

R N I B

Cymru

Golwg gwahanol

See differently

National Assembly for Wales
Petitions Committee,
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff,
CF99 1NA

Date: 12 March 2020

Dear Janet,

Many thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the Petitions Committee's discussion on Petition P-05-935 Ban Pavement Parking – Pavement Promise.

1. About RNIB Cymru

1.1 RNIB Cymru is Wales' largest sight loss charity. We provide support, advice and information to people living with sight loss across Wales. We also campaign for improvements to services and raise awareness of the issues facing blind and partially sighted people. We support, empower and involve thousands of people affected by sight loss to improve lives and challenge inequalities.

We want to lead the creation of a **Wales where there are no barriers for people with sight loss.**

1.2 We welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee's consideration of this petition. There are currently 111,000 people in Wales living with sight loss.

From difficulty accessing treatment and services, to a lack of emotional and practical support, blind and partially sighted people each face their own set of challenges every day. Feelings of isolation are unacceptably

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high, and only one in four blind or partially sighted people of working age has a job.

We know the numbers will increase dramatically. By 2050, the number of people with sight loss is expected to double. 13 people a day are losing their sight in Wales.¹

1.3 This submission emphasises the experiences of blind and partially sighted people and the impact of navigating walkways obstructed by parked vehicles. It also draws attention to developments in Scotland and England which will be of relevance to this committee's discussions.

2. About pavement parking

2.1 Vehicles parked partly or fully on pavements obstruct clear passage on walkways and effective use of mobility aids, and often can't be detected by people with sight loss until it's too late. This causes blind and partially sighted people to collide with parked vehicles, at best losing confidence of independence and at worst resulting in injury.

2.2 Pavement parking can also mean pedestrians are forced to venture into the road to bypass the parked vehicles, placing them in danger of moving vehicles in the road, especially on roads with higher traffic volumes. This is particularly problematic for people with a visual impairment, wheelchair and mobility scooter users, and parents with buggies or prams.

2.3 All pavement obstructions have adverse effects on blind and partially sighted people because they make getting around harder. The more difficult it is to get around, the less freedom and opportunity people have to participate in their local community and contribute to society.

2.4 Blind and partially sighted people rely on clear and accessible pavements and often face totally unacceptable risks to personal safety when attempting to pick their way around cars parked on pavements.

2.5 RNIB's 2015 report "Who put that there!" found that 95 per cent of blind and partially sighted people had collided with an obstacle in their

¹ *Every day 250 people in the UK start to lose their sight [Reference: Deloitte Access Economics (2018), Incidence and risk of sight loss and blindness in the UK. RNIB]

local neighbourhood over a three month period. The most common obstacles collided with were cars parked on pavements (70 per cent).²

3. Lived experiences in Wales

3.1 A more recent survey conducted by RNIB Cymru specifically on the issue of pavement parking in Wales found that 95 per cent of respondents supported a nationwide ban, with 77 per cent claiming that they encountered vehicle-obstructed pavements daily.

Respondents to this survey were asked to describe the impact on their daily routine and independence. Sophie, a 26 year old Swansea resident stated, 'pavement parking increases my anxiety when visiting particular areas and results in me having to risk my and my guide dogs safety to get to where I want to.'

Another respondent, 53 year old Susan from Ystrad Mynach stated, 'I have been forced to walk in the road with my Guide Dog on numerous occasions, at times when I am without my dog I have collided with the vehicle parked on the pavement.'

3.2 In a recent interview with RNIB Cymru, Steve Lawrence, 62, from Talbot Green described an incident which took place whilst out shopping near his home in December 2019. He was walking past cars parked on the pavement, using his cane to follow the curb, when one of the parked cars started and hit Mr Lawrence whilst still on the pavement. The driver then swore at him before driving away. The collision left him needing physiotherapy for his shoulder and in need of a new cane, which was damaged beyond repair. He was unable to report the incident, as he could not see the driver or the number plate.

Mr Lawrence described himself as very independent and confident walking alone, but says the incident has made him more nervous to walk in that area. 'I worry other blind and partially sighted people in similar situations would have their confidence knocked and be less likely to leave the house as a result.'

² "Who put that there!" – The barriers to blind and partially sighted people getting out and about [February 2015 report]
<https://www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/Who%20put%20that%20there%21%20Report%20February%202015.pdf>

4. Pavement parking ban in Scotland

4.1 The introduction of the Transport (Scotland) Bill led to a new law to ban pavement parking in Scotland which was approved in October 2019. This followed a Scottish Government survey on improving parking in Scotland in which 85% of respondents believed that parking enforcement should be applied consistently across the country.³

5. Pavement parking ban in London

5.1 Pavement parking has been banned in London since 1974, but this does not currently apply to the rest of England, with the exception of heavy goods vehicles. However, there is currently no ban across the rest of England.

6. House of Commons Transport Committee Recommendations

6.1 The Transport Committee published a report on 9 September 2019 following its inquiry into problems with pavement parking in England and possible solutions.

6.2 The inquiry recommended that the government legislate for a country-wide ban on pavement parking. The report noted that, whilst such a ban could impact negatively on some, such as those who live on narrow streets with limited parking provision, it sees a ban is justified given the serious harm caused by pavement parking, and provided that the legislation also allows for local authorities to make exemptions to the ban where necessary.⁴

7. RNIB Recommendations

7.1 RNIB fully supports the call for a ban as we think this is the simplest way to resolve the issue of pavement parking.

7.2 People with sight loss, and organisations such as RNIB which represent them, must be fully consulted about the nature of the ban and

³ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/42239/improving-parking-in-scotland-may-2018.pdf>

⁴ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtrans/1982/1982.pdf>

the nature of any exemptions to ensure that the legislation meets their needs.

7.2 Pavement parking is an equalities issue, and the government must enforce a nation-wide ban as part of its Equality Action Plan and in line with the Equalities Act 2010.

7.3 The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 requires Welsh Ministers and local authorities, in the performance of functions under the Highways Act 1980, to take reasonable steps to enhance the provision made for, and to have regard to the needs of, walkers and cyclists. The Act explicitly includes disabled people who use aids to mobility (such as guide dogs and canes) under the definition of 'walkers and cyclists'. The Welsh government should take steps to remove barriers to active travel faced by blind and partially sighted people, such as pavement parked cars.

In summary, RNIB Cymru is fully supportive of the aims of this Ban and of the Petition's submitter Rhian Morris.

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[REDACTED], [REDACTED]