

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

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

15 November 2024

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.