

**P-05-779 Compulsory scanning of domestic pets for microchips by councils -
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 19.03.18**

CatsMatter's views in light of council correspondence

We sincerely thank the petitions committee's commitment, and support, throughout our petition's process. We feel we have been listened to, and our concerns met with the severity we feel they deserve thus far. As hoped, writing to the remaining 5 councils who did not scan has seen some great success. We are of course thrilled at the responses from Newport and Anglesey, and thoroughly commend the actions to now implement a scanning procedure.

In regard to Blaenau Gwent and Cardiff, it is extremely encouraging that they have agreed to review the process they currently have in place, and we look forward to confirmation of what action they ultimately decided upon. In terms of Cardiff, it is fully understandable not all deceased pets can be scanned due to the state some may be collected in. We fully respect there may be cases where seeking a microchip may prove impossible, but we would appreciate good attempts are made to locate a chip where possible in most cases. We would personally welcome compulsory microchipping of cats, simply for the reason it would ease pressure on the rescue and shelter systems, however we do not feel considering such legislation should be directly linked to the scanning of cats at this stage. Persons should microchip their pet as good and responsible practice, but if an owner fails to have one microchipped it is not the councils fault, or place, to search for the owner. However, we highly appreciate and commend Cardiff making records, such as markings etc, of those found and do agree it could help give an owner closure should any unchipped cats description match their missing pet. We agree, and stand with Cardiff, on that a voluntary charter outlining the best practice for local authorities, would be a good consideration. This also fits with our argument that, in some cases, cats 'slip through the net' for various reasons. Apart from the above considerations to damaged or un-scannable chips, this could be a good outline for councils to opt to follow to minimize the unacceptable reasons for which some pets are not routinely scanned. Again, we commend Cardiff for outlining this possible measure the Assembly could consider.

Gwynedd's response is thoroughly disappointing and, should Cardiff and Blaenau Gwent soon confirm they have implemented this procedure, Gwynedd will be the only council in Wales to not have this in place. It would be a great achievement for the Welsh Government to be able to say they are the first country in the world to have an all scanning procedure throughout, and we believe it would be honourable

to be able to show how high standards are. Our previous attempts to work with Gwynedd have failed, and in the latter stages of discussions, ourselves and residents struggled to receive a response at all. The fact the petitions committee also had to re-chase them for a response, for us, shows a complete lack of sympathy and regard to residents' requests, and a complacency for the importance of this issue.

Gwynedd highlight there is no legislation surrounding the compulsory microchipping of cats currently, which is true. However, the law does state dogs must be microchipped by law and we are not aware of them scanning deceased dogs found through our previous enquiries with staff. We thoroughly appreciate the current climate councils find themselves in, but equipment has been offered free to the council by numerous sources previously which were declined. The cost to implement in the first instance would be extremely low. Scanners can cost between £20-£40 generally, and the chest freezers councils use to store pet remains can be collected free from their own recycling centre - such as Carmarthenshire who chose to do this to keep cost to a minimal, also due to financial restraints. To equip 3 depots, it would not exceed £100 if alternatives such as the freezer option was considered and used. The cost to continue this would cost no more than the odd phone call in reality. Every council is different of course, but we have found generally they will collect around 7 cats a month in constituencies with a mostly rural landscape. Of the 7, around 4 will be microchipped, meaning just 4 phone calls per month would have to be made to notify the owners. To be more accurate on this, it would be reasonable if Gwynedd at least explored the possibilities, and accepted a trial of such a procedure. We are confident, should they honour a trial, they will learn it is inexpensive to implement and run, and would be much more encouraged to adopting it full time. We find it difficult to understand why Gwynedd would not do this, especially given every other council in Wales manages it perfectly well, with the new exceptions of Cardiff and Blaenau Gwent of course. We would greatly appreciate if the Welsh Government could work further with Gwynedd on this and we see no reason why mutual ground could not be found in the near future.

A number of our supporters are of course residents in the above 5 regions. We are sending a second document with their thoughts on the council's new procedures, or lack of, in hope you will sympathise and understand how important it is for the residents these procedures will directly affect. We do ask the Government to consider both ours, and residents, concerns and act in the best way they see fit for moving forward. One statement in particular is from a rescue volunteer who's made

it her unpaid role to collect deceased cats from the roadside in the Gwynedd and Anglesey regions, knowing the council won't, and she will scan them and return them to the owner. All she wishes for is owners have closure and can grieve properly. This is all anyone asks the council to do, although their jobs already is to collect and dispose of them, all we ask is the added procedure of scanning them and notifying them. Welsh residents should not feel they need to go out there and do this themselves because their council's have ultimately failed them.

Thank you again for the dedication, commitment, and success you have brought to this petition to date, ultimately ensuring residents in Cardiff, Newport, Blaenau Gwent and Anglesey, receive the closure they deserve should the worst happen to their pets. To receive closure, regardless of how difficult the news may be, is invaluable to a pet owner.

Mandy & Tiya

Responses from residents

- To the Petitions Committee of the Welsh Assembly. Many Members will know me for my campaign to ban wild animals being used in circuses in Wales. My concern for animals and their welfare is well documented, as is my work as a former branch Trustee and Committee member for RSPCA West Gwynedd Branch and volunteer at RSPCA Bryn-y-Maen Animal Centre. As you may know I live in Gwynedd, I share my home with two rescue cats Rosa and Grace. As a responsible owner I have ensured both my girls are spayed and micro chipped. I have known for some time that sadly Gwynedd Council choose not to scan the remains of deceased companion animals they find on the side of the road. They simply dispose of their bodies at landfill. Veterinary practices in this area will tell you that it's my practice to take any bodies of companion animals involved in RTA to them to be scanned. Should I find them or am told of such cases. As you can imagine this is not a pleasant task for either myself or the staff at the vets. I do this because somewhere a grieving owner or family may be looking for their beloved pet. Plus, I know if the pet isn't chipped the practice will dispose of their body in the proper manner, after first trying to find their owner. I know Gwynedd Council are under great financial pressure, as all LA's are, but I really cannot see how their current position

on this is tenable. If other cash strapped LA's can do this in Cymru, why can't Gwynedd? I believe Gwynedd have been offered scanners free of charge. I for one would be willing to buy the scanners for them. I am sure animal rescue centres, veterinary practices and indeed RSPCA West Gwynedd Branch would be willing to work with Gwynedd so a solution could be found. To my mind bodies such as Government's even local governments are looked to to set standards. What is the point of the WG making it a legal requirement for dog owners to microchip them, if a LA simply disposes of their remains like rubbish at landfill without scanning? I know my girls will not be with me for ever, but the thought that my local council – Gwynedd could threaten their remains like rubbish without even letting me know what happened to them is a truly horrendous prospect.

- Thank you for the work you are doing to help make scanning deceased cats mandatory by local councils. I think the decision by Gwynedd not to participate is extremely disappointing. Microchip scanners are not expensive to buy and I would donate even and it only takes seconds to scan a cat and contact a vets with the details. I cannot understand why they won't and can only feel that the people making the decision are not animal lovers and don't appreciate how we feel. Losing a pet and not knowing what has happened to him or her can be as bad a losing a person. It saddens me deeply that these humans in the council won't help with such an easy process to help people come to terms about what has happened to a loved one. Many thanks
- Disgusted and appalled that Cyngor Gwynedd Council can't find it in their budget or whatever to scan deceased cats. There is growing number of social media sites in Gwynedd and Anglesey working together to reunite lost pets and sadly the deceased ones too but what about the ones us the public don't find and take to the vets or local scanner. Please Cyngor Gwynedd Council rethink this stupid decision.
- I live in Gwynedd and am appalled to learn that Gwynedd County Council can't be bothered to buy scanners to scan microchipped strays/deceased animals. It's compulsory for all dogs to be microchipped (at our own cost) in Wales so why can't ALL councils scan and hopefully reunite our pets. They are family.

- I have 2 cats microchipped, i took comfort in the knowledge that if one of them died at the roadside, the council were obliged to scan for the owner. I live in Bangor, Gwynedd. I was shocked to discover this is not the case in Gwynedd.
- I don't live in Wales but my mother was from what is now Gwynedd. As a lifetime cat lover and owner, she would be horrified to know that the cats of Gwynedd and their families are so little respected by the local Council. My Welsh blood is boiling.
- They should be ashamed of themselves they need to think if it was their beloved pet how would they feel and change animals matter x
- Hello, I live in Gwynedd and am guardian for a young rescued cat. She is microchipped and when she went missing for a short while last year I had the reassurance that if she was found, alive or dead, we would get closure. Or that is what I thought at the time. I am horrified to discover that this is not the case. Dora was only missing for a day and was found via social media, it felt awful in the meantime. But many don't ever find out and imagine dog baiters etc. Never knowing what has happened to a furry family member must be horrible.
- I saw your post about the microchip scanning issue in Wales and wanted to share my thoughts on the matter. This is my comment: "I live in Conwy County where scanning deceased pets is mandatory. I was completely shocked when I discovered Gwynedd, our neighbouring county, has not yet adopted this strategy. I think this is absolutely ludicrous! Owners have a right to know what has happened to their animals. Allowing people to unnecessarily remain distressed over a missing animal because the council is unwilling to scan is wrong on many levels. At the cost of a microchip scanner and the little effort it takes to scan, this is completely inexcusable. Denying people closure is cruel and something I certainly would not expect from a council in Wales; especially considering every other council in the country has adopted the policy. I urge Gwynedd County Council to listen to general public opinion and in doing so I hope they will reconsider their position on the matter.

- I am writing in support of your campaign to have all councils scan cats which have been found deceased. It is a distressing time when your cat goes missing. As many end up having been run over and consequently picked up by the council the application of a hand held scanner could at least give closure to the owner. Having been in the position of having cats disappear without knowing what happened I welcome the fact that my local council has adopted this system already. Many councils have taken on this task the few that remain should now follow suit and adopt the same procedures.