only
Exempt Finishing Unit (EFUs)	Indoor only or not permitted	Indoor only	Indoor only
Cymorth TB (Support for affected farmers)	Breakdown farms (one off visit for all)	Breakdown farms	All farms
Badgers	Monitor the level of infection	Encourage vaccination (when available)	Explore and develop ways to break the transmission cycle between cattle and badgers where it can be demonstrated badgers are contributing to the problem in chronic herd breakdowns.

Figure 2: Welsh Government proposals for regional approach

Source: Annex B of the Welsh Government TB consultation document

The frequency of testing proposed in the consultation varies depending on whether it is a low, intermediate or high TB area. For low and intermediate areas the consultation proposes annual surveillance testing (and for high risk herds, six monthly testing). For high TB areas surveillance testing will be on a six monthly basis. The consultation sets out that this proposed approach is based on risk and the epidemiological evidence of the disease situation in each area.

Welsh Government action

The *Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2010 (as amended)*, made under the [Animal Health Act 1981](#), confers powers relating to the prevention of the spread of bovine TB in cattle, including provision for testing and movement of animals.

In her letter to the Chair of the Petitions Committee, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs set out the rationale for the proposed new approach to TB testing in certain parts of Wales:

In areas of high TB incidence and in herds which are of higher risk of becoming infected, it is of paramount importance to get a step ahead of the disease, find it quickly and stop it spreading, both within the herd and to other herds. **A stringent and robust testing regime is, therefore, an essential component of an eradication programme.** That is why I felt it was necessary to consult on an **enhanced routine testing regime in those herds which are at greatest risk of having a TB breakdown.**

The Welsh Government is yet to publish its summary of consultation responses, or a new TB eradication strategy. The Cabinet Secretary says that she will be making a statement on the refreshed TB eradication programme in **early May**, having carefully considered the consultation responses.

National Assembly for Wales action

The Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee has recently undertaken an inquiry into Bovine TB, holding [evidence sessions](#) in November and December 2016, and is due to report in the Summer Term. In her [evidence to the Committee](#), Dr Malla Hovi from the UK Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) set out that in 2015 it changed its approach to testing in its Low Risk, High Risk and Edge Areas, outlining that different areas have different testing regimes:

We introduced successfully at the beginning of 2015 six-monthly testing in some of the high-risk parts of the edge, and we've seen very beneficial impacts of that six-monthly testing.

...in low-risk areas we're only doing four-yearly routine surveillance testing, exactly like Scotland did before they went official TB free [...] Two independent universities modelled the testing regime or the surveillance regime, and they came to a conclusion, both independently, that there was no disease control benefit from extending the annual testing across low-risk areas.

There was a [Plenary debate on Bovine TB](#) on 28th October 2016. The debate called on the Welsh Government:

...to take decisive action to tackle bovine TB by committing to use the most effective measures to control and eradicate bovine TB and **ensuring that testing and movement restrictions are proportionate to the disease status of an area.**

In response to the debate, the Cabinet Secretary attributed the reduction in TB breakdowns to, amongst other aspects, better targeting of testing:

I support the motion proposed today, and believe the only way to tackle this issue is to use a combination of the most appropriate and effective measures, proportionate the different risk areas in Wales. All measures applied must be supported by firm evidence and veterinary risk assessment, focusing on all routes of transmission, not just transmission from wildlife reservoirs, which seems to receive all the attention.

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

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-747
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00349/17

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23 February 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 14 February regarding a petition opposing the proposal to implement a 6 monthly TB testing policy for cattle herds in certain parts of Wales.

A consultation on a refreshed TB Eradication Programme closed on 10 January. The consultation sought views on a number of proposals, including the measures to be deployed as part of a regional approach to TB eradication in Wales. One proposed measure was the change from annual herd testing to six monthly testing for all herds in High TB Areas, areas defined according to TB incidence. Another proposal was to six monthly test high risk herds (as identified by set criteria) in Low and Intermediate TB Areas.

In areas of high TB incidence and in herds which are of higher risk of becoming infected, it is of paramount importance to get a step ahead of the disease, find it quickly and stop it spreading, both within the herd and to other herds. A stringent and robust testing regime is, therefore, an essential component of an eradication programme. This is why I felt it was necessary to consult on an enhanced routine testing regime in those herds which are at greatest risk of having a TB breakdown.

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

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

A substantial number of representations were received in response to the consultation and I will carefully be considering these responses before making further decisions on the way forward. I will be making a statement on the refreshed TB eradication Programme in early May.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

Agenda Item 3.1

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



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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

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

Mike Hedges AM
Chair
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF991 NA

Ein cyf / Our ref: GD/FfJ/CR/2893/625

Eich cyf / Your ref:

☎: 01745 586384

Gofynnwch am / Ask for:

Dyddiad / Date: 9th February 2017

Dear Mr Hedges

Re: P-04-479 Tywyn Hospital X-ray & Minor Injuries Petition

Thank you for your letter dated 1 February 2017 requesting a response to the latest comments from the petitioner and the latest position in relation to access to minor injuries services in the Tywyn area, including outside of the opening hours of Tywyn Hospital. I apologise that there has been no response from the Health Board to this question put by the Petition Committee in 2015. I hope that this letter provides the clarity you are seeking.

Brief Background

The drive behind the changes to community services proposed by the Health Care in North Wales is Changing strategy (2012), was the aim to provide consistent and sustainable healthcare services with the same opening times within 40 minutes' drive for as many people as possible in North Wales.

The strategy designated ten hospitals as "hubs" in local areas, where a broad range of services could be delivered consistently and safely. Using these hospitals as the "hubs" means that services such as X-ray and Minor Injuries are available within 40 minutes' drive for nearly all of the population in North Wales. In North West Wales minor injuries services are provided at each of the "hubs" seven days a week (8am to 8pm currently) and X-ray services are available five days per week Monday to Friday.

With regard to the community of Tywyn, the nearest hub is Dolgellau and Barmouth Hospital, which is a 19 mile journey taking 31 minutes. It was agreed that, in addition to the hub arrangement being in place, Tywyn MIU would stay open for a reduced period in recognition of the rurality of the area. The opening period would be increased at peak seasonal times. Both of these factors reflected the low level of use of the MIU. The Tywyn Minor Injury Unit currently sees on average 3 to 4 patients per day.

In terms of providing a response to the Petition Committee's question of how BCUHB has addressed the CHC's recommendation of providing the population of Tywyn with a strategy for accessing alternative Minor Injuries Services outside the opening hours of Tywyn Memorial Hospital, this is outlined below:

Tywyn Area – Access to Minor Injury Services



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- The Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) in Tywyn Hospital is open 7 days per week from April to September 10am to 6pm and 5 days per week from October to March.
- The Health Board also has a LES (Local Enhanced Service) in place with the Tywyn GP Practice for the provision of minor injury services (five days per week).
- Dolgellau Hospital MIU (nearest hospital hub is 31 minutes away) is open 7 days per week from 8am to 8pm. The MIU opening hours will be extended from 1st April 2017 in Dolgellau Hospital initially until 10pm and within a couple of months until midnight 7 days per week on a permanent basis. There is a telehealth link to ED in the Dolgellau MIU for specialist doctor opinion, as and when required.
- Outside of Tywyn MIU's opening hours, there is local access to MIU services in Dolgellau Hospital until 8pm 7 days per week and from 1st April 2017 until 10pm and subsequently until midnight seven days per week.
- Outside of Dolgellau MIU's opening hours i.e. between 8pm and 8am currently (and between midnight and 8am in due course), people in Tywyn and across North Wales wishing to access alternative Minor Injuries Services have the following choices:
 - Self care or review / follow-up with GP / MIU following day
 - Telephone NHS Direct for advice
 - Present at the nearest Emergency Department
- Those in need of a minor illness service out of hours of course should contact GP Out of Hours – nearest OOH Doctor is located in Dolgellau Hospital.

In terms of communicating the routes of access to local minor injuries services in the Tywyn area, the Health Board will publicise the above in Tywyn Medical Centre and within Tywyn Hospital and MIU.

The Health Board is continuing to work closely with GP Out of Hours services, Welsh Ambulance Service and Community Nursing services to ensure there is an appropriate, integrated community response available at all times.

I trust that this covers the issues raised in your letter by the petitioner.

Yours sincerely

Gary Doherty
Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive

Kayleigh Driscoll
Petition's Committee Deputy Clerk
Chamber and Committee Services Wales
National Assembly for Wales

Miss Jennifer Windsor
South Meirionnydd Older People's Forum
Sunnyside, Corbett Avenue, LL36 0DF,
Tywyn, Gwynedd.
14th March 2017

Re Petition P04-479 Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray and Minor Injuries Unit Petition.

Dear Kayleigh,

Thank you for sending to me a copy of the correspondence which you received from Gary Doherty, Chief Executive, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

We feel that the correspondence has provided comprehensive information regarding the drive behind the changes that were proposed to the provision of Health Care in North Wales during 2012. In terms of providing a response to the Petition Committee's question of how the Health Board have addressed the CHC's recommendation of providing the Population of Tywyn with a strategy for accessing alternative Minor Injuries Services outside the opening hours of Tywyn Memorial Hospital, we are pleased to say that we are satisfied that this question has been answered in the outline of Access to Services which has been provided by the Health Board in this correspondence. We are pleased to see that the opening hours of the Minor Injuries Unit are defined and that there is an increase of availability of the Service during the peak season when it is usual to expect a rather large increase in the local population.

We are pleased to note that the Health Board has a (Local Enhanced Service) in place with the GP's Practice for the provision of Minor Injuries Service (five days per week)

We are pleased to be notified that the nearest Hospital Hub which provides a Minor Injuries Service outside the opening hours of Tywyn Hospital will have its opening hours extended on a permanent basis.

We are extremely pleased and very grateful that the Health Board will now communicate the routes of access to Minor Injuries Services to the population through publicising in Tywyn Medical Centre and within Tywyn Hospital and the Minor Injury Unit as it has long been an issue of concern locally. We would like to politely request a notification when the publications are in place.

We would like to extend our grateful thanks and appreciation to the Petition's Committee for the work that it has undertaken, on our behalf, in order to receive this considered response from Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board.

We consider that we are very fortunate that Tywyn Memorial Hospital has been regenerated to the extent that it has been and that the Community has been able to retain the X-ray Unit and the Minor Injuries as part of its consistent and sustainable Health Care Services.

Yours Sincerely, Miss Jennifer Windsor (Lead Petitioner)
South Meirionnydd Older People's Forum.

Agenda Item 3.2

P-05-697 45000 Reasons Wales Needs a Dementia Strategy

This petition was submitted by the Alzheimer's Society, having collected 5,861 signatures on an alternative e-petitions website.

Text of the Petition

We call on the Welsh Government to commit to a dementia strategy that improves the lives of people living with dementia in Wales.

There are currently 45,000 people estimated to be living with dementia in Wales, less than 50% of whom have received a formal diagnosis. Receiving a diagnosis of dementia empowers people to make decisions about the care and support they receive; it opens the door to accessing services and, where necessary, medication.

However, even those who have received a diagnosis have most likely not received the information and support that they need in order to live well with dementia. 1 in 10 people with dementia in Wales did not receive any support at all in the first year after their diagnosis, leaving them to deal with their diagnosis alone.

People living with dementia in Wales are less likely to receive a diagnosis, and are less likely to have access to post-diagnosis support than those living in the rest of the UK. This has to change.

We want the Welsh Government to develop a dementia strategy for Wales, one that demonstrates a commitment to improving diagnosis rates, and ensures the access to local services and the quality of care that people living with dementia deserve.

**P-05-697 45000 Reasons Wales Needs a Dementia Strategy –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 08.03.17**

“We are grateful to the Committee for accepting and discussing the petition and for examining the issues it raised. As a result of the petition, the Welsh Government is now working with Alzheimer’s Society Cymru and with people in Wales affected by dementia to develop a dementia strategy. We are content for the petition to be closed, given that its main objective is now being met, and we would like to place on record our thanks to the Committee for their assistance.”

Agenda Item 3.3

P-05-732 Unacceptable Waiting Times for NHS patients in A & E Wreccsam/Wrexham Maelor Hospital.

This petition was submitted by Charles Dodman, which collected 14 signatures.

Text of the Petition

I am petitioning the Welsh Assembly to debate and discuss and implement measures to resolve unacceptable waiting times for the Welsh people at A & E Wreccsam/Wrexham Maelor Hospital. Welsh people look undermined and demoralised by this unacceptable situation.

Assembly Constituency and Region.

- Wrexham
- North Wales



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LL17 0JG

Mike Hedges AM
Chair
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF991 NA

Ein cyf / Our ref: GD/NL/2894/649

Eich cyf / Your ref:

☎: 01745 448788 ext 6364

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Renné Evans

E-bost / Email: Renné.Evans@wales.nhs.uk

Dyddiad / Date: 22nd February 2017

Dear Mr Hedges,

**Re: P-05-732 Unacceptable Waiting Times for NHS patients in A&E
Wrecsam/Wrexham Maelor Hospital**

Thank you for your letter of the 1st February 2017 regarding the Waiting times in the A&E department at Wrexham Maelor Hospital. The Health Board is very aware that, in line with all other Emergency departments in Wales, the waiting times at Wrexham are unacceptably below the 95% target for patients waiting more than 4 hours in the Emergency Department (ED) and we share your concerns.

With reference to the performance in Wrexham in particular, whilst still well below where we would like the performance to be, there has been a steady and continued improvement in the last 6 months. It is worth noting that the performance in January 2017 saw a 10% improvement on the performance for the same month in 2016. However, improvements in the urgent care performance cannot be achieved solely by focusing on the ED itself; any improvements have to be part of the whole Health and Social Care System and we will only succeed by working closely and in partnership with our Community and Local Authority Partners.

A number of factors are contributing to the under achievement of the 95% target in Wrexham, including: challenges with medical and nursing staffing; the acuity of patients (i.e. the number of patients with serious conditions); and the challenges with discharging patients from Hospital in a timely manner (whether due to constraints in community, care home beds or Home Care support available in the Wrexham and Flintshire areas.

The Hospital has been working with colleagues in Community Services and Local Authorities across the region to make the improvements that have been seen and continue to make ongoing improvements. Some of the actions that have been taken and are in planning are:

- Successful recruitment in 2016 to 4 of the 6 Senior Doctor vacancies with further appointments expected to be made in the next 3 months.



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- Successful recruitment in 2016 to the vacant Junior Doctor posts with 2 additional appointments made to temporarily add to the Workforce.
- Improving position in the number of Nurse vacancies filled.
- Development of a Rapid Assessment Unit with the recruitment of an additional Acute Physician (this unit focuses on avoidance of up to 5 admissions a day and reduces attendance of patients with some conditions to ED.
- Weekly full review with Local Authority and Community Teams on patients who have delayed discharges. This has reduced the number of 'Delayed Transfer of Care' patients in both the Acute and Community Hospitals.
- Development of care pathways with Welsh Ambulance Service Trust and Community colleagues to avoid patients being admitted to hospital eg admissions for blocked catheters and patients who have had a fall.
- Development of a communications hub with community colleagues and WAST to support the redirection of G.P. admissions where appropriate as an alternative to admission to Hospital.
- Increase in the District Nursing Service to provide a 24 hour Service and enable more patients to be cared for at home where appropriate.

Whilst we acknowledge that there is much to do, the signs of improvement are encouraging and the work done by the clinical teams, in both the hospital and wider health and social care system, is having a positive effect. The Health Board is committed to maintaining the strong focus on effective care for patients and their families, and we will continue to strive with Local Authority colleagues to further improve performance in the Wrexham Maelor hospital as well as the other sites at Ysbyty Glan Clywd and Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Yours sincerely

Gary Doherty
Prif Weithredwr
Chief Executive

Cc: Nesta Lloyd-Jones, The Welsh NHS Confederation

Agenda Item 3.4

P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time

Petition Wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to review the guidance to Local Authorities on head teachers being able to authorise absence for family holidays during term time. Many families from poor backgrounds can only afford to go on holiday during term time, as holidays are about 60% more expensive during the holiday period. Also, many families where parents work are unable to take time off during the school holidays. Holidays can be extremely educational, giving the children awareness of the world in which we live.

Petition raised by: Bethany Walpole-Wroe

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 1008 – An associated e-petition has collected over 10,300 signatures.

**P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time -
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking Team, 09.03.17**

Dear Kathryn,

Thank you for contacting me about this matter, I would like to thank the petitions committee for their help and support with this.

Unfortunately I have to tell you that there is still a problem, we are being contacted by parents that are being told that head teachers no longer have the right to allow holidays in term time, and that the 'H' code is still being withheld and does not appear on leave forms, this means that the head teacher only has the code for 'unauthorised leave' to put down on their records. Parents are also being told that schools are required to inform the education authority that unauthorised leave was taken, which is very intimidating and unpleasant.

I have attached a copy of a form that is currently being given to parents that ask for leave in the Rhondda Cynon Taff area, I apologise for the poor quality of the picture but the words can be made out quite easily. Sadly I have to come to the conclusion that there is an ongoing problem, with the education authorities holding parents, children, the law and the Welsh Assembly in contempt.

Best wishes Beth

Agenda Item 3.5

P-04-628 Access to BSL for All

Petition wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language to improve the quality of life for Deaf people of all ages.

Improve Access for families to learn BSL: When a child is diagnosed as being Deaf/hard of hearing parents should be offered free/subsidised BSL lessons (BSL level one costs approximately £300 per person). By using speech alone, Deaf children struggle/fail to develop communication skills missing important milestones. Learning other languages through BSL (English/Welsh) will improve the child's understanding and comprehension.

Introduce BSL on the National Curriculum: Deaf Children and young people who are taught BSL at an early age will have better access to their education and an improved wellbeing. BSL should be available in schools and taught by qualified Deaf teachers, for all to learn as this would achieve better access for all in society. We believe that BSL should be offered as a language for all learners as a qualification. GCSE Welsh (and other modern languages) are not always offered to Deaf students: this also needs to be improved.

Improving access to Education in BSL for Deaf Children and Young People: currently they have limited access to Education in BSL, and often experience under qualified support. There is a massive gap in the education of Deaf children, as many are wrongly treated as having a Learning Disability. This has a negative impact on their development in life, reducing independence with poor education, resulting in under-employment. They need adequately qualified Communication Support Workers available in school.

Making Services and resources accessible in BSL for Deaf young people: enabling BSL users to access information in their preferred language via digital resources to services such as Education, Health care, Social Services and public transport, giving them equality to access as an equivalent to Welsh Language access.

Organisation: Deffo!

Lead petitioner: Cathie Robins-Talbot

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 502 online signatures. 660 paper signatures . total
=1162 signatures

Alun Davies AC/AM
Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-628
Ein cyf/Our ref ARD/05578/16

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

22 February 2017

Wne Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 21 December regarding the petition to improve access to education and services in British Sign Language (BSL).

I note the former Minister for Education and Skills, Huw Lewis, responded to this petition in March 2015 and also provided a further letter clarifying a number of points raised by DEFFO later that spring.

When taking on the role of Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language, I made it a priority to meet with organisations who support vulnerable learners. I was pleased to meet with DEFFO in September 2016 to hear first hand some of the issues hearing impaired children and their families' experience. As I assured attendees at this meeting, the Welsh Government is committed to creating an inclusive education system for all learners, regardless of their needs and background, to ensure all learners, including those with special educational needs (SEN), are able to access a high standard of education and reach their full potential.

I recognise the importance of sign language to the deaf community. BSL has been recognised by Welsh Government as a language in its own right since January 2004 and since then we have supported training to increase the number of qualified interpreters in Wales.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400
Gohebiaeth.Alun.Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Alun.Davies@gov.wales

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

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

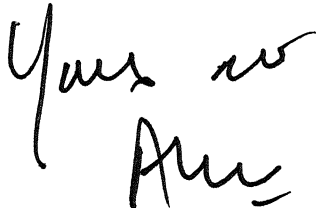
As with all educational provision, the responsibility to ensure BSL is available to a child whose needs have been identified as requiring such provision to enable them to access the curriculum rests with local authorities (LAs). Many LAs also provide training and make BSL courses available via adult learning centres. Many further education institutions also provide courses.

In response to a question in plenary on 17 January which called for supporting the creation of GCSE qualifications in British Sign Language (BSL) as a first language, the First Minister has agreed to raise the matter with Qualifications Wales. Although there is no requirement to teach BSL in schools, there are already a number of Level 1 and 2 Qualifications available for schools in Wales to deliver at Key Stage 4 and post 16, which are equivalent to GCSEs.

You will be aware that on 12 December 2016 I introduced to the National Assembly for Wales the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill. The Bill will deliver a new legislative system for supporting children and young people aged 0–25 who have additional learning needs (ALN). The new system will replace the existing legislation surrounding SEN and the assessment of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in post-16 education and training.

The proposed changes to the legislative structure are just one part of a much wider Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme (ALN-TP). The ALN-TP aims to transform expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with ALN. It is about transforming the whole system to ensure that all learners with ALN are supported to overcome barriers to learning and can achieve their full potential.

We have engaged with teachers of the deaf and are aware of pressure on LAs, including specialist teacher numbers. In partnership with the WLGA we are collecting data from Heads of Service on specialist workforce issues. This will provide us with the intelligence needed to understand the issues and actions required, including for bilingual specialist services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yours as Alun', written in a cursive style.

Alun Davies AC/AM

Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language



Deffo!
57a Neath Road,
Hafod
Swansea
SA1 2HW
01792 641786

The voice for Youth Deaf Youth in Wales

Date 13th March 2017

Mike Hedges AM
Chair- Petition Committee

Dear Mr Hedges

Deffo! Petition- Access to BSL for All

Further to the recent response from Alun Davies, the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language, please see our thoughts below:

We welcome his view on our petition and his comments on the items relating to the British Sign Language in Wales. We feel strongly that within Wales we have come a long way since BSL was recognised by the Welsh Government 13 years ago in 2004. We now want to move forward with BSL in Education, there is still a long way to go.

We are delighted to learn that the plenary has discussed the GCSE qualification in BSL and that it would be considered, however this does not resolve our major concern. It is vital for families of Deaf Children of all ages to access BSL from early years in schools and ultimately to be able to progress to a GCSE qualification in BSL. We believe that BSL should be compulsory in mainstream education and that Local Authorities should provide this to complement the SEN statement for each child. Many families experience barriers in gaining full access to education in their sign language for their child. We want to see the current provision strengthened to maximise the support available, without restricting hours of support - for example, 2 hours' speech therapy, 5 hours with communication supports workers, 3 hours with Teacher for the Deaf.

We welcome the changes proposed in the ALN consultation for the education of children with special needs (additional learning needs), however there is nothing in that consultation that addresses our community's needs and it does not specifically outline the concerns raised in our petition, that we want children across all ages to have opportunity to learn BSL in schools. Many families are still fighting their Local Authority to secure access to the limited availability of support available for BSL education. We were looking forward to ensuring that Deaf families are involved in this consultation but unfortunately this is now not happening and we are anxious to be involved in the consultation as recommended by the former petition committee before the successful report was launched which never happened.

Even though the Minister of Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language stated that the Welsh Government have recognised BSL since 2004 as a language in its own right, today, we still have no power to legislate for the language, as confirmed by petition committee member, Bethan Jenkins in requesting that the previous petition was referred to the Education Department for review.

We seek confirmation that the BSL will be accessible to all school age children and be put on the national curriculum. GCSE level will of course will complement comprehensive school learning, but we are also concerned about pre and primary education who must not be left

behind in the process. We want BSL to be put on the national curriculum for ALL ages to learn, (both Deaf and non-Deaf young people). Early learning will help Deaf Children to address confidence issues and the wider barriers they face to education. Deaf pupils are potentially isolated in mainstream settings and do not often have a natural 'peer 'group. This will also ensure better awareness for hearing peers and build cohesive school communities.

Further-more we seek to address the shortfall of BSL classes for families of Deaf children. English language provision is offered free of charge to people from other countries who wish to live in this country (rightly so) but we still do not offer the same courtesy to the families of Deaf Children who face significant barriers in communicating with their children. The medical profession still recommend that parents of Deaf children today should NOT sign with their children as they will not learn to speak. In various research, it has been proven that using sign language with babies/children not only helps with anxiety issues but also aids the language acquisition, and in turn improves their chance to fulfil their lives in society, as such the provision of accessible BSL within schools will contribute to the successful, cohesive and sustainable Wales to which we all aspire.

Yours sincerely,

Cathie Robins-Talbot
Deffo! Principal Petitioner

Agenda Item 3.6

P-05-727 Funding for the Education Workforce Council Registration (EWC) Fee for Learning Support Workers in Schools.

This petition was submitted by UNISON Cymru Wales, which is collected 752 signatures.

Text of the Petition

Since April 2016, Learning Support Workers in schools and colleges in Wales have been required to register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) – the same body that regulates Teachers and Further Education Lecturers.

This year the actual fee for Learning Support Workers to register was £15. It was £45 for teaching and lecturing staff. The fee from April 2017 is not yet clear. UNISON lobbying secured an agreement from 12 Local Authorities to pay, in whole or in part, the 2016 fee on behalf of Learning Support Workers in Schools – therefore recognising that these workers are amongst the lowest paid in the public sector, largely due to their term time worker status.

The remit of the EWC has so far been concerned with Teachers and Lecturers who are on significantly better wages than Learning Support Workers.

Learning Support Workers are predominantly women, the vast majority are paid term time only, unlike teachers and lecturers; their contracts are more likely to be fixed term and at the mercy of school budget cuts. Many work more than one job already.

Those Local Authorities who committed to pay the fee last year should be acknowledged. But, at a time of ever squeezed budgets, there are no guarantees for April 2017. Additional money must be ring fenced in the Local Government settlement to ensure that Learning Support Workers are not expected to bear the burden of the cost of registration next April.

For these reasons we the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ring fence monies in the Local Government settlement to fund the EWC fee for Learning Support Workers in Schools in April 2017

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Cardiff Central
- South Wales Central

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05- 727
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00364/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

7 March 2017

Dear Mike

P-05-727 Funding for the Education Workforce Council Registration Fee for Learning Support Workers

Thank you for your letter dated 27 February, regarding concerns and questions raised by Unison in their recent correspondence to your Committee.

Can I begin by stating that I do firmly believe that the registration of learning support workers will ensure they are part of a credible and valued workforce. Registration will also raise the status and recognition of these practitioners and that of youth workers and work based learning practitioners (from April 2017).

Another important factor which appears to have been missed is that registration of learning support workers and the wider workforce provides reassurance to parents, learners, employers and the general public that staff, are deemed suitable for registration. I am sure all members of the Petitions Committee will agree that is a very important element of registration.

The development of professional standards for those who directly support teaching and learning is underway. A workshop was held on 13 February, led by Professor Mick Waters, which was well attended by support staff practitioners and by representatives of UNISON. A further workshop is scheduled for 13 March to maintain momentum. It is envisaged this work will result in professional standards that reflect the valuable role learning support staff play in securing high quality teaching and learning. This will also provide an opportunity to review the Higher Level Teaching Assistant Standards which have been in place, with minor amendment, since 2005 and so better support career progression for this sector of the workforce.

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

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

In addition, the development of the Professional Learning Passport will also be beneficial to all Education Workforce Council (EWC) registrants; providing practitioners with a tool to empower them to reflect and identify their own professional learning needs and record this in one place, in continuing to develop and deepen their practice at every stage of their career. This will be to the benefit of our learners, practitioners and the wider workforce.

The Education Workforce Council is responsible for and sets its own Code of Conduct and Practice for all registrants. The Education (Wales) Act 2014 states that the EWC will make such revisions to Code of Conduct and Practice when they consider appropriate within 3 years of each date of its publication, and when a new category of registration is added. UNISON should be aware of the fact that the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice was developed by the EWC Independent Reference Group, which included representatives of the learning support sector. A draft code of conduct was also presented to the Union Partnership Group for comment, for which Jess Turner is a member.

Turning to the fee level, I am baffled by the UNISON statement that the fee level for learning support workers has already increased, as this is simply not the case. Their fee level contribution from April 2017 will remain at the same level as it was set in April 2016, when their registration requirement was first put in place. This is something I made clear during the debate on the 2017 Fees Regulations on 31st January.

In setting the fee models for the 'Registration fees for the education workforce in Wales 2017' consultation, there was clear recognition that during these times of austerity and on-going pay freezes in the public sector, the Welsh Government had a duty to protect the education workforce from unnecessarily high fee levels or increases.

The fee models proposed were developed with three key principles in mind; sustainability, proportionality and cost effectiveness. Creating a model with differentiated fees based on salary scales was considered in the development of the Education (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act). However, further analysis suggested that this method would be extremely complex to administer, and consequently more costly. Higher administration costs would lead to higher fees for all registrants.

It is for these reasons the General Teaching Council for Wales did not have a differential system for teachers, despite there being some 5000 supply teachers on the register who do not work full time; and why the Welsh Government does not intend to differentiate between those working full and part time, as is the case with the regulatory bodies in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Eire, and the Care Council for Wales - the only other regulatory body specific to Wales.

However, the Government has endeavoured to ensure that fees associated with registration are fair and comparable to practitioners' potential earnings within their categories of registration (as set out in Schedule 2 of the Act).

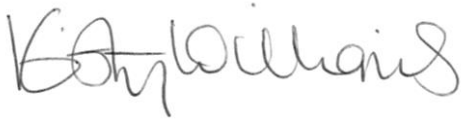
Furthermore, the transfer of £1million from the Revenue Support Grant to support the registration subsidy for all practitioners will not be in place until April 2017, therefore concerns over its removal are slightly premature. I can, however, assure you that there are no plans to take such action.

The requirement for registration with the EWC is the same as those within any other regulatory body, such as the General Medical Council; Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Health and Care Professionals Council. Professionals in these sectors are also required to fund their own registration as a requirement of employment, with fees averaging between £80-120 per year. By comparison, registration with the EWC is considerably lower.

Finally, it is a matter for each individual local authority to determine whether the cost of registration is met by them as the employer.

I trust you find this response satisfactory.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

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BY EMAIL ONLY

14 March 2017

Dear Mike,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter you received from the Cabinet Secretary for Education dated 7 March 2017.

Firstly I would like to highlight that UNISON has never been opposed to the registration of school support staff, so long as it is meaningful and of value. However, whilst the Cabinet Secretary for Education firmly believes that the registration of learning support workers will address a number of issues around status and recognition, we have not seen any evidence to support this to date, nor have we been privy to any forthcoming plans to address the issues we have raised.

Furthermore, it is understandable that the Cabinet Secretary is concerned with the implications of registration in its' broadest sense. For UNISON, however, the constituency we represent is the schools workforce and so that is where our focus rests. As we have previously emphasised, school support staff continue to struggle to get their collective voice recognised within a sector that has always prioritised teaching staff. It is our duty as the trade union for school support staff to ensure school support staff are properly represented and acknowledged for the important role they play in education in Wales.

With a view to professional standards for school support staff, UNISON has held a long-term commitment to support the development of such standards. In fact, UNISON has been involved in a number of working groups that have been initiated to address this issue, only for those groups to then stop with no outcome. Clearly this is a frustration for those who have been involved in those discussions, but more importantly is a disappointment for school support staff. UNISON has been engaged in the working groups the Cabinet Secretary refers to and we have delivered a consistent message on this matter. In addition, it must be noted that, with the broad categories of school support staff registered, the development of professional standards is not a straightforward task. For example, there are hundreds of different descriptors for the same role across Wales. UNISON will continue to engage in this process to help rectify this issue, and we sincerely hope and look forward to an outcome that will address some of the difficulties school support staff experience across Wales.

UNISON continues to promote the Professional Learning Passport. We are directly and constructively involved in the running of workshops across Wales. However, until professional standards are developed and consistency is reached, the PLP will not have the same meaning as it does for the teaching profession. This is not the fault of the EWC who have developed the PLP tool.

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In relation to the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice, UNISON took issue at the time with the formation of the EWC Independent Reference Group as it was not a group that allowed the active participation of trade unions. The code was put out for comments at union partnership group, but not for consultation. Problems that were raised at the time have never been addressed. Furthermore, mere attendance at a meeting does not signify agreement.

UNISON is clear the fee level for school support staff increased from £45 to £46 per year and the subsidy increased accordingly on this occasion. The subsidy and the fee are separate matters, and there is no guarantee the subsidy will continue in the long term. The Cabinet Secretary is correct in saying the fee contribution has not increased, but the fee rate has. Additionally, the introduction of the fee has left school support staff financially worse off – irrespective of the amount they are expected to contribute to the overall fee.

With regard to the fee models, UNISON is in agreement with the principles as outlined, but we would also argue that a fourth principle around value for money should be included. If this were the case, then it would become clear very quickly that school support staff do not currently experience value for money from registering when compared to other members of the schools workforce.

It is disappointing that the Welsh Government has opted not to differentiate between full and part-time workers registering with the EWC. Nearly all school support workers in Wales work part-time as a result of term-time only arrangements. For the majority of school support staff, this is not a choice but is a result of inherent unfavourable treatment which has become embedded in the culture across the education sector. Until this matter is addressed and school support staff are treated professionally and in the manner they deserve, UNISON will continue to argue that they should not be expected to meet the costs of registration.

We also feel it is inappropriate and unhelpful to compare the fee level of school support staff with registrants of the General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and Health and Care Professionals Council. School support staff have no formal training, do not have automatic access to ongoing professional development, have no entry level requirements and do not have the earning potential of those professionals who can register with the aforementioned bodies.

As outlined above and in previous correspondence, UNISON is committed to and in favour of the registration of school support staff, but we have consistently argued that any registration must be meaningful. Unfortunately this is not currently the case and so we believe it is unreasonable for school support staff to have to meet the costs of registration.

I hope you will find this response useful.

Yours sincerely,

Jess Turner
UNISON Cymru/Wales schools lead

Agenda Item 3.7

P-05-701 Road Safety Improvements Along the A487 Trunk Road between Cardigan and Aberystwyth, to Include Passing Places

This petition was submitted by Maldwyn Lewis, having collected 93 signatures online and 750 paper signatures.

Text of the Petition

Following numerous incidents along the A487 Trunk Road particularly between Cardigan and Aberystwyth, I petition the Welsh Assembly to make improvements along this coastal road, including passing places at various locations, in order to alleviate the build up of traffic behind slower moving vehicles. I'm of the opinion that having strategically located passing places would reduce driver frustration and risk taking when attempting to overtake.

When this Fishguard to Holyhead Trunk road is closed due to an incident, the alternative diversion route is along minor roads which can be a nightmare especially when Heavy Goods Vehicles, buses and coaches meet each other in opposite directions.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Mid and West Wales
- Ceredigion

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-701
Ein cyf/Our ref KS/00729/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

2 March 2017

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 4 October 2016, that I received on 21 February regarding Petition P-05-701 Road Safety Improvements Along the A487 Trunk Road between Cardigan and Aberystwyth, to Include Passing Places.

We regularly review collision data to establish the need for road safety improvements. A part time speed limit is being put in place outside Ysgol Llanfarian. We are currently progressing with the installation of the sign infrastructure and the traffic order is likely to come into force early in the new financial year.

Following a recent meeting with Ceredigion County Council, my officials will be investigating further potential improvement measures at Llanfarian, Blaenplwyf to Llanddeiniol, Chancery and Nant Yr Arian on the A487 as well as at other locations around Aberystwyth. We will also be undertaking a further Speed Limit Review across Wales during the summer.

Our investigations surrounding congestion and safe overtaking opportunities on the trunk road network in Mid Wales are still in the early stages and several types of survey are required to establish which locations along the A487 route can be engineered with the minimum of environmental impact, within our financial resources and without prejudice to road safety.

I have passed the additional comments from the principal petitioner to my officials so they can be considered as part of our ongoing work.

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

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

I remain confident that subject to the availability of funding, the programme of improvements identified will go towards addressing some of the concerns expressed by the petitioners.

Yours ever,



Ken Skates AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure

Agenda Item 3.8

P-05-721 Penegoes Speed Limit Petition

This petition was submitted by Isabel Bottoms, Peter Bottoms and Sarah Holgate, having collected 298 paper signatures.

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales urge the Welsh Government to introduce a 30 miles per hour speed limit throughout the village of Penegoes (from the Penegoes village sign entering from Machynlleth, to the other side of the Maesperthi Caravan Park's Proposed new entrance) on the A489 road towards Newtown; and a 40 miles per hour speed limit from Machynlleth to Pengoes.

Assembly Constituency and Region:

Montgomeryshire

Mid and West Wales

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref KS/00403/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

28 February 2017

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your further letter of 1 February regarding Penegoes Speed Limit Petition P-05-721.

I passed the results from the petitioner's recent traffic monitoring scheme to my officials to be considered but they have been unable to correlate the data with our sources. We use the following data <http://www.dft.gov.uk/traffic-counts/cp.php?la=Powys#556>

Officials would like to discuss this matter further with the person who carried out the counts. Please can contact be made with transport official, Tim Barnes via email at

Yours ever,

Ken

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure

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

Agenda Item 3.9

P-05-734 Ban Letting Agent Fees to Tenants

This petition was submitted by Shelter Cymru, which collected 328 online signatures.

Text of the Petition

We, the undersigned, call on the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to end the unfair practice of charging letting agent fees to tenants.

Earlier this year Shelter Cymru campaign supporters mystery-shopped letting agents across Wales and found that more than half (55%) are not advertising fees on their websites as required by law. The study found that a tenant could pay between £39.99 and £480 for the same service depending which agent their landlord had chosen to go with.

The reality is that there is no such thing as consumer choice in tenants' fees, and a real risk that tenants and landlords are being double-charged for the same service. We believe that Wales should follow Scotland's example and ban fees to tenants. The private rented sector in Scotland is still going strong and three-quarters of Scottish agents say the ban has had no impact, or a positive impact, on their business.

Welsh letting agents are enjoying a business boom thanks to Rent Smart Wales which is encouraging smaller landlords to sign up with agents. However, extortionate letting fees are pushing tenants into debt and making it harder for local authorities to prevent homelessness. Please act now to give a fair deal to Wales' growing numbers.

Assembly constituency and Region.

- Swansea West
- South Wales West

Carl Sargeant AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-734
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00317/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

6 March 2017

Dear Mike

Petition: P-05-734 Ban Letting Agent Fees to Tenants

Thank you for your letter of 21 February enclosing the further comments you have received from Shelter Cymru, and seeking further information on when I intend to make a decision over whether legislation is required on the issue.

I am very concerned that fees charged by letting agents are placing a disproportionate burden on tenants. I hope to be able to announce shortly how we as a government propose to respond to this matter.

In the meantime, it is worth remembering that Rent Smart Wales already provides stronger controls over landlords and letting agents than elsewhere in the UK, and these powers should not be underestimated. If some of the fees referred to in Shelter Cymru's paper were charged by letting agents who had not published them, as required under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, then technically they were illegal fees. If a letting agent is successfully prosecuted for charging fees they have not published, this could have serious implications for their licence with Rent Smart Wales, and potentially their ability to continue operating as a letting agent in Wales.

Yours sincerely

Carl Sargeant AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children

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

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