

# P-06-1232: Stop the proliferation of intensive poultry units (IPUs) by legislating and introduce a moratorium until this can be achieved

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 10 Hydref 2022  
Petitions Committee | 10 October 2022

Reference: SR21/1626-1

**Petition Number:** P-06-1232

**Petition title:** Stop the proliferation of intensive poultry units (IPUs) by legislating and introduce a moratorium until this can be achieved

**Text of petition:**

There are many intensive poultry units in Wales. Powys has the unfortunate reputation of being one of the IPU hot spots. There have been 147 IPU applications granted by PCC. IPUs bring with them many issues including pollution of rivers and land, smell, ammonia, traffic, 24x7 noise and light. To many, the practice of intensive poultry production is cruel and unnecessary.

Despite many villages being blighted by these units there is still nothing being done to stop them. We need our politicians to act.

Another small village in Powys is the latest in a long line to be threatened by the building of an intensive poultry unit. This is a rural area, the roads are walked regularly by the people of the village and visitors. The landscape is stunning, there is no light pollution and the silence is, wonderfully, deafening. The River Cain runs through the Village and close to the site feeds into the River Severn.



Despite many villages being blighted by these units there is still nothing being done to stop them. We need our politicians to act. So, this petition is about getting the politicians to legislate; they have promised this for years; they accept this is a serious issue but still the legislation is missing.

A TAN (Technical Advice Note) regarding IPUs was promised in 2019. Lesley Griffiths, the Agriculture Minister has stated that something must be done, particularly with regard to the smaller units. But still nothing.

## 1. Background

### Previous petition

This petition is similar to a previous petition considered by your predecessor committee: [P-05-815 Control Rapidly Expanding Intensive Poultry Industry in Wales](#). The Committee closed that petition on 27 July 2020 with this conclusion:

The Committee considered further correspondence and noted that work is ongoing to review and, where opportunities are identified, strengthen planning requirements around intensive agriculture. The Committee agreed to note the serious concerns expressed by the petitioners throughout this process but concluded that, in light of the responses received from the Minister, Natural Resources Wales and the petitioners, there is little further that it could achieve at this time. The Committee agreed to close the petition and to write to the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee to ask if they can continue to monitor developments as part of their work into land use and biodiversity.

### Regulating intensive poultry units

There are two principle aspects to regulating new poultry units:

- the planning system, which is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority (LPA); and
- the environmental permitting system, which is the responsibility of Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

Broadly speaking, new units require planning permission and, above certain thresholds, also require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). An environmental permit is also required above a certain threshold.

Further detail on planning permission and environmental permit process for poultry units can be found in the [Senedd Research briefing](#) provided to your predecessor committee.

In 2018 [the Welsh Government wrote to LPAs](#) reminding them of “the need to fully consider the effects of intensive agricultural development when determining planning applications.” The letter noted:

- Large intensive agricultural units usually require planning permission so LPAs should include appropriate policies in their Local Development Plans. This will enable them to properly consider planning applications for this type of development.
- Intensive agricultural units, particularly pig and poultry farms, can affect the local population and sensitive habitats. This is largely through pollutants including: ammonia; nutrients from manure, litter and slurry; effluent discharges; dust; odour; and noise.
- Particular care should be exercised when considering developments that would bring livestock units within close proximity to sensitive land uses such as homes, schools, hospitals, office development or sensitive environmental areas.
- While an individual intensive livestock development may be acceptable, the cumulative impacts resulting from similar developments nearby should also be taken into account

NRW has published [guidance for ammonia assessments](#) for developments that require planning permission or an environmental permit.

Poultry units are also subject to regulation relating to animal and human health disease risk, and animal welfare.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government established the Town and Country Planning Intensive Agriculture Working Group in 2019. At the outset the group comprised planning officers from LPAs, representatives from farming unions, environmental groups, Public Health Wales, NRW and Welsh Government policy teams.

The group was initially focused on developing planning guidance for intensive agriculture developments in the form of a new Technical Advice Note (TAN).

The Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, wrote to you about this petition on 13 July 2022. The Minister's letter explains the work of the working group was interrupted by the pandemic.

NRW's subsequent announcement about the performance of river Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) against tighter phosphorus targets means the work on the agricultural planning impacts has been refocused to solving the immediate phosphorus issue. The phosphorus issue is currently preventing a "great many" new homes, including affordable homes, from coming forward.

There are two river SACs in Powys: the rivers Wye and Usk.

However, the Minister's letter commits to developing the TAN on agricultural development with a view to publishing a draft for consultation in the autumn. The Minister also says she hasn't ruled out a "block on new poultry development" but stresses she'll be guided by the evidence.

## River Pollution Summit

The First Minister convened a summit to discuss phosphorus pollution of Welsh rivers on 18 July, the opening day of the Royal Welsh Show.

The summit brought together regulators, water companies, developers, local government, farming unions, academia and environmental bodies to discuss a strategic and joined-up approach to improving the situation. Eight actions were agreed:

- 1.** More funding for Nutrient Management Boards (£415k for 2022-23 and an unspecified amount for 2023-24 and 2024-25) and a review of the Boards' governance arrangements (see action 8 below).
- 2.** Develop a regulatory approach to enable nature-based solutions to mitigate phosphorus loading and reduce environmental impact.
- 3.** Implement short-term interventions, drawing on financial support from developers, Welsh Government and others.
- 4.** Develop an all-Wales nutrient calculator to support planning decisions.

5. Agree a 'menu' of potential mitigating actions and interventions, to inform Nutrient Management Board decisions on measures to reduce pollution.
6. Explore an approach to 'catchment consenting' to broaden the range of mitigation measures available to reduce pollution in SAC rivers.
7. Assess the potential for nutrient offsetting.
8. A long-term roadmap supported by an action plan for Welsh SAC rivers, to be developed in the autumn. The outcome of the review of Nutrient Management Board governance arrangements will be included in the action plan.

A [technical information and evidence pack](#) was published to coincide with the summit.

The Welsh Government aims to reconvene the summit in early 2023.

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

As noted above your [predecessor committee considered a similar petition](#) in the Fifth Senedd.

Two Committees of the current Senedd have recently considered aspects of freshwater pollution:

- Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee [inquiry into the agricultural pollution regulations](#); and
- Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee [inquiry into water quality and sewage discharges](#).
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Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.