

Licensing powers on 'fracking' transferred to Wales

The Cabinet Secretary set out her preferred policy in July, that the Welsh Government would not support any applications for hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking" consents, or undertake any new petroleum licensing in Wales.

A [consultation](#) has since been held on petroleum extraction, which closed on 25 September. The consultation received more than 1,800 responses. The Welsh Government will now consider the feedback to the consultation before confirming its future policy by the end of the year.

The Welsh Government has put a Notification Direction in place so that local authorities cannot approve planning applications for unconventional oil and gas, including fracking, without Welsh Ministers' approval. This supports the Welsh Government's opposition to unconventional extraction.

The Welsh Government has been working with UK Government and the UK Oil & Gas Authority to ensure a smooth transfer of the powers.

Lesley Griffiths said:

"Burning fossil fuels is the number one contributor to global warming and there is overwhelming scientific evidence which shows how climate change is damaging our planet. Instead of exploring new ways to extract fossil fuels, we should be investing in renewable forms of energy.

"As a Government, we must responsibly manage our natural resources in a way that meets the needs of the people of Wales, not just today, but into the future.

"I would like to thank everyone who provided their feedback to the consultation and I expect to announce the Welsh Government's policy by the end of the year."

The Welsh Government [Onshore Petroleum Licensing web page](#) launched on 1st October.

Consultation to ban the use of wild

animals in travelling circuses in Wales launched

The [eight week consultation](#) will seek the public's views of the proposed Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Wales) Bill.

There are no circuses using wild animals based in Wales, but when they do visit there are renewed calls to ban the practice.

A previous public consultation exploring the possible licensing of Mobile Animal Exhibits, where views were also sought about the use of wild animals in circuses, found overwhelming support for a ban.

Travelling circuses have toured the United Kingdom for over two hundred years and will continue to be welcome in Wales, but they will not be permitted to use wild animals under the Bill.

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

"We believe that wild animals should be treated with dignity and respect as sentient beings, and not objectified or perceived as commodities for our entertainment.

"A ban will send a clear message that the people of Wales believe this practice to be an outdated notion and ethically unacceptable.

"We want future generations of children and young people to develop respectful and responsible attitudes towards animals. I would urge everyone with an interest to give their views on our proposals and take part in the consultation.

"It is important to stress the Bill is not about the use of all animals in circuses or other forms of entertainment, but instead the use of wild animals in travelling circuses in Wales."

The consultation will be open to responses until 26 November 2018.

Teachers pay & conditions devolved to Wales

To mark the event, Education Secretary Kirsty Williams has reiterated her

commitment to set up a national model that will work with teachers and professional bodies within the education sector to create a system that is fair for all.

Earlier this year, the Education Secretary confirmed in a written statement that a new national model would be formed to determine teachers' pay and conditions, bringing together employers, teachers unions, and the Welsh Government on an annual basis in a Partnership Forum.

Once formed, the new Partnership Forum will propose changes to pay and conditions and address any additional issues, before Welsh Ministers submit a 'final' remit for scrutiny by an independent expert body – the Welsh Pay Review Body – prior to taking any final decisions.

The Education Secretary said:

“This is a truly historic moment for Wales. For the first time we will be able to determine teachers' pay and conditions within Wales, giving us a fantastic opportunity to develop and elevate the status of the teaching profession.”

“The new national model will encourage co-operation, bringing unions, employers and Welsh Government together for an equal, practical and sustainable way forward – with the added benefit of all decisions being subject to advice and review from an independent expert body.

“Implementing the new model will be an ongoing process, with many finer details to be considered to ensure that the model is run fairly and is fit for purpose to ensure that teachers are supported to be the best that they can be.”

PM must stop misleading the public with false Brexit claims

With 6 months to go until the UK leaves the EU, First Minister Carwyn Jones has said the Prime Minister must stop misleading the public with false Brexit claims.

The First Minister said:

“Prime Minister Theresa May's claim that the only choice the UK has is between the Chequer's deal or 'no deal' is completely false – and peddling this myth is damaging to democracy.

“It is hugely irresponsible to force people to choose between a disastrous hard Brexit and a catastrophic ‘no deal’. Insisting the country is stuck between a rock and a hard place heightens tensions and causes confusion at a time when we need cool heads and conversations.

“My government has shown there is another way that would protect jobs and our economy and which is compatible both with the result of the referendum and the EU’s negotiating position.”

The Welsh Government has published evidence based proposals based on the UK’s continued participation in the Single Market and customs union. Securing Wales’ Future, published in January 2017, is a credible, evidence-based blueprint for negotiations that can deliver for all parts of the United Kingdom.

“Only by securing full and unfettered access to the Single Market and by agreeing a customs union can we protect Welsh jobs and our economy.

“A ‘No deal’ Brexit would leave the UK poorer, isolated internationally and more divided at home. It would cause huge disruption and long-lasting damage to all parts of the UK. It is not an option and to claim otherwise is a deception. It would be a catastrophic failure of the UK government that would only satisfy a small cabal of fanatical Brexiteers who are hell-bent on undermining the social and environmental protections we enjoy and careless of destroying our links with our most important trading partner.

“With just 6 months to go, the Prime Minister needs to put the interests of the country ahead of her party and work with the EU to reach an agreement that protects the prosperity and well-being of people across the UK.”

[Welsh Government proposes 50p minimum unit price for alcohol](#)

The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018 was passed by the National Assembly for Wales in June 2018, and received Royal Assent in August 2018.

The Act allows Welsh Ministers to introduce a minimum unit price (MUP) for

alcohol supplied in Wales, and makes it an offence for alcohol to be supplied by alcohol retailers below a minimum price made up of that MUP, the strength of the alcohol and its volume, specifically targeting cheap, strong alcohol.

The Health Secretary has today launched a consultation on the Welsh Government's preferred MUP of 50p.

It is currently intended that the new regime will come into force in summer 2019.

Recent analysis by the University of Sheffield estimated that a 50p MUP in Wales will:

- Capture nearly half of off-trade alcohol sold and just under half of alcohol purchased by harmful drinkers, whilst only capturing just over a fifth of alcohol purchased by moderate drinkers
- Lead to 66 (8.5%) fewer alcohol-attributable deaths per year
- Lead to 1,281 (3.6%) fewer alcohol-attributable hospital admissions per year.

Over half of the estimated reduction in consumption would be accounted for by harmful drinkers. There would be minimal impact on moderate drinkers, accounting for 8% of the reduction in consumption in line with the targeted aim of the legislation.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"The ultimate objective of introducing a minimum unit price is to tackle alcohol-related harm, including alcohol-attributable hospital admissions and alcohol-related deaths in Wales, by reducing alcohol consumption in hazardous and harmful drinkers.

"In particular, the Act is targeted at protecting the health of hazardous and harmful drinkers – including young people – who tend to consume greater quantities of low-cost and high-alcohol content products.

"The higher the level of MUP that is chosen, the greater the proportion of purchased alcohol that is captured and the greater the estimated impact on alcohol-related harms. However, there is a trade-off, as there is also a greater impact on moderate drinkers, particularly moderate drinkers in the more deprived groups. After careful consideration and on balance, my preference is that the initial level of the MUP should be set at 50p. But we will now gather views from individuals, businesses, public bodies and interested parties about the Welsh Government's preferred price of 50p."

The new law supports the Welsh Government's comprehensive strategy to tackle hazardous and harmful drinking by tackling the availability and affordability of cheap, strong alcohol, which is part of wider efforts to improve and

protect the health of the population of Wales.

Currently:

- Just under two-fifths (37%) of all alcohol is currently purchased at less than 50p per unit, accounting for just under half of all off-trade alcohol (47% sold below 50p)
- Moderate drinkers purchased 22% of their units below this threshold, with the figures for hazardous and harmful drinkers being higher (36% and 46% respectively)
- Harmful drinkers purchase more of their alcohol in the off-trade than either hazardous or moderate drinkers (76% compared to 67% and 60% respectively).