

**P-06-1374 Bring Wales in line with England by allowing landowners 60 days tent and campervan camping a year, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 21.11.23**

Andrew Walton  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Thank you for the chance to respond to the letter from Julie James AS/MS, Minister for Climate Change.

You asked if the response addresses my questions, and the answer is no. In England a consultation was held in the Spring of this year to amend their permitted rights for camping to 60 days on a permanent basis. This was enacted in the Planning law in July of this year.

The Welsh Government held a consultation on the issue of permitted rights amendments 2 years ago now, and the consultation closed in February 2022. Almost 2 years on from the consultation closing and nothing further has happened. At the very least, rather than keep pushing the issue into the long grass by saying a date to look at this has not yet been scheduled, can you please commit today in this debate to a date by which you will hold a full debate on the matter. Also, while in your letter you refer to evidence received to the consultation, I note that at no point have the consultation results and any evidence been released. As part of today's proceedings can you please also commit to releasing, in full, the results of the consultation held around the element of permitted rights to run a pop-up campsite so that everyone can see the level of support and opposition to the change and what issues need to be overcome?

At the moment in Wales a landowner can create a pop-up camping site without any recourse to talk to neighbours or the local council so I can see how some sites may have arisen which are considered an issue to those living very near-by. But by moving to the same rules as have been enacted in England you can actually avoid some of these issues. For instance, under the English 60 day rule the land owner has to write to the council to notify them of the dates on which they will be operating. This helps with basics such as notifying the fire service in the event of an emergency but it also serves to give the council a list of the names and addresses of those operating under the permitted rights rules and therefore it is easier for the council or other authority to address any issues with the landowner directly. And of course laws around noise nuisance already exist and can be acted upon by the council if it were a problem.

Another advantage of following the England rules is that the sites which choose to operate for up to 60 days in England need to provide toilet facilities and full waste disposal facilities – in Wales this can help with the recycling rates – as a camp site we are very keen to reduce waste, reuse anything we can, and recycle everything.

I must add that most land-owners who use the permitted rights option, like myself, use a website such as Pitchup.com for bookings and these companies ensure that the campsite has full camping rules which include the need to have no noise between the hours of 11pm and 8am and to ensure that other rules around fires etc are included. As an aside we actually specify 10pm for all noise to stop on site, mainly because we live on the land as well and are closer to the camping than any of our neighbours – so from a selfish perspective we also want to be able to sleep in the summer with our windows open. I think you will find that many other pop-up campsites are in the same boat with their residence nearer to the camping than any neighbour would be. The other advantage of companies such as pitch-up.com is that they set up the listing on their site as a pop-up site so they know how many days a site is allowed to operate for in a calendar year, and once you reach that level you can not take any more bookings through them. If you allowed 60 days per year of permitted rights camping more small sites would turn to using these booking services as they would have increased revenue to pay the commission and more dates available to fill and this would increase the proportion of sites which have rules in place and therefore protect neighbours' interests.

The difference between 28 days and 60 days of permitted rights will determine how many landowners even find it viable to open a pop-up campsite. For instance, between 6th April 2021, when the extension was announced in Wales, and 3rd Jan 2022, when it ended, 97 new pop-up campsites were added to pitchup.com. The following year for the same period, only 53 new pop-ups were added. Currently only 28 pop-ups in Wales are live and taking bookings on pitchup.com as the 28-day permitted development right is unviable for many landowners. The significant cost of providing services such as mobile toilet and shower blocks and water supplies is difficult to recoup if sites can only operate for 28 days a year. Sites need to be able to make best use of the weather - bad weather plagued the sector in summer 2023 - and low mid-week occupancy and time erecting and dismantling facilities also deplete the limit.

The temporary extension of permitted rights did not have a negative impact on existing campsites as pitchup.com saw bookings for these sites rise by 97% compared to 2019, highlighting the scale of the demand for outdoor holidays which they expect to remain resilient in the coming years. Pop-ups appear to have expanded the overall camping market rather than taking share from existing formal campsites.

I don't need to tell you and your fellow Senedd members that the Welsh economy is heavily reliant on tourism, particularly in areas of west Wales which are less populous but also offer stunning locations to stay. With the cost of living crisis we are seeing more and more people plan to have staycations in the UK in 2024 and beyond, and this also helps to reduce the carbon footprint by avoiding air travel. But Wales will miss out on a large portion of this income by putting Welsh pop-up campsites at a 32 day disadvantage to their English counterparts.

I am a senior statistician for the UK Government by training, so analytical evidence is what most persuades me. Camping and caravanning is more important to Welsh

tourism than for other parts of the UK. In Wales, camping and caravanning holidays make up 34% of all holidays, compared with 20% in England and 21% in Scotland. Yet that 20% in England, because of the 60 days ruling means that spend on pop-up camping holiday sites in England this year has been 577% more than in Wales. That is a massive boost that could be given to Welsh landowners with a simple change in the rules to bring consistency with England. Speaking personally, when we have campers we tell them all about what the local area has to offer, and we find that our campers don't stay on site all day but do head out in to Aberaeron, Cardigan, New Quay and Aberystwyth to visit attractions and to eat in local pubs and restaurants. So the knock-on impact of campers staying to the local economy and local businesses is massive. A quick look back at our bookings for this year shows that over 75% of our campers came from England, so that is a significant income being brought in to Wales. In 2021, temporary campsites listed on Pitchup across the UK generated £25m for the British rural economy (estimates based on Pitching the Value figures p.23). This is broken down as:

- £9.8m in pitch fees
- £2.9m in extras like firewood and fresh produce
- £12.3m in off-site spend for local pubs, restaurants and newsagents for example

In Wales the contribution has been steadily declining since the PDRs reverted despite UK booking value increasing by 20% this year in comparison to last year, underpinned by long-term trends in sustainable living and health and wellness.

More of holidaymakers' spend is in the local rural economy than on pitch fees. Pop-up campsites have contributed £4.2m to the Welsh rural economy since the start of 2021 but now the 28 days rules are back in place the 2023 contribution is only around half the level of 2021.

The increased time for this permitted development right will have a hugely positive impact on communities by boosting GVA and employment opportunities without depriving local residents of housing stock, unlike tourism accommodation such as holiday lets. Also, with a higher footfall than holiday lets, minimal on-site facilities (and in tents themselves) and low prices meaning more money in holidaymakers' pockets, campsites deliver a much greater share of visitor spend to rural high streets and other local businesses. This spending over a short period helps to underpin the viability of local services for the benefit of local residents all year round.

I have also spoken with pitchup.com about the issue of complaints and they state "We have received fewer than a handful of complaints relating to pop up sites. In fact, we have found that, as pop-up campsites are cheaper and offer a nearly-wild experience, they can help to deter illegal 'dirty camping' by providing a regulated and managed alternative - further helping local communities and easing the need for local authority enforcement. Pitchup.com sends out a copy of the Countryside Code with every booking, encouraging customers to leave no trace."

So I urge the Senedd members to consider a timely debate on the permitted rights rules for land-owners and to consider the case study below. Ultimately all Wales landowners who run a pop-up campsite want to be able to run extended pop-up camping in a sustainable manner which boosts the Welsh economy without negative impacts on the environment or the local areas by ensuring that the right rules are in place, under a light touch council lead scheme commensurate with the number of days on offer i.e. not as burdensome as the requirements for a year round camping licence.

Thank you for the chance to put my views across.

Andrew Walton

Tynrhos Camping and Fishing Ltd.

### Case study:

The permanent introduction of the 60-day allowance will benefit hundreds of farm owners in rural communities in Wales, such as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who own [REDACTED] in Pembrokeshire:

- [REDACTED] site is located on their family organic beef farm that has existed since 1948. When they learned of the 56-day rule, [REDACTED] invested around £1,300 in creating their site - building 3 portable showers and 3 kitchenettes for visitors. Their site went live on Pitchup on 25 June, and closed on 3 September.
- As a result of the 56-day rule, the site was able to remain open from 9th July through to 3rd September. [REDACTED] “made around £43,000 in those 56 days and after paying all of the bills (logs, campfires, toilet hire, drain digger, cleaning products)... profited a fantastic £36,000.”
- [REDACTED] added that as farmers, this extension “has made a massive difference”, explaining that the revenue provided by the pop-up campsite made them “financially able to keep the farm going that bit longer and support our family better.”
- Explaining why the pop-up sites are an excellent way to diversify income, they said: “If we were to invest into the cattle, we would have to restructure the whole business and become a herd of about 75-100 head of cattle. We would have to build more sheds to sleep all of the cattle and this would cost around about £220,000 - £270,000 and would still not make as much money as the campsite did in those 56 days. It would also put our family into a huge, constant, never ending debt which would be impossible to ever pay back.”

[REDACTED] concluded that the ease by which they generated the campsite income has been a game changer for their farm. They concluded: “To change from the 28- day rule to the 56-day rule permanently would dramatically change our income, our livelihood, our future and make less impact on our beautiful, organic fields.”