



# 11.0 Engagement and Influencing

## Launching a Petition

### Overview

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Petitions to Senedd Cymru, or the Welsh Parliament, are a relatively easy way to ensure the issue that matters to you is discussed by politicians in Cardiff Bay, placing it firmly on the political agenda. Not only can petitions raise the profile of your selected issue amongst decision-makers and the media, but it is possible for them to eventually become law.

### The Petitions Committee

The remit of the Petitions Committee is to consider all admissible petitions that are submitted by the public, allowing the public to directly influence the work of the Senedd.

It only takes two signatures to get a petition checked – if it is valid and within the powers of the Senedd, it will then be published in both English and Welsh on the Senedd petitions site.



Image: Woman signing a petition

The Petitions Committee reviews all petitions that collect over 50 signatures in order to determine what they can do to help take the petition forward. This could include writing to Welsh Government ministers, referring the topic of a petition for a debate in the Senedd, referring it to a subject committee for further scrutiny, or choosing to write a Petitions Committee report on the topic.



### Example

Such a report was agreed by the Committee following a petition on CCTV in slaughterhouses, recommending that the Welsh Government makes the installation and maintenance of CCTV monitoring systems mandatory in all slaughterhouses in Wales.

The Committee does not have the power to change Government policy or legislation – but rather decides if there is merit in the case that you are presenting that warrants further investigation and can make recommendations for future policy changes.

Writing to a minister is one of the most common actions for the Petitions Committee to take with regards to a petition. Ministers will be required to provide a response, and the Committee can go back to the Minister if they are unsatisfied with the response or if they need further clarity.

The Committee can also write to the original petitioner to ask for their views on ministerial responses, or even invite them to make their case before the Committee. The Petitions Committee has also used its Twitter account to publicise issues. If a petition gets over 5,000 signatures, the Petitions Committee will consider asking for a debate in the Senedd chamber. Considerations about whether to debate this in the plenary include the urgency of the situation, the topic of the petition, and the proportion of signatures from within Wales.



### Example

A petition calling on the Welsh Government to ban the use of wild animals in circuses in Wales, submitted by the RSPCA, resulted in the then Deputy Minister for Farming and Food to announce an independent review of the evidence on welfare of animals in travelling and non-travelling circuses. The review supported a ban, and the Welsh Government consulted on this in 2017.

Another petition on this issue was considered by Petitions Committee on 23 January 2018. This petition received over 6,000 signatures and a plenary debate was scheduled. The Minister responsible announced her plans to bring forward legislation to ban the use of wild animals in circuses, and the Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Bill was tabled with Welsh Government support in the Senedd. If used correctly and with public support, therefore, petitions can be the start of the law-making process.

### What Do You Want to Change?

It is important to draft the text with a specific, achievable goal – one clear action that you would like the Welsh Government or Senedd to take. It does not have to be an essay – petitions are simple devices and as long as the ask is clear, with no ambiguities as to what is being proposed, it will be sufficient for the purpose.

One of the most common reasons for petitions to fall at the first hurdle is for them to be outside the scope of the remit of the Welsh Government. You can't demand, **for example, that the Welsh Government takes action on a non-devolved issue such as criminal justice.** Take some time to consider what matters are devolved and within the powers of the Welsh Government or Senedd to change.

**Don't use this petitions process for a demand that will require an the Westminster Government or an external body to take action.**

You should also establish whether the topic of your petition calls for the same action as a petition that's already open or has been considered by the Committee over the last year, as this will mean that your petition will be rejected. Petitions derived from petitions websites are also not accepted by the Committee.

It is advisable to contact the Petitions Committee clerking team whilst drafting the wording of your petition to ensure that you follow the guidelines set out. These include ensuring that it doesn't contain offensive language, false or potentially defamatory statements, or refers to a case that is active in the courts.

It should also not aim to cause personal distress or loss nor name individual officials of public bodies. It also should not be seen as a promotion for a specific product or service, nor include issues that would not be appropriate for a petition such as calling for an individual to lose their job, resign or face a vote of no confidence.

If you wish to collect signatures on paper, then you should contact the Committee clerking team ahead of time for their advice on how best to do that in order to be compliant to the guidelines set out by the Senedd. They will be available to advise on how to set out your petition, and what information you need from those who wish to sign and support your petition.

### Getting Support

Once you have successfully launched your petition, either by using the online petitions system, on paper, or a combination of the two, you will need to consider how best to gain support for your stated ask.

You will be able to share the webpage of your petition with your supporters and networks and use your media channels to advertise the opportunity to support your call for change.

Any person or organisation with an address in Wales can create a petition, and people can only sign the petition once. People from outside Wales are able to sign the petition, but if your petition attracts over 5,000 signatures the Committee will consider asking for a debate in the Senedd, and one of their considerations in deciding on their response to the petition is to consider the proportion of signatures which come from within Wales. If people sign online, they will be sent an email to verify their signature.

### Submitting to Committee

Many organisations use the opportunity provided of presenting their petition, or a pledge card or similar if your petition is an online petition, to petition committee members as a hook to try and obtain further press and media coverage.

The clerking team will be able to provide you with further assistance, but petition handovers take place at the Senedd on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The committee also provide an informal opportunity for petitioners to discuss the issue raised in the petition and provide background information during this time, which is a valuable discussion in order to try and persuade the committee members about the validity of the issues you raised, the importance of the topic and the need for action.

The Petition Committee meets regularly. Prior to Covid-19 these sessions would be held at the Senedd in Cardiff Bay, and during the period of lockdown they were held online via zoom.

There are a vast number of petitions open at one time, and it might take a few weeks from handing in your petition to it being discussed at Committee. As part of their considerations into the merits of your petition the Committee can engage with you further by writing to you for further information or invite you to talk to the Committee in person.



### External Link

All committee meetings are broadcast live, and can be watched online:

[senedd.tv](https://www.senedd.tv)

## A Useful Campaigning Element

Change doesn't happen overnight. Creating and submitting a petition is the first step in the campaign for change. The Petitions Committee does not have the power or authority to make policy changes or introduce legislation, but they can recommend further action into the areas you raise.

The presentation of a petition can also prompt a subject committee or individual Members of the Senedd to take further action themselves in the policy area raised by asking questions, heading a campaign or by generating media attention into the issues you raised.

Used effectively as part of a wide campaign, a petition can be a valuable way to highlight the need for action and can lead to policy change in Wales.



Cefnogi Trydydd  
Sector **Cymru**

Third Sector  
Support **Wales**

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales.

It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

For further information contact  
<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>

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### Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.