



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau  
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 23 Chwefror 2010  
Tuesday, 23 February 2010**

**Cynnwys**  
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg. Mae hon yn fersiwn ddrafft o'r cofnod. Cyhoeddir fersiwn derfynol ymhen pum diwrnod gwaith.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included. This is a draft version of the record. The final version will be published within five working days.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Andrew R.T. Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mick Bates	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Michael German) Welsh Liberal Democrats (substitute for Michael German)
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Tomas Baum	Cyfarwyddwr, Sefydliad Heddwch Fflandrys Director, Flemish Peace Institute
Dr John Cox	CND Cymru CND Cymru
Carys Evans	Pennaeth Byrddau Gwasanaethau Lleol a Chynllun Gofodol Cymru Head of Local Service Boards and the Wales Spatial Plan, Welsh Assembly Government
Jill Evans	Aelod Seneddol Ewropeaidd, Plaid Cymru a Chadeirydd, CND Cymru Member of European Parliament, Party of Wales, and Chair, CND Cymru
Jane Hutt	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Gweinidog dros Fusnes a'r Gyllideb) Assembly Member, Labour (the Minister for Business and Budget)
Nellie Maes	Llywydd, Sefydliad Heddwch Fflandrys President, Flemish Peace Institute
Rosemary Thomas	Pennaeth Cynllunio, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Planning, Welsh Assembly Government
Stephen Thomas	Cyfarwyddwr, Canolfan Gymreig Materion Rhyngwladol Director, Welsh Centre for International Affairs

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol**  
**National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Joanest Jackson	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Andrew Minnis	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.01 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.01 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon  
Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions**

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning, everyone. I welcome you to the Petitions Committee. I remind you that you are welcome to speak in Welsh or English, and that headsets are available to the public for translation and amplification: channel 0 is for amplification only, and channel 1 is for translation. I also remind you to switch off any mobile phones. If the fire alarms go off, the ushers will tell everyone what to do and, if necessary, direct you to the fire exits. We have received apologies from Mike German, whom I understand is in Ireland at the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly meeting. I welcome Mick Bates, who is attending as a substitute.

9.02 a.m.

**Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: P-03-262 Academi Heddwch Cymru—Prif Ddeisebwyr  
Evidence Session: P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute—Lead Petitioners**

[2] **Christine Chapman:** We have started to look at this petition. The petitioners are asking for

[3] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to investigate the potential for and practicality of Wales having a Peace Institute concerned with Peace and Human Rights, comparable with those supported by state governments in Flanders, Catalonia and elsewhere in Europe’

[4] Some of us on the committee have supported this petition, and we will be declaring an interest. Therefore, I declare an interest.

[5] **Bethan Jenkins:** I also declare an interest in this.

[6] **Christine Chapman:** This does not preclude our involvement in discussions or the evidence sessions, but we will not be able to vote on the issue. I welcome our petitioners Stephen Thomas, Dr John Cox and Jill Evans, Member of the European Parliament. You have provided written evidence and we have read this with interest. First of all, I would like you to present your case and then Members will ask questions. It is up to you who will start, but you have up to 15 minutes to do this.

[7] **Dr Cox:** Jill Evans brought the issue to our attention by virtue of the fact that she came across the Flemish Peace Institute in Brussels, and brought it to the attention of people in Wales. She will speak first, and Stephen Thomas, who is director of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs, will tell us how it has been taken up since. We will then be ready for your questions.

[8] **Jill Evans:** Gwn eich bod wedi cael gwybodaeth ymlaen llaw, felly ni wnaif ailadrodd beth sydd yn y cais. Diolch yn fawr am y cyfle i drafod y syniad hwn. Mae llawer o fudiadau dros Gymru wedi bod yn trafod academi heddwch ers dros flwyddyn cyn cyflwyno'r cais, ac yr ydym yn ffyddiog y bydd yn gorff a fydd yn cynorthwyo gwaith y Cynulliad fel corff etholedig, yn ogystal â gwella'r berthynas rhwng y Cynulliad â phobl Cymru. Ysbrydoliaeth y syniad, fel y dywedodd John, oedd y gwaith sy'n cael ei

**Jill Evans:** I am aware that you have received prior information, so I will not repeat what is in the proposal. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this idea. Many movements across Wales have been discussing a peace academy for over a year before the proposal was submitted, and we are confident that the body will support the Assembly's work as an elected body, as well as improving the relationship between the Assembly and the people of Wales. The idea was inspired, as John mentioned, by the work

wneud gan Sefydliad Heddwch Fflandrys. Er nad ydym yn cynnig model union yr un fath ar gyfer academi heddwch i Gymru, oherwydd mater i'r Cynulliad fyddai hynny yn y pen draw, yr ydym yn falch iawn bod cynrychiolwyr o Fflandrys yma i gynorthwyo ein dealltwriaeth o bwysigrwydd corff felly i waith y Cynulliad.

that is being done by the Flemish Peace Institute. Although we are not proposing exactly the same model for a peace institute in Wales, because in the end that would be a matter for the Assembly, we are glad that representatives from Flanders are here to help us to understand the importance of such a body to the work of the Assembly.

[9] The central question that we need to address is why we need a peace institute in Wales. To answer that, we need to consider the nature of a peace institute in itself. Most people would assume that a peace institute would be concerned with issues of war and peace in the traditional sense. However, we are looking at something much more than that: a body that would promote peace in all aspects of our society. The Assembly covers so many areas of policy, such as economic development, environmental management, education and training, health, voluntary sector activity, prevention of violence in society, planning, the Welsh language and so on, that we believe that an independent evaluation of the impact of all those policies on Welsh society, international society and on peace and human rights would be extremely valuable.

[10] We have seen how positive the Assembly's commitment to sustainable development has been and how the Assembly has been able to take the lead internationally as a result. We believe that a peace institute could inform and clarify debates and decisions in the same way. It could, for example, advise on issues to do with the curriculum and work with academic institutions, the education sector, industry, trade unions, local authorities and voluntary bodies.

[11] A number of precedents for it have been set by bodies that are not exactly the same but that are similar, such as the Climate Change Commission for Wales, Cynnal Cymru, the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the child poverty expert group, all of which provide Assembly Members with independent research findings and expertise. They also perform an important function in involving relevant sectors of society in the decisions that are made by Government.

[12] We are aware that cost is a prime concern for the Assembly, as it is for us. That is why, instead of proposing a peace institute with a function that is already carried out or that can be performed by other organisations in Wales at the moment, we are proposing something that would complement the work that is already done, but that would also perform a unique function. We believe that it would be cost-effective because of the added value that it would give to Assembly decision making. It would be a centre of excellence for independent research on issues such as young people and violence, maximising the potential for job creation from financial investment in different sectors, and Wales's role in conflict prevention and the promotion of human rights, which is another responsibility of the Assembly. All of that would be a natural progression for an Assembly that has shown that it wants to pioneer a new kind of inclusive politics.

[13] It is impossible, in the short time that we have today, to investigate and to discuss this in real detail. That is why we are asking you to support the proposal in principle and to establish a working party to explore it further. I am sure that you will agree that the idea is worth further consideration, particularly as peace institutes in other countries have been so successful. There are peace institutes around the world from which we can learn a great deal. We would like to develop a peace institute, an *academi heddwch*, for Wales, which would make its own unique contribution to Wales and to the world.

[14] **Mr Thomas:** Hoffwn danlinellu pa **Mr Thomas:** I would like to underline how

mor ymgynghorol y mae'r broses wedi bod hyd yn hyn. Yr wyf yn gynrychiolydd o fudiad sy'n rhan o gymdeithas sifil Cymru, ac yr ydym wedi sicrhau bod llawer o wahanol fudiadau a sefydliadau wedi cael mewnbwn i'r cynllun hwn, gan gynnwys Cynefin y Werin, sy'n rhwydwaith o dros 30 o wahanol fudiadau.

consultative the process has been thus far. I represent an organisation that is part of civil society in Wales, and we have ensured that many different organisations and institutions have had an input into this project, including Cynefin y Werin, which is a network of over 30 different organisations.

9.10 a.m.

[15] Felly, i gyrraedd y lle yr ydym heddiw, yr ydym eisoes wedi cynnal proses drylwyr, gynhwysol, a chynhwysfawr, ac yr ydym wedi creu'r dogfennau a'r ddeiseb drwy ymgynghori â llawer o wahanol unigolion a mudiadau.

So, to get to our current position, we have already carried out a thorough, inclusive, and comprehensive process, and we have created the documents and the petition by consulting with many individuals and organisations.

[16] Mae'r bobl sydd wedi rhoi siâp i'r hyn sydd gerbron y pwyllgor yn cynnwys ymgyrchwyr, wrth gwrs, ymchwilwyr yn y maes, ac addysgwyr. Serch hynny, y teimlad yw nad oes gennym yr holl atebion. Felly, nid oes templed ger eich bron heddiw. Yn hytrach, yr ydym yn ystyried bod llawer mwy o wybodaeth, diddordeb a brwdfrydedd ynghylch y syniad hwn y tu allan i'r rhwydwaith. Gwelsom hynny yn yr ymateb a gafwyd i'r ddeiseb y llynedd.

The people who have shaped what is before the committee include campaigners, of course, researchers in the field, and educationalists. However, the feeling is that we do not have all the answers. You do not therefore have a template before you today. Rather, we consider there to be a lot more information, interest and enthusiasm for this idea outside our network. We saw that in the response that we got to the petition last year.

[17] Dyna paham yr ydym yn gosod ger eich bron y syniad ein bod wedi cyrraedd y man lle y byddai rhyw fath o grŵp gweithredol o'r help mwyaf er mwyn cymryd y cam nesaf. Gallai'r grŵp gynnwys mewnbwn o'n hochr ni, y deisebwyr, ac yn fwy na hynny, gellid ehangu'r mewnbwn posibl i gynnwys Aelodau'r Cynulliad, staff y Cynulliad, ac arbenigwyr eraill y tu allan i'r adeilad hwn, i symud ymlaen â'r ddelfryd a'r amcan o sefydlu academi heddwch i Gymru. Dyna, yn y bôn, yr ydym yn ei osod ger eich bron y bore yma.

That is why we are submitting to you the idea that we have reached the point at which some sort of executive group would be of the greatest help in taking the next step. Such a group could include input from our side, as petitioners, and more than that, it could be extended to include input from Assembly Members, Assembly staff, and other experts outside this building, to advance the ideal and the aim of establishing a peace institute in Wales. That, in essence, is what we are presenting to you this morning.

[18] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. John, do you want to finish?

[19] **Dr Cox:** Looking at the time, I am ready either to pre-empt what I think the questions will be and start talking, or give you the floor, for you to ask questions without any pre-empting. I do not want to lose the full time, however.

[20] **Christine Chapman:** Okay; I shall start. First, thank you for your presentation. What would be the greatest benefits that you could envisage from the establishment of a Welsh peace institute?

[21] **Dr Cox:** I preface my answer by saying that this is my own reply and when you

speak on behalf of a huge number of people, the answer that you would get from one person will not necessarily be the same as the answer that you would get from someone else. The essential thing is to elevate the consciousness of peace. Looking at the International Catalan Institute for Peace, its basic premise is to raise the profile of peace, harmony and working together in communities. It is looking at its own situation, where there is a potential problem of inter-communal conflict, and it sees that as the most important thing for it to address. The right thing for us in Wales—and I think that the people from Flanders will confirm that they have a similar situation—is that, whenever a public opinion poll is taken, the people of Wales tend to be more in favour of peace than the people of Britain as a whole. People in Flanders are in exactly the same situation, and they see themselves as spearheading more thoughts about peace within their state, which is Belgium, just as I believe that Wales can give a lead to the United Kingdom in terms of thoughts about peace and harmony. There may be many other answers to that question, however.

[22] **Jill Evans:** It is also about making all of us aware that the decisions that we take that affect all aspects of our lives should be related to achieving peace. It is easy to talk about peace and the peace movement as though it only relates to issues that are directly associated with war, for instance; however, the way in which we conduct our lives and our politics in Wales is related to the issue of achieving a more peaceful society. Education is central to that, of course. It is about creating an awareness of the importance of all our decisions for achieving peace.

[23] **Christine Chapman:** What would a Welsh peace institute offer that is not already available from established research groups and other bodies?

[24] **Dr Cox:** With regard to research bodies, there is quite a lot of academic study, but it is very much buried, in my view—I may upset some of our academic friends who want to see a peace institute by saying that. It really is something in which the converted are talking to the converted, and the academics are talking to the academics. We want to see this being spread to the whole of civic society.

[25] **Mr Thomas:** Beyond that, there are undoubtedly other examples of the sort of research institute that you have mentioned. Some of that is going on in Wales. There are very distinguished academic departments in Aberystwyth University and Cardiff University, for example, and in other institutions. What we feel is essential is a greater co-ordinating function, so that, as John says, there is an ability for those already working in that field, producing world-class material and written outputs and teaching, to engage at a specifically Welsh level. It goes on already in Wales and in a number of other European countries, but there is a distinctive Welsh aspect that has yet to be really stamped on it. Such an institution, possibly with more than one location and distributed around Wales, would provide that and a focus that would be of great use to the Assembly and the people of Wales.

[26] **Christine Chapman:** Andrew, are you happy to ask the next question?

[27] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes, that would be no problem at all. I apologise for being late this morning; perhaps we need a traffic management forum rather than a peace institute. I apologise for missing your presentation, but thank you for the papers that you provided in advance.

[28] I have been a member of this committee for some time, so I have had the opportunity to read the various parts of the petition as it has progressed through the system. One thing that interests me greatly is that if an institute were to be established, given the restrictions that we have in Wales as part of the larger United Kingdom, what would the priorities of that Welsh peace institute be and what impact would it have if you targeted those priorities correctly?

[29] **Dr Cox:** I am not going to dodge this question, but I want to emphasise that we are not coming along with a blueprint. We have made it clear that there is a range of possibilities that are worth pursuing. However, we really want to interact more. I realise that, very often, a petition is something that you can give a 'yes' or 'no' answer to, but we thought that we would be wrong if we came up with something prescriptive because the more that we debate this, the more that we find that there are other facets coming into play. So, what we are asking for as the next stage is that we find some perhaps less formal way of discussing the matters, considering the options, eliminating some that may not be appropriate to Wales, and then coming up with a document that has been well thought out, in that the officers of the National Assembly have said, 'This fits in'.

[30] I had a long talk with Sue Essex, who is one of our supporters on this, about how Cynnal Cymru got set up. She said that it was after hours and hours of discussion, but in the end, a decision was taken and it went ahead. We do not think that we, as petitioners, should be coming up with a blueprint. We have opened up a perspective, which we now want to discuss with a number of people, including you, as well as everyone else. Then, if we can reach a consensus, we will come up with a blueprint. However, we think that it would be a bit arrogant of us to have come up with an absolute firm plan at this stage in the process.

[31] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Just to clarify, at this stage, you have no priorities, other than to air the idea and to flesh it out. Would I be correct in saying that?

[32] **Dr Cox:** Yes. The broad sheet is outlining the whole perspective and some of the facets may turn out to be less appropriate than others, but we want it to be discussed and we want to institute a debate about what would be most appropriate to Wales. Hopefully, there will be a suggestion on which there will be consensus, and there has to be consensus before one would move to the next stage. Therefore, we need more discussion.

9.20 a.m.

[33] **Mr Thomas:** I would like to add a footnote to that. The Cynefin y Werin network, and the other organisations that have been involved, are an eclectic—some would say occasionally eccentric—mixture of people. There is a range of different reasons within that network for wanting to push this idea forward. Some come from an avowedly pacifist stance, while others are academic researchers and teachers, who would emphasise that aspect. We have a number of people who are big on lobbying, advocacy and the political process. That is just to give you three rather stereotypical images of the range of people behind this.

[34] We do not want to push any of those views before the others. As more and more people become aware of the idea, different points of view are being fed into the process—even since the document was drawn up last summer. The broad umbrella of peace issues gets ever broader. People understand that even more can be covered by it.

[35] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** A cynic might say that, by not having priorities, you are trying to be all things to all people. Is that a correct interpretation at this stage? Are you being holistic in your view and trying to embrace as many strands as possible before clearly identifying the path that you would like to take? Looking at the paper, I understand the background of many of the organisations, which have clear priorities. However, from what we have heard this morning, it almost seems that, at this moment in time, you are trying to take in the whole of Welsh society and, once you have everyone inside the tent, you will then lay out your priorities, or the collective priorities. At that point, some might exit the tent, given the background of some of the organisations involved.

[36] **Dr Cox:** If you put it that way, it sounds terrible, but I think that it is still an accurate picture of what we are trying to do. We want to look at all of the possibilities and then home



in when we have done that. Any group of people will have its own set of values. It would be premature to pre-empt what might arise from what will be a very positive discussion if we involve more people and it is a conscious decision on our part not to pre-empt that. Something better will arise out of such a discussion.

[37] **Jill Evans:** The only way that a peace institute for Wales could work effectively is with the support of the whole of society—a cross-section of Welsh society. I do not want to pre-empt the discussions that you will have with the Flemish Peace Institute, but it was important that the vote in the Flemish Parliament to set up the institute in 2004 was unanimous. So, all parties and all organisations supported its establishment. Now, because of the standard of its research, it has the respect of all sectors of society in Flanders. Unless you have a body with that wide level of support, it will not be effective in advising the Assembly, or anyone else, because it will be seen to be representing a specific sector of Welsh society. So, it is central to the whole idea that it is a body that represents everyone and that everyone will take notice of the reports of the seminars or whatever it organises. We have been extremely aware of that.

[38] The peace movement in Wales could set up its own body, but that would be informing the peace movement. This is much broader than that; it is something that would inform the Assembly as a whole and all of us about the implications of decisions made by the Assembly. That, in itself, would enable a much closer working relationship between the Assembly, Assembly Members, and the people of Wales—not just the organisations that are already listed as supporting the petition, but all kinds of organisations, such as schools, colleges, and voluntary bodies, across the country.

[39] **Christine Chapman:** I am going to move on to questions from other Members. We have around four minutes left. Bethan, you have some questions.

[40] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yr ydych yn dweud yn eich datganiad yn cyflwyno'r ddeiseb eich bod am greu agenda unigryw Gymreig. Beth yw hynny yn union? Sut ydych yn creu rhywbeth a fydd yn edrych allan yn fwy rhyngwladol sy'n gynhenid Gymreig? Pa fath o berthynas yr ydych yn rhagweld a gaiff y sefydliad gyda'r Cynulliad? Mae gan rai sefydliadu goblygiadau cyfansoddiadol i roi gwybodaeth i'r Senedd neu i'r Cabinet. Sut yr ydych yn gweld y berthynas honno yn datblygu yng Nghymru?

**Bethan Jenkins:** You say in your statement introducing the petition that you wish to create a uniquely Welsh agenda. What is that exactly? How will you create something that will be more international in its outlook that is innately Welsh? What kind of relationship do you see the institute as having with the Assembly? Some institutes have a constitutional obligation to provide information to the Parliament or to Cabinet. How do you see that relationship developing in Wales?

[41] **Dr Cox:** You are doing something similar to Andrew, in that you are asking us to go firm before we are ready to do so. My general point—and I make this point partly because of my professional background—is that we do not have a sufficient tradition in this country of understanding the value of independent opinion. As a professional engineer, I have been engaged in the United States of America in giving a genuinely independent opinion on environmental matters. That would be impossible in Britain, because, in Britain, if there is a proposal, you ask the firm to provide an environmental impact assessment—which I have also done—and the firm then doctors it before it becomes complete. On the continent and in the United States, it is understood that having genuinely independent views is good for the organisation, because it legitimises anything that is controversial and it teases out any problems in advance. An independent expert does not do what we have at the moment. It is essential that we understand that this institute is to be independent—not distinct or separate, but independent—in the views that it puts forward, and that it will be recognised for the quality of its research and input.

[42] **Christine Chapman:** If you are happy with that, Bethan, I will move on to Mick, as I believe that some of your other questions have been covered. Mick, will you ask the final question?

[43] **Mick Bates:** I am sure that you will be ready for this one. How do you envisage that the peace institute will be funded, and what level of funding do you think would be required?

[44] **Dr Cox:** It was one of the questions that I was ready to pre-empt if asked. [*Laughter.*]

[45] **Mick Bates:** I thought that it might be.

[46] **Dr Cox:** We envisage several potential sources of funding, and we discussed at an early stage whether we should start asking various independent sources. We took a firm decision that it would be wrong to do so, because if you start on the basis of getting funding, the funding organisations will predetermine what you might do. We think that the right thing to do is to judge what we think the need and terms of reference for a peace institute are, and what its activities might be. When we have done that, we will say, 'Given that this is what we think is the need for Wales, we will now see what the funding sources are'. We do not think that that will be a drawback or an obstacle to there being a peace institute, because we know that there are various funding options. However, the moment that you choose a funding authority, you are predetermining some aspect of what the activities will be. So, it is not dodging the question; it is a conscious decision on our part not to start by saying, 'We have a pot of money here, and this is what is going to be done'. We want to decide on the merits of the activities of the peace institute first, and then we will go for the funding, which may or may not involve something relating to the National Assembly, but it is not part of our thinking that any money would be required from the National Assembly, nor is it, in our view, necessary to rule it out completely. I am sorry if I am running over time on this, but just as the Flemish Peace Institute, although constituted in 2004, took over some activities that were already being publicly funded, as it was appropriate for those activities to be done by it, when we look at this issue openly, it is possible that we may find that some already publicly funded activities would be better done by a Welsh peace institute. So, in that sense, it would be wrong for us to rule out any public funding, because it would restrict the potential activities that could take place.

9.30 a.m.

[47] **Christine Chapman:** There are two further, very brief, questions. Sorry, Mick, did you want to come back on that?

[48] **Mick Bates:** Yes. I accept Dr Cox's answer; I think that it is philosophically very sound, but there was a second part to my question, which was whether he could indicate the level of funding. I accept your rationale, but people will look at this and ask, 'What is the level of funding?'

[49] **Dr Cox:** Were we to have the same level of activities as the Flemish Peace Institute, representatives of which you will see later, we would require the same level of funding, which they will tell you about. The level of funding depends on what the level of activity is, but that would give you an order of magnitude.

[50] **Christine Chapman:** Andrew is next and then Bethan.

[51] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I heard what you said, Dr Cox, about not wishing to be seen to dodge the question—that is the second time that you have used those words today—but in the First Minister's letter, which is publicly available, I think, because it is on the record from a

previous meeting, he states that he does not believe, and, therefore, by association, neither does his Government, that there is a need for a Welsh institute. He raised the issue of the economic viability of such an institute and the potential drain on the limited resources that the Welsh Assembly Government might be able to provide for such matters. He highlighted existing strands of work and said that he believed that, in the first instance, those were perhaps the best strands. He mentioned the Cardiff bank and the universities of Aberystwyth, Glamorgan and Swansea, and using the research systems of the higher education sector and so on. Unless you can give us some indication of the level of funding or of the resource that you will draw from in donor bodies and public bodies, it is quite difficult, certainly from my perspective, to move on to the next stage.

[52] **Christine Chapman:** Before you answer, I will ask Bethan to ask her question and for you to respond to both questions together, because we need to move on to our next set of witnesses.

[53] **Bethan Jenkins:** I wanted to respond to what Jill said about the children's commissioner. Would you prefer the institute to be at arm's length from the Government so that it would receive an element of funding but would be accountable to the Government of the time? Would you prefer to see that rather than it being completely independent?

[54] **Dr Cox:** I do not think that we can say that we have preferences on this. With regard to the former First Minister's letter, I think that he, dare I say it, misunderstood what we were about. There is a parallel project going on among academics to set up extra courses that are related to this. I think that the First Minister was wrongly advised that that is what we were talking about—we were not; we are talking about something much broader than that—and he replied as if this were an application for funding for extra courses for the universities. If that were the case, I would agree with Rhodri Morgan on that particular point. However, that is not what we are about. The straight answer is that we either want nothing at all in terms of public funding, because it would be more appropriate to take it from elsewhere, or we may come to you, but, if so, it would have to be justified by the same criterion applied to any other public funding—that it is necessary in the circumstances.

[55] **Jill Evans:** There are many different models that we can consider in terms of funding and how the peace institute is established. What we are asking you to do is to explore this further. However, it is vital for the peace institute to be independent. So, whoever funds it, it must be seen as being independent and not as representing any particular interest group. That is a very important concept that we need to keep at the top of the agenda.

[56] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you all for attending and for your evidence. I am sure that you will listen to the rest of the committee's evidence from the public gallery. We will discuss this later in the meeting.

[57] **Dr Cox:** We will listen with great interest.

[58] **Christine Chapman:** I am sure. Thank you.

9.34 a.m.

**Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: P-03-243 Tynnu'n Ôl yn Ffurfiol o Strategaeth Is-ranbarthol  
Gorllewin Caer/Gogledd-ddwyrain Cymru  
Evidence Session: P-03-243 Withdrawal from the West Cheshire/North-east  
Wales Sub-regional Strategy**

[59] **Christine Chapman:** We will now hear evidence from the Minister for Business and

Budget. I welcome you, Minister, along with Carys Evans, head of local service boards and the Wales spatial plan, and Rosemary Thomas, head of planning for the Welsh Government. You are invited to give evidence for up to five minutes. As you know, the petition calls for the Welsh Government's withdrawal from the west Cheshire and north-east Wales sub-regional strategy. Evidence has already been taken from the lead petitioners, namely the People's Council for North Wales and the Mersey Dee Alliance. We are currently awaiting additional written evidence from both those groups. I also welcome Jeff Andrews, special adviser to the Welsh Assembly Government. You have up to five minutes in which to respond to the petition, Minister.

[60] **The Minister for Business and Budget (Jane Hutt):** I welcome the opportunity to address the committee on this petition, and I refer you to my written evidence. It is important that we try to understand and respond to any legitimate concerns raised by the petition. At the same time, we must ensure that the facts are laid out clearly. It is worth saying at the outset that it would be a mistake to withdraw from the west Cheshire and north-east Wales spatial strategy, and from our work with the Mersey Dee Alliance. Both produce a number of important benefits for the people of north-east Wales, which would be lost if we were not at the table. The alliance provides an important framework for communication, co-ordination and joint planning, but it is also limited in scope by the statutory local development process, so I do not think that we should overstate its significance.

[61] We need to be clear that decisions that directly affect the people of north-east Wales are made by the Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh local authorities. These are the democratically elected and accountable bodies in Wales, and the only exceptions to the decisions that they are able to make are those policy areas in which powers have not been devolved, such as taxation and benefits.

[62] It is important to be clear that the spatial plan for north-east Wales is part of the Wales spatial plan and is the plan that we are required to have by law. The plan was subject to extensive public consultation and was approved by the National Assembly for Wales in July 2008. However, the Wales spatial plan does not operate in a vacuum. Decisions taken on the English side of the border will have an impact on Wales, and vice versa. It is for that very reason that we need to find a way in which to work together with authorities on the English side of the border—and that is the important phrase: working together. If we had not worked with partners, such as the Mersey Dee Alliance, we would not have made the case successfully for increased housing allocations in west Cheshire. These allocations have helped to mitigate housing pressures on Wrexham and Flintshire, and they were the product of joint working. The west Cheshire and north-east Wales spatial strategy is non-statutory—that is important. It has no special authority in relation to the local development plans.

[63] I note that there has been a focus on housing in the considerations discussed by this committee, and it is worth noting that the main factor that is influencing the demand for housing across north-east Wales is a decrease in the size of households, rather than population increases. More people are choosing to live in single-person households, which means that, in future, we will need more homes across Wales, including in the north east. The local development plan is the key document in answering the questions of where these homes should be built and how communities should develop.

[64] The Welsh Assembly Government's position is clear: the Wales spatial plan argues strongly for balanced, appropriate development. 'Planning Policy Wales' provides detailed guidance on how that should be achieved, respecting and building on the integrity and distinctiveness of the social, cultural and environmental fabric of Wales. The petitioners' concerns about specific developments should, therefore, be taken up through the planning process. Local government has a duty to consult widely at different stages during the development of local plans. Citizens and organisations have a right to comment on local plans

right up to, and including, the independent examination of the plans in public. There is also a system for making objections to specific planning applications.

9.40 a.m.

[65] In conclusion, I believe that the right way forward is to continue to work with local authorities on both sides of the border. The Mersey Dee Alliance provides an appropriate framework and forum for that. I also believe that community strategies, local development plans, the Wales spatial plan and ‘Planning Policy Wales’, as well as a raft of other Welsh Assembly Government policies, all support the promotion of the Welsh language, the protection of the environment and heritage, and the building of sustainable communities.

[66] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Minister. I will start with some questions. Your written evidence states that one benefit of the sub-regional strategy is the increased housing allocation in west Cheshire. What other benefits has the strategy had for the people of north-east Wales?

[67] **Jane Hutt:** As I have outlined in my opening remarks and in the written evidence, the importance is that it can help to inform developments and discussions in relation to the planning process—and that is where the statutory authority lies, via the development of the local plans and the unitary development plans. Housing and the allocation of housing in west Cheshire was also an important point. I want to bring Rosemary in on this point, as it is about making west Cheshire a housing growth point for the pressures that were emerging in north-east Wales. It is also important that it looks to wider issues in relation to commuting, transport and access to facilities, and that it makes sure that we have robust, sustainable communities in Wales, which is the main purpose of the Wales spatial plan. It is also important that local authorities collaborate across the border appropriately, while recognising the distinctive policy remit and parameters of the Wales spatial plan. However, it is worth remembering that the north-east Wales spatial plan regional partnership is chaired by a Welsh Assembly Government Minister. Rosemary, do you want to say something about the housing growth point in particular?

[68] **Ms Thomas:** Yes, to pick up on the Minister’s point about Chester, for many years, Chester had a green belt, which acted as a constraint on the development of the west Cheshire area. That put pressure on the north-eastern parts of Wales. As a result of the discussions with the authorities, including the work of the Mersey Dee Alliance, that policy has changed and there is a greater recognition in the west Chester area that it needs to look to provide more land to cater for its housing needs in England. That is an example of the benefits of this type of collaborative working.

[69] **Jane Hutt:** I will just add one quick point, finally. It is important that the strategy has a sustainability appraisal, which made an assessment of possible impacts on a wide range of factors. The purpose of the sustainability appraisal is to assist planning authorities in mitigating negative impacts and maximising benefits. The social, cultural and environmental impacts also make an important contribution to ensure that we are getting it right in north-east Wales.

[70] **Christine Chapman:** I will move on. What was the Welsh Government’s role in developing the sub-regional strategy?

[71] **Jane Hutt:** This goes back to what I have laid out in my written statement. An extensive formal consultation on the sub-regional spatial strategy was launched back in December 2005, by Ann Jones. I was just checking back, and I think that that must have been in her role as the Chair of the Local Government and Public Services Committee at that time rather than as the Assembly Member for the Vale of Clwyd. It was as a result of the

recognition that there had formerly been collaboration across the authorities in west Cheshire and in north-east Wales prior to the sub-regional spatial strategy being developed, but that this was moving it forward into more of an alliance, as it is described, to ensure that there was clarity on the role and the impact. On the consultation that took place, more than 300 invitations were issued to a consultation event, more than 100 people attended, and 36 formal consultation responses were received. Therefore, there was a wide range of responses. In March 2007, the sub-regional spatial strategy was launched by Sue Essex and Michael Gallagher of the North West Regional Assembly. I do not know whether Carys would like to say anything more about the background at this stage.

[72] **Jill Evans:** The key thing is to remember that the strategy has contributed to the Wales spatial plan, and it just makes sure that the Wales spatial plan is informed by the wider picture. As the Minister said, the key thing is the Wales spatial plan for north-east Wales. Some of the key things there, such as the crucial role of Wrexham and the need to regenerate the coastal areas, which are really important issues for north-east Wales, are reflected by the partners on the other side of the border. That is a shared vision. Our role in the Welsh Assembly Government, particularly our officers in north Wales, is to provide the expertise and to engage to make the case for the need for more flexibility on housing around Chester, as Rosemary said.

[73] **Christine Chapman:** You talked about the consultation event, and so we know that it was attended by 100 people, but could you clarify whether that was organised by the Welsh Assembly Government alone or in partnership? How did that work?

[74] **Jane Hutt:** It was launched by Ann Jones. The event was held before the consultation and then, when it was approved, it was finally launched by Sue Essex and Michael Gallagher. So, it was organised in partnership but led by the Welsh Assembly Government.

[75] **Jill Evans:** I am not sure exactly how that happened. Our officers would be part of the officer group planning that. The official support was a joint effort.

[76] **Christine Chapman:** Just for clarity, could you write to us with that information?

[77] **Jill Evans:** Yes, of course.

[78] **Christine Chapman:** Andrew wants to come in on this.

[79] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I just want to clarify something, if possible. At various junctures, all speakers have touched on partnership, responsibility, and local authorities. Particularly on the housing projections in this plan, whose projections would they have been? Would they have been clearly the local authorities' projections or a partnership of projections? That is, you would have given your estimates and the authorities would submit theirs, and you would arrive at some sort of middle ground or consensus. Who takes ownership of these figures to say how many residential units we need? Is it clearly the local authorities, and the case that their figures rule, is it the partnership approach, or is it solely down to you?

[80] **Jill Evans:** I believe that they are the local authorities' projections. Is that your understanding, too, Rosemary?

[81] **Ms Thomas:** I was not involved in the preparation of the strategy. It was my understanding that it was the Department for Economic Development and Transport working with the local authorities.

[82] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, the department in the Welsh Assembly Government and

the local authorities were working together.

[83] **Ms Thomas:** Yes.

[84] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Do you have a feel for who had the greater weighting on putting the projections on paper, as it were?

[85] **Ms Thomas:** I cannot comment, as I was not involved in the process at all. I do not suppose that any of us three here together were involved in that process. We might need to come back to you on that.

[86] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I would be grateful if you could do that, because it is quite an important point.

[87] **Jane Hutt:** It goes back to the fact that it is the local development plan that is pre-eminent in statutory duty and responsibility. However, because of the cross-border collaboration between local authorities, the figures contained in the strategy were helpful to inform the local development planning process. That is the important point. This is about a strategy in north-east Wales helping to inform local development plans. It is also important to recognise that Wrexham and Denbighshire's unitary development plans were completed well before the sub-regional strategy. The Flintshire unitary development plan had been subject to a public inquiry, with modifications published and a public consultation held. Wrexham and Denbighshire address local housing issues, such as affordability, and culture and language issues surrounding housing development and the growth in rural settlements. So, it is about making its role and impact with regard to housing developments proportionate. However, we believe that this collaboration supported the case for the West Cheshire housing growth point, which we have already mentioned.

9.50 a.m.

[88] **Ms Thomas:** I will give an example of what the Minister is saying and clarify the situation so that there is no confusion as to the status of population projections or anything like that. I issued a letter, last June, to all local planning authorities stating that they were not Assembly Government figures being passed down to them from on high that they must reflect in their local plans. I made it clear—and I am happy to make this letter available to the committee—[*Interruption.*]

[89] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We would appreciate that. Could we also get information on the Department for the Economy and Transport's input to the figures? You highlighted earlier that they were present at the initial stage.

[90] **Ms Thomas:** That department was one of the initiators of the alliance approach and that was the point that I was making. I am sure that the figures would not have been developed by the department, but by local authorities. In reading the text of the committee's previous considerations, I can see that there has been some misinformation about how population projection figures are worked out and reflected in the strategy and subsequent plans. My letter makes that clear and I will make it available to the committee.

[91] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. We will now move on, because we still have many questions to cover.

[92] **Bethan Jenkins:** To what extent has the Welsh Government funded the development of the strategy? You mentioned partnerships, so I gather that there was input from other bodies, but I just want clarification on that.

[93] **Ms C. Evans:** We provide £6,000 a year to a partnership pot to help fund the administration of the Mersey Dee Alliance.

[94] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, that is all that the Welsh Government gives. We have heard evidence that the strategy is incompatible with the 'One Wales' agreement as it promotes east-west links, as opposed to north-south links. How do you view that claim?

[95] My other comment relates to something that the Minister said earlier about the sustainability appraisal. We have received additional evidence from the People's Council for North Wales stating that it was not fully considered, and that the appraisal itself stated that it would damage Welsh identity and the growth of the Welsh language in the area. Where do you see that fitting in to your earlier analysis?

[96] **Jane Hutt:** I dispute the claim that this strategy is incompatible with the 'One Wales' programme for government. Only last week, in Cabinet, we reviewed the progress of the 'One Wales' programme for government. It would be useful for the committee to look at the latest delivery plan. We have achieved virtually all of the key priorities in the 'One Wales' programme for government. I know that the issues relating to north-south links, for example, are critical with regard to transport. The delivery of the objectives and the results of the 'One Wales' programme for government are to ensure that there is integrity in terms of policy and delivery in Wales. Certainly, the sub-regional strategy is not detracting from that.

[97] Prior to the 'One Wales' programme for government, we had 'Planning Policy Wales', which is the pre-eminent planning guidance for local authorities and, as Rosemary described, is the guidance that we can provide in terms of population projections. That is clear in the letter that we are going to share with you. 'Planning Policy Wales' 2002, with its technical advice notes, addresses issues such as housing and affordable housing provision, relationship to official population projections, local housing market assessments, affordable housing delivery statements, advice on the Welsh language, sustainability, conserving landscape and heritage, and mainly the maintenance of the distinctive character of a place.

[98] It is crucial that the spatial plan, which is our statutory plan, is regarded as pre-eminent in helping with any kind of cross-border work. 'Planning Policy Wales', with its technical advice notes, is pre-eminent in terms of planning guidance and in terms of guiding local authorities, which have the statutory duty and responsibility. I hope that that clarifies the issue that the committee has raised about the non-statutory status of the plan: it is not a statutory strategy because the statutory responsibilities lie with the local authorities. The policy drivers are in the Wales spatial plan, which relates only to Wales.

[99] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you, Minister, for coming in this morning. I think that you are the first Minister to appear before the Petitions Committee, so thank you for breaking our duck. In Wrexham, we heard evidence that a consensus is developing that the plan provides opportunities, but as your predecessor, Andrew Davies, said, it is a bit of a movable feast and it needs to be constantly revisited. Most people would accept that. There now seems to be a greater emphasis on the residential aspect, rather than the possibly more sustainable approach of creating jobs and housing to mitigate outflows and movements. One of the papers that have been provided previously showed an outflow from the three counties of 13,500 people, going over the border to find jobs. Would you accept that as a fair criticism, that the plan has not developed a more considered mix of employment and residential opportunities for people in that part of north-east Wales?

[100] **Jane Hutt:** I am pleased to come to this meeting because I hope that the committee will show the way forward in order to address the concerns of the petitioners. On the Wales spatial plan, Brian Gibbons was the former Minister who chaired the regional partnership, and



it was clear that the parameters of the work done under the north-east Wales spatial plan were focused on employment, regeneration, sustainability and those other key issues that I know that were mentioned by some of the councillors who gave evidence in Wrexham. For instance, a point was made about the development of Welsh-medium education in Wrexham and north-east Wales, which has moved on apace because of Welsh Assembly Government policies. We place great importance on the economic development of north-east Wales, and although we should not mention Airbus alone, it is nevertheless a key employer in that area. I know from my former role as Minister for education about the development of Glyndŵr University and the skills development work that is emerging through the partnerships with Deeside College and Coleg Llandrillo. We have plenty of evidence to show that these are the parameters or dimensions of the north-east Wales spatial plan, and they are critical.

[101] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I accept all that, but my point to you was that your own figures confirm an outflow across the border of 13,500 residents seeking employment opportunities. Given that, and given the evidence that we have heard, would you accept that, to date, the plan has not lived up to the desired outcome of creating a more balanced mix of greater employment opportunities and residential expansion in the three counties? Surely it should be an aspiration to create more employment opportunities in that locality, rather than have that outflow of 13,500 people commuting across the border on a daily basis. That figure of 13,500 takes account of the people who move into the area and out of the area on a daily basis.

[102] **Jane Hutt:** I wanted to say this morning that the strategy was based on work undertaken in 2005-06 and the consultation that you have questioned me on, and maybe it does not reflect some of the recent developments in the area, such as the impact of the recession.

10.00 a.m.

[103] Perhaps the most recent population projections and the household projections of 2006 now need to inform the strategy. As a Minister, I would like to see the strategy reviewed in the near future, but we will want to discuss that and work in collaboration and partnership with the alliance and help to provide the steer and the support to do so.

[104] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The other point that came over loud and clear in the previous meeting with the petitioners, but which was categorically refuted by the local authorities that came to speak to us on behalf of the alliance, was the inability to address local concerns in the plan's formation and implementation. There are two sides to this coin: the local authorities are democratically elected and the councillors who came before us are democratically elected members of those authorities, yet this is a petition of considerable size, which has close to 20,000 signatures, and that indicates that there must be a middle ground somewhere where both parties can agree. Do you accept that there have been problems with the ability to consult and to take on board some of the wider views that have been expressed, although there have been consultations and it is elected members who make the final decision when it comes to implementing it?

[105] **Jane Hutt:** We will provide more information on the public consultation that took place when this was initially launched by Ann Jones and then went forward to formal adoption. We need to revisit that and give you that information. As you said, it is the responsibility of the democratically elected local authorities in north-east Wales and I am specifically concerned with looking at their roles and responsibilities. Scrutiny is taking place at local authority level and we are here today, looking at these issues, because the petition was mounted. It is important that people on the ground feel that they can relate to not only the regional strategy, but the Wales spatial plan, and that it reflects their understanding of what it is to live, work, prosper and flourish in Wales. The more that they can understand the impact of policies on not just their communities, but at a local, sub-regional and regional level, the

better. So, I am sure that there are lessons to be learned.

[106] **Ms Thomas:** Members will appreciate from their constituency postbags that a lot of local communities find it hard to engage in strategies and long-term documents of that type. What people understand are applications for controversial proposals on the field opposite their homes or in a village near their homes. By the nature of the system, people and communities are inclined to react to proposals rather than being proactively engaged in longer-term strategic documents. While we do our darnedest to get people involved in strategy documents, that is the reality and I am sure that you will be aware of that, probably even more than I am.

[107] **Christine Chapman:** We will now move on to the final two questions from Mick Bates.

[108] **Mick Bates:** Thank you for that last statement, Ms Thomas, because it is on that issue that I would like to end this session. You have talked about the Wales spatial plan and the sub-regional strategy and their impact at the local level. To what extent is the sustainable development appraisal being used to reassess the link between the regional and national spatial plans? There were many criticisms after the 11 environmental, eight social and eight economic factors were taken into account. How do you adapt and respond to those measures, Minister?

[109] **Jane Hutt:** I have already responded on the role of the sustainability appraisal that was undertaken. It is about the testing of impacts, both beneficial and negative, is it not? However, the purpose of that is to assist planning authorities with their approval or rejection of the proposals that come forward. I have talked about the need to review and refresh the strategy, and this could form part of it.

[110] **Mick Bates:** Is there a timescale for that, Minister, because some serious concerns have been raised with the sustainable development appraisal?

[111] **Jane Hutt:** We tend to talk to the partnership about how we could review this in the near future.

[112] **Mick Bates:** Finally, Bethan asked you a question about how you feel the Wales spatial plan protects the Welsh language and cultural identity. I did not hear a clear answer on how the Wales spatial plan protects cultural identity and the Welsh language.

[113] **Jane Hutt:** I probably referred to 'Planning Policy Wales' as the key statutory driver for taking into account issues relating to the Welsh language, sustainability and linguistic issues. However, you are right to pose the question about the Wales spatial plan. I will ask Carys to respond to that and she may want to respond in Welsh.

[114] **Ms C. Evans:** Gwerthoedd craidd y cynllun gofodol yw cynaliadwyedd a pharchu a meithrin yr iaith Gymraeg, ac yr ydym yn ceisio hyrwyddo'r gwerthoedd hynny ym mhopeth a wnawn. Fel y dywedodd y Gweinidog, mae hyn yn dod yn ôl at arweiniad ac mae'r cynllun gofodol yn cael ei lywio gan Weinidogion y Cynulliad, sy'n rhoi arweiniad o'r lefel uchaf i sicrhau bod holl amcanion rhaglen 'Cymru'n Un' a strategaethau'r Cynulliad yn cael eu hyrwyddo drwy'r cynllun gofodol. Maent yn **Ms C. Evans:** The core values of the spatial plan are sustainability and respecting and nurturing the Welsh language, and we endeavour to promote those values in everything that we do. As the Minister said, this comes back to leadership and the spatial plan is steered by Assembly Ministers who provide leadership from the highest level to ensure that all of the objectives of the 'One Wales' programme and the Assembly's strategies are promoted through the spatial plan. They work very closely with partners,

gweithio'n agos iawn gyda phartneriaid, nid yn unig mewn Llywodraeth leol, ond yn y sector addysg, fel y dywedodd y Gweinidog, a'r gwasanaeth iechyd ac yn tynnu'r holl bartneriaid hynny at ei gilydd i geisio hyrwyddo datblygiad, sy'n creu ffyniant economaidd a chymdeithasol ac sy'n hybu iaith a diwylliant Cymru. Gallwn barhau i siarad am hyn, ond dyna yw pwrpas y cynllun gofodol, sef tynnu'r holl strategaethau hyn at ei gilydd a sicrhau ein bod yn cael llawer mwy o lwyddiant nag a fyddai'n bosibl pe byddem yn edrych ar bethau ar wahân. Yr ydym yn tueddu i edrych ar y gwasanaeth iechyd a datblygiad economaidd mewn ffordd rhy gul. Yr hyn sy'n arloesol am y cynllun gofodol yw ei fod yn gwneud ymdrech mor strategol i gydlynu ac integreiddio polisiau gydag arweiniad o'r Cabinet.

not only in local Government, but also in the education sector, as the Minister said, and the health service and they draw all of those partners together to try to promote development, which creates economic and social prosperity and also promotes the language and culture of Wales. I could say much more about this, but that is the purpose of the spatial plan, namely to draw all of these strategies together and to try to ensure that we achieve much more success than would be possible if we looked at these things in isolation. We tend to look too narrowly at the health service and economic development. What is innovative about the spatial plan is that it makes such a great strategic effort to co-ordinate and integrate policies with leadership from the Cabinet.

[115] **Bethan Jenkins:** A fyddai rhywbeth a allai ddeillio o'r LCO arfaethedig ar yr iaith Gymraeg yn gallu ehangu'r hyn sy'n digwydd yn y strategaethau penodol hyn? Beth yw eich barn chi neu beth yw barn y Gweinidog ar hynny?

**Bethan Jenkins:** Would anything that could emanate from the proposed Welsh-language LCO enhance what happens in these specific strategies? What is your opinion or what is the Minister's opinion on that?

[116] **Jane Hutt:** That will give us an opportunity to look at all parameters of influence and policy, will it not? I am sure that the findings of this committee can feed into what develops in terms of legislation as well as policy.

[117] **Christine Chapman:** We had other questions, but because of time, we are not able to ask those. We will send them to you and if you are happy to do so, perhaps you could respond to them in writing. I thank all of you for attending this morning. We will discuss this evidence later in the meeting.

10.09 a.m.

**Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: P-03-262 Academi Heddwch Cymru—Sefydliad Heddwch Fflandrys**  
**Evidence Session: P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute—Flemish Peace Institute**

[118] **Christine Chapman:** In our next item of business, we will continue to discuss the petition on the Wales Peace Institute and we will take evidence from the Flemish Peace Institute. I understand that Tomas Baum, the director of that institute will give evidence. He has prepared a PowerPoint presentation in advance, which we have included in our papers. I welcome Tomas Baum and Nellie Maes from the Flemish Peace Institute. It is great to see you here today. Would you like to give us your presentation first?

[119] **Ms Maes:** It is not a presentation; I would like to thank you for inviting us here. We had good contacts with other peace institutes, even before starting our peace institute. So, it is good to see each other and to speak about practical things.

[120] This is the first time that the Flemish Peace Institute has been invited by a young Parliament. We are a young institute; we have only five years of experience. We are an arm's-length organisation of the Flemish Parliament, which, like the National Assembly for Wales, is a young Parliament. We have much common history and therefore we in Flanders have many memories of war. Your national poet, Hedd Wyn, died in the trenches near Ypres. He was one of many Welsh soldiers to die in Flanders. We also had many victims in all of those wars. This created a desire for peace in Flanders. Based on that, we wanted a society that was not militarised, but one with jobs and with happiness for everyone, in peace. Therefore, we need research and we have an institute that helps the Parliament to consider the consequences of its laws from a certain approach. Therefore, we are grateful to you. I will leave it to Tomas to introduce the institute, because he is our director.

[121] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. We are very pleased to have you here today and I look forward to the presentation from Tomas Baum.

[122] **Mr Baum:** Due to time constraints, I will be as short and snappy as possible. However, there are quite a few things to be said. I am not a native speaker of English, and there are translation problems when you talk about peace. We use the word *Vrede*, and *Vredesinstituut*. In English, this becomes 'peace institute'. Etymologically, it is interesting, because one goes back to *pax*, the Roman 'peace as order' idea, which is classically understood as the absence of violence and nice subservient people. However, in the German root of the word, you find 'freedom' that is more like a situation of rightfulness, which is a different connotation. When I speak in English, I have to balance these two connotations. So, it is a richer concept than just the absence of war. I wanted to say that at the beginning.

[123] We are a paraparliamentary institution. It is a big word, which I will explain in a second. Some tasks are entrusted to us by the Parliament. The structure is three-fold. The financial picture of what we do is the most important thing, and all the rest comes under our function. I will then discuss what I have learned from working in a parliamentary environment.

[124] Belgium has a federal system, under which a lot of competence is given to the different regions. We were instituted at the regionalisation of the competence for the licensing of the foreign arms trade. It is unique in the world. It is a special thing, and I can talk about this during questions, if you would like me to. The Flemish Parliament said that a peace institute was needed to advise it on this competence. In the political process, the mandate was broadened. If it relates to international relations, peace and society, polemology, social defence, we do it all, with six people, which is impossible, but I will come to that.

[125] So, the institute was founded by decree, by law. We are fully financed by the Flemish Parliament, although we can receive external finance. The institute has now been operational for three and a half years. I ensure that, first, we service the Parliament, and any strategic thinking comes later. It is also important to say that we are one of four paraparliamentary institutions. One looks at children's rights and has an ombudsman function for children's rights. There is an ombudsman function for the Flemish Government and the administration. There is an institute for science and technology. There are many of these institutes throughout Europe, which forecast cell phone radiation dangers. It is not about what you do about nuclear energy or strategic long-term thinking about technology and society. The Flemish Peace Institute, which is the youngest of these institutes, deals with peace and society, and the arms trade. I will come back to that.

[126] It is important that we are independent. You will see from our structure that we are independent of the political parties or the political balance in Parliament at a certain point. We have four tasks. First, we have a documentary task. Secondly, we have a research task, which I consider to be the core business, because it is only solid research that keeps you alive in the

political environment—without that, they do away with you.

[127] Thirdly, we have an advisory task to Parliament, but it is mainly entrusted to the board—I will come back to that. Fourthly, we have an information task, which is a bit *sui generis*; if you are in this kind of work you have to make sure that people know about it and use what you are doing.

[128] So, the structure is threefold. We have a board of directors with 19 members, from political parties and factions and socio-economic organisations, which means that the defence industry and the unions are on board. Universities and the peace movement are on board. Three additional members are co-opted in case we have forgotten someone in Flanders who has something to say about these issues. The scientific council is made up of 10 members. It is mostly international; it works in English, but we also work bilingually, translating everything we do into English and Dutch. We do not translate into French, but we can discuss that. The scientific council members are the guards of the quality of the research. They review every report that we make, and they produce an annual report evaluating our work based on academic standards more or less, taking into account that when writing advice you do not apply the same standards as when writing a report. The secretariat has six employees. I am the director. We have very good researchers, all with double degrees. In my view, they are the capital of the institute.

[129] On the issue of budget, we are totally independent. I provide five-year forecasts of operational needs to Parliament. It does not approve it; it just takes it into account and says ‘Thank you for the proposal’. Every year, we do a budget setting out what we need. Of all the parliamentary institutions, we are the smallest and cheapest. Of course, being in a parliamentary environment is expensive. We are in a very nice building, and we pay for part of the nice building in the Flanders Parliament so it is a case of giving and taking at the same time. Nevertheless, we have €1 million a year to work with, and from the cake diagram you can see that transfer to reserve is an important part. It is 10 per cent that we do not use, which goes back to Parliament. It is put in the reserve for one year, and the next year it goes back to Parliament. Half of our costs are wage costs, as you can see from the light grey part of the diagram.

[130] Turning to what we do, the occasion that made us was the fact that the competence for arms relicensing was regionalised and we had to ensure that Parliament had enough information on that. It has turned out that we do mainly legal work with regard to how you produce law on it and incorporate international obligations into your own situation and the federal system, taking into account what the European Union has already decided. It is quite a complex matter. We also follow up the licensing policy—which countries are served and with which goods—and we make an annual report to Parliament that analyses the trade. Thirdly, we make profiles of the involved industries, not to name and shame but to ensure that everyone knows what we are talking about. For example, customs use our report to get a picture of what they should check at the borders.

[131] A recent piece of work, which will be finished in the fall, is research on firearms. We know that firearms possession is quite a contentious issue. New law has been made at a federal level in Belgium that has implications for the regions. We have found that there is not really good factual material around to assess what is meant by the term ‘firearm’ in Belgium. What do the hunters think and what do they use? What do shops do? What do the sport shooters do? Are people buying firearms for self-defence? So we have produced a very good report that provides the overview in Belgium. It gives the numbers of firearms that are available, sets out how they are checked methodologically, and sets out the policy that the Government uses to control these issues and so on.

[132] Recently, we have got more involved in the peace in society programme. The original

programme showed that civil society really expected something from the peace institute. The first thing civil society expects—and we do not hide this—is money for projects. In the parliamentary environment, this is not our core assignment—we have to produce research for the Parliament—so it has taken the form of capacitating other actors without taking their place. Then, you can be the link between the actors doing stuff and the policy. A big formal sector, such as the education sector, can benefit from the specific insights that we have given to Parliament vis-à-vis remembrance, as one example. I will give an example later. So, our bottom line there is to facilitate other people's work, gather the information and provide an overview. A potential example would be an overview of all the organisations that deal with remembrance with regard to Flanders fields; that has not been done yet.

10.20 a.m.

[133] On peace education and remembrance, I feel that people in Parliament expect that we do that. There is the centenary of the first world war and the administration and the executive will come along and ask us, 'How should we do that?' and 'Could you give an input?' In the beginning, we were set up to serve everyone, then there was the separation of powers, which meant that we worked for the Parliament, and now we feel that there is a *modus vivendi* that we work for Parliament. When there is a formal request that we do work for someone else, it must go through Parliament, which must approve it. Our Parliament can ask for advice and commission specific research. We will never work for others on our own initiative, but we feel that by doing the work there is a critical field that needs and uses the input. The role of the media is also important, because people's image of the world is created by the media and the points of leverage in the media are important.

[134] What have I learned? I have learned, sometimes with some pain, that there is a primacy of politics and research. The main challenge that I face as an operations director is in speaking truth to power, in the sense that I work for a Parliament that has a majority in a minority, and the easiest thing to do when you critique executive policies is for you to be put in the opposition corner, and then you are in the wrong place. I do not want to sell censorship or anything, but I am conscious that if you make a report, you need to make very explicit the conditions under which the results apply, so that everyone can use it. In publications, the references and methodologies are always explained. In a way, that is a burden for parliamentarians, because they always want a synopsis or the overview. An overview is included, but if someone wants to check what we did to reach that conclusion, that can be seen in the publication.

[135] How do we manage? In relation to the arms trade, which was quite a touchy subject, we managed it through juridical framing. You use definitions that are already around. It is uncontroversial to use a definition of a broker that has been used by the EU. It exists, and you take it and use it for the research. When something is missing in a definition, you can say so, but your starting point is a juridical framing. That is a good point at which to start in a Parliament. It is also important to check and double check, because sometimes we have had rows with Ministers on some issues, and if your data are wrong, they attack you politically. So, you must ensure that everything is as correct as possible. When there is contestation, and there is contestation in many fields—peace is nice and people like peace institutes, but there is contestation when you really address some issues—consultation with the stakeholders is important. There were two occasions where we did that. First, when we started to be active around remembrance education, there was a classical dominance of holocaust education, which is legitimate, but you come on to territory that was already taken. So, if you want to engage with that, then there are sensitivities to take into account. Secondly, with regard to the defence industry, for example, there was much information in the public sphere that parliamentarians had to use and take into account, but we also found a *modus vivendi* there. Our new board will have a higher profile representation from the industry, because industry sees the importance of being on it.

[136] In conclusion, I am here to give information and to give evidence on how we do things. As I said before, every region or entity must decide on their own way of approaching this issue, but the moment that you see peace as more than just the absence of violence or war, and see it as a societal issue that has many layers, there is room for work on peace research with parliamentary environments.

[137] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Mr Baum. We will now ask questions. Before I forget, I will also welcome Mr Robin Gwyndaf, who I understand is with you from your institute. I will begin with a few questions. First, why did the Flemish Parliament establish a peace institute?

[138] **Ms Maes:** I would say that it was established because of a feeling of guilt. The arms trade issue was a very sensitive issue, given that the Walloon area traditionally has had a weapons industry: it has an ancient tradition of making rifles that are exported all over the world. Flanders has a more peaceful approach, but, at the same time, technologically we have dual use of our core business. A lot of installations, such as screens and so forth, are built into weapons systems and become military by definition. Therefore, we are also involved.

[139] To avoid discussions on a federal level, we got the competence and then we started to say, 'Okay, but we need to go for peace and we want a peace institute next to it to underpin what you will do as a parliament in terms of legislation and government, as control and processing in this field'. That was the beginning. We hoped to have an institute, and that was the moment to do it.

[140] **Christine Chapman:** What do you consider to be the institute's greatest successes?

[141] **Mr Baum:** We are in the course of being evaluated by an external consultancy at present.

[142] **Ms Maes:** We will send you the report.

[143] **Mr Baum:** It is a strange thing to be accepted by the executive level in acquiring a competence, in knowing what you are talking about and feeling that many civil servants benefit from the work that you do, and that it gets engrained in policy. You see it in small signals: they go to conferences and then you hear from other civil servants from other countries that they use your work. On a personal level, that is very important. It was also important to be able to work in a team. It is an internal issue, but I have very nice people working with me. There are six people, and we do everything around the table. There is no hierarchy. I have to decide in the end, of course—

[144] **Ms Maes:** He is the director.

[145] **Mr Baum:** However, everything is talked about, and engaging people in doing the work is very important, as is acceptance by the peace movement. There was a concern, in the beginning, that it would be a fancy office in the Parliament and people wondered what it would mean for them. Now, I get many signals from both the left and right that they use what we do. In the beginning it was a bit frustrating to see your work just cut and pasted without acknowledgment. As an academic, I hate that. However, I am now comfortable with it. You can see that people use the work—they do so selectively, of course, but the original is there for everyone to check.

[146] **Ms Maes:** I was the first president of the peace institute board. We had to establish the scientific secretariat, of which Tomas is director, and also to create a consensus among this broad group of people—academics, former politicians, and members of the peace

movement, the trade unions and of industry. We went for this consensus, which was, in my view, a big success, since we could have the authority of good research. If we had jumped from one subject to another, it would not have worked. Based on this, we were able to serve the Parliament. Having been a member of Parliament for many years on different levels, I see it as an enormous benefit for a parliament to have real data when it needs them, because information is often the monopoly of the executive. It has consultants and commissions university studies. The Parliament does not have the same weapons—I say ‘weapons’, but am speaking as a peace movement—but we have to underpin what we do and to see through the processes and the so-called well done things that do not work.

[147] **Mick Bates:** Thank you for your evidence, which is fascinating. What would be the main advice that you would give to a country wishing to set up a peace institute?

10.30 a.m.

[148] **Mr Baum:** Basically, just do it and make sure that you have enough critical mass to make it relevant to your own situation. There is the bottom-up way of getting everyone on board, but, at some point, there has to be this scheme, concept and idea that everyone says that they can live with and you need to just go ahead with it. I think—although I cannot speak for Wales—that the military has a role in this society. It is a socio-economic factor and there are many marginal issues that are not explicitly dealt with by the military as such—and they have to be dealt with—such as people coming back from a conflict situation, for example. It is interesting to think about and work out.

[149] **Ms Maes:** I would like to say to make it independent. We had a big discussion in Flanders about whether it should be part of Government, and embedded in Government, or at arm’s length of Parliament, and I am very happy that we made that choice to be a partner in Parliament.

[150] **Mick Bates:** That is a very interesting comment. How effective is your governance structure? Tomas, you mentioned that you have to go to the Parliament every time, so how effective is your governance structure, and would you recommend it?

[151] **Mr Baum:** There is this very delicate balance between output and outcome. For me, the limit is the output and making sure that everybody has got it—that is my outcome. If I were to go further and advocate certain policy options, I would be doing politics; I am a civil servant, so I do not do that. I really stick to that. For example, when I have an issue, I go to all the factions of Parliament and give them the same paper that says, ‘This is what I think about it’. There are a lot of committees, for example, and, operationally, it is important that they know that you exist. It is not self-evident; you have to make sure that the 124 parliamentarians know that you exist. Then, you must ensure, through the commission secretariat, that you are acknowledged at some point for your input and that you are asked questions. We were asked one research question; we did it properly, but the result was not very usable afterwards because it was a clear, ‘No, there is no use in investing in military research and development from an economic perspective. It is fine from a national security perspective, but from an economic perspective, there is no real use’. Spin-ins are more often used now than spin-offs, in a way. That was an unpopular message for some people; they could not deal with it, so the report got put aside, and I have not received another question on that since. It is also important to say that we only accept a question from Parliament or a commission, not an individual parliamentarian. Parliamentarians can always come by for information and we will gladly give information on everything we publish; we will explain what we publish and pass on new research or advice to the board and ask Parliament to ensure that everyone wants this new research.

[152] **Bethan Jenkins:** Thank you for coming here today; it is very interesting to hear what



you have to say. It is also educational for us to learn about what other countries are doing; my personal opinion is that we need to do more of that as an institution. You hinted at the fact that the institute was set up because of the fact that the arms trade was regionalised. In Wales, we do not have powers over those matters, although as a nationalist Assembly Member, I would say that we should. How far do you think that we should go in setting up a peace institute that would look at those issues if we do not have the powers here in Wales? Jill Evans said earlier that we can talk about how peace permeates into education, training and so forth, but if we do not have the powers over those fundamental defence issues here in Wales, how far can we go with setting up an effective institute?

[153] **Ms Maes:** You have to look at Welsh society. We live in a time of crisis and crisis takes away a lot of jobs, so people ask for jobs. It is a poor offer if you can only say to a young chap, 'Okay, go into the military. Eventually, you will die, but, if you are lucky, you will survive'. That is not the only future we ask for our children; we ask for creativity. That was what, in our case, was the beginning of looking at what kind of investment was needed to create sustainable jobs for tomorrow apart from going into the military. I am not against the military; the military will do what it has to do in your case, because you have no say in it as the Welsh Assembly Government. However, as a Welsh Assembly Government, you look to your education system and your broadcasting system. What are you doing with those to create another society in the hearts and minds of the people and also to create jobs? That is what we did at the beginning. We looked at our society and asked what the attitude of the Flemish people was to peace. What are they waiting for? What can we see? One thing that we saw in our research was that the media plays an important role, because it is clear that people who are well informed or better informed have a clearer view of peace and are not as ready to look for direct military solutions.

[154] We did some research and saw that the media pays less attention than before to foreign affairs because it likes other types of news. There was then a report on the media and on the fact that many schools pay attention to non-violence at school and to the prevention of violence in school and in education. Many programmes are offered to schools to address that. We did research on what those 300 or so schools—and I cannot remember how many there were—were doing.

[155] **Mr Baum:** It was 362.

[156] **Ms Maes:** Tomas can tell you about that ongoing research.

[157] **Mr Baum:** First, peace is not an issue of high politics alone, but also of low politics. That is the issue. There is this understanding that low politics is of a different nature, but they are connected, for example, in the education sector. We have identified 450 projects offered by 62 organisations to schools to see how they address this and what their target audience is. For instance, are they talking about war? Are they talking about human rights or not bullying each other? That can inform policy later, because you can see that there is already a lot of attention given to bullying in the formal school system, but there is less attention on something else—although the research is not yet finished—and so, should we address that something else? You go on like that. There is always this mistrust and defensiveness of high politics. That is legitimate and is part of the issue, and dealing with that is one of the two classic strands of peace research, but there is also another side. For example, remembrance is a very clear issue—not here, but in Northern Ireland. How do they deal with remembrance?

[158] **Christine Chapman:** I apologise, but we need to move on to the final question from Andrew.

[159] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could I just correct you, Nellie, on one point that you made on joining the armed services? You said that, eventually, you will die. That is not the case. Many

young men and women find very good career opportunities in the armed services, and I regret that you made that statement about eventually dying. If you check the Record, you will find that that is what you said.

[160] On finance, in your paper, you clearly identify that you are financed by your Parliament. The previous witnesses who submitted the petition on setting up a Welsh peace institute were looking more holistically at avenues of funding for Wales's institute. Why would you say that your model of complete funding from the Parliament is more robust than having some parliamentary funding with an element of charitable/private funding, or indeed—and this is more desirable from my Conservative point of view—completely third-party funding that is not from the public sector?

[161] **Mr Baum:** That is a very good question. On the landscape of non-governmental organisations, I see shifts from structural funding to project funding, and it always nibbles away at the quality of what they do, because they have to invest much more time in getting the money and pleasing the donors. For example, in Palestine, donor dependency is a huge problem. There is this donor dependency, which involves being a friend of everyone and doing what they want for their project and so on. If you want a real qualitative structural entity that provides unbiased research, that is the only way to provide for some kind of structural funding. The think tanks in the USA have different agendas. Often, think tanks pose as academic think tanks and have a clear agenda, perhaps on creationism or whatever. So, there is this need for provision. Whether the money comes from the Executive or wherever, structural long-term funding is important, apart from the small projects that everybody needs.

10.40 a.m.

[162] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I can see the strengths and merits of both sides of the case, but I would like to take it to the next stage. Accepting that you have parliamentary funding—and that is a fact—I was interested in how you take instruction, given that your work is paid for by the Parliament. That no one Member can ask you to do a piece of written work is, I would suggest, a good check and balance, so I presume that such requests would come from a standing committee of the Parliament or from the Executive. How does that instruction to do a piece of research eventually arrive on your desk?

[163] **Mr Baum:** First, they made a separate board, to which political parties nominate people, and it is the board that decides the long-term policies. So, there is a link. On a board of 19 members, six people are proposed by the parties in the Flemish Parliament in a balance that is linked to the formal elections. For the next board, we have two Christian Democrats, one from a more extreme right-wing party, one more Nationalist Progressive, one Liberal, and one from the Socialist Party.

[164] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It would come from the board, would it?

[165] **Mr Baum:** It can come from Parliament. It has happened, when a committee has decided to ask the peace institute for advice on something. If a resolution is passed to ask the peace institute for advice on something, I will ask whether we can operationalise the question to make sure that we know what they want answered, and then we can go ahead with the research, and we come back with it and say, 'Here you go—this is what you asked for'.

[166] **Christine Chapman:** I have to draw this conversation to a close, because of the time and the fact that we have other items on agenda. I thank you both very much for your evidence. It has been a fascinating discussion. We will discuss further action later in the meeting, and I am happy for you to watch the rest of the proceedings from the public gallery. You have our best wishes for your peace institute, and I hope that you have an enjoyable stay in Wales. Thank you.

[167] **Ms Maes:** We would like to invite the Assembly to the Parliament in Flanders to meet our institute during its working days. We will hand over a report to you so that you can see what we have done in the past.

[168] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you very much.

10.43 a.m.

### **Trafod y Dystiolaeth Discussion of Evidence**

[169] **Christine Chapman:** We will now have a quick discussion on the west Cheshire/north-east Wales sub-regional strategy petition. First of all, we are awaiting the additional written evidence from the lead petitioners and the Mersey Dee Alliance. Members, is there any other action that you wish to take?

[170] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The evidence that the Minister gave this morning shows a level of understanding of the concerns, because, to her credit, she and her officials were minded to request a review of the plan and were also aware of the concerns about the consultation. For us to take a more informed overview, it would be good to see the evidence that we are waiting for. However, there was a positive feeling from the Minister's response—or at least I hope that that is what came through.

[171] **Bethan Jenkins:** I want to know more about the background from 'Planning Policy Wales', because that was referred to quite a bit as preceding the 'One Wales' coalition document. I want to know where that fits in to 'One Wales' and whether it is still viable as a document. We also need to listen to what the petitioners have to say, because I know that they did not have enough time to come back to us with a comprehensive response, but they did e-mail us a few pointers, which we tried to raise today.

[172] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. We will get that response.

[173] **Mick Bates:** The point about the sustainability appraisal is important. Perhaps I did not ask for a copy of the appraisal that has been carried out on the national and the sub-regional strategies. It is important that we bear in mind many of the issues that were raised in that regard.

[174] The other bit to that, which I did not quite have time to ask about, is whether the strategies for Merseyside or Cheshire are subject to the same sustainability appraisal. If so, we have a comparator for any appraisal at the national and sub-regional levels.

[175] **Christine Chapman:** I am sure that we can clarify all those points in writing.

[176] **Mick Bates:** Thank you.

[177] **Christine Chapman:** I now want to move on to discuss the evidence on the Wales peace institute. Are committee members happy to consider using the issues raised today to inform the questions for the Catalan and Frankfurt peace institutes? Representatives from those will attend the committee on 9 March.

[178] **Bethan Jenkins:** Are they attending the meeting?

[179] **Christine Chapman:** Sorry, no, they are appearing by video link.

[180] **Ms Stocks:** We have had confirmation from Frankfurt, and we are chasing the Catalan institute at the moment.

[181] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would not want to pre-empt discussion before then.

[182] **Christine Chapman:** Are there any other actions?

[183] **Bethan Jenkins:** I believe that we have to take into account other peace institutes, and I thank the witnesses for their evidence on this today. I know that the petitioners called for a task and finish group, which would be valuable, but from my experience of co-ordinating the *coleg ffederal* campaign before I was elected, I know that there was a blueprint there for us, as that was discussed. I am probably not making myself popular with the petitioners in saying this, but I think that some guidance and core principles might help us if a working group is to be established made up of Assembly Members, representatives of the peace movement, and key stakeholders in future. At least then we would have something to work from, rather than opening up a discussion on anything.

[184] **Christine Chapman:** As I said, we hope to hear evidence from the other peace institutes on 9 March and we can take it forward from there.

[185] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Given the concern raised about the First Minister's letter from the end of November—and there seemed to be an inference that the point had been missed—would it be appropriate to address the new First Minister to see whether he has a view on the evidence to date, particularly the domestic evidence, shall we say, from the original petitioners? I do not think that that would prejudice any of the information or evidence that we would receive from the other two sets of witnesses, because they will be talking about how those institutions function in their domestic settings and any lessons that we could learn if it was decided to take this forward.

[186] **Christine Chapman:** What do other Members think?

[187] **Mick Bates:** I want to raise a new point rather than comment on Andrew's point.

[188] **Christine Chapman:** We will stick with Andrew's point for now. I would be happy for another letter to go to the First Minister.

[189] **Mick Bates:** So would I.

[190] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we can do that.

[191] **Mick Bates:** I would be very happy with that. When I read the evidence today and asked questions on this, I thought that the issue of governance will become quite important. Not having attended this committee before, is there a paper on the governance in the Catalan situation and other issues? I think that, politically, that will become an important point. Perhaps a comparative study has been done on the different methods of governance.

[192] **Christine Chapman:** I am sure that the Members' research service could look at that.

[193] **Ms Stocks:** The Members' research service prepared a brief detailing the different governance structures. However, it is quite brief. It is with the papers.

[194] **Mick Bates:** I saw it, but it is very brief.

[195] **Ms Stocks:** So, you would want some additional information, would you?

[196] **Mick Bates:** How governance operates will become a political issue. Tomas made the point in evidence this morning that they had to get the arms companies to be members of the board, if I understood him correctly.

[197] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I do not think that they had to get them on the board, but they are on the new board. I understood that the arms companies have taken the opportunity to put someone on the board, but I stand to be corrected.

[198] **Mick Bates:** It is important that we understand in detail how the board is formed. As I understood it, the Parliament appointed people to the board.

[199] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I thought that 10 were appointed by the Parliament and six were co-opted. I assumed that the board had co-opted—

[200] **Christine Chapman:** We can get clarification of that.

10.49 a.m.

### **Deiseb Newydd New Petition**

[201] **Christine Chapman:** Petition P-03-257 is about restoring Assembly broadcasting on S4C2.

10.50 a.m.

[202] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Assembly Commission to hold urgent discussions with the British Broadcasting Corporation to ensure that broadcasts of Assembly proceedings are returned to S4C/2 as soon as possible so that those who have an interest in the governance of Wales are able to watch Assembly proceedings without having to use a computer’.

[203] This petition was raised by Harry Hayfield and collected 14 signatures. Following committee protocol, I have written to the Presiding Officer in his capacity as chair of the Assembly Commission to seek his views on the petition. Are Members happy to await his response or is there any action that you wish to take? I see that you are happy with that.

10.50 a.m.

### **Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeiseb Flaenorol Update on a Previous Petition**

[204] **Christine Chapman:** The final item is an update on the petition for free swimming all year round. I have only just taken over as Chair, but I understand that you have had three evidence sessions on this. The updates on other petitions have been carried over to the next committee meeting on 9 March. This petition was raised by Ammanford Junior Gateway, signed by 562 people, and calls for free all-year-round swimming facilities for children and young people. I know that the committee produced a video to explain the progress so far. We have received a video in reply from the petitioners, which we will show now.

*Dangoswyd DVD. Mae'r trawsgrifiad mewn llythrennau italig isod yn drawsgrifiad o'r cyfraniadau llafar ar y DVD.*

*A DVD was shown. The transcription in italics below is a transcription of the oral*

*contributions on the DVD.*

**Helen Jones:** *My name is Helen Jones and I am the Partners in Politics officer for west Wales. I am going to explain what the members of Ammanford Junior Gateway think about the progress of their petition.*

**Emily:** *I am Emily, I am 16 and I am from Ammanford.*

**Bryony:** *I am Bryony, I am 16 and I am from Ammanford.*

**Ellie:** *I am Ellie. I am from Brynamman and I am 11 years old.*

**Rhys:** *I am Rhys Jones from Ammanford and I am 14 years old.*

**Helen Jones:** *The members of Ammanford Junior Gateway still feel that swimming should be free for all children and young people in Wales. They think that this decision should be made by the Welsh Government and not local councils.*

**Bryony:** *I disagree because some areas may have the free swimming, and other areas may not, which is a bit unfair to the children who may not be living in the area that gets free swimming. I think that the Assembly should make the final decision so that all kids either get it or do not get it.*

**Rhys:** *If one place is doing it and the other place is not, it is not really fair on the other people.*

**Helen Jones:** *The members of Ammanford Junior Gateway also feel that it would be a really good idea to make 5x60 available on weekends and during the holidays.*

**Bryony:** *5x60 is a very good idea. It interests a lot of children who are not interested in mainstream sports like hockey, netball and football. It brings them into contact with a lot of interesting sports that they would never have had the opportunity to join in with before.*

**Rhys:** *I think that everyone should have the opportunity of free swimming.*

**Emily:** *Some disabled children just stay in the house on weekends, and it would be something for them to do.*

**Helen Jones:** *Do you agree?*

**Bryony:** *Yes, I agree that it should be extended to weekends and evenings, as long as there was a sufficient amount of staff there to make sure that they are getting everything that they can get out of it because if they have a bad experience in the evening or on the weekends, when not so many of their friends are there, they will not want to go again.*

**Helen Jones:** *Finally, the members are not sure how much disabled children and young people will benefit from 5x60.*

**Ellie:** *It doesn't say anything about disabled children.*

**Emily:** *Disabled children are left out far more than more able children.*

**Bryony:** *Maybe more staff would be a good idea as well. In some of the clubs, there is only one member of 5x60, and one or two volunteers. If there were other people there who could be more one-to-one with some of the less able children, they might feel a lot more confident in*

*general.*

**Rhys:** *Can you tell me if disabled people and young children can have the chance to do 5x60?*

**Helen Jones:** *I would like to thank the Petitions Committee for making the DVD. Everyone agreed that it was easy to understand.*

**Ellie:** *I would like to thank the Assembly for making the video.*

[205] **Christine Chapman:** I am sure that we would like to thank the young people involved in making that video. That was very useful. Are Members happy for us to write to the Minister for Heritage with a summary of the video response, and to ask about progress in extending the free swimming provision throughout the year? We could also ask how the 5x60 scheme accommodates disabled children. Are you happy with that?

[206] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It would also be useful to ask the Welsh Local Government Association, because it is charged with implementing the scheme on the ground.

[207] **Bethan Jenkins:** The WLGA mentioned the disparity between local authorities, but there is specific guidance from the Welsh Government to allow local authorities to decide at what point in their timetable they can allow free swimming to happen. That is an issue that we could go back to the Government with as well. Some local authorities provide free swimming at 8.00 a.m., but some provide it at 10.00 p.m., and it is not conceivable that young people can get there at those times. That is a Government issue, although I am not against asking the WLGA to provide an opinion on how they are trying to streamline it. We could do both.

[208] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could we get a feel from the WLGA about how the 22 local authorities in Wales programme it? Bethan touched on the fact that some authorities provide free swimming at 8.00 a.m.. Could we see if that is a pattern in the majority of councils in Wales, or whether it is just one or two councils that are doing that? It would be good to try to get a feel for how it is implemented politically. When you have 22 authorities, you have 22 interpretations.

[209] **Christine Chapman:** We need to get back to the big picture.

[210] **Bethan Jenkins:** As an Assembly Member, I asked the Members' research service to do this particular research. However, if we asked as a committee, I am sure that it could provide an updated version of where and how local authorities offer free swimming, because I know that there are disparities. However, I think that that piece of research does exist.

[211] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we will do that.

[212] **Mick Bates:** Further to that, we should also find out how children with disabilities are included in the scheme because I know that there were major problems with continuity of the scheme in Powys.

[213] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** On top of that is the disability side of it.

[214] **Mick Bates:** Yes, it was quite a big problem. It was about the withdrawal of funding because transport becomes such a major issue in sparsely populated areas. So, when you write to the WLGA, will you ask how it specifically deals with rural areas, because there are transport issues that become critical to budgets?

[215] **Christine Chapman:** We will cover all those points, and we will look at this in due course. That is all for today, so I thank Members for their contributions.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.57 a.m.*  
*The meeting ended at 10.57 a.m.*