

Your ref: P-06-1474
Our ref: CX24-154

Gareth Price
Petitions Committee Clerk
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

By email only: petitions@senedd.wales

30 September 2024

Dear Gareth

Petition P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas Visitor Centres

Thank you for your letter of 16 September.

As the Petitions Committee will be aware, public funding is very tight, not only for NRW but also for other public sector bodies. NRW needs to make a minimum saving of £13 million over the next two years. As such, we are having to look across all of our remit and critically review what we can and must continue to do, what we stop, and what we slow or do differently to fulfil our Corporate Plan ambitions. We are having to make difficult decisions in order to achieve these savings.

While we fully recognise how well loved and regarded our visitor centres are, the truth is that NRW is not best placed to operate catering and retail facilities. We have acknowledged that if we are to support visitor access and maintain the sites for future use, the centres themselves need to be run by organisations that have the skills, knowledge and financial capacity to operate in the retail and catering sector.

In the Case for Change, we proposed that visitor centre sites remain open for recreation access, such as walking and biking, as they are currently. Services such as play areas, car parking and toilet provision will also remain available. The proposal is that we no longer operate catering and retail provision at visitor centres but that we will seek to identify and work with partners to run these services. Our visitor centre staff are not responsible for managing the land in and around the centres, so are not responsible for trail and access management.

We are currently reviewing the services we provide as part of our Case for Change process. This impacts all our services, not just visitor centres. Our consultation with Trade

Unions on the proposals has now closed, and we will review the information received during the consultation to determine if any adjustments are needed. The final proposals will be presented to the NRW Board for consideration in the autumn.

The outcome of the Case for Change will then be communicated to staff, and further information on impacted services will be shared with the public and stakeholders in due course. At that point, we will re-engage with local groups and potential partners about the next steps at each visitor centre site. These may be slightly different, as each site has bespoke needs that will need to be considered.

We have already been approached by multiple community groups and private enterprises that are interested in operating the visitor centres, and we are planning further public meetings in mid-November. Information about those meetings will be shared in due course.

It is very important to NRW that we do this responsibly and in the right way, and that we secure the future of the sites for maximum benefit in the long-term. It is a great opportunity to secure future investment in the sites, provide refreshed interest in the areas and promote the ongoing attractiveness of mid-Wales as a destination for visitors to Wales.

Yours sincerely



pp. Sarah Jennings, Executive Director for Customer, Communications & Commercial

Clare Pillman

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

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hynny arwain at oedi. Correspondence in Welsh is welcomed, and we will respond in Welsh without it leading to a delay.