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P-03-208 – Historic Counties – Supporting Information (Provided by the petitioner)

Since 1996 the number of purposes for which the "preserved counties" were retained has been reduced by legislative reform. Currently the only three pertinent uses are the Sheriffs Act 1887 (c. 55), Lieutenancies Act 1997 (c. 23) and a provision in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (c. 56) that constituencies should not cross "preserved county" boundaries where practicable. This particular provision can be and has been ignored in previous constituency reviews.

During the last review of "preserved county" boundaries in 2002, the LGBCW itself admitted that there is not a widespread understanding of the role of the preserved counties. Various respondents suggested that the present system was not fit for purpose and suggested that the thirteen historic counties should be used for such ceremonial purposes. This can easily be achieved by a directive to the LGBCW to perform a total redrawing of the "preserved county" boundaries to match those of the historic counties.

P-03-230 – International Conscientious Objectors’ Day – Further information provided by the petitioner

There have been many examples of Welsh people supporting the right to refuse to kill. This was especially so during the First and Second World Wars, and during the period of National Service. Today, many Welsh citizens defend that same right as expressed by others elsewhere in the world, and campaign for the right not to pay for military expenditure through their taxes.

P-03-230 – Diwrnod Rhyngwladol Gwrthwynebwyr Cydwybodol – Gwybodaeth ychwanegol darparwyd gan y deisebydd

Bu llawer enghraifft o Gymry yn cefnogi'r hawl i wrthod lladd. Yr oedd hyn yn wir yn enwedig yn ystod y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf a'r Ail, ac yng nghyfnod Gwasanaeth Milwrol Cenedlaethol. Heddiw, mae llawer o ddinasyddion Cymreig yn amddiffyn yr union un hawl pan fynegir gan eraill ledled y byd, neu yn ymgyrchu dros yr hawl i beidio â thalu am wariant milwrol trwy eu trethi.

**P-03-236 – The Charter for Grandchildren – Supporting information
provided by the petitioner**

The Charter for Grandchildren would not have any legal rights, but would recognise the importance grandparents play in the lives of grandchildren. Grandparents can be cut off from their grandchildren at a whim, or a family problem, fall outs or a bereavement all of which have a devastating effect on children and their cries must be heard.



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The Petitions Committee
The National Assembly for Wales
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03 September 2009

To whom it may concern,

MS Society Cymru - Public Transport petition

I have enclosed 789 signatures to a petition organised by MS Society Cymru. The wording of the petition reads:

We, the undersigned, believe that public transport should be accessible for people with disabilities. We therefore call on the Welsh Assembly Government, to bring forward an action plan to make public transport in Wales accessible for all.

In addition to the completed petitions, I have enclosed 'The National Assembly for Wales Public Petitions Template' and have also included a briefing document to satisfy the requirements of question 4.

MS Society Cymru and the over 4,000 people that the charity represents, would be most grateful if the National Assembly's Petitions Committee could consider this petition.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Carter
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Multiple Sclerosis Society
Cymru

Disabled Access to Public Transport in Wales **Briefing document for Petitions Committee**

Background

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (updated in 2005) was supposed to break down barriers for disabled people, putting pressure on private and public organisations to make their premises as accessible as possible to people with a range of disabilities.

High fuel costs and successive government policies have encouraged more and more people to use public transport instead of the private car. The number of people using the rail network has increased dramatically over the last year with the number of annual passenger miles hitting 30 billion during 2007, the highest ever number of passenger miles recorded in peacetime.

The examples below show the plight of disabled rail users in Wales:

Example 1

'Railway stations a bridge too far for disabled', 29/04/07 – Wales on Sunday
Wheelchair user Sasha Smith with cerebral palsy explained how she was forced to take a taxi from Pontypridd to Cardiff, because railway stations on the route to her office didn't have lifts.

Example 2

'Access Denied', 31/07/2007 – Port Talbot Guardian
Disabled passengers were told they had to give 24 hours notice before using Neath railway station so that staff could open a gate leading to a ramp onto the platform.
At Port Talbot railway station disabled passengers are forced to tackle two flights of stairs.

Example 3

'Disabled woman left stranded at Rhyl railway station', 27/08/2008 – Daily Post
A disabled woman was left stranded at Rhyl railway station after she discovered that the lift was out of use. She rang the help button, only to be answered 45 minutes later by an operative in Cardiff, who claimed they were waiting for a mechanic. She rang North Wales Police, who contacted the British Transport Police, who finally passed the call onto the Welsh Ambulance Service. When the ambulance arrived she had to be given liquid morphine before being carried up and down the stairs. She was later told that the lifts were not operational after 7.30pm due to vandals. She arrived at 7.15pm and found them not working.

Multiple Sclerosis and disabled access to public transport

Approximately a third of the 4,000 people who are affected by Multiple Sclerosis in Wales will need a wheelchair. Many more will rely on crutches, frames or other pieces of equipment to assist their mobility, all of whom will need ramps and lifts to access platforms and trains.

Approximately 10-15% of people affected by Multiple Sclerosis are diagnosed with 'Primary Progressive MS.' This type of MS leads to a steady worsening of symptoms and increase in disability. People affected by this type are far more likely to need a wheelchair and are most likely to suffer if waiting lists are lengthy.

The majority of people with Multiple Sclerosis will live with the condition for decades, before developing 'Secondary Progressive MS' later in life. This type of MS will lead to an increase in disability, most likely requiring use of a wheelchair.

In addition to this three quarters of people affected by Multiple Sclerosis will suffer from some sort of bladder problems. This will tend to be either a problem with bladder storage (frequent trips to the toilets) or with bladder emptying (bladder emptying is incomplete). Many people affected by Multiple Sclerosis will therefore need frequent access to an accessible toilet if they are at a railway station.

Key railway facts

Multiple Sclerosis Society Cymru has conducted research into railway stations across Wales using information publically available from Arriva Trains Wales.

The Society found that only 4% of railway stations are completely disabled friendly. This figure is based on the 8 out of 220 railway stations having "Wheelchair access to the platform", "Accessible toilets" and "Wheelchair access to the train."

99 stations (45%) have wheelchair access to the platform and to the train, whilst 16 Stations (7%) fall in the worst offending category offering no wheelchair access to either the train or the platform and no disabled toilets. Only 19 railway stations (8%) have accessible toilets.

Buses in Wales

In 2007/08 there were 718 bus operators in Wales. The larger bus operators have a high number of low floor vehicles – Arriva (80%), Stagecoach (80%), First Cymru (88%) and Cardiff Bus (99%), although as Example 1 above shows even some routes into the major cities use high floor buses.

One of the greatest frustrations of people with MS and other disabilities is the inability to access public transport. Small rural towns are the least likely to have modern low-floor buses and yet these are the places where disabled people are most likely to be in need of transport.

Why accept this petition?

This petition seeks to put the issue of disabled access to public transport back on the political agenda. At the core of the petition is a principle that all parties can support; that public transport should be accessible to everyone, not simply the "able-bodied" public.

Successive UK and Welsh Assembly Governments have prioritised helping disabled people back into the work place and taking steps to help them lead fulfilling lives. However outside of the cities, the vast majority of railway stations have no wheelchair access to the platform, whilst many of the smaller bus operators are not yet using modern low-floor wheelchair accessible buses.

The request to bring forward an "action plan to make transport in Wales accessible for all" is a devolved responsibility. The Government of Wales Act 2006 gave the Welsh Assembly Government specific responsibility to:

- develop and fund infrastructure enhancement schemes
- develop new rail passenger services
- invest in improving the journey experience for rail users
- fund rail freight improvement schemes through Freight Facility Grant (FFG)
- award tendering contracts for the Wales and Borders service

MS Society Cymru believes that the responsibility to "invest in improving the journey experience for rail users," makes the Welsh Assembly Government responsible for improving the journey experience of disabled people, through better access to the railway. The responsibility to "develop and fund infrastructure enhancement schemes", can also be interpreted to mean the Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for funding infrastructure improvements to stations, including accessibility improvements.

FULL SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PETITION FROM TENOVUS

Each year over 10,000 people in the UK are diagnosed with malignant melanoma, the most dangerous and potentially lethal form of skin cancer. In Wales alone there are around 500 cases each year with over 100 deaths.

The rise in the incidence of malignant melanoma is truly alarming. In Wales, between 1996 and 2006 the number of cases in both men and women has more than doubled and this trend shows no sign of abating.

TENOVUS are aware of an increasing trend among young people, particularly young women, towards year round tanning and that over exposure to strong levels of unnatural UV light highly increases the threat of developing malignant melanoma at an early age. Modern sunbeds are powerful sources of UV radiations that do not exist in nature, and repeated exposures to high doses of UVA constitutes a new phenomenon in humans.

This is particularly concerning when you consider that some machines are capable of emitting UV radiation up to 5 times stronger than the midday Australian summer sun⁹ and approximately 40 per cent of sunbed users in the United Kingdom have fair skin and are therefore more susceptible to developing skin cancer. Well documented cases have recently demonstrated the severity of burns, and thus by definition, the risk of skin cancer that young people are vulnerable to.

TENOVUS are calling for the use of sunbeds by under 18 year olds to be prohibited and for a ban on all un-manned, coin operated sunbeds across Wales. However, this will only be effective if combined with clear information and education regarding the links between UV radiation exposure and skin cancer across all age ranges.

TENOVUS believe that these simple actions would have a positive health impact on Wales.

TENOVUS is submitting this petition as an organisation to the Petitions Committee of the Assembly; but we are also submitting a paper copy of the petition to the Assembly, containing 1500+ signatures.

TENOVUS would like the Petitions Committee of the Assembly to refer this petition to the Health, Well-being and Local Government Committee of the Assembly as soon as possible in order that the petition demonstrates to that Committee the strength of popular feeling on this issue in Wales during the current Committee enquiry on sunbed regulation.