



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-05-893
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/06243/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee

SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales

13 August 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter dated 16 July regarding Petition P-05-893 - Save Our Parks in Wales.

The Welsh Government recognises the many benefits that good quality green and open spaces can offer. Open spaces are focal points for sport and leisure in our cities, towns and villages. They are naturally inclusive places, providing access for people of all ages and backgrounds to healthy, green environments. We recognise in our Natural Resource Policy the significant contribution that open spaces make to biodiversity and ecology across the country and we highlight the importance of having good quality, accessible green spaces in our communities.

Planning and open spaces

The planning system plays an important and proactive role in promoting the value of open spaces and ensuring they are accessible and attractive places. National planning policy, set out in Planning Policy Wales (Ed. 10, 2019), embeds the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act into the planning system. This includes our approach to open spaces, where planning policy provides strong support for creating new open spaces and maintaining existing provision.

Planning Policy Wales, supplemented by guidance in Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16: *sport, recreation and open space* (2009), seeks to ensure there is sufficient provision of parks and playing fields across Wales. Local planning authorities undertake Open Space Assessments, which look at the quality and quantity of open space in their area, to inform policies and proposals in their Local Development Plans (LDPs). Typically, LDPs will identify existing open spaces and outline requirements for new open spaces to be provided as part of housing or mixed-use developments.

The planning system also has a key role in protecting existing open spaces from inappropriate development and from being lost. Planning Policy Wales states "*planning authorities should protect playing fields and open spaces which have significant amenity or*

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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.

recreational value to local communities from development". Sport Wales is a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting playing fields, providing valuable advice to local planning authorities.

The aims of the planning system are supported by Cadw, which seeks to protect gardens, parks and other green spaces of historic interest through the registration process. They ensure all sites on the register of historic parks and gardens in Wales are protected through the planning system. The register is not a closed list and new sites which meet the criteria for registration can be added thus affording them further protection from development.

Funding

The vast majority of Welsh Government funding for parks and open spaces is delivered through the unhypothecated local government settlement. The settlement is delivered on the basis that individual local authorities are best placed to take decisions around spending priorities in their areas. The funding system we have in place gives local authorities the flexibility to make those decisions.

Maintaining green and open spaces to high standards.

We recognise the importance of good quality, accessible, local green space and therefore we fund the Green Flag Award in Wales, which is the benchmark for parks and green spaces across the UK. The Green Flag Award helps to improve a wide range of spaces, by encouraging investment and pride in our open spaces, including many in urban areas. There are currently 201 awarded sites across Wales, including 112 Community Awards. One of the criteria for the award is for spaces to be '*well maintained and clean*'.

Disposal of green and open spaces

In some circumstances it can be appropriate to dispose of open spaces or to redevelop them for another use. Planning Policy Wales sets out circumstances where this may be appropriate and the views of Sport Wales will be sought in these situations. There is a further safeguard against inappropriate loss of playing spaces through legislation governing processes to be followed by local authorities. These [regulations](#) require local authorities to advertise its intention and consider any representations it receives before it can dispose of playing fields.

Yours sincerely,



Julie James AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government