

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 10 March 2025

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Gareth Price – Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

Petitions@senedd.wales

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 36)

2 New Petitions

2.1 P-06-1489 Legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales

(Pages 37 – 43)

2.2 P-06-1507 We call on UWTSD and the Welsh Government to create a viable, sustainable plan for the long-term future of Lampeter campus

(Pages 44 – 53)

2.3 P-06-1508 Limit the Welsh Councils to a maximum increase of 2% on Council tax each year, starting in April 2025

(Pages 54 – 62)

3 Updates to previous petitions

3.1 P-06-1365 Re-open railway lines to connect the north and south of Wales

(Pages 63 – 65)

3.2 P-06-1380 Make Blue badge Applications Lifelong for individuals who have a lifelong diagnosis

(Pages 66 – 84)

3.3 P-06-1400 Fair and Adequate Resourcing of General Practice in Wales

(Pages 85 – 91)



- 3.4 P-06-1425 We ask the Welsh Government to reverse its decision to stop T2 buses calling at Garndolbenmaen
(Pages 92 – 93)
- 3.5 P-06-1435 We're calling on the Welsh Government to commit to implementing targeted lung cancer screening
(Pages 94 – 97)
- 3.6 P-06-1453 Provide funding and support for the adequate provision of accessible and clean public toilets
(Pages 98 – 103)
- 3.7 P-06-1479 Stop the detention of learning disabled and autistic children, young people and adults in hospitals
(Pages 104 – 107)
- 3.8 P-06-1480 Make menopause a mandatory part of the curriculum for all healthcare sciences and medical students
(Pages 108 – 116)
- 3.9 P-06-1486 Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence
(Pages 117 – 121)

The following two petition will be grouped together for consideration

- 3.10 P-06-1253 Ban greyhound racing in Wales
(Pages 122 – 123)
- 3.11 P-06-1354 The Welsh Government should support greyhound racing in Wales
(Pages 124 – 130)
- 3.12 P-06-1391 Introduce regulation of the dog grooming sector, to protect the welfare of dogs and rights of owners
(Pages 131 – 133)

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

Document is Restricted

P-06-1489: Legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 10 Mawrth 2025
Petitions Committee | 10 March 2025

Reference: SR24/10372-2

Petition Number: P-06-1489

Petition title: Legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales

Text of petition:

Swifts are the fastest birds in level flight and can sleep, eat, drink and mate on the wing. Their cries define Welsh summers. Sadly, they are rapidly declining – down 72% in the last 30 yrs. Swifts nest in holes in buildings. Renovation makes them homeless, and new-builds currently offer no cavities. Without more nesting options, swifts will disappear. Incorporating swift bricks into all new developments would help swifts (and other struggling birds like house martins and sparrows) to recover.

British Trust for Ornithology data show Welsh swifts declined by 72% from 1995 - 2018. They are Red Listed as Birds of Conservation Concern. Swifts face many challenges, but nest site loss is a major factor. Due to the scale of Welsh decline and ongoing destruction of their unprotected nest sites, only a mandatory approach will provide enough new nest spaces to allow swifts to recover to anything like former levels. Regulatory or legislative change is needed for this.

Swift bricks are nest-boxes that can be built into a wall. They are BSI standardised, affordable, sustainable, easy to install, don't need maintaining / replacing, and help other declining hole-nesting birds.



Swifts' lives have been linked to ours for centuries. Their connection with buildings is captured in an old Welsh name – gwrach yr eglwys ('church sprite'). Swifts are a charismatic species and enliven built up areas, inspiring people and communities. They depend on us - their disappearance would be a real loss.

1. Background

The Swift (*Apus apus*) is an ariel bird that feeds on small invertebrates and often nests in buildings at roof level when raising chicks. Swifts are summer migrants to the UK, spending their winters in Africa.

As the petitioner notes, Swift numbers have declined dramatically in recent years - 62% between 1995 and 2021. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) placed Swifts on the UK Red List for birds in 2021 "due to worsening declines in the breeding population".

The RSPB says swift bricks are:

... an easy and cheap way to provide nest sites for Swifts that can be simply included in new housing developments or fitted into existing buildings. When they are, research shows they are help not only for Swifts, but other wildlife, including Red Listed species such as House Sparrows, Starlings and House Martins.

A petition to the UK Parliament - Make swift bricks compulsory in new housing to help red-listed birds – received 109,896 signatures and was debated in Westminster Hall on 10 July 2023.

The then UK Government responded saying it would not legislate to require developers or local authorities to use swift bricks in every development. It said:

We welcome actions by developers to provide "swift bricks", however Government considers this a matter for local authorities depending upon the specific circumstances of each site.

2. Welsh Government action

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies MS, has written to the Committee in relation to this petition.

The Cabinet Secretary states he understands that swift bricks work and provide opportunities for other species. He says they're affordable, don't require maintenance and "it does make sense to incorporate them into new buildings as part of their structure when they are designed and built".

However, he points out that the main mechanisms to promote or mandate the use of swift bricks in new buildings are through Building Regulations and the planning system. These lie within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS. He also identifies building work funded or procured by the Welsh Government as another important mechanism. He concludes:

Action to secure the incorporation of swift bricks into new building across Wales therefore will require a cross-cabinet approach which I support and am keen to explore with my cabinet colleagues.

In his letter, the Cabinet Secretary, identifies Welsh Government work he believes will support swifts and other species, including that:

- The forthcoming Environmental Governance, Principles and Biodiversity Bill will include a power and duty for Welsh Ministers to set statutory domestic biodiversity targets. He says the proposed priority areas of safeguarding and recovering species, and ecosystem resilience offer the potential for action to support swift populations.
- Welsh Government officials are developing additional guidance on the Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) approach set out in Planning Policy Wales which requires bespoke, place-based solutions for biodiversity, including measures such as swift bricks where appropriate. He says the guidance should be completed by spring 2025.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The issue of mandating swift boxes was raised in Plenary on 30 June 2021 by Jenny Rathbone MS. The then Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, responded by saying the Welsh Government was incorporating them into its

Innovative Housing Programme, with swift bricks “going up across a number of social houses across Wales”. She also said the then Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS, was “looking at biodiversity along road routes and rail routes, including incorporating swift boxes and other nesting boxes as appropriate along those routes.”

In response to a question from Jenny Rathbone MS in **Plenary on 4 December 2024**, the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government, Jayne Bryant MS, confirmed that swift bricks were included in the developments funded under the Innovative Housing Programme, from the date the previous Minister agreed to do so until that programme came to an end. She also committed to considering mandating swift bricks in social housing in the future:

Our social housing new-build standard, the Welsh Development Quality Requirement, requires developments to consider biodiversity, which has meant swift bricks are being used by many social landlords in their new developments. The Welsh development quality requirement is due for review in 2025, and we will consider the mandated use of swift bricks as part of this review.

Jenny Rathbone MS is the Wales Environment Link species champion for the Swift.

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.

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1489
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10772/24, HIDCC/00010/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

19 February 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 6 December concerning the petition calling on the Welsh Government to legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales. As Cabinet Secretary with lead responsibility for biodiversity I am writing to set out my views on the issues and opportunities this raises.

I am aware of this petition and the support it has gathered. I recognise that like many of our species in Wales, swifts have been declining at an alarming rate. As a government we are committed to tackling the nature emergency, and know that we, along with the rest of the UK and the world, need to do more to reverse the decline in biodiversity. I am committed to ensuring that we work collaboratively to take positive actions to address both the nature and climate emergencies.

I understand that studies show that swift bricks work, and they also provide opportunities for other species too. They are affordable, don't require maintenance and it does make sense to incorporate them into new buildings as part of their structure when they are designed and built.

The main levers to promote or mandate the use of swift bricks in new buildings lie outside of my portfolio, for example through planning and building regulations, but also in the building work we fund or procure in other parts of government. Action to secure the incorporation of swift bricks into new building across Wales therefore will require a cross-cabinet approach which I support and am keen to explore with my cabinet colleagues.

Swift bricks could help boost swift numbers, but broader action is also needed in a variety of areas to combat the drivers of swift decline. This includes factors such as the 'insect apocalypse' (driven by habitat loss, agricultural pesticides and climatic factors), to the wider consequences of climate change, both here and in their wintering grounds in Africa which have impacted on the health and breeding success of this species. Evidence suggests that

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales

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

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

increasingly colder and wetter summers are playing a key role, as breeding success is positively associated with warmer temperatures in June and July.

A key part of our broader action to support swifts and other species is the Environmental Governance, Principles and Biodiversity targets Bill. The Bill will include a power and duty for Welsh Ministers to set statutory domestic biodiversity targets. While the details of the targets are to be developed, the proposed priority areas of safeguarding and recovering species, and ecosystem resilience offer the potential for further action to support swift populations. Actions that we are taking through the Bill, the Nature Networks Programme and the forthcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme will also be vital in increasing swift populations by tackling the wider drivers of species decline.

In addition to these work programmes my officials have also been working with planning officials to develop additional guidance on the Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) approach set out in Planning Policy Wales which requires bespoke, place-based solutions for biodiversity, including measures such as swift bricks where appropriate. Importantly, finding the right solutions requires professional ecological advice which will differ depending on context. The guidance should be completed by spring 2025.

I thank you once again for your letter and I hope my response has been helpful. As part of my wider work, I shall be happy to promote the use of swift bricks within my portfolio and encourage others to do so across government. Like many issues relating to the nature and climate change emergencies the solutions require an integrated and cross Government approach.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

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

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

**P-06-1489 Legislate to ensure swift bricks are installed in all new buildings in Wales
Correspondence from the Petitioner, 27th February 2025**

Dear Petitions Committee members

SWIFT BRICK PETITION

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to the Deputy First Minister's letter. The following are my comments -

Swifts are Wales' fastest declining birds and need help now.

In about 2 months, they will arrive back in Wales. Many will find their longstanding nest sites blocked off – and they will struggle to find others. This is because of refurbishments to existing buildings and the lack of provision in new builds.

Whilst climate change and biodiversity loss are very likely playing a part in swifts' decline, the loss of nest sites is a critical and growing issue. It can be observed in areas where, for example, streets have been fitted with plastic soffits, causing whole colonies of swifts to be made homeless. Without swift bricks, the decline in swift numbers will continue, irrespective of climate change and biodiversity improvements.

It seems that there is no opposition to swift brick provision – the RSPB point to the fact that more than 20 large house-builders in England and Wales already support them. As do Wildlife Trusts Wales and RSPB Cymru. There is also growing public support - the swift network in Wales comprises members of the public taking positive action for swifts, such as awareness raising and installing swift bricks and nest boxes.

Swift bricks are cheap, easily and quickly installed and need no maintenance. There is already British Standards Institution guidance on the selection and siting of swift bricks in new builds – '*BS42021: 2022 Integral nest boxes. Selection and installation for new developments – Specification*', so additional ecological expertise re. their installation is not required.

The installation of swift bricks is currently patchy and relies on voluntary action by local authorities or developers. Provision of swift bricks must be mandated. Without this, it is highly unlikely that swift brick provision will be undertaken at the scale that is required to halt swift numbers decreasing further – let alone reversing this decline.

I welcome the Deputy First Minister's commitment to this issue. However, without a clear timetable for action, my concern is that this issue will not be addressed quickly, if at all, and will not be mandated. Swifts are disappearing from our cities, towns and villages now.

I would welcome the views of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning on the issue of mandating swift bricks in new builds. I would also welcome understanding how and when Welsh Government will adopt a cross-Cabinet approach to resolve this issue, including setting a deadline for making a decision.

Yours faithfully

Julia Barrell (Petitioner)

Lampeter Campus

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 10 Mawrth 2025
Petitions Committee | 10 March 2025

Reference: SR25/10747

Petition Number: [P-06-1507](#)

Petition title: We call on UWTSD and the Welsh Government to create a viable, sustainable plan for the long-term future of Lampeter campus

Text of petition: The University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) has announced a plan to end all undergraduate teaching at its Lampeter campus by September 2025, a decision that would sever nearly 200 years of Lampeter's role as a centre of higher education and devastate the local community. As alumni, students, and supporters, we call upon UWTSD and the Welsh Government to protect Lampeter's legacy and commit to a sustainable future for this historic campus.

Lampeter is not only Wales's oldest university institution but a pillar of its educational and cultural history. By allowing undergraduate teaching to end, UWTSD would undermine the very essence of Lampeter's mission, weaken the local economy, and sever its historic role as a centre of learning. The town of Lampeter, the alumni community, and the people of Wales deserve better.

Our Goal: We urge UWTSD and the Welsh Government to halt the planned end of undergraduate teaching at Lampeter and instead work with all stakeholders to create a viable, sustainable plan for the campus. This must include a serious investment in new courses, marketing, and student



recruitment efforts to ensure Lampeter's relevance and appeal for future generations.

1. Background

The University of Wales Lampeter was founded in 1822 as St David's College. In 1996 the name was changed to the University of Wales Lampeter. In 2010 there was a merger with Trinity University College in Carmarthen to create the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). In 2013, Swansea Metropolitan University merged with the UWSTD. The three campuses in Lampeter, Carmarthen and Swansea make up UWTSD.

On 23 January 2025, the UWTSD announced that it would be moving the Humanities courses from Lampeter to the Carmarthen campus. This would take effect from September 2025. There will be no taught provision remaining on the Lampeter Campus, and students will complete their programme in Carmarthen.

The National Union of Students state that around 1,250 full-time on-campus students would be needed to sustain a delivery on the scale of the Lampeter campus. Lampeter has 92 on-campus humanities students.

2. Welsh Government action

On 4 December, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Vikki Howells MS, said in Plenary that she recognises "the concern that this announcement may have a negative impact on the local economy, particularly the town centre of Lampeter, and Welsh Ministers [...] will remain in regular contact with the university as plans progress".

The Minister also noted that "universities in Wales are autonomous institutions, and it wouldn't be appropriate for Welsh Ministers to intervene in their academic matters, such as course delivery and campus location". She added that the university is "responding strategically to challenges to safeguard the study of humanities at their institution" and that "the number of full-time undergraduates at Lampeter now stands at 92, which is smaller than most primary schools in Wales, so we need to be realistic about the situation facing the university".

In answer to a question in Plenary on 19 February 2025, the Minister for Further and Higher Education said:

Reform in Wales is already under way with new legislation in place and the creation of Medr [the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research], and I want to make the most of this significant opportunity to transform the sector by talking to as many people as possible. I've invited all vice-chancellors to a round-table meeting in the week after recess for more discussions about the current challenges facing the sector.

In a Written Statement on 18 February 2025, the Minister announced:

To support our universities, I have already increased the tuition fee cap for 2025/26, providing up to £21.9m in additional income to universities, and I have also provided an additional £10m in grant funding to the sector. In recognition of the significant financial challenges facing higher education, I am pleased to announce today a further £18.5m capital funding this financial year. This additional funding will support universities with estate maintenance and digital projects to reduce operating costs, while also improving environmental sustainability and ensuring that facilities continue to be suitable for providing a high-quality student experience and delivering world-leading research. I have also asked Medr to report back to me on how this funding has been maximised to make future savings to ease the current financial challenges.

3. Other Higher Education Institutions in Wales

A number of other universities in Wales are in the process of consulting on reductions in staff and courses in the context of increasing financial pressures.

On 28 January 2025, Cardiff University began a consultation on proposed reduction of 400 (Full Time Equivalent) academic staff (7 per cent of the total workforce) and the possibility of School and subject closures and School mergers. Their proposals include:

- ceasing subjects and programmes in Ancient History, Modern Languages and Translation, Music, Nursing, and Religion and Theology;
- increasing student and staff ratios across the University, and revising approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, and simplifying bureaucratic processes; and

- The creation of the Schools of Natural Sciences; Data Science, Computing and Mathematics; Human and Social Sciences; and Global Humanities through merging various current courses.

On 19 February 2025, the University of South Wales announced a consultation on closing a 'small number' of their courses after all current students have completed their studies and a reduction of around 90 roles (around 3 per cent of the total workforce). Further details about affected areas are not currently available.

Also on 19 February 2025, Bangor University told staff in an email that it aims to cut around 200 jobs (around 10 per cent of the total workforce) to make savings of £15m.

4. Welsh Parliament Action

There are currently two open Petitions relating to cuts to universities in Wales, both relate to Cardiff University and both have passed the number of signatures required to be considered by the Petitions Committee:

- Help Cardiff University to keep their Modern Languages degree courses
- Enable Cardiff University to keep the Nursing degree course

On 17 February 2025, the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee wrote to the President and Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff University, Professor Wendy Lerner, inviting her to give oral evidence to the Committee once the consultation on restructuring has closed.

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.

Vikki Howells AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Your ref P-06-1507
Our ref VH/00053/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

25 February 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 3 February to the Cabinet Secretary for Education regarding Petition P-06-1507 in respect of the plans by the University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD) to relocate its Humanities provision from its Lampeter campus to its Carmarthen campus. I am responding as this matter falls within my portfolio.

This is a difficult time for the higher education sector in Wales and indeed across the UK, with higher education institutions facing financial pressures and needing to find ways to respond to these challenges.

In November 2024, the UWTSD announced proposals to reshape its provision at its Lampeter campus. These proposals involved moving the University's Humanities provision to its Carmarthen campus. The University's view is that the Lampeter provision is not sustainable. The move to Carmarthen is deemed to be strategic, allowing for a mix of humanities with other disciplines (with the intention of reinvigorating the humanities portfolio), and offering a more vibrant student experience.

The Vice Chancellor of the UWTSD, Professor Elwen Evans KC, wrote to me on 23 January to confirm that, following a formal consultation with trade unions and affected staff, the University has approved the proposal to relocate its Humanities provision from Lampeter to Carmarthen. I have been advised that the University is commencing preparations and practical considerations for this forthcoming change, to enable a smooth transition for Humanities to begin the academic year at its new Carmarthen home in September 2025.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Vikki.Howells@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Vikki.Howells@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.

I recognise the impact these plans may have on staff and students. However, as an autonomous institution, the UWTSD is responsible for its own academic affairs, including strategic management of its estate. It would not be appropriate for Welsh Ministers to intervene in matters such as course delivery and campus location.

I understand staff and students are being supported and I expect to see the principles of social partnership applied as well as support for students based in Lampeter to continue their studies with minimum disruption while these plans are implemented. The University has support services in place for affected staff and students to raise their concerns directly.

I also recognise the concern that this announcement may have a negative impact on the local economy, particularly the town centre of Lampeter. I acknowledge that the University has been at Lampeter for more than 200 years, having been founded in 1822, and has played an important role in the economic, cultural, social and educational fabric of the town for many years. The university is clear that it is not closing the Lampeter campus and states that it is committed to retaining the main Lampeter campus estate. I am aware that a period of engagement with stakeholders and with the local community in Lampeter has now begun, to identify sustainable education-related activities for the future of the campus.

I intend to remain in contact with the university as plans progress.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'V. Howells', with a long, sweeping underline stroke extending to the left.

Vikki Howells AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education

P-06-1507 We call on UWTSD and the Welsh Government to create a viable, sustainable plan for the long-term future of Lampeter campus - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 04 March 2025

Background information for Petitions Committee meeting 10/3/25

The university at Lampeter is Wales's oldest university; the 3rd oldest in England and Wales after Oxford and Cambridge. It is a globally significant institution of higher education. The decision to end undergraduate teaching at Lampeter marks a devastating blow not only to the Lampeter campus but to the cultural, historical, and educational heritage of Wales. UWTSD have allowed the closure of an institution that has shaped Wales's intellectual and cultural identity for nearly 200 years.

The decision has been framed as a financial necessity. We, the Lampeter Society, do not accept that narrative. The decline of Lampeter was not inevitable but engineered through successive cuts, neglect, and strategic missteps that reduced a once-vibrant institution to its current state. For decades, Lampeter has been deliberately and systematically stripped of its resources and identity. Fewer courses led to fewer students, which in turn justified further reductions - a clear and calculated process of managed decline.

The decision completely disregards the devastating economic and social impact on Lampeter and south Ceredigion. The 2008 HEFCW report explicitly warned that the closure of Lampeter would have a severe economic impact on the town and surrounding area. For a rural community like Lampeter, the university is not just an employer but a cultural and social lifeline.

Lampeter is more than a campus. It is an institution of global renown, a vital thread in the cultural fabric of Wales, and a symbol of resilience and intellectual excellence. Its closure represents a national scandal, and history will not look kindly on those who allowed this to happen.

The Lampeter Society calls upon UWTSD and the Welsh Government to develop a robust way forward that honours the institution's past while securing its future. Despite the current narrative, we believe it is certainly a matter for the Welsh Government. Not stepping in when the nation's Higher Education sector is struggling, and in some cases failing, is shortsighted and indeed contravening a precedent which has already been set.

The following are alternative proposals drawn up by the Lampeter Society for the Lampeter campus.

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS FOR THE LAMPETER CAMPUS

A strategic review of higher education in Wales is ultimately needed as the sector grapples with a nation-wide financial crisis with falling student demand; rising costs; tuition fee-value erosion; research being undertaken at a net loss; and an over-reliance on international student income. The solution to this crisis so far has been to cut costs by reducing or closing down departments and faculties – as is the case with UWTSD, Bangor University, University of South Wales and Cardiff University. However, education should not be seen as a cost burden but rather as an investment in the nation's future. What is ultimately needed is a global and integrated vision of the future and a planned approach to reform and consolidation of HE institutions in Wales. A world-class University of Wales with member branches and campuses would rationalise course distribution, encourage world class departments, attract globally recognised academics and would reduce competition between campuses/universities across Wales.

There are four **local business options** for Lampeter on the table. These are:

I - Positioning Lampeter as a leading institution in heritage-driven education and research excellence, developing interdisciplinary degree programmes combining humanities with practical and emerging fields, such as digital studies and sustainability

II – Offering a mainstream humanities degree teaching programme that focusses on popular subjects that the Lampeter Campus is noted for globally, and allied with the **Centre for Advanced Celtic Studies**, the **Welsh National College** and the prospective **National Welsh Language Learning Institute**. The Lampeter portfolio would include Celtic studies & the Welsh language; archaeology; geography; creative writing & English; religious studies & theology; ancient/medieval history & classics; philosophy; and Chinese studies. Programme delivery would be low-cost, with a small core academic and support staff and the use of visiting 'star' alumni lecturers to add pulling power and admin volunteers

III – Turning the Lampeter Campus into an enterprise hub for Mid-Wales, offering entrepreneurship undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes that promote sustainable economic development and the concept of the green campus

NB – We believe the above options work alongside and support the Welsh Government's ***Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015***; widening access to participation and developing a cohesive and strengthened local community and economy.

IV – Leasing out part of the Lampeter campus to an international or Russell Group university, that is looking for a rural campus and an alternative approach

Lampeter's rural and community-oriented environment holds great advantages to non-traditional and neurodivergent students. Welsh universities are experiencing a quiet epidemic of student suicides; the University of South Wales alone had more than 10 suicides last year alone. The large university metropolis does not suit many young people; the mental health benefit of being able to study in a close knit friendly environment which Lampeter is uniquely able to offer cannot be underestimated.

Limit the Welsh Councils to a maximum increase of 2% on Council tax each year

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 10 Mawrth 2025
Petitions Committee | 10 March 2025

Reference: SR2510747-3

Petition Number: P-06-1508

Petition title: Limit the Welsh Councils to a maximum increase of 2% on Council tax each year

Text of petition: Limit the Welsh Councils to a maximum increase of 2% on Council tax each year, starting in April 2025. The increase in council tax in 2024 was too high for the people of Wales, and to increase Council tax again by above inflation is not a fair increase for the people of Wales.

1. Background

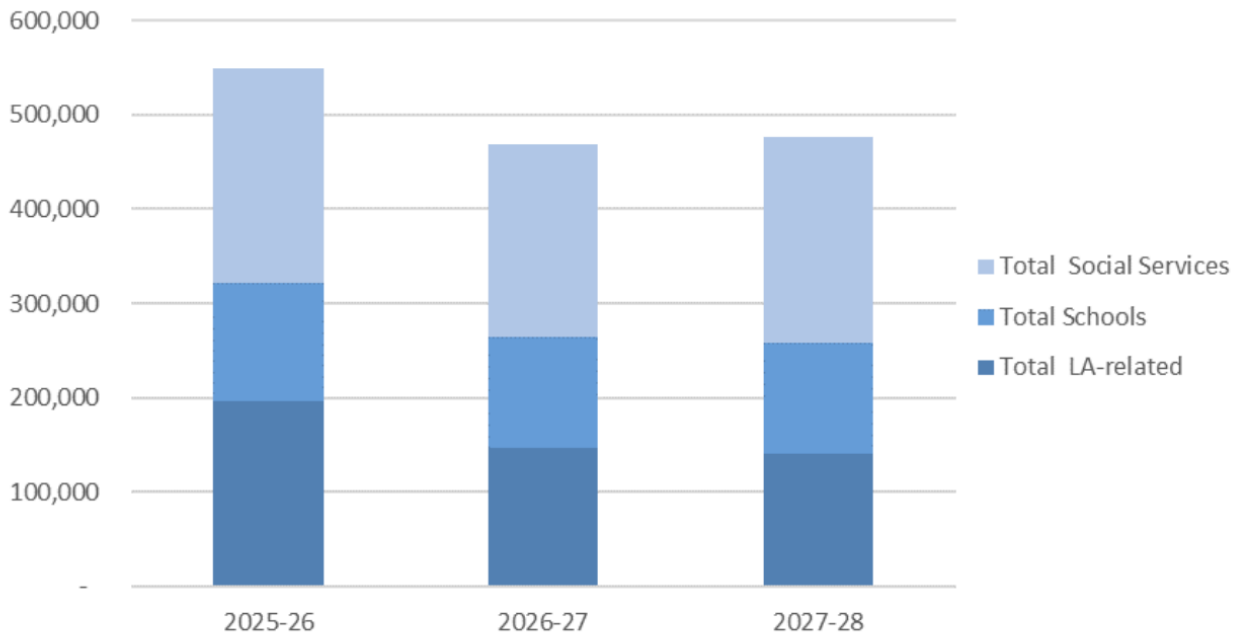
The Welsh Government provides the majority of local government funding through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and redistributed Non-Domestic Rates (NDR). For 2025-26, local authorities, through the provisional local government settlement, will receive around £6.1 billion from the Welsh Government in core revenue funding and non-domestic rates. The Welsh Government has also allocated over £1.1 billion in specific grants, and over £1 billion in capital funding.



The remaining funds needed to support local services are raised by local authorities themselves. The most significant element is council tax, but there are also a number of other income streams for local authorities, such as discretionary charges for leisure services, parking and trade waste.

Local authorities have recently consulted on how much to increase their council tax for 2025-26 to make up some of the estimated funding shortfalls. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in its [written evidence on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2025-26](#) has estimated funding pressures in excess of £550 million for Welsh local authorities in the next financial year. The WLGA illustrated in its evidence the budget pressures, by service, faced by local authorities over the next three years:

Budget pressures by service, 2025-26 to 2027-28, £000



Source: SWT Survey 2024

2. Average council tax increases

Average Band D council tax for Wales increased in 2024-25 by [£122 \(7.8%\) over the previous year](#). Police increases averaged 7.1% (£23). These increases combined produce an average band D rise of 7.7% (or £145). This provided for the highest combined increase in average Band D rates since 2019-20 when there was an average Band D rise of 6.6% (£99).

Between 2018-19 and 2024-25, the average Band D combined rate (council tax and police) has increased by a little under 36%, and over a period of a decade (between 2015-16 and 2024-25), it has increased by over 50%.

3. Council tax limits and the legislative framework

The Welsh Ministers do currently have powers to limit (cap) excessive increases in the budget requirement of local authorities in Wales. However, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language, Mark Drakeford MS notes in his response to the petition that ‘the Welsh Government has respected the autonomy of local authorities and has not sought to cap or limit council tax in Wales since devolution’.

The Cabinet Secretary’s response goes on to state that the:

Welsh Government channels as much of the available funding as possible into the unencumbered Local Government Settlement so that local authorities have greater flexibility in allocating funding according to local priorities.

3.1. Legislative framework to limit excessive increases

The relevant legislation is the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (“the LGFA 1992”).

Section 52B of the LGFA 1992 gives Welsh Ministers the power to take action against a local authority if they consider that the budget requirement set out by the local authority for the upcoming year is ‘excessive’.

A “budget requirement” is the amount equal to how much the local authority’s expected spending (i.e. expenditure incurred during the year in performing its functions, grant monies that will have to be repaid to Welsh Ministers, allocation of funds to financial reserves and contingencies) exceeds its expected income (i.e. monies which the authority expects to receive that year, subject to certain exceptions).

Section 52B provides that they must produce a set of principles that will be used to determine whether the budget requirement is excessive. It also provides that

these principles must (as a minimum) contain a comparison of the budget requirement for the year under consideration with that of an earlier year.

Section 52C provides that the Welsh Ministers may publish a report which sets a “notional amount” for a local authority’s budget, to be used as the basis of any comparison between the year under consideration and any previous year. Notional amounts may be set by the Welsh Ministers in certain circumstances such as where there has been a change in function or boundary – thereby allowing a valid comparison can be made with the budget requirement for the year under consideration. It may also be used to set a notional amount where there was no budget requirement set for an earlier year.

Following determination using the principles required by section 52B, if the Welsh Ministers are of the opinion that the amount calculated by an authority as its budget requirement for the year is excessive, section 52D enables the Welsh Ministers to “designate” or “nominate” the local authority in question.

3.2. Designated Local Authorities

Section 52E provides that if a local authority is *designated*, the Welsh Ministers must notify the authority of the amount which they propose should be the maximum amount calculated by the local authority as its budget requirement of the year, and set out the maximum amount which the Welsh Ministers propose the authority could calculate as its budget requirement for the year without the amount calculated being excessive.

The local authority can then either:

- accept the designated maximum amount provided by the Welsh Ministers; or
- challenge the decision of the Welsh Ministers.

If an unsuccessful challenge to the maximum amount is made by the local authority, the Welsh Ministers are able to issue a mandatory order to the local authority to ensure that the authority complies.

3.3. Nominated Local Authorities

Section 52L provides that if a local authority is *nominated*, the Welsh Ministers must notify the authority of the amount which they would have proposed as the

target amount of budget requirement for the year under consideration if they had *designated* the authority.

After a local authority has been nominated, the Welsh Ministers can decide whether to:

- *designate* the authority (following the procedure in section 52E outlined above); or
- determine an amount that they propose should be the notional amount calculated by the authority as its budget requirement for the year.

If the local authority receives notification from the Welsh Ministers of a proposed amount, the authority has 21 days to either:

- accept the amount proposed by the Welsh Ministers; or
- challenge the proposed amount and request that the Welsh Ministers reconsider their determination.

If the amount proposed is challenged by the local authority and the reasons given for the challenge are agreed with, the Welsh Ministers may reconsider their decision.

3.4. Interpretation of the legislation

While the provisions in Chapter IVA of the LGFA 1992 do not specifically mention council tax, the title of the chapter which they fall under is called “Limitation of Council Tax and Precepts”. A [House of Commons Briefing Paper on Council tax capping](#) published in 2004 (specifically Chapter III) provides some background as to why this section of the legislation provides Ministers with the power to cap council tax.

Welsh Ministers have in the past outlined how they might be prepared to use the powers available to limit increases in council tax if these were deemed excessive. For example, in her [statement on the Provisional Local Government Settlement for 2014-15](#) (16 October 2013), the then Minister for Local Government (Lesley Griffiths MS), said:

In enabling Local Authorities to make local decisions about council tax, I am offering them flexibilities in managing their budgets which are not available to their counterparts in England where restrictive freezes apply. However, I have made it very clear I am prepared to use capping powers available to me in the event of excessive increases.

A similar statement was made in 2015 by the then Minister for Public Services, Leighton Andrews AM, stating in his [letter accompanying the Final Local Government Settlement 2015-16](#):

I am prepared to use the capping powers available to me should I consider any proposed increase in council tax to be excessive. I also expect every authority to take account of all the available funding streams in considering service provision and setting its budget and Council Tax.

Despite this, in his response to this petition, the position of the current Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language is that the Welsh Government has a “relationship with local government based on collaboration and mutual respect” and that:

we consider the setting of budgets and council tax is an essential aspect of local democracy.

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.



Ein cyf/Our ref MDFWL/00109/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

17th February 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for writing ahead of the Petitions Committee's initial consideration of the petition P-06-1508, "Limit the Welsh Councils to a maximum increase of 2% on Council tax each year, starting in April 2025". I welcome the opportunity to set out the Welsh Government's views.

The responsibility for setting a local authority's annual budget and as part of that, decisions about council tax, are matters for each local authority and its elected members. Each local authority in Wales has the democratic freedom to set its own council tax to meet local needs and priorities, which means they are accountable to the local electorate for the decisions they make. While any increase in council tax may be unwelcome to local taxpayers, the tax provides a significant source of funding for essential local services upon which people rely every day, such as schools and social care.

Local authorities must strike a balance between maintaining essential services and limiting the financial pressures placed on households, particularly in light of the cost-of-living crisis many households are experiencing. I welcome the engagement and consultation local authorities conduct with communities on proposals before making decisions.

The Welsh Government has respected the autonomy of local government and has not sought to cap or limit council tax in Wales since devolution. We have a relationship with local government based on collaboration and mutual respect of each other's responsibilities. We consider the setting of budgets and council tax is an essential aspect of local democracy.

Instead, the Welsh Government channels as much of the available funding as possible into the unhypothecated Local Government Settlement so that local authorities have greater flexibility in allocating funding according to local priorities. Next year Welsh local authorities will receive £6.1bn (provisionally) from the Local Government Settlement to spend on delivering key services. Core revenue funding for local government will increase by 4.3%. We look forward to finalising the details of the Final Local Government Settlement later this month, and I am doing all that I can to support local government.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@gov.wales
Gohebiaeth.Mark.Drakeford@llyw.cymru

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

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

I recognise current financial circumstances are very challenging for many households across Wales. The Welsh Government has a number of schemes available to help people who are finding it difficult to pay their council tax bills, as well as a range of exemptions and discounts. We continue to provide £244 million a year to support local authorities in delivering the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Around 260,000 vulnerable and low-income households – around one in five households in Wales – are receiving support with their council tax bills. I urge anyone struggling to pay their council tax to contact their local authority as early as possible, and to seek expert advice through [Advicelink Cymru](#).

I hope this information assists the Committee's consideration of the petition.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mark Drakeford AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language

P-06-1508 Limit the Welsh Councils to a maximum increase of 2% on Council tax each year, starting in April 2025 – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 21 February 2025

Good Afternoon

I write in response to your email asking for my view on the attached document you sent.

I feel that the document only passed the buck and is not taking responsibility for the increase in council tax ,we as tax payers are going to experience again this April.

The Welsh government has the power to bring in legislation to force council's to limit the increase to council tax to inflation only.

The increases that are due to come in in April are way above inflation as they where for 2024/2025.

The politicians do not have any idea how these increases affect the population of Wales.

It is all well and good saying you have funds to help,but if council's managed there finances efficiently there would be no need to increase council tax by way over inflation.

Also there needs to be a fundamental change in how our council's are ran.

We need an amalgamation of Council's to bring down costs.

To sum up council's have forgotten they work for us not the other way around, they can't keep using us as cash cows,it is unsustainable .

Regards

Stuart Phillips.

Agenda Item 3.1

P-06-1365 Re-open railway lines to connect the north and south of Wales

This petition was submitted by Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, having collected a total of 12,936 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Travelling between the North and the South of Wales is always a long journey, especially when using the railway. If a person is traveling between the Bangor and Cardiff, one has to go outside of Wales on rail to be able to complete the journey.

Wales needs to be connected internally by rail. The plan to do this would be to reopen the Bangor – Afon-wen and Aberystwyth to Carmarthen lines, and integrating them with the Cambrian railway, and the line from Carmarthen on to Cardiff

Additional Information:

What this petition is specifically asking for is:

- A Scoping and Feasibility study for the Bangor to Afon-wen Line
- Commitment to spend any funding for the railways from Westminster on reinstating the railway lines
- Develop a blueprint of the rail route between Bangor and Cardiff on the proposed route
- Look at other routes within Wales that would be beneficial on a national and local level to reopen

If we are looking to develop the infrastructure in Wales, and to use a greener method of travel, reinstating and reopening this railway would be a step in the right direction, and would be beneficial for all the communities situated along the railway, as well as for Wales as a nation.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Dwyfor Meirionnydd
- Mid and West Wales

**P-06-1365 Ail-agor llinellau rheilffordd i gysylltu gogledd a de Cymru -
Gohebiaeth gan y deisebydd, 03 Mawrth 2025**

Noswaith dda,

Diolch am f'atgoffa i

Dyma fy sylwadau, sydd yn dod gan aelodau o bwyllgor Traws Linc Cymru.

Dyma adroddiad strategol a grewyd gan Traws Linc Cymru sy'n gosod yr achos i ailagor llinell dren Afon-wen i Fangor / Aberystwyth i Gaerfyrddin:

<https://trawslincymru.org.uk/en/the-strategic-case-for-re-opening-the-aberystwyth-to-carmarthen-and-afon-wen-to-bangor-railways-2020/>

Mae Traws Linc Cymru'n gofyn am astudiaeth ddichonoldeb newydd gan fod yr adroddiad strategol wedi dod i'r casgliad bod llawer o ddiffygion yn adroddiad Mott Macdonald. O ran Caerfyrddin i Aberystwyth.

Hefyd rydym yn dymuno cael astudiaeth ddichonoldeb lawn a chynhwysfawr gael ei chynnal ar gyfer Aberystwyth-Caerfyrddin yn benodol, yn seiliedig ar gasgliadau yr adroddiad strategol.

Rydym [fel Traws Linc Cymru] yn dal i sefyll wrth ei sylwadau a'i gasgliadau o blaid rheilffyrdd trwm er gwaethaf yr astudiaeth ddichonoldeb ddiweddar, ac eisiau gweld astudiaeth pellach o hyn ar linell Afon-wen i Fangor.

Diolch yn fawr,

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

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 3.2

P-06-1380 Make Blue badge Applications Lifelong for individuals who have a lifelong diagnosis

This petition was submitted by STAND NW CIC, having collected a total of 1,618 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Not all disabilities are the same, some are life long, meaning they do not change over time.

Unfortunately, current guidelines require individuals with lifelong diagnoses, which include learning disabilities or profound and complex needs, to reapply for a blue badge every three years. This process can be very frustrating and time consuming for both individuals and their caregivers and focus heavily on the negative aspects of an individual's abilities.

Additional Information:

The Equality Act 2010, states, a disability is a physical or mental condition that has a substantial and long-term impact on a person's ability to do normal day-to-day activities, it states it allows for the better or more favourable treatment of people with impairments based on the evidence given, to provide equality of opportunity.

We believe that the process should be updated to better support those with disabilities by making life easier for those with lifelong conditions.

We are therefore proposing a change, we are calling for the Welsh Government to change their current process when applying for blue badges, to give what's right and to support disabled people.

The change would be, that if a person applies for a blue badge due to a lifelong medical condition that is not expected to change, and their supporting health notes confirm this, then a blue badge should be granted for their lifetime.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Vale of Clwyd
- North Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Julie Meese
Community, Engagement and Participation Officer
Conwy and Denbighshire

Julie Meese julie@standnw.org

04 February 2025

Dear Julie

Petition – P-06-1380 “Make blue badge applications lifelong for individuals who have a lifelong diagnosis.”

Thank you for your emails to me and my officials; this letter is a response to all the correspondence you have submitted to the Welsh Government. I am also grateful for the time you have given to meeting my officials, most recently on 7 January 2025 with Caroline Thomas MS, Chair of the Petitions Committee. I enclose the notes of that meeting for your reference.

I appreciate you sharing your experiences and explaining why you feel it is important to offer lifelong Blue Badges for individuals with lifelong diagnoses. While I understand your perspective, Blue Badge eligibility is determined by mobility needs rather than medical diagnoses, as mobility can vary even among those with similar conditions. With the limited resources of the Welsh Government, I cannot pursue legislation to make Blue Badges lifelong. Additionally, it is important to protect the scheme's fairness and effectiveness.

Local authorities administering the scheme currently have the discretion to determine if an applicant's impairment is unlikely to improve. In such cases, they can streamline the application process through the “Not for Reassessment” (NfR) route. This allows applicants to renew their badge by simply providing proof of identity, residency, and an up-to-date photograph.

I acknowledge that the NfR route does not always work smoothly for applicants. To address this, my officials will continue collaborating with local authorities to enhance the guidance and streamline the process. We will explore with local authorities the potential for a voluntary Code of Practice to set out more clearly the service that applicants can expect. For those unable to use the online Blue Badge Digital System, we will work with local authorities to ensure alternative systems are in place to provide additional support. The Welsh Government will also maintain funding for the Independent Advisory Service in Wales to assist local authorities with assessments and to provide ongoing training for assessors.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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.

Additionally, I will review the recommendations from the upcoming Blue Badge Research Project and take forward any necessary improvements.

The eligibility criteria for a blue badge has been subject to many reviews, reports and consultations and regulations since 2002.

An Inquiry was held by the Senedd's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee in 2019 on the 'Blue Badge Scheme in Wales: Eligibility and Implementation'. The published responses can be found here:

[Written Statement by the Welsh Government to the report by the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee on Blue Badge Scheme in Wales: Eligibility and Implementation](#)

[Welsh Government response to the report by the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee on the Blue Badge Scheme in Wales: Eligibility and Implementation](#)

Officials have undertaken considerable work to date following the Inquiry. There are currently two recommendations which are still being progressed linked to the blue badge research project. These recommendations relate to a review of the eligibility criteria for a blue badge considering whether there are further conditions which should automatically qualify a person to receive a blue badge, whether the process for undertaking further assessment is robust enough to respond to the various needs of those who apply, and whether the needs of those who receive a cancer diagnosis are adequately met. The second recommendation relates to Welsh Government updating its guidance to local authorities to ensure that the current arrangement of expediting applications by those with a terminal diagnosis becomes mandatory.

Regarding the other issues you raised, we recognise that many railway stations are not fully accessible and that bus facilities for disabled people could be improved. While rail infrastructure and bus layout regulations are reserved to the UK Government, the Welsh Government continues to work with the rail and bus industries to improve accessibility. For rail infrastructure we own, such as the Core Valley Lines, we are delivering step-free access at nearly every station.

I understand your concerns regarding Blue Badge parking being replaced with EV spaces, the allocation of spaces in car parks, and arrangements for events. These issues have been raised with the local authorities, and I share your desire for a solution that ensures accessibility for all. As the local parking authority, they are best placed to address these matters, and I would encourage you to continue the discussion with them to ensure your points are fully considered.

You mentioned that Active Travel schemes could disadvantage disabled drivers by limiting parking close to shops for those in wheelchairs. The example you provided, regarding a proposed scheme in Colwyn Bay, has been noted, and I have asked officials to raise your concerns with Conwy Council to ensure they are carefully considered.

Finally, my officials have had the opportunity to meet with you and your petitioners, listen to your views, and carefully consider the shared lived experiences. At this stage, I don't believe there is a need for further meetings regarding your petition, but please know that your concerns have been fully noted and valued. I have asked my officials to contact you again once we have had the opportunity to work with local authorities to establish clearer timescales for the next steps described above.

I am copying this letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, the Chair of the Petitions Committee, Gareth Davies MS, Janet Finch-Saunders MS, Llyr Gruffydd MS, Mark Isherwood MS, Darren Millar MS, and Jack Sargeant MS.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Skates', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Ken Skates AS/MS

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

Notes of virtual meeting with petitioners STAND North Wales – 7/1/25.

Blue Badge petition – P06 - 1380

Date: Tuesday, 7 January 2025 @10am

Present

Julie Meese, Community, Engagement and Participation Officer - Conwy and Denbighshire (JM)

2 Petitioners with lived experience Kirsty and Nige

Caroline Thomas MS, Chair Petitions Committee (CT)

Chris Warner, Deputy Director – Transport Strategy & Policy (CW)

Ian Bradfield (IB)

Sue Blunt (SB)

Lorraine Walsh (LW)

Purpose

To update the petitioners following discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales on 3 December, following a meeting with the petitioners who shared their lived experiences on 4 November.

CW confirmed discussions had been held with the CS and the team had shared the lived experiences with him and the key points of the petition.

CW reported that the CS was keen to make a difference to applicants for blue badges but had decided not to make legislative changes to the badge duration. There are risk factors and resource issues involved. However, he would like the Blue Badge Scheme to work well and as it should. He acknowledges there is still scope to improve the service and consistency of the scheme across local authorities and improvements with Not for Reassessments (NfR) under the further assessment eligibility criteria. Applicants with the greatest need who may need further support to apply/re-apply for a badge should be supported. The CS would like policy leads to continue to work with local authorities to encourage consistency and share best practice. One way is possibly developing a code of practice and ask all local authorities in Wales to sign up to this.

JM responded and other petitioners individually stating they were disappointed with this outcome and the length of time it had taken to date but they were grateful CW had updated the CS.

CW advised the next steps would be for the CS to write to the petitioners to confirm his decision and send a copy to the Petitions Committee.

CT said this was a social justice issue which she had also raised with Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip. She observed that blue

Notes of virtual meeting with petitioners STAND North Wales – 7/1/25.

badge applicants were struggling, and she disagreed with the process. The NfR needed strengthening and local authorities needed to be more helpful. She was concerned NfR was not applied to PIP based applicants. CT said she had helped an applicant who because they could not find the letter of diagnosis asked their GP and it has resulted in a £30 charge for information. CT also commented LAs are too strict and should be more lenient. NfR should be used more often.

SB explained the eligibility criteria for a blue badge. “Without further assessment” (automatic) eligibility is based on higher awards of certain benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). These recipients would have already undergone a thorough assessment with the DWP. People who have a severe sight impairment or who are registered blind with appropriate certification also are eligible under the automatic route.

“Further assessment” (discretionary) eligibility is available under “mobility and cognitive” criteria. This further assessment is to ensure it remains robust and consistent. This captures people who are over the age of two years old and fall within one or more certain descriptors:

- “Has a permanent and substantial impairment which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking.
- Drives a vehicle regularly and has a impairment in both arms and is unable to operate or has considerable difficulty in operating all or some types of parking equipment.
- Holds an SR (special rules) 1 form (DWP).”

There are additional descriptors for children under the age of three years old, relating to needing to be near a vehicle for treatment for that condition to be given in that vehicle or to take them to a place where such treatment can be given. Or a child on account of that condition must always be accompanied by bulky medical equipment which can not be carried around without difficulty with the child.

SB confirmed that the cognitive eligibility criteria apply to people who have difficulty planning and following a familiar journey to such an extent that they need constant supervision. Examples included autism, Alzheimer’s or dementia, stroke, learning disabilities, mental health and head injuries. The eligibility was still based on mobility but lots of things would be considered including not being aware of danger. It was also noted that the blue badge is based on mobility and not on medical conditions. Many people are diagnosed with medical conditions but not to the extent that it always affects their mobility in life and often some medical conditions would need to progress to make someone’s mobility reach the stage when they would be eligible for a blue badge.

SB acknowledged that some applicants may need further help and support if they are unable to apply online or unable to ask family or friends to support them. The team will work with local authorities to explore further assistance that may be required especially where some are struggling.

JM shared disappointment and asked for timescales on local authorities signing up to a code of practice and updates on actions and timeframes.

Notes of virtual meeting with petitioners STAND North Wales – 7/1/25.

Other petitioner Nige – shared his disappointment and concerns and frustrations of those applying for a badge. He raised financial savings with applications and consistency with systems processing these. He was pleased car park spaces had been raised and often existing spaces were eroding and not maintained.

Petitioner KH restated her concerns on the scheme and when having to re-apply and her experience of a delay in PIP reassessment and the worry of possibly not having a blue badge to use daily.

CW referred to other concerns and experiences raised previously by some of the petitioners on parking and commented that these were a matter for local authorities. This has been shared with local authorities. Other matters and concerns raised on accessibility with rail and buses are a matter for UK Government as many of the concerns raised were not devolved matters for Ministers in Wales.

SB commented that many of the concerns shared have been previously raised by stakeholders and people with lived experience in the Disability Rights Taskforce group which had several workstreams, one being transport.

CW concluded the meeting by saying he will update the CS following the meeting and request the CS to write to JM main petitioner confirming his decision. However, he emphasised the CS was keen to improve things and make a difference and very much welcomed and valued the feedback shared from those with lived experiences.

P-06-1380 Make Blue badge Applications Lifelong for individuals who have a lifelong diagnosis - Correspondence from the Petitioners to the Committee, 03 March 2025

Ken Skates states 04th February 25

1. With the limited resources of the Welsh Government, I cannot pursue legislation to make Blue Badges lifelong
2. Blue Badge eligibility is determined by mobility needs rather than medical diagnoses
3. It is important to protect the scheme's fairness and effectiveness
4. Local authorities administering the scheme currently have the discretion to determine if an applicant's impairment is unlikely to improve. In such cases, they can streamline the application process through the "Not for Reassessment" (NfR) route
5. I acknowledge that the NfR route does not always work smoothly for applicants. To address this, my officials will continue collaborating with local authorities to enhance the guidance and streamline the process. We will explore with local authorities the potential for a voluntary Code of Practice
6. The Welsh Government will also maintain funding for the Independent Advisory Service in Wales to assist local authorities with assessments and to provide ongoing training for assessors.

1. As Ken states 'The eligibility criteria for a blue badge has been subject to many reviews, reports and consultations and regulations since 2002', our findings reveal the same issues are still being raised and little progress has been made, this is costing the Government, both in terms of time and money, to continue applying temporary fixes to a system that is clearly not working. A blue badge is a lifeline, offering freedom and independence, allowing individuals to experience a sense of normality. Yet, obstacles remain, making it harder for those who depend on it, to access the support they desperately need.
2. Ken states eligibility is determined by mobility needs rather than medical diagnosis, what about Severe Cognitive Impairment, this is also on the eligibility criteria and seems to be overlooked
3. Protecting the scheme's fairness and effectiveness- The current scheme does not show fairness or effectiveness with the constant barriers faced by individuals when trying to apply for a blue badge, please see attached, a parents renewal application experience, a parent that had discussed the 'Not for reassessment' award, it had been verbally agreed and a note to be put on file, but when actually renewed was told " Our system does not allow us to action her badge for not for reassessment under the DLA criteria only when it's applied under walking disability or cognitive reasons – this

person is severely cognitively impaired and on the learning disability register. How is this fair or effective, this is only one example

Please see Local Authorities questions and statement 'There are no technical capabilities in place within the system for this this to be highlighted automatically when an assessor accesses an applications account e.g. no 'pop up' box highlighting 'not for reassessment'

4. How can local authorities use discretion to determine if an applicant's impairment is unlikely to improve when they don't have formal /mandatory /medical training (enforceable, not awareness) please see FOI
5. Not for Reassessment /NFR is no where to be seen in the guidance – it is referenced under **Streamlined processes** - *Where the local authority is satisfied that an applicant will permanently meet the eligibility criteria, the local authority is able to mark their records as such to shorten the 'renewal' process when their badge expires. This will be the case where a person clearly meets the criteria and their impairment will not improve, such as a double amputee. In such cases the applicant will have a simplified renewal process, only needing to supply evidence of their identity, residence and a photograph. They will still be expected to sign the declaration form.*

It is not mentioned in the booklet [Who is eligible for a Blue Badge?](#), however 'eligible without further assessment' can be seen. The language needs to be clearer.

At the beginning of our petition Lee Waters was Cabinet secretary for Transport, in a letter to Mark Isherwood on 15th January 2024 he stated ' Local authorities can decide if a blue badge should be awarded for life ' however WLGA state ' As there is a requirement to renew badges every three years, we do not believe there to be any lifelong badges'

Nothing is clear, you can understand why this can cause confusion, so many mixed messages. Many people are not aware NFR exists, this language is not used in any documentation. When people are now aware (petitioners) of NFR, the process is definitely not streamline, clearer language and more consistent communication is needed.

6. The Welsh Government will also maintain funding for the Independent Advisory Service in Wales to assist local authorities with assessments and to provide ongoing training for assessors.
 - a. Training, Lee Water in a letter to Jack Sargeant on January 23rd, 2024 Stated *'The Welsh Government's guidance for local authorities on how to deliver the Blue Badge scheme recommends that all members of staff who deal regularly with applicants and badge holders should receive disability and equality awareness training
However, this guidance is non-statutory and we are unable to direct local authorities to provide specific training for individual staff. In 2020, my officials*

held a workshop on the social model of disability for local authority staff dealing with blue badge applications'

As you can see training is non-statutory – not enforceable and when we requested data on who attended workshops, Lee could not provide this I refer to point 4, if training is non enforceable / non statutory how can decisions be made to determine if an applicant's impairment is unlikely to improve, sure they aren't qualified to do so.

- b.** No Appeals Process The booklet "Who is eligible for a Blue Badge?" states on the last page that "The local authority's decision on eligibility is final" in bold, which can be intimidating for readers. This language may discourage individuals from seeking further explanation or pursuing the application process, as they might assume there is no way to challenge the decision. Additionally, the booklet does not mention the availability of the Independent Advisory Service

The Equality Act 2010 states it allows for the better or more favourable treatment of people with impairments based on the evidence given, to provide equality of opportunities.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Participation and Engagement: The Act emphasises the importance of involving all people, including those with disabilities, in decision-making processes that affect their lives, **ensuring that their voices are heard and valued.**

Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social right and opportunities

A quote from one our *petitioners* ' *Someone listening to you can share your worries and burdens, someone hearing you and understanding they can make an impact.*'

Petitioner's do not feel heard

Change is needed

- Listen to individuals with lived experiences, act on the feedback they provide, and collaborate to implement meaningful change
- Award lifetime badges or extend duration
- All local authorities implement the scheme in the same way and through the same departments.
- Training and code of conduct should be mandatory, not optional
- Use clear language in communications, such as booklets, guidelines, and other materials.
- Introduce an Appeal process

Blue badge Petition

Parents response to Ken Skates Letter dated February 4th 2024 and WGLA and 2019 report

In response to Ken's Letter. At the start of his letter he states that a blue badge is 'determined by mobility needs rather than medical diagnosis'. Ken makes no mention of any conditions of cognitive impairment that would put someone in danger. This makes me question if he understands the full independence a badge gives to an individual with various disabilities, not just those with mobility struggles.

Looking at the 'Written Statement: Eligibility and Implementation' report and highlighting a few recommendations that stood out to me.

Recommendation 7- for all staff who undertake blue badge assessments to be trained and apply the social model of disability- REJECTED. The blue badge helps remove a large barrier for many disabled people who are trying to access the local community, gain independence and some normality in what could be an ever changing new world for them. If staff undertook a small amount of training to understand the barriers disabled people faced this could make a huge impact on the application process.

Recommendation 8- Excellent news that this changed from REJECTED to accept in principle. However, what has happened since the report to improve things? The Welsh government should be pushing the UK government to make public transport inclusive. It is encouraged to use public transport yet it is inaccessible to many.

Recommendation 9- there is still no official Appeals process, meaning that if someone is rejected: for a variety of reasons, they have to provide more evidence or take matters further. This in turn can cause excess stress, worry and isolation.

Recommendation 13- the Welsh Government works with the WLGA to develop a process to enable those suffering with a life-long or deteriorating condition to renew their blue badge automatically, without further assessment. - REJECTED on the grounds of Not for reassessment.. If we look at the response from the WLGA they have NO belief that anyone has a lifelong badge. This shows that not for reassessment doesn't work. Regardless of condition you are required to reapply for a badge every 3 years.

Going back to Ken's letter he says that 'Local authorities administering the scheme currently have the discretion to determine if an applicant's impairment is unlikely to improve', how are they meant to do this with no formal or mandatory training? They can not make an educated decision if they do not have all the information provided to them. He goes on to say he will 'explore the potential for a voluntary Code of Practice to set out more clearly the service that applicants can expect' nothing should be voluntary, it should be one code of practice for all. This would make the application process easier and less complicated. It would also make sure the scheme is fair and effective in all ways as everyone will be following the same set of rules and regulations

You currently have various agencies and departments issuing blue badges. This does not help with the consistency, fairness and effectiveness across the board.

2019 was 6 years ago. Even before this as there had been previous implementations surrounding the blue badge. Nothing has changed. We, the people who require the badges, are still putting forward the same complaints and problems for the Welsh government to address and assist with. Half a decade, and more, is a long time for no progress.

We very much appreciate Ken's officials meeting with us and whilst they may have listened they may not have heard what we had to say. I think the documents speak volumes for us in that sense. Someone listening to you can share your worries and burdens, someone hearing you and understanding they can make an impact.

Blue badge renewal request – Blue badge permit team – Denbighshire
'Not For reassessment'

On 27 Feb 2025, at 15:06, Blue Badge <blue.badge@denbighshire.gov.uk> wrote:

Regarding your meeting this afternoon, I suggest raising the following with the AS's:

Can you explain how you believe the 'not for reassessment' process to work?
i.e do you believe that there is a technical capability within the system that recognises and highlights these customers automatically? Press a button and the Badge reissued automatically??

While councils understand that Walking Ability applications can be eligible for 'not for reassessment' - this is currently applied manually

Council can only do this by adding the verbatim to the applicant details i.e. manual intervention.

There are no technical capabilities in place within the system for this this to be highlighted automatically when an assessor accesses an applications account e.g. no 'pop up' box highlighting 'not for reassessment'

Further to this, an applicant still has to provide up to date proof of ID, address and a photo every 3 years to maintain the Blue Badge.

Cofion/Regards

Tim Trwydded Bathodyn Glas / Blue Badge Permit Team

Gwasanaeth Cymorth Corfforaethol – Pobl / Corporate Support Service – People
Cyngor Sir Ddinbych / Denbighshire County Council
sirddinbych.gov.uk / denbighshire.gov.uk

From: Blue Badge <blue.badge@denbighshire.gov.uk>

Date: 19 February 2025 at 09:16:03 GMT

Subject: RE: Blue badge renewal

Good morning

Our system does not allow us to action her badge for not for reassessment under the DLA criteria only when it's applied under walking disability or cognitive reasons.

As you are probably aware she doesn't get assessed on her application if she is receiving the higher rate mobility component of the award.

Hope this helps.

Cofion/Regards

Tîm Trwydded Bathodyn Glas / Blue Badge Permit Team

Sent: 18 February 2025 13:36

To: Blue Badge <blue.badge@denbighshire.gov.uk>

Subject: Re: Blue badge renewal

Hello blue badge team

Just for clarity....

You have issued XXXXXXX's badge on the automatic DLA high rate criteria, but I want her to be additionally under the severe cognitive impairment as she is severely cognitively impaired and on the learning disability register.

Therefore she can then be "not for reassessment?"

I had discussed this about 9 months ago with the blue badge team manager and she said that when XXXXXXX's badge came up to be reissued this would be actioned?

I did ask for clarification prior to you issuing the badge?

Please could you advise further?

Kind regards

On 18 Feb 2025, at 12:35, Blue Badge <blue.badge@denbighshire.gov.uk> wrote:

Good afternoon

Thank you for your enquiry and apologies for the late reply.

Regarding XXXXX's badge, she is a not for reassessment as she receives higher rate mobility DLA, and those badges are an automatic qualification.

However, due to Welsh government guidance we will require a new application every 3 yrs regardless of it being a "not for reassessment" application.

Cofion/Regards

Tîm Trwydded Bathodyn Glas / Blue Badge Permit Team

Sent: 14 February 2025 11:06

To: Blue Badge <blue.badge@denbighshire.gov.uk>

Subject: Re: Blue badge renewal

Hello blue badge team

I have received notification that my daughter's blue badge is being reissued today.

As per previous email below, I wanted to clarify if you have reissued the badge on the -
'not for reassessment' basis?

Please could you respond and clarify for me?

Kind regards

On 10 Dec 2024, at 21:24

Hello Blue Badge Team Hello Blue Badge Team

Re Application for a Blue Badge under the 'Not for reassessment' criteria -

I'm reapplying for my daughter's blue badge

I know I've had this discussion with your team before regarding issuing life long Blue badges for individuals who have life long conditions, and was told to submit the application when next due. Hopefully there is a note on Xxxxxxxx's record to this effect with the Blue badge Manager who I discussed this with approximately 12months ago. xxxxxxxx diagnosis is genetic and lifelong.

STAND (Stronger together for additional needs and disabilities) and myself forwarded a petition to the Welsh Government and it was debated in the Senedd.

We were informed that individuals who permanently met the eligibility criteria can be awarded a badge on a 'not for reassessment' basis. (Documentation of this attached in blue badge application).

Please could you consider issuing Xxxxxxxx blue badge under this 'not for reassessment' criteria therefore saving us and yourselves the additional time that this process takes.

Please could you let me know if this is possible.

Kind regards



Blue Badge Petition - Make Blue badge Applications Lifelong for individuals who have a lifelong diagnosis

1. Are you aware that there is an option for lifelong blue badges?
2. How many individuals have been awarded lifelong blue badges? If so, could you provide us with a breakdown for the last 5 years?
3. What qualifications or training do desk-based assessors have in health, ALN or disability

	RECIEVED	
Conwy	19/01/24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are unable to award a lifelong badge. “Indefinite or “life” awards are not available as all badges are valid for 3 years. Some people refer to applicants being given an award for life but that this really is a marker that no further assessment is required. This means that when re-applying in three years’ time no further medical evidence is needed to support the application – only proof of ID and residency in Conwy. 2. None -As mentioned in the previous question we do not award lifelong blue badges to applicants 3. Local authorities are responsible for the day-to-day administration and enforcement of the scheme. They are responsible for determining and implementing administrative, assessment and enforcement procedures in accordance with the governing legislation. All staff complete the local authority’s disability and equality awareness training programme. This includes information on the social model of disability. <p>All administrators of the Blue Badge scheme follow processes on how to administer the scheme, including policy on circumstances when local authorities will charge for a Blue Badge in the case of a replacement or organisational badge, as well as procedures for reviewing decisions. When they are unable to come to a clear decision to award a Blue Badge they can refer to an Independent Advisory Service for further assessment.</p>

		<p>If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of this response and should be sent to the Council's Information Governance Unit.</p>
Denbighshire	09/01/24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 00001967 - As per the Welsh Government guidelines, Local Authorities can 'mark' a customer account with 'not for reassessment' - if submitted based on 'walking ability'. This means – on expiry - the badge can be reissued automatically on presentation of a photo, proof of id and address without evidence. This does not apply to DLA, PIP applications. 31 badges - 2018 – 18, 2019 – 12 badges, 2020 - November 23 – 1 Badge, Until November is as far as report go. 2023 – This is because most applicants use their DLA / PIP award as evidence for their application - which cannot be marked 'not for further assessment' <p>Using the 'walking ability' option on the application form (not DLA / PIP award as the reason for their application) the badge holder will have to continue to reapply every 3 years using the online application form and can attach photos of all the evidence required to the online application with a request for it to be marked as 'not for reassessment' (first time only)</p> <p>Once this is processed, the 'not for reassessment' will be in place for all future applications (stays on the account permanently) – a 'life award' is not a term used by LA administrators.</p>
	09/01/23	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 00001975 - I can confirm that staff: complete the Welsh Government (Blue Badge Local Authority Verification Toolkit) training; complete intense job shadowing training exercise with experienced and knowledgeable staff members, attend benchmarking groups meetings with other LA's to discuss potential complex 'loss/lack of mobility' cases. seek specialist advice from the Welsh Government Independent Assessors/Advisors Able 2
Flintshire		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> F00021931 – Yes 428 issued between 01/01/19 to 01/01/24 by the Independent Mobility Assessor (IAS). We are unable to give you a breakdown, the team are presented with an overall total. F00021933 - Our assessors do not hold health, ALN or disability qualifications. Blue Badge applications are assessed based on the blue badge Local Authority Toolkit which has been

		prepared by the Welsh Government to help local authorities manage the application and verification process for a Blue Badge across Wales.
Anglesey	03/01/24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, we are aware that LAs can flag on the Blue Badge Digital System (BBDS) if they have assessed someone for a Blue Badge or have referred an application to the Blue Badge Independent Advisory Service and they have recommended to the LA that the applicant is eligible and should be awarded a badge for life. By flagging this on the system we will then know that the BB holder will still have to re-apply for a BB every 3 years before their existing badge expires but We would still however need to check their identity, address etc to ensure against fraudulent applications. 2. None 3. Desk based assessors abide to the Local Authority verification toolkit that is provided by the Welsh Government.”
Gwynedd,	16/02/24 18/01/24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We do have some applications that are recommended to be awarded for life. Which means they do not require reassessment when re-applying for a blue Badge at the end of the three year validity period. 2. How many individuals have been awarded lifelong blue badges? If so, could you provide us with a breakdown for the last 5 years? We have 69 applications that have been recommended to be awarded for life by the IAS (Independent Assessment Service) . 3. All our desk based assessors are trained to use the Welsh Government Blue Badge Assessment Tool Kit. If we are unable to come to a decision on an application using the Welsh Government desk based assessment toolkit, applications are forwarded to the Independent Mobility Assessors, who are contracted by Welsh Government to carry out further desk based assessments and face to face assessments. I am unable to comment on what training the Mobility Assessors have, as they are not employed by Cyngor Gwynedd”.
Wrexham	15/01/24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4035 - Blue Badges are issued for a period of 3 years in Wales and we are not aware that there is an option for lifelong badges, as part of our process we record if a customer has benefits or condition that are unlikely to improve so that the process is extremely straightforward when they reapply. 2. How many individuals have been awarded lifelong blue badges? If so, could you provide us with a breakdown for the last 5 years? Nil

	15/01/24	3. 4040 –Desk based Advisors are not trained in Health, ALN or disability, if there are cases which is not straight forward then the application is referred for an independent assessment to a qualified Occupational Health officer.
--	----------	--

Agenda Item 3.3

P-06-1400 Fair and Adequate Resourcing of General Practice in Wales

This petition was submitted by Lewis Williams, having collected a total of 21,620 signatures.

Text of Petition:

General Practice in Wales is under significant and growing strain. GP numbers are declining, demand is rising, and practices are struggling to recruit and retain staff.

General practice is being forced to try and cope with inadequate resources, an unsustainable workload, and a workforce under pressure across the whole of Wales, with some areas in crisis..

Additional Information:

Current inadequate capacity is a product of longstanding workload, workforce, and well-being issues, which correlate to the chronic underfunding of general medical services.

BMA Cymru Wales's Save Our Surgeries campaign asks Welsh Government to commit to a rescue package for General Practice, to provide GPs and their patients with the support they need.

By taking one minute to sign this petition, you can amplify our calls for the Welsh Government to provide a rescue package for General Practice.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff South and Penarth
- South Wales Central



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1400
Ein cyf/Our ref MDFWL/10145/24

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

07 January 2025

Dear Carolyn Thomas MS,

Thank you for your letter and the ongoing work of the petitions committee in highlighting this important petition from BMA Cymru.

The draft budget, published on the 10th of December, set out the spending priorities for the Welsh Government and included funding to deliver our commitment to 'Iechyd Da' - A Healthier Wales. As part of this, the Draft Budget prioritised health and social care and provided the MEG with an additional £435m of resource funding. This was on top of the extra funding provided to frontline NHS services in 2024-25. Taken together, our investment over the last two years in health and social care is £880m, an increase of 8%. We are also investing in the infrastructure of the NHS, with an additional £175m of capital funding to improve the NHS estate as well as investing in new equipment and digital technology.

The Draft Budget will enable us to reinvest in our public services after having to make some very difficult decisions in recent budget rounds. We will still face pressures, but we have ensured that the fiscal resources we have as part of this budget are aligned to the most important issues for Welsh people. This budget signals a brighter future for Wales and puts the country on a path to growth once again.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@gov.wales
Gohebiaeth.Mark.Drakeford@llyw.cymru

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

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

I hope this reassures the Committee and BMA Cymru that we recognise the importance of providing the Health and Social Services MEG with the appropriate level of financial support. However, it is of course for the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, to now make decisions on how to use the resources available to him, including the funding for GPs.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Mark Drakeford AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-06-1400
Ein cyf/Our ref: JMHSC/11074/24

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions committee

Petitions@senedd.wales

08 January 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Petition P-06-1400 Fair and Adequate Resourcing of General Practice in Wales

Thank you for your letter regarding the above petition.

I note the work of the Petitions Committee in relation to this petition and the future work to be undertaken by the Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee. I have carefully read the points raised in the correspondence from BMA Cymru Wales, which you refer to in your letter.

I am committed to working with the GP profession to secure the best possible investment outcomes for practices and their staff. My officials engage with NHS Wales and the General Practitioner Committee (GPC Wales) of BMA Cymru Wales in annual tripartite negotiations. The tripartite negotiation process is based on the principles of social partnership and has enabled healthy discussions to date. This negotiation process is ongoing.

In [my response to the Senedd debate to this petition on 6 November](#), I noted that redressing the imbalance of funding between secondary and primary care will be a priority for future funding decisions, and that the Welsh Government is committed to the principle of providing more care closer to home.

I look forward to working with GP representatives on how we can further support sustainability in general medical services, as well as a preventative approach to care that keeps people well and out of hospital.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

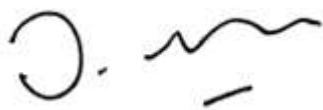
Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@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.

Yours sincerely,

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

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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

BMA Cymru Wales comments on correspondence from Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language to Chair of the Senedd Petitions Committee re. [Petition P-06-1400 Fair and Adequate Resourcing of General Practice in Wales](#)

Introduction

The BMA is a professional association and trade union representing and negotiating on behalf of all doctors and medical students in the UK. It is a leading voice advocating for outstanding health care and a healthy population. It is an association providing members with excellent individual services and support throughout their lives.

Comments

We are grateful for the correspondence between the Chair of the Petitions Committee and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language on the issues raised by the petition.

We recognise that since both letters were issued by the Welsh Government, GPC Wales, Welsh Government and NHS Wales concluded contract negotiations for General Medical Services (GMS) for the year 2024/25.

In addition to this, we also note the agreement of Welsh Government's Final Budget for the year 2025/26. While we recognise and welcome the additional £100m for public services, it remains unclear how much of this funding will be directed towards sustaining general practice. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care remarked that "redressing the imbalance of funding between secondary and primary care will be a priority for future funding decisions". Without further commitment to addressing the funding and resourcing within Welsh general practice, we fear many practices will continue to struggle and be at risk of closure, impacting patient care and exacerbating pressures on the wider health service. We would welcome indication toward this commitment to reassure GPs, their staff and patients across Wales now the upcoming year's budget is agreed.

In light of the above, we would urge Welsh Government to:

- **Clarify how general practice will directly benefit from the final budget allocations** – while broader investment in the health service is welcomed, there must be transparency on how much of this will arrive at the frontline for GMS.



- **Ensure that additional funding translates into tangible support for practices** – providing enough that GPs have the resources needed to deliver high-quality care
- **Commit to a long-term strategy for sustainability within general practice in Wales – Short-term fixes will not resolve the deep-rooted issues facing general practice.** A sustainable funding model is essential to keep patients out of hospital and ensure equitable access to care closer to home for the people of Wales

In addition to the above, we would like to draw the Committee's attention to the lack of commitment in the Budget to addressing the concerns around significant unavoidable costs that will be incurred by practices from April 2025 (including increased **National Insurance Employer Contributions**, on which we have previously written to the [Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care on 8 November 2024](#)).

BMA Cymru Wales remains committed to working constructively with the Welsh Government to secure the necessary investment in general practice. We continue our calls for resource restoration to sustain GPs and their practices across Wales to provide vital care within our communities.

Agenda Item 3.4

P-06-1425 We ask the Welsh Government to reverse its decision to stop T2 buses calling at Garndolbenmaen.

This petition was submitted by Steven Churchman, having collected 282 signatures online and 139 signatures on paper, making for a total of 421 signatures.

Text of Petition:

On 5th November 2023 a new bus timetable was introduced by the Welsh Government and all the T2 buses which pass through Garndolbenmaen were withdrawn and T2 buses are by-passing the village.

The ability of people in Garndolbenmaen to travel to work, to school or to hospital appointments will be all but impossible.

There has been no consultation whatsoever with the people of Garndolbenmaen on these changes to the T2 bus service.

Additional details:

Most of these problems could be resolved with virtually no extra cost if the T2 service was retained to Garndolbenmaen. This would require only an extra 8 minute detour (less than two extra miles) if all the T2 buses were to continue to call at Garndolbenmaen. The minor extra expenditure would be mitigated by the avoidance of public expenditure on paying for taxi fares for school students and those people on low incomes who travel to Ysbyty Gwynedd for appointments. It would also restore a useful bus service between Garndolbenmaen and Cricieth which is now included in the new T2 bus route.

This practical proposal to resolve the problem has already been suggested by local councillor Steve Churchman, and it would be helpful if others would also support this campaign for the T2 service to be retained for the people of Garndolbenmaen.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Dwyfor Meirionnydd
- Mid and West Wales

P-06-1425 We ask the Welsh Government to reverse its decision to stop T2 buses calling at Garndolbenmaen - Petitioner to Committee, 24 February 2025

Many thanks. I was present at e meeting held on February 13th with representatives of WG, TfW and Cyngor Gwynedd. I believe this was very positive, and was able to discuss the alternative routes suggested in my petition presentation to the Senedd petitions Committee. I also alluded to a third option involving the T22 service.

At the conclusion of this meeting it was agreed that consideration will be given to the feasibility of these suggestions and that a further meeting will be convened. At this moment in time, I have not been advised of any planned dates, but will endeavour to find out and will let you know.

I would add that this stage that although the conclusion of the meeting does not imply resolution to the situation, the concerns of the communities in my ward are at the moment are being considered.

Best Wishes,

Cyng. Steve Churchman

Agenda Item 3.5

P-06-1435 We're calling on the Welsh Government to commit to implementing targeted lung cancer screening

This petition was submitted by Simon Scheeres, having collected a total of 5,339 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Lung cancer claims 1,800 lives each year, more than any other cancer in Wales.

This must change.

We can do things to reduce this impact. One of these is targeted lung cancer screening, which would invite people aged 55-74 to be screened if they have a high-risk of lung cancer.

This screening can catch lung cancer at an earlier stage: and can save lives from lung cancer.

By taking 2 minutes to sign, you can aid calls for the Welsh Government to commit to implementing this screening in Wales.

Additional Information:

In Wales, almost half of lung cancers are caught at the latest stage. Too many die from lung cancer for this reason.

By screening those most at risk we can detect lung cancer earlier: when survival is highest.

We know this works, as an evaluation of English Targeted Lung Health Checks (a pilot programme) saw:

- 76% of lung cancers caught at an early stage.

Last year, the UK National Screening Committee recommended targeted lung cancer screening to all UK nations, with the provision of stop smoking

support. This screening is for people aged 55–74 without symptoms, who hold a high risk of lung cancer (those with a history of smoking). Sadly, only one UK nation (England) has committed to a national rollout of this. This must change.

Lung cancer takes a terrible toll on Wales. Targeted lung cancer screening can help reduce this toll, giving more people precious time with family and friends.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff South and Penarth
- South Wales Central

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1435
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/11132/24

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions committee
petitions@senedd.wales

28 January 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Petition P-06-1435 We're calling on the Welsh Government to commit to implementing targeted lung cancer screening

Thank you for your letter about this petition. The Welsh Government is committed to improving cancer outcomes and recognises lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related death in Wales.

The Welsh Government is working with Public Health Wales (PHW) to determine how best to implement a national targeted lung screening programme in Wales and I am keen we progress towards a Wales-wide screening programme as soon as possible.

The pilot in Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board is due to end in March 2025 when its final evaluation will be published. PHW has been funded to take forward detailed scoping work to determine the model, activity and funding requirements for a national targeted screening programme, building on the intelligence gained from the pilot.

I have asked PHW to provide advice about the implementation of a national lung cancer screening programme by the spring, six months earlier than originally planned, so a decision about how to progress can be made at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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

Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@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.

Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

3rd March 2025

Dear Committee Members,

It is positive to hear that the PHW scoping work has been brought forward. While we understand that the scoping exercise must be thorough, this is a welcome step towards advancing this screening in Wales.

As we await the Welsh Government's decision following the scoping exercise, I would like to thank the Committee for its continued efforts in raising this issue on behalf of those who signed the petition and supported this vital work in Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Scheeres
Public Affairs Manager (Wales)
Cancer Research UK

Agenda Item 3.6

P-06-1453 Provide funding and support for the adequate provision of accessible and clean public toilets

This petition was submitted by Gareth Parsons, having collected a total of 1,772 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Wales Seniors Forum research shows that many older people do not go out or reduce the time they are out of the house because of a lack of public toilets. This can lead to isolation and loneliness. Inadequate provision of facilities is a public health issue that affects all of us, preventing some from fully accessing their communities.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff South and Penarth
- South Wales Central

P-06-1453 - Provide funding and support for the adequate provision of accessible and clean public toilets, Correspondence from Pencoed Town Council, 17.10.24

Good afternoon

I write I response to the request from Carolyn Thomas MS in respect of the above.

The Current facilities were purchased in 2012 by the Town Council which at the time included an integral bus shelter . The purchase being undertaken as part of the regeneration strategy to improve the Town Centre, for the benefit of the community and visitors.

Since being purchased the Toilets have been refurbished to include a disabled facility.

The refurbishment work was undertaken by a local building firm - Alcon Builders

The Toilets are manned daily by two part time attendants.

In 2018 the Town Council was congratulated for the provision of Public Toilets by One Voice Wales in recognition of a "Devolution of Service"

Attached herewith are before and after photographs etc and the press article regarding the presentation of the award from One Voice Wales

It is important to note that the purchase and refurbishment were carried out without a financial input from anyone and was met by the precept, and the strategy referred to above, which encompassed other issues as well.

Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me directly

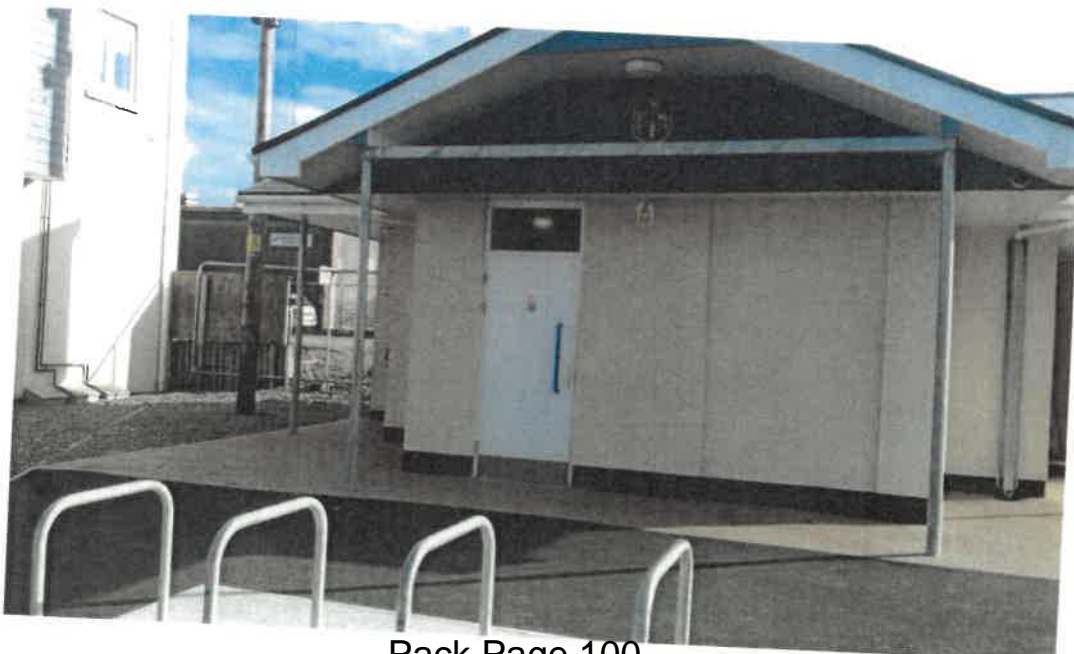
Regards

Geraint Thomas

Town Clerk



AFTER



Flushed with success for work

Glamorgan Gazette · 3 May 2018

PENCOED Town Council has been honoured for its efforts in saving toilets.



The council received the Highly Commended Award as part of the Innovative Practice Awards 2018 organised by One Voice Wales, under the category of Devolution of Services.

It was in recognition of its purchase and refurbishment of the Town Toilets at the Square in Pencoed, including additional facilities for the disabled.

The Town Toilets were refurbished by Alcon Builders and they are now kept clean by two parttime toilet attendants.

This achievement was reached not only by way of a strategic approach by the town council in respect of its regeneration of the town centre, but also by totally funding the work carried out and the employment of part-time employees.



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-06-1453
Ein cyf/Our ref: JMSHSC/11233/24

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair
Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru

petitions@senedd.wales

18 February 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter about petition *P-06-1453: Provide funding and support for the adequate provision of accessible and clean public toilets*. As the petitioners acknowledge, the Welsh Government has provided a clear statutory and strategic framework in this area. Local Toilet Strategies are subject to local authorities' existing scrutiny structures and public scrutiny. Any concerns should be raised directly with the local authority in the first instance and, if necessary, complaints can be escalated to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Our [comprehensive statutory guidance](#) provides a strong foundation and covers in detail the issues raised by the Wales Seniors' Forum. This includes the wider public health impacts of inadequate access to public toilets, the importance of meaningful consultation, ways to engage with the public to identify local need, engagement with potential providers to deliver sustainable solutions and the importance of information and signage in a range of formats. In relation to signage, the National Toilet Logo was designed to meet disability requirements in respect of contrast and colour and the toilet symbol has been drawn from visual vocabulary systems in use for people with learning and cognitive disabilities.

The importance of collaboration with other public bodies is also made clear and this collaboration and sharing best practice can be undertaken through a range of forums. Organisations such as the Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales can also play a key role in this.

While standalone public toilets in Wales receive 100% relief from business rates, there are no plans to provide business rates relief to businesses which make their toilets available to the public. Local authorities could choose to provide their own incentives and have a broad power to grant [discretionary relief](#), if it would be reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of local taxpayers. The cost of any such relief must be borne by the local authority.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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

Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales

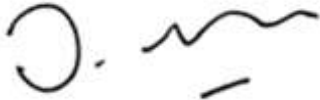
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

Core funding for local government is provided through the local government settlement. As you are aware, public finances have been highly constrained in recent years, but the Welsh Government has consistently prioritised funding for public services in making its budget decisions.

The Draft Budget 2025-26 increased the local government settlement to more than £6.1bn, an increase of 4.3%, compared to 2024-25. Decisions about local services and budgets are the responsibility of each local authority. The Final Budget will be published on 20 February.

Yours sincerely,

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

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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

Agenda Item 3.7

P-06-1479 Stop the detention of learning disabled and autistic children, young people and adults in hospitals

This petition was submitted by Stolen Lives, having collected a total of 1,754 signatures.

Text of Petition:

There are people with learning disabilities and/or autism from Wales who are living in hospitals. This is a human rights scandal which has been ignored for too long.

Many people with learning disabilities and/or autism are trapped in hospitals due to a lack of appropriate housing and support in their community. Many are sectioned due to placement breakdown and they have been inappropriately placed.

Welsh Government must recognise that sectioning people under the MHA is not the solution.

Additional information:

Stolen Lives are a campaign group consisting of families who have loved ones with a learning disability and/or autism who are, or have been incarcerated, in hospitals.

They are supported by members of the Wales Learning Disability Consortium: Learning Disability Wales, All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers, Mencap Cymru, All Wales People First, Down's Syndrome Association and Cymorth Cymru.

Hospitals are not a home. Many hospitals are far from people's families, and cases of abuse and neglect are all too common.

Welsh Government must tell us how they plan to stop sectioning under the Mental Health Act and how they plan to bring children, young people and adults who have been sectioned closer to home and out of hospitals, and tell us exactly how many children, young people and adults with learning

disabilities and/or autism are currently away from home in mental health hospitals and so-called assessment and treatment units.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Preseli Pembrokeshire
- Mid and West Wales

Sarah Murphy AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1479
Ein cyf/Our ref SM/00016/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

petitions@senedd.wales

27 January 2025

Dear Carolyn Thomas,

Thank you for your letter dated 9 January regarding the petition from the Stolen Lives Wales, Homes Not Hospitals campaign.

I support the principle that a hospital bed is not a home and whenever practical, people with learning disabilities should be cared for in the community, at home or as close to home as possible. I am committed to reducing the number of people receiving their care, long-term in a hospital setting and when they are admitted, their hospital stay is for no longer than is absolutely necessary.

I responded to a debate about this issue in the Senedd in December; my response touches on many of the issues raised in the petition. It is available here: [Plenary 04/12/2024 - Welsh Parliament](#)

I tasked the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group (LDMAG) with setting up a task and finish group to consider the five key asks of the Stolen Lives Wales manifesto. Members of the Stolen Lives campaign and learning disability third sector partners are members of this group.

The group has met three times to date, the last meeting was on 21 January. This is a complex area of work, and the group have committed to providing me with a report and recommendations via the LDMAG in the summer.

I want to wait for this report and its recommendations before responding to some of the specific queries in your letter. I have committed to sharing the report and my formal response to any recommendations with the Senedd.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

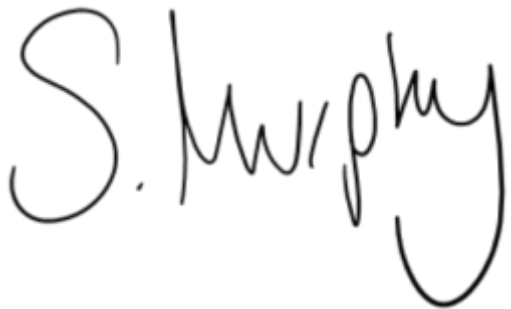
Gohebiaeth.Sarah.Murphy@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Sarah.Murphy@gov.wales

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.

I am copying this letter to Russell George, chair of the Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee and to Sioned Williams, chair of the cross-party group on learning disabilities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'S' at the beginning and a long, sweeping underline at the end.

Sarah Murphy AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Agenda Item 3.8

P-06-1480 Make menopause a mandatory part of the curriculum for all healthcare sciences and medical students

This petition was submitted by Nico Campbell, having collected a total of 540 signatures.

Text of Petition:

Menopause is experienced by approximately 50% of the population. There are a wide variety of symptoms and long term health risks associated with it which can significantly impact physical and mental health, and which for some people can affect their ability to work, socialise, and maintain good health and well being.

In spite of this, education about menopause during healthcare and medical training programs in Wales is minimal, and there is no mandatory requirement for including this topic.

Additional Information:

It is not just doctors who will care for people experiencing perimenopause and menopause symptoms. As such, as well as calling for all medical students to be taught about menopause symptom and interventions, we also call for all students of healthcare sciences in Wales to be educated. Nurses, physiotherapists, dentists, optometrists, pharmacists, radiographers, ODPs, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists will all encounter people experiencing menopause in their professional practice. Mandatory education will enable greater confidence and competence in identifying perimenopause/menopause, and improve outcomes for patients.

Promptly identifying perimenopause/menopause can enable healthcare and medical professionals to empower patients to work in partnership to manage their own health effectively, minimise waste through unnecessary prescribing, and reduce repeat appointments and unnecessary referrals at a time where resourcing in the Welsh NHS is under strain.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Cardiff Central
- South Wales Central

11 February 2025

Carolyn Thomas MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Regent's Place
350 Euston Road
London NW1 3JN

Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org
Telephone: 0161 923 6602

gmc-uk.org

Chair
Professor Dame Carrie MacEwen

Chief Executive and Registrar
Charlie Massey

Dear Ms Thomas

Thank you for your letter of 9 January regarding the petition on including menopause as a mandatory part of the curriculum for all healthcare sciences and medical students.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide you with information on the GMC's role in medical education and training. Whilst our powers do not extend to directing the inclusion of specific content in undergraduate curricula, medical schools must demonstrate to us that they meet our standards and outcomes for graduates, including in relation to learning about women's health.

The attachment I include with this letter explains the steps we have taken to include women's health and menopause in the content map for our Medical Licensing Assessment for doctors new to medical practice, including international doctors seeking registration via our examination route. All students graduating from UK medical schools from the academic year 2024/25 will be required to pass this new assessment. The document also describes how we are using our generic professional capabilities framework to influence postgraduate medical education and training, to ensure that women's health and menopause are included in postgraduate curricula.

I hope you find the information provided in this response useful. The GMC is committed to working with our partners across the UK, including within the Senedd, to improve the safety and quality of care that women receive throughout their lives. I would be happy to provide additional information or clarification if helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Massey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

CHARLIE MASSEY

Document A: The GMC's role in relation to Women's Health and Menopause in Medical Education and Training

The GMC works to make sure that education and training prepares doctors, physician associates and anaesthesia associates to deliver good, safe patient care across the UK. We set the standards and outcomes for medical education and training in the UK. We regulate all stages of doctors' training and professional development, from undergraduate education at medical schools to postgraduate education.

The GMC's role

Under the Medical Act 1983, the GMC has two main education functions: setting the outcomes for graduates of UK medical schools and approving the curricula for postgraduate training. While we don't control specific curriculum content, we ensure through our standards and quality assurance that UK doctors are equipped with the professional behaviours, knowledge, and skills necessary to deliver safe and competent care. Curricula for undergraduate education are set by medical schools, and for postgraduate training by discipline-specific medical colleges and faculties, such as the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Promoting excellence: standards for medical education and training

[Promoting excellence: standards for medical education and training](#) sets out standards that we expect organisations responsible for educating and training medical students and doctors in the UK to meet. The standards and requirements are organised around five themes:

- Theme 1: Learning environment and culture
- Theme 2: Educational governance and leadership
- Theme 3: Supporting learners
- Theme 4: Supporting educators
- Theme 5: Developing and implementing curricula

Some requirements – what an organisation must do to show us they are meeting the standards – may apply to a specific stage of education and training.

Outcomes for Graduates

Whilst our powers do not extend to directing specific content in undergraduate curricula, schools must demonstrate to us that they meet both the outcomes and our standards.

We published [Outcomes for graduates](#) in 2018 after extensive consultation with stakeholders in medical education and training. The outcomes set out what newly qualified doctors, from all medical schools who award UK primary medical qualifications, must know and be able to do.

Medical students must apply their knowledge and skills in a competent and ethical manner. They must use their ability to provide leadership and to analyse complex and uncertain situations. Although *Outcomes for Graduates* does not refer comprehensively to issues related to women, the general approach to learning to manage patients and apply knowledge will include women's health. For example, under 'diagnosis and medical management' we say:

- *Newly qualified doctors must be able to work collaboratively with patients, their relatives, carers or other advocates to make clinical judgements and decisions based on a holistic assessment of the patient and their needs, priorities and concerns, and appreciating the importance of the links between pathophysiological, psychological, spiritual, religious, social and cultural factors for each individual.*

Under 'applying biomedical scientific principles' we also say:

- *Newly qualified doctors must be able to apply biomedical scientific principles, methods and knowledge to medical practice and integrate these into patient care. This must include principles and knowledge relating to anatomy, biochemistry, cell biology, genetics, genomics and personalised medicine, immunology, microbiology, molecular biology, nutrition, pathology, pharmacology and clinical pharmacology, and physiology.*

We also say that newly qualified doctors must be able to recognise and identify factors that suggest patient vulnerability and take action in response. They must be able to:

- explain how normal human structure and function and physiological processes applies, including at the extremes of age, in children and young people and during pregnancy and childbirth (under section 'Applying biomedical scientific principles' – page 21).*
- adhere to the professional responsibilities in relation to procedures performed for non-medical reasons, such as female genital mutilation and cosmetic interventions (under section 'Safeguarding vulnerable patients' – page 12).*

Women's health in undergraduate education

Undergraduate medical curricula are set by medical schools. However, we decide which organisations can award UK primary medical qualifications. We also carry out quality

assurance of institutions that want approval to issue a medical degree, or to start a new programme.

The UK Government's [Women's Health Strategy](#) for England has a helpful explanatory paragraph on our role in undergraduate medical education which states:

- *Undergraduate medical curricula for people training to be doctors are set by individual medical schools, with the GMC's Outcomes for graduates ensuring that all doctors have the requisite set of skills required to progress into specialty training. The GMC will be introducing the Medical Licensing Assessment for the majority of incoming doctors, including all medical students graduating from academic year 2024 to 2025 and onwards. Within this assessment, there are a number of topics relating to women's health. This will encourage a better understanding of women's health among doctors as they start their careers in the UK.*

Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA)

The [Medical Licensing Assessment \(MLA\)](#) is an assessment framework designed to test the core knowledge, skills and behaviours of doctors new to medical practice in the UK. Students graduating from UK medical schools at the end of this academic year (2024-25) – and in future academic years – must have passed the MLA as part of their medical degree programme for the GMC to recognise their degree as a primary medical qualification.

The MLA consists of an applied knowledge test and a clinical and professional skills assessment. The content of both must derive from the GMC's comprehensive [MLA content map](#). The [MLA content map](#) sets out the key topics that could be covered in either part of the MLA. These include topics relating to women's health, for example, menopause, pregnancy, breast and vaginal conditions. Medical schools will therefore need to prepare their students to answer these topics. This will encourage a better understanding of common women's health problems among newly qualified doctors as they start their careers in the UK.

International doctors who want to join the UK medical register through our examination route will continue to take PLAB which is now compliant with our MLA requirements. These international doctors will take assessments that draw from the same topics as the assessments for students in UK medical schools.

Generic Professional Capabilities

Our [Generic professional capabilities \(GPCs\)](#) describes the essential capabilities which underpin professional medical practice and are a fundamental part of all postgraduate training programmes. The framework was published in 2017, alongside [Excellence by design](#) which sets out the standards all postgraduate curricula in the UK must meet.

The framework sets out the core professional values, knowledge, skills and behaviours that all doctors should be aware of.

By the end of specialty training, students are expected to be capable of applying and adapting to a range of clinical and non-clinical contexts.

Under domain 3 (professional knowledge) of GPC we say, Doctors in training must be aware of their legal responsibilities and be able to apply in practice any legislative requirements relevant to their jurisdiction of practice, for example:

- female genital mutilation
- equality and diversity, including legally protected characteristics.

Women's health in postgraduate education

The UK's medical royal colleges and faculties design the curricula and programmes of assessment for postgraduate specialty and GP training. We then approve these curricula and assessments, making sure they meet our standards.

They are responsible for the delivery of the post-graduate curricula. We actively check on postgraduate training organisations to ensure they are meeting our standards. Our model aims to be a flexible and collaborative approach to the quality assurance of the organisations we work with.

Women are included as part of the broader population in outcomes, curricula and Generic Professional Capabilities. However, we recognise their lack of direct visibility in these standards can lead to a default male bias in how health is viewed. As they are not always articulated separately in curricula, often doctors in training are only exposed to women's health opportunistically on placements. Where a patient first presents, i.e. the care setting, will generally impact on how they are treated.

However, through *Generic professional capabilities*, we look to influence competence in managing healthcare of different groups. Some examples of topics covered in curricula include:

General Practice

- Reproductive health and maternity
- Gynaecology and breast

Obstetrics & Gynaecology

- Recognising, assessing and managing emergencies in gynaecology and early pregnancy and obstetrics

- Recognising, assessing and managing non-emergency gynaecology and early pregnancy care, and obstetrics care.
- Championing healthcare needs of people from all groups within society.
- Playing an active role in implementing public health priorities for women and works within local, national and international structures to promote health and prevent disease.

Community Sexual & Reproductive Health

- Pregnancy planning, abortion care and general gynaecology
- Ultrasound scanning
- Menopause and PMS

Good Medical Practice

[Good medical practice](#) is at the heart of UK healthcare. It sets the standards of care and professional behaviour expected of all medical professionals registered with us. The updated version became effective for doctors on 30 January 2024 and for physician associates and anaesthesia associates on 13 December 2024.

The updated professional standards have a stronger focus on behaviours and values which create respectful, fair and supportive workplaces, key themes include:

- Creating respectful, fair and compassionate workplaces
- Promoting patient centred care
- Helping to tackle discrimination
- Championing fair and inclusive leadership
- Supporting continuity of care and safe delegation

The Future of Career Development and Education

- The Future of Career Development and Education is a five-year programme focused on reviewing the GMC's education framework, including both undergraduate and postgraduate standards, outcomes, and guidance, with the goal of publishing a new framework by 2029. We are committed to working with partners to ensure the framework delivers a positive impact for both the public and the profession.
- [Our vision for the future of medical education](#) includes improving support for educators, driving innovation and enhancing career development and lifelong learning for all medical professionals.

- We agree that there needs to be greater awareness, focus, and recognition of women's health, including menopause and perimenopause, which are highly individual experiences. This is an area we are considering as part of the review of our education standards to ensure that medical professionals are better equipped to manage these important health issues.
- Any changes we make will reflect the views of our stakeholders across the UK through engagement and consultation exercises. To gather input, we will begin a 12–18-month listening exercise, exploring key themes related to our future approach to education and training. This process will ensure that the updated framework aligns with the needs and priorities medical professionals, patients and the wider health system.

Agenda Item 3.9

P-06-1486 Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence

This petition was submitted by Chai Yiu Melody Lin, having collected a total of 377 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The British National (Overseas) visa, launched in January 2021 after the National Security Law in Hong Kong, offers a pathway to UK citizenship for Hongkongers. Many BN(O) visa holders and their dependents have since moved to the UK, including Wales. While the UK Government calls this visa a reflection of its "historic and moral commitment" to Hongkongers, classifying BN(O) students as international students undermines this, as they face higher tuition fees and financial barriers to education.

Additional Information:

Here in Wales, the Senedd can do more to create a welcoming environment for those from Hong Kong. In Scotland, BN(O) Hong Kong students are granted home fee status after three years of residence. In contrast, in Wales (and other UK countries), BN(O) Hongkongers are only eligible for home fee status after five years of residence, once considered "settled." The Senedd has the power to grant exemptions for groups like Afghan and Ukrainian students, and we urge the same for BN(O) Hong Kong students.

This petition calls for the Senedd to grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence, or adopt a more progressive measure. Currently, while the home fee in Wales is capped at £9,000 per year, international fees, set by universities, can be double or more, creating a significant financial burden. Without access to student finance due to the "settled status" rule, many BN(O) students face insurmountable barriers to higher education.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Swansea West
- South Wales West

Vikki Howells AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1486
Ein cyf/Our ref VH/10148/24

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair – Petitions committee

03 January 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 9 December regarding '*Petition P-06-1486 Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence*' in which you express concerns about the timescale for the review of eligibility of British National (Overseas) visa holders from Hong Kong.

Developing policy and legislation on student support and fee protections is complex and timing is important. The Welsh Government has committed to review the position of these visa holders ahead of the 2026/27 academic year. I expect this review to conclude in the first half of 2025 in advance of legislation being prepared for the following academic year.

When the Welsh Government extends fee protections to any particular group, changes must be made in good time. We cannot reasonably expect higher education institutions in Wales to adopt changed policy on fee charging late in their preparations and admissions cycle for a new academic year.

The same is true when the Welsh Government extends eligibility for student support. The Student Loans Company launches its Student Finance Wales service several months ahead of the academic year to ensure students have ample time to apply for support and to understand their financial position, and to enable the many tens of thousands of applications to be processed. So that this can happen, the Welsh Government must make any amending legislation well in advance. That process is now approaching its conclusion ahead of the 2025/26 academic year.

Reviewing eligibility is complex. Fee protections and student support are discretionary, and the Welsh Government must ensure that decisions are made on the basis of carefully considered evidence and advice. The Welsh Government is ever-conscious of the life-changing importance of access to higher education.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Vikki.Howells@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Vikki.Howells@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.

Persons eligible for student support and tuition fee protections are those who are settled in the UK and, for the most part, ordinarily resident in Wales. They must have three years of ordinary residence before becoming eligible. Holders of the British National (Overseas) visa will, therefore, become eligible as soon as they are settled and have three years ordinary residence in the same way as all others ordinarily resident of Wales.

There are limited exceptions to the rule regarding settlement, sometimes made for those granted a form of humanitarian protection by the UK Government. Exceptions to the policy requiring three years of ordinary residence are also made for certain groups, again, often those who have been given a form of humanitarian protection by the UK Government. The Welsh Government understands that the British National (Overseas) visa route is not a form of humanitarian protection.

However, in recognition of the unique position of those with this visa, Wales's status as a Nation of Sanctuary, and the complexity of immigration policy, the Welsh Government is willing, as indicated, to review policy.

The Welsh Government does not hold statistics on the immigration status of those ordinarily resident in Wales. I understand from '*How many people come to the UK via safe and legal (humanitarian) routes?*' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-september-2024/how-many-people-come-to-the-uk-via-safe-and-legal-humanitarian-routes>) that there have been 174,307 out-of-country visas, and 41,305 in-country visa extensions, granted between the introduction of the visa on 31 January 2021 and the end of September 2024. There are no official statistics on holders of this visa in Wales.

If individuals wish to raise the matter further, they can write to me by email at Correspondence.Vikki.Howells@gov.wales or by post to: Vikki Howells MS, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Welsh Government, 5th Floor, Tŷ Hywel, Cardiff Bay, CF99 1SN.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Howells', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Vikki Howells AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education

P-06-1486 Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence - Correspondence from the Petitioner, 28 February 2025

Annwyl Vikki, Carolyn and other committee members

Thank you for your response regarding the petition on granting British National (Overseas) visa holders home fee status after three years of residence in Wales. While we acknowledge the commitment to reviewing the policy for the 2026/27 academic year, we have strong concerns about the timeline and the fairness of the current approach. It is unfair that BN(O) visa holders - who are in the UK on humanitarian grounds and are residents of country - are required to pay international fees.

1. Residency requirement undermines the principle of offering BN(O) visas

The UK government provided the BN(O) visa on [humanitarian grounds](#). As such, BN(O) visa holders should receive the same treatment as other humanitarian visa holders. In Wales, those who have come to the country via Afghan and Ukrainian schemes are entitled to home fee status after three years of residency. This is not the case for BN(O) visa holders: they are required five years of residency. The additional requirement is inconsistent and places a barrier for BN(O) visa holders to access higher education.

2. Potential Violation of International Human Rights Commitments

According to [Article 2\(2\)](#) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), all individuals should be treated equally without discrimination. Unlike refugees and some persons who have relocated to Wales under other humanitarian routes, BN(O) students are unfairly not granted home fee status despite the humanitarian basis of their visa.

3. Urgency of Policy Review

While we appreciate the commitment to reviewing the policy for the 2026/27 academic year, this timeline is too late given the significant number of BN(O) students will have enrolled in Welsh universities at the time. Each year, at least 1,000 Hong Kong students begin their studies in Wales, not including those already enrolled. They are required to pay international fees, X times more than the home fees, creating financial difficulties and discouraging them from choosing Wales as a study destination. Given these circumstances, the policy review should begin this year rather than be delayed until 2026.

We urge the Welsh Government to consider these points and initiate a review immediately to ensure fair treatment for BN(O) visa holders in Wales. We look forward to your response and hope for a more inclusive and timely policy change.

Confion Gorau

Melody Lin

Agenda Item 3.10

P-06-1253 Ban greyhound racing in Wales

This petition was submitted by Hope Rescue, having collected a total of 35,101 signatures.

Text of Petition:

In Wales we have one independent greyhound track racing once a week. Since April 2018, Hope Rescue & their rescue partners have taken in almost 200 surplus greyhounds from this track, 40 of which sustained injuries. There are plans for the track to become a Greyhound Board of Great Britain track, racing four times a week, greatly increasing the number of surplus dogs & injuries. Greyhound racing is inherently cruel & greyhounds have little legal protection. It is already banned in 41 US states.

Additional Information:

Campaign groups have collated data and evidence of poor welfare within greyhound racing in the U.K.

Alliance Against Greyhound Racing: <https://www.aagr.org.uk/category/why-is-greyhound-racing-cruel/>

League Against Cruel Sports: <https://www.league.org.uk/greyhound-racing>

There have also been press articles and undercover investigations in to greyhound racing:

RTE Investigates: Greyhounds Running For Their Lives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYTb2qBjIMM>

Panorama investigates: Doping and rigging bets

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0p0bHSkIAk>

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jun/26/activists-renew-calls-to-end-greyhound-racing-as-400-die-despite-lockdowns>

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/greyhounds-being-shipped-pakistan-illegal-23765480>

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/13086085/british-greyhounds-racing-dogs-mass-graves-bolt/>

A recent petition is due to be debated in Parliament after securing 104,882 signatures.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/554073>

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Ogmore
- South Wales West

Agenda Item 3.11

P-06-1354 The Welsh Government should support greyhound racing in Wales

This petition was submitted by David Tams, having collected a total of 10,601 signatures.

Text of Petition:

The Welsh Government are currently considering banning greyhound racing in Wales.

This potential ban has been brought on through a petition submitted by a charity. I believe the information used to create that petition was not factually correct and that they used massively inflated figures on the number of injured greyhounds with no supporting evidence. The charity has been asked for evidence on multiple occasions but refused. The petition gained 35k signatures but less than 19k of these signatures came from within Wales.

Additional Information:

Banning greyhound racing would have an economic impact on individuals involved in the industry. There would also be a direct impact on the Valleys Stadium, and the medium and long term development of the Ystrad Mynach area.

There would also be a negative impact on the greyhound breed.

Valley Greyhound Stadium is currently in the process of becoming a GBGB registered track.

All tracks licensed by GBGB must adhere to the regulator's Rules of Racing which seek to uphold the very highest standards of greyhound welfare and integrity. There are over 200 rules covering all aspects of how the sport is run and regulated including how greyhounds are cared for when they are at the track, at home in their trainer's residential kennels, when being transported and into their retirement.

The Senedd currently has a cross party group to support horse racing in Wales, we ask that the same support is shown for greyhound racing.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Islwyn
- South Wales East

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 3.12

P-06-1391 Introduce regulation of the dog grooming sector, to protect the welfare of dogs and rights of owners

This petition was submitted by Brian Howell, having collected a total of 284 signatures.

Text of Petition:

We believe that the establishment of clear guidelines, licensing requirements, and industry standards will aid the welfare and safety of dogs during grooming procedures. There's no regulatory framework at all of the sector, whether at local authority or national level. It doesn't fall within the oversight of any charity or the RSPCA.

The last 3 years has seen an exponential growth in dog ownership and the businesses that service their needs. Establishing standards is long overdue.

Additional Information:

1. Animal Welfare: It is imperative to prioritize the well-being and humane treatment of dogs. Regulation will promote responsible ownership, minimise stress levels, and reduce potential harm/injury caused by unqualified/negligent groomers.
2. Training/Certification: Unregulated dog grooming has lead to untrained individuals operating without the necessary knowledge of breed-specific needs, hygiene practices, handling, or grooming procedures. A minimum standard of Animal First Aid should be a pre-requisite component.
3. Health and Safety: Minimum health and safety guidelines to maintain a safe environment. Correct sanitation, grooming equipment maintenance and compliance with hygiene protocols, crucial in preventing the spread of infections/parasites/diseases.
4. Licensing/Inspection: Training/insurance verification and compliance with health and safety regulations.
5. Setting standards: Regulation offers owners an assurance of standards by identifying qualified practitioners.

Senedd Constituency and Region

- Vale of Glamorgan
- South Wales Central

P-06-1391 Introduce regulation of the dog grooming sector, to protect the welfare of dogs and rights of owners – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 03 March 2025

With reference to summary of responses, I was extremely heartened to learn of the consensus of opinions regarding the need to introduce minimum standards for the dog grooming sector in Wales.

During the period from the petition's inception there have been a number of incidents that have resulted in injury and in some instances the death of a dog whilst in the care of a dog groomer in Wales.

It cannot be the case that we wait for more cases of untrained, uninsured and usually hidden practitioners to operate without any oversight.

Dog grooming standards directly reflect the value we place as a nation on our pet's welfare and safeguarding. Without a method for protecting owners and their dogs, the sector will continue to operate devoid of professional responsibility.

Currently, there isn't even a concise overview of the numbers of grooming practitioners in Wales. The only method available to inform owners of best practice would be through the vagaries of online customer reviews.