



**Janet Finch-Saunders MS|AS**

Aelod Senedd Cymru dros Aberconwy  
Member of the Welsh Parliament for Aberconwy



Dafydd Elis-Thomas MS,  
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism,  
Welsh Government,  
*By Email*

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Dear Deputy Minister,

Janet.Finch-Saunders@Senedd.Cymru

I hope that this letter finds you well. I write to express my serious concern at the fact that whilst showcaves have been allowed to re-open across the United Kingdom, your Welsh Government is forcing The National Showcaves Centre for Wales to remain closed.

Dan Yr Ogof showcaves are one of the largest complexes of its kind in the UK, with over 16km of explored passageways. It truly is a natural wonder, and unsurprisingly is one of Wales and the Brecon Beacons National Park's top attractions. As I have explained to you in relation to CADW and in particular Caernarfon and Conwy castles, the delayed opening of attractions or cancellation of bookings made by tour groups at such anchor attractions in Wales is set to have a detrimental impact on the Wales wide tourist sector. The same is true for the National Showcave Centre.

With regards to Dan yr Ogof I am aware that your refusal to allow the caves to reopen has contributed to the loss of over forty members of staff, and questions by The Public Relations Officer for the Association of British and Irish Showcaves (ABIS), as to the future of this vitally important centre.

I would be very grateful if you could urgently provide me with the scientific evidence which you have relied on to keep Dan yr Ogof closed. Indeed, I question whether this exists, and if so, whether it is accurate when considering the fact that all ABIS showcaves have been allowed to reopen other than the one here in Wales. Importantly, showcaves are not like coal mines, copper mines, lead mines or slate quarries, as they are entirely natural, and have air currents that are continuously being circulated and vented through the limestones natural jointing systems. This is corroborated by Professor John Gunn, an international expert on caves, who has commented in relation to Dan yr Ogof:

*'I find this a very odd decision that is not based on any scientific evidence. The Dan Yr Ogof Caves, in common with the other caves in the ABIS network, are formed in limestone and have very efficient ventilation'.*

Given the above, it would be appreciated if you could as a matter of urgency consider authorising the opening of Wales' greatest showcave attraction, and if unable to clarify the scientific advice you have relied on to keep the cave closed, seriously consider whether the Welsh Government's policy in relation to showcaves has been negligent in comparison to the rest of the UK and Ireland. I think that to a reasonable person it does seem that a major error has been made in keeping the centre closed.

Yours sincerely,

**Janet Finch-Saunders MS/AS**