



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 16 Hydref 2008
Thursday, 16 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.

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

Michael German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Val Lloyd	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

John Evans	O blaid maes awyr Llanbedr For Llanbedr airfield
Katherine Himsworth	Ysgrifennydd, Cymdeithas Eryri (yn erbyn maes awyr Llanbedr) Secretary, Snowdonia Society (against Llanbedr airfield)
Gwynli Jones	O blaid maes awyr Llanbedr For Llanbedr airfield
David Lewis	Cadeirydd, Cymdeithas Eryri (yn erbyn maes awyr Llanbedr) Chair, Snowdonia Society (against Llanbedr airfield)
Alun Pugh	Cyfarwyddwr, Cymdeithas Eryri (yn erbyn maes awyr Llanbedr) Director, Snowdonia Society (against Llanbedr airfield)
Yr Arglwydd/Lord Elis-Thomas	Aelod Cynulliad, Plaid Cymru Assembly Member, The Party of Wales

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

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

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 12.46 p.m.
The meeting began at 12.46 p.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Val Lloyd:** Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. I remind everyone to switch off all their electronic devices and let our visitors know that, should we hear the fire alarm, it will be for real, as we are not expecting a drill; the ushers will assist you to the nearest exit. I hope that that will not happen, but it is a possibility. For those people who need translation, it is available on channel 1 on your headsets; the headsets also provide amplification if you have any hearing difficulties.

12.47 p.m.

**O blaid Maes Awyr Llanbedr—Tystiolaeth oddi wrth y Deisebwyr
For Llanbedr Airfield—Evidence from the Petitioners**

[2] **Val Lloyd:** We are fortunate to have the petitioners here. Gentlemen, will you introduce yourselves, please?

[3] **Mr Evans:** My name is John Evans.

[4] **Mr Jones:** I am Gwynli Jones.

[5] **Val Lloyd:** You are very welcome, gentlemen. We will allow you up to 15 minutes—if you take less; that is not a problem—to raise any issues that you wish to raise on behalf of your petition. After that period of 15 minutes, we are delighted that your constituency AM, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, is here in his role as the constituency Member; he will address us for up to five minutes, in support of your petition. I do not count this introduction as part of your 15 minutes, so whenever you are ready, please start.

[6] **Mr Jones:** Yr wyf am rannu ychydig o hanes maes awyr Llanbedr ers yr amser y'i hagorwyd ar ôl y rhyfel. Yr awyrennau a ddaeth i mewn yn gyntaf i'r maes awyr oedd y Beaufighter, y Mosquito, yr Anson, y Vampire a'r Spitfire. Tynnu targedau i'r fyddin yn Tonfannau a Thy'n y Groes oedd gwaith y Mosquito a'r Beaufighter. Wedyn, yn 1952, dechreuodd y Firefly ddod i mewn—awyren heb beilot ynddi—a bu'n hedfan tan Fehefin 1960. Pan adawodd y Firefly olaf Llanbedr, cododd yr awyren heb beilot i fyny oddi ar y rhedfa at 1,000 o droedfeddi ac aeth allan i'r môr, a 'ta ta' oedd hi. Diflannodd o'r golwg i'r môr. Dyna ddiwedd ar y Firefly. Yr oedd y Firefly yn debyg iawn i'r Spitfire; yr oedd yn awyren anodd iawn i'w hedfan. Eto i gyd, yr oeddent yn llwyddo i'w hedfan yn Llanbedr.

Mr Jones: I will share some of the history of Llanbedr airfield, since its opening following the war. The first aircraft to come in to the airfield were the Beaufighter, the Mosquito, the Anson, the Vampire and the Spitfire. The Mosquito and the Beaufighter were used to tow targets for the army in Tonfannau and Ty'n y Groes. Then, in 1952, the Firefly—an unmanned plane—started to come in, and flew in and out until June 1960. When the last Firefly left Llanbedr, the unmanned plane left the runway, rising to 1,000 feet and went out to sea, and then it was goodbye. It disappeared from view into the sea. That was the end of the Firefly. The Firefly was very similar to the Spitfire; a very difficult plane to fly. Nevertheless, they did manage to fly the aircraft out of Llanbedr.

12.50 p.m.

[7] Yn y 1950au a'r 1960au, gwnaed llawer o waith yn y maes awyr. Codwyd tŵr rheoli, dau awyrendy mawr, a rhedfa arall a oedd yn 7,500 troedfedd o hyd ac yn ddigon hir i hedfan awyrennau Jet, Meteor a Jindivik. Wrth gwrs, gallai'r rheini ddod i mewn a chodi yn ddibeilot ar gyflymder anferthol. Hefyd, bu awyrennau V Bombers a Comet yn dod i faes awyr Llanbedr, yn ogystal â llawer iawn o wahanol awyrennau eraill.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a great deal of work was done on the airfield. A control tower, two large hangars, and a second runway were constructed. The runway was 7,500 feet long and long enough to fly Jets, Meteors and Jindiviks. These unmanned planes could, of course, approach the airfield and take off at a tremendous speed. Also, the V Bombers and Comets used the Llanbedr airfield, along with a huge variety of other aircraft.

[8] Gwelais yr awyrennau olaf yn mynd allan o Llanbedr ym mis Tachwedd 2004 ac yr oedd hynny'n achlysur eithriadol o drist. Cofiaf y diwrnod hwnnw am byth. Yr

I saw the last aircraft leaving Llanbedr airfield in November 2004 and it was an extremely sad occasion. I will never forget that day. I was very sad.

oeddwn yn drist iawn.

[9] Hoffwn ddangos llun o'r maes awyr i chi. Yr wyf wedi gwneud rhyw fath o fraslun o'r maes awyr yn Llanbedr. Dyma'r rhedfa a gafodd ei hailagor. Yr oedd y ddwy redfa yma cyn hynny. Yr oeddent yn hedfan awyrennau Firefly oddi ar y rhedfa fach hon ond yr oedd yn llawer yn rhy fyr i awyrennau Jindivik a Meteor ei defnyddio. Wedyn, byddent yn defnyddio'r rhedfa hir. Fel y gwelwch, mae'r rhedfeydd yn Llanbedr yn pwyntio'n syth tuag at y môr. Byddech yn codi o'r pen yma—1.8—a chodi i fyny 500 troedfedd, dal ymlaen, a chyn gynted ag y cyrhaeddid y pwynt hwn, byddech yn troi tuag at y môr ac esgyn hyd at 800 troedfedd ac yna 1,000 troedfedd. Yna byddech allan dros y môr yn dysgu neu'n gwneud cylchoedd, neu beth bynnag y dymunech ei wneud. Byddech yn gwneud yr un peth yn union ar yr ochr arall—codi hyd at 500 troedfedd, wedyn 800 troedfedd, ac yna troi ac anelu allan am y môr.

[10] Yr unig dro y byddwn yn defnyddio'r rhedfa fach hon yw pan fyddwn yn codi o'r fan hon ac allan yn syth tuag at y môr. Mae hon eto yr un fath: cychwyn ar 500 troedfedd, wedyn 800 troedfedd, ac yna allan i'r môr. Mae'r ddwy ochr yr un fath. Felly, nid oes angen hedfan dros dŷ neu unrhyw beth arall; dim ond twyni a'r môr sydd o'ch blaen. I ddysgu hedfan, mae'n eithriadol o hwylus, gan eich bod yn gallu gwneud y cwbl dros y môr.

[11] Wrth ddod i mewn i faes awyr Llanbedr o rywle arall—o'r de, y dwyrain neu o'r gorllewin—byddwch yn dod i mewn 4,000 troedfedd uwchben y maes awyr; yna bydd yr ystafell reoli yn cymryd drosodd ac yn anfon yr awyren allan i'r môr i wneud cylch, disgyn i 800 troedfedd, yna 500 troedfedd ac i mewn. Dyma'r unig faes awyr yn y wlad lle nad oes rhaid i chi hedfan dros dŷ nag unrhyw beth arall. Mae'n hollol ddiogel. Hefyd, ni fyddwch yn clywed sŵn awyrennau'n hedfan ychwaith. Ni glywch awyren fach un injan yn codi yn Llanbedr. Byddech yn clywed y Jets, wrth gwrs, gan eu bod yn gwneud mwy o sŵn. Mae'r maes awyr, felly, yn ddiogel iawn ar gyfer hedfan.

[12] Yr wyf yn erfyn yn daer arnoch i

I would like to show you a picture of the airfield itself. I have prepared a rough sketch of the Llanbedr airfield. Here is the runway that was re-opened. These other two runways were already there. They used to fly the Firefly from the shorter runway but it was far too short for Jindiviks and Meteors. Then, they would use the longer runway. As you can see, the runways at Llanbedr all point straight out to sea. You would leave from this end—1.8—and ascend to 500 feet, proceed a little, and then as soon as you got to this point, you would turn towards the sea and ascend to 800 feet and then 1,000 feet. Then you would be out over the open sea carrying out the training or any circuits that you would want to complete. The same is true on the other side—you would ascend to 500 feet, then 800 feet, turn, and then head out to sea.

We only use this smaller runway to take off from here and head straight out to sea. Once again this is the same: starting at 500 feet, then 800 feet, and straight out to sea. Both sides are the same. Therefore, you do not have to fly over a house or anything else; you only have the sand dunes and the sea beneath you. For training purposes, it is extremely convenient, because every manoeuvre is carried out over the sea.

In approaching Llanbedr airfield from anywhere else—from the south, east or west—you come in at 4,000 feet above the airfield; then the control room takes over, sends the aircraft out to sea to do its circuit, descend to 800 feet, 500 feet and then land. It is the only airfield in the country that is remote enough so that you do not have to fly over any houses or anything else. It is entirely safe. Also, you do not hear the aircraft. You will not hear noise from small one-engine aircraft taking off from Llanbedr. You would hear the Jets, of course, as they are noisier. Therefore, the airfield is very safe for flying purposes.

I strongly urge you to support the reopening

gefnogi ailagor maes awyr Llanbedr. Diolch of Llanbedr airfield. Thank you.
yn fawr.

[13] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you, Mr Jones. Do you wish to speak, Mr Evans?

[14] **Mr Evans:** Hoffwn ategu'r hyn a ddywedodd Gwynli ac ychwanegu ychydig eiriau. Mae gwelliannau sylweddol yn digwydd neu ar y gweill, gyda Gwesty Dewi Sant yn Harlech a'r coleg yn ochr y gwesty. Mae'r ddau adeilad yn edrych dros un o glybiau golff gorau Cymru—mae'n ail ar y rhestr. Teimlo wyf i a llawer un, pe bai'r maes awyr hwn yn cael ailagor, ynghyd â'r prosiect sy'n mynd yn ei flaen yn y ddau adeilad yn Harlech, byddai'n hwb i'r economi leol.

Mr Evans: I would like to endorse what Gwynli has said and also add a few words. Significant improvements are being made or are in hand, with the Saint David's Hotel in Harlech and the college to the side of the hotel. Both buildings overlook one of Wales's best golf clubs—it is second on the list. I and many others feel that were this airfield reopened, along with the project that is under way in the two buildings in Harlech, that would boost the local economy.

[15] Mae'n rhaid cadw mewn cof, er 2004, fod dwy siop wedi cau ym mhentref bach Llanbedr, yn ogystal â garej â phympiau petrol a ffatri fach dur gwrthstaen. Ychydig flynyddoedd cyn hynny, collodd oddeutu 250 eu gwaith yn Cookes Explosives Ltd ym Mhenrhyndeudraeth. Yn atomfa Trawsfynydd, collodd o gwmpas 300 waith, ac yn awr mae toriadau go sylweddol yn Blaenau Plastics Cyf. Teimlwn fod ardal Ardudwy'n cael un ergyd ar ôl y llall, ac nid oes gwaith arall yn dod i mewn.

You must remember that, since 2004, two shops have closed in the small village of Llanbedr, as well as a garage with petrol pumps and a small factory making stainless steel products. A few years before that, some 250 people lost their jobs at Cookes Explosives Ltd in Penrhyndeudraeth. At the Trawsfynydd nuclear plant, some 300 lost their jobs, and now there are significant cuts at Blaenau Plastics Ltd. We feel that the Ardudwy region has suffered one blow after another, and no replacement jobs are coming in.

[16] Yr ydym wedi datgan ein pryder i rai o swyddogion y parc cenedlaethol, wedi inni dderbyn cwynion gan bobl y pentref eu bod wedi clywed bod y parc yn erbyn y datblygiad. Pan soniais am hynny wrth y swyddogion, pwysleisiasant nad oedd ganddynt ddim byd yn erbyn y gwrsyll o gwbl, ac mai swyddogion o Gymdeithas Eryri oedd yn creu pryder ac yn datgan nad oeddent am i'r peth fynd yn ei flaen, yn syml. Mae'r maes awyr yno ers bron i 70 mlynedd, ac felly ni wn pam bod eisiau cais cynllunio, a chredaf fod rhai o swyddogion y parc yn cyd-weld â mi ar hynny.

We have stated our concerns to some of the national park officials, following complaints from villagers that they had heard that the park was against the development. When I mentioned this to the officials, they stressed that they had nothing against the camp at all, and that it was officials from the Snowdonia Society who were creating concerns and stating that they did not want it to go ahead, to put it simply. The airfield has been there for 70 years, so why planning permission is required I have no idea, and I believe that some of the park officials would go along with that view.

[17] O'r ychydig sydd wedi gwrthwynebu'r cais hwn, mae'u hanner o Loegr ac 16 y cant ohonynt o Wynedd. Hoffwn wybod faint o'r 16 y cant hynny sydd o'r filltir sgwâr. Mae'n pentref yn haeddu gwell.

Of the few people that have objected to this application, half are from England and 16 per cent from Gwynedd. I would like to know how many of those 16 per cent are from the local area. The village deserves better.

[18] Erfyniaf arnoch un ac oll i gefnogi'r fenter hon, er lles ein cymdeithas ac, yn

I appeal to all of you to support this initiative, for the benefit of our society and, more

bwysicach oll, er lles ein plant a'u dyfodol. Heb blant, heb ddyfodol, a Duw a'n helpo wedyn. Diolch ichi am wrando.

importantly, for the sake of our children and their future. Without our children, we have no future, and God help us all should it come to that. Thank you for listening.

[19] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you very much, gentlemen, and thank you for keeping within your allocated time. Dafydd, would you care to address the committee as the constituency AM?

[20] **Dafydd Elis-Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd, am y cyfle hwn i gefnogi'r ddeiseb a baratowyd mewn cyfnod byr. Fe'm galwyd i gyfarfod yn Llanbedr i gwrdd â'r deisebwyr. Gwn eu bod yn adlewyrchu barn y gymuned. Yr wyf yn gyfarwydd â'r maes awyr yn Llanbedr ers imi fynd i weithio i Harlech yn 1970, ac yn fwy cyfarwydd wedyn fel Aelod Seneddol ac wedyn Aelod Cynulliad dros Feirionydd a thros Lanbedr.

Dafydd Elis-Thomas: Thank you very much, Chair, for this opportunity to support the petition, which was prepared at short notice. I was invited to a meeting in Llanbedr with the petitioners. I know that they reflect the opinion of the community. I have been familiar with the airfield at Llanbedr since I went to work in Harlech in 1970, and my familiarity deepened when I was returned as the Member of Parliament and then the Assembly Member for Meirionydd and Llanbedr.

[21] Mae'r deisebwyr wedi gosod eu dadl yn gwbl glir. Yr hyn sydd gennym yma yw adnodd cyhoeddus a oedd yn arfer perthyn i'r Weinyddiaeth Amddiffyn, a barhaodd i'w ddatblygu a'i redeg ar gontract ar gyfer ymarferion a phrofi gwahanol offerynnau milwrol. Mae pobl o bob rhan o'r byd wedi ymarfer oddi ar fae Ceredigion â'r offer oedd yno yn y gorffennol.

The petitioners have set out their argument absolutely clearly. What we have here is a public resource that used to belong to the Ministry of Defence, which continued to be owned, developed and run under contract for exercises and various tests of military equipment. People from all over the world have taken part in exercises off Cardigan bay using the equipment that used to be there in the past.

[22] Felly, pan ddaeth diwedd cyfnod y Weinyddiaeth Amddiffyn a'r contractwyr yn y maes awyr, yr oedd yn amlwg bod rhaid chwilio am ddefnydd economaidd a masnachol gwahanol iddo dan berchenogion newydd, a dyna sydd wedi digwydd. Er 2004, mae Awdurdod Datblygu Cymru ac yna adran berthnasol Llywodraeth Cymru dan arweiniad y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog, wedi bod yn chwilio am ddefnydd amgen. Mae'n amlwg mai'r defnydd priodol i faes awyr yw datblygiad sy'n ymwneud â'r gweithgaredd hwnnw. Mae hynny i'w ffafrio'n fwy o safbwynt economi'r ardal na cheisio addasu neu hyd yn oed ddileu'r safle hwnnw.

When the time came for the Ministry of Defence and the contractors to leave the airfield, it was clear that a different economic and commercial use had to be found under new ownership, and that is what happened. Since 2004, the Welsh Development Agency and then the relevant Welsh Assembly Government department led by the Deputy First Minister have been searching for an alternative use. It is clear that the most appropriate use for an airfield is a development that is based on that activity. That is more favourable from the point of view of the local economy than trying to adapt or even eradicate the site.

1.00 p.m.

[23] Felly, mae'n dda gennyf gefnogi'r ymgais hwn a chefnogi'r deisebwyr. Nid wyf am wneud unrhyw sylw am y ddeiseb sy'n gwrthwynebu, ond efallai y bydd o ddiddordeb i chi wybod fy mod yn gyn-aelod

Therefore, I am pleased to support this campaign and the petitioners. I do not wish to comment on the opposing petition, but it may be of interest to you that I am a former member of Snowdonia Society's committee

o bwyllgor Cymdeithas Eryri a bod nifer ohonom yn anghytuno â'r safbwynt y mae'r gymdeithas wedi'i gymryd.

and that there are many of us who disagree with the stand that the society has taken.

[24] Yr wyf wedi byw ym Mharc Cenedlaethol Eryri, neu wrth ei ochr, ar hyd fy mywyd, ac nid wyf yn gweld unrhyw wrthdaro rhwng amcanion mwynhau mwynnderau'r parc cenedlaethol a datblygiad rhesymol mewn maes awyr sydd wedi bod yn adnodd cyhoeddus yn yr ardal am gyhyd o flynyddoedd, fel yr ydym wedi clywed.

I have lived in or near the Snowdonia National Park all my life, and I do not see any conflict between the aims of enjoying the facilities of the national park and a reasonable development in an airfield that has been a public resource for the area for many years, as we have heard.

[25] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you for your contribution and for keeping within the time limit. I will now open up the discussion for questions. Members also have a time limit: we have up to 15 minutes to ask you questions, and we would be very grateful if you could answer them. We understand if you do not know the answer, but we require a little more information. I will start the questioning.

[26] You tell us in your letters that there is almost unanimous support locally for the airport. Can you give us some indication, as we are not local to the area, of the population of Llanbedr and roughly what proportion of that population has signed your petition?

[27] **Mr Jones:** Poblogaeth Harlech yw 1,200, Dyffryn Ardudwy, 742, Llanbedr, 500, Talybont, 457, a Llanfair, 500—heb gynnwys plant. Mae hyn oll o fewn dwy filltir sgwâr i'r maes awyr.

Mr Jones: The population of Harlech is 1,200, Dyffryn Ardudwy, 742, Llanbedr, 500, Talybont, 457, and Llanfair, 500—not including children. That is all within two square miles of the airfield.

[28] **Val Lloyd:** According to my calculations that is 3,219. How many have signed your petition?

[29] **Mr Jones:** Mewn 24 awr yr oeddem wedi cael yn agos at 1,500 o enwau, ac un person yn unig a wrthododd arwyddo'r ddeiseb.

Mr Jones: Within 24 hours we had collected close to 1,500 signatures, and only one person refused to sign the petition.

[30] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you. That is a clear answer to my question. Do Members have questions?

[31] **Bethan Jenkins:** Diolch am eich cyflwyniad. Dywedasoeh bod rhai o swyddogion Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri yn gefnogol o'ch cais ac yn anghytuno â'r ddeiseb arall. A fedrwch chi ehangu ar hynny? A ydynt wedi gwneud eu barn yn gyhoeddus?

Bethan Jenkins: Thank you for your presentation. You mentioned that some Snowdonia National Park Authority officials support your bid and oppose the other petition. Can you expand on that? Have they made their views known publicly?

[32] **Mr Evans:** Siaradais ag un o'r swyddogion—nid wyf eisiau ei enwi, er mwyn bod yn deg ag ef—gan fy mod yn derbyn galwadau ffôn yn gofyn pam fod Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri yn gwrthwynebu'r datblygiad. Dywedodd bod y ffaith bod Cymdeithas Eryri wedi

Mr Evans: I spoke to one of the officials—I do not wish to name him, to be fair to him—as I had been getting phone calls asking why Snowdonia National Park Authority was opposing the development. He said that the fact that the Snowdonia Society had opposed the development had been of great concern to

gwrthwynebu'r datblygiad wedi bod yn boen ar eu meddwl, a'u bod hwythau hefyd wedi derbyn galwadau ffôn diri, ond nid oedd swyddogion y parc yn gwrthwynebu'r datblygiad. Maent dal i ddweud nad ydynt yn ei wrthwynebu—mae pobl wedi camddeall y sefyllfa, gan gymryd bod Cymdeithas Eryri ac Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri yr un peth, ond nid ydynt. Maent yn hollol wahanol—mae un yn ymwneud â chynllunio, ac nid yw'r llall, Cymdeithas Eryri, wedi cael ei ethol gan unrhyw un.

[33] **Bethan Jenkins:** Felly, hyd y gwyddoch, nid yw'r awdurdod wedi gwrthwynebu'r datblygiad yn gyhoeddus?

[34] **Mr Evans:** Nid cyn belled ag y gwn. Yr wyf wedi siarad â dau o'r swyddogion, a ddywedodd nad oeddynt yn gwrthwynebu hyn o gwbl. Ni wn a ydynt wedi dweud hynny yn gyhoeddus. Mae'r ddau swyddog o'r un farn â mi—nid ydynt yn gwybod pam bod eisiau cais cynllunio newydd, pan fydd yr un gwaith yn mynd yn ei flaen, oherwydd defnyddir y maes awyr at yr un defnydd ag y cafodd ei ddefnyddio dros y blynyddoedd. Ond pedair blynedd sydd wedi pasio rhyngddynt, felly nid wyf yn deall pam bod angen cais cynllunio, ac mae rhai ohonynt hwy o'r un farn.

[35] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ar y pwynt hwnnw, a ydych wedi cael trafodaethau gyda Kemble ynglŷn â defnydd y maes awyr pe bai'n cael ei ddatblygu, neu a fuasech yn hyblyg o ran newid yr hyn a fuasai'n digwydd yno—datblygiadau awyrennau, er enghraifft?

[36] **Mr Evans:** Pasiaf y cwestiwn hwnnw ymlaen at Gwynli Jones.

[37] **Mr Jones:** Gofynnais i swyddogion Kemble ddod i Lanbedr i egluro beth yr oeddynt yn bwriadu ei wneud â'r maes awyr. Dywedasant mai'r peth cyntaf fuasai'n cael ei wneud fuasai dechrau clwb hedfan gydag awyrennau bach. Ni allwn i weld dim byd o'i le â hynny. Maent eisiau gosod cymaint ag y gallant o'r adeiladau i bobl yr ardal—gweithwyr, seiri, ac yn y blaen.

[38] **Bethan Jenkins:** A ydynt wedi dweud wrthy ch faint o swyddi a allai ddod i'r ardal yn sgîl unrhyw ddatblygiad?

them, and that they also received numerous phone calls, but that the park officials did not oppose the development. They still say that they do not oppose it—people have misunderstood the situation, and assumed that the Snowdonia Society and Snowdonia National Park Authority are the same, but they are not. They are completely different—one is to do with planning, and the other, the Snowdonia Society, has not been elected by anyone.

Bethan Jenkins: Therefore, as far as you know, the authority has not opposed the development publicly?

Mr Evans: Not as far as I know. I have spoken to two of the officials, who told me that they did not oppose this at all. I do not know whether they have said that publicly. The two officials are of the same opinion as me—they do not know why another planning application is needed, when the same work will be going on, because the airfield will be used for the same purpose that it has been used over the years. Only four years have gone by, so I cannot understand why a planning application is needed, and some of them are of the same opinion.

Bethan Jenkins: On that point, have you had any discussions with Kemble about the use of the airfield were it to be developed, or would you be flexible about changing what would happen there—airplane development, for example?

Mr Evans: I will pass that question on to Gwynli Jones.

Mr Jones: I asked officials from Kemble to come to Lanbedr to explain what they intended to do with the airfield. They told me that the first thing that would be done would be to start a flying club, with small aircraft. I can see nothing wrong with that. They want to lease as many of the buildings as possible to local people—workers, carpenters, and so on.

Bethan Jenkins: Have they told you how many jobs might come to the area following any development?

[39] **Mr Jones:** Fel pobl fusnes, buaswn yn tybio y buasent yn gobeithio dechrau gydag o leiaf 12, ac adeiladu ar hynny. Wrth gwrs, bydd yn rhaid iddynt ddechrau o'r dechrau, beth bynnag y maent yn ei wneud. Fodd bynnag, fel y bydd pethau yn datblygu, yr wyf yn siŵr y byddant yn cyflogi mwy.

Mr Jones: As business people, I would think that they would want to start with a minimum of 12, and build up from there. Of course, they will have to start from the bottom, whatever their intentions are. However, as things develop, I am sure that they will employ more people.

[40] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ond nid ydych wedi gweld unrhyw gynllun busnes sy'n nodi mai'r hyn fydd yn digwydd yno yw A, B neu C?

Bethan Jenkins: But you have not seen any business plan that notes that what will happen there is A, B or C?

[41] **Mr Jones:** Ni fuaswn yn hoffi dweud fy mod, oherwydd dyna'r unig wybodaeth a gefais ganddynt bryd hynny, ac yr oeddwn yn go hapus â hynny. Wrth gwrs, os ydynt yn gwneud rhywbeth allan o'i le, bydd y system gynllunio yn delio â hynny.

Mr Jones: I would not like to say that I have, because that is the only information that I received from them at that time, and I was quite happy with that. Of course, if they do something that is not right, then the planning system will deal with that.

[42] **Mr Evans:** Gwn am lawer o fusnesau lleol sy'n disgwyl am y cyfle i ddefnyddio'r adeiladau mae Kemble eisiau eu gosod. Byddai'r busnesau hynny wedyn yn cyflogi mwy o bobl, ond nid wyf yn gwybod faint yn union o bobl byddai Kemble yn eu cyflogi.

Mr Evans: I know of several local businesses that are waiting for the opportunity to access the buildings that Kemble wants to lease. Those businesses would then employ more people, but I do not know exactly how many people Kemble would employ.

[43] **Mr Jones:** Pe baent yn dechrau clwb hedfan, mae'n dibynnu yn union faint fuasai eisiau dysgu hedfan. Fodd bynnag, buaswn yn meddwl y buasai'n rhaid cael o leiaf 12 o bobl cyn gallu dechrau clwb hedfan, ac mae'n rhaid dechrau o'r dechrau, onid oes?

Mr Jones: If they were to start a flying club, it would depend on exactly how many people would want to learn to fly. However, I would think that you would need at least 12 people before you could start a flying club, and you have to begin at the beginning, do you not?

[44] **Bethan Jenkins:** A ydynt wedi ymgynghori'n lleol ynglŷn â phwy fyddai am ddefnyddio'r adnodd hwnnw?

Bethan Jenkins: Have they consulted locally on who would like to use that resource?

[45] **Mr Jones:** Maent wedi siarad â'r rhai a oedd yn arfer gweithio yn y maes awyr—megis y rhai a oedd yn gweithio yn y tŵr rheoli, y peirianwyr, ac yn y blaen—ac wedi cynnig y cyfle iddynt i fynd yn ôl i weithio yno.

Mr Jones: They have spoken to those who used to work in the airfield—such as those who worked in the control tower, the engineers, and so on—and they have offered them the chance to return to work there.

[46] **Michael German:** I want to pursue this issue of what would happen on the airfield. Would Kemble take over the whole airfield, and manage it all? You say that it would then rent out some of the buildings to whoever might want to rent them? Is that right?

[47] **Mr Jones:** Yes.

[48] **Michael German:** However, it is not gone as far as showing you a plan—you have not seen a plan of its proposals?

1.10 p.m.

[49] **Mr Jones:** No. I asked Kemble about that: the officials said that things had gone through, and did not show me any plans. There is one building there that has already been taken over by the Ministry of Defence, and it has done some alterations to that building. I asked the people from Kemble about it and they said that they had nothing to do with that part of the airfield and that that belonged to Aberporth and Farnborough. I do not know what they will do.

[50] **Michael German:** So, what would you like to see on the airfield and what would you not like to see?

[51] **Mr Jones:** I would like to see a flying club, because I fly myself. I would like to see small, single-engine aircraft coming in, carrying visitors or whatever. As I said earlier, its location is such that you would not hear any aircraft landing or taking off.

[52] **Michael German:** Do you think that most of the benefits for the local community would be from renting spaces near the buildings or from the flying club?

[53] **Mr Jones:** I hope that, further on, the community will benefit from tourism because we depend on tourism.

[54] **Michael German:** Were any of these issues raised when people talked about this to you? Were any issues relating to the sort of development that people would like to see raised with you?

[55] **Mr Jones:** I have been asked the question, but I am in no position to answer it.

[56] **Michael German:** That is why I asked about Kemble, because, clearly, it is the only one interested. Is no-one else interested?

[57] **Mr Jones:** Not that I am aware, but I have flown to Kemble many times and it seems to be organised. I was quite happy with what I saw.

[58] **Michael German:** So, has it submitted a bid to purchase the whole site?

[59] **Mr Jones:** Yes.

[60] Yr ydym yn dibynnu gymaint ar We depend so much on tourism and I am sure
dwristiaeth ac yr wyf yn siŵr y byddem yn that we would gain a great deal from tourists
ennill llawer o dwristiaid yn hedfan i mewn flying in and out; I am not talking about
ac allan; nid wyf yn sôn am awyrennau Boeing 747 aeroplanes or anything like that.
Boeing 747 neu dim byd felly.

[61] **Michael German:** So as far as your consultation with local people goes, no-one is worried about having aircraft there?

[62] **Mr Jones:** Kemble mentioned the flying club.

[63] **Michael German:** No, I am sorry—what I wanted to know was whether the local community is worried about having aircraft flying in and out.

[64] **Mr Jones:** No, because when the flying stopped, it was like a grandfather clock stopping; everything went quiet. We missed it very much. It would be music to my ears to

hear small aircraft flying overhead again.

[65] **Val Lloyd:** We have three minutes left, but I see that there are no further questions. Thank you, gentlemen. We have also kept to time—we have all been very punctual. Thank you very much for coming here. I am sure that you would like to go the public gallery to hear the next session. Normally, after petitioners have spoken about their petition, we discuss the way forward, but because these two petitions are linked, we will not start the discussion until we have heard both sides of the argument. I also thank Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas for attending.

1.13 p.m.

**Yn Erbyn Maes Awyr Llanbedr—Tystiolaeth oddi wrth y Ddeisebwyr
Against Llanbedr Airfield—Evidence from the Petitioners**

[66] **Val Lloyd:** Before I ask you to introduce yourselves, I apologise for the delay in starting—it was beyond our control. One of our committee members is, unfortunately, sick today and another was at another meeting, and we needed three to be quorate. So, I am sorry that we kept you waiting, but we would not have been quorate otherwise.

[67] **Mr Lewis:** We are grateful to the committee for arranging the hearing, and for giving us the opportunity to highlight the lack of information and the absence of public debate about this issue.

[68] **Val Lloyd:** That is our pleasure, and that is what the Petitions Committee is here to do. First, I ask you to introduce yourselves.

[69] **Mr Lewis:** I am David Lewis, and I am a resident of Llanbedr. I have known the airfield since the mid-1970s, but I am appearing not primarily in that capacity but as chair of Cymdeithas Eryri/Snowdonia Society, which originated this petition. I have been chair of the society as of last Saturday, to be precise.

[70] **Val Lloyd:** Congratulations on that.

[71] **Mr Lewis:** My colleagues are Katherine Himsworth, honorary secretary of the society, and Alun Pugh, who since March has been the society's chief executive. Otherwise, I am sure that he needs no introduction.

[72] **Val Lloyd:** You are quite right in that. Thank you. We adopt the same procedure for all petitioners. You have 15 minutes in which to make your presentation, and how you do it is entirely up to you. Your time has not started yet—I assure you that I am not taking it up. After that 15 minutes, we allow up to 15 minutes for the committee to ask you questions. We will take it from there after that. So, whenever you are ready, please begin.

[73] **Mr Lewis:** I will begin, if I may. Cymdeithas Eryri/Snowdonia Society is a registered charity with over 2,500 members. It is concerned with the Snowdonia national park in all its aspects. We, too, want to see jobs created that will help young people to find ready access to employment and sustain thriving communities within the national park. However, any development proposed must also respect the special qualities which have led to the designation of the area as a national park.

[74] The large military airfield at Llanbedr of 563 acres was constructed during the war in one of the most beautiful parts of Snowdonia. After the war, it was used for a while as a diversion field for V-bombers during cold war crises, and it was then converted into a facility

for launching pilotless target aircraft, as Gwynli said. When that ceased, it was closed and decommissioned in 2004. We would have liked to give you some impression in pictures of the beauty of the area, but I gather that there is a glitch in the IT system. Also, one can see in the pictures the buildings of the existing airfield. Unfortunately, we are not able to do that. Of course, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas is familiar with the area, but if other members of the committee can spare the time to come and see it, I am sure that they would realise how beautiful it is.

[75] **Val Lloyd:** We can circulate the photographs to Members.

[76] **Mr Lewis:** The airfield is within one of the first national parks created under the post-war Labour Government's legislation. The role of national parks was endorsed and reinforced in legislation passed by the Conservative Government in 1995, and the Welsh Assembly Government, in a policy statement in March 2007, recognised specifically the importance of national parks for Wales.

1.20 p.m.

[77] As well as being in a national park, the area is internationally important for nature conservation. The giant dunes that lie between the runways and the sea have been designated as a site of special scientific interest and a national nature reserve. They have also been given strict protection under European legislation as a special area of conservation. Part of the airfield is within the European designated area and a rather larger part is within the site of special scientific interest and subject to legal requirements in that respect. Moreover, activities elsewhere on the airfield can have an effect on the dunes, particularly on the water table.

[78] What impact would Kemble's activities have on the area? It has said little about its intentions. The one specific thing that, to our knowledge, it has said is that it would like to hold air days similar to those that it holds at its original base in the Cotswolds. That might give us some idea. We were going to show you an aerial photograph at this stage of a Kemble air day, which shows the vast activity that would go on. We were also going to show you something that was on its website until last week, but has now been removed, which shows some form of display of military prowess in giant fireballs along the runway at Kemble—it is very intimidating. However, we come back to the fact that we do not know what it intends to do and it is therefore difficult to say what would happen at Llanbedr if it got its way.

[79] You have described our petition as Against Llanbedr Airfield, but I think that that might give a misleading impression of negativity in our attitude, because, as we shall develop a little later, jobs are also important from our perspective. However, in launching this proposal, have Assembly Government officials or Kemble shown any awareness of or respect for environmental and legal constraints? The answer, regrettably, is 'no', and Alun Pugh will enlarge on that.

[80] **Mr Pugh:** There are three sets of issues here, where the Welsh Government is either guilty of a serious failure of due process or has acted unlawfully. First, there are what are called the section 62 issues, which go right to the heart of the statutory purposes of national parks. There is a clear consensus across the parties about the enduring value of national parks, and the law in section 62 is absolutely clear. It lays down a clear obligation upon Ministers 'to have regard to' the statutory purposes of the national parks in making their decisions. We have made extensive inquiries under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and there is no evidence that this legal duty has been complied with. Snowdonia National Park Authority is the statutory authority with responsibility for the area, but there has been no contact with the chair of the authority and its members, no contact by Welsh Ministers or officials with the chief executive officer, and no contact whatsoever with any member of the park authority's

senior management team about these proposals. That, we believe, is clear proof of a lack of due legal process, and a clear case for the judicial review of a fatally flawed decision.

[81] The second set of issues concerns the special status of the site. Not only is it within a national park, but, as our chair has pointed out, it is an SSSI, a national nature reserve and an SAC. There are additional and special laws to protect such landscapes, in British and European legislation. There has been no environmental impact assessment of what Kemble proposes to do, which we also discovered under FOI legislation.

[82] Finally, there are the planning issues. The site has never had planning permission, because it was a military facility. When you need certain conditions to appropriate a piece of land and construct a defence facility, you do not need to go through that process. We have taken advice from counsel—not general counsel, but specialist planning counsel working at a leading chambers dealing with planning. Their clear advice to us is that planning permission is indeed required, and that has been reinforced by events at Kemble’s other base in the Cotswolds.

[83] We know that the Snowdonia National Park Authority has sought, at public expense, several sets of external legal advice, but, alas, has not been prepared to put that advice in the public domain. The committee could do us all a favour by asking that this information be made available to the general public. Even if planning permission were not required—and we clearly believe that it is—there is the question of abandonment within planning law. The Welsh Assembly Government, in its press statements, has referred to the site, quite rightly, as ‘a disused and decommissioned site’. There are no navigational aids or any air traffic control equipment there, as they have been physically disconnected and removed from the site. Indeed, the transfer document, which transfers the legal title from the Ministry of Defence to the Welsh Assembly Government, refers to it as a ‘former airfield’. The site is not currently used for aviation but for agriculture, and there has been a legal agreement between Welsh Ministers and local farmers on that agricultural use.

[84] So, what is the way forward? We believe that the Welsh Assembly Government should apply for planning permission for all intended uses of the site. Therefore, if the Welsh Assembly Government believes that it is appropriate to use it as a base for sightseeing pleasure flights around the highest mountains of Wales, that should be outlined in the planning application. Similarly, if the Welsh Assembly Government believes that day trips or weekend trips from other parts of the UK into a national park by air are appropriate, again, that should be in the planning permission.

[85] We know that part of Kemble’s activities, as well as operating flying schools and so on, involve dismantling and scrapping aircraft. It says on its website that it is a member of an international airline scrapping body. If it intends to scrap aircraft at Llanbedr—and it has given no assurances that it will not do this, and there is nothing in the lease to prevent it from doing so—that should be the focus of a planning application. On those three issues, we believe that there has been a serious failure of due process. We believe that the way forward is for the Welsh Assembly Government to bring forward a planning application. Thank you.

[86] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you very much.

[87] **Ms Himsworth:** Hoffwn ychwanegu gair am y swyddi. Fel y clywsoch, mae Kemble wedi bod yn amhendiant iawn ynghylch nifer y swyddi y bydd yn creu yn y maes awyr, ac nid ydym wedi llwyddo i gael manylion gan y cwmni. Dywed y papurau newydd y bydd tua 50 o swyddi newydd, ond **Ms Himsworth:** I want to add a little about jobs. As you have heard, Kemble has been extremely vague about the number of jobs that it will create on the airfield, and we have been unable to secure details from the company. The newspapers say that there will be around 50 new jobs, but we believe that

credwn fod y ffigur hwnnw'n cynnwys y swyddi sydd eisoes yn yr ardal. Mae adeiladau ar ffin y maes, ac mae Kemble am eu defnyddio fel parc busnes. Byddem yn cefnogi hynny, ond nid yw symud swydd o un rhan o Lanbedr i ran arall yn creu swydd newydd.

that figure includes jobs that already exist in the area. There are buildings on the outskirts of the airfield, which Kemble wants to use as a business park. We would support that, but moving a job from one part of Llanbedr to another does not create a new job.

[88] Llanbedr is not an unemployment black spot. Despite the closure of the airfield, there is no evidence to suggest that the situation is worse in Llanbedr than it is elsewhere in Gwynedd. We have been unable to find unemployment figures for Llanbedr—a community of 993 people—but we note that the proportion of people of working age on benefits in Llanbedr is significantly lower than it is in Wales as a whole, and it is also lower than the proportion in Gwynedd. Those figures are for 2005, which is the year after the airfield closed.

[89] I stress that we are just as keen as others to see quality jobs for local people. You will know that the Wales spatial plan and the current convergence programme both focus on the need for higher-value-added jobs in Gwynedd. We agree, but we think that the goal should be to link those to the environment, which is the fundamental advantage that Llanbedr and Gwynedd enjoy.

[90] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you. You have three minutes left if anyone wants to take it up.

1.30 p.m.

[91] **Mr Lewis:** I would like to make two comments, Chair. The first is that Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas is a member and a former committee member of the Snowdonia Society. At our annual general meeting last Saturday, there was general support for the position of the society. There are one or two members who dissent, but there is general support for the stance that we have taken. Indeed, among the great issues that blight the national park more generally is aircraft noise. I also emphasise that what we want, as Alun has said, is to see the issues aired, to have a proper public discussion on what is intended for the site. Not only do we think that that is justifiable in every way in an environmental sense, but also that that is what the law requires.

[92] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you very much. We will now move on to our questions. We have the same upper limit of time as you had, namely 15 minutes. Has Cymdeithas Eryri had any direct contact with Kemble Air Services Ltd and, if so, what response did you receive?

[93] **Mr Pugh:** Yes. We asked Kemble to send a representative to come to meet us, to come to our executive committee and our policy committee, but it declined.

[94] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you. Would Members like to ask questions?

[95] **Bethan Jenkins:** I want to come back on the strong statement that you made, namely that the Welsh Assembly Government may be acting illegally in this regard. Reading the letter from the Deputy First Minister, Ieuan Wyn Jones, on this issue, it seems to me that he has gone through the process as rigorously as he could. He has held an open day and consulted with those who are interested in taking up the lease. What is your opinion of that particular way of working? Do you question that action in full?

[96] **Mr Pugh:** The law is very clear on the section 62 issue. I am not sure to which letter you are referring. We have been through the whole audit trail of evidence—everything from the KPMG report—with a fine-toothed comb, as you can imagine. We were particularly keen to see what high-level consultations there had been with the appropriate statutory authorities,

such as the planning authorities, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency and the other authorities that have a legal responsibility to act in these matters. It is our opinion, and that of the specialist counsel from whom we have taken specialist legal advice, that that legal duty to have due regard for the statutory processes has not been discharged. That is why we have issued a letter before claim. The last thing in the world the society wants to do is use its members' subscriptions in legal action. We want a full and open discussion of these issues and we want to see the law obeyed and due legal process followed. We are not at all convinced that that has been the case.

[97] **Bethan Jenkins:** The letter from Ieuan Wyn Jones was addressed to the Chair of the committee, and outlined the fact that a site open day and tour were held in June 2007. It states that the preferred leaseholder is Kemble Air Services. Although a final decision has not yet been made, that is the Government's preferred company at the moment. If you have not seen that letter, perhaps it is difficult for you to comment on the content.

[98] **Mr Lewis:** I wish to emphasise the point that we started judicial review proceedings on the specific question of whether section 62 had been complied with. The Assembly Government has been completely unable to produce evidence to show that it was complied with. That makes us feel a certain confidence that we are right in making that statement.

[99] **Michael German:** May I pursue what is in the letter? I am going to read you a sentence from Ieuan Wyn Jones's letter and ask whether you agree that it covers the section 62 issue that you referred to. In his letter to the committee on 8 September, he says,

[100] 'I am conscious of my duties in making any decisions as to the future of the Airfield including the duty which arises under Section 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to have regard to the purposes of the National Park'.

[101] Would those duties include, in your view, section 62?

[102] **Mr Pugh:** It is the same obligation.

[103] **Mr Lewis:** It was section 62 that amended section 11A.

[104] **Michael German:** In a sense, what he is saying in his letter to us is that he has not yet taken a decision, but, when he does, he knows that he has duties under the 1949 Act and section 11A of it. Is it not slightly precipitous to say that he has not taken due regard of the law when, in fact, he has not actually made a decision and he knows that he has to take account of that Act?

[105] **Mr Lewis:** We were told that the lease was to be signed next week, which is why we cheered a certain amount of haste.

[106] **Mr Pugh:** The decision to award preferred bidder status to Kemble required the section 62 duty to be observed, but there is no evidence that it was observed on that.

[107] **Michael German:** You have come to my second point, which was dependent on what you said in response to the first question. You mentioned legal advice that you had not been able to see. Sometimes, as I am sure Alun will be aware, legal advice that is made available to Ministers cannot be made available to the public. That will not be done. I seem to remember you defending that position at some stage, Alun, which is quite reasonable, and I have done the same. Is there any other information that is not legal advice but which you believe should be in the public domain? If so, what?

[108] **Mr Pugh:** It would be very helpful if the Welsh Ministers would release a full

statement outlining how they observed section 62 in deciding to award preferred bidder status to Kemble. That has never been done. It is very difficult for them to have regard to the statutory purposes of the national park when no-one knows what Kemble intends to do with the site. The draft lease is very open-ended. It is a huge site of around 500 acres. It is public land and the lease is for the next 125 years. We are talking about the future of a strategic site to the middle of the twenty-second century. Of course, the aerospace industry has changed quite a bit in the past 125 years: 125 years ago, the Wright brothers were wondering whether a flying machine was a practical proposition. Surely, before we hand over the control of such a strategic asset in the national park, which is the jewel in the crown of the Welsh landscape, for a century and more, we need clarity on exactly what is proposed for that site. That has not been forthcoming.

[109] **Michael German:** What is the attitude of the national park authority towards this development?

[110] **Mr Pugh:** You can understand that the national park is not making any public statements at present because it is the planning authority and it is anxious not to prejudice its position. So, it has said nothing on the record. To be fair, it has been kept in the dark as much as the rest of Welsh society. As I said in my opening remarks, there was no contact with the chair, authority members, chief executive or any member of the senior management team of the park authority. Surely, you would expect proper high-level minuted discussions to take place between the planning authority and the landowners before going ahead and signing a lease on such a vast site of strategic importance.

[111] **Michael German:** I have not seen this document but we are told that the committee has it, although it has not been provided for Members. There was a meeting between officials of the Welsh Assembly Government and Snowdonia National Park Authority on 21 May 2008. Were you aware of that meeting, and do you know what was discussed at that meeting? We are told that that meeting took place and that we have a note on that.

[112] **Val Lloyd:** It did not come with the correspondence; otherwise, we would have sent it to Members.

[113] **Michael German:** Therefore, we know that there was a meeting.

[114] **Val Lloyd:** We have had that letter but we have not had the—

[115] **Michael German:** All we know is that there was a meeting and that a note of that meeting was kept, which is in the public domain.

[116] **Mr Pugh:** On the grounds of transparency, we would like to see the full disclosure of documents and minutes between the park authority, Welsh Ministers and their officials. We know that meetings have taken place. In fact, I have a freedom of information request before me, bearing the reference number 2805, asking for details of communications between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Snowdonia National Park Authority in the context of the former RAF facility, Llanbedr airfield. The reply, which I have before me, states:

[117] 'I have decided that the draft document is exempt from disclosure under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act'.

1.40 p.m.

[118] It sets out in detail why it has been concluded that it is exempt and why the Government is not prepared to share that with us. That is the key issue, as our chair said. It is not that we want to be negative about this, but there is a complete fog around the decision

making. We want to see some scrutiny of the decision on this strategic site. We believe that the best way of getting that scrutiny, of making sure that section 62 is properly observed and that the sites of special scientific interest and the special areas of conservation are properly protected and of putting the planning decision beyond any doubt is to deal with this through the democratic process of a planning application.

[119] **Michael German:** I have a general question. What sort of development does the Snowdonia Society feel would be appropriate for this facility?

[120] **Mr Lewis:** We have already said that the existing buildings could be converted to make a business park, and there was a proposal to do that several years ago, but it fell through. Kemble Air Services proposed to do that with a cluster of buildings on the edge of the airfield. I believe that I can say that there has also been interest in converting it into a championship golf course. There is already a high-quality golf course at Harlech, and there needs to be a certain critical mass in these things if you are going to attract in high-value tourism from outside Wales. There was a group two years ago that was interested in using it for that purpose, but we understand that it was shooed away by the Welsh Development Agency, which existed at the time.

[121] **Michael German:** To be absolutely clear, in real terms, you are opposed to any form of air movement—

[122] **Mr Lewis:** Not necessarily, no. Other proposals came up too. It was said that somebody wanted to use it for high-value bullion shipments on the grounds that it was more secure than Heathrow. Without committing ourselves to automatic approval of such a proposal, there would be relatively little environmental impact from that for a high economic benefit. We do not know whether the intention is to use it as a scrap yard, for which it might be eminently suitable, or for private, vintage jet aircraft, which is, apparently, a growing field, and so on. There is a range of uses that it could be used for, and we are completely in the dark.

[123] **Michael German:** Would you or would you not be opposed to an air club such as we heard described to us earlier on, which would be for private enthusiasts who own small aircraft?

[124] **Mr Lewis:** I think that we would want to examine such a proposal on its merits, because, as I say, there is an increasing tendency for private flyers to fly vintage jets, and we would want to be satisfied about how that would work and how much disruption it would cause. However, we would certainly be prepared to consider such a proposal on its merits.

[125] **Michael German:** If it is non-jet—

[126] **Mr Lewis:** Or if it was on a really limited scale. Obviously I cannot commit the society until we have a more specific proposition and have consulted our members.

[127] **Mr Pugh:** We know that there are issues around transport infrastructure into north Wales. Is, for example, arriving at a national park by air on an internal flight for a day trip or a weekend trip an appropriate use for a national park? Does it sit well with the statutory purposes of national parks, to which all political parties are signed up?

[128] **Michael German:** You pose a question; do you have an answer?

[129] **Mr Pugh:** We think that there are issues with internal flights for day and weekend trips to national parks. It does not sit well with sustainability or with the type of economic growth that we want. We believe that there should be additional investment in transport

infrastructure. We would like to see more investment in, for example, the mid Wales railway line, which goes up into the national park, or the north Wales railway line. We think that that would be more sustainable and would sit better with the National Assembly's wholly admirable policies on sustainable development.

[130] **Bethan Jenkins:** You have said what you want to happen with the application and the planning process. Would you have a problem with Kemble above and beyond this if it won the lease, if the Government went ahead again with the process? Do you have concerns about Kemble being that leaseholder?

[131] **Mr Pugh:** The issue is not the identity of the leaseholder. The key issue is the use of that site. To have a completely open-ended lease for 125 years on 500 acres, which could include the scrapping of aircraft, which it does at its current base—

[132] **Bethan Jenkins:** That is why I asked the question, because of Kemble's current functions.

[133] **Mr Pugh:** It is about functions, not about individual owners.

[134] **Val Lloyd:** We are just out of time. Planning permission would allow for whatever use, would it not? It would be in the scope of the planning permission.

[135] **Mr Pugh:** Indeed; that is why we are advocating that the use made of the site should be included in the planning system. If the planning authority then thinks that it is acceptable to scrap aircraft in the open in a national park, that is its decision.

[136] **Michael German:** As I understand it, the key issue here is—perhaps this can be confirmed—whether or not planning permission is required. Is that the issue? If planning permission is not required, there will not be a planning application.

[137] **Val Lloyd:** I assume that you are basing that on that fact that it was an airfield; if it deviated from that function it would require a new planning application.

[138] We have broken our own rules, I am afraid. We are one minute over time, for which I apologise. Thank you for your contribution. We will not discuss this until you are safely seated, and we will, rather than waste time, move on to the next item on the agenda in the meantime.

1.46 p.m.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[139] **Val Lloyd:** We have a number of new petitions to deal with. They are not set out on the agenda in the same order as they were sent to us, so, for clarity, I will follow the agenda—just in case your papers are a little muddled up.

[140] The first petition—I do not think that there is a problem with this one, because it was the same on both sets—is on Hafod quarry. This is a new petition calling on the National Assembly for Wales to investigate the Welsh Assembly Government's decision not to identify Hafod quarry as a site of national importance. From memory—this has come before us, I think, in the first Assembly—Hafod quarry is in the Wrexham area. The petition has been raised by the Hafod environmental group and focuses on a small part of a much larger ongoing campaign by that group to halt landfill activities at the quarry.

[141] **Michael German:** If I remember rightly, Chair, this was basically about planning permission that had been in existence for a long time, and the position of the petitioners was to object as a way of frustrating the planning permission, as I understand it. I do not mean that in a negative way, but it has been another way around the planning permission.

[142] **Val Lloyd:** I have the same issue in my constituency. I think that the group would like to see that landfill permission withdrawn; however, it is not asking us to deal with anything like that.

[143] **Michael German:** In which case, perhaps we should ask the Minister why the Government made the decision not to designate it as a special area of conservation.

[144] **Val Lloyd:** The group is basing its application on the fact that there is a colony of great crested newts at the site. I agree with Mike.

[145] **Bethan Jenkins:** It would be interesting to have the petitioners before us, because, as we know, having visited Brussels, they have an ongoing petition there, but I do not think that there are plans in the near future for that to be heard. Perhaps it would be interesting for them to give their perspective in Wales. Having spoken to them in Brussels, we know that they were frustrated that they did not know that much about our Petitions Committee, and they submitted this petition as a result of meeting us in Brussels. So, perhaps we should give them the opportunity to come before us and give their opinion as to how this process should be taken forward.

[146] **Val Lloyd:** I am not speaking against that at all, but, following on from something from last week, I think that we should wait for the Minister's reply before we make a firm decision to ask anyone in. I am not arguing against you, particularly—I just think that it would be wise. There have been instances where the Minister's response has overridden the need to ask people in, and I do not want to fall into that position again. Could we, therefore, defer this until we hear from the Minister?

[147] **Michael German:** I was not going to speak in favour of having them in yet, but I certainly think that we ought to, provided that the Minister's response does not obviate the need for a petition.

[148] **Val Lloyd:** Then we are all agreed that the next step is to wait for the Minister's letter.

1.50 p.m.

Trafod y Dystiolaeth—Maes Awyr Llanbedr Discussion of Evidence—Llanbedr Airfield

[149] **Val Lloyd:** The petitioners who spoke to us are now in the public gallery, so we will return to discussing the Llanbedr airfield petitions. I invite Members to give their opinion on how we should move forward.

[150] **Michael German:** I have a technical question. We received a letter from the Minister that mentioned attachments that are material to the petitioners' case, but the attachments are not included. Was that an error, or are we not allowed to have them?

[151] **Val Lloyd:** I have raised that question myself.

[152] **Ms Webber:** The attachments did not come through with the letter. That is my

understanding.

[153] **Mr Davidson:** It has happened in the past, and usually it is just a case of the private office not having sent it. We will chase it up and forward the attachments to you.

[154] **Michael German:** The notes of the meetings at the airfield, and between national park representatives and officials, may be particularly relevant.

[155] I have one other technical question. One of the petitioners thought that a decision would be made on this shortly. However, whatever we decide today, it seems to me appropriate that we consider those attachments before the Minister brings the matter to a conclusion. We need to see whether those documents are relevant to the petition.

[156] **Val Lloyd:** I agree, and we should also write to the Deputy First Minister asking whether he can provide details of the lease, or any relevant information over and above the documents that we have.

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would also write to the company involved in the lease, because there was lack of clarity on both sides as to what was happening. The first group of petitioners did not have a clear business plan from the company, and the second group did not have any correspondence with them at all, and refused discussions with the company. I would also say, on a point of process, that it would be good if we could give copies of the letters that we receive to the petitioners—if they are to form part of our discussions and our decision. I felt that I was talking in a silo—

[158] **Val Lloyd:** There are copies available on the website.

[159] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not think that they had seen them, though.

[160] **Val Lloyd:** It was a public paper. The letter that we had was made public for the petitioners to access.

[161] **Bethan Jenkins:** We usually try to help petitioners as much as possible with the process, and I think that they should have had a copy from us. Out of respect, we should ensure that they know what we are talking about around the table. They obviously had some information, but we had a letter that some of the petitioners had not seen.

[162] **Val Lloyd:** We would normally send them a copy of such letters. The secretariat will check whether it was sent or not. You make a fair point—I assumed that it had been sent. So, we will check and let you know.

[163] **Michael German:** Is there an issue of clarity here? I am in the dark, and Joanest may be able to help, as always. In this particular example, would planning permission be a requirement?

[164] **Ms Jackson:** I was making notes as you were discussing this, and I thought that you might ask me about that. I was going to suggest, if it would assist, that I prepare a note on some of the relevant provisions in various Acts—not to make any judgment on this, but so that you have a basis to work from. I will not seek to apply facts to this case, or make a judgment on it, but I could provide something objective so that you have a few of the issues collected together. The issue of whether a use has been abandoned, whether there is a change of use and so on can be difficult. I will try to outline some of the issues, including matters relating to special areas of conservation and the national nature reserve issue, so that we know whether they should be taken into account.

[165] **Michael German:** From questioning, it seemed to me that the sort of use that the first group of petitioners was seeking was not too far from what the second group might have accepted, and planning permission would have clarified that position. It might help us a great deal if we could find out whether permission should be sought to allow the sort of activity that both sides seem to find acceptable. It is clear to me that both sides were in favour of the business side of it and both were in favour of having a smallish, local-type air club. However, we do not know about that, because it cannot be tested at the moment. There is a very good reason for taking this further, and we do not want the Minister to take a decision without knowing that we have discussed these matters.

[166] **Val Lloyd:** I agree. I had the feeling that the groups of petitioners were not miles apart in what they wanted. There was a dissonance on some issues, but both groups appreciated the need for jobs in the area, and both were mindful of the environmental issues. Shall we also write to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing to ask her views on the environmental issues connected to this matter? If we are going to look at it, we might as well look at it in the round.

[167] **Michael German:** Is this the sort of thing you need a site visit for? [*Laughter.*]

[168] **Bethan Jenkins:** The Snowdonia National Park Authority has not been involved so far in our proceedings, and both groups have made comments on what they believe it feels, so perhaps we need clarity on that.

[169] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, the more information we have, the better. We will ask the secretariat to write to the Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport as a priority so that we can make our views known. Is everyone content with that?

[170] **Michael German:** Yes, and perhaps we should ensure that the process will not come to an end before we have had a chance to consider these matters.

[171] **Val Lloyd:** That is why I said that we will make our views known.

[172] **Michael German:** Perhaps it would be worth the petitioners understanding from the clerk afterwards what that means. It may not look as if we are doing a huge amount at this stage, but we are taking this a step forward.

[173] **Val Lloyd:** We are taking the biggest possible step that we could take.

1.58 p.m.

Deisebau Newydd (parhad) New Petitions (continued)

[174] **Val Lloyd:** The next petition is P-03-125 on Cleddau bridge tolls, which calls

[175] 'upon the National Assembly for Wales to request that the Welsh Assembly Government negotiates with Pembrokeshire County Council to find an acceptable proposal that will enable road tolls on the Cleddau Bridge ... to be scrapped'.

[176] This petition has collected 39 signatures, and there is an accompanying letter from the lead petitioner.

[177] **Michael German:** As a matter of principle, I think that, as we have done before, we should ask the Minister, the Deputy First Minister in this case, for a view on the matter and

then we should consider whether we should speak to the petitioners in light of the response that we get.

[178] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. I think that we are all agreed on that.

[179] Our next petition is on hypothyroidism. The petition calls,

[180] ‘upon the National Assembly for Wales to investigate the non-diagnosis and mismanagement of hypothyroidism in Wales with a view to producing recommendations to rectify this situation’.

[181] This petition was raised by Dr Sarah Myhill, and 1,433 signatures have been collected.

2.00 p.m.

[182] We have also had a thick information pack—that is not from a petitioner, but from a Mrs Cameron. I must confess that I have not had time to read that yet.

[183] **Bethan Jenkins:** Again, can we write to the Minister for Health and Social Services about that?

[184] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, in the first instance, I believe that we need to write to the Minister for Health and Social Services.

[185] **Michael German:** We can then consider our actions in light of that.

[186] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. I am sure that you are knowledgeable about the next petition, Mike—the railway between Ebbw Vale and Newport.

[187] **Michael German:** I think that there is a misconception in what we are being told about this by the Members’ research service. What has been announced means that we will have the railway lines on which a service can be provided. The problem is the feasibility of organising that service; that is the subject of the study to which the First Minister refers. It is in the public domain and I have read it, and it produces some harsh alternatives, which the Minister needs to consider. Therefore, this is very much an ongoing issue, because the decision has not been made about the nature of the service—that is the Ebbw Valley to Gaer junction report. However, that is not the one that I am talking about; I am talking about the report on the timetable, which is part of that report. It is a much bigger report that refers to the whole series, rather than only that junction.

[188] Six or seven options are provided in that paper, only two of which Network Rail recommends. One option is not to have a service to Newport, or to Cardiff, and the other is to build a loop, to ensure that the trains can be moved up and down the line. Those are the only two options that it recommends could work to make a service to Newport. It would be much more sensible for us to find out more about those options and perhaps ask the petitioner to deal with the options in that paper, and to give us a view that we could then feed to the Minister, so that he knows what the views are on this matter. The Gaer junction bit—the £2.6 million—will give us only the rails, not the service.

[189] **Val Lloyd:** The difficulty that you outline is the difficulty of capacity on other parts of the train network in south Wales. They are not identical, but it is about the capacity issue of running the trains, to some extent, is it not?

[190] **Michael German:** I would like to know what the petitioners’ views are on the options provided in that paper, to investigate the feasibility of introducing a direct train service

between Ebbw Vale and Newport. They now have the options in that document that has been provided to the committee. I presume that we have that document? I see that we do. That is the document on which the feasibility will be judged.

[191] **Val Lloyd:** Can we write to the petitioners, outlining the options, and ask them for their view on that?

[192] **Ms Webber:** Yes.

[193] **Michael German:** We could then come back to it later.

[194] **Val Lloyd:** It mirrors a problem in other areas too—not that that has been raised with us.

[195] **Michael German:** I have asked questions about this matter, and it is a matter of choices, as always, when you come to making any change with money.

[196] **Val Lloyd:** It is a limited budget. It is like a household budget really—it does not do everything that you want.

[197] Our next new petition is from the Welsh Sleep Apnoea Society. The petition asks that:

[198] ‘Wales should have an effective, cohesive, well-funded policy for all patients with sleep disorders. This would include the provision of Constant Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machines for diagnosed sufferers of Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA)’.

[199] We have had a response from the Minister, which was in Members’ packs. What are Members’ wishes?

[200] **Mr Davidson:** We received this today, so we have not had time to circulate it to Members; we will bring it to the next meeting.

[201] **Val Lloyd:** Are you talking about this paper in my hand?

[202] **Mr Davidson:** I am sorry—that is not from the Minister.

[203] **Val Lloyd:** No. There are papers from the Minister, but they are copies directly to the petitioner.

[204] **Bethan Jenkins:** There are letters from Edwina Hart. Could we perhaps look at those further?

[205] **Val Lloyd:** It literally came in today’s post.

[206] **Bethan Jenkins:** In the correspondence that we have already received, the Minister mentions the fact that there is not equity of funding across the board for this. She has acknowledged that there are difficulties in the area.

[207] **Val Lloyd:** It arrived in my mail as I left the office.

[208] **Bethan Jenkins:** We need to consider that first.

[209] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. I cannot recall the total because it arrived as I was leaving.

[210] **Michael German:** Perhaps the other letters could be re-circulated at the next meeting

so that we do not have to find papers from the last meeting, given that some of us are not good at knowing what time these meetings start.

[211] **Val Lloyd:** The next petition is on the Abertillery and District Hospital. It calls on us to urge,

[212] ‘the Welsh Assembly Government to look into and address the proposed closure of Abertillery and District Hospital by the local health board’.

[213] **Michael German:** I have not been involved with this petition, but I know of the concerns outlined in it, which relate to a building that was what used to be called a ‘sanitarium’ in a nice location. What interests local people is whether it could be used in the health community as some kind of facility, but not in the same way that it is currently used. When we write to the Minister, should we ask whether there is an intention to retain the land and site at the hospital in the health community? I refer to the health community in its wider sense. It is certainly a spectacular location.

[214] **Val Lloyd:** Was it built by public subscription?

[215] **Michael German:** Yes, on top of a mountain, overlooking an entire valley; it is amazing. It would be a shame to lose it, because, presumably, the alternative would be for it to be sold.

[216] **Val Lloyd:** Is it listed?

[217] **Michael German:** I am not certain; perhaps we could ask that question.

[218] **Val Lloyd:** Sometimes there are benefits in listing because the façade can be preserved. The inside could be put to a more profitable use. I can understand the petitioners’ point of view. On using it as an NHS facility, that is probably not so easy these days, but we will write to the Minister.

[219] **Michael German:** That is why I spoke in terms of the wider health community, because there may well be private sector interest.

[220] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, I accept that.

[221] The next petition is on wet age-related macular degeneration. It collected 141 signatures and asks us to campaign to ensure that equal treatment is given in the Vale of Glamorgan for the first eye to that currently available in Swansea. Correct me if I am wrong, but I recall the Minister for Health and Social Services saying in a letter that Lucentis was funded for a year—from August 2008 to August 2009—because new treatments were in the pipeline. So, she said that she would fund Lucentis for a year and then revisit this because of the possibility that more advanced drugs would be available.

[222] **Michael German:** Have we written to the Minister on this matter yet?

[223] **Val Lloyd:** We must have because this says, ‘awaiting the Minister’s response’.

[224] **Michael German:** Yes, but there is a bit of a mix of information there if you look carefully—

[225] **Val Lloyd:** I know what you are saying, but I checked that and it is a typing error.

[226] **Ms Webber:** We are awaiting the Minister’s response.

[227] **Michael German:** Shall we wait and come back to it then, Chair?

[228] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. I am just referring to the other letter from memory.

[229] **Bethan Jenkins:** There was an opposition party debate on this, which is when the Minister for health made that statement.

[230] **Val Lloyd:** I have seen it writing; I have it in my health folder. I refer to it because I took an interest in this matter on behalf of several of my constituents. That is why I remember it, although that is not to say that I remembered it correctly.

2.10 p.m.

[231] The next petition is on fire safety. It reads:

[232] ‘We, the undersigned, note the new risk reduction plans for the fire service in many parts of Wales. We believe that these plans may lead to an increase in risk for many communities. We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to take action to ensure that current standards of safety are not reduced’.

[233] I think that we have to write to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government and bring it back. I am reading the petitions out because our audience does not necessarily have access to the papers. We now move on to the petition on the Swansea-Cork ferry. I have declared an interest in this petition, so I shall not be taking part in the discussion; it is over to you two to discuss it.

[234] **Michael German:** I think that we should ask the Deputy First Minister to outline what action he intends to take in respect of the Swansea-Cork ferry and then come back to the committee for a discussion when we have received that letter.

[235] **Bethan Jenkins:** I agree.

[236] **Michael German:** There we are.

[237] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you very much. We will now move on to the next one, which is a petition from the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers.

[238] ‘We, being Officers and Members of the Executive Council of NASUWT Cymru, call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to ensure that teachers working in Wales are reimbursed fully for the cost of registration with the General Teaching Council’.

[239] The petitioners did give us a little more supporting evidence.

[240] **Michael German:** Again, I think that this one is very much worthy of our having the petitioners in, but let us wait for a reply from the Minister first.

[241] **Val Lloyd:** I would just like to make an additional point. I am surprised by this. It is clearly set down in their terms and conditions of employment and it is news to me that teachers do not have to have to pay their own registration fee—nurses do, as do other members of professional bodies.

[242] **Michael German:** A commitment was given, I think, back at the time when the General Teaching Council for Wales was established that support would be given for

registration fees. I think that the Minister may have given that guarantee some time ago.

[243] **Val Lloyd:** I am just saying that I am surprised.

[244] **Bethan Jenkins:** If we get the petitioners in, you can say that to them.

[245] **Michael German:** We will be able to ask them that question.

[246] **Val Lloyd:** I think that we have to wait for the Minister's response. That completes the new petitions.

2.12 p.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates on Previous Petitions

[247] **Val Lloyd:** We have had updates on two existing petitions. The first one is on the old school and schoolhouse in Caergeiliog. I am going to ask Joanest to initiate our discussion on this.

[248] **Ms Jackson:** Members might recall this petition, which came in some months ago. It relates to the concern of a petitioner about the making of a statutory instrument in relation to an old ecclesiastical school. The petitioner, in parallel with any correspondence initiated with the committee, has obviously had considerable correspondence with the Government. You will see that from the, I must say, very comprehensive response from the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, dated 9 October 2008. It sets out the comprehensive history of the matter and the involvement that the Government has had in this matter. It would seem that the matter has been very thoroughly investigated by those who are charged with dealing with it, and I would suggest that you consider that this committee has done all that it can and that you may wish to consider closing the matter. I would urge the petitioner to take independent advice if he considers that the matter should be taken further.

[249] **Michael German:** It all hinges on the last page and the bit of Jane Hutt's letter about the notice of the order containing inaccuracies—relating to B1, B2 and B3 planning use classes? To be honest, I do not feel in a position to judge and I do not think that I should be in a position to make a judgment on whether the Minister is right. What is clear is that there has been significant investigation of this matter by the Minister and I do not think that there is anything more that we can do.

[250] **Val Lloyd:** I think that the Minister has given it huge consideration and I think that it also received huge consideration when the petitioner, quite legitimately, prior to coming to us, approached his Member of Parliament and his former Assembly Member. I agree with Mike. We will now formally close this petition.

[251] The next petition is P-03-104 Against Fluoridation. We have a letter from the Minister included in our pack, in which it is categorically stated that there are no plans to introduce a fluoridation scheme in Wales.

[252] **Michael German:** It says that there are no 'current plans'.

[253] **Val Lloyd:** I know, but it is always put that way, 'no current plans', as the Minister cannot speak for any future Ministers. I think that it is quite categorical that this Minister is not thinking of introducing fluoridisation.

[254] **Michael German:** In the letter that we send to the petitioner informing him that we

have closed it, we can say that the petition has achieved the objectives and he can always submit a new petition should the Minister change her mind or a future Minister decide to introduce such a scheme.

[255] **Val Lloyd:** No problem; I am sure that the petitioner would know that, but we can certainly reinforce the point.

[256] Bethan, do you wish to raise something under this item?

[257] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. On the Coal M-TAN petition, I am aware that we have been waiting quite some time for a response. Although no time limit has been imposed on when the Minister will give her opinion, can we not write to her again, perhaps to hurry her reply?

[258] **Michael German:** It has been over a year.

[259] **Val Lloyd:** You are quite right; it has been over a year since the matter came to us. Writing would be very appropriate.

[260] With that, I formally close the meeting.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 2.17 p.m.
The meeting ended at 2.17 p.m.