



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau  
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 2 Hydref 2008  
Thursday, 2 October 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. Mae hon yn fersiwn ddrafft o'r cofnod. Cyhoeddir fersiwn derfynol ymhen pum diwrnod gwaith.

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

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

Andrew R.T. Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Michael German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
David Lloyd	Plaid Cymru (Yn dirprwyo ar ran Bethan Jenkins) The Party of Wales (Substituting for Bethan Jenkins)
Val Lloyd	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)

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

Nick Capaldi	Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru Arts Council of Wales
Professor Dai Smith	Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru Arts Council of Wales

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

Alun Davidson	Clerc Clerk
Joanest Jackson	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Bethan Webber	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 1.46 p.m.*  
*The meeting began at 1.46 p.m.*

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

[1] **Val Lloyd:** Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. I remind everyone that the translation facility is on channel 1 of the headsets, and that you can also use them for amplification of the sound if necessary. We are not expecting a fire alarm test, therefore if you hear an alarm it will be the real thing. Bethan Jenkins has sent her apologies for absence and I welcome Dr Dai Lloyd who is substituting for her.

[2] I also welcome our new clerk, Bethan Webber, who is joining us for the first time today.

1.46 p.m.

**P-03-139 Canolfan Gelfyddydau Glannau Gwy—Tystiolaeth Cyngor**  
**Celfyddydau Cymru**  
**P-03-139 Wyeside Arts Centre—Evidence from the Arts Council of Wales**

[3] **Val Lloyd:** Our first petition for consideration today has had some airing previously, particularly at our last meeting, which was held at the Royal Welsh Show. We are delighted

to welcome the chair and the chief executive of the Arts Council of Wales. Please introduce yourselves, gentlemen.

[4] **Professor Smith:** I am Dai Smith, chair of the Arts Council of Wales. I also extend a warm welcome on behalf of everyone to Nick Capaldi, who is our new chief executive. This will be his first time, I think, appearing before any of your committees.

[5] **Mr Capaldi:** I am Nick Capaldi, chief executive of the Arts Council of Wales. I am very pleased to be here.

[6] **Val Lloyd:** It is a pleasure to have you here. I will just run through the procedure this afternoon; it will not take a great deal of time. We allow anyone who is addressing us to have up to 15 minutes. How you distribute that time is entirely in your hands. I am not taking from your time in my introduction. I always assure people of that. We will then ask you to retire and to move to the gallery to hear our deliberations, if you wish. While you are doing that, we will probably move on to the next item of business in the interests of saving time and when we see that you are seated comfortably in the gallery, we will begin our deliberations. We will also take 15 minutes to level the score, so to speak. Therefore, you may start.

[7] **Professor Smith:** I will not take anything like 15 minutes. In fact, I do not think that I will take five minutes. It is a great pleasure for us to come before you and I thank you for the opportunity. I know that you have received our written submission and I will not take you through it point by point. However, I will highlight some matters on which you may have been—however inadvertently or for whatever reason—misinformed or misled in your previous deliberations.

[8] I will turn directly to the Wyeside Arts Centre issue and highlight the major points. At a meeting in January 2008, when officers put various concerns about the management of Wyeside Arts Centre before the arts council, the Arts Council of Wales reaffirmed its wish to support Wyeside Arts Centre and to continue discussions to ensure that its ongoing viability would be effective. The Arts Council of Wales has never threatened the closure of Wyeside Arts Centre or, indeed, the withdrawal of any grant, provided that accountability for public money could be assured by a satisfactory business plan and by urgent discussion between Wyeside Arts Centre with other partners and our sense that that would happen and was happening.

[9] In July, as you will see from the written submission, the council agreed—because of those issues—the release of funding, which was then triggered. Constructive discussions followed which, again on officer advice, led to the confirmation of further funding to April 2009, and that was advised to Wyeside Arts Centre after the September council meeting. I believe that you also have the note from the current chair, Julian Gibson-Watt, which candidly states that Wyeside acknowledges that the Arts Council of Wales's decision on that issue is not connected to the petition hearing. To which I can only add, 'indeed'.

1.50 p.m.

[10] My other major point, and my final point, is that, as I am sure you will agree, the Arts Council of Wales would have been failing in its duty as a responsible arts council with a charge of taking accountable, transparent and strategic decisions on the arts in Wales if it were in any way to allow such matters to impinge on the judgments that it takes. That is where we are, and we will be delighted to address any further points or questions that you may have.

[11] **Val Lloyd:** Mr Capaldi, did you want to contribute?

[12] **Mr Capaldi:** No. That was a very fair summary of our position.

[13] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you. I should have mentioned in my introduction that we are quorate, but that one Member has not been able to join us yet. I believe that he was late leaving another meeting, so we await his arrival.

[14] **Michael German:** For me, there are two issues remaining. If we take the petition at face value on the question of longer-term funding, as I understand it, you have confirmed funding through to the end of this financial year, and Wyeside is probably very happy with that. However, if this is the process by which you engage with each of your bodies, using an ongoing dialogue, at what point in the cycle would you give the body in question a decision on its funding for the next year, so that it has some certainty? Is three-year funding a possibility?

[15] The second question is the criteria that you use for Arts Outside Cardiff funding. The Wyeside Centre is outside Cardiff, so would it qualify? What are the baseline criteria for that?

[16] **Professor Smith:** On your first point, Mike, we are not able to guarantee our clients funding except on a year-on-year basis. We would like longer funding cycles, and we are in discussion with the Minister on that, as we have been with previous Ministers. However, budgetary considerations mean that all our clients are in that position, although it is possible to give people assurances. In this particular case, we were advised by officers that we needed to be clear that effective management was being putting in place and that there were discussions with Powys County Council and other partners in the area. That has taken time, but we are now there.

[17] In terms of Arts Outside Cardiff, the money is designed to provide high-quality arts provision across Wales. On the basis of the regional strategies that we have adopted, particularly with the regional performance arts centres—the so-called REPACS—we are content that we are doing that effectively. Powys has been a particular beneficiary of the Night Out scheme—there were 170 performances this year, out of a total of 406, and Powys has had 55 of those performances this year, which is the highest number of any local authority area. Where those performances go is a matter for those who put together the programmes, in discussion with our officers.

[18] **Mr Capaldi:** In an ideal world, one would want to give at least a quarter of a year's advance notice of funding for the subsequent year. However, as Professor Smith has explained, we are not always in a position to do that; it depends on when we have confirmation of our own funding. We look individually at each organisation, and examine its circumstances on a case-by-case basis. It was through that process that we identified some issues that we wanted to talk to Wyeside about, and that could be true for a number of organisations.

[19] **Michael German:** In general, when would you expect an organisation to know its budget for the following year? Would it be post-April or before April of the financial year in question?

[20] **Mr Capaldi:** Before April.

[21] **Michael German:** In that sense, if you were satisfied with all the matters concerning this project at the moment, presumably, there should be no barriers to clearing the hurdle for next year on time.

[22] **Professor Smith:** No, we are engaged with the theatre at the moment, and we still have some concerns about the ongoing process that we want to iron out, as I know Wyeside

does. In the January meeting, we were faced with dividing up the limited resources from last year's tight financial settlement, and that led to our taking some decisions on the change to our portfolio. We had to speak to five of our clients in that particular way. St Donats was the one that appealed against that and, on the basis of process only, it won its appeal. Wyeside was never in that category, and we recognised from the very beginning that there were very firm regional, strategic reasons why we would wish to see Wyeside prosper. However, we were also clear that we did not have the moneys that it was looking to us to provide it with, and, therefore, there had to be an effective business plan that could be taken forward. I think that we have come to a constructive end to that part of the story.

[23] **David Lloyd:** From your point of view, what is the biggest risk to Wyeside's future financial security?

[24] **Mr Capaldi:** The biggest risk is the ambitious fundraising targets that it has established. It has exceeded the target for this year, but, given the current economic climate, it may be difficult to sustain in future years. That is one particular area that we are looking at.

[25] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you for coming in this afternoon. It seems like a lifetime ago when we were discussing this petition at the Royal Welsh Show, back in the dark—or bright—days of summer. When the petitioners were presenting their evidence, one thing that came across time and again was the fact that Wyeside is seen as a hub for a lot of other organisations in a rural location. I appreciate that that may not be your paramount objective—or is it, actually? From reading some of the papers, I see that you identify with how it promotes the arts in rural Wales, particularly mid Wales. How important to your strategy of delivering arts and artistic direction in an area is an organisation like Wyeside theatre? How important is retaining it in that area? If you were to take the theatre out of the area, you would suddenly be creating a void that something else would have to fill. The petitioners made the point that, if you took the theatre out of Wyeside, there would be little or no other provision available, and no-one else could provide such a facility.

[26] **Mr Capaldi:** Strategically, that is an issue that is very much in our thoughts when we are planning expenditure. It is certainly the case that strongly performing and artistically ambitious hub organisations are incredibly important for arts provision in the locality. However, one needs to be certain that it is working to optimum capacity, and we have a pan-Wales responsibility to look at the resources that we have and to ensure that every pound that we allocate is well spent. Unfortunately, on occasion, that can mean that we are not able to support even those organisations that we think are important. However, I hope that what you have got from the extract of the minutes is the council's absolute recognition of the importance of looking at Wyeside theatre's needs, which is why my officers have spent a significant proportion of the year working with it.

[27] **Professor Smith:** There are issues, in a positive sense, about a county like Powys, given its size and the spread of the population. If you look at it only through the telescope of Wyeside, you may miss the point that 13 arts organisations across Powys are supported by the Arts Council of Wales, and they have received a total of almost £1,200,000. Theatr Brycheiniog is also just down the road. If we were talking about an urban area or an urban-ish area, the distance between Theatr Brycheiniog and Wyeside theatre would not appear to be quite the distance that it is, in the more elaborate sense that people in Builth and Brecon do not necessarily think of themselves as being contiguous.

[28] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** With respect, although that might be just down the road, the communications in that neck of the woods are a fundamental deterrent to its being considered in that way.

[29] **Professor Smith:** Indeed. That is what I meant when I said, 'If it were an urban area'.

We have taken that into account and I think that we have an understanding, through the expertise on the council, of the localisms of the localities of Wales. As Nick says—and I am sure that the committee will appreciate this—Wales is more than the sum of its parts.

[30] 2.00 p.m.

[31] We are charged with looking at a strategy for the arts across Wales. We have a regional strategy and we have strategies for almost everything in every artform. Wyeside Arts Centre falls firmly within that concern and remit. Something that emerged from the verbatim report of your committee meeting was how the representatives of Wyeside would have liked to do more with the community. They talked about how they had to claw that back and increase the cinematic offerings. We would also like to see it do more with the community, but, as Nick says, there are issues with funding. Two members of Powys County Council are coming onto its board, and they are looking at the future in a more positive light. However, there is no point in pretending that we have magic wands or endless pots of money to dip into; we do not.

[32] **Val Lloyd:** I was not at the last meeting because of personal circumstances, but I have read the transcript, as have you. I note that the petitioners stated that funding was prioritised for encouraging access to the arts in Communities First areas, because of the Arts Council of Wales's interpretation of 'access' in its remit letter. Is that the case, Professor Smith?

[33] **Professor Smith:** It is not a description of the arts council that I recognise. As I said a moment ago, there must be an understanding about the decisions taken about the establishment of the regional performance arts centres. They were looked at in great detail by the arts council and successive Ministers, as was the spending on that. On how we respond to the remit letters of Ministers, including on access, we take them absolutely seriously. Of course Communities First areas come into it, but we also see the index of multiple deprivation in other ways and there are always anomalies, as between Cardiff and Cardiff bay, for example. So, we tend to be sensitive, and that is why we have members on the council from across Wales representing many different interests. We also have our regional committees and regional offices. I firmly believe that we have our finger on the pulse of those matters.

[34] **Mr Capaldi:** Last year, we invested a little over £10 million in Communities First areas, which is about 31 per cent of our total direct arts expenditure.

[35] **Val Lloyd:** We have three minutes left, if any Member would like to ask another question.

[36] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I have two further questions on the back of what my colleagues have asked. You touched on the new board that has been set up and strengthened, which is to be welcomed. With the experience that you have across Wales, have you worked with the board and helped it to strengthen the governance and outreach of Wyeside Arts Centre, or has the centre created a more proactive board itself in the hope of maintaining these new levels of funding? With the economic climate as it stands, an event like this can galvanise support, but, as time progresses, that support can filter away and you end up in the same position. Therefore, are the changes that we have read about in these papers fundamental changes that will, hopefully, secure the long-term future of Wyeside Arts Centre?

[37] **Professor Smith:** We were encouraged by the way in which both parties were proactive, and by the levels of co-operation. I understand that difficulties arose early in these discussions, but, as I said, with our responsibility for public money, we were concerned that sustainability and viability for the future be underlined, because we want to see Wyeside Arts

Centre go forwards. So, I do not think that the Arts Council of Wales would wish to take credit for those changes on the board; all credit is due to Wyeside Arts Centre, However, we are deeply encouraged that it has responded to some of the initiatives that we led it to do. I am confident that we can go forward in a sustained fashion, but serious difficulties will remain, not just for Wyeside Arts Centre, to be frank, but also for the arts across Wales.

[38] In the meetings that I have with Alun Ffred and others, we say that we get approximately 0.2 per cent of the entire Welsh Assembly Government budget to spend on grant in aid for the arts in Wales, but that is not enough, ladies and gentlemen. It is not enough if we are to take the creative economy of Wales forward, and understand what we mean by 'creativity'. Nick's officers are performing miracles at the moment, and the arts community is struggling to maintain those standards, given the diminution of funds occurring elsewhere.

[39] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you very much. I must draw this item to a close now. Thank you for answering our questions. We limit the time allowed, so that we take the same approach to everybody. A member of staff will escort you to the public gallery, and we will deal with other business until you are settled.

[40] **Professor Smith:** I hope that I have been able to help you to clarify matters.

2.05 p.m.

### **Deisebau Newydd New Petitions**

[41] **Val Lloyd:** We will deal with this item while the arts council's representatives move to the public gallery. We have just two new petitions before us. Please do not think that that means a reduction in our work, as I am told that an enormous number of petitions are in the pipeline, in various stages of preparation to come before us.

[42] Petition P-03-146 was submitted as an e-petition by Mr Gordon Pritchard, and it calls on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to remind all local authorities of the regulations under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. Joanest, do you want to come in at all on this matter, or are you happy for us to move forward?

[43] **Ms Jackson:** I am happy for you to move forward.

[44] **Val Lloyd:** I note that the matter includes a slightly personal issue.

[45] **Michael German:** I agree with that, Chair, but that is part of the background information. The trouble is that we have only the wording of the petition to go on. I suggest that we ask the relevant Minister to remind local authorities by letter of the regulations as per the petition, and then close the petition.

[46] **Val Lloyd:** Is everybody content with that? I see that you are. That is straightforward. We will have honoured the intention of the petition. So, to confirm, we will send a letter of confirmation, a letter to the Minister, and then we will take a view on closing the petition.

[47] The next one is P-03-154, asking for a panel debate with His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales. I will open the floor to Members, of course, but it is important to note first that the petitioners have made it clear that the petition was submitted at a particular time to coincide with a visit. The petitioners wanted to raise the profile of their campaign for an elected head of state.



[48] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You have stated why the petition has come before us. Everybody is entitled to petition the National Assembly for Wales, and I fully respect that, but we need to understand what we can do, and it is not for us to instruct the Prince of Wales to attend the Assembly to engage in debate. The same goes for the organisation that wishes to conduct that debate. I am therefore not sure how this petition can be progressed. I recommend closing it. Everyone has an avenue for publicity, but we want to be productive. From the wording of the petition, I am not sure how productive we could be in furnishing an outcome.

[49] **Val Lloyd:** I agree with you, but I invite other Members to contribute, should they wish to give their view. I see that Members are content, so we will proceed as suggested by Andrew. We will close that petition.

2.08 p.m.

**P-03-139 Canolfan Gelfyddydau Glannau Gwy—Tystiolaeth oddi wrth Gyngor  
Celfyddydau Cymru: Parhad  
P-03-139 Wyeside Arts Centre—Evidence from the Arts Council of Wales:  
Continued**

[50] **Val Lloyd:** I see that the representatives of the arts council have now reached the public gallery, which means that we can now return to our first petition. I open it up for Members to discuss.

[51] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Considerable progress seems to have been made on this petition. The petitioners certainly informed me a lot about what goes on at Wyeside Arts Centre when they took the opportunity to present their evidence in their home town of Builth Wells. Hopefully, the oxygen of that publicity has focused minds. Having heard from the arts council today about the agreements that have been reached, I really cannot see where else we can go with this matter. Admittedly, the petition is asking the Minister to intervene personally, but, as I think we are aware, the Minister treats funding on an arm's-length basis. While there may be a perception that Ministers can pick up telephones and demand X, Y or Z, it does not always happen that way. However, the positive nature of this petition means that, through the engagement of both parties, a productive outcome has been achieved, and, hopefully, the long-term future of Wyeside Arts Centre has been secured, albeit going forward in a challenging climate. I hope that this petitions system has afforded all parties a reasonable opportunity to debate the points and to get an understanding of the positions. As a Member, I have benefited from it. With that, I suggest that we now close the petition.

[52] **Michael German:** I do not disagree with that. I have just thought of one other thing that we could do, following the evidence that we have just received from the arts council, and that is to consider the issue of three-year funding.

2.10 p.m.

[53] It is something that dogs voluntary organisations across Wales. We could say that we have received this petition seeking long-term support, that, underpinning all of this, is the issue of three-year funding, and we could ask whether the Minister is willing to look at the issue of three-year funding proposals, which would help the Arts Council of Wales in its sustainability proposals for organisations such as Wyeside Arts Centre.

[54] **Val Lloyd:** I agree. Do you mean for all organisations or specifically for Wyeside?

[55] **Michael German:** No, it is not specific to Wyeside, although it could be mentioned

as an example. Part of the problem of longer term sustainability is that, at the moment, the arts council cannot give funding for more than one year. It means that organisations are always scrabbling around at the end of the year hoping for funding for the next year. We all know the syndrome. We try to do it for other parts of Welsh public life. It seems to me that it is a case that the Minister might want to consider. I am asking only that we write a letter and still close the petition. It is just an observation that arises from the petition.

[56] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. I will take advice. Should we close the petition now and write to the Minister or should we not close the petition on a technicality until we have had the Minister's response?

[57] **Mr Davidson:** Not closing the petition at this stage would allow the committee the opportunity to look at the Minister's response.

[58] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I agree entirely with Mike. However, the petition is relevant to Wyeside. The point that Mike makes is about the generality of arts council funding and three-year funding, rather than a specific point about Wyeside. I am not sure whether we are jeopardising our position since we are making an observation resulting from what we have gleaned from Wyeside. We will be making the more general point that the arts council should be allowed to give three-year funding to all organisations.

[59] **Val Lloyd:** You make a very good point. You have also raised the central issue of our overall deliberations. Very often, we are ready to close a petition, having worked hard and exhausted all avenues. We never take the decision to close a petition lightly, do we? Then, if the Minister lets us come back on an issue, we find that there is a tendency for organisations to think that the process can carry on. Therefore, would it be possible for us to close the petition and record the Minister's letter when it is received?

[60] **Mr Davidson:** Yes. We could include it as a paper to note.

[61] **Val Lloyd:** Shall we do that? I see that there are no objections.

[62] **Michael German:** I am sure that the arts council could find some of its supporters to submit a petition themselves.

[63] **Val Lloyd:** We are not touting for business yet. We are not that hard up.

2.13 p.m.

### **Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates on Previous Petitions**

[64] **Val Lloyd:** I notice that our agenda says that we could have a break now. However, we have only just got under way. I think that that speaks volumes for our efficiency. We have a considerable number of petitions to get through, so I think we should continue.

[65] The first are the two petitions that we received relating to similar, but not identical, subjects: one is from Kidney Foundation Wales and the other from the Kidney Patients Association. We have had these for some time. The Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee's report has now been published. The Minister has also commented on it and taken a different view to the majority view of the committee. That is the Minister's prerogative, of course.

[66] **Michael German:** On this occasion, I think that she is right. Should we send her response to the report to the petitioners? We have sent them the committee's report. Do you think that we should also send them the Minister's response?

[67] **Val Lloyd:** I am sure that we can. However, I am sure that they are very well aware of it. We will do that. We will also formally close both petitions today.

[68] Another long-standing petition is the one on the Miners' Welfare Ground at Nelson, in Caerphilly borough. As you see in your papers, we have had a communication from Ieuan Wyn Jones, the relevant Minister, stating that the land is required as part of the overall development and that there is no intention to return it to the control of local residents. However, he is keen to ensure that the development is beneficial to the community and aims to involve the community in the development wherever possible. So, there has been considerable movement since we started to consider the petition. Does anyone want to comment?

[69] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is a get-out-of-jail-free card, is it not? The decision has been made, but the Assembly Government will consult. Ultimately, a decision has to be made. Sadly, not everyone always signs up to such decisions. In this instance, rightly or wrongly, a decision has been made, and it is to be hoped that people will engage with the consultation process. I feel that there is little we can do, as the Petitions Committee, to take this any further. Therefore, I believe that the petition should be closed. We may or may not agree with the decision, but it has been taken and, therefore, a natural conclusion has been reached.

[70] **Val Lloyd:** I do not think that there is anything more that we can do. Mike, do you have a point to make?

[71] **Michael German:** We might wait for a response from the Deputy First Minister on what happened at the meeting between the community council and the Welsh Assembly Government. We could then put that on the record before we close the petition, and we could forward that to the petitioners. We know that it will happen, so this may not be productive; he has said that it is an action that he will take. However, we should allow the petitioners, who may not be from the community council—in fact some of them are not—the opportunity to read about what happened.

[72] **Val Lloyd:** Do we know how long that timescale will be?

[73] **Michael German:** I should not think that it would be long.

[74] **Val Lloyd:** I do not recall the timescale being mentioned in any of the evidence.

[75] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is an ongoing consultation, is it not? I do not think that it is a one-off meeting.

[76] **Michael German:** The Minister's letter states:

[77] 'I have asked my officials to meet with the Community Council to explore ideas and opportunities for the development.'

[78] **Val Lloyd:** How about writing to the Minister and asking directly for the timescale on this? Should we do that or move to closure? I see that you would prefer to write. We will thank him for his letter and ask for an indication of the timescale.

[79] **Michael German:** If he has met with them already, we can also ask what happened.

[80] **Val Lloyd:** That would be even better, and I am sure that he would let us know.

[81] Our next update is on the petition regarding Rhyl Flats. We have had considerable

input on this, have we not? It has been going for some time. We originally considered this petition at one of our meetings in north Wales—I was about to say ‘Royal progress’, but I do not think that that is appropriate. I have been watching too much of *The Tudors*.

[82] **Michael German:** The only point that I wondered about was the naming of the site. Those of us who were present when we heard from the petitioners and were shown the map, know that the name of the site is wrong. I do not understand who is responsible for naming it—whether it is the applicants, the UK Government or someone else. I am sure that there will be future applications of this sort—as offshore wind will continue to be an issue—and the inaccurate naming of sites is not good. I do not know what we can do about it. We have seen that it is wrong, but who is responsible for ensuring that it is right?

[83] **Val Lloyd:** I was going to suggest that we close the petition but write to the Welsh Assembly Government summarising the points raised by the petitioners. Most of the issues that they raised were for the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform rather than for us.

2.20 p.m.

[84] We had responses from those Welsh Assembly Government Ministers with responsibilities in this area, but I think that it would be of use if we summarised the points raised by them, which includes the naming. The petitioners would understand that we took their queries very seriously and that, with our limited powers, we have done what we can. I think that we need to draw this to the attention of the Welsh Assembly Government.

[85] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I wish to back up what Mike has said. It is such a fundamental flaw not to be precise about the location. Imagine a planning application being submitted to build several houses that did not specify the correct address and the development being allowed to go ahead. The permission would be classed as null and void if the address was not correct. It is a fundamental requirement in order for people to be engaged with the activity that is to be undertaken in their area.

[86] I see that the papers say that this has been examined fully by the Welsh Affairs Committee. [*Laughter.*] I am wondering what recommendation came out of its investigation. Could that be made available to us? This is quite a critical part of the process. The frustrating part about this petition is that so much lies outside the remit of this institution. I sympathise with the petitioners’ plight in that they may feel that we are not doing as much as we should. However, the fact of the devolution settlement is that so much of the granting of permission, including the granting of various licences, lies at the other end of the M4, rather than at this end. However, that does not stop us from trying to get some answers for them, and I believe that, as an inquiry or examination has been carried out by the Welsh Affairs Committee, it would be useful if the report or a summary of its findings could be made available to us, so that we can find out what conclusions it came to.

[87] **Val Lloyd:** Did we not have it at an earlier stage?

[88] **Mr Davidson:** Yes, although I cannot recall the exact meeting.

[89] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, we did have the relevant extracts from that meeting in your paper.

[90] **Michael German:** I am loathe to ask this question, Chair, as Joanest does not like my difficult questions, but who has responsibility for ensuring that the name of any application adequately reflects the location of that application?

[91] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The granting authority.

- [92] **Ms Jackson:** I would say that the responsibility should lie with the applicant.
- [93] **Michael German:** What if the address for the location is wrong?
- [94] **Ms Jackson:** You would expect it to be corrected at a very early stage.
- [95] **Michael German:** By whom?
- [96] **Ms Jackson:** One would expect it to come up during discussions. I am not 100 per cent familiar with the process involved in these applications. However, if, for example, it was a planning application, it could probably be dealt with as a minor amendment by the planning authority. It would not require a second application; it would become clear in the very early stages of the process. My view is that it would be the applicant who should be cautious and alert to ensuring that the information in the application is correct.
- [97] **Michael German:** The responsibility to check would presumably lie with the person who received the application.
- [98] **Ms Jackson:** One would expect that someone receiving an application would normally give an initial cursory check before it is logged and that there might be discussion as to the information given. Nobody here has been party to this application however.
- [99] **Val Lloyd:** It is not for us.
- [100] **Ms Jackson:** It is not for us to make a judgment.
- [101] **Val Lloyd:** As it has been examined by the Welsh Affairs Committee, there is nothing that we can do. We have, quite rightly, placed a great deal of importance on the petition, and we have investigated all of the issues the petitioners have raised and re-raised. It has been fully examined by the Welsh Affairs Committee, and we have already received the relevant part of that report or investigation.
- [102] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Looking at the amount of paper we have, I could well have missed it.
- [103] **Val Lloyd:** From my memory, we did receive it.
- [104] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I confess that I cannot recall seeing it. I happen to think that that is a fundamental oversight. If you submit a simple planning application, it falls on the granting authority to visit the site, view it, and ascertain that it is correct as described. If it is not correct, it is for it to follow up. That applies even to basic planning applications, let alone something as major as this. I think that we owe it to the petitioners to clarify the situation. I appreciate that so much of this is outside our remit, but there are one or two little things that we might be able to do to help bring about a bit of clarity and soothe a few sore heads.
- [105] **Val Lloyd:** If we find that out, what can we do as a Committee? If we find that it is misnamed, what can the committee do? We would not be able to do anything anyway.
- [106] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** In our humble role here, we might not be able to stop it, but we could notify the regulatory authority that this oversight has occurred. It might not change much, but at least we have executed the role that has been asked of us by the petitioners. That, surely, is the fundamental role of this committee. Petitioners come to us to raise specific questions; we have no power as a committee, but we have a mandate to investigate and then pass on our findings to the relevant bodies from which we seek information.

[107] **Val Lloyd:** Which we do to the best of our ability. However, I wonder why we have not picked this up before. If my memory is wrong, I apologise, but I thought that we had seen the Welsh Affairs Committee papers.

[108] **Michael German:** I have now located it in my papers. I am sorry, Chair. It recommended that the UK Government sets out clear and unambiguous guidelines for the accurate description of windfarm locations for the future. The response from the UK Government referred to Rhyl flats, and not to clear and unambiguous guidelines for the accurate description of windfarm locations for the future. I would like to reinforce the message from the Welsh Affairs Committee that this is important for people. Perhaps we should simply report that to those responsible for it in the Welsh Assembly Government, and let them decide who is responsible for this.

[109] **Val Lloyd:** We could report that and close the petition.

[110] **Michael German:** Yes, that is fine.

[111] **Val Lloyd:** So, we will close the petition. I am glad that you had those papers with you, Mike. Thank you; that was helpful.

[112] Would you like to take a few more updates before we break?

[113] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We could carry on.

[114] **Val Lloyd:** I am content with that.

[115] The next update relates to the petition regarding the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Joane, will you comment on this please?

[116] **Ms Jackson:** In your papers, you have been alerted to the response of the children's commissioner. You will recall that this petition essentially concerns enhancing the powers of the children's commissioner. Reference is made in particular to areas in which the commissioner, at present, has no jurisdiction to investigate, particularly where such matters are, or have been, before the courts. I understand that, in your papers, there is a link to the evidence given on behalf of the office of the children's commissioner to the legislative committee considering the National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Social Welfare and Other Fields) Order 2008, which was previously referred to as the vulnerable children LCO. Members are probably aware that this Order has completed its progress through the Assembly and is awaiting consideration by the Houses of Parliament. If it successfully proceeds through Parliament, it will go to the Privy Council for confirmation. I do not think that there is very much more to say.

[117] The petition concerned the powers of the commissioner. You have seen the response from the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, who referred to the position of the commissioner, setting out that some of the functions are not exercisable when judicial hearings have taken place. In other instances, other mechanisms are available, such as representations to local authorities or other statutory bodies. Her view is that the position may change if this LCO becomes law. The action that the committee is advised to take is set out for you there, namely that you should close this petition, as you cannot progress any further.

2.30 p.m.

[118] **Val Lloyd:** Does anybody wish to comment on that, or are you all minded to accept that way forward? I see that you are, so we will close this petition. I stress that it is going

forward elsewhere, as Joanest has helpfully outlined, namely through the LCO. Therefore, I formally close this petition.

[119] The next petition before us is on student loan regulations. We have received a letter from the Minister on this, saying that a task and finish group is looking at the issue. Shall we wait until we have the results of the findings of that task and finish group before we close the petition?

[120] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes; it is not for us to prejudge.

[121] **Val Lloyd:** That was a concern across the piece, so we will wait.

[122] Next we have a petition on Ysgol Hen Felin. You will remember that pupils came to talk with us, which was a pleasant experience. We have had a response from the Minister regarding the additional funding of leisure opportunities for disabled children and young people. She pointed out that the budget is coming up, and that all Ministers will need to consider whether they can reprioritise and reallocate resources in their portfolios. She also pointed out that there is £1 million a year for three years to support play activities for children.

[123] **Michael German:** If your statement that reprioritisation was possible is correct, we could wait for the budget to be laid next week before we respond. I suggest that the response should be particularly relevant to its audience.

[124] **Val Lloyd:** The Minister only points out that Ministers will need to reprioritise, but you are right that we can hold our own formal scrutiny into this, while we recognise that it is a difficult settlement. However, we owe it to the petitioners to hold fire.

[125] Some Members might know more about the next petition than I do, following their visit to Portfield School. The petition is about accessible bus services in Pembrokeshire. Would one of the Members who went like to lead on this?

[126] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Am I right to think, Chair, that there was another petition on similar lines from Brecon?

[127] **Mr Davidson:** Yes, that is correct.

[128] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We were going to take some action on that.

[129] **Mr Davidson:** At its last meeting, on 23 July at the Royal Welsh show, the committee agreed that it would look at a short report prepared by the clerk on the visit to Portfield School in Pembrokeshire, and, if it thought it appropriate, to send the findings onto the other school in Brecon, which I believe is Ysgol Penmaes.

[130] **Michael German:** What we did on the visit was quite unusual. We broke into groups, and each of us sat with a group of young people and talked through the issues about transport to and from school. The paper is the result of a general discussion with the whole school on the sorts of issues that they raised, about the style of the provision of buses in general. We may need to address those issues to the Minister and seek a response, so that we can reply, again, in a suitable manner, because it is important that we address the style of these learners. The issues are space, access, seat belts, clear timetabling and bus shelters. What is the Government's policy and guidelines on these issues? We could also report on that to Pembrokeshire County Council and ask it to add its thoughts to it. This is an education process as much as it is a petitions process.

[131] **Val Lloyd:** Yes; I think so. We must give the pupils every facility.

[132] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** To add to that, I think that there is a role for the Committee on Equality of Opportunity and the Children and Young People Committee. This was specifically relating to the problems that arise when disability affects young children attending education. Some of the measures were basic, but would make a radical improvement to the lives of young people. The Assembly has passed the learner travel Measure this week and we found that the Minister was not prepared to go down the road of testing bus regulation in Wales. One young participant in the group that I was in said that the simple thing that would make life much easier was a handle to help in getting on the bus. This pupil was currently using the bag holding the driver's bus manual, because that was the only thing available. There were so many simple little things that needed to be addressed that I think that the Committee on Equality of Opportunity and the Children and Young People Committee could benefit from being made aware of our brief report. The changes that most of them were looking for were so basic, there was no real fundamental—

[133] **Michael German:** Pupils in the group that I was with suggested that it would help them to know, by virtue of the bus timetable, which buses had a flat floor for wheelchair access. They said that, on some days, they could be waiting there and a bus would come along that could not take a wheelchair. Therefore, they would have to wait for the next bus, which might not be due for another 30 or 40 minutes. Just knowing which buses had these facilities—simply marked with an asterisk, coloured in on the timetable, or whatever—would be helpful.

[134] **Val Lloyd:** I think that you are absolutely right, but I doubt that the bus company itself would know. However, I am not disagreeing with you. Shall we, therefore, write to the Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport and to Pembrokeshire County Council, and also send your report to the Committee on Equality of Opportunity and the Children and Young People Committee?

[135] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could I also take this just that little bit further by suggesting that the Committee on Equality of Opportunity or the Children and Young People Committee could grant one of the Members, or a group of Members, who went on this visit a slot in their meeting schedule to present some evidence on this issue? I do not know about you, Mike, but I found the effect to be very compelling. We know that we will not get that much further in this institution, because responsibility for much of what is required lies up the M4—as we appreciate—but I think that there is work here that can be passed on to other committees for consideration. That will, hopefully, help to put the jigsaw together.

[136] **Val Lloyd:** I am sure that the clerk, when he writes to those committees, would say that you are very happy to go along. Would you be happy to do that?

[137] **Mr Davidson:** Yes.

[138] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you. We will wait for a reply from the Deputy First Minister. We are bringing it to his attention, so do we close the petition?

[139] **Michael German:** If we have a reply coming, we could pass it on if we kept the petition open. It is only a matter of—

[140] **Val Lloyd:** Okay. I am keen—

[141] **Michael German:** Maybe you could send one of your very nice letters, Chair.

[142] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Although I do not want to keep coming in, do we have a role



in requesting some information from the Whitehall Government, which is responsible for bus regulation, or a view from it on any measures that it has coming out to address the specifics that have been raised by this report? Ultimately, if it comes out and says, 'There is nothing on the horizon; we will not be doing anything', at least the petitioners know that there is nothing coming. However, if there is something coming through, they might feel that they would like to be a part of that consultation process, or would like to put something into it, so that they could make a difference.

[143] **Val Lloyd:** We can write to anyone that we want to write to.

[144] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Can we write to the Department for Transport, which is responsible for bus regulation in Whitehall?

[145] **Val Lloyd:** We can write to the Department for Transport and to the relevant Minister in the Westminster Government.

[146] The next petition is on Welsh-medium education in the former Gwent area. We have closed this petition. It had the desired result, but we have had a response from the Minister since we closed the petition.

2.40 p.m.

[147] So, I just bring that to your attention. The Minister's letter is attached, in which she states that she has asked the Welsh language development unit within the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, which is leading on this strategy, to arrange a meeting through the chair of the group, Mrs Emma Hill. She was one of the ladies who came to give us evidence.

[148] **Michael German:** I can also report, Chair, that the Newport, Monmouth, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent local authorities have agreed upon a development programme for the existing Welsh-medium high school to be provided with modern facilities and for a considerable amount of reconstruction and rebuilding over the next four years.

[149] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you for that information.

[150] We now move to the petition on the Welsh-language daily newspaper. The petitioners gave evidence at the meeting held at the Royal Welsh Show, but I was not present.

[151] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It was a 'One Wales' commitment, was it not?

[152] **Val Lloyd:** We have received a comprehensive response from the Minister, but he did not answer the specific question of whether independent market research had been conducted into the viability of a Welsh-language daily newspaper. So, the only course of action left to us is to ask the Minister that direct question. We will also thank him for his letter because it was comprehensive and he did address all the points but that one. So we will take that direct course of action.

[153] The next petition is that by the Residents Against Nantygwyddon Tip. We have given this petition quite a considerable hearing. The residents asked us to ask Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to resume HAPSITE monitoring and also requested that another epidemiological study be undertaken by the Wales Centre for Health. We all remember the original evidence regarding this matter during the first Assembly, when it was considered by the Environment, Planning and Transport Committee. I do not think that there is anything more that we can do. The local authority is responsible for the monitoring programme, and, from memory, from the evidence that we received last time and from what the Minister said,

it has been investigated quite thoroughly and there was no evidence that pointed to a need for it to be reinvestigated. What are Members' views?

[154] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** There has been an extensive dialogue here and the Minister has come back to us, as have various other parties. It is a question of fulfilling the petitioners' aspirations. Some of those aspirations cannot be fulfilled because they are not within the power of this institution, and, as the Minister pointed out, he cannot require the local authority to resume monitoring. Therefore, where can one go with this petition? From the evidence, it seems that we have explored all avenues.

[155] **Val Lloyd:** The work has been reviewed by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and the local health board has also investigated the matter, so it has not gone unconsidered. I think that we should move to close the petition. Is that acceptable to Members? I see that it is.

[156] We now move to the petition regarding the Morryston roundabout. We have received a response from the Minister, which points out that it is within the remit of the local authority and that there is nothing that we can do about it. So, I recommend closing this petition. I think that it has had its desired aim, in any case. I see that Members are in agreement.

[157] The next petition is on unadopted roads.

[158] **Michael German:** I worry about this petition, because there is no policy to provide unhypothecated grants for the adoption of unadopted roads in the local authority network. There is a lack of a regulatory or compulsory framework or of criteria in relation to this matter. This is not just an issue here; it is an issue everywhere.

[159] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, it is an issue absolutely everywhere.

[160] **Michael German:** I do not know enough whether there is a regulatory section that we need to look at or which needs to be investigated. Perhaps we should ask the Deputy First Minister whether he is aware of any administrative procedures or regulations in respect of this matter, and whether or not he considers that they need to be amended. That is just in order that we can know what the rules are, because I am not aware of what they are.

[161] **Val Lloyd:** We all share this concern. We have discussed it when we have raised this issue twice before. We have all come across this, whether as public representatives at a local government level previously, or at this level. It is a fraught subject, because not all of those who have frontages agree. I know that, in the past, some councils have had a policy of trying to work through two or three roads per year, but it would take hundreds of years to get through them all. So, residents living in some of those streets now will never see any change. I am content to write to the Deputy First Minister, if everyone else is content with that. I see that you are. Thank you.

[162] The next petition relates to Cysgliad. You will correct my pronunciation if it is wrong, Dr Lloyd.

[163] **David Lloyd:** It was impeccable, Chair.

[164] **Val Lloyd:** This is regarding software for translation into Welsh. We asked why it was suitable only for Apple Mac computers. The reply that we have received says that this is because Canolfan Bedwyr was funded to produce the software for Apple Mac. It is happy to look at it for other systems, particularly Microsoft, I suppose, if the Minister will fund it.

[165] **Michael German:** What do we have on our computers here?

[166] **Val Lloyd:** Windows. We do not have Apple Mac computers.

[167] **Michael German:** No, we have a dictionary. It is not this though, is it?

[168] **David Lloyd:** It is not Cysgliad; it is Cysgair.

[169] **Michael German:** Cysgair—that is it. There is already software for Windows that provides a thesaurus and dictionary. Why do we need to worry about paying for software produced for Apple to be made freely available on Windows when there is already Windows software available?

[170] **Val Lloyd:** Why do we not investigate the current situation? We are all in the dark. We have little bits of information, but none of us knows what is really happening.

[171] **Michael German:** It is usually the other way around; there is usually nothing for Apple users but plenty of programmes for Windows.

[172] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. We will seek advice on that.

[173] **Mr Davidson:** Perhaps I could clarify the position for Members. I can confirm that it is part of the package developed by Canolfan Bedwyr that we have here. There is a version available for Windows, but it costs around £50 for the licence. At present, Canolfan Bedwyr at Bangor University relies on that money to continue to develop the software and offer support for it. The specific project that the Welsh Language Board funded for an Apple version was a set scheme; Canolfan Bedwyr does not offer any further support or development for it.

[174] **Michael German:** So, it is not updated?

[175] **Mr Davidson:** No.

[176] **Val Lloyd:** That is helpful; thank you very much. We now have our answer. Where do we go now?

[177] **Michael German:** It comes down to money again. I am no expert on this, but I am told that, whatever form of software you have, it needs to be looked after, tended, and updated. So, we are being told that the Mac one will go out of date as we add all of these new Welsh words, like that for 'speedometer' and so on.

[178] **Val Lloyd:** Are we going to close the petition? The only other option for us is to write to the Minister for Heritage seeking his views on the issue. Are you happy with that? I see that you are.

2.50 p.m.

[179] Do Members wish us to continue straight through or would you like a short break? I am not expressing a personal view on either option.

[180] **Michael German:** How far are we from the end?

[181] **Val Lloyd:** We have about 10 petitions to go through.

[182] **David Lloyd:** That is okay. We are on a roll.

[183] **Val Lloyd:** The next petition is on psychological traffic-calming measures. This petition was submitted by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, if I remember correctly—no, I beg your pardon, there are two similar petitions, and this one was raised by two councillors in Swansea. I apologise to the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and the councillors for my error.

[184] We have received a very interesting paper from the Members' research service, which gives us information on psychological traffic calming and also on shared space, which we will be able to use when we come to the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association's petition.

[185] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I am not sure where we can take this. The report that the Members' research service has gathered together is comprehensive, and, hopefully, that will give the petitioners information. Reading through the wording of the petition, I think that this could be achieved through their constituency or regional Members putting the request to the Welsh Assembly Government rather than the Petitions Committee, because it is not for us to tell the Welsh Assembly Government to carry out pilot projects. We have done the research part of this, and, hopefully, that will inform the petitioners' view to a greater or lesser degree. The logical way for them to progress their cause is to work through their elected representatives, and have them lobby on their behalf. We should send the report to the petitioners, but, other than that, I think that we should close the petition.

[186] **Val Lloyd:** Are we all agreed?

[187] **Mr Davidson:** I will have to check that the Members' research service is content for the report to be forwarded first.

[188] **Val Lloyd:** Of course. It is its property, is it not?

[189] The next petition relates to Castle care home. We first discussed it in June and we have now had a reply from Jane Davidson, the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing. Basically, we are told that we should advise the petitioners to address their concerns to the local planning authority once the planning application is on the table. Are there any views on this? I do not think that we can do anything more than advise the petitioners that they will have an avenue to influence the planning department and that they should be alert to the advertisement appearing in the press, or they should forewarn the Neath Port Talbot planning department that they would like to know if a planning application came in.

[190] **Mr Davidson:** I am sorry to interject again, but I have very recently received correspondence from the petitioner. I understand that the planning application has been approved by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. However, as this is a local authority decision-making process, the committee would not get involved, and the petitioner is pursuing this via the local authority's complaints procedure.

[191] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We have always erred on the side of caution when it comes to planning applications and planning issues, because, in the first instance, they are within the remit of local authorities. I thank the clerk for his update, but I do not think that we can do much more on the petition, so we should close it.

[192] **Val Lloyd:** I do not think that there is more that we can do, so we will close it. The petitioners are obviously aware of the information that we were going to give them.

[193] On petition P-03-130, requesting broadband in the St Brides Wentloog and Lighthouse Park areas of Newport city, we wrote back to the petitioners with details of how they could register their not spot and get in touch with Ofcom, but they told us that they had already done so. When they requested guidance and help for the provision of broadband, I

rather think that they were hoping that we would wave a magic wand of some type, but we cannot.

[194] **Michael German:** There were questions on this in the Chamber last week. The Welsh Assembly Government must have some form of policy or guidance on not spots. Could we provide that to the petitioners, if it is available?

[195] **Val Lloyd:** We could write to the Assembly Government to find out whether it has such guidance.

[196] **Michael German:** The Assembly Government has put huge amounts of money into dealing with not spots, so it must have a policy on how it gives its money out.

[197] **Mr Davidson:** We can check the correspondence that we have already received from the Minister, and, if there is no direct reference to the policy, we can write again to ask for it.

[198] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** William Graham is on the case, as well.

[199] **Val Lloyd:** I think that William has already asked questions in the Chamber about it. We are not partisan in this committee. *[Interruption.]* Not at all. I have great admiration for your chief whip.

[200] We move on to petition P-03-134 about the Welsh honours system.

[201] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The First Minister has replied outlining the exact situation. It might be an aspiration for certain Members to have a more defined Welsh honours system, and that may well progress over time. However, there may be a need to highlight with the Prime Minister's Office the feeling within Wales that a more distinct Welsh element could be introduced to the honours system. However, other than that—

[202] **Val Lloyd:** Do you want us to write, as a committee, to the Prime Minister's Office requesting the statistics? I do not think that we can progress this petition, but at least we would have some answer for the petitioners. We have received some answer, of course, because the First Minister has replied.

[203] **Michael German:** May I suggest that we write to the Prime Minister in any case?

[204] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, we will.

[205] On petition P-03-136 about parking in the Heath and Birchgrove area of Cardiff, we have received a letter back from the Minister for Health and Social Services. The request in the petition was in two main parts: to make a recommendation to Cardiff City Council, and to give advice to Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust. We wrote to the Minister on that issue, because parts of the recommendation to Cardiff City Council would refer to its local development plan and to planning permission, which are issues that we cannot take up. However, we can and have taken it up with the Minister, and the Minister's reply is before us, outlining what the trust is doing to reduce car parking congestion. It is an issue with which we are all familiar around major sites, especially hospitals.

[206] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We delayed having the petitioners in to give oral evidence because the Minister was conducting a review, which was due to be published by the end of May or June, if I recall correctly, although I may have my dates slightly wrong. When we discussed that initially, we were awaiting the Minister's report. So, I suggest that we now invite the petitioners to give oral evidence in light of the information that we have, namely that the Minister is looking at this and that she has received reports from various trusts across

Wales, particularly from Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust. It is a wider issue.

[207] **Val Lloyd:** I know that we said that we would consider bringing the petitioners in, but my concern is what exactly we can do for the petitioners. Sometimes, petitions are brought before us that we do not know enough about and so we invite the petitioners in. However, although we do not know the exact conditions around that hospital, we have seen such hospitals in our own areas, so we know about the parking overspill problems in the locality. What would we hope to achieve by hearing the petitioners' genuine concerns?

3.00 p.m.

[208] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** If I remember rightly, in their documents, the petitioners included a clear plan to address these issues, particularly the concentration of services on the University Hospital of Wales site, which they perceived to be compounding the problem. There was that issue about the increased centralisation of services at the site and the fact that the petitioners believed that only the health aspect had been looked at and no consideration had been given to the surrounding area and the parking. People were working in silos instead of looking at the bigger picture. The petitioners were hoping that a more strategic overview would be taken of the parking problems in conjunction with the migration of services onto the UHW site in Cardiff. It is specific to Cardiff because, over the past 10 years or so, there has been a large migration of services from Cardiff Royal Infirmary and Llandough Hospital to UHW, and no thought has been given to the effect on the surrounding areas or to how the transfer of those services compound the problems in those areas every day. I understand that the petitioners had some sort of plan to address this, which they could present to the Petitions Committee in their evidence.

[209] **Michael German:** The petition is in two halves, and it is the first half of the petition that we are looking at, not the second half. The Minister has not really addressed any of the issues relating to the first half of the petition in her response letter. If we are to invite the petitioners in, we should ask them to address point 1, because point 2 is not our responsibility. Point 1 is a matter for the Minister.

[210] **Val Lloyd:** In her letter, the Minister talks about a brand-new public transport interchange, to be developed in autumn 2008. Should we give that time to bed down?

[211] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think that it is time to have the petitioners in, because we have had the petition for quite some time. We have waited for one document to come to us. The new interchange will develop in time, and it might be a point that they wish to raise with us—although I do not want to prejudge what they will say. I believe that they were invited to come in and give evidence. The offer has already been made.

[212] **Val Lloyd:** When we ask them to come, I think that we should suggest that they concentrate on point 1, because there is nothing that we can do about point 2. However, it raises an issue that perhaps we will discuss in one of our informal meetings about whether we should issue any invitations until we have received replies. It occurred to me the other day that we say that we will invite people in—and I am not necessarily saying that we would or would not have done it in this case—but the situation can change once we have received a ministerial reply. Perhaps we can add that as an agenda item on policy. So, we will ask the petitioners to come in but to address us on point 1 only.

[213] **Michael German:** Can we provide them with a copy of the Minister's reply?

[214] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, of course.

[215] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** There is also point 3 in the petition, on the ability to appeal.

[216] **Val Lloyd:** That is third-party planning appeals.

[217] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes. It is not for us to take pieces out. It is relevant to the Assembly, is it not? I believe that we have dealt with it on another occasion.

[218] **Val Lloyd:** We have dealt with it before.

[219] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** But not in relation to this petition.

[220] **Val Lloyd:** No, but it is exactly the same. We could send the reply that we issued previously.

[221] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I am just wary of it. I put a line through point 2 and then I saw point 3 underneath it.

[222] **Val Lloyd:** I grouped point 3 with point 2, actually.

[223] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** There are three component parts. We have dealt with point 3 on another issue.

[224] **Ms Jackson:** I think that this was the petition on which we dealt with that, actually.

[225] **Val Lloyd:** We have a ministerial reply.

[226] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That could be provided.

[227] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. We now move on to petitions P-03-141 and P-03-149. I understand that the chief executive of the Snowdonia Society is in the public gallery to hear our deliberations on this today. We have grouped the two petitions together. One is in favour of Llanbedr airfield and the other is against it. So, what do Members wish to do?

[228] **Michael German:** I thought that we were going to hear both sides of the argument.

[229] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, we did say that. We also said that we should hear them on the same day. I would suggest—and I cannot remember which order they came in—that whichever petition came in first should be taken first and that the second petition should be taken second. Is everyone agreeable?

[230] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, it will be the petition that is for the airfield first and the petition that is against second, as P-03-141 is for the airfield and P-03-149 is against it.

[231] **Val Lloyd:** I was not doing it for that reason; I was just thinking of being fair. So, we agree that the clerks should look for a suitable date in conjunction with both sets of petitioners so that they can come to address us on the issues that they raise in their petitions. We have had a reply from Ieuan Wyn Jones, the relevant Minister, setting out the situation. Perhaps we should make a copy available to both sets of petitioners.

[232] The next petition, which is to remove the statue of Margaret Thatcher from the Senedd, is a little past its sell-by date. We have no alternative but to close this petition as we cannot progress it any further.

[233] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** She is coming back.

[234] **David Lloyd:** She is not coming back.

[235] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** She is, and she will be bigger.

[236] **David Lloyd:** She is gone and good riddance.

[237] **Val Lloyd:** The next petition is from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, petitioning us to lay specific responsibility on local authorities to be aware of their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the disability equality duty,

[238] ‘by not creating town centres, high streets and residential streets with shared surfaces that discriminate against blind and partially sighted and other disabled people’.

[239] The paper that we had from the Members’ research service on shared use is applicable, and we have also had a response from the Minister. The Minister points out that the

[240] ‘Government’s policy in respect of shared services is contained in the Manual for Streets which was published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Transport and the Welsh Assembly Government in 2007.’

[241] **Michael German:** Is it guidance? Is it statutory or non-statutory?

[242] **Val Lloyd:** You mean the policy, I assume. I do not know. Did our paper from the Members’ research service tell us? We do not know.

[243] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It was published in 2007, and that is confirmed by the Minister’s letter to the committee dated 14 August.

[244] **Michael German:** Does policy normally require some form of guidance?

[245] **Val Lloyd:** There is usually guidance on implementation. We will write and ask, unless anyone knows the answer. Joane, you say that you do not know either, so we will clarify it. It is an interesting point. We should look for the wider guidance and at how it applies to everything else so that we would know in future.

[246] The next petition is on fuel and road haulage in Wales. This has been around for a while.

[247] **Michael German:** How is the committee getting on with it?

[248] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It was supposed to have done it by the summer recess. Nothing has been reported back to the Enterprise and Learning Committee. A small group was established from the Enterprise and Learning Committee. David Melding from our party was involved, Kirsty from yours, Mike—I am not sure who else was involved. The group was supposed to report back, so I think that we should find out from the Enterprise and Learning Committee clerk what progress has been made. I know that a programme of work was set up to be done during recess.

[249] **Val Lloyd:** I am sure that the group has not finished; if it had, the clerk would have pointed us in that direction. So, perhaps a progress report would be applicable. It is one of these cases where we are awaiting their response before we close the petition.

3.10 p.m.

[250] Moving on to the Coleg Ffederal Cymraeg petition, again, I think that we have been



overtaken by events. I mentioned earlier the fact that, originally, we were suggesting that we ask the petitioners to address us, but the Minister has now set up a group under the chairmanship of Professor Robin Williams, formerly of Swansea University. I am very mindful of what Andrew said about giving petitioners a full hearing, but I am also mindful of wasting petitioners' time.

[251] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** There is nothing stopping petitioners from coming to see us, because that evidence, or whatever they submit to us, could be put into Professor Williams's review or whatever they have set up for this. In some respects, we would be offering them a platform to bring something to the table, would we not, which might not be afforded to them by Professor Williams's report? The petitioners could turn around and say, 'No; we are quite happy with what the Minister has done here; we do not want to exercise our options to come before you as a committee, and we would prefer to see what Professor Williams has to say on it.'. It could be a way for them to put their arguments out in the open. There is no compulsion on their coming before us, is there?

[252] **Val Lloyd:** No. Perhaps we could make the point in our invitation that, if they feel that it is redundant because there is an inquiry—

[253] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think that we should make that point because there is no point in our doing two things, is there?

[254] **Val Lloyd:** No.

[255] **Michael German:** We could also ask them whether they have been invited by Professor Williams to meet the review board. Jane Hutt states in her letter that they will consult with interested parties and a wide range of organisations.

[256] **Val Lloyd:** I imagine that Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg would be one of those interested parties.

[257] Finally, has anyone approached the clerk to say that they want information on any more of these?

[258] **Michael German:** How many are there now, Chair?

[259] **Val Lloyd:** I do not know. That is the answer. You would not want me say that I know where everyone is. I am afraid that I do not know.

[260] **Mr Davidson:** There are around 70.

[261] **Michael German:** Thank you.

[262] **Val Lloyd:** That is the answer, and it is correct.

[263] **Michael German:** You are supposed to whisper it.

[264] **Val Lloyd:** He did whisper it to me but I see no point in pretending that it was my knowledge.

[265] **David Lloyd:** That is very wise.

[266] **Val Lloyd:** There are some petitions coming in. We have some e-petitions collecting signatures and some that are yet to have their admissibility confirmed. Therefore, we are not short of business, as they say. With that, I can move to close the meeting. I thank Dr Dai

Lloyd very much for substituting for Bethan Jenkins; I hope that you found our committee deliberations interesting.

[267] **David Lloyd:** Delightful, Chair.

[268] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you. I now formally close the meeting.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 3.13 p.m.*  
*The meeting ended at 3.13 p.m.*