

01 October 2026

Dear

ATISN 27504 – Request for preventative safeguards before the 2026 Carneddau pony gatherings and removals

Information requested

Thank you for your request which we received on 13 September.

You asked for information about the timetable for gatherings, the proposed population changes, the arrangements for independent veterinary oversight, and the designated lead responsible for providing practical support during the gathering of the Carneddau ponies.

You are also seeking assurances that ponies with a reasonable quality of life will not be sent for slaughter where suitable alternatives exist, and that robust traceability arrangements are in place to record where permanently removed ponies are rehomed or otherwise placed.

You have specifically asked for the following information:

Confirm the timetable and proposed population changes

1. Please establish the anticipated dates of the gatherings and any earlier removals, the numbers and categories of ponies proposed for permanent removal, and the population intended to remain. Please distinguish Aber and Llanfairfechan from Llanllechid where the arrangements differ, and explain what ecological, genetic and welfare advice informs the plans.

Seek a supported agreement to avoid slaughter as a means of disposing of ponies from this year's gatherings.

2. Will you work with the owners and relevant organisations to seek a written commitment that ponies capable of an acceptable quality of life will not be sent for slaughter, either directly or knowingly through intermediaries, and that suitable alternatives will be explored before disposal decisions are made?

This request expressly excludes humane euthanasia necessary to prevent suffering. Necessary veterinary treatment or euthanasia must not be delayed while correspondence or information requests are being considered.

Arrange independent veterinary oversight

3. Please clarify what veterinary provision is planned for the gatherings, including assessment of animals causing concern, fitness for transport, and a recorded process for welfare decisions. I would welcome veterinary oversight independent of commercial decisions about sale or disposal.

Establish clear traceability and suitable destinations.

4. Please seek arrangements under which each permanently removed pony can be linked to its responsible owner and recorded destination, with appropriate checks on proposed placements. Aggregate destination categories could be reported publicly afterwards without exposing private addresses or personal details.

Identify a lead and practical support

5. Please identify who will coordinate a pre-gather discussion involving the owners, relevant public bodies and an appropriate equine welfare organisation. This should establish whether barriers such as suitable accommodation, identification costs, transport or veterinary care can be addressed through an agreed plan.

Our response

The information you have requested is not held by the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government does not directly manage semi-feral pony populations in Wales. Responsibility for the day-to-day management of these ponies, including identification and marking systems, gathering and de-stocking activities, population management decisions, and the health and welfare of individual animals, rests with the relevant commoners, landowners, grazing associations and pony owners.

The matters raised in your request, including gathering arrangements, population numbers, disposal decisions, veterinary oversight, traceability arrangements and local coordination activities, fall within the remit of those responsible for managing the ponies rather than the Welsh Government.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely