

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 – Senedd

HYBRID

Meeting date: 27 March 2023

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

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Petitions@senedd.wales

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 21)

2 Evidence session 1 – P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales (14.00 – 14.40)

(Pages 22 – 28)

Bethan Sayed, Climate Cymru

Ben Saltmarsh, National Energy Action Cymru

Luke Young, Citizens Advice Cymru

3 New Petitions (14.40 – 15.00)

3.1 P-06-1325 Lower the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn

(Pages 29 – 36)

4 Updates to previous petitions

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

(Pages 37 – 38)



- 4.2 P-06-1190 Ban the use of peat in horticulture and all growing media by 2023
(Pages 39 – 40)
- 4.3 P-06-1272 Ban the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy
(Pages 41 – 47)
- 4.4 P-06-1275 Call on the Government to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the Llanbedr bypass scheme
(Page 48)
- 4.5 P-06-1299 Welsh Government 'Freeze on road building" to include a clause for cases that pose a danger to life
(Page 49)
- 4.6 P-06-1286 To ensure treatment and screening for cancer continues during COVID19
(Pages 50 – 52)
- 4.7 P-06-1297 Stop "Controlled Burning" in Wales
(Pages 53 – 60)

5 Evidence session 2 – P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales (15.00 – 15.30)

Dean Kirby, Journalist – i Newspaper

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting (15.30 – 16.00)

7 Discussion of evidence – P-06-1326 The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

Document is Restricted

The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Mawrth 2023
Petitions Committee | 13 March 2023

Reference: SR23/5378/2

Petition Number: P-06-1326

Petition title: The Senedd should scrutinise the prepayment meter scandal in Wales

Text of petition:

We call on the Senedd to undertake an inquiry into the prepayment meter scandal.

Over the last two months evidence has emerged that thousands of people have been switched to prepay meters without the required checks as to whether they are vulnerable.

We at Climate Cymru and other campaigners have been exposing this scandal.

Please see links to stories by campaigning journalists like Dean Kirby at the i Newspaper [all behind a paywall].

- [Forced installations of prepayment meters to stop as courts ordered to end issuing warrants](#)

- [Prepayment meters must be removed for vulnerable families as compensation is not enough, Grant Schapps told](#)

- [i morning briefing: How the prepayment meter scandal was uncovered, and forced change](#)



- [Prepayment meters: Grant Schappys gives energy firms until Tuesday to consider compensation](#)
- [Prepayment meter investigation](#)

1. Background

1.1. The rising cost of energy

[Rocketing energy prices have been dominating the news](#), both in the UK and globally. The price of gas jumped to an all-time high, taking electricity prices with it, and causing the UK Government to step in to [support people and businesses](#).

The [wholesale price of energy has increased](#) due to a [combination of events](#), resulting in a reduced supply coupled with an increasing demand.

Ofgem, the energy regulator, has been able to limit the rates a supplier can charge to domestic customers by putting a [‘price cap’](#) on the cost per unit of electricity and gas, as well as limits on the standing charge for each, and re-evaluate every three months. As wholesale prices increased, Ofgem increased the level of the price cap.

In response to the rising [price cap](#), the [UK Government announced the Energy Price Guarantee as a temporary additional measure](#), which means consumers will pay less for their energy than under the price cap. It means that currently from April 2023 a typical household will pay £3,000 per year to end of March 2024 (although it is [expected to be kept at the current level of £2,500](#) per year).

The [Welsh Government says](#):

Current estimates suggest up to 45% of all households in Wales could be in fuel poverty following increases to the energy price cap.

1.2. Payment up front

Prepayment meters (‘PPM’) are a [type of domestic energy meter](#) that require users to pay for energy before using it.

A recent Welsh Government Statement says:

...approximately 200,000 households in Wales use pre-payment meters for their mains gas and electricity. This represents approximately 15% of all households and 24% of tenants in the private rented sector. Almost half of social housing tenants (45%) also use pre-payment meters.

Energy is more expensive with a PPM compared to the best direct debit deals. There are also fewer tariffs and suppliers to choose from, and customers have more limited credit options as they are unable to go into arrears. The gap between unit prices available to PPM and other customers was reduced through the price cap, and more recently the Energy Price Guarantee.

Under the Energy Price Guarantee PPM customers pay a lower unit price for electricity than other customers. However they pay a higher unit price for gas than customers paying by direct debit, and pay higher standing charges than all other customers for both electricity and gas.

A recent comparison by Which? reported in December 2022, found a £60 difference per year between a dual-fuel deal for a 'typical household' paying by direct debit, and the same household with a PPM.

A recent survey undertaken by Citizens Advice Cymru found that over 70% of PPM users in Wales are worried about keeping their PPM topped up until April, and that:

32% of PPM users in Wales have been disconnected from their energy supply over the last year because they can't afford to top-up.

If a consumer with a PPM does not have enough money to top-up their meter, or when they do not realise that credit on the meter is running out, their meter cuts out. This is known as 'self-disconnection'.

1.3. Those on prepayment meters are disproportionately on the lowest incomes

Research by the independent think tank Resolution Foundation shows almost half (48%) of British families using a PPM are in the lowest income quintile.

Barnardo's Cymru says families on PPM need to be prioritised to be switched wherever possible to non-prepayment, as this perpetuates a very real poverty tax. Further, young people often face some of the worst consequences of financial

crises, and are likely to be the hardest hit by energy price hikes. Younger households are up to four times more likely to be on PPM, preventing them from spreading energy costs out evenly throughout the year, with fewer savings to fall back on compared to older age groups.

1.4. Customers being forced on to prepayment meters

A consumer and supplier may agree that a PPM is the best option to help manage any debt payments. However, energy firms can also apply to a magistrate to force (under warrant) a customer on to a PPM without their agreement if they have racked up debts.

Ofgem's good practice guidance for supporting customers in payment difficulty requires energy suppliers to identify vulnerable customers and offer them support if debts are building.

Following reports that energy companies were not doing enough to support vulnerable customers, on 22 January the then UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Grant Shapps MP, wrote to energy suppliers calling on them to stop forcibly moving consumers over to PPM, without taking every step to support consumers in difficulty.

Following this, Ofgem CEO Jonathan Brearley wrote to the Secretary of State detailing previous Market Compliance Reviews (MCRs) into suppliers' governance and processes on how they treat customers in payment difficulty. Three suppliers were found to have "severe weaknesses" in how they support these customers.

In his letter, Jonathan Bearley set out Ofgem's intended actions, including to conduct a further MCR focused on suppliers' practices on PPM.

Since then, it's been reported that 32,790 warrants were issued in January to forcibly install PPM. Ofgem asked suppliers to pause forcible installation and to conduct a thorough review of processes. Magistrates have since been ordered to stop issuing warrants for this practice in England and Wales.

Ofgem has also called on all suppliers to use the pause in installations (lasting until 31 March 2023) to review all of their recent forced and remotely switched PPM installations, and consider if any need to be reversed, and compensation offered where the strict rules have not been followed.

Following intervention from MPs and the (now) Secretary of State for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Grant Shapps MP, energy suppliers

have committed to ending the forced installation of PPM in vulnerable customers' homes.

Ofgem will also be taking an urgent investigation into British Gas, following undercover reporting from The Times into the company's treatment of customers when forced PPM were being installed.

2. Welsh Government action

The distribution and supply of electricity, and the supply of gas are both reserved to Westminster under the Government of Wales Act 2006. Consumer Protection is also a reserved matter. It is therefore unlikely that the Welsh Government could restrict or ban the installation of PPMs.

In terms of the energy price cap/guarantee, this is also a reserved matter, and Ofgem is accountable to the UK Parliament. However the Welsh Government can implement schemes to support people in Wales. For example in June 2022 the Welsh Government announced a Fuel Voucher Scheme for those who are pre-paying for energy, either on PPM or where they are reliant on heating oil.

Following a meeting with Energy Suppliers in January 2023, the Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS said:

I was told by the suppliers that moving householders onto pre-payments meters was seen as a last resort, and whilst there was a perception pre-payment meters are linked to debt, some suppliers stated the majority of their pre-payment customers used the meters as a tool to control usage.

Suppliers confirmed to me they try to actively engage with their customers before a pre-payment meter is considered and, in most cases, there is a lengthy process to follow before one is installed, in agreement with the householder. There are measures in place to determine who is considered to be appropriate for a pre-payment meter

The Minister said that energy suppliers have agreed to share data on the number of households being supported with their energy bills and/or being transferred onto PPM, and the reason for doing so. They also agreed to provide information on 'self-disconnection'.

The Minister also said **the Welsh Government has consistently** called on the UK Government and Ofgem to **introduce a social tariff** to protect the most vulnerable householders and there was broad support for this from energy suppliers.

The **Minister met with energy companies again on the 23 January**, and expressed that she was “appalled” about the number of forced installations of PPM.

3. Welsh Parliament action

A **topical question was asked in Plenary on 25 January**, by Jack Sargeant MS, where he called for an immediate ban on the forced installation of PPM. This topic was **raised again in Plenary by Jack Sargeant on 1 March**.

The Senedd’s Equality and Social Justice Committee has been undertaking an enquiry into **debt and the impact of the rising cost of living**. PPM and recent revelations around forced installations have been raised during this inquiry on **30 January** and **13 February**. The Committee is yet to report its findings.

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.

P-06-1325 Lower the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 27 Mawrth 2023
Petitions Committee | 27 March 2023

Reference: SR23/1325-2

Petition Number: P-06-1325

Petition title: Lower the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn

Text of petition: We are calling for a speed limit of 30mph to be set on the A5 through the village of Glasfryn as a matter of urgency and before someone is killed.

Families live on the edge of this busy and dangerous road. Businesses are conducted very near to the road and farmers and contractors use the road daily to conduct their businesses.

Over the years, there have been a number of serious accidents including one fatality and several near misses. This is an urgent matter as it is only a matter of time before another serious incident occurs.



1. Background

The A5 at Glasfryn forms part of the trunk road network. Consequently, the Welsh Government is the highway authority, and also traffic authority responsible for speed limits on this stretch of road.

The speed limit through the village is currently 60mph. It forms part of what is informally known as the “[Evo Triangle](#)”, named because [EVO magazine](#) uses the 20 mile stretch of road to test cars. The [Welsh Government has funded](#) a road safety scheme in the area. This included installation of average speed cameras at each end of the A5 through Glasfryn. However, [residents do not believe](#) this is sufficient and that the speed limit should be reduced.

Currently speed limits on Welsh roads other than motorways are set using guidance published in 2009 known as [Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales](#).

The Welsh Government published [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy](#) in 2021. This commits to review the approach to setting speed limits.

2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Chair, dated 7 March, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS says that the speed limit in the village has recently been reviewed using the 2009 guidance. That recommended no change.

However, he stresses that this guidance is being reviewed, and points to [the guidance webpage](#) which highlights that the Welsh Government would like to hear views on the review. Although it includes no formal response mechanism.

The updated guidance is expected to be published “by the end of the year”, at which point trunk road speed limits will be reviewed again. He stresses it would not be appropriate to review again using the current guidance.

In the meantime, he suggests concerns should be [directed to the Go Safe](#) partnership which is responsible for speed limit enforcement.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Senedd passed the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order 2022 in June 2022 to implement Welsh Government policy in this area. This will introduce a default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads – the default limit is currently 30mph. While this would not apply to Glasfryn, it forms part of the basis for the review of speed limit guidance referred to by the Deputy Minister.

You have considered a wide range of petitions calling for speed limit change. Some call for speed reductions and / or other road safety measures. Others oppose the introduction of 20mph speed limits.

This specific issue of the A5 at Glasfryn was raised in Plenary on 21 September 2022 by Llyr Gruffydd MS. The Member said:

If you travel on the A5 from Bangor all the way to Shrewsbury, Glasfryn is the only village on that journey where there are no speed limits in place, even though there are busy junctions in the village and homes only a metre or two from the side of the road. Indeed, what you see when you reach the village are national speed limit signs, which, to all intents and purposes, remind drivers to drive at 60 miles an hour, which is entirely unacceptable.

The Deputy Minister's response drew attention the speed limit policy changes described above. He said:

... there are examples where a community feels the road speeds are too fast, and that is something we're going to look at as part of our overall package of modal shift.

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-06-1325
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/00306/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

07 March 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 15 February regarding Petition P-06-1325 Lower the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn.

Improving road safety is a priority for Welsh Government and we are continuously working with local authorities, the police and other partners to identify locations where there is a need for road safety engineering measures. The views of local residents assist us in making informed decisions when sections of road are reviewed and I appreciate the serious nature of the concerns being raised by this petition.

We have reviewed the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn against the criteria in the existing Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales guidance. Whilst I appreciate it isn't the outcome the petitioner is hoping for, that review recommended no change to the current 60mph speed limit.

However, I can confirm that we're in the process of updating the Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales guidance to reflect current Welsh Government policy including the national roll-out of [20mph speed limits](#) and to meet the ambitions highlighted in [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#). This work may see a change in the criteria for lower speed limits in Wales. Further details including an opportunity to comment on the existing guidance can be found [here](#). The updated guidance is expected to be published before the end of the year, after which we will review the speed limits across the trunk road network. It would not be right to review any speed limits until this new guidance is published.

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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.

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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.

Go Safe, the Road Safety Partnership has responsibility for speed limit enforcement and I can confirm that this section of the A5 has Average Speed Cameras in situ, forming part of the 'Evo Triangle' average speed camera enforcement site. Nevertheless, if there are concerns regarding traffic speeds, I would encourage the petitioner and any concerned local residents to contact Go Safe directly to highlight their concerns via the following webpage: <https://gosafe.org/contact-us/community-concern/>.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', written in a cursive style.

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

**P-06-1325 Lower the speed limit on the A5 through Glasfryn, Correspondence –
Petitioner to Committee, 20.03.23**

20 March, 2023

REF: P-06-1325

Dear Petitions Committee

Thank you for the invitation to share my views in light of the document sent to me. In preparation for my response, I have also read the hyperlinked report and the Senedd's ambitions as set out in Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021 in great detail.

I have also studied the **Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales** guidance which clearly states the following:

The current national speed limit on rural single carriageway roads is 60mph and a limit of 70mph applies on rural dual carriageways. 40 and 50mph speed limits may be used where appropriate, and the speed limit in rural towns and villages should generally be 30mph.

Also: Section 5.3 The national speed limit in urban areas is currently 30mph, representing a balance between the mobility and safety of road users, especially the more vulnerable groups.

Local speed limits of 20mph are encouraged where appropriate, particularly in situations

Key points:

- Lower speeds benefits all users of urban roads, especially vulnerable road users.
- Highway authorities are encouraged to adopt the Institution of Highways and Transportation's Urban Safety Management Guidelines. The guidelines propose the use of a road hierarchy approach which reflects a road's function, the mix of vehicular traffic that it carries and its use by vulnerable road users **(In the case of Glasfryn, this would refer to residents of all ages but in particular, the children and families living in the village).**
- The national speed limit in urban areas is currently 30mph.
- Highway authorities are encouraged to consider any new speed limits or modifications to existing limits on an individual case-by-case basis.
- The Welsh Assembly Government encourages and supports 20mph speed limits and zones at appropriate locations. 20mph limits may even be introduced on trunk roads in exceptional circumstances, generally over short lengths and for limited times of the day.

I am deeply concerned that Lee Waters' response to the call for reducing the speed limit on the A5 through the village of Glasfryn, contradicts his own views in parts e.g. *'The views of local residents assist us in making informed decisions when sections of road are reviewed and I appreciate the serious nature of the concerns raised by this petition'*. In writing this, Lee Waters acknowledges that residents' concerns and the possible outcomes of the speed limit being set at 60mph though the village are serious.

In Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021

Section 3 : 0.3

Confidence and safety

We want everyone to feel confident, safe, secure and welcome using the sustainable transport mode of their choice.

I can assure you that the residents of Glasfryn and people living in the wider area **do not** feel safe. This is particularly true of children and their families who live in the village, alongside the busy A5

trunk road. Walking on the pavement e.g. to the village playground does not feel safe when cars speed past at 60mph. Having children picked up and returned on the school transport mini-bus which has to park on the A5 is certainly not safe. The reason being that cars enter the village from the direction of Pentrefoelas around a corner at 60 onto the stretch that is the village and have to break from 60mph to 0mph to avoid hitting the back of the minibus. This happens on a regular basis, however as it has not yet resulted in a serious accident (through sheer luck) it can only be deemed as a 'near-miss'. Also, farm vehicles and lorries enter this stretch of road from junctions at either end of the village. They cannot gather speed at the same rate as cars and when this happens, cars entering the village from either direction at speed overtake through the village or are forced to break to avoid a collision.

Section 5.4 Well-being measures - For safety, we will consider monitoring how safe people feel using different types of public transport, and also walking and cycling.

Children in the village of Glasfryn have expressed publicly and in a TV interview that they do not feel safe and are worried that they or a family member will be killed. It is having a detrimental effect on families' wellbeing. A child who lives less than 2 meters from the road saw his cat being run over and is now even more scared of the speeding cars. Four houses have no option other than to park in the layby which is below their home and is on the A5. Therefore, when opening a car door on one side, they do so into the passing traffic which can appear very suddenly when traveling at speed.

Section 7.4: Roads, Streets and Parking: Our Vision

We will ensure that our roads and streets are safe, well-maintained and managed for all road users, and also support sustainable transport options including active travel and more public transport.

Priorities: introduce a new national default speed limit of 20mph in residential areas and tackle pavement parking.

The point I would like to underline to the Committee is that all the government's narrative around transport focuses on:

- 1. Reduce emissions**
- 2. Reduce the use of cars**
- 3. Improve road safety**

Reducing the speed of driving in Glasfryn would contribute to those goals, therefore the Committee would be wise to underline that and to press for better consistency across the roads policy. In my view, the Minister cannot argue over the above and then ignore the situation in Glasfryn.

Finally, as I have stated in previous correspondence, Glasfryn is the only village on the A5 where cars are allowed to travel at 60mph and is in my view a massive discrepancy and "anomaly" on the part of the Government.

I'm afraid that we cannot afford to wait for the publication of your updated guidance, when you will consider reviewing the speed limits across the trunk road network. In the last 4 months, a speed restriction of 40mph has been implemented on the A5 starting at just before the National Trust centre at Dinas and all the way down to Betws y Coed. This is a winding part of the road with many sharp bends where it is natural that cars will not drive excessively. However, touring motorcyclists visiting the area do speed on this part of the road and there have been accidents. This leads me to question whether the Government values the lives of tourists who chose to risk their lives over the lives of the residents and in particular, children of Glasfryn.

Sincerely

Gwennol Ellis

Cynghorydd Gwennol Ellis
Councillor Gwennol Ellis

Agenda Item 4.1

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

Agenda Item 4.2

P-06-1190 Ban the use of peat in horticulture and all growing media by 2023

This petition was submitted Jake Rayson, having collected a total of 1,013 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Peat bogs and moors are extremely important in the fight against the climate emergency; sequestering carbon better than many natural landscapes, reducing flooding and providing biodiversity. We need to ban the use of peat in horticulture and all growing media by 2023, including imports.

Additional Information:

Peat currently makes up 40% of growing media used by the public, and over 60% of that used in the professional sector. There are other materials such as coir, composted wood and leaf mould which can be used. Peatlands should not be mined but protected and restored.

The Senedd should protect and restore all Welsh peat bogs and moors and crucially ensure that all growing media sold and used in Wales is peat free.

- 3 million cubic metres of peat sold for horticultural use annually in UK, $\frac{1}{3}$ from UK peatlands (IUCN <http://bit.ly/peat-extraction-horticulture>)
- 20 million tonnes carbon dioxide lost to atmosphere annually from UK's damaged peatlands (IUCN <http://bit.ly/peat-climate>)
- Peatland destruction releasing vast amounts of CO₂ (New Scientist <http://bit.ly/peatland-destruction>)
- Peatlands support many important species & unique ecosystems (IUCN <http://bit.ly/peat-species>)

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ceredigion
- Mid and West Wales

Agenda Item 4.3

P-06-1272 Ban the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy agreements in Wales

This petition was submitted by Sam Swash, having collected a total of 857 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The number of people privately renting is increasing year-on-year – currently many are prohibited from keeping pets because of clauses in their tenancy agreements.

The benefits of pet ownership should not be exclusive to homeowners. Those who rent should be equally as entitled to keep a pet as those who own.

Additional Information:

According to the Dog's Trust, the single biggest reason for dogs being handed in to rehoming centres is because of a change of circumstances, such as being unable to live in a rented property with a pet. These clauses also stop large numbers of people coming forward to rehome pets; effectively prohibited from doing so by being a tenant. This means both tenants and pets suffer.

In January 2021, the UK Government introduced a new Model Tenancy Agreement which prohibited landlords from issuing blanket 'no pet' bans. Consent for pets is now the default position. In Wales, there is no such reference and therefore Welsh tenants are less likely to be able to keep a pet than their UK counterparts.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Alyn and Deeside
- North Wales

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/02950/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

18 January 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 21 December regarding Petition P-06-1272 (Ban the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy agreements in Wales), asking what is being done to increase awareness of people's rights with regard to the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.

The Welsh Government has implemented a comprehensive communications campaign to raise awareness of the changes to rights and responsibilities resulting from the 2016 Act. This has targeted both contract-holders (tenants and licensees) and landlords, with the key communications also being made available in eleven commonly used languages in Wales, in addition to Welsh and English. The campaign included online, radio, television and social media messaging and articles were published in both online and print versions of the Western Mail and Daily Post. Whilst the campaign is still ongoing, the initial evaluation of its effectiveness is very positive with, for example, high 'click-through' rates from online content being recorded. Landlords, on whom duties were placed to issue converted contracts and ensure home are fit for human habitation, have also been contacted directly by Rent Smart Wales, receiving regular email and SMS alerts with each message focussed on a different aspect of the new legislation. The campaign page is available at: [Housing law is changing: Renting Homes Wales | GOV.WALES](#).

The communications campaign has been complemented by a range of detailed guidance on the legislation published on our website ([Renting Homes: housing law is changing | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES](#)) and the websites of stakeholders including Shelter Cymru, Citizens Advice Cymru, the National Residential Landlords Association and PropertyMark. The guidance materials include, for example, the model written statements of contract, guidance on converting pre-existing tenancies and the new requirements on fitness for human habitation. Information is also available in Easy-Read and plain language formats, to assist understanding. Free online training on the 2016 Act is being provided by Rent Smart Wales (see: [Renting Homes Act: The Way You Rent Has Changed - Rent Smart Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)), with many other partners also offering training.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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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.

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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.

Throughout the implementation of the legislation, officials have also engaged directly with thousands of landlords, letting agents, tenants and other stakeholders, both to provide briefings on the changes and to answer individual questions, which in turn informed the production of FAQ documents hosted on the Welsh Government website.

I hope this is a helpful summary of the extensive work undertaken to raise awareness of the 2016 Act.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru

17 March 2023

Dear Jack,

Petition P-06-1272 Ban the use of 'no pet clauses' in tenancy agreements in Wales

Thank you for your letter in relation to this petition which we considered at our meeting on 16 November. Members decided to ask the Minister for Climate Change about temporary accommodation suitable for people with pets a during a scrutiny session on 7 December 2022 as part of the Committee's inquiry into homelessness (see paragraphs 49 – 60 of the [Record of Proceedings](#)). The Minister told us:

"...a dog or other pets are a real source of companionship and support for people who are homeless, and owning one absolutely should not be a barrier to accessing temporary accommodation at all. And we are really pleased to say that the attitude to pets, and in particular dogs, in emergency accommodation in Wales has changed significantly over recent years, and, in particular, it changed during the pandemic. But we still have—we absolutely still have—a long way to go to ensure that we do not revert back to a position where many are excluded."

The Minister went on to say that local authorities are expected to look closely at the housing available to ensure people who have pets can be accommodated:

"...we expect local authorities to look closely at the range of provision within their area to make sure it's fit for purpose and able to meet the needs of everyone, and that includes people with pets who would otherwise be sleeping rough."

With regards to the private rented sector, the Minister said that following the commencement of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 on 1 December 2022 “a landlord cannot unreasonably withhold a request to have a pet”.

We referred to your letter and the Minister’s evidence in our [report](#) on Homelessness published on 9 March (see paragraph 75).

The Committee has no further plans to look specifically at the use of ‘no pet clauses’ in tenancy agreements. However we will keep you updated if the issue comes up in future inquiries.

Yours sincerely



John Griffiths MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Petition P-06-1272 – Ban the use of ‘no pet clauses’ in tenancy agreements in Wales

Response from petitioner, Sam Swash, to Minister for Climate Change’s letter to Jack Sargeant, Chair of the Petitions Committee 18.01.2023

The letter presented by the Minister is somewhat of a distraction from the real issue and does little to solve the problem of tenants being unfairly restricted from keeping a pet in Wales.

To date, the Minister has failed to adequately provide any confidence that the Welsh Government has any intention of preventing the continued treatment of tenants as second-class citizens in Wales.

There appears to be an inherently flawed belief that landlords generally act in good faith, when the evidence, and experience of tenants, suggests the opposite.

As such, the solutions provided to date by the Minister to tackle this problem haven’t gone anywhere near far enough. The solutions presented have been in the form of placing further impedimentary expectations onto tenants, rather than landlords.

Sadly, it reflects the depths of the institutional timidity of the Welsh Government in facing up to the private landlord lobby. Such is the extent of that timidity that the UK Conservative Government, and indeed some Conservative MSs, hold a more progressive position on tenants’ rights than the Welsh Government.

Regardless of whether the Welsh Government has undertaken what it believes to be a ‘comprehensive communications campaign’ in relation to the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, it remains patently unrealistic to expect the majority of tenants to understand the minutiae of the Act, or of their ability to challenge the inclusion of an unreasonable no pet clause in an Occupation Contract.

Indeed, the Minister, in her response, states that a tenant can challenge the inclusion of a no pet clause ‘if it was unreasonable to’ have included it within the Occupation Contract. In response to this, the petitioner asks;

- 1) What does the Minister believe amounts to an ‘unreasonable clause’ when including a no pet clause in an Occupation Contract?
- 2) Where has the Welsh Government provided guidance to landlords and tenants in relation to what constitutes an ‘unreasonable clause’ to prohibit pets?
- 3) How does the Welsh Government believe a tenant should go about ‘challenging’ the unreasonable inclusion of a no pet clause within an Occupation Contract?
- 4) What are the consequences for a landlord who inserts an ‘unreasonable’ no pet clause into an Occupation Contract in Wales?
- 5) How does the Welsh Government intend to enforce the restriction of ‘unreasonable’ clauses?
- 6) How does the Minister’s response help somebody who is not an existing tenant, and faces blanket dismissals from letting agents and landlords when attempting to rent a property with a pet in Wales?

The landlord-tenant relationship is a fundamentally unequal one. To date, the responses in relation to this petition have done little but reinforce the nature of that relationship here in Wales.

Aside from the increasing financial toll of renting, the petitioner would encourage the Minister to consider the psychological hardship caused by trying to make a life for yourself in what is

ultimately someone else's spare house. Your home, your refuge, your place of safety in the world – all can be taken away from you, through no fault of your own, in order to financially enrich someone wealthier than you.

The current position of the Welsh Government is to further add to that psychological hardship by allowing landlords to restrict tenants from even possessing the small comfort of keeping a pet.

Agenda Item 4.4

P-06-1275 Call on the Government to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the Llanbedr bypass scheme

This petition was submitted by Annwen Hughes, having collected a total of 2,704 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Following months of constructive discussions, the Government withdrew from the scheme to build the bypass at Llanbedr, Gwynedd, based on flawed information in their report.

Not only will abandoning the bypass be detrimental to the environment as hundreds of cars will continue to queue in the village, the decision is also a huge blow to any hopes of developing high quality jobs at the airport – the main hope of providing good work for our local people in this part of Meirionnydd.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Dwyfor Meirionnydd
- Mid and West Wales

Agenda Item 4.5

P-06-1299 Welsh Government 'Freeze on road building" to include a clause for cases that pose a danger to life

This petition was submitted by Susan Blaney, having collected a total of XXX signatures.

Text of Petition:

The recent fire at Tylorstown Working Mens' Club proved that the infrastructure in the Rhondda Fach needs urgent updating. With the main road blocked for several days, all traffic was diverted through side streets causing blockages and congestion. Schools had to be shut, public transport halted, school transport cancelled, people were unable to get to work and there was no accessible route for emergency vehicles.

Additional Information:

The relief road from Tylorstown to Maerdy has been in the Local Authority's Local Development Plan for years, it's time the people of the Fach see some swift action. This can't happen with the Welsh Government's "freeze" on new roads as stands.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Rhondda
- South Wales Central

Agenda Item 4.6

P-06-1286 To ensure treatment and screening for cancer continues during COVID19

This petition was submitted by Ellie-may Sharpe, having collected a total of 50 signatures.

Text of Petition:

To ensure all people struggling with cancer receive timely treatment and have equal chances of fighting cancer wherever they live in Wales. It is also essential to support families who have family members with cancer.

Additional Information:

We want this petition to go far and to reach families who are struggling and to provide people with resources and facilities.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Caerphilly
- South Wales East



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1286
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/03813/22

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

21 November 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your further letter regarding petition no. P-06-1286 about ensuring the continuation of cancer screening and treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You asked what progress has been made regarding cancer waiting times over recent months, and whether these have returned to pre-pandemic waiting times.

It is really pleasing to see that the number of cancer referrals is now consistently above the pre-pandemic level. This means that people are confident to visit their GP with suspected cancer symptoms. We were concerned that people were not presenting with symptoms. In August (the latest available data) NHS Wales had 16,389 referrals for suspected cancer, the highest number ever received

This constant increase in demand, alongside capacity issues at first outpatients and the diagnostic stage of the pathway is having an impact on our ability to treat patients within 62 days. However, the number of people starting treatment within the month continues to grow and during August, nearly 1,700 patients started their first definitive cancer treatment, the highest number since March. Reassuringly, in August 13,500 patients were informed they did not have cancer, the highest ever recorded, and were subsequently downgraded off the suspected cancer pathway. It is important to remember that the patients, who are found not to have cancer are still seen and diagnosed within the targets set. The latest data for August shows the total numbers starting treatment or downgraded is the highest ever recorded and continues the upward trend seen over recent months.

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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.

In October, I held a cancer summit and made clear my expectation to the health boards that it is important that further action is taken to improve cancer performance, ensuring that the clinically ill patients are prioritised. However, it is likely that performance will not improve until the end of the financial year.

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

Agenda Item 4.7

P-06-1297 Stop "Controlled Burning" in Wales

This petition was submitted by Maya James, having collected a total of 604 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The recent Mynydd Mawr, Gwynedd, fire has highlighted the problem with so-called "controlled burning". This was lit within the allowed period (1st October to 31st March) despite recent dry weather and strong winds, and when many birds have already started nesting.

North Wales Fire Service described Mynydd Mawr as "quite devastated" by the fire. The smoke affected local residents, and the fire service described how valuable resources from as far as South Wales had to be enlisted to help.

Additional Information:

This fire covered an area of 100,000 sq m at one stage and is not an isolated incident.

Last year there were over 2000 grassfires in Wales; over 75% of these deliberately lit.

These fires cause:

- Risks to the health and safety of our fire crews, local residents and property
- Dangerous diversion and monopolisation of fire crews putting lives elsewhere at risk
- Unacceptable cost to taxpayers into the hundreds of thousands of pounds due to the high burden on fire crews
- Release of smoke and carbon at a time of a climate crisis
- Impact on nesting birds and other wildlife such as increasingly threatened adder during a biodiversity crisis. The 1st October to 31st March were colder wetter months in Wales but our climate is already changing with drier warmer weather shifting wildlife's emergence and breeding seasons. The RSPB has called for an end to upland peatland burning due to the conservation and climate concerns.

We call on the Welsh Government to stop "controlled burning" now.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Delyn
- North Wales

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



Petitions@senedd.wales

16 March 2023

Dear Mr Sargeant

Petition P-06-1297 Stop "Controlled Burning" in Wales

Please accept our apologies for not having replied to your letter of 24 November.

We have sympathy with the petition's concerns about "controlled burning", both for its impact on peat soils and for the effect of uncontrolled fire on the habitats of birds and other animals, particularly reptiles. We believe that Welsh Government should review the *Heather and Grass Burning Code* for Wales, incorporating advice and evidence from Natural Resources Wales and others.

We should state at the outset that controlled burning can have a place in habitat restoration in some limited situations, but its effectiveness has been challenged and depends on multiple factors, including the intensity and scale of the fire. The merits of a controlled burn at a particular site must be assessed against the damage that a fire can cause to sensitive habitats, such as deep peat, and the *Code* rightly presumes against burning on such habitats. Furthermore, for a burn to be controlled relies on experienced practitioners and having sufficient mitigation measures, including trained people to prevent it getting out of control.

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Mae'r RSPB yn aelod o BirdLife International, partneriaeth o gyrrff cadwraeth sy'n gweithio i sicrhau cartref i fyd 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.

RSPB never burns vegetation on peat and generally uses cutting or grazing to manage vegetation on any soil, although we undertake limited controlled burns on mineral soils on parts of our South Stack and Ramsey nature reserves where cutting is not feasible. Our experience is that cutting is more practical especially given the wet and breezy conditions in Wales that limit the opportunities for burning, and so the need for burning is very localised and specific.

Burning on deep peat

Despite the ability of peatlands to sequester and store huge amounts of carbon, the UK's peatlands are currently a net source of emissions. Peatlands account for [4.3% of the land area of Wales](#) but store up to 30% of our soil carbon, some [65.8 million tonnes](#). The UK's blanket bogs are globally rare ecosystems, protected under UK and international law. However much of this peat is in poor condition, with dry soils releasing emissions and failing to support wetland species. This is mainly due to drainage and burning. Our upland peatland should be a net carbon sink, it is instead a source of emissions. If the Government is serious about tackling the climate and ecological crisis, it must end burning on peatland habitats and scale up restoration such that degraded peat is brought under positive management.

The Welsh Government *Heather and Grass Burning Code* (2008) has a presumption against burning on sensitive habitats, including blanket bog with peat soils deeper than 50cm. Considerably more evidence on the impact of burning on peat has been obtained since the *Code* was last updated 15 years ago. We note that in England, Defra prohibits burning on peat greater than 40cm depth. We would urge Welsh Government, informed by the latest evidence and through the lens of the climate and nature emergency, to review the *Code*. **We believe that there is a strong case for burning to cease on peat soils, particularly on blanket bog, deeper than 30cm.**

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Timing of burning

Under [The Heather and Grass etc Burning \(Wales\) Regulations 2008](#), Ministers have set the dates of burning as 1 October to 31 March in the majority of Wales and 1 November to 15 March in lower altitude areas.

A review of the timing of nesting by selected birds by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) ([Wilson et al. 2021](#)) found that the timing of egg-laying, while varying by species, is advancing by 1–2 days per decade. At a GB level, egg-laying has started in 31% of Peregrine nests before burning ceases on 31 March, 15% of Lapwing nests, 10% of Golden Plover, 8% of Stonechat and 7% of Snipe. It is important to note that selection of a territory and nest-building starts some time before the first egg is laid and that the dates are based on an average across the whole of Britain, not in the milder conditions experienced in Wales. **We believe a review of the dates in Wales should consider a 'buffer' period to reduce the likelihood of nesting attempts being disrupted.** A review of dates should also account for other wildlife interests, including threatened reptiles and plants.

Wildfire

Wildfire is a growing concern, both grassland fires resulting from arson and 'controlled' burns that became uncontrolled. When those occur on, or spread into, peat soils, the consequences can be long-lasting and resource-hungry, as illustrated by the Llantysilio fire in Denbighshire in 2018. Some argue that burning, including on peat soils, has a key role to play in reducing fuel load. A Defra-funded study ([Heinemeyer et al. 2020](#)) concluded that cutting was less damaging than burning. **Restoring peatlands to good condition, including blanket bogs to the wetlands they should be, is widely acknowledged as the most effective long-term solution to minimise fire risk on and damage to peat, as well as delivering other benefits for carbon sequestration, water quality and nature.** The National Peatland Action Programme estimates that 63,830 ha, 71% of peatland in Wales, requires restoration, having been modified or used for agriculture or forestry.

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Enforcement and reviewing the Regulations and Code

The climate emergency increases the risk of large wildfires by making landscapes, globally, more susceptible to burn more often and more severely, according to [research co-authored by Swansea University](#). Deliberate burning must not contribute unnecessarily to either carbon release or damage to nature, and thus we urge Welsh Government to commit to periodic reviews of the evidence, including its value for farming in the context of the aims of the Agriculture (Wales) Bill. Such **a review would also consider whether existing monitoring and enforcement of the Code are sufficient, both within and outside sites designated for nature**. RSPB scientists have developed a means to monitor burns using remote-sensing satellites, which could support this.

We urge the Petitions Committee to ask the Minister to review the regulations and statutory code on 'controlled burning' in Wales, ensuring that they align with and support the objectives of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Sustainable Land Management.

Yours sincerely



Dr Sharon Thompson

Head of Policy and Advocacy

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P-06-1297 Dod â "llosgi dan reolaeth" i ben yng Nghymru, Gohebiaeth – Deisebydd at y Pwyllgor, 17.03.23

Annwyl Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Diolch yn fawr am ofyn am farn ac arbennigedd yr RSPB yn y maes hwn.

Rwyf yn cymeradwyo eu safbwynt a gofynion.

Hoffwn bwysleisio bod y CCC (Climate Change Committee) yn galw ar llywodraethau y DU i ddod a llosgi dan reolaeth i ben er mwyn gwarchod y "carbon sink" pwysig hon.

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/2020/01/23/major-shift-in-uk-land-use-needed-to-deliver-net-zero-emissions/>.

Efo argyfwng hinsawdd a bioamrywiaeth yng Nghymru rhaid ail-feddwl y rheolau cyfredol a gwneud newidiau positif a dewr ar gyfer ein dyfodol.

Yn gywir

Maya Eirian James

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