

10th September 2025

Dear Carolyn Thomas MS,

RE: Recent petition regarding "Stop all foreign aid payments from the Welsh Government including to "Size of Wales" (246525)

I am writing in response to Petition 246525, which calls on all funding for global solidarity projects to be ended, including the Mbale Tree Growing Programme.

As Director of Size of Wales, I believe it is important to offer clarity, provide context, and strongly express support for this internationally respected initiative that embodies Wales' commitment to climate justice, global responsibility, and environmental leadership.

Since 2013, the Welsh Government via the Wales and Africa programme has supported Size of Wales and our local partner, the Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise (METGE) to implement the Mbale Tree Growing Programme in eastern Uganda.

Uganda has one of the highest rates of forest loss in the world. Between 2001 and 2020, the country lost [918,000 hectares of tree cover](#), a 12% decrease. Based on current trends, it risks losing its [entire forest cover by 2040](#). Mbale is a large mountainous area that has become heavily deforested primarily due to the expansion of agriculture; increasing demand for fuelwood and charcoal; and weak legal protections and enforcement of forest protection laws. The once predictable weather has become irregular and the local soils, destabilised by the reduction of trees and heavy rainfall, causes flooding and landslides. Landslides have resulted in a loss of homes, schools, livestock and sometimes cost lives.

This programme has supported a network of community-run nurseries in eastern Uganda that have distributed over 25 million trees to rural farmers and schools free of charge. Half of these nurseries are run by passionate and empowered women, such as Deborah Nabulobi who some of you might have met when she visited Wales back in March 2025, who are not only leading their communities but also advancing gender equality and sustainability.

This is not charity, it is climate action at scale. The trees planted through the programme have sequestered an estimated 1.4 million tonnes of CO₂, equivalent to 25% of Wales' annual transport emissions. This is a meaningful contribution to the global fight against climate change, arguably the greatest threat facing humanity.

Planting trees in the tropics, especially near the equator where they grow more than four times faster than in Wales, offers a powerful and efficient strategy for carbon capture. These trees sequester carbon more quickly and on a larger scale, making them a highly effective tool in global efforts to reduce atmospheric CO₂. As well as tackling climate change, trees protect local people in the Mount Elgon region from the effects of soil erosion, which can cause deadly landslides. The trees also help regulate the climate, provide local communities with

shelter, shade for crops, fresh fruit, nuts and animal fodder, sustainable wood, forage for bees to support local agriculture and are an important source of income.

The Office of National Statistics - Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (ONS – FCDO) with support from the Welsh Government (WG) used satellite imagery to carry out [research](#) to determine whether there has been a change in tree coverage in the Mbale Trees Programme area. The research found that forest cover is seven times higher within a 5km radius of the nurseries compared to surrounding areas. That clearly demonstrates the tangible environmental impact the programme is having thanks to supporting local leadership and puts into practice Wales' commitment to being a Globally responsible nation as outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The Mbale Tree Growing Programme also demonstrates Wales' commitment to climate justice. Rural Ugandan communities, who have contributed very little to global emissions, are facing severe impacts of climate change, including drought, flooding, and landslides. By supporting this Ugandan-led initiative, Wales is helping some of the world's poorest people to adapt to climate change, improve their livelihoods through beekeeping and coffee growing, install fuel efficient stoves, and restore their ecosystems.

A powerful example of that is that trees grown by the programme are used as shade for coffee farmers such as Jenipher Sambazi – a Fairtrade coffee farmer and Vice Chair of MEACCE cooperative. The coffee that Jenipher and other farmers grow is now exported to Wales as [Jenipher's Coffi](#) demonstrating Wales' commitment to fairtrade and ethical labour rights.

It is important to clarify that in 2023-24, the Welsh Government contributed £550,000 to the Mbale programme and in 2025-26 the funding was reduced to £350,000. This is separate from the additional funding that Size of Wales receives for its climate education work within Wales (£225,000 for 2023-24 - also included in the figure quoted in the petition), which helps thousands of young people in primary and secondary schools across Wales learn about climate change, become responsible global citizens, and take informed action at a time of growing climate anxiety. Size of Wales offers bilingual sessions free of charge to schools and this work is highly valued by pupils and teachers. We engage in schools with a higher than average free school meals rate supporting children that may not have access to the same opportunities, addressing educational disparities and promoting equal opportunities.

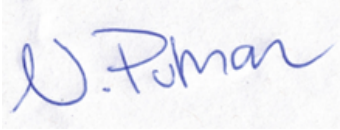
Furthermore, Size of Wales' work in Brazil, Kenya, Indonesia, and Peru are funded by other donors, such as the Welsh based charity, the Waterloo Foundation.

Beyond the carbon and environmental and social gains, the programme has created lasting and valuable connections between Wales and Uganda. Thousands of young people in Welsh schools have participated in climate education and exchange programmes, building solidarity, understanding, and purpose across continents.

In summary, the Mbale Tree Growing Programme is a deeply impactful, cost-effective, and global responsible initiative. It benefits both Wales and Uganda, while helping tackle the global climate crisis.

I hope this additional information helps inform the Committee when they review the arguments presented in the petition. Please do not hesitate to ask if you would like any further information about Size of Wales' work.

Yours sincerely,



Nicola Pulman
Director, Size of Wales