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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y  
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Welsh Parliament

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9 March 2026

Dear Jenny

Thank you for your letter of 6 February 2026 regarding the ESJ Committee's consideration of Dr Rob Jones' briefing on the Expansion of HMP Parc.

I welcome the opportunity to respond to your request for an update on the Welsh Government's position on the expansion of HMP Parc, coupled with progress against Recommendation 10 of the ESJ Committee's report on the implementation of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan in 2024.

### HMP Parc Expansion

The Welsh Government takes the concerns raised in Dr Jones' briefing seriously. As the Committee will be aware, HMP Parc has experienced ongoing challenges, highlighted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) in their April 2025 Report. This report followed an unannounced inspection of HMP Parc, which took place over 6 - 17 January 2025.

This report highlighted issues including high levels of drug availability within the prison, safety concerns raised by staff and prisoners and persistently elevated levels of self-harm. The report did however also mention positive practice at HMP Parc, such as collaboration with Bath University to provide 'innovative drug detection technology' and 'Parc Tank', an initiative where prisoners due for release pitch business ideas for investment.

I shared Dr Jones' briefing on HMP Parc with Lord Timpson, Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, on 22 December 2025 and met with him recently on

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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.

25 February 2026, to discuss this in further detail. I welcomed a constructive discussion regarding ongoing pressures within the adult prison estate, including at HMP Parc, with a focus on the expansion and potential implications for devolved services.

Also in attendance at my meeting with Lord Timpson was Ian Barrow, Chief Executive of HMPPS in Wales. Ian confirmed that HMIP conducted an interim review of HMP Parc in January 2026, which has now been published: [Report on an independent review of progress at HMP Parc by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons \(5-7 January 2026\)](#)

Ian wrote to me after the meeting, on 3 March 2026, to expand upon the findings of the review. Namely, he confirmed that 518 windows—62.5% of the total—have now been replaced, and that the project remains on track for completion by October 2026, though there are ambitions to complete this work sooner. The letter also set out areas of ‘reasonable progress’, including work to address weaknesses in mental health, substance misuse and education provision, as well as significant areas of ‘insufficient progress’, notably ongoing high levels of violence and self-harm, limited clinical capacity, inconsistent attendance at education and work, and delays in public protection checks.

The Chief Inspector, Charlie Taylor, left HMP and YOI Parc reassured that the establishment is on the right path. However, he was clear that without consistent staffing levels the prison regime will not improve, and progress will remain constrained. Ian shared that national challenges relating to staff vetting continue to have a direct impact on HMP and YOI Parc.

As the Committee will be aware, justice is not yet devolved to Wales, so the operational running of prisons is reserved to the UK Government. In relation to the expansion of HMP Parc, our position remains that any expansion must be accompanied by safeguards that ensure improved safety outcomes and do not exacerbate existing pressures on devolved services, particularly health, education, and social care. We continue to examine the cross-cutting impacts of expansion and are maintaining regular dialogue with UK Government counterparts at Ministerial and official level, to facilitate partnership working.

I have also raised the expansion of Parc Prison with Justice Unions in the context of our commitment to Social Partnership and shared policy objectives regarding the devolution of justice.

#### Progress against Recommendation 10 of the ESJ Committee’s report on the implementation of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan in 2024

Recommendation 10 in the Equality and Social Justice Committee report, *‘Actions, not Words: towards an anti-racist Wales by 2030’*, published 15 March 2023, was accepted in principle. This recommendation called for the Welsh Government to *‘establish a Welsh criminal justice observatory and seek further opportunities for collaboration with academia in the context of the ArWAP’*.

Given the limits of the Welsh specific data currently available, we expect there will be opportunities for the research programme to undertake work to identify gaps in existing data availability and data needs, and obtain and analyse data on a thematic basis.

In February 2025, following an open procurement exercise, Welsh Government let a contract for a justice research programme to a consortium led by Miller Research. The programme is designed to provide evidence and insight to support preparations for devolving justice functions and powers to the Welsh Ministers and the Senedd; and to further support public understanding of justice outcomes for people in Wales.

This activity would complement the work we are undertaking to promote access to disaggregated justice data for Wales. We are working closely with the Ministry of Justice and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to work towards the goal of better understanding the justice system in Wales. The Wales Governance Centre in Cardiff University has also been engaged in that work, following its work over a number of years to establish where disaggregated data might be made available and to pursue the publication of that data.

Progress has also been made in data linkage. Data is being acquired for the Administrative Data Research (ADR) Wales so criminal justice data can be used for research. ADR Wales and Public Health Wales work has continued on the Better Outcomes through Linked Data (BOLD), programme in partnership with (MoJ). This includes over £1m funding received for a data linking project investigating substance misuse services and pathways in Wales.

I value the Committee's continued scrutiny of these important areas, especially as they relate to prisoner and staff safety, the effectiveness of justice policy in Wales, and our shared commitment to tackling racial inequality.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke above the first letter "J".

**Jane Hutt AS/MS**

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