Dear Petitions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment ahead of the meeting on Monday, 16 March 2026. I note that the Committee will also be discussing the inquiry into the Hafod Landfill site **(P-06-1510)** during this meeting. The forensic evidence gathered regarding Bryn Posteg strongly reinforces the findings of the Hafod inquiry, demonstrating that regulatory failure, loss of community trust, and prolonged environmental hazard are systemic issues with Landfill sites across Wales.

I also note the response from Huw Irranca-Davies **(P-06-1573)** regarding this matter - unfortunately, while this response which lays out the landscape of regulatory accountability, and provides some context as to the practical reasons why these egregious breaches are occurring, there is very little substance as to the **systemic mismanagement of the site,** or whether **NRW's regulatory & enforcement powers (and the resources at their disposal) are sufficient**. It also **does not address the regulatory "gap"** where resident's health and wellbeing is neither considered nor prioritised by NRW, Powys CC environmental health, or otherwise. Indeed, it is deeply frustrating that parts of this response almost seem to provide a *justification* for the landfill's impact on residents, rather than laying out any **remedial action** beyond NRW's existing procedures, which are demonstrably insufficient in protecting the wellbeing and safety of local residents.

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the following key points regarding Bryn Posteg (Permit EPR/BU7766IC), which NRW has previously designated in 2017 as the "worst performing landfill in Wales", and has shown little sign of improving since then.

1. An Acute Public Safety and Environmental Crisis.

The situation at Bryn Posteg is an active public safety and environmental emergency. In the 12 months of 2025 alone, the site recorded **five separate "Significant" (Category 2) breaches** of its permit. A "Significant" breach implies a serious impact on the environment or human health. For a regulated site to have *one* is bad, to have *five* in a year is indicative of total management failure.

- **Methane Gas Migration.** In late 2025, methane levels at the site perimeter reached 84%—**radically exceeding the 1% safety limit**. This indicates mass lateral migration of explosive gas through the subsurface. In April 2025, atmospheric gas levels were so hazardous that **NRW officers had to abandon an inspection when their personal safety alarms were triggered**. In April 2024, an NRW Gas Audit found extreme dilapidation - **25% of the gas wells were disconnected** from the gas extraction system, **venting up to 47% raw methane into the atmosphere**. These breaches are not isolated incidents, they are continuous and systemic - frequently, levels for methane in perimeter boreholes are above 80%, and environmental permit limits are breached **over 100 times each year.** The 2024 & 2025 annual reviews of the site by Caulmert states that *"Due to the EP limit exceedances of methane and carbon dioxide at a number of perimeter wells, it has been suggested that off-site gas migration may be an issue".*

- **Hydrogen Sulphide (H_2S) emissions.** Hydrogen Sulphide is the primary compound responsible for the "rotten egg" smell associated with landfill gas. It is highly toxic and odorous even at parts-per-billion levels. The operator's 2025 Annual Review reveals that the waste mass at Bryn Posteg is generating massive volumes of H_2S. For context, the UK workplace exposure limit for H_2S is just 5 ppm (parts per million) over an 8-hour period, and the human nose can detect it at just 0.01 ppm. While peaks of **1,360 ppm** were measured within in-waste boreholes, **H_2S is not staying contained within the waste mass**. The 2025 data confirms it is migrating to the perimeter of the site. Multiple perimeter wells evidence a concentration of up to **162 ppm** in January 2025. A

walkover survey in July 2025 identified **35 separate Point Source Emissions**—locations where gas is actively leaking out of the capped surfaces and broken infrastructure. Despite all this evidence, residents are continually gaslit by the site operator about their lived experience of odour nuisance from the site, and the burden of proof falls squarely on the shoulders of affected individuals.

- **Severe River Contamination.** In November 2025, the site discharged sediment into the Nant Y Bradnant tributary of the Upper Severn at a concentration of 7,050 mg/l, which is **140 times the legal limit of 50 mg/l**. Remedial bunds ordered by NRW to prevent this were found unbuilt a month later. This runoff is not, as NRW or the site operator state, simply "clean" sediment from recent earthworks - the sediment contained almost **40x the permitted limit** of ammoniacal nitrates - a level that demonstrates that toxic leachate is not effectively contained and is mixing with surface runoff, as well as being a level that is acutely toxic to life within the watercourse. Several Curlew nesting pairs, a "red list" species that is "critically endangered" in Wales due to environmental pressures, nest within a mile of the site. Curlews predate on benthic invertebrates (sediment-dwelling food sources) that live in watercourses such as the Nant Y Bradnant.
- **Hydraulic Containment Failure.** Monitoring in 2022-24 revealed leachate heads reaching up to 22 metres above the sump base—**over 20 times the legal limit**. This exerts immense hydraulic pressure on the site's lining, drastically increasing the risk of "forever chemicals" (PFAS) and heavy metals contaminating local groundwater and private water supplies. The pedigree of the landfill site as a historic lead mine, and its establishment by local authorities in the '80's, paint a very unclear and poorly documented picture of the site's ability to effectively contain leachate or prevent PFAs from leaching into local private water supplies.
- **2025 Annual Report.** The operator's own 2025 Annual Review admits to **102 methane gas breaches**, **35 separate gas leaks on the cap**, and **routine failures in managing toxic leachate** - all in language that normalises systemic failure - significant breaches of legal levels are referenced as "comparable to previous reports". Worse, the report (from Caulmert) explicitly states the data was provided by the operator (Sundorne Products (Llanidloes) Ltd) and is completely unverified. When we look at the independent regulator (NRW) data, we see the true pollution figures are **up to 7 times worse** than the site operator documents in their annual review.

2. Decades of Corporate Negligence and Regulatory Failure

The operator, Sundorne Products (Llanidloes) Ltd, has a proven track record of prioritising revenue and operations over environmental safety:

- **Criminal and Safety Convictions:** The operator was criminally convicted and fined £55,000 in 2019 for illegal waste deposits and failing to manage landfill gas. In January 2025, the same company was fined £100,000 by the Health and Safety Executive for severe safety failures at a recycling centre. The documented history of a failure to safely manage the site suggests that the r**egulatory pressure NRW is able to exact on the site operator is not sufficient**, with the history of fines and continued operational, managerial and administrative negligence suggesting corporate recidivism - minimal fines for permit breaches are simply the cost of doing business for the site operator, and preferable to operating safely and within permitted limits.
- **Administrative Deception:** In regulatory filings submitted to NRW in 2023, the operator used topographical surveys dated from 2009 to represent the site's current settlement and stability, masking the true physical state of the over-tipped landform. Waste returns for Q1, Q2, and Q3 2024 were **exactly the same** to the decimal point, raising serious questions about the accuracy/honesty of their reporting. Their most

recent planning permission was remedial to account for previous breaches - in short, overtipping the site, asking for forgiveness rather than permission, and putting profits before people.

- **Infrastructure Neglect:** An NRW audit revealed that the operator conducted zero mandatory emissions monitoring on its gas engines for the entirety of 2022. When tested in 2023, emissions of Nitrogen Oxides and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) massively breached legal limits - nearly 3.5 times the legally permitted limit of $NO^{2,}$ and 20% more VOCs than the environmental permit stipulates.
- **Ineffective Regulation:** In recent responses to complaints, NRW state that nuisance odours are the temporary result of earthworks, whereas both the lived experience of residents and NRWs own reporting suggests otherwise. NRW's methodology for investigating smell reports is to alert the site operator and request they investigate - a wholly unsatisfactory method of "marking their own homework" which suggests apathy towards the local impact. Frequently reports are discredited without investigation due to wind direction or lack of perceivable onsite odour, and the burden of proof lies squarely with the complainant.
- **Residents left stranded:** NRW's regulatory mandate focuses on environmental impacts, and not health outcomes. Environmental health point to regulatory responsibility being NRW's. Powys CC point to the Sennedd and NRW. NRW state they are doing their jobs and impacts are temporary - this merry-go-round of buck-passing and administrative apathy has gone on for decades, with seemingly no accountability or ownership of the issue. Meanwhile, local residents are stuck in the gap between these various agencies, their lived experience remaining unheeded.

3. Alignment with the Hafod Landfill Inquiry Findings

The community of Llanidloes stands in absolute solidarity with the residents of Johnstown. The recent Petitions Committee report on Hafod highlighted a total breakdown in trust and called for mandatory automated monitoring. Bryn Posteg proves this is a national necessity:

- Like Hafod, residents near Bryn Posteg suffer daily from toxic methane & hydrogen sulphide odours, impacting mental health, trapping people indoors, and causing physical symptoms like migraines.
- We fully endorse the Committee's recommendation for mandatory, independent, automated odour monitoring at all landfill sites in Wales. The current system of self-reporting by operators is fundamentally broken, and this is leveraged by the site operator to continue to act with impunity.

4. Health Impacts of Living near Landfill sites

Finally, it is relevant to highlight the findings from the UK Health Security Agency's Guidance: Impacts on health of emissions from landfill sites (2024), which states:

> *"living close to a **well-managed** municipal active or closed landfill site does not pose a significant risk to human health…the picture for **historic sites is less clear,** due to the lack of data and construction details. However, **given their age** and assuming **a capping that … decreases gas emissions**, the same statement can be applied."*

I believe it's clear from that data within NRW's public register that this site is neither well-managed nor safe, and that the current site operator is demonstrably incapable or

unwilling to ensure its safe management. The findings from this report are clear about the mental health, stressors, and negative health impacts of mismanaged and historic sites.

5. Requested Actions from the Committee

Given the extreme data relating to the site operator going back decades - consistently breaching safe permit levels in air and water pollution up to 140 times the legal limit—we urge the Committee to recognise that standard regulatory warnings and pressure are no longer sufficient. We ask the Committee to recommend the following to the Welsh Government and NRW:

1. **Immediate Permit Revocation:** Direct NRW to revoke the permit, as the site poses an imminent threat to public safety and the River Severn catchment.
2. **Independent Closure Taskforce:** Establish a Welsh Government-led taskforce to oversee the site's closure, taking control out of the hands of the failing operator.
3. **Regulatory overhaul:** Timelines between permit breaches and remediation/ prosecution of site operators are far too long. No specific parameters for H_2S are laid out in the Environmental Permit - despite this being the gas that provides the primary odour pathway for nuisance odours. No weighting is given to historic trends or evidence of negligence when investigating contemporary breaches or performance. Site operators breach environmental permits with impunity, fines are “swallowed up” as a cost of doing business. There is no compliance oversight from local planning authorities or environmental health bodies. The growing problem of historic landfills will need regulatory adaptation to prevent a toxic legacy. We ask that **NRW be provided the resources and powers to be effective regulators of landfills**.
4. **Fugitive Emissions:** Urgently reform the environmental regulatory framework governing fugitive emissions and nuisance odours, specifically highly toxic Hydrogen Sulphide. The current protocol (which allows NRW to rely on a polluting operator’s self-investigation to dismiss community complaints) is entirely unfit for purpose. We request the implementation of a mandated, robust enforcement process that requires rapid, independent, on-site verification of odour breaches by NRW officers, ensuring strict adherence to environmental permits and ending the culture of operator self-regulation.
5. **Financial Bond Audit:** Initiate an immediate, transparent audit of the site's financial provision to ensure the taxpayer is not left with the multi-million-pound liability of managing a leaking, 30-year aftercare site, and ensuring that the site operator is held to effective regulatory pressures to ensure the safety of the local environment and population.
6. **Private Water Supply Testing:** Environmental Health seemingly show little interest in the potentially damaging health impacts related to the mismanagement of the site, or in applying any specialised testing to private water supplies or monitoring air quality in nearby dwellings and amenity areas. We ask that the Senedd mandate immediate testing of local private water supplies for PFAS and trace metals.

All data relating to the Bryn Posteg Landfill shared above is in the public record and is freely available through NRW’s own public register: https://publicregister.naturalresources.wales/
Thank you for your time, your diligent work on the Hafod inquiry, and your ongoing commitment to protecting Welsh communities from environmental negligence. I look forward to hearing **how the Senedd will act in this instance** to ensure the wellbeing of its remarkable citizens and the continued stewardship of our beautiful natural environment.

Yours sincerely,
Xander Ashwell