



Ben Lake AS/MP

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Janet Finch Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament,
Cardiff,
CF99 1SN

28th May 2020.

Annwyl Janet,

RE: Petition P-05-954

Petition for a public inquiry by the Welsh Government into the historic child abuse on Caldey Island

I hope this finds you well in these uncertain times. I am writing in support of the above petition, and in the hope that you will be able to consider this letter when the Committee meets to discuss the petition on the 9th of June.

In addition to conveying my support for the petition, I would also like to make the following points in response to the letter the Committee received from the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services dated the 6th of April.

In her letter the Minister outlined the Welsh Government's view that the case for an inquiry has not been made. In particular, the Government argues that an inquiry would not be a good use of limited resources due there being an ongoing Independent Inquiry (the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse – IICSA) which is looking at institutional failure to protect children and young people, and that IICSA has said that the allegations of child sexual abuse on Caldey Island is a matter of interest to them.

I am afraid that the Government is mistaken on this point. Whilst IICSA is undertaking important work in investigating a wide range of institutions, including the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, it confirmed in May 2019 that it will not be considering the concerns raised in relation to Caldey Island.

In correspondence from August 2019, IICSA explained that although it recognises the concerns that have been raised about Caldey Island by a number of people, it “is not possible for the Inquiry to consider every institution about which concerns have been raised.”

Although regrettable, such a position is understandable, and indeed, IICSA's inability to consider the concerns about Caldey Island was a key development that prompted this petition. The Welsh Government would not, therefore, be duplicating the work of IICSA if it were to initiate its own inquiry.

The Government also notes the decision taken by the police not to progress matters further, and in particular the unavailability of the perpetrator Kotik, and the Abbot, who are both deceased. This is indisputable. However, it has not yet been established whether or not there are other potential perpetrators or persons of interest who could give evidence in regard to any allegations, and from whom important learning could be realised.

Should there be no further police investigation, and given that the IICSA inquiry will not be considering the allegations of abuse on Caldey Island, it would appear that an inquiry initiated by the Welsh Government is the only route left to victims of historical child sexual abuse on the island. I concede that death may have made impossible for the perpetrators to be brought to justice, but the victims still deserve the truth to be established, their suffering to be acknowledged, and lessons to be learnt.

I hope that the committee will be able to consider these points at the meeting on the 9th of June, and look kindly on the petition's request.

Yn gywir,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Lake', written in a cursive style.

Ben Lake AS/MP
Ceredigion