



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 23 Gorffennaf 2008
Wednesday, 23 July 2008**

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

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

Alun Davies	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Val Lloyd) Labour (substitutue for Val Lloyd)
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

Peter Cox	Canolfan Gelfyddydau Glannau Gwy Wyeside Arts Centre
Sybil Crouch	Canolfan Gelfyddydau Glannau Gwy Wyeside Arts Centre
Hywel Griffiths	Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg Welsh Language Society
Sioned Haf	Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg Welsh Language Society
Guy Roderick	Canolfan Gelfyddydau Glannau Gwy Wyeside Arts Centre

Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol
Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance

Joanne Clinton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Joanest Jackson	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Stefan Sanchez	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 2.00 p.m.
The meeting began at 2.00 p.m.

Ethol Cadeirydd Dros Dro
Election of a Temporary Chair

[1] **Mr Sanchez:** I welcome everyone to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. As you are aware, Val Lloyd is currently not at work, which leaves us without a Chair. Therefore, under Standing Order No. 10.19, are there any nominations for the Chair of this meeting?

[2] **Bethan Jenkins:** I nominate Alun Davies.

[3] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I second the nomination.

[4] **Mr Sanchez:** In that case, you are the temporary Chair, Alun.

*Penodwyd Alun Davies yn Gadeirydd dros dro.
Alun Davies was appointed temporary Chair.*

[5] **Alun Davies:** Diolch am fy ethol yn Gadeirydd dros dro. Gwn y bydd pob un ohonom am anfon ein dymuniadau gorau i Val. Yr wyf yn credu ei bod allan o'r ysbyty erbyn hyn, ac yr ydym yn edrych ymlaen at ei gweld yn ôl yn yr hydref.

Alun Davies: Thank you for electing me as temporary Chair. I know that we will all want to send our best wishes to Val. I believe that she is now out of hospital, and we look forward to her return in the autumn.

2.01 p.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[6] **Alun Davies:** Fel Cynulliad, yr ydym wedi bod yn ceisio symud ein cyfarfodydd allan o'r Senedd a bae Caerdydd. Mae'n briodol, felly, ein bod yn cyfarfod yn Sioe Frenhinol Cymru. Yr wyf yn falch o'r cyfle i gadeirio'r cyfarfod hwn.

Alun Davies: As an Assembly, we have been trying to move our meetings out of the Senedd and Cardiff bay. It is only appropriate, therefore, that we should meet at the Royal Welsh Show. I am pleased to have the opportunity to chair this meeting.

P-03-107 Papur Dyddiol Cymraeg P-03-107 Welsh-language Daily Newspaper

[7] **Alun Davies:** Y ddeiseb gyntaf ar yr agenda yw'r un ar bapur dyddiol Cymraeg. Y deisebwyr yw Hywel Griffiths a Sioned Haf. Croeso i'r cyfarfod. Yr ydym wedi derbyn deiseb gennych, a deallaf fod dros 1,000 o enwau arni. Trafodwyd hyn gennym yn ystod ein cyfarfod ar 10 Ebrill. Yr ydym wedi cael cyfle i ddarllen eich deiseb a materion cefndirol. A wnewch dreulio rhyw chwarter awr yn cyflwyno'r ddeiseb i ni, ynghyd â'r hyn yr ydych yn disgwyl ei weld o ganlyniad iddi?

Alun Davies: The first petition on the agenda is the one on a Welsh-language daily newspaper. The petitioners are Hywel Griffiths and Sioned Haf. Welcome to the meeting. We have received a petition from you, which I understand includes over 1,000 signatures. We discussed this at our meeting on 10 April. We have had an opportunity to read your petition and the background information. Could you spend about quarter of an hour presenting the petition to us, telling us what you expect to see as a result of it?

[8] **Mr Griffiths:** Diolch yn fawr i chi am y cyfle i ddod yma i roi tystiolaeth ger eich bron. Hoffwn ddechrau â dyfyniad o gytundeb 'Cymru'n Un':

Mr Griffiths: Thank you for the opportunity to come here to give evidence. I would like to start with a quotation from the 'One Wales' agreement:

[9] 'Byddwn yn cynyddu'r cyllid a'r gefnogaeth a roddir i gylchgronau a phapurau newydd Cymraeg, gan gynnwys sefydlu papur newydd dyddiol Cymraeg.'

'We will expand the funding and support for Welsh-medium magazines and newspapers, including the establishment of a Welsh-language daily newspaper.'

[10] Ein bwriad drwy gyflwyno'r ddeiseb yw ceisio cael atebolrwydd am y penderfyniad i beidio â sefydlu papur dyddiol. Daw'r dyfyniad o gytundeb 'Cymru'n Un', rhwng y grŵp Llafur a grŵp

Our intention in presenting the petition is to try to ensure accountability for the decision taken not to establish a daily newspaper. The quotation comes from the 'One Wales' agreement, between the Labour and Plaid

Plaid Cymru, a gytunwyd fel rhaglen lywodraethol yn 2007. Dyma'r dyfyniad a'n symbylodd ni yng Nghymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, ac a'n sbardunodd, i drefnu deiseb, a gyflwynwyd i'r Pwyllgor Deisebau ar 3 Mawrth eleni.

Cymru groups, which was agreed as a programme of government in 2007. This is the quotation that prompted us as the Welsh Language Society, and spurred us on, to organise a petition, which was presented to the Petitions Committee on 3 March this year.

[11] Fel y gwyddoch, lawnsiwyd ein deiseb yn dilyn cyhoeddiad y cyn Weinidog dros Dreftadaeth, Rhodri Glyn Thomas, mai dim ond £200,000 y flwyddyn y bydd y Llywodraeth yn ei gynnig i'r wasg Gymreig. Yr oedd yn amlwg, yn dilyn y cyhoeddiad hwnnw, ac o ystyried yr ymchwil a wnaed i'r maes, fod y swm yn hollol annigonol i gynnal papur newydd print dyddiol cyfrwng Cymraeg.

As you know, our petition was launched following the announcement made by the former Minister for Heritage, Rhodri Glyn Thomas, that only £200,000 a year would be available from Government to the Welsh-medium press. It was apparent, following that announcement, and given the research done in this area, that that sum was completely inadequate to maintain a Welsh-medium printed daily newspaper.

[12] Yr hyn yr hoffwn ei ddadlau heddiw yw bod y datganiad hwn, ac, yn hwyrach, y system o glustnodi arian i sefydlu gwasanaeth newyddion ar y we—gan Golwg Cyf.—wedi torri addewid gan Lywodraeth Cymru'n Un i sefydlu papur newydd dyddiol cyfrwng Cymraeg. Yr ydym yn dadlau ei fod yn gam sydd, unwaith yn rhagor, yn datgelu nad yw'r Gymraeg yn cael ei chymryd o ddifrif gan Lywodraeth Cymru'n Un, ac nad oes unrhyw gamau gwirioneddol hyderus wedi cael eu cymryd hyd yn hyn gan y Llywodraeth i normaleiddio'r Gymraeg.

What I wish to argue today is that this statement, and the subsequent system of allocating funding to establish a web-based news service—by Golwg Ltd.—has broken a promise by the One Wales Government to establish a Welsh-language daily newspaper. We are arguing that this is a step that, once again, reveals that the Welsh language is not taken seriously by the One Wales Government, and that no real confident steps have been taken to date by the Government to normalise the Welsh language.

[13] Mae'r ffaith bod yr addewid i sefydlu papur dyddiol wedi cael ei gynnwys yn 'Cymru'n Un' yn awgrymu nad oes angen cyfiawnhau egwyddorion y cynllun. Fodd bynnag, hoffwn roi ychydig o resymau pam y credwn ei fod yn syniad da, cyn symud ymlaen i geisio cael atebolrwydd ar y penderfyniad a wnaed.

The fact that the promise to establish a daily newspaper was included in 'One Wales' suggests that there is no need to justify the principles of the scheme. However, I would like to give a few reasons why we believe that it is a good idea, before moving on to try to ensure accountability for the decision taken.

[14] Nid oes ond angen edrych ar esiamplau o gefnogaeth llywodraethau ar draws Ewrop i bapurau dyddiol mewn ieithoedd lleiafrifol eraill i sylweddoli'r diffyg gweledigaeth y mae'r penderfyniad hwn yn ei gynrychioli. Er enghraifft, yng Ngwlad y Basg, lle mae nifer siaradwyr y Fasgeg i'w chymharu â nifer y siaradwyr Cymraeg, mae *Berria*, papur dyddiol Basgeg, yn derbyn £1.2 miliwn o gymhorthdal blynyddol oddi wrth y Llywodraeth. Dyna un enghraifft o'r fath gefnogaeth y mae papurau dyddiol gwledydd eraill yn ei chael.

You only need to look at examples of the support of Governments across Europe to daily newspapers in other minority languages to realise the lack of vision that this decision illustrates. For example, in the Basque Country, where number of Basque speakers is comparable to the number of Welsh speakers, *Berria*, the Basque-language daily paper, receives an annual grant of £1.2 million from the Government. That is one example of the kind of support that daily newspapers in other nations receive.

[15] Yr ydym yn dadlau hefyd na fu unrhyw gamau gwirioneddol arloesol gan Lywodraeth ym maes newyddiaduraeth a chyfryngau cyfrwng Cymraeg ers sefydlu S4C yn 1982.

We also argue that no truly innovative steps have been taken by Government in Welsh-language journalism and media since the establishment of S4C in 1982.

[16] Sefydlu papur dyddiol Cymraeg oedd yr unig wir ymrwymiad diweddar gan unrhyw rym llywodraethol i sicrhau cam cadarnhaol i normaleiddio'r Gymraeg. Byddai sefydlu papur print dyddiol cyfrwng Cymraeg wedi bod yn fodd i gynyddu hunan hyder pobl Cymru, yn Gymry Cymraeg ac yn Gymry di-Gymraeg, yn eu hunaniaeth genedlaethol. Prin iawn yw'r ieithoedd, hyd yn oed ieithoedd lleiafrifol, nad oes ganddynt bapur dyddiol, sy'n rhoi modd i'w siaradwyr ddarllen am ddigwyddiadau lleol, cenedlaethol a rhyngwladol yn yr ieithoedd hynny, gan greu lle i drafodaeth am wleidyddiaeth y dydd a materion cyfoes.

The establishment of a daily Welsh-language newspaper was the only real recent commitment by any governmental power to ensure a positive step towards normalising Welsh. Establishing a printed daily Welsh-language newspaper would have been a way to boost the confidence of Welsh people, whether Welsh speakers or not, in their national identity. There are very few languages, even minority ones, that do not have a daily newspaper, which gives the speakers of those languages a means of reading about local, national and international events in those languages, creating a space in which to discuss the politics of the day and current affairs.

[17] Dylai fod yn hawl i unrhyw ddinesydd gael darllen am ddigwyddiadau'r byd yn ei iaith ei hun. Byddai galluogi'r Gymraeg i ymuno â'r ieithoedd eraill hynny wedi galluogi pobl i sylweddoli bod dysgu'r Gymraeg yn beth hynod werthfawr. Byddai wedi bod yn gymorth addysg hynod effeithiol i ddysgwyr Cymraeg o bob oedran hefyd.

It should be the right of any citizen to be able to read about world events in his or her own language. Enabling Welsh to join the ranks of those other languages would have allowed people to realise that learning Welsh is very worthwhile. It would also have been a very effective educational aid for learners of Welsh of all ages.

[18] Yr ydym wedi gweld yn y blynyddoedd diwethaf dwf aruthrol yn nifer y bobl sy'n derbyn eu haddysg drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, ond mae ceisio cynyddu'r defnydd y tu hwnt i hynny'n parhau i fod yn sialens. Byddai papur dyddiol, yn ein barn, wedi gwneud gwahaniaeth mawr yn hynny o beth.

In recent years, we have seen an amazing growth in the number of people who are educated through the medium of Welsh. However, trying to increase language use beyond that continues to be a challenge. A daily newspaper would, in our opinion, have made a major difference in that regard.

[19] Nid yw'r pecyn y mae cwmni Golwg yn ei gynnig, erystal ydyw fel pecyn newyddion ar y we, gyfystyr â sefydlu papur newydd dyddiol cyfrwng Cymraeg. Os ydych yn sefydlu papur dyddiol o'r fath, gan roi'r hawl i bobl Cymru ddarllen newyddion drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, dylai hynny gael ei ddarparu ar gyfer pawb yng Nghymru. Bydd y pecyn ar y we ond ar gael i'r bobl dosbarth canol hynny sydd yn ddigon lwcus i allu cael mynediad i'r we yn y gwaith, sydd yn ddigon cyfoethog i allu fforddio mynediad i'r we, neu sydd yn byw mewn ardaloedd lle mae'n dechneog bosibl cael mynediad i wasanaeth

The package that the company Golwg is offering, although it is a good web-based news package, is not equivalent to establishing a Welsh-language daily newspaper. If you are establishing a daily newspaper of that sort, giving the people of Wales the right to read the news through the medium of Welsh, it should be provided to everyone in Wales. The web-based package will only be available to those middle-class people fortunate enough to be able to access the internet at work, who are sufficiently well off to afford internet access, or who live in areas where it is technologically possible to

band llydan. Bydd rhannau mawr o'r gymdeithas ym methu cael mynediad iddo am wahanol resymau.

access broadband services. Large sections of society will not be able to access it for a variety of reasons.

[20] Yr ydym yn dadlau felly bod y penderfyniad hwn yn mynd yn groes i ddaliadau sosialaidd Llywodraeth Cymru'n Un.

We therefore argue that this decision goes against the One Wales Government's socialist beliefs.

[21] **Ms Haf:** Hoffwn gyfeirio yn ôl i'r arolwg gan Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg a gafodd Dr Tony Bianchi ei gomisiynu i'w cynnal. Mae'r arolwg wedi cael ei ddefnyddio fel arf gan gyn Weinidog dros Dreftadaeth Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru. Ym mis Tachwedd 2007, comisiynwyd Dr Tony Bianchi i gynnal arolwg o'r wasg brintiedig cyfrwng Gymraeg er mwyn

Ms Haf: I would like to refer back to the review by the Welsh Language Board, which Dr Tony Bianchi was commissioned to undertake. The review has been used as a weapon by the former Minister for Heritage of the Welsh Assembly Government. In November 2007, Dr Tony Bianchi was charged with conducting a survey of the Welsh-language print media in order

[22] 'ystyried sut y gall Llywodraeth y Cynulliad a Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg weithredu argymhellion Cymru'n Un ar gyfer y sector, sef: Byddwn yn cynyddu'r cyllid a'r gefnogaeth a roddir i gylchgronau a phapurau newydd Cymraeg, gan gynnwys sefydlu papur newydd dyddiol.'

'to consider how the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Language Board can implement the recommendations of the One Wales agreement for the sector, viz.: We will expand the funding and support for Welsh-medium magazines and newspapers, including the establishment of a Welsh-language daily newspaper.'

[23] Edrychodd yr arolwg ar sefyllfa'r wasg brintiedig ar y pryd ac ar gynlluniau nodedig i ddatblygu'r gwasanaeth Cymraeg yn ogystal â chymariaethau â gweisg printiedig ieithoedd lleiafrifol eraill Ewrop drwy ymchwil Canolfan Mercator yn Aberystwyth. Mae'r ddogfen yn gynhwysfawr a manwl, ac mae'n cyflwyno'n eglur sefyllfa'r wasg brintiedig Gymraeg. Defnyddiodd y Llywodraeth yr adroddiad fel tystiolaeth digon cynhwysfawr i ddod i'r penderfyniad bod £200,000 y flwyddyn yn ddigonol i sefydlu papur dyddiol Cymraeg.

The review looked at the state of print media at that time and at plans to develop the Welsh-language service as well as making comparisons with print media in European minority languages through the research undertaken by the Mercator Centre in Aberystwyth. The document is comprehensive and detailed, and it clearly presents the state of Welsh-language print media. The Government used the report as sufficiently comprehensive evidence for the decision that £200,000 a year is adequate to establish a daily Welsh-language newspaper.

2.10 p.m.

[24] Mae'r adroddiad wedi cael ei ddefnyddio am resymau gwleidyddol, yn ein barn ni, ac nid yw'r Llywodraeth wedi bod yn eglur ynglŷn â'r rhesymau dros ei phenderfyniad terfynol. Nid oedd un darn o'r adroddiad yn dweud yn bendant nad oedd y fath fenter â phapur dyddiol cyfrwng Cymraeg yn ddichonadwy. Yr hyn a ddywedwyd yn yr adroddiad oedd y byddai angen mwy o ymchwil marchnad er mwyn penderfynu hynny. Hyd y gwyddom, ni

The report has been used for political reasons, in our opinion, and the Government has not been clear about the reasons for its final decision. Not one section of the report stated categorically that such an enterprise as a daily Welsh-language newspaper was not feasible. What was said in that report was that more market research would be needed before a decision could be made. As far as we know, that research was not undertaken by the Government before it made the final

wnaed yr ymchwil hwnnw gan y Llywodraeth cyn iddi wneud y penderfyniad terfynol. Credwn fod hawl gan bobl Cymru, yn enwedig y rhai a bleidleisiodd dros Blaid Cymru, y Blaid Lafur a'r glymblaid, wybod pa ffactorau a ystyriwyd wrth wneud y penderfyniad. Mae angen dangos unrhyw dystiolaeth i'r cyhoedd. Ni chafwyd unrhyw drafodaeth hygyrch nac agored gyda'r cyhoedd am y penderfyniad hwn, nac ychwaith amddiffyniad o'r ffaith y torrwyd addewid mewn rhaglen lywodraethol. Dywedodd Rhodri Glyn Thomas ar 7 Tachwedd 2007:

[25] 'Rwyf wrth fy modd y bydd y gyllideb ar gyfer Treftadaeth yn cynyddu yn ystod y tair blynedd nesaf ac rwy'n hyderus y bydd y gyllideb ddrafft yn ein galluogi ni i gyflawni ein hymrwymiaidau yn y ddogfen Cymru'n Un'.

[26] Fel sydd yn amlwg erbyn hyn, nid hyn yw'r gwirionedd ac y mae angen i'r Llywodraeth fod yn atebol ar y ffaith fod yr addewid hon wedi cael ei thorri.

[27] Ni wyddom yn union faint y gall y Pwyllgor Deisebau ei wneud ar ôl derbyn y ddeiseb a'r dystiolaeth yr ydym newydd ei rhoi i chi. Wedi dweud hynny, ar ôl ichi dderbyn y dystiolaeth hon, ac o ystyried nifer y bobl sydd wedi llofnodi'r ddeiseb, buaswn yn galw ar y pwyllgor i alw ar y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth newydd i ymateb i'r dystiolaeth yn eglur ac yn fanwl, heb osgoi cyfrifoldeb, ac ymateb i'r her fod y Llywodraeth wedi torri ei haddewid i sefydlu papur dyddiol Cymraeg. Yr wyf hefyd am ofyn i'r pwyllgor ofyn i'r Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth newydd i ddatgelu, o dan Ddeddf Rhyddid Gwybodaeth 2000, unrhyw dystiolaeth arall a chyngor allanol a ddefnyddiwyd i ddod i'r penderfyniad ynglŷn â sefydlu papur dyddiol Cymraeg.

[28] **Alun Davies:** Diolch yn fawr. Diolch am drafod eich tystiolaeth. Yr wyf yn gwybod bod yr amgylchiadau braidd yn rhyfedd, gyda cherddoriaeth yn y cefndir. A oes gan Aelodau unrhyw gwestiynau yr hoffent ofyn i'r cyflwynwyr?

[29] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Hywel, in your evidence, you highlighted examples from across Europe, particularly the Basque example, and said that £1.2 million goes into the

decision. We think that the people of Wales, especially those who voted for Plaid Cymru, the Labour Party and the coalition, have a right to know what factors were considered in the making of that decision. Any evidence needs to be shown to the public. No accessible or open discussion was held with the public about this decision nor has there been a defence of the fact that a promise made in a programme of government was broken. Rhodri Glyn Thomas said on 7 November 2007:

'I'm delighted that the budget for Heritage will increase over the next three years, and am confident that the draft budget will enable us to achieve all our One Wales commitments.'

As is all too obvious by now, this is not true and the Government must be held to account for the fact that this promise has been broken.

We do not know exactly how much the Petitions Committee can do after receiving the petition and the evidence that we have just presented to you. Having said that, after your having received this evidence, and given the number of people who have signed the petition, I would call on the committee to call on the new Minister for Heritage to respond to the evidence clearly and in detail, without shirking responsibility, and to respond to the challenge that the Government has broken its promise to establish a daily Welsh-language newspaper. I also want to ask the committee to ask the new Minister for Heritage to reveal, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, any other evidence and external advice used to reach this decision about establishing a daily Welsh-language newspaper.

Alun Davies: Thank you very much. Thank you for discussing your evidence. I know that the circumstances are rather odd, with music playing in the background. Do Members have any questions that they would like to ask of the presenters?

newspaper in the Basque language. What is the total budget that regional newspaper operates on, so that we can get a sense of the context? The crux of the matter is whether the operation would be viable or not and whether the long-term projection is that without a subsidy continuing indefinitely, the project would not be able to go forward. From the papers that I have read, those are the concerns that the Minister clearly has. However, on the other side, there does seem to be a dark area with regard to the information that the Minister has used to inform his decision. You and other organisations, I presume, have found that that information is inaccessible to you, as you try to support the establishment of a Welsh-language daily newspaper.

[30] **Mr Griffiths:** O ran Gwlad y Basg, nid wyf yn siŵr pa fath o ragamcaniadau sydd wedi cael eu defnyddio—hynny yw, faint o gymhorthdal fydd yn parhau i gael eu rhoi i'r papur. Mae'n bosibl mai'r bwriad yw ei ariannu am nifer o flynyddoedd ac wedyn edrych arno wrth fynd ymlaen, fel y dylid fod wedi ei wneud yn yr achos hwn. Buaswn i'n dadlau nad yw'r £200,000 sydd i fod ar gyfer y wasg brintiedig gyfan yn ddigon i sefydlu papur newydd dyddiol Cymraeg. Pe bai swm cymharol i'r un a ddefnyddir yng Ngwlad y Basg wedi cael ei roi, byddai hynny wedi bod yn ddigonol i sefydlu'r papur o leiaf ac wedyn byddai'n fater o fonitro sut y mae'n mynd, wrth fynd ymlaen, a lleihau neu gynyddu'r arian yn ôl y galw a'r angen. Mae'n ddrwg gennyf, nid oes gennyf y manylion ynglŷn â'r hyn y mae Gwlad y Basg yn gobeithio gwneud yn y dyfodol, ond gallaf ddod o hyd i'r wybodaeth hwnnw.

Mr Griffiths: On the Basque Country, I am not sure what sort of projections have been used—that is, how much subsidy will continue to be given to the newspaper. It is possible that the intention is to fund it for a number of years and then look at it going forward, as should have been done in this case. I would argue that that £200,000 that is supposed to be for the entire print media is not enough to establish a Welsh-language daily newspaper. If a comparable sum to the one used in the Basque Country had been given, that would have been sufficient to at least establish the newspaper and then it would be a matter of monitoring how it was going, going forward, and increasing or decreasing the funding according to the demand and the need. I am sorry, I do not have the details on what the Basque Country hopes to do in the future, but I can find out that information.

[31] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Do you not have any idea of the level of subsidy in relation to the overall budget of the newspaper? You have used the specific example of the Basque Country in your evidence.

[32] **Mr Griffiths:** Not in terms of the actual budget, no.

[33] Fodd bynnag, mae'n gymhariaeth deg. Byddwn yn dadlau fod y cyllidebau yn weddol debyg, ond nid wyf yn gwybod y ffigurau. Credaf y byddai rhoi cymhorthdal i ddechrau'r prosiect wedi bod yn werthfawr.

However, it is a fair comparison. I would argue that the budgets are fairly similar, but I do not know the figures. I believe that providing support to start the project would have been worthwhile.

[34] O ran eich cwestiwn ynglŷn â'r wybodaeth y mae'r penderfyniad wedi ei seilio arno, dyna un o'r pwyntiau hollbwysig sydd angen dod allan o'r holl beth. Hynny yw, mae angen rhyw fath o atebolrwydd ynglŷn â pham y gwnaed y penderfyniad hwn a pham y torrwyd addewid mewn rhaglen lywodraethol. Dyna'r lleiaf y gallwch ei ddisgwyl. Nid yw adroddiad Tony Bianchi, sef yr adroddiad y bu i'r Gweinidog gyfeirio ato'n aml, yn argymhell peidio â sefydlu papur

On your question about the information on which the decision was based, that is one of the very important points that need to come out of this. That is, there is a need for some accountability as to why this decision was made and why the promise made in a programme of government was broken. That is the least that you can expect. Tony Bianchi's report, which is the report that the Minister referred to frequently, does not recommend that a Welsh-language daily

dyddiol cyfrwng Cymraeg; mae'r adroddiad yn argymhell mwy o ymchwil i weld a yw papur yn ddichonadwy. Felly, mae angen gwybod seiliau'r penderfyniad.

[35] **Alun Davies:** Ond nid yw adroddiad Bianchi yn cefnogi sefydlu papur dyddiol.

[36] **Mr Griffiths:** Nac ydy. Yr oedd yn eang ei gwmpas. Dywedodd fod amheuan ar un ochr a dadleuon yn erbyn sefydlu papur dyddiol, ond hefyd dadleuon o blaid gwneud hynny, yn enwedig dadleuon diwylliannol a dadleuon ynghylch cynyddu gwybodaeth am yr iaith Gymraeg, a daeth i'r casgliad bod angen mwy o ymchwil. Mae'r ffaith bod yr adroddiad yn dweud hynny ond bod y datganiadau gan y Llywodraeth yn defnyddio'r adroddiad fel un o'r rhesymau dros beidio â sefydlu papur—

[37] **Alun Davies:** Yn fy marn i, dangosodd adroddiad Bianchi a'r drafodaeth o gwmpas hynny bod cryn ansicrwydd yn y wasg Cymraeg ynglŷn â sefydlu papur dyddiol.

[38] **Ms Haf:** Efallai fod ansicrwydd, ond dywedodd yr adroddiad yn ddigon eglur bod angen mwy o ymchwil—arolwg oedd gwaith Dr Tony Bianchi, ac, wedi hynny, yr oedd angen edrych i mewn i'r posibiliad o sefydlu papur mwy a chael mwy o dystiolaeth at ei gilydd. Yr hyn a ddigwyddodd oedd, yn hytrach na chael mwy o ymchwil, defnyddiwyd yr arolwg at ddiben gwleidyddol i ddweud nad oedd papur yn bosibl.

[39] **Mr Griffiths:** Yr wyf yn cydnabod y pwynt: yr oedd ansicrwydd, ond mae hefyd resymau pam mae angen papur dyddiol. Byddwn yn dadlau bod yn rhaid gwneud penderfyniad ar sail y ffaith ei bod yn gywir ac yn iawn i'w wneud. Hynny yw, am resymau diwylliannol ac egwyddorol. Nid ydych yn gwybod a fydd rhywbeth yn llwyddo 100 y cant cyn eich bod yn ei dro.

[40] **Alun Davies:** A gredwch mai dyna'r ffordd i wneud penderfyniadau ar wariant cyhoeddus?

[41] **Mr Griffiths:** Na, dim o gwbl. Wrth

newspaper should not be established; the report recommends more research to see whether a paper is possible. Therefore, the basis of the decision needs to be known.

Alun Davies: However, the Bianchi report does not support establishing a daily newspaper.

Mr Griffiths: No, it does not. Its scope was wide. It said that there were doubts on one side and arguments against establishing a daily newspaper, but also arguments in favour of doing so, especially cultural arguments and arguments relating to increasing knowledge of the Welsh language, and came to the conclusion that more research is needed. The fact that the report says that but that the statements made by the Government use the report as a reason for not establishing the paper—

Alun Davies: In my view, the Bianchi report and the discussion on that report showed that there was considerable uncertainty in the Welsh press about establishing a daily newspaper.

Ms Haf: Perhaps there was uncertainty, but the report stated quite clearly that more research is needed—Dr Tony Bianchi's work was a review, and, following it, the possibility of establishing a newspaper needed to be investigated and more evidence collected. What happened was that, instead of having more research, the review was used for political purposes to say that a paper was not possible.

Mr Griffiths: I acknowledge the point: there was uncertainty, but there are also reasons why a daily newspaper is needed. I would argue that a decision needs to be made on the basis of the fact that it is correct and should be done. That is, for cultural reasons and as a matter of principle. You do not know whether something will succeed 100 per cent before you try it.

Alun Davies: Do you believe that that is the way to make decisions on public expenditure?

Mr Griffiths: No, not at all. Obviously,

gwrs, mae angen ymchwil, ond mae rhai pethau sylfaenol y mae pobl yn derbyn y dylid eu cael mewn gwlad ddiwylliedig, fodern sy'n edrych allan ar y byd ac sy'n parchu ei diwylliant a'i hieithoedd. Wrth gwrs, mae angen seilio hynny ar ymchwil yn y farchnad ac yr ydym yn gofyn am gael gweld yr ymchwil yn y farchnad sydd yn dangos nad yw hyn yn bosibl.

research is needed, but there are some fundamental things that people accept should exist in a modern, cultured country that looks out on the world and which respects its culture and its languages. Of course, that needs to be based on market research and we are asking to see the market research that shows that this is not possible.

2.20 p.m.

[42] **Michael German:** I will start by asking about your freedom of information request. You asked whether the committee could make an FOI request for information. That seems strange to me, because anyone can make an FOI request, so let me clear this matter up. Have you asked for all the documentation upon which the Minister based his decision? If not, why not, and if you have, what response did you get?

[43] **Mr Griffiths:** We have not yet done so as a society, but we know that some people have requested the information. That point arose because we are not sure what the next steps are in terms of the committee. Do we move on with you saying that you will take it forward? How do you take it forward from here?

[44] **Michael German:** What I am trying to explain is that, if you say that the Government fundamentally made the wrong decision, you can say that it did so either based upon its view or based upon the information that it was given; we do not know which it was yet. I think that what we are both saying is that you do not yet have the information, so you cannot make a judgment as to whether the Minister made the wrong call, or whether he made that call because of the advice that he was given, and that it should be different.

[45] **Mr Griffiths:** Yr wyf yn derbyn y pwynt bod angen inni ofyn am yr holl ddogfennau a ddefnyddiwyd, a chredaf fod y broses honno yn digwydd. Fodd bynnag, byddwn hefyd yn dadlau bod yr adroddiad a gomisiynodd Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg gan Tony Bianchi yn cael ei ddefnyddio fel tystiolaeth dros beidio â sefydlu papur dyddiol pan nad yw'n dweud hynny mewn modd diamwys. Mae cwestiynau i'w gofyn yno; nid wyf yn siŵr ai ni yw'r bobl i fynd â'r mater hwnnw ymhellach ynteu a yw gofyn am hynny yn disgyn o fewn cwmpas y pwyllgor.

Mr Griffiths: I accept the point that we need to request all the documents that were used, and I believe that that process is in hand. However, I would also argue that the report that the Welsh Language Board commissioned from Tony Bianchi is being used as evidence against establishing a daily paper, when it does not unambiguously say that. There are questions to be asked; I am not certain whether we should take the matter further or whether asking those questions falls within the committee's remit.

[46] **Michael German:** I think that I understand. You feel that it is unwise to have made the decision, but, because you have not seen the information, you cannot make a judgment as to whether it was a wise decision and whether it was a decision based on the facts and information provided to the Minister. So, that point is cleared.

[47] The second area that I wanted to look at was the issue of the web-based newspaper. The commitment, as you rightly read out, was for a Welsh-language daily newspaper. Do you think that a Welsh-language daily newspaper that is on the web is a Welsh-language daily newspaper, or is it fundamentally different?

[48] **Mr Griffiths:** Mae'n rhywbeth gwahanol, yn fy marn i. Nid wyf am ddadlau yn erbyn gwneud rhywbeth sy'n fentrus ac yn fodern, ac sy'n defnyddio technoleg fodern a phoblogaidd, oherwydd mae'n rhywbeth gwych i'w wneud. Fodd bynnag, os edrychwch ar gynlluniau a oedd ar y bwrdd gan sefydliadau eraill, gwelwch fod gwasanaeth ar y we yn rhan ohonynt. Yr wyf yn credu bod gwahaniaeth sylfaenol rhwng yr addewid i sefydlu papur newydd dyddiol Cymraeg a rhoi rhywbeth ar y we. Er mor boblogaidd yw'r we yng Nghymru, mae pobl sy'n methu â chael mynediad ato am wahanol resymau—ariannol a thechnolegol—ar hyn o bryd. Yr ydym ychydig flynyddoedd o gyrraedd y pwynt lle bydd pawb yn cael eu newyddion drwy gyfrwng y we.

Mr Griffiths: It is something different, in my opinion. I do not wish to argue against doing something innovative and modern, using modern, popular technology, because that is an excellent thing to do. However, if you look at the proposals put forward by other organisations, you will see that they included web-based services. I believe that there is a fundamental difference between the commitment to establish a Welsh-language daily newspaper and putting something online. Despite the popularity of the internet in Wales, there are currently people who cannot access it for various reasons, both financial and technological. We are a few years away from reaching the point where everyone can get their news online.

[49] Os ydych yn dilyn yr egwyddor fod gan bawb yr hawl i gael newyddion drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg ac i ddarllen am newyddion y byd drwy gyfrwng eu hiaith eu hunain, mae'n rhaid cael papur printiedig i ddechrau. Yr wyf yn siŵr y daw cyfnod pan fydd modd i bawb ddarllen newyddion ar y we, ac efallai y gellir symud i hynny y pryd hwnnw.

Following the principle that everyone has a right to access news through the medium of Welsh and to read about world news in their own language, it is necessary to begin with a printed newspaper. I am sure that the time will come when everyone will be able to read news online, and perhaps it will be possible to move in that direction then.

[50] **Michael German:** What you are saying is that the word 'paper' is the important part of 'newspaper'. Is it, therefore, your impression that the promise has been broken because it is not a paper version? Do you believe that it was always the intention that it should be a newspaper version and that you had always understood it to be a paper version? Is that how the promise has been broken? Is that your view?

[51] **Ms Haf:** Mae'n deg dweud hynny. Byddai unrhyw un a ddarllenodd y rhan honno o 'Cymru'n Un' yn cymryd yn ganiataol mai papur dyddiol ydyw. Mae elfennau o unrhyw bapur dyddiol modern yn cael eu cyhoeddi ar y we, ond dim ond un rhan o bapur dyddiol Cymraeg yw hwnnw.

Ms Haf: It is fair to say that. Anyone who read that part of 'One Wales' would assume that it is a daily paper. Elements of all modern, daily papers are published on the web, but that is just one aspect of a daily Welsh-language paper.

[52] **Mr Griffiths:** Gwnaed yr addewid mewn cyfnod lle mai'r ddealltwriaeth—o ran y bobl a oedd yn trafod y peth—oedd y byddai ar ffurf print. Gwnaed yr addewid ar sail y pwynt hwnnw, felly nid yw ei sefydlu ar y we yn gyfystyr â dilyn yr addewid.

Mr Griffiths: The promise was made at a time when the understanding—in terms of those who discussed it—was that it would be in print form. The promise was made on that basis, so placing it on the web is not consistent with what was promised.

[53] **Michael German:** Finally, what do you think led to the decision to move to a web-based version of a 'newspaper'? Was that decision down to the level of public investment that could be afforded, or the level of public investment that was going to be made, rather than whether or not to have a newspaper per se?

[54] **Mr Griffiths:** Credaf fod y dyfyniad a glywsom gan y Gweinidog—ei fod yn hapus bod y gyllideb ar gael i gyflawni holl ymrwymiadau diwylliannol ‘Cymru’n Un’—yn bwysig. Pe bai'r ewyllys yno i'w sefydlu, credaf y byddai'r arian wedi dod. Os edrychwn ar wariant cyhoeddus ar sefydliadau eraill—nid wyf am eu henwi—bu llawer o wariant cyhoeddus ar amryw ohonynt, ac yr oedd y gwariant hwnnw dipyn yn fwy sylweddol na'r hyn a roddwyd i'r wasg Gymraeg.

[55] **Bethan Jenkins:** Diolch am eich tystiolaeth. Nid yw *Golwg, Barn* nac *Y Cymro* yn gwerthu mwy na 10,000 o gopiâu yr un ar hyn o bryd. Pa drafodaethau a gawsoch gyda'r cyrff hynny er mwyn sefydlu agenda ar y cyd ynglŷn â'r cam nesaf ymlaen? A oeddent yn cytuno â Rhodri Glyn Thomas y byddai papur dyddiol cyfrwng Cymraeg yn fygythiad iddynt? A gredwech y byddai hyn wedi ei gyflawni pe bai consensws a phe bai'r Gweinidog wedi'i gymryd fel agenda bersonol?

[56] **Ms Haf:** Yn ddiddorol, bu Tony Bianchi yn cyfweld â chynrychiolwyr o *Golwg* ac *Y Cymro* ac yn y blaen, ac yr oeddent i gyd, yn y pen draw, yn gweld y cysyniad o gael papur dyddiol Cymraeg yn bositif. Byddai papur o'r fath yn creu sefyllfa lle mae pobl yn fwy hyderus nid yn unig i brynu papur dyddiol Cymraeg ond hefyd i edrych ar y posibilrwydd o brynu *Golwg* neu *Y Cymro*, gan fod gan bob un ohonynt arbenigedd gwahanol. Mae lle ar gyfer popeth, felly credaf fod pawb yn gefnogol.

[57] **Alun Davies:** Mae gwahaniaeth mawr rhwng cefnogi rhywbeth a mynd allan i brynu papur dyddiol bob dydd. Ni welais unrhyw dystiolaeth i ddangos yn glir bod digon o bobl sydd yn fodlon prynu papur o'r fath bob dydd. Dyna wendid eich achos a dyna'r pwynt y mae'n rhaid i chi ei ateb.

2.30 p.m.

[58] **Mr Griffiths:** Derbyniaf y pwynt, ond fy nadl i yw bod 700 o bobl wedi tanysgrifio ymlaen llaw ar gyfer rhywbeth nad oedd yn bodoli. Nid ydych yn mynd i gael miloedd o bobl yn tanysgrifio i rywbeth

Mr Griffiths: I think that what the Minister said—that he was happy that the budget was available to deliver all the cultural commitments in ‘One Wales’—is important. If the will was there to establish it, I think that the funding would have come. If we look at public expenditure on other organisations—I will not name them—a lot was spent on a number of them, and that expenditure was substantially greater than what was given to the Welsh press.

Bethan Jenkins: Thank you for your evidence. The circulation of *Golwg, Barn* and *Y Cymro* is lower than 10,000 each at present. What discussions have you had with them to develop a joint agenda on the next step forward? Did they agree with Rhodri Glyn Thomas that a Welsh-language daily newspaper would pose a threat to them? Do you think that, if there was consensus and if the Minister had taken this forward as his personal agenda, it could have been achieved?

Ms Haf: Interestingly, Tony Bianchi interviewed representatives of *Golwg* and *Y Cymro* and so on, and they all, ultimately, saw the concept of having a Welsh-language newspaper as being positive. It would create a situation where people are more confident not only to buy a Welsh-language newspaper, but also to look at the possibility of buying *Golwg* and *Y Cymro*, given that they all specialise in different areas. There is room for everything, so I think that everyone was supportive.

Alun Davies: There is a big difference between supporting something and going out every day to buy a daily paper. I have not seen any evidence to show clearly that a sufficient number of people would be prepared to buy such a paper every day. That is the weakness of your case and that is the point that you must answer.

Mr Griffiths: I accept the point, but I would argue that 700 people had subscribed beforehand to something that did not exist. You will not find thousands of people subscribing to something that does not exist.

nad yw'n bodoli. Rhaid i chi edrych ar y sefyllfa a dweud, 'Mae hwn wedi'i sefydlu', a rhaid ei hyrwyddo a meithrin y diddordeb ynddo.

You must approach the situation and say, 'This has been established', and it must be promoted and the interest in it nurtured.

[59] Gan ddychwelyd i'm pwynt blaenorol, efallai nad dyma'r ffordd i drin pob gwariant cyhoeddus, ond credaf fod rhai egwyddorion y dylid eu gweithredu oherwydd eu bod yn bwyntiau egwyddorol, ac wedyn byddai'r perfformiad yn penderfynu yn y tymor hir a fyddai unrhyw grantiau yn parhau. Daw hynny â ni yn ôl at gwestiwn Andrew ynglŷn â'r blaenamcanu ar gyfer y dyfodol. Credaf fod yn rhaid i chi sefydlu rhywbeth yn gyntaf a gweld wedyn beth yw'r sefyllfa.

Returning to my earlier point, this might not be the way to approach all public expenditure, but I think that there are some principles that should be actioned because they are points of principle, and performance would then decide in the long term whether any further grants would be provided. That brings us back to Andrew's question with regard to projections for the future. I believe that you must establish something first and then see what the situation is.

[60] **Alun Davies:** Na; rhaid i chi wybod bod galw ar gyfer rhywbeth cyn ei sefydlu. Yr wyf wedi rhedeg busnes, ac ni fyddwn yn buddsoddi fy arian mewn rhywbeth nad oeddwn yn siŵr bod marchnad ar ei gyfer. Nid oes neb—a hyn sy'n bwysig—wedi profi bod marchnad yn bodoli. Gallwch sôn am egwyddorion, ond nid yw egwyddorion yn prynu papurau newydd; pobl sy'n prynu papurau newydd.

Alun Davies: No; you must know whether there is demand for something before you establish it. I have run a business, and I would never invest my own money in something without knowing that there was a market for it. No-one—and this is the important thing—has been able to prove that a market exists. You can talk of principles, but principles do not buy newspapers; people buy newspapers.

[61] **Mr Griffiths:** A ydych chi wedi gweld unrhyw dystiolaeth i'r gwrthwyneb?

Mr Griffiths: Have you seen any contradictory evidence?

[62] **Alun Davies:** Ydw.

Alun Davies: Yes.

[63] **Mr Griffiths:** Ymhle?

Mr Griffiths: Where?

[64] **Alun Davies:** Bob dydd a phob wythnos, achos nid yw Cymry Cymraeg, fel ni, yn mynd allan i brynu cyhoeddiadau Cymraeg yn wythnosol mewn niferoedd mawr, fel yr ydych chi'n sôn amdanynt pe bai *Y Byd* neu unrhyw bapur arall yn cael ei gyhoeddi.

Alun Davies: Every day and every week, because Welsh speakers, such as us, do not go out to buy Welsh-language weekly publications in their droves, in the kind of way that you suggest would happen if *Y Byd* or any other newspaper was to be published.

[65] **Mr Griffiths:** Mae'n fater o newid canfyddiad, felly. Dyna eich canfyddiad chi o'r sefyllfa—nid wyf yn dweud ei fod yn anghywir neu'n gywir, ond rhaid cael ffeithiau caled i gefnogi hynny. Efallai bod ffeithiau caled i gefnogi hynny mewn adroddiad tebyg i adroddiad Tony Bianchi, ond nid yw ei adroddiad ef yn dweud un ffordd neu'r llall a fyddai menter papur dyddiol yn gweithio—nid yw'n dweud hynny gant y cant mewn du a gwyn, felly, mae'n

Mr Griffiths: It is a matter, therefore, of changing perception. That is your perception of the situation as it exists—I am not saying that it is right or wrong, but we need hard facts to back that up. There may be hard facts to support that assertion in a report such as Tony Bianchi's, but his report did not say one way or another whether a daily newspaper would succeed—it does not say that in black and white, so it is wrong to use it as evidence. I would disagree with you on that, as I have

anghywir i'w ddefnyddio fel tystiolaeth. Byddwn yn anghytuno â chi ar hynny, fel yr wyf wedi dweud eisoes, ac, weithiau, rhaid penderfynu ar sail egwyddor.

[66] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yr wyf am ddychwelyd at y ffaith eich bod wedi dweud nad yw adroddiad Tony Bianchi yn dweud 'na' i'r cysyniad. A fydddech yn hapus â rhyw fath o ymchwiliad ychwanegol i'r sefyllfa yn awr, yng nghyd-destun y ffaith bod Gweinidog newydd wedi dod i rym? Hefyd, a ydych yn gweld rôl i *Golwg* yn awr yng nghyd-destun y we i gynnal rhyw fath o arolwg o pa mor boblogaidd fyddai syniad fel hyn? Ai rôl *Golwg* fyddai datblygu papur dyddiol, gan mai dyna realiti'r sefyllfa ar hyn o bryd?

[67] **Ms Haf:** Byddwn yn croesawu yn bendant eich pwynt cyntaf. Yr ydym wedi gofyn i'r Pwyllgor Deisebau ofyn i'r Gweinidog newydd i edrych ar y mater eto.

[68] Nid oeddwn yn deall yn iawn beth oedd yr ail bwynt, o ran *Golwg*.

[69] **Bethan Jenkins:** Gan mai *Golwg* sydd wedi ennill y contract am yr arian sy'n bodoli ar hyn o bryd, a oes ganddo rôl i'w chwarae wrth geisio datblygu'r cysyniad o gael papur newydd dyddiol mewn print? Efallai fod hynny'n rhywbeth creadigol newydd y gallai fod yn ei wneud hefyd.

[70] **Ms Haf:** Mae hynny'n bosibilrwydd; gallwn edrych i mewn i hynny.

[71] **Mr Griffiths:** Os mai'r bwriad yw cynnal arolwg i seilio penderfyniad arno, credaf fod angen iddo gael ei wneud yn annibynnol. Gellid edrych ar y profiad y bydd *Golwg* yn ei ennill drwy gyhoeddi ar y we er mwyn cynnig gwybodaeth am y sefyllfa, ond eto wrth ystyried y niferoedd sy'n darllen y fersiwn ar y we, nid ydych yn ystyried y pobl sy'n methu â darllen y fersiwn ar y we. Nid wyf yn siŵr beth fyddai'r camau wedyn. Mae'r grant hwn wedi'i roi i *Golwg*, ond ni wn beth fydd yn digwydd nesaf o ran polisi. Felly, nid wyf yn siŵr sut mae ateb y cwestiwn.

[72] **Alun Davies:** Os nad oes cwestiynau eraill gan yr Aelodau, galwaf ar Mike i ofyn

said, and, sometimes, you must make decisions on the basis of principle.

Bethan Jenkins: I want to return to the fact that you have said that the Tony Bianchi report does not actually say 'no' to the concept. Would you be happy with some sort of additional review into the situation as it stands, in the context of the fact that there is a new Minister in place? Also, do you see a role for *Golwg* in the online context to conduct some sort of review into how popular this would be? Would it be *Golwg*'s role to develop a daily newspaper, as that is the current reality of the situation?

Ms Haf: I would certainly welcome the first point that you made. We have asked the Petitions Committee to ask the new Minister to look into this issue again.

I did not quite understand your second point, as regards *Golwg*.

Bethan Jenkins: Given that *Golwg* won the contract for the existing funding, would it have a role to play in trying to develop the concept of a daily printed newspaper form? Perhaps that is something creative and new that it could also be doing.

Ms Haf: That is a possibility; we could look into that.

Mr Griffiths: If the intention was to hold a review on which to make a decision, I believe that it should be conducted independently. The experience that *Golwg* will gain from online publication could be looked at in order to provide information on the situation, but then again in looking at the number of people who read the online version, you do not take into account the people who cannot read the online version. I am not sure what the next steps would be. *Golwg* has been awarded this grant, but I do not know what will happen next in terms of policy. So, I am not sure how to answer the question.

Alun Davies: If Members do not have any other questions, I call on Mike to ask the final

y cwestiwn olaf.

question.

[73] **Michael German:** To put your argument into a single sentence, the Bianchi report suggested that there needed to be market research, you do not know whether any market research was carried out and whether the Minister's decision was based on market research, simply because you do not have access to the papers, as they have not been made public, and your position now is that market research ought to be conducted in order to ensure that the right decision was made. Is that right?

[74] **Ms Haf:** I think that market research is definitely needed. Perhaps that is something that we can do—as Bethan suggested—through *Golwg*. Going back to the original point of Tony Bianchi's report, the other thing that needs to be considered is whether more evidence was used in coming to the decision at the end.

[75] **Mr Griffiths:** Yr wyf yn cytuno. **Mr Griffiths:** I agree. I believe that that Credaf fod hynny'n crynhoi'r pwynt yn sums up the point quite well. weddol.

[76] **Alun Davies:** Diolch yn fawr am dreulio amser gyda ni y prynhawn yma, am baratoi'ch tystiolaeth, ac am ateb ein cwestiynau. Yr ydym yn gwerthfawrogi hynny'n fawr iawn. Byddaf yn gofyn i'r Aelodau drafod i ba gyfeiriad yr awn nesaf gyda'r ddeiseb hon. Felly, gofynnaf ichi adael y bwrdd ar gyfer y drafodaeth honno.

Alun Davies: Thank you for spending time with us this afternoon, for preparing your evidence, and for answering our questions. We very much appreciate it. I will ask Members to discuss our next move with this particular petition. Therefore, I will ask you to leave the table for that discussion.

[77] Aelodau, yr ydym wedi clywed y dystiolaeth ac wedi cael cyfle i ddarllen y papurau sy'n rhoi cefndir i'r dystiolaeth. A oes gan unrhyw Aelod gynnig o ran sut y dylem symud ymlaen gyda'r ddeiseb hon?

Members, we have heard the evidence and we have had an opportunity to read the background papers. Does any Member have a proposal as to how we should move forward with this petition?

[78] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I just think, Minister—sorry, Chair; you have not been elevated yet. [*Laughter.*] I know that you have aspirations in that department.

[79] **Alun Davies:** Stay in order, Andrew.

[80] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** As we now have a new Minister in place, it would seem pertinent to seek his views on this project, although I doubt that they would differ greatly from the previous Minister's views. A key area that we need to work on is the freedom of information request that the petitioners clearly have over the grey area of information. Perhaps the committee clerk could work with the petitioners to find out exactly what form of questioning/information would make the debate clearer on behalf of the petitioners.

[81] I was heartened to hear Hywel's example of the Basque country and how there is a live example there of a regional newspaper that is specific to a language. I would like to find out more about that. If the clerking team could find out more information about that for us, it would give us a better understanding of whether there is a proven track record in Europe, and whether that could be brought to Wales.

[82] **Mr Sanchez:** That sounds like a journey to Spain may be required. [*Laughter.*]

[83] **Michael German:** To add to that request, and to make it even tighter for the Minister, we could ask what market research was conducted that led to the decision that was

arrived at, and how you can reconcile the statement that there was money to fund a Welsh-language newspaper when that money turned out to be £200,000, which would not have funded a Welsh-language newspaper. We could then be clear on whether the decision that was taken was based on evidence about markets or whether it was based on available cash.

[84] **Bethan Jenkins:** Hoffwn weld datganiad gan y Gweinidog newydd ynglŷn â dilyniant polisi. Nawr bod y £200,000 hwn wedi mynd tuag at sefydlu *Golwg* ar y we, beth fydd yn digwydd nesaf? A fydd proses o fonitro? A fydd mwy o arian yn cael ei roi mewn tair neu bedair blynedd ac, os felly, sut y caiff hynny ei fwydo'n ôl i mewn i'r Cynulliad fel bod Aelodau'r Cynulliad yn cael mewnbwn i'r hyn sy'n digwydd yn y dyfodol? Mae'r pwynt hefyd a ofynnais i Sioned, ynglŷn â *Golwg*, efallai, yn chwarae rôl mewn ymchwil farchnata o'r fath—gan mai *Golwg* sydd wedi ennill y contract hwn—i weld a yw papur dyddiol drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg yn bosibl.

Bethan Jenkins: I would like to see a statement from the new Minister regarding continuity of policy. Now that this £200,000 has been given to set up *Golwg* on the internet, what will happen next? Will there be a monitoring process? Will more funding be awarded in three or four years and, if so, how will that be fed back into the Assembly so that Assembly Members can have an input into what happens in the future? There is also the point that I asked Sioned regarding *Golwg* perhaps playing some kind of role in market research—as *Golwg* has been awarded this contract—to see whether a Welsh-language daily newspaper could be viable in the future.

2.40 p.m.

[85] **Alun Davies:** Thank you. There are several different actions there. I am anxious that the Petitions Committee does not turn into a secondary scrutiny committee. There must be clear directions regarding the work of this committee and the relationship with other methods of ongoing scrutiny of ministerial action; there is a difference between directing petitions and scrutinising Ministers, which is rightly the work of the Communities and Culture Committee. If I have understood it correctly, Members wish to remain in control of this petition for a while longer—is that the case? I see that that is your decision. You therefore wish to take the actions that you have outlined—is there any dissent from that?

[86] **Michael German:** I believe that it would be unwise to promote any one organisation to conduct market research; you would want to be as independent as possible. It is not that I do not agree with some of the issues that have been raised, but I do not believe that one organisation should do that. I would much prefer to say that we need to be reassured that market research is conducted, has been conducted, and will be conducted.

[87] **Alun Davies:** I think that that point is taken. I do not believe that the Government would be seeking to employ any individual organisation or business ahead of a tendering process. Therefore, are Members happy with the actions that have been outlined?

[88] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could the clerk highlight the actions as he understood them? There were about four strands. For clarity—and for the petitioners' benefit—it would be beneficial to hear those.

[89] **Alun Davies:** You want to see the minutes of the meeting during the meeting—you should join the Labour Party.

[90] **Mr Sanchez:** I was not absolutely clear about the freedom of information point. We can speak to the petitioners about what they have already asked the Minister, and clarify with them whether or not they have submitted a freedom of information request, or whether they propose to submit one; we can do that. Is that what you meant by that?

[91] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes. I believe that it would be better to work with the petitioners so that there is no duplication of process. That could then perhaps be collated into some sort of documentation so that we as Members get a good insight into what is going on, and the petitioners can feel satisfied that all angles have been covered.

[92] **Mr Sanchez:** Yes, we can do that.

[93] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yn ôl e-bost a dderbyniwyd gan Gymdeithas yr Iaith ym mis Chwefror, er nad oedd y penderfyniad wedi ei seilio ar gynllun *Y Byd*, trafodwyd y fenter gyda nifer o bobl sydd â phrofiad o gynhyrchu papur dyddiol, a phobl sydd â phrofiad o'r wasg Gymreig.

Bethan Jenkins: According to an e-mail received from the Welsh Language Society in February, although the decision was not based on the *Y Byd* scheme, the initiative was discussed with several people who have experience of producing newspapers, and people with experience of the Welsh-language press.

[94] Felly, mae trafodaethau wedi digwydd rhwng y Gweinidog a phobl yn y sector. Credaf mai'r pwynt yw nad ydynt yn gwybod yn iawn beth oedd y trafodaethau hynny.

Therefore, discussions have taken place between the Minister and people in the sector. I believe that the point is that they do not know exactly what those decisions were.

[95] **Alun Davies:** Mae hwnnw'n bwynt digon teg.

Alun Davies: That is a fair point.

[96] Are we clear on that? I see that we are.

2.43 p.m.

P-03-139 Canolfan Gelfyddydau Glannau Gwy P-03-139 Wyeside Arts Centre

[97] **Alun Davies:** I understand that the petitioners for this item are Peter Cox, Guy Roderick and Sybil Crouch.

[98] Diolch am eich amser y prynhawn yma. Mae'n flin gennyf am y trac sain sydd yn y cefndir; drwy ddefnyddio'r clustffonau, gallwch glywed yr hyn sy'n cael ei ddweud.

Thank you for your time this afternoon. I apologise for the soundtrack that is going on in the background; if you use the headsets, you will be able to hear what is being said.

[99] Mae'r pwyllgor wedi cael cyfle i edrych ar eich deiseb ac i'w thrafod. Hoffwn ofyn i chi ei thrafod gyda ni am dua 10 munud ac i gyflwyno'r dadleuon sydd gennych, eich syniadau, a'r ffeithiau yr ydych am i ni eu hystyried. Gofynnaf i chi wneud sylwadau agoriadol, ac wedyn bydd cyfle i Aelodau ofyn cwestiynau i chi.

The committee has had an opportunity to look at your petition and to discuss it. I would like to ask you to discuss it with us for about 10 minutes, and to present your arguments, ideas, and the facts that you want us to consider. I ask you to make some introductory remarks, and then Members will have the opportunity to ask you questions.

[100] **Mr Cox:** My name is Peter Cox, and I am vice-chair of the trustees of Wyeside Arts Centre. On my left is Sybil Crouch, who will also be speaking today. Sybil is head of cultural services at Swansea University, and she was chair of the Arts Council of Wales from 1999 to 2003. She is also currently vice-chair of the Film Agency for Wales and director of Taliesin Arts Centre. On Sybil's left is Guy Roderick, who is the chief executive officer of Wyeside

Arts Centre, and he is also our artistic director.

[101] We have not invited an Assembly Member to speak on our behalf today. We think that Members have already made their points very publicly, and they are on record. We did not want this petition to be seen as singling out any particular Member or party for preferential purposes. It is very much a cross-party issue. Guy will start us off.

[102] **Mr Roderick:** I will cover the basic history of Wyeside Arts Centre. It was established 30 years ago this December, with the specific intent of bringing high-quality art within the scope of this rural community and, in particular, to offer the young people of the town and of mid Wales a cultural experience. That is still an ethos that Wyeside aspires to today.

[103] Wyeside was a visionary inception by two people: Elizabeth Pugh, who owned the building, and Donald Jones, a solicitor. It was groundbreaking at the time, and it has influenced the inception of other arts centres throughout Wales and across the border. For the first 20 years, Wyeside undertook a very broad programme of activity, including vibrant and thriving community arts-based activities that encouraged participation in a range of arts. Wyeside is also home to Wales's longest-running cinema, which was opened at the venue in 1911 and has been screening films there ever since.

[104] Over 10 years ago, Wyeside was obliged to address the debts that it had inherited when it first opened, and which exceeded £100,000. There was a strong, business-like attitude towards addressing these debts, and in partnership with the arts council and Powys County Council, a strategy was implemented to enable Wyeside to trade its way out of debt, which it did over a three-year period. It met all of its targets and, at the same time, increased activity and attendance in terms of the arts. Unfortunately, one of the sacrifices that had to be made was the breadth of community arts activity that Wyeside had held so dear because the revenue was no longer there. So, essentially, there was an increase in cinema activity to enable it to meet the shortfall in public subsidy for the activities that Wyeside had been promoting.

[105] Wyeside has had some remarkable achievements over the last 10 years. One of the things that it had to do was move to a significantly increased level of voluntary support, and it now relies on over 100 hours of volunteer support per month. It has been commended by Investors in People for the way in which it manages itself as an employer—in fact, it is only the third arts centre in Wales to be awarded Investors in People status. Its achievements as a voluntary organisation were recognised at a reception to recognise the value of voluntary organisations at Downing Street, and independent reports by consultants, including officers from the arts council, have commended Wyeside on its business practices.

[106] I will briefly tie this up. This year, Wyeside will promote over 1,000 events, and it anticipates receiving something in the region of 40,000 visitors. It is open to the public six days a week, and as our petition illustrates, it receives a great deal of support from people who use the arts centre. Finally, when Wyeside applies for money, it points out that its activities meet the aspirations set out in Powys County Council's corporate improvement plan, Powys County Council's community strategy, Powys County Council's art strategy, the Arts Council of Wales's arts development strategy, and the Welsh Assembly Government's culture strategy for Wales.

2.50 p.m.

[107] **Mr Cox:** As the vice-chair of the trustees, I feel a great sense of responsibility today to represent the voice of the over 8,000 signatures to the petition. My task is simply to break that down—a very multilayered and complex collection of interest groups and individuals have signed the petition.

[108] The key central group is our audience. We have an extraordinary range of people who attend activities at Wyeside, and they are of all ages and all backgrounds and abilities, and from a wide geographical spread. Arts practitioners and professionals also use Wyeside, and that is an important and key part of the arts and cultural scene in mid Wales.

[109] Arts practitioners around mid Wales are involved in many different sectors. They are involved in health, education, criminal justice, skills development, the voluntary sector, community regeneration, lifelong learning and mental health, and they work with people of all abilities. Wyeside is an extremely important point of access for professionals in mid Wales, as well as for the public.

[110] Linking those two things is participation. We have involved young people in activities over many years in lots of different ways. Mid Powys Youth Theatre, for example, is a renowned and award-winning youth theatre, and it is founded out of Wyeside Arts Centre in conjunction with Theatr Powys, and it has a 21-year history—it celebrates its twenty-first birthday this year. It has represented Wales outside Wales; it has been to the National Theatre as one of the winners in the Lloyds Bank Young Theatre Challenge in the past.

[111] Many of the young people who signed the petition made a very strong case for the importance of Wyeside, not only for access to the arts in rural mid Wales, but also as a springboard and launching pad for their careers. Clearly, the creative industry sector is an important sector for the future of our communities, and Wyeside has a strong history of putting people in very good, early development in their early years of access to the arts and participation.

[112] We also have a strong cultural tourism place in the mid Wales economy. People use Wyeside when they come on holiday. Estate agents cite Wyeside as a reason why people might want to move in and start businesses and that kind of thing. I moved to mid Wales 22 years ago, and I have since become an employer, bringing £2.5 million worth of inward investment to the mid Wales economy. A key reason for me and my family in choosing this part of mid Wales was access to the arts through Wyeside Arts Centre.

[113] Young people also get involved in many different activities through Wyeside, and again, that is not just in access, but through the Builth Wells Community Arts organisation—it is a combination of a venue that provides opportunities for people to view high-quality product and for people to participate. Our most regular users come from a geographical area between 600 to 700 square miles.

[114] **Ms Crouch:** The number of signatures to the petition attests to the importance of Wyeside's local value. I will attest to Wyeside's strategic value more widely in Wales. It is part of a pattern of cultural provision and investment across the country. This has seen the development of new and refurbished facilities in cities, towns and villages across Wales. This most recent revival of civic pride in arts and cultural facilities goes back about 30 years, with local authorities, universities and other institutions really getting behind this notion that a sense of citizen entitlement exists—in the same way as we perhaps take for granted in terms of sport—for people to have access to good arts facilities. This is the idea that people should not have to travel long distances to access arts and their culture.

[115] The last eight years have seen a further resurgence of that investment, with lottery money coming on stream. The arts have been among the beneficiaries. This investment in bricks and mortar has not been random—until the capital lottery programme closed recently, the arts council had a very good, coherent and well-thought-out strategy that recognised the importance of having investment in towns and villages, as well as in our bigger cities. Wyeside has benefited from that capital lottery investment, as have many places across the

country. The people of this area can appreciate cinema, music, theatre and the visual arts in a comfortable, safe and professional environment. Of course, any threat to the funding of an organisation like Wyeside means that the community also loses a hugely valuable community asset. I think that most people would agree that there are very few things still left in the public realm—things like libraries and parks, post offices and arts centres—that are not made for profit or for shopping or for drinking alcohol, but are basically places where people can join together and enjoy and celebrate a sense of community.

[116] Why did the arts council cut the funding for St Donats Arts Centre and why is Wyeside's future under threat? I think that there are a couple of interlinked factors here. One is that there is a very simple view within the arts council that it has too many clients—'The list is too long, so we had better make the list shorter'. Alongside that, there is unfortunately a view that bigger must mean better, that it must mean more excellence, it must be more efficient and, by its very nature, size equals value. Of course, the other side of that coin is that surely small, local and rural must somehow be of lower quality, and must somehow be less efficient. The passionate defence that has been mounted by St Donats Arts Centre and by Wyeside will make the arts council realise that it needs to challenge those assumptions and revisit its priorities.

[117] Secondly, the arts council has certainly become more centralised over the last five years. When I left the arts council, I left it with a new structure that put a lot more emphasis on the role of the regions. The role of the regional committees, where the local authorities are represented, was strengthened and the role of the regional directors was such that they were made part of the senior management team. That was overturned five years ago and we now have, I am afraid, a very Cardiff-centric arts council. The point of the restructuring was to say, 'Actually, it is the local and the regional that make up the national; the national does not exist without the local. It is the local that makes Wales the country that it is'. I think that we are seeing a combination of the following views: 'We need to shrink the number of organisations that we fund'; 'Big is better'; and, of course, 'Large, metropolitan-type organisations, by their very nature, are superior'. Perhaps there is also an element of thinking that perhaps the small organisations will not be able to mount as vigorous a defence of their future as those with a significant amount of clout.

[118] I will conclude by asking, through this committee, for a few very basic things. I believe that the arts council has a duty to follow the spirit of the Minister's remit letter, in focusing investment and in increasing access to and widening participation in high-quality arts. In the remit letter, there is a sub-clause that mentions Communities First areas in particular, but I think that many people with rural experience will know that there is deprivation everywhere. Very often, in rural areas, it is below the surface and more difficult to identify. So, arts council, invest in what the Minister tells you to invest in.

[119] One of the problems in relation to Wyeside is that the arts council has been inconsistent and incoherent in its dealings with the organisation. I think that every organisation has the right to expect coherency, consistency and transparency from public bodies. I also feel that we have got to this position because the arts council does not have a policy on how it supports theatres and arts centres. It had a capital policy, which was very good, but it does not have a policy on revenue funding and what level of support is appropriate. A policy for the support of arts centres and theatres, put together in partnership with local authorities and other providers, is urgently needed and should be required of the arts council, by the Minister, as a matter of priority.

[120] Finally and crucially for this organisation, it is most important that Wyeside's three-year funding agreement should be reinstated with terms negotiated by the chairs of both organisations and with independent advice. There is some history and background; that needs to be cleared away and Wyeside's future secured in the context of a proper strategy and a

proper communication of that strategy.

3.00 p.m.

[121] **Alun Davies:** Diolch yn fawr. Yr ydym yn gwerthfawrogi eich sylwadau agoriadol. Byddwch yn falch o glywed ein bod, y bore yma, wedi lansio'r adroddiad ar dlodi yng nghefn gwlad, sydd yn delio gyda rhai o'r materion yr ydych wedi'u trafod yn eich cyflwyniad. Yr wyf yn awr yn gwahodd aelod arall o'r Is-bwyllgor Datblygu Gwledig, Mike German, i ofyn y cwestiwn nesaf.

Alun Davies: Thank you. We appreciate your opening remarks. You will be pleased to hear that, this morning, we launched our report on rural poverty, which deals with some of the issues that you raised in your introduction. I now invite another member of the Rural Development Sub-committee, Mike German, to ask the next question.

[122] **Michael German:** I echo the view about poverty being hidden, and not being seen and observed well enough in rural Wales. That was the finding of the Assembly sub-committee.

[123] I want to try to establish what it is about the criteria that has played against you—if, indeed, there were to be criteria. The third paragraph of the supporting letter to the petition says that:

[124] 'Wyeside's crisis...raises general issues about appropriate criteria for the Minister's remit letter to ACW'.

[125] You have just mentioned, specifically, Communities First areas. Is that the part of the criteria that is at fault, or has some other part of the criteria run against you and made it more difficult for you?

[126] **Ms Crouch:** One of the difficulties is that that sub-clause—forgive my lack of knowledge of the proper term—is focused upon to the detriment of the rest of the sentence, which goes on to talk about promoting access to the arts for the people of Wales. Giving a particular focus is, of course, appropriate, but it does not mean that you only support access to the arts in those particular areas. So, I think that the remit letter needs to be understood by the arts council in the sense in which it was intended, rather than, if you like, the council being selective with its choice of bits of sentences.

[127] **Michael German:** What evidence do you have that the Arts Council of Wales has misinterpreted, or not interpreted fully, the views of the Minister's remit letter?

[128] **Mr Roderick:** Even within the funds available there are centres, such as Wyeside, being threatened with closure, which will disenfranchise people from any sort of access. There will be no alternative. There is lack of rationale by which we can make these statements to the arts council in order to argue that there is a way of achieving what the Assembly wishes. That has already been presented to the arts council, but it has not been taken up.

[129] **Michael German:** Are there others who have also fallen foul of this criterion? Apart from St Donats, what other organisation would be in that category?

[130] **Mr Roderick:** This year, I believe that it is St Donats Arts Centre and Wyeside Arts Centre. I believe that there are other organisations that have been given an indication that next year is possibly the year in which their future will be addressed, as money is focused particularly at one part of a strategy at the cost of organisations that address the crucial first part of the remit letter.

[131] **Michael German:** To be clear, what part of the strategy is at fault?

[132] **Mr Roderick:** I am afraid that I am unclear as to what the arts council's strategy is. I have asked, but I do not believe that there is a strategy.

[133] **Ms Crouch:** The issue is that Wyeside and similar organisations are measurably delivering on the access agenda, yet funding is either being withdrawn or threatened for no clear reasons. It has been implied that, somehow, they are not priorities in terms of delivering access—that there are fewer access issues, if you like, in rural areas. If Wyeside was in Swansea's Castle ward, perhaps, it would not be judged in the same way. However, Wyeside can provide evidence to support the access criterion laid down by the Minister.

[134] **Michael German:** To play hardball on this, is this because someone, somewhere in the arts council is interpreting access as being access for poor people when there are no poor people in Wyeside's area?

[135] **Ms Crouch:** You could say that.

[136] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That is quite a damning statement, and one that I am sure we will look forward to investigating further. There are two strands here, one of which was mentioned by Guy. You said that, when you came on board, there was a debt at Wyeside Arts Centre and that you paid it off. I am not sure whether I heard the figure correctly: was it £80,000 or £8,000?

[137] **Mr Roderick:** The debt was just in excess of £100,000.

[138] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I did not hear it correctly either way, then. If Wyeside was that financially secure then, what has radically changed now? If you were able to pay off a £100,000 debt over three years, which is no mean feat, what has changed dramatically since? Is it the level of work and commitment to the area, or is it just that it is a far more expensive operation to run and, without the grant, it is just a non-runner?

[139] **Mr Roderick:** It is a combination of a number of things. The need to address the £100,000 debt was brought about by a change in the legislation, whereby banks had to limit the amount of borrowing that they were allowed to give to charities. So, Wyeside was told by its bank that it would have to bring the overdraft down. There was no public money available to write off debts, so we argued for a capital investment in order to improve facilities to increase turnover. We increased turnover by £100,000. Essentially, we turned the theatre into a cinema. That was to save Wyeside. The downside of that is that youth dance workshops and youth theatre workshops, bingo, and community arts classes of all varieties had to go, because there was no money to subsidise them. We reached our maximum earning capacity. To give you an example by way of explanation, we were open seven days a week. We did the sums and realised that we could generate a similar amount of income over a six-day period, thereby reducing our expenditure but still maintaining income. We are now operating at capacity.

[140] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could you slow down, please, because you are competing with the music from the Young Farmers Club. I want to take all of this information on board.

[141] **Mr Roderick:** I am sorry, I am just aware of the time.

[142] We increased our earning potential and cut our expenditure to a minimum, but we are now at capacity in terms of what we can earn. We cannot keep offsetting the increases to the customers. We still maintain a strategy of ensuring that the arts are financially accessible to young people. Wyeside's funding from the local authority has stood still for seven years; we

have received £37,000 for the last seven years. There has been no increase. The arts council is unable to give us any more money. The wages bill alone for staffing events, the number of which has risen from 800 to 1,000, is bound to increase each year. Staff are not on an incremental scale, but the very least that we try to offer staff is something to help them to keep up with inflation. Fuel bills and the other costs of running a relatively old arts centre mean that, although we wrote off the earlier debt, we are now accumulating another debt. We have flagged up for the last five years that this would happen.

[143] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Sybil and Peter, the point was made that numerous events are held at Wyeside. Assuming the worst-case scenario, what are the options for the community in Builth if Wyeside goes? That must also be a factor. You look at the overall strategy for where these 1,000 events could be held and where 40,000 individuals could access what you are offering.

[144] **Mr Cox:** The reality is that we bring our audience and participants from an extraordinarily wide area of a minimum of 6,700 square miles. The suggestion is that many people would have to travel to Hereford—they would go across the border from the east Radnorshire area. There is no equivalent arts centre until you get to Aberystwyth or, really, until you get to south Wales and Swansea. Sybil is vice-chair of the film agency in Wales; that is the sector that I work in. It is a developing sector and is the key global artform of the late twentieth century. Wales is developing its film-making sector. There is a theatre in Brecon and Theatr Hafren in Newtown, but to get access to the kind of things that Guy is able to programme, we would have to go a very long way indeed. So, you are talking about a huge environmental impact in terms of the transport miles that people would have to undertake to access this kind of cultural activity. It is beyond thinking about, particularly with the price of fuel being high on people's agenda at the moment. It makes no environmental sense whatsoever, and it makes no cultural access sense whatsoever.

[145] **Alun Davies:** I am surprised that you dismiss Theatr Brycheiniog so easily.

[146] **Mr Cox:** Not at all. I go to watch Theatr Brycheiniog productions, and go to Aberystwyth Arts Centre regularly; I am a great supporter of both organisations. However, the reality is that the film content of the programme does not exist in Brecon. The access to foreign-language films and non-mainstream films are the things that young people tell us are particularly important aspects of their access. We have those comments endlessly on the petition. I meant no disrespect; once again, it was due to time constraints.

3.10 p.m.

[147] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I would like to enlarge on that. St Donats Arts Centre was mentioned—and I declare an interest, because it is in my constituency and I have been involved to a point—and it was successful in its appeal and it is now negotiating with the Arts Council of Wales to try to formulate a longer-term strategy. Have you appealed against this decision or are you in the process of appealing against the decision? What are you doing?

[148] **Mr Cox:** I think that Guy should clarify the situation with Wyeside, and perhaps Sybil can talk about St Donats.

[149] **Mr Roderick:** We have attempted to appeal, but part of the reason why we addressed this petition specifically to the Minister and the Assembly is that we were unable to establish the level of dialogue that we had hoped to achieve in order to address this issue.

[150] **Mr Cox:** We should also clarify that St Donats' grant was cut, whereas Wyeside's petition and campaign were already up and running, so, any decision to cut us was put on hold, and we are still in that position.

[151] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** For clarity, you have appealed, have you not? Have you actioned that process or not?

[152] **Mr Cox:** We would have to have been cut in the first place to make an appeal. Our campaign and our petition began before the arts council made a decision at its council meeting. It has been considering and discussing us without cutting us ever since, and it is now four months later.

[153] **Ms Crouch:** That is one of the key issues—Wyeside is having to operate in a climate of huge uncertainty. Only the first three months of its grant has been released. It is unable to replace staff who have left because people are uncertain about the future. It is has been put into some difficulty in terms of being able to make proper business decisions, because of the uncertainty and the lack of coherence in terms of its future, and a failure to acknowledge the real costs of maintaining a facility such as this. It goes back to the need for a coherent policy from the arts council.

[154] My understanding is that although St Donats won its appeal on the basis that the procedure that was followed was not correct, its future is far from secure. The arts council has said that there is an understanding in place that the arts centres that did not get Arts Outside Cardiff funding—this is all a bit arcane—three years ago would be priorities for additional lottery funding. So, if you want to do something special in terms of your programme, you can apply for some lottery money. A lot of small organisations rely on that top-up over and above their revenue grant. St Donats has been given the opportunity to use that little caveat that said that those organisations would be priorities, however, when Wyeside tried to make the same argument, that it needs that extra money to programme appropriately and that the arts council said that it would receive priority for that lottery funding, I was at the meeting where the chief executive said, ‘Oh, that doesn’t apply any more’. On the one hand, we have an arts organisation that is being cut being told that it can apply as a priority, and, on the other, another organisation is told it cannot apply for that funding. There is uncertainty, a lack of coherence and a lack of consistency, and people cannot run organisations, employ staff, and have a commitment to their communities without clarity from the organisations that support them. That is one of the main things that we are seeking for Wyeside.

[155] **Alun Davies:** Before I bring Mike in, I warn Members that I will wind up questions in about five minutes’ time.

[156] **Michael German:** I want to be clear on this point. Am I right to say that you have had the first three months of funding—presumably that is April, May and June—at the old rate, but you have no money or guarantee of any money for July, August and September at the present moment, and that you have not been allowed—I am phrasing it that way, but you can tell me if I am wrong—to make a lottery bid?

[157] **Mr Roderick:** We are not in a position to make a lottery bid because to make a lottery bid, you must have the security of a 12-month funding agreement from your arts organisation, so we do not fit the criteria. We were also told that we could only expect half of what we got last year, which makes it less of an issue as we have a much bigger problem to deal with, and that is what we have been trying to get across, but, unfortunately, so far—

[158] **Michael German:** I want to be absolutely clear on this. For July, August and September, what precisely have you been told?

[159] **Mr Roderick:** We were told that for July, August and September—and this was only verbally, over the phone—we should probably get a second-quarter cheque, but that there was no guarantee for the third and fourth quarters, which makes it difficult.

[160] **Michael German:** So, at the moment, it is hand to mouth.

[161] **Mr Roderick:** Yes, and the nature of the organisation is such that we have to plan at least 18 months in advance, so unfortunately—

[162] **Michael German:** And because it is hand to mouth, you cannot apply for a lottery grant.

[163] **Mr Roderick:** No, and we cannot re-employ staff.

[164] **Bethan Jenkins:** The financial issues have been well rehearsed and I am sure that we could talk about those afterwards, but on something that you have all mentioned, namely youth arts development and having to change that in accordance with the financial difficulties that you have encountered, I have an interest in that because I was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales and I saw the development structures from county level to national level. I have undertaken some research on the areas that young people, who take part in national youth arts, come from and those areas that they do not come from, and the progression that occurs. How do you see that affecting your area? You said that people would potentially have to travel to Hereford for the arts to the detriment of youth arts progression in your area.

[165] **Mr Roderick:** Young people, in particular, do not have access to transport to get them anywhere else, unless they are lucky enough to know someone with a car who will take them there. So, Wyeseide is their one and only opportunity. At the heart of the centre, and the reason why it was set up, is to encourage and enable young people to access a range of art forms, and not just as simple observers and paying customers. We encourage them to participate and to develop an understanding of the language of the arts. That is why Wyeseide is very good and why I was appointed, because my background is as a youth arts worker.

[166] I established the Mid Powys Youth Theatre and I have always been excited about the long-term strategy of investing in young people and encouraging young people to embrace and understand the arts. There is a lot of short-term thinking, but many young people have come through the youth theatre and, in fact, the twenty-first youth theatre show will be directed by one of the young people who was in the first show. There are many young people in the industry, in the arts and other sectors and that is all down to the arts activity that Wyeseide promoted and encouraged; we want to get that back, but, in order to do so, we need the support. We can evidence our success, but it is about how we get someone to see the evidence, measure it against what appear to be published criteria and support our successes.

[167] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is that where you see—[*Inaudible.*]—and cinemas? Is that where you see the lack of coherence and strategy and the youth arts coming into that? Is that where you would like to see your role coming in?

[168] **Ms Crouch:** There is a dichotomy relating to the emerging view, which is the entitlement view. For example, the Assembly is looking at making the arts a statutory responsibility of local authorities. Not many people are aware that within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child there is the right to enjoy and to practise the arts. If national policies are shrinking the amount of organisations that receive money, concentrating that funding into metropolitan or larger regional centres, then there will be a direct effect on the entitlement of the citizen, but particularly of relevance, and about which we all feel passionate, is the effect on the entitlement of the child and the young person. So, it is all interconnected. If we lose those resources, we lose opportunities for young people in the future. To be able to provide those opportunities, there needs to be more than short-termism—people need to know that they have a future and a resource over the medium to long term.

[169] **Bethan Jenkins:** Just to finish, you introduced the regionalisation, so do you believe that there should be a reconsideration of that strategy on behalf of the arts centre and is that something that you would like this committee to call for?

[170] **Ms Crouch:** The arts council needs to have clear, published policies against which it is accountable. My own view is that the regional committees and localities must have a role in shaping national policy, otherwise we go back to—we have already gone back—that top-down approach of ‘the centre knows best’. That goes against the grain of so much of what we believe in in Wales.

[171] **Alun Davies:** Diolch am eich amser y prynhawn yma. Gofynnaf i chi adael y bwrdd tra’r ydym yn trafod sut i symud ymlaen. Mae croeso i chi wrando ar ein trafodaeth yn y gynulleidfa. **Alun Davies:** Thank you for your time this afternoon. I ask you to leave the table while we discuss how we move forward. You are welcome to listen to our discussion in the audience.

3.20 p.m.

[172] I find this quite a difficult issue and I do not know whether I should declare a constituency interest. In the opening statements, I detected a lot of anger and frustration in what was being said; I share a lot of that frustration, and those of us who were present this morning to discuss poverty in rural Wales will appreciate that access to cultural experiences are an essential part of what should be the Government’s agenda.

[173] The whole issue is the policy and the approach of the Arts Council for Wales; Wyeside is one example, and Ystradgynlais is another, of where Arts Outside Cardiff has not succeeded in securing cultural experiences, if you like, for people in sometimes deprived areas. I probably share the view of the petitioners that there is a lack of recognition of the needs of people, particularly young people, in areas such as this.

[174] I will start the discussion by saying that it might be useful for the Petitions Committee to ask the arts council to attend committee to discuss the policy that had directly led to this situation. I know that it has been discussed previously. If the arts council were to attend it would be a good opportunity to air some of these issues at least, but, at the same time, I am aware that the funding of small arts centres such as Wyeside—and I am also thinking of Ystradgynlais in particular, because we are in the Breconshire area—is important. That probably implies a wider review of arts-funding policy, which is probably the responsibility of the relevant scrutiny committee, rather than of this committee. I will now throw the discussion open to Members.

[175] **Michael German:** I agree with that; I think that we need to understand more, but there is a short term and a longer-term problem here. In the longer term, we need to acquaint the arts council with the report that was published this morning so that it is aware of what rural poverty is, and that access and rural poverty are locked closely together. I think that that would be a splendid outcome. In the short term, we have an arts centre dangling on a string, working hand to mouth for its funding, and unclear as to how it can secure its future. It seems to me that its being able to secure its own future is the issue here.

[176] I would like to think that we could take immediate steps to ensure that this matter is resolved as swiftly as possible, either through the intervention of the Minister or the intervention of the arts council directly, so that, one way or the other, everyone is aware that we have a situation where certainty is not being provided—and it seems, from what we have heard, that it is the only arts centre in Wales that has not been given certainty for this current year; we are not talking about future years. The whole issue of application for Lottery

funding, which is more difficult now with the Olympics, is in doubt anyway, because it cannot make an application while that uncertainty exists.

[177] Ending uncertainty seems to me to be something that this committee can do, either by asking the Minister to intervene to ensure that this matter is brought swiftly to a conclusion, or, alternatively, by bringing it to the attention of the arts council. I would personally favour asking the Minister.

[178] **Bethan Jenkins:** I second the point about talking to the Minister about this issue, but, as you indicated, Alun, there is a wider remit for a committee, probably the Communities and Culture Committee, to look at the overall arts strategy in relation to not just rural poverty but devolving the arts to other areas of Wales, taking into consideration the development of young people, as mentioned, given the possible statutory duty on local authorities to provide cultural activities.

[179] **Alun Davies:** I think that the new Minister will regret his choice of holiday dates when he returns.

[180] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I concur with my colleagues. What we must also focus on is that this petition is specific to Wyeside. We have heard about the precarious nature of finances at Wyeside, so it is an exercise of bringing this to the Minister's attention, so that the arguments that we have heard today, which are persuasive and compelling, weigh on the Minister's mind so that he steps in in the short term and offers some sort of alleviation to help secure the longer-term future. However, ultimately, although there are two sides to every argument, from the evidence that we have gathered here, it seems that there is an issue of a national policy and how that is directed by the arts council. I would like to hear the arts council's view, but I would suggest that, in the longer term, it would be a piece of work on which the Communities and Culture Committee could launch a full scrutiny. However, the petition relates to Wyeside Arts Centre and not the national policy. It is a symptom of the position in which it finds itself.

[181] **Alun Davies:** Okay. Are we coming to a consensus? The first action is to seek the views of the new Minister and to ask for an intervention.

[182] **Michael German:** That is to speedily resolve the short-term funding issue at the Wyeside Arts Centre.

[183] **Alun Davies:** I see that we are agreed on that. The second action would be to ask the Communities and Culture Committee of the National Assembly for Wales to ask the arts council to review its approach to arts outside Cardiff and to ask specifically how the arts council would see the new cultural duty, on which the Government is seeking to work with local authorities to provide a cultural experience for everyone, operating within the policy structures that it is now operating.

[184] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I do not dissent from that, Chair, but I think that the middle part should be the arts council coming in to give its side of the argument. When we have collated that, we could push it into the scrutiny process of the Communities and Culture Committee. As I said, there are two sides to every argument, and it is important that we project the level of opinion that was shown to us today, along with the persuasive argument, and hear what the arts council has to say about its remit and how it has come to these decisions. Having the arts council before us at our next scrutiny session in the early part of next term, in September, would be the most beneficial way for us to approach this.

[185] **Alun Davies:** I am happy with that.

[186] **Mr Sanchez:** I want to clarify that we will not be formally referring this petition to the Communities and Culture Committee; we will invite it to look into the broader issues.

[187] **Alun Davies:** We will invite the Arts Council of Wales to the next meeting of this committee to respond to what we have heard this afternoon. Unless it can enable us to feel content with the approach that it is taking, the next step would be to refer this matter to the Communities and Culture Committee of the National Assembly for Wales and ask it to undertake scrutiny of the policies being followed by the arts council in relation to arts outside Cardiff and the future of small—I am trying to avoid saying ‘rural’ because it does happen in other parts as well—

[188] **Michael German:** ‘Access’ is the right word.

[189] **Alun Davies:** It is a matter of access to cultural and arts activities.

[190] **Michael German:** Perhaps we could also send it a copy of this report.

[191] **Alun Davies:** Frankly, I prefer a more subtle approach, but we can do that.

[192] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I will just correct you, if I may, Chair. It is not a case of ‘unless’; we want the arts council to come to a scrutiny session. Rather than its sending a letter, we want it to come in to present evidence.

[193] **Alun Davies:** Yes. I should have made that clear. Is there any other action to take?

[194] **Mr Sanchez:** Let us not specify exactly when the arts council will come in. We will get it in as soon as we can.

[195] **Alun Davies:** I think that we should ask it to come pretty soon. We cannot let the situation continue and, therefore, I think that we should tell it that we expect it to be available in September.

[196] **Mr Sanchez:** We are not meeting in September.

[197] **Alun Davies:** Therefore, it will have to be in October, or the first available meeting.

[198] **Mr Sanchez:** Okay.

3.30 p.m.

New Petitions Deisebau Newydd

[199] **Alun Davies:** The first new petition that we have is on the foundation phase. Members will have had an opportunity to read through this petition and to review the information that we have been provided with. Do Members have any proposals for actions that they would like us to take, as a committee, on this petition?

3.30 p.m.

[200] **Michael German:** Is the Enterprise and Learning Committee conducting a review of foundation phase funding? I believe that the Finance Committee, or the Enterprise and Learning Committee, is doing that.

[201] **Mr Sanchez:** It has already reported.

[202] **Michael German:** Fine, I just wanted some clarification on that.

[203] **Alun Davies:** The Finance Committee undertook a review of the foundation phase policy in May and reported on 18 July. That report was on the funding of the foundation phase; it was not on policy relating to the foundation phase, which is beyond the remit of the Finance Committee. Are Members content that that report met some, or all, of the criteria or demands in this petition?

[204] **Michael German:** The petition says:

[205] ‘We ask the National Assembly for Wales to fully investigate the case for more funding.’

[206] That surely takes an educational perspective. Should we ask the Enterprise and Learning Committee to look at the case for more funding, from an educational perspective as opposed to from a financial perspective?

[207] **Bethan Jenkins:** The report notes that:

[208] ‘The Committee recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government secures the finance necessary to ensure the optimum delivery of the Foundation Phase over the next 4 years.’

[209] I would have thought that that would have been sufficient for the Minister to carry forth her investigations into the matter, as opposed to having another committee investigation on this issue.

[210] **Alun Davies:** The Finance Committee has said that it will return to this issue in future years. Its report looks at the additional funding requirements. I understand what you are saying, Mike, about the educational demands driving additional funding—you are right to say that. The Finance Committee looked at the funding issues in some detail, although over a relatively short period of time. If you are saying that you want an additional inquiry that will take place before the Finance Committee’s next inquiry—although we do not know when that will be—then so be it. However, we need to be careful that we do not ask committees to be in almost constant session, doing inquiries into similar issues.

[211] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I acknowledge the Finance Committee’s report, but that looked specifically at the Welsh Assembly Government’s funding and the interaction over funding for the foundation phase. If the report had stopped at saying that the Welsh Assembly Government funding is insufficient, I believe that that would have been clear. However, it goes on to ask—and I am thinking specifically about this petition—the National Assembly for Wales, to consider this, which obviously means scrutiny by committees, because they are committees of the National Assembly for Wales and not of the Welsh Assembly Government.

[212] As education falls within the Enterprise and Learning Committee’s remit, it would be pertinent to refer it to that committee in the first instance. That committee could then determine whether it wishes the Finance Committee to carry on its work, or to seek a new course of action, to address what this petition is asking for: whether or not there is a fundamental need for more money. It is the petition, rather than policy objectives, and so on, that we have. I believe that that is the sensible course to take. As we have done with other petitions, we can refer it to the scrutiny committee, and that committee can then decide what it wishes to do with it. The committee might well decide to work with the Finance Committee to resolve the petition, rather than do anything on its own. I do not believe that we as a

Petitions Committee can do much with this petition, other than refer it to the Enterprise and Learning Committee.

[213] **Alun Davies:** I am happy to do that. However, neither of you have asked for anything substantially different to what has already been asked by the Finance Committee over the last two months. However, if you wish to refer this to the Enterprise and Learning Committee, I am happy to do so, and we can move on. Are you happy with that?

[214] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am, but I do not think that it is necessary, because the Finance Committee was a National Assembly for Wales Finance Committee—there was no Welsh Assembly Government committee—and it scrutinised the foundation phase. I would see the next port of call as being the Minister, rather than another committee.

[215] **Michael German:** I think that Andrew's suggestion was that we put it to the committee, and if the committee does not want to take it forward, that is its choice. Then we might come back to it, and ask the Minister directly whether the money is there.

[216] **Alun Davies:** This is perhaps an example of where the Assembly has moved more quickly than the petition. Had this petition been submitted three months ago, we might have taken a different course of action. However, if Members are content, we will ask the clerk to refer this to the Enterprise and Learning Committee for consideration.

[217] **Bethan Jenkins:** Would we be guaranteed a response during recess? We might get a quicker response from the Minister than we would from a committee during recess.

[218] **Alun Davies:** I think that I can guarantee that you will not receive a response during recess. I do not know when the next Enterprise and Learning Committee meeting is, but I would imagine that it is in September.

[219] **Michael German:** Given that funding bids are going in at the moment, it will not be clear until October whether there is sufficient funding in the budget.

[220] **Alun Davies:** Shall we say that we will refer this to the Enterprise and Learning Committee for its consideration and send a copy to the Finance Committee and ask it to raise the matter during the budgetary round? I see that you agree.

[221] The next petition is from Ysgol Penmaes.

[222] **Michael German:** Is this similar to the school that we saw in Pembrokeshire?

[223] **Mr Sanchez:** Yes.

[224] **Michael German:** Did its genesis come from Mencap?

[225] **Mr Sanchez:** Yes, it was facilitated by Mencap.

[226] **Michael German:** I found the visit to Pembrokeshire a very useful exercise, by the way—I would be happy to do it again, if Members could find the time. It was a good exercise for us, I believe.

[227] **Alun Davies:** I joined you for that visit in Pembrokeshire, and I found it a very stimulating morning, and I learned an awful lot from it. Shall we ask the clerk to make arrangements for a similar visit to Ysgol Penmaes in Brecon?

[228] **Michael German:** Is Ysgol Penmaes a through-age school? Does it teach pupils from

age six to 18?

[229] **Mr Sanchez:** I am not sure; we can look into that.

[230] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Can I ask that the thoughts and opinions that were gathered during our Pembrokeshire visit are pulled together—and I am sure that the clerk is already doing this—into some form of report? We could perhaps forward that to the school, so that we are not duplicating work from our information-gathering exercise in Pembrokeshire. Indeed, Ysgol Penmaes might consider that certain points have been covered. I am sure that it would be beneficial for all concerned if we arranged such a visit, as long as there is an understanding of what we achieved in our Pembrokeshire visit.

[231] **Alun Davies:** It would be important for this potential visit to build upon the visit to Pembrokeshire. It would be useful if we continued to consider this petition in terms of what we learned in Pembrokeshire about the Government's policy development, as well as its legislative programme. I felt that there were quite a few things that we could learn from the Pembrokeshire visit that could be built into the Government's legislative programme, both in terms of the Proposed Learner Travel (Wales) Measure and the Member proposed legislative competence Order on the regulation of bus services. So, there are a number of different areas where this committee could have an input into the legislative programme. It is important that we keep that in mind, as these processes move forward.

[232] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** With that in mind, I suggest that we feed what we have learned from this work back to Huw Lewis, for the benefit of his LCO, as well as to the Minister, with his proposed Learner Travel (Wales) Measure. We should not miss the opportunity to pass on certain points that come out of our information gathering exercise so that they can be incorporated, rather than waiting for the final report, which could be some time away. We could feed into those systems on a periodic basis.

3.40 p.m.

[233] **Alun Davies:** That is noted.

[234] The next two petitions are in favour of Llanbedr airfield and opposed to Llanbedr airfield respectively. Before we start discussions, I must declare an interest. I have written to the Minister about this issue, taking the former rather than the latter view. As such, I want that stated on the record before we discuss the matter.

[235] **Michael German:** There is a policy for that now, is there not?

[236] **Alun Davies:** I have a feeling that there is more than one policy on this matter.

[237] **Michael German:** Not on Llanbedr, but on how we should act.

[238] **Mr Sanchez:** We decided that if a Member declares an interest, he or she may be involved in the discussion of the petition as a member of the committee, but not in the decision about what to do with the petition.

[239] **Alun Davies:** That is clear.

[240] **Michael German:** It is interesting that, in certain circumstances, you could have the opponents and the proponents together, making their case. You could hear each case made and question both parties. That may give us an interesting insight into what the outcome might be. I do not think that it is possible to make a judgment on which petition is correct. So, my inclination is to hear both sides by inviting both to present evidence to us.

[241] **Bethan Jenkins:** In the meantime, we could get updated information from the Minister concerned. I would say that we would like to hear from both sides in this regard. We have not had such a scenario before—there could be fireworks.

[242] **Alun Davies:** I would hope that we would not have fireworks in Llanbedr airfield, of course. However, in taking this forward—

[243] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Sorry, Chair, I would just like to clarify something. I have read the papers. This is a very localised issue, specific to that area. We as a committee have always trodden very carefully with regard to planning issues. Obviously, this is a planning/development issue. Are we aware of the stage that the planning issue has reached? The paper does not say at what stage the application is, or whether a decision is being appealed. In any planning application, people have the right to appeal, and they have a recourse that we should not be interfering with. That is something that we have always tried to stay on the right side of. We do not want to be dealing with planning applications all the time; that is not our role. Is an update available of where this development is sitting at the moment?

[244] **Alun Davies:** I was going to make this point. The Minister—I understand that it is the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing—is currently taking a view on this. There has been at least the threat of a judicial review of the decision to let this contract. As I understand it, the Welsh Assembly Government is considering and reviewing its decision-making processes. Until that process is complete, it might well be that we need to take into consideration the fact that reviewing this petition might best be done when the legal position is clear, rather than beforehand.

[245] **Michael German:** I suggest that we ask Joanev what we should do in this regard, given where we are. Shall we wait until such time as those processes become clearer, or are we getting into the planning field, as Andrew suggested?

[246] **Ms Jackson:** There is some information in the papers to suggest that planning permission has not been required for any proposed development. I see no harm in your writing to the relevant Minister to ascertain the situation in terms of some of the processes and to find out what action has been taken to date, so that you have as much information as possible.

[247] **Michael German:** We can then make a decision about where we go after that.

[248] **Ms Jackson:** Yes.

[249] **Alun Davies:** I would go a bit further than that and say, ‘Minister, you have had two months; let’s get this clarified’—notwithstanding what her eventual decision will be. It is important that we clarify where exactly we stand at the moment and whether the Government is content with its decision making. So, we will either move forward or we will not. At that point, the political decision and the decisions to be made with regard to the petitions would become more relevant.

[250] **Michael German:** We also ought to know what the processes are in these circumstances—I mean what the line of decision making is. That may not be easy—

[251] **Alun Davies:** It is not easy at all.

[252] **Michael German:** That is what Joanev is splendid at.

[253] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Perhaps we can do something in the meantime, in the background. It does seem that as long as we tick the boxes and are not treading on any toes regarding the planning process or a judicial review, evidence could be gathered to facilitate a hearing of the petitioners, should they wish it, so that we are not bogged down and so that the petition does not drag on for months. Perhaps through the summer recess, the clerking team could pull together the bits of information that would facilitate an evidence-gathering session, subject to our getting clarification from the Minister. That would be of benefit.

[254] **Alun Davies:** Thank you very much. I assume that that is agreed.

3.47 p.m.

Deisebau Newydd Updates on Previous Petitions

[255] **Alun Davies:** I see that the only update that we have is on the A465 relief road, which goes past my old school at Bryn Bach in Tredegar.

[256] **Bethan Jenkins:** Should you declare an interest here?

[257] **Alun Davies:** I wish I had to declare an interest of that sort; 30 years ago, perhaps I would have done. Are there any comments?

[258] **Michael German:** The only comment that I would like to make is that I would like to have a copy of the final report. A range of eight options, including relocating the school and so on, will have been considered. It might be useful to have that report, as a matter of record, before a decision is reached. It is likely that this will remain open for some time. If the option that is decided on by the local authority affects the trunk road, which affects the local authority, then it is going to be some time away, I would have thought. However, in the interim, we could ask for a copy of the report from Capita Symonds. Have we had a report with all those options?

[259] **Mr Sanchez:** We have had a report from Capita Symonds, but I think that you are referring to the report with the updated option consideration in it.

[260] **Michael German:** Yes, I am. I think that that would be sufficient and then we could leave it open until such time as Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has reached a conclusion on it and we know what the Minister wants to do.

[261] **Alun Davies:** Are Members content with that? We will maintain a watching brief on this issue, until such time as it is resolved. Thank you very much.

[262] This final item is the paper to note, which is an update on the petitions. I would like to invite Members to note this paper and to inform the clerk of any issues that they would like to raise at the next meeting.

[263] I would like to thank you all for being so kind and gentle with me over the last two hours and thank you for electing me Chair for this short meeting.

[264] **Michael German:** When is the next committee meeting?

[265] **Alun Davies:** The date of the next meeting will be communicated to you, Mr German.

[266] **Mr Sanchez:** I think that it is 3 October, but do not quote me on that—although, of

course, that will now be on the record.

[267] **Alun Davies:** Diolch yn fawr.

Alun Davies: Thank you.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 3.49 p.m.
The meeting ended at 3.49 p.m.