

# A Beacon of Hope at Risk: Please Support Bronllys Well-Being Community Hub!

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 16 Medi 2024  
Petitions Committee | 16 September 2024

Reference: SR248813-4

Petition Number: P-06-1431

**Petition title:** A Beacon of Hope at Risk: Please Support Bronllys Well-Being Community Hub!

**Text of petition:** We call on the Welsh Government to:

Support the transfer of underutilised land at Bronllys Community Hospital site to Bronllys Well Being Park CLT Ltd for a nominal sum to develop a community well-being hub.

Encourage Powys Teaching Health Board to respond to community issues and concerns with respect, transparency, and support for the proposed community-led initiative.

Embrace the long-term objectives of this carefully researched proposal, which aims to improve local people's lives.



# 1. Context

Bronllys Well Being Park CLT was established in 2016 as a Community Benefit Organisation dedicated to improving the lives of local people in areas such as affordable housing, employment and well-being. The overall intention is to develop an asset owned by the local community which will support and enhance Bronllys Community hospital.

Among the goals of Bronllys Well Being Park is to:

- **Utilise existing vacant and unused land and buildings** within the grounds of Bronllys Hospital estate to encourage small businesses and social enterprises (particularly in the health and well-being sectors) offering local employment opportunities;
- Employ existing vacant and unused facilities at the Bronllys Hospital estate to offer sporting, recreational and wider social activities.

The organisation published a feasibility study in 2021 which:

reviews and highlights how land assets within the Bronllys hospital site could promote and enhance well-being opportunities for local communities.

The study also notes that:

BWBP CLT is **responding to requests by Welsh Government** to work with Powys Teaching Health Board and Powys County Council...to develop a Health & Wellbeing Park.

The study highlighted that:

- Bronllys hospital site has **many structurally obsolete buildings and estate land** which is not being used to its full potential and which as a result has become a maintenance burden to the health board;
- BWBP CLT Ltd should by raising awareness of land or open space which may come under threat from any proposed future private or commercial development at Bronllys hospital [to] preserve the interests of local communities and members.

## 2. Community Asset Transfer

A Community Asset Transfer (CAT) occurs when a public sector body transfers the management and/or ownership of a property, land or services to a community council or the third sector/community group. This avenue presents opportunities for communities to own and manage facilities that might otherwise be closed as the public body is unable to subsidise them any longer.

A CAT usually involves a transfer at less than full market value, either at reduced cost or nominal consideration. Transferring an asset could include a number of different tenures, including a management agreement, a licence to occupy, a short or long lease, and a freehold transfer.

A Mapping Communities Assets in Wales report published by Building Communities Trust in 2020 highlighted some of the barriers around community Asset Transfer in Wales. This included difficulties with the CAT process and variable outcomes across Wales and some patchiness in access to professional support.

The Institute of Welsh Affairs report Our Land: Communities and Land Use published in 2022 identifies further challenges. Key points include:

- There are few limited mechanisms for community control beyond Community Asset Transfers.
- Communities in Wales 'appear to be some of the least empowered on this island' and there is 'no statutory right to buy land or assets as in Scotland, and no right to bid, challenge, or build as in England.'

Plunkett UK Ltd published its Community Ownership: A Way Forward for Wales report in February 2024. This references Bronllys case directly and notes that:

- It received **public endorsement** from then Future Generations Commissioner Sophie Howe in 2021.
- Communication with Powys Teaching Health Board has reached a standstill, and it is **unclear why they will not accept the request**.

### 3. Welsh Government Action

Welsh Government published a [Community Asset Transfer best practice guide](#) in 2019 which states that it:

recognises the importance of community assets and has a **specific commitment** ‘to work with communities to help maintain local facilities that bring people together’.

The Welsh Government has also published some useful [resources on CATs](#) including an [example of the CAT process](#) and [successful case studies](#).

Responding specifically to this petition, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care notes that “this is not a matter in which I am able to intervene”. The letter also states that officials have “confirmed there are no buildings or land which are currently deemed to be surplus to requirements”.

### 4. Welsh Parliament action

The Local Government and Housing Committee published its report on [Community Assets](#) following its [inquiry](#) in October 2022. Senedd research published an [article on the Committee inquiry](#). The report made 16 recommendations, including:

- The Welsh Government should set out how it intends to make the process of ascertaining ownership of land and assets easier for communities and how the process can help to empower groups to take on assets they would like to see continue;
- The Welsh Government should establish a coordinated support package to support communities that are seeking to buy or lease land or assets; and
- That the Welsh Government establish a Commission to ‘stimulate innovative thinking on community ownership of land and assets in Wales.’

In a [written response to the committee’s report](#), the Welsh Government reiterated that it is:

fully supportive of communities taking control of assets, where it is appropriate for them to do so and there is sufficient local support.

In this response, the Welsh Government accepted in principle the call to establish a commission, noting:

The Minister for Climate Change has already stated that she is minded to agree to a commission. The form and scope of a commission will need to be carefully considered before action is taken to implement this, and other recommendations making reference to a commission.

In October 2023, 12 months after publication of the report, the Chair of the Committee wrote to the Minister for Finance and Local Government and the Minister for Climate Change for an update on progress with implementing each of the recommendations.

The Minister for Finance and Local Government responded to the letter on the 03 November 2023 with a progress update and provided additional supporting information on 17 November 2023 (included with response from 03 November). It notes that work on “establishing the Commission, its membership, scope and how it will work is well advanced” and that the Welsh Government is hoping to be in a position to “make a formal announcement on the chair and membership of the Commission by early January 2024”. Any future legislative proposals would form part of the work of the new commission.

On 30 May 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Housing wrote to Cefin Campbell MS following a request for an update on plans to establish a commission on community ownership. The Cabinet Secretary stated that a Community Asset Commission was established in March 2024, and that:

The commission is tasked with encouraging innovative thinking on community ownership of land and assets in Wales. As part of this work, the current legislative framework will be explored along with potential barriers to land and building ownership by community groups.

Despite this, there have seemingly been no further announcements by the Welsh Government relating to the development of the Commission, its membership or its remit.

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.