

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-868
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/05832/19

Janet Finch-Saunders, AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

30 April 2019

Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter of 18 April regarding a petition on water safety/drowning prevention and the effects of cold water shock to be taught in all schools in Wales, and the development of a Water Safety Plan for Wales.

The then Minister for Environment met with the Drowning Prevention Co-ordinator and Deputy Director of Education from the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) on 28 November 2018 to discuss these issues and the development of a Water Safety Strategy for Wales. It was agreed at the meeting Welsh Government officials would maintain contact with the RLSS on the development of a Strategy and support this important initiative where appropriate. I understand work is progressing and the draft Strategy is scheduled for consultation at the end of the year.

Also of relevance to the petition, on 30 April, Kirsty Williams AM, Minister for Education, launched the new curriculum and assessment arrangements for feedback - accessible via this link: <https://hwb.gov.wales/>. There will be an extensive period of engagement between 30 April and 19 July, and during this next phase of co-construction the Welsh Government is inviting feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. Over the summer term, the views of teachers, children and young people and a range of wider stakeholders are being sought to help improve what's been developed.

The new curriculum in Wales, taking forward the recommendations of Successful Futures - an independent and fundamental review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements - is being designed with four purposes at its heart. These will be central to all decisions made in respect of the new curriculum, and one of the four purposes is to support children and young people to become healthy confident individuals, who know how to find the information and support to keep safe and well.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400
Gohebiaeth.Lesley.Griffiths@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lesley.Griffiths@gov.wales

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.

Alongside this work, important practical steps are already being taken. For example, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) as part of their water safety campaign produced 'One Last Breath' - material which is a pan-Wales campaign, with a particular focus on hotspot areas in Wales. This includes a hard hitting video about the risk of drowning at inland waters, including the risk of cold water shock and how to stay safe around water. DCWW also visit schools every spring/ summer with bespoke sessions, use radio and social media to reach their target audience, and have shared their approach with other water companies. On this latter point, through the Water UK Occupational Health and Safety Group, DCWW have helped establish and agree a water industry water safety position statement.

However, as you note in your letter, the issues span a number of Ministerial portfolios and therefore policy areas. They also involve various external stakeholders, not just the water companies. This is evident, for example, from the 2017 Sustainable Management of Natural Resources consultation proposals, which included changing the law on access to the outdoors (including to waterways). The consultation stressed the importance of responsible recreation, the provision of appropriate information and providing clarity for users on appropriate behaviour.

Whilst this is a complex and important issue requiring many relevant organisations to come together, I would hope actions already underway will go some way to addressing the issues captured in the recommendations made by the petitioning body. I will ask my officials to share the recommendations with the RLSS so they can be considered during the development of the draft strategy.

A handwritten signature in blue ink. The word "Regards" is written in a cursive style on the top line, and the name "Lesley" is written below it, also in a cursive style. The signature is positioned to the left of the typed name and title.

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