

P-06-1222 Ban disposable barbecues from our National Parks, National Nature Reserves and Welsh beaches!- Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales to the Committee, 18 February 2022

By e-mail to Jack Sergeant MS, Chair of the Petitions Committee

18th February, 2022

Briefing for Petitions Committee request for Disposable BBQ Position Statement.

At its meeting on 10th January, the Petitions Committee of the Welsh Parliament considered Petition P-06-1222, [Ban disposable barbecues from our National Parks, National Nature Reserves and Welsh beaches] alongside correspondence from the Minister for Climate Change. At the meeting members agreed to write to NRW in order to seek our position on disposable BBQ's in Wales.

Thank you for the opportunity to explain our position as regards the use of disposable barbecues in National Park, National Nature Reserves and on Welsh beaches.

As an important land manager in Wales, we are stewards of Welsh Government's Woodland Estate and some National Nature Reserves on behalf of WG for the people of Wales and we welcome thousands of visitors every year to these sites. NRW bylaws clearly state that starting a fire is not permitted on the NRW Estate. Our experience is that on the whole the vast majority of visitors are sensible and our controls and information provision to visitors reduces risks significantly.

Disposable BBQs are permitted in designated areas on some of our sites. In these places metal racks are fixed to the picnic tables provided, enabling safe use. We also provide hot ash bins in these places to enable safe disposal of hot ash. Where BBQs are not permitted signs clearly state the risk of fires. I have attached two versions of the warning signs aimed at grassland and forestry. Our land managers continuously monitor visitor behaviour as part of our routine work to provide advice and guidance. Where anti-social behaviour is identified we enforce wherever practicable. Our guidance and information provided at our sites for visitors also includes reference to the Countryside Code.

We work closely with Fire and Rescue Services across Wales as members of PSBs. We collaborate with them regarding efficient and effective incident response on the one hand. We also work closely in partnership on projects like healthy hillsides in the S Wales area; aimed at reframing the relationship between communities and adjoining upland areas to optimise the benefits they realise and enabling preventative and long-term interventions. As a partner we have ongoing conversations with fire service wildfire leads. Most concern has been around deliberate setting of fires being in the south Wales valleys and there is not much

evidence to report on the impact from disposable BBQs, They support designating BBQ areas which can be easily controlled and used tactically to raise awareness via things like communications on Fire Severity index communications. Equally they advise that blanket bans across all of our estate are hard to but are more practical be easily managed and controlled in designated areas.

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NRW have a statutory duty to give advice about responsible recreation under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Countryside and National Park Act (1949). Further, our work on outdoor recreational activities includes working with partners, stakeholders and governing bodies to develop codes of conduct and best practice encouraging responsible recreation. Natural Resources Wales produces and publish the [Countryside Code](#). This is a set of guidelines and advice for the public to ensure respect and enjoyment in the countryside. Its aim is to allow and encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits that nature offers, while respecting the people who live and work in the countryside and protecting the environment. The three main sections that form the basis of the code are - Respect everyone , Protect the Environment and Enjoy the outdoors.

The code is not silent on the matter of BBQ's and open fires. The code specifically states that you should not light fires and only have BBQs where signs say you can. Furthermore, the code advises people visiting the countryside to:

- Be careful with naked flames and cigarettes,
- To only use BBQs where signs state they are allowed.
- Always put your BBQ out, make sure the ashes are cold and dispose of them responsibly.

The code further advises its readers of the detrimental effect of fires to wildlife, habitats, people and property.

At the last review of the Code in 2021, messages about risks from fires and BBQs was carefully considered with land managers and stakeholders throughout this recent refresh. As a result, the position reflected the most appropriate position at the time of publishing (March 2021).

We communicate the messages of the code through various media channels and seek to share good practice advice with our partners and their networks as far as possible. NRW have a series of responsible recreation animations to help educate about specific activities that may have an affect on the environment, including a message about the responsible use of BBQs and taking care with cigarettes in the countryside. Link: [Be careful with BBQs, fires and cigarettes - YouTube](#).

The countryside code can help people enjoy the countryside in a safe and respectful way and we encourage people to read the code, so they know what to expect before they head outdoors. NRW are working closely with Natural England, as shared owners of the code, to better communicate the countryside code and land manager code messages. This will be achieved by collaboratively delivering targeted campaign work to raise the profile of the code's and exploring the development of updated educative material to learners.

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Wider than the issues specifically on the estate and National Nature Reserves and coast are aware that cooking on single use disposable BBQ's are a single use product made of aluminium, steel and charcoal, all of which have a large embedded energy and carbon footprint, that it is a very carbon intensive and resource inefficient method of cooking, and that risks of wildfires contribute significantly to climate and nature emergency risks which is why we have management actions in place to manage the risks of fires.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Jenkins

Head of Natural Resource Management Policy