

Mr David J Rowlands, AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

4 September 2017

Re: Petition P-05-759 Re-open the Cwmcarn Forest Drive at Easter 2018

Dear Mr Rowlands,

Thank you for your letter of 7 August 2017 concerning Cwmcarn Forest Drive and the petition requesting the reinstatement of the scenic drive.

At the outset I should make clear that we fully understand the concerns of the community, and that we are in contact with Mr Southall on a regular basis. We recognise the importance of the site, not just to the local community but to many others who use the site. For that reason, we continue to invest in the site following the removal of infected larch trees; to that end, 170,000 trees will be planted over the next 12 months to provide a more diverse forest than has been present in the recent past.

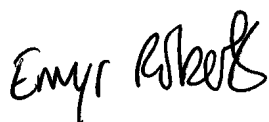
We continue to work with Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) on the feasibility study; however, we are currently unable to give a precise commitment as to when we will be in a position to commission that study. Our focus to date has been on planning the replanting schemes, but I would like to reassure you that we do see the study as priority and will endeavour to move forward this matter as quickly as possible. We will provide you with an update as soon as possible.

I should like to add that the feasibility scheme will only suggest medium to long term options, and the question of reinstatement of the drive is obviously one of the concerns of the community. We are currently looking at the condition of the drive and will be assessing the costs of such reinstatement; we will then be in a better position to understand how we proceed further.

The community has also expressed concerns about the opening up of new mountain bike trails at a time when we have been unable to reinstate the drive. These new trails, although on the Welsh Government estate, are a proposal being developed by CCBC at no cost to NRW.

Finally, can I reiterate that we do understand the concerns of the community and will continue to work closely with them as we want as many people as possible to enjoy the facilities provided at Cwmcarn. We will aim to update you within two months on progress.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emyr Roberts'.

Emyr Roberts

**Prif Weithredwr, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Chief Executive, Natural Resources Wales**