

# Agenda – Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee room 3 Senedd  
and video Conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 27 November 2024

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

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Committee Clerk

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## Hybrid

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**Private pre-meeting (09.15–09.30)**

**Public meeting (09.30–11.00)**

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

(09.30)

### 2 General scrutiny of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

(09.30–11.00)

(Pages 1 – 29)

Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

Peter McDonald, Director of Transport and Digital Connectivity – Welsh Government

Steven McGregor, Deputy Director, North Wales – Welsh Government

Attached Documents:

Research brief – Transport Scrutiny

Paper – Welsh Government



### **3 Papers to note (11.00)**

#### **3.1 Petition P-06-1439 Improve vital late night public transport infrastructure in South and South West Wales**

(Page 30)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee to the Chair in relation to late night public transport infrastructure in South and South West Wales

#### **3.2 Transport scrutiny**

(Pages 31 – 42)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales in relation to transport

Response from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales to the Chair in relation to transport

#### **3.3 National Seagrass Action Plan proposal for Wales**

(Page 43)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Chair to Joel James MS in relation to the National Seagrass Action Plan for Wales

#### **3.4 The Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

(Pages 44 – 47)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the Interministerial Group on Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee in relation to the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Letter from the Chair of the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee to the Chair in relation to engagement in areas of shared

policy

Response from the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee to the Chair of the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee in relation to engagement in areas of shared policy

### **3.5 Interim Environmental Governance Measures in Wales**

(Pages 48 – 55)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales to the Chair in relation to the Committee's report: Report on operation of the interim environmental protection measures 2023–24

Response from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the Committee's report: Report on operation of the interim environmental protection measures 2023–24

### **3.6 The UK Emissions Trading Scheme**

(Pages 56 – 57)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2024

### **3.7 Legislative Consent: Water (Special Measures) Bill**

(Pages 58 – 59)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs in relation to the Water (Special Measures) Bill

### **3.8 Petition P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres and Petition P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve**

(Pages 60 – 63)

Attached Documents:

Follow up letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs in relation to Petition P-06-1474 and Petition P-06-1447

Follow up letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee to the CEO of Natural Resources Wales in relation to Petition P-06-1474 and Petition P-06-1447

- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) and (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting (11.00)**

**Private meeting (11.00-11.30)**

- 5 Consideration of evidence received under item 2**
  
- 6 Consideration of the Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Water (Special Measures) Bill**

(Pages 64 – 69)

Attached Documents:

Legal note on the Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Water (Special Measures) Bill

- 7 The Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Bill – Consideration of approach to Stage 1 scrutiny**

(Pages 70 – 79)

Attached Documents:

Papur – Dull craffu ar Fil Tomenni Mwyngloddiau a Chwareli Nas Defnyddir (Cymru) (Saesneg yn unig)

Document is Restricted



# Evidence paper from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales for General Scrutiny at the CCEI Committee

06/11/2024

Information provided to aid the Committee in advance of the Cabinet Secretary's attendance for General Scrutiny on 27 November 2024.

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## 1. Rail

### Rail collision on the Cambrian line

1. On Monday 21 October, two TfW trains were involved in a low-speed collision near Llanbrynmair in Powys, Mid Wales. 41 passengers and 4 crew members were involved in the incident, following which one passenger sadly passed away. Emergency services were called to the scene and 15 people were treated for injuries at nearby hospitals.
2. Following extensive safety checks, Network Rail reopened the line on Monday 28 October and TfW resumed services the same day.
3. The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) is leading the investigation. No further comment will be made until the investigation has concluded and its findings have been considered.

### Rail Performance

4. Transport for Wales (TfW) has demonstrated sustained performance improvement this year and, on average so far in 2024, is the most reliable and punctual operator in Wales.
5. In the first quarter of this financial year, TfW demonstrated the biggest improvement in punctuality and reliability of all rail operators in Great Britain compared to the same period last year. TfW also recorded the largest rise in passenger numbers, attributing this increase to factors including the introduction of new trains, additional and brand-new service options and improved performance.
6. Passenger satisfaction with TfW continues to rise, scoring 88% in the most recent Transport Focus survey. This represents a 16% increase over the past 12 months.
7. TfW are progressing with the roll-out of the new fleet of trains, with many of these trains now in regular operation across Wales. The Stadler Class 756 tri-mode trains will be introduced to the Core Valley Lines (CVL) network before the end of this year, marking the first time ever that an electric train is in regular passenger operation on the CVL. Following completion of the new fleet roll out, TfW will have significantly more carriages available compared to those inherited in 2018. These trains will offer improved capacity, accessibility and comfort for passengers.
8. In December, TfW will implement changes to the timetable following a review to ensure that services meet passenger demand and travel patterns. Whilst this means a reduction in some services, TfW are prioritising and bolstering capacity where it is needed most. TfW have undertaken a public

consultation exercise regarding the proposed changes, listening to the feedback and, where appropriate, making changes.

9. TfW are working to increase farebox revenue and reduce the annual subsidy requirement by bringing more trains into service across the network, improving performance and introducing ticketing offers such as Pay As You Go and discounts on Advance tickets for longer distance journeys.
10. Over the summer, TfW safely transported hundreds of thousands of passengers to and from major events, including the Taylor Swift concert at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff and the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd. More recently, TfW worked with stakeholders to support major events by pausing engineering works on the Coryton line to enable passengers to use services to travel to the Wales vs. Montenegro international football match and provided earlier services from key stations into Cardiff prior to the start of the Cardiff Half Marathon. TfW have developed bespoke event plans for the Wales rugby internationals in Cardiff this autumn.

## Rail Reform & Passenger Services Bill

11. The UK Government has announced its intention to introduce the Rail Reform Bill next year. This presents a significant opportunity to work in partnership with the UK Government to deliver a better railway for Wales, including an empowered Wales and Borders Business Unit within Great British Railways that delivers against Welsh priorities and is accountable to Welsh ministers. The Welsh Government is also seeking a role in the specification of services operating in and out of Wales considering the importance of these services for the Welsh economy and connectivity. Work is ongoing to develop the detailed proposition, but the UK Government has already committed to a statutory role for Welsh Ministers on managing, planning and developing the rail industry in Wales.
12. The Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill introduced by the UK Government this summer will see the operation of rail services brought into the public sector, revoking existing franchising powers and delivering on a key Welsh Government ask of rail reform. This move is welcomed by the Welsh Government, and a Legislative Consent Memorandum will be debated in the Senedd on 5th November.

## Wales Rail Board

13. The Wales Rail Board is a joint Welsh and UK Government board that includes membership from Transport for Wales and Network Rail. Welsh Government officials have worked to build consensus with the UK Government on a list of rail infrastructure priorities to be agreed with the Wales Rail Board. These are enhancements schemes over and above the work and investment needed to maintain and renew the existing rail network and its assets. The intention is to

have a single set of rail infrastructure improvements in Wales to enable development and delivery funding to be targeted on what all stakeholders agree are the priority interventions. I have met with Lord Hendy, UK Government Rail Minister and, more recently, Louise Haigh, Secretary of State for Transport to progress this important discussion and work towards agreeing the shared priorities between governments.

## Core Valley Lines Transformation

14. The Welsh Government is investing over £1 bn to deliver the Core Valley Lines (CVL) transformation programme. This will upgrade the lines to Treherbert, Aberdare, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney and Coryton, and includes Overhead Line Electrification (OLE) to enable brand-new electric trains to replace the inherited diesel-powered fleet.
15. The extensive work required to deliver this ambitious programme has caused disruption to people who live alongside the route. However, this is necessary to undertake essential upgrades and achieve our vision of a high-quality network that is fit for future generations. We are already starting to see the benefits of these upgrades, with the introduction of the new CVL timetable in June 2024 bringing more frequent and later services for passengers.
16. The CVL transformation works were originally planned to be completed by the end of 2023. However, this has been delayed due to the impact of Covid on the programme, which, alongside high levels of inflation, has also increased the cost of delivery.
17. So far, TfW have electrified the lines from Cardiff to Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr. Stations across the CVL are being upgraded to ensure that they can accommodate the new trains and, where possible, achieve level boarding. 'Access for All' facilities are also being installed at key stations across the CVL and, following completion of the transformation programme, the majority of the CVL network will have step-free access.
18. Key outstanding infrastructure interventions include track and signalling enhancements at Cardiff Queen Street and on the Rhymney line. The programme is currently forecasted to finish in 2027 and, when complete, will deliver a metro style turn-up-and-go service with 4 trains per hour to the valley heads at Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr and 12 trains per hour from Pontypridd to Cardiff. Incremental benefits will be realised before this, including the introduction of brand-new electric trains on the CVL before the end of the year.

## Cardiff Central Enhancements Programme

19. The Cardiff Central Enhancements Programme (CCEP) will improve the safety and operations of Cardiff Central Station by increasing platform capacity,

improving the operation of services and improving pedestrian flows around the station whilst maximising commercial returns and economic value of the surrounding land.

20. The Welsh Government is the client for the scheme and a prospective funding partner alongside the Department for Transport (DfT) and Cardiff Capital Region. Transport for Wales is leading delivery of the scheme. Initial survey work has commenced on-site, with construction currently planned to begin in summer 2025 and the majority of disruptive works completed by summer 2028 in time for the European Football Championships – for which Cardiff is a host city.
21. This project represents an opportunity to work collaboratively with partners to leverage significant funding into Wales, enhancing Wales' busiest station and a major hub on the South Wales Metro network which is key to services across the capital regional and beyond.

## 2. Active Travel

### New priorities for walking, wheeling and cycling

22. Building on the four Cabinet priorities, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales has identified his priorities for active travel and creating environments that encourage walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday journeys. These priorities are:
  - Ensuring safe and inclusive access to public transport, especially for those without cars.
  - Promoting walking, wheeling, and cycling to young people, supporting healthy access to education.
  - Making the most of safer speed limits, reducing the need for expensive new infrastructure.
23. Underpinning these priorities will be a hierarchy of users founded on social justice and inclusion, with the most vulnerable walkers and wheelers at the top. Investment decisions will be based on this hierarchy. In practice this will mean that infrastructure for walking and wheeling will take priority.

### Active travel to schools

24. The Welsh Government works with partners to encourage more children and young people to walk, wheel and cycle to school. These efforts include creating safe and accessible routes to schools, through new and improved infrastructure or through the introduction of school streets. Across Wales, over 20 School Streets have been piloted or implemented to date, including many supported through our Active Travel Fund and Safe Routes in Communities grant. A School Street reduces danger around the school and

improves air quality by restricting traffic at the start and end of the school day.

- 25.** Further emphasis is on supporting the development of School Travel Plans to identify and address barriers to healthy school travel, complementing our Active Journeys programme and cycling and child pedestrian training. Additionally, we back the Walk to School programme, delivered by Living Streets, to encourage students to walk, wheel, scoot, or cycle to school, fostering healthier lifestyles and reducing reliance on car travel for school commutes.

## Active Travel Delivery Plan

- 26.** Since publishing the Active Travel Delivery Plan 2024-27 in March, we have made good progress with the actions set out for the current year. Some have already been completed, like the publication of the promotional toolkit and others are in progress. Welsh Government will formally report on progress after the first year in Spring 2025.

## Active travel and Safe Routes in Communities funding

- 27.** During 2023-24 £36.4 million was invested through the Active Travel Fund across Wales. £30.5 million was spent on 34 main schemes, in addition to £15.9 million core funding provided to all local authorities. Core funding can be used for small scale improvements such as installing crossings, benches, or cycle parking and to get larger schemes ready for construction. For 2024-25, applications to the Active Travel Fund exceeded £89m. Over £35 million has been allocated to 37 main schemes, in addition to core funding of £15 million provided to all local authorities.
- 28.** In 2023-24 funding of over £4.8m was allocated through the Safe Routes in Communities grant for 17 schemes and for initial feasibility and development funding for School Streets. The Safe Routes in Communities grant received 35 applications for 2024-25, totalling over £9.5m. Funding of over £6 million has been allocated to 24 schemes.

## Audit Wales report on active travel

- 29.** Welsh Government accepts all ten recommendations from the Audit Wales report on active travel. Five of the recommendations relate to how we can improve data collection. Our new National Transport Survey Wales (NTS), which we are currently piloting, will help address this. Our active travel monitoring framework will draw on future NTS and wider data. Welsh Government is working with Transport for Wales to ensure monitoring at the local level is more consistent.

## Active Travel Board

- 30.** The Active Travel Board's first annual report was published in August 2024. Similarly to the Audit Wales report, the Active Travel Board pushed for better data on active travel in Wales.

## 3. Roads Policy

- 31.** Our [National Transport Delivery Plan](#) sets out the programmes, projects and policies that Welsh Government will be delivering up until 2027.
- 32.** Good progress is being made on the delivery of schemes identified in the NTDP. The A55 Aber to Tai'r Meibion and the A487 New Dyfi Bridge Improvements have been completed and open to traffic and the A40 Llanddewi Velfrey to Redstone Cross and A465 Sections 5 and 6 are due to be completed during spring and summer 2025 respectively.
- 33.** A public consultation is due to be held in December 2024 on the A494 River Dee Bridge Replacement scheme with a view to progressing a preferred option to draft orders publication stage by the autumn of 2025. We provided grant funding and are working with Wrexham County Borough Council to progress the A483 multi-modal corridor improvements and city centre connectivity and consultants have also been appointed to undertake this work.
- 34.** Similarly, consultants have been appointed to develop options to address the highest priority recommendations from the North Wales Transport commission for improving the resilience of connections across the Menai Strait.
- 35.** The procurement of an employer's agent is also underway for the A483 Llandeilo and Ffairfach Bypass and good progress is being made to develop options and solutions for a number of high priority schemes under the Safety and Resilience programme - these schemes are being developed through the WelTAG stages, and short, medium and long term measures are being considered for each site.
- 36.** Through our transport grants, we fund local authority road schemes. These include schemes to repair and improve the existing road network or to develop new roads if the evidence demonstrates that a new road is the best solution. For example, this year the Welsh Government is providing £1.8m to Wrexham County Borough Council to repair and re-open the B5605 in Newbridge, and £0.6m to Gwynedd Council to develop plans to address traffic in Llanbedr.
- 37.** We have recently invited local authorities to apply for [transport grants for 2025-26](#). This includes the Resilient Roads Fund, through which local

authorities can apply for funding to adapt the road network to climate change or improve the condition of roads for all users.

- 38.** We are currently assessing the road building purposes which were published following the roads review and will shortly be engaging with local authorities to understand their experiences of applying the purposes in practice. We want to ensure we have a framework which raises the bar and enables us to build better roads in a way which is consistent with the climate and nature emergencies. This means not immediately jumping to a roads solution when there is a transport problem but considering alternative options and thinking innovatively about solutions (while acknowledging that in some circumstances a road scheme will be the best option).

## 4. 20mph

- 39.** We engaged during the summer in the listening programme, and as well as local authorities Welsh Government fed into the update guidance as a highway authority. The updated guidance on 30mph speed limits on restricted roads was published in July 2024.
- 40.** We have begun working with our Trunk Road Agents to review the speed limits on 111 sections of trunk road. The review of trunk road speed limits will require gathering significant data as evidence to support consistent decision making, along with input from the relevant Local Authorities. The current programme is we will conclude this review work in May 2025 – at this point we will understand any changes to the 20mph and 30mph on the ground on the trunk road network.
- 41.** Any changes to the speed limit on the trunk road network arising from this review require Traffic Regulation Orders, the process for which can take 9 months so changes on the ground will be seen in mid-2026.

## 5. Bus

### Bus reform

- 42.** We want to give people more accessible, affordable and sustainable options for the journeys they take. To do that, we need a public transport network that works for all. By bringing public transport into public control, we can deliver our vision of 'one network, one timetable, one ticket', and deliver an integrated system.
- 43.** As we set out in our 2022 White Paper and Roadmap to Bus Reform (published in March 2024), we intend to reform the delivery of bus services in Wales, bringing the planning and contracting of buses into public control, so they can be delivered in the public interest.

- 44.** The present deregulated system means that commercial bus operators can cherry pick the most profitable bits of the bus network and local authorities often have to fill in the gaps, where they can afford to do so. The current system is un-strategic and an inefficient way to deploy public money. Most of the money going into the bus system comes from public funds, yet we are not able to design the system to deliver the best public service.
- 45.** We are proposing a new system to reverse that, allowing public bodies to work together to plan and deliver the local bus network people need in Wales. We are working with Transport for Wales and local authorities to plan and implement local bus networks that work as effectively as possible.
- 46.** In brief, the Bill will:
- Require the Welsh Ministers to secure the provision of local bus services, primarily through franchising.
  - Allow local authorities to create new municipal bus companies and lift restrictions on existing local authority owned bus companies to place them on an equal footing.
  - Ensure the appropriate sharing of information both between organisations for the management of the network and with the public for effective use of services.
- 47.** We have identified the Bus Bill as a priority for the remainder of this Senedd term. We are planning to introduce the Bill in the Spring and, subject to scrutiny and approval by the Senedd, obtain Royal Assent before the end of this Senedd term. The rollout of bus franchising is intended to begin in 2027, following the introduction of secondary legislation.

## Bus Funding Support

- 48.** We recognise that buses play a crucial role in supporting our economy as well as providing access to education, health services and other important services and activities. This is why we have invested significant funding into our bus industry – since the beginning of the pandemic alone we have provided local authorities with over £250m to keep bus services running.
- 49.** Our Bus Network Grant was introduced at the beginning of April this year and has replaced the Bus Transition Scheme. The scheme provides local authorities with £39m funding for 2024/25 to secure bus services that would not otherwise be provided through their existing statutory duties. This is on top of the existing Bus Service Support Grant for 2024/25 totalling £25m.
- 50.** We also continue to fund the Welsh Concessionary Travel Scheme which provides free local bus travel for all eligible residents aged 60 and over across Wales. Free travel is also available for eligible residents who are disabled. This year our investment will be over £50m.

## TrawsCymru

- 51.** TrawsCymru services provide vital links to communities and main centres not directly served by rail. If we did not invest in the TrawsCymru network large areas of rural Wales would not be served by a regular bus service. Passenger numbers across the TrawsCymru network are recovering well following the Covid pandemic, and Transport for Wales are working actively to promote the network to new passengers through targeted publicity campaigns and ticketing promotions.
- 52.** Having Transport for Wales contracting services enables us to improve connections and ticketing arrangements between TrawsCymru buses and trains at key stations. For instance, in West Wales we now offer combined 'through' bus / rail ticketing between the T1 Carmarthen and Aberystwyth bus station and trains at Aberystwyth and Carmarthen rail stations. Last year this route became the first to be converted to a zero emissions operation, which we intend to rollout across the TrawsCymru network.

# Y Pwyllgor Deisebau Agenda Item 3.1

## Petitions Committee

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

8 October 2024

Dear Chair,

Petition P-06-1439 Improve vital late night public transport infrastructure in South and South West  
Wales

As you may be aware, the Petitions Committee considered the above petition, submitted by Lisa  
Mart, at its 16 September meeting.

We are writing to highlight the petition and its contents. The full details of the Committee's  
consideration of the petition, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee  
can be found here:

<https://business.senedd.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=44291>

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the clerking team at  
[petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales).

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Ken Skates MS

Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

21 October 2024

Dear Ken,

Thank you for attending the Committee's meeting on 26 June 2024 to discuss transport policy. The Committee agreed that I should write to you to request further clarification and information on several matters raised during the meeting.

### 20 mph Speed Limit

The Committee questioned whether the guidance for local authorities to support the implementation of the policy had been sufficiently clear and whether this had resulted in an inconsistent approach across Wales. In response, you said that further work was being undertaken to address public concerns. This would consist of a three-phase approach: engaging with the public and local authorities, refining the existing guidance, and the implementation of changes to specific roads where necessary. The implementation phase would start in September.

You will be aware that media reports have suggested that the scale of changes will be significant, with certain reports describing the review as a policy u-turn<sup>1</sup>. There are concerns that this will only serve to further erode confidence in the communication around the policy. The Committee is eager to hear what steps you are taking to manage the public's expectations in relation to the policy.

- *Given that decisions on changes to specific roads will be a matter for local authorities (within the framework of the Welsh Government's guidance), how will you address public concerns about potential inconsistencies across Wales?*

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<sup>1</sup> [The end of hated 20mph speed limit in Wales: Roads revert to 30mph as transport minister reveals even his own family have signed 500,000-strong petition against the scheme | Daily Mail Online](#)

- *What steps are you taking to manage public expectations regarding the scale of changes likely to arise from the review?*

The Committee highlighted concerns about the misreporting of the policy and the misuse of statistics.

For example, in July, the media reported that fines resulting from the policy had totalled £1.28m by June. This would appear to be derived by multiplying the total “offences” reported on the GoSafe website by the £100 fixed penalty. However, we understand that only about one quarter of offences actually resulted in fines, with the remainder either addressed by other means, such as speed awareness courses, or involving exempt vehicles like emergency vehicles on call.

Similarly, media coverage has reported increases in accident rates in 20mph areas, along with suggestions from campaigners that this may indicate 20mph roads are less safe, without highlighting that the total distance of 20mph limit roads has increased from 870km to 13,000km. We note that for this reason, the Welsh Government has reported accident rates in 20mph and 30mph areas together.

More generally, concerns have been raised about the Welsh Government’s apparent reluctance to explain and defend the policy in the face of criticism. This is difficult to understand, particularly given the emphasis you placed on securing public buy-in for the policy.

- *Could you explain the steps being taken to promote the benefits of the policy to the Welsh public, and how will you assess whether this has been a success?*
- *How do you respond to concerns about the Welsh Government’s apparent reluctance to defend the policy in the face of misinformation in the media?*
- *What steps have you taken to clarify reporting on the policy in general, and specifically in the case of the two examples outlined above?*

## Roads Policy Statement and review

During the meeting, you emphasised the importance of making transport decisions at the most appropriate level and stressed your commitment to empowering local authorities and Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) in making these decisions. You highlighted the need for flexibility in terms of funding to enable local authorities to have greater control over investment in transport.

You referred to the need to consider whether the Roads Policy Statement remains effective and fit for purpose, in response to the climate and nature emergencies. You argued that new road building can be consistent with climate targets if it facilitates more effective public transport and reduces road congestion on local roads. You said that strategic road planning could reduce overall vehicle use.

We note that the current Roads Policy Statement does not prohibit road investment but would allow it in circumstances, including where it would “support modal shift and reduce carbon emissions”. We recognise that you are still considering the policy, but we would be grateful for further explanation of

whether you believe this specific aspect of the statement would already enable road building to take place in the circumstances you outlined.

You also indicated that you believe road building is consistent with the Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 target of a 10% reduction in car miles per person. We would appreciate details of the evidence supporting this view, including examples of road-building schemes that have led to a net reduction in car miles overall, rather than reductions on specific feeder routes or the wider local road network.

- *Can you explain the steps you are taking to ensure that transport funding is sufficiently flexible to provide local authorities and CJs with more control over investment?*
- *With regard to your comments that road building may be desirable where it promotes public transport, can you clarify whether you are satisfied that the current provision in the Roads Policy Statement, that road investment and building is permissible where it would "support modal shift and reduce carbon emissions" would permit construction in the circumstances you outlined? If not, which aspect would prevent it?*
- *Can you provide data and case studies that demonstrate how recent road-building projects have successfully reduced private car use by the Welsh Government's target of 10%?*
- *How are you seeking to ensure that any proposal for a third Menai crossing aligns with the Welsh Government's climate goals, and what environmental impact assessments are being conducted as part of the planning process?*

## Highway Maintenance

During the meeting, you strongly supported the Lugg review on strategic road network maintenance. You recognised its importance in guiding maintenance practices to maximise benefits for modal shift, biodiversity, climate change resilience, and emissions reduction.

You went on to acknowledge the significant backlog in road maintenance, which has been estimated to require over £1 billion to address it.

- *How are findings of the Lugg review being incorporated into current and future road maintenance projects?*
- *What specific measures are being taken to address the backlog in local road maintenance, and given the estimated overall costs, how are priorities being set?*

## Active Travel

In terms of active travel, you emphasised that the focus should be on the quality of active travel programmes rather than their overall quantity and highlighted the importance of identifying high-impact projects to meet the 2030 target set out in Net Zero Wales. Again, you acknowledged the

importance of providing flexibility in funding for local authorities to allocate funding based on their specific needs, including highway maintenance and active travel projects.

The Committee notes the recent publication of the Wales Audit Office's report on active travel, which set out that the Welsh Government remains a long way from achieving the step change in active travel intended through the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.

- *What mechanisms are in place to ensure that funding used by local authorities will meet both maintenance and active travel objectives?*
- *Can you outline your timetable for responding to the Wales Audit Office's report on Active Travel, including the publication of your response?*

## Bus Reform

During the meeting, you confirmed that you are satisfied with the progress being made on bus reform and that the delay in introducing the Bus Reform Bill would not impact the overall timeline.

You acknowledged the risks associated with transitioning to a new model of provision, including ensuring short-term stability, managing costs, and maintaining a sustainable bus network. During discussions, you highlighted innovative funding models from other countries, such as council tax-funded free local bus networks in parts of France and suggested that such models could be considered in Wales.

- *What steps are being taken to explore innovative funding models for bus service provision from other countries, such as those in France?*
- *Can you set out the approach being taken to managing risks associated with the transition to bus franchising?*

## Rail Services

During the meeting, you referred to improvements in Transport for Wales' (TfW) performance, particularly in relation to punctuality and reduced numbers of cancellations. However, you explained that delays often arose due to issues under the control of Network Rail.

You discussed preparations for the upcoming Under-19s Euros in North Wales in 2026, mentioning recent meetings with Wrexham local authority leaders and Wrexham AFC co-owner Rob McElhenney to plan for increased foot traffic due to the football club's success. Steven McGregor added that meetings were scheduled to discuss the challenges and opportunities around the tournament in North Wales.

- *In your statement in the Senedd Chamber on 24 September, you referred to the establishment of GBR Cymru, an "empowered Wales and Borders Business Unit within Great British Railways". Can you provide the Committee with further details on this and the statutory role for the Welsh*

*Ministers which you referred to, including details of any firm commitments you have received from the UK Government?*

- *What discussions are you having with your counterparts in the UK Government about the need to urgently improve rail infrastructure and the role of Network Rail in Wales?*
- *What are the key challenges identified in planning for the Under-19s Euros in North Wales, and what support is Welsh Government providing to Tŷŵ to help address them?*

## Decarbonisation of Public Transport

You acknowledged the difficulty of meeting the 2028 target for 50% of the bus fleet to achieve zero-tailpipe-emissions. You said that the transition to zero emissions could be facilitated through the new bus franchising arrangements, although reaching the target would remain a significant challenge due to costs and the pressures on public finances.

- *Do you intend to revise the 2028 target in light of the challenges you outlined?*
- *How will the rollout of bus franchising be structured to ensure that it supports the transition to zero-tailpipe emission buses?*

Thank you again for your constructive contribution to the Committee's ongoing work on transport policy.

I should be grateful for a response as soon as possible, and by 14 November at the latest.

Yours sincerely,



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

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



Ein cyf/Our ref – KS/PO/333/2024

Llyr Gruffydd MS,

Chair, Climate Change, Environment and  
Infrastructure Committee

14 November 2024

Dear Llyr

Thank you for your letter of 21 October seeking further clarification and information on several matters raised during the previous committee meeting. Please see below responses to the questions.

### **20MPH SPEED LIMIT**

- *Given that decisions on changes to specific roads will be a matter for local authorities (within the framework of the Welsh Government's guidance), how will you address public concerns about potential inconsistencies across Wales?*

There is a growing consensus on safe speeds in communities that we can build from. We still believe that 20mph is right, but we want to make sure we are getting the right speeds on the right roads.

Between April and August 2024, I met and listened to citizens, bus drivers, emergency services, the police, young people, vulnerable people, businesses, county, town and community councillors, local authorities and many others – to understand their views on road safety in residential areas.

In July 2024, we gave highway authorities revised guidance to make it clearer where roads can be 30mph. In 2024, the public has had a chance to suggest where they feel changes should be made. Highway authorities are now using [our revised guidance](#) to assess these suggestions.

Any change in speed limits will need to be made through a traffic regulation order. This process will take several months to complete.

Officials continue to hold regional meetings with all local authorities to support them while making these changes ensuring they can share best practice and a consistent approach is taken. However, it is important to note that each Local Authority acts as the local highway authority and ultimately, how they decided to interpret guidance and implement the change is down to them.

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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.

- *What steps are you taking to manage public expectations regarding the scale of changes likely to arise from the review.*

Over the summer, people were encouraged to feed back to their highway authority to ensure we have the right speeds on the right roads across Wales. Highway authorities are now in the process of reviewing feedback. We have provided an additional £5 million in funding to help highway authorities implement changes.

Highway authorities will advertise any proposed changes through the statutory Traffic Regulation Order process, which includes a 21-day public consultation period allowing the public to comment on the proposed changes. Welsh Government is supporting highway authorities to communicate a consistent message to the public about changes and has provided a communications toolkit. This includes managing expectations around the number of roads which will change and the need to be clear that the default speed limit remains 20mph. This is not a change in policy, but a review to change the speed limit to 30mph where it is considered safe to do so.

- *Could you explain the steps being taken to promote the benefits of the policy to the Welsh public, and how will you assess whether this has been a success?*

Welsh Government is undertaking a five-year evaluation of the policy. This will provide a process evaluation report by 2025, a mid-term evaluation report by April 2027 and a final impact evaluation report by 2029. A meaningful assessment of the policy will be made over this longer-term period, including collision rates, changes in public attitudes to the 20mph limit and estimated changes in carbon dioxide emissions.

Transport for Wales (TfW) have published the [monitoring framework](#) which sets out what is being monitored and how the monitoring will take place. The initial phase one monitoring has been completed, which measured (but was not limited to) performance indicators such as vehicle speeds, collisions, injuries, journey times and air quality. This shows that:

- Vehicle speeds on 20mph main through roads have fallen by an average of 4.3mph, with reductions evident soon after the new limit was introduced. 58% of vehicles are now being driven at or below 24mph, compared to 20% before. These reductions are expected to lower the collision risk and the severity of resulting injuries.
- Average journey times have increased on most routes assessed but generally not by more than 2 minutes. Simultaneously, journey time variability has reduced on most routes, indicating improved journey time reliability and meaning greater certainty on how long it will take to drive a particular route.
- Air quality monitoring in the phase 1 areas until April 2024 did not reveal any material difference in nitrogen dioxide concentrations between areas inside and outside the 20mph limit.

There is also secondary data being collected from police recorded road collision statistics. From April – June 2024 they showed that both collisions (24%) and casualties (24%) on 20mph and 30mph roads (combined) have fallen by almost a quarter compared to the same period of 2023 - the lowest recorded outside of the pandemic.

We also know that in the first nine months since the introduction of 20mph in September 2023, the number of collisions (26%) and casualties (28%) on 20mph and 30mph roads (combined) were down by more than a quarter. The three quarterly reductions within this period are the three largest quarterly reductions outside the pandemic period.

- *How do you respond to concerns about the Welsh Government's apparent reluctance to defend the policy in the face of misinformation in the media?*

We have consistently said that the default 20mph policy will reduce collisions and save lives. Since the introduction of the new speed limit, we have continued to promote statistics on police recorded collisions, which show that, since September 2023, we have seen promising signs that collisions and casualties are reducing.

Over the summer we engaged in a listening programme and have supported Local Authorities with new guidance to help empower local decisions. We have highlighted this work in the media and continued to set out our belief that 20mph is the right speed where people live, work and play.

- *What steps have you taken to clarify reporting on the policy in general, and specifically in the case of the two examples outlined above?*

When setting out the next steps for this policy we have been clear in our communications that 20mph is the right speed where people live, work and play. We want to give people a voice and 20mph and get the right speeds on the right roads.

We work closely with GoSafe, who lead on communications around enforcement. We have also encouraged them to ask for any corrections necessary on the statistics they publish.

When publishing statistics on police recorded road collisions, we have carried out technical briefings for the media to help them understand the contents of releases and report on them accurately. Any misreporting of statistics is raised with specific news outlets and we have published a blog post to correct misinformation on 20mph: [20mph Speed Limits | For The Record](#)

## **ROADS POLICY STATEMENT AND REVIEW**

- *Can you explain the steps you are taking to ensure that transport funding is sufficiently flexible to provide local authorities and CJsCs with more control over investment?*

The four Corporate Joint Committees (CJsCs) in Wales are currently preparing Regional Transport Plans which set out their priorities for transport in their region over the next five years. The Welsh Government currently has several different capital grants for Local Authorities, which each have different criteria for how they can be spent, such as the Active Travel Fund, Local Transport Fund and Resilient Roads Fund. We are looking at how we can combine our grants into a single source of funding aimed at delivering Regional Transport Plans, while also giving the four CJsCs a role in making decisions about how this funding is spent.

- *With regard to your comments that road building may be desirable where it promotes public transport, can you clarify whether you are satisfied that the current provision in the Roads Policy Statement, that road investment and building is permissible where it would “support modal shift and reduce carbon emissions” would permit construction in the circumstances you outlined? If not, which aspect would prevent it?*

The purposes set out in the policy statement should not be treated as simplistic ‘black and white’ tests, as this would not take into account the many different decisions which go into building a road, including the design of the road and the method of construction. However, in many circumstances, building a road to promote public transport would be consistent with the aim of supporting modal shift and reducing carbon emissions. We are assessing how the roads policy statement and been understood and applied by those using it, to ensure we have a framework that works as intended.

- *Can you provide data and case studies that demonstrate how recent road-building projects have successfully reduced private car use by the Welsh Government's target of 10%?*

Two recently completed road building projects (past 18 months) include the A55 Aber to Tai'r Meibion Improvements and A487 New Dyfi Bridge Improvements. The key objectives for both schemes were to improve safety and resilience against flooding. In addition, significant improvements to active travel connections were implemented. On the A55 Aber to Tai'r Meibion Improvements, a tenfold increase in usage has been recorded on the improved active travel route (National Cycle Route 5) from January to May 2023 to the same period in 2024. This demonstrates people are using sustainable modes of transport rather than private cars where high quality and safe active travel facilities are provided as part of road schemes.

- *How are you seeking to ensure that any proposal for a third Menai crossing aligns with the Welsh Government's climate goals, and what environmental impact assessments are being conducted as part of the planning process?*

No progress is currently being made on developing any proposals for a third Menai Crossing therefore no environmental impact assessments are being undertaken.

However, following the Roads Review, the North Wales Transport Commission made 16 recommendations on 'Improving the Resilience of Connections Across the Menai Strait.' [North Wales Transport Commission Improving the Resilience of Connections Across the Menai Strait](#) Consultants have now been appointed to take forward the highest priority recommendations including; reviewing the speed limit and consideration of the A55 mainline carriageway, slip roads and junction layout changes; options to install wind deflectors and an active travel route on Britannia Bridge.

## **HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE**

- *How are findings of the Lugg review being incorporated into current and future road maintenance projects?*

We have adopted the New Approach to Road Maintenance following the agreement with the recommendations of the Lugg Review. The focus is on:

- Improving Asset Management and maintenance strategies
- Alignment of maintenance priorities with Policy
- Enhancing our inspection data collection and analysis to inform evidence-based decisions for maintenance
- Ensuring our resources are prioritised and are sufficient to deliver our priorities

We are also progressing with a Major Asset Renewal (MAR) programme – these are mainly large scale and complex structural repair schemes on the network which need addressing to maintain safety and to avoid road closures.

A prioritisation methodology has been developed based on factors including safety, network criticality, urgency, decarbonisation and opportunities for sustainable travel. We engaged with UK wide industry and supply chain partners on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024 to launch the MAR programme and to obtain feedback on delivering innovation, decarbonisation through the delivery cycle and procurement options and opportunities.

Good progress is being made to progress this programme with the high priority schemes, including the A494 River Dee Bridge replacement, already underway and the overall delivery of the programme and timescales will be subject to funding availability.

- *What specific measures are being taken to address the backlog in local road maintenance, and given the estimated overall costs, how are priorities being set?*

In addition to the Revenue Support Grant, we provide grants to Highway Authorities across Wales for local road improvements through funds such as our Local Transport Fund, Resilient Roads Fund and Active Travel Fund. Through their Regional Transport Plans, the Corporate Joint Committees can prioritise the most important work needed on their highway network, and we will work with them to give them even further control over budgets to deliver on those priorities.

### **ACTIVE TRAVEL**

- *What mechanisms are in place to ensure that funding used by local authorities will meet both maintenance and active travel objectives?*

Currently, local authorities apply for funding for active travel through our Active Travel Fund and Safe Routes in Community grant. The Active Travel Fund includes a core element, guaranteeing a minimum amount of funding for each local authority. The core funding can be used for minor works such as dropped kerbs, pedestrian seating, barrier removal and cycle storage.

Welsh Government is working towards the devolution of local authority transport grant funding. From 2026-27, local authority transport grants (including the Active Travel Fund and Safe Routes in Communities) will be used to fund the Corporate Joint Committees' Regional Transport Plans and Delivery Plans. These plans, whilst reflecting local priorities, will be aligned with Welsh Government policy. Highways maintenance is funded from a separate budget.

- *Can you outline your timetable for responding to the Wales Audit Office's report on Active Travel, including the publication of your response?*

Welsh Government has responded to Audit Wales' report and has accepted its recommendations. I have attached a copy of Welsh Government's response.

### **BUS REFORM**

- *What steps are being taken to explore innovative funding models for bus service provision from other countries, such as those in France?*

We are always keen to engage with and learn from the experiences of other administrations, both in the UK and beyond. We are aware of different funding models, including in France, and officials will seek to learn more about these to inform our approach in Wales.

- *Can you set out the approach being taken to managing risks associated with the transition to bus franchising?*

We recognise that – subject to the successful passage of the Bus Bill – the implementation of bus franchising represents a significant change for the industry, which does therefore come with risks. To mitigate these risks, we are working very closely with a wide range of stakeholders including TfW, local authorities, trade unions and bus operators. TfW have begun a series of engagement sessions with bus operators and meet regularly with local authorities and trade unions as we plan for a bus network that works more effectively for current and potential users of the network.

We have a governance structure in place with TfW to ensure risks, decisions and our complex programme of work to operationalise bus franchising is properly managed.

## RAIL SERVICES

- *In your statement in the Senedd Chamber on 24 September, you referred to the establishment of GBR Cymru, an “empowered Wales and Borders Business Unit within Great British Railways”. Can you provide the Committee with further details on this and the statutory role for the Welsh Ministers which you referred to, including details of any firm commitments you have received from the UK Government?*

I have had productive discussions with the UK Rail Minister, Lord Hendy, and the Secretary of State for Transport, Louise Haigh, concerning our key priorities for Rail Reform. These talks have encompassed the establishment of GBR Cymru, the creation of a Wales enhancements programme, and granting Welsh Ministers a greater role in specifying cross-border services. The UK Government has committed to partnering with us on these priorities and our shared ambitions to boost opportunities and lead to better outcomes for passengers.

The establishment of GBR Cymru, an empowered Wales and Borders Business Unit within Great British Railways (GBR), is a key ask within the wider reform we are seeking. A locally driven, empowered business unit that is accountable to Welsh Ministers and the Senedd is a step change against the current system today. Alongside a fair funding settlement, this will contribute to better outcomes for passengers by ensuring the railways in Wales are managed and developed to meet their specific needs and expectations against Welsh priorities and policy. Our ongoing collaboration with industry partners and the UK Government to continue developing the detail behind the proposition is focused on ensuring this necessary accountability and delivering better outcomes for passengers across Wales and Borders.

- *What discussions are you having with your counterparts in the UK Government about the need to urgently improve rail infrastructure and the role of Network Rail in Wales?*

The need to improve the railways in Wales is a key focus of my regular discussions with the UK Government. We are working closely with the UK Government to develop a pipeline of rail infrastructure enhancements via the Wales Rail Board, which also includes representation from TfW and Network Rail.

The role of Network Rail in Wales will be considered as part of the UK Government's proposals for Rail Reform. We have outlined our priorities for Rail Reform, including the need for accountability to Wales for the management and enhancement of railway infrastructure, and I have regular engagement with the UK Government on this matter.

- *What are the key challenges identified in planning for the Under-19s Euros in North Wales, and what support is Welsh Government providing to TfW to help address them?*

I am delighted to welcome the UEFA Under-19s Football Championships to North Wales in 2026. TfW develop bespoke operational plans for major events and are experienced in working with partners to ensure that passengers can safely travel to and from their destination. This was in evidence over the summer as TfW successfully moved hundreds of thousands of passengers for major events across Wales. I am confident that they will work positively with UEFA and the FAW to agree a robust plan to accommodate the likely number of people who will travel to the event.

I was also delighted to recently announce plans to significantly increase rail capacity on the North Wales Main Line by 2026. TfW will deliver a 50% increase in timetabled services on the line which will provide a major boost in capacity for the whole region.

## DECARBONISATION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- *Do you intend to revise the 2028 target in light of the challenges you outlined?*

Yes, it will be necessary to change the targets for decarbonising the bus fleet. Carbon emissions from bus amount to around 3% of all transport emissions in Wales and so cannot be ignored, we also have some of the oldest buses operating in the UK. That said, reducing the carbon emissions from buses is expensive. As we progress towards franchising it is important that we have a bus fleet that is fit for purpose and attractive to bus users. There is a requirement for a fleet of around 1600 buses in Wales along with the need to provide infrastructure for charging and fuelling. My officials are nearing the completion of plans to have a rolling programme of bus fleet replacement over the next 15 years, which I will share with the committee as soon as it is complete.

- *How will the rollout of bus franchising be structured to ensure that it supports the transition to zero-tailpipe emission buses?*

Current thinking is that franchising will be rolled out across regions in Wales, starting with the southwest. As far as possible or affordable the intention is to provide zero emission buses to replace the older vehicles in each region as franchising is introduced. It will also be necessary to replace some of the older and more polluting vehicles in regions before the introduction of franchising, which may include the cascading of vehicles from areas where we are introducing franchising first. The principle of replacing the oldest and most polluting vehicles first is key to our planning. For the next 3 years it will be necessary to provide a proportion of new diesel buses, which are far less polluting than the older buses currently in use. The main reason for this being the need to provide new fuelling and charging infrastructure ahead of introducing new zero emission fleet in an area. As already mentioned, I will share the details of the plans to roll out new fleet as soon as they are complete.

Yours sincerely



**Ken Skates AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

Joel James MS

Member of the Senedd for South Wales Central  
Shadow Minister for Social Partnership

21 October 2024

Dear Joel,

Thank you for your letter regarding the National Seagrass Action Plan for Wales and for bringing this important issue to the Committee's attention.

The Committee recognises the importance of seagrass ecosystems in supporting biodiversity and mitigating climate change. The Seagrass Action Plan has been raised by several stakeholders during our current inquiry into halting biodiversity loss. Indeed, Members had the opportunity to pursue the matter with the Cabinet Secretary when he appeared before the Committee on 16 October.

I will ensure that you are kept informed of any relevant developments as we prepare and publish the report of our inquiry. Thank you again for your raising this important issue with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



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

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

# Agenda Item 3.4

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0284/24

Mike Hedges MS  
Chair  
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

Llŷr Gruffydd MS  
Chair  
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee  
Welsh Parliament

11 October 2024

Dear Mike, Llŷr,

I am writing in accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement to notify you of a meeting of the Interministerial Group on Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change, which will take place on the 17 October 2024 in Scotland. I apologise for the very short notice, but the meeting was only confirmed this week. I anticipate the discussion will focus on common challenges in meeting net zero and in decarbonising the power sector, as well as future collaboration between the four governments of the UK.

I will provide an update after the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

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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.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros  
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0318/24

Mike Hedges MS  
Chair  
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
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7 November 2024

Dear Mike,

I am writing in accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement to let you know that the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will be held on 18 November.

I will be representing the Welsh Government. The meeting is expected to focus on the UK Government Budget and funding allocations, the IMG's work programme, circular economy, borders, and labour shortages in the agriculture and food sector. I will update you on discussions, and a communique will be issued, after the meeting.

I have also copied this letter to the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee and the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs committee.

Yours sincerely,

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

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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.



**Environment, Food  
and Rural Affairs  
Committee**

Wednesday 6 November 2024

**Chair Llyr Gruffydd MS**  
**Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee**  
**Cardiff**  
***By email***

**Subject: Inter-Parliamentary engagement**

Dear Llyr,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the Senedd Cymru Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee.

As the recently elected Chair of the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, one of my priorities is to promote greater engagement with the devolved legislatures, and in particular corresponding committees, in areas of shared policy.

I am hoping to arrange a meeting with the Chairs and Conveners of key partner committees from the devolved legislatures to this end and would value your attendance if you are available. I have also written to the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee regarding this. My Clerks will be in touch to coordinate diaries.

Yours sincerely,

**Rt Hon Mr Alistair Carmichael MP**  
**Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee**

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The Rt Hon Mr Alistair Carmichael MP  
Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee  
House of Commons

15 November 2024

Dear Alistair,

**Inter-Parliamentary engagement**

Thank you for your letter and congratulations on your election as Chair of the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. I would be pleased to attend a meeting with yourself and our colleagues from the Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly to explore our shared interests and ways our Committees may work together.

I look forward to working with you in the future.

I have copied this letter to Llyr Gruffydd MS in his capacity as Chair of the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee.

Kind regards,



Paul Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

CC: Llyr Gruffydd MS, Chair of the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee



Llŷr Gruffydd MS  
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
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11<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Dear Llŷr,

Thank you for your letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 enclosing a copy of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee's report on the operation of the interim environmental protection measures.

I would like to thank the Committee for the work they have undertaken in this area and for inviting Anna Heslop, Lynda Warren and I to participate in the evidence session on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024. We value the Committee's recommendations.

I note that, as in previous years, the report includes recommendations for both Welsh Government and the IEPAW. We continue to meet regularly with the Environmental Governance team in relation to the bill, in addition to Welsh Government policy teams on relevant areas of work.

Your recommendations for the IEPAW relate primarily to impact monitoring, the increasing number of submissions and how this affects capacity. Also, the transition from the interim arrangements to the new permanent governance body.

As I noted in my response to you last year, the IEPAW has already embarked on processes to improve our impact monitoring. Details of the outcome of processes already in place regarding the impact of our work on these submissions have been included in the IEPAW Annual Report 2023-2024.

As part of our Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning Framework, we are further developing formal processes for the ongoing monitoring of impact. This will be reported on in our Annual Report.

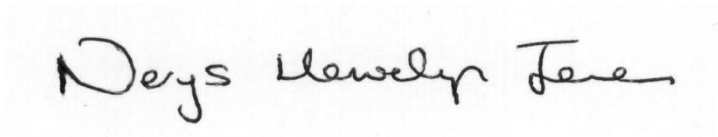
Evaluation of our work processes and resource utilisation also occurs at regular intervals. The Committee has requested that we produce a *Lessons Learned* report for the benefit of the new scrutiny body and to inform the transition. The IEPAW undertakes to complete this by the end of the current term.

We are grateful that the Committee recognises the constraints available resources place on our activity and progress. The appointment of two deputies has

considerably strengthened the capacity of the IEPAW. We are also keen to have permanent legal support added to our current secretariat function.

In closing, I would like to express my appreciation to the committee for their observations and recommendations.

Kindest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nerys Llewelyn Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light grey rectangular box.

**Dr Nerys Llewelyn Jones**  
**Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales**



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Report on operation of interim environmental protection measures 2023-24

## Response to the CCEI Committee report (October 2024)

06/11/24

In October 2024, the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee submitted its report on the operation of environmental protection measures. Welsh Government established the role of the Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales in 2021 to bridge the gap between the end of the Brexit transition period and the establishment of a new environmental governance body for Wales. The report includes 9 recommendations. This is the Welsh Government's response to those recommendations.

[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)

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## Introduction

The Welsh Government is dedicated to continuing to develop and strengthen environmental law in Wales. The environment is the foundation upon which our society and economy are built. It provides us with clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and fertile land to grow food. It also supports a rich tapestry of biodiversity, which is essential for the health of our ecosystems.

Environmental law is essential in tackling the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and harm to the environment such as pollution.

Whilst Wales does not have a permanent environmental governance body in place, an Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales (IEPAW), Dr Nerys Llewelyn Jones was appointed on 1 March 2021. The role of the IEPAW is to consider issues in relation to the functioning of environmental law in Wales and to submit reports on such issues to the Welsh Ministers setting out recommendations. The IEPAW also provides members of the public with a mechanism to raise submissions about the functioning of environmental law in Wales, consider their validity and as appropriate make recommendations to Welsh Ministers.

The IEPAW role was created to fill some of the environmental governance gap created by the UK's exit from the European Union and has been well received by stakeholders. The IEPAW considers and reports on the functioning of environmental law but does not have the power to investigate and take compliance action against breaches.

The Welsh Government has appointed dedicated staff to provide secretariat support for the Interim Assessor. The IEPAW resourcing has increased with the appointment of two Deputy IEPAW in May. This reflects the Government's commitment to robust Environmental Governance.

The Bill to establish an environmental governance body for Wales signals our clear commitment that action and leadership to tackle the climate and nature emergency remains a top priority for this Welsh Government.

I would like to thank the members of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee for their report on the operation of environmental protection measures and its recommendations. I have set out my response to the report's individual recommendations below.

## Response to the 9 recommendations

### Recommendation 1

The Cabinet Secretary should engage with the IEPAW to ensure her office has sufficient resources to deal with its workload. This is particularly important to ensure its work is not lost as focus shifts to the transition to the new body.

**Response:** Accept in principle

I will discuss this recommendation with the IEPAW at our next regular meeting. The Welsh Government is currently exploring options to secure additional permanent resources to enhance the expertise within the IEPAW team. In addition recruitment for additional PhD student placements is ongoing.

**Financial Implications:** The cost of this additional resource will be met by the existing budget for the IEPAW which had previously been increased to facilitate the provision of extra drafting capacity and specialist and legal support.

### Recommendation 2

The Cabinet Secretary should engage with the IEPAW to consider whether staffing arrangements can be put in place, including through secondments, to facilitate the transfer of experience and expertise during the transition period.

**Response:** Accept in principle

I will discuss this recommendation with the IEPAW at our next regular meeting. The Welsh Government is currently evaluating options for transitioning from interim measures to a permanent governance body. To support this process, the Welsh Government Officials are liaising with the IEPAW and collaborating with the Office of Environmental Protection (OEP), Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS), and our counterparts in DEFRA and the Scottish Government to gather relevant insight.

**Financial Implications:** These have not yet been quantified. Costs will be established through the development of the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the proposed Bill and any additional costs will be drawn from future budgets.

### Recommendation 3

The IEPAW's office should include in its next annual report details of the work it has undertaken to monitor its performance and the impact of its work.

**Response:** This is a matter for the IEPAW, but I will discuss this recommendation with the IEPAW at our next regular meeting.

## Recommendation 4

The IEPAW should keep under review the potential impact of increasing public submissions on the IEPAW's capacity, with a view to making the case for additional resources to manage future demand, if necessary.

**Response:** This is a matter for the IEPAW. I will discuss this recommendation with the IEPAW at our next regular meeting. Additionally, it will be monitored during the bi-monthly meetings between the Deputy Director Land, Nature and Forestry and the IEPAW as part of the regular performance monitoring process.

## Recommendation 5

The Cabinet Secretary should set out a clear and detailed timeline for the establishment of the new environmental governance body.

**Response:** Accept

The First Minister confirmed the Government's intention to bring forward a Bill to establish an environmental governance body for Wales in his legislative statement made in the Senedd on 9 July 2024. The timing of the body's establishment will depend on the precise timing of the Bill's passage through the Senedd. Additional detailed implementation planning is currently in progress and more detail on the implementation timeline will be shared in due course.

**Financial Implications:** These have not yet been quantified. Costs will be established through the development of the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the proposed Bill and any additional costs will be drawn from future programme budgets.

## Recommendation 6

The Cabinet Secretary should outline specific steps for managing the transition from interim arrangements to the new governance body, and provide clarity on how this will be achieved effectively without a shadow body.

**Response:** Accept in principle

The Welsh Government is currently evaluating options for transitioning from interim measures to a permanent governance body. As part of this evaluation, the Welsh Government has examined the strategies employed by our counterparts in DEFRA and the Scottish Government to establish the Office of Environmental Protection (OEP) and Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS). It is important to note that our circumstances differ, as we initiated interim measures in 2021.

I will continue to discuss transition at my regular meetings with the IEPAW and my officials will continue their regular dialogue.

**Financial Implications:** Not yet quantified. Costs in addition to the IEPAW will be established through the development of the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the proposed Bill and any additional costs will be drawn from future programme budgets.

## **Recommendation 7**

The IEPAW should produce and publish a “lessons learned” report, based on her experience of the interim arrangements, to inform the transition to a permanent governance body. The Welsh Government should commit to publishing a response to the IEPAW's report.

**Response:** Accept in principle

This is a matter for the IEPAW. I will discuss this recommendation with the IEPAW at our next regular meeting. Welsh Government officials will consider any report as part of the planning for implementation of the permanent governance body and publish a response.

**Financial Implications:** None

## **Recommendation 8**

The IEPAW should ensure that its next annual report sets out details of how it is feeding into establishment of the new body.

**Response:** This is a matter for the IEPAW. I will discuss this recommendation with the IEPAW at our next regular meeting.

**Financial Implications:** None

## **Recommendation 9**

The Cabinet Secretary should ensure that Welsh Government officials engage with the OEP and ESS to inform the development and smooth transition to the permanent environmental governance arrangements in Wales.

**Response:** Accept

The Welsh Government has been actively monitoring developments at the Office of Environmental Protection (OEP) and Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS). Officials are and will continue to collaborate with OEP, ESS, and our counterparts in DEFRA and the Scottish Government to gather relevant insights to ensure the planning and transition are managed as effectively as possible.

**Financial Implications:** None



Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0328/24

Llŷr Gruffydd MS  
Chair  
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

12 November 2024

Dear Llŷr,

I am writing to inform you that the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2024 was laid in the Senedd on the 22 October and is due to come into force in December 2024, if agreed. While the changes effected by the amending Order are minor, they would help update the scope of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme and strengthen its capabilities to deliver decarbonisation goals in Wales and the UK.

Specifically, the Order amends the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme Order 2020 to:

- Regularise legislation providing for the UK ETS cap, resetting the amount of allowances that can be given freely for participants at risk of carbon leakage (the “industry cap”) and creating a reserve of allowances that can be used to smooth unexpected price and volume fluctuations in the market (the “flexible reserve”). These changes will align the UK ETS with the net zero ambitions of the four UK nations and enable the UK ETS market to function effectively.
- Extend the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2023 to Northern Ireland – to implement changes to the use of Free Allocations in aviation; carbon capture, transport and storage; and electricity generators.
- Expand the scope of the UK ETS to include flights from Northern Ireland to Switzerland to restore the 4-nation approach of the UK ETS following the return of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly.

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

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[Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@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.

- Expand the scope of the UK ETS to include carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) venting from the upstream oil and gas sector to strengthen the decarbonisation potential of the UK ETS.
- Strengthen and regularise the enforcement of the UK ETS by introducing new civil penalties and an enforcement notice, amending existing penalties for better parity across the UK ETS.

Some of the above comes in the form of “catch-up” legislation. Amendments immediately critical to the operation of the UK ETS were made as Great Britain-only legislation with the agreement of the Permanent Secretary for Northern Ireland, during the period when Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly were not in place. Now that they have been restored, we are able to extend these changes to Northern Ireland. Changes to the UK ETS Cap were temporarily implemented via the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme Auctioning (Amendment) Regulations 2023, again in the absence of an Assembly in Northern Ireland, and now are being incorporated into the ETS legislation. Advice was sought from our statutory advisors, the Climate Change Committee on the proposals covered in the Order.

The UK Emissions Trading Scheme will continue to be an extremely important policy for Wales, providing a vital investment signal, which incentivises decarbonisation while promoting economic growth. I thank you for your co-operation and support in strengthening its capabilities to deliver these goals.

This letter has also been sent to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee.

Yours sincerely,



**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

**Legislation, Justice and  
Constitution Committee**

Huw Irranca-Davies MS  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs

13 November 2024

Dear Huw

**Written Statement: Independent Commission and Review of the Water Sector**

At our meeting on Monday 4 November 2024 we noted your written statement concerning the joint launch with the UK Government of an Independent Commission and Review of the Water Sector. This matter is of interest to us given our consideration of the Welsh Government's legislative consent memorandum on the UK Government's Water (Special Measures) Bill and our scrutiny of intergovernmental relations.

In the statement, you refer to the "fresh approach of our two governments to cross-border cooperation on an issue which affects us all". You also note that "water is a complex and highly sensitive aspect of the devolution settlement in Wales, *which needs to be considered when developing future arrangements*" and that recommendations from the Commission "will *form the basis of further legislation to attract long-term investment* and clean up our waters for good." [Our emphasis].

In addition you state that "*We* have clear priorities for reform and a *shared sense* of the work that will be needed across both countries' policy and regulatory regimes to make this change happen. There will need to be a *consensus for action*, and this includes where distinctive solutions are needed in Wales and in England to *deliver a reset* and secure a resilient water sector and framework that will work for the long term." [Our emphasis].

Reference is also made to "This crucial work will complement the wide range of work on water quality that is already underway in other areas" and "our continued collaboration with our counterparts in England on this vital issue."

We anticipate that a primary legislative solution may be required to deliver some of the Commission's potential recommendations and that this will likely arise during the Seventh Senedd. Given that it is likely that the UK Government would introduce a Bill to implement recommendations for England arising from the Commission's work, a few questions arise:

- (i) How will the Welsh Government approach the Commission's work and implement its recommendations that relate to Wales, and are your officials working and preparing on the basis (during this Senedd) that a Bill will be introduced into the Seventh Senedd?
- (ii) As part of the cross-border cooperation you refer to in your written statement, what representations have you made to the UK Government about future legislative solutions to deliver the Commission's recommendations? Have you or your officials discussed with counterparts in the UK Government using a UK Bill to deliver the recommendations that relate to Wales?
- (iii) In terms of your collaboration with your counterparts in the UK Government, how might this be affected if legislation was introduced to the Senedd, rather than the UK Government legislating for Wales?
- (iv) What information have you provided to the Commission about possible future legislative solutions and your preferred approach?
- (v) Your statement refers to "a dedicated representative of the sector in Wales" being on the Commission, and seeking the views of Wales' experts to ensure the Welsh perspective is considered at the highest level. On what basis will these representatives input to the Commission: on the basis of a Bill coming before the Senedd or a joint legislative solution in a UK Bill?

I look forward to receiving a reply by 28 November 2024. I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Hedges

Chair

# Agenda Item 3.8

## Petitions Committee

Huw Irranca-Davies MS  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs  
Welsh Government  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

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**Welsh Parliament**  
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0300 200 6565

Copied to the Chair of the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

15 November 2024

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

**Petition P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres; and Petition P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve**

The Petitions Committee most recently considered the above petitions, submitted by Gareth Jones and Kim Williams, at its 4 November meeting. This followed a debate on Petition P-06-1474, which reached over 13,000 signatures, in plenary on 9 October.

We are writing to highlight the petitions and further comments received from the petitioners following the debate. As you are aware there is a great deal of concern about the possible closure of the visitor centres following NRW's announcement on 6 November of the outcome of its Case for Change consultation.

In discussion on 4 November, Members noted that there remained uncertainty over the future of the centres and that the issue was a matter of concern for Members across the chamber. Members also note that petitioners say what they are hearing on the ground does not match with what has been said publicly by NRW about its intentions, and how it will engage with stakeholders locally on its plans to find new operators for the facilities at the visitor centres.

Members agreed to write to NRW with the petitioner's request to ask NRW to share the financial records of the three centres, their visitor management plans, and an impact assessment on what closure would mean for access.

Members also agreed I would write to you regarding concerns raised with the Committee by the petitioners about what they were hearing on the ground, including their concerns about possible mothballing of the centres prior to new operators taking over.

The full details of the Committee's consideration of these petitions, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee can be found here:

[P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres](#)

[P-05-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve](#)

When Clare Pillman of NRW wrote to the Committee on 30 September she said:

*"The outcome of the Case for Change will then be communicated to staff, and further information on impacted services will be shared with the public and stakeholders in due course. At that point, we will re-engage with local groups and potential partners about the next steps at each visitor centre site. These may be slightly different, as each site has bespoke needs that will need to be considered. We have already been approached by multiple community groups and private enterprises that are interested in operating the visitor centres, and we are planning further public meetings in mid-November. Information about those meetings will be shared in due course. It is very important to NRW that we do this responsibly and in the right way, and that we secure the future of the sites for maximum benefit in the long-term. It is a great opportunity to secure future investment in the sites, provide refreshed interest in the areas and promote the ongoing attractiveness of mid-Wales as a destination for visitors to Wales."*

We are now in mid-November, and people's concerns about NRW's action on this issue have not been allayed. Nothing I have heard since the discussion in Committee reassures me about the situation.

I appreciate that Welsh Government cannot intervene directly in the process of finding new operators for facilities at these important visitor centres. However you are in a position to tell Natural Resources Wales to now proactively engage with communities and organisations to expedite a process so that these centres don't close, and there is continuity of the offer to visitors and users. The visitor centres are an important resource for tourism, health and wellbeing and education.

I would be grateful if you could send any response by e-mail to the clerking team at [petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales).

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Clare Pillman, Chief Executive

Sir David Henshaw, Chair

Natural Resources Wales

Welsh Government Offices

Cathays Park

King Edward VII Avenue

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Copied to the Chair of the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

15 November 2024

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Members also agreed I would write to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs regarding concerns raised with the Committee by the petitioners about what they were hearing on the ground, including their concerns about possible mothballing of the centres prior to new operators taking over.

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[P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres](#)

[P-05-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve](#)

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the clerking team at [petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales).

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

# Agenda Item 6

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

# Agenda Item 7

By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

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