

Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Bill:

Summary note of engagement

October 2019

Background

During its meeting in July 2019, the Committee agreed its general approach to citizen engagement during Stage 1 scrutiny of the Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Bill ('the Bill' hereafter).

The Citizen Engagement Team proposed a qualitative approach to engagement, which involved gathering the views and attitudes of citizens, with a specific focus on young people.

Approach to engagement

As part of the Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill, the National Assembly for Wales' Citizen Engagement Team has been gathering the views of people across Wales via an online discussion board called Loomio and during education sessions with schools and youth groups.

Given the timetable for Stage 1 consideration of the Bill, a significant part coincided with the School Holidays in Wales. The Committee therefore agreed to gather the views of young people online.

Loomio

Loomio is an easily accessible online platform designed to run open discussions, allow participants to share views and communicate with each other. It also allows participants the opportunity to engage remotely and comment on the contributions of other participants.



Participants were provided with background and context to the Bill, including a short explainer video which was used to promote the online discussion on the Assembly's social media channels. Participants were asked the following questions:-

- Do you think it should be an offence to use wild animals in travelling circuses? If so, why?
- Do you think the opportunity to experience wild animals in a visiting travelling circus has a positive or negative impact on young people?
- What impact do you think banning the use of wild animals in travelling circuses will have on the attitudes of young people towards animals?
- Do you think seeing a wild animal in a travelling circus can help children and young people learn about animals?

The online discussion generated 23 contributions from predominantly school pupils, college students and youth group members, which included some Welsh Youth Parliament Members.

The Assembly's Citizen Engagement and Education and Youth Engagement teams also ran focus group discussions with schools and youth groups involving 43 young people aged between 15 and 26.

Submissions to Loomio

1. Do you think it should be an offence to use wild animals in travelling circuses? If so, why?

There were 15 contributions to this question. All contributions are available by request. The following is a snapshot of the responses:-

Contribution	<p>No. I disagree with the premise of making it an offence to use wild animals in travelling circuses and consider there are far far more important topics that the National Assembly for Wales should be focussed on.</p> <p>I do think it would be eminently sensible to produce legislated requirements of travelling circuses in regards to the well being of wild animals used. A part of this, in my view, must be a requirement to educate and improve awareness of the issues facing wild animals in their natural habitats. Travelling circuses</p>
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	<p>can play, in my view, a valid and invaluable role in educating the public about wild animals and the issues faced where many species are facing extinction.</p> <p>Last time I went to a travelling circus, which had elephants, we were invited openly to visit the animals after the show where we could see not only how well the animals were being cared for but also be told about where these animals had come from (they had been bred in captivity) and the many issues faced by these animals in the wild. It was informative and engaging.</p> <p>One concern that I have is what provisions will be made, should this bill be made law, for the safety and well being of any existing wild animals within travelling circuses.</p> <p>Also, since Wales (last time I looked) is part of the United Kingdom, leading with a piece of legislation such as this creates many potential problems. For example, it could lead to travelling circuses abandoning Wales since if they have wild animals that are permitted in England which aren't in Wales, it would not be economically viable for the travelling circus to "home" its livestock before travelling over the border.</p>
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Contribution	Yes - wild animals deserve an environment as close as possible to their natural habitat, and are not to be coerced into unnatural behaviour.
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Contribution	Yes. I am not sure that workers are fully trained in looking after the health and well being of the animals. They may be badly treated and not have sufficient room to move and follow their natural instincts. I am also not sure where the animals come from. It is possible that they may have been taken illegally.
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Contribution	Animals should be allowed to be a part of a travelling circus if they are in the correct conditions and treated correctly
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Contribution	Yes it should be an offence, animals aren't made to "jump" trough hoops, regardless of how their treated, its not natural, and they
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	don't have a choice, I'm sure many humans wouldn't be happy being forced to do such things
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Contribution	It's wrong to use animals as entertainment Animals should be able to free and roam around as they like They deserve to be treated fairly like we are.
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The following contributions were submitted in Welsh and have been translated:-

Contribution	<p><i>Ydi, mae'n drosedd sy'n anghredadwy i mi ei bod hi dal yn cael ei chofleidio heddiw. Mae'r cysyniad o ddefnyddio anifeiliaid gwyllt fel modd o adloniant teuluol yn hollol anerbynnol, anaturiol a di-bwynt. Dylai anifeiliaid gael yr hawl i fyw mewn amgylchedd diogel a rhydd. Mae'r ffenomenon o syrcasau teithiol ar drai, felly dylai defnyddio anifeiliaid gwyllt cael ei ddiweddu hefyd.</i></p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>Yes, it is an offence and it is unbelievable to me that it is still being embraced today. The concept of using wild animals as a means of family entertainment is utterly unacceptable, unnatural and pointless. Animals should have the right to live in a safe and free environment. The phenomenon of travelling circuses is in decline, so the use of wild animals should also come to an end.</p>
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Contribution	<p><i>Dylai fod yn drosedd defnyddio anifeiliaid gwyllt mewn syrcasau, maen nhw'n haeddu bod allan yn eu cynefin yn byw eu bywydau naturiol lle dylen nhw fod. Dydyn nhw ddim wedi'r arfer â'r fath awyrgylch â ni ac er mwyn iddynt fod, maent yn cael eu camdrin a'u "hyfforddi", hynny yw, cyflyru i berfformio triciau anaturiol sydd yn groes i'w greddf a dim ond er mwyn ein diddanu ni, mae hyn yn greulon!</i></p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>It should be an offence to use wild animals in circuses, they deserve to be out in their own habitat living their natural lives where they should be. They are not used to the same type of environment as us, and in order for them to be, they are being mistreated and "trained", that is, encouraged to perform unnatural tricks that are against their instincts and only in order to entertain us, this is cruel</p>
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2. Do you think the opportunity to experience wild animals in a visiting travelling circus has a positive or negative impact on young people?

There were 3 contributions to this question.

Contribution	<p>I am of the view that young people being able to see wild animals, that are well cared for, enables them to understand their beauty and the need to preserve and protect the various species of wild animals that exist, so long as viewing them is coupled with appropriate education and awareness. The opportunity to see them in travelling circuses ensures that a wider range of young people can see wild animals. In overall terms, so long as the care and well being of the animals is at the best standards, then I see the opportunity to experience wild animals in a visiting travelling circus is a positive one.</p> <p>By contrast, if this bill is permitted to succeed, then young people will have a much reduced opportunity to experience wild animals given the rising costs of visiting zoo's. I do think that enhanced regulations are needed, coupled with appropriate oversight, to ensure the well being of animals that are part of travelling circuses. But I don't think that banning their use is a positive way of preserving their well being.</p>
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Contribution	Negative - it portrays wild animals as things for human entertainment. It denies the need for conservation.
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Contribution	Negative. They are kept in cramped quarters without sufficient room to move, hunt etc. They should be in the wild. Seeing them perform in a circus gives children the impression that it is acceptable to remove wild animals from their natural habitats for human entertainment.
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3. What impact do you think banning the use of wild animals in travelling circuses will have on the attitudes of young people towards animals?

Contribution	Good impact, it is more respectful of animals.
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Contribution	Seeing animals in a circus will give children the impression that it is acceptable to keep wild animals in cramped quarters so that they can provide entertainment. It isn't. They can instead realise that wild animals should be in the wild. We can now watch fabulous film of the animals in the wild. Much better to see this rather than a cowed animal in a circus.
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4. Do you think seeing a wild animal in a travelling circus can help children and young people learn about animals?

Contribution	Definitely not - they should only be seen in as close a natural habitat as possible (sanctuaries and in the wild). Emphasis must be on protection and education, not on entertainment.
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Contribution	No. Animals are not always well treated. If you really want to see wild animals then well run, reputable zoos are the best place (unless you can see them in the wild)
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The following contribution was received in Welsh and has been translated:-

Contribution	<p><i>Yr unig beth y gallent wir ei ddysgu yw fod lle anifeiliaid gwyllt yn y gwyllt ac nid yn y syrcas, mae'n anheg ar yr anifeiliaid fod yn gaeth yn y syrcas ac mae sawl gwahanol ffordd o ddysgu plant am anifeiliaid fel y profwyd gan sawl techneg ddysgu yn yr ysgol ac ati.</i></p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>The only thing that we can truly learn is that the place for wild animals is in the wild and not in a circus. It's unfair for the animals</p>
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	to be stuck in circus and there are many different ways of teaching children about animals as has been proven by many teaching techniques in the school and so on.
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