

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1472  
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10183/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

30 September 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your correspondence of 06 September regarding "Petition P-06-1472 Protect our wildlife...ban plastic grass in Wales!".

I share the concerns outlined in the petition in relation to microplastics. I believe it is imperative that societal use of plastics is reduced to help protect the environment, biodiversity and human health. As microplastics originate from a range of different sources, including industrial and domestic activities, we have several existing strategies (NB - some of these are referenced in the email response you attached - Circular Economy Strategy for example) committed to taking a focussed and evidence-based approach to tackling the issue.

To help coordinate our response to these challenges and to inform future Welsh Government policy, I have asked my officials to work with Environment Platform Wales to organise a microplastics event this Autumn. Our aim is to bring together scientific expertise in this area to help us understand what research is being undertaken and to identify any existing gaps in knowledge.

Our aim is to move towards a more circular economy in Wales, where plastic pollution together with all other forms of waste is avoided and resources are kept in use as long as possible as a key part of our action on the climate and nature emergency. In doing so, it is vital to consider the whole lifecycle of products such as artificial grass. In bringing forward Extended Producer Responsibility for products like packaging, we are emphasising the role that improvements in design and the materials used can help to improve resource efficiency, reduce pollution, and support the remanufacture and recycling of materials. Our Beyond Recycling strategy also includes commitments to reduce to zero the amount of plastic disposed of in landfill and to also reduce the amount of plastic waste that is sent overseas. The Welsh Government is committed to tackling the Nature Emergency and enhancing biodiversity which underpins our health, economy and wellbeing. Planting mixed-species

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-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.

grass instead of using artificial grass, would help to absorb carbon and provide habitat for wildlife.

It is important to build understanding and raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the impact of specific actions. This is recognised in our legislative and policy approach to biodiversity as, for example, one of the primary objectives of our Nature Recovery Action Plan is to improve understanding and raise awareness of biodiversity. This is also a key aim of the Section 6 [Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty](#) introduced by the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which requires public authorities to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into all of their functions and activities. The section 6 duty applies to public authorities, but through their functions, they can have a major influence on the private and third sector, such as in determining planning applications. In addition to the general application of the duty, the requirement to incorporate biodiversity into decision-making is specifically re-enforced through Planning Policy Wales. This states “development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity” (para. 6.4.5). Therefore, the planning system has a key responsibility in securing positive biodiversity outcomes when new development is proposed and to promote more sustainable behaviours and outcomes wherever possible.

Looking ahead, actions to encourage behaviour change and raise awareness of what organisations and individuals can do to help biodiversity will form part of the action plan to implement the Deep Dive Recommendations (a set of collective actions we can take in Wales to support nature’s recovery). Also, we are currently developing primary legislation to include a framework to set detailed statutory nature recovery targets which will further strengthen our actions to tackle the nature and climate emergencies.

Welsh Government is encouraging organisations who manage grassy areas such as verges and parks to take a more sympathetic approach to mowing. We have worked with yourself and a subgroup of the Action Plan for Pollinators to develop the ‘It’s for Them’ campaign to explain that changing mowing of green spaces can create a better habitat for ‘Them’: invertebrates, birds, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. The campaign toolkit pack includes an infographic, Frequently Asked Questions and sign templates that organisations can customise with their logos and contact details. There is also an education pack containing colouring-in sheets and activities to help children learn about some of the animals and plants that could live and feed in these areas.

The [Bee Friendly Scheme Planting for Pollinators booklet](#) has useful tips on how people can help pollinators including how to maintain lawns and other grassy areas.

Yours sincerely,



**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs