



24th August 2022

Dear Mr Sargeant,

Welsh Parliament Petitions Committee Report August 22: Mark Allen's Law - Water safety and drowning prevention

I read with interest the aforementioned report and appreciate the short period of time given for such a process. However, I am concerned that the consulted contributors (three utility companies, two public bodies, one fire and rescue service, the Chair of Water Safety Wales (WSW) and the families of those who have lost loved ones to drowning in Wales) were not able to present a balanced view of the issue and the work that is being done to improve water safety and prevent drowning in Wales. I recognise that the outdoor sector is incredibly wide and diverse and therefore, reaching out beyond this sphere would have been time-consuming.

I am Chair of the Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation (member of WSW), Chair of Outdoor Alliance Wales, Secretariat to the Cross Party Group for the Outdoor Activity Sector in Wales and one of the Project Leads for AdventureSmartWales and AdventureSmart.UK (member of WSW) and am also a contracted advisor to Visit Wales on aspects of safety in the outdoors. As such, I would have hoped to have been aware of the consultation and that the wider outdoor sector in Wales might have been consulted, to ensure a balanced perspective on safety.

The report certainly highlights a number of the issues we all face when it comes to ensuring water spaces are safer places for those who visit and use them as well as making suggestions to help mitigate such issues. Studies relating to the communication of both water safety and safety in an outdoor context, commissioned by WSW and the Visitor Safety Group in 2021 (organisations referred to in your report), provide an in-depth insight into the issues faced, together with a contextualised suite of recommendations for a variety of situations. This current thinking may have been helpful in adding a wider outdoor sector context to the many issues and challenges faced.

The report recommendations are, understandably very specific to the petition presented to you and seem to reflect the information shared by those consulted. They do however have the potential to further highlight the disconnect from the wider outdoor sector perspective if acted upon in isolation. Whilst I have some additional insight relating to all of the recommendations, I would like to pass comment on Recommendation 6.

A public awareness safety campaign (AdventureSmartWales & AdventureSmart.UK) already exists with clear and consistent bilingual safety messages. Its mission is to develop a coordinated approach with its regional and national partners, through a range of innovative interventions to ensure key safety messages reach new audiences and stimulate positive behaviour change towards safe, responsible outdoor recreation.

AdventureSmartWales was launched in Wales in 2018 as a legacy to the Year of Adventure and was partly funded by Welsh Government. The ultimate aim of the campaign is to reduce the number of avoidable incidents that the rescue and emergency services deal with each year and to promote safe enjoyment of the outdoor. The campaign currently has 100+ partners who through its collaborative approach work with the agreed safety messaging and share it with their respective networks.

Whilst I appreciated that this process has now concluded, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of my comments in the hope that I can provide context. Many thanks for taking the time to read this letter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'P' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul Donovan

NB. The Cross Party Group for the Outdoor Activity Sector in Wales was established in June 2021 and has met quarterly to discuss many topical issues. Meeting #4 is due in September with a focus on outdoor education but I thought you might be interested in Meeting#5 which is in its early stages of being set up. It's focus will be safety in the outdoors and will be hosted by Plas Menai, Wales' National Outdoor Centre towards the end of this year.