

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1173
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/10901/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

petitions@senedd.wales

16 September 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 22 July concerning Petition P-06-1173 '*Give legal protection to designated Special Landscape Areas in Wales*' and offering the opportunity to present some views to the Committee on the issues that are raised in the petition.

Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are a long-standing planning policy mechanism, widely used by local planning authorities to provide for the conservation and enhancement of local landscapes. Whilst they are a non-statutory landscape designation (compared with a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) they are a policy mechanism available to local planning authorities to recognise landscape features, characteristics and qualities of local significance. SLAs have and continue to be seen by local planning authorities as a means of protecting sensitive landscapes in Local Development Plans and in developing an understanding and awareness of those features and characteristics that give a locality its sense of place.

The SLA designation process followed by local planning authorities is robust and evidence-based (Planning Policy Wales 11, para 6.3.12/13); planning authorities should state which landscape features, characteristics or qualities require extra protection and explain how the SLA policy or designation will achieve this protection. [LANDMAP](#) (a national landscape policy and decision making tool hosted and managed by Natural Resources Wales) and any associated landscape character assessments should be used to inform local landscape policies and to help identify or revise SLAs.

Planning Policy Wales 11 is unambiguous stating that "*SLAs are non statutory designations that define local areas of high landscape importance, which may be unique, exceptional or distinctive to the area. Planning authorities should apply these designations where there is good reason to believe that normal planning polices cannot provide the necessary protection.*"

Alongside the policy framework for SLAs as set in Planning Policy Wales we also have a wider, contextual policy framework in Future Wales.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.James@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.

Future Wales - the National Plan 2040 introduces at Policy 9 a safeguarding approach for the protection of habitats (amongst other objectives) to ensure that they are not unduly compromised by development. This top tier development plan policy sets out a strong policy steer to help ensure that areas of land that are potentially important for expanding or connecting ecological networks, adapting to climate change or other pressures, or which provide key ecological services are not compromised by development. The safeguarding policy operates at a landscape scale and areas may be safeguarded for a wide variety of reasons. These can include increasing the resilience or connectivity of certain habitat types, creating habitat, or for the provision of green infrastructure.

The safeguarding policy approach as set out in Future Wales can assist in the protection and restoration of landscape features and it can enable the planning system to take action which can complement wider approaches to the sustainable management of natural resources.

Whilst it is 'early days' for Future Wales policies to filter through the planning system, Welsh Government's policy aspirations are high and ambitious; the legal status of Future Wales means that local policies and decision making must be in conformity with Future Wales.

I trust that the above information will aid the Committee as you prepare for your consideration of the petition.

Yours sincerely,



Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change