

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue: REMOTE

For further information contact:

Committee Room 3 – Senedd

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

Meeting date: 7 February 2022

0300 200 6565

Meeting time: 14.00

Petitions@senedd.wales

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

(Pages 1 – 22)

2 Evidence session – P-06-1207 Start referring to Welsh cities and towns by their Welsh names – **has been postponed until 7 March**

(Page 23)

Aled Roberts, Welsh Language Commissioner.

3 New Petitions

3.1 P-06-1231 Introduce greener 'bee-friendly' bus stops across Wales

(Pages 24 – 31)

3.2 P-06-1234 The new Heads of the Valley road should not be restricted to 50 mph

(Pages 32 – 37)

3.3 P-06-1239 Cancel GCSE Exams in Wales

(Pages 38 – 44)

3.4 P-06-1241 Welsh government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers

(Pages 45 – 54)

3.5 P-06-1242 Improve Endometriosis Healthcare in Wales

(Pages 55 – 63)

3.6 P-06-1244 In remembrance of Aberfan, rename the George Thomas Hospital

(Pages 64 – 69)

3.7 P-06-1245 Diverse and equal representation in the Senedd

(Pages 70 – 71)



4 Updates to previous petitions

- 4.1 P-05-1010 An independent inquiry into the 2020 flooding in Rhondda Cynon Taf so that lessons are learned
(Pages 72 – 76)
- 4.2 P-05-1097 Ban game bird cages
(Pages 77 – 81)
- 4.3 P-05-1112 Help Welsh Communities Buy Community Assets: Implement Part 5 Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011
(Pages 82 – 84)
- 4.4 P-06-1201 Ban the shooting of critically endangered birds...give them the protection they so desperately need
(Pages 85 – 108)
- 4.5 P-06-1202 Ban the killing of day old chicks in Wales
(Pages 109 – 115)

Petitions that require no further action

- 4.6 P-06-1254 Demand that all depictions of our dragon have a penis
(Page 116)
- 4.7 P-06-1246 Drop the limit on outdoor gatherings and allow community events to continue
(Page 117)

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from item 6 of the meeting

6 Discussion of evidence – P-06-1207 Start referring to Welsh cities and towns by their Welsh names

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 2

P-06-1207 Start referring to Welsh cities and towns by their Welsh names

This petition was submitted by Madison Lorraine, having collected a total of 108 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The Senedd, and other bodies, should start using Welsh terms if they want to successfully increase the use of the Welsh language, they must set an example to others. Instead of referring to Caerdydd by its English given name, 'Cardiff', use its Welsh name instead. After all, speaking Welsh in Wales is no longer a crime – is it not?

“Do as I say, not as I do” it's time to lead by example.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Pontypridd
- South Wales Central

P-06-1231 Introduce greener 'bee-friendly' bus stops across Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | 7 February 2022

Reference: SR21/1434

Petition Number: P-06-1231

Petition title: Introduce greener 'bee-friendly' bus stops across Wales

Text of petition:

We are asking the Welsh Government to introduce greener 'bee-friendly' bus stops across Wales and to commit to making 10% of bus stops bee-friendly over the next five years.

1. Background

There is widespread concern in the UK and beyond about the status of pollinators, especially bees.

Bees and other pollinators are essential for maintaining biodiversity, supporting ecosystems and ultimately providing food security due to the pollination service they provide. The charity Buglife says "84% of EU crops (valued at £12.6 billion) and 80% of wildflowers rely on insect pollination", and "one out of every three mouthfuls of our food depends on pollinators".



There are more than 250 species of bee in the UK. Not all are in decline. However, Buglife's Wales Threatened Bee Report looked at the 26 bee species at greatest risk in the UK and which had been present in Wales. It found range contractions for the majority, 7 species already extinct and a further 5 are at high risk of extinction. Buglife says "bee losses are evident across the whole of Wales with some counties having lost as many as 10 species".

Wales is not alone. Estimates suggest 38% of bee and hoverfly species across Europe are in decline and only 12% increasing.

The decline in bee populations is attributed to a range of pressures. Buglife says pollinators face a 'perfect storm' of problems, including:

- the impact of climate change on weather patterns;
- intensive farming which fragments and isolates flower-rich habitat;
- loss of flower habitat due to urbanisation;
- 'sanitising' of the countryside;
- inappropriate tree planting; and
- loss of brownfield sites.

The Living With Environmental Change Partnership identifies a range of potential measures to address species loss including adapting publicly owned spaces to provide habitat.

In 2019 the City of Utrecht Council (the Netherlands), in collaboration with advertising agency Clear Channel, installed green roofs on 316 bus stops to create bee friendly spaces.

The concept has spread to the UK and globally. In April 2020 Cardiff announced plans to plant 10 bus stops, maintained by Clear Channel as part of its maintenance contract. Leicester has also implemented 'bee bus stops', again in contract with Clear Channel. Wider benefits such as management of rainfall and air quality are also suggested.

Senedd Action

In June 2021 the Senedd declared a nature emergency, and called for statutory targets to halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity.

Welsh Government action

The updated Programme for Government states the Welsh Government will embed its response to the nature emergency “in everything we do”.

While local authorities are responsible for the installation and maintenance of most bus stops, the Welsh Government is responsible for bus policy and provides funding to local authorities. Although most nature conservation legislation and policy are derived from international obligations, responsibility for nature conservation in Wales is devolved.

The Welsh Government updated its Nature Recovery Action Plan in 2020. It makes a range of commitments, including to embed biodiversity in decision-making; to safeguard species and habitats; increase the resilience of the natural environment by restoring and creating habitat; and tackling pressures on species and habitats.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 aims to promote the sustainable management of natural resources, and requires public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity and the types of habitat of principle importance for biodiversity in Wales.

A product of this Act, the Welsh Government’s Natural Resource Policy (NRP), includes a commitment to develop green infrastructure “at the heart of our communities” to provide spaces for nature. The transport section of the NRP (page 28) specifically aims to “integrate nature based solutions into the planning and development of new transport related infrastructure”.

The Welsh Government published its Action Plan for Pollinators in 2013. It identified actions to achieve 4 outcomes, including that “Wales provides diverse and connected flower rich habitats to support our pollinators”. The plan was reviewed and updated in 2018 by the Pollinator Task Force.

The March 2021 Wales Transport Strategy commits to “maintain and enhance biodiversity, and increase ecosystem resilience through transport operations and infrastructure projects”. It says:

In line with our Natural Resources Policy, we will maintain biodiversity and increase ecosystems resilience through the way we, and our partners, manage the soft estate associated with transport networks and in the design and delivery of transport interventions including upgrading infrastructure and new infrastructure schemes. We will also ensure that day-to-day transport operations maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

The Deputy Minister for Climate Change wrote to the Petitions Committee Chair about this petition on 13 January. The letter points to a range of actions being taken by the Welsh Government to promote biodiversity via transport and planning policy, as well as funding. Measures include the Green Corridors Programme initiated in 2018. The letter says “Some local authorities are starting to install bus shelters with ‘living roofs’ using the Welsh Government’s local transport fund”. It concludes:

In terms of the specific proposals and targets in the petition, as outlined above, whilst we don’t have a specific target in place in terms of bus shelters, we are working closely with our partners and communities in much broader terms to encourage greening of areas across Wales through a number of initiatives and this work will continue to be a significant priority for the Welsh Government.

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.

Lee Waters AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1231
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/12098/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru

13 January 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 5 November regarding the petition from the Rewilding Group, Climate Change Grand Committee, Cardiff University School of Law and Politics requesting the introduction of greener 'bee-friendly' bus stops in Wales.

As a Government, we are very supportive of green initiatives and are already making progress in relation to the greening of public transport stops and stations. Some local authorities are starting to install bus shelters with 'living roofs' using the Welsh Government's local transport fund. In December 2020, Transport for Wales was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant of £100,000 for a Green Routes Project via the Welsh Government's Local Places for Nature Scheme. The project will deliver biodiversity enhancements such as planters and wildlife boxes, and pilot fixed green features, for example walls and roofs, at 22 stations across Wales and five community areas.

As part of the mitigation and biodiversity enhancements for new road infrastructure projects, we have standard requirements for the introduction of wildflower areas. Under our 'Green Corridors' initiative, from 2018 to date, over 100 road verge improvement projects have been completed with over 5ha of new wildflower areas sown, supplemented by native bulb planting and 'plug' planting (young plants) such as Primroses, Cowslips and Scabious. We have also brought an additional circa 25ha of grassland into favourable management across the motorway and trunk road network, including reclaiming areas lost to invasive scrub. *In addition to this, within the recently published Wales Transport Strategy, we committed to examining and resetting our approach to biodiversity and are currently producing our own Biodiversity Plan for the trunk road and motorway network. This will build on the existing Green Corridors initiative and the previous Trunk road estate Biodiversity Action Plan and will aim to further embed biodiversity and climate change resilience in our decision-making and actions.*

There is also a role for the Planning system in securing some of the broader objectives that the petitioner is seeking. Our land use planning policy document, Planning Policy Wales, outlines that landscaping, green roofs, grass verges, sustainable urban drainage and gardens are examples of individual measures that can have wider cumulative benefits, particularly in relation to biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems as well as in securing the other desired environmental qualities of

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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.

places. Future Wales, our national development framework, published in February 2021, refers to the need to embed green infrastructure within design solutions and contains a dedicated policy on resilient ecological networks and green infrastructure.

We have asked local authorities to undertake Green Infrastructure Assessments. The Assessments are a positive means to delivering sustainable placemaking outcomes; understanding your 'patch' and identifying the opportunities available to deliver multiple benefits is 'good planning' and all authorities must undertake the Assessment. The Green Infrastructure Assessment can help authorities identify priorities for new green roofs and help integrate green infrastructure into new development proposals.

In terms of the specific proposals and targets in the petition, as outlined above, whilst we don't have a specific target in place in terms of bus shelters, we are working closely with our partners and communities in much broader terms to encourage greening of areas across Wales through a number of initiatives and this work will continue to be a significant priority for the Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

28th January 2022

Your ref P-06-1231

Ms. Kayleigh Imperato

Deputy Clerk, Petitions Committee, Welsh Parliament By email only Petitions@Senedd.Wales

Dear Ms Imperato

Thank you for forwarding the Deputy Minister's letter of 13th January 2022 to the Chair of the Petitions Committee, concerning the petition lodged by the students of Cardiff University School of Law and Politics Climate Change Grand Challenge Group on Rewilding, asking for 'bee friendly' bus stops - <https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/244863>.

Our thanks to the Committee for taking the time and trouble to consider and pursue the petition.

We welcome and are pleased to read in the Deputy Minister's letter of the commitments made recently by the Welsh Government, including many since the petition was initially lodged. Progress appears to be being made.

You ask if we have anything further to add to the consideration of the petition.

We would simply suggest that the sooner green infrastructure - whether that is green-roofed buildings and structures, 'wild' verges, permeable surfaces, SUDS or bee-friendly bus stops - becomes the 'norm', rather than the exception, or simply an 'add-on', so much the better.

We would perhaps encourage and support the use by Welsh Government of regulatory changes, as opposed to planning policy changes, to enable us all to be more certain that green infrastructure is indeed embedded, as the Deputy Minister suggests it needs to be.

We look forward to the results of the Green Infrastructure Assessment currently being conducted by local authorities, which we hope will identify the very many opportunities out there to roll out more green infrastructure, including bee-friendly bus stops.

More generally, Cardiff University's School of Law and Politics Climate Change Grand Challenge continues this academic year under a slightly different name - the Climate and Environment Project. This year students will be looking at three subject areas that they have selected - the electrification of transport in Wales, the making of land available for community tree planting in Wales and the



ease of re-use and recycling of packaging in Wales. We recognise that these are already areas of fast-moving change in Wales and we look forward to engaging further with Welsh Government over the next months and years.

Yours sincerely

Guy Linley-Adams

Lecturer in Law

Climate and Environment Project

P-06-1234 The new Heads of the Valleys road should not be restricted to 50 mph

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | 7 February 2022

Reference: SR21/1626/3

Petition Number: P-06-1234

Petition title:

The new Heads of the Valley road should not be restricted to 50 mph.

Text of petition:

The Welsh Government has spent £336m to improve the Heads of the Valley road which was previously restricted to 50mph. If the new road is also restricted to 50mph the £336m will have been completely wasted.

The works on the road have over run in terms of time and costs with regular users subject to years of delays and 40mph. The promise of improving speed of transit will be destroyed with a 50mph speed limit. As a new road the project will have been designed with good vision and all current safety measures. There is no justification for a 50mph limit



1. Background

The [Welsh Government website](#) explains that the existing A465 was built in the 1960s as a single carriageway with three lanes. It indicates that a 1990 study identified the need to improve this road as the width restricted traffic flow and opportunities for safe overtaking.

Detailed scheme development was undertaken following a public consultation in 1994. The road between Abergavenny and Hirwaun is being upgraded to dual carriageway, with the route divided into 6 separate projects, or 'sections'.

The petition refers to section 2 of the route – Gilwern to Brynmawr. [The scheme is described in the Stage 3 WelTag report](#) published in 2013 as extending for 8.1km from west of the Intermediate Road Bridge to immediately west of the Glanbaiden Junction. The new road would be a dual carriageway with two lanes in each direction.

The [Welsh government website](#) sets out a range of expected aims and benefits including reducing congestion and queuing during peak times, and improving connectivity and journey times.

These [scheme plans](#) provide maps of section 2.

2. Welsh Government action

Historical information

Information was published from 2013 which set out that this section of the Heads of the Valleys road would be restricted to 50mph.

This includes the [stage 3 WelTag report](#) which states that due to the constrained nature of the gorge, the hardstrips and verges are narrower than would normally be expected for a road of this nature and the alignment includes tighter bends:

This layout combined with the need to minimise the air quality impacts of the road on the surrounding ecological sites requires that the whole length of the scheme would be subject to a mandatory 50mph speed limit which would be monitored and enforced.

In the [same document](#), the engineers assessment describes how the scheme had been designed taking into account all relevant national and local planning policies, plans and standards:

The Design Speed of the scheme is 85kph (50 mph), however, there would be some Departures from Standards in terms of highway geometry to reduce the impact on the environment.

In addition, the [planning inspector's report](#) on the scheme (published in 2014) also states within the section 'The Case for the Welsh Government - Proposed Road' that:

...there would be departures from normal engineering standards, the main mitigation to which would be a 50mph speed limit imposed on the road.

Current progress

Welsh Government publishes [information on current progress](#) and the scheme timetable on its website as well as [this update from February 2021](#) published under the previous administration.

In order to implement the 50mph speed limit a [Statutory Instrument](#) was made on 28th October. In its [Statement of Reasons](#) the Welsh Government states that the limit is:

...in the interest of road safety and meets the engineering design of the improved road. The new road alignment is designed to reduce the road's impact on environmentally sensitive designated sites and complies with environmental legislation specifically the Habitats Directive 92/43/EC.

In a January letter from the Deputy Minister to the Chair of the Petitions Committee, he notes that the draft Order was published on 10 June 2021. Thirty one objections were received and considered but these did not provide any new information that would enable the speed limit to be safely increased from the 50mph speed limit.

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Ein cyf/Our ref LW/12307/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

13 January 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 25 November regarding petition P-06-1234 the new Heads of the Valley road should not be restricted to 50 mph.

As you will be aware, we have been carrying out improvements to the A465 trunk road between Gilwern and Brynmawr, known as Section 2. The improvements are in accordance with orders made under the Highways Act 1980 following a public inquiry held in 2014 which considered the scheme in detail. The report of the Inspector who conducted the inquiry can be found on our website at:

[A465 Gilwern to Brynmawr: planning inspectors report | GOV.WALES](#)

The constraints of the A465 Section 2 corridor required a scheme that balanced the need to minimise the impact on the environment and delivery of economic benefits. As a result, the road has been designed and constructed on the basis that it would be subject to a 50mph speed limit. There are physical constraints to raising the speed limit above 50mph and the inspector noted at the inquiry that the scheme involved departures from normal engineering standards, the main mitigation to which would be a 50mph speed limit imposed on the road.

Consultation on the A465 Section 2 scheme's 50mph enforced speed limit was agreed with Local Authorities, GoSafe, Gwent Police, Road Safety Support Limited and was also presented at the Public Local Inquiry. No objections were received from statutory consultees or members of the public on this particular element.

The draft Order was published on 10 June 2021. Thirty one objections were received which I fully considered but I did not see anything in the letters of objection, or in any of the papers before, that would enable the speed limit within the designed and constructed constraints to be safely increased from the 50mph speed limit.

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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.

The new road has been operational, utilising the 50mph limit with two lanes in each direction, since 21 November 2021.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', is positioned above the typed name. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long vertical stroke at the beginning.

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

Cancel GCSE Exams in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | 7 February 2022

Reference: SR22/1851

Petition Number: P-06-1239

Petition title: Cancel GCSE Exams in Wales

There is uncertainty around the cancellation of exams. This adds extra stress to learners who haven't had a full year of education since 2019! By having Centre Assessed Grades, students will feel more secure. The mental health and well-being of students should be the first priority in this decision making process. Sign this petition now and help Year 10 and 11 reach their full potentials and get the grades they deserve.



1. Examinations in 2020

In March 2020, Kirsty Williams, then Minister for Education announced that the 2020 summer GCSE and A level exam series would not proceed. Learners were to be awarded a 'fair grade', 'drawing on the range of information available'. Learners grades were to be awarded on the basis of information that schools and colleges submitted to WJEC. The initial plan was for those grades to be 'standardised' using WJEC standardisation models, approved by the regulator, Qualifications Wales. This approach was changed on 12 August 2020. Those who were due to sit their A levels were automatically be awarded the same grade they achieved in their AS-Level, if it was higher than that calculated by WJEC. A further change was announced on 17 August and grades were awarded on the basis of the information that schools and colleges had submitted.

2. Examinations in 2021

On 10 November 2020, Kirsty Williams announced that there would be no end of year examinations in 2021. On 20 January 2021, she announced that learners would have their GCSE, AS and A level qualifications awarded through a **Centre Determined Grade** model. This meant that grades would be determined by schools and colleges (centres) based on their assessment of learners' work. Centres used a range of evidence, including non-exam assessments, mock exams and classwork, to judge a pupil's "demonstrated attainment" and award them an appropriate grade.

3. November 2021 examinations

GCSE examinations in November 2021 proceeded as usual prior to the pandemic. November exams are generally taken by those who are resitting GCSEs in order to obtain a better grade. There are also 'early entry' candidates who may take some exams before the end of the school year. These candidates have an opportunity to sit the exam again in the summer examination series. A limited number of subjects are available in the November series compared to the summer series. In November 2021, reformed GCSEs in Mathematics, Mathematics – Numeracy, English Language and Welsh Language were taken by learners in Wales.

4. Summer examination series 2022

In March 2021, [Qualifications Wales announced](#) that there would be exams in summer 2022. They confirmed this again on [5 January 2022](#) stating that any decision to cancel would be made by the Welsh Government.

Qualifications Wales said that the assessment requirements for WJEC GCSE, AS and A levels, Skills Challenge Certificate **qualifications would be adapted to recognise the impact of lost face-to-face teaching** and learning time during the pandemic. Qualifications Wales have also said that if there are further substantial periods of disruption that results in the cancellation of future exam series, **contingency arrangements** will be put in place. – these would be similar to those for 2021 but refined following lessons learned – [guidance](#) was published in November 2021.

The Welsh Government have said repeatedly that their intention is that exams go ahead this year. At the [Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister](#) (16 December 2021), the First Minister explained the reasons why the Welsh Government wanted exams to go ahead:

- **Parity with the rest of the UK** – for those applying for a university place outside Wales, the qualification should have equal status with learners in other jurisdictions who also plan to hold to hold exams this summer.
- **Equity** – using the system in place for summer 2021, the performance of young men from working-class backgrounds fell back.

The First Minister said

‘truthfully, that is at least partly a reflection of the assessment method. Young people from those backgrounds do better in exams; they often exceed the expectations of their teachers, and exams give them the opportunity to do that, and, for reasons of equity, we want to go back to an element of exams, because we think it will help young people from those backgrounds to show what they can do’.

Qualifications Wales published their [Equalities Analysis of General Qualifications in Summer 2021](#) in October 2021.

In October 2021, Qualifications Wales [announced their approach to grading](#), that 2022 would be a transition year to reflect that it is a pandemic recovery period and learners’ education has been disrupted. In 2022 they will aim, for exam results

to reflect broadly a midway point between 2021 and 2019. In 2023 they will aim to return to results that are in line with those in pre-pandemic years.

5. Welsh Government Action

On 15 December the Minister for Education and Welsh Language announced funding of £24m to support learners impacted by the pandemic. Of this, £7.5m is to provide **extra support for learners in exam years**, with additional teaching time and learning resources - to help learners to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence, as well as supporting those who feel anxious about exams. The funding will be weighted towards schools with greater numbers of learners who receive free school meals. Over £7m will go towards supporting learners whose attendance has dropped during the pandemic. Dedicated support will be provided to support Year 11 pupils who have low attendance to complete their GCSEs or help them reach the next stage in their education or in starting a career, as well as support for pupils in other years. Funding will also be provided to support well-being and education for learners at Pupil Referrals Units.

In a Cabinet Statement on 25 January 2022, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language said:

I wish to reiterate to learners, schools and colleges that exams and assessments this year will go ahead, unless the public health situation makes it impossible for them to physically run – which we do not envisage. The intention to adjust grade boundaries to reflect disruption has already been set out. Adaptations to exam content have been put in place as well as prior notification of areas of examination, so that assessments are as fair as possible, and which will enable teachers to focus their time on the key areas for learning [...] I encourage all learners in exam years to talk to their schools and colleges about what additional support and flexibility might be available this year, to help them progress with confidence.

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.



Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/12005/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
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5 January 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter dated 13 December drawing my attention to Petition P-06-1239 Cancel GCSE Exams in Wales which you have received from Ms Millie Rae.

I understand the concerns that Ms Rae has raised, given the disruption to teaching and learning there has been over the last eighteen months and the challenging start there has been to the autumn term. I would like to reassure Ms Rae that supporting learner wellbeing and progression are my key priorities and will continue to be at the heart of the qualifications arrangements in 2022.

On 16 December I made a statement outlining a comprehensive £24m funding package to support learners in exam years. This package will ensure every young person in qualifications years will be able to access practical support or advice to help them so they can look forward to the next step of their life, whether that be in education, training or employment.

As I explained in my statement, I believe exams are the fairest way to provide qualifications, particularly in the wider UK context where it is essential that our young people are on a level playing field with their counterparts in other parts of the UK for university admissions. Importantly, exams are primarily scheduled at the end of the school year which increases the time for learning and preparation.

I understand that some learners may feel anxious at the prospect of sitting formal exams for the first time next summer, so I would particularly like to note that there will be £7.5m to provide extra support for learners in exam years, with additional teaching time and resources. In addition to this WJEC's website has a [wide range of resources](#) to support learning and preparation for exams, including knowledge organisers, blended learning and exam walk-throughs.

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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.

To ensure learners were not disadvantaged by the disruption to teaching and learning, adaptations have been made to individual subjects by the WJEC, in consultation with teachers and subject specialists. These were confirmed to schools and colleges before the end of the summer term to facilitate planning for the autumn term. The detail of these [adaptations to assessments are published](#) and include adjustments to non-examination assessments (NEA), streamlining assessment content and in some cases, the removal of a whole unit. In light of the continuing disruption, WJEC has also recently announced further adaptations to help young people prepare for exams, which provide advance information on exam topics for a number of additional subjects.

To complement this exam year focussed support, further education colleges and sixth forms will be provided with £9.5m to support young people with their transition into the next stage of their education or career and for activities such as taster sessions into vocational careers and open days, as well as a continuation of the University Ready hub in partnership with the Open University and universities in Wales. This was developed in response to the pandemic last year to help learners moving to university prepare and it is a free, open access hub providing a wealth of materials that will help students heading to university for the first time to get '[University Ready](#)'.

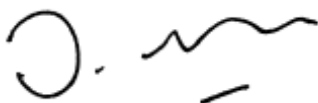
Whilst the intention is to hold the summer exam series, learning from previous experience and acknowledging the continued unpredictable nature of the pandemic, Qualifications Wales has provided advice to schools and colleges about [contingency arrangements](#) should the public health situation mean exams cannot safely be held.

I note that Ms Rae has emphasised the importance of our learners' mental health and wellbeing, an issue I take very seriously, and so I would also like to highlight the helpful resources we have available in our [Young Persons Mental Health Toolkit](#) which can be found on our Hwb pages.

Finally, I would like to reassure Ms Rae that I meet regularly with Qualifications Wales to discuss these matters and will continue to work closely with them to monitor the public health situation. Together we will ensure that learners in Wales are not disadvantaged and that those taking qualifications this year can continue to have confidence both in the qualifications arrangements but also the wider support that is being provided to support their progression.

I hope the Petitions Committee finds the above helpful and thank you once again for drawing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Welsh Government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | 7 February 2022

Reference: SR22/1851-3

Petition Number: P-06-1241

Petition title: Welsh Government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers

Text of petition: Please sign the petition and ask the Welsh Government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers and listen to our stories. We want the Welsh Government to meet regularly with carers outside of the carer organisations and committees. The aim of these meetings would be to give carers a voice, a chance to share their concerns and for the Welsh Government to hear the real stories of carers on the ground.

We deserve the right to have our voices heard. Unpaid carers have been ignored for too long and even more so during the pandemic. For example, the Welsh Government stated that they couldn't find any examples of services being stopped during the pandemic, but actual carers on the ground know that services were stopped and still haven't be restarted.

We're asking that relevant Minister to meet with us so we can help shape future policies to ensure a better future for unpaid carers living in Wales.



1. Background

Carers Trust Wales refers to an unpaid carer as anyone who provides unpaid care for someone who is ill, older, has a disability, has mental health concerns or has addiction issues. The type of care can include physical, emotional and financial support, cooking, cleaning and medical intervention on a periodic or daily basis.

According to Carers Wales, the number of unpaid carers rose from one in six to over a one fifth of the population in Wales during the pandemic, which is an estimated 683,000 carers.

2. Third sector action

There are third sector organisations supporting and representing carers in Wales, including, as referred to above, Carers Wales, and Carers Trust Wales.

One relevant project being run jointly by Carers Trust Wales and Carers Wales is Carer Aware, which is funded by the Welsh Government. Carers Trust Wales and Carers Wales work collaboratively with unpaid carers, social care and health professionals to 'better empower unpaid carers to be actively involved in decisions and services for the people they care for and themselves'.

The Wales Carers Alliance (an alliance of charities that aims to uphold the rights of unpaid carers and champion the voice of carers across Wales), published a manifesto for the 2021 Senedd election, which set out six priorities for carers. One of the priorities relates to working in partnership with carers and states that the Welsh Government 'must ensure carers are empowered to meaningfully co-produce national policies and local/regional services'. Further details on this priority are provided in the manifesto.

3. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government published its Strategy for unpaid carers in March 2021, which sets out what the Welsh Government will do to improve the recognition of and support to unpaid carers. A Strategy for unpaid carers: delivery plan 2021 was then published in November 2021.

In correspondence to the Committee on 5 January 2022, the Deputy Minister for Social Services notes that she welcomes hearing the views of unpaid carers and

looks to meet with them wherever possible. An example is given of meetings held with unpaid carers on Carers' Rights Day on 25 November 2021.

In relation to more formal engagement with carers, the Deputy Minister refers to the **Carers' Ministerial Advisory Group** (MAG), which has provided information and advice to Ministers. The group meets at least four times each year with members including statutory bodies such as local authorities and health boards, the independent Commissioners, Social Care Wales, Public Health Wales, national carers' organisations, young people's organisations and officials.

The MAG assisted the Welsh Government in developing the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and the Delivery Plan.

The Deputy Minister also highlights that since 2019 the Welsh Government has funded Carers Trust Wales to support a **Carers Engagement Group** which enables the Welsh Government to engage directly with unpaid carers, social care and health sector professionals. Members of the group worked with MAG members and officials on both the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and the Delivery Plan. One specific group is continuing to work with the Welsh Government to co-produce a new Carers' Charter which aims to be launched in early 2022.

The Carers Engagement Group is undergoing a review of its remit, and the Deputy Minister notes that this will enable it to support wider engagement with carers as the Welsh Government takes forward the actions in the Delivery Plan. This will include the addition of young carers to the group. A decision will be made in early 2022 on the new format for the refreshed Carers Engagement Group.

Funding has been provided for Carers Wales to host a **5 day Carers' Summit** in February 2022, which will involve a series of discussion sessions for carers, concluding with an expert panel question and answer session which the Deputy Minister will be attending and observing.

In relation to the petitioner, the Deputy Minister states:

I wish to assure both him and the committee that whether or not a carer is linked with any government or formal network, their views are equally valued and important.

4. Welsh Parliament action

In November 2019, the Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee published its [report](#) on its inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers of all ages in Wales.

The Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee also published a [report](#) into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social care sector and unpaid carers in March 2021.

The Sixth Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee ran a consultation on [priorities for the Sixth Senedd](#) between July and September 2021. This asked for views on initial priorities identified by the Committee, and other key priorities the Committee should consider in relation to health services, social care and carers, and COVID recovery. The Committee received 139 responses.

The increasing pressure on unpaid carers was acknowledged in a large number of responses. A range of issues were highlighted, including the need for emotional and mental health support, lack of breaks/respice, Welsh-medium support for carers, and the accessibility of information and advice online, particularly for older people.

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.

Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1241
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/10671/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

5 January 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 13th December where you set out the petition from Mike O'Brien asking Welsh Government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers. Responsibility for unpaid carers sits within my portfolio and I am pleased to say that I continue to welcome hearing the views of unpaid carers and look to meet with them wherever possible.

On 25th November - Carers' Rights Day - I had the opportunity to meet virtually with two groups of unpaid carers, one from Swansea and one from Powys. The carers very kindly talked openly about their circumstances but also offered their thoughts as to what can be improved, and what they see as being the critical issues affecting them during the pandemic.

With regards to more formal engagement with carers, since 2018 the Carers' Ministerial Advisory group has provided information and advice to ministers. It meets at least four times each year with members including statutory bodies such as local authorities and health boards, the independent Commissioners, Social Care Wales, Public Health Wales, national carers' organisations, young people's organisations and officials. The group played a vital role in helping us to develop the Strategy for Unpaid Carers published in March of this year, as well as the recently launched Delivery Plan.

Alongside the MAG, since 2019 we have funded Carers Trust Wales to support a Carers Engagement group which enables us to engage directly with unpaid carers, social care and health sector professionals. Members of the group have worked with the MAG members and officials on both the strategy and delivery plan. One specific group is continuing to work with us to co-produce a new Carers' Charter which we aim to launch in early 2022.

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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.

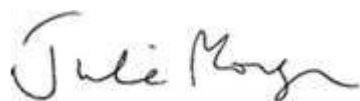
Following recent discussions and feedback the Engagement group is now undergoing a review of its remit so that it will support wider engagement with carers as we take forward the actions in the Delivery Plan. This will include the addition of young carers to the group. I was pleased to accept the recommendation from the Children's Commissioner's annual report which called for the Welsh Government to have more direct engagement with young carers. We will be looking to build on previous work such as the carers' engagement week sessions held in October 2020 examining a range of different topics for example, communication between carers and social care staff, what affects older carers or parent carers. A decision will be made in early 2022 on the new format for the refreshed Engagement group.

Following the success of the two day Carers Summit held in early 2021, we have provided funding via our Sustainable Social Services Third Sector grant scheme for Carers Wales to host a 5 day Carers' Summit in February 2022. Expanded from last year, it will involve a series of discussion sessions for carers, concluding with an expert panel question and answer session which I will be attending and observing. I have also asked officials to identify suitable opportunities for me to meet again with young carers in early 2022.

I appreciate Mike O'Brien taking the time to create this petition and his previous correspondence to me asking for the voices of unpaid carers to be heard. I wish to assure both him and the committee that whether or not a carer is linked with any government or formal network, their views are equally valued and important. I have asked my officials in Social Services and Integration Directorate to put him in contact with Carers Trust Wales so that he, and the carers he represents, can discuss the refreshed engagement group and framework.

On a final point, with the publication of the new Carers' Delivery Plan setting out a range of actions for government, the third and public sectors, it remains vital that we continue to proactively engage with carers to better understand their needs and involve them in identifying and developing solutions.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services

**P-06-1241 Welsh government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers,
Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 31.01.22**

To whom it may concern,

Whilst I appreciate Julie Morgan has asked her officials to put me in touch with Carers Trust Wales re the Carers Engagement Group I feel I need to inform you that as of yet I have not heard anything from either her officials or Carers Trust Wales in respect of this. However, this is not what I was aiming to achieve with the petition. My hope is that something along the lines of what we had with Joel James and Heledd Fychan last year (but on a larger scale) could be set up on a regular basis where carers are invited to meet with Ministers or their officials to discuss carer related issues without the need to be a member of a group or carers organisation. I'd like to thank both Joel and Heledd for agreeing to such a meeting and for taking the time to hear our concerns and this is something I'd like to repeat with members of the Welsh government, Julie Morgan or their officials.

I understand the need for the Ministerial Advisory group and their roles in advising Ministers and as such would also be happy if unpaid carers were given the opportunity to talk with them without the need for a carers organisation to be present at the time.

From past consultations we've seen that these fail to reach as wide a group of unpaid carers as possible and for many it can be difficult to find the time to complete the consultation. However, given a date in advance for the opportunity to discuss such consultations or other issues would provide a greater opportunity to make alternative care arrangements and take part in such a meeting.

We are all aware that social care right across the UK is at a crisis point due to the pandemic, Brexit and staff shortages, so now it's more important than ever that the Welsh Government listen to and engage with unpaid carers as we're being asked to take on even more and even give up careers to relieve the pressure on social care. Health boards are also stating that people entering into unpaid care roles will be entitled to claim Carers Allowance. This may well be true, but only a small percentage can actually claim. For example, a person who has reached pension age and is claiming State Pension or a full time student would not be eligible. Health boards are also not making people aware of the financial, physical and mental impacts of entering into a full time caring role

At press briefings during the pandemic minister's repeatedly stated that the Social Services and Wellbeing Act for Wales was working and it was also stated by ministers that there hadn't been any evidence of the suspension or closure of services at any time during the pandemic and multiple lockdowns. Had they engaged with unpaid carers they would have known that this simply wasn't true and that services had been suspended. For example, parents of disabled children often rely on the child's school to provide additional support and services which was impossible while schools were closed. Respite services were also closed during the pandemic meaning that many carers haven't had any breaks from their caring roles for at least the past two years. Many carers also feel that the SSWB simply isn't working as intended and that ministers are only hearing part of the story or being told what others think they want to hear rather than being shown the bigger picture or told the whole story.

Disabled children were also meant to be given priority places at school along with the children of key workers during the lockdowns. However, for many disabled children this simply didn't happen and meant that they missed out on education, support and therapy they would have normally received at school. For many of these children home schooling simply wasn't an option and they needed to be in an education setting in order to continue with their learning and various therapies. This simply can't be allowed to happen again and had the Welsh Government engaged with the parent carers of disabled children they would have known what was really happening.

Unpaid carers are much more than just somebody to do the shopping, make cups of tea and provide emotional support. Many provide nursing level care and much more with little to know support and we have a great deal of lived experience and knowledge of what is needed. It's this lived experience and knowledge that need to be heard by the Welsh government in greater numbers rather than just from the select few.

The following is comments from another unpaid carer and my comments above also include comments from others. No names are provided as all wish to remain anonymous.

Although the Carer's Trust claims to speak for carers in Wales, I feel that they are an added layer of bureaucracy acting as a gatekeeper between the authentic voices of those currently engaged in full-time caring.

Many of the activities and social events are dominated by those who are not currently in a direct caring role, such as those whose cared for are in residential accommodation. Whilst it is difficult to argue that they have no needs, they are not dealing with day-to-day procedures.

Letters that are sent to the Senedd go unanswered or are answered in such a peremptory fashion that it is clear that they are not viewed as important.

We wish to have a better voice, one that is unmediated by professional bodies and request that you consider alternative methods of speaking to those with access to power - even an online open letter system would be preferable to the current situation.

Much information offered is irrelevant or uninformed, so that Health Boards are requesting that people take on increasing responsibility for family members who are well but require support. This is being done without an understanding that caring is a massive financial as well as a social burden and the current care system is at the point of collapse.

We have experienced a 50% cut in care hours and are also providing additional cover for staff absences. Whilst unavoidable, it is also not acceptable. It is having a marked effect on our physical and mental health.

We are not prioritised by other services such as health services and dental care, so access to essential medications has proved difficult. Many GP receptionists are unaware of the significance of having a carer's representative. In our own surgery, when we asked to speak to the Carer Rep, their response was one of confusion and irritation at us.

Other services have been cut so that ministers have shown themselves to be complacent - possibly because the larger carer organisations are unwilling to criticise their paymasters.

There is little recognition of the highly skilled nature of care work - many care workers are exceptional, but respite requires additional training because many needy and vulnerable people can present with challenging behaviours.

We have witnessed a very marked decline in our son's confidence and skills as essential services such as access to leisure centres, outdoor

activities, social opportunities and activities have all been subject to Covid restrictions.

Money that is being allocated to the needs of carers appears to be spent on computer access and technicians as it is cheaper to do that than provide services. Websites are no better for all of the money that is spent.

Carers are at breaking point and it's only the knowledge that local service provision is generally unreliable, inappropriate and incompetent that is keeping many carers going.

We need a more authentic voice because carer's organisations are not representative of all carers.

Improve Endometriosis Healthcare in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | February 2022

Reference: SR22/1851-4

Petition Number: P-06-1242

Petition title: Improve Endometriosis Healthcare in Wales

Text of petition: Endometriosis devastates the lives of women and their families living in Wales with 1 in 10 suffering with the condition. The cause of endometriosis is unknown, there is no cure, the average diagnosis time is currently 8.5 years and there's a 6 year waiting list for treatment on the NHS.

The demonstrable lack of understanding of the condition is detrimentally impacting society at all levels. Funding therefore needs to be prioritised to ensure equality of healthcare in Wales.

More details

[A report commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2018](#) highlighted how big a problem we're facing with resources being wasted and harm currently being caused to individuals suffering with Endometriosis. Despite the findings showing impacts on healthcare, education, economic, financial and social levels within society, most recommendations haven't been adopted, and in many areas things have instead worsened for sufferers of Endometriosis.



1. Background

Endometriosis is a disease where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows elsewhere in the body. Endometriosis is a disease affecting 1 in 10 women. Common symptoms include chronic pelvic pain, painful periods, pain during or after sex, painful urination and bowel movements, fatigue and infertility.

There are long waiting times for endometriosis care in Wales. Endometriosis UK say that those needing specialist care, such as complex surgery at an endometriosis specialist centre are in some cases being told they will now wait for several years for that surgery.

Long waits for surgery can have a negative impact on quality of life including ongoing chronic pain and debilitating symptoms that leave some unable to work.

2. Welsh Government action

Following a [report](#) by the charity Fair Treatment for the Women in Wales (FTWW) on endometriosis care in Wales, the Chief Executive of NHS Wales established a Task and Finish to review endometriosis services.

The Endometriosis Task and Finish Group submitted its [report](#) to the Welsh Government in 2018. It concluded that service provision for women and girls with endometriosis was not meeting their needs, resulting in insufficient access to appropriate care across Wales.

In her letter to the Petitions Committee, the Minister for Health and Social Services, Eluned Morgan MS says “I am aware that, in spite of efforts to change things, there can still be a lack of understanding of endometriosis among some health professionals and that current provision sometimes falls short of what we, and service users, might expect”.

Health boards have a responsibility for the delivery of gynaecology services and for the management of endometriosis care in accordance with [NICE guidance](#).

The Minister explains in her letter; “Welsh Government officials wrote to health boards in August 2018 seeking assurance that services were being delivered in line

with the NICE guidance on endometriosis and all health boards confirmed compliance”.

The Welsh Government’s Women’s Health Implementation Group (WHIG) has been allocated £1m a year to support its activities, including working with health boards to improve endometriosis care. The Minister says this includes “the recruitment of a network of specialist endometriosis nurses in each health board to develop national pathways to help to reduce diagnostic times across Wales and again ensure women with the condition are fully supported whilst awaiting or undergoing treatment”.

3. Welsh Parliament action

During the Fifth Senedd, endometriosis was debated in the Senedd; led by the then Chair of the Cross Party Group for Women’s Health, Jenny Rathbone MS. In his response to the debate (which took place on 14 October 2020), the former Health Minister Vaughan Gethin MS said that “services in Wales were not acceptable” and committed to writing to all health boards to seek assurances that endometriosis care would be prioritised.

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.



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1242
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/14731/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

18 January 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 13 December regarding Petition P-06-1242 Improve Endometriosis Healthcare in Wales.

I understand endometriosis is a condition which affects a significant number of women and, as the petition from Ms Hales highlights, the impact on quality of life can be huge and diagnosis can take a significant period of time. I am also aware that, in spite of efforts to change things, there can still be a lack of understanding of endometriosis among some health professionals and that current provision sometimes falls short of what we, and service users, might expect.

Health boards have a responsibility to deliver high quality gynaecology services and it is vital they provide a robust and effective pathway, which includes early diagnosis, for the management of endometriosis in accordance with NICE guidance. The NICE guidance provides a clear pathway which lists the symptoms of endometriosis and directs healthcare professionals as to when a woman should be referred to a gynaecology service for an ultrasound or gynaecology opinion. Welsh Government officials wrote to health boards in August 2018 seeking assurance that services were being delivered in line with the NICE guidance on endometriosis and all health boards confirmed compliance.

The Women's Health Implementation Group (WHIG) was set up in March 2018 as a ministerially-directed group to consider reports into the use of synthetic tape and mesh sheets for stress urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse, endometriosis and fecal incontinence. Since its establishment, WHIG has been allocated £1m a year to support its activities. This funding has been used to establish a network of pelvic health and wellbeing coordinators in each health board, who are already playing a vital role in addressing interlinking issues across areas of women's pelvic health and supporting women and sign posting them to appropriate services, including physiotherapy and pain management where appropriate.

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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.

More recently it has also allowed for the recruitment of a network of specialist endometriosis nurses in each health board to develop national pathways to help to reduce diagnostic times across Wales and again ensure women with the condition are fully supported whilst awaiting or undergoing treatment. The WHIG has continued to work with health boards to ensure the endometriosis nurse resource is was fully introduced and a Community of Practice is established across Wales.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

P-06-1242 Improve Endometriosis Healthcare in Wales – Correspondence from the petitioner, 28 January 2022

Good Afternoon,

Many thanks for your e-mail and I really appreciate the Petitions Committee taking the time to consider my petition on 7th February.

I have read the attached response from Eluned Morgan MS and this continues to inadequately address the issues that I'm raising.

My thoughts on the attached document are as follows:

- I have previously received similar responses from the Health Minister's office since I first started asking for her help with this issue in July 2021. Unfortunately, the responses continue to provide out-of-date and incorrect information whilst ignoring the questions I've been trying to raise.
- *The questions that I'm looking to raise are as follows:*
 1. *NHS waitlists are currently in excess of 5 years for endometriosis treatment. What element of the £140m pledged by the health minister on 19/08/2021 for tackling NHS waitlist backlogs in Wales will be allocated to help reduce this?*
 2. *Accredited endometriosis specialists have recently been reduced from 3 to 2 for the whole of Wales (rather than being increased to 6 as the Government's 2018 report recommended it should be to ensure Wales are offering the same standard of treatment as the rest of the UK). What are the timescales for increasing the number of endometriosis specialists?*
 3. *As there are currently no endometriosis specialists outside of Cardiff, what plans do the Welsh Government have to ensure equal access to endometriosis healthcare regardless of geographic location within Wales moving forwards? I'm aware that endometriosis nurses have recently been recruited to each of the 7 Health Boards which will of course ensure some degree of equity in terms of that support. However, with sufficiently skilled surgeons and multi-disciplinary teams inaccessible to most patients, how can the nurses alone support the number of patients affected and how can they make referrals if there are no specialist surgeons or centres to take them?*

4. *With UHW currently having the only fully-accredited specialist centre for endometriosis in Wales, are there plans to develop similar facilities in other Health Boards and if so what are the timescales for this? And are there plans to take forward recent recommendations from a third sector coalition for a new NHS Executive who would have sufficient statutory powers to mandate all 7 Health Boards, ensuring they can work together in the best interests of patients (similar to the process with fertility treatment where funds follow the patient due to the involvement of WHSSC) and help end entrenched postcode lotteries in Wales?*

- A Welsh Government Report commissioned in 2018 highlighted how big a problem we're facing and found that a lack of access to appropriate care had resulted in "non-prudent use of resources and waste and harm for individuals and service providers". Despite these findings, the recommendations which would have the biggest impact still haven't been implemented and in many areas the situation has instead worsened. The report also highlights that there are "disparities in care and choice offered to patients living in England compared to those in Wales" as we should have six endometriosis specialists in order to level-up with the current provisions available in the other home nations. Wales's sole endometriosis facility is "inadequately funded" and the current "financial situation is unsustainable", so there is a clear message from the report that additional resources are urgently required to ensure NHS Wales starts meeting NICE quality standards. This information from the 2018 report, as well as my more recent experiences as a patient, contradicts the Health Minister's suggestion that NICE guidance is being complied with. I'd suggest that a lot has happened since 2018 and it may be prudent for the Health Minister to check again with Health Boards, especially considering the situation has deteriorated hugely over the last 4 years.
- It's excellent news that pelvic health co-ordinators and specialist endometriosis nurses have been recruited, however I refer you to question 3 above. I was diagnosed with endometriosis in 2015 and I'm still awaiting an appointment with the Cardiff and Vale endometriosis nurse. Also two of the three surgeries I've had to undergo for endometriosis had to be done privately due to the ever increasing NHS waitlist times (2 years in 2015 and 6 years in 2021). This ongoing increase isn't surprising considering patients only have access to two specialists in Wales, both of whom are based in UHW

Cardiff. Therefore although this recent recruitment in all 7 Health Boards is much needed progress, if the issues relating to all aspects of the patient pathway aren't addressed (such as specialist consultants being recruited) then this alone won't solve the problem and will instead create a bottleneck of patients and further increase waiting list backlogs;

- It hasn't been mentioned in the Health Minister's response (which I'm surprised at), but in October 2020 Jenny Rathbone MS proposed a motion that the Senedd should recognise the devastating impact of endometriosis, acknowledge the diagnostic delay, make menstrual wellbeing education mandatory for all Welsh pupils, and ensure that more endometriosis specialists are trained and accessible to patients across Wales. Despite the motion being unanimously agreed, the position in Wales hasn't improved for the majority of patients and due to this lack of action endometriosis care is now in crisis in Wales. We've lost a specialist and there are no plans to replace him, referrals are being rejected (against NICE guidance), and patients are being forced to take out loans to pay privately for treatment if they're not able to wait up to seven-and-a-half years for the surgery they need. The system was near breaking point before the pandemic, but now it has been completely decimated.
- If the situation is left to deteriorate any further then all patients could be left without access to specialist endometriosis treatment in Wales, unless they have private healthcare. I therefore believe that if the Welsh Government want to fulfil their pledge of being a Feminist Government and meet their responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, they have to address this issue urgently and give it the full attention and understanding it deserves for the nearly 6,000 people who signed this petition, for the (minimum) 10% of women who suffer with endometriosis and for all the women of Wales who deserve to have healthcare equality.

I really need your help in ensuring the Welsh Government urgently act upon the recommendations and promises that have already been made, especially as the Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee has made 'Women's Health' one of its top priorities for this Senedd term.

Many thanks and best wishes,

Beth Hales

The committee may also find the following links and attached documents useful when considering the petition:

- Link to the Welsh Government Endometriosis Task and Finish Group Report 2018
- <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/endometriosis-care-in-wales-provision-care-pathway-workforce-planning-and-quality-and-outcome-measures.pdf>;
- Link to the Senedd Cymru Member Debate on Endometriosis 14/10/2020
- <https://record.senedd.wales/Motion/7304>;
- Link regarding the recent recommendations for a new NHS Executive
- <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/news/rcp-joins-more-20-organisations-call-independent-nhs-wales-executive>
- Link to a Nation Cymru opinion piece which I wrote to provide some further information about endometriosis and the issues patients are currently faced with
- <https://nation.cymru/opinion/not-just-a-bad-period-why-its-past-time-we-improved-endometriosis-healthcare-in-wales/>
- Correspondence to Jane Hutt MS in her capacity of minister for Social Justice;
- Correspondence to Jenny Rathbone MS who is supportive of the petition and who will be accepting a 'hand-in' of the petition outside the Senedd on Wednesday 2nd February at 1pm;
- Timeline of events over the last 4 years regarding the provision of endometriosis healthcare in Wales to provide background on the on-going issue;
- List of organisations who are supportive of the petition and the urgent call for action.

Agenda Item 3.6

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1244
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/00136/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

26 January 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 7 January on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding the renaming of the George Thomas Hospital.

I was sorry to read about the concerns expressed by the petition, however, it is not within the gift of the Welsh Government to insist upon a change of name for the hospital. This would be a matter for Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

The petitioners may therefore wish to bring their concerns to the attention of health board members, who form the senior decision-making body within the health board and whose duties include establishing its culture and values. Contact details are as follows:

Mr Paul Mears
Chief Executive
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
Ynysmeurig House
Navigation Park
Abercynon
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E-mail: Paul.Mears@wales.nhs.uk

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Gohebiaeth.Eluned.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Eluned.Morgan@gov.wales

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.

It will then be for health board to decide whether to take forward the petitioners' request. However, the petitioners should be aware that any discussions about a change of name would need to include the cost implications for health board; for example, changes to signage (for both buildings and vehicles) and stationery, and implications for IT and contracts. There would also be considerable staff time involved in meeting and planning to decide and incorporate the new name at a time when the NHS is understandably focused on addressing and recovering from the ongoing pandemic.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

P-06-1244 George Thomas Hospital

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | 7 February 2022

Reference: SR22/1904-1

Petition Number: P-06-1244

Petition title: In remembrance of Aberfan, rename the George Thomas Hospital

Text of petition: History now shows the full extent of the culpability of George Thomas in the light of his misuse of funds donated to survivors and bereaved relatives following the Aberfan disaster. That this man should be honoured with the naming of a hospital is a calumny that needs to be corrected.



1. Background

Ysbyty George Thomas is located in Treorchy, Rhondda Cynon Taf. It is managed by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

The facility was officially opened in 1991 by the Labour politician former Speaker of the House of Commons, George Thomas (later Viscount Tonypandy), after whom it was named.

In 1966, at the time of the Aberfan disaster George Thomas was the Welsh Secretary. The disaster, a catastrophic collapse of a colliery spoil tip, cost the lives of 144 people, 116 of them children at Pantglas Junior School.

The Tribunal of Inquiry into the Aberfan Disaster (the Aberfan Disaster Tribunal), chaired by Lord Justice Edmund Davies, was established in 1966 to inquire into the causes of and circumstances of the disaster. The report of the tribunal placed the blame for the disaster on the National Coal Board (NCB), naming nine of its staff as having some degree of responsibility. The NCB, which ran British coal mines and was responsible for the coal tip, refused to pay for the removal.

Although having agreed to remove the spoil tips above Aberfan after the disaster, George Thomas was party to a decision by the Wilson Government to take £150,000 from the Aberfan charity fund - raised to help the victims of the disaster and their families - as part payment for the removal operation. Historian Martin Johnes wrote that George Thomas initially objected to the decision but "his lone voice in the cabinet was not sufficient and in the end he acquiesced in the plan and placed strong moral pressure on the disaster fund to ensure it too gave in."

In 1997, 30 years after the disaster, the money was paid back to the charity fund by the newly appointed Secretary of State for Wales Ron Davies, who was quoted as saying: "It was a wrong perpetrated by a previous government - a Labour Secretary of State. I regarded it as an embarrassment. It was a wrong that needed to be righted."

2. Welsh Government action

The letter from the Minister for Health and Social Services states that the renaming of the hospital is not a matter for the Welsh Government, and should be taken up with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. She also says:

...the petitioners should be aware that any discussions about a change of name would need to include the cost implications for health board; for example, changes to signage (for both buildings and vehicles) and stationery, and implications for IT and contracts. There would also be considerable staff time involved in meeting and planning to decide and incorporate the new name at a time when the NHS is understandably focused on addressing and recovering from the ongoing pandemic.

The Welsh Government commissioned an audit of statues, street and building names to address Wales' connections with the slave trade, led by Gaynor Legall. In November 2020 the Legall audit identified 209 monuments, buildings or street names, located in all parts of Wales, which commemorate people who were directly involved with slavery and the slave trade or opposed its abolition. This report did not look at broader historical issues – such as are raised by this petition – but as part of its response the Welsh Government has said that it will issue guidance on resolving disputes about acts of historical commemoration.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In 2020, the previous Senedd's Culture, Welsh Language and Culture Committee carried out an inquiry into public acts of commemoration, in the wake of the toppling of Colston's statue in Bristol and widespread discussion about the appropriateness of historic monuments.

The report's recommendations included that "The Welsh Government should create a comprehensive "one stop shop" guidance document for local authorities and public bodies relating to acts of commemoration in Wales".

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.

Agenda Item 3.7

P-06-1245 Diverse and equal representation in the Senedd

This petition was submitted by Women's Equality Network Wales, having collected a total of 199 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The vision of the Diverse5050 Campaign is to see more Black, Asian, and ethnic minority women, LGBTQ+ women, disabled women, and women with other protected characteristics in the leadership structure in Wales – a Senedd that is gender balanced and reflective of the whole Welsh population.

The agreement between Plaid Cymru and Welsh Labour supports integrated gender quotas, but more needs to be done.

We are calling for legally binding integrated diversity and gender quotas.

Additional Information:

While the Senedd celebrated having gender parity in 2003, female representation has since dropped to 43%. Diversity leads to better decision making and lack of diverse representation has had a negative impact, as experienced by disabled people during the COVID-19 pandemic. 100 countries around the world have gender quotas, and around 40 countries use them for additional characteristics. International evidence shows that quotas have been the single most effective tool for 'fast tracking' women's representation in public and political life.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-56225381>

Krook, M. L. & Zetterberg, P. (2014). Electoral quotas and political representation: comparative perspectives, *International Political Science Review* Vol 35(1), 3-11.

<https://gov.wales/locked-out-liberating-disabled-peoples-lives-and-rights-wales-beyond-covid-19-html>.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff Central
- South Wales Central

Agenda Item 4.1

P-05-1010 An independent inquiry into the 2020 flooding in Rhondda Cynon Taf so that lessons are learned

This petition was submitted by Eleri Griffiths having collected 274 signatures on paper and 5,743 online, a total of 6,017 signatures.

Text of Petition:

We, the undersigned, urge the Welsh Government to initiate a full, independent, open and public inquiry into the 2020 flooding of homes and businesses across Rhondda Cynon Taf, and that appropriate steps are taken to rectify any issues so that similar damage can be prevented from reoccurring.

Additional Information

People and businesses across Rhondda Cynon Taf need an inquiry into the flooding that has hit so many of our communities this year, with some affected three times since February. It is time for the voices and experiences of the people and businesses of Pontypridd, Treforest, Taff's Well, Trehafod, Cilfynydd, Rhydyfelin, Nantgarw, Hawthorn, Hirwaun, Abercwmboi, Mountain Ash, Pentre, Treorchy, Treherbert, Maerdy, Porth and others to be heard, so that lessons are learned for the future.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Pontypridd
- South Wales Central

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1010
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/11826/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

petitions@senedd.wales

20 December 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 22 October 2021 regarding Petition P-06-1010 'An independent inquiry into the 2020 flooding in Rhondda Cynon Taf so that lessons are learned.'

The rainfall and river levels which led to the floods of February 2020, were exceptional. It was the wettest February since records began in 1862, and the fifth wettest winter on record. These events produced significant impacts across Wales.

I would like to once again thank the heroic efforts of the emergency responders, Local Authorities and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) who worked in atrocious conditions, day and night, to protect life and property. I also want to thank neighbourhood volunteers throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCT) who provided help and support to the community to rebuild following the flood event.

The human cost of a flooding event can never be underestimated. For individuals who witness their homes flooded, it is a very upsetting and distressing experience. The devastating situation for communities following the February 2020 floods was of course made even more difficult by the subsequent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. I extend my sympathies to everyone whose homes flooded as a result of the February 2020 storms and the subsequent flooding events.

The Welsh Government's response to the February storms was swift. We invited all Risk Management Authorities to apply for emergency funding to repair flood alleviation assets and improve communities' standard of protection. RCT applied for and was allocated £1, 924,500 to repair their assets. An additional £409,000 has been provided to RCT to repair and improve a culvert inlet at Pentre which was significantly damaged during Storm Dennis. I'm pleased to inform you work on this project is nearing completion and will reduce flood risk to 157 homes.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
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Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.James@gov.Wales

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.

The Welsh Government also provided RCT with £1,696,913 of funding through the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme (EFAS) to assist with the immediate clear up costs of Storm Dennis.

To assist households with the immediate situation they experienced following Storm Dennis, the Welsh Government quickly moved to extend our Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) to provide assistance to individuals with essential living costs such as food, gas and electricity. Payments of £500 were awarded to households that experienced internal flooding, with an extra £500 for households without insurance, or if their insurance did not cover flood damage. In total The Welsh Government made payments of £565,000 to 792 homes across RCT.

Further storms in January 2021 resulted in 41 homes in RCT experiencing internal flooding. The Welsh Government has provided a further £210,750 to RCT to undertake repairs to flood alleviation assets which suffered structural damage during this period.

In 2021-2022 RCT is due to undertake £1,824,774 of flood alleviation capital projects including business case development and construction with £1,666,858 of Welsh Government funding to reduce flood risk to 446 homes and businesses. Additionally RCT will undertake £1,065,000 in small scale schemes in 2021-2022 with the Welsh Government providing £905,250 of the total costs. These projects will reduce flood risk to 511 homes and businesses.

The Welsh Government encourages collaborative working between Risk Management Authorities and other interested parties when considering flood alleviation measures. I am happy to report such collaboration between RCT and NRW where NRW used their Flood maps to identify homes at high risk of flooding. RCT then used this information and their resource to offer flood gates to 133 homes utilising Welsh Government funding. The flood gates and associated property resilience measures are intended to provide a short-term intervention whilst NRW develop more significant flood alleviation projects to manage the wider risk within these communities. RCT is also installing property resilience measures to 100 homes which are at risk of ordinary watercourse flooding, in addition to the 281 homes provided with flood gates in 2020-21.

I acknowledge the emotional impacts and human costs associated with flood events. Research by Public Health England has shown that people experience higher rates of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after a flood. The research also established the direct costs to the economy associated with treating people who experience these conditions after a flood.

I'm pleased to say we have incorporated such evidence into our flood programme. Economic appraisals for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) projects can now include accurate estimates of the mental health benefits associated with reducing the risk of flooding, providing further justification for investment in flood alleviation.

The points raised on flood investigations are important in learning lessons and helping identify the causes of flooding. Following a flooding incident, Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 places a duty on Local Authorities to investigate and report the flood event, providing details on the scale of the flooding. We also ask Local Authorities to provide recommendations on how to reduce future risk, where applicable.

These investigation reports are published for residents, elected members and interested parties to view and may bring forward further recommendations for reducing risk.

RCT have to date published three section 19 reports and an overview report into the Storm Dennis flood events. Crucially, their summary overview report brings together their Section 19 reports in a single document, which has proved helpful in communicating their findings in a shorter and more accessible format. Complementing these Section 19 reports, NRW published their own internal review in October 2020 which provided recommendations for improvements around forecasting, warning and response. The three RCT investigation reports, the RCT summary report and NRW's review into the 2020 flooding provide a comprehensive overview into the flood events.

The Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru includes a commitment to commission an independent review of the Section 19 reports produced into extreme weather flooding in Wales in the winter of 2020 and 2021, together with the reports produced by NRW.

I will be exploring with Plaid Cymru representatives the process and timetable for the independent review and will make an announcement in due course.

This work will be carried out in collaboration with the Plaid Cymru designated lead member, as part of the Co-operation Agreement.

Yours sincerely,



Julie James AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

**Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd,
yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith**

—
**Climate Change, Environment,
and Infrastructure Committee**

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair
Petitions Committee

06 December 2021

Dear Jack,

Petition P-05-1010 An independent inquiry into the flooding in Rhondda Cynon Taf so that lessons are learned

Thank you for your letter, dated 22 October 2021, and for drawing to our attention to above petition.

The Committee is in the process of agreeing its priorities for the Sixth Senedd and has highlighted flood risk management as a an on-going area of interest.

You will be aware that the recent Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru includes a commitment to an independent review of the flooding events in winter 2020-21 and for the Welsh Government to act on its recommendations.

The Committee awaits, with interest, further details of the review, and will wish to follow the review as it progresses. The Committee will, no doubt, wish to consider progress towards implementation of the review's recommendations as part of any wider work on the Welsh Government's approach to flood risk management.

I hope you find this helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Llyr Gruffydd MS,
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



Agenda Item 4.2

P-05-1097 Ban game bird cages

This petition was submitted by The League Against Cruel Sports having collected a total of 5,287 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Millions of pheasants and partridges are estimated to be factory farmed in Wales each year so that they can be shot for 'sport'. To breed them, tens of thousands of parent birds are confined to cages, often for much of their breeding lives. Cages are cruel and cause animals to suffer. The Welsh Government has previously indicated support for Wales to become a cage-free nation. We call for the Welsh Government to ban the use of cages to produce game birds.

Additional Information:

Life in a cage can lead to distress and injury, and doesn't fully allow for birds' needs or natural behaviour. Their suffering can include painful open foot sores, stress-induced attacks and injury from repeated attempts to escape. To reduce problem behaviours linked to their captivity, such as pecking other birds, devices such as plastic bits forced into their nostrils can also be used.

Pheasants and partridges are semi-wild by nature, making the impact of cages all the greater. Yet they're not even covered by the basic regulations granted to other farmed animals or routinely inspected. Investigations have revealed breaches of guidance such as repeated use of barren cages and dead pheasants left long enough in cages to be cannibalised. Even in cages described as 'enriched', there could be as little as a single shared perch, a plastic curtain and some astroturf.

Whether confined to barren or 'enriched' cages, game birds suffer. The Welsh Government has the power to end this practice.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff North
- South Wales Central

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1097
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/10516/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

12 January 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 8 December regarding Petition P-05-1097 Ban game bird cages.

Animal welfare is a priority for the Welsh Government. We have made a commitment to restrict the use of cages for farmed animals. The review of our Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes will remain on hold while we work with other administrations to examine the evidence around the use of cages for breeding gamebirds. I have already provided assurance in my letter of 16 November that any changes to the Code of Practice, or to welfare legislation, will not be made without further consultation with stakeholders.

We are currently dealing with the largest outbreak of Avian Influenza the UK has ever seen, in addition to the ongoing pressures of the Covid pandemic and transition out of the European Union. For these reasons I cannot, at this time, provide you with detail on the timeline for progressing this work.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Lesley.Griffiths@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lesley.Griffiths@gov.wales

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.

Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

By email

1 February 2022

Dear Petitions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the latest correspondence from the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs (LG/10383/21) regarding the petition to Ban Game Bird Cages (P-05-1097), and for the Petitions Committee's continued consideration of the issue.

We welcome the Minister's confirmation that the Welsh Government will consult further with stakeholders before concluding its review of the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes. We hope that when that takes place, should the Welsh Government have not yet committed to legislative action, an end to the use of cages is considered as part of the remit of the review.

More broadly, we would like to reiterate our welcome of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government containing a commitment to restrict the use of cages for farmed animals. Similarly, we welcome that its Animal Welfare Plan for Wales includes the use of breeding cages for gamebirds within the examination of evidence that will be undertaken.

However, we maintain our view, as expressed in our correspondence of 23 November 2021, that the timescales offered in the Animal Welfare Plan would benefit from a more detailed breakdown of expected delivery. Including a clarification on each component action of the overall commitment to restrict the use of cages for farmed animals. This would enable us to better track the progress of this work, particularly in light of the many delays to related work due to factors such as Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also note that, despite the positive developments, the Minister has not so far responded to the overall request of the petition, that the use of cages to breed game birds be banned. Since the petition closed in November 2020, many tens of thousands of pheasants and partridges have continued to be confined to cages in intensive breeding systems, simply to produce more birds to be shot for 'sport'.

Life in a cage does not fully allow for the needs or natural behaviour of gamebirds, all the more so due to their semi wild nature. Cages are inherently cruel, offering so little space that birds are denied the ability to express their natural behaviour. Concessions to enrichment provide little relief from the catalogue of suffering seen in caged birds through indicators such as feather damage caused by pecking, foot injuries and jump escape behaviour.

In the absence of a commitment to end the caged breeding of gamebirds, we remain

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concerned that the practice will simply continue and may ultimately drop off the agenda unless closely monitored, particularly where progress is tied to discussions with other governments. For example, a call for evidence by the UK government expected last year has not so far materialised. While a consistent approach across Great Britain which led to an end to the use of game bird cages would be positive, a lack of action from its counterparts should not be a barrier to action by the Welsh Government.

We believe that an end to the use of the cages in question would be best achieved through legislative means, in light of the weakness inherent to codes of practice detailed in previous correspondence to the Committee (particularly our letter dated 18 January 2021).

For example, the existing code functions as guidance and breaching it is not in itself an offence. This in stark contrast to the position of laying hens, for which conditions such as minimum space requirements are set in the Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007, made under Section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

As noted by the Research Service's research brief (RS20/14886-1), the government "could legislate to regulate the breeding of birds for sporting purposes, if the purpose of such legislation was the promotion of animal welfare". We urge the government to move as swiftly as possible to end the suffering of caged breeding, and would suggest that the upcoming Agriculture (Wales) Bill presents an ideal opportunity for such action.

Wales has the opportunity to lead the way for animal welfare by banning the caged breeding of game birds, a measure which would be backed by the vast majority of the public. Nationally representative opinion polling conducted by YouGov in 2018¹ showed that 82% of people in Wales are opposed to the use of cages for this purpose.

In light of the issues highlighted above, we would like to request that the Petitions Committee continue its consideration of the petition to ban game bird cages if it feels it is appropriate to do so. We believe it would be beneficial for the Petitions Committee to seek an additional update on the Welsh Governments work on the use of cages for gamebirds detailed in its Animal Welfare plan to be sought at an appropriate time later this year.

Yours faithfully,

Will Morton
Head of Public Affairs
League Against Cruel Sports

¹ YouGov/League Against Cruel Sports (2018).

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/1qaemiv24u/YGArchive-230418-LeagueAgainstCruelSports.pdf

Agenda Item 4.3

P-05-1112 Help Welsh Communities Buy Community Assets: Implement Part 5 Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011

This petition was submitted by Daniel Evans having collected a total of 655 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Welsh communities continue to lose community assets such as pubs and sports grounds at an alarming rate. Unlike England & Scotland, Welsh communities still do not have the statutory right to bid for assets.

We urgently require new legislation relating specifically to Assets of Community Value. We call on the next Welsh Government to immediately introduce the provisions of Part 5 Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011 to ensure groups in Wales have the legal right to buy & manage community assets.

Additional Information:

Community assets build social capital, health and wellbeing. Losing community assets leads to weaker, more disconnected & unhappier communities

Part 5, Ch. 3 of The Localism Act 2011 granted the legal right for community groups to bid for & run assets of community value (ACV) under threat/for sale. It also requires local authorities to keep lists of such community assets. In Scotland, community groups have first refusal on these assets (<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06366/>).

In Wales, however, the Welsh Government decided to not apply the relevant parts of the act that would facilitate this. Our communities are therefore being placed in a hugely disadvantaged position relative to England & Scotland.

In 2015, the minister stated that action would be taken on ACV during the 2016-21 Welsh Government, but nothing happened.

Implementing the relevant provisos of the Localism Act would hugely benefit Welsh communities desperate to save valuable local assets.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Bridgend
- South Wales West

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JH-/10791/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

20 December 21

Dear Jack

<p>Diolch am eich gohebiaeth bellach dyddiedig 3 Rhagfyr ynghylch yr argymhellion a geir yn yr ymchwil CAT.</p> <p>Nid yw fy swyddogion wedi cynnal cyfarfodydd gyda'r holl grwpiau rhanddeiliaid eto i drafod y camau nesaf. Unwaith bydd y cyfarfodydd wedi'i gwblhau, byddaf yn rhoi'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf i chi.</p>	<p>Thank you for your further correspondence dated 3 December regarding the recommendations contained in the CAT research.</p> <p>My officials have not yet held meetings with all stakeholders groups to discuss next steps. Once the round of meetings has been completed I will provide you with an update.</p>
--	--

Yours Sincerely

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@gov.wales

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.

Agenda Item 4.4

P-06-1201 Ban the shooting of critically endangered birds...give them the protection they so desperately need

This petition was submitted by Robert Curtis, having collected a total of 122 signatures.

Text of Petition:

It is absolutely shocking that some of our most endangered birds, including Woodcock, Pochard, Black Grouse and Snipe are still allowed to be shot in Wales.

These species are currently on the RED and AMBER list of birds of conservation concern 4. That means that they are currently of the highest conservation priority in the UK.

We fully understand that shooting may not be the main cause of their decline, but at the moment when they need maximum protection allowing them to be shot is madness.

Additional Information:

We are calling for a complete ban on the shooting of all birds on the red and amber list of conservation concern 4.

Experts are collating ecological and scientific evidence on the health of a species, but the law and gun lobby choose to ignore the facts.

There are around only 200 Black Grouse surviving in Wales. This Red listed species exposes the hypocrisy of spending large amounts of money on trying to conserve this vulnerable species yet allowing them to be shot at the same time.

With its beautiful plumage and camouflage, the Woodcock is another Red listed species currently being targeted by shoots, even though they are experiencing dramatic population decline.

Although game shooting in the UK is controlled by having an open and closed season, which restricts the time of year birds may be shot, we are calling for a total ban on the shooting of these endangered birds. Whilst many call these shoots a tradition, it is time for a change in the law to protect our struggling wildlife.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Vale Glamorgan
- South Wales Central

Mr J Sargeant MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Submitted by email to Petitions@senedd.wales

20 December 2021

Dear Mr Sargeant

Petition P-06-1201 Ban the shooting of critically endangered birds... give them the protection they so desperately need

Thank you for your letter of 23 November to Katie-jo Luxton, to which she has asked me to respond.

Although RSPB Cymru was not involved in setting up or supporting the petition, it is clearly borne of a genuine concern about the parlous state of nature in Wales and a desire to improve the legal protection for our threatened birds. We believe that the recent publication of the UK Birds of Conservation Concern & the GB Red List of birds¹ and the European Red List of birds² means that **this is the right moment to consider the quarry species that can be legally hunted in Wales and the periods of the year in which they can be shot.**

The RSPB is neutral on the ethics of shooting. RSPB Cymru works with those who shoot game and their representative organisations in a variety of ways, such as on the recovery of curlew in Wales, for which a 10-year plan recently received cross-party support. However, we can and do speak out if practices associated with shooting are found to be causing serious harm to wildlife and to the environment. For example, we believe that the use of



Mae'r RSPB yn aelod o BirdLife International, partneriaeth o gyrrff cadwraeth sy'n gweithio i sicrhau cartref i fyfyr natur o amgylch y byd.

The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, a

Partnership of conservation organisations

Working to give nature a home around the world.

Pencadlys RSPB Cymru

Pont y Castell 3
5-19 Heol Ddwyreiniol y Bont-faen
Caerdydd
CF11 9AB

RSPB Cymru Headquarters

Castlebridge 3
5-19 Cowbridge Road East
Cardiff
CF11 9AB

Ffôn/ Tel: 029 2035 3000

Facebook: RSPBCymru

Twitter: @RSPBCymru

rspb.org.uk

Noddwr/Patron: Ei Mawrhydi y Frenhines / Her Majesty the Queen **Cadeirydd y Cyngor/Chairman of Council:** Kevin Cox
Llywydd/President: Miranda Krestovnikoff **Cadeirydd Pwyllgor Cymru/Chairman, Committee for Wales:** Professor Sir Adrian Webb
Cyfarwyddwr, RSPB Cymru/Director, RSPB Cymru: Katie-jo Luxton

Mae'r Gymdeithas Frenhinol er Gwarchod Adar (yr RPSB) yn elusen gofrestredig: Lloegr a Chymru rhif 207076, yr Alban rhif SC037654

Cyfeiriad cofrestredig: The Lodge, Potton Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654

Registered address: The Lodge, Potton Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL

lead ammunition should be illegal in Wales and supported a petition considered by your Committee in September 2021 (P-06-1184 *Immediately ban the use of toxic lead in all ammunition in Wales*). We are concerned that many elements of hunting wild birds have minimal regulation and that there has been a reluctance by government to review the Game Acts (some of which are almost 200 years old) or the species listed on Schedule 2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 that may be hunted.

Species of conservation concern

*Birds of Conservation Concern Wales (BoCCW)*³, a periodic assessment of the status of native birds, led by RSPB Cymru with support from Natural Resources Wales and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), includes seven huntable species on the Red List: black grouse, red grouse, grey partridge, European white-fronted goose, pochard, golden plover and woodcock. These are listed because of declines of more than 50% in the previous 25 years, severe historic decline or risk of global extinction. In addition, Wetland Bird Survey Alerts have been issued in Wales for pochard, goldeneye, pintail, mallard and coot.⁴

The risk of extirpation (extinction from a specified area) is assessed by the Red List, using criteria agreed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These Red Lists have recently been updated for both Britain¹ and Europe.² On the GB Red List, one huntable species is Critically Endangered (pintail), two are Endangered (pochard and European white-fronted goose) and 10 others are Vulnerable.¹

We are deeply concerned about the rate of decline of these species and urge an evidence-based approach to tackle the drivers of decline and recover their numbers. Changes in extent and quality of habitat as a result of unsustainable management are by far the biggest causes of decline, added to which factors such as the climate emergency, disturbance from a variety of human sources, and direct mortality from shooting can all play a part.

Regulation of hunting

RSPB Cymru believes there are three fundamental issues that prevent Welsh Government from being able to determine whether shooting is a sustainable management of natural resources:

- There is no means to review the legal status of quarry species, either to cease hunting or to permit it to re-start, or of the duration of hunting seasons.
- There is no statutory monitoring of numbers of birds shot in Wales, which is very different to most European countries.
- Absence of an Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) plan for birds in Wales, which would be informed by data about the numbers shot and the resilience of their populations to mortality from shooting. This could, for example, determine thresholds that would need to be met for hunting to be permitted, and set limits on numbers that could be shot or the shooting season.

To take a couple of examples.

1. Woodcock may be legally shot from 1 October, but birds from the continent (where the species is listed as of 'Least Concern' on the IUCN European Red List) do not arrive in Wales until November, and in some years even later. These birds form a winter population many times larger than our breeding population, alongside some woodcocks that breed in Wales and northern England. However, there is a lack of reliable data on the extent to which woodcocks shot in Wales comprise UK-breeding birds or continental wintering birds, or the impact of shooting on Welsh breeding woodcocks while they are outside Wales. We believe that a precautionary approach is essential, given the Red List status of the woodcock breeding population in the UK and Wales. The Game &

Wildlife Conservation Trust states that “we cannot rule out shooting as a factor contributing to the decline of our resident woodcock”⁵ and recommends delaying shooting until after 1 December in areas that they are known to breed. This will help, but there is no requirement to follow this advice, and Welsh-breeding Woodcock will remain at risk of being shot throughout the winter.

2. Most pochards wintering in Wales breed in eastern Europe. It is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List for Europe and as Endangered in Britain. Numbers wintering in Wales have fallen dramatically, leading the BTO to issue a high alert for its population following a decline of 89% over 25 years and a 68% decline in just five years to 2015/16.⁴ In some Welsh counties, it is now a rare bird.⁶

Pochards can be shot in Wales between 1 September and 31 January (20 February below the high-water mark). In a review of hunting bags across Europe, Hirschfeld *et al.* (2019) expressed concern that “hunting may be an unnecessary pressure and potentially a contributing factor to the European population declines observed” in this species.⁷ We are concerned that declines in pochards in the UK and across Europe may be driven by the demographic impact of both hunting of the birds themselves and by the lead pollution that hunting produces.

Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM)

For some declining species, the sustainability of hunting pressure has been assessed and found wanting. For example, pressure of hunting of turtle dove, taiga bean goose and ortolan bunting across Europe was greater than the population could sustain.^{8,9,10} Adaptive Harvest Management is widely recognised as an efficient tool to ensure that any take is only allowed if it can be done sustainably. A multi-national AHM approach has already been adopted for turtle dove, an Afro-Paleartic migrant that has declined rapidly across Europe (and now extinct as a breeding species in Wales). This used data on population size, trends, breeding success, survival rates, movements between breeding and wintering grounds, and hunting bags. In its first iteration, the AHM resulted in a ‘zero take’ being agreed in Spain, Portugal and France in 2021/22, where hunting was shown to be unsustainable.¹¹ The adaptive nature of the plan means that the impact of hunting at different thresholds can be reviewed regularly, and if the population is sufficiently resilient, some level of hunting can be permitted.

The AHM approach is being put in place across the EU for quarry species that are in unfavourable conservation status. We believe that an AHM could determine whether a ban is necessary, and that Wales could lead the way in the UK by adopting this approach. However, an AHM depends on there being accurate and robust demographic data, and this is not easy to achieve for some species, such as woodcock and we understand that for this reason, there are no plans to include woodcock in AHM schemes in Europe.

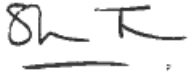
Immediate action

We believe the onus on demonstrating that AHM is achievable in Wales should rest with the hunting community, and in the meantime, a precautionary approach to permitting shooting is required. The speed of decline in some of the species listed above necessitates additional action that we think Welsh Government should request of Natural Resources Wales:

- To conclude urgently its review of consents for shooting of Schedule 2 species on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in Wales, and determine whether these are consistent with SMNR. No proposals were included in the recent NRW public consultation and RSPB Cymru has asked for a public statement on this aspect of the review. We believe that it is timely to review the species and consistency of conditions that consent hunting on SSSIs.
- to review the legal status of native gamebirds and of huntable species on Schedule 2 in all habitats in Wales, and whether as an emergency measure it is appropriate to cease hunting of any species at risk of extirpation from Wales or its breeding areas outside Wales until an AHM system is in place, allied to other measures to reduce disturbance and improve habitat condition.

We believe that to achieve sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR), as required by the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, it is important to assess all the contributory factors causing declines in wildlife. The declining populations of birds on the GB Red List and Birds of Conservation Concern Wales are, we suggest, a signal that moratoria on shooting should be considered until there is clear evidence that the hunting is not a contributory factor. Although there is uncertainty, this should not be a reason not to invest in robust Adaptive Harvest Management. We urge the Petitions Committee to ask Welsh Government to explore the options for AHM in Wales and to consider short-term emergency measures to address the issues raised by the petition.

Yours sincerely



Dr Sharon Thompson
Head of Policy & Advocacy

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23rd December 2021

**The British Association for Shooting and Conservations response to Senedd petition
P-06-1201**

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) is the largest shooting organisation in the UK. Our mission is to promote and protect sporting shooting and advocate its conservation role throughout the UK. Shooting activities in Wales contribute £75 million to the national economy directly supporting the equivalent of 2,400 full-time jobs.

BASC firmly oppose the proposals outlined the Senedd petition [P-06-1201](#). The Climate Change Minister stated that any “regulatory changes to the listing of amber and red listed species as shooting quarry would need to be underpinned by robust evidence to support that change”¹. BASC concludes that there is no evidence to support the petition proposals and as such there should be no change in policy.

BASC notes that the petition did not gain significant support, receiving a total of 122 signatures with only 92 signatories from Wales. The petitions threshold has recently been increased from 50 to 250 signatures and we note that if this petition was submitted now, it would have been rejected. Also, some statements made in the petition are provocative and are not supported by available evidence, and, in our opinion, are misleading. For these reasons, BASC are surprised that the committee and Minister are considering such a petition.

Quarry shooting is a legal and legitimate activity that brings both economic and conservation benefits to Wales. Those participating in shooting activities have an interest in ensuring there are sustainable quarry populations and shooting practitioners across the country undertake a range of conservation activities to monitor and enhance bird populations. Across Wales, shooting contributes to an annual spend of £7.4m on conservation, which is the equivalent of 490 full-time jobs or 120,000 conservation workdays. Game shoots and BASC affiliated wildfowling clubs and syndicates undertake large amounts of conservation work throughout the year, varying from single-species action plans to landscape-scale habitat management and site-specific wardening to monitoring initiatives. Game managers work to provide improved habitat while managing predators and disease benefitting other wildlife in the area as well as plants and trees, supporting overall wildlife conservation. Such activities improve the conservation of the countryside as a whole and benefit other species.

Correspondence from the Climate Change Minister and to chair of the petitions committee on 8th October 2021 stated that “any regulatory changes to the listing of amber and red listed species as shooting quarry would need to be underpinned by robust evidence to support that change and need to be considered alongside other factors that are contributing to the decline of these endangered species such as loss of habitat and the effects of climate change.”² The petition assertion is entirely spurious because it provides no logical reasoning or evidence of shooting being a factor and should be dismissed. Many species on the red and amber list have no association with shooting activities, highlighting the need to look at other factors that are influencing the decline in populations.

BASC believe that regulation is not the appropriate method to secure a species good conservation status and, in the long term, it will not reverse population declines. Such an approach may even prove counterproductive as it would remove the motivation to manage habitats and predators in way that benefits declining species. Shooting puts in place voluntary moratoriums when they may provide benefits to species conservation. Examples in Wales include Greenland White-Fronted Geese and Black Grouse. In other scenarios advice and guidance are utilised, for example the harvesting of woodcock is done on a precautionary basis.

¹ [Letter](#) from Julie James MS to Jack Sargeant MS

² Birds of Conservation Concern 4, [The population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man](#)

The petition highlighted several endangered birds that are on the quarry list. We have provided more information on them below.

In 2016 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) rejected a petition calling for a moratorium on the shooting of woodcock, snipe and golden plover. The department did not believe shooting was to blame for declines in populations of wading birds stating that “it is unlikely that hunting has had a significant impact on recent population trends for woodcock, snipe and golden plover; trends are likely to be influenced more by the quality and extent of habitat.”³

Woodcock

- Shoots across Wales make an important contribution to the management of our woodland and woodcock habitat and already [self-regulate woodcock shooting](#).
- The petition notes that the woodcock is “experiencing dramatic population decline.” Wales has a small population of breeding woodcock and the majority of the woodcock found in Wales are migratory. Approximately 800,000 to 1.3 million woodcock migrate to Britain from Scandinavia, Finland, the Baltic States and Russia and research suggests that these breeding populations appear stable.⁴
- The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) highlight that habitat appears to have a significant influence on the rise and fall of resident woodcock numbers and that the mixture of woodland habitats, or the landscape as a whole, may have a significant effect on woodcock abundance.
- The Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* was one of only two species that are red-listed because of range decline alone.⁵ GWCT highlight that there are a range of factors influencing this such as the change of structure and mixture of woodlands and the increased fragmentation of woodlands and evidence suggests that shooting is not the main factor driving their decline. In Britain and Ireland research indicates that 2% of woodcock shot, nationally, are residents.⁶
- There is an indication, at a national scale, of a reduction in shooting pressure over the last 20 years, with many people deciding voluntarily that they no longer wish to shoot woodcock.
- Woodcock is not included on the Welsh Government species priority list under section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, a list that outlines species that are considered ‘of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales’.⁷
- The shooting community have funded two national surveys into the decline of the resident woodcock populations. This emphasises a desire to better understand the species and to ensure that shooting is sustainable.⁸ A GWCT study to attach GPS tags to resident woodcock is underway to try and better understand their breeding behaviour, their habitat requirements and the common causes of mortality to best advise those managing woodland.

Black Grouse

- The statements made in the petition regarding Black Grouse are misleading. There is a Wales-wide moratorium on shooting of black grouse already in place. This approach has the benefit of encouraging areas used for shooting to continue to manage for the species in the hope a sustainable harvest will appropriate in the future. It is cost effective to the public purse because it both achieves a zero take yet retains the incentive for local land managers to manage for the species.
- Evidence suggests that the reversal of the decline of the black grouse has been achieved by working with shoots, through voluntary restraint, the maintenance of good habitat and protection from generalist predators.

³ BASC, [BASC welcomes government response to Packham petition](#)

⁴ GWCT, [Woodcock the essential brief](#)

⁵ Birds of Conservation Concern 4, [The population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man](#)

⁶ GWCT, [Woodcock the essential brief](#)

⁷ Welsh Government, [Environment Wales Act \(2016\)](#)

⁸ GWCT, [Woodcock the essential brief](#)

- GWCT research identified that predation was the main cause of death in full-grown birds in all regions of the UK, with foxes and raptors most prominent cause in Wales.⁹

Greenland White-fronted Geese

- BASC are the current chair of the Wales Greenland White-fronted Goose Partnership and so are exceptionally knowledgeable about the conservation status and interventions the species requires.
- The species was not hunted on its principal Welsh site, the Dyfi Estuary since the wildfowling clubs brought in a voluntary moratorium in 1972. A Wales-wide voluntary moratorium from 2009. Welsh Government, following previous consultations on the species have judged these effective and chose not to legislate.
- However, the petition highlights a complaint from the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds resulted in the species being removed from the quarry list. This was technical requirement under the species international action plan, so the UK had no option to do otherwise. The real-world conservation benefit of doing this in Wales was nil.
- Data from the Greenland White-fronted Goose Study¹⁰ shows that Greenland White-fronted Goose numbers wintering in the UK have continued to steadily decline with population estimates in 2009 at 23,162 and the 2021 estimate at 20,186. Experts agree that the conservation issue with Greenland White-fronted Geese is their breeding success when summering in Greenland. That is where conservation action and resulting legislative change is required for the conservation of the species.

Snipe

- Snipe population declined rapidly from the 1970s to 2000 as a result of drainage of farmland. The population has been largely stable since and there is no evidence that shooting is contributing to declines.

Evidence highlights the positive impact of sustainable shooting on some bird species. Research has been undertaken on grey partridge populations. In the UK grey partridge bags are lower now than at any time during the last 200 years¹¹, yet grey partridges thrive in areas where they, and their habitat, is actively managed to allow for their sustainable shooting. Indeed, shooting is often cited as the primary driver of grey partridge conservation efforts across Europe.

The evidence collated highlights that proposals to ban the shooting of red and amber listed birds would have little impact on the species populations. Considering this, BASC questions why emphasis of species decline is being focused on shooting activities as there is no evidence to support this or to show that a ban will have a positive impact on population numbers. BASC notes that any review of the status of red and amber listed birds should be done as part of Natural Resources Wales Wild Bird Review. In light of, this BASC rejects the proposals outlined in the petition and urges the Welsh Government to work with the shooting community and allied partners to deliver positive conservation on the ground.

BASC would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic and the importance of sustainable shooting to Wales with members of the petitions committee. We could provide a briefing in person to the Committee or/and facilitate a visit, to a wildfowling or other relevant group, to further highlight the points raised. For more information, please contact Bronwen Gardner, BASC Public Affairs Manager Wales, on bronwen.gardner@basc.org.uk

⁹ GWCT, [Black grouse survival and reproduction](#)

¹⁰ Greenland White Fronted Goose Study, [Report of the 2020/21 international census of Greenland White Fronted Goose](#)

¹¹ GWCT, [Long-term trends in grey partridge abundance](#)



The Maltings
East Tyndall St,
Cardiff CF24 5EA

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair
Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff, CF99 1SN

6th January 2022

Dear Mr Sargeant

Evidence - Petition P-06-1201 Ban the shooting of critically endangered birds...give them the protection they so desperately need

Thank you for inviting us to present evidence on the subject of Petition P -06-1201 as above. We are a research and education charity that has had over 1,000 scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals over the past 80 years. Below you will find a brief paper on woodcock which will give you a flavour of the complexity of the matter.

You will see in the conclusion below that the removal of woodcock from the quarry list in Wales will have no benefit to the woodcock population status because they don't breed in Wales and are even less likely to do so as climate change results in more frequent episodes of wet and cold spring weather. The woodcock shot in Wales come from the much larger and stable continental population identified by the IUCN as being of least concern and can therefore be considered a sustainable harvest.

We are very happy to provide further evidence given more time and explain how the shooting community are incentivised through their passion can deliver the best habitat for these species. The banning of shooting would remove that incentive for the shooting community to actively manage for these species which is done at no expense to the wider public.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sue Evans', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Sue Evans

Director Wales

WOODCOCK SHOOTING IN WALES

WOODCOCK IN THE UK

Calculating the breeding population of woodcock is difficult due to their secretive nature and cryptic plumage, which makes locating nests very difficult. The established method of censusing woodcock is to count displaying (roding) males in woodland in spring. Woodcock are polygynous and females are not easily censused so an equal sex-ratio is usually assumed to estimate total numbers. Dr Andrew Hoodless of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) refined this technique further (Hoodless et al 2007). Using sonogram recordings that enabled the identification of individual males whilst they displayed, he was able to relate the number of individuals to the total number of woodcock passes in an evening, enabling an estimate of the number of displaying males to be derived from raw counts.

BTO breeding bird surveys recorded a long-term decline of 52% in observed Bird Atlas squares between 1971 and 2011. This observed decline resulted in the UK population being placed on the BTO's Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red list. This status stands in contrast to the continental population which in 2019 the IUCN classified as of 'Least Concern' over the rest of its huge boreal breeding range stretching from north-west Europe to the far east of Russia.

Ringling data from as far back 1891 has shown that our resident breeding population is sedentary. Our modest UK population is joined in winter by an estimated 1.2 – 1.5 million migrant woodcock that arrive in early November from Russia and Scandinavia. These stay in the UK until increasing daylight length and rising temperate trigger a return migration to their breeding grounds in mid-March.

These UK wintering woodcock are spread across the country with high densities in western Britain and Ireland, including Wales. The secretive nature, cryptic plumage and nocturnal habit of woodcock lead many bird watchers to consider the species to be rare in the UK, however it has been recently estimated that woodcock are the most abundant wintering wader in Wales. This is confirmed by data from long-term ringling and monitoring on a study site in West Wales showing an average density of 0.66 woodcock per ha observed on pastures at night where woodcock feed.

Despite their Red List status in the UK, woodcock remain on the quarry list because research has shown that shooting has very little impact on our breeding population. A study conducted by GWCT in collaboration with the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford University used feather samples from woodcock shot across the UK to measure the relative levels of hydrogen isotopes in order to determine the area of origin of each bird. This showed that less than 3% of the samples were from our native UK woodcock population and 97% from wintering migrants from the population designated by IUCN as being of 'Least Concern'. As previously stated, there are very few records of woodcock breeding in Wales and, due to the sedentary nature of woodcock breeding in England, the likelihood of any woodcock from the declining UK population being shot in Wales is very remote .

Despite this finding, as a precautionary measure, GWCT advises shooting estates in areas where there are breeding woodcock to delay the start of their season until 1 December, by which time large numbers of migrant woodcock have arrived, thus further reducing any impact from shooting. This measure has been widely adopted by shoots and, in addition, many shoots have voluntarily imposed bans on shooting woodcock in recent years.

It is now widely accepted that shooting is not a significant factor in recent breeding woodcock declines, GWCT published research (Heward et al 2013) that identified the probable drivers behind the UK decline.

This research found that the greatest declines have been from small woods near to major towns and villages suggesting that human disturbance from increased public amenity use of woodland is a major driver. Furthermore, analysis of the data shows that breeding woodcock are more abundant in heterogeneous woods illustrating that management resulting in varied age/structure is likely to be beneficial. Declining woodland management such as coppicing (Hopkins & Kirby 2007) has been identified as a reason for the general decline in woodland ground-nesting bird species such as wood warbler and nightingale, and is also likely to have impacted woodcock. With a few exceptions, suitable woodland management that encourages the desired growth of understorey is now largely restricted to woods that are managed for game shooting. Increased light penetration enables the spring growth of important ground cover that is essential for nesting, shelter and protection from predation and significantly improves brood survival. It is also the case that woods on shoots experience lower levels of public disturbance, more deer control ensuring less understorey browsing, and greater nest and brood protection by means of predator control.

Climate change has been widely recognised as a significant driver moving the breeding ranges of many woodland species such as wood warbler and nightingale northwards or eastwards; it would be astonishing if woodcock did not show to the same trend. Being on the western fringe of the boreal woodland habitat, the UK and Ireland have witnessed climate induced fluctuations in woodcock numbers in the past.

Gilbert White's 'Natural History of Selborne' debates whether woodcock were a widespread breeding species in the UK in the 18th century. Literature also documented that in the early 19th century woodcock were considered a rare breeding bird in Ireland, however by 1880 they were regarded as widespread. This dramatic westward breeding range expansion coincided with the end of the 'Little Ice age' and the return of warmer drier spring weather that encouraged nesting and ensured sustainable brood survival rates. Today south and west regions, including Wales experience higher rainfall and lower spring temperatures than the rest of the UK so it is no coincidence that these areas have never seen woodcock breeding in any significant number. The latest GWCT/BTO breeding woodcock survey showed no breeding plots in Wales.

CONCLUSION

The removal of woodcock from the quarry list in Wales will have no benefit to the woodcock population status because they don't breed in Wales and are even less likely to do so as climate change results in more frequent episodes of wet and cold spring weather. The woodcock shot in Wales come from the much larger and stable continental population identified by the IUCN as being of least concern and can therefore be considered a sustainable harvest.

Woodcock: Your Essential Brief



Q: Is the global estimate of woodcock¹ falling?

A: No. The global population of 10-26 million² individuals is considered stable³.

Q: Are the woodcock that migrate here each autumn declining?

A: No. Approximately 800,000 to 1.3 million woodcock migrate to Britain and Ireland each winter, mainly from Scandinavia, Finland, the Baltic States and Russia, where results from a joint Franco-Russian survey indicate that breeding populations appear stable.

Q: Do some woodcock stay here all year?

A: Yes. There is a resident British population of 55,000 male woodcock in spring, equating to about 180,000⁴ individuals in autumn. It is this population which has declined by 29% in 10 years. The population and range contraction is considerable and we expect the species will join others on the red list of conservation concern in the UK.

Q: Was the decline in resident woodcock a surprise?

A: No. Many woodland birds have been declining⁵ in range and abundance through the latter half of the 20th century. Our resident woodcock population has slowly declined since its peak in 1970⁶.

Q: Why did the resident woodcock population increase prior to 1970?

A: Woodcock were rare or absent as breeding birds until about 1850. The initial increase was probably due to the extensive planting of woods managed for pheasant shooting⁷. The increase continued with the planting of large conifer forests in the 1950s and 1960s across Scotland, Wales and East Anglia.

Q: Do we know why our resident woodcock population has been declining for 40 years?

A: No. This mysterious and cryptic species is difficult to study and we simply don't know all the answers yet. It is likely to be a combination of: increased fragmentation of woodlands⁸; change in woodland structure as forests mature; rising deer numbers reducing understorey vegetation and increased disturbance; increased predation pressure; recreational disturbance by dog walkers; the disappearance of permanent grasslands and perhaps game shooting.

¹ Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

² Wetlands International 2006

³ Bird Life International

⁴ 55k males and we assume an equal number of females, 60% annual survival and an average of 1.8 chicks fledged per pair

⁵ Fuller et al. 2005

⁶ BTO: CBC all habitats 1966-2000 Woodcock

⁷ Holloway, S. 1996. *The Historical Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1875-1900*. BTO

⁸ del Hoyo et al. 1996

Q: Do we know why woodland birds in the UK have been declining?

A: The declines of several species have been linked to changes in the structure and mixture of trees and shrubs in woodland, particularly a reduced, less diverse shrub layer and loss of open space in woodland^{9,10}.

Q: Why are our woodlands changing?

A: An increasing trend in average woodland age⁹ since the large-scale post-war afforestation of the late 1940s and 1950s as well as modification, reduction or cessation of management¹⁰ in many woods are usually agreed to be important factors driving such changes. In many cases, these issues may be compounded by the impact of increased browsing pressure from rising deer¹¹ numbers and climate change¹².

Q: Is it just down to woodland?

A: No. For example, there is no good explanation why the bird appears to have always been absent from south-western England, where there appears to be plenty of suitable woodland.

Q: Could we copy the targeted recovery model used for curlew buntings and bitterns?

A: No. Unlike curlew buntings and bitterns, which are very rare and are associated with small isolated habitats, the woodcock is still widespread so a highly targeted approach to recovery is unlikely to achieve a national recovery. A more effective approach will be to work with landowners to create and manage suitable habitat across the country.

Q: Where are woodcock seen breeding?

A: Breeding woodcock require open rides and clearings for display and courtship and have specific habitat requirements during incubation and brood-rearing¹³. Nesting Woodcock typically utilize woodland with open ground-layer vegetation and patches of overhead cover¹⁴. When feeding, sites where trees are relatively small and close together with a dense shrub or herb layer are preferred¹⁵.

Q: Where are woodcock seen feeding?

A: Woodcock feed primarily on earthworms and other soil-dwelling invertebrates¹⁶. During winter, they leave woodland to feed on open fields at night, but this becomes less frequent during the breeding season, when more time is spent foraging within woodland¹⁷. This may make soil moisture and the availability of wet feeding areas within woodland an important consideration, particularly where summers have become drier¹⁸.

Q: Can we use this existing research to advise landowners on improving habitat?

⁹ Hopkins & Kirby 2007, Mason 2007

¹⁰ Fuller et al. 2005, Amar et al. 2006

¹¹ Gill & Fuller 2007, Holt et al. 2011

¹² Leech & Crick 2007

¹³ Hoodless & Hirons 2007

¹⁴ Hirons & Johnson 1987

¹⁵ Hirons & Johnson 1987, Hoodless & Hirons 2007

¹⁶ Hoodless & Hirons 2007

¹⁷ Hoodless & Hirons 2007

¹⁸ Smart et al. 2006

A: Yes. If you would like to improve your woods for woodcock and other game and wildlife, call in your GWCT advisor.

Q Are woodcock shot in the UK?

A: Yes. From 1st October¹⁹ (1st September in Scotland) until 31st January it is legal to shoot both resident woodcock and those that have migrated here for the winter from Europe.

Q: The winter population from Europe may be stable but is shooting causing the decline in our resident woodcock?

A: No, we do not think that shooting is the main factor driving the decline, but at this stage we cannot rule it out as a contributing factor.

Q: Do we know what percentage of woodcock shot are resident?

A: Yes. Our research, using stable isotope analysis to determine the origins of woodcock shot in Britain and Ireland, indicates that 2% of woodcock shot are residents.

Q: Could shooting play a role in local woodcock declines?

A: We know the majority of resident and migratory woodcock are site faithful so any local changes in habitat, predation or shooting could all play a part in local population declines.

Q: Why are the GWCT asking people to delay shooting woodcock until 1 December?

A: As a precaution many shoots have voluntarily ceased shooting woodcock. The GWCT is asking those that still shoot woodcock to delay doing so until 1 December. This precaution ensures that shooting does not begin until most migrant woodcock have arrived from Europe, so reducing the chance of residents being shot.

Q: Is there any evidence that shooting pressure on woodcock is reducing?

A: Yes. There is an indication, at a national scale, of a reduction in shooting pressure over the last 20 years, with many people deciding voluntarily that they no longer wish to shoot woodcock. The GWCT intends to publish a scientific paper that covers this point.

Q: Why are the GWCT not calling for a ban on woodcock shooting?

A: Banning the shooting of woodcock will not reverse declines in the long term and a ban may simply prove counterproductive. Reversing the national decline of other quarry species, such as black grouse, has been achieved by working with shoots to maintain good habitat and protection from generalist predators alongside voluntary restraint.

Q: How might a ban be counterproductive?

A: A ban on shooting may remove the motivation for many landowners to manage their woods in ways that will maintain suitable habitat for woodcock. It is this motivation that helped black grouse to recover.

Q: What has the shooting community already done to help woodcock?

A: The vast majority of research on woodcock, including the two national surveys that confirmed the scale of decline in our resident birds, has been funded by the shooting community through a desire to better understand the ecology of the species and ensure that shooting is sustainable.

¹⁹ Woodcock may be shot in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and Eire Oct 1st- Jan 31st. In Scotland Sep 1st- Jan 31st.

Q: Has this woodcock research already proved its worth?

A: Yes. The survey methods used until 2002 (incidental sightings of woodcock during the course of general bird surveys) had significantly under-estimated the UK population at possibly 5,000-12,000 pairs. The GWCT's survey method (based on the sightings of roding males at dusk), now accepted as best practice, established that the population was in fact six times higher.

Q: How will further research help reverse the decline?

A: The GWCT has started to attach GPS tags to resident woodcock in order to better understand their breeding behaviour. Through following the precise movement of birds during the breeding season we can develop a broader understanding of their complex habitat requirements, the common causes of mortality, including predation, and the effects of disturbance. This information can then be used to provide the best possible advice to those that manage our woodland.

Q: Why not call for a ban on woodcock shooting until resident numbers increase?

A: We do not think that shooting has caused the decline in resident numbers, but we do know that shoots make an important contribution to the management of our woodland and woodcock habitat. We would like to harness that interest in shooting woodcock to understand more about the species and ultimately try and reverse declines.

Q: How can shoots help recover resident woodcock numbers?

A: Habitat appears to have a significant influence on the rise and fall of resident woodcock numbers. The habitat requirements of woodcock appear to vary with different stages of the life cycle. The mixture of woodland habitats, or the landscape as a whole, may have a significant effect on woodcock abundance. Shoots across the UK can help, both by gathering the evidence about the habitat requirements of the species and then by managing habitat appropriately.

Shooting of woodcock

In winter, the woodcock adds interest and excitement to shoots throughout Britain and Ireland. The secretive habits of this bird ensure that it is widely admired and respected. Current evidence suggests that over 90% of woodcock shot here migrate from Europe where breeding numbers appear stable. Resident British woodcock have increased in abundance and range since the 19th Century. Subsequent range contraction was detected between 1970 and 1990, and further range contraction and population decline has become evident since. As a result, the GWCT advises all those who wish to shoot woodcock to exercise particular care and improve their knowledge of local populations.



Residents and migrants

Britain and Ireland support a relatively small resident breeding population of woodcock. Counts of displaying males give us the best information on trends in our breeding woodcock and the **current population estimate** is 55,240 males. The European breeding population is estimated at 6-8 million males. In winter we see a large influx of migrant woodcock from the main European breeding grounds in Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Baltic States and Russia. Owing to the fact that woodcock feed primarily on soil invertebrates by probing, these birds are forced off their northern and eastern breeding grounds in autumn and have to migrate to warmer areas for the winter. Migrants typically arrive in all months from October to January, but the timing and numbers vary regionally within Britain and Ireland, as well as annually according to the severity of cold weather on the continent. We estimate that between 800,000 and 1.3 million migrant woodcock winter here, with most departing in March.

The decline in our resident population

Recent work by the GWCT and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) shows a severe decline in the population size and breeding range of our resident woodcock since 1970. BTO Atlas data indicate that woodcock presence fell by 56% at the 10km square scale between 1970 and 2010. In randomised surveys across Britain in 2003 and 2013, funded by the GWCT, occupancy of 1km squares that contained at least 10ha of woodland dropped from 35% to 22%. The British population estimate fell by 29% from 78,350 males in 2003 to 55,240 males in 2013. Both data sources suggest regional variation in the rate of decline, with losses greatest in the west and south. Given the scale of the decline, we expect the woodcock to be moved from amber to red status on the UK's Birds of Conservation Concern listing this year.



We do not fully understand what is driving the decline in our breeding woodcock, but we expect there to be multiple factors involved and regional differences. It should be borne in mind that Britain and Ireland

represent the western limit of the woodcock's breeding range and that the species only became widely established as a breeding bird after the 1850s, with the large-scale planting of woodland, primarily for pheasant shooting. Changing climate and changes in the suitability and management of woodland might therefore be important. We are conducting further analysis of our datasets to examine patterns in the distribution of breeding woodcock with respect to these factors, as well as others potentially influencing the recent fall in numbers, such as predation, deer, recreational disturbance and shooting. Other ground-nesting wading birds in open habitats, such as the curlew and lapwing, are declining as a result of predation on eggs and chicks and high nest predation rates have recently been documented in some declining woodland songbirds. Increasing grazing pressure by the expanding numbers of deer may be affecting habitat quality for breeding woodcock in some UK regions. Increased recreational activity in spring and summer by people in woodland may be an issue because the woodcock is particularly susceptible to disturbance when nesting.

At present, we cannot rule out shooting as a factor contributing to the decline of our resident woodcock. We have commenced work to examine the effect of shooting on breeding woodcock numbers and produce guidance on sustainable harvest rates, but this is not yet complete.

Woodcock monitoring in the main European breeding areas indicates that the European population is stable and there is no evidence for a change in the numbers of migrant woodcock wintering in Britain and Ireland.

Reducing the impact of shooting on residents

We do not believe that a ban on woodcock shooting would help recover our resident woodcock, in the long term, for three reasons. First, there is an indication, at a national scale, of a reduction in hunting pressure over the last 20 years, with many people deciding voluntarily that they no longer wish to shoot woodcock. Second, a ban might remove the motivation for many landowners to manage their woods in ways that will maintain suitable habitat for woodcock. Third, parts of western Britain have no history of breeding woodcock, but host large numbers of migrants, so shooting in these areas does not put residents at risk except during cold spells when residents might move south and west¹.

However, until we better understand the reasons for the decline in our breeding woodcock and the effects of shooting, we believe it would be prudent for those that intend to shoot woodcock to:

1 – Improve their understanding of their local woodcock populations before shooting

We advocate improving local knowledge about both the presence of resident breeders and the numbers of woodcock typically present at different times during the winter. For instance, on the east coast of Scotland the largest numbers of migrant woodcock are often present in November, whereas in southern England migrant numbers are typically highest in January. Information on how to count residents in summer can be found [here](#).

2 – Show restraint even where resident birds are absent

Restraint when shooting woodcock makes sense even in areas where there are no local breeders, because we know from our satellite tracking and annual ringing of woodcock that the majority of migrant woodcock are extremely faithful to the same wintering site year on year. Overshooting will therefore break the migratory link with your shoot and is likely to lead to fewer woodcock being seen in future.

3 – Shoot flight lines with caution

We urge local caution when shooting woodcock flighting from woodland at dusk owing to a higher risk of overshooting.

4 – Curb shooting in cold weather

We are currently conducting research to better understand the effect of cold weather on woodcock.

However, every effort should be made to reduce additional mortality when woodcock are at higher risk of starvation and predation during cold spells. We are aware that most shoots stop shooting woodcock before a **statutory cold weather suspension** comes into force after 13 days. Our current advice is that woodcock shooting should stop after seven days with daily temperatures below 0°C or with the onset of lying snow and that birds should be given a chance to recover for at least a week following such weather.

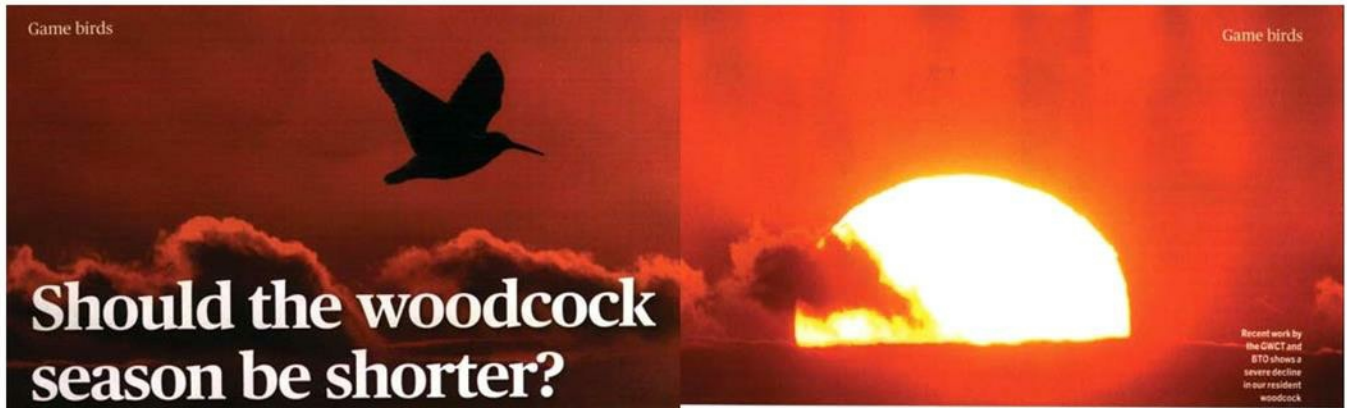
Footnotes

¹ Woodcock have historically never bred regularly in Cornwall, Pembrokeshire or the Outer Hebrides and hence, in mild weather, shooting should only affect migrants. Devon, Somerset, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Anglesey have supported only very low and localised numbers of breeding woodcock in the last 50 years and the risk of shooting to residents in these counties is currently low. Very few woodcock currently breed in Galway and Mayo, but the species bred far more widely in these counties until 20-30 years ago.



Client: The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust Yellow News
Source: Shooting Times & Country Magazine
Date: 19/07/2017

Keyword: Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Page: 22
Reach: 22003
Size: 1589
Value: 7245.84



Andrew Hoodless of the GWCT looks at ways in which shooters and conservationists could prevent impacts on our resident breeding birds

Our resident breeding woodcock are in decline and, inevitably, the question of whether or not to shoot them and what constitutes sustainable practice keeps coming up.

So, would woodcock populations fare better with greater statutory controls on shooting or might improved self-regulation by shoots be more effective?

Before discussing these options, let's establish some facts. The European breeding woodcock population is estimated at 7million to 9million males.

In Britain and Ireland, we also have a relatively small resident breeding population of woodcock. Recent work by the GWCT and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) shows a severe decline in our resident woodcock, with a range contraction of 56 per cent between 1970 and 2010.

'Britain and Ireland represent the western limit of the woodcock's breeding range'

losses greatest in the west and south. Owing to the scale of decline, the woodcock was moved to red status on the UK's Birds of Conservation Concern list in December 2015.

We don't fully understand what is driving this decline. It should be borne in mind that Britain and Ireland represent the western limit of the woodcock's global breeding range and that the species became widely established as a breeding bird only

after the 1850s, with the large-scale planting of woodland, primarily for pheasant shooting. The planting of conifer forests across Scotland, Wales and East Anglia in the 1950s and 1960s produced further extensive areas of ideal habitat and consequently our resident breeding population probably peaked around 1970.

An increasing trend in average woodland age and a reduction or cessation in woodland management might be important in the recent decline. The maturation of the conifers established in the 1950s and 1960s will have resulted in large areas of formerly suitable habitat being far less attractive to breeding woodcock.

At the same time, we have seen a significant growth in deer numbers, with many former deer-free areas colonised, which means more browsing of the herb and shrub layers that woodcock need. Predation pressure may well have risen too. We know that lowland areas, in particular, support higher densities of foxes and corvids than 50 years ago and, coupled with a growing population of badgers, increased predation becomes another plausible factor in the decline.



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Roding woodcock

During the breeding season, male woodcock make roding flights over woodland at dawn and dusk in search of females while uttering a peculiar croak-and-whistle call.

influence the abundance and accessibility of food for chicks.

Effects of shooting

Back to the question of shooting. At present, we cannot rule out shooting as a factor in the decline of our resident woodcock. We think that its contribution at a national scale is likely to be small, but it could be important at a local level.

The GWCT currently advocates not shooting woodcock before 1 December, to give migrant woodcock numbers time to build up and hence minimise the chance of shooting a resident. So should the season be changed to December and January? An advantage would be



Guns are being urged to make efforts to avoid shooting resident woodcock wherever possible

that no woodcock would be shot in September (in Scotland) or October, when the majority killed are likely to be residents, and residents would also be protected in November while migrant numbers are building up.

The potential downside might be a belief among shooters that any detriment to resident woodcock had been addressed by the revised legislation and shooting pressure might increase during the shorter season. Some shoots in the east that often only see woodcock in November as migrant birds pass through would miss out on the chance to take a bag.

For self-regulation of shooting to be successful, it has to be based

on clear guidelines that are adopted by all. Coupled with active management to improve habitat and reduce predation, it can be highly effective, as demonstrated by the voluntary moratorium on the shooting of black grouse. This is why the GWCT has emphasised the importance of obtaining a good local understanding of woodcock numbers and of restraint when the decision is made to shoot.

Landowners and gamekeepers should make it their business to know whether woodcock are present in summer and which woods are used by local breeders. Watching from a ride in the largest wood at dusk on a couple of evenings in May or June ->



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Game birds

should be sufficient to detect roding males. In upland areas they can be seen over open moorland.

Counts of woodcock feeding on fields between October and December will soon make it clear when the migrant woodcock have arrived in good numbers.

Respect for this truly wild bird and restraint when shooting makes sense even in areas where there are no local breeders. Though ringing records indicate that most resident woodcock do not move more than a few miles from their breeding woods in winter, some Scottish birds move to Ireland. We also know from our satellite tracking and ringing of woodcock that about 70 per cent of migrant woodcock are faithful to the same wintering site year on year. Overshooting will probably break the migratory link with your shoot and may lead to fewer woodcock being seen in future.

For instance, allowing woodcock to be shot throughout the season on a commercial pheasant shoot is soon likely to lead to the extinction of any resident breeders and a reduction in numbers of migrants seen in future.

“Shooters might think that any detriment to resident woodcock had been addressed”

In contrast, a single woodcock day in January on a wild bird shoot may have no effect on breeding numbers. There is perhaps the greatest risk of overshooting when targeting woodcock flighting from woodland at dusk. This activity is best restricted to one or two evenings a season and only a small proportion of the birds seen should be taken.



Restraint when shooting this truly wild bird makes sense, even in areas where there are no local breeders

We are not alone in tackling the issue of how to ensure sustainable woodcock shooting. At the recent annual meeting of FANBPO (Federation of European Woodcock Associations of the Western Palearctic) there was concern about tourist hunters and commercial exploitation of woodcock. The flighting of woodcock was regarded as unsporting and condemned.

Though the numbers of woodcock shot in Britain and Ireland are seven to eight times lower than in Italy or France, where they are widely hunted over pointers and setters, we are in the unusual position of having no statutory monitoring of bags and no bag limits. The sale of woodcock is banned throughout the rest of Europe. I was encouraged that

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Help the GWCT to understand the decline in resident woodcock and devise solutions by making a donation at www.gwct.org.uk/game/resident-woodcock-appeal.
Help survey breeding woodcock: www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/woodcock-survey.
Read more about the GWCT's research: www.gwct.org.uk/game/research/species/woodcock.

there was consensus on the need for better co-ordinated monitoring of winter woodcock numbers and bags between countries, a better understanding of the impact of cold weather and when to halt shooting and more work to determine what constitutes a sustainable harvest.

Prudent policy

Until we have better information, it would be prudent for all shoots to rethink their woodcock shooting policy. Shoots can also make an important contribution to habitat management for breeding woodcock. Ensuring diversity in woodland structure and creating open space is likely to help. Where the canopy is dense and there is little undergrowth, thinning is important to promote more ground cover. Making clearings to regenerate naturally, or for replanting, will create open space in the short term, followed by thickets for foraging areas. Rotational ride management will provide access to preferred stands and is likely to benefit warblers and butterflies too.



Shoots can make an important contribution to habitat management for breeding woodcock

P-06-1201 Ban the shooting of critically endangered birds...give them the protection they so desperately need!, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 30.01.22

Dear Members of the petition committee,

Thank you for your email and the attached correspondence.

I would like to make a couple of important points for my response:

1. The declaration of a nature emergency should mean that the Welsh Government would do everything it can to reverse the loss of these vulnerable species.

All of the State of Nature Reports have warned us that we cannot and must not go back to business as usual!

2. The arguments which our sport shooting industry use are fundamentally the same as what the discredited trophy industry use to justify their appalling activities. Planting some trees and paying blood money allows them to shoot and kill whatever they desire. I am glad the world is starting to wake up to these 18th century delusion.

3. Why has there been no consultation with the BTO or the LACS?

4. My group is a small conservation group based in Barry and is made up of volunteers. To ask us to present scientific evidence for our argument is simply unreasonable and the RSPB'S Royal Charter mean that they are fundamentally biased. Only the Welsh Government can carry out an unbiased review.

5. The shooting of red listed species by sport shooting means they cannot even use the excuse of crop protection...it's basically for fun!

Finally the low gene pool left in these red listed species should automatically protect them from the lead of the sport shooting. In my opinion, the Welsh public would welcome some extra protection for these vulnerable species.

We are not asking for a total ban on sport shoot, all we are asking is that they those species who are currently classed as red listed are given protection from this senseless slaughter...the nature crisis demands action before more bird species are lost to the UK.

Where are all the champions of nature gone?!

Agenda Item 4.5

P-06-1202 Ban the killing of day old chicks in Wales

This petition was submitted David Grimsell, having collected 413 signatures online and 731 on paper, for a total of 1,144 signatures.

Text of Petition:

To produce laying hens only female chicks are needed. Male chicks are killed shortly after hatching. The chicks are killed by gassing or maceration.

Gassing is likely to be highly aversive, while maceration is brutal. Technology exists by which the sex of an egg can be determined, so male eggs can be prevented from hatching. France and Germany will ban the killing of male chicks by 2021 and 2022 respectively. Wales should now ban this practice too and provide a lead to the rest of the UK.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ceredigion
- Mid and West Wales

P-06-1202 Ban the killing of day old chicks in Wales, Correspondence – Humane Slaughter Association to Committee, 08.12.21

Humane Slaughter Association – response to P-06-1202 Correspondence from the Chair of the Petitions Committee

Maceration

Maceration of day-old chicks, despite its unpleasant appearance to many observers, is likely to be humane if used correctly. The process will lead to instantaneous destruction of the chicks' brains, precluding any possibility of suffering. However, there is potential for poor welfare both during pre-cull handling and during maceration. Poorly designed or maintained macerators can injure chicks without killing them instantly. Poor handling during sexing and conveyance to the macerator may also cause poor welfare as may the holding of birds in storage containers prior to maceration.

Gas/Controlled Atmosphere Killing

Use of gas killing carries the same welfare risks during handling prior to culling as mechanical dispatch. Various methods are used including carbon dioxide and Inert Gases (argon and nitrogen). The use of Low Atmospheric Pressure Stunning has also been suggested. There is limited evidence to suggest that inert gases may induce more stress as measured by hormonal assays than CO₂, possibly because they take longer to induce loss of consciousness (e.g Wang et al. 2021; Gurung et al. 2018). The possibility that CO₂ exposure causes aversion in chicks cannot be conclusively ruled out and it is notable that this gas is aversive to adult birds and many other species. Unlike the welfare risks from maceration, the welfare risks of gas-killing are inherent and so it may not be possible to avoid them by employing best practice.

In-ovo egg sexing

If this method is viable on an industrial scale we would support the usage of this method, which precludes the possibility of hatched male chicks suffering when they are culled. We do not envisage any animal welfare downsides to the adoption of this method. We also note the recent development of gene-editing techniques which may in future allow the creation of single-sex offspring, which may offer another solution to the problem.

Emergency killing for deformed and unviable chicks alongside any mis-sexed chicks.

Even where in-ovo sexing is performed, a process for culling unviable or injured female chicks will need to be in place. If in-ovo sexing is not 100% reliable, leading to the hatching of some male chicks, these chicks will also need to be culled. In both these scenarios it will still be necessary to cull these chicks in a humane manner. Maceration should potentially be retained as an option for the culling of these limited numbers of chicks even if in-ovo sexing is universally adopted..

Summary

The HSA would support a move towards in-ovo sexing and away from culling of viable male chicks. However, the feasibility of this transition, timescale and any eventual ban on culling male chicks is a matter for the industry and regulators. The use of maceration, as long as carried out with care does not inherently compromise chick welfare although the method may compromise welfare if good practice is not followed. We continue to encourage and support producers to employ best-practice wherever maceration is used.

Gurung, Shailesh, Dima White, Gregory Archer, Dan Zhao, Yuhua Farnell, J. Allen Byrd, E. David Peebles, and Morgan Farnell. 2018. 'Evaluation of Alternative Euthanasia Methods of Neonatal Chickens'. *Animals : An Open Access Journal from MDPI* 8 (3): 37. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani8030037>.

Wang, Xi, Dan Zhao, Allison C. Milby, Gregory S. Archer, E. David Peebles, Shailesh Gurung, and Morgan B. Farnell. 2021. 'Evaluation of Euthanasia Methods on Behavioral and Physiological Responses of Newly Hatched Male Layer Chicks'. *Animals : An Open Access Journal from MDPI* 11 (6): 1802. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani11061802>.



Cymdeithas Frenhinol er Atal Creulondeb i Anifeiliaid Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament / Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff
CF99 1NA

8 December 2021

Dear Jack Sargeant MS,

Thank you for your recent correspondence dated 23 November 2021, with regard to Petition P-06-1202 *'Ban the killing of day old chicks in Wales'*.

Sadly, it is true that male chicks could be considered a by-product of egg production, with male chicks in hatcheries euthanised shortly after hatching. At present, this could be through exposure to certain gasses or via a process known as maceration.

Maceration (Instantaneous Mechanical Destruction, IMD) is a method involving a mechanical apparatus that instantly kills the chicks using either rapidly rotating blades or a roller-type device with solid projections resulting in the chicks being 'flattened'. The idea of using any of these apparatus to dispose of chicks can be and indeed looks distressing - and this petition is raising awareness of that. However, maceration constitutes a humane method when managed and maintained correctly as it causes chicks to be killed instantly, thus minimising chances of suffering.

While maceration is a legally permitted method of euthanasia in Wales, and the wider UK at present, all male laying hen chicks hatched in Wales are in fact killed using Argon gas. As Argon gas is inert there is no aversive reaction from the chicks to this killing method. The majority of chicks hatched in the UK come from RSPCA Assured hatcheries which must adhere to and be inspected to all relevant RSPCA welfare standards, and currently all these hatcheries use Argon gas to kill the male chicks. In addition, RSPCA standards cover over 80% of eggs produced on farms in Wales and around 89% of laying hens in Wales are in free range flocks - the largest percentage in Europe.

The RSPCA standards do also permit maceration as a method of euthanasia, subject to adherence to strict mandatory rules to ensure the instant and painless death that research shows can be achieved when the nature, maintenance and operation of the equipment are appropriate. Nevertheless, in practice, maceration is generally only used for hatchery waste and unviable eggs (rather than healthy chicks), where gas killing is not an option.

Aside from the humaneness issue, the RSPCA agrees that the killing of young animals raises an ethical issue so any subsequent use of the culled chicks is important. In the UK, these culled chicks are widely used as food for birds of prey, exotic pets and other captive wild animals in zoos. If the domestic market could not supply this demand, day-old chicks would have to be imported or an alternative feed source - such as baby mice and rats - used. Some reports suggest that all the culled



Cymdeithas Frenhinol er Atal Creulondeb i Anifeiliaid Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

day old male chicks produced across the UK are already utilised and the RSPCA's own investigations indicate that some imports already occur to meet demand. Young mice and rats are also bred to supply this market and are kept and killed under poor or unknown conditions in Wales, and across the UK, too. So the welfare of any alternative feed sources needs to be considered if chick culling ceases. The RSPCA does not want the welfare concerns associated with day-old chick culling to be worsened by displacing them overseas or onto different species of animal bred and killed under uncontrolled conditions.

Measures to reduce the number of male chicks hatched are being used such as in Germany and France where the culling of day old chicks will be prohibited from 2022. There is on-going research being carried out to discover ways of sexing chicks whilst still in the egg, with this often referred to as in-ovo sexing. These new technologies aim to do the sexing and disposal before an embryo can feel pain, which happens at around nine days. However, alternative feed sources for exotics and captive species would still be needed and as mentioned above, there are currently no welfare standards to inform or control the rearing and killing methods of alternatives. The RSPCA will be considering the consequences of the legislation in France and Germany on issues such as the level of demand for day-old chicks in those countries and how this is satisfied without national production occurring.

As mentioned above, in the UK, the current demand for male chicks appears to be greater than the 40 million hatched in the UK each year. With this in mind, we are hesitant to support any action that would result in these eggs being laid but not used, ahead of an alternative feed source being identified and developed that avoids production and killing of living beings (such as mice) solely for the purpose of animal feed under uncontrolled conditions (in contrast with the well controlled hatchery production). Such a situation would have very significant ethical and welfare implications.

I hope that this has helped to explain the RSPCA's position on this challenging issue and the reasons behind it. Please do not hesitate to contact me if more information would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Bowles', written over a faint dotted line.

David Bowles
RSPCA Head of Public Affairs

**P-06-1202 Ban the killing of day old chicks in Wales, Correspondence –
Petitioner to Committee, 27.01.22**

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Mr Jack Sargeant, M.S.

Chair of the Petitions Committee

Welsh Parliament

27th January 2022

Dear Mr Sargeant

Re Petition 06-1202: Ban the killing of day-old chicks in Wales.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to correspondence you have received from the RSPCA and the Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) in connection with the above petition.

I think it is first important to emphasise that irrespective of the method used to kill chicks in the egg industry, the process inherently involves the destruction of sentient individuals. The chicks involved (about 40 million in the U.K.) hatch, are fully aware and are sentient and are concerned to live. It is surely better that the necessity for this to occur, treating the animals as by-products in their millions, is avoided.

With respect to the methods used, both the HSA and the RSPCA, are of the view that instantaneous maceration is potentially 'humane', in the sense of avoiding suffering, though the HSA emphasises that this can be assumed only where 'best practice' is followed. However, the egg industry has indicated that maceration is not used in the U.K. The alternative is the use of gas, by which most, if not all, male chicks in the U.K. are destroyed.

Gas combinations that may be used include high concentration carbon dioxide, carbon dioxide mixed with argon, or high concentration argon. There is much evidence that stunning of any animal with carbon dioxide causes significant distress and this is likely to be the case if used to kill male chicks. However, the egg industry has asserted that high concentration argon, not carbon dioxide, is almost exclusively used. The RSPCA response states that, 'As argon gas is inert there is no aversive reaction from the chicks to this killing method'. There is no basis for this statement, and the HSA (who have greater expertise on the matter) report evidence that suggests that use of argon may not only be aversive but may even induce more stress than the use of carbon dioxide. Moreover, with respect to the use of gas to kill chicks, the HAS states in its response, '...the welfare risks of gas killing are inherent and so it may not be possible to avoid them by employing best practice'.

It is also important to note that the welfare harms associated with the killing of male chicks are not limited to the slaughter process itself. When chicks (both male and female) are hatched in the large-

scale operations where this occurs, chicks are placed in their thousands on conveyor belts and jostled roughly, before hand 'sexers' unceremoniously grab the chicks and place them at high speed in either the 'male' (to be destroyed) or 'female' (to be reared on) lines of the conveyor belt. These processes hardly respect the welfare of the animals.

The RSPCA response seeks to justify the continued killing of male chicks in the egg industry on the grounds that the chicks are used to feed 'birds of prey, exotic pets and captive animals in zoos', and that, were these chicks not to be available, food sources (potentially rats and mice) might be used which involve greater welfare harms because of the unregulated sources that would potentially be used. This kind of argument is one that the egg industry itself uses—it wants to avoid change and also benefits commercially from the sale of dead male chicks. However, this is a justification in terms of meeting human interests and not the welfare of animals. The private keeping of birds of prey and exotic pets in itself creates major welfare harms with animals often kept in inappropriate conditions. Captive animals in zoos are also very often kept in inappropriate conditions and the justifications for doing so ('education' or 'conservation') are seldom in practice realized. We should not be justifying the unnecessary killing of tens of millions of male chicks in order to support the inappropriate keeping of animals for selfish purposes, or to support the egg industry's reluctance to change.

As my previous correspondence has indicated, there are now commercially viable, rapid and effective means of 'in-ovo' sexing, i.e., finding out the sex of an egg before it hatches. This is the basis for the newly introduced laws in France and Germany (from 1st January) of this year that prohibit the killing of male chicks as a by-product. The HSA clearly states in its response, 'We do not envisage any animal welfare downsides to the adoption of this method'. There have, moreover, as the HSA comments, been recent reports that suggest gene editing will also, in future, be able to provide a method of preventing male eggs developing as an alternative means of preventing the need for the destruction of male chicks.

Currently, about 3 million laying hens are kept in Wales. For every one of these produced, a male chick will have hatched and been destroyed. There is some uncertainty at the moment as to the extent to which laying hen eggs are hatched in Wales—the egg industry asserts that this does not occur to any substantial extent. The chicks that will grow into egg-laying hens here are most likely to be hatched in England, and the male chicks will be being destroyed in hatcheries there.

There is a need to end the production and killing of male chicks across the U.K. It would be positive, in my view, if the Petitions Committee were to clearly recommend that means should be found to end the unnecessary killing of male chicks. This might be achieved by dialogue between the Welsh and U.K. administrations to identify compatible legislative solutions to prevent the killing of male chicks in both England and Wales.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours,

David Grimsell

Welsh citizen.

Agenda Item 4.6

P-06-1254 Demand that all depictions of our dragon have a penis

This petition was submitted by Rhŷn Williams, having collected a total of 1,104 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Within symbology, an erect penis depicts fertility and strength, when applied to a royal insignia, it's even more important because in order to show a leader's capability in sustaining a kingdom, this has to be conveyed via simple imagery, thus... when the dragon is erect, it portrays dominance and leadership, but when the penis is missing, this portrays the creature (the nation) as dominated, weak and fragile.

Additional Information:

When the Royal Mint depict our dragon, they recognise that he has a penis, but for some reason, our government does not, and although some may find the topic amusing, this imagery is important if we are to carry on flying it for centuries to come.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/royal-mint-makes-20-welsh-11558570>

<https://www.royalmint.com/our-coins/ranges/denomination/The-Welsh-Dragon-Celebration-2019-UK-20-pound-Fine-Silver-Coin/>

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Dwyfor Meirionnydd
- Mid and West Wales

Agenda Item 4.7

P-06-1246 Drop the limit on outdoor gatherings and allow community events to continue

This petition was submitted by Gareth Howell, having collected a total of XX signatures.

Text of Petition:

The Welsh Government is again imposing a strict limit of 50 people who can gather for an event outdoors, from Boxing Day. This immediately rules out several community events such as seasonal gatherings and 5k parkruns, which are so crucial to the mental and physical health of the nation in these hard times.

Banning these events is cruel, disproportionate and against all known evidence about Covid transmission outdoors and we ask that the Welsh Government reverses this decision immediately.

Additional Information:

Many of these events are already subject to stringent risk assessment whose implementation minimises Covid risk to an acceptable level where participants can choose freely to decide what is in their best interest. See 'parkrun Covid framework' for an example.

The WG have produced no evidence to counter that these frameworks are insufficient for the protection of the public and we find it deeply irresponsible to simply close out community sport on a "just in case basis" given the obvious balance of health risks in favour of their continued running.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff North
- South Wales Central