

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 5 – Tŷ Hywel

Hybrid

Meeting date: 30 June 2025

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

Petitions@senedd.wales

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 28)

2 New Petitions

2.1 P-06-1503 Site ground mounted solar panels next to roads and railways, in industrial areas and over car parks

(Pages 29 – 38)

2.2 P-06-1511 Rebuild Cardiff's Lost Observatory at St Fagans Museum
"Together we shape the story of Wales"

(Pages 39 – 46)

2.3 P-06-1512 Call on the Welsh Government to recognise and address the dental crisis facing patients in Wales

(Pages 47 – 52)

2.4 P-06-1528 Prevent Powys patients who are treated in English hospitals from facing increased waiting times

(Pages 53 – 61)

3 Updates to previous petitions

3.1 P-06-1317 Recognise Teaching Assistants as an important asset to schools by raising wage

(Pages 62 – 63)



- 3.2 P-06-1357 Draw up a new Microplastics Action Plan for Wales
(Pages 64 – 68)
- 3.3 P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development Kilvey Hill, Swansea
(Pages 69 – 76)
- 3.4 P-06-1488 Establish a ‘Care Society’ to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales
(Pages 77 – 95)
- 3.5 P-06-1491 We demand a fair deal for residents affected by the Arbed and CESP scheme
(Pages 96 – 103)

4 Papers to note

- 4.1 P-06-1335 Welsh Government should take steps to ensure vulnerable adults without bank cards can pay with cash
(Pages 104 – 105)
- 4.2 P-06-1525 Preserve the unique character of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the future generations of Wales
(Pages 106 – 107)

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the remainder of today's business:

Document is Restricted

P-06-1503 Site ground mounted solar panels next to roads and railways, in industrial areas and over car parks

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 30 Mehefin 2020

Petitions Committee | 30 June 2025

Reference: SR25/11624-1

Introduction

Petition Number: P-06-1503

Petition title: Site ground mounted solar panels next to roads and railways, in industrial areas and over car parks

Text of petition: Acting on climate change means we need to reduce our energy use and move to using more renewable energy. Solar power is part of the solution.

Germany have taken a different approach to Wales and the UK however and commissioned studies to look at siting ground mounted solar panels next to roads and railways, in industrial areas and even over car parks. These studies have identified enough suitable land to install more than enough solar to meet Germany's 2030 target of 215GW.



Meanwhile, in an effort to increase solar power capacity and to support the solar manufacturing industry in Europe, the EU are progressing a 'solar roof top initiative' which will see new regulations making it mandatory to install solar panels on any new public, commercial and residential buildings by 2029.

Welsh Government however prefer not to bring in new regulations which would see all new builds in Wales having solar panels. They are also in favour of siting ground mounted solar panels on agricultural land.

We call on Welsh Government to commission a new study to analyse the options for ground mounted solar panels alongside roads, railways, in industrial areas and over car parks to see if we can achieve our solar power targets by using these areas.

<https://cleantechnica.com/2024/07/02/german-industry-embraces-rooftop-solar/>

<https://www.borntoengineer.com/solar-panels-a-requirement-on-all-new-eu-buildings>

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

1. Background

1.1. The current state of solar PV in Wales

Solar photovoltaic (PV) contributed approximately 5.1% of total electricity generation in Wales in 2023. The Welsh Government's [Energy in Wales report 2023](#) said that a total of 86,398 solar PV projects provided 1,291 MW of capacity and an estimated 1,184 MWh of electricity generation. This makes solar PV the largest renewable technology in Wales by capacity, and the third largest by generation, behind only onshore (3,106 MWh) and offshore wind (2,163 MWh).

There has also been a large increase in the deployment of solar PV projects in Wales in recent years. Almost four times as many projects were commissioned in 2023 (15,300) compared to 2021 (3,900). The new solar PV capacity installed in 2023 (108 MW) was more than double the amount installed in 2022.

1.2. Planning guidance and project consenting

Some types of development are considered by planning law to be 'permitted' and are therefore granted development consent without the need for a planning application. Small installations of solar panels, either on roofs, walls, or ground-mounted panels, may be considered 'permitted development' under [Welsh Government planning guidance](#).

Larger solar projects require planning consent and are subject to approval by the relevant planning authority, which is determined based on proposed generating capacity, as shown in the table below.

Project capacity	Consenting organisation
<10 MW	Local planning authority (LPA)
10 - 350 MW	Welsh Ministers (Developments of National Significance (DNS))
>350 MW	UK Secretary of State (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects)

However, following the [Infrastructure \(Wales\) Act 2024](#) gaining Royal Assent, a new consenting regime known as an Infrastructure Consent for 'Significant Infrastructure Projects' is being established to replace the existing DNS regime.

The Act changes the threshold in relation to energy generation and means energy generation projects of between 10-49 MW, currently consented by the Welsh Ministers through the DNS regime, will in future be consented by LPAs.

In November 2024, the Welsh Government announced it was delegating decisions for energy projects under 50 MW to [Planning and Environment Decisions Wales \(PEDW\)](#).

In June 2025 the Welsh Government laid a number of Regulations to implement the new regime, including [The Infrastructure \(Wales\) Act 2024 \(Commencement No. 1\) Order 2025](#). As a result of this Order, decisions on energy generation projects under 50MW will be consented by LPAs from 15 December 2025.

1.3. Measures in Europe

The petition links to two articles discussing the expansion of rooftop solar in Germany and the European Union's '[European Solar Rooftops Initiative](#)'. The latter measure will make it mandatory to install solar panels on all new residential buildings by 2029, and on all new and existing large public and commercial buildings by 2027.

The petition also mentions [research by the German Institute for Applied Ecology](#) published in 2024 (a short [English language summary](#) is available on Clean Energy Wire). The research found that 287GW of solar capacity could be installed along Germany's roads, railways, above car parks, and in industrial and commercial areas. This would exceed Germany's 2040 target for 200GW of ground-mounted solar systems, and reduce the need to site solar panels on other areas of land. Germany's Renewable Energy Act currently calls for an equal split between rooftop solar and ground-mounted solar.

The previous [German Government's 2023 Solar Strategy](#) sets out its approach to solar deployment. [Solar Package I, \(English language summary\)](#) which commenced in 2024, included explicit permission for solar PV installations in commercial and industrial areas.

1.4. UK Government proposals

In May 2025, the UK Government launched a [call for evidence](#) on "the potential for solar canopy installation on new outdoor car parks". Section 1 asks for feedback on a proposal for mandatory solar canopies on new outdoor car parks and opportunities for deployment on existing car parks. The territorial extent of Section 1 includes Wales, although the UK Government acknowledges that some related policy areas are devolved to national administrations.

In her response to the petition, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS, says that her officials are working with UK Government counterparts on these proposals.

2. Welsh Government action

The Cabinet Secretary's petition response says the Welsh Government has no plans to install solar panels on the Core Valley Lines, which are the only devolved railway infrastructure in Wales. She says Trunk Road Agents, who manage major roads in Wales, are working with Welsh Government officials to identify opportunities to use renewable energy sources .

The Cabinet Secretary further says that Welsh Government changes to Building Regulations on fuel and power in 2022 have encouraged the use of renewable energy generation on new housing, although these are not mandatory. The new notional building specifications, which set energy targets for housing, include solar PV.

The Welsh Government has statutory duties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the *Environment (Wales) Act 2016*. The Welsh Government has also set a target for renewable electricity generation to be equivalent to 70% of Wales' annual electricity consumption by 2030, rising to 100% by 2035.

The Welsh Government's national planning policy is set out in Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 and Planning Policy Wales (PPW). Section 5.7 of PPW states:

The planning system should secure an appropriate mix of energy provision, which maximises benefits to our economy and communities whilst minimising potential environmental and social impacts.

PPW also sets out guidance for the management of the best and most versatile agricultural land:

Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a should only be developed if there is an overriding need for the development, and either previously developed land or land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable, or available lower grade land has an environmental value recognised by a landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation which outweighs the agricultural considerations.

In 2019, the consultancy [Arup published Welsh Government-commissioned research](#) “informing the identification of priority areas for solar and wind energy in Future Wales”. The research supported the Welsh Government to locate “the most appropriate locations for large on-shore wind and solar energy development in Wales”. It recommended 15 priority areas for solar and wind energy “based on key areas of analysis, featuring environmental designations, heritage designations, high-level landscape assessment, and aviation constraints”.

3. Welsh Parliament action

On 11 June 2025, there was a [Senedd debate on a Welsh Conservatives motion](#) calling on the Welsh Government to: announce a moratorium on applications for solar panels on agricultural land; review solar energy potential in Wales; and develop a solar strategy for Wales. Janet Finch-Saunders MS, who moved the motion, cited the same German Institute for Applied Ecology study as is referenced in this petition to discuss the potential installation of solar panels along transport infrastructure, over car parks, and in industrial and commercial areas. The motion was not passed.

Samuel Kurtz MS [asked the Cabinet Secretary](#) about the Welsh Government’s consideration of installing solar panels between railway tracks in a written question on 8 May 2025. The Cabinet Secretary said there were no plans to install panels on the Core Valley Lines, but that the Welsh Government supports research into “innovative solutions so that buildings and infrastructure can become active energy generating units”.

An [open debate on 19 March 2025](#) addressed the question of whether renewables alone can meet Wales’ energy needs. The debate included discussion of the most appropriate locations to site solar panels.

In January 2023, Sioned Williams MS [highlighted policy developments](#) in France requiring every large car park to include a canopy of solar panels. She asked the then-Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, whether she would look into the feasibility of developing a similar scheme for Wales. Julie James MS responded:

I'm not sure that we could justify building a canopy in order to put a solar panel on it. But I absolutely take the point that, where there is capacity to put a solar panel on an existing roof, or we're building new, deliberately, we should be doing that.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1503
Ein cyf/Our ref RE/00522/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

17 June 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter regarding petition P-06-1503 which asks the Welsh Government to conduct a study to analyse the options for ground mounted solar panels alongside roads, railways, in industrial areas and over car parks.

Here in Wales, we understand that to deliver our renewable energy targets we need a mixture of renewable energy technologies, which includes solar, and wind and other innovative technologies such as tidal and hydrogen. We believe this mixture adds resilience to delivering the energy demand required for now and the future.

I have included information below on the work already being undertaken regarding the use of solar energy technology in Wales.

Roads and Railways:

We have no plans to install solar panels on the Core Valley Lines (CVL) railway infrastructure for which we are responsible. Railway infrastructure in Wales outside of the CVL is owned and managed by Network Rail. The installation of solar panels on this infrastructure is a matter for them and I am not aware of any plans they may have on this matter. We remain committed to improving the railways in Wales and continue to work with Transport for Wales and partners such as Network Rail to deliver for passengers.

My officials are also working closely with our Trunk Road Agents to identify opportunities to use renewable energy sources such as solar panels. We are undertaking a programme of installing panels on works depots and other suitable buildings and are also investigating the possibilities of use elsewhere, however, we have not commenced installations adjacent to the strategic road network at this time.

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

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CF99 1SN

Correspondence.Rebecca.Evans@gov.wales
Gohebiaeth.Rebecca.Evans@llyw.cymru

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.

Rooftop solar:

Welsh Government makes active use of solar panels in Wales in schemes such as the Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP) in which social housing landlords are encouraged and supported to decarbonise their stock through a suite of interventions which has included significant amount of solar panel installations.

Permitted development rights for solar installations

Some solar panel developments benefit from permitted development rights which mean they do not require planning permission subject to certain restrictions and conditions. Permitted development rights for domestic and non-domestic solar are set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, Part 40, Class A, and Part 43 Class A respectively. On domestic properties permitted development rights allow solar installations, defined as microgeneration, of up to 50kw electricity and 45kw thermal subject to location and impact on amenity. On non-domestic properties there is no limit to the amount of solar panels that can be placed on a roof under permitted development rights subject to location and impact on amenity.

Building Regulations

The Welsh Government's Building Regulations (Part L: Conservation of fuel and power) are largely technology and fuel neutral in that they do not prescribe or prohibit any particular form of heating or energy generation, the intention being flexibility in meeting energy targets so as not to act as a barrier to innovation. In 2022, we made a significant and necessary step change in energy and carbon performance in new housing, which introduced a 37% reduction in carbon emissions for new dwellings (compared with previous standards). The 2022 amendments included solar PV within the notional building specification which sets the energy target. Although not mandatory, this encourages the use of renewable energy in new dwellings.

Car parks:

My officials are already working with their UK Government counterparts to explore the use of solar canopies on car parks [Solar on car parks and electric vehicle charging - GOV.UK](#)

National planning policy:

The Welsh Government supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs. Future Wales policy 18 sets out the criteria against which large scale renewable energy developments should be considered. Planning applications for large scale developments are rigorously assessed so that communities, designated areas and landscapes, and protected habitats and species, are protected from unacceptable adverse impacts. Planning Policy Wales supports the use of Local Area Energy Planning. LAEP are led by local authorities and through local and regional partnership seek to identify the most appropriate way to deliver renewable and low carbon energy delivery in an area across all technologies. Local authorities should also prepare a Renewable Energy Assessment and Energy Opportunities Plan to inform the preparation of their Local Development Plan and local planning policies.

Development on agricultural land

Planning Policy Wales also sets out the approach to be taken to managing best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. In development plan policies and development management decisions considerable weight should be given to protecting such BMV land from development, because of its special importance. Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a should only be developed if there is an overriding need for the development, and either previously developed land or land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable, or available lower grade land has an environmental value recognised by a landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation which outweighs the agricultural considerations. The Welsh

Government's position on BMV land and solar PV arrays was further clarified by the former Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, in her Chief Planning Officer letter of 1 March 2022.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Evans AS/MS

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio

P-06-1511 Rebuild Cardiff's Lost Observatory at St Fagans Museum "Together we shape the story of Wales"

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 30 Mehefin 2025
Petitions Committee | 30 June 2025

Reference: RS25/11480/1

Petition Number: P-06-1511

Petition title: Rebuild Cardiff's Lost Observatory at St Fagans Museum "Together we shape the story of Wales"

Text of petition: The Penylan Observatory, once a beacon of astronomical discovery and community engagement in Cardiff, was tragically lost in the late 20th century. This petition proposes the rebuilding of this historic landmark at St Fagans National Museum of History, highlighting its importance to the city's cultural heritage and its potential to inspire future generations of astronomers.

The Penylan Observatory, an Edwardian-era landmark in Cardiff, served as a public observatory for decades, fostering community engagement and scientific interest. Its closure in 1979 left a void, but the Cardiff Astronomical Society (CAS) has kept its spirit alive.

Rebuilding the observatory at St Fagans Museum would:



- Honour the observatory's legacy and contributions.
- Inspire future generations through hands-on learning and stargazing events.
- Provide a valuable educational resource for astronomy, history, and science.
- Enrich cultural heritage and foster community engagement.
- Promote STEM education in Wales.

We urge the Welsh Government and the National Museums of Wales to support this reconstruction, aligning with the Future Generations Act and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Let's celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Cardiff Astronomy Society in 2026 with the reopening of this iconic landmark.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

1. Background

The Welsh Government provides grant-funding to Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales), which is an independent organisation.

1.1. Funding context

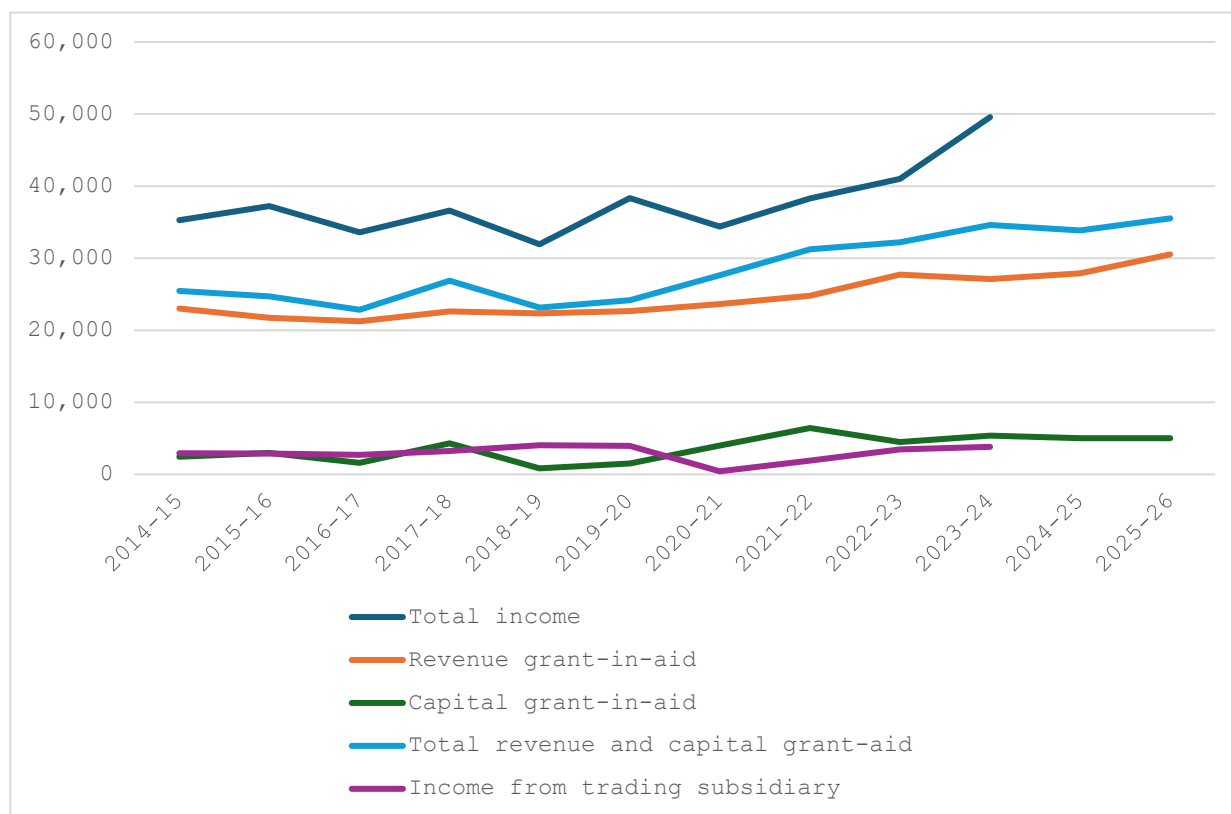
-National Museum

1. In comparison with the 2025-2026 revised baseline, revenue funding (excluding non-cash¹) for the Museum increases from £25.8 million to £27.2 million in the 2025-26 final budget (an increase of 5.4%, not adjusted for inflation). However, given an equivalent cut in 2024-5 of 6%, this just means that Amgueddfa Cymru's revenue funding returns to 2023-24 levels (meaning a real-

¹ Non-cash allocations are ring-fenced and cannot be used to fund day-to-day spending (it can include items such as depreciation)

terms cut between 2023-24 and 2025-26 of about 4%). Between 2024-25 and 2025-26, Amgueddfa Cymru's capital funding has remained at £5 million.

Amgueddfa Cymru finances 2014-15 to 2025-26 (£000s)



Grant-in-aid figures for 2024-25 and 2025-26 are taken from Welsh Government budgets, and so are not directly comparable to previous years.

Grant-in-aid figures exclude specimen grant-in-aid and other government funding.

Source: Amgueddfa Cymru Financial Report and Welsh Government budgets

Welsh Government revenue funding of Amgueddfa Cymru reduced in real-terms between 2014-15 and 2024-25 by about 9 per cent².

2. Welsh Government action

2.1. Culture Priorities

In May 2025 the Welsh Government published its [Culture Priorities](#). These are intended to give strategic direction to the culture sector. When launching this

² Calculated on 22 May 2024 using the [Bank of England inflation calculator](#).

document the Minister noted £15 million to support the delivery of these priorities, which had already been included in the 2025-26 Final Budget. He said:

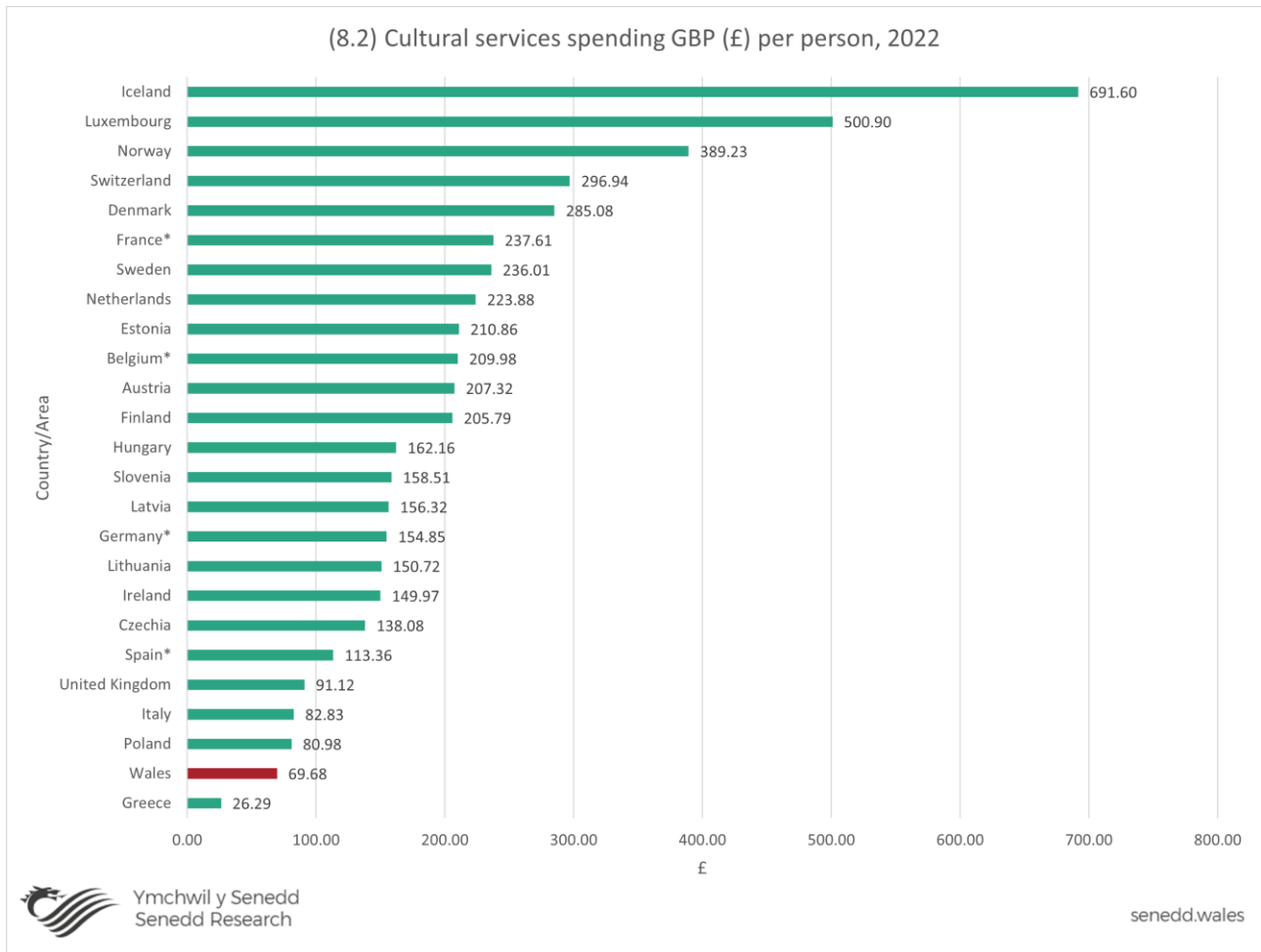
This includes £8 million for an arts sector strategic capital investment programme via the Arts Council of Wales. This significant investment will provide vital capital funding and support the delivery of many ambitions within the 'Priorities for Culture'. It also includes a £7 million capital and revenue fund for museums, archives, libraries and the historic environment.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In January 2025 the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee published a report [A decade of cuts: impact of funding reductions on culture and sport.](#)

[Analysis from Senedd Research](#) compared public spending on culture and sport with 24 European countries (including the UK as a whole) for which data was available.

The average spend on cultural services in these countries is £215.02 per person. In Wales the figure is £69.68 per person, also 32% of the average of these countries. This placed Wales second from bottom of the group of 25 nations.



Source: Senedd Research analysis of Welsh Government, StatsWales and OECD data

The Culture Committee called for the Welsh Government to reach parity of funding with similar countries. The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle, and responded with funding increases in the 2025-26 Final Budget.

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4. Contact

For more information contact:

Robin Wilkinson



0300 200 6298



Robin.Wilkinson@senedd.wales

Jack Sargeant AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref: P-06-1511
Ein cyf/Our ref: JS/00244/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair, Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
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Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

15 April 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 28 March regarding petition P-06-1511, which requests that Penylan Observatory is rebuilt at St Fagans National Museum of History.

We have discussed the petition with Amgueddfa Cymru. It has confirmed that it would welcome the opportunity to discuss the ideas in this petition with Mr Grennan and Cardiff Astronomical Society (CAS) to learn more about the proposal. As far as Amgueddfa Cymru is aware, very little of the observatory survived beyond 1979 and a replica would need to be built. If a replica were to be considered, it would require the architectural and engineering drawings and detailed specifications of the telescope and its cradle to enable the creation of an accurate, functioning and worthwhile representation of the observatory.

Amgueddfa Cymru has a Collection Development Group and a procedure in place to support decision making regarding what it collects. Any future proposal to rebuild the observatory at St Fagans would have to be considered in line with this procedure and support the delivery of Amgueddfa Cymru's Collection Development Strategy.

The petitioner is welcome to contact Amgueddfa Cymru online at www.museum.wales/enquiries or by post to:

Sioned Hughes
Head of History and Collection Development
National Museum Cardiff
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NP.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Jack.Sargeant@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jack.Sargeant@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.

Upon the closure of the observatory, CAS donated the telescope and the mirror cell from the larger reflecting telescope to the Museum of Cardiff. The Museum is currently working with CAS to co-produce a city showcase exhibition to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The exhibition, which is provisionally planned to be held between 5 July and 1 November, will potentially showcase the telescope and mirror cell. It will also allow the local community and visitors to explore more about the CAS, the history of Penylan Observatory, Dyffryn Observatory and astronomical discoveries in Cardiff.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JACK SARGEANT". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath the name.

Jack Sargeant AS/MS

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership

Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol

Dental crisis in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 30 Mehefin 2025

Petitions Committee | 30 June 2025

Reference: RS25/11480-3

Introduction

Petition Number: P-06-1512

Petition title: Call on the Welsh Government to recognise and address the dental crisis facing patients in Wales.

Text of petition: The Welsh Government does not recognise the reality of the dental crisis in Wales and the impact on the public.

Whilst there have been petitions presented in the past, the Welsh Government has never admitted that there is a crisis and to the public, it seems that there has been no action taken by the Welsh Government in addressing this crisis.

In September 2024, the First Minister, Eluned Morgan, made a misleading claim that “The UK government will take inspiration from NHS Wales on dentistry, where reforms have unlocked almost 400,000 more appointments in the last two years”. This is insulting to the people impacted by the dental crisis, and demonstrates the lack of understanding at the heart of the Welsh Government of the realities that patients face when trying to access NHS dental care.

Public Health Wales recently revealed that more than half of all mouth cancer cases are now being diagnosed at the most advanced stages (rising each year). Timely access to regular dental appointments can help to identify early signs of mouth cancer.

Unless the Welsh Government admits that there is a dental crisis in Wales, a solution will not be found.



The petition calls on the Welsh Government to recognise that there is a dental crisis in Wales and to then work to address the problem with the urgency that the Welsh people deserve.

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Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

1. Background

Concerns relating to NHS dentistry in Wales have been raised by Members on a number of occasions during Plenary, including most recently on [10 June 2025](#), [18 March 2025](#), [4 March 2025](#) and [8 January 2025](#). Senedd Research also published an [article in June 2023](#) which outlines the issues with accessing NHS dentistry in Wales.

The British Dental Association (BDA) Cymru published an [open letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care](#) on 17 February 2025. This set out the concerns and challenges for dental providers in Wales, including investment in dentistry, dental activity and workforce, and financial uplift negotiations. BDA Cymru states that “...NHS dental activity has stalled and may be about to fall off the cliff if the issues we and others have raised repeatedly are not addressed very soon.”

Dentistry statistics

The latest statistical release, [NHS dental services: April 2023 to March 2024](#), was published in October 2024. A range of statistics on NHS dentistry are also available on [StatsWales](#), including [new NHS dental patients treated](#); NHS patients treated in a [12-month](#) and [24-month](#) period, and the [number of dental contracts and practices by local health board](#).

2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Petitions Committee dated 3 June 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care states that he and his predecessors “have acknowledged that access to dentistry is not where we and the public want it to be.” The letter also states that it has been acknowledged that the issue is more pronounced in some parts of Wales and there is no quick fix.

Recent action taken by the Welsh Government in relation to NHS dentistry in Wales includes the following:

- In a [Statement in Plenary on 18 March 2025](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care provided information on a **proposed new dental contract for General Dental Services in Wales**. The Cabinet Secretary set out some of the key proposed changes to the contract and stated that he would like to see the new contract implemented from April 2026. The [consultation on the reform of NHS general dental services](#) was launched on 27 March 2025 and closed on 19 June 2025.
- [Since April 2022](#), dental practices in Wales have been offered the opportunity to opt-in to a [variation of their contract](#), which encourages the provision of care on a risk and needs basis and includes a requirement to see a set number of new patients, dependent on the practice’s NHS contract value. The Cabinet Secretary’s letter to the Committee states that this has enabled more than 400,000 new patients to receive a full course of NHS dental treatment.
- In response to a [recommendation by the Health and Social Care Committee](#), an all-Wales digital [Dental Access Portal](#) was rolled out in February this year, which allows people to register their interest in receiving NHS dentistry if they haven’t had access to an NHS dentist in the last four years.

3. Welsh Parliament action

As mentioned above, issues relating to dentistry have been raised in the Senedd on a number of occasions. Dentistry has also been raised during the following:

- The Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee carried out an [inquiry into dentistry](#) and published its [report](#) in February 2023. In a [letter to the Committee on 10 October 2024](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care provided an update on action the Welsh Government has taken in response to the Committee report's recommendations.
- The [Health and Social Care Committee's report](#) and [Sian Gwenllian MS](#) called for the Welsh Government to consider establishing a school of dentistry in Bangor. [The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care stated](#) that it's not currently possible to fund a project of this sort but is open to a robust proposal being in place that could be progressed quickly when the opportunity arises.
- On 28 March 2025 the [Committee for the scrutiny of the First Minister](#) discussed dentistry.
- During [Plenary on 30 April 2025](#), Mabon ap Gwynfor MS led a debate on his Member's Legislative Proposal: A Bill on minimum NHS dentistry staffing levels. The motion was agreed.
- During [Plenary on 17 June 2025](#), Heledd Fychan MS noted that she had been contacted by a number of NHS dentists who expressed "deep concerns" regarding the [consultation on the reform of NHS general dental services](#), including their thoughts that "this will be the end of NHS dentistry if the plans progress."

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1512
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/01231/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions Committee

03 June 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 2 May about Petition P-06-1512: Call on the Welsh Government to recognise and address the dental crisis facing patients in Wales.

I want to be clear that I, and my predecessors, have acknowledged that access to dentistry is not where we and the public want it to be. We have also acknowledged that the issue is more pronounced in some parts of Wales and there is no quick fix.

We are committed to whole-system reform in NHS dentistry. We are embedding the principals of prudent healthcare by moving away from the much-criticised Units of Dental Activity (UDA) model and reorientating NHS dentistry towards prevention and providing care on a risk and needs basis. By doing so, I believe we will increase quality of care and access for patients.

We have launched a consultation on proposals for a new NHS dental contract. This comes after 13 months of detailed discussions with the dental profession's representatives and the NHS to shape those proposals. Concluding this process and implementing a new NHS dental contract is the most important step we can take to ensure the provision of NHS dental services is attractive to the profession and therefore sustainable for the long term.

We have also recognised that people are experiencing difficulties accessing NHS dentistry if they do not have an ongoing relationship with an NHS dentist. Since April 2022, dental practices have been offered a variation to their existing contract, which includes the requirement to provide treatment to new patients. This has enabled more than 400,000 new patients to receive a full course of NHS dental treatment.

Finding a practice that is accepting new NHS patients is also an issue we are working to resolve. We have developed an all-Wales system to enable people to register their interest in receiving NHS dental care. This will provide health boards with a clear understanding of need in their area and enable them to manage the allocation of people to dental practices as capacity becomes available. It also removes the need for people to have to ring around

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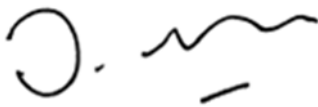
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

practices to find an NHS dentist. People can register their details on the Denal Access Portal by following this link: [Dental Access Portal - Digital Health and Care Wales](#)

Finally, seeing a dentist will not prevent oral cancer. Stopping smoking and reducing alcohol intake are the key actions people can take to reduce their risk of getting oral cancer. It is important people are able to access a dental examination when they suspect something might be wrong. Although oral cancer can sometimes be picked up by a dentist, we do not routinely screen for most cancers, indeed there is no recognised screening process for oral cancers. If a patient suspects they have symptoms of oral cancer they should get an urgent appointment with a dentist or their GP. If a person is concerned about anything in their mouth, urgent care is available either through their regular dentist or through the NHS 111 service.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

P-06-1528 Prevent Powys patients who are treated in English hospitals from facing increased waiting times

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 30 Mehefin 2025
Petitions Committee | 30 June 2025

Reference: SR25/11480

Introduction

Petition Number: P-06-1528

Petition title: Prevent Powys patients who are treated in English hospitals from facing increased waiting times

Text of petition: Immediate action to prevent Powys patients treated in English hospitals from facing increased waiting times. This decision was agreed in the meeting of the Powys Teaching Health Board 26th March 2025: <https://pthb.nhs.wales/about-us/the-board/board-meetings/2025/26-march-2025/>

This treats Powys patients as second-class citizens. Welsh targets apply to Welsh hospitals, shouldn't apply to those treated in England. On 25 January 2025 the First Minister was reported as saying 'I don't want to see people in Powys suffer and I certainly don't want them to go to the back of the queue if they are going to be treated across the border in England.'



Urge the Welsh Government to plug the deficit and fund Powys Teaching Health Board fairly for Powys.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

1. Background

Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) is responsible for planning and delivering healthcare services in Powys. Due to its low population density, Powys does not have its own district general hospital. Instead, Powys residents receive specialist care in hospitals outside of the county, including hospitals in England. These services are commissioned and paid for by PTHB.

At a meeting on 26 March 2025, PTHB unanimously agreed on the Board's Annual Plan for 2025/26. The plan requires all commissioned service providers to adhere to NHS Wales waiting times targets, regardless of whether services are delivered by NHS England or NHS Wales. These changes are set to be implemented in July 2025 and will not apply to cancer care, urgent care, or care for those under 18. However, due to the longer waiting times targets set for NHS Wales compared to NHS England, Powys residents treated in English hospitals will face longer waits for planned care than English residents treated at the same hospitals. Powys patients will not, however, be waiting any longer than patients treated at other Welsh health boards.

NHS England Targets

NHS England published an updated set of targets for 2025/26 earlier this year. These targets include:

- 65% of patients waiting no longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment.
- 72% of patients waiting no longer than 18 weeks for their first appointment.
- Every NHS Trust in England is expected to deliver a minimum 5% improvement towards these targets by March 2026.

- NHS England aims to reduce the proportion of people waiting over a year for treatment to less than 1% of the total waiting list by March 2026.

NHS Wales Targets

NHS Wales is working towards different targets as set out in its [programme for transforming and modernising planned care](#) published in April 2022. These targets include:

- No patients waiting longer than a year for their first outpatient appointment.
- No patients waiting longer than two years in most specialities.

Financial position

The decision to apply NHS Wales waiting times targets to all commissioned service providers was made in response to a financial deficit at PTHB of £38.4 million going into 2025-26.

PTHB claim the cost of commissioned services is a major driver of its deficit, with nearly 40% of the total budget being spent on services outside PTHB's borders. According to estimates in the Annual Plan for 2025/26, applying NHS Wales waiting times targets to all commissioned service providers will save £16.4 million. In total, the measures set out in the Annual Plan for 2025/26 are estimated by PTHB to bring savings of £22.4 million. This would reduce the deficit down to £16 million but would still be £4 million short of the £12 million [Target Control Total set by the Welsh Government](#).

The financial position at PTHB has led to an [escalation in its status](#) for finance, strategy and planning from Level 3 (enhanced monitoring) to Level 4 (targeted intervention). This escalation was announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care on [5 November 2024](#). Escalation to Level 4 occurs where "serious concerns have been identified" and targeted support is required from the Welsh Government or other NHS or external review bodies.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government response to the petition states that it is the responsibility of health boards to plan and deliver healthcare services to meet the needs of their populations and that this may include difficult decisions given available resources. It also emphasises the need for health boards to carefully consider the balance of

their statutory duties and deficit position against the need to deliver services in line with Welsh Government targets.

The response mentions that £12.5 million in additional funding has been provided to PTHB by the Welsh Government in 2024-25 in recognition of its financial challenges, with an acknowledgement of the higher costs involved in commissioning services in England. This is in addition to core funding of £400 million provided annually to PTHB.

The Welsh Government has committed to working with PTHB to deliver sustainable improvements following its escalation to Level 4 for finance, strategy, and planning. On 6 May 2025, the Welsh Government agreed to make up to £1 million available to support Level 4 interventions at PTHB (alongside Swansea Bay University Health Board, which has also been escalated to Level 4 for finance, planning and strategy).

3. Welsh Parliament action

The financial position at PTHB was raised in Plenary by Russell George MS on 11 March 2025. He asked the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care whether the absence of a district general hospital and resulting need to commission services from outside PTHB's borders made it more difficult for PTHB to manage its deficit. The Cabinet Secretary replied:

I do recognise the point that he makes, that Powys is in a different situation in not having a district general hospital, and commissioning services from elsewhere. However, you could also make the argument that it faces fewer risks in terms of the management of a hospital, which brings its own complexity and exposure. So, it is particular. From a strategy, planning and financial point of view, I think there are advantages and disadvantages to that. The most important thing, of course, is that residents in Powys have access to care on an equal basis with other parts of Wales.

Prior to PTHB's agreement of the Annual Plan for 2025/26, on 25 March 2025 James Evans MS asked the First Minister what discussions the Welsh Government were having with PTHB to ensure funding was available to prevent the proposed changes from being made. The First Minister replied:

I know that there are ongoing discussions between the health Secretary and Powys health board, to make sure that they are

able to not only deliver for the people of Powys, but also deliver within the budget constraints that we've set out. We have bailed out health boards year after year. That time is finished. They need to manage their finances much better because, otherwise, every other department has to bail them out. Enough—that's not happening any longer. And it's really important that Powys takes that seriously.

Russell George MS tabled a written question on 27 May 2025 asking how many patients in Powys were waiting more than two years for treatment in hospitals outside of Powys. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care replied that 81 patients were on referral to treatment pathways in hospitals outside of Powys at the end of March 2025, of which 40 were in hospitals outside of Wales.

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Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1528
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/01217/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions Committee

02 June 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 2 May about Petition P-06-1528: Prevent Powys patients who are treated in English hospitals from facing increased waiting times .

Health boards in Wales are responsible for the planning and delivery of healthcare services to meet the needs of their local population. In doing so, they will need to consider a range of options and may need to make difficult decisions on how this can be delivered within the financial and staffing resources available. My role and that of the Welsh Government is to set the strategic direction for the NHS in Wales.

The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring people in all parts of Wales have equitable and timely access to good quality healthcare services, wherever they receive their treatment. We set out the strategic requirements through the planning framework. Health boards must plan to deliver their services to meet the needs of their local population and achieve national performance targets.

Cross-border working has been in place for many years and health boards continue to build on the well-established reciprocal arrangements already in place where NHS providers in Wales and England commission services for patients who live in border communities, or for patients who need access to treatments not available locally.

I have been very clear with health boards that they should use all available resources to support the reduction of long waits, including the use of additional capacity in both NHS England and the independent sector where that is available.

I have also been clear with all NHS Wales organisations that they must deliver against their plans and that in the preparation and consideration of their plans for 2025-26, they must carefully consider the balance of their statutory duties and deficit position against the need to deliver good quality services for their resident population, in line with Welsh Government targets.

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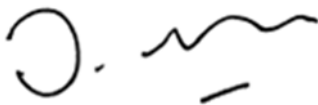
In recognition of the financial challenges experienced by Powys Teaching Health Board, the Welsh Government provided an additional £12.5m funding to the health board in 2024-25. This is in addition to the core financial allocation of over £400m awarded to the health board each year and included an acknowledgment of the additional cost to the health board of the commissioning position for Powys residents being treated in England to meet the Welsh waiting times target.

Powys Teaching Health Board was placed in 'level four' escalation for finance, strategy and planning in November 2024, due to confidence levels about the health board's financial position and its ability to meet its statutory duties relation to financial balance. The Welsh Government and NHS partners are, therefore, working with the health board to help it make the necessary improvements to deliver sustainable improvements within available resources.

The health board recently launched its ['Better Together' programme](#) which will provide the public and key stakeholders an opportunity to share their views to inform plans for the future of health services in the county. It will be reviewing each of its service areas in turn, and the first phase of the programme will focus on community and adult mental health services in 2025, with planned care and diagnostics to follow in 2026, and women and children's services in 2027.

My officials continue to monitor this situation in line with oversight and assurance arrangements in place with the health board.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Miles', with a stylized flourish.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

P-06-1528 Prevent Powys patients who are treated in English hospitals from facing increased waiting times - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 19 June 2025

Good Afternoon

Thank you for your reply and for outlining the Welsh Government's position in relation to cross-border healthcare provision and waiting times.

While I acknowledge the minister's explanation and appreciate the complexities around healthcare delivery and resource allocation, I feel compelled to highlight the very real and pressing challenges faced by residents living in border communities such as ours in Powys. We do not have access to a general hospital locally, and in many cases, minor injury services are not available out of hours or locally. This leaves us dependent on out-of-hours services such as Shropdoc and the general hospital in England.

Given these geographical and logistical realities, many of us receive planned care in Shropshire, Hereford or other neighbouring counties. Recent changes to align waiting time targets with Welsh Government standards are now resulting in significantly longer delays for Welsh patients—even when being treated by the same consultants in the same English hospitals as our English counterparts. This creates a strong and distressing sense of inequality.

Being told that your wait time will be substantially longer solely because you live in Wales is not only disheartening but also raises questions of fairness and equality. Early intervention is critical, and prolonged delays can lead to worsened health outcomes, reduced quality of life, and increased pressure on benefits and economic productivity due to long-term illness.

These policy changes risk deepening the disparity for residents in Powys and make many of us feel overlooked by our own government. It is not our choice that we must cross the border for care, and yet we now feel penalised for doing so. The perception is growing that we are treated as second-class citizens—spoken for but not listened to.

I urge the Welsh Government to reconsider its position on cross-border healthcare access and ensure that Powys residents are not disadvantaged due to their postcode. A commitment to equitable care must extend to everyone in Wales, regardless of proximity to Cardiff or the border.

We welcome genuine engagement and would greatly value a visit from the Health Minister to our communities to hear directly from the people most affected. We believe this would be a positive step in understanding the human impact behind these policies.

In light of the concerns raised, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with Jeremy Miles AS/MS or a representative from the Welsh Government to discuss this matter further. A face-to-face conversation would allow for a more meaningful exchange and help ensure that the

voices of those living in border communities are properly heard and understood. I hope you will consider this request and look forward to your response.

On January 25th, during a visit to Welshpool, the First Minister stated, "*I don't want to see people in Powys suffer, and I certainly don't want them to go to the back of the queue if they are going to be treated across the board in England.*" These words offered reassurance and a commitment to fairness. However, the situation we now face stands in direct contrast to that promise. **Many residents in Powys feel we are being treated as second-class citizens by the Welsh Government and further discriminated against by the health services over the border.** This isn't an isolated concern—it's a widely shared feeling across our communities. We feel we have been completely let down. Now is the time for action, not just words.

Regards

Joy

Agenda Item 3.1

P-06-1317 Recognise Teaching Assistants as an important asset to schools by raising wage

This petition was submitted by Caroline Hugill, having collected a total of 1,405 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Teaching Assistants (TA) are an extremely important part of the running of schools in Wales but are not currently recognised as this by our government when reflecting on the wage.

Additional Information:

Without Teaching Assistants, schools wouldn't be able to cater to the high number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) students. They work hard and are discriminately underpaid for the work they do. A Teaching Assistant's role is demanding, and the workload they face in current times is massive. Duties include, but are not limited to, supporting SEN students (often on a one-to-one basis), teaching groups of children and sometimes even a whole class to cover teachers, lesson planning, organising extra curricular activities, making sure that every child reaches their full potential. Sadly, as the wage is so low, this is not a job many TAs can afford to keep, and a huge number of highly skilled TAs are being forced to find other jobs. This needs to change.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ynys Môn
- North Wales

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1317
Ein cyf/Our ref LN/00526/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

2 June 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter dated 30 April 2025 regarding petition P-06-1317.

You will be aware that we in the Welsh Government do not have responsibility for the employment and pay of support staff and that it is for local authorities as employers to address these concerns.

Negotiations on local government staff pay and conditions, including school support staff, are currently negotiated directly between unions and local authorities in Wales and on an all Wales and England basis by agreement through the National Joint Council (NJC). The Welsh Government does not play a part in these negotiations.

I have however made it clear that pay and conditions for school support staff are a priority for me, and I am committed to ensure their contribution is better recognised both through pay and wider support. I held a round table with Teaching Assistants in November to hear directly from them regarding their concerns and where they would like to see improvements. I will be working with trade union partners and the WLGA to look at recruitment and retention, professional learning and terms and conditions for Teaching Assistants as part of the work I am taking forward to develop the Strategic Education Workforce Plan I announced earlier this year.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

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

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Agenda Item 3.2

P-06-1357 Microplastics Action Plan for Wales

This petition was submitted by Friends of the Earth Cymru, having collected a total of 3,259 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Microplastic particles have been found from the highest mountain tops to the deepest oceans and plastic microfibres from the clothes we wear are estimated to make up about 35% of the entire plastic pollution in our seas and oceans.

Microplastics have been found to be toxic to marine life and growing evidence suggests they are harmful to life on land, including ourselves.

We call on Welsh Government to draw up a new Microplastics Action Plan to protect life in our seas and on our land.

Additional Information:

Microplastics are thinner than a human hair but they are causing big problems for life in our oceans and on our land

They come from many sources including plastic bottles, vehicle tyres and even from paints on buildings and road markings

They are also in the air and in our food chain. Fragments have even been found in the blood in 8 out of 10 people with as yet unknown health effects <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/24/microplastics-found-in-human-blood-for-first-time>

Welsh Government has a strong record of action on plastics but there is scope for increased action on microplastics.

We ask that Welsh Government work with relevant organisations and experts to draw up a Microplastics Action Plan to include things like addressing plastic microfibre release and microplastic pollution on land and in water courses around Wales and the provision of education about these issues in schools.

Microplastic pollution is a big problem in Wales – we must address it.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff West
- South Wales Central

P-06-1357 Draw up a new Microplastics Action Plan for Wales - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 18 June 2025

Dear Senedd Petitions Committee,

I hope you are well.

I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on developments in terms of microplastics following on from our Senedd petition.

The coalition group Sustainable Clothing and Textiles Cymru worked with Welsh Government civil servants and Environment Platform Wales to organise an event to bring together academics from around Wales to share latest developments in their work on microplastics, nanoplastics and plastics more generally. This event took place at Cardiff University on 17th and 18th December 2024. It was very well attended.

The event was split in to different aspects, looking at some of the various sources of microplastics, their human and environmental impacts and then thinking ahead to some of the solutions, especially those for which we have the devolved responsibility for. It also looked at the issue of the multitude of chemicals present in plastics and what effect they can have when they leach out into the environment.

At the event it was stated that Welsh Government would be keen to look for some early wins on taking action on microplastics.

It was originally also the idea that we have 2 events, this first one and then one relatively soon afterwards to bring together other groups, experts and businesses who are working on issues and solutions around microplastic contamination.

So whilst the event went well and it was certainly a welcome development, there has been no mention since that of organising the second suggested event.

In terms of follow ups to the first event, there was an online meeting at the end of March this year. This turned into primarily one for academics. There was also a discussion at the meeting of excluding NGOs from future such meetings!

Since that online meeting, there has been no further communication from that group so unfortunately I am unable to say whether there will be any more meetings or whether progress will be maintained. This is disappointing.

In terms of recommendations to WG, I would offer the following:

- I still think we need a plan of some sort, whether that is an official strategy or action plan or even just a more informal plan of action. There are so many different sources of micro and nano plastics that we need a plan to work out what the solutions are here in Wales for each source. Some sources are being addressed by things like some single use plastic items being banned, but these only constitute a small percentage of

sources. We need to be taking action on as many different sources as we can in a joined up way. A plan would also allow us to determine whether we have the necessary regulatory powers over different sources of microplastics and would allow us to develop a timeline for action. At the moment we don't have that

- There are some obvious things WG could do such as finally introducing a comprehensive litter and fly tipping prevention strategy. Currently Wales is the only UK country not to have one of these strategies despite having consulted on one a few years ago.
- We need to have an ongoing forum which brings in people from businesses and other sectors as well as academics.
- WG should signal a direction of travel by taking action on some of the 'easy wins' or 'low hanging fruit' in terms of microplastics. Some sources will be more difficult to regulate, some will be easier. If we can't even address the easier ones to start with, then we will really be struggling. As they themselves stated that they were looking for some of these easier wins, we would like to see them follow up on that
- Thank you for forwarding the correspondence concerning the Senedd petition on artificial grass. Even though that petition was not from us, it does of course highlight one of the many sources of microplastics as well as having other negative impacts. I note that the Cabinet Secretary makes mention of microplastics in waste water in his response. It is important to note that currently neither Dŵr Cymru nor NRW test for microplastics in water courses in Wales. We established this through EIR requests. Again, this is an issue WG could address by requiring them to start testing so we can establish exactly what the situation is in Wales. Through our own citizen science testing, we know that sand and soil samples from around Wales contain huge quantities of microplastics. This again highlights the need for some sort of action plan. It should also be a very specific ask for WG – will you start testing water courses and other environments in Wales for microplastics?
- We currently have an ongoing Senedd petition concerning a somewhat related matter – the use of plastic mesh netting in grass turf. It is a totally unnecessary practice and one which has many negative impacts. It can become exposed and then snags and kills hedgehogs, birds and other small animals, it is a nightmare for gardeners as it is very difficult to cut through and it eventually breaks down in to ever smaller pieces of plastic over the years. WG could take action to prevent the use of this turf in new build housing estates in Wales for instance through amendments to Housing regs and Planning. It would be an easy win and would signal a direction of travel on microplastics. Helpfully, the UK Turfgrass Growers Association, the industry trade body, have taken a vote to ban this practice from their members from next year onwards. There should be nothing stopping WG following suit and using whatever

levers it has available to restrict its use in Wales wherever possible. We have turf suppliers in Wales who supply plastic free turf so we would even be supporting Welsh businesses. If we can't even take action on something this easy, something that is completely unnecessary and which the relevant trade body don't even want, then it will be a sad state of affairs. It will be interesting to see WG's response to our petition once it closes.

In summary I think it is fair to say that things could be better and that things need to move forwards more quickly and in a more joined up way. We also need to start seeing some more action from WG.

Yours sincerely

Bleddyn Lake

Agenda Item 3.3

P-06-1373 Stop Welsh Government Wasting £4million on Skyline private development Kilvey Hill, Swansea

This petition was submitted by Neil Jones, having collected 2,109 signatures online and 942 signatures on paper, making for a total of 3,051 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The plans for a skyline involve privatising a public open space for a project of very uncertain success. The shareholders of this private firm will benefit from this large injection of cash but there is a risk of major environmental damage with no guarantee of success in the long term.

It means the loss of a much used local nature amenity. Better action: Use existing plans to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of this wild part of Swansea. A big cash grant for no certain benefit is unwise.

Additional Information:

Toxic pollution from Swansea's heavy metal industrial past turned our hill into a barren wasteland until in the 70's a partnership of our council and the university began its slow transformation into a pine woodland, the only species that could thrive . Involvement of the local community and schools began then and has continued till today with a volunteer group helping NRW rewild the woodland so that native species and creatures are now thriving. We are proud our woodland is known as the finest example of regenerated urban woodland in Wales and it has a special place in the hearts of local people for enjoyment of a green lung for the city's Eastside. It is also an outdoor classroom for local schools. If money is to be spent, let's have woodland management, trails, maintained paths, rangers, none of which we've had for 25 years!

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Swansea East
- South Wales West



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1373
Ein cyf/Our ref RE/00586/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

10 June 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter about petition P-06-1373 relating to the proposed Skyline attraction on Kilvey Hill in Swansea.

This is a project the Welsh Government strongly supports. We believe that a world-class adventure tourism attraction will significantly enhance Swansea's tourism offer and widen the city's appeal for visitors. The attraction will create 100 permanent new jobs directly and is expected to attract 450,000 visitors. The build phase will support over 400 construction jobs. A new attraction on this scale will help boost many other aspects of Swansea's visitor economy, bringing an estimated £54m of additional visitor spend into the local economy over 15 years.

The attraction will include a gondola ride, luge rides, chairlift, sky swing, zipwire, mountain bike trails and a visitor building including food and drink sales. The base station for the gondola ride will be at Hafod Morfa, supporting the wider regeneration of the historic copperworks heritage site as a vibrant new focal point within the city.

The commercial operator which is bringing the project forward, Skyline Enterprises Ltd, is a global attraction business based in New Zealand with extensive experience of running attractions of this type in New Zealand, Canada, Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore. Visit Wales has offered the company financial support of £4m as a tourism development grant, of which £1m is repayable. Nevertheless, most of the expected £34m cost of developing the attraction will be met by the company itself and the project therefore represents a significant foreign direct investment into Wales.

The petition expresses concern about loss of public open space and nature amenity on Kilvey Hill. It is important to be clear that open public access will continue, and the public will be able to access Kilvey Hill on foot, bike or horseback just as they currently do. In addition, the Gondola system will offer a means of access to the elderly, disabled & other disadvantaged groups who are currently excluded from being able to enjoy the benefits of the hill and the spectacular views it provides. Existing footpaths will remain, and new paths

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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.

will be created. Less than ten percent of the land on Kilvey Hill will be used by Skyline and only very limited areas of land around the Skyline infrastructure will need to be enclosed, largely for safety reasons. Whilst a limited number of trees will need to be felled these will be mostly conifers and there will be fresh planting of native species which will in time enhance nature diversity. Almost all current wooded and grassed areas and well-known features such as the Quaker's seat will remain open to everyone to enjoy. Picnic areas and a new children's play area will be free to use.

The petitioners raise concerns about the expected visitor numbers but there is strong evidence that Skyline attractions succeed in attracting large numbers of visitors, including in locations with cool and wet winters similar to ours. In 2023-24 Skyline sites globally catered to 1.3m gondola passengers and visitors took 7.46m luge rides.

The petitioners' response to the Committee mentions the operator's involvement with Casino operations in New Zealand. Casino operations have no relevance to the Skyline attraction proposed for Swansea which does not include any gambling facilities. It is a standard condition of all Welsh Government grants to businesses that no part of the grant may be spent on activities related to gambling and this condition is included in our funding offer to Skyline as it is in all others.

The Welsh Government believes that the Skyline attraction will enhance people's enjoyment of Kilvey Hill whilst also safeguarding its natural beauty and vantage points. We recognise the sincerity of the views conveyed to the Committee by the petitioners, but we do not share them.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Evans AS/MS

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

The Cabinet Secretary's letter of June 10, 2025, entirely omits any engagement with the specific "Quiet Area (QA 28) procedure". This is a critical oversight, as the Welsh Government's own policy (D1) and previous Ministerial correspondence (A1) confirm the following:

Cabinet Secretary's letter of 10 June 2025 – key omissions

While the letter restates headline economic benefits, it fails to engage with five matters the Committee specifically flagged:

- **Quiet Area (QA 28) procedure** – The letter does not explain why the Welsh Government has not triggered the **WG12523** process for de-designation (D1), despite Swansea Council admitting it did not do so (A2).
- **Ongoing Breach:** Consequently, any construction and day to day running that increases noise within QA 28 without the statutory Ministerial de-designation, following public consultation, would constitute an unlawful increase in noise inside a formally designated Quiet Area, as required by the Environmental Noise (Wales) Regulations 2006 (D1). This process has not even begun.
- **Ministerial Prerogative:** Only Welsh Ministers can remove a designated Quiet Area, and this process requires prior public consultation. The Cabinet Secretary's Quiet-Area letter of March 7, 2025 (ref **RE/00179/25**) explicitly states that "No Quiet Area has ever been removed" (A1).
- **Noise safeguards – acknowledged Quiet-Area sensitivity.**
"Vacuum of Responsibility": As evidenced by the latest correspondence outlined below, there is now a clear "vacuum of responsibility" where the Council states it will not protect the Quiet Area (A2), and the Welsh Government will only intervene if formally requested to do so (A3). This leaves Kilvey Hill's protected status exposed to irreparable harm.
- **Condition enforcement** – Assumes conditions are adequate, yet Swansea Council has now refused to amend them (A9) and admits it will rely on the applicant for any s.73 revisions.
Legal Conflict: This creates a stark "legal conflict" where the Council's position directly contrasts with Welsh Government policy and Ministerial statements (A1, A2).
- **Ethical / corporate issues** – Offers no detail on the operator's overseas casino interests (A10) or on how Welsh public money will be ring-fenced from gambling activities.
- **Funding and long-term risk** – There is concern that the money raised is not inward investment, but rather debt guaranteed by land. Failure of the 125-year lease by Skyline Swansea Limited could place Kilvey into a business portfolio, earmarking it for development. This would burden the asset with debt and allow for minimal tax returns until the debts are covered, potentially functioning as a tax break. The escalating estimated cost (£40 m, with £12 m public contributions) (A4) and the absence of local governance merit a value-for-money review before any funds are drawn.
Loss of local governance: The only UK-based director (Nigel Short) resigned on 1 June 2025, leaving Skyline Swansea Ltd entirely overseas-controlled (A11). This cuts across the Cabinet Secretary's assertion that the scheme secures "local benefit" and strengthens the case for robust community-benefit and claw-back clauses. We believe an audit by Audit Wales and public scrutiny are needed.

Key developments – What it proves:

- **3 Feb 2023:** Screening opinion decided without informing applicant/WG of Quiet Area constraints (A0).
- **7 Mar 2025:** Conditional planning consent issued, but no condition-discharge applications validated (A5).
- **7 Mar 2025:** Public call-in voided, leaving no public route for intervention (A4).
- **7 Mar 2025:** Cabinet Secretary's letter confirmed only Welsh Ministers can remove Quiet Areas, requiring public consultation, and none have ever been removed (A1).
- **10 Apr 2025:** Swansea Council stated it's not their role to alter Quiet Area status and didn't refer the scheme to Ministers (A2).
- **9 May 2025:** Residents' planning-law firm (Richard Buxton Solicitors) had to draft 30+ corrections to basic water-quality, ecology and noise conditions because the Skyline ES left critical gaps (A8).
- **11 June 2025:** Council refused to tighten conditions, stating it requires a fresh s.73 application from

Skyline (A9).

- **Lease of public land:** Not executed; disposal needs lease agreement and re-advertising under s.123 LGA 1972 (B2).

Taken together, these letters show a **vacuum of responsibility**: *The Council will not protect the Quiet Area, and the Welsh Government will only step in if formally asked. These documents fundamentally change the picture, revealing a "vacuum of responsibility" where the Council won't protect the Quiet Area and the Welsh Government will only intervene if formally asked.*

Fact-check:

- **Quiet-Area Law** – Confirmed against **WG12523** and **RE/00179/25** (no QA has ever been removed; Ministers must consult) (D1, A1).
- **Legal Conflict:** The Council's PAP response denying need for de-designation starkly contrasts WG policy/Ministerial letters (A2, A1). The **Noise & Soundscape Plan 2023–28** reaffirms QA protections.
- **Committee Report** sections discuss the nature of the assessment and the lack of specific, comprehensive noise monitoring within the quiet area (A5).

Relevant excerpts:

"It is important to note that the quiet area designation is not related to or bound by any objective noise levels or limits."

"It is acknowledged that it is likely to be quieter in the more central areas..."

"Notwithstanding this, it is not considered necessary to require additional monitoring..."

"It is accepted that Kilvey Hill is currently a relatively quiet and tranquil area... noted through site visits..."

These show the tranquillity assessment was largely qualitative (site visits), not based on new data (A5, B1). Pollution Control confirmed the Quiet Area is not within their remit (B1), and the Council relies on the applicant's own noise model (A5), despite admitting it has set no noise limits.

The PAP response defends the officer report by stating that Pollution Control officers "did not object" and that the proposal "would not result in an unacceptable impact upon the quiet area" (A2).

However, it's important to remember that Swansea Council has not yet set any noise limits (A5, A6).

Therefore, Pollution Control officers have no responsibility to comment on noise levels, rendering their "non-objection" moot—especially considering the Council's own admissions in provided letters. Is this a statutory failing?

Please for scale reference, note the **damage** based on available data below to the Quiet area.:

(A7) Ramboll noise contour graphic "Luge Track + Amplified Music at 4 m AGL" (Fig 2) Skyline Quiet Area Damage 2025-05-06.jpeg	Supplied by petitioner – not public Black line is Quiet area Boundary Red line is skyline Planning application boundary overlaid on luge noise mapping only	Shows (scale of loss of the Quiet Area with much untested data LAmx gap). Much sound data is not available and unmapped by Skyline based on the tranquillity of the quiet area, nor a community assessment/engagement on effects.
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Key problems that now demand Ministerial and/or PEDW (Planning & Environment Decisions Wales) and NRW intervention

1. Quiet-Area tranquillity protection and potential breach remains un-tested as outlined

- Council "not our role" claim - Skyline PAP response.pdf, verified at JR letter paras 11–14 (A2).
- Condition stalemate - Council refusal to alter conditions Ref: JW_DVP-280063.pdf (A9), single-page refusal letter expressly cites need for a s.73 by the applicant (A9).
- **2022/2986/SCR SCREENING OPINION (A0)** Decided but without informing the applicant or WG of the Quiet Area Application Constraints or public at PAC stage
- Swansea's own lawyer admits the Council never instigated the Ministerial de-designation process (A2).
- Yet the Cabinet Secretary confirms the hill is still formally designated and that removal must go through Ministers after consultation (A1).

- Much sound data is not available and unmapped by Skyline based on the tranquillity of the quiet area, nor a community assessment leaving EIA for the purposes of the designated quiet areas Environmental and recreational use missing.
- Council says it is *not* its role to alter Quiet-Area status and therefore did **not** refer the scheme to Ministers.
- Therefore construction would unlawfully increase noise inside QA 28 without the statutory approval required by the Environmental Noise (Wales) Regulations 2006 quite possibly needing Designation by default as precedence which is unacceptable.
- Welsh government needs to build policies and processes before a site of national interest can be allowed to designated by default by lack of procedural processes and the lack cross departmental triggers to start start such processes
- Welsh Ministers alone can remove a Quiet Area and would first need to consult the public. No Quiet Area has ever been removed and policies not existing by admission.
- NRW has still not reviewed drainage, groundwater-risk or SINC mitigation plans that are essential under the Habitats Regulations. Nor reviewed the effect to the Nationally Protected, Quiet area tranquillity requirements due to it not being seen at the WG planning level.

2. Conditions stalemate

Condition 51 bars any start on site until the s.106 is signed by all landowners, but neither the lease nor the s.106 exists (**A5, B2**). At the same time, the Council says it will only revisit conditions if Skyline volunteers (**A9**). That leaves no effective mechanism to fix the defects.

Conclusion and Action Requests

Given the serious and unresolved issues outlined—including the failure to initiate the statutory Quiet Area (QA28) de-designation process (**D1, A1, A2, A3**), the discredited environmental evidence (**A5, A6, A7, A8, B3**), and Swansea Council's refusal to enforce or revise planning conditions (**A9**)—this case now exposes a clear legal and procedural vacuum.

Welsh Ministers have a statutory duty under **WG12523** and Planning Policy Wales to uphold protections for designated Quiet Areas (**D1**). To date, no Quiet Area has ever been removed (**A1**). Yet this scheme proceeds without WG policy in place, without consultation, de-designation, or proper community assessment—placing the Government at risk of facilitating an unlawful breach of the Environmental Noise (Wales) Regulations 2006 (**D1**).

We are especially concerned that Quiet Area policy is being undermined by omission: with no de-designation framework initiated and no environmental baseline within the Quiet Area, the site is effectively being "de-designated by default"—a precedent that cannot be allowed.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has not reviewed any incomplete or report mentioned in constraints, required either drainage, groundwater, or habitat mitigation data (**B3**), while **PEDW's** role remains unclear with no call in and in light of Swansea Council's refusal to vary or tighten conditions without applicant consent (**A8**). Though the call-in window for the original application has passed, new decisions—such as discharge of conditions or refusal to revise them—remain open to judicial review over constraints, particularly where national policy has not been properly considered (**D1, D2**).

Welsh Government guidance (**D2, Making Good Decisions**) confirms that decisions may be quashed where public authorities ignore relevant policies or act irrationally. The Welsh Government itself has standing to initiate judicial review where statutory duties are breached (**D2, B3**).

This is not a call to oppose investment in Swansea—but to ensure that development respects environmental law, planning policy, and public interest.

We therefore ask the Committee to:

1. **Secure a formal Welsh Government commitment to uphold the Environmental Noise (Wales) Regulations 2006, and either:**
 - trigger the statutory Quiet Area de-designation process with full public consultation (**D1**), or

- halt the project unless that process is lawfully completed.

2. Refer the project to Audit Wales for independent review of:

- the financial model, including the £12m public grant ,
- the escalating £40m cost (**A5**),
- the long-term risk of debt on public land (**B2**),
- and the loss of local governance after Skyline Swansea Ltd became entirely overseas-controlled (**A11**).

3. Request NRW and PEDW intervention to ensure:

- full assessment of tranquillity impacts on QA28 (**A5, A6**),
- scrutiny of untested environmental evidence (**A6, A7**),
- and a review of planning conditions under the Habitats Regulations and Quiet Area criteria.


4. We call for an immediate halt to all construction in QA28. This suspension must remain until robust environmental safeguards and policies are legally established and clearly detailed. These procedures should include clear de-designation Triggers and processes (**A1, B1, B3, D1, D2**).

- Seek clarification from the Welsh Government on how it intends to address the current "vacuum of responsibility" and ensure Quiet Area protections are formally integrated into local planning frameworks (**D1, A1, B3**).
- Support a judicial review, or encourage the Welsh Government to initiate one, to challenge Swansea Council's failure to apply national Quiet Area policy and enforce statutory planning duties (**D2, A3, A8, A9, B3**).
- Demand full transparency regarding Skyline's overseas casino interests (**A10**), and ensure public funds are ring-fenced from gambling-related activities in line with grant conditions.
- Insist on enforceable community-benefit and claw-back clauses, to ensure that any claimed "local benefit" is legally secured—particularly as the company is now entirely controlled from overseas (**A11**).

I urge the Committee to press the Welsh Government for a **formal commitment to uphold the Environmental Noise (Wales) Regulations 2006** regarding Quiet Areas, and to initiate the necessary de-designation process with full public consultation if they intend to proceed with the project as planned. Furthermore, a **thorough independent audit of the project's financial model and the proposed public funding** is essential before any funds are released.

Key Supporting Documents & Links

Our position is supported by the following references and ex key documents:

-  Annex A – Source cross-reference This annex provides a cross-referenced list of key docume...
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oagoex7nFKa6eLKsосу5Mn2iEpyKPCq5SBgcJ-oV-80/edit?usp=sharing>

I am available to provide any further information or clarification the Committee may require.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Jones

(on behalf of Swansea Friends of the Earth and the 3,051 signatories to Petition P-06-1373)

Agenda Item 3.4

P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales

This petition was submitted by Elizabeth Trombley, having collected 260 signatures.

Text of petition

Wales is grappling with escalating long-term illnesses from Long COVID in previously healthy children and working people.

In Wales, more than 12,000 have died with COVID [1, BBC]. As many as 300,000 are battling Long COVID [2, ONS].

- Families are losing income providers [3, Bylines]
- Hospitals under extreme pressure [4, Wales Online]
- School absences more than doubled [5, BBC]

By 2030, 1 in 3 could have Long COVID. We call for a 'Care Society' to safeguard our health and livelihoods.

Additional information

Components of 'The Care Society'

1. Health

- Funding for Long COVID clinics and research

2. Economic Participation

- Workplace adjustments such as flexible hours, remote work, and discrimination protections
- A Universal Basic Income pilot, examining how financial support could empower people to contribute to society, regardless of health status

3. Infrastructure

- Enhance air quality in public buildings, including schools and hospitals
- Invest in green infrastructure to spur economic growth, including retraining for those transitioning from current roles due to Long COVID

References

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/uk-wales-68426481>
2. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/selfreportedlongcovidsymptomsuk/10july2023>
3. <https://bylines.cymru/voices-lleisiau/bereaved-covid-inquiry/>
4. <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/welsh-hospitals-full-nhs-services-28378743>
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c90exkyw15no>

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff West
- South Wales Central

Carolyn Thomas MS
Petitions Committee Chair

11 March 2025

Petitions relating to Covid-19

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letters of 18 February and 7 March 2025, making the Committee aware of petitions P-06-1450: Welsh Government to take action to protect people from airborne infections in health care settings and P-06-1488 to establish a 'Care Society' to tackle the long COVID crisis in Wales. We considered your letters and the issues raised in the petitions at our meeting on 10 March 2025.

Our Committee is currently considering the Module 1 report of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry which relates to the resilience and preparedness of the United Kingdom. As such, we note the issues raised by the petitions and will take them into consideration in our future work on relevant modules of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Joyce Watson

Tom Giffard

Co-Chairs, Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair of the Petitions Committee

April 17th 2025

Dear Carolyn

Petition P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales

Thank you for your letter dated 4 March which we noted at our meeting on 24 March. We recognise the importance of this issue and wanted to highlight the findings of our recent report on the Disability Employment Gap which may be of interest to the petitioners. In 'Anything's achievable with the right support' we concluded that those who want, and are able to work, should have that dignity of work. Our recommendations and conclusions emphasised the need to review how guidance is promoted among employers; ensure reasonable adjustments for employees are more consistently and proactively offered; and the need to challenge attitudes and assumptions about the difficulty or cost associated with employing people with a range of conditions and impairments. Published at the beginning of March, we are currently awaiting a Welsh Government response and expect to debate the report in Plenary during summer 2025.

More broadly, however, I am afraid that we have no current plans to look at the impact of Long COVID and are unlikely to have the capacity to do so in the time that remains available to us. Our forward work programme is heavily committed and we expect our ability to undertake additional work will further diminish if legislation is referred to us for scrutiny in the final year of the Senedd term.

Nevertheless this matter deserves proper scrutiny and we hope that another committee perhaps with more expertise or capacity can accommodate your request in some way. In so doing we think it would be important to consider the impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns on early years and child development including their speech and language skills. This was an important theme in our work on speech, language and communication needs in the youth justice system and despite Welsh Government recalcitrance we continue to advocate for better provision in this area.

Thank you to you and to the petitioners for highlighting this important issue. We hope that you are not too disappointed by our response and find our previous work useful.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

22 April 2025

Re. Petition P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter dated 7th March about our ongoing or planned inquiry work regarding the Welsh Government's strategic approach to Long COVID.

We are not currently undertaking, and do not have any plans to undertake, any work that relates directly to the Welsh Government's strategic approach to Long COVID.

However, COVID and its long-term impacts have been relevant to most of the scrutiny work we have carried out during the Sixth Senedd. Here are some examples of current and completed pieces of work that are particularly relevant to the above petition:

- Pupil absence, which considered absenteeism of pupils as a consequence of COVID, amongst other factors (completed)
- Mental health support in higher education, which considered specifically what the impact of COVID has been on the mental health of university students (completed)
- Services for care experience children: exploring radical reform, which considered the Welsh Government's basic income trial for care leavers (completed)
- Implementation of education reforms, which considers the implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 and the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, the rollout of which has been significantly affected by COVID (ongoing)
- School improvement and learner attainment, which will consider whether, and to what extent, pupil absence has an impact on educational progress (planned for summer 2025)

The petitioner will also find reference to COVID throughout our annual scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget, Estyn, Qualifications Wales and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. My clerks would be happy to provide any more information about those areas of work if that would be helpful. Your petitioner can contact them any time by emailing SeneddChildren@Senedd.Wales.

I hope this information has been useful.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1488
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/00727/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions Committee

petitions@senedd.wales

01 May 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Petition P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales

Thank you for your letter of 7 March to the First Minister regarding the above petition. I will take each substantive point in turn.

1. A Guaranteed Basic Income for People with Chronic Illness

Our Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales pilot is intended to help understand the unique challenges care leavers face and determine whether extending the time they are supported could have a positive impact on their lives as they transition to adulthood. The pilot will conclude later this year and will be subject to a comprehensive evaluation, which is due to run until early 2027. The pilot is not intended to respond to the efficacy of all possible uses for basic income.

Any future consideration of the use of a basic income in Wales will need to be informed by the learning from the care leavers pilot, including through the evaluation. I also refer you to the Social Justice Secretary's comments about the support we provide to people in this Senedd [debate](#).

2. Expansion of Community-Based Work and Care Cooperatives

Social enterprises and community-led co-operatives are an important part of the social and economic landscape in Wales. It is recognised that community-based organisations provide good quality job opportunities, support local economies and in many cases safeguarding community assets and vital services.

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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.

There are currently just over 500 co-operatives and mutuals in Wales. The Welsh Government provides funding support to Cwmpas and it has been promoting the co-operative economy for more than 40 years in Wales. It works with partners to provide advice and support to those establishing co-operative and mutuals in Wales, in addition to working to ensure the right conditions in Wales to enable the sector to grow and flourish.

Social prescribing initiatives across Wales have been developed to meet local need. Our [National Framework for Social Prescribing](#) aims to develop a shared understanding of the language used and the approach taken to social prescribing in Wales; support social prescribing practitioners and drive-up skills; set out the outcomes expected from a user, organisation, commissioner, and referrer perspective; and ensure a quality of provision by community assets. It includes several cross-cutting themes essential for the successful implementation of social prescribing which includes ensuring social prescribing is accessible to all.

The Welsh Government's Plan for Employability and Skills includes the priority of supporting people with a long term health condition to work. Our Communities for Work+ programme which provides specialist employment advisory support and intensive mentoring for people, has also made strong progress in supporting participants who identify as disabled or having long term health conditions. This accounts for more than 20% of those supported.

Furthermore, the Welsh Government's In-Work Support Service provides rapid access to tailored occupational therapy, physiotherapy and psychological therapy services. The services are designed to help employed or self-employed people return to work or manage a health condition in work.

3. A Publicly-Owned Clean Air Strategy

Our national air quality strategy, also known as the *Clean Air Plan for Wales: Healthy Air, Healthy Wales*, describes how the Welsh Government is addressing air pollution challenges by working collaboratively across Government departments, different sectors and with the public. The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024 created a requirement for a Welsh clean air plan or strategy to be reviewed and published at least every five years.

The Act sets out an air quality target-setting framework that gives Welsh Ministers powers to make regulations setting long term targets in respect of any matter relating to air quality in Wales. There is a duty on Welsh Ministers to make regulations setting a target for PM_{2.5} within three years of Royal Assent. There is a further duty for Welsh Ministers to make regulations within six years of Royal Assent to set a long-term target for one of the following pollutants: ammonia; particulate matter (PM₁₀); ground level ozone; nitrogen dioxide; carbon monoxide; and sulphur dioxide. New national air quality targets will provide a strong mechanism to deliver positive long-term ambitions for clean air and associated public health and environmental outcomes, building upon progress towards the objectives of the Clean Air Plan for Wales.

The Act includes a duty on Welsh Ministers to promote awareness of air pollution. We are working with an expert group to develop a delivery plan setting out how we will promote awareness of, and work to mitigate, the risks to human health and the natural environment associated with air pollution. This is likely to include actions related to raising awareness of local air quality, as well as actions aimed at reducing pollution from vehicle idling and domestic burning. Enabling the public to make informed choices about the impacts of poor air quality and required mitigations is essential to informing and changing public attitudes

and behaviours. These actions are important in delivering the ambitious changes needed to improve air quality and support wider government ambitions, such as for decarbonisation. As part of our action to promote awareness of air pollution, we have continued to support Clean Air Day and Clean Air Night – the UK’s biggest air pollution campaign.

We have also continued to make funding available to local authorities through the Local Air Quality Management Support Fund. In 2024-25, we allocated around £600k allocated to five local authorities to deliver projects aimed at improving local air quality.

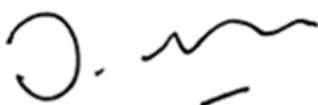
With regards to the Optimised Retrofit Programme, should new evidence arise where there is a need to revise these standards we would consider the available evidence and advice from industry experts.

Separately, new social homes are built to high energy efficiency standards which requires adequate ventilation.

Finally, in relation to public awareness campaigns on airborne disease prevention, last winter Public Health Wales ran a Beat Winter Viruses communications campaign to encourage preventative behaviours for respiratory viruses, based on behaviours and audience insight. The campaign targeted a broad range of the population, focusing on increasing knowledge and motivation for the public to adopt preventative behaviours over winter when there is an increased risk of spread. Widespread public awareness can play a role in reducing gaps in knowledge and information. A campaign approach is most effective when taking a risk-based approach, focused on areas with a higher level of risk, combined with being specific in terms of audience, timing and saliency of messaging to help elicit protective behaviours.

We will continue to support people to access their entitlements, to maximise their incomes and to access sustainable employment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions Committee

12 June 2025

Dear Carolyn

Petition P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales

Thank you for your letter of 7 March asking about our ongoing or planned inquiry work regarding the Welsh Government's strategic approach to Long Covid.

We are not currently undertaking any work that relates directly to the Welsh Government's strategic approach to Long Covid, and we do not plan to undertake any such work before the end of this Senedd.

However, consideration of [the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, and its management](#), is a priority identified in the Committee's [5-year strategy](#) and, as such, has been a feature of most of our scrutiny work throughout this Senedd.

Full details of all the inquiries we have undertaken to date are available on our [website](#). If the petitioner would like to discuss any particular inquiry in more detail, they are welcome to contact the clerk: seneddhealth@senedd.wales

Yours sincerely



Peter Fox MS
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

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

P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales- Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 23 June 2025

Thank you for sharing the responses from the Health and Social Care Committee, the Equality and Social Justice Committee, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, and others.

This is a factual response to those positions and a request for coordinated action. The central point is that Long COVID isn't a patient advocacy issue, but a cross-portfolio civil crisis on the scale of the world wars, backed up by data, and requires an urgent, coordinated government response.

For data, I refer you to reporting on this topic and I've attached remarks from the previous meeting.

Wales's Hidden War

<https://www.thecanary.co/uk/analysis/2025/03/03/long-covid-wales-petition/>

1. Summary of Positions Received

- No Senedd committee is currently conducting or planning focused work on Long COVID.
- The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care referenced existing programmes (e.g. social prescribing, community co-operatives, clean air initiatives), but did not commit to a Long COVID-specific plan or strategy.
- The Equality and Social Justice Committee cited their work on disability and employment but noted they do not have capacity to examine Long COVID further in this term.
- The Health and Social Care Committee confirmed it is not addressing the Welsh Government's strategic response to Long COVID.
- The Covid-19 Inquiry Committee acknowledged receipt but made no commitment to action.

2. Reframing the Issue: Not Patient Advocacy, But Civil Emergency

This petition is not asking for health service improvements or representing a small patient group. It raises a national emergency issue. The scale of Long COVID in Wales meets criteria consistent with crisis-level public health and governance response:

- Population-scale disability: ONS estimates suggest up to 300,000 people in Wales are experiencing Long COVID as of mid-2023.
- Health system pressure: Hospitals continue to report operating beyond safe capacity due to ongoing COVID-related burden ([WalesOnline, Dec 2023](#)).

- Labour force attrition: Working-age people are exiting employment or reducing hours due to post-viral illness, compounding skills shortages and reducing household incomes.
- Education disruption: School absence levels have more than doubled since pre-pandemic baselines ([BBC, 2024](#)).
- No national plan: There is no published Welsh Government strategy specifically addressing Long COVID across health, employment, education, or social care.

In practical terms, this represents a sustained crisis on the scale of a wartime or civil emergency, with prolonged population-level impacts across every core public sector.

3. Current Government Measures Are Not Sufficient

The Cabinet Secretary's letter identifies existing infrastructure—such as social prescribing, co-ops, employment mentoring, and clean air initiatives—but none of these are:

- Designed specifically for Long COVID;
- Integrated across sectors;
- Supported by metrics on uptake or impact for people with post-viral chronic illness;
- Positioned as part of a long-term policy response.

As a result, support is fragmented, under-utilised, and difficult to access.

4. Recommendations for the Petitions Committee

We are requesting that the Petitions Committee take the following practical steps:

A. Recommend Cross-Committee Scrutiny

- Refer this petition to both the Health and Social Care Committee and the Equality and Social Justice Committee for further action.
- Encourage joint hearings or inquiries on the cross-sector impact of Long COVID as a civil crisis.

B. Request a Plenary Debate

- Recommend a Plenary debate on the long-term public policy consequences of the ongoing COVID pandemic, with a specific focus on Long COVID and Wales' capacity to respond.

C. Support the Establishment of a Coordinated Government Response

- Recommend that the Welsh Government establish a cross-departmental Long COVID strategy, covering:

- - Health services and clinics;
 - Workplace protections and income support;
 - Education system impacts and mitigation;
 - Public building ventilation and clean air;
 - Data monitoring and cross-sector accountability.

5. Conclusion

This petition is based on current government data and peer-reviewed public information. Long COVID is creating an escalating population-scale disabling event. Its impact on core public services—health, education, work, and care—is sustained, measurable, and worsening.

The absence of a national, coordinated response increases long-term system strain and public cost.

We urge the Committee to treat this petition not as a request for clinical improvement, but as a warning of systemic policy failure on an emergency scale.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Waltz

Lead Petitioner, P-06-1488

Wales' Hidden War

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate the opportunity to present this urgent issue—an issue that, if it were caused by war, would demand immediate national action. But because it unfolds in hospitals, workplaces, and schools rather than on battlefields, it remains dangerously overlooked.

Wales is at war—not with an invading army, but with a crisis that is silently reshaping our nation. Long COVID is disabling our workforce, overwhelming our healthcare system, disrupting education, and leaving tens of thousands permanently disabled. The scale of its impact is comparable to the world wars of the past century.

The latest ONS data states that 2 million people in the UK have Long COVID. Given that Wales makes up 4.7% of the UK population, this suggests at least 94,000 cases—certainly higher due to healthcare disparities and the ONS halting data collection in 2023.

The death toll is staggering. The Economist estimates that COVID has killed 27 million people worldwide—more in four years than AIDS has in forty. In Wales alone, the Welsh COVID inquiry found that 12,000 people have died with COVID.

For comparison, during World War II, Wales lost around 15,000 soldiers in combat and 984 civilians in air raids. But war didn't just kill—it left survivors with long-term injuries. Today, Long COVID is causing mass disability on a similar scale.

Long COVID is a peacetime epidemic of war-like injuries. During World War II, Wales saw mass casualties from direct combat, but also from infectious diseases, exposure, gas attacks, and shell shock. Similarly, Long COVID is a debilitating condition with over 200 possible symptoms, leaving tens of thousands of people in Wales with permanent organ damage, cognitive impairment, chronic pain, and exhaustion.

Wales's already struggling healthcare system is being pushed to collapse. A King's College London study found that one-third of healthcare workers report Long COVID symptoms. Wales's hospitals are under extreme pressure—in January 2024, 15 out of 18 Welsh hospitals monitored by the Welsh government were at level 4 risk, meaning they were at or beyond full capacity.

The number of people in the UK unable to work due to ill health is growing by 300,000 a year, according to the Health Foundation. Today, 4 million working-age people are out of work due to ill health, with 3.9 million living with work-limiting conditions. By comparison, around 300,000 Welsh men were mobilized during World War II.

During World War II, Welsh children faced massive educational disruption due to evacuation. Now, school absenteeism in Wales has more than doubled since the pandemic began. The ONS counted 58,000 UK children with Long COVID, meaning at least 3,000 in Wales.

Meanwhile, teachers are also being affected. While ONS isn't counting teacher illnesses, New Zealand, which had minimal COVID exposure until 2022, found that between 10% and 20% of teachers had Long COVID.

The Senedd's devolved powers don't permit it to mount a response to aerial bombings, but it does have the ability to fight the invasion of this virus.

We don't need air raid shelters, but we do need urgent investment in air quality—because stopping airborne transmission is the modern equivalent of stopping aerial bombings.

We don't need war pensions, but in the face of benefits cuts and lack of access to occupational health services, we do need a universal basic income (UBI) study to determine how those with Long COVID to support them reintegrating in society.

And like the second world war, Wales is situated to be the center of a new paradigm in reconstruction. The Care Society, where we center our most vulnerable for a more resilient nation.

Wales' Hidden War: The Crisis We're Failing to See

Wales is in the grip of a crisis so vast that if it were caused by war or terrorism, there would be no question of action. Yet, because it unfolds in hospitals, classrooms, and behind closed doors, it remains largely unspoken.

Long COVID is crippling the nation. The latest ONS data states that 2 million people in the UK have Long COVID. Given Wales makes up 4.7% of the UK population, this suggests at least 94,000 cases—likely higher due to healthcare disparities and the ONS halting data collection in 2023. Tens of thousands in Wales now suffer from long-term symptoms that leave many unable to work, study, or even leave their homes.

The Economist estimates that COVID has killed 27 million people worldwide—more in four years than AIDS has in forty. The Welsh COVID inquiry found that 12,000 people in Wales have died with COVID.

This is a health crisis on the scale of war. During World War II, Wales lost around 15,000 soldiers in combat and 984 civilians in air raids. While Long COVID isn't as visible as bomb damage, it is quietly reshaping Welsh society with devastating consequences.

During World War II, Wales saw mass casualties from direct combat, but also from infectious diseases, exposure, gas attacks, and shell shock. Many soldiers returned home with chronic injuries, lung damage, and neurological conditions. Similarly, Long COVID is a debilitating condition with over 200 possible symptoms, leaving tens of thousands of people in Wales with permanent organ damage, cognitive impairment, chronic pain, and exhaustion—a peacetime epidemic of war-like injuries.

Wales's already struggling healthcare system is being pushed to collapse. A King's College London study found that one-third of healthcare workers report Long COVID symptoms. Wales's hospitals are consistently under extreme pressure, particularly in winter—by January 2024, 15 out of 18 Welsh hospitals monitored by the Welsh government were at level 4 risk, meaning they were at or beyond full capacity.

The number of people in the UK unable to work due to ill health is growing by 300,000 a year, according to the Health Foundation. Today, 4 million working-age people are out of work due to ill health, with 3.9 million living with work-limiting conditions.

By comparison, around 300,000 Welsh men were mobilized during World War II. The current scale of workforce depletion due to illness rivals the impact of mass conscription—except instead of temporary service, many are permanently disabled. Unlike in wartime, where rationing, war bonds, and emergency planning helped keep the economy afloat, today there is no comparable national response to the economic devastation of Long COVID.

School absenteeism in Wales has more than doubled since the pandemic began, with many children suffering lingering illness. The ONS counted 58,000 UK children with Long COVID,

which means at least 3,000 in Wales. But the last ONS data was from 2022, so the number is likely far higher.

Meanwhile, teachers have some of the highest rates of COVID infection—data from New Zealand, a country with minimal COVID exposure until 2022, found that between 10% and 20% of teachers had Long COVID. Wales's schools are likely facing similar losses in staff that ONS isn't counting.

During World War II, Welsh children experienced mass educational disruption due to evacuation. But the damage here is happening in the classroom—children are present but too sick to learn, teachers are struggling to stay in work, and nothing is being done.

Wales isn't just facing a public health emergency. We are living through an ongoing, slow-motion catastrophe that is reshaping our society. COVID and Long COVID have reshaped life on a similar scale—so why is there no wartime-level response?

We don't need air raid shelters, but we do need urgent investment in air quality—because stopping airborne transmission is the modern equivalent of stopping aerial bombings.

We don't need war pensions, but we do need a universal basic income (UBI) for those with Long COVID, because just as wounded soldiers were compensated for their injuries, those disabled by this crisis need financial support to survive.

And we don't need ration books, but we do need a coordinated national effort to prevent further infections, protect workers, and keep schools and hospitals functioning.

Wales' Hidden War: The Crisis We're Failing to See

Wales is in the grip of a crisis so vast that if it were caused by war or terrorism, there would be no question of action. Yet, because it unfolds in hospitals, classrooms, and behind closed doors, it remains largely unspoken.

Long COVID is crippling the nation. The latest ONS data states that 2 million people in the UK have Long COVID. Given Wales makes up 4.7% of the UK population, this suggests at least 94,000 cases—likely higher due to healthcare disparities and the ONS halting data collection in 2023. Tens of thousands in Wales now suffer from long-term symptoms that leave many unable to work, study, or even leave their homes.

The Economist estimates that COVID has killed 27 million people worldwide—more in four years than AIDS has in forty. The Welsh COVID inquiry found that 12,000 people in Wales have died with COVID.

This is a health crisis on the scale of war. During World War II, Wales lost around 15,000 soldiers in combat and 984 civilians in air raids. **While Long COVID isn't as visible as bomb damage, it is quietly reshaping Welsh society with devastating consequences.**

Wales's already struggling healthcare system is being pushed to collapse. A King's College London study found that one-third of healthcare workers report Long COVID symptoms. Wales's hospitals are consistently under extreme pressure, particularly in winter—by January 2024, 15 out of 18 Welsh hospitals monitored by the Welsh government were at level 4 risk, meaning they were at or beyond full capacity.

The number of people in the UK unable to work due to ill health is growing by 300,000 a year, according to the Health Foundation. Today, 4 million working-age people are out of work due to ill health, with 3.9 million living with work-limiting conditions.

By comparison, around 300,000 Welsh men were mobilized during World War II. The current scale of workforce depletion due to illness rivals the impact of mass conscription—except instead of temporary service, many are permanently disabled.

School absenteeism in Wales has more than doubled since the pandemic began, with many children suffering lingering illness. The ONS counted 58,000 UK children with Long COVID, which means at least 3,000 in Wales. But the last ONS data was from 2022 so it's significantly more.

Meanwhile, teachers have some of the highest rates of COVID infection—data from New Zealand, a country with minimal COVID exposure until 2022, found that between 10% and 20% of teachers had Long COVID. Wales's schools are likely facing similar losses in staff that ONS isn't counting.

During World War II, Welsh children experienced mass educational disruption due to evacuation. But the damage here is happening in the classroom.

Wales isn't just facing a public health emergency. We are living through an ongoing, slow-motion catastrophe that is reshaping our society.

During World War II, the state took emergency action: nationalizing industries, overhauling healthcare, and mobilizing millions to fight a common threat. COVID and Long COVID have reshaped life on a similar scale—so why is there no wartime-level response?

Wales needs decisive action: investment in air quality improvements is the equivalent of stopping the aerial bombing and a UBI for people with Long COVID gives people the resources to continue fighting. Except it's not against an invading army, but against the collapse of our society.

Wales' Hidden War: The Crisis We're Failing to See

Wales is in the grip of a crisis so vast that if it were caused by war or terrorism, there would be no question of action. Yet, because it unfolds in hospitals, classrooms, and behind closed doors, it remains largely unspoken.

Long COVID is crippling the nation. The latest ONS data says 2 million people in the UK have Long COVID. Wales constitutes 4.7% of the UK population, so that's at least 94,000, but likely higher because of healthcare disparities and ONS stopped counting in 2023. This means tens of thousands in Wales are suffering from long-term symptoms after infection, with many unable to work, study, or even leave their homes.

Wales's already underresourced healthcare system is being decimated. According to a King's College London study, one third of healthcare workers report symptoms with Long COVID. Wales's hospitals are consistently under extreme pressure, especially in the winter. In January 2024, 15 out of 18 Welsh hospitals monitored by the Welsh government were at a level 4 res.

The number of people in the UK who are out of work due to ill health is growing by 300,000 a year, according to the Health Foundation. 4 million working age people are out of work with ill health and now there are 3.9 million people with work-limiting conditions. "Fewer than half of UK workers have access to occupational health services, the [fit note system](#) is ineffective and statutory sick pay is less generous than in other countries."

Long-term school absences in Wales have more than doubled since the beginning of the pandemic. A generation of children—many dealing with lingering illness—are missing out on education. The latest ONS data from December 2022 counted 58,000 children Long COVID. And though ONS isn't counting teachers data, in New Zealand, which by the way had almost zero COVID until 2022, between 1 in 10 and 1 in 5 teachers has Long COVID. And parents with Long COVID aren't able to be present for their children.

Businesses are quietly failing. Staff shortages, sickness absences, and the economic impact of long-term disability are cutting into productivity. The Welsh economy is bleeding out, but because the losses are scattered across thousands of workplaces, the alarm hasn't sounded.

And then there's the death toll. The Economist estimates that COVID has killed 27 million people worldwide. Covid has killed more people in 4 years than AIDS has in 40. The Welsh Covid inquiry found that 12,000 people in Wales have died with Covid. How many excess deaths will it take before we acknowledge the scale of this disaster?

Wales isn't just facing a public health emergency. We are living through an ongoing, slow-motion catastrophe that is reshaping our society. And yet, where is the urgency? Where is the plan?

This isn't about fear—it's about survival. Wales needs decisive action: investment in clean air, proper support for those suffering, and a real strategy to prevent mass disablement. Other crises get emergency responses. Why not this one?

Agenda Item 3.5

P-06-1491 We demand a fair deal for residents affected by the Arbed and CESP scheme

This petition was submitted by Rhiannon Goodall, having collected a total of 333 signatures.

Text of petition:

In September 2012, residents in Caerau and other areas in Wales signed up to an energy efficiency scheme run by both UK and Welsh Governments.

The scheme provided internal and external wall insulation to houses involved and since the installation of the insulation, participant houses have suffered from damp and mould. This in turn has drained residents finances and negatively affected residents' mental health.

We entered these schemes in good faith, now we want that good faith returned in kind.

Additional information:

Involved in the works were internal and external insulation, new boilers, vents on the properties and rendering.

Since the works have been done, residents have had to live with extreme damp and mould. This has led to residents paying for work to put things right, such as paying for new kitchens, carpets, new paint, new blinds. This has been an ongoing issue for over a decade now. Some residents have unfortunately passed away having not seen these issues put right. Below are links to news stories that give further information:

<https://oggybloggyogwr.com/2021/11/the-caerau-insulation-scandal-a-timeline-of-shame/>

<https://oggybloggyogwr.com/2021/11/welsh-government-unenthusiastic-about-supporting-arbed-scandal-clean-up-in-caerau/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-60765932>

Damages to the property must be put right and residents compensated for putting the damages right themselves which has amounted to thousands of pounds.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ogmore
- South Wales West



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1491
Ein cyf/Our ref JB/00389/25

Carolyn Thomas
Chair, Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

8 May 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter confirming the outcome of the Petition Committee's decision on 24 March on external wall insulation (EWI) in Caerau, Bridgend.

Following complaints from householders living in Caerau, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) commissioned a survey to determine the root cause of penetrating damp and mould growth. The survey revealed the external wall insulation (EWI) installed under the UK Government Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) scheme in 2012 had failed. The failure is attributed to poor workmanship.

BCBC identified issues with 104 homes all in the owner-occupied sector in one of the most disadvantaged communities in BCBC area. The contractors responsible for the original installation have ceased trading and no guarantees were issued when the works were completed. BCBC has explored funding remedial work with the energy suppliers who funded the original works and with the CESP scheme administrator, Ofgem.

Although the Welsh Government have no legal liability, we recognise the distress this has caused, and we have provided grant funding in order to rectify the damage to the EWI in affected homes. To date BCBC have spent over £1,35m of the £2.65m awarded by Welsh Government, an additional £673,000 has been provided this financial year. The local authority has also contributed £855,000 of its own money, to put things right.

The cost of installing the initial EWI was provided through EU Convergence funding. This means it was subject to very stringent monitoring and auditing through the Welsh European Funding Office. Given the time that has elapsed since it was awarded in 2012, it is unlikely that a new exercise would be more useful than intelligence from the contemporaneous audits and evaluation. It is not, therefore, our intention to conduct a further review on Caerau.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Jayne.Bryant@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jayne.Bryant@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.

However, Welsh Government recognise the importance of learning lessons from such schemes. We have, therefore, implemented several measures to provide greater assurance and protection to householders under our new Warm Homes Nest programme. Lessons learned include:

- Reducing potential conflicts of interest by letting separate contracts for our advice and referral provider and our delivery provider.
- Works are undertaken in accordance with PAS 2035 standards so that the most appropriate measures are applied to each household. This means every retrofit project is subject to monitoring and evaluation to determine whether the intended outcomes of the retrofit project have been realised.
- Independent quality assurance requirement for works to be compliant with the PAS2035 standard. The presence of independent QA expertise reduces the likelihood of poor design and installation.
- Introducing KPIs for complaints received.
- Retaining 10% of payment in the final year of the contract to ensure there are sufficient funds to remediate any deficiencies in installation. This also stands as an incentive to ensure high quality work.
- Ensuring governance through financial monitoring, Project Boards and compliance meetings.

I understand residents are keen for the work to be completed swiftly. However, it is essential to remove the old insulation, install ventilation and ensure walls have dried out before installing the new insulation and finishing the works. Failing to do so risks further mould and damp issues in the future and I support the council in their determination to complete this work to the highest quality and protect residents from further issues.

Bridgend County Borough Council has appointed a community liaison manager to answer any queries from concerned residents. Bridgend County Borough Council are best placed to answer any issues around the works or any wider concerns around the impacts of the historic scheme.

Once again, thank you for writing to me about this important issue. I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jayne Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jayne Bryant AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai
Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government

13 May 2025

Dear Carolyn,

P-06-1491 We demand a fair deal for residents affected by the Arbed and CESP scheme

Many thanks for your letter dated 3 April 2025 relating to the above petition which we noted at our meeting on 28 April. The Equality and Social Justice Committee has held two inquiries on this subject namely an inquiry on Fuel Poverty and the Warm Homes Programme and a follow-up inquiry looking at Fuel Poverty in Wales.

The Committee laid its most recent report: 'Turning up the heat before 2160: time to pick up the pace on tackling fuel poverty' on Monday 7 April 2025. Welsh Government will be responding to this report very soon.

We did not receive any specific information during the course of either inquiry regarding the situation in Caerau. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that it would not have been possible or appropriate for us to look into individual cases.

We did receive evidence more generally which highlighted damage to property and poor quality installations that some householders received under the previous Arbed schemes. That is why we called for a much more robust and fit for purpose quality assurance regime and for post-installation checks to be undertaken by an independent third party in future. This recommendation was accepted by the Welsh Government and has been implemented in full for the Nest element of the new Warm Homes Programme. As a result, the risk of a repeat of the unacceptable experiences highlighted by the petitioner should be greatly reduced in future.

We were sorry to hear of the petitioners experiences, which are unacceptable. We very much hope and expect a positive outcome can be achieved as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr Bridgend County Borough Council



Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

petitions@senedd.wales

Arweinydd y Cyngor / Leader of Council
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line: (01656) 643225
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Karen Gilbert

Ein cyf / Our ref: JS/KLG
Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 5th June 2025

Dear Carolyn Thomas MS

Thank you for your letter dated 15th May and apologies for the delay in responding.

I welcome the Committee's interest in the scheme and the work that we are doing to address the legacy issues that residents have been dealing with, in relation to previously installed insulation.

It's worth highlighting that out of the 104 properties affected, only 25 were part of the Arbed Scheme which was funded by Welsh Government and administered by Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC). The Council had no involvement with the other 79 properties that had work completed through the UK Government's CESP programme. However, we wanted to support as many residents as possible by extending the eligibility criteria to include CESP properties.

This remedial work project is largely funded by Welsh Government along with a contribution from BCBC and, although issues have been reported since 2014, the funding was secured from Welsh Government in March 2023 so the project could only start from that point onwards. Since then, we have quickly established a local engagement programme, completed Retrofit Assessments of each eligible property and in March 2024 appointed Warmworks to deliver the repair works.

Since Warmworks was appointed, a significant amount of work has taken place to mobilise the delivery phase of the scheme, that will allow remedial works to be completed as soon as possible. To that end, Warmworks has removed the external wall insulation and installed new ventilation on more than 40 properties. They will soon start to install new insulation or cement render, as preferred by the homeowner. This is not a one size fits all project and ultimately the scale of works for each property will be different to meet specific needs. We expect that the project will be complete by March 2026.

Ffôn/Tel: 01656 643643

Facs/Fax: 01656 668126

Ebost/Email: talktous@bridgend.gov.uk

Negeseuon SMS/ SMS Messaging: 07581 157014

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Gwefan/Website: www.bridgend.gov.uk

Cyfnwyd testun: Rhowch 18001 o flaen unrhyw un o'n rhifau ffon ar gyfer y gwasanaeth trosglwyddo testun

Text relay: Put 18001 before any of our phone numbers for the text relay service

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich dewis iaith

We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please let us know if your language choice is Welsh

The work is being carried out in line with PAS 2035, a UK-wide framework that was developed to raise the standards of domestic energy efficiency retrofit and requires a bespoke, whole house approach that considers ventilation and prioritises quality. While it does add to the complexity of the project, it will ensure high quality installations that deliver the promised benefits.

Resident engagement activity has been ongoing since June 2023, led by Warmworks under the resident liaison service, with regular weekly drop-in sessions held at Noddfa, visits to homes to make sure as many eligible people as possible benefit and a quarterly newsletter. This scheme does not involve any financial compensation. If property owners believe they have a claim, they should seek their own legal advice and the Council will respond as appropriate outside of this scheme. Deferral of works until after any such claim is resolved (or any other reason), puts at risk our ability to complete the repairs within the confirmed project timescale. After this point, grant funding agreements and contracts with delivery contractors will end.

To answer the specific questions in your letter:

What will the funding allocated to remedial work in Caerau be used for? If it becomes apparent that the funding already allocated will not be sufficient to put things right for residents homes, how will the Welsh Government and BCBC address this funding gap as a priority?

The remedial works scheme focuses on removing any existing internal and external wall insulation, drying out the walls and removing any internal mould before installing new insulation or cement render, as preferred by the homeowner. We have undertaken extensive survey and preparation work, so are confident that the secured funding is sufficient to complete the work on all eligible homes and will continue to carefully manage expenditure. However, if it becomes apparent that costs might exceed the available budget we will explore options with Welsh Government including further direct grant funding, accessing UK Government schemes such as ECO4 and the Great British Insulation Scheme and other grants such as the Energy Redress Scheme. At no point will homeowners or residents be required to financially contribute to this work.

Will residents receive written confirmation of the work to be undertaken on each home, and written guarantees for the work?

Following completion of the detailed designs and the walls reaching a satisfactory moisture level, the options for each property will be presented to each homeowner who will be asked to book an appointment with Warmworks to discuss the specific findings of all property visits and the proposals for the next stage (wall insulation being reinstalled or render-only finishing being applied).

These findings will include data from initial retrofit assessments carried out in 2023, right up to the most recent moisture readings taken. A report of these findings will be produced, specifically tailored to each individual property. It will detail defects and interventions required, clearly distinguishing between any defects originating from the wall insulation that has now been removed and any from pre-existing and/or historical issues.

This will ensure each homeowner has a complete understanding of all works carried out to date and empower them to make informed decisions about the works still to be undertaken. Following this, each resident's signed confirmation of their preferred outcome will be required before work can be started.

The insulation will come with a 25 year Insurance Backed Guarantee (IBG) from the installer, registered with the Solid Wall Insulation Guarantee Agency (SWIGA) which will provide cover should the installer used on this project cease trading. Where a homeowner chooses a render only finish, it will be accredited by the British Board of Agrément (BBA) and will have a product specific IBG of 10 - 25 years, dependent on the actual product used.

Can you confirm that a joint meeting with residents, involving both the contractor and council representatives, will take place to flush out any outstanding issues and reassure residents?

Yes, we will work with residents and Warmworks to schedule a meeting to resolve any ongoing issues and concerns the residents have. Warmworks will continue to offer regular opportunities in Caerau for residents to speak to them through the resident liaison officer and established contact channels.

I trust this addresses the points raised in your letter. We have made good progress since securing the project funding and will soon have dealt with the defective work in all eligible homes. We will continue to work with residents and other local stakeholders, ultimately making sure residents receive the best possible service and support as Warmworks complete the remedial works.

Yours sincerely

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

Y Cyng / Cllr John Spanswick
Arweinydd y Cyngor / Leader of Council

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair of the Petitions Committee

10 June 2025

Dear Carolyn Thomas MS

Thank you for your letter regarding Mencap Cymru's petition relating to vulnerable adults and cashless payments. Transport for Wales is committed to ensuring that we provide the highest standard of accessibility and customer service for all of our customers, so we greatly welcome all feedback and opportunities to engage with our disabled passengers.

We have previously provided this information to support the Petition Committee's consideration of this petition, but for the context of this letter, I'd like to highlight our position on cash payments for tickets.

If a ticket office is located at a station a customer is travelling from, and they would like to purchase a ticket using cash, then they are able to do so before boarding the train at the office. If a station does not have a ticket office, or if the ticket office is closed, then they can use a self-service machine to get a 'promise to pay voucher' which can be exchanged for a normal ticket at the earliest opportunity at their destination. This demonstrates the customer's intent to pay for their journey and a penalty fare will not be necessary.

Our self-service ticket machines are designed to be accessible for all to use. If customers are unable to use a self-service ticket machine due to personal circumstances they can purchase a ticket on the train. In these circumstances, our Revenue Protection team will have discretion not to charge a penalty fare.

TfW is fully committed to ensuring all customers have the confidence and ability to use our network, and we work close with industry partners and our own Accessibility Panel to ensure we deliver for all, including those who may require additional accessibility.

Our Accessibility Panel influences our accessibility policies and advises us on how to support disabled, deaf and older customers to use our services effectively. We've recently expanded the membership of our Accessibility Panel and we now have members who are representative of the Autistic community, those with learning disabilities and a representative from All Wales People First, a learning disability charity. We are committed to seeking the views of those with lived experience across a wide range of backgrounds, providing support and alternative communication (such as easy read format) to ensure we break down barriers to engagement. More information on our Accessibility Panel can be found here: [Accessibility panel | TfW](#).



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We also welcome the opportunity to engage further with Mencap Cymru through our Confidence to Travel scheme, which offers tailored support to disabled and vulnerable customers. Through the programme, we work with a number of third sector organisations to support customers to purchase tickets, plan journeys, visit stations and experience a journey by train. The aim of this scheme is to help our customers build confidence and ensure they're aware of the support they can access when travelling with TfW. If this is something the Mencap Cymru is interested in hearing more about, they can contact our Community Rail team at community@tfw.wales or by calling our Customer Relations team on 03333 211 202.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to highlight our Passenger Assist service, which we've delivered in order to improve accessibility and inclusion for customers when travelling on our network. We have a specialist Passenger Assist team who help disabled customers book assistance and buy tickets in advance at our stations and on our trains. The team is available to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (excluding 25th and 26th December). When booking assisted travel, the following can be arranged if applicable:

- Making a ramp available to assist with getting on and off the train
- Guidance through the station or on or off the train
- Finding a seat on the train
- Reserving a seat or wheelchair space on services where available
- Help with making connections with other train companies on one single booking
- Help with luggage

Customers can book Passenger Assist by phone on 03330 050 501 or online at: [Book Assisted Travel On Our Trains | Transport for Wales](#). Although we encourage passengers to book assistance in advance, in order to help us plan and make sure they're not waiting for support, customers can also simply "turn up and go" without booking assistance in advance.

Thank you once again for engaging with us in your consideration of this petition. As always, TfW is committed to ensuring that our services reflect the needs of all of our customers, particularly those with lived experience. We will continue to engage with vulnerable and learning disabled passengers to ensure we continue to improve passenger experience for all.

If you have any further questions, then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

James Price
Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive

Agenda Item 4.2



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Emma Hardy MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

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Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee
House of Commons

25th June 2025

Dear Ruth,

Thank you for your letter of 4 June on behalf of the Welsh Affairs Committee about the situation concerning the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.

This Government recognises the wide range of public benefits that our inland waterways bring, with people simply enjoying being by them, using them for leisure and recreation, deriving health and wellbeing improvements, and visiting industrial heritage attractions located beside many of them. Many people also live on the waterways, and there are many waterway-related jobs and businesses.

Waterways also form an important part of our natural environment by providing green corridors along which biodiversity can flourish, as well as contributing to the growth of local economies, such as through domestic tourism and providing active transport links. In certain circumstances they also can have a role in flood risk management planning and response situations.

In responding to your questions, it is important to note that the Canal and River Trust is independent of government and as such we do not have a direct role in its management or operational matters and decisions. DEFRA officials stay joined up with Welsh officials via meetings on Grant Oversight. The £52.6 million annual grant funding provided by the government, while made in consideration of the Trust's responsibilities, supports the Trust's network infrastructure maintenance to ensure public safety and navigability. The Grant Agreement does not stipulate how the grant funding should be allocated within the maintenance programme, and it is for the Trust to decide those priorities based on operational need.

Accordingly, Defra does not assess the Trust's management of individual canals in the network. The use of the grant funding across the whole network is monitored on a quarterly basis by officials, and senior level meetings are held three times a year with the Trusts' executive management team at which operational matters linked to grant funding are noted along with a report on the Trust's financial situation. Our view at this time is that the Trust is financially sound and is making good progress towards increasing funding from alternative non-grant sources, in line with the objective agreed when the Trust was set up in 2012 to move towards greater financial self-sufficiency and reduced reliance on public funding.

As you have noted, water abstraction regulations and their enforcement is a devolved matter for the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The Canal and River Trust works with NRW in the same way it does with the Environment Agency (EA) as the environmental regulator in England. Defra does not direct the EA on matters concerning the application of environmental regulations to the Canal and River Trust, or any other organisation. Likewise, it does not direct NRW on its regulation due to the devolved nature of the policy area.

As far as future funding for the Canal and River Trust is concerned, we have agreed to provide a further 10-year government grant of £401 million from 2027. It will bring the total amount of government support for the C&RT since 2012 to around £1.14 billion and will continue to support the Canal and River Trust in planning for the future of the waterways. Welsh Government officials attend the cross-Whitehall oversight board that has been established for the development of the new grant agreement and accompanying key performance indicators.

Thank you for your continued and constructive engagement regarding this matter, which will help to ensure our waterways are protected and supported to flourish, benefitting local communities, economies, and environments alike.

I trust that this response has answered the questions you raised in your letter.

I am copying this letter to Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP, Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, and Carolyn Thomas MS, Chair of the Senedd Petitions Committee.

Yours sincerely,

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

EMMA HARDY MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs