

**P-05-904 Ban the use of animals from circuses and traveling shows in Wales,
Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 28.10.19**

Submission to the Welsh Assembly's Petition Committee

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

Thank you for asking us to provide this submission in support of the above petition. Which is a matter devolved to the Welsh Assembly and Government.

The current position

The Welsh Government announced its intention to bring legislation forward to ban the use of wild animals in circuses in Wales after Linda's previous petition. Which also triggered a debate on the floor of The Senedd.

The Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Bill is currently on its scrutiny journey but it is hoped that legislation will be brought forward by May 2020. England are banning from January 2020. This legislation in Wales is being brought forward **on ethical grounds**.

Since we launched our petition the Welsh Government have opened a consultation on a licensing system for Animal Exhibits. This will include the remaining animals used in traveling circuses in Wales that are not defined as wild. The purpose of this licensing system is one " **that requires that animals are exhibited in a way that encourages respectful and responsible attitudes towards all species** " .

Although there are currently no animal circuses based in Cymru they do tour Wales. Circus Mondeo has toured Wales every year for over a decade they usually visit from April until mid July. Peter Jollies Circus last visited in 2017, they usually stay around the area located close to the English border such as Telford and Wrexham as their home base is in Shopshire. Thomas Chipperfield and Anthony Beckwith toured Wales with their educational show " An Evening with Lions and Tigers " in 2015. Thomas Chipperfield now holds a licence to exhibit animals together with a licence to keep wild animals (under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976) . Both issued by DEFRA.

The present licensing system in England.

Because of the Welsh Government's consultation I think it may be of some benefit to look at the licensing system currently in force in England. The UK Government said that their licensing system would cover all aspects of life for a wild animal in a travelling circus environment including:

Good accommodation and housing whilst being transported at a performance, and in winter quarters.

Full veterinary care.

Controlling carefully who has access to the animals.

Diet including food storage, preparation and provision.

Environment such as noise and temperature.

Welfare during training and performance.

However the licensing documents in the public domain paint an altogether different picture. These licence inspection reports concerning Circus Mondao are an example of the issues with reference to accommodation and housing.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reports-on-2-circuses-between-26-june-2014-and-22-january-2015>

At the time of the above unannounced inspection (at the animals winter quarters) the Inspector also raised concerns about the animals veterinary treatment. It became clear to him during this unannounced inspection that Circus Mondao were self-medicating their animals, including their baby Camel (who was born on the road in Wales the previous year). The camel had "open and weeping sores on each of its legs". Circus Mondao's licence was instantly suspended, later to be reinstated, but only on certain conditions; one being that they wouldn't take their wild animals back to this location. They did exactly this in April 2017, with DEFRA having to insist certain animals were returned to their home base while they were at this location. This is not an isolated incident, DEFRA Inspectors have raised concerns many times in regards to members of the public having unsupervised access to their animals after the circus .

Our point has always been that if this can happen to a animal defined as wild, then why not a " domestic " animal?

While giving evidence this year to the UK Government's scrutiny Committee on wild animals in circuses. Carol MacManus (of Circus Mondeo) was asked if there was any animal that couldn't be used in a circus. Ms MacManus replied " No " .

Enforcement.

A problem with any licensing system is the effective policing of it. In Wales we face challenges particular to us due to large parts of our Country being very rural. The required licence in the new system will be issued by the Council where the circus or traveling show is based . But the monitoring and enforcement of the licence will fall to the local authority in the area the circus visits . When I met with Councillor Dafydd Meurig and [REDACTED], Public Protection Manager - Pollution Control and Licensing of Gwynedd Council. They made it clear to me the challenges a visiting circus presents to their already stretched department. Ms Roberts also stated her colleagues felt they were operating with "one hand tied behind our backs " . They can be refused entry to the private land to inspect the conditions the animals are kept in. Ms Roberts also admitted as far as the animals go " we can only really check if their basic needs are provided for, and that they are moving around normally and their eyes, coats etc look okay " . When Thomas Chipperfield visited Gwynedd in 2015 she stated that she was faced with "very challenging circumstances " when she and a colleague inspected them. If any concerns are identified then action can be taken,for instance to contact the RSPCA or Animal Health. But they often need police assistance to gain entry. By which time the circus has moved on, usually the longest period they remain in one spot in Wales is seven days. There has been only two successful prosecutions for animal cruelty in relation to animal circuses in England. Many think the constant traveling nature of a circus adds greatly to the issues of effective enforcement and successful prosecutions.

Public Opinion.

If I am honest I was a little unsure how the public would react to supporting this petition in relation to the all animals angle. I (Linda) collected nearly half the total of signatures submitted on paper form . At Bangor University's Freshers Fair this September, at Caernarfon Food Festival in April. The most common comment made by people was " I thought this had already been banned " together with " I don't see the difference between using wild animals and other animals in a circus " . People willingly and enthusiastically signed from all sections of the community, age and gender having no bearing on people's opinion in this matter.

In the recent consultation carried out by the Welsh Government 97% of respondents chose to answer only one question - that of banning the use of wild animals in circuses in Wales. However "**many respondents called for an all- animal ban, suggesting the welfare concerns of wild animals in these conditions would also apply to domestic animals. Similarly some argued that if a ban is on ' ethical grounds ', these should apply to all animals "**

*Page 15 Wild Animals in Traveling Circuses : Research Briefing National Assembly for Wales Senedd Research.

The Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths AM at the recent Climate Change and Environmental Committee meeting admitted that when an animal circus is touring Cymru her " post bag " is full of correspondence . All expressing concern that this practice is happening. Unlike the all human circuses, those circuses that use animals also encounter protesters outside their venues .

Economic benefit to Wales.

Traveling circuses are quite self contained operation's. They come with their show and crew already established and in place. They move from one venue to the other only staying in each venue Sunday to Sunday, with two shows daily from Wednesday until Saturday and one show on Sunday afternoon. A team goes ahead to the new area illegally putting up posters which is counted as fly posting. It's left to our already stretched and under funded local councils to remove these posters. They carry and sell their own merchandise, none of which is produced in Cymru. Non of it reflects our Welsh culture or makes any concession to our thriving Welsh Language.

I think one of the reasons Circus Mondeo tours Wales every year is because of our thriving tourist industry.

I have spoken to one of the major holiday cottage letting companies here in North Wales, who have been established for over forty years. One of their Directors stated " we often get asked by guests about our local attractions such as Zip World, Snowdonia Surf, Bodnant Gardens, Festival No 6 (when it took place) . The Welsh Highland Railway, various Food Festivals, the way people book our cottages can depend on the above . But we have never had any enquires in regards to animal circuses " .

In short the animal circuses come, make their money and go .

The traveling circus environment .

The need for the circus to be taken down and put up weekly, means that the animals are kept in temporary very sparse housing with little enrichment. The size of the vehicles they travel in are constricted by the size of our roads. The constant loading and unloading of the animals can often

put them at risk of injury. The traveling aspect of the business dictates everything, in the life of the animals and humans involved in traveling circuses.

The aspect of forced performance together with the " training " that makes this happen, are a great concern to many people.

I would say that this lifestyle - constantly " on the road " together with forced performance goes against the " five freedoms or welfare needs " as laid out by the Animal Welfare Act (England and Wales) 2006.

Freedom from hunger and thirst

Freedom from discomfort

Freedom from pain injury or disease

Freedom from fear and distress

Freedom to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

The response from Lesley Griffiths Cabinet Secretary for Environment Planning and Rural Affairs.

I am most grateful to Lesley for her response dated 24/09/19, which also clarified the Welsh Government's position. Lesley stated in regards to the use of wild animals " **it's ethically unacceptable and an out dated practice that has no place in a modern society** ".

We would agree with the above statement and see no reason why it cannot be extended to all animals.

In conclusion.

The subject of wild animals in circuses has long been debated within the Welsh Assembly and Government.

It could be argued that we could have led the way - set the standard in this matter. However two years after the Welsh Government announced that a ban would be brought forward, we are lagging behind the rest of the UK . With Scotland banning from May 2018, the Republic of Ireland January 2018 and England from January 2020.

With the current consultation this petition is very timely, and could be seen as breaking new ground. The purpose of this licensing system is one " **that requires that animals are exhibited in a way that encourages respectful and responsible attitudes towards all species** ". We struggle to see how this can be achieved.

Ethical grounds together with public opinion can clearly be demonstrated in regards to all animals used in circuses and traveling shows.

It's worth noting that several Members of the Welsh Assembly's Climate Change and Environmental Committee also expressed that opinion during their recent discussions in regards to the Wild Animals and Circuses

(Wales) Bill .

Should you require any more information we will try our very best to assist you .

Jayne Dendle - Swansea.

Kirsty John - Camarthan

Linda Joyce-Jones - Caernarfon

28/10/ 2019