

Carl Sargeant AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol  
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/05273/14

William Powell AM  
Chair Petitions Committee  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

44 November 2014

Dear Bill

Thank you for your letter of 15<sup>th</sup> October with regard to the petition against the decision by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to close Cwmcarn Drive.

I am of the view that the closure of Cwmcarn Drive is an unfortunate but necessary step as part of the nationwide strategy to reduce the risk of the further spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* (Larch disease). Cwmcarn forest is predominantly larch (50%) with a concentration of 74% along the Drive itself. This is a much higher proportion of Larch than in other woodland areas in Wales.

Health and safety concerns, difficult terrain and the use of specialised heavy machinery were some of the key factors behind the decision by NRW to close the route. The removal of around 50,000 tonnes of larch from the area using the Drive (which is not a public highway but rather a forest road covered in a thin layer of tarmac) will have a significant impact on its condition.

I am informed that it will take approximately £2.5 million to re-instate the route. NRW officers are of the view that this would be the most expensive and least creative option for re-opening the route. They, in partnership with local residents, Welsh Government and Caerphilly County Council will be working to find a better, more appropriate alternative. I understand that Mr Southall has been invited to participate in this process.

Welsh Government officials have made it clear to NRW that least restrictive access to this site should be a priority once the felling operation has been completed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a vertical line.

**Carl Sargeant AC / AM**  
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Minister for Natural Resources