

# Report 03-19 to the Assembly under Standing Order 22.9

September 2019



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# Report 03-19 to the Assembly under Standing Order 22.9

September 2019



# About the Committee

The Committee was established on 28 June 2016. Its remit can be found at:  
[www.assembly.wales/SeneddStandards](http://www.assembly.wales/SeneddStandards)

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## Committee Chair:



**Jayne Bryant AM**  
Welsh Labour  
Newport West

## Current Committee membership:



**Andrew RT Davies AM**  
Welsh Conservatives  
South Wales Central



**Helen Mary Jones AM**  
Plaid Cymru  
Mid and West Wales



**David J Rowlands AM**  
Brexit Party  
South Wales East

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## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** The Committee recommends to the Assembly, in accordance with 7.12(iv) of the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Assembly Members, that a breach has been found and that no further action should be taken.....Page 9

## 1. Introduction

**1.** The terms of reference of the Standards of Conduct Committee (the Committee) are set out in Standing Order 22.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with functions set out in Standing Order 22.2 the Committee must:

“investigate, report on and, if appropriate, recommend action in respect of any complaint referred to it by the Commissioner for Standards.”<sup>2</sup>

**2.** This report is made to the Assembly under Standing Order 22.9 and paragraph 8.1 of the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Assembly Members<sup>3</sup> (the Procedure), in relation to two complaints made against Dr Hefin David AM. The complaints refer to the same incident and will be referred to in this report in the singular.

**3.** The report from the Commissioner for Standards (the Commissioner), on his investigation of the complaint, is attached at Annex A. It sets out the details of the complaint and the findings of the Commissioner’s formal investigation.

**4.** This report sets out the details of the complaint and the way in which the Committee arrived at its recommendation.

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<sup>1</sup> Standing Orders

<sup>2</sup> Standing Order 22.2(i)

<sup>3</sup> The National Assembly for Wales’ Procedure for Dealing with Complaints Against Assembly Members



## 2. Consideration of the Complaint

5. The complainants alleged that the Member concerned failed to comply with paragraphs 4 (b) and 4 (g), which state:

**“Paragraph 4(b) – Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Assembly Members should at all times conduct themselves in a manner which will tend to maintain and strengthen the public’s trust and confidence in the integrity of the Assembly and refrain from any action which would bring the Assembly, or its members generally, into disrepute. Members should not ask Assembly Commission or Welsh Government staff to act in any way which would compromise the political impartiality of the Civil Service and/or Assembly Commission staff or conflict with the Civil Service Code and/or the Assembly Commission Staff Code of Conduct.”

**“Paragraph 4(g) – Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.”<sup>4</sup>

6. The Commissioner also considered the complaint in the light of the Assembly’s Dignity and Respect Policy, which was passed on 16 May 2018 and requires everyone who works in the National Assembly for Wales to have a high degree of respect for the dignity of others.

7. The complainants alleged that the Member breached the Code of Conduct for Assembly Members by referring to an author of a tweet regarding a member of the public, who is also a Plaid Cymru member of Holyhead Town Council, as “an utter knob” and a “coc oen” [lamb’s cock].

8. In his written correspondence with the Commissioner, Dr David AM took full responsibility for drafting and posting the tweet. He contextualised the response to the tweet by explaining:

“...A constituent of mine, Mr John Poyner, tweeted his opinion that we should not mix sport and political protests about Welsh independence as they alienate football supporters. Mr Poyner subsequently received a

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<sup>4</sup> Code of Conduct

great deal of strongly worded criticism from a group of Welsh independence campaigners. I issued a tweet to support Mr Poyner's character and his position as independence of party politics.

My involvement in the discussion, therefore, came about because I sought to defend a constituent of mine from aggression on social media."

- 9.** The Committee received oral evidence from Hefin David AM on 2 July 2019 in accordance with the provision in the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Assembly Members.
- 10.** During the evidence session, Hefin David AM set out further contextual evidence around the abuse he has received online.
- 11.** The Committee noted the statement from Hefin David AM and reflected that the Member could have handled the tweet in a number of ways and should not have used this language on a social media platform.
- 12.** The Committee met on Tuesday 25 June, Tuesday 2 July and Tuesday 9 July 2019 to consider and reach its conclusion in respect of this complaint.

### Committee's Consideration of its Decision

- 13.** The Committee considered whether the Member was in breach of Standing Order 22.2(i).<sup>5</sup>
- 14.** In considering whether a breach took place, the Committee reviewed the information within the Commissioner's report and the Commissioner's opinion that a breach had taken place alongside the oral representations from Hefin David AM.
- 15.** The Committee noted that the Member has stated that his responses to Cllr Williams were not premediated or seriously intended but were a reaction to an unsolicited response by him. Regarding his comments to Cllr Williams, Dr David AM states that he insulted but did not abuse Cllr Williams. He also stated that he has and continues to receive a great deal of abuse from a variety of accounts on social media but has muted persistent offenders.
- 16.** The Committee is aware of the high level of verbal abuse some people face on social media platforms. However, we believe that the appropriate response to dealing with this, is not using language which some people may find offensive. As

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<sup>5</sup> Standing order 22.2(i)

elected politicians, it is incumbent on us to hold ourselves to as high a standard as possible.

Having reviewed the report from the Commissioner for Standards the Committee finds that a breach of the Code of Conduct has taken place by Hefin David AM in relation to paragraphs 4 (b) and 4(g) of the Code of Conduct and the Dignity and Respect Policy.

### Committee's Recommendation – Sanctions available.

**17.** The Committee considers that a breach by any Assembly Member is a serious matter. The reputation of the National Assembly for Wales as an institution, and the public's trust and confidence in it, rely upon Members demonstrating integrity and leadership by their actions.

**18.** However, whilst recognising the seriousness of the breach that occurred, the Committee notes that since attending the Committee meeting, Hefin David AM has apologised for his use of unparliamentary language. We also welcome the Member having sought guidance on how to deal with abuse on social media and amending his approach to how he deals with social media.

**19.** Given an apology has been made, the Committee has concluded that no further action is required in this instance.

**Recommendation 1.** The Committee recommends to the Assembly, in accordance with 7.12(iv) of the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Assembly Members, that a breach has been found and that no further action should be taken.

**20.** A copy of this report has been provided to the Member concerned, who was also notified of his right to appeal under section 8 of the procedure.<sup>6</sup>

**21.** The Committee Chair has tabled a motion (in accordance with Standing Order 22.11 and paragraph 9.1 of the procedure) calling on the Assembly to endorse the Committee's recommendation.

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<sup>6</sup> The National Assembly for Wales' Procedure for Dealing with Complaints Against Assembly Members

## Other matters arising from this complaint

### Use of Social Media

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**22.** The Committee notes that the Commissioner for Standards has received other complaints arising from postings by Assembly Members on social media platforms. The Commissioner believes that there needs to be a more explicit link between what is acceptable on social media and the Code of Conduct. The Committee has already indicated it will take this forward as part of our wider work on implementing the dignity and respect agenda set out in our report “Creating the Right Culture”.

### Sanctions

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**23.** In this instance, the AM concerned brought forward an apology which the Committee believes to be a sufficient outcome for the breach in question

**24.** However, the Committee believes it would benefit from having a wider range of sanctions available. For example, it may have been appropriate in this instance to require the Member to attend training on how to deal with abuse online. We will consider this as a future piece of work.

### Phrasing in the report

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**25.** The Committee notes that the Commissioner states in his report that this was an instance of verbal abuse. Hefin David AM disputes the term “abuse” in his statement referring to his actions instead as being “insulting”.

**26.** The Committee sought clarification from the Commissioner regarding the phraseology in the report. The Commissioner explained his reasoning behind the terms used and the need for a distinction between insult and abuse. He explained that a term can be insulting but, depending on the facts, may not amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct, whereas a term, which amounts to verbal abuse, does constitute a breach of the Code.

**27.** The Committee is in agreement with the Commissioner that the terms used by Hefin David AM, in this instance, were a breach of the Code of Conduct and the Dignity and Respect Policy. While it is not acceptable to insult people, it would not necessarily constitute a breach of the Code. However language which is so insulting or offensive such that it amounts to abusive language does breach the Code.

**28.** We wish to make clear that there are many degrees and interpretations of the term “abuse” in its broader sense, which are not relevant in this instance. The consideration of the complaint was solely concerned with whether the language used was sufficient to constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct.

**From:** Sir Roderick Evans, Commissioner for Standards

**To:** Standards of Conduct Committee

## **FORMAL INVESTIGATION REPORT**

### **Dr Hefin David AM**

#### **The Complainants**

1. On 29th March 2019 I received a complaint from a member of the public about messages posted on Twitter by Dr Hefin David AM. The email contained the name of the complainant together with his home address and telephone number. My office has used those contact details to correspond with the complainant and I am satisfied that this is not an anonymous complaint. The complainant, however, does not want his name and contact details disclosed and I, therefore, do not include them in this report and I have not disclosed them to Dr David. I attach the email which contained the complaint (Attachment 1) which I have redacted in accordance with the wishes of the complainant.
2. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 I received a further complaint about the same messages posted by Dr David. The complainant was John Vaughan Williams, the person referred to in the messages about which complaint is made. I also attach the email in which he complained. (Attachment 2).

#### **The Background**

3. On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019, the Welsh soccer team played an international match in Cardiff and supporters of Welsh independence organised a march into Cardiff in support of Welsh independence. This sparked activity on Twitter. WalesOnline posted a picture of marching fans holding a banner which bore the wording “Cefnogwyr Pêl-droed Cymru Dros Annibyniaeth” and “Welsh Football Fans For Independence”.
4. At 11.52 am, a John Poyner posted:  
“Hate how football has been hijacked by this movement. politics and sport should not be linked. Such actions can alliliate (sic) fans who are views differ (sic) which can be to the detriment of the team. together stronger is the motto. it should all be about sport. Not politics.”

5. Shortly after, a message was posted from a third party saying “Well said!” to which John Poyner replied at 12.06pm “Thank you”.

6. At 12.08pm, Dr David posted a message:

“Totally agree John.”

I attach, as Attachment 3, a copy of these and the immediately following tweets and as Attachment 4 a copy of a thread of tweets which includes Mr Joyner’s tweet, sent me by Dr David during my investigation of these complaints which he said led to multiple responses, together with subsequent tweets.

7. At 12.43pm Dr David tweeted:

“I can categorically say that @poynerj62 is one of the most inspirational people I’ve ever met, who loves Welsh sport and has unbounded ambition for our nation. I’ve no idea of his politics but attacks on him are truly bollocks.”

I attach a copy of this and other tweets as Attachment 5

8. At 12.51pm, John Vaughan Williams tweeted to Dr David:

“is it @Welshlabour policy or just your view that Welsh fans shouldn’t display political opinions in public?”

9. There then followed the following thread of tweets:

At 12.53pm Dr David replied to Mr Williams:

“You are an utter knob.”

At 12.56pm Gethin Griffiths:

“Asu di hunu myn ffordd i AS fyhafio nadi. Ateb hollol plentynnaidd.”

*(Gosh that is not the way for an AM to behave is it. A completely childish answer.)*

At 1.00pm, Dr David replied to Mr Griffiths:

“Plentynnaidd ymateb i plentynnaidd.”

*(“A childish answer to childish.”)*

At 1.02pm Mr Williams:

“Piti gweld y fath ymddygiad gan aelod etholedig o’n Senedd Gendlaethol.

Mae galw enwau felna yn anffodus i ddweud y lleiaf.”

*(It is a pity to see such behaviour from an elected member of our National Parliament. Name calling like that is unfortunate to say the least.)*

At 1.14pm Dr David replied:

“Mae popeth yn ymwneud â Llafur Cymru among nat trolls.. Fy marn i yw eich bod yn coc oen”

*(“Everything to do with Welsh Labour among nat trolls.. My view is that you are a lamb’s cock.”)*

I attach as Attachment 6 a copy of the above and immediately following tweets.

## The Investigation

10. On 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019 I wrote to Dr David asking for his comments on the tweets about which I had received complaints and for an explanation of his verbally abusing a member of the public in the way he had in light of the Code of Conduct for Assembly Members and of the Dignity and Respect Policy adopted by the Assembly.
11. The following day Dr David spoke to me on the telephone about the complaints and later put his comments in writing for me. He told me that the messages he posted were not premeditated; they were made very much in the heat of the moment and were a reaction to what he called an unsolicited approach made to him by John Vaughan Williams whom he identified as a Plaid Cymru member of Holyhead Town Council. He said that he had become involved in the discussion on twitter because he sought to defend a constituent of his, John Poyner, from aggression on social media after Mr Poyner had tweeted his view that politics and sport should be kept separate. Dr David said that he tweeted to support Mr Poyner's character and his position as independent of party politics.
12. Dr David said he regarded the first tweet from Mr Williams as containing a view which he, Dr David, regarded as clearly absurd as in his earlier tweet he had not been defending or supporting Mr Poyner's arguments but only his right to make them. In any event, he told me, his party, the Labour Party, had long stood for freedom of expression of political opinions. Dr David said he regarded Mr Williams' tweet as vexatious and aggressive and he was upset at the attacks on Mr Poyner. It was in this frame of mind and with the intention of closing down the discussion that he called Mr Williams "an utter knob".
13. When Mr Williams commented critically on this response, Dr David called Mr Williams a "coc oen" (lamb's cock) which, as a Welsh learner, he understood to be a very mild term among Welsh speakers.
14. Dr David told me that since this incident he had reflected on it and it was, he said, not something he would intend to repeat. He said he had taken advice on dealing with hostile approaches on social media and had developed a strategy of muting and ignoring those who wish to make vexatious comments rather than responding to them.
15. On 15<sup>th</sup> April I informed Dr David that the complaints against him were admissible and that, in accordance with the prescribed procedure, I was moving to the formal investigation stage. I had further telephone conversations and an email exchange with Dr David and he subsequently provided me with a statement which I attach as Attachment 7.
16. In this statement Dr David repeats that the messages he posted were not premeditated and were not "seriously intended". He issued them, he says, "tongue in cheek" with



the aim of closing down further discussion “rather than engage further with a discussion that would give Mr Williams’ views credence”.

### **Facts found by the Commissioner**

17. Dr David posted the tweets about which complaints are made.

### **Conclusions**

18. Dr David appears to complain that Mr Williams’ tweet was “unsolicited”. If it is a complaint, I can see no relevance in it. Twitter is a social medium which, to a great extent, is based on and thrives on “unsolicited” approaches. Indeed, Dr David’s first tweet at 12.08 pm in response to Mr Poyner’s tweet was, itself, “unsolicited”.
19. Although Dr David states that he became involved in the discussion on Twitter “to support Mr Poyner’s character and his position as independent of party politics”, “to defend a constituent from aggression on social media” and that he had not been defending or supporting Mr Poyner’s arguments but his right to make them, his tweet at 12.08 cannot be interpreted that way. The tweet “Totally agree John” permits of only one interpretation, namely, that Dr David agreed with the content of Mr Poyner’s 11.52am tweet. It was not until 12.43pm that Dr David tweeted in praise/support of Mr Poyner.
20. As Dr David had tweeted his agreement with Mr Poyner’s tweet which included the view that sport and politics should be kept separate, Mr Williams’ question to Dr David is reasonable. I see nothing in it which is absurd, aggressive or vexatious. It might well have been intended to make a political point and, possibly, to score one but politicians should be able to deal with such questions without resorting to verbal abuse.
21. Dr David says that his response to Mr Williams’ tweeted question was “tongue in cheek” and not “seriously intended”. I have difficulty in understanding, in this context, how an Assembly Member in a public forum calling someone who clearly holds a different political view “an utter knob” is tongue in cheek. “Utter knob” is a term of vulgar abuse and when the inappropriateness of its use by a Member of the Assembly is pointed out to Dr David, first by Mr Griffith and then by Mr Williams, rather than regarding the discussion as closed down or pointing out that he was speaking tongue in cheek and did not mean it seriously, Dr David responded to Mr Williams by calling him a “nat troll” and a “coc oen”. It is correct that there are more abusive terms in Welsh than “coc oen”; there are also less abusive terms. However, the fact remains that “coc oen” is a term of abuse.

22. Following this tweet Dr David continued to take part in the discussion, which he says he wished to close down, as can be seen, for example, in Attachment 6. This attachment also contains an example of the kind of abuse which Dr David says he has suffered on Twitter.
23. I am satisfied that the two tweets from Dr David about which complaint is made were abusive and that there was no justification for such abuse. Dr David, in his statement, takes exception to the word “abuse”; he regards his tweets as “insulting” rather than “abusive”. It is correct that “abuse” and “abusive” are words that are used in different contexts. One of those contexts is the use of language: a dictionary definition<sup>1</sup> includes “abuse – to reproach coarsely; insulting or scurrilous language”. It is possible to insult someone without using coarse or scurrilous language and I am satisfied that Dr David’s tweets were abusive.
24. However, in the context of this case, if there is a difference between “abuse/abusive” and “insults/insulting” it is a distinction without a difference. Even assuming for the sake of argument that Mr Williams’ tweets could be interpreted as absurd, aggressive, vexatious or provocative, deploying verbal abuse or insults is not the way a Member of the Assembly should respond.
25. The content of political debate in Wales and the United Kingdom in general gives cause for serious concern. Views have become polarised. Verbal abuse of those who hold different views has become common on social media and beyond. Sometimes debate degenerates to threats of physical violence and on one occasion it has resulted in murder. Those in public life bear a responsibility to detoxify political debate and, by example and restraint, to ensure that those who hold opposing views are treated with respect and tolerance. It is possible to disagree fundamentally with the political views of others but still to conduct the debate in a constructive and respectful manner. Simply verbally abusing someone who holds a different view is neither consistent with supporting freedom of expression of political views nor with rational debate in a democratic society.
26. The seven general principles of conduct in public life set out in paragraph 4 of the Code of Conduct for Assembly Members require Members to conduct themselves at all times in a manner which will tend to maintain and strengthen the public’s trust and confidence in the integrity of the Assembly and to refrain from any action which would bring the Assembly.... into disrepute. (para. 4b) Members should promote and support these principles by leadership and example. (para 4g) By verbally abusing Mr Williams in the way that he did Dr David has brought the Assembly into disrepute and failed to show leadership in the way that on-line political debate should be conducted in Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> Cassell’s New English Dictionary

27. The Dignity and Respect Policy adopted by the National Assembly requires everyone who works at the National Assembly for Wales to show a high degree of respect for the dignity of others. A Member of the Assembly calling a member of the public who holds a different political view “an utter knob” and a “coc oen” on a social media platform is a clear breach of this policy.
28. I, therefore, conclude that Dr David is in breach of the Code of Conduct and of the Assembly’s Dignity and Respect Policy and that he falls to be dealt with by the Committee on Standards of Conduct under Standing Order 22.2.

### **Requirements under the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints**

29. This complaint, of itself, raises no issue of general principle. However, Dr David refers in his statement to the absence of any advice or training on how to deal with what he refers to as vexatious and aggressive social media approaches. In “Creating the Right Culture” para. 70 the Committee expressed the view that there needs to be a more explicit link between what is acceptable on social media and the Code of Conduct and that the provision of guidance will form part of the Committee’s future work. However, the absence of guidance at present does not in any way affect my conclusion in this case. A Member of the Assembly should not need guidance to realise that it is unacceptable to verbally abuse a member of the public on social media.
30. I confirm that the complainants and the Member concerned have been provided with a draft of this report and given an opportunity to comment on its factual accuracy. Neither identified a factual inaccuracy contained in it.

### **Attachments**

I attach to this report the following documents:

1. Complaint redacted as explained in paragraph 1
2. Complaint of John Vaughan Williams
3. Copy of tweets from John Poyner’s account
4. Copy of a thread of tweets
5. Copy of tweet by Dr David praising Mr Poyner
6. Copy of tweets about which complaints are made and immediately subsequent tweets
7. Statement of Dr Hefin David AM

Sir Roderick Evans

17 June 2019

Dear Sir / Madam,

I have been referred to you by [redacted] caseworker for [redacted].

I believe AM Hefin David to be in breach of the code of conduct. Specifically 1.4b) Integrity;

"Assembly Members should at all times conduct themselves in a manner which will tend to maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of the Assembly and refrain from any action which would bring the Assembly, or its Members generally, into disrepute"

Sometime last weekend on twitter ( a social networking site) from his personal twitter account which he uses to publicise his political and constituency activities reacted angrily to a thread about a stadium March in favour of independence, and called a critic of his point of view a "Utter Knob" and a "Coc Oen" (Lambs Cock). The target of this childish name calling was a Plaid Cymru councillor from Ynys Mon - Vaughan Williams, he also described him as a cybernat and a troll.

I'm sure that I could find screenshots if this would help.

Please could you let me know if this is admissible?

Regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Annwyl Gomisiynydd,

Hoffwn gyflwyno fy nghwyn swyddogol yn erbyn Aelod Cynulliad dros Gaerffili, Mr Hefin David.

Atodaf screenshots ar eich cyfer wrth hwyluso'r broses.

Cefais sioc wrth gael fy ngalw ar fforwm gyhoeddus "Utter knob" a "coc oen".

Credaf fod yr AC wedi pardduo enw da y Cynulliad ac mi dybiaf ei fod o wedi ymddwyn yn amhriodol.

Gan edrych ymlaen yn eiddgar at glywed gennych,

Yn gywir iawn.

Vaughan Williams



## Retweeted

by Hefin David AC/AM



**Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caer... · 2h ▾

Replying to [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#)  
[@WalesOnline](#) and [@WelshLabour](#)

You are an utter knob [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#)



23



2



1



**Hefin David AC/AM**

@hef4caerphilly

Follow

Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru/ Assembly  
Member for Caerphilly/ Aelod Cynulliad...



1



**Vaughan Williams** 🇨🇪 🇮🇪 🇪🇺 @... · 15m

Piti gweld y fath ymddygiad gan aelod etholedig o'n Senedd Genedlaethol. Mae galw enwau felna ar bobl yn anffodus i ddweud y lleiaf.

2 2



**Hefin David AC/AM**

@hef4caerphilly

Replying to [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) [@gethingriffith](#) and 2 others

Mae popeth yn ymwneud â Llafur Cymru among nat trolls.. Fy marn i yw eich bod yn coc oen

[Translate Tweet](#)

20:14 · 24 Mar 19 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)



Hundreds of Welsh football fans march through Cardiff calling for an independent Wales [walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-new...](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-new...)



43 146 468



**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24

Hate how football has been hijacked by this movement. politics and sport should not be linked . Such actions can alliliate fans who are views differ which can be to the detriment of the team.together stronger is the motto .it should all be about the sport .not politics.

17 1 17



**new name pending** @newnamepending1 · Mar 24

Well said!

1 1



**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24

Thankyou 😊

1 1



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

Totally agree John.

5 1



**Vaughan Williams** 🇨🇪 🇮🇪 🇪🇺 @Vaughan\_Wms · Mar 24

Labour talking Wales down. Overseeing a slow managed decline. Its the Labour way.

1 1

1 1 15



**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24

There you go mixing politics with sport trying to split the fan base

2 2



**Vaughan Williams** 🇪🇺 @Vaughan\_Wms · Mar 24

Not at all. Some fans support it others don't. No need for melodrama. I think our fans are most united aha intelligent to have a reasoned debate, I'm sure you'd agree with the latter point. Using words like "split" as you did doesn't benefit a rational debate.

2 10



**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24

Well keep your political ideology out of our sport and demonstrate your views in the appropriate arena.

2 2



**Dan Williams** @djwilliams1990 · Mar 24

It was out of the sport and they did demonstrate views in the appropriate arena. Outside of the ground, before the match.

That being said, maybe you missed the Gareth Bale chant? 😏

1 1



**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24

Outside the ground and rallying the fans outside the stadium is hardly out of the sport. I of course heard the chant you referred to.

1 1



**Dan Williams** @djwilliams1990 · Mar 24

How do you propose the matter be discussed without advertising? No fan/supporter/innocent bystander is forced to take on the views shared here.

1 2



**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24

People are free to do what they want within the law. I am expressing an opinion and I will continue to do so.

2 1 2



**Dan Williams**

@djwilliams1990

Follow

Replying to @poynej62 @Vaughan\_Wms and 3 others





sport.I of course heard the chant you referred to.

1 reply 1 retweet 1 like



**Dan Williams** @djwilliams1990 · Mar 24

How do you propose the matter be discussed without advertising? No fan/supporter/innocent bystander is forced to take on the views shared here.

1 reply 1 retweet 2 likes



**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24

People are free to do what they want within the law.I am expressing an opinion and I will continue to do so.

2 replies 1 retweet 2 likes



**Dan Williams**

@djwilliams1990

Follow

Replying to @poynej62 @Vaughan\_Wms and 3 others

It's ok John. If you've ever stood and cheered Wales, or live in Wales and want the best for Wales & it's people, I'm sure you'll come round to this eventually. When you do, give the annibyniaeth movement a shout. You'll be very welcome.

1:40 PM - 24 Mar 2019

1 Like



1 reply 1 retweet 1 like



**new name pending** @newnamepending1 · Mar 24

Replying to @djwilliams1990 @poynej62 and 3 others

3% and you still shout loudly? Like the remoaners. Losers seem to be the loudest

1 reply 1 retweet 1 like



**WalesOnline** @WalesOnline · Mar 24  
 Hundreds of Welsh football fans march through Cardiff calling for an independent Wales [walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-new...](https://walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-new...)



43 146 468

**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24  
 Hate how football has been hijacked by this movement. politics and sport should not be linked . Such actions can alliniate fans who are views differ which can be to the detriment of the team.together stronger is the motto .it should all be about the sport .not politics.

17 1 17

**Welsh Bollocks** @welshbollocks · Mar 24  
 What an incredibly stupid point. We're one of the few national football teams that isn't an independent nation. Just because you lack ambition for the country that doesn't stop the rest of us having hope for the future.

2 7 91

**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24  
 You like me are entitled to your opinion and are free to demonstrate your views .Just don't want them getting mixed up with the teams performance where the supporters should share one common aim .I don't think this is stupid.

2 1

2 3 1

**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks · Mar 24  
 No it really is stupid, if fans want to walk together to a WALES match peacefully stating their desire for independence for the country they support it's up to them. You don't decide what I or others do on our way to the game.

1 3 18

**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24  
 I have never stated that.I am just expressing my opinion that I believe it is to the detriment of a sporting fixture and national football team when a section of fans chooses to fuel some of their emotions to politics as opposed to the common aim of getting behind the team.

2 1

**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks · Mar 24  
 How the hell do you get to that conclusion? Are you saying that during the game a group of people who support Welsh independence aren't 100% behind the team? To be honest I'm questioning your support for the team as you appear to be more preoccupied with other fans views.

1 8

**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24  
 I have no idea if you support independence at a national teams sporting event today but concentrated solely on years through thick and thin.

2

**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks · Mar 24  
 It wasn't my march, I have no doubt they did today support Wales.

1

**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24  
 I have no idea if you support independence at a national teams sporting event today but concentrated solely on years through thick and thin.

**WalesOnline** @WalesOnline  
 The latest Wales news, sport, weather and events from Wales Online. We're also on Facebook [fb.me/WalesOnline](https://fb.me/WalesOnline).

Tweets	Following	Followers
182K	1,488	227K

Replying to @welshbollocks @WalesOnline

You don't know me and you don't know what contribution I make to this country for 365 days a year.I expressed an opinion to an

Replying to [@welshbollocks](#) [@WalesOnline](#)

You don't know me and you don't know what contribution I make to this country for 365 days a year. I expressed an opinion to an article tonight and you don't agree with it. Neither of us will change our opinions

2:31 PM - 24 Mar 2019

 2  



**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks · Mar 25

Replying to [@poynej62](#) [@WalesOnline](#)

I dread to think what your contribution is if you hold such idiotic opinions. I'll leave you be now, I'm sure you have a number of other things to be wrong about....

 1   1



**John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 25

I have the same opinion of and I now have a job of work to do. I hope you have a great day.



**BenjimanCymru** 🇬🇧🇺🇸🇪🇺🇫🇷 @TheBengwin · Mar 25

Replying to [@poynej62](#) [@welshbollocks](#) [@WalesOnline](#)

We need democratic reforms on a constitutional level to quell the alienation in our society.

Nationalism arises from several sources. Sometimes community spirit, belonging and culture, but also democratic failures, angst, economic desparation.

We must tread with caution.

 1  



**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks · Mar 25

Nationalism arises? FFS... I'm a Welsh nationalist, it's not a disease.

 1   1



**BenjimanCymru** 🇬🇧🇺🇸🇪🇺🇫🇷 @TheBengwin · Mar 25

Didnt say it was.



**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks · Mar 25

Replying to @TheBengwin @poynej62 @WalesOnline

Nationalism arises? FFS... I'm a Welsh nationalist, it's not a disease.

1 1



**BenjimanCymru** 🇬🇧🇺🇸🇪🇺🇫🇷 @TheBengwin · Mar 25

Didnt say it was.

1



**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks · Mar 25

Read your message and tell me how it isn't a derogatory statement about nationalism? Just another lazy attempt to make it sound like something negative.

1



**BenjimanCymru** 🇬🇧🇺🇸🇪🇺🇫🇷 @TheBengwin · Mar 25

Nationalism is often very bad, because it can become conformist very quickly.

Wales needs a lot of reform and building and investment to strengthen it as a nation. We just have to be careful about nationalism.

1



**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks · Mar 25

No, you're framing the word nationalism in a negative context. The desire for self determination is a natural desire for most countries, I assume you agree that Wales is a country...

1 2



**BenjimanCymru** 🇬🇧🇺🇸🇪🇺🇫🇷 @TheBengwin · Mar 25

Of course I believe Wales is a country. I would be in England otherwise.

My primary aims will always be tied to the Welsh Language and each person's liberties as an individual.

Nationalism can be very dangerous to individuals, that's all Im saying.

1

⋮ [1 more reply](#)



 Absolutely 🌞

**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly  
 I can categorically say that @poynej62 is one of the most inspirational people I've ever met, who loves Welsh sport and has unbounded ambition for our nation. I've no idea of his politics but attacks on him are truly bollocks.  
[twitter.com/welshbollocks/...](https://twitter.com/welshbollocks/)

  4  5

---

 Dr Hefin David AC/AM Retweeted

 **John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24 

Replying to @hef4caerphilly

Many thanks Hefin I absolutely live for sport and back all our teams.I serve politicians of all colours in my career but share the passion with all of them in wanting our teams to win on match day when everything else is put to one side.

  1  3

---

 **Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24 

I can categorically say that @poynej62 is one of the most inspirational people I've ever met, who loves Welsh sport and has unbounded ambition for our nation. I've no idea of his politics but attacks on him are truly bollocks.

**Welsh Bollocks** 🇬🇧 @welshbollocks  
 Replying to @poynej62 @WalesOnline  
 What an incredibly stupid point. We're one of the few national football teams that isn't an independent nation. Just because you lack ambition for the country that doesn't stop the rest of us having hope for the future.

 2  2  7

---

 Dr Hefin David AC/AM Retweeted

 **John Poyner** @poynej62 · Mar 24 

Replying to @WalesOnline

Hate how football has been hijacked by this movement. politics and sport should not be linked . Such actions can alliniate fans who are views differ which can be to the detriment of the team.together stronger is the motto .it should all be about the sport .not politics.





**WalesOnline** @WalesOnline · Mar 24

Hundreds of Welsh football fans march through Cardiff calling for an independent Wales [walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-new...](http://walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-new...)



43 147 472



**Vaughan Williams** @Vaughan\_Wms · Mar 24

@hef4caerphilly is it @WelshLabour policy or just your view that Welsh fans shouldn't display political opinions in public? 🤔

7 3 45



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM**

@hef4caerphilly

Follow

Replying to @Vaughan\_Wms @WalesOnline @WelshLabour

You are an utter knob @Vaughan\_Wms

12:53 PM - 24 Mar 2019 from Wales, United Kingdom

5 Retweets 5 Likes



43 5 5



**Gethin Griffith** @gethingriffith · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Asu di huna myn ffordd i AS fyhafio nadi. Ateb hollol plentynnaidd.

1 16



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

Plentynnaidd ymateb i plentynnaidd.

1



**Vaughan Williams** 🇨🇪 🇬🇧 🇪🇺 @Vaughan\_Wms · Mar 24

Piti gweld y fath ymddygiad gan aelod etholedig o'n Senedd Genedlaethol. Mae galw enwau felna ar bobl yn anffodus i ddweud y lleiaf.

2 27



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

Mae popeth yn ymwneud â Llafur Cymru among nat trolls.. Fy marn i yw eich bod yn coc oen

4 1



**Olaf Cai Larsen** @OlafCaiLarsen · Mar 24

Yn anffodus dwi'n meddwl bod y trydariad yma'n torri cymal 3b o'ch cod ymddygiad Hefin. Efallai y byddai'n beth call i ddileu'r sylw.

1 9



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

Maybe so syr. Dwi'n caru the odd troll though, as @1neilcoles will tell you! 😊



1



**Antwn Owen Hicks** /I\ 🇨🇪 🇬🇧 🇪🇺 @Pibydd · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Oh dear, extremely undignified and totally unnecessary, unbecfitting an elected representative. Cywilydd arnoch.

1 10



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

Cymru first minister ?

**A Plaid Cymru and Conservative coalition**



**A Plaid Cymru and Conservative coalition cannot be ruled out after the next election in 2021, a Plaid MP says.**

Speaking on the eve of his party's spring conference in Bangor, Jonathan Edwards said

4      

Tweet unavailable



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

Replying to @tominism @Pibydd and 2 others

**A Plaid Cymru and Conservative coalition cannot be ruled out after the next election in 2021, a Plaid MP says.**

Speaking on the eve of his party's spring conference in Bangor. Jonathan Edwards said

1      



**tom** @tominism · Mar 24

Our LEADER ruled it out. It's typical of you, your party, and your government to spread misinformation in order to benefit yourselves. The same way you use public confusion on devolution to avoid blame for awful governing.



**Adam Price: No coalition with the Tories, and no name change**

Adam Price has quashed suggestions in a BBC story that the party was thinking of entering a coalition with the Conservatives after the next Wels...  
[nation.cymru](http://nation.cymru)

1   ↻   ♡

Tweet unavailable



**tom** @tominism · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Pibydd and 3 others

You're an elected representative of the governing party of Wales and this is your level of maturity? The article I linked is both more recent and directly quoted from Adam price. Do you think it's sensible for elected representatives to spread information?

1   ↻   ♡ 2



**Callum Roberts** @STEMCal · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

This is how an elected representative responds to criticism from the public?  
Absolute disgrace.

1   ↻ 2   ♡ 14

**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

1 2 14



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

'The public' 😊😊😊

1 1



**Callum Roberts** @STEMCal · Mar 24

@WalesOnline fancy reporting on this level of unprofessionalism from an elected labour representative?

1 20



**Aled** 🇬🇧 @AledGwynWilliams · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Not a good look.

1 8



**Morgan** 🇬🇧 🐕 @0\_0crews · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms @WalesOnline

In a BBC Wales interview, Plaid Cymru MP Jonathan Edwards said his party "was not in the business of wanting to be a junior party to the Labour Party any more in Wales".

Speaking to BBC Radio Wales later, Mr Price insisted the MP was not advocating a Tory-Plaid coalition, but was saying that "Labour are as bad as the Conservatives in terms of their negative impact on

a Tory-Plaid coalition, but was saying that "Labour are as bad as the Conservatives in terms of their negative impact on people's lives in Wales".

1 2



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

**A Plaid Cymru and Conservative coalition cannot be ruled out after the next election in 2021, a Plaid MP says.**

Speaking on the eve of his party's spring conference in Bangor. Jonathan Edwards said

1



**lest** @iestg · Mar 24

Your basic comprehension is pretty shit for an AS

6



**Wogan Jones** 🇨🇦🇪🇺 @Wogan\_Jones · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

I want my AMs to behave respectfully on all social media, especially if using their work account. This is not the political climate to use abuse. Be an example Hefin.

1 5



**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · Mar 24

I don't have a work account x

2



**keith evans** @evans1282 · Mar 25

You'd have to actually work to have one of them!

1

🗨️ ↻ ❤️ 1



**Morgan BB** 🇬🇧 @MorganBowler · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Word of advice, in your shell like. 🐚



🗨️ 1 ↻ ❤️ 13

⋮  
[1 more reply](#)



**patrick mcguinness** @padrigmcg · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

That sport and entertainment were 'no place for politics' is what the Tories used to tell us during apartheid, the miners strike etc. It's thus hardly surprising to find establishment drones like Hefin David repeating the mantra in 2019 when confronted with views they don't like.

🗨️ 1 ↻ 3 ❤️ 26



**Dylan Foster Evans** @diferionDFE · Mar 24

A similar argument was used in the 60s and 70s to try and stop 'Hen wlad fy nhadau' (rather than 'God save the Queen') being sung at Wales rugby and football matches.

🗨️ ↻ ❤️



football matches.



↻ 2

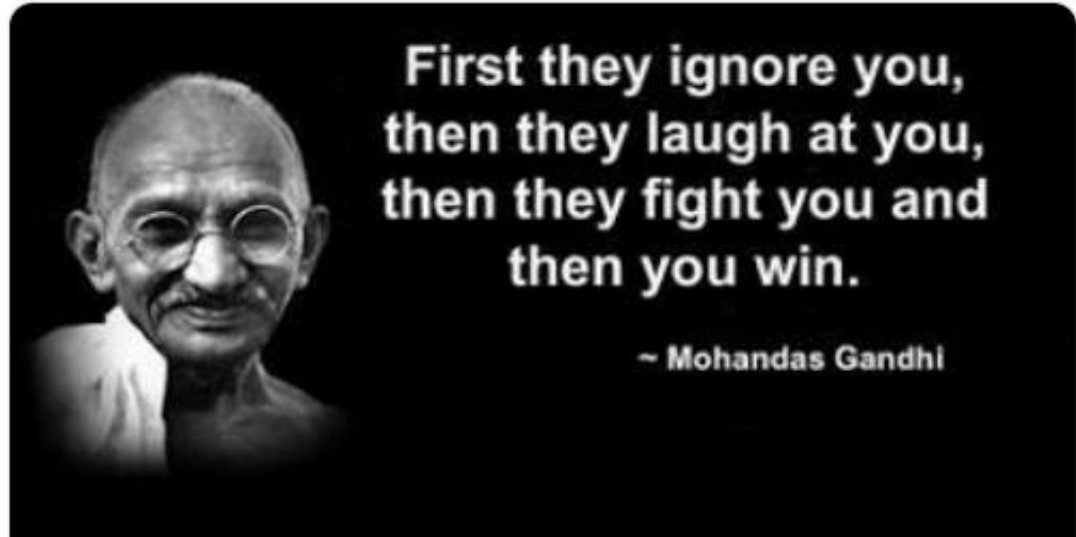
♥ 23



**Arwyn Lloyd** @ArwynLloyd · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Looks like we're at stage 3 then. Stage 4 coming in 2021.



↻ 2

♥ 20



**Gemma** @VGemmaMasonV · Mar 24

Replying to @WelshAlanP @beatygul\_beaty and 4 others

Shouldn't your name be Alun Partridge...?



♥ 4



**Alun Morgan** @alundavidmorgan · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Fair play, even for the current level of Tory and Labour politicians that is poor behaviour. Remember who pays your wages. That's an incredibly insulting way for an allegedly professional person to behave on a public forum. You and your party should be ashamed.1/2



↻ 2

♥ 14



**oakley8376** @oakley8376 · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Man who works for a political party which has spent 20 years destroying Wales through devolution & is a subsidiary of a London political party calls person seeking Welsh independence a 'knob' 😂😂😂😂



↻ 2

♥ 9

🗨️ ↻ 2 ❤️ 9



**Chris Cronin** @chriscronin76 · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

@fmwales have a word with your lot, this isn't what we expect from our elected officials in Wales!

🗨️ ↻ 1 ❤️ 15



**Michael Oxlonge** @MOxlonge · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Classy response that... 🙄

🗨️ ↻ ❤️ 23



**UndebPlaidCymru** @UndebPlaidCymru · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

So when there was criticism of campaigners linking apartheid with sport, that was different?

Come in Hefin, everything is political & that comment is beneath you.

🗨️ ↻ 1 ❤️ 7



**Bryn Llys** @Brynllys1 · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

"Kinder, gentler politics"

🗨️ ↻ ❤️ 14



**the thorn!** @investinbritain · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

That is your response. No wonder labour in caerphilly are screwing locals. Looks like they dont care. Thanks for highlighting this

🗨️ ↻ ❤️ 15



**Alun Morgan** @alundavidmorgan · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

Surely expressing your view is a fundamental right of free speech? Or is everyone who disagrees with you "an utter knob"? In which case I assume you are in no way a democrat and would much prefer a dictatorship? Is that also the view of @WelshLabour ?2/2

🗨️ ↻ ❤️ 7



**NJR** @RusbatchJ · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others



**Lionel V.C.** @LazyLabourOut · Mar 24



Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) [@WalesOnline](#)



Interaction icons: a speech bubble, a retweet icon, and a heart icon with the number 4.



**Huw Robs** @Therealhuwrobs · Mar 24



Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others  
Sacked in the morning....

Interaction icons: a speech bubble, a retweet icon, and a heart icon with the number 2.



**Llwyd** @mahogany\_nefol · Mar 24



Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others  
Solid reply there butt, cachau bant llafur

Interaction icons: a speech bubble, a retweet icon, and a heart icon with the number 2.



**Rhian Llewelyn** @RhianLlewelyn · Mar 30



Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others  
Just remember when you make personal insults that people have families. It's unacceptable language at any level.

Interaction icons: a speech bubble, a retweet icon, and a heart icon with the number 1.



**Rhiannon aka NonWacyn** @nonwacyn · Mar 25



Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others





**Rhian Llewelyn** @RhianLlewelyn · Mar 30

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others

Just remember when you make personal insults that people have families. It's unacceptable language at any level.

   1



**Rhiannon aka NonWalcyn** @nonwalcyn · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others

..charming 😏

   1



**Zyg. A.** @AZyggi · Mar 24

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others

You should be ashamed of yourself.

   1



**David Lewis** @LewDai · Mar 26

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others

How unbecoming of a representative of the people of Wales. Apologise!



**Wil Jones** @WilJonesMusic · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others

You might want to jump ship, the Labour stronghold on Wales isn't going to last much longer. You'll be out of a job.



**Matt Jarvis** @thatmattjarvis · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others

What? Get over yourself.



**Russell Williams** @YesWalGoch · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others

Not the most convincing argument I've ever read.



**RW** @AmphetCymru · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others



**RW** @AmphetCymru · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others  
Naughty naughty



**Geth Jones** @Geth14 · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others  
Proffesiynol lawn 😏 #TypicalLabour



**keith evans** @evans1282 · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others  
And you are a crass Vichy Liebour c\*\*t,your turn! Or you could grow up and act like a respectable politician!



**Paul Godding** 🇨🇪🇪🇺 @7puzzle · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@JosefRoberts4](#) and 3 others

Resign Hefin, no need for your bad language on here. We don't want Welsh politicians acting like that. You AM's represent us in Wales, but nobody wants people like you representing our wonderful country. I'm sure even [@WelshLabour](#) would be shocked! Disgraceful behaviour.



**Gareth John McCann** @mucky24 · Mar 25

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others  
Just scrolled through apology yet?



This Tweet is unavailable



**Yr Huws** @Garthgynydd · Mar 24

Replying to [@hef4caerphilly](#) [@Vaughan\\_Wms](#) and 2 others

Mawredd. Dyna sut maen nhw'n ymateb i fach o feirniadaeth ife. Mond lawr yr hewl o le dwi'n byw - am enghreifft gwael i bobol Cymru. Cael gwared pobol Caerffili.



This Tweet is unavailable



**Keith Evans** @evans1282 · Mar 25

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @Vaughan\_Wms and 2 others

And you are a crass Vichy Liebour c\*\*t,your turn! Or you could grow up and act like a respectable politician!



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This Tweet is unavailable



**Steve Griffiths** @postie802 · Mar 24

Replying to @hef4caerphilly @DafiThom and 3 others

Sorry to hear of the death of your optician.



Hefin's homepage on which he's described as AC/AM, Welsh Labour Assembly Member for Caerphilly

twitter.com/hef4caerphilly

Home Moments Search Twitter

**CHISHOLM**  
*of B...*  
Carpets, Furniture &  
01443 831148

Tweets	Following	Followers	Likes	Lists
4,129	1,281	3,084	3,986	1

**Dr Hefin David AC/AM**  
@hef4caerphilly

Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru/ Assembly Member for Caerphilly/ Aelod Cynulliad dros Caerffili 🇨🇪 Aelod Unison/UCU Member [eprints.glos.ac.uk/5373/](http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/5373/)

Caerphilly, Wales

[facebook.com/hefindavidam](https://facebook.com/hefindavidam)

Joined September 2015

564 Photos and videos

**Tweets** Tweets & replies Media

Pinned Tweet

**Dr Hefin David AC/AM** @hef4caerphilly · 16 Sep 2018  
Dyma'r manylion cysylltu da fi. Rhif ffon etholaeth: 01443 838542. E-bost: hef.in.david@cynulliad.cymru

The original shared link:

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/hundreds-welsh-football-fans-march-16020876>



## Statement of Hefin David AM

I have been asked by the Commissioner for Standards about comments I posted on Twitter on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019 which were directed at a Plaid Cymru town councillor called Vaughan Williams.

On that day the Wales football team were playing a match in Cardiff and Wales football supporters who support independence for Wales marched into Cardiff in support of independence. This led to activity on Twitter.

A constituent of mine, Mr John Poyner, tweeted his opinion that we should not mix sport and political protests about Welsh independence as they alienate football supporters. Mr Poyner subsequently received a great deal of strongly worded criticism from a group of Welsh independence campaigners. I issued a tweet to support Mr Poyner's character and his position as independent of party politics.

My involvement in the discussion, therefore, came about because I sought to defend a constituent of mine from aggression on social media.

In response to my defence of Mr Poyner, Cllr. Williams, tweeted me to say;

*"@hef4caerphilly is it @WelshLabour policy or just your view that Welsh fans shouldn't display political opinions in public?"*

I regarded the content of Cllr Williams' tweet as absurd and designed to goad me into an unproductive party political exchange simply because I was defending Mr Poyner's right to express his opinion. This was clearly the exact opposite of Cllr Williams' point. My party has always stood and stands now for freedom of expression of political opinions.

I considered Cllr Williams unsolicited approach to be aggressive and vexatious in intent in the context in which it was sent and it reflected the tone of similar tweets I had received from others.

At this point, rather than engage further with a discussion that would give his views credence, I responded with the aim of closing it down with a tongue-in-cheek reply, not seriously intended, namely:

*"@vaughan\_wms you are an utter knob."*

Mr Williams then tweeted:

*"@hef4caerphilly Piti gweld y fath ymddygiad gan aelod etholedig o'n Senedd Genedlaethol. Mae galw enwau felna ar bobl yn anffodus i ddweud y lleiaf"*

To which I replied;

*'@vaughan\_wms Mae popeth yn ymwneud a Llafur Cymru among nat trolls... Fy marn i yw eich bod yn coc oen.'*

I tweeted this with the same intent as my previous response. It is my understanding that 'coc oen' is not considered to be particularly strong language by fluent Welsh

speakers. See for example this reference from Wales Online (*21 ways to swear in Welsh that are much funnier than they are offensive*).

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/fun-stuff/21-ways-swear-welsh-much-9557813>

My responses to Cllr Williams were not premeditated and were not seriously intended. They were a reaction to an unsolicited approach by him. When expressing an opinion on some issues via Twitter, I have received and continue to receive a great deal of exceptionally strong abuse from a variety of accounts using truly appalling language. I regard this kind of activity on Twitter to be similar to being chased by an angry mob and it can be a bewildering experience.

I note that other Assembly Members have previously responded in similar, if not stronger terms during these kinds of exchanges. By way of example, I cite Leanne Wood AM's response of the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019 to a member of the public while defending a fellow AM;

*"Do you have to be an arsehole all the time? Have a day off."*

This is not to defend either my responses or those of others, but to note that Twitter is an instant medium and, in the heat of the moment, it can be difficult to deliver a considered response.

While the Assembly code of conduct and dignity and respect policies are clear with regard to personal interactions, there is no specific advice or training on how to deal with vexatious and aggressive social media approaches. As far as I am aware, there is no reference to this in either policy.

I would not wish to repeat this incident and I have since reflected on how to deal with hostile Twitter approaches and I have taken advice on how to deal with them. I have developed a strategy of muting and blocking those who make vexatious comments rather than responding in the way I did to Cllr Williams.

I do not accept that my responses to Cllr Williams can be termed 'abuse', nor that I 'abused' Cllr Williams. Dictionary definitions of abuse include, though are not limited to, treating people with sustained violence or cruelty or an act of assault. Given these associations, I do not believe that I 'abused' Cllr Williams. I insulted him and the terms I used were insulting. They were not abusive.

I would note that, since this episode, Cllr Williams has tweeted me on four further occasions referencing the fact that he has reported me to *"the relevant authorities"* in the Assembly, and the last two tweets were directly trying to provoke a response from me. These were received on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May, again unsolicited and unrelated to the discussion thread I had joined. They read:

*"I agree. I also find politicians swearing at members of the public childish. Do you agree Hefin?"*

And:

*"I'm referring to you swearing personally at me twice. Still awaiting an apology. I look forward to receiving a personal one very, very soon. Have a lovely day."*

I believe that Cllr Williams is engaging in ongoing harassment via Twitter and I believe that he will continue to do so. My correspondence with him is now at an end and I have muted him.



18-06-19