

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 15 November 2016

Meeting time: 09.00

For further information contact:

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Agenda Item 2.1

P-05-717 Establish Statutory Public Rights of Access to Land and Water for Recreational and Other Purposes.

This petition was submitted by Waters of Wales – WoW, having collected 3,045 paper signatures and 433 paper signatures – Total = 3,478

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to implement a Bill to establish statutory public rights of access to land and water for recreational and other purposes. The bill should enshrine access rights and responsibilities for the public in the same way that the 2003 Land Reform (Scotland) Act encourages co-operative use of the outdoors for healthy, low impact recreation. This Bill must enshrine public rights of navigation for inland water, and permit access to and along water. It must remove the lack of legal clarity and restrictions which act as a barrier to sport and recreation and the promotion of Wales as a welcoming place for healthy recreation, tourism and adventurous activity at all levels of participation and enjoyment.

Additional information

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 (i) was intended to deliver much-needed public access to the countryside. Before CRoW was enacted, however, it had already been stripped of many of its intended public benefits. For example, it sought to exclude the public from inland water. CRoW was complicated, expensive, and fails to deliver the access to land and water needed by the wider public. The CRoW mapping exercise alone cost nearly £8m, to address the needs of the small percentage of the public who want to access upland areas. Welsh Government took ownership of this issue in 2009 (ii), yet at the end of 2015, recreational access to land fails to meet the needs of the wider public, and the issue of access to water has not progressed. To the contrary, costly initiatives endorsed and supported by Welsh Government have led in some cases to reduced access to inland water. Two successive Welsh Governments have acknowledged the need for change, but instead chose a process which serves only to maintain the status quo. Welsh Government's 3-year process costing at least £2.4m has, by their own admission, not delivered. Rather, it has demonstrably reduced access opportunities, for example to inland

water. Scotland implemented a permanent solution through land reform legislation (iv) for the legislative cost of £200,000, with a final cost of approx. £3m including the cost of television campaigning and public education (v).

(i) Countryside and Rights of Way Act(2000)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents/enacted>

(ii) Report of the Petitions Committee's Short Inquiry into Access along Inland Water, March 2009 (iii)

https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/62377602/Welsh_Government_Letter_RefTOJG0126513_16Oct2013.pdf (iv) Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/contents/enacted>

(v) LAND REFORM (SCOTLAND) BILL–EXPLANATORY NOTES (AND OTHER ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS)

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S1_Bills/Land%20Reform%20%28Scotland%29%20Bill/b44s

Petition: P-05-717 Establish statutory public rights of access to land and water for recreational and other purposes

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Tachwedd 2016
Petitions Committee | 15 November 2016

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-717

Petition title: **Establish statutory public rights of access to land and water for recreational and other purposes**

Petition text:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to implement a Bill to establish statutory public rights of access to land and water for recreational and other purposes. The bill should enshrine access rights and responsibilities for the public in the same way that the 2003 Land Reform (Scotland) Act encourages co-operative use of the outdoors for healthy, low impact recreation. This Bill must enshrine public rights of navigation for inland water, and permit access to and along water. It must remove the lack of legal clarity and restrictions which act as a barrier to sport and recreation and the promotion of Wales as a welcoming place for healthy recreation, tourism and adventurous activity at all levels of participation and enjoyment.

Background

Access to land in Wales

Access rights to land in Wales consist principally of public rights of way, open access and permissive access. Access rights in England are very similar to those in Wales, whereas in Scotland they are comparatively less restrictive, and in Northern Ireland comparatively more restrictive.

Rights of way

Public rights of way are highways that allow the public a legal right of passage. There are around 33,000 km of public rights of way in Wales. Rights of way include:

- footpaths – right of way is on foot only;
- bridleways – for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists (who must give way to people on foot or horseback);
- byways open to all traffic (BOATs) – open to walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, horse-drawn vehicles and motor vehicles; and
- restricted byways – can have rights for all traffic except motorised vehicles.

Open access

Certain areas of land can be accessed without having to use paths. This land is known as “access land”. Access land includes open country (mountain, moor, heath and down), registered common land and areas of dedicated public forests (where owners such as the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) allow free access). One fifth of Wales is mapped as access land. This includes 360,000 hectares of open country and common land plus 100,000 hectares of NRW land.

There are some activities that cannot, in most circumstances, be undertaken on access land. These are known as “general restrictions”. They include horse riding, cycling, fishing, camping, taking animals other than dogs onto the land, driving a vehicle and water sports.

Permissive access

Some landowners may allow the public access to their land for walking, cycling or riding. This is known as “permissive access”. Access may be restricted at specific times of the year, for example to protect ground-nesting birds. Landowners have a duty of care for those using permissive access across their land.

Some landowners may enter into an agreement with a public authority to allow the public to gain access to their land. In these instances the terms and agreements of any contract signed would apply. An example of this is the Welsh Government’s [Glastir agri-environment scheme](#) which gives land owners the opportunity to provide permissive access to otherwise inaccessible land in return for payment.

Legislation

There are many pieces of legislation governing access in Wales (and England), however the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* (CRoW Act) is the most significant.

The CRoW Act makes local highway authorities responsible for protecting and maintaining rights of way, publishing Rights of Way Improvement Plans and mapping rights of way on Definitive Maps and Statements. It also provides for a statutory right to apply to permanently extinguish or divert certain public rights of way.

The CRoW Act also introduced a general right of public access on foot to certain land, i.e. access land. The Act does not cover permissive access.

Access to water in Wales

Access rights set out in the CRoW Act do not include to access to inland water.

Access to inland water in Wales has proved to be a highly divisive issue in the past with strongly held views on both sides of the debate. Recreational water-users such as canoeists are in favour of legislation to provide people with a right to navigate these waters. Anglers and fishing organisations are generally opposed to the introduction of a general right of access for recreational water users.

In broad terms recreational users argue that there is a high demand for recreational activities on inland waters in Wales and that increased access could lead to higher levels of tourism and economic benefits. Angling and fishing groups argue that recreational water use can cause environmental damage to fisheries and particularly fish spawning grounds for species such as salmon. Anglers currently pay a rod licence and other fees to fish in rivers and argue that recreational users pay no fees towards the cost of maintaining and enhancing rivers.

A summary of the debate around the issues can be found in the Third Assembly's Sustainability Committee report on its [Inquiry into Access to Inland Water in Wales \(2010\) \(PDF 706KB\)](#). The Inquiry is discussed in further detail later in this briefing.

Some have argued that there are historical navigational rights that provide a general right of access to non-tidal rivers and lakes for recreational users. The consensus view however, is that there is no general common law right for people to navigate non-tidal waters or inland lakes in England and Wales. In its inquiry report, the Sustainability Committee concluded that while it had considered the views about historical rights:

There is however, no modern judicial precedent which supports this, and whilst we have considered the views of these witnesses with interest, we cannot, for the purpose of our inquiry, base our recommendations on a view of the law which is at odds with the one that is generally accepted.

The Welsh Government, in developing its policy on the issue, adopts the same legal position.

There are some rivers in Wales where access for recreational use is already permitted either for historical reasons or because voluntary access agreements have been agreed.

Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

The *Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003* (LRS Act) and the accompanying [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) is the principal legislation relating to outdoor access in Scotland. The associated statutory right of access came into effect in 2005.

Part 1 of the LRS Act establishes statutory public rights of access to land and inland water for recreational, educational and other activities. The rights specifically exclude any kind of motorised activity (unless for disabled access), hunting, shooting and fishing.

The rights apply over all of Scotland including urban areas, hills, farmland, forests, beaches, canals, lochs and rivers. However, the rights of access do not apply within buildings, structures or their immediate surroundings, to houses and gardens, and to crop land (grass is not deemed to be a crop unless it is grown for hay/silage), though access to field margins is allowed.

The emphasis of Part 1 of the LRS Act is on the management of access at a local level providing local authorities and National Park authorities (access authorities) with powers to manage access in their area. The LRS Act requires local authorities to establish Local Access Forums. The LRS Act provides that access authorities can temporarily exempt a particular area of land and/or inland water from access rights by way of a “Section 11 Order”.

The LRS Act lays out a duty for the local authority to draw up a plan for a system of paths (“core paths”) sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area.

Further information on access in each of the countries of the UK can be found in the Research Service publication: [Countryside access in the UK: a review of associated legislation and policy \(2014\) \(PDF 449KB\)](#).

Welsh Government action

Previous Welsh Governments have voiced general support for increasing access for recreational users to inland water and they have in the past [supported a voluntary \(PDF 160KB\)](#) rather than a statutory approach. The Welsh Government Splash Fund ran from 2009 to 2014 and provided funding to support the development of voluntary access agreements and enhanced facilities for recreational water users, such as enhanced access points to rivers at appropriate locations.

The previous Welsh Government reviewed the legislative framework surrounding access and outdoor recreation [and concluded that](#):

- On land, there is a need to improve our rights of way network and make the associated legislative framework on access more effective; and
- On water, there is a need to see an increase in the number of voluntary access agreements providing for a range of recreational activities.

In 2015, the Welsh Government consulted on a Green Paper entitled [Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation](#). Key proposals in the Green Paper included:

- Removing restrictions around recording public rights of way, maintaining routes, and creating diverting and extinguishing. The proposals include removing some of the restrictions on the range of activities that can take place on rights of way and on access land;

- A more permissive approach to access including extending the definition of access land to include other areas such as woodland, lakes and coastal cliffs; and
- Improving access to water through more opportunities for responsible access for recreation to inland waters, the coast and maritime environment.

The consultation attracted 5,796 responses. The [summary of consultation responses \(PDF 123KB\)](#), published in March 2016, noted that the Welsh Government had not at that time made a decision on whether any changes would be implemented.

Lesley Griffiths, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, wrote to the Petitions Committee on 19 October 2016. Her letter states that most respondents to the consultation “were of the view that the current system is too complex and burdensome”.

The Cabinet Secretary also said that she is keen to increase opportunities for outdoor access and intends to develop proposals to this effect, the scope and timetable for which will be set out “early next year”.

National Assembly for Wales action

Third Assembly Petitions Committee 2009

In 2008 a petition was submitted to the Petitions Committee that called on the Welsh Government to introduce legislation to increase **access to inland water** based on the model adopted in Scotland through the LRS Act. The Petitions Committee agreed to undertake a short inquiry into the issue and reported in March 2009.

The [Committee found \(PDF 227KB\)](#) that the situation in Wales was “untenable and unworkable” and that there was much “complexity and confusion” over the many and varied rights to inland water. It concluded that new legislation on access to inland water was needed and that the LRS Act provided a model upon which a “unique Welsh model” could be adopted.

The Petitions Committee recommended that a scrutiny committee of the Assembly should undertake a full inquiry into the need for a new legislation on this basis.

Third Assembly Sustainability Committee 2010

In response to the Petitions Committee’s recommendation the Sustainability Committee undertook a 12-month inquiry into the issue. Its [report \(PDF 706KB\)](#), published in June 2010, made 13 recommendations. While it agreed with the Petitions Committee that the situation was untenable and that a new legislative framework was needed, it did not support the Petition Committee’s view that the LRS Act was a suitable model for Wales.

The Sustainability Committee recommended that legislation should be adopted that would appoint a “lead body” in Wales to be responsible for facilitating voluntary agreements between stakeholders. It stated that this “lead body” should also be empowered to adopt a compulsory approach where no voluntary agreement had been possible. The Welsh

Government [accepted this recommendation in principle \(PDF 160KB\)](#), saying it wished to evaluate the success of the voluntary approach before deciding whether a mandatory approach was necessary. At the time of publishing the report the Assembly did not have the legislative competence it needed to introduce such legislation, but gained this competence following the 2011 referendum.

In relation to the LRS Act, the Committee concluded that the difference in the laws of trespass in England and Wales as compared to Scotland would make it difficult for Wales to adopt a similar model to Scotland.

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-05-717
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/06408/16

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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19 October 2016

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 5 October, regarding the petition to establish statutory public access to land and water – ref: P-05-717.

This latest petition is very similar to one submitted by Canoe Wales (then the Welsh Canoeing Association) in 2009. Then the Committee recommended “a further more wide ranging inquiry be carried out with a view to bringing forward legislation in this area, which would give all stakeholders the opportunity to submit evidence”. The matter then went for consideration by the Sustainability Committee. The Welsh Government has to date followed the recommendations put forward by the latter Committee, including supporting the use of access agreements on inland waters through the Splash funding scheme between 2009 - 2014.

In 2014 the Welsh Government commenced a broad based review of the legislative framework for access and outdoor recreation. This included a series of stakeholder seminars leading to the 2015 consultation on Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation.

The consultation paper examined the current legislative framework for access to the outdoors and encouraged discussion on a sliding scale of potential options, including making improvements and removing some of the restrictions in place under current access legislation, extending the definition of access land to include other areas, and implementing an entirely new legislative framework to allow for responsible recreation similar to the system referred to in the petition. The consultation received almost 5800 responses most of which were of the view that the current system is too complex and burdensome.

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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.

I agree with the petitioners, we should continue to promote Wales as a welcoming destination for those wanting to participate in recreation, tourism and adventurous activity. There are also significant health and well-being benefits from people participating in outdoor recreation activity or utilising the available access for active travel.

It is clear, from the work done to date and the continuing interest from groups such as Waters of Wales, people are very passionate about the benefits of outdoor recreation and are sensitive to the potential impact on land management and existing users. Careful consideration is, therefore, needed of the many issues raised in the consultation. I remain keen to increase the opportunities available for access to the outdoors and intend to undertake further work to develop proposals which could better support access to the outdoors in Wales.

I intend to set out the scope and timetable for developing reform proposals early next year.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



08 November 2016

Dear Petitions Committee Members

Letter from Lesley Griffiths AM, ref. LG/06408/16

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter referenced above.

We welcome the Minister's acknowledgement of the benefits of outdoor recreation to the health and well-being of the nation, and to the Welsh economy. However, the process followed to date demonstrates that the wide-ranging benefits will only be truly released and built upon if a Land Reform (Wales) bill is produced.

Regarding the statement that "Welsh Government has to date followed the recommendations put forward by the Sustainability Committee following their subsequent Inquiry"; we should not forget that these recommendations followed an unexplained departure, at a late stage in the proceedings, from the recommendations of the petitions committee.

The Petitions Committee in 2009, informed in the course of its inquiry, by "...a formal meeting in the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh to take evidence on the effectiveness of the Scottish legislation", concluded:

"We believe that the mechanisms and processes of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 go a long way to providing clarity and understanding of the situation within Scotland. At the very least, the Act has effectively established and equalised statutory rights and responsibilities; it has clarified local authority powers and duties; it has created local access forums to facilitate discussion between parties; it has encouraged education to promote awareness and understanding of people's rights and responsibilities; and, importantly, it has led to investment in recreational and

environmental capital. We believe that the clear balance of rights in Scotland has inherently moved the access debate forward onto a more productive footing. Parties have been able to “leave behind cul-de-sac positions concerning who has which legal rights on their side”ⁱ and to develop communication and dialogue over practical management solutions, joint-working arrangements and monitoring. We therefore suggest it provides a useful model for Wales to copy and adapt”ⁱⁱ.

Key points arising from the Petitions Committee’s Inquiry include:

- Before the Act came into being there was an “uneasy balance” between the public not having clear legal rights and landowners or occupiers having very few workable remedies against trespass or irresponsible behaviour.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Following a major public consultation before the draft Bill was published in 2001 Scottish Ministers had concluded that the legal difficulties had proved not as great as originally thought.^{iv}
- The emphasis of the Act is on local management of access, so it gave the Scottish local authorities and national park authorities, duties and powers to uphold access rights including a duty to plan a comprehensive “Core Paths Plan” system, to employ local officers and to set up Local Access Forums.^{v(pp8-9)}

The success of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act can be attributed to its simplicity and comprehensive nature. Codes of conduct are issued to operate within these principles, and management measures are undertaken on an ‘as-needed’, basis, working in the knowledge of clearly defined rights and responsibilities with all parties on an equal footing.

This is in sharp contrast to CRoW, which failed to deliver due to the way it was ‘watered down’ by complex and arbitrary restrictions; and to the process followed by Welsh Government in attempting to negotiate access on a piecemeal basis, location by location and user-group by user group. The piecemeal process cannot work for the long or even medium term, as even if it were possible to draft legislation to cover every existing activity, we cannot know what activities may develop in the future.

Like every other devolved administration before them, Scotland legislated at the first opportunity to clarify and enshrine public rights to the land (including inland water). The Land Reform (Scotland) Act is future-proofed by legislating for the key principles.

The Petitions Committee Report highlights this statement:

“The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 is “one of the most advanced pieces of access legislation in the whole of Europe and is, by and large, working well.”^{vi}(pp8)

A land reform bill for Wales presents an ideal opportunity for Wales to take its place among the many countries: i.e. almost everywhere, which have legislated in the public interest to enshrine public rights. Land Reform (Wales) will contribute to achieving all the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, and will make a particularly significant contribution to ‘A healthier Wales’ and ‘A more equal Wales’.

Along with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, a Land Reform (Wales) Act will complement the Environment (Wales) Act and Planning (Wales) Act to sit at the centre of a raft of progressive legislation to secure the long-term well-being of Wales.

Yours sincerely

Pam Bell

On behalf of the Waters of Wales – WoW Community.

contact.watersofwales.org.uk@gmail.com

ⁱ Record of Proceedings column 39, 2 March 2009, Petitions Committee

ⁱⁱ Report of the Petitions Committee’s Short Inquiry into Access Along Inland Water, April 2009 pp13

ⁱⁱⁱ Rob Garner, Policy Officer with Scottish Natural Heritage, Access to the Countryside for Open-air Recreation, Scottish Natural Heritage’s Advice to Government, 1999, quoted in Report of the Petitions Committee’s Short Inquiry into Access Along Inland Water, April 2009.

^{iv} Record of Proceedings column 29, 2 March 2009, Petitions Committee.

^v Report of the Petitions Committee’s Short Inquiry into Access Along Inland Water, April 2009.

^{vi} Record of Proceedings column 18, 2 March 2009, Petitions Committee

Agenda Item 2.2

P-05-720 Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council Petition for the Installation of Fibre Optic Broadband

This petition was submitted by Cllr James Campell, having collected 166 paper signatures.

Text of the Petition

We, the residents of Penderyn have signed the below petition to express our desire that Fibre Optic Broadband be installed in our village. The use of this service will transform our community, enhancing us the users in our social use of the internet as well as those who work within the village either in local business or those who work from home.

Assembly Constituency and Region:

Cynon Valley

South Wales Central

Superfast broadband petition

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Tachwedd 2016
Petitions Committee | 15 November 2016

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-720

Petition title: Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council Petition for the Installation of Fibre Optic Broadband

Text of petition: We, the residents of Penderyn have signed the below petition to express our desire that Fibre Optic Broadband be installed in our village. The use of this service will transform our community, enhancing us the users in our social use of the internet as well as those who work within the village either in local business or those who work from home.

Background and Welsh Government action

BT is currently in the process of rolling out superfast broadband across Wales through the Welsh Government's Superfast Cymru project. The project is funded by the Welsh Government, the UK Government, the EU and BT's own investment. In July 2015 the Welsh Government announced an extension to this project to cover an additional 42,000 premises: consequently the programme deadline was extended to summer 2017.

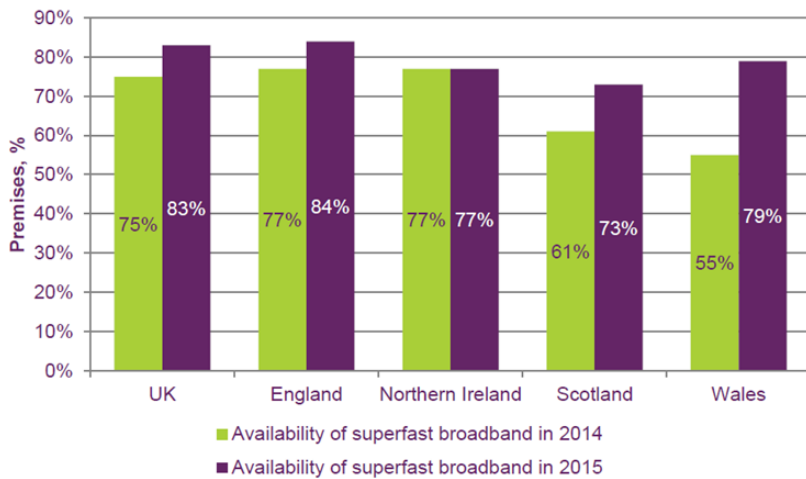
The Welsh Government runs two other schemes to improve broadband availability:

- [Access Broadband Cymru](#): grants of up to £800 are available where premises cannot currently access fast broadband;
- [Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher](#): grants of up to £10,000 are available to fund (or part-fund) the installation costs of new ultrafast connections for businesses in Wales

The Welsh Government has a £12.5 million five-year "Superfast broadband exploitation programme" to help businesses make the most of the opportunities offered by superfast broadband. This is being funded by the Welsh Government, the EU, local authorities and academic and private sources.

The [latest Ofcom data](#) for broadband coverage (June 2015) shows that, since 2014 coverage of superfast broadband services has increased faster in Wales than any other UK nation:

Figure 1: Coverage of superfast services has improved



Source: Ofcom analysis of operator data

National Assembly for Wales action

On 2 November 2016 there was a [plenary debate](#) into broadband access, called by the Welsh Conservatives. The following amended motion was subsequently passed:

To propose that the National Assembly for Wales:

1. Welcomes the progress made in implementing the Superfast Cymru scheme which has brought high-speed broadband to over 610,000 premises across Wales and will provide access for an additional 100,000 further premises before project close in 2017.
2. Notes the progress of Access Broadband Cymru and its predecessor project which have provided broadband to over 6,500 premises across Wales using a range of innovative technologies.
3. Recognises the importance of high speed broadband and digital connectivity to businesses, communities and the economy in all parts of Wales and notes the Programme for Government commitment to offer fast reliable broadband to every property in Wales.
4. Notes the Welsh Government's intention to:
 - a) work with Ofcom, the UK Government and network operators, to deliver universal access to high speed broadband and mobile coverage;
 - b) reform Permitted Development Rights in the planning system to promote telecoms infrastructure investment and network deployment;
 - c) reflect on the progress made by the Scottish Government through its mobile action in developing proposals in Wales; and
 - d) publish further information about extending fast reliable broadband access to every property in Wales.

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

Julie James AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Sgiliau a Gwyddoniaeth
Minister for Skills and Science



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-720
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/05426/16

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17 October 2016

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 10 October 2016 regarding the roll out of superfast broadband in Penderyn.

I'm sorry to hear of the frustrations of those who are unable to access superfast broadband. The fact that the petition collected 163 paper signatures clearly demonstrates that this is a matter that the residents of Penderyn feel passionately about.

Officials have checked several addresses in Penderyn and can see that the majority of the village is served by cabinet 2 on the Hirwaun Exchange. The cabinet 2 area is scheduled to be enabled for superfast broadband using a mixture of Fibre to the Property (FTTP) and Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) technology.

Those who are scheduled for connectivity using FTTP technology are due to be enabled in Spring 2017. This date is subject to change should any problems be encountered when engineers access the site. The deployment of FTTP technology does sometimes require a greater level of preparation and work by Openreach as it takes a fibre cable from the exchange right into a premise meaning no crossover onto the original copper network.

The remainder of the cabinet 2 area are in scope to be rolled out for superfast broadband using FTTC technology; where fibre optic cables run from the local exchange to roadside cabinets which are, in turn, connected to standard phone lines to provide superfast broadband to premises.

Unfortunately specific dates for roll-out to those premises served by FTTC are difficult to schedule due to each individual premises' distance from an enabled cabinet being the determining factor in level of groundwork required and the speeds achievable.

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

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In the meantime, as an alternative route to accessing the superfast broadband, the Access Broadband Cymru (ABC) scheme is something that the resident of Penderyn might wish to explore.

The scheme provides grants to fund (or part-fund) the installation costs of new broadband connections for homes and businesses in Wales (it does not include monthly rental costs). New connections through this scheme must deliver a step change in speed - with at least double current download speeds. The amount of funding received is dependent on the speed of the new connection.

In addition, local businesses could be eligible for assistance under our Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher scheme. The scheme provides up to £10,000 to fund (or part-fund) the installation costs of new ultrafast connections for businesses in Wales. It does not include monthly rental costs. The 1st £3,000 of eligible costs is 100% funded by Welsh Government, between £3,000 and £17,000 is 50% funded, and above £17,000 no additional funding is provided.

Further information on both schemes can be obtained by calling 0300 025 8897 or emailing broadband@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

As was highlighted in my statement on Superfast Broadband on Tuesday 11th October, the contract that the Welsh Government holds with BT is for the delivery of superfast broadband to all eligible parts of Wales by the end of the project, the schedule for which areas are enabled is the responsibility of BT Openreach.

However, please rest assured that we are doing everything possible to ensure that the roll-out superfast broadband across Wales happens as soon as smoothly as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Julie James AM/AC
Y Gweinidog Sgiliau a Gwyddoniaeth
Minister for Skills and Science

Agenda Item 3.1

P-04-436 : Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to put together a Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales report.

In Scotland they have the GERS report, it aims to enhance public understanding of fiscal issues through detailed analysis of official UK and Scottish Government financial statistics. It's time that the Welsh Government published a similar report so that we can truly see the fiscal position of Wales.

Petition raised by: Stuart Evans

Date petition first considered by Committee: 15 January 2013

Number of signatures: 27

P-04-436 Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the clerking team, 03.11.16

Hi Kayleigh, I apologise for not replying sooner, I must have missed the last email.

I am a little confused though as the inaugural GERW was published earlier this year.

<http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/wgc/gerw/>

From what I've seen it's pretty much what I wanted in the first place, it's just a shame that Jane Hutt fuffed about for years trying to fob me off before it ended up being published anyway.

I think the committee can probably now consider this petition closed and I'll consider it a win. Jane Hutt probably won't care either way as no media outlet here is ever going to offer any real scrutiny.

Anyway, hwyl fawr.

Stuart

Agenda Item 3.2

P-04-532 Improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that Health Boards implement the investment proposed by the Welsh Neuromuscular Network Vision Document for improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales.

Additional Information:

The Welsh Neuromuscular Network is recommending the following priority developments: 1. Increase in Family Care Advisors and support. 2. Specialist adult neuromuscular physiotherapists. 3. Appointment of consultant in adult neuromuscular disease. 4. Increase in clinical psychology. 5. An equipment budget to enable minor purchases and lease arrangements.

Petition raised by: Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 4 February 2014

Mike Hedges AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

1 November 2016

Dear Mike,

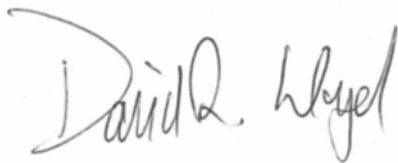
Petition P-04-532 Improving Specialised Neuromuscular Services in Wales

Thank you for your letter of 20 September 2016 regarding the above petition.

The Committee considered the petition at our meetings on 29 September and 19 October and noted that the Neurological Conditions Delivery Plan is due for renewal in 2017. We agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport to seek an update on the relevant deliverables and on specific actions the Welsh Government is taking.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Dai Lloyd AM
Chair, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee



**P-04-532 Improving Specialised Neuromuscular Services in Wales.doc –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking team, 09.11.16**

Dear Kayleigh,

Please see below a comment from Muscular Dystrophy UK.

We welcome the involvement of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee as we press for improvements to neuromuscular services in Wales.

We continue to urge each Health Board across Wales to collaborate and work with the Welsh Neuromuscular Network, with commitments to supporting a more robust and sustainable service for people with muscular dystrophy and neuromuscular conditions across Wales.

This should include:

- the required level of neuromuscular care advisor support
- specialist physiotherapy
- psychology support
- increased dedicated neuromuscular consultant time
- better co-ordination of appointments

Regards,

Jonathan

Jonathan Kingsley

Policy, Campaigns and Parliamentary Manager

Agenda Item 3.3

P-04-659 – Pay Student Nurses their full Travel Costs

This petition was submitted by Steffan Thomas, having collected 102 signatures.

Text of Petition

In 2014 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) changed its policy on travel to placements, the work component of a nursing course. Before this change, students were paid travel expenses from their home to their place of work. Now students are paid the cost of travel from their home, or the university at which they study. The smallest distance is then used to calculate the payment they receive.

Student nurses without dependents in Wales receive a bursary of approx. £100 to £500 a month. The higher figure, spread across their work hours, reaches the minimum wage at best. On placements, student nurses are expected to take on an increasing number of the responsibilities of a nurse. They provide care – washing, dressing, feeding patients; talking to patients and families; working with healthcare professionals to improve patients' well-being. They are also called on to show learning from these placements, and hone their skills in patient care.

The cut in travel allowances for these work placements means a total cut in the amount received for being student nurse.

This change has several ill effects It creates an incentive for Universities to place students near as possible to campus – limiting the clinical experience of student nurses before qualification It makes nursing less attractive to people from rural or isolated communities It privileges nurses who live nearer to their university, and could discourage those who are unable to move because of commitments to children and others. It makes nursing less attractive to people in full-time work, or from deprived backgrounds.

We believe that student nurses should be paid their travel costs where they live, to the places they work. We believe this change makes it less likely that people will choose a nursing career, and we believe that it will limit the range of experience that they have prior to qualification. We call on the WAG to reverse this change, for the benefit of student nurses and their patients.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Neath
- South Wales West

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-659
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/03134/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

21 November 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 2 November to Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills, regarding the petition you have received from Steffan Thomas regarding student nurse placement travel costs. The letter was passed to me for reply as Minister for Health and Social Services.

The Welsh NHS Bursary Scheme supports the education and training of a range of healthcare professionals, including nurses. Prior to the change, individuals were able to claim travel expenses for attending all placement venues. The scheme did not distinguish between placements located closer or further from the normal base of study. This was in contrast to the arrangements in place elsewhere in the UK and to the arrangements for employed nurses who would normally receive reimbursement for hours travelled in excess of their normal travelling requirement.

The changes introduced make provision for mileage to be claimed in circumstances where students are required to travel further than they would normally to participate in an educational placement. This means no student should be disadvantaged regardless of where their placements take place.

In addition, as part of the wider changes, the amount which students are able to claim per mile was increased.

The introduction of these arrangements applied to new students only and therefore no student experienced a cut in the funding they could claim under the bursary arrangements.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0300 0603300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0300 0604400
Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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.

Students attend placements to learn about the duties they will undertake on satisfactory completion of their training programmes. During these placements they are supervised and are required to meet educational standards as part of their evidence of competence.

I am able to confirm there are no plans to change the current arrangements.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Mark".

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

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

Agenda Item 3.4

P-04-682 Routine Screening for Type 1 Diabetes in Children and Young People

This petition was submitted by Anthony Cook, having collected 2,570 signatures. An associated petition collected 3,670 signatures

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to introduce routine screening for Type 1 Diabetes in children and young people.

In January of this year we tragically lost our beloved 13-year-old grandson, Peter Baldwin, to Type 1 diabetes that had been undetected until it was too late to save him. Peter was a well-loved and highly respected pupil at Whitchurch High School in Cardiff where he is greatly missed but for his family the hurt is unimaginable.

Our daughter Beth was recently presented with an award from The Pride of Britain for her fundraising efforts and for raising awareness of this terrible illness but with your help, and that of your friends and family we can really make a difference.

Please spare a couple of minutes to sign our petition calling on the Welsh Government to introduce a screening programme and to raise the profile of the need to check for Type 1 Diabetes in anyone presented to a health care professional with unexplained flu-like symptoms or general feeling of being unwell. The test involved is merely a finger prick or urine sample and takes less

time than you have spent reading this paragraph; it also only costs pennies. It is our intention to make this test as routine within GP surgeries and clinics as temperature and blood pressure checks presently are.

Your signature on this petition really could help save lives and prevent further terrible loss within families.

Additional Information:

The ideal standard would be for screening of all youngsters in order to catch this stealthy condition in the early stages. Many parts of the world are seeing the benefit of this screening and are now introducing it, the most recent being North Carolina in the U.S. Below is a link to the North Carolina implementation.

<http://insulinnation.com/living/reegans-rule-passes-north-carolina/>

The devolved Scottish Parliament is ahead of the rest of the U.K. and is already committed to debate the issue and appear very likely to implement screening. We want this for our children in Wales and are calling on the Welsh Government to introduce screening at the earliest opportunity.

PLEASE SIGN THE PETITION AND SHARE IT FAR AND WIDE

(now give yourself a pat on the back, you may have saved a child's life)

A petition campaigning for this change across the UK is currently collecting signatures on Change.org:

<https://www.change.org/p/craig-williams-mp-screen-children-for-type-1-diabetes>

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Cardiff North
- South Wales Central

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-682
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/01049/16 and MD/00196/16 follow up

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

4 April 2016

Dear William,

In my letter of 12 February I committed to writing to you once the paediatric diabetes network had made an assessment of the issues involved in your request to consider introducing screening in children for type 1 diabetes. You have since raised a query about my letter, in which I stated the prompt diagnosis of individuals, once they show signs of type 1 diabetes is a more effective approach.

Unlike type 2 diabetes, the onset of type 1 diabetes can be swift and is not therefore suitable to be detected by intermittent testing of people with no symptoms. This view is supported by the paediatric diabetes network, which has advised the evidence indicates screening children who do not have symptoms is not an effective intervention to reduce the risk of diabetic ketoacidosis neither is routine testing of unwell children who do not have specific diabetes features.

We are working with the diabetes implementation group and Diabetes UK Cymru to encourage healthcare professionals to implement the new National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline about diagnosis and management of diabetes in children and young people. In particular, we want all clinicians, especially in primary care, to check for the common symptoms – tiredness, thirst, toilet, thinner – and to hold a high index of

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Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford @wales.gsi.gov.uk

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.

suspicion to promote appropriate testing. We are also working through the implementation group to consider what other awareness raising approaches could be adopted.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Mark".

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol

Minister for Health and Social Services

Mike Hedges AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

1 November 2016

Dear Mike,

Petition P-04-682 Routine Screening for Type 1 Diabetes in Children and Young People

Thank you for your letter of 12 September 2016 regarding the above petition.

The Committee considered the petition at our meetings on 29 September and 19 October and agreed the following actions:

- To write to the Children and Young People's Wales Diabetes Network to seek up to date information on action to improve outcomes for children and young people with Type 1 diabetes in Wales. The Committee agreed that the response from the Network could inform a letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport.
- In relation to a study currently underway in Germany into whether a screening programme for Type 1 diabetes is feasible across a large population, we agreed to undertake a short inquiry to review the outcomes of the study when it concludes in 2017.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,



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

Dr Dai Lloyd AM
Chair, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee



Welsh Assembly Petition submission P-04-682

(Anthony Cook/ Beth & Stuart Baldwin)



Campaign to prevent late diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes

Peter's Story

Peter Baldwin turned 13 on 10th December 2014; he loved life, school and his friends. He was a fit, healthy teenager who had the world at his feet. As Christmas approached Peter got a winter cold which seemed to be worsening so we called the GP for advice and got an appointment on 31st December as by this time Peter was very unwell. The GP diagnosed a chest infection and gave us antibiotics. No Type 1 test was offered or discussed. I explained Peter was sleeping and drinking lots. (We now know 2 of the 4 signs of type 1)

24 hours later, 4.30pm on New Year's days we called the out of hours GP and explained we were very concerned about Peter who seemed to be deteriorating, with laboured breathing and a delirium. After insisting this was VERY URGENT we were transferred to 999 which was engaged for a short time. I, Beth Peter's mum then asked for an ambulance, which I had to be very direct about, the operator kept asking if I deemed it necessary and was it that much of an emergency. Thank goodness I stuck to my guns (many at this point would've given in and thought they were wasting the callers time) the rapid response paramedic arrived shortly and the very first thing he did after giving Peter some oxygen was prick his finger. He diagnosed Peter on the spot with Type 1 Diabetes; it took less than 30 seconds. The paramedic called an ambulance immediately and within less than 15 minutes we were in the resus department in UHW and Peter was being given the right care.

Had the GP pricked Peter's finger we would have had a 24 hour head start & Peter's body would have had more chance to recover from the diabetic ketoacidosis.

Please make GP/HCP testing for Type 1 Diabetes (finger prick/ urine sample) mandatory when presented with an ill child who has an obvious illness that could be masking Type 1 signs.

What do we want to achieve–

To reduce the number of children presenting with diabetic ketoacidosis (currently 500 per annum in the UK)

We are calling for a **mandatory** duty for all GPs and healthcare professionals in a primary care setting to carry out the finger prick blood test for all children who present to them with an illness that could be masking Type 1.

Why do we believe this is achievable?

We believe this petition can have immediate results. The National Assembly for Wales has powers to make/change laws to the devolved Health sector. We want Wales to lead the way and make Type 1 testing mandatory.

It has cost saving benefits, public awareness benefits and ultimately can prevent 500 children per year in the UK being diagnosed before the condition becomes life-threatening.

In response to your latest letter; dated 1st November 2016

We understand the Children and Young People's network are working closely with Diabetes UK Cymru to raise the profile and awareness of the dangers of misdiagnosis and late diagnosis/ detection. There are campaigns being developed at present. The CYPWDN only has direct access to secondary care (via paediatric clinics – 14 in Wales) so would not be in a position to ensure implementation of clinical guidance and promote appropriate testing, particularly in primary care. Diabetes UK Cymru is able to provide more information on the mechanisms *obtaining primary care evidence* in more detail. Once this is obtained we hope you the committee can use this information to implement direct action and positive change to implement protocol for more testing to prevent unnecessary DKA type 1 diabetes diagnosis.

The CYPWDN can only provide so much information. Feedback **directly from Local Health Boards** in Wales would provide a more accurate picture of levels of DKA/Type 1 pathways, which would enable all parties to identify gaps in service provision and make recommendations for changes and standardised practice across all boards.

What we aim to see actioned is additional training (e-learning is an option) and measures put into practice to encourage more testing amongst ill children, alongside blood glucose monitors being given to **every** GP not just every practice (pharmaceutical companies give

these away – the income comes from purchasing the strips) these actions we believe are achievable, cost effective and can be rolled out quickly. A public health campaign to support these actions would increase awareness, profile and impact effectiveness. We encourage this information to be shared with the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport.

In relation to the study taking place in Germany to conclude in 2017, we welcome this research and all others into the development of screening for antibodies/ genes testing at birth/ very young age, to establish whether Type 1 onset will occur. We appreciate this is on-going and will continue to follow the progress and updates. With regard to the feasibility study of screening, we would urge the Committee to take note of this, but to highlight the widely accepted approach of testing as being the most effective way of early identification of Type 1. Thank you for looking into this study, we look forward to receiving the findings and recommendations for us here in Wales with focus on increased testing until such time where screening is feasible.

Our petition is very much a moving document, since the discovery and development of insulin in 1921 many advances have been made. No-one, especially children, should die from undiagnosed/ misdiagnosed Type 1 Diabetes. We have the tools to detect and diagnose this autoimmune non preventable disease that can be managed if caught in time. A simple finger prick can save a life, please make testing mandatory for GP's and primary care professionals. The NICE guidelines state the pathway and the signs; rules need to be in place to make sure ALL ill children are tested. There needs to be accountability if these guidelines and pathways are not followed.

The previous committee made the following closing suggestions suggested by Bethan Jenkins AM and unanimously adopted by the other members. Bethan was particularly frank about the Committee doing as much as it can within its powers to assist our family with our petition.

1. The Petitions Committee committed to write to all Local Health Boards in Wales requesting more information on their DKA/Type 1 diagnosis policies and pathways. When all responses have been received, they would write a Research Paper on DKA/Type 1 diagnosis in Wales to assist them in their work and to raise awareness of the issue amongst other AMs who may sit on the relevant Committees.
2. The Petitions Committee would write to Health & Social Services Minister at the time, Mark Drakeford AM, to request clarification of his Ministerial response to the petition. Bethan Jenkins particularly highlighted the area of Beth's response that draws attention to the inconsistencies in the Government's position. The Committee will also request to see the evidence on which the Ministerial response is based, as this is also unclear, especially to those who are not familiar with diabetes.

3. The Petitions Committee would also recommend that the Minister meet with the Baldwin family to discuss the possibilities available to us in Wales to implement any future procedural measures that could be put in place for testing for Type 1.

We look forward to hearing your responses and recommended actions working closely with the Health, Social Care and Sport committee, thanks for your time,

Kind regards,

Peter's Family.

Agenda Item 3.5

P-04-556 No to Junction 41 closure

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government not to close Junction 41 of the M4 for the following reasons: 1. The closure will negatively impact the town centre traders and businesses. 2. The closure will cause traffic chaos in the town as residents try to access the motorway. 3. There has been insufficient consultation with the townspeople. 4. Further research is needed into alternative solutions. 5. The new train station cannot be a transport hub if it is not easily accessible. 6. It will adversely affect the town redevelopment.

Additional Text: Again, the needs of motorists have been prioritised over those of the people of Port Talbot. The town was desecrated when the motorway was originally built through the heart of the town and now we are expected to suffer the pollution whilst traffic passes through our town on the way to somewhere else! The motorway, not the Steelworks, is the towns biggest polluter, and yet we who breathe it in will be unable to gain access to it. Plans to reroute the towns traffic through the streets will add to traffic pollution and bring chaos. People of the town understand the issues with the motorway but demand real consultation on options and alternatives. Please give us a chance to protect our town.

Petition raised by: Rose David

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 13 May 2014

Number of signatures: 1654. An associated paper petition was handed in and collected 22,467 signatures.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**WRITTEN STATEMENT
BY
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

TITLE **The M4 at Port Talbot**

DATE **24 October 2016**

BY **Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure**

This Statement provides an update on the M4 at Port Talbot and specifically the trial part-time closure of the westbound on-slip at junction 41.

As part of our ongoing review, I met with David Rees AM, Stephen Kinnock MP and a member of the public from Port Talbot recently, to seek their views on the impact of the potential closure of the slip roads and to better understand the concerns raised by the local residents and businesses.

Having considered the issue fully, including the implications of the uncertainties surrounding TATA Steel and the impact of the UK's decision to leave the European Union, I have decided not to proceed with further consideration of slip road closures at Port Talbot at this time.

However, I recognise that improvement of strategic traffic flow is of great importance to economic prosperity in South Wales. Therefore, I have asked my officials to engage with Swansea Bay City Region to seek their involvement in a wider study of the M4 corridor around Swansea that is currently being developed.

This study will incorporate the valuable data obtained through the trial slip road closure, and will seek to develop options for improvement of the M4 which will accommodate the encouraging growth of the Swansea Bay City Region.

P-04-556 No to Junction 41 Closure. Correspondence – Petitioner to the Committee and her letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure. 18.10.2016

Dear members of the Petitions Committee,

Thank you for once again considering the petition against the closure of Junction 41. The Action group is awaiting details of the further analysis referred to in the most recent correspondence from Ms Hart in December 2015. I understand that Ms. Hart's replacement, the new Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure will be undertaking a further study and we would be pleased to be involved in any consultations.

I have written to Mr. Skates to this effect and have attached this correspondence to this email.

Thanks Again,

Sincerely, Rose David (petitioner).

Dear Mr. Skates,

I write to you in relation to my petition against the closure of Junction 41 at Port Talbot which is again being considered by the Petitions Committee on 1st November. Our AM David Rees has stated that you are undertaking a further survey into the situation and may be considering a site visit at a future date. If so, please would you consider meeting a small delegation of local people who are active in our junction 41 Action Group to listen to our concerns?

I know you have access to all our previous correspondence to Ms. Hart but I would like to briefly summarise some of our main concerns below:

1. We believe that alternatives, such as hard-shoulder running for local traffic, ruled out on financial and H&S grounds, have not been properly considered.

2. Much of the congestion is caused by the mandatory 50 mile limit at Port Talbot. Closing the junctions will have a negligible effect on this.
3. Westbound congestion often begins at Junction 43 and 44 and backs up to Junction 41. Junction 41 is often cited as causing tailbacks which actually begin further along the motorway. Closing Junction 41 will result in increased traffic at Junction 43 and will exacerbate this problem.
4. The previous report into the closures is flawed in many aspects. We have taken issue with a number of its conclusions on grounds of selective headline statistics and the use of non comparable data to name but two. The net effect on traffic congestion in terms of journey times is negligible (11 seconds according to our analysis of the data).
5. The new relief distributor road is only really used by traffic moving east and west. It is not accessible to traffic accessing the motorway north of the town from the valleys.
6. The effect of the junction closure on the local road systems is not acceptable at peak times and is sometimes dangerous.

There are many other issues with regard to the closure of our junction and, although we understand the frustrations of motorists who are caught up in congestion at Port Talbot, we believe that the problem will not be solved by a simple junction closure. The net gain to motorists would be minimal but the effect on our town centre businesses would be catastrophic.

Finally, I would like to point out that support for our campaign has come from all our A.M.'s regardless of party allegiances. All are united against the prospect of choking the life out of our town.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I look forward to hearing from you ,

Yours sincerely,

Rose David (petitioner)

Agenda Item 3.6

P-04-667 – A Roundabout for the A477/A4075 Junction

This petition was submitted by Pembroke Town Council, having collected 115 online signatures and 482 paper signatures.

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to replace the Fingerpost Junction on the A477/A4075 with a roundabout – The current road configuration has not resolved the problems on this dangerous stretch of road.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire
- Mid and West Wales

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-667
Ein cyf/Our ref KS/06711/16

Mike Hedges AM

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

21 October 2016

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your further letter of 3 October regarding Petition P-04-667 Roundabout for the A477/ A4075 junction.

We have received the personal injury collisions data recorded by the police and a consultant has been commissioned to undertake the Stage 4 Road Safety Audit.

The petitioners' comments will be considered as part of the audit. We are due to receive the results by the end of November and I will update you shortly after.

Yours ever,

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure

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Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

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

Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales

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

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Agenda Item 3.7

P-04-670 – Owain Glyndwr Motion Picture

This petition was submitted by John Lewis, having collected 94 signatures.

Text of the Petition

I would like to petition the Welsh Assembly Government to finance a film about the life of Owain Glyndwr.

It is my opinion it is in the public interest as such a film would raise the profile of Wales on a global scale such as Braveheart did for Scotland.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Vale of Glamorgan
- South Wales Central

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-670
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00046/16

William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair - Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

19 January 2016

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 4 January regarding the financing of a film about the life of Owain Glyndwr.

We have not yet been approached by anyone involved in this project with regard to finance, nevertheless we would be happy to discuss options.

If you are able to provide contact details for Mr Lewis, then David Ball, Business Development Manager from my Creative Sector team would be happy to make contact. David will also be able to signpost to other sources of funding (Finance Wales, Arts Council Wales, Ffilm Cymru Wales, etc.) which may be relevant to the production.

Edwina Hart

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Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0300 0603300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0300 0604400
Correspondence.edwina.Hart@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

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.

Pack Page 75

Agenda Item 3.8

P-04-688 TATA Steel Port Talbot Power Plant

This petition was submitted by Peter Bamsey, having collected 531 signatures.

Text of the Petition

We the undersigned call upon the Welsh Government to use all levers at its disposal, including financial levers, to support the completion of a new power plant planned for Port Talbot steels works. The construction of this plant will create jobs and when it is operational it will reduce emissions, reduce Tata's running costs and help to safeguard vital jobs in the area.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Aberavon
- South Wales West

Mike Hedges AM
Chair Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

24 October 2016

Dear Mike,

Petition P-04-688 TATA Steel Port Talbot Power Plant

Thank you for your letter dated 3 October regarding a petition about a power plant at Tata Steel Port Talbot.

The EIS Committee noted the petition at our meeting looking at the future of the Steel industry in Wales on 19 October 2016.

At the same session, I raised the petition with the First Minister who said he was aware of the underlying issue. When asked to comment further he conferred with a senior official before saying:

“I was just checking what I can say given the commercial situation.

“It’s part of the £60m package that we can help with the power plant. And good progress is being made on that.

“What we have offered Tata we believe is a good deal. Tata have said the same thing. But of course we still have these outstanding issues of energy prices and pensions that will need to be addressed for the full package to be made available for Tata.



“There’s no difficulty in terms of going forward with the support we’ve put in place.”

Petitioners may also wish to be aware that there were further discussions around energy prices and energy conservation throughout our session on 19 October – both with steel producers, and the unions representing steel workers. The video of the session can be seen on [Senedd TV](#).

Following the session, the committee has agreed to write to Prime Minister Theresa May MP. A copy of that letter will be available shortly on the [committee’s website](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell George". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Russell George AM

Chair of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee



Agenda Item 3.9

P-05-709 The Circuit of Wales

This petition was submitted by Don Wilcox, having collected 3,279 paper signatures.

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to expedite the start of work on the Circuit of Wales as quickly as possible in order to help with the regeneration of Blaenau Gwent, the Heads of the Valleys and South Wales generally.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Blaenau Gwent
- South Wales East

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Mr Mike Hedges AM
Chair
National Assembly for Wales Petitions Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Date: 1 November 2016
Our ref: HVT/2630/fgb
Page: 1 of 1

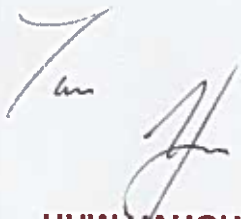
Dear Mike

THE CIRCUIT OF WALES

Thank you for your letter dated 25 October 2016, bringing to my attention the petition which the Petitions Committee has received in relation to the 'Circuit of Wales' project.

At present my audit work in relation to the 'Circuit of Wales' is focused upon the Welsh Government financial support to date and specifically on matters raised in correspondence relating to how public funds have been used.

However, should the Welsh Government decide to provide further financial support, I may then decide to undertake a wider value for money study which could consider the potential for the project to generate benefits to the Welsh economy.



HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS
AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES

P-05-709 The Circuit of Wales - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Chair, 07.11.16

Dear Mike,

I have to say that your Committee's response to our petition falls far short of what was expected. We asked the Committee to call upon the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to expedite the decision relating to the Circuit of Wales for the economic development of Blaenau Gwent, the Heads of the Valley and South Wales Generally. What appears to have happened is further prevarication and delay.

The promoters of the project were asked to put forward new proposals reducing the public sector risk to below 50% of the project cost. **My understanding is that they have now done this!** Now we have the Auditor General looking at value for money for the spend so far and suggesting that he will be looking at value for money on future spend if the project finally gets ministerial approval. Given the length of time that this project has been with the Welsh Government I find it amazing that these assessments have not already taken place. **In view of this I would ask the Committee to pass the petition to the Welsh Assembly as quickly as possible.**

One other fact that you and the Assembly should be aware of is a widely held view of people in Blaenau Gwent is that "if this project had been proposed for a location adjacent to Cardiff or the Vale of Glamorgan the first races would have taken place by now."

Finally I would ask you to pass on my thanks to your staff for their courteous and helpful assistance.

Best wishes

Don Wilcox

Agenda Item 3.10

P-04-648 Amendment to Unconventional Oil and Gas Direction 2015

Petition wording:

We the undersigned call upon the Minister for Natural Resources to amend the THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (NOTIFICATION) (UNCONVENTIONAL OIL AND GAS) (WALES) DIRECTION 2015 to call in all Planning Applications for Unconventional Oil and Gas development including exploratory drilling for Shale Gas, Coal Bed Methane and Underground Coal Gasification, to the Minister

Additional Information

At present the Direction only relates to applications involving certain unconventional extraction techniques where the Local Planning Authority is inclined to approve the application.

The current Direction does not apply to Underground Coal Gasification, the impacts of which would be equally damaging to the environment and communities. Nor does it apply to exploratory drilling or test drilling. There are growing concerns about the impact of exploratory drilling, particularly around noise, traffic, disturbance of water courses, the potential for seismic disturbance, industrialisation of the countryside and the impact on house prices.

If there is an effective moratorium on extraction, then what is the purpose of exploration? Allowing exploration to proceed when, at present, extraction will be prohibited is perverse and illogical

Petition raised by: Councillor Arfon Jones

Date petition first considered by Committee: 22 September 2015

Number of signatures: 1,254 Online signatures and 293 paper signatures. A further 415 signatures have been handed in after the petition was closed.

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-648
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/06223/16

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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13

September 2016

Dear Mike

The Committee had previously asked to be informed with regard to actions taken in relation to petition P-04-648. I would, therefore, like to take the opportunity to provide an update.

A Notification Direction was issued on 22 March 2016 regarding underground coal gasification, the effect of which is for local planning authorities to notify Welsh Ministers where they do not propose to refuse an application for underground coal gasification. The new direction will apply to any relevant application for planning permission registered as valid on or after 25 March 2016 and includes all applications connected with the gasification of coal in the strata but does not include the drilling of boreholes solely for the purposes of core sampling. This represents a precautionary approach in terms of the planning system.

I can confirm the intention previously expressed by my predecessor not to apply the Notification Direction relating to shale gas and coal bed methane to exploratory boreholes. This Direction remains as issued on 13 February 2015, on the basis of exploratory boreholes being widely used for engineering operations and routinely undertaken without any adverse environmental impacts.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

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

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

**P-04-648 Unconventional Oil and Gas Planning Applications –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 30.10.16**

The guidance from the Minister is still unclear and confused, petition had nothing to do with bore holes for geophysical surveys like the British Geographical survey.

It concerns only drilling EITHER to explore for unconventional gas OR to extract unconventional gas. The Ministerial guidance seems unequivocal around UCG but somewhat more confused around shale/coalbed methane.

Perhaps we can have a definitive 'ban' on the whole unconventional gas business once energy is devolved in the Wales Bill.

Regards

Arfon Jones

Agenda Item 3.11

P-05-705 Encourage Planning Committees to Ensure that Planning Decisions Take Due Regard of the Impact on, or Closure of Local Community Groups and Voluntary Organisations.

This petition was submitted by Mike Walker, having collected 79 signatures.

Text of the Petition

Increasingly local churches and community buildings are closing and being sold for development, despite them still being actively used by community groups. Often these sales are subject to planning permission being given for the conversion or demolition of the building before the purchaser will complete the sale.

Unfortunately this process often means that community groups like nurseries and scout groups are forced to vacate the premises during the planning process. We call, therefore, for the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to change planning law or guidance to ensure that planning committees must take into account in the planning approval process consideration of the impact on the local community of the eviction of community groups.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Cardiff North
- South Wales Central



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-705
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/06488/16

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

November 2016

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 14 October, regarding Petition P-05-405 about the consideration given by Planning Committees to the loss of community facilities.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination to be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, if a Local Planning Authority has included policies in its Local Development Plan addressing the provision of community facilities then this will carry significant weight.

With regard to the weight given to local views, this will be given where valid planning considerations are expressed. Where it is proposed to change the use of a church or community building, the planning system will consider the merits of the community use continuing to be available for all similar groups, not the individual circumstances of the particular group using it at the time of the planning application or those evicted prior to its submission. The planning system is unable to compel a landowner to rent their property to a particular individual or group, therefore, cannot intervene if a particular group is evicted.

Regards

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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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.

Agenda Item 3.12

P-04-673 Call for all Welsh Political Parties to Offer Everything Bilingually

This petition was submitted by Aaron Davies, having collected 12 signatures.

Text of the Petition We are calling on the Welsh Government to legislate that all political parties and their candidates that are standing for election (general/national/local) should offer everything bilingually (Welsh/English). This means leaflets, newsletters, websites (and so on) of individual candidates, groups of the party and the main party.

Some political parties offer this service already, some candidates also offer this service, but not all.

We are calling on all political parties to ensure that Welsh speakers have equal rights to information as non Welsh speakers have.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Aberconwy
- North Wales

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Minister for Public Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-673
Ein cyf/Our ref LA -/00010/16

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

21 January 2016

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 6 January, addressed to the First Minister, regarding the call for Welsh political parties to provide information bilingually. The First Minister has asked me to respond.

Political parties are not included under the provisions of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 as organisations that could be subject to Welsh language standards. This means that what the petition calls for would not be within the current scope of the Measure. Official documents at elections, of course, must be bilingual.

Yours sincerely,
Leighton Andrews

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Minister for Public Services

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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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.

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Agenda Item 3.13

P-04-679 Remove the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

This petition was submitted by Jago Lewis, having collected 378 signatures.

Text of the Petition

At a time when young people are told that they must excel in core curriculum subjects such as English, Maths and Science the Welsh Baccalaureate takes up time that can be used to concentrate on these areas. The Welsh Baccalaureate is a pointless qualification that serves no real purpose to a student's future. The Welsh Baccalaureate qualification could easily be removed or replaced by a citizenship course. The removal of Welsh Baccalaureate could also help improve grades as it would allow students to focus on real GCSE's and A Levels and will relieve students of added pressure.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Islwyn
- South Wales East

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P—04-679
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/00096/16
William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk
seneddpetitions@assembly.wales

26 January 2016

Dear William

Thank you for your letter dated 19 January concerning a petition for the removal of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

The new Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification was rolled out for first teaching in September 2015 following a wide consultation with stakeholders including universities. This followed a comprehensive Review of Qualifications for 14-19 year olds in Wales, which made 42 recommendations for improving the qualifications system. The review was based on a large body of evidence and on discussions with stakeholders and experts from across the UK and beyond. The changes that have been made to the Welsh Baccalaureate are in line with these recommendations, and will deliver a high quality and well respected qualification.

I firmly believe that the new and more rigorous Welsh Baccalaureate is a qualification that all learners will benefit from studying, through its focus on the development of valuable life skills that will help learners to progress to further/higher education or to secure employment.

I would like to see the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate with all its benefits becoming universally adopted across Wales by 2020 although it is not compulsory for Post 16 learners.

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The new Welsh Baccalaureate with the fully graded A* to E Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate at its heart will affect university entrance for 2017 entry. Universities are currently considering their positions for 2017 and the information will be in their prospectuses and websites in the early spring of 2016. Early indications are very positive with the majority of universities prepared to accept the new Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate and to treat it as an 'A' level for entry requirements purposes. I am also very pleased by the recent decision of Cambridge University to also include it, as appropriate, in their offers for 2017 entry.

I hope that you find this information helpful in consideration of the petition.



Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau

Minister for Education and Skills

Agenda Item 3.14

P-04-675 Cover the Cost of the Bedroom Tax

This petition was submitted by Jamie Insole, having collected 193 signatures.

Text of the Petition

Following the recommendation of the National Assembly's own Public Accounts Committee, Cardiff & South Wales Against the Bedroom Tax, Shelter Cymru, Welsh Tenants, TPAS Cymru & the Church in Wales calls upon the Welsh Government to allocate the necessary funds to cover the cost of the bedroom tax in Wales as has been achieved in Scotland.

Cardiff & South Wales Against the Bedroom Tax (C&SWABT) is a tenant led, grassroots campaign committed to fighting the 'bedroom tax'.

Our experience indicates that the financial burden of the bedroom tax continues to fall predominantly upon the sick, disabled and the most financially vulnerable members of our community. Currently, approximately 33,000 households face the impossible choice of finding extra-money they do not have or 'downsizing' to smaller homes that do not exist.

Over the course of 2013 and 2014, social tenants in Wales were made subject to 5136 suspended possession orders. Dramatic cuts in discretionary housing payment, combined with the perfect storm of further welfare reform can only see more people facing insurmountable debt and eviction threats.

We are fully aware of the budgetary challenges posed by central government underfunding. However, in our view the cost of not intervening will be measured both in terms of thousands of evictions and the irreversible toxification of the Welsh social housing sector.

Welsh Government spends a lower percentage of its expenditure on housing than either Scotland or Northern Ireland. It is essential that the housing budget is expanded so that the DHP top-up does not come at the expense of other vital housing services. In Scotland, no tenant pays the Bedroom Tax. We call upon Welsh Government to show the same leadership, act upon the Committee's recommendation and take tens of thousands of Welsh tenants out of poverty and misery.

Additional information

On July 24th, the Welsh Assembly's own Public Accounts Committee recommended "a cost/benefit analysis of mitigating the full impact of the removal of the spare room subsidy through discretionary housing payments, as the Scottish Government chose to do."

Following publication, a coalition of sector agencies and high-profile individuals, including, the Archbishop of Wales and Tenant Participation called upon Welsh Government to find the funds to take tenants out of this charge.

Cardiff & South Wales Against the Bedroom Tax has already worked with its partners, Welsh local authorities and sector Leaders to embed best practise and lift hundreds from the bedroom tax; either through exemptions in law or tribunal appeals.

The campaign has also succeeded in staving off over 30 evictions.

However, against a background of escalating central funding cuts and their impact upon support services, it is our settled view that the current impasse is not sustainable.

Best estimates indicate that the total cost to Welsh Government would not exceed £17 million.

It is now time to act!

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Swansea West
- South Wales West

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchgu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-675
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00038/16

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
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CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk
seneddpetitions@assembly.wales (Clerking Team)

19

January 2016

Dear Bill

Thank you for your letter of 11 January, regarding the petition received by your Committee concerning the Bedroom Tax in Wales.

The Bedroom Tax, also known more neutrally as the Housing Benefit Size Criteria, was introduced into the Social Rented Sector by the UK Government in April 2013. Since its inception, there have been calls for the Welsh Government to follow the example of Scotland to fully mitigate the impacts of the Bedroom Tax. They have achieved this by having the Discretionary Housing Payments cap removed and topping up that fund.

The Welsh Government does not agree with this reform. We have had to prioritise specific mitigating actions and policy changes to support those worst affected by the impacts of the UK Government's welfare reforms generally. This action forms part of The Welsh Government's wider strategy on tackling poverty.

The Bedroom Tax provisions are by no means the only aspect of welfare reform to impact negatively on people in Wales. Whilst the UK Government retained responsibility for changes to Housing Benefit, it transferred responsibility for the *Discretionary Social Fund* and the *Independent Living Fund* to the Welsh Government. It also abolished Council Tax Benefit in April 2013 and transferred responsibility for a new scheme to provide Council Tax Support to the Welsh Government, along with a 10 per cent reduction in funding. It was incumbent on us to give priority to addressing the impact of those schemes which had become its direct responsibility.

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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.

Pack Page 95

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.

Department for Work and Pensions statistics for August 2015, demonstrate around 30,000 claimants in Wales were affected by the Bedroom Tax in the social rented sector, losing around £14 a week on average. Based on these statistics, intervention from the Welsh Government is estimated to cost around £22 million per annum. Making up this shortfall needs to be considered in light of the knock-on effects on our other mitigating actions. A long term view of the costs and benefits is needed since this constitutes an ongoing annual commitment.

We have already entered an annual commitment of the same magnitude on Council Tax Reduction, supporting over 300,000 households through maintaining entitlement to Council Tax support at an annual cost of £244 million from 2013-14 to 2016-17 (£222 million was transferred to The Welsh Government for 2013-14).

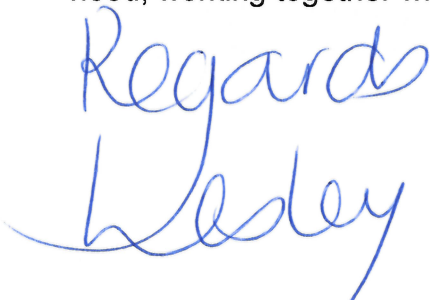
There would have been a significant opportunity cost in spending around £20 million per annum on making good the shortfall for Housing Benefit recipients. This would have been around £20 million per year not spent on independent advice services and investment to prevent homelessness. In 2014-15, the additional £2 million of funding provided to frontline advice services enabled organisations to respond to 30,000 requests for information and advice and secured almost £6.5 million in increased income gains for people.

We provided around £3 million to prevent homelessness through the Homeless Prevention Fund to support the work of Local Authorities and partners between April 2011 and March 2015. Monitoring data shows between April 2011 – March 2014, just under 5,100 private sector landlords and around 7,850 tenants have been provided with advice and services for the first time through this funding.

Furthermore, the Explanatory Memorandum to the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 demonstrates there is an additional cost of at least £2,000 for each household where prevention of homelessness is not successful, and other studies show the wider costs on the public purse including health, crime and social care costs can lead to additional costs of over £10,000. Funding of the order of £20 million per annum would have involved reductions in other programmes which prevent homelessness and promote independent living, including those who are most likely to be adversely affected by the UK Government's welfare reforms in general, such as lone parents and disabled people.

From our research programme and other evidence, I am well aware of the disproportionate impact of the UK Government's welfare reforms in Wales. The impacts of these reforms are not spread equally, with households already around the poverty line, families with children and disabled households expected to be amongst the hardest hit.

Unfortunately, we cannot fill all the gaps left by the UK Government's welfare benefit changes and reducing budgets. However, in spite of a £1.4 billion cut to the Welsh Government's budget since 2010, we continue to do all we can to support those most in need, working together with our partners to deliver our priorities.



Lesley Griffiths AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

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