

Carl Sargeant AM
Minister for Natural Resources
Welsh Government

8 July 2015

Dear Carl

Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014

On 12 March 2015 the Committee held a short post-legislative scrutiny session in relation to the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014.

I set out below our preliminary conclusions and several questions to which we would appreciate your response. Some of these questions relate to matters not covered by the Act but they do relate to your broader policy approach to the control of horses.

1. Scrutiny of the Bill

1.1 We have not received any convincing evidence to support the 'fast tracking' of the Bill through the Assembly's scrutiny procedures. We believe that the concerns raised by this Committee about the circumvention of due democratic process were justified and we hope that the Welsh Government (and future Welsh Governments) present a more convincing case for not subjecting a Bill to Stage 1 scrutiny in the future. In drawing this conclusion we acknowledge that this was a decision of your predecessor.

2. Engagement and Communications Plan

2.1 The action plan that accompanied the Bill promised an 'engagement and communications plan'.

2.2 Can you please provide us with an update on the development of this plan and details of when we can expect it to be published?



3. Costs to third parties

3.1 Can you provide us with details of the costs incurred by third parties in their work to assist local authorities in using their powers under the Act?

4. Local authority resources

4.1 The evidence we received suggested that some local authorities are facing difficulties in using the powers available to them due to constraints on resources and expertise.

4.2 Are you planning to provide any centralised resource (in terms of specialist equipment and skilled people and training, as well as funds) to assist local authorities and to encourage them to use their powers under the Act?

5. Central horse database

5.1 Can you please provide an update on progress towards establishing a new central horse database and how you have been working with the UK Government to develop the database?

5.2 Can you confirm that the experience of Welsh local authorities is being utilised in its development and provide details of how their experience has been fed into the process?

6. Microchipping of horses – derogations

6.1 Some stakeholders voiced support for removing the derogation for horses in certain designated areas to remain without a passport or microchip. In particular, we heard that this would make it easier to identify abandoned horses on common land. We appreciate that there were good reasons for the derogations to be made when equine identification regulations were first introduced, but in light of this view from stakeholders we can see some merit in reviewing the derogations.

6.2 What work has the Welsh Government done to understand the impacts of derogation and do you have plans to review this derogation?

7. Conclusions

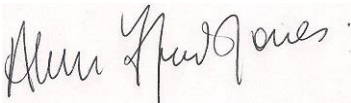
7.1 Stakeholders have told us that this legislation is a useful tool for addressing the issue of fly-grazing and horse abandonment in parts of Wales. However, local authorities in many parts of Wales lack the resources and expertise to utilise their



powers under this Act. We accept that this Act is only one part of the approach to tackling fly-grazing and horse abandonment. That said, if this legislation is to play its full part in addressing this serious issue, then we believe that the Welsh Government needs to give further consideration to the resources and expertise that it makes available to local authorities.

7.2 Answers to the question posed above may offer us reassurance on this final point. I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored rectangular background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Alun Ffred Jones".

Alun Ffred Jones AM

Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee

