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Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig  
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-825  
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/02579/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS  
Chair, Petitions Committee

18 November 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 26 October regarding petition P-05-825 on protecting children's lungs from harmful pollution whilst at school.

I am grateful to you for sharing the petitioner's latest comments on the Clean Air Plan for Wales: Healthy Air, Healthy Wales and our White Paper on a Clean Air Bill for Wales. I am pleased to read the positive comments from the petitioner on our work so far and am keen to continue working closely with them to develop and implement policies to further improve air quality in Wales. However, I note several specific concerns raised by the petitioner and hope to offer some assurances below.

#### Funding at a Local Authority level

The petitioner has concerns regarding financial implications for Local Authorities delivering air quality improvements. For instance, through smoke control and tackling air pollution from domestic combustion. This was an issue identified through the consultation on our Clean Air Plan for Wales. We received feedback from Local Authorities across Wales, highlighting the need to ensure there is sufficient funding for any extra duties we place on them. We are working with Local Authorities in Wales, as we develop the Clean Air Bill for Wales, to ensure we fully understand impacts of new legislative duties on them. New responsibilities will be assessed and appropriately funded to ensure we deliver the best outcomes for public health and the environment.

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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.

The petitioner calls for a detailed analysis of the monitoring measures undertaken in areas of known air quality issues in Local Authorities where Local Sustainable Transport Covid Response funding was granted this year. The primary purpose of this funding was to introduce temporary measures to improve the safety and conditions for sustainable and active travel modes.

Overall, I am supportive of proposals which can deliver potential air quality benefits if modal shift is achieved. But, I am aware road space reallocation can increase congestion and worsen air quality. Not all funded measures are expected to have a direct impact on air quality. However, a condition of funding was for air quality to be monitored in areas where such measures are being introduced and there are known air quality issues. Local Authorities are, otherwise, already required to monitor air quality within their areas under the Local Air Quality Management regime.

I agree we should seek to retain the improvements to air quality which have resulted from working from home. Welsh Government has publicly stated its intention to develop a hybrid workplace model, where staff can work in the office, at home, or in a hub location. The aim is this will enable 30% or more of workers to work remotely, helping reduce air pollution and congestion, and improving work-life balance for employees and employers.

### Exclusion Zones

In our Clean Air Plan for Wales, we committed to further examine the evidence base for strengthening anti-idling measures. As part of our White Paper on a Clean Air Bill for Wales, we will seek to strengthen powers to address road vehicle idling, subject to the outcome of further examination of evidence.

My officials are currently considering the use of school exclusion zones as a measure to reduce air pollution. They hosted a webinar on Clean Air Day which explored this matter as part of our wider proposals to enhance Local Air Quality Management and anti-idling provisions through the Clean Air Bill for Wales.

### WHO Guidelines

As the petitioner notes, we have committed to new evidence-based, health-focused targets for fine particulate matter (which take account of stringent World Health Organisation guidelines values). We will consult on our pathway to new air quality targets through our consultation on a White Paper on a Clean Air Bill for Wales.

We do not yet know whether it is possible to achieve the WHO guideline everywhere across Wales, and how and by when it could be achieved, if it is possible. Future targets for ambient levels of fine particulate matter need to be underpinned by the right evidence and metrics to achieve the most effective improvement, supporting the delivery of our well-being goals.

I have convened a Clean Air Advisory Panel to provide advice and recommendations to the Welsh Government on air quality matters in Wales, including the development of new targets for particulate matter.

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## White Paper on a Clean Air Bill for Wales

The petitioner expressed concern at the lack of detail in the Clean Air Plan regarding the content in the White Paper on a Clean Air Bill for Wales. When the Clean Air Plan was published in August, it was not possible to provide more detail on content of the White Paper as my officials were still in the process of developing evidence and engaging with relevant stakeholders. More specific and detailed information on new air quality legislation proposals will be included in the consultation on the White Paper on a Clean Air Bill for Wales. I look forward to receiving the petitioner's views on this White Paper, which I intend to publish before the end of this Senedd term. In relation to the request to introduce the Clean Air Plan for Wales in the Senedd, I have previously made a statement on the consultation draft. Our proposals in relation to the Clean Air Act will be introduced to the Senedd for scrutiny early next year.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours Sincerely,



### **Lesley Griffiths AS/MS**

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