

Call for evidence on UK-wide ban on live export of animals for overseas slaughter launched

The proposals relate only to the export of animals for slaughter and not to the banning of live animal exports for production or breeding.

Whilst a ban on live animal exports is not currently possible due to EU free trade rules, a ban could be introduced once the UK leaves the EU.

The Welsh Government has also agreed to work with the UK Government and other devolved administrations to consider how existing welfare in transport standards can be strengthened and to support further research in this area.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said:

“As a government, we are committed to ensuring high standards of welfare for all animals kept in Wales and our position on live exports for slaughter is clear.

“We would prefer for animals to be slaughtered as close as practicable to their point of production and consider a trade in meat and meat products to be preferable to long distance transport of animals to slaughter. That is why we are supporting the call for evidence on a UK-wide ban on the export of live animals for overseas slaughter.

“Whilst there is likely to be public support for a ban on live exports for slaughter it is important to recognise the trade is currently lawful and a ban is unlikely to be welcomed by all. The livestock industry and the sheep sector in Wales for example are likely to have mixed views, particularly given the uncertainty around our future trading relationship with the EU.

“I encourage the public, the agriculture industry, partners and anyone with an interest in animal welfare to get involved and share their views with us on this important issue.”

“I have also agreed to work with the UK government and other devolved administrations to see how the protection of animal welfare during transport can be strengthened and to support further research in this area. I look forward to receiving the recommendations from both in due course.”

Residential care savings limit increases in Wales

A capital limit determines whether a person pays for the full cost of their residential care, or whether they receive financial support towards the cost from their local authority.

The Welsh Government's Programme for Government commits Ministers to increasing this capital limit used by local authorities who charge for residential care from £24,000 to £50,000 during the current Assembly term.

The capital limit in Wales is the highest in the UK. In England, people with capital and savings above £23,250 have to fund all of their own residential care.

The increase is being delivered in a phased approach, starting in April 2017 when the limit was increased to £30,000. The capital limit has today increased further from £30,000 to £40,000.

There are up to 4,000 care home residents who pay for the full cost of their care. Around 450 care home residents have already benefitted from the increase last year, with a steady increase in this number expected.

Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"This is the second step in delivering one of our top six 'Taking Wales Forward' commitments to more than doubling the amount of capital a person in residential care can retain without having to use this to pay for their care.

"From today, the capital limit is rising from £30,000 to £40,000, thereby allowing residents to retain a further £10,000 of their hard earned savings and other capital to use as they wish. By the end of the currently Assembly, the limit will be raised to £50,000.

"This is another firm example of this Welsh Government delivering its commitments to the people of Wales."

Lesley Griffiths visits New Zealand to strengthen links between both countries

During the visit, the Cabinet Secretary will visit the Parliament to attend its Primary Production Select Committee and meet her Ministerial counterparts to discuss a broad range of issues across her portfolio.

The Cabinet Secretary will also visit the Auckland and Manawatu regions to visit dairy, sheep and beef farms and hold discussions with a wide range of representatives from these sectors.

The visit provides an opportunity to discover what Wales can learn from a small, global-facing country such as New Zealand and also discuss opportunities for both countries to work together. The Cabinet Secretary will meet representatives of the winegrowers' industry which has seen a significant growth in the last forty years. The Cabinet Secretary will also meet with the CEO's of the main beef and lamb exporting bodies and with dairy trade organisations such as Fonterra to see what Wales can learn from their food and drink industry.

Speaking ahead of the visit, the Cabinet Secretary said:

"I am pleased to be visiting New Zealand to strengthen the links between our countries. Like Wales, New Zealand is a small outward-facing, globally trading nation and I believe there is a lot we can learn from each other.

"It is now just under a year before we leave the European Union. For decades, the management of our land has been shaped by the EU. This has greatly influenced the structure and performance of our agricultural sector.

"Brexit brings significant and swift changes – the combination of leaving the Common Agricultural Policy and new trading arrangements mean simply maintaining the status quo is untenable.

"I recently published the five core principles for the future of our land and the people who manage it and these will form the basis of our future policy. I have launched a new phase of intensive engagement to develop initial proposals and I see this visit to New Zealand as a key part of that engagement.

"This visit will enable us to learn from their food and drinks industry – a key sector for us post-Brexit. It is also an opportunity to hear about New Zealand's experiences in managing significant change in agricultural policy which is particularly timely as we work to secure a resilient and thriving industry in

Wales after leaving the EU.”

[Nurse Staffing Levels \(Wales\) Act comes in to full force](#)

The Act places a duty on health boards and NHS Trusts to take steps to calculate and maintain nurse staffing levels in adult acute medical and surgical inpatient wards, as well as a broader duty to consider how many nurses are necessary to provide care for patients sensitively in all settings.

It also ensures that the NHS more widely recognises the professional judgement of nurses in identifying the needs of their patients, and supports nurses from ward to board to have the necessary and sometimes difficult conversations about the resource needs of their patients based on those needs.

Kirsty Williams AM introduced what would become the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act as a Private Member’s Bill in December 2014. With the support of Welsh Government, the Act received Royal Assent on 21 March 2016.

Guidance to support NHS staff to implement the legislation was developed through consultations with nurses, patients, staff and stakeholder groups.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“Implementing the Nurse Staffing Levels legislation is a real step forward for Wales, and we have done so because we understand there’s an evidence base that shows high quality nursing care with the right numbers and skill mix makes a real difference to patient care and patient outcomes.

“We now have a system to empower and support nurses on the front line, and nurse leaders to use their professional judgement to understand and plan for the right levels of care; with the right number of nurses needed to ensure the patient gets the very best deal possible.”

Chief Nursing Officer for Wales, Jean White said:

“I’m really delighted that Wales has taken the lead in introducing this piece of legislation. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to get the right nurse staffing levels to meet our patients’ needs and

to empower our nurses with the evidence base that will support and help inform their professional judgement.

There is a real sense of pride in Wales within our nursing community and we regularly read about how the Welsh public share that sentiment, in letters praising the outstanding care they have received at the hands of our nursing staff. We want to see the implementation of this Act cement that feeling of pride and see it spread to every corner of our workforce and be a clear message to the outside world that in Wales, we value our nurses.”

Tina Donnelly, Director of the Royal College of Nursing in Wales, said:

“This is a fantastic achievement, which will focus on ensuring patients will benefit from legislation that will protect them and ensure a safe environment of care. Low nurse staffing levels are directly linked to sharp rises in patient mortality. This new law means an appropriate number of nurses will be at the bedside providing patient care. RCN Wales has been proud to work with Kirsty Williams AM and the Welsh Government in seeking to achieve this legislation which we confirm was a first for the UK and Europe.”

[Wales a key partner in pioneering EU funded community energy scheme](#)

The Green Valleys, a community interest company based in the Brecon Beacons, is a key project partner in the ECCO project which aims to create five new community owned energy schemes in Wales by 2020.

Working in collaboration with eleven North West European partners the project is working to create a strong network of community energy cooperatives and inspire and enable continued growth of the community energy sector.

The project is backed by €3.2m of EU funds through the North West Europe transnational programme, with Wales set to benefit from €273,000 of EU funds and an additional £156,000 investment from the Welsh Government.

Welsh third sector organisations Datblygu Egni Gwledig and Community Energy Wales are also involved in the project and are set to benefit from the expertise of countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, who for over a decade have been pioneers in the community renewable energy sector.

Professor Drakeford said:

“This project will bring together expertise from across Europe, sharing the same opportunities, challenges and resources. I’m delighted to see EU funding supporting this collaboration to help develop a strong and sustainable community energy sector in Wales.”

“The benefits of building friendships and partnerships to address common global challenges and opportunities are clear to see, which is why it is also very important for Wales to participate in such EU co-operation programmes after the UK leaves the European Union.”

Gareth Ellis, Community Projects Manager, The Green Valleys said:

“We are on the cusp of significant future changes to the way our energy is generated and supplied. These changes create opportunities for communities across Wales to own and benefit directly from future energy projects. The ECCO project will allow us to work with partners across North West Europe to share learning, financing models and community led approaches to the development of new energy generation. ”