

Petition P-05-904: Ban the use of animals from circuses and travelling shows in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 5 Tachwedd 2019
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Reference: RS19/10596-1

Petition Number: P-05-904

Petition title: Ban the use of animals from circuses and travelling shows in Wales

Text of petition:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to ask the Welsh Government to ban the use of animals in circuses and travelling shows in Wales.

On July 17th 2018 the First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones AM said "Finally Llywydd, we will bring forward a Bill to ban the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. Animal welfare is a priority for this government and the way we treat animals is an important reflection of the values of our society. Circuses are legitimate businesses and it is not our intention to outlaw all forms of circus entertainment in Wales. But the use of wild animals in circuses in this context is outdated and ethically unacceptable. We will prohibit their use in travelling circuses."

Circus is an art form in its own right. While in the past it has been strongly connected with the use of animals, it is clear that the public's taste in such matters have changed considerably in recent years. This is demonstrated by the increasing number of all human circuses, together with the success they enjoy. While these shows often play to full audiences and face no protesters outside, it's safe to say the reverse is true in respect of the remaining circuses and travelling shows that use animals, even those using animals not defined as wild.



Many states and Countries are banning all animals in circuses and travelling exhibitions. Italy (long associated with the animal circus industry) are set to do this next year. The welfare concerns around the use of wild animals in circuses such as constant travel, loading and unloading, forced performance, together with inadequate and unnatural social environments apply to all animals used in this way.

Their use should be banned from any travelling show which is purely for people's entertainment and to make people money for example a commercial enterprise. Sadly last year the Cabinet Secretary for Environment Planning and Rural affairs Lesley Griffiths AM, indicated the Welsh Government would licence "mobile animal exhibits".

1. Background

The Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Bill

On 8 July, the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs ('the Minister'), Lesley Griffiths AM, introduced the [Wild Animals and Circuses \(Wales\) Bill](#) ('the Bill') to the Assembly.

The policy objective of the Bill is to prohibit the use of wild animals in travelling circuses in Wales on ethical grounds. A wild animal is 'used' if the animal 'performs' or is 'exhibited'. There are currently two travelling circuses using wild animals in the UK, both regularly visit Wales.

The Welsh Bill will not affect the use of domestic animals in travelling circuses. Nor will it affect the use of animals for entertainment in other settings such as other 'Animal Exhibits' (described below) including static circuses.

Wales is the latest country in the UK to introduce legislation to ban the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. *The Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Act 2018* ('the 2018 Scottish Act') received Royal Assent on 24 January 2018 and came into force the next day. The UK *Wild Animals in Circuses (No.2) Act 2019* ('the 2019 UK Act') received Royal Assent on 24 July 2019 and will come into force in January 2020.

A [Research Service Briefing](#) provides a background to the issues.

The Bill is currently being [considered by the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs \(CCERA\) Committee](#) (Stage 1 scrutiny).

In evidence to the CCERA Committee, some stakeholders have highlighted the issue of the ban being limited to the travelling circuses and have raised questions around the ethics and animal welfare of other Animal Exhibits. Some have argued that if the proposed ban

on using wild animals in traveling circuses is based on ethical grounds, this should also extend to domestic species. Others believe that the same ethical argument does not apply to domesticated animals.

Animal Exhibit licensing

Animal Exhibits can display domestic and wild animals, and include exotic pet displays, falconry and hawking displays and reindeer events. They are used for educational school visits, themed events, parties, weddings, fêtes and corporate functions.

On 29 August 2019 the Welsh Government published a consultation on draft Regulations; *The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Animal Exhibits) (Wales) Regulations 2020* and guidance. The Regulations would be introduced under the *Animal Welfare Act 2006*. The accompanying written statement says:

The draft Regulations provide a licensing scheme for all Animal Exhibits (AEs) based in, and visiting, Wales which meet a given criteria; it allows checks to be made to ensure good welfare standards are met at their home base, in transport and during exhibition.

The Welsh Government says that a key principle behind the licensing scheme is to develop 'respectful and responsible attitudes towards animals' and for that purpose, the draft Regulations introduce a new requirement for licensed Animal Exhibits to 'promote public education and raise awareness of the species kept'. This is already a requirement for licensed zoos.

Under the draft Regulations the licensing scheme will cover keeping, training and exhibiting animals in Wales where those animals are being used for exhibition for educational or entertainment purposes.

Please note, the petition text uses the terminology 'Mobile Animal Exhibits'. The Welsh Government's original consultation was around Mobile Animal Exhibits but the scope was later broadened to include all 'Animal Exhibits' (including static exhibits).

In summary, the Welsh Government is using different approaches for regulating the use of animals in travelling circuses and Animal Exhibits; a ban on ethical grounds and a licensing scheme on animal welfare grounds respectively.

2. Welsh Government action

The Minister's letter to the Petitions Committee on this matter outlines details of the Bill and licensing scheme described above. She offers the Welsh Government's justification for the different approaches:

The [Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales)] Bill does not affect the use of domesticated animals in travelling circuses, nor does it prevent wild animals being used for entertainment in other settings. There are not the same fundamental ethical objections to the use of animals in these other settings as there are for the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. There are differences with regards to the types of species kept, the conditions in which they are kept and how they are used or displayed.

3. National Assembly for Wales action

As mentioned, the Bill is currently being considered by the CCERA Committee. The Committee initially took evidence [from the Minister on 18 July on the Bill](#).

Members asked the Minister for her views on the ethical acceptability of using domesticated animals in travelling circuses. She said:

So, there are not the same fundamental ethical objections to the use of domesticated animals in travelling circuses as there are to wild animals. You use the example of a horse, The example that I was given [...] was in relation to showjumping. So, you could say that it's comparable—what horses do in showjumping to what they would do in a circus. [...] I think it appears that showjumping is acceptable to society in a way that the use of wild animals in circuses isn't.

Members questioned the Minister on widening the scope of the Bill to include static circuses. She said:

So, at the moment, there are no static circuses in Wales. [...] That's not to say that, obviously, there couldn't be static circuses in the future, but they're not included in the ethical argument in the way that—. Obviously, with travelling circuses, it's a much weaker argument. So, an environment that's permanent could, arguably, be better adapted for an animal's needs than an environment that's constantly on the move, which obviously is the purpose of this Bill. So, that's the reason why.

The CCERA Committee launched a public consultation on the Bill over the summer recess which closed on 23 August. It received 24 written responses which are published on the Committee's website.

The Committee subsequently held 3 oral evidence sessions with; academics, animal welfare groups and circus representatives (18 and 26 September and 2 October).

The Committee then held a second scrutiny session with the Minister on 10 October. In reference to other types of Mobile Animal Exhibits she referred to the proposed Animal Exhibit licensing scheme.

The Committee will report on Stage 1 towards the end of the year.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.