

## Agenda – Petitions Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 2 – Senedd

Hybrid

Meeting date: 23 October 2023

Meeting time: 14.00

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### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 12)

### 2 Evidence session – P-06-1307 The Welsh Government should commit to the adoption of the maintenance of new housing estates by local authorities

(Pages 13 – 40)

Simon Gilbert, Head of planning – Cardiff Council

### 3 New Petitions

#### 3.1 P-06-1362 Match the new childcare offer in England of 15 hours for 2 year old's from April 2024

(Pages 41 – 52)

### 4 Updates to previous petitions

#### 4.1 P-06-1334 Make the Senedd More Representative of the Welsh Population

(Pages 53 – 55)

#### 4.2 P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus

(Pages 56 – 59)

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

(Page 60)



- 5 Evidence session – P-06-1335 Welsh Government should take steps to ensure vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay with cash

(Pages 61 – 65)

Darren Joyce, Director of the Friendly Trust

- 6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting
- 7 Discussion of evidence – P-06-1307 The Welsh Government should commit to the adoption of the maintenance of new housing estates by local authorities
- 8 Discussion of evidence – P-06-1335 Welsh Government should take steps to ensure vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay with cash

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# Commit to the adoption of the maintenance of new housing estates by local authorities

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 27 Chwefror 2023  
Petitions Committee | 27 February 2023

Reference: SR23/5289-1

Petition Number: P-06-1307

Petition title: Commit to the adoption of the maintenance of new housing estates by local authorities.

Text of petition: The residents of the Mill, a new estate in Canton, Cardiff are having to pay an annual fee of £102 for the maintenance of a park bordering the estate. This payment must be made alongside other maintenance payments covering the unadopted highways, green spaces etc. Residents also must pay the full council tax required. Residents are not provided with a detailed breakdown of the costs of the park, just a notice to say they must pay the fee.

The Mill was regarded as a good example of Welsh Government policy due to its status as a mixed tenure estate including affordable housing alongside freehold purchasing – therefore with the current cost of living crisis we believe that the Welsh Government should support residents on estates like The Mill by encouraging and facilitating the adoption of maintenance by local authorities and to remove these punitive charges.



# 1. Background

Where the local authority has not adopted common areas like roads, open spaces and play facilities on housing estates, private arrangements can be put in place to ensure they are maintained. This will generally result in a charge being levied on residents by a management company, or their agent, to pay for maintenance costs.

According to a [2020 Welsh Government consultation](#), these spaces and facilities may include:

- *open areas,*
- *play parks,*
- *roads and paving,*
- *car parking areas,*
- *street lighting,*
- *landscaping,*
- *environmental initiatives such as wild flower verges, and*
- *provision of private shared sprinkler systems.*

These charges are often referred to as estate charges. Freeholders are likely to be charged directly, while leaseholders and tenants may have to pay through their service charges and rent. This briefing uses the term “residents” to cover all groups who may be liable for estate charges.

According to the [responses to the 2020 consultation](#), estate charges can range anywhere between £50 and £500 per year, with most amounting to £100-£150. Residents are still liable for council tax in addition to any estate charges.

A number of concerns have been raised about estate charges by Members of the Senedd and through the consultation referred to above. A key issue is transparency, with residents complaining that estate managers are able to [set charges without consultation](#). Residents have also commented that [developers often don't provide information on estate charges](#) during the sale of a property.

Respondents to the 2020 consultation questioned why they are being charged for the maintenance of what are largely public facilities when they already pay council tax. The 2020 consultation noted a ‘strong preference’ among respondents for ending estate charges and bringing the management of community infrastructure into the hands of local authorities.

At present, freeholders may only have limited powers to challenge estate charges. This differs from leaseholders, who can apply to a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal to challenge service charges.

The use of estate charges in Wales appears to have increased over the last decade, with the 2020 consultation reporting that 72% of respondents lived on estates built after 2010. There has been a corresponding rise in media coverage of estate charges and their impact on freeholders in particular, resulting in the popularisation of the term 'fleecehold' across the UK housing sector.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government consultation on estate charges ran between February and April 2020 and received over 600 responses. On 30 November 2020, the then Minister for Housing and Local Government, Julie James MS, released a written statement responding to its findings.

The Minister announced changes to the Help to Buy-Wales scheme to address some of the concerns raised in the consultation responses and committed to exploring different methods of estate management.

The Minister's statement highlighted the possible impact on local authorities if they were made responsible for communal areas or facilities covered by estate charges:

I recognise it is not simply the case that local authorities could take on these additional responsibilities in perpetuity without the necessary resources to provide for such a service. This question requires proper thought and investigation, to ensure any changes we make do not bring about unintended consequences and unforeseen adverse impacts.

The Welsh Government included estate charge reform in their June 2021 Programme for Government, stating that they would:

*Ensure that estate charges for public open spaces and facilities are paid for in a way that is fair.*

Following a question in plenary on 24 May 2022, the First Minister reaffirmed that the Welsh Government would not give a guarantee that local authorities would pick up maintenance costs of new housing estates. The First Minister noted:

If a developer believed that no matter how shoddy the work they carried out, no matter how poor the standard of communal facilities it provided, there was a guarantee that the public purse would pick that up and put it right, there's no incentive at all for them to do the job in the way that we want it to be done.

The First Minister also confirmed that the Welsh Government would introduce new building safety legislation during this Senedd term, including a new registration and licensing scheme. This scheme will cover residential property management companies. The First Minister said that it would “help to eliminate some of the abuses” relating to estate charges.

In addition, the First Minister commented that the Welsh Government was waiting for the UK Government to introduce leasehold reform (based on the recommendations of the Law Commission) that would give freeholders greater power to challenge estate charges and management. At the time of writing, these reforms have not yet taken place. On 30 January 2023, the UK Secretary of State for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove MP, said that his aim was for a leasehold Bill to be included in the King's Speech, expected to be in autumn 2023.

The Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, replied to the petition on 1 November 2022. In her letter, the Minister reiterated the Welsh Government's expectation that the UK Government will introduce legislation to improve freeholders' rights. The Minister noted in the letter that the Welsh Government was considering how to address communal infrastructure on new estates:

For new estates, we will explore the practicality of using legislation to bring together the various regimes to pay for the maintenance of communal infrastructure into a single approach. This will include consideration of placing a duty on local authorities to adopt communal infrastructure in return for an appropriate payment from the developer.

However, the Minister maintained that retrospective adoption of community infrastructure would remain a choice for councils.

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

On 14 March 2018, the Senedd debated a Member's Legislative Proposal submitted by Hefin David MS, who proposed a Bill aimed at regulating estate

management companies. The proposed Bill would also strengthen the ability of freeholders to challenge estate managers.

In response, the then Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Rebecca Evans MS, committed to establishing a task and finish group to examine the issue. The group's findings were published in a [report](#) on 17 July 2019.

On 1 November 2020, a [petition](#) was submitted calling for freeholders in Wales to have greater powers to challenge estate management companies. The Minister for Climate Change [responded to this petition](#) on 5 October 2021, and the petition was closed by the Committee as the petitioner was satisfied with the Minister's response. The research briefing prepared for this petition can be found [here](#).

Estate charges have also been raised several times in plenary. Hefin David MS [raised the issue on 15 June 2021](#), receiving a response that the Welsh Government was considering 'all options' in addressing the matter.

On 24 May 2022, Rhys ab Owen MS [raised the question of estate management](#) following complaints from the [Mill estate in Canton](#), Cardiff (as referenced in this petition).

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-06-1307 The Welsh Government should commit to the adoption of the maintenance of new housing estates by local authorities, Correspondence – WLGA to Committee, 12.10.23**

The Unadopted Roads Taskforce was established in 2018 to look at situation regarding unadopted roads (URs) in Wales, and in so doing quantifying the extent of URs and what are the issues caused by URs. Further work has been around estimating costs of upgrading the URs infrastructure to adoptable standards, and also about what Local Highway Authorities can do to avoid further URs being created now and in the future. A number of Welsh Government funded Pilot Schemes have been carried out to test the emerging understanding on costs and processes in terms of 'upgrading' URs.

Early on, it became clear that URs fall into 5 distinct types, one of which was unadopted housing estate roads. It is this element of the URs work that may be relevant and of interest to the committee. Therefore, the information presented here just deals with this aspect of URs and not the other four categories that we came across.

So on housing estate roads specifically, the Taskforce found issues around

- Developments proceeding without the necessary agreements between Highway Authorities and Developers having been completed
- Developers and Builders going into liquidation and insufficient bond monies set aside for completion of roads
- Developments taking place over decades in some examples
- Properties being purchased with homebuyers apparently not aware of potential ongoing Highway liabilities
- Also, there appeared to be a lack of consistency of expected standards across the 22 local authorities but also with the approach of Developers.

There were a few high profile 'management company' matters that the Taskforce was aware of at the time, but the focus of the work was to look at what could be done to prevent such situations arising in the future and also look at potential upgrading if possible.

The Highways Act does in fact empower Local Highway Authorities to take control of new estate road infrastructure through insisting on highway agreements being entered into before development works commence. The Taskforce drew together a Good Practice Guide for use by Local Authorities setting out how the relevant sections of the Highways Act and supporting legislation can be enacted to ensure that robust agreements are in place in a timely manner. Local Highway Authorities have the means to control this. Ideally, all new housing developments would have adoptable highways, but it was recognised that some developments such as high rise flats and gated cul de sacs may include access strips that would not be in the public realm, and

so reasonably would be managed and maintained privately alongside the communal building costs.

It may be important to recognise that as far as the writer is aware, general open spaces at developments do not enjoy the legislative underpinning that is in place for highway infrastructure. Also, the highway is important in terms of how utilities and services are provided to new developments, and there is close interaction between the Highways Act and the Utility Providers.

Another aspect of the work of the Taskforce was to manage the assembly of a set of Common Standards for use by Developers and Local Authorities. This was achieved by representatives of Local Authorities and Development Companies working together to agree a base set of standards that were reasonable and could commonly apply throughout Wales, thus improving the understanding and expectations of all parties leading to easier completion of highway agreements.

To conclude, the work of the Unadopted Roads Taskforce in this area has centred around ensuring that the tools are in place for better management and delivery of estate roads to adoptable standards that provide good and reasonable safe environments, and also avoiding the engagement and use of management companies. The assumption has always been that it is in the public interest that new highway infrastructure is publicly maintained as adopted highway. Clearly, there are always financial pressures in terms of the viability of developments and how highway standards impact here, and indeed the net cost to the public purse in future years for taking on further maintenance liabilities. However, the Taskforce's work always set out to be 'enabling' and positive, and it is in this light that these comments are presented to the Committee.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**UNADOPTED ROADS IN WALES  
FINAL REPORT TO THE  
MINISTER FOR ECONOMY AND  
TRANSPORT  
September 2020**

The Unadopted Roads Taskforce was established at the Minister for Economy and Transport's request to look at the issues in Wales and in so doing identify the extent of unadopted roads and what could be done to improve the situation. Following initial investigation and a comprehensive consultation exercise involving key stakeholders, a [preliminary report](#) was submitted to the Minister in the Spring of 2019. This current report build on the initial work and addresses the recommendations emanating from the initial report.

The Taskforce has been very mindful of the useful feedback from the November 2018 consultation exercise and has considered all the issues raised. These have been varied and have included matters to do with all types of unadopted roads, and the difficulties that arise as a result of no clear ownership or responsible bodies for particular unadopted roads. The Taskforce membership included skilled practitioners and professionals that have been able to recognise and recommend certain actions that are leading to a better understanding of the nature and quantum of the issues across Wales. Importantly, recommendations are made that will start to address the enormity of the issue on a priority basis, but also through the Good Practice Guide and Common Standards, will reduce significantly the chances of any further 'unadopted road' being created.

All the actions from the recommendations of the initial Unadopted Roads report of Spring 2019 have completed successfully and are summarised as follows:

- » Work has progressed in establishing a DATABASE to provide a comprehensive record of all unadopted roads in Wales
- » The emerging database has been used to provide the quantum of unadopted roads throughout Wales and in so doing, has enabled outline estimates to be provided for improving unadopted roads to reasonable adoptable standards

- » The database will be maintained as part of the management of the National Streetworks Gazetteer with the assistance of Local Authorities
- » Budgets were identified for the work involved in establishing the said database
- » Local Authorities and housebuilding federations have signed up to the GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE
- » A working group has been established to develop a set of highway design and construction COMMON STANDARDS for use by Local Authorities and housing developers for adoptable roadways

Further Recommendations are as follows :

**RECOMMENDATION 1 –**

that Local Authorities initially identify the priority unadopted road issues within their Council areas, and that cost estimates be provided for improvement to adoptable standards. Such proposals would need to be justified in terms of need based on national and local priorities.

**RECOMMENDATION 2 –**

that consideration be made for some form of central resource to be made available to assist with the funding of necessary works to address local unadopted road priorities

**RECOMMENDATION 3 –**

that the usage of the Good Practice Guide be monitored, and that further dialogue with Local Authorities takes place later in 2020 to evaluate the benefits of using the Good Practice Guide

**RECOMMENDATION 4 –**

that a suite of Common Standards for use by Local Highway Authorities and Housing Developers be published

**RECOMMENDATION 5 –**

that the Common Standards suite of documents are reviewed annually and amended as necessary to reflect changing requirements as a result of other emerging initiatives, and that annual funding be provided to enable this

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## Background

**Following the Welsh Assembly Member Debate in Plenary in February 2018 regarding the issues around unadopted roads, the Minister for Economy and Transport committed to establishing a Taskforce to investigate the issues and to report with initial findings and recommendations in the Spring of 2019.**

Accordingly, the Taskforce was set up and undertook a review of unadopted roads and reported back to the Minister in April 2019. The outcomes of the initial investigations were as follows:

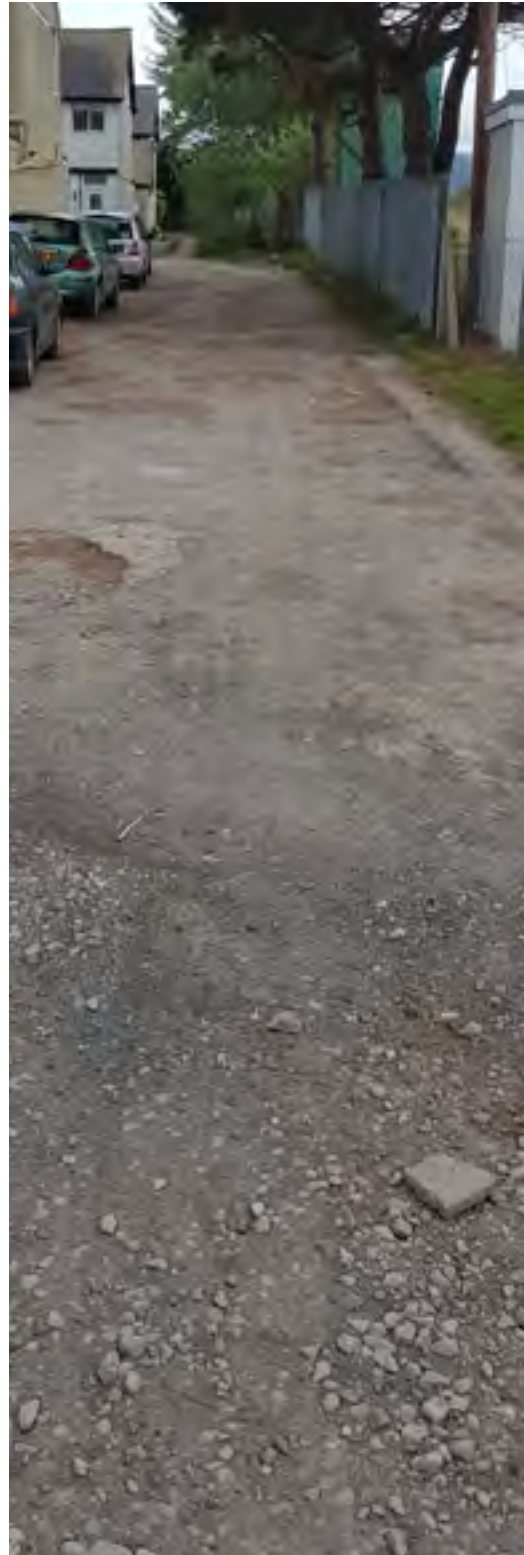
- » There is currently little reliable, managed information available and it is difficult therefore to quantify the extent of unadopted roads, and the cost of remediation
- » Investment is required to develop a database to provide consistent and robust information on unadopted roads that would enable a more accurate picture to be generated and to understand the cost of remediation
- » Unadopted roads fall broadly into six categories
- » Unadopted housing estate roads are the type of unadopted road which was numerically most referred to by consultation respondents (both historic situations and new build)
- » A number of steps have been identified that could prevent the problem from becoming worse over time. Based on these, a flow chart has been developed that sets out the basis for a future good practice guide for use by Local Highway Authorities and housing developers. Applied consistently, this could help reduce new housing estate roads not being adopted. This would enable efforts to be focussed on dealing with the backlog of unadopted roads, and how to reduce this in a prioritised way over time, subject to resource availability
- » The need for a common standards approach has been identified to accompany the good practice guide



## Introduction

The following recommendations were made, and subsequently endorsed by the Minister:

- » That work progress to establish a DATABASE to provide a comprehensive record of all unadopted roads in Wales
- » That the database be used to provide cost estimates for improving unadopted roads to reasonable adoptable standards
- » That the database be managed and maintained with the assistance of local authorities
- » That a budget be established to set up the database
- » That Local Authorities and housebuilders develop a GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE to significantly reduce the chances of any new housing estate roads ending up in an unadopted state
- » That Local Authorities and the house building federations sign up to the suggested good practice guide
- » That a working group be established to develop a set of highway design and construction COMMON STANDARDS for use by Local Authorities and housing developers for adoptable roadways.



This report focusses on addressing the above recommendations and providing a position statement specifically on the DATABASE, GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE and COMMON STANDARDS.



## Findings and outcomes

The following recommendations were made, and subsequently endorsed by the Minister:

### **DATABASE**

**That work progresses to establish a DATABASE to provide a comprehensive record of all unadopted roads in Wales**

In response to this, 'Geoplace' was engaged to undertake a data mapping exercise of unadopted roads in each County area in Wales. Geoplace already works closely with Welsh Local Highway Authorities and the Public Utility Companies and produces and manages the National Streetworks Gazetteer. Moreover, Geoplace is a jointly owned company of the Local Government Association and Ordnance Survey, making it ideally suited to take on this role.

Currently Local Authorities do not hold consistent or accurate data on unadopted roads. The desktop analysis that has been undertaken has produced draft data maps initially for a limited number of Councils that identify unadopted roads on an OS based data layer. The six Councils in question ( see Appendix 1) have been sense checking the data to ensure that the information produced is sufficiently robust and a good representation of what is the actual unadopted roads situation in each of these Council areas.

Early indications are promising with agreement that there is good correlation between the emerging data and the known situation on the ground. This gives confidence as to the totality of Unadopted Roads in Wales.

Also, once all the data sets are complete, consideration was to have been given to making all unadopted roads mapping information available in one central location so as to enable public access to the data.

However, the web based 'Find My Street' tool already exists and is freely available to all; this shows all adopted highways, and therefore any road not shown as adopted can be considered 'unadopted'. 'Find My Street' already provides a caveat to say that the data may not be 100% accurate and that the adopted roads status should be checked locally via the statutory adopted roads data held by each individual Local Authority. 'Find My Street' is maintained and updated by Geoplace alongside the Streetworks Gazetteer work and predicated on the same data.

[Details on how Geoplace undertook the data mapping exercise can be viewed here](#)

**That the database be used to provide cost estimates for improving unadopted roads to reasonable adoptable standards.**

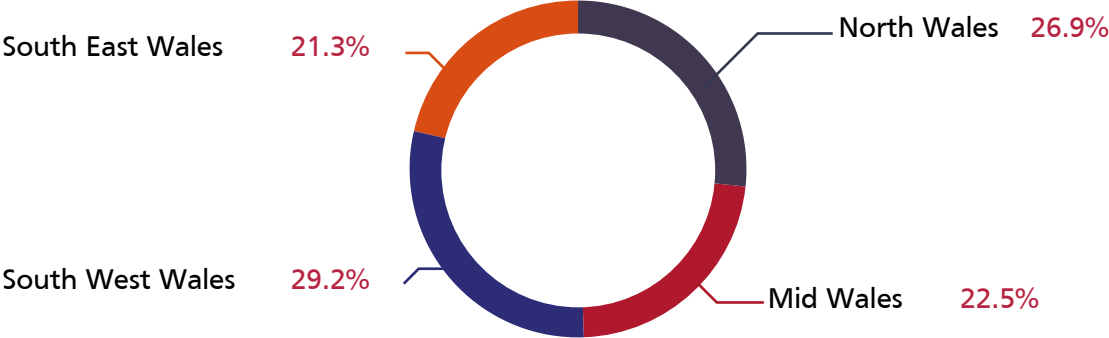
Prior to now, the only available information that appears to be available is that in the early nineteen seventies, a total length of 4000 miles (6437 kilometres) was identified as being the total length of unadopted roads in England and Wales.

Based on the emerging data produced by Geoplace, it appears that there are some 25,000 kilometres of unadopted roads in Wales alone. Such a figure includes all 6 categories of unadopted roads identified and reported initially (see Appendix 2). However, in terms of unadopted roads that serve 5 properties or more (as would typically be the case for an unadopted housing estate road), then the length is some 2,600 kilometres for the whole of Wales.

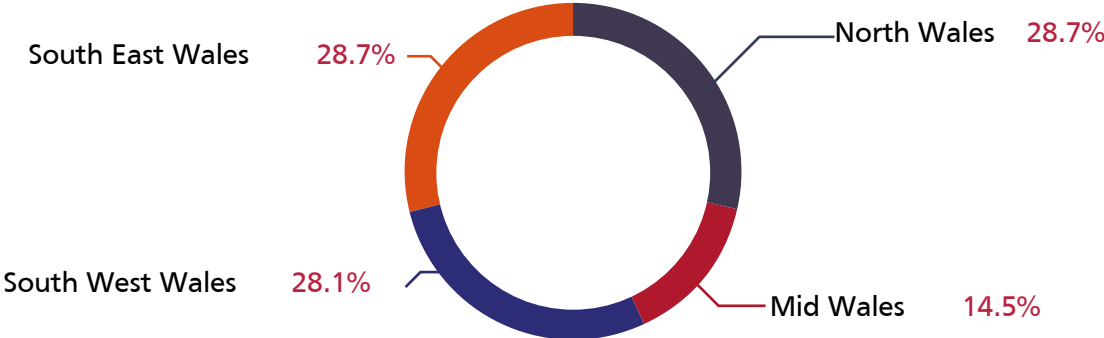
Overall length of Unadopted Roads in Wales is 25,374 kilometres broken down as follows



Length of unadopted roads serving 2 or more properties is 5,557 kilometres



Length of unadopted roads serving 5 or more properties is 2,617 kilometres



Through the feedback to the initial consultation on unadopted roads, and through discussion with practitioners serving on the Taskforce, an agreed typical cost for making up a roadway to an adoptable standard would be of the order of £600 per linear metre.

Clearly, this is very much a typical average figure and some situations would obviously require more or less per linear metre dependent on individual circumstances.

The unadopted roads infrastructure is extensive, and it is inconceivable to consider improvements to every individual section. However, based on the £600 / linear metre cost, then a £10 million pound investment will improve approximately 16 kilometres of road. Whilst unadopted housing estates roads are numerically dominant, there are also concerns over other types of unadopted roads in some areas. Such examples include rural lanes serving remote properties, some back lanes, and former holiday chalet parks now being used as permanent residences etc.

Local Authorities have no statutory responsibilities in respect of unadopted roads. There are however discretionary powers under the Highways Act 1980 that enable Highway Authorities if they so choose to make good and improve highways to an adoptable standard.

Following years of difficult funding settlements, Councils have no budgets and no plans to invest in resolving unadopted roads issues and enabling improvement work; some form of central funding may allow Highway Authorities to undertake the improvement of the worst unadopted road issues within their Local Authority areas.

The value of any central investment could be increased if potential beneficiaries (e.g. residents who would benefit from improvements to their unadopted streets) were to contribute also. This principle is already enshrined in the Private Street Works mechanisms that exist as part of the Highways Act 1980.

Accordingly, an emerging recommendation is that Welsh Government in principle set aside funding to address the worst unadopted roads throughout Wales, and that Highway Authorities provide details as to how they would use any funding and articulate the benefits of such an investment.

Dependent on the responses, consideration could be given as to how it would be best to distribute funding; this could be on a formula funding basis similar in principle to how revenue funding is distributed to Local Authorities for road maintenance of adopted roads.

**That the database be managed and maintained with the assistance of local authorities**

Through discussions with the Welsh Route Custodians (Local Authority Highway staff who are responsible for inputting and maintaining the National Street Gazetteer in conjunction with the Public Utilities organisations), it appears that once the unadopted roads data base is established, records can be maintained and updated through the Streetworks Gazetteer processes; hopefully no known new unadopted roads will be created (or identified).

Those associated with housing developments will be subject to legal agreements and widely known to the individual Highway Authority and the Utility companies who will be servicing such developments. The 'Find my Street' tool is automatically updated as part of this process.

**That the budget be established to set up the database.**

Funding of less than £5,000 was required to establish the 22 unadopted databases throughout Wales. The Welsh Government made financial provision for this.

### **That Local Authorities and housebuilders develop a GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE to significantly reduce the chances of any new housing estate roads ending up in an unadopted state**

A Good Practice Guide (GPG) has been developed by the Taskforce together with specialist legal input from Geldards Solicitors. (The GPG appears in Appendix 3).

The GPG has been widely disseminated to Local Authorities through Highway officer links (County Surveyors Society Wales), Planning officer links (Planning Officers Society Wales) and the WLGA Environment Directors Group.

Also, the Homebuilders Federation Wales and the Federation of Master Builders who are represented on the Taskforce have disseminated the GPG to their members.

Another matter that has been considered alongside the development of the GPG is that of the Bond required as part of the standard road adoption agreement between Highway Authorities and housing developers.

Such Bonds are problematic in terms of many factors such as the availability of finance, ease of process, release mechanisms etc. It appears that there is improving consistency in the way that Local Authorities are dealing with Bonds, and that also, the housing developers are similarly aware and responding accordingly.

Use of the GPG and the Common Standards approach (see later) will bring further improvement as will the explanations and approaches outlined in the emerging UK DfT Advice Note on Road Adoption. No further actions or recommendations are proposed at this time.

### **That Local Authorities and the house building federations sign up to the suggested GPG.**

The GPG is primarily aimed at Local Authority Highway officers who have powers under the Highways Act 1950 to direct the completion of agreements for highway adoption at an early stage.

Housing developers will be aware of such powers and their consistent application through the GPG, and will be better placed to expeditiously complete such agreements early in the process thus avoiding any complications or difficulties later on.

At the time of writing, 17 out of 22 Highway Authorities have confirmed that their processes are aligned with the GPG.



**That a working group be established to develop a set of highway design and construction COMMON STANDARDS for use by Local Authorities and housing developers for adoptable roadways.**

A Common Standards Review Group has been established in line with this recommendation. The Review Group is led by the Chairman of the County Surveyors Society Wales Development Control Forum, and its membership includes Local Authority Highway Engineers and Planners, together with House Building Federation members and representatives from housing developers both large and small in scale.

Rondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCT) already have a comprehensive set of documents recently completed which are ideal as a basis to work on to achieve an all Wales set of Common Standards for highway alignment and construction. The Review Group is reviewing the RCT documentation and where necessary proposing amendments and changes that would make this suitable for the whole of Wales.

Once completed, the Common Standards documentation will reflect the current situation and will have taken on board all other matters that will impact on current development including sustainable drainage design (SUDS), Active Travel measures, Placemaking requirements etc.

As these other matters evolve, it will thus be necessary to annually monitor and review the Common Standards documentation to take account of any future changes. It is envisaged that the County Surveyors Society Wales would be best placed to undertake the required monitoring and reviewing. Modest funding would be required to facilitate this.



## Summary

All the actions from the recommendations of the initial Unadopted Roads report of Spring 2019 have completed successfully as noted earlier in section 3 of this report and are summarised as follows:

- » Work has progressed in establishing a DATABASE
- » The emerging database has been used to provide outline costings for improving unadopted roads to reasonable adoptable standards
- » The database will be managed and maintained with the assistance of Local Authorities
- » Budgets were identified for the work involved in establishing the said database
- » Local Authorities and housebuilding federations have signed up to the GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE
- » A working group has been established to develop a set of highway design and construction COMMON STANDARDS for use by Local Authorities and housing developers for adoptable roadways

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## Further recommendations

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It has emerged that a reasonable typical cost for 'making up' roads to adoptable standard is of the order of £600 per linear metre. The database outputs are detailed above and are summarised in Table 1 below:

Category	Linear length (km)	Cost (£) per linear meter	Cost (£) billion
All unadopted roads (UR)	25,000	600	15
URs serving 2 or more properties	5,600	600	3.36
URs serving 5 or more properties	2,600	600	1.56

### ADDRESSING PRIORITY SITUATIONS

As mentioned earlier, whilst unadopted housing estate roads appear generally the source of most concern for most local authorities, there are other types of unadopted roads that may be more of an issue in other local authority areas; such examples include rural lane serving isolated remote properties, unadopted back lanes, former holiday chalet developments now being used as permanent residences etc. From this the Taskforce makes further recommendations as follows:

**RECOMMENDATION 1** –that Local Authorities initially identify the priority unadopted road issues within their Council areas, and that cost estimates be provided for improvement to adoptable standards. Such proposals would need to be justified in terms of need based on national and local priorities.

**RECOMMENDATION 2** - that consideration be made for some form of central resource to be made available to assist with the funding of necessary works to address local unadopted road priorities

### GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

It is encouraging to note the widespread use and adoption of the Good Practice Guide. However, it is too early to properly understand how effective its use has been and what measurable improvements have been realised. There needs to be a follow up discussion with Local Authorities during the latter part of 2020 to assess the continues level of usage and to measure any improvements; housing developments and the associated adoption of roads take time and other factors affect timelines also such as any current economic climate so getting robust data here will be difficult. Nevertheless, through dialogue with Local Authorities, it is hoped that an emerging view as to the effectiveness of the Good Practice Guide can be achieved.

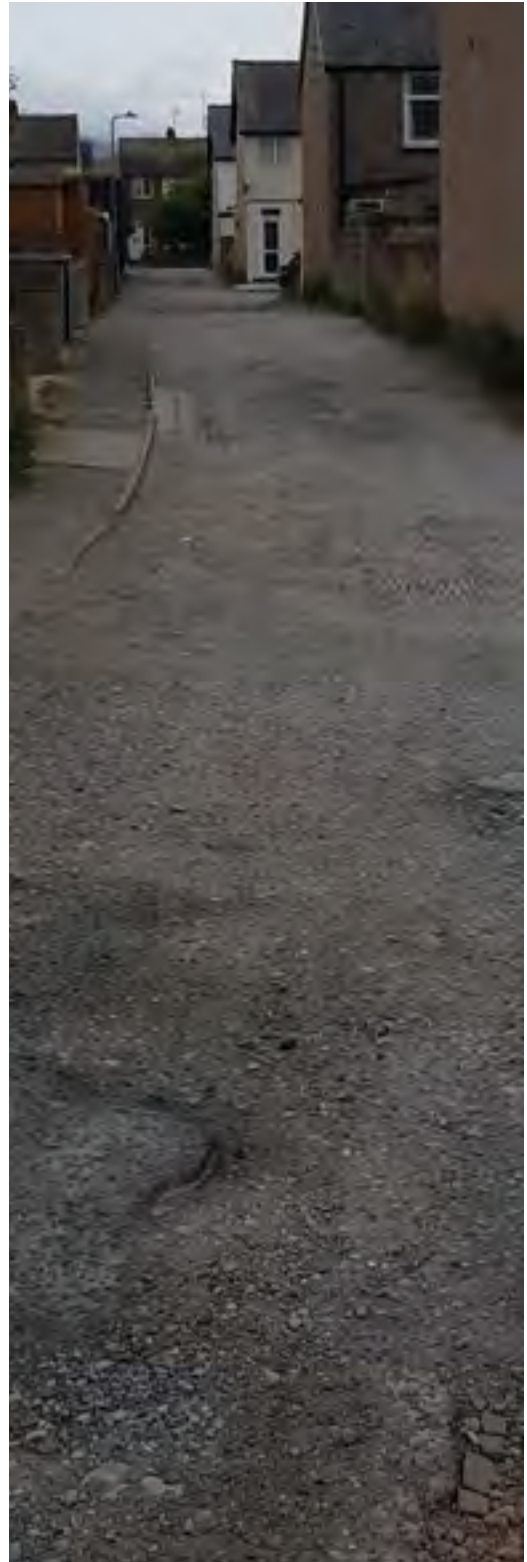
**RECOMMENDATION 3** – that the usage of the Good Practice Guide be monitored, and that further dialogue with Local Authorities takes place later in 2020 to evaluate the benefits of using the Good Practice Guide

## COMMON STANDARDS

The emerging Common Standards suite of documents is nearing completion, and it is proposed to disseminate this widely to all Local Authorities and housebuilders (via the housebuilding federations). There is early positivity here with all parties acknowledging the potential improvements to process and relationships that a 'common standards' approach will bring to new housing estate road adoption. Whilst the Common Standards documents will properly reflect how best to integrate other major considerations into current highway design and construction detail, there will be a need to review and amend 'common standards' regularly as other factors change; such other factors include emerging SUDS requirements, changing Active Travel requirement, Pavement Parking etc. etc.

**RECOMMENDATION 4** – that a suite of Common Standards for use by Local Highway Authorities and Housing Developers be published

**RECOMMENDATION 5** – that the Common Standards suite of documents are reviewed annually and amended as necessary to reflect changing requirements as a result of other emerging initiatives, and that annual funding be provided to enable this



### APPENDIX 1 – List of sense checking Councils (and rationale for selection)

The following Local Authorities were requested to assist with checking early outputs for their own geographic areas from the initial data assembly and presentational work undertaken by Geoplace. These Local Authorities were chosen to give a fair representation geographically across Wales, but also to represent urban, valleys and rural type Council areas:

- » Bridgend County Borough Council
- » Conwy County Borough Council
- » Ceredigion County Council
- » Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- » Powys County Council
- » Torfaen County Borough Council



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## APPENDIX 2 – Categories of Unadopted Roads

Early on in the process, the Unadopted Roads Taskforce identified 6 main categories of Unadopted Roads. The comprehensive consultation exercise undertaken in the Autumn of 2018 resulted in endorsement of these categories with no other or new categories coming forward.

The categories are as follows:

- » unadopted former chalet developments.



- » unadopted minor roads not specifically serving households



- » unadopted housing estate roads



- » unadopted urban back lanes



- » unadopted privately managed estate roads



- » unadopted industrial / business development sites





# **ROAD ADOPTION MODEL GUIDE**

**FOR HIGHWAY AUTHORITIES  
AND HOUSING DEVELOPERS**



## **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

### **Pre Application Stage**

Discussions between Applicant and Planning Authority prior to submission of Planning Application.

### **Building Control Submission**

Required as part of 'Building Regulations' made pursuant to the Building Act 1984.

### **Private Shared Access**

Providing access for residents only to developments such as gated cul de sacs, complexes of flats concierge controlled etc and does not include any thoroughfares.

### **Advanced Payment Code**

The statutory code provided by sections 219 to 225 of the Highways Act 1980. The code secures payment of the costs of street works in private streets adjacent to new buildings. This means works for the construction of estate roads in a scheme for built development such as a housing estate.

### **Section 38 Agreement**

An agreement for carrying out highway works made pursuant to section 38 of the Highways Act 1980, usually associated with the construction and adoption of estate roads normally within residential developments.



# Petitions Briefing:

## Free Childcare

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 23 Hydref 2023  
Petitions Committee | 23 October 2023

Reference: SR237014-1

**Petition Number:** P-06-1362

**Petition title:** Match the new childcare offer in England of 15 hours for 2 year olds from April 2024.

**Text of petition:** The UK Government have announced that from April 2024 all working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare.

However, this benefit will not apply to all working families in Wales, as the equivalent "flying start" program will not expand to all areas. This leaves Welsh families thousands of pounds worse off than English counterparts, despite claims from the first minister that the Welsh offer is "better" as its 48 weeks instead of 38 for 3 and 4 year olds.



# 1. Summary

There are different offers for free childcare in Wales and England for 2 (and 3) year olds, and 3 and 4 year olds.

Both countries have some provision for certain groups of **two year olds**, but this provision is delivered in different ways.

Whilst the information below is not intended as a guide to any individual eligibility, broadly, the current policy position can be summarized as below. (Note it is a changing policy area):

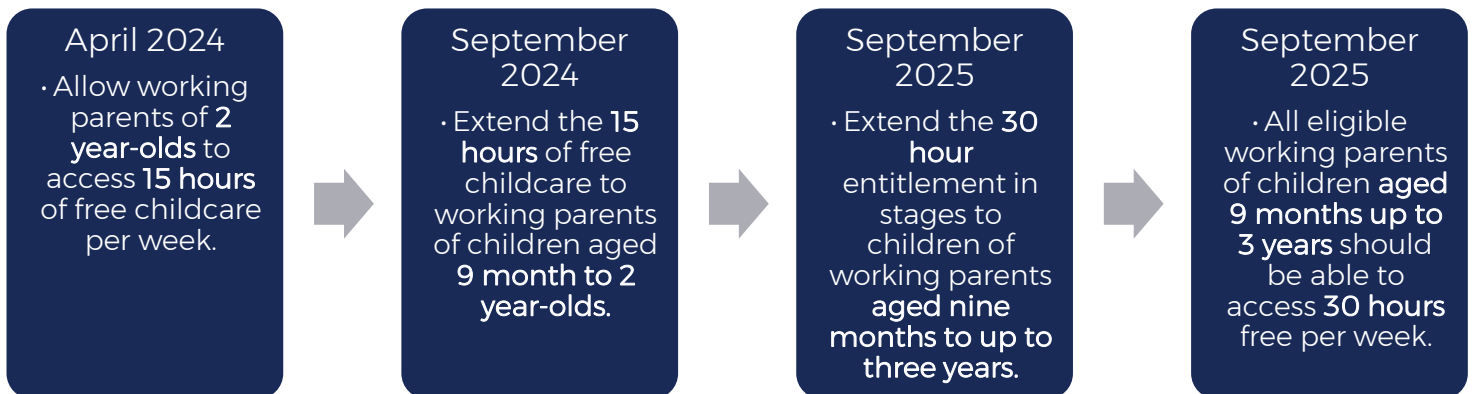
- **2 year olds (Table 1):**
  - **Wales:** Parents of all **2 and 3-year olds living in Flying Start areas are currently entitled to 12.5 hours a week for 39 weeks** per year and a minimum school holiday offer. This has expanded outside the Flying Start areas with an aim to introduce eligibility to all two year olds (see below).
  - **England:** Eligible working parents of **2-year olds** entitled to **15 hours a week for 38 weeks** per year.
- **All 3 and 4 year olds:**
  - **Wales:** Entitled to minimum 10 hours a week early education, but many authorities offer more.
  - **England:** Entitled to roughly 15 hours a week early education.
- **3 and 4 year olds of eligible working parents:**
  - **Wales:** Entitled to **30 hours a week, 48 weeks** per year. From September 2022, this entitlement expanded to include some parents in education and training in Wales.
  - **England:** Entitled to **30 hours a week, 38 weeks** per year.

## 1.1. Expansion plans

There are also plans for expansion of provision for two year olds in both countries, including:

- In **Wales**, the Welsh Government say that it is focused on the next phase of expansion of early years provision to include **all two year olds**, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision (further information in *Table 1* below).

- In England, the UK Government announced in the Spring Budget 2023 that it would expand free childcare in stages, aiming to:



## 2. Ministerial responses

The Deputy Minister for Social Services responded to this petition, saying:

*“...we are currently providing support for childcare costs under the Childcare Offer and the Flying Start programme. By progressing the expansion of Flying Start, we will be ensuring that all parents of 2-year-olds served by this programme have access to funded childcare, not just those parents who are working or in education and training as is the case with the Childcare Offer... Unfortunately, as you will know, due to the significant financial pressures we are currently facing, **we are not in a position to confirm any new financial developments to support with childcare costs.**”*

The Deputy Minister also said:

*“You will be aware of the written statement which the First Minister issued in August, about the significant pressures Welsh Government is currently facing, consequently we are not currently in a position to confirm any new developments to childcare and how we will support families with childcare costs in the future.”*

### 3. Comparing childcare support in Wales and England: 2 year olds

Wales and England have different provision, registration and inspection processes for free childcare. *Table 1* broadly compares the current childcare support offered to parents of children in **Wales (eligible 2 and 3 year olds)** and in **England (eligible 2 year olds)**.

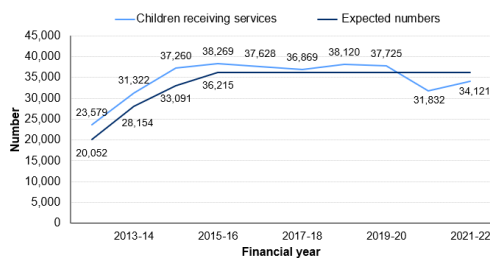
*Table 1: Eligible parents of 2 (and 3) year olds.*

	Wales	England
Offered by:	<u>Flying Start</u> : a Welsh Government early years programme introduced in 2007, and delivered by local authorities.	The UK Government.
Target population:	All 2 and 3-year-old children living in <u>Flying Start areas</u> .	<u>2-year-olds</u> of eligible parents on low incomes.
Support offered:	Entitled to free childcare for 2.5 hours per day, 5 days a week ( <b>12.5 hours a week</b> ) for <b>39</b> weeks per year. At least 15 sessions of childcare provision must be made available during school holidays.  Children can also receive services from a range of different professionals, including health visitors; wider health professionals such as dieticians, midwives and social workers; and other staff such as assistants to fully qualified health staff.	Entitled to <b>15 hours a week</b> for <b>38</b> weeks per year.
Eligibility criteria:	<u>Flying Start targets</u> the most disadvantaged areas in Wales. The programme has been targeted to areas according to measures of relative deprivation including the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD), free school meals and the proportions of children aged under 4 years living in households in receipt of income related benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if parents are in receipt of certain income-related benefits.</li> <li>- 2-year-olds are also eligible for non-economic reasons including if they have an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan, receive disability living allowance, are looked after by a local authority, or have left care under an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order.</li> </ul>
Evaluation:	Welsh Government <u>says</u> that over 3,100 additional children have benefitted from	

the first phase of expansion in September 2022.

However, from 2015-16 to 2021-22, the number of children receiving Flying Start services remains unchanged. In 2021-22, just over 34,000 children received Flying Start services, including a contact with a health visitor. This was 6% lower than the expected number, but an increase of 7% since 2020-21.

**Figure 1: Number of children in receipt of Flying Start services, 2012-13 to 2021-22**



Source: Welsh Government Flying Start Data Monitoring Returns

Nonetheless, as the eligibility for Flying Start services is area-based, the total number of children in receipt of Flying Start services is affected by the number of children aged under four years living in Flying Start areas in each year. This is in turn affected by changes to population demographics. The number of 0 to 4 year olds in Wales has decreased by between 1.2% and 2.5% each year since 2016. As children may move in or out of Flying Start areas during the year, the total number of children counted as receiving Flying Start services, may not actually receive services for the duration of a whole year.

**Future plans:**

Welsh Government say that it is focused on the next phase of expansion of early years provision to include **all two year olds**, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision.

In **March 2022**, the Welsh Government highlighted that they would aim for the Flying Start programme **“to be expanded to reach up to 2,500 more children aged 0 to 4 by increasing the Flying Start target areas in every local authority in Wales.”** Also, that **“Once the Flying Start scheme has been fully rolled out, all**

From April 2024, the aim is to extend this to all parents of children aged 2 years in England.

*families in Wales with children aged 2 to 3 years will be eligible for 12.5 hours of funded, high-quality childcare for 39 weeks of the year.”*

Additionally, in March 2022, the Welsh Government also highlighted that they “*will focus on investing £26m to deliver the high-quality childcare element of Flying Start to even more two-year-olds during 2023-24 and 2024-25*”.

Moreover, that from September 2023, “*an additional £20 million in funding has been allocated over the next 3 years to support the expansion.*” The aim is for this to support over 9,500 more two-year-olds to access quality Flying Start childcare.

Further, that “*Plans for the larger expansion of childcare via Flying Start will be announced in the autumn. To meet this target, existing Flying Start childcare providers will be supported to expand their reach, with work ongoing to encourage new providers, including those who specialise in Welsh-medium provision, to offer the programme.*”

Further information can be found here:

- [Research Briefings House of Commons Library](#)
- [Help with childcare costs in England: House of Commons Library](#)

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 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-06-1362  
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/00591/23

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

09 October 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your correspondence on 11 September, regarding the petition from Madeline Hallam asking the Welsh Government to match the new Childcare Offer in England of 15 hours for 2-year-olds from April 2024.

We recognise the pressures many families are currently facing with the rising cost of childcare, particularly in the current cost of living crisis. You will be aware from my response to your previous correspondence regarding the very similar petition from Jade Richards (P-06-1359), we are currently providing support for childcare costs under the Childcare Offer and the Flying Start programme. By progressing the expansion of Flying Start, we will be ensuring that all parents of 2-year-olds served by this programme have access to funded childcare, not just those parents who are working or in education and training as is the case with the Childcare Offer.

Phase 1 of the Flying Start programme has already supported around 2,500 additional children (aged 0-4 years) with funded part-time, high-quality childcare for 2-year-olds; parenting support; enhanced health visitor support; and support for speech, language and communication and has already made a real difference to the lives of children in some of Wales' most disadvantaged communities.

Phase 2 of the expansion programme will continue to make progress on our commitment to "deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to include all 2-year-olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision", as set out in the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru. We are investing £46m in Phase 2 of Flying Start expansion in 2023-24 and 2024-25. This will support over 9,500 more two-year-olds to access quality Flying Start childcare during Phase 2. Delivery of Phase 2 began in April 2023, however, it takes time to build the capacity within the sector.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
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[Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales)

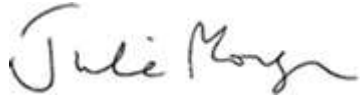
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

You will also be aware, we expanded the Childcare Offer in September 2022 to support parents in education and training and we continue to review the Offer to ensure it is fair and equitable to as many families as possible throughout Wales.

Unfortunately, as you will know, due to the significant financial pressures we are currently facing, we are not in a position to confirm any new financial developments to support with childcare costs.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

**Julie Morgan AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Dear Senedd Committee,

We are writing to you in reference to the Petition to 'Offer Welsh working parents the same financial support for childcare as England'.

We find the petition problematic in its wording in that it refers to commitments made to provide an extension to the current childcare offer in England which are yet to become reality, and the majority of which will likely be the responsibility of a newly formed government following the upcoming (as yet to be scheduled) general election.

The petition highlights the complexity of the Welsh Government's childcare offer, comprising a range of services including the 30 hours childcare offer for 3–4-year-olds and the Flying Start offer for 2-year-olds.

Parents are under extreme pressure, and the UK has one of the most expensive childcare systems in the world. According to 2022 OECD figures, the UK has the third most expensive childcare, with only the Czech Republic and New Zealand more expensive in net childcare costs.<sup>i</sup>

Figures show that one in three young mums were forced to leave a job because they could not afford childcare.<sup>ii</sup>

Oxfam Cymru research, to be released in coming weeks, shows families are struggling with the cost of childcare:

- A staggering 91.7% (306/334) of parents either agree or strongly agree that childcare costs are too high compared to their income.
- 53% (178/334) of parents said that it doesn't make financial sense for them to go to work after paying for childcare.
- 39% (130/333) of the participants agree or strongly agree that they haven't been able to pay other essential costs after paying for childcare.

Childcare is a critical social infrastructure for our society and economy, impacting multiple dimensions. Beyond its role in shaping the future generation, childcare also plays a pivotal role in workforce participation, enabling parents, especially mothers, to maintain or re-enter the workforce, contributing significantly to economic productivity and financial independence.

Moreover, childcare fosters social inclusion by offering support to families of diverse backgrounds and income levels, helping to bridge socio-economic gaps. Recognizing childcare's multifaceted importance is crucial as it not only empowers children but also empowers communities and economies, ultimately shaping the trajectory of our society for generations to come.

Childcare remains one of the main reasons for women to be economically inactive. More women are economically inactive in Wales, 25.5% of economically inactive women are out of work due to "looking after family/home", compared to only 6.8% of men.



Yet, childcare support and offers remain insufficient to overcome this inequality.

Our upcoming research presents some staggering figures in relation to childcare and parent's employment:

- 53.3% (178/334) of parents said that after paying for childcare, it doesn't make financial sense for them to go to work.
- 66% (221/334) of the parents said due to childcare costs, they did not have any disposal income/savings.
- 67% (106/158) of the parents/carers said that they would have returned to work or increased working hours quicker if more funded childcare had been available.
- 74% (247/334) of the parents agreed that lack of funded childcare has had a negative impact on their work or career.

This petition has shone a light on the need for the Welsh Government to provide clear and detailed plans on how they will support families struggling to survive with the insurmountable cost of childcare. The interest in this petition, at a time when families were juggling a busy summer holiday period, shows the strength of public interest in this matter, and how they are looking for a solution that helps all families as soon as is practicable.

Kind regards

Sarah Rees  
Head of Oxfam Cymru

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<sup>i</sup> OECD (2022), Net Childcare Costs

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.youngwomenstrust.org/our-research/childcare-what-young-women-want/>

**P-06-1362 Match the new childcare offer in England of 15 hours for 2 year old's from April 2024 – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 11 October 2023**

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1362 Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/00591/23

Views in light of the document for the Committee to consider  
October 2023

11<sup>th</sup>

I do not feel that the letter I received from the Deputy Minister for Social services on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 adequately address the issues raised. Firstly, I would ask that in future the Deputy Minister for SS avoids comparing the Flying Start program (supporting deprived areas) to universal government funded help for **working parents**. It is not relevant in response to the petition that I started for the following reasons laid out in this letter.

Key Points for consideration

Why Flying Start is not comparable to working parents childcare offer;

- It is a postcode lottery and therefore not universal (unlike the English offer)
- The majority of parents who qualify for flying start **do not work**.
- Flying start hours are specified as 2 hours per day which **does not support parents who work** traditional hours 9-5 as they need a provider to pick up/drop off.
- The ability to use flying start if you are a **working parent** is therefore depending on the availability of wrap around childcare.
- In my area in particular (as I'm sure many others) the only local provision that provided wrap around childcare to local schools in Llangollen closed in August 2024 so even if flying start became available in our area **working parents** would not able to use it.
- Qualified providers have to be registered as a Flying start setting so parents cannot use the hours where ever they wish (unlike the English offer)

Other comments on the letter

The expansion of the Welsh childcare offer to support parents in education and training that you mentioned again **does not help working parents**. To hide behind financial pressures is not acceptable when the UK government has provided the funding but it is being spent otherwise.

Further questions

You mention *building capacity in the sector*. By this I assume you mean number of childcare places suitable for flying start. The Welsh childcare system is crumbling, 300,000 less places than this time 12 months ago and counting. How are the government looking to support the building of capacity?

Final question - can **working parents** who have to send their child to nursery in England due to lack of provision in Wales claim the 15 hours in April 2024 in line with the other parents sending their children to the nursery, otherwise is this not border county discrimination based on regional postcode.

### Similar Petition

I am aware of a comparable petition started a few days after mine by Jade Richards (didn't think this was possible) which received an astonishing 10,000+ signatures. I hope the Welsh government realise how many **working parents** and childcare providers feel let down.

Thank you very much for your time.

# Agenda Item 4.1

## **P-06-1334 Make the Senedd More Representative of the Welsh Population**

This petition was submitted by Seren Cole, having collected a total of 258 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

This petition is calling upon the Welsh Parliament to investigate the introduction of Gender and Ethnicity Quotas within its electoral systems and calls for more representation of those from a disabled background.

Furthermore, it requests what action has this Senedd and the previous five incarnations done to make the Senedd more reflective of Wales as a whole.

### **Additional Information:**

According to the Welsh Government's own statistics, 5.2% of Wales is of ethnic minority background, however, this number is not reflected in the current composition of the Senedd, a further 48.9% are women according to the ONS and over a 1 / 5 of the population self-identify as disabled.

However, this diverse makeup is not reflected in the Welsh Parliament.

Only 43% of those elected to the Senedd are women and only 3 members are from an ethnic minority background with little to no representation of those with a disability. Whilst there have been improvements in recent years, these numbers are still shockingly low and have led to vast parts of the Welsh population not having their voices heard.

We need representation in the Senedd, so all people's needs are met and understood by their government.

### **Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Bridgend
- South Wales West

Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair, Petitions Committee

3 October 2023

Dear Jack

**Petition P-06-1334 Make the Senedd More Representative of the Welsh Population**

Thank you for your letter of 2 October 2023 bringing the above petition to the attention of the Reform Bill Committee.

As you know, our role is to scrutinise Bills referred to us by the Business Committee. We are currently scrutinising the Welsh Government's Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill, and we anticipate that further legislation to introduce candidate level gender quotas for Senedd elections and require the publication of diversity information about candidates will also be referred to us in due course.

I will ensure that Reform Bill Committee members are made aware of the petition, and related correspondence, as we carry out our work.

You may also wish to consider drawing the petition to the attention of the Local Government and Housing Committee, which is currently scrutinising the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill. I note that this Bill places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to put in place arrangements aimed at improving diversity within Senedd and local government democratic structures, and for individual schemes to be created and tailored to provide support for protected characteristics.

Yours sincerely



David Rees MS  
Chair, Reform Bill Committee

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

**P-06-1334 Make the Senedd More Representative of the Welsh Population,  
Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 17.10.23**

I agree with the statement in the email and don't have much else to add except I want to stress the importance of where diverse attributes overlap, for example, black women having little to no representation compared to black men or white women. Other than making quotas, the Senedd must be more aware of bias when selecting members when they are a part of more than one minority group.

Regards,  
Seren Cole

# Agenda Item 4.2

## **P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus**

This petition was submitted by Craig Shuttleworth, having collected a total of 11,306 signatures.

### **Text of Petition:**

Squirrelpox virus is carried and spread by grey squirrels. It doesn't harm them. When red squirrels are infected they develop open extensive skin lesions and die a painful death within 2 weeks

In North Wales, 70–80% of the Gwynedd red population was lost in a 2020/21 outbreak <https://theconversation.com/squirrelpox-outbreak-detected-in-north-wales-without-a-vaccine-the-disease-will-keep-decimating-red-squirrels-196811>

Promising research by Moredun Institute into a vaccine ran out of funds.

### **Additional Information:**

The Wales Red Squirrel Conservation Plan (Page 9) highlights that most Welsh red squirrels are in forests inhabited by grey squirrels. Pox virus is thus a major threat in Wales.

<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/691092/eng-red-squirrel-conservation-plan-for-wales.pdf>

In Bangor, there have been repeated Squirrelpox virus outbreaks in the period 2017–2022. Dead red squirrels have been found in woodland close to the Britannia Bridge and Telford's Suspension Bridge. It is only a matter of time before the infection is spread across the Menai Strait and onto Anglesey. The island contains the largest red squirrel population in Wales.

The infection causes graphic symptoms:

<http://www.britishredsquirrel.org/red-squirrels/disease/>

We need Welsh Government to commit to funding research such as the stalled vaccine research of Moredun/Wildlife Ark Trust:

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/red-squirrel-vaccine-under-threat-2540293>.

**Senedd Constituency and Region**

- Arfon
- North Wales

**P-06-1332 Fund vaccine research to protect red squirrels from deadly Squirrelpox virus, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 10.10.23**

Dear Mr Sargeant

Squirrelpox has, and will continue, to devastate red squirrel populations in Wales unless we have a vaccine. The urgency of the matter was clear in the Senedd debate with strong cross-party support for red squirrel conservation. I would like to thank you and your colleagues for taking this forward.

I have made a few brief points below which I hope will assist your committee in its considerations.

**Vaccine feasibility study**

There are a large numbers of questions about vaccine which we need answered. The Minister sensibly mentioned many of these: cost, timetable, utility, method of delivery, attenuation or other research steps. My petition was of course not wedded to Wildlife Ark Trust (WAT) attenuated approach mentioned, as I was careful to leave the door open to alternative routes e.g. Pirbright Institute.

I would therefore ask that the Petitions Committee consider getting in touch with WAT and Pirbright Labs respectively about current or potential research proposals.

**Red squirrels and pox in Mid Wales**

The Minister mentioned that in Mid Wales, the Wildlife Trusts (Wales) had never recorded a case of squirrelpox. However, only a small proportion of infected animals are recorded, even in major disease outbreaks in habitats where finding bodies is relatively easy e.g. Formby (Lancs) & Bangor (Gwynedd). In the upland spruce forest of Mid Wales my understanding is that only a handful of dead reds have been found in 20 years: one brought in dead by a cat and one a road casualty. Thus it is quite baffling that anyone can claim with confidence the relative importance of any cause of regional mortality, let alone that viral disease outbreaks have not occurred in the forests.

Importantly, some dead red squirrels only show minor localised lesions, and in these cases infection could very easily be overlooked where (as in mid Wales) animals are monitored at a distance using automatic cameras. Finally, I was contacted by the Mid Wales project in 2022 lamenting the lack of red squirrel sightings and apparent inexplicable declines in numbers to a point where serious consideration was being given to releasing animals to boost numbers.

The Wildlife Trusts (Wales) are of course entitled to provide their position regarding Squirrelpox. However, I would ask the petitions committee to consider the peer reviewed scientific publications that paint a very different and grave picture of the viral threat posed by grey to red squirrels in Wales.

Kind regards

Dr Craig Shuttleworth

# Agenda Item 4.3

**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

# P-06-1335 Welsh Government should take steps to ensure vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay with cash

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 5 Mehefin 2023  
Petitions Committee | 5 June 2023

SR235996-3

**Petition Number:** P-06-1335

**Petition title:** Welsh Government should take steps to ensure vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay with cash

**Text of petition:**

Mencap Cymru is concerned that the move to a cashless society will leave behind disabled people who cannot have access to electronic forms of payment.

In recent months people with a learning disability have been unable to pay for goods and services and have had to leave businesses empty-handed. Support workers are not permitted to use their own cards, and nor should they be.

This means they do not have equal access to goods and services with many businesses and organisations moving to cashless transactions.



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## 1. Background

A recent report by UK Finance, the trade association for the banking and finance industry, found that almost “40 per cent of people use cash to pay for something at least once a week, with 11 per cent saying that they prefer to use cash and only three per cent saying that they never used cash at all”. The report also found that “a third of people that had used cash in the last year said that they had had a cash payment refused”.

## 2. UK Parliament

On 20 March the House of Commons held a debate on a petition which calls for the UK Government to “require all businesses and public services to accept cash payments”.

The UK Government’s response to the petition states:

“The Government does not intend to mandate cash acceptance. The Government’s view is that as technology and consumer behaviour changes, it should remain the choice of individual organisations as to whether to accept or decline any form of payment, including cash or card based on their consideration of factors such as customer preference and cost.

However, the Government recognises that millions of people continue to transact in cash across the UK, particularly those in vulnerable groups, and engages closely with financial regulators to monitor and assess trends relating to cash. Research undertaken by the Financial Conduct Authority found that 98% of small businesses would never turn away a customer if they needed to pay by cash.”

The response also notes that the UK Government has recently introduced legislation to “protect access to cash as part of the Financial Services and Markets Bill”. The UK Government considers that this legislation will support organisations, including local businesses, to continue accepting cash by ensuring they have reasonable access to deposit facilities.

### 3. Welsh Government action

The response to the petition from the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip (the Minister) sets out that the Welsh Government supports, wherever possible, the need for businesses to accept cash. However, the Minister notes that “our levers are limited in this space as this is entirely a voluntary decision based on commercial considerations”. The Minister also highlights that there may be equality-related aspects to consider:

“The provision of digital only payment routes with no option to use cash as a payment method raises potential equality of treatment issues. Recipients and providers of services in both the public and private sectors are impacted. There are risks that a cashless requirement could indirectly discriminate against persons from certain protected characteristics. Officials are looking to explore this in more detail.”

The Minister’s response also points to the work of the Disability Rights Taskforce which it established in order to develop a new Disability Rights Action Plan:

“The Welsh Government is fully committed in supporting all disabled people in Wales and has set up the Disability Rights Taskforce which will run until 2024. It brings together people with lived experience, Welsh Government Policy Leads and representative organisations to identify the issues and barriers that affect the lives of many disabled people. The Taskforce works within the scope of the Welsh Government’s legal remit and not in areas that solely fall under the UK Government’s responsibilities.”

The Welsh Government’s new Disability Rights Action Plan is expected to be published in March 2024.

### 4. Welsh Parliament action

In April 2019, the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee of the Fifth Senedd published its report on “Access to Banking”.

The Committee found overwhelming evidence of the negative impact of bank closures and reduction in free-to-use ATMs in Wales and voiced concern that “Wales is certainly not ready to go cashless”.

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In relation to access to cash, LINK, the not-for-profit organisation which manages the LINK ATM network, told the Committee that although cash use has declined rapidly in the last decade and this is expected to continue, free access to cash for consumers is a “vital national service”. LINK said over 47% of consumers still rely on cash and for 17% a cashless society would present real challenges. The consumer organisation Which? told the Committee it was concerned that the rate at which access to cash is declining is “at odds with consumer attitudes and demand”, and is being driven by industry. It warned that Welsh communities could be stripped of their choice to use cash before they are ready and if cash disappears, re-introducing it can be complex.

The reduction in cash usage also affects how businesses choose to accept payments, as the costs of handling cash and accepting electronic payments change over time. The Committee noted that “a particular issue here is the ability for businesses to deposit cash takings, and the associated cost of that”.

The Committee made a number of recommendations, including:

“Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government should explore how regional hubs, and cooperation and collaboration between different agencies can improve the access to cash in Welsh communities (recognising that cash-handling is an expensive business).”

The Welsh Government accepted the recommendation in principle.

The Committee received strong evidence about the impact of branch closures on older people and disabled people in particular, and the problems of digital exclusion for those already disadvantaged. As such, the Committee also recommended:

“Recommendation 10. The Welsh Government’s support for digital inclusion should prioritise a) maintaining support for existing digital skills training, b) consulting stakeholders on how to further address barriers to older and vulnerable people safely accessing online banking, and c) providing additional support to teachers to deliver financial education within the school curriculum.”

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation.

Title:

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