

**P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development  
Kilvey Hill, Swansea - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 06 May  
2025**

I've been asked for a response to the planning application on this case. I will do this but there is also the serious issue of Welsh government supporting gambling interests

There are serious issues on the granting of planning permission to the Swansea Skyline project due to Swansea Council's failure to conduct the planning process fairly and transparently. The Council has not upheld the Nolan Principles of Public Life particularly integrity, accountability, and openness—and has demonstrated clear bias from the outset, undermining public trust in democratic planning procedures.

At the heart of the matter is the council's dual role as both supporter and arbiter. The development is being advanced on land owned or managed by the council, with the potential for financial or political gain. Meanwhile, the council leader has taken an unusually visible role in championing the project, including speaking in favour of it publicly . This has only deepened fears that the outcome may have been entirely predetermined, undermining public confidence in the process.

The Council's public consultation was conducted in name only. It had already committed to supporting and funding the Skyline project before properly considering environmental objections or residents' concerns. This pre-emptive endorsement reveals a predetermined outcome and disregards genuine public input, rendering the process undemocratic.

Despite credible warnings from conservation groups, Swansea Council failed to request thorough ecological surveys for Kilvey Hill. Notably, the presence of records of the High Brown Fritillary butterfly which is a legally protected and critically endangered species in Wales was ignored. Proceeding without investigating the potential impact on such a species is a serious dereliction of duty that may breach legal protections under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the NERC Act.

In a move that defies transparency standards practiced by councils across the UK, Swansea Council removed records of public objections to the Skyline project from its website. This deliberate concealment of legitimate opposition makes it difficult for campaigners and residents to access essential information and raises alarming questions about what the Council may be trying to hide.

Kilvey Hill includes a legally designated Quiet Space, intended to safeguard local tranquillity and mental well-being. The Council has failed to properly assess how the Skyline development would impact this space. Concerns raised by residents and campaigners, including local advocate Ben Houghton, have been largely ignored. This failure demonstrates a lack of regard for community well-being and due process.

Throughout the planning process, Swansea Council has shown a consistent pattern of dismissing objections, ignoring complaints, and failing to address legitimate environmental and community concerns. This approach undermines confidence in the planning system and reinforces the belief that public voices are being sidelined in favour of corporate interests.

The projected figure of 450,000 visitors annually is highly questionable, particularly in comparison to established tourist attractions in Wales. There is a significant risk that the development will fail to meet these targets, leading to economic failure and leaving a lasting environmental and financial burden on the region. Instead of a successful investment, the project risks becoming an abandoned white elephant.

In addition to this, and specifically relating to the environmental assessments submitted by the development, the original ecological appraisal submitted in support of the development is fundamentally flawed. Basic factual errors, such as the claim that the River Taff is in Swansea and adjacent to the Landore Park and Ride Facility, demonstrate a lack of local knowledge and credibility.

This development meets the very definition of ecological vandalism. The Oxford English Dictionary, the definitive dictionary of English defines vandalism as the "ruthless destruction or spoiling of anything beautiful or venerable." The equivalent Welsh term, *fandaliaeth*, in the equivalent University of Wales dictionary has definition that is even more explicit in defining it as a lack of respect for the beauty of nature (*diffig parch at brydferthwch natur*). Approving this project would lead to irreversible environmental damage to a cherished Welsh mountain, depriving future generations of its natural beauty and biodiversity.

Skyline runs a casino in Christchurch, New Zealand, has interests in a casino in Dunedin and runs an online casino based in Malta.

When a government offers financial support to a private company to develop a tourist attraction, it is generally seen as an effort to boost local economic development, employment, and international visibility. However, when that company is known to operate casinos in other regions—and has no prior history in the country or continent in question—there is a pressing need to scrutinize the moral implications of such support, particularly if it paves the way for gambling infrastructure.

Casinos, by design, are establishments where the statistical odds are set up to favour the house. This is not a flaw; it is the business model. While some argue that adults should be free to choose how they spend their money, this assumes all participants understand the risks. In

reality, many people—especially those with poor education or limited understanding of probability and statistics—do not fully grasp how deeply the odds are stacked against them.

Casinos often attract individuals with dreams of changing their fortunes. But those dreams are, by and large, illusory. For individuals with minimal financial literacy, the notion of a "lucky win" can override sound judgment. This dynamic is not accidental; it is known, studied,

and often exploited through the use of psychologically manipulative design—free drinks, no clocks, flashing lights, “near misses,” and reward systems engineered to keep people playing.

When a government subsidises a company that could reasonably be expected to establish such operations, it is not a neutral act. It lends not only financial but moral legitimacy to an industry that thrives on extracting money from those least equipped to afford its costs. The social damage can be especially acute—gambling addiction, household debt, crime, and increased strain on social services often follow the introduction of casinos.

There is also a troubling asymmetry of power. A foreign company with vast resources and experience in gaming psychology is invited into a market where locals many without strong consumer protections such as high education levels, or economic resilience are its prospective customers. This raises uncomfortable parallels to predatory behaviour. It is one thing for a government to foster tourism through parks, museums, or cultural events. It is another to help build the foundation for a business model that profits only when people lose.

Public money should not support enterprises that rely on exploiting human cognitive limitations, especially when those affected are likely to be among the most vulnerable.

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I implore you to listen to me and the other petitioners and to recommend that this project does not receive funding from the public purse.

Neil Jones