



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau  
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 23 Mawrth 2010  
Tuesday, 23 March 2010**

**Cynnwys**  
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,  
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

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.

**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
Michael German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

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

Simon Cooke	Gweithiwr Addysgu Cyfoedion, Shelter Cymru Peer Learning Worker, Shelter Cymru
Richard Hamilton	Addysgwr Cyfoedion, Shelter Cymru Peer Educator, Shelter Cymru
Rhian Jones	Cydlynnydd Addysg, Shelter Cymru Education Co-ordinator, Shelter Cymru

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

Joanest Jackson	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Gareth Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 8.59 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 8.59 a.m.*

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

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Bore da. I welcome everyone to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. I have some housekeeping announcements to make, as usual. As you know, you are welcome to speak in Welsh or English. Headsets are available for the public for translation and amplification. Channel 0 is for amplification only and channel 1 is for translation. I remind Members to switch off their mobile phones. If the fire alarm goes off, the ushers will tell everyone what to do and, if necessary, direct you to the fire exits. We have not received any apologies this morning.

9.00 a.m.

**Deisebau Newydd**  
**New Petitions**

[2] **Christine Chapman:** The first new petition is P-03-260, which was raised by the Campaign for Dark Skies and which collected 1,643 signatures. It calls for the issue of light pollution to be tackled through clear guidance from the Welsh Government to local

authorities. Following the committee protocol, I have written to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing. Are you happy to await her response, or are there any other actions that you wish to take?

[3] **Michael German:** Let us await the Minister's response.

[4] **Christine Chapman:** The next petition is P-03-274, on the boiler scrappage scheme. This petition was raised by John Jacobs and collected 112 signatures, urging the Welsh Government to introduce a boiler scrappage scheme in Wales to match that in England. I have written to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing. Are you happy to await her response, or are there any other actions that you wish to take?

[5] **Michael German:** Could we ask the petitioner what he thinks of the Minister's response, made in her written statement?

[6] **Christine Chapman:** Yes. Are Members happy with that? I see that they are. The next petition is P-03-277 to change the decision to sell alcohol at the Urdd Eisteddfod. This was raised by the Welsh Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs and collected 114 signatures, calling for the Welsh Government to provide future funding to the Urdd Eisteddfod only on the condition that alcohol is not sold on site. I have written to the Minister for Heritage about this. Are you happy to await his response, or are there any other actions that you would like to take?

[7] **Bethan Jenkins:** Could we do some research on whether there are any other Government-funded youth festivals that sell alcohol, so that we can conduct a comparison study? I have only seen that in relation to the Urdd. Perhaps the Government does not fund any other festivals and it is not an issue, but I would like some sort of background as to why the Urdd is being pinpointed in this regard.

[8] **Christine Chapman:** I have written to the Minister, but we could commission an inquiry from the Members' research service.

[9] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, that is what I meant.

[10] **Christine Chapman:** That will be fine. Thank you. The next petition is P-03-279, save Welsh universities. This petition was raised by the University and College Union and collected 907 signatures calling for universities to be fully funded in Wales. It also seeks a timetabled commitment from the Welsh Government to close the investment gap between England and Wales. I have written to the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, and I know that the funding announcement for Welsh universities for 2010-11 is due today. Are you happy to await the ministerial response, or are there any other actions that you wish to take?

[11] **Michael German:** The Enterprise and Learning Committee published a report on higher education recently. Could we include its recommendations when we get the responses, so that we can compare them with the Minister's actions? If the Minister has responded to its recommendations, perhaps we could also look at the ministerial response to any appropriate recommendations.

[12] **Christine Chapman:** Are Members happy with that suggestion? I see that you are. Good. The next petition is P-03-280 on Cardiff Royal Infirmary. It was raised by Mrs Breen and collected 4,071 signatures. It calls for Cardiff Royal Infirmary to be redeveloped using public money and, following redevelopment, to be reopened as a fully working hospital, including an accident and emergency unit. I have written to the Minister for Health and Social Services for a response. Are you happy to await her response, or are there any other actions

that you would like to take? I see that Members are happy. Good.

9.04 a.m.

### **Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Update to Previous Petitions**

[13] **Christine Chapman:** The first update is on petition P-03-134, which called for the establishment of a Welsh honours system. As you know, the committee relaunched the discussion forum on this as an online weblog in January to get the views of the public. People were invited to give their views on whether they agreed with the scheme, what it should look like, and who could be honoured. A summary of the comments have been included in your papers. Are there any thoughts on further actions?

[14] **Bethan Jenkins:** I still think that we could advertise the concept of blogs much more widely, and the attached paper suggests that we could do that much more often with future petitions. I do not think that the previous blog generated enough marketing from the Assembly Commission, and perhaps we could talk to the Commission's media department about that for the future. I am not keen to include the line about the use of blogs possibly resulting in a group of people with similar views being over- or underrepresented. We have to use new technology, and that is a given now. If we are to set up a blog, we have to consider why we are doing that instead of letter-writing or holding a public consultation. I do not think that that line is needed there, although the document that has been provided is very strong. We now need to give it to the First Minister and the Llywydd to see what they think can be done for the future. Perhaps we could do an analysis of where we can tighten up the system in case we want to use blogs again. I do not know whether Mike has any comments to add.

[15] **Michael German:** On the substance of the petition, the feedback that we have received so far is that everyone is broadly supportive of having some form of Welsh honours system. What is disappointing is that we had only 38 or 40 responses, which is pretty limited given the interest that was shown when we had the Plenary debate, but that probably ties into the way in which we did it. The next step, presumably, is for the Presiding Officer to take it forward in the Assembly Commission, or for the First Minister to do so in the Government. We should tell them what we have discovered so far and ask them for their views on how they intend to progress this issue. Given the original debate that we had here, my guess is that there is general support from the Assembly for this to happen. Now it is up to the Presiding Officer or the First Minister to progress it, and we should find out whether they even want to. It would also be useful to see whether our colleagues in Northern Ireland and Scotland have a view on this, and whether they would like to proceed with something similar. If there is any room for commonality in the procedures behind a move of this kind, perhaps we could investigate that when we find out what they are doing.

[16] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you. I also think that we should keep the blog active in view of the discussion that we have had today.

[17] We move on now to petition P-03-136, which is on parking in Heath and Birchgrove. This was a petition calling for solutions to parking problems around the Heath hospital in Cardiff. We have received a sustainable travel plan from the Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board, and we took evidence from the petitioners in 2008. I now ask for views on whether we should seek an update from the health board about progress on delivering the actions listed in the sustainable travel plan, and whether the health board feels that this has led to a reduction in car use. Are Members happy with that course of action?

[18] **Michael German:** We should also ask whether the plan has worked.

[19] **Christine Chapman:** Yes. Are Members content with that? I see that you are. Thank you.

[20] We now move on to petition P-03-150, which is on national cancer standards. This was asking for an investigation into whether the LHBs would have the tools in place to meet the national cancer standards by March 2009. We have tried to ascertain whether the LHBs were compliant by March 2009. The latest correspondence from the Minister indicates that there were areas of non-compliance, but it does not indicate where they were. LHBs have been given until September to ensure full compliance with the standards. Would Members be happy to seek further details from the Minister on the areas of non-compliance, and possibly to ask for confirmation that each LHB has an action plan to ensure that the national cancer standards will be met by September 2010? I see that you would. Thank you.

[21] **Bethan Jenkins:** Sorry, I have one issue to raise. The Minister said in the letter that that information was not intended for public consumption, so I think that we need to be specific rather than ask for a broad outline of those areas. Otherwise, we could be knocking on a closed door.

[22] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we will take that on board.

9.10 a.m.

[23] The next petition is P-03-153, on body piercing. This petition called for a minimum age of 16 for body piercing. We received an update from the Minister for Health and Social Services in which she stated that the task and finish group focused on the issues of age and consent at a recent meeting. Are you happy to wait for a further update from the Minister, and are there any other actions that you would like to take on this?

[24] **Michael German:** I think that we ought to progress this a bit more rapidly. We have been waiting over a year now for an answer or a view on this matter. I think that we should press for a conclusion, to find out whether the Minister intends to move in the direction of an age limit in this matter.

[25] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next petition is P-03-156 on sleep apnoea. This petition called for a consistent approach to sleep disorders. An update has been received from the Minister stating that further development work is needed to ensure that LHBs are compliant with the respiratory directives. We know that LHBs will have to achieve full compliance in time for the next audit in September 2010. Are you happy to receive further information on the key development areas identified in the audit? Is any other action needed?

[26] **Michael German:** There is a workshop on 30 March. It would be useful to have any conclusions from that workshop reported to us.

[27] **Christine Chapman:** We can mention that as well.

[28] The next petition is P-03-162 on road safety in Llanspyddid. This petition called for improvements to road safety on the A40 at Llanspyddid. We have received an update from the Deputy First Minister stating that a safety review is being completed on this part of the trunk road, scheduled for the end of the financial year. Are Members happy to write to the Deputy First Minister, asking when the review will be completed and to be kept updated on the outcomes of the review, as well as perhaps writing to the petitioners to inform them of the forthcoming safety review?

[29] **Michael German:** We were told in February 2009 that the review would be completed by the end of March 2010. We were told in February 2010 that they will have

completed it by the end of March. I would hope that, by the end of the next meeting, we will have a firm decision one way or the other on the safety review of that part of the road. We should have a result by the next meeting.

[30] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, agreed.

[31] The next update is on P-03-182, the European funding petition. This called on the Enterprise and Learning Committee to investigate the use of European funding since 2000 and the mechanisms for the delivery of convergence funds between 2007 and 2014. We have received an update from the Chair of that committee, stating that the lead petitioner has been informed of the inquiry's terms of reference. The committee has also been sent a copy of a letter from the petitioner to the clerk of the Enterprise and Learning Committee about the inquiry. Are you happy for us to write to the Chair of that committee—I sit on that committee—asking to be kept informed of the inquiry's findings?

[32] **Michael German:** The principal objection from the petitioner is that the committee is undertaking a short review, but do we know just how short that short review is? Do we have any knowledge of that?

[33] **Ms Stocks:** I do not think that it has been defined as a short inquiry. It has just been defined as an inquiry. [*Inaudible.*]

[34] **Michael German:** Perhaps we could ask the clerk to write to the petitioners and use precisely those words.

[35] **Bethan Jenkins:** Could we also ask that Objective 1 is taken into account, because that was another issue in the letter, that it would only concentrate on the convergence fund programme, while the petitioners want to look at how successful Objective 1 has been historically?

[36] **Christine Chapman:** We can write to the Enterprise and Learning Committee about that.

[37] The next petition is P-03-187, on abolishing the Severn bridge tolls. I am sure that Mike will want to speak about this petition, which calls on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the UK Government to abolish the Severn bridge tolls. The Deputy First Minister's response does not provide clear answers to the questions asked by the committee, including, for example, whether an assessment will be made of the impact of tolls and when, and whether the Highways Agency will be setting the full toll rate. As you know, this is mainly because the crossings are owned by the UK Government and governed by the Severn Bridges Act 1992. So, I seek your views on this.

[38] **Michael German:** The letter from the Deputy First Minister of 28 February 2010 is concerning because, in the third paragraph, he says that any plan to collect evidence on the impact of tolls—and that presumably means the impact on the economy of Wales—is a matter for the UK Government. I find that very strange indeed. Could we clarify with the Deputy First Minister that that is what he meant? The call that has been made is to understand whether or not the tolls have an economic impact on the economy of south Wales. If that is the case, then it will be a matter for the Welsh Assembly Government to identify the impact. I do not believe that it is a matter for the UK Government to understand that; it is for us to make the case. We ought to clarify that sentence with the Deputy First Minister, if possible, before we close the petition.

[39] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Bethan, are you happy with that?

[40] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am happy with that, but I think that the only reason that he is saying that is because the bridges are owned by the UK Government until 2016. However, I am happy to ask, until that time, that the case be made to identify the impact.

[41] **Michael German:** Is there a case? As you know, I held a short debate on this matter in the Chamber. The problem that we have is that the evidence is anecdotal and there is no evidence beyond people's belief that, if we have a toll, it stops people wanting to come to Wales. However, you need to have substantive evidence if you are going to mount a campaign so that, by 2016, you have evidence to prove that it is not in Wales's interest to have tolls on the Severn bridges. That is the only case that we have not had yet. That is why that sentence does not clarify whether there is a Welsh Assembly Government responsibility to make the case for the economy of south Wales.

[42] **Christine Chapman:** I would be happy to send another letter for clarification and we can return to this at a future meeting.

[43] The next petition is P-03-188 on the special care baby unit. This was a petition relating to the protest against the downgrading of the special care baby unit at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital. Updates have been received from the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee, the Minister and the UK Border Agency. The Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee has announced the terms of reference of its inquiry into neonatal services, which will cover the staffing of neonatal wards. We have also requested specific examples of how the immigration restrictions have impacted on staffing within the NHS. The Minister has stated that this will be provided, but it has not yet been received. Would you be happy if we remind the Minister of the request for examples and ask about the progress that has been made by the junior doctor review group? We could also, perhaps, write to the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee to ask that this committee be kept informed of the findings of its inquiry.

[44] **Michael German:** May I expand that second point somewhat? I want to say the following on the record because I am disappointed that the letter from the Chair of this committee to the permanent secretary—sorry, not the permanent secretary, the head of the UK Border Agency, which is lower than a permanent secretary—on a major issue of policy has been responded to by the regional director. The Assembly deserves more dignity than being responded to by a regional director when this is a matter of policy. The matter that the Chair raised related to policy.

9.20 a.m.

[45] I wonder whether we could point out to the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee the problems raised by the policy issues identified in that letter of 2 February, and ask whether it would pursue those issues as part of its inquiry. This matter has been very much in the news over the last month—I think that the shortage of middle-grade doctors was in the news yesterday—and the way that these immigration rules have been applied is part of the reason for the problem. I wonder whether the committee will be minded to take this work on as part of its study of provision. The way the immigration rules have been applied is probably the cause of the problem.

[46] **Christine Chapman:** Bethan, do you have any thoughts on that? Are you happy with that?

[47] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, I am happy with that.

[48] **Christine Chapman:** I am happy with that too. We move on to petition P-03-217 regarding Saturday opening at the National Library of Wales. The very good news is that the



Minister's response to this is that the library will be reopening on Saturdays from 8 May 2010. Are you therefore happy to close the petition?

[49] **Michael German:** It was this committee 'wot done it'.

[50] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, it is a success story. Are you therefore happy to close the petition and produce a summary?

[51] **Michael German:** Yes, we should close the petition and open the library.

[52] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. We move on to petition P-03-219 regarding pharmacies in Barry. This calls for the protection of high street pharmacies in relation to the restrictions on relocation of pharmacies. The Minister has provided an update on the task and finish group, which has evolved into a strategic delivery group. We know that the group's report states that pharmacy regulations, which cover applications for the relocation of pharmacies, will be reviewed. Are you happy that we request that the Minister keeps the committee updated with outcomes from this strategic delivery group in relation to this issue? I see that you are.

[53] Next is petition P-03-220 on lowering the speed limit on the A40 near Abergavenny. We have had correspondence from the Deputy First Minister stating that the schedule for the review of speed limits on trunk roads is being prepared, and should be completed by summer 2010. The committee is currently considering a number of petitions in which the speed limit review on trunk roads will play a part. We have requested details of how roads will be prioritised with the speed limit review in relation to petition P-03-162 on road safety in Llanspyddid, but we know that the Deputy First Minister did not provide this information, so are you happy that the request for information be repeated in relation to this and any similar petitions? I see that you are.

[54] The next petition is P-03-221 about improving NHS chiropody treatment for those who are housebound. The Minister's response stated that work is ongoing on the scoping exercise into chiropody services, and that she will update the committee with progress. So again, we are awaiting further information on that.

[55] **Michael German:** When are we likely to get a response?

[56] **Christine Chapman:** Do you know, Naomi?

[57] **Ms Stocks:** I do not know.

[58] **Michael German:** We could ask.

[59] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, we will ask.

[60] The next is petition P-03-224 on the Stepping Stones nursery. This called for the prevention of the closure of the Stepping Stones nursery at the Ebbw Vale campus of Coleg Gwent. The nursery has subsequently closed, but the committee is continuing to look at some of the issues raised. The most recent correspondence from the Minister provides an overview of some of the initial findings from the childcare sufficiency audit. Are there any thoughts on that one? Is there any action for the committee there?

[61] **Michael German:** We could ask whether the annual review for Blaenau Gwent included information on the impact of the closure of Stepping Stones nursery, and what action was taken to mitigate the closure. I think that we also need to know when the childcare strategy will be ready. It is also a timing issue, is it not?

[62] **Bethan Jenkins:** On the issue of child poverty, which you are obviously well versed in, how will the Deputy Minister responsible for dealing with child poverty consider these issues in a broader context, because closing a nursery in a place like Blaenau Gwent will have a detrimental impact on that agenda? So, is the Government preparing advice for local authorities on alternatives or potential strategies that it could put in place so that local communities do not suffer due to closures?

[63] **Christine Chapman:** So, we should also refer to child poverty in the letter.

[64] **Michael German:** Part of the problem is that the further education college closed its provision, but if it falls to the local authority or others to make that provision, what we are doing is moving money around the public purse. That does not quite make sense, so there is a need for a strategic review into that.

[65] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Are we happy to do that? I see that we are.

[66] **Bethan Jenkins:** I also think that the petitioners should be involved in the childcare strategy; I do not know whether they are involved at present. Perhaps we could write to the Minister to ensure that he is aware that the petitioners want be informed of that strategy.

[67] **Christine Chapman:** There are two petitions to consider now, which are P-03-227 on the access road in Llanmaes and P-03-252 on opposing the RAF St Athan northern access road. Both petitions oppose the construction of the northern access road and 227 people initially opposed the building of the Tremains Farm housing estate. The Deputy First Minister's response states that a public inquiry is currently being undertaken in relation to the draft compulsory purchase order. The letter states that it is inappropriate for the Deputy First Minister to comment further on these petitions. However, further information has been provided on our requested areas, which includes assurances that work will not start on the northern access road until there is confirmation that development work will commence on the defence technical college, which was one of the concerns raised by the petitioners. Are there any thoughts on these petitions?

[68] **Michael German:** The inquiry started in January and was ongoing in February, so, presumably, it will have been completed by now. If it has been completed, can we find out when we are likely to have the inquiry response reported to us, so that we know where we are? You do not go ahead with a road if you do not have a CPO, of course, so it is crucial. I know of examples where a piece of land was acquired but the road did not go ahead; the M4 relief road was one of those. So, it may well be that this will have to tick on a little further.

[69] **Christine Chapman:** We need a progress report on this petition. We will also send the petitioners a copy of the ministerial response.

[70] Before we go on to the next item, I would like us to consider P-03-230 on the international conscientious objectors' day. This petition calls on the National Assembly to mark international conscientious objectors' day with an annual event. The previous First Minister stated that there were no plans for the Welsh Government to mark this event. We are chasing up a response from the Presiding Officer. As we have a new First Minister, you may wish to write to him; it is up to you. What is your view on that?

[71] **Michael German:** I think that we should write to the First Minister.

[72] **Bethan Jenkins:** I declare an interest on this, because I have already provided a statement of opinion. When did we write to the Llywydd asking him whether the National Assembly would support this concept?

[73] **Ms Stocks:** We wrote to him when the petition was first considered. I believe that there has been an issue because the letter was lost somewhere. However, his office is aware of this matter and it is dealing with it, so we should receive a response in due course.

[74] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay. So, we should receive responses from the Llywydd and the new First Minister in due course. That is fine.

[75] **Christine Chapman:** Okay; thank you.

9.29 a.m.

**Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: P-03-265 Cynnwys Gwybodaeth ac Addysg am Adael  
Cartref yn y Cwricwlwm Cenedlaethol—Shelter Cymru  
Evidence Session: P-03-265 Include Leaving Home Information and Education  
in National Curriculum—Shelter Cymru**

[76] **Christine Chapman:** The petition is worded as follows:

[77] ‘We ask the National Assembly for Wales to apply pressure on the Welsh Assembly Government to include leaving home information and education in the national curriculum.’

[78] This petition was raised by a group of young people that Shelter Cymru has been working with who have experienced homelessness and housing difficulties. Richard Hamilton, who is giving evidence, is one of the young people who came up with the wording of the petition. First, I welcome you here today. It is a pleasure to have you here to give evidence. We have with us Simon Cooke, who is a peer learning worker, Richard Hamilton, who is a peer educator, and Rhian Jones, who is an education co-ordinator. We have read the papers that you provided and we are looking forward to the session. You may spend up to 15 minutes giving evidence and then there will be questions from committee members.

[79] **Ms Jones:** Bore da. Diolch yn fawr. Thank you for the invitation to come to provide evidence on the petition. I want to hand over straight away to Richard to kick off by explaining why the petition has been submitted.

9.30 a.m.

[80] **Mr Hamilton:** Thank you. The petition was submitted after a group of us put our ideas together on what we could put forward. From the experiences of the group of people, with hindsight, we realised that this information would have been a fantastic help in extreme cases, such as mine and those of many people I had met. However, ultimately, it is not aimed at tackling homelessness, but at providing information to help and support people in their home lives, to help people to sustain tenancies and to provide young people with information so that, when they leave school, they have the knowledge to move on in a successful way and to avoid the worst-case scenario. I got involved when Simon from Shelter approached me. He came to the hostel where I was living at the time and asked whether I would like to be involved in peer education. We put together the petition and, so far, it has been a pretty good experience.

[81] With hindsight, I have been looking at how this information would have helped me. The information would have been available, I would have known where to go to get it, and I would have known where to go to get direct help. My case was an extreme case, and this information would have stopped me ending up on the streets, it would have prevented a great deal of stress, and it would have stopped me going through an experience that I would not

wish on my worst enemy. It is an experience that a lot of young people go through. I could have gone for direct help because I had nowhere to go, and I could have got the information and help that I needed. At the moment, many young people do not know where to go to get this information and help. Knowing where to get this information would definitely have helped me and many of the people I have spoken to.

[82] **Ms Jones:** We have obviously read with interest the response of the Minister to the Chair of this committee on the personal and social education curriculum. Shelter Cymru has spent a great deal of time lobbying for the inclusion of leaving home education in the revised PSE framework. We are fully aware of the value and benefits of the PSE framework for learners. However, we feel that the current framework does not go far enough in ensuring that all young people gain access to education on leaving home. Homelessness is mentioned in the framework and, at the time that the new framework was released, we were overjoyed that homelessness was included. However, on reflection, we feel that just to mention homelessness as a local and global contemporary issue does not go far enough to ensure that all young people are provided with information and education on leaving home and the broad issue of what leaving home means. In the supporting documents, leaving home education is defined, and homelessness is included in that, but it is just one issue in the leaving home education agenda.

[83] I thought that it might be useful to share with you the experience of Shelter Cymru's education service. This petition has come from young people, and we have supported them in the development of the petition. However, the campaigning work and work on raising awareness of leaving home education is not a new thing for Shelter Cymru. Our education service has been running since 2002, and has received funding from the Welsh Assembly Government since then. It is also supported by an experienced advisory group. We take the experiences of others working in the field of preventative education, in order to be able to seize all opportunities to inform and to educate young people.

[84] In the Minister's response, reference is made to CLIC, and we are fully aware of the CLIC website and the information that it offers to young people. We do not by any means want to duplicate any of the work that is going on; we want to complement everything that is happening. We have been invited to sit on CLIC's new standards and quality steering group. That is an important development and means that we can work together to ensure that there is consistency of information. The education service met recently with the relatively new head of curriculum at the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. We have sat down together and looked at ways in which leaving home education could be incorporated into the curriculum.

[85] We are just calling for recognition, really, because this topic tends to get lost among other issues. We want it to be made a subject in its own right, so that learners and teachers are made aware of how important it is. This is a whole-school thing. Teachers need somewhere to live as well, and so, by teaching young people about the issues, maybe the teachers will become a bit more informed themselves. Teachers are not spared from paying rent and mortgages; it affects them as well. We also see it as being important because, by educating young people and teachers, in cases where there might be an issue at home, a young person could go to a teacher to ask for advice, and that intervention could therefore work within the school. So, it benefits the whole school.

[86] We are calling for it to be a statutory requirement. This is not about competing with other issues, but we are concerned that leaving home education is somewhat ignored because issues such as sex education, and drugs and alcohol awareness may be considered to be more important. While it remains optional in the curriculum, there is a danger that it will not be taught in the first instance or, in the second instance, that only homelessness will be looked at, rather than the whole leaving home agenda. We also run a risk with regard to the quality and

consistency of the information that is passed on to the young people.

[87] On the question on where it sits, we are not really fussy about where exactly it would sit. I will not tell you that we want it to be in a particular part of the curriculum. As a voluntary organisation, we are not really fussy; we will take what we can. We are just saying that it has to be in there somewhere. The question of where it sits, if it does go through, is up for discussion, and we would be more than happy to liaise with PSE advisers on that.

[88] I was hoping to show the bilingual nature of the work that we do in Shelter Cymru, so I will carry on through the medium of Welsh, if I may.

[89] Yn amlwg, yr ydym am eistedd yma a dweud wrthyfch fod addysg am adael cartref yn effeithiol, ond er mwyn rhagweld unrhyw gwestiynau y byddwch yn eu gofyn am y canlyniadau a sut y gallwn fesur effeithiolrwydd y gwaith hwn, dywedaf y canlynol: mae'n eithaf anodd mesur sut mae'r addysg ataliol wedi gweithio. Er enghraifft, ni ddysgais am forgeisi ac ati yn yr ysgol, ac fel rhywun sydd, yn ystod y ddwy neu dair blynedd diwethaf, wedi mynd drwy'r broses o brynu tŷ, gallaf ddweud gyda fy llaw ar fy nghalon y byddai wedi bod o fudd mawr imi gael gwybodaeth am forgeisi ac ati yn yr ysgol. Yr wyf yn siŵr y byddwn yn arbed tua £100 neu £200 y mis pe bawn wedi gwybod ychydig mwy am forgeisi.

Clearly, we will sit here and tell you that leaving home education is effective, but, in order to anticipate any questions that you may ask regarding the efficiency of this work, I will say the following: it is quite hard to measure how the preventative education has worked. For example, I did not learn about mortgages at school, and as someone who, over the last two or three years, has gone through the process of buying a house, I can tell you with my hand on my heart that it would have been of great benefit to me to have had information about mortgages at school. I am sure that I would now save around £100 or £200 a month if I had known a bit more about mortgages.

[90] Nid yw hynny'n golygu fy mod wedi cael rhyw fath o argyfwng. Ni fŷm yn gofyn am gymorth gan unrhyw un, felly nid yw'r ffaith fy mod wedi mynd drwy'r profiad hwnnw wedi cael ei gofnodi. Byddwn wedi gallu cael budd o addysg ataliol, ond gan nad yw'n cael ei gofnodi mewn unrhyw le, mae'n eithaf anodd mesur yr effaith.

That is not to say that I had some sort of crisis. I did not ask anyone for help, so the fact that I went through that experience has not been recorded. I could have benefited from preventative education, but because it was not noted anywhere, it is quite difficult to measure the impact.

9.40 a.m.

[91] Enghraifft arall yw addysg rhyw. Nid yw hwnnw wedi arwain at gwmp yn y nifer o bobl ifanc sy'n beichiogi, ond nid yw hynny'n golygu na ddylem ddysgu am hwnnw yn yr ysgol a byddem yn dweud yr un peth am addysg ataliol o ran gadael cartref. Mae'n eithaf anodd ei brofi. Er enghraifft, pe byddem yn mynd i ysgol yfory a chynnal sesiwn ymwybyddiaeth ac ati, byddai'n eithaf anodd imi ddweud ar ddiwedd y sesiwn honno fy mod wedi atal pum person ifanc rhag bod yn ddigartref. Nid yw'n amhosibl mesur effeithiolrwydd, ond mae'n eithaf anodd.

Sex education is another example. That has not led to a reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies, but that does not mean that we should not learn about that in school and we would say the same about preventative education with regard to leaving home. It is quite difficult to prove. For example, if I went into a school tomorrow and ran an awareness session and so on, it would be quite difficult for me to say, at the end of the session, that I had prevented five young people from becoming homeless. It is not impossible to measure effectiveness, but it is quite difficult.

[92] O ran atal digartrefedd a dangos tystiolaeth bod addysg ataliol yn gweithio, yr ydym yn dechrau gweld tystiolaeth o ran y bobl sy'n defnyddio gwasanaethau Shelter Cymru. Mae gennym holiadur o gleientiaid Shelter Cymru ac mae nifer o'r cleientiaid hynny'n dweud bod rhywun wedi mynd i'w hysgol i siarad gyda nhw neu eu bod wedi clywed am Shelter Cymru neu am wasanaethau eraill sydd ar gael.

On preventing homelessness and showing evidence that preventative education is working, we are beginning to see evidence from people using the Shelter Cymru services. We have a client survey and many of those clients say that someone came to their school to talk to them or that they had heard about Shelter Cymru or other services that are available.

[93] Trof yn awr at Simon a fydd yn sôn am brosiect y mae ef yn gweithio arno yn y gogledd ac a fydd yn rhoi mwy o dystiolaeth am effeithiolrwydd addysg ataliol.

I will now turn to Simon who will speak about a project that he is working on in north Wales and who will provide more evidence about the effectiveness of preventive education.

[94] **Mr Cook:** I am Simon Cook and I work for Shelter Cymru as a peer education worker. I work with young people who are aged 16 to 25 and who are homeless, currently experiencing homelessness or have previous experience of it. We train them and take them into schools, colleges, workplaces and youth clubs and so on—places where there are young people—to talk about their personal experiences, to try to do some activities and to give everyone who listens to the sessions a bit more knowledge and information on where they can find help, hopefully to prevent the same from happening to them. However, unfortunately, you cannot always prevent every situation from happening, so we give them extra information and advice on where they can get help from.

[95] I will quickly go through some figures because we provide feedback sheets at the end of the sessions. When asked if their understanding of youth homelessness and its issues improved after our presentation, only 1 per cent of those who filled in the forms said, 'No, not at all'. I know that questionnaires can be taken in any way, but we could also perceive that as them already having that information, therefore their knowledge was not improved by our presentation. On the other figures, 63 per cent said, 'Yes, a lot', and 23 per cent said, 'Yes, a little'. Unfortunately when you go to schools for PSE sessions, not everyone wants to fill in the form, so there is a small gap there where people did not respond.

[96] Our second question asked, 'After seeing our presentation, would you know what to do if you or a friend became homeless?' Again, only 1 per cent said, 'No, not at all'. It is hard to gauge how far into the future they would remember all of that information, but that is some of the feedback that we have received so far. It has been a useful addition to the PSE programme, according to one teacher. The fact that every school that I have attended has booked repeat sessions shows the realisation that teachers have of the seriousness and importance of the information that is being passed on to the young people. They always want us to return to deliver more sessions to different year groups and to different classes.

[97] We are not here to try to sell peer education to you either—far from it, although it is proven to work. If and when you approve our request, I am sure that Shelter Cymru and other partner organisations would be able to come up with many more exciting initiatives to be able to get this delivered. With that, I will pass you back to Rhian Jones.

[98] **Ms Jones:** I am sure that if you all had £1 every time you heard the word 'sustainability'—

[99] **Christine Chapman:** I am sorry to interrupt, but you have around two minutes left because we need to move to questions.

[100] **Ms Jones:** Okay. This is not about getting leaving home education included in the curriculum, followed by an expectation that voluntary organisations, such as Shelter Cymru, will deliver the information, although, having said that, charities like us will always look for pots of money to be able to carry out such projects. We are saying that this needs to come from within the schools so that teachers deliver this information: for that to be sustainable and to be a long-term commitment that teachers have to teach this issue.

[101] Finally, on resource implications, I am not so naïve as to think that passing something like this will happen overnight or that it is a simple process. I have spoken to the head of curriculum and understand the processes that are involved. However, the delivery is quite simple, because it is happening already. The Welsh Assembly Government funded Shelter Cymru to redevelop the Housemate/Agor Drysau resource, which has gone out to every secondary school in Wales. We also offer training or staff development for teachers on how best to use the resource. The work is already in place, but we are calling for 100 per cent of schools to take us up on this offer; this is all that we need. Presenting this petition and seeing it through to a successful conclusion will, hopefully, give all schools a nudge in the right direction to teach leaving home education.

[102] **Christine Chapman:** Some of the points that you raised will be developed in your responses to our questions. You have covered some of the issues raised in my first question already, but I wanted to check whether you wanted to add anything. How is leaving home currently covered in the PSE framework, and why do you think that the current provision is insufficient?

[103] **Ms Jones:** As I said, we campaign on this issue a lot, so we have a good working knowledge of the PSE framework. I have not come here to slate the PSE framework; it is fantastic. However, while the content of the framework is still optional, we are running the risk that only some schools will take up the issues that it contains. Unfortunately, leaving home education is lost. Pupils may be taught about homelessness, but from my experience of going into schools it is mainly taught as a crisis thing. We are trying to avert that crisis, so we are looking at coming back to the earliest possible intervention and prevention. As Richard mentioned, this includes teaching about being able to sustain tenancies.

[104] Shelter Cymru is carrying out an evaluation of Housemate over the next six months, which will shed some light on how leaving home education is taught in the current PSE framework. However, having attended meetings on PSE across the country, anecdotal feedback tells us that between roughly 50 and 60 per cent of schools are using Housemate at the moment. We are obviously not going to say that that is not good, but we are looking for 100 per cent use of Housemate by schools. That is not to say that Housemate is the be-all and end-all, but I would make the point that the education service and the Housemate resource are both funded by the Welsh Assembly Government; money is being pumped into these resources, so it seems a shame that leaving home is not being recognised as a topic in its own right. The resources and the service are already there, raring to go.

[105] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** My apologies for missing the first part of your evidence. One of the pieces of evidence that has been submitted to us by the Welsh Local Government Association is the 'Myths and Legends' booklet that Bridgend County Borough Council has produced for its area, which indicates that a national view would, perhaps, be too broad a driver in addressing the needs of young people when trying to meet the challenges of everyday life. The WLGA's view is that it is far better to allow local education authorities to determine the needs of their localities instead of having what is almost a national doctrine. Would you suggest that that is the best way to take this type of development forward, or is your petition driven by more of a national perspective?

[106] **Ms Jones:** I could not agree more that we need local information to get across to young people; I have worked with Bridgend council on the ‘Myths and Legends’ booklet, while Carmarthenshire County Council has also produced a little booklet, with the support of Shelter Cymru, which goes out to all year 10 pupils. However, I still think that we need a national approach, but with local delivery. Part of the work of the education service is to encourage local authorities—not only their education departments but also their housing departments—to look at different approaches. It could be a peer-education approach: Simon works with a project based on peer education that is funded by Conwy County Borough Council. The project uses the Housemate materials and also adapts its own localised materials. There are 22 approaches to reflect the needs of the 22 local authorities, but I still think that it has to be a subject in its own right in the curriculum and then that will trickle down. I definitely see the value of the localised booklet, but a generic resource is always a good place to start. I do not think that all 22 local authorities will have resources for a booklet, so at least they have something like Housemate.

9.50 a.m.

[107] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** They have a template.

[108] **Ms Jones:** Yes, it is a basis. Some of our partner organisations, such as Llamau and Barnardo’s, deliver local projects and use Housemate, but they might tailor it because they have more first-hand experience of the young people whom they work with.

[109] **Bethan Jenkins:** You mentioned that 50 to 60 schools currently use the materials, but do you know how effective they view those materials to be? Have they given you any feedback? When will the evaluation be carried out on that?

[110] **Ms Jones:** The 50 to 60 per cent of schools is a bit of a finger in the air type of figure. We carried out an evaluation of the old Housemate pack in 2004, which found that 55 per cent of schools used the materials. Obviously, we would like to see an increase in that figure. I also ran a small focus group with Carmarthenshire PSE and had some good anecdotal feedback on how it is being used. The pack is split into seven sections and it is good to hear that schools are using different sections. Every school is not necessarily using every section, but they are dipping in and out and they find that it links in well with things like the Welsh baccalaureate. Some teachers are even using it in maths and there are sections that can be used in English and Welsh, so it cuts across other curriculum subjects. We are already working on the evaluation and we hope that, within the next six months, it will involve sending a questionnaire or carrying out a focus group with every PSE co-ordinator in Wales.

[111] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have a short question. At the moment, I am campaigning for self-esteem and confidence lessons to be statutory, which reflects what you are calling for, but in a different area. Do you think that there is an argument to have a strengthened PSE as opposed to more statutory education? I had the same type of conversations as you on the need to develop the PSE framework and doing it that way. There are courses and different elements within PSE that you can tap into. Do you think that different organisations and charities should come together to discuss how to strengthen the PSE framework as opposed to calling for individual statutory obligations on the curriculum?

[112] **Ms Jones:** I appreciate that argument; the last thing that we want to do is to put more pressure on teachers with a new framework and a new topic. It is quite a bold move for us to ask for this as a topic in its own right. I come back to the fact that leaving home education is left a bit on the side because we still have the perception of homelessness that we are talking about. Some teachers might think that homelessness will never be an issue in their school, which is wrong because it is an issue for all people in all schools. Leaving home is an issue for all young people; every young person—or 99 per cent of young people—will leave home



at some point. Your argument about linking up with other areas is a strong one. We are currently in talks with the Financial Services Authority to see how we can link to the financial capability agenda as the new PSE framework includes a lot about financial capability. We are just a bit disappointed that stronger links were not made in this new curriculum. We did not hold back; we campaigned, lobbied and went to consultations. On reflection, it is disappointing that homelessness was only mentioned in there. That is why I was asking where it sits. We are not that fussed about where it sits, but leaving home education needs to be mentioned specifically and not be left too fuzzy, because it is then open to interpretation and it gives an option of not teaching young people about the issues.

[113] **Christine Chapman:** Andrew, do you want to say any more about the—

[114] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Very briefly. The papers before us—Jane Hutt’s letter in particular—highlights the current PSE framework and various other types of framework and tools that teachers and schools can develop. If the leaving home package that you are talking about is included in the curriculum, what key outcomes do you see being of benefit to young people? You talked about it in your presentation, but the Minister, from the letter that she has sent, clearly thinks that these outcomes are being achieved through the tools that are currently being used in schools. Briefly, if you wanted to sell your product to the Minister, what additional benefits would you say that it has?

[115] **Ms Jones:** The things that we talked about, such as being able to maintain tenancies. There are topics such as self-esteem and confidence already in the personal and social education curriculum, but what gives you more self-esteem than having a home?

[116] **Mr Hamilton:** Council tax, rent, bills, utilities—I never knew anything about those when I left school, and nor did my friends, unless their parents had informed them of them. I found out about those issues by becoming an estate agent, which is quite ironic. Do not hold that against me. [*Laughter.*] However, these issues affect young people now, not just in the past, and they will also affect them in the future. They need to know this. As a result, they may not have all the information that they will need, but at least they will be a bit more clued-up about where to go to get help and advice. As Rhian said, at least they will have information on how to maintain a tenancy, and at least they will know that it will be an issue if they get behind with their council tax or their rent. These are not things that young people know about, but they need to know about them.

[117] **Ms Jones:** The outcomes of that kind of education are difficult, because it comes back to how you know whether it is working. You do not necessarily know whether it is working, as people will no longer need to access crisis or emergency services, but that is not to say that we should not deliver it. There are softer outcomes, too. The hard outcome in the most extreme cases is to prevent homelessness, but many young people will not fall into that category.

[118] To use myself as an example again, I may be paying £100 too much on my mortgage because, when I went to set up my mortgage, I did not have a clue. You sign up to these things that you are not informed about. However, that comes back to the same question: would I have listened when I was 18 years old? Some things stick. For example, when I was 18, we learned about drugs awareness after Leah Betts’s death, and those things stay with you. So, we should not underestimate young people’s ability to—

[119] **Mr Hamilton:** To take the information on board and use it.

[120] **Ms Jones:** Yes. In crisis situations, if the one thing that they can remember is that Shelter Cymru will be able to help them, the education will have worked. It is difficult to say what the outcomes are, or how we can measure them, but there are ways around that. For

example, perhaps long-term studies could be arranged to follow a young person through the transition into independent life. However, that is another pot of money that we will have to go after.

[121] **Michael German:** I have two questions, and they are linked, but I ask you to address them separately. First, the PSE curriculum is stretched, and every school will tell you that it has great difficulty encompassing the existing scope of the curriculum and covering every topic, so how do you envisage creating the space within the PSE curriculum for what you propose?

[122] Secondly, flowing from that—and this is a rhetorical question, so you can interpret it in any way that you like—would it not be better to target the resources and funding available and any extra funding that you might get at the most at-risk groups of people, such as those leaving care? That has been very topical recently, and I have met three 16-year-olds this week who have been made homeless from having to leave care. Given that it is such a stretched curriculum, would it not be better to target your resources at those people who will feel the impact immediately?

[123] **Ms Jones:** On the first question about the space in the PSE curriculum, I mentioned the word ‘competitiveness’ earlier. There is competition between the topics in the PSE curriculum, and I have not come here today to say that this is more important than any other, but I would definitely say that leaving home education is as important as sex education, or drug and alcohol awareness. It is such a basic need to have a home, to live somewhere and to be able to fulfil your potential. It is difficult to generalise. I come across some schools in which the planning of PSE does take place, and they look at all the different issues. I am not here to make comments about teachers not planning their PSE courses correctly, but with resources such as Shelter’s Housemate pack, the work has already been done for teachers. We are saying that the work is already there.

10.00 a.m.

[124] It is difficult, but I would say that they can pick this up. It has been written from the perspective of someone who is not a housing specialist and it is for people to use with young people. It would not require a huge resource to fit this into an hour a week as part of PSE. I appreciate that, in some schools, they may focus on other things, such as drugs awareness, so we are vying for space, and I do not really know where this would fit in.

[125] **Mr Cooke:** You also talked about helping those who are at risk.

[126] **Michael German:** It was whether you can find the space within the PSE curriculum to make this happen.

[127] **Mr Cooke:** I work in schools across the whole of north-east Wales, and I recently moved on to Gwynedd and north Powys, too. I am sorry, I should have noted how many schools I have visited, but I can tell you that all those schools managed to fit this in, as well as lots of other sessions and speakers who came in to speak about different things. As I said, they always ask me to go back to talk to young people about this, because they see it as such an important topic. The feedback is always fantastic, and we are always asked to go back.

[128] **Ms Jones:** To return to the question that was asked earlier about linking in with other subjects, you are right that there is more room to link in with other subjects such as financial capability, or even by bringing in drug and alcohol awareness. There is room, you are right. If some schools can do it, why can others not? I do not think that it means that other schools are neglecting other parts of the PSE curriculum. It is a matter of learning about life, so it gives you some skills, such as self-esteem and confidence. I do not like to use this phrase but it is

about ticking the boxes within the PSE framework. Something such as Housemate looks at quite a lot of the PSE framework requirements, such as budgeting. I suppose that we are saying that, if some schools can do it, why cannot all schools? We are definitely looking at targeting certain groups, and we have consulted on the strategy for those not in employment, education or training.

[129] **Michael German:** My question was whether it would be better to focus your efforts on the target groups that you know will want this sort of help.

[130] **Ms Jones:** That brings it back to looking at just homelessness again, but our argument is that all young people have to leave home. We appreciate that some young people will be more at risk of experiencing a bad transition, but we still think that we need this blanket approach to all young people and so the resources would be better spent on all young people. We are also looking at young people who might go on to become teachers or solicitors, within professions where they might ultimately help young homeless people.

[131] **Mr Hamilton:** On target groups, I came from a good background, had a good education at secondary school, and had fantastic parents. I moved straight from school to join the armed forces. So, I was not in a specific target group, and a lot of the people with whom I have come into contact, through the hostels and different organisations, such as Shelter, were not from a specific target group. As I am sure you all know, things happen in life that you cannot prevent. Stuff like this happens, but you can try to prevent it from happening. It could happen to anyone: to you, to Simon, or even to me, again. However, I do not think that it would be better to target a group. Everyone should have this information rather than just the target groups. That way, everyone knows where to get the information, not just people who are leaving care or who are coming from a challenging home life. Everyone needs access to this information.

[132] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Richard. That is a very powerful point. I have to draw this session to a close now, because of time constraints, but I thank all three of you for your evidence today, which we will be considering. If you would like to go to the public gallery, you will be able to listen to our discussion. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your evidence and your petition.

10.04 a.m.

### **Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol (Parhad) Update to Previous Petitions (Continued)**

[133] **Christine Chapman:** I want to proceed by returning to the updates. We now move to petition P-03-238, on the pollution of the Burry inlet, and petition P-03-241, on the *Llanelli Star's* Save Our Sewers campaign. These petitions are considered together because of the related nature of the issues raised. Petition P-03-238 calls for an inquiry into the sewage pollution of Burry inlet in Carmarthen bay, while P-03-241 calls for improvements to the sewers in Llanelli. A substantial report highlighting issues raised during site visits to some of the sewage treatment centres in the area has been submitted by the petitioners, and a response from the Minister states that the interim report into cockle mortality is still to be finalised. I know that the petitioners feel strongly that not enough is being done to deal with the problems in the Burry inlet, and that they were seeking clarification on the differences between the Welsh Government and the National Assembly, which we have provided. What are your views on further action?

[134] **Michael German:** A whole series of technical questions emerges from the work that we have been given, and the highlighted areas. This is a serious matter, so can we ask whether the pumping station or the water treatment works meet the urban waste water directive? Can

we also ask for some information on how many places discharge is permitted to occur prior to sewage reaching the Northumberland-based treatment centre? We need to highlight the petitioners' concerns in general about the conflict of interest in investigating the issue of sewage discharging. We understand that there are eight different agencies that have an important role here. I am not certain, but it seems as though the petitioners are not really aware of our role in this matter. Has that been apparent to the clerk? Do they think that this committee can make a decision on these matters? If so, we ought to make the role that we play clear to the petitioners, because I would not want people to think that we are a solutions committee, as we are not; we are a spotlight committee.

[135] **Ms Stokes:** We have provided some clarity to the petitioners, because, when this information was submitted, it became apparent that there was some confusion about our role as separate from the Government, so we have provided that clarity to the petitioners.

[136] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Are there any comments?

[137] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I support the course of action suggested by Mike. To reiterate the point about the petitioners, it seems to be a recurring problem that petitioners think that we have the power to make the decision, and so we cannot emphasise strongly enough to people that we do not. The last thing that we want to do is build false hope, but it is surprising, by the power of the searchlight, as it were, how we can get decisions once Ministers and other organisations receive correspondence from us.

[138] **Christine Chapman:** Bethan, are you happy with that? I see that you are. Now that Simon, Richard and Rhian are in the public gallery, let us return to our discussion on their evidence session.

10.08 a.m.

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

[139] **Christine Chapman:** Are there any thoughts on any actions we should take?

[140] **Bethan Jenkins:** As the petitioners were giving evidence, it occurred to me that the Communities and Culture Committee, which I sit on, has just started an investigation into financial inclusion, reviewing the Government's policy and financial inclusion strategy. When we took evidence from the Minister last week, he stressed the importance of setting up credit unions in schools to develop financial literacy. So, can we refer this petition to that committee and ask Shelter to give evidence in that inquiry on what it sees as the Government's role? I know that it is a social justice matter and that Shelter has probably been talking to the Minister for education, but if this could be included more widely in the social justice agenda, it would have significant benefits. We should also give the evidence to the Minister for education to see whether he can bring this forward by placing a statutory obligation on schools to deliver this form of education.

[141] **Michael German:** The PSE curriculum is a fraught area, because teachers can approach it in a variety of different ways. The argument that underpins the case being made here is that there should be a more explicit space for this type of work to take place.

10.10 p.m.

[142] When we ask the Minister, perhaps we can also ask whether the level of definition in the PSE curriculum provides a sufficient steer to teachers to include this matter. You could obviously fit it into a range of different headings that come out of the framework, but it does

not mean that you are compelled to do it, because you could approach it in a different way. We are trying to achieve that balance between being structured enough to cover an area and to give teachers the flexibility to approach the curriculum in their own way. It would be helpful to have the Minister's views on that balance in the response that we get from him.

[143] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The previous Minister's letter to the committee in December outlines the tools that are currently used to try to teach what I would call life development. Having kids who are coming up to that age now, I realise the importance of it, especially with my eldest daughter. They grow up so quickly these days and seem to know everything about everything, but the big, wide world is a brutal place, to say the least. The Minister's letter does not address the key tenet of the petition, so while it is informative about the tools that are currently being used to develop this type of curriculum in schools, when we address the Minister, we should ask the basic question of whether he can see any way in which this petition's aspiration can be put into the national curriculum and whether he is minded to take on the aspiration of this petition and develop a strategy. That is the crux of this, because if the Minister says 'no', the petition will go no further. In that case, we may have to consider how we work to develop the local aspects of the petition, because, as was identified in the witnesses' evidence, good practices are going on in certain local authorities. However, to put a plank down, we also need that national angle. So, while I welcome what the Minister has said to date, we need to address the basic tenet of the petition.

[144] **Christine Chapman:** The evidence that we received today was very powerful with regard to how it affects all young people, because you cannot predict when a young person will need this advice and when they will think about what they did in school. So, it was very good evidence and the petitioners are to be congratulated. Is there anything else about the evaluation report?

[145] **Michael German:** Can we have a copy of the evaluation report when it is completed? I am interested in the fact that the evaluation report is mentioned in the WLGA letter but not in the Minister's letter. So, I wonder who has commissioned the evaluation or to whom it reports; is it simply a Shelter evaluation? If you have an evaluation, you will want to be engaged with the people who will be making the decisions about whether it will go further. Presumably, we will be able to assist in that matter if it needs to be steered towards either or both of those bodies.

[146] **Bethan Jenkins:** May I raise an additional point? When I talked to the Minister about self-esteem lessons, the Minister told me that new school counsellors were being put in place in lots of schools. Could we find out what the job descriptions of those counsellors are and whether they deal with leaving home matters as they would other issues? Shelter does not want duplication, but we need to know whether new strategies are being implemented by the Government and that they do not conflict with what the petition is calling to be put into the national curriculum.

[147] **Christine Chapman:** I agree with that.

[148] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I did not know about the school counsellor aspect. It would also be interesting to know whether WAG funds that directly to the 22 local authorities or local education authorities, or whether it is left to the discretion of the local education authorities. You might find that some LEAs have school counsellors who will play an important role in the school environment, but other authorities may choose not to introduce that provision.

[149] **Christine Chapman:** I think that it is statutory.

[150] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I did not realise that. You often find that what you think is

happening on the ground is not happening in eight of the 22 authorities, for example.

[151] **Christine Chapman:** I know that there are some good examples across Wales.

[152] **Bethan Jenkins:** The worry is that they will not have the skills, as Shelter would have, to go into schools. Would these counsellors have the skills to be able to deal with young people who might not be at crisis point, but who would want information on how to go about paying a bill or looking for a mortgage?

[153] **Christine Chapman:** We will take those views into account and we will have further updates in due course.

10.15 a.m.

### **Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenrol (Parhad) Update to Previous Petitions (Continued)**

[154] We will now return to petition P-03-240, which calls for improvements to the A40 in Llanddewi Velfrey. The Deputy First Minister's latest correspondence highlights that a number of traffic-calming measures will be introduced shortly and that work to improve the pavement at Ivy Cottage will be completed in the next financial year. The speed limit will be reviewed later this year as part of the wider trunk road speed limit programme. A decision on the bypass should be made shortly. Again, this is one of a group of petitions where progress hinges on when the trunk road speed limit programme will be completed. Do Members have any thoughts on that?

[155] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Would it be possible to have a more definitive timeline on when the review into the speed measures will be undertaken? I appreciate that you say that it is either imminent or likely to happen later this year, but, from my experience of sitting on committees, unless you have a definitive date on which you can hang your cap 'this year' very often becomes quite flexible in the way that it is extended. Likewise with the pavement improvements. I appreciate that that is for the next financial year, but would it be possible to have some form of definitive timeline as to when that will be undertaken?

[156] **Michael German:** The Deputy First Minister says that they will be erected within this financial year, therefore at which point in the next two weeks will they be erected?

[157] **Christine Chapman:** We will chase that one up.

[158] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That cuts it down.

[159] **Michael German:** It narrows his options slightly.

[160] **Christine Chapman:** The next update is on petition P-03-243, which calls for the withdrawal from the west Cheshire/north-east Wales sub-regional strategy. As you know, we took evidence in Wrexham. We have received additional written evidence from the petitioners and the Mersey Dee Alliance, following the oral evidence taken on 1 February. You have also had a briefing from the Members' research service, which provides a comparison between the sub-regional strategy and the Wales spatial plan. Again, there is still some disagreement between the evidence provided by the petitioners and the Minister about the use of population projection figures, and we are waiting for additional information from the Minister, which might help to provide some clarity on this. We are also awaiting a response from the Minister for Heritage, having sought further information on causes of the decline of Welsh cultural identity and the use of the Welsh language. Do Members have any thoughts on this matter?

[161] **Bethan Jenkins:** The Minister's advisers said that there was no influence on population projection figures, and we heard that loud and clear. The petitioners have given us evidence to suggest that there has been pressure on local authorities to use the Government's analysis. Therefore, I think that we should get a holistic view on that from the Welsh Local Government Association to see whether local authorities are being pressurised to accept particular figures. I would also like the committee to consider whether we could contact the Equality and Human Rights Commission as regards the emphasis in the petitioners' evidence about the breach of human rights in terms of indigenous individuals' rights to a nationality and the destruction of culture, as referred to in the United Nations human rights charter. I would like to know whether the commission thinks that this strategy could undermine those human rights, and whether it would be willing to step in or whether it believes that it would be inappropriate at this stage. However, this is something that we need to consider further because it is one of the key concerns of the petitioners.

[162] **Christine Chapman:** Do other Members have any thoughts on that?

[163] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is a matter for Bethan to suggest that course of action. I am not quite convinced of the merits of the course of action. We were given very detailed evidence in Wrexham and here. Some of the response from the Minister for Business and Budget was quite heartening, in that she commented that there would be a review of the strategy and that she would provide us with additional information. I appreciate that it is difficult to satisfy everyone's needs, but I believe that the evidence that we received was quite positive. To provide an informed view, we need to receive all the evidence from the various Ministers that have received a request for evidence, particularly the Minister for Heritage, on the impact on the culture and, above all, on how the strategy is unfolding.

10.20 a.m.

[164] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Mike, do you have any thoughts on that?

[165] **Michael German:** I agree with Andrew that we need to get in the bits of evidence that we are still waiting for and to better understand the use of population statistics. Those are the two key issues in this matter.

[166] **Christine Chapman:** Are you happy for us to write to the Equality and Human Rights Commission? I know that you may have thoughts on that.

[167] **Michael German:** I am not convinced of the need for that, really.

[168] **Christine Chapman:** No, I know that you are not, but are you happy for us, as a committee, to write to the commission on that?

[169] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We are a consensual committee and I am happy to give that support. However, I am not quite convinced where that would take us in the context of what we are looking at here.

[170] **Bethan Jenkins:** The petitioners have those concerns. If we were to write, we would not be saying that we support them per se; we would be saying that the petitioners have raised concerns that this strategy may impinge on human rights and that, therefore, we are asking whether the commission could assess if that would be the case and if the petitioners have a strong argument or not. It would not be for me to say that I agree with the petitioners, but the commission would have a role in determining whether that is the case or not. That is what I am suggesting.

[171] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I am not objecting to it.

[172] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. We will move on now. Obviously, we will await further information and we will come back to that in future.

[173] The next petition is P-03-247 on saving Hedd Wyn's home. This petition calls for Hedd Wyn's former home to be protected and preserved. The Minister has stated that the building is grade II listed and the Government has had discussions with the homeowner on ways to help preserve the building, but that cannot be done without the homeowner's co-operation. I understand that the issues raised by the petition to save the Vulcan are not relevant to this petition as this building is listed, whereas the Vulcan could not be listed under the current listing criteria, either nationally or locally. Would you be happy for the committee to contact the homeowner to find out if he has any plans to take forward work to help to preserve the building?

[174] **Michael German:** To help improve my understanding and because we have not asked too much of our legal adviser today, I would just like an explanation of that sentence about the ability of Cadw or the Minister to intervene without the owner's co-operation. There must be something in a piece of legislation somewhere that says that, and I would not mind seeing a paragraph or two on that issue in layperson's English, if possible.

[175] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Thank you.

[176] We will now move on to P-03-248 on improved access to public transport for people with disabilities. This petition called for an action plan to ensure that public transport is accessible to all. Responses have been received from the Deputy First Minister and the Welsh Local Government Association. The Deputy First Minister highlights a number of schemes to help increase transport accessibility, and the WLGA states that an action plan would be welcome if it was supported with the finances to aid delivery. We know that the Enterprise and Learning Committee's recent report on rail infrastructure made recommendations in relation to this issue and that the Deputy First Minister accepted them in full. We also know that the Committee on Equality of Opportunity is undertaking an inquiry into the accessibility of railway stations and that it is at the written consultation stage. Are there any thoughts on that?

[177] **Michael German:** There are several bits of information that I think would be helpful, given that there is a lot of ongoing work, which I think is a very good thing. We need the Deputy First Minister to tell us which stations will get improvements as a result of his national stations improvements programme, or which ones are going to get some help. There has already been a written statement on the blue badge scheme and extending that widely. We need to know more about how that is going to work. We should also see the outcomes of the report on access for those with sensory impairment. The WLGA needs money to make sure that all this happens and we need to know what sort of level of resources it is talking about and whether it is likely to appear in a budget. Of course, there is the report from the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, as well as the report from the Enterprise and Learning Committee, and I think that we ought to get the petitioner's view on all of these issues so that we can continue to focus our attention. There is a major issue here, which I think that everyone recognises. It may be our job to create the funnel through which the focus on action can take place.

[178] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I concur with that. There is a whole host of reviews and committee inquiries, but the important thing is how much improvement is seen on the ground, with people able to move around on public transport, irrespective of ability or disability. It was interesting to hear about the review on railways, but, very often, people need public transport to get to the station, so you need bus routes and bus shelters. It is creating that



joined-up approach that is crucial to delivering on the true aspiration of what most of us are signed up to. So, I would support the petitioners coming in to give evidence, because we could ask them to comment on the various aspects of the work that is being undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government, but, in particular, the clerk could perhaps draw in the Committee on Equality of Opportunities's review, as well as the Enterprise and Learning Committee's review on the whole aspect of public transport. As I said, to get to a railway station, individuals often rely on buses, and if they cannot use the bus service, they are not going to be able to access the train station. There is no point having state of the art services at the train station if the service to get you there is not viable. It may be desirable for them to increase the scope of their inquiry to look at the whole transport operation.

[179] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. We will move on to the next petition, P-03-253, on the adoption of private sewers. This petition called for the adoption of private sewers by Welsh Water to be done at the earliest date. A legal briefing has been provided, along with an update from the Minister. The Minister's response states that there is a commitment that regulations will be published in 2011. It also highlights that progress is being made to address some of the issues, but no detail was provided. I know that you have noted that this can be a significant issue and the committee sought the views of other Assembly Members. A summary of responses was considered at a previous meeting and sent to the Minister. Are there any comments?

[180] **Michael German:** We need some more detail from the Minister, do we not?

[181] **Christine Chapman:** Yes.

[182] **Bethan Jenkins:** There is no date for progressing the Flood and Water Management Bill, which will include the adoption of private sewers, unless I have missed it. Can we get any clarification from the Minister on that particular issue?

[183] **Christine Chapman:** Yes. Are Members otherwise content?

[184] **Michael German:** Just for information, I cannot recall—it was before my time—whether there is anything in the Sustainability Committee's report on flooding that relates to sewers, but the Minister is due to give a response on that within the next few weeks. That may be useful if there is anything relevant in it.

[185] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you. The next one, P-03-254, is on third party representation at planning meetings. This petition called for the Welsh Government to give third parties the right to speak at planning meetings across Wales. The committee is considering updates from the Minister and the Welsh Local Government Association. The WLGA has provided us with more information on the practices across Wales, and we know that 16 councils, which is the majority of them, allow third-party representations at planning committees. The Minister states that draft technical advice note 17, which looks at this issue, is currently being reviewed. Would you be happy to seek clarity on when the draft TAN will be published, and to possibly update the petitioner on the information circulated?

[186] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We have had very detailed responses on this petition, and it is one of the areas that is determinable based on how the local authority chooses to act. You might disagree with that course of action, or you might support it, but, ultimately, it is up to the local authority within its orbit to decide how it processes planning applications. Obviously, it is a localised matter.

[187] **Christine Chapman:** We will move on to P-03-255, which is the special needs education provision in mainstream schools petition. This petition sought the protection of SEN provision within mainstream schools. An update from the petitioners states that they are

happy with the responses received from the Minister and that the SEN unit at St Julian's Comprehensive School will not be closing. Are you happy to close the petition?

[188] **Michael German:** Success to the committee; congratulations to all.

[189] **Christine Chapman:** Good. Is everyone happy? I see that they are. We will produce a summary closure report.

10.30 a.m.

[190] The next petition is P-03-256, on additional trains to Fishguard. This petition asked the Welsh Government to fund five additional trains to Fishguard. We know that the recent correspondence from the Deputy First Minister said that the redoubling work between Gowerton and Loughor would be completed by 2013. The Chair of the Enterprise and Learning Committee highlighted the fact that the committee supported the proposal in the petition, but that the proposal had been rejected by the Deputy First Minister, who stated that established processes for prioritising work should not be bypassed. We had a Plenary debate on this issue last Wednesday, and the rejection of this recommendation was raised during the debate. It appears that the draft transport plan has been approved. The proposals from the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium included the recommendation for additional trains to Fishguard. The Deputy First Minister stated that the proposal had not been rejected, but that he would respond to the SWWITCH recommendations in the whole. Are there any thoughts on this?

[191] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We need to find out when the Deputy First Minister is likely to respond to the recommendations, and when there might be funding available for such a project to be undertaken. We need to find out if this is something that has completely fallen off the radar. We all understand the budget pressures, but it would be good to get clarity on whether there is something in the pipeline over the medium to long term that might give the petitioners some hope of achieving what the petition is seeking, or whether there is, sadly, no hope on the medium to long term horizon of creating the additional services that the petitioners are seeking.

[192] **Michael German:** One important point that this raises, and a point that is worth looking at, relates to Gareth Jones's letter to us, dated 16 March. In his penultimate paragraph, he says that the Minister has rejected the recommendations and that it would be inappropriate to agree to a committee proposal to support a particular regional transport plan priority when there are many priorities across all four regional transport plans. That suggests to me—and I think that Gareth Jones is right—that the Minister has assumed that the committee did not look at that as a priority. In other words, the committee was doing its job wrongly. I think that Gareth Jones is right that this looks like a criticism of the committee, and I know that Gareth expressed this view in Plenary. We need to relay to SWWITCH both Gareth's letter and the letter, dated 20 February, from the Deputy First Minister. We need to see what SWWITCH thinks of the responses that were indicated in both letters. When we get a response from SWWITCH, it might be worthwhile passing it on to the Enterprise and Learning Committee for it to give us a view on where it thinks the issue should go now.

[193] **Bethan Jenkins:** It does differ somewhat from the letter that we received in February from the Deputy First Minister, stating that his officials would look at possible implementation at some later date. Perhaps we could seek clarification on why his view has changed from February to the view that was expressed in the Plenary debate, because there has obviously been a key change in his attitude towards taking this particular plan forward.

[194] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we will seek those responses.

[195] **Michael German:** This is something that the Enterprise and Learning Committee is sufficiently exercised and concerned about that the Chair ought to have a chance to tell us how he thinks his concerns can now be addressed.

[196] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. We now move on to petition P-03-257, on restoring Assembly broadcasting on S4C2. The Presiding Officer has responded, stating that informal discussions are ongoing. S4C has made a proposal that would enable a broadcast of daily proceedings on late-night transmission. Are there any thoughts on this?

[197] **Michael German:** We have gone from 'live' to 'late-night' transmissions, which I suppose you could record. We need to know what happens in those negotiations. We would prefer to be live, would we not? Nevertheless, the latter would be better than nothing. Due to the problem of broadband accessibility in Wales, there are many people who cannot stream it and would therefore value having it on S4C2. Perhaps the Llywydd could tell us when his negotiations have reached a conclusion. You may want to transfer the information that we all agree that we should be live rather than recorded.

[198] **Christine Chapman:** Okay.

[199] **Bethan Jenkins:** Sorry for making a pedantic point, but did he report to the Commission on informal discussions with John Walter Jones? I do not see any information here to show what the culmination of the discussion was.

[200] **Michael German:** I am asking that.

[201] **Andrew R. T. Davies:** We might top S4C's viewing figures, judging by the most recent figures released.

[202] **Christine Chapman:** Let us move on now to P-03-261 on local solutions to Newtown traffic congestion. This petition called for a sustainable travel measure, or measures, to be trialled in Newtown before a decision is made on a proposed bypass. Petitioners have submitted additional information, which highlights that all options for dealing with congestion in the area include a bypass. We have had an update from the Enterprise and Learning Committee to highlight that its recent inquiry did not cover this area. It suggested that the Finance Committee may have undertaken the relevant work. Are there any thoughts on this one?

[203] **Andrew R. T. Davies:** I think that we need to write to the Deputy First Minister to seek his views on the key points raised by the petitioner and to ask whether the results of the public consultation have been announced. I do not think that I have seen that. We could also write to the Finance Committee to see whether its inquiry into the trunk road programme looks at the issues raised in the petition.

[204] **Christine Chapman:** Are Members happy with that? I see that you are.

[205] We now turn to P-03-264, the petition to stop the alarming loss of wildlife and habitats. This petition called for an inquiry into why the 2010 target for biodiversity will be missed. The petitioners have responded, giving their reasons why they feel that the ministerial statement published on 18 January did not address the needs of their petition. This response is not in relation to the Minister's letter dated 5 February. The Minister has responded, highlighting the fact that the review was launched in September 2009. I know that the petitioners have been in touch with the previous Chair of the Sustainability Committee, requesting an inquiry. Do you have any thoughts on this?

[206] **Michael German:** May I pre-empt the request that you might want to send to me to

have the Sustainability Committee look at it? The primary concern is whether the review undertaken by the Minister will be satisfactory. I understand that one of the problems is that the Minister's review will be an internal inquiry, and since the Assembly Government has missed this important target, there is a feeling that there should be engagement with all the partners in public. I understand that, which is why I suspect that we shall pick it up at some later stage. It might be helpful, however, to have two things done before you send your request to me—this is passing the work on to this committee, rather than mine. The two things that I think will be useful, as they will speed the process up, are to know exactly the terms of reference and scope of the Minister's review, as they are not yet known, and to know what the RSPB as the petitioner feels are the gaps in the terms of reference and scope. If we could have that on the public record, it would be helpful then to write to me, informing me of the views of the petitioner, to point out the perceived gaps and to ask whether I would be prepared to look at it. In that sense, we would prefer to have something that is more specific and narrower, rather than general. It depends on what that information turns out to be.

[207] **Christine Chapman:** I would be happy with that. What do others think?

[208] **Andrew R. T. Davies:** Yes, I support that.

[209] **Christine Chapman:** So, we will do some work first and come back to this matter fairly soon.

[210] **Andrew R. T. Davies:** Before we let Mike have his letter.

[211] **Christine Chapman:** Right. We will not write to you formally, Mike, until we have had the information back.

10.40 a.m.

[212] The next one is P-03-268, calling for an accident and emergency department at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan in Blaenau Gwent. We have had a response from the Minister and the chief executive of the LHB, which included some useful information. The response from the Minister does not specifically address the point of how the public is made aware of where to go for emergency treatment, but the LHB response details the arrangements for acute care in the area. Do Members have any thoughts on this one?

[213] **Michael German:** I once raised with the chair of the trust that preceded the LHB the issue of how you know what qualifies as a 'minor injury'. If you look at annex 1 of the letter, the left-hand column lists injuries treatable at a minor injuries unit, and the right-hand column lists the exceptions. People will not know where to go, and I suspect that this will lead to utter confusion unless it is clarified for the public. For example, 'Animal bites and attacks' are treatable at minor injury units, but if you have a snake bite you should go to an accident and emergency department. 'Wounds with avulsed and/or crushed tissue' is another exception. You cannot expect the public to understand that. We need to ask the Minister how people will know where to go. The range of conditions treatable at a minor injuries unit is quite extensive. However, I do not think that the public would understand the boundaries, and the worst thing would be people mis-presenting because they think that they can get treated for something when they cannot. I am not suggesting that there are a lot of snake bites in Ebbw Vale, but people could mis-present at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan when they ought to go to Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr, or Abergavenny or Newport, because the injury cannot be dealt with in Ebbw Vale. It is important that the public is clear about that, and the Minister is the only person who can provide that clarity.

[214] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** This may be an extreme example, but the annex distinguishes between falls from a height of five steps and more and falls from lower heights; I suppose that

if you fall down four steps, you should present at the minor injuries unit. I know that that is taking it to the extreme, but it shows the level of understanding that is being expected of the public. Naturally, people will not know about these guidelines. Moreover, one person might be able to tolerate an injury that would be a disaster for someone else.

[215] **Christine Chapman:** A fall down one step can be bad.

[216] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Exactly. I would suggest that, as well as writing to the Minister, we write to the health board. The Minister could legitimately say that it is for the health board to seek ways of informing the public about this on an ongoing basis, rather than on a one-off basis when the hospital opens. While accepting that the Minister needs to be brought into the loop because there are national guidelines, and I would not have thought that Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan is the only hospital that faces this issue, I presume it is down to the local health board and the way it manages its budget and promote services within the locality to ensure that people are informed on an ongoing basis.

[217] **Christine Chapman:** So, you want to write two letters on this issue.

[218] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Exactly—to the Minister and to the local health board, because, ultimately, it is the local health board that is charged with delivering that service.

[219] **Michael German:** The one thing that is missing from this discussion is the out-of-hours general practitioner service. There has to be a link there as well.

[220] **Christine Chapman:** We could refer to that as well, because I am not sure that there is clarity on that.

[221] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We could also ask the petitioners what they feel about the evidence to date, because there is more evidence available now in relation to this petition; it might have been the case that they were not aware that there was a protocol or some form of managed scheme of promoting this within the locality, and they may well come up with useful suggestions to complement what the health board and the Minister come back with.

[222] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, I think that that is what we need to do.

[223] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have a point about the second paragraph of the Minister's letter. Perhaps I just do not understand the issue, but I do not think that we have seen the business case that was submitted outlining which services would be delivered at the new hospital, which was part of the due process prior to commencement of the building work. I just wondered whether there was any more information that we could get on why it was decided that this particular hospital would not have certain elements, so that we know why there is this situation. I do not think that we have had that information. It would help me to understand the argument that the Minister might give as to why there would not be a fully fledged accident and emergency unit in this area, given the community resources or existing provision.

[224] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. I see that we are happy with that. The next petition is P-03-270 from Action for Children. It calls on the Assembly to urge the Assembly Government to increase the provision of work-based learning to better meet the needs of vulnerable young people. The Minister's response states that the NEET—not in employment, education or training—plan that was published in April 2009 outlines how the Welsh Assembly Government will improve services to these groups and develop new approaches to meeting the needs of this group of vulnerable young people. The Members' research service has provided committee members with a briefing detailing the work-based learning that is offered in Wales. The briefing details the fact that most of the work-based learning providers have performed well in Estyn inspections.

[225] When this petition was initially considered, you suggested taking evidence from the petitioners and said that you would like to hear in particular from some of the young people affected by this issue. Committee members also requested that the recent Wales Audit Office report on child and adolescent mental health services be reviewed to see whether there were any links. The WAO report does not particularly address this specific issue, so do committee members have any thoughts on further action?

[226] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It will obviously be after the recess before the petitioners or a group of individuals would be able to come in. Do we have a date as yet?

[227] **Ms Stocks:** No, not yet.

[228] **Christine Chapman:** The Enterprise and Learning Committee is also doing an inquiry into the NEET strategy.

[229] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Has it not done an inquiry into this already, or was that on a different matter?

[230] **Christine Chapman:** No, not yet. It is on the forward work programme. We might need to clarify that with the committee.

[231] **Michael German:** May I request a bit of information? We have a good MRS brief, but perhaps we could have a bit more information on two issues that have been raised with me. As I said earlier, I met a group of young people who were made homeless at 16 who are now looking for training and so on, and they raised two issues. One is that, on the sort of money they are getting, they cannot afford to buy the equipment that they need for the training. There is a possibility that they could get a grant for it, but they would not get this until some way into the course.

[232] **Christine Chapman:** That is too late.

[233] **Michael German:** Yes, you need the equipment from day one, but you are not able to apply for the grant earlier. So, what is the route for getting equipment for training for people in this situation? The second issue was transport. I was told that, provided that you have a piece of paper that says that you are applying for a grant for transport to training, the bus company will allow you to travel. However, I am not certain that that is correct. I wonder what the rules are on what happens when people start training. In particular, what is the situation for homeless people who live on very limited amounts of money and who are managing to care for themselves and deal with all the issues we heard about earlier? How can they get their transport paid for from day one?

[234] **Christine Chapman:** I think that we could write to the Minister.

[235] **Michael German:** Or perhaps MRS could provide a briefing.

[236] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. We will seek clarification on that. We will move on. The next petition is P-03-273, on the transportation of wind turbines in mid Wales. The petition calls for guidance to be issued to ensure that communities are consulted properly on windfarm developments, with specific reference to the road infrastructure and traffic disruption. We have received a response from the Minister that states that a review is being conducted of the transportation of wind turbines in mid Wales. We have had a response from the Chair of the Sustainability Committee about the relevant findings of a recent inquiry. The response states that, in its recent inquiry report, the Sustainability Committee recommended that a review is needed of the adequacy of the transport infrastructure for the construction of

fossil fuel and renewable energy plants. However, we have not received any further information on this issue since the report was discussed in Plenary. Would you be happy for us to request further details into the study mentioned by the Minister, and for the petitioners possibly to be included in the consultation on changes to the relevant technical advice note, which is due to be reviewed this year?

10.50 a.m.

[237] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes, I am happy with that.

[238] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you.

[239] **Michael German:** I should say that the Sustainability Committee is probably going to be looking at technical advice note 8 again as part of a wider review of planning issues. So, it may be worthwhile asking the committee to bear that in mind when it comes to its review of planning. We have not started it yet; it is for next term.

[240] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you for that.

[241] The final petition is P-03-276, the motion for women from Sustrans. The petition calls for the Welsh Assembly Government to prioritise the creation of safe environments to support cycling. The Deputy First Minister's response states that the draft national transport plan sets out a series of proposals to increase the use of sustainable travel. You will know that the proposed legislative competence Order that resulted from an earlier petition by Sustrans, which places a duty on the Welsh Government to provide shared-use routes that incorporate cyclists, is currently being considered, and it is expected that it will be completed during the lifetime of this Assembly. Are there any thoughts on this petition?

[242] **Bethan Jenkins:** The Deputy First Minister states his concern that a recent survey showed that many women do not feel safe cycling, but the rest of the letter does not really address how the cycling action plan and the national transport plan will address that. So, I think that we need to write to him again to seek clarification on that, because there is nothing in the letter that reflects that concern. We should also write to Sustrans for any comments on the Deputy First Minister's letter, and to ask whether it has any ideas as to how the national transport plan could be improved in light of this petition. I know that it is a gender-based motion, but you can all obviously contribute if you want to.

[243] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** If there was such a motion for men, then everyone would be up in arms about it. We should have safety for women and men. [*Laughter.*]

[244] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. We had a long agenda today. Thank you for your comments and I look forward to seeing you all at the next Petitions Committee.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.52 a.m.  
The meeting ended at 10.52 a.m.*