



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

**Y Pwyllgor Cynaliadwyedd
The Sustainability Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 24 Ebrill 2008
Thursday, 24 April 2008**

Cynnwys
Contents

- 3 Ethol Cadeirydd Dros Dro
Election of Temporary Chair
- 4 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions
- 4 Ystyried Deiseb P-03-63, yn Galw am Wahardd Bagiau Plastig
Consideration of Petition P-03-63, Calling for a Ban on Plastic Bags

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

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Alun Davies	Llafur Labour
Michael German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Mick Bates) Welsh Liberal Democrats (substitute for Mick Bates)
Janice Gregory	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Lorraine Barrett) Labour (substitute for Lorraine Barrett)
Lesley Griffiths	Llafur Labour
Alun Ffred Jones	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Darren Millar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Brynle Williams	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Leanne Wood	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Gill Bell	Swyddog Cymru, Cymdeithas Cadwraeth y Môr Welsh Officer, Marine Conservation Society
Tegryn Jones	Prif Weithredwr, Cadwch Gymru'n Daclus Chief Executive, Keep Wales Tidy

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

Joanne Clinton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Dr Virginia Hawkins	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 12.32 p.m.
The meeting began at 12.32 p.m.

Ethol Cadeirydd Dros Dro
Election of Temporary Chair

[1] **Dr Hawkins:** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this meeting of the Sustainability Committee. Unfortunately, our Chair, Mick Bates, cannot be with us today and, as he may not be able to attend several further meetings, under Standing Order No. 10.18, I call for nominations for a temporary Chair to stand in for Mick Bates today and whenever he is absent until the end of the current Assembly term in July 2008.

[2] **Brynle Williams:** I nominate Mike German.

[3] **Dr Hawkins:** Thank you. Are there any further nominations? I see that there are none.

*Penodwyd Michael German yn gadeirydd dros dro.
Michael German was appointed temporary chair.*

12.33 p.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[4] **Michael German:** Thank you, Virginia. I will start with the normal in-flight arrangements. There is no fire alarm planned for today, but if the alarm sounds, you should not run but follow the ushers and leave by the marked fire exits. Please ensure that phones, pagers, BlackBerrys and any other electronic devices are switched off, because they interfere with the broadcasting equipment. The usual translation facilities are available, and the headsets can also be used to amplify sound. Channel 0 is for the amplification and channel 1 is for the live translation. For the benefit of our guests, I remind you not to touch any of the buttons on the microphones—they come on automatically, and apparently things go wrong if you touch them.

[5] I thank Members for their consideration today. Mick, as you know, is having a large piece of his body removed and replaced by something metal, and I am hopeful that he will get through all that. [*Laughter.*] He is already a bionic man, but now he will be able to do even more. However, he is obviously absent today, and I am substituting for him. Karen Sinclair and Lorraine Barrett have given their apologies, and Janice Gregory is substituting for Lorraine Barrett.

12.34 p.m.

Ystyried Deiseb P-03-63, yn Galw am Wahardd Bagiau Plastig Consideration of Petition P-03-63, Calling for a Ban on Plastic Bags

[6] The primary work for our meeting today is to look at the petition that has been referred to us by the Petitions Committee, calling for a ban on plastic bags. You have before you a briefing paper and a copy of the petition, and you have the correspondence and the transcript of the Petitions Committee's discussion. We will need, at some stage, a discussion on what you would like to do further to today's meeting; I propose to do that after we have heard the evidence today and after we have discussed it. Just to warn you, it seems that there are only four potential options on how we take this forward. We may have to discuss this matter afterwards. The first option is that we do nothing; the second is that we take further evidence and produce a report; the third is that we put the whole thing on hold until the legislative competence Order goes through and then we wait to see what the Minister proposes; and the fourth is to get straight on to the Minister and ask her to deal with it, ending the committee's deliberations on the matter. There could be a variation on any one or more of those, but that is what I propose after we have taken the evidence, if that is alright with Members. Is there anything else about the petition or its process that anyone wants to clarify before we move on to the written evidence? I see that there is not.

[7] I should say that, while the petition calls for a ban on plastic bags, buried in the text of the prefacing remarks from the petitioner is a reference to a levy. So, I suspect that generous application of the text could be interpreted in that manner.

[8] I welcome Tegryn Jones as chief executive of Keep Wales Tidy and Gill Bell, who is the Welsh officer of the Marine Conservation Society. Could you outline your written statements for about three minutes, and then Members will ask you questions?

[9] **Ms Bell:** Thank you for inviting me here today. I come from the Marine Conservation Society; we are a very small charity and I have been invited because we carry out litter surveys—not only do we undertake beach cleans, but we also carry out litter surveys on beaches. We have a flagship event called, ‘Beach Watch’. Last year, on the third weekend in September, we managed to survey around a third of UK beaches. From that, we identified the main sources of material types of litter. We were able to identify that plastic makes up at least 50 per cent of the litter that we find and that plastic bags make up around 2 per cent. That does not sound very much when you think about it—it is only 2 per cent—but we found over 7,500 bags on the beaches over that weekend; from a UK perspective, that is 44 bags per km.

[10] If we break that down regionally, in Wales, 880 bags were found on 38 beaches and that amounts to 57 bags per km. That is quite a few bags. That was over one weekend, so if you multiply that over a full year, it is potentially 160,000 bags per year that could be found on beaches in Wales—and that was only on 38 beaches.

[11] We focus a great deal on marine wildlife and the impact on wildlife. Tegryn and I have agreed that I would focus on that. The reason that I focus on the marine issues is because I work for the Marine Conservation Society. No-one else has looked into the impact of this on other animals. I know that many farm animals are affected by bags, but the information that I have is all on marine animals, mainly the larger marine animals, because no-one else conducts surveys and finds out who does post-mortems. Nothing else is done on any other animals other than the large marine mammals, such as the leatherback turtles that we find around the shores. The limited data that are available on other wildlife have been collected on seabirds and microplastics. However, in general, if you find wild animals on the beach, no-one collects them and finds out their cause of death. So, we do not know an awful lot. It may not sound as though many animals have died and there may be some question about whether they have been entangled in or have ingested plastic, but it is basically because no-one has the data.

[12] The international coastal clean up, which undertakes surveys around the world, found that, in 2005, 9 per cent of the animals were entangled in plastic bags; in 2006 it went down to 2 per cent. The 2007 results came out after I produced this paper last week, and that percentage has now increased to 9 per cent. So, globally, that is around 9 per cent of animals. So, MCS is in favour of this ban. We would like it to be introduced with some sort of levy to replace it, so that we change people’s mindset about having disposable plastic items that will never biodegrade and will always remain in the environment. We would like to see some sort of sustainable replacement, and, if there is a levy, for that to go to environmental education to try to raise awareness of the issues around plastic.

12.40 p.m.

[13] **Mr Jones:** I would like to give the first part of my evidence in Welsh.

[14] Diolch yn fawr am y gwahoddiad i gyflwyno tystiolaeth i’r pwyllgor ar y ddeiseb sy’n galw am wahardd bagiau plastig. Mae Cadwch Gymru’n Daclus yn elusen Gymreig sy’n gweithredu er mwyn ceisio creu Cymru lân, ddiogel a thaclus. Yr ydym yn croesawu’r ddeiseb a’r cyfle i gyflwyno tystiolaeth ar bwnc sydd wedi bod o ddiddordeb mawr inni ers nifer o flynyddoedd. Ni all unrhyw un sydd yn ymweld â Chymru osgoi effaith weladwy bagiau plastig ar ein hamgylchedd. Maent yn Thank you for the invitation to provide evidence to the committee on the petition that calls for a ban on plastic bags. Keep Wales Tidy is a Welsh charity that works to try to create a clean, safe and tidy Wales. We welcome this petition and the opportunity to provide evidence on an issue that has been of great interest to us for a number of years. No-one who visits Wales can avoid seeing the effect of plastic bags on our environment. They are hard to miss, draped across trees, riverbanks, verges and many other locations.

nodwedd amlwg, yn addurno coed, glannau afonydd, ochrau ffyrdd ac amryw leoliadau eraill.

[15] Cymharol anodd yw cael ffigurau manwl am wir effaith bagiau plastig ond mae rhai ffeithiau na ellir dadlau amdanynt. Mae bagiau plastig yn cymryd hyd at 1,000 o flynyddoedd i ddirywio. Lle ceir bagiau plastig fel sbwriel, maent yn weladwy iawn, ac felly yn gwneud cyfraniad sylweddol at anharddu'r ardal. Mae bagiau plastig yn peryglu bywyd gwylt, a chan eu bod yn cael eu rhoi am ddim, nid oes unrhyw anogaeth i leihau eu defnydd neu eu hailddefnyddio. Gyda thua 490 miliwn o fagiau yn cael eu rhoi allan yng Nghymru bob blwyddyn, mae angen cymryd camau i leihau eu heffaith ar yr amgylchedd ac i leihau'r nifer sy'n cael eu dosbarthu.

[16] Dengys tystiolaeth o wledydd eraill ei bod yn ymarferol i wahardd bagiau plastig, ond, fel y nodwn yn ein tystiolaeth, mae angen bod yn ofalus wrth lunio Mesur, er mwyn sicrhau nad yw'r Mesur ond yn arwain at gynnydd mewn defnydd o fathau eraill o fagiau sydd yr un mor niweidiol i'r amgylchedd. Yn ogystal, mae angen sicrhau bod y ddeddfwriaeth yn hawdd ei gweithredu. Yn ein barn ni, mae angen sicrhau bod unrhyw Fesur yn arwain at newid mewn ymddygiad sy'n peri bod lleihau yn y defnydd o fagiau ac sy'n creu diwylliant o aildefnyddio bagiau. Byddai cyflwyno deddfwriaeth a fyddai'n newid y sefyllfa o roi miliynau o fagiau plastig i ffwrdd am ddim i un lle mae miliynau o fath arall o fagiau yn cael eu rhoi i ffwrdd am ddim yn gyfle coll. Mae gennym beth amheuan am effeithiolrwydd gwaharddiad ar fagiau plastig i gyflawni hyn, ac yr ydym o'r farn y byddai cyflwyno ardoll neu waharddiad ar roi bagiau i ffwrdd am ddim yn llawer mwy effeithiol.

[17] Wrth lunio'r dystiolaeth, yr oedd yn anodd dehongli beth yw gwir bwerau'r Cynulliad yn y maes hwn, felly, yr ydym wedi cynnig nifer o syniadau. Mae rhai yn ddibynnol ar ddeddfwriaeth, ac mae rhai o fewn cwrmpas pwerau'r Cynulliad ar hyn o bryd. Cafodd y ddeiseb hon ei chyflwyno yn sgîl pleidlais mewn cystadleuaeth dan nawdd y BBC. Dengys hyn bod cefnogaeth ymhlith y cyhoedd i Fesur sydd yn delio gyda

It is comparatively difficult to get detailed figures about the real effect of plastic bags, but there are some incontrovertible facts. Plastic bags take up to 1,000 years to degrade. Plastic bags are highly visible as rubbish, and, therefore, make a substantial contribution to disfiguring the surrounding area. Plastic bags endanger wildlife, and, because they are given away free of charge, there is no incentive to use fewer of them or to reuse them. With around 490 million plastic bags given out in Wales every year, it is necessary to take steps to reduce their effect on the environment, and to reduce the number of bags that are given out.

Evidence from other countries shows that it is practical to ban plastic bags, but, as we state in our evidence, it is necessary to be careful in drawing up any Measure, to ensure that it does not just lead to an increase in the use of other types of bags that are equally damaging to the environment. In addition, we need to ensure that the legislation is easy to implement. In our opinion, it is necessary to ensure that any Measure leads to a change in behaviour, so that the use of bags is reduced, creating a culture of reusing bags. Introducing legislation that will lead to a change from the present situation of giving away millions of plastic bags free of charge to one where millions of some other type of bags are given away would be an opportunity lost. We have some doubts about the effectiveness of a ban on plastic bags to achieve this aim, and we believe that introducing a levy or a ban on giving plastic bags away free of charge would be far more effective.

In preparing our evidence, it was difficult to work out exactly what powers the Assembly has in this area, so we have offered a number of options. Some are dependent on securing legislation, and some are within the scope of the Assembly's current powers. This petition was introduced as a result of a vote in a competition conducted by the BBC. This shows that there is public support for a Measure that will deal with the problem of

phroblem bagiau plastig. Ein gobaith yw y plastic bags. Our hope is that the Assembly
bydd Llywodraeth y Cynulliad yn defnyddio Government will use its powers to get to
ei phwerau i fynd i'r afael â'r pla hwn, sydd grips with this plague, which is disfiguring
yn anharddu ein hamgylchedd. our environment.

[18] **Michael German:** Members have a number of questions to draw out some more evidence from you. Janice will start.

[19] **Janice Gregory:** Thank you for those oral presentations; to a certain extent, you have probably answered my question. Those of us, like me, who participate in clean-ups, litter picks, and so forth, in our constituencies will have seen the amount of plastic bags that is collected on those days, and the plastic bag trees that seem to surround most supermarkets. Would you like to take a further opportunity to tell the committee exactly how much of a serious environmental impact you think this is?

[20] **Ms Bell:** We calculated that we are possibly talking about 160,000 bags just on the beaches. Those bags may have blown in from wherever, but if you add up all these bags, it comes to a massive amount. Yet it is easily prevented, as has been demonstrated in Ireland. So, from an impact point of view, a lot of people do not like them and are unhappy with them; this won the vote.

[21] Also, from a wildlife point of view, the animals that we are seeing, and the few animals that are collected and post-mortemed, leading to the cause of death being determined, represent only the tip of the iceberg. The majority of the earth is covered by sea, and many of those plastic bags will never get washed ashore, but they are still impacting on animals, so it is a small number. As I say, we only have statistics for marine animals, because we are the Marine Conservation Society; if you asked farmers, I am sure that they would say that they had cattle impacted by it, as well as the unsightliness of seeing all these plastic bags all over the place. *[Interruption.]*

[22] **Mr Jones:** Sorry, I think that Ela Gwennon, my daughter, is passing comment on my evidence from the public gallery.

[23] **Michael German:** Well done. *[Laughter.]*

[24] **Mr Jones:** Part of the issue with plastic bags, as seen in the anecdotal evidence, is that everyone here would say that it is a very visible problem. We suggest a few different interpretations of statistics that try to prove it, but all of them are pretty conservative estimates. Many litter surveys measure litter on public land—river banks would be exempt and we tend to look more at what is on the ground rather than in the trees. It is the sheer scale of the problem.

[25] You can make the case from a litter point of view. The vast number of alternatives, and their impacts, makes it harder to make a waste argument. However, when you are talking about 490 million plastic bags—once again, that is a conservative estimate—there is surely a strong argument from a resource use point of view. Someone visiting a supermarket, or a shop, using 10 bags a week would go through 520 bags in a year; a reusable bag could be used, and you would just use 10 bags, which would probably last far longer than one year. There are so many arguments for this that perhaps, for the majority of activities, the time of the plastic bag has come to an end.

[26] **Alun Davies:** Diolch am eich **Alun Davies:** Thank you for your evidence.
tystiolaeth. A oes modd inni ddeall faint o Could we get some understanding of how
broblem yw hyn? Yr ydym newydd glywed y great a problem this is? We have just heard
geiriau 'massive amount'. Fodd bynnag, a the words 'massive amount'. However, is it

oes modd inni fesur faint o broblem yw bagiau plastig mewn gwirionedd? A yw'r ffaith eu bod yn weladwy iawn yn rhan o hyn? Soniodd Janice am y coed bagiau plastig a welir o gwmpas siopau mawr, sy'n wir. Yr ydym hefyd yn gweld bagiau ar draethau ac o gwmpas afonydd—yr ydym yn deall hynny. Fodd bynnag, a ydynt mewn gwirionedd yn broblem fawr? Yr ydych wedi sôn eu bod yn cyfrif am 1 neu 2 y cant o sbwriel cyffredin. A oes gennych ffigur go iawn inni gael deall faint o broblem yw bagiau plastig?

[27] **Mr Jones:** Byddai'n anodd cael ffigur penodol. Credaf fod y ffigurau yn mynd o tua 1 i 3 y cant. Yr hyn sy'n bwysig o safbwynt sbwriel yw yr hyn sy'n weledol. Mae nifer o arolygon sbwriel yn mesur sbwriel, gyda sigarét yn cael ei gyfrif fel un, a bag plastig yn cael ei gyfrif fel un. Felly, yn naturiol, o safbwynt gweledol, sef y prif ffordd o fesur sbwriel, mae bag plastig yn llawer mwy amlwg ac yn cael llawer mwy o effaith.

[28] Mae tystiolaeth, neu farn, yn dangos bod sbwriel yn cael effaith ar yr hyn mae pobl yn ei feddwl o'r amgylchedd. Mae sbwriel yn dueddol o annog mwy o sbwriel—mae amgylchedd glân yn llawer llai tebygol o gael ei anharddu ac mae pobl yn llai tebygol o daflu sbwriel. Mae hefyd yn ymwneud â pha mor ddiogel mae pobl yn ei deimlo mewn amgylchedd.

[29] Drwy gynnig gwaharddiad, neu ardoll, mae'n bwysig ystyried a oes rhywbeth arall i gymryd ei le. Byddem yn ffôl i feddwl ein bod yn gallu cael gwared â bagiau plastig, a dyna ni. Gobeithio ein bod yn dangos bod digon o opsiynau eraill i'w chael. Felly, mae'n rhywbeth ymarferol, a fydd yn cael effaith ar leihau sbwriel, ac mae'n bosibl ei gyflawni.

12.50 p.m.

[30] **Ms Bell:** I know that we are talking about plastic bags, but it has been shown, particularly in Ireland, that, as a result of people thinking about single-use plastic bags, and using alternatives, reusable bags, that has an impact on other streams of waste as well. Littering appears to have gone down and people have appeared to turn to more sustainable ways and taken up more recycling. So, yes, we are talking about it and it is very difficult to get numbers, and when I talk about the beaches, only 38 beaches in Wales were surveyed, but we still had at least 57 bags per km. That is a massive amount, if you ask me, and you cannot

possible for us to measure how much of a problem plastic bags are in reality? Is the fact that they are very visible a part of this? Janice mentioned the plastic bag trees that we see around supermarkets, which is true. We also see bags on beaches and around rivers—we understand that. However, in reality, are they a serious problem? You have mentioned that they account for 1 or 2 per cent of ordinary rubbish. Do you have an actual figure so that we can understand how much of a problem plastic bags are?

Mr Jones: It would be difficult to get a specific figure. I believe that the figures go from around 1 to 3 per cent. What is important in terms of litter is what is visible. Several litter surveys measure litter, with a cigarette being counted as one, and a plastic bag being counted as one. Therefore, naturally, from a visibility point of view, which is the main way of measuring litter, a plastic bag is far more visible and has far more of an effect.

Evidence, or opinion, demonstrates that litter has an effect on what people think of the environment. Litter tends to lead to more litter—a clean environment is far more unlikely to be defiled, and people are less likely to throw litter. This also has an impact on how safe people feel in any given environment.

By proposing a ban, or a levy, it is important to consider whether something could take its place. We would be foolish to think that we could get rid of plastic bags, and that that was that. I hope that we are demonstrating that there are plenty of other options available. Therefore, it is something practical, which will have an impact on litter reduction, and it is possible to achieve it.

really take more than five steps or so without finding a plastic bag. It is an entirely solvable problem, as has been demonstrated in Ireland.

[31] **Darren Millar:** May I just say, Chair, that I am having some problems with the sound? I do not really know what the issue is, but there is a problem. Please forgive me if you did mention something in your earlier comments that would answer some of my questions.

[32] Thank you very much for the comprehensive papers; they have been extremely helpful in setting the scene and giving us more information on the subject. Also, thank you for your opening remarks. Gill, you just referred to alternatives to plastic bags, and both of you referred to alternatives in your papers. What alternatives are there and can you tell us what the impact of a ban or a levy on plastic bags might be on the use of alternatives?

[33] **Ms Bell:** Certainly. Tegryn's paper outlined what could be used as alternatives. What we would suggest is that you should not replace bags on a like-for-like basis; people should be able to reuse the bag, so cloth bags are the most common. Many charities have been giving them away free and lots of people use them. Many supermarkets have now taken this up and started a bag for life scheme, using not heavy-duty plastic bags, but cloth bags. So jute, cloth and hemp are alternatives.

[34] For items such as fish or meat that need to be put in some sort of container or bag, we recommend that you use a compostable vegetable-based bag. You can get potato starch bags and so on. Modbury, the town that highlighted this and went plastic bag-free, is celebrating its first anniversary on Monday of going plastic bag-free. There, in butchers' shops for example, they give away the free, smaller corn-starch bags that they wrap the meat in and everyone in Modbury uses a cloth bag or an alternative. We are not saying that all bags must be banned, because there are certain food items that must obviously be packaged, but we are trying to encourage people to reuse a cloth bag rather than take a disposable one.

[35] **Darren Millar:** I was interested to hear you say earlier that the experience in Ireland was that, because there was less visible litter, people were dropping less litter generally. In your paper, Tegryn, you said that, unless all disposable bags are dealt with, the litter problem will still exist, albeit it will be less visible. There is a little bit of contradiction there. Do you think that that is the case? What is the evidence from elsewhere?

[36] **Mr Jones:** I do not think that there is a contradiction. Perhaps we are coming at it from slightly different angles, but I think that the basic message is relatively consistent. When looking at plastic bags, there needs to be an understanding that there is a multitude of different uses and perhaps one measure might work in certain contexts, but not in another. When evidence was presented to the Scottish Parliament on this, the fear was that plastic bags would be replaced by paper bags. The evidence from Ireland suggests that that is not the case. The majority of people—I think over 90 per cent of people—changed to using long-life bags, which are now relatively common.

[37] Gill mentioned corn-starch bags. I have brought some along with me because I was not particularly familiar with corn starch before. As you can see, it is an extremely similar material to plastic. We would not want to see the introduction of a ban on plastic bags resulting in the free distribution of corn-starch bags. I think that they will decompose in about three months, but there will still be litter during that time and, under certain conditions, they will stay around for longer. What we say is that everybody is familiar with the 'reduce, reuse, recycle' message and that the emphasis now needs to be on reducing and reusing. To replace one with the other would go some of the way because it is less damaging to the environment, but you do not want to create another problem in trying to solve this one.

[38] **Darren Millar:** You are both telling us that all disposable bags are a problem and

that perhaps it would be better to deal with all disposable bags rather than just plastic ones.

[39] **Michael German:** You had a question, Brynle.

[40] **Brynle Williams:** Yes. Just briefly on corn starch bags, I would emphasise how much land would be taken out of food production, given the problem of food shortages. We need to look at alternatives that would not affect food production.

[41] **Ms Bell:** May I answer that question? Modbury is the town in Devon that was the first place to go plastic bag-free. Yes, people were using very small corn starch bags for wrapping fish, meat and fresh produce, but the residents of Modbury were all given a large, free cloth bag at the beginning of the trial, and they reused that in place of carrier bags. So, there was a massive reduction in the number of bags that were used. We are not saying that corn starch bags will replace plastic bags like for like; that would obviously have an effect on crop production. What we are saying is that people can reuse a cloth bag 100 to 200 times over, and the corn starch bags would just be an alternative, with a levy applying to their use, should you forget your cloth bag or need your produce wrapped in something.

[42] **Brynle Williams:** Diolch yn fawr. Thank you, Chair.

[43] **Leanne Wood:** Tegryn, you say that banning plastic bags will not change customers' behaviour. Can you say what would be likely to change their behaviour?

[44] **Mr Jones:** I think that fiscal measures have been shown to work in Ireland. In 2002, the Republic of Ireland introduced a levy on plastic bags, which saw a 90 per cent reduction in their use. We argue that, because there are pros and cons for different types of bags, a levy should perhaps be introduced across the range of carriers, or whatever you want to call them. If a bag is used 100 or 200 times, that levy would be a negligible cost. However, if you just use bags once and have to pay 10p every time, it would have an impact. Nobody would have to pay a levy more than once: the more you use your bags, the less significant the levy becomes. However, it is important that the levy is charged at the point of sale to the customer. There is a levy in Denmark, but it is borne by the retailer and that has had less of an impact in changing people's behaviour. The levy has been shown to work in Ireland so, as a case study, it is the best that we can do.

[45] **Leanne Wood:** You also say that an opinion poll survey commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2000 suggested that 80 per cent of people reuse plastic bags. If there is evidence that plastic bags are being extensively reused, is it necessary to legislate to reduce their distribution?

[46] **Mr Jones:** Our interpretation of that is that, although 80 per cent of people say that they reuse bags, that does not mean that they reuse them every time. It could be that they reuse it only once. I have a dog, and I could use a plastic bag if he fouls the area where I take him for a walk—however, it would only be used once. Alternatively, a plastic bag might be used as a bin bag. There was a slight increase in sales of bin bags in Ireland after the introduction of the levy, but there was a net reduction in usage of 930 million bags, so that is significant. We raised that issue because we were aware that, if you get around to developing an Assembly Measure or other legislation, it will need to avoid loopholes. Retailers should not be able to say, 'The Defra survey says that 80 per cent of people reuse their bags, so I will carry on as usual because the legislation just bans bags that are not reused.', or something like that. The example of Ireland, with a reduction of 930 million seems to suggest that reuse is not significant.

1.00 p.m.

[47] **Brynle Williams:** Deallwn eich bod am osod ardoll ar y cwsmer. Ddeng mlynedd yn ôl, ceisiwyd rhywbeth tebyg gyda'r plastig y mae ffermwyr yn ei ddefnyddio, gydag ardoll ar y gweithgynhyrchwr, ond nid oedd yn cael ei dalu yn ôl. Gwyddom oll sut drafferth oedd hynny, ac yn awr y mae'n rhaid inni gael gwared ar blastig gwastraff drwy wasanaethau gwaredu sbwriel proffesiynol. Yr wyf yn ddiolchgar ichi, felly, am ddweud bod yn rhaid i'r ardoll fod ar ddiwedd y cadwyn—ni fydd yn gweithio fel arall.

Brynle Williams: We understand that you want a levy imposed on customers. Some 10 years ago, something similar was attempted with the plastic that farmers use, with a levy imposed on the manufacturers, but it was not paid back. We all know how much trouble that was, and we now have to dispose of plastic by employing professional waste disposal services. I am grateful to you, therefore, for saying that the levy must be at the end of the chain—it will not work otherwise.

[48] **Mr Jones:** Yr wyf yn cytuno. Nid wyf yn ymwybodol iawn o'r sefyllfa o ran ffermwyr 10 mlynedd yn ôl, ond un o'r problemau oedd cael rhywbeth yn lle hynny, onid oedd? Credaf fod yr ateb yn gymharol syml o ran hyn, ac mae nifer o enghreifftiau, fel yr ydym wedi dangos, gobeithio, o sut i wneud i newid hwnnw'n ymarferol, a hynny gyda manteision ar draws nifer o feysydd.

Mr Jones: I agree. I am not aware of the situation in terms of farmers 10 years ago, but one of the problems was finding an alternative, was it not? I believe that the answer is relatively simple in this regard. There are several examples, as we have shown, hopefully, of how to make that change so that is practical, and has benefits across a number of areas.

[49] **Lesley Griffiths:** You mentioned the town of Modbury in Devon being the first town to become plastic-bag free, Gill. In your evidence, Tegryn, you said that traders in the town have agreed a voluntary code to stop using plastic bags, and reports indicate that trade has continued as normal. Obviously, that relies on the traders' and the customers' goodwill. Would a voluntary agreement to reduce or to ban the use of plastic bags achieve the aims of the legislative proposal?

[50] **Ms Bell:** If you look at Ireland, which has seen a decrease of 93 million in the use of plastic bags, that demonstrates what a levy can do. Compare that to 2005, when Scotland was thinking about a levy on plastic bags. We campaigned at that time to get England to do the same thing, but it said, 'No, we support the bag-for-life scheme', and in 2007 it introduced this voluntary code for retailers. Its 'ambitious' target is to reduce the number of bags by 25 per cent: that is not ambitious, as far as we are concerned. It has been proven in Ireland how effective this can be. So, a voluntary code is all well and good, but it does not seem to have such an impact on the number of bags used as the introduction of a levy.

[51] **Mr Jones:** I agree. It is difficult to see how a voluntary code with a target of 25 per cent reduction in the UK will compete with a 90 per cent reduction. You also have companies that might change to using paper bags. I did have a supply of bags, but I thought, 'I can't carry them all', so I only brought one or two, but some shops have moved to using paper. Recent evidence given to the London Assembly suggested that a number of large companies have achieved their 25 per cent target a year in advance, which suggests that there are easy gains to be made. If it is decided that the Assembly does not have the powers, or it does not wish to go down this route, then either a voluntary code for Wales or, more realistically, perhaps, lobbying DEFRA to strengthen the code across the UK, is a possible course of action, and could perhaps achieve a 50 per cent reduction or a 75 per cent reduction. If you remember that over 10 billion bags are used in the UK, 25 per cent still leaves several billion bags floating about the place, does it not?

[52] **Lesley Griffiths:** You say that 25 per cent is not an ambitious target, so what sort of target would you want?

[53] **Ms Bell:** Well, Ireland managed 90 per cent, and that would be fantastic, but if a voluntary code is implemented, you are not going to reach that figure. It would be at least 50 per cent, however. It is important to point out, though, that the 25 per cent reduction is a reduction of 25 per cent in environmental impact. It is not necessarily the number of bags, because the type of plastic used can be changed, or more recycled material can be used. However, that does not really get the point across. What we want is a change in mindset so that people stop thinking about disposable items in a disposable society, and think instead about reusing, and reducing the amount of waste. So, a voluntary scheme needs to encompass decreasing the number of bags that are used.

[54] **Michael German:** I think that Darren has a question along those lines.

[55] **Darren Millar:** Lesley was asking you about voluntary arrangements, and many retailers have introduced charges for plastic bags. What has been the impact in areas, for example, where a particular supermarket charges for plastic bags? Has there been a significant reduction in litter items in those sorts of areas?

[56] **Mr Jones:** I am not sure. I think that it would depend on different circumstances in each case. We are beginning to find that a number of communities now wish to be plastic bag free. Part of the problem that they face is that smaller retailers are more than happy to take that step, but it might be harder for bigger retailers, which are part of chains, to make that change, which is ironic, because some of the most effective work under the voluntary codes has come from the bigger retailers. There is a slight anomaly there.

[57] Retailers are responsive, to an extent, to customer needs. If we were having this discussion 18 months ago, the focus of the discussion would be slightly different. It might have been considered to be far more imaginative and forward-looking. It is far more accepted now across Government, national newspapers are also running campaigns and chain stores are proposing to charge for bags—some of them have done so for a long time. When you have that fiscal encouragement, you will see a reduction.

[58] **Brynle Williams:** Many retailers have used plastic bags for advertising. Has there been success elsewhere on that?

[59] **Mr Jones:** We suggested that one course of action would be to ban advertising from bags that have a negative impact. It always frustrates me that, when I buy a newspaper, there is almost an instant reaction to put that in a bag. The onus is on us to say, 'No, I do not want that, because it is a pointless exercise'. I can only think that the main reason for doing that is to promote the shop. Therefore, that would only take a relatively small step. I would not class that as likely to have a wholesale effect. We are in a situation of exploring what powers are available, so if the higher impact ones are not available, we need to look at the more incremental steps.

[60] **Brynle Williams:** On that point, how could we educate people about this? You go into a shop and they ask if you want everything in a plastic bag—it does not matter if it is even a book of stamps. How do we go about educating the retail industry to be more selective about providing these bags, because they are just as guilty as anyone about pushing them?

[61] **Mr Jones:** We need a cultural change to ensure that the default option is not to have a bag as opposed to having a bag. It is quite interesting, because the current cost of bags is borne by the retailer, so you could make the case that it is of significant benefit to the retailer to reduce the use of bags. That is why we tend to think that, if they are so keen to give the bags away, there must be a benefit and the only benefit to them that we can come up with is advertising, although some smaller shops that might not have branded bags are still providing

bags. So, I think that it is a cultural issue. It is up to business and the public to start saying that they do not want that.

[62] **Ms Bell:** In the last couple of years, there has been a change in a lot of shops. They will ask you if you want a bag as opposed to automatically giving you one. That is purely down to public perception, because companies that do this are seen to be more environmentally sustainable, whereas, before, it was just accepted that you got everything in a bag. It is due to public perception and public awareness that they now do not want a plastic bag with everything. Every time they go to put something in a plastic bag, I say, 'No thank you, I have got one'. The message is getting through and it is the public that is instigating it, because they do not want plastic bags all the time.

1.10 p.m.

[63] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Yr wyf yn awgrymu bod Brynle yn newid ei siop os yw'n cael bag bob tro mae'n prynu stampiau.

Alun Ffred Jones: I suggest that Brynle changes his shop, if he is given a bag every time he buys stamps.

[64] Yr oeddwn am ofyn cwestiwn ynglŷn â'r newid i ddefnyddio bagiau o ddeunydd arall yn lle plastig, ond yr ydych wedi ateb y cwestiwn hwnnw wrth awgrymu na fydd hynny, mewn gwirionedd, o fudd mawr. Fe ofynnaf gwestiwn arall, felly, sy'n ymwneud ag arferion a diwylliant. Bu rhai ohonom, yn ddiweddar, yn ne'r Almaen ac Awstria ar ymweliad, ac un o'r pethau a oedd yn taro rhywun yn y fan honno oedd cyn lleied o sbwriel a oedd i'w weld ar y stryd ac yn y wlad. Yr hyn a'm trawodd i ar ôl dod yn ôl i Gaerdydd oedd nifer y bagiau plastig sydd ar ochr y ffordd sy'n arwain i Groes Cyrllwys. A ydych yn gwybod pam bod hynny'n bod? A yw hynny'n ymwneud ag arfer neu ddeddfau? A ydych yn gwybod a oes llai o ddefnydd yn cael ei wneud o fagiau plastig yn yr Almaen ac Awstria?

I was going to ask a question about the switch to using bags made from materials other than plastic, but you have answered that question by suggesting that it would not really be of much benefit. I will, therefore, ask another question on habits and culture. Some of us visited southern Germany and Austria recently and one thing that struck me while there was how little rubbish was to be seen on the streets and in the countryside. What struck me after I got back to Cardiff was the number of plastic bags that line the road that leads up to Culverhouse Cross. Do you know why that is? That is, is that to do with habits or legislation? Do you know whether less use is made of plastic bags in Germany and Austria?

[65] **Mr Jones:** Nid wyf yn gwybod am y pwynt penodol hwnnw. Yn sgîl fy swydd, yr wyf yn treulio llawer o amser—efallai llawer gormod o amser—yn meddwl am y broblem hon. Mae gennym broblem o ran sbwriel ac er mwyn delio â'r broblem honno mae angen inni edrych ar addysg, yn sicr, ac ar sicrhau bod y lleiafrif sy'n taflu sbwriel yn cael ei erlyn. Credaf fod llywodraeth leol wedi gwella'n sylweddol o ran glanhau strydoedd: yn sicr yng nghanol rhai dinasoedd a threfi, bu gwelliant sylweddol dros y blynyddoedd. Hefyd, credaf fod angen gweithio â phobl leol, fel eu bod yn ymgymryd â'r gwaith o ofalu am eu hardaloedd lleol. Mae angen edrych ar ddulliau o atal y broblem yn y lle cyntaf.

Mr Jones: I do not know about that specific point. As a consequence of my job, I spend a lot of time—perhaps too much time—thinking about this problem. We have a problem in terms of rubbish and in order to deal with that problem we need to look at education, certainly, and at ensuring that the minority who drop litter is prosecuted. I think that local government has improved greatly in terms of street cleansing work: certainly in the centre of some towns and cities, there has been a significant improvement over the years. Also, I think that there is a need to work with local people, so that they undertake the work of looking after their localities. We need to look at ways of preventing the problem in the first place.

[66] Gyda nifer o fathau o sbwriel, mae'n anodd meddwl sut y gallwn dynnu'r broblem o'r gadwyn, mewn ffordd. Gyda bagiau plastig, mae ateb eithaf ymarferol i sicrhau mai prin iawn fyddai'r bagiau plastig a fyddai ar gael i gyfrannu at sbwriel yn ein gwlad. Mae atebion o ran caniau a photeli ac yn y blaen a fyddai hefyd yn ymarferol. Pe baem yn delio â'r rheini, byddwn yn gobeithio y byddai hynny'n cael effaith bositif ar yr amgylchedd ac yn gwneud i bobl feddwl mwy am bethau. Un o'r problemau gyda bagiau plastig, ac efallai caniau a photeli, yw nad oes gwerth iddynt. Maent yn cael eu defnyddio ac wedyn nid oes gwerth iddynt. Pe baem yn rhoi gwerth iddynt, efallai y byddai pobl yn meddwl mwy ac yn dangos mwy o barch o ran eu defnydd.

With lots of different kinds of rubbish, it is difficult to think how we can take the problem out of the chain, in a way. In terms of plastic bags, there is a quite practical solution to ensure that very few plastic bags are available to contribute to the rubbish in our country. There are solutions in terms of cans and bottles and so on that would also be practical. If we dealt with those, I would hope that that would have a positive effect on the environment and make people think more about things. One of the problems with plastic bags, and perhaps cans and bottles, is that they have no value. They are used and then they have no value. If we were to put a price on them, people might think more and show more respect in terms of their use.

[67] **Michael German:** I have some questions on a couple of entirely unrelated subjects. The first one is that there are a number of towns and communities in Wales that are seeking to go plastic-bag free. What progress has been made with those? What sort of help have they had in getting to that point? Secondly, if you were in the position of being the legislator rather than the campaigner, what would be the solution in law that you would like to see? You have already said that you would prefer a legal solution to a voluntary one. How might it work? If you are going to impose a levy, which is what I think that you are suggesting, who would collect it, how would it be funded and where would the money go? I do not know which point you want to take first.

[68] **Ms Bell:** I will start off by talking about the towns. Rebecca Hoskins was the lady who started the Modbury thing. If you have not seen it, the BBC was doing all this filming about litter in Hawaii and I was getting frustrated because it was on all the news bulletins, every night, and I was thinking, 'That is happening on all our Welsh beaches but they are not covering it'. However, it does highlight the fact that towns want to do it. I gave a presentation at the end of January at which we showed Rebecca's film, and I would say that, since then, I have given a presentation every other week about plastic bags and how to go plastic-bag free. I cannot keep up with the demand. Towns want to do it. Everybody wants information, they all want me to go to their town and I am trying to split myself in three in order to do it. So, it has been progressing and there is some help; I know that Sustainable Wales has been given some money by the Welsh Assembly Government to try to do this—it is trying to get Porthcawl to go plastic-bag free, so that it can be shown as an example town. There is also the case of Hay-on-Wye and many other towns; we both mentioned towns in Wales that are doing that. In general, local retailers are very much in favour of this, maybe because they do not have a head office somewhere outside of Wales that is not able to comply with the local feeling.

[69] They are getting on well—to answer your question—and they want to do it. There is strong public feeling for this, and many local retailers are fully behind it. We and Keep Wales Tidy are providing as much information as we can, as are many other small charities. So, it is progressing, but it is difficult when there is a massive chain, and most retailers are still giving out plastic bags free of charge. There is no real definition of what a plastic-bag-free town is. Modbury is the prime example, in that no plastic bags are given out there, but I think that they are all working towards being plastic-bag free.

[70] **Mr Jones:** We very much congratulate Modbury. There is a sense of frustration in that, about two years ago, we developed a document encouraging Welsh communities to become plastic-bag free. I remember giving a presentation to 50 or 60 people at the Royal Welsh Show, and no-one took much of an interest. We could have had a Welsh Modbury. Modbury's contribution is to show that it is possible. Something that was relatively theoretical, based on work in Australia, needed an example to show that it could work. We are working closely with Chepstow, where about 80 per cent of the retailers are on board, and very supportive, although one or two of the larger shops are tougher nuts to crack. There has been a groundswell of movement, which is an indication of public opinion.

[71] To move on to your second question—

[72] **Michael German:** Brynle, did you want to ask a question on the first part?

[73] **Brynle Williams:** I have a question that is similar to Alun Ffred's question, based on the visit to Austria. I was considering the nations with outright bans and so on. Recently, I was in Singapore, a highly densely populated city, but there was no plastic bag to be seen anywhere. It is very much a consumer's city. I assume that it is a matter of culture, so, how do we break it?

[74] **Michael German:** It is to do with the method of government.

[75] **Mr Jones:** I was going to say that democracy is an issue in Singapore.

[76] **Brynle Williams:** There is that.

[77] **Ms Bell:** I have been to Singapore, and I was amazed at how spotless it was. Many things go on there. First of all, there is public stigma attached to dropping litter, which no longer exists in the UK. You see people dropping litter all the time, but when was the last time that you heard of anyone being fined for dropping litter? So, there is an enforcement issue. It is illegal to drop litter, but who is policing this? I know that, in Hong Kong, martial arts training had to be given to the litter wardens, because of the amount of physical abuse that they have been presented with as a result of trying to stop people from dropping litter. So, that is a whole other issue. With regard to Singapore, there is little litter and a massive stigma. As Tegryn pointed out, if you have a littered area, people think that it is unsafe, and they will litter it even more; if it is clean, they will not do so. It is about the whole mindset. Twenty years ago, people did not drop litter; now they do.

[78] If I may, I will say something else. I was giving a talk at EnCams, which runs environment campaigns in England, and Trevor McDonald was asked to give a presentation. He talked about his home in Jamaica, and said that the President was once walking behind a visitor who dropped litter; he tapped them on the shoulder, picked it up and handed it back to them, saying, 'We don't do that here'. Twenty years later, Trevor McDonald was back in Jamaica and saw someone drop some litter. He picked it up, tapped them on the shoulder and handed it back to them, and said, 'We don't do that here', but that person turned around and said, 'We do now', dropped it again and walked away. It is about culture. If we return to the idea that littering is illegal and that people should not do it, it will, hopefully, have an impact. However, Tegryn spends all his days trying to get that message across, so it is difficult.

1.20 p.m.

[79] **Mr Jones:** On the second question, we have suggested several options, and have then put them in order of preference. Our preferred option would be a levy. In Ireland, the levy is collected through the VAT system. I will not even pretend to go into the mechanics of how that works, but it has been shown to be a relatively low-cost option for collecting. Of course,

the issue for you as an Assembly is that powers over that area would not be devolved.

[80] A simpler version of it could perhaps be legislation to ban giving bags away for free, which would have a similar impact. The disadvantage of that is that it would not raise any money that could potentially be used for other positive environmental works, but the advantage of that for retailers is that it would be a benefit for them. Therefore, looking wholesale across the board, those two would be our preferred options. If that does not happen, then you start looking at an outright ban, but it all depends what powers you have, or will have, over the next few months.

[81] **Ms Bell:** To add to that, there has been a hoo-hah about the fact that Marks and Spencer has suddenly stopped giving away plastic bags for free. However, if you walk into its clothing section, it gives you free plastic bags with the clothes. Therefore, if we are going to introduce some sort of levy, it has to be applied across the range. We would like to see plastic bags banned, and a levy introduced. Whether there is the power to do that is to be decided. However, we believe that they should be banned—they will be around for thousands of years, and there is no need for it.

[82] **Michael German:** Thank you both for giving us an opener for 10—people are hearing this evidence for the first time, and you have given us a good overview of the issues that affect us with regard to plastic bags. We are grateful for your evidence today. We will now consider as a committee what we do next. You are welcome to stay, if you wish.

[83] At the beginning, I said that it seemed that there were four options that we could move forward with. The first would be to do nothing. The second was to take further evidence and produce a report, as would be done in a normal inquiry. The third option is that we could put the whole thing on hold until the LCO goes through, and see what the Minister plans to do as a result of the LCO. I believe that we should always plan for success, and therefore I would have thought that we should all be viewing as a fact that the LCO will go through, in roughly its present format. The fourth option would be to put the matter to the Minister, and say, 'It is for you to act on this matter—it is your choice'. I am open to what Members consider is the best option.

[84] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Pe bai'r LCO yn pasio, byddai gan Lywodraeth y Cynulliad hawl i weithredu. Felly, y peth cyntaf i'w wneud yw ceisio gweld beth yw'r sefyllfa ar ran yr LCO, sydd ar hyn o bryd yn sownd yn rhywle yn San Steffan. Credaf ei bod yn briodol, felly, i'r Cadeirydd, ar ran y pwyllgor, wneud ymholiadau gyda'r Gweinidog perthnasol i weld a yw hwn yn debyg o gael ei weithredu, hynny yw, a yw'r LCO yn mynd i gael ei symud ymlaen yn y dyfodol agos. Os oes rheswm i gredu bod problemau tymor hir, yna byddai'n rhaid i'r pwyllgor ailystyried y dewisiadau eraill sydd ger ei fron.

Alun Ffred Jones: If the LCO is passed, the Assembly Government would have the right to take action. Therefore, the first thing to do is to try to see what the situation is with regard to the LCO, which is stuck somewhere in Westminster. I believe that it would therefore be appropriate, therefore, for the Chair, on behalf of the committee, to make inquiries of the relevant Minister to see whether it is likely to be implemented, that is, whether the LCO will progress in the near future. If there is reason to believe that there are long-term problems, then the committee would have to reconsider the options available to it.

[85] **Michael German:** I asked the clerk about where the LCO was before the meeting. Do we have any report on that?

[86] **Dr Hawkins:** No, not as far as I know. We were told that it was coming back to us sometime after Easter—that was the latest information that we had.

[87] **Michael German:** What does ‘coming back’ mean?

[88] **Dr Hawkins:** It means coming back to be reconsidered, as far as I know.

[89] **Michael German:** That presumably means redrafted, does it? You are right to raise the issue. That is a crucial point, and we need to find the answer to that question—is it coming back to be redrafted, and what will the powers within it be?

[90] **Alun Ffred Jones:** As the Chair of this committee, I believe that you have the authority to request a meeting with the Minister to ask in detail what is happening.

[91] **Darren Millar:** I would go further than that, Chair. I think that the Minister needs to come to this committee and explain what the hold-up is. We have been waiting since November last year for the LCO to be laid before Parliament. Clearly, officials in Whitehall are holding this up. Politicians in Westminster are not even being given the chance to discuss the LCO. That is extremely regrettable. The Minister had the opportunity to give us an update yesterday in Plenary, but did not do so. Given that there is cross-party consensus in the Assembly on the need to take action on plastic bags, we need to have a detailed update. That can only be given—without the official-speak—with the Minister sat before this committee so that we can ask those pertinent questions. Therefore, I suggest that we invite the Minister to attend one of our meetings so that we can pursue this further. In addition to that, we need to explore this much further and take evidence from, perhaps, the other side of the argument. It is only fair to give the Carrier Bag Consortium the opportunity to put their case forward—I was surprised to learn that there was a carrier bag consortium; I am sure that it is a bunch of anoraks. However, you will know that the Welsh Conservatives take this matter very seriously, having held a debate on it in the Assembly last year. It is important that the Minister comes here to explain exactly the LCO is. If the Minister is not prepared to meet us, which would be regrettable, then we ought to get someone from Westminster to come to explain the hold-up.

[92] **Michael German:** Does anyone else want to comment?

[93] **Alun Davies:** I am pleased that there is consensus that we should look to the LCO, which will provide the ability for the Assembly to take action on this issue. I am concerned about whether the LCO would provide us with sufficient powers to impose a levy. I am not entirely sure that that would be the case. However, I certainly think that there would be a role for you, Chair, to examine and to test with our legal advisers whether the LCO would provide us with sufficient powers to take that action should we so decide at the appropriate point.

[94] I do not necessarily agree with Darren Millar that we need to bring the Minister here—to drag her to this table—to provide those answers. I think that there is a requirement for you to meet her, Chair, and to find out what the timetable is for this to be brought back. I would not want to see an entire session taken up with simply trying to grill a Minister on a timetabling issue. First, we need to explore and agree whether sufficient powers are available to this body via the LCO. We can do that reasonably straightforwardly by asking our legal advisers to look at the LCO as it is currently drafted. When we are comfortable with that, we can ask the Minister—you can do that, Chair—for a timetable as to when she expects to take this issue forward.

[95] **Michael German:** Darren, do you want to come back on that?

[96] **Darren Millar:** I am a member of the committee that scrutinised the LCO and—I am sure that Alun Ffred Jones will be able to confirm this—the LCO will deliver the powers for the Assembly to impose either a ban or a levy on plastic bags should it so wish.

Alun Ffred Jones: Dyna a ddywedwyd wrthym yn y pwyllgor gan y Gweinidog, os gofiat yn iawn: mae'r Gorchymyn cymhwysedd deddfwriaethol yn rhoi'r pwerau naill ai i wahardd neu i osod ardoll. Cytunaf ag Alun na ddylem alw'r Gweinidog yma dim ond i roi amser caled iddi. Dylem ofyn, drwy'r Gadair—wedi'r cyfan, y Gadair yw ein cynrychiolydd ni—i wneud ymholiadau am yr hyn sy'n digwydd a'r amserlen. Os ydym yn anhapus gyda'r atebion, gallwn ystyried beth i'w wneud wedyn.

Alun Ffred Jones: That is what we were told by the Minister in committee, if I remember correctly: the legislative competence Order gives the power either to ban or to impose a levy. I agree with Alun that we should not call the Minister here only to give her a hard time. We should ask, through the Chair—after all, the Chair is our representative—to make inquiries as to what is happening and the timetable. If we are unhappy with the responses, we can then consider what to do next.

1.30 p.m.

[97] **Michael German:** As a reasonable person, I was going to suggest that the sensible approach would be first to seek to find out where the LCO is and come back to the committee with a report as soon as possible on the progress on that matter. If the committee is unhappy with what it is told, then perhaps we could move in a different direction. However, from what has been said, it seems that there is some confusion about powers in relation to a levy and perhaps we should ask the legal advisers to provide us with a report on what those powers would mean. There are various interpretations of what a levy could be. We have had a range of options put before us today, which might mean differences of approach. One of the difficulties, as far as I can see, is that this is a levy collected on the sale of bags by retailers. How do the retailers pay it back, and to whom do they pay it back? If they pay it back to the UK Government, does that mean that Wales does not get a handle on this? We could try to do this by a different route, such as a voluntary code. Let us say that England introduced a levy, and Wales went for a voluntary code—there are all sorts of implications around that, which I think we need to explore a bit more, and we need legal advice on that.

[98] Do I take it that, if the committee is satisfied with the replies on the powers issue, you would then want to continue with a review of this matter? I see that you would. In that case, I suggest that Members might like to think about the sorts of people, bodies and organisations that you might want to take evidence from. We have had one suggestion from Darren today. We do not necessarily need suggestions now, but perhaps you could put them to the clerk. You will also need to think about when you want to see the witnesses, and there is a timetabling issue around that that I am sure the clerk is well aware of—it is difficult to fit this in. However, it seems to me that, if a review were to take place, provided it was over by the time the powers arrived, we would have a chance to influence the implementation of those powers. So, the answer to when the LCO will be passed will almost be the deadline for completing the inquiry—is that right? Somewhere around there, anyway.

[99] **Lesley Griffiths:** Could I just clarify something? Will the clerk find out when the LCO is coming back, and whether it is coming back for reconsideration, redrafting, or whatever?

[100] **Michael German:** Yes—and I give my commitment to chase that. I will meet the Minister, or whatever, to ensure that we get those answers. Perhaps I can do that before the next meeting.

[101] I see that no-one wants to raise anything else on this matter. Thank you very much. That is the end of the meeting.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 1.32 p.m.

The meeting ended at 1.32 p.m.