



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

**Yr Is-bwyllgor Datblygu Gwledig  
The Rural Development Sub-committee**

**Dydd Iau, 18 Tachwedd 2010  
Thursday, 18 November 2010**

**Cynnwys**  
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Inquiry into Rural Tourism: Evidence Session

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn yr is-bwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

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

**Aelodau'r is-bwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Sub-committee members in attendance**

Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd yr Is-bwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Sub-committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour
Kirsty Williams	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

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

Andrew Blake	Y Gymdeithas Genedlaethol dros Ardaloedd o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Rob Hanna	Cymdeithas y Cerddwyr a Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru The Ramblers Association and Wales Environment Link
Huw Jones	Chwaraeon Cymru Sports Wales
Sam Littlechilds	Cymdeithas yr Hostelau Ieuenctid The Youth Hostels Association
Rowland Pittard	Cymdeithas yr Hostelau Ieuenctid The Youth Hostels Association

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

Ryan Bishop	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Meriel Singleton	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.03 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.03 a.m.*

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

[1] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Bore da a chroeso i'r cyfarfod hwn o'r Is-bwyllgor Datblygu Gwledig. Yr ydych i gyd yn gyfarwydd â'r cyhoeddiadau arferol, ond fe'ch atgoffaf fod angen troi pob teclyn trydanol i ffwrdd rhag iddynt amharu ar yr offer darlledu.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Good morning and welcome to this meeting of the Rural Development Sub-committee. You are all familiar with the usual announcements, but I remind you to turn off any electrical equipment in case they interfere with the broadcasting equipment.

[2] Yr ydym wedi derbyn ymddiheuriad gan Brynle Williams a deallaf nad yw Andrew R.T. Davies yn gallu ymuno â ni ychwaith.

We have received an apology from Brynle Williams and I understand that Andrew R.T. Davies is unable to join us this morning either.

9.03 a.m.

### **Ymchwiliad i Dwristiaeth Wledig yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Rural Tourism: Evidence Session**

[3] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yr ydym yn parhau heddiw i dderbyn dystiolaeth fel rhan o'n hymchwiliad i dwristiaeth wledig yng Nghymru. Yr wyf yn falch iawn o groesawu Andrew Blake o Gymdeithas Genedlaethol dros Ardaloedd o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol. Andrew, fe'ch gwahoddaf i wneud rhyw ychydig o sylwadau agoriadol, a gofynnaf i chi eu cadw'n gymharol fyr oherwydd y mae amser braidd yn dynn y bore yma.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We are continuing today to gather evidence as part of our inquiry into rural tourism in Wales. I am very pleased to welcome Andrew Blake from the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Andrew, I invite you to make a few opening remarks, and I ask that you keep them relatively brief, because we are a little short on time this morning.

[4] **Mr Blake:** Good morning. I represent the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which covers all 47 areas of outstanding natural beauty in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, five of which are in Wales. I have a couple of apologies to make. First, I hope that you received my paper, which only got through to Ryan the day before yesterday. So, I apologise for the lateness of that. I also apologise for spelling 'Anglesey' wrong in the AONB column of the table included in that paper.

[5] The AONBs cover about 4 per cent of Wales and receive an estimated 13.5 million visitor days per annum. With some of the best outstanding landscapes, along with national parks in Wales, we offer key destinations for visitors. Therefore, we are involved in rural tourism management in addition to our other work of conserving and enhancing the landscape. I will leave it there. I am here to answer your questions, so please fire away.

[6] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Beth yw eich asesiad o gyflwr y sector twristiaeth mewn ardaloedd gwledig yng Nghymru o'i gymharu â chyflwr twristiaeth yn gyffredinol drwy Gymru, a'r sector twristiaeth yn y Deyrnas Unedig? Sut ydych yn credu bod twristiaeth mewn ardaloedd gwledig yn cymharu?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What is your assessment of the state of the tourism sector in rural Wales compared with the state of tourism throughout Wales generally, and the tourism sector in the United Kingdom? How do you think tourism in rural areas compares?

[7] **Mr Blake:** For rural tourism in Wales, there is an increasing market and potential in activity tourism, particularly based around walking, sightseeing and the more active aspects of outward bound activities and so on. There is also the cultural heritage side, which is of growing interest to many people. So, there is great potential for its growth within the constraints of the landscape and countryside. There are trends showing that visitors are still looking to take trips abroad, but the trends in this country seem to be moving away from long-distance three-week—I am sorry, I do not know who has three-week holidays these days—two-week holidays, to short breaks such as weekend breaks. That level of activity tourism in the countryside has huge potential and it is an important part of the market. All the surveys and statistics for England and Wales show that a huge amount of the tourism sector involves going to see nice views, seeking out peace and tranquillity, and activity. There is a huge opportunity there for Wales, which it is already capitalising on, but there are opportunities for further growth.

[8] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. We have heard from other witnesses of the need to improve broadband access and public transport in rural areas to help the rural tourism

industry. Do you agree with that point of view?

[9] **Mr Blake:** Yes. Broadband is now essential for most businesses. Rural tourism is made up of a huge number of small businesses. I find that, if I am arranging a trip away, I will try to do as much of it as possible over the internet, and that is the case for a huge number of people these days. Therefore, having broadband access in rural areas is essential for those businesses to have a presence on the internet and so on, and to have booking systems and communications systems that are compatible with the twenty-first century.

[10] You also asked about transport, and an increasing issue is the need for sustainable transport. The fact that that relies to a large extent on integrated public transport is crucial. It is very difficult in dispersed rural areas, but getting the integration in hubs and centres, and co-ordination between railway stations and bus services, as well as co-ordination with cycle carriage and baggage handling systems, is essential to let the rural tourism market grow effectively.

9.10 a.m.

[11] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you. There are two further matters that I invite you to make further comment on. We talk about broadband and access to broadband, but if we are talking about doing business via broadband, surely it is the quality of the broadband rather than the access that matters. We have heard from others that you could have access to it, but that the quality may not be sufficient to support what you want to do. In this case it would be crucial to have high-quality broadband to support lots of pictures showing the places you are going to visit, for example. Do you have any comments to make on that side of things—not just on the access, but the quality?

[12] **Mr Blake:** Yes, certainly. In the Wye Valley—my patch—there are areas where broadband is very slow and mobile phone reception very poor. It is a distinct problem. As you say, if download times are slow, people cannot get the high-quality information that they now expect of websites. That needs to be available in rural areas as well. The flipside of that is that we have been looking at interpretive information in the Wye Valley. I know that other AONBs and national parks have been looking at this. You can download information on your iPhone or smartphone, which will give you on-the-spot interpretation about the site and so on. Obviously, that is fantastic if you have the connection and can do that. It is also a very efficient way of providing information without littering the countryside with interpretation boards and so on. However, if you do not have reliable broadband connections, it is not possible. More and more, the visitor is expecting and able to use that sort of thing, and if it is not available in rural areas, it can be a let-down for them.

[13] **Kirsty Williams:** Good morning, Mr Blake. Do you have any evidence of a connection between designation as an AONB and successful rural tourism? Does the designation make a significant difference to the tourism potential of a place?

[14] **Mr Blake:** I think that it does. All of the AONBs are designated because they are exceptional places; visitors go to them because they are exception places, not because they are designated. However, dedicated teams and increased investment come as a result of the designation. Having a dedicated AONB team and such things as the sustainable development fund means that there is a greater level of focus and co-ordination in that area than you might get in a part of the countryside that is not designated. That greater co-ordination improves the visitor experience. Again, speaking as the Wye Valley area of outstanding natural beauty officer, we have been able to pull together a £2.8 million heritage lottery funded scheme, which is enhancing the historic viewpoints as well as the industrial heritage in the Wye Valley. So, that is improving the tourism assets in the area. We are also just embarking on a new sustainable tourism strategy, which will pull together all the tourism interests and give a

clear focus for tourism in the area with a five-year action plan. Clwydian Range AONB and Brecon Beacons national park have already gone through that process and got the Europarks sustainable tourism charter, so that is another layer of polish, I suppose, on the tourism product, enhancing the visitor experience. We are going down a similar route, as is Gower AONB. That level of attention and input inevitably improves the tourism product in those areas as compared with undesignated parts of the countryside, albeit that public money goes into that. However, the leverage that it gives us greatly enhances that use of public money.

[15] **Kirsty Williams:** So, to be clear, first of all, the designation may be the hook to draw someone to an area that, otherwise, they would not necessarily be aware of; and secondly, it allows greater co-ordination to the levering-in of funds from other sources to develop the tourism infrastructure and the offer. Are those the two main benefits?

[16] **Mr Blake:** On the first point, I would say that people would go to the Gower whether it was designated or not, because it is an exceptional area of coastline. The same applies to the national parks, in a sense. However, having that designation, the dedicated team and so on, allows that greater focus and investment.

[17] **Kirsty Williams:** Would you agree that there are other parts of Wales that are exceptional that do not have a designation at present? I am aware of two campaigns to extend designations, one in north Wales and the other closer to me in the Cambrian mountains area. Could you give us details of any other campaigns that may be ongoing at the moment to secure designation? I am assuming, given your previous answer, that you feel that the impact that that would have on tourism in those areas would be beneficial, should the designation go ahead.

[18] **Mr Blake:** It is obviously a problem for such a beautiful country.

[19] **Kirsty Williams:** It could all be designated.

[20] **Mr Blake:** Yes—well, nearly all of it. Under the European landscape convention, every landscape matters, but if all landscapes are equal, some are more equal than others, I suppose. Again, it comes down to having that dedicated focus on an area, which inevitably enhances its potential. If the Cambrians, for example, were designated, I am sure that that would elevate their status and profile and facilitate the attraction of funds and resources. With regard to other campaigns, or whatever, there is obviously the investigation into extending the Clwydian Range, but I am not aware of any other specific campaigns in Wales. Just over the border—English hat on—in the Wye Valley, the Forest of Dean is going for AONB status. There is a bit of unfinished business in that: it was originally demarcated as part of the Wye Valley AONB, but it was never designated, because it was already a forest park. That is something that is over the border, but it is still on my patch, but I am not aware of any other campaigns in Wales.

9.20 a.m.

[21] **Joyce Watson:** What sort of Government intervention has had the most success in developing rural tourism? Have grants targeted directly at those in the sector played their part, is it broader measures aimed at enhancing rural areas, or is it both?

[22] **Mr Blake:** I would say that it is both. Tourism in urban and rural areas is a very fine mix between the private sector and the public sector, and the voluntary sector as well to a certain extent. So, for the private sector, targeted grants and instruments are effective in raising standards or in facilitating investment. On the public sector side, the continuation of support for public infrastructure, such as transport—as we have already talked about—tourism information centres and the promotional side that the local authorities undertake, are

more down to the level in which we are involved in AONBs. We provide information on the ground, such as leaflets about walks and that sort of thing, and enhancing sites in the countryside. Any investment will help, and the more focused and targeted it is, the more effective it will be. The sustainable development fund has enabled us to support small initiatives that may have not been able to take advantage of the bigger rural development plan funding. So, that ability at a local level to be flexible to understand local needs has been a huge asset. On the other hand, the RDP programmes have hugely benefited the public sector, private sector and voluntary sector, so it all helps, but keeping it focused and targeted makes better use of public money.

[23] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** A oes gwrthdaro rhwng athroniaeth eich sefydliad a denu twristiaeth? Mae eich sefydliad yn ceisio diogelu harddwch naturiol ardaloedd, ond a yw'r ffaith bod llawer iawn o bobl yn dod i'r ardaloedd hynny yn gallu amharu arno?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Is there a conflict between your institution's philosophy and attracting tourism? Your institution is trying to protect the natural beauty of areas, but does the fact that many people come to those areas interfere with that?

[24] **Mr Blake:** In the Wye Valley—I am sure that it is the same for other AONBs—our objective is not to increase visitor numbers per se; our objective is to increase the visitor experience, to extend the visitor stay and, therefore, to increase the visitor spend in the area. Therefore, we want people to stay longer and spend more rather than increase the visitor numbers. That has knock-on effects in terms of transport and infrastructure, so impacts on the natural environment.

[25] The aim is to get the visitors who are already coming here to come back more often and to spread the season a bit more. Natural landscapes are worth visiting in every season to see the seasonal differences. That is something that we promote. So, people do not come back just once, but at least four times a year, if not eight. Once again, instead of coming for a day trip, people should be encouraged to come for an overnight trip, instead of saying that we need more busloads of people coming in, waddling around Tintern Abbey and then going away again. So, the focus is on increasing the visitor spend rather than just increasing visitor numbers. Otherwise, there is a conflict.

[26] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Pe bai gennych gyfle i gynnig un argymhelliad i Lywodraeth Cymru, a'r Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth a'r Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig yn benodol, o ran beth yr ydych yn dymuno iddynt ei wneud er mwyn sicrhau gwyliau o ansawdd uchel mewn ardaloedd o harddwch arbennig, beth fyddai hynny?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** If you had the opportunity to offer one recommendation to the Welsh Government, and the Minister for Heritage and the Minister for Rural Affairs in particular, on what you want them to do to ensure high-quality holidays in areas of outstanding natural beauty, what would it be?

[27] **Mr Blake:** That is the \$50,000 question, is it not? For us in the AONBs, it is the need to be aware of the potential, as I said, for the dedicated teams to draw in the investment and the other public sector resources—whether through Cadw or the Countryside Council for Wales—and the ability to draw on the rural development plan funding. That needs to be recognised and supported as an effective model for enhancing these areas. We have found the sustainable development fund to be extremely useful in allowing us to operate flexibly in the area and offer support at a local level. So, in a sense, it is about the continuation of those existing streams and mechanisms and the recognition that they are very effective instruments in the rural environment.

[28] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch am eich presenoldeb y bore yma ac am eich

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you for your attendance this morning and for your

tystiolaeth. Os hoffech ychwanegu unrhyw beth at eich tystiolaeth, mae croeso ichi gysylltu gyda ni.

evidence. If you would like to add anything to your evidence, please contact us.

9.29 a.m.

### **Ymchwiliad i Dwristiaeth Wledig yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Rural Tourism: Evidence Session**

[29] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Croeso cynnes i Rob Hanna o Gymdeithas y Cerddwyr a Chyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru. Yr ydym yn ddiolchgar iawn am eich presenoldeb. Yr wyf yn eich gwahodd i wneud sylwadau agoriadol. Gofynnaf ichi gyfyngu eich sylwadau i ryw dri munud, gan ein bod braidd yn dynn ar amser ac mae dau dyst arall i ddod cyn 11 a.m..

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I extend a warm welcome to Rob Hanna from the Ramblers Association and Wales Environment Link. We are very grateful for your attendance. I invite you to make some opening remarks. I ask you to restrict your comments to around three minutes, because we are a little tight on time and we have two other witnesses to come before 11 a.m..

9.30 a.m.

[30] **Mr Hanna:** Thank you very much indeed; it is very nice to see you all this morning. Thank you for allowing us to make a contribution to your inquiry. We are pleased to be able to do so. This is a significant piece of work, and we hope that our evidence will contribute to the information that you require.

[31] Today, I am representing Ramblers Cymru, the Wales Environment Link and their stakeholders. Rural tourism makes a major contribution to the Welsh economy. Visit Wales estimates that it represents about 6.8 per cent of Wales's gross domestic product. A recent report compiled by Deloitte for Visit Wales forecast that this growth sector would be the major driver for the Welsh economy over the next five or six years.

[32] The tourism industry is based on the experiences delivered by a wide-ranging and diverse sector of land managers and suppliers—events providers, restaurants, pubs and, most importantly, people. Experience visitors come to Wales to view its world-class landscape, seascape, biodiversity, heritage and culture. Once visitors arrive here, they want to undertake these experiences, mainly by walking the hills and mountains, or by cycling or travelling on the water. A recent survey of Welsh communities by the Countryside Council for Wales and the Forestry Commission found that walking was by far the most popular activity undertaken, accounting for about 80 per cent of tourist activity.

[33] In the current environment, the question is how we can do more with less. First, I think that 'synergy' is an important word. We recognise that the investment that the Welsh Assembly Government is making in a diverse range of programmes could be related. Glastir is one example. If implemented properly, Glastir would protect habitats and landscapes and improve their quality, and would also contribute in a very real way by opening up a further 16 per cent of the rights-of-way network in Wales. As you know, only 50 per cent of that network is open currently, which is crazy when you think about it. Walking is a major activity in Wales, yet only half the network is open. We have to do something about that.

[34] We also think that there are opportunities to work more closely with delivery agencies. We would like to see a lot more cross-departmental working between Assembly Government-sponsored bodies, such as Cadw, the CCW and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. They could each have a tourist champion to pick up and recognise the opportunities in different programmes and how they could link



together better. We would like to see much closer working between those bodies.

[35] Moreover, industry providers need a lot more support and a voice to be able to bring forward innovative ideas. I picked up on a comment made by your last witness about the sustainable development fund. As an organisation, we took advantage of that and developed a product, working closely with some of the partners that I just mentioned. We are now delivering a world-class product that is available only here in Wales; it is not being offered anywhere else in the world. That was all stimulated by the small little grant and the investment and network that came through the sustainable development fund. We would like to see an organisational initiative to bring together what we call ‘tourist champions’, and to innovate and provide communities with support. ‘Communities’ is the key word, as we need to enable communities to download the opportunities arising from this Government’s investment in infrastructure. Again, I can give a quick example. The all-Wales coastal path is a £16 million-worth investment targeted primarily at helping coastal communities and rural areas to seek and gain tourism opportunities. Yet, who is helping those communities to prepare themselves for this initiative? The investment is going into the infrastructure, but it is not going into finding ways to engage the entrepreneurial work that will be needed by those communities, so that they can download those economic opportunities.

[36] There are also issues relating to what I call ‘distorted investment’. As I said earlier, it seems crazy that only half our rights-of-way network is open today, although it is a huge economic driver for tourism in Wales. We spent £300 million this year on roadworks and £1.8 million on footpaths. That is a distorted investment. Any business would look at where its main opportunities are, and there is no doubt that tourism is a major economic driver in Wales, based on the evidence that we have. We have to put a business model in place to get hold of people, to make sure that people stay longer, spend more and go back with clear messages. They come to Wales because of its unique offer: its landscape, culture, tourism, heritage and so on. That is what they come here to see, and we have to make sure that they are getting it.

[37] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch am y sylwadau hynny, sydd wedi bod yn arweiniad da i’ch tystiolaeth. Sut y mae twristiaeth wledig yn cymharu â gweddill y sector twristiaeth yng Nghymru ac yn y Deyrnas Unedig yn gyffredinol?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you for those remarks, which have given us a good introduction to your evidence. How does rural tourism compare with the rest of the tourism sector in Wales and the United Kingdom in general?

[38] **Mr Hanna:** There is again a lack of clarity on the evidence, and I continually get frustrated by the different numbers. I know that measuring tourism is a difficult task, because it comprises distinctly different sectors, including inward tourism, whereby people move within Wales to experience their own country, and inbound tourism, with the international visitors who come here. So, that is frustrating, but I know that visitors to Wales spend less money on their visits than visitors to Scotland and England, and they do not tend to stay as long. The tourism offer is distinctly different. There are huge opportunities to focus on growing the market and targeting longer stays specifically, by producing new products and packages to keep people here longer, and giving them the things that they want. What they usually want is to experience the local culture: they want to hear the language and the music, and they want to eat our food—they do not want to eat Thai green curry and all the other things that the industry seems to think that visitors want. So, there needs to be a much healthier dialogue among the providers and users to ensure that customers get what they want.

[39] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. It is fascinating listening to you. Could you expand on the benefits that you think the tourism sector brings to the rural economy particularly, given that we are looking at rural tourism? What are the wider social and economic benefits?

[40] **Mr Hanna:** I have two things to say about that. By providing a better tourism offer in rural areas, we are also providing an infrastructure for our local communities. They benefit from shops improving by supplying a greater range of products, and from the amenities and events. They can also take part, because they are aimed at them as well. A greater sense of community can be developed by providing that.

[41] Secondly, I was talking recently to a gentleman in Rhayader—and forgive my pronunciation—in mid Wales, who was telling me that his business supports 30 people in the town. That is a considerable number. If his business is affected and is not doing so well, a lot of people could be out of work. He is constantly frustrated by the inability to access the opportunities that are being talked about. I would suggest that the way in which the consumer is purchasing tourism is different today from how it was five years ago: people are using mobile technology and are making decisions later. So, it is a very fast-changing environment, and we have to be flexible and responsive if we are to cash in on that. We do not have a year or two years for development; we have to respond immediately, using initiatives such as social marketing, Twitter and Facebook. We have to enable our communities to do that, and so infrastructural things such as the internet and 3G services are crucial in rural areas, because consumers are going to those areas expecting those facilities. As you probably know, we do not have a particularly good mobile phone network, especially in rural areas of Wales.

[42] **Joyce Watson:** How could the Welsh Government's sustainability commitment be reflected in the support that it provides? You talked about provision.

[43] **Mr Hanna:** Could you expand on that a little more, please?

[44] **Joyce Watson:** The Welsh Government has a commitment to the sustainability of rural Wales. How can we support that and move sustainability into the tourism sector?

9.40 a.m.

[45] **Mr Hanna:** I do not think that they are separate. We have to find our unique identity and separate ourselves and what we are selling from the rest of the market. The one thing that Wales has, without question, is the quality of its landscapes and seascapes. That relies heavily on the people who live in those areas delivering that for us. Again, it is about the sustainability, the biodiversity, the hedges and the walls and the features of those landscapes—the very things that people appreciate. It is a very difficult quality to define sometimes, because it is not a product; it is a collection of experiences. People want to arrive in a town, we hope, by public transport, although, as we know, that is difficult in Wales. We must accept that most of our inbound tourists use the car. That is the reality, and it will be difficult to get them to leave their cars at the edge of Wales and take the bus or the train or the bike in. However, once they get here, they want to walk. Increasingly, we find that they park their cars for a couple of days and go to walk, cycle and experience our landscape. We have to be able to signpost them and give them the information that they want to enable them to take away the best possible experience.

[46] As I said in my opening statement, crucially, the people of Wales are one of the key factors. It is the welcome that we give people here that is important; it is absolutely fundamental. To do that, we must be able to develop within our communities an appreciation of the importance of doing that well and of the fact that this is an industry that contributes close to 100,000 jobs in Wales today. I know that some of that work is seasonal and that some of it is not structurally important, but it contributes in a huge way. As I said, the evidence is all there that this is a growth industry in Wales. So, if done well, it could drive future jobs and future investment.

[47] **Joyce Watson:** Good. You raise concerns in your paper about the merger of the

Wales Tourist Board and the Welsh Government. How do you think that organisational changes within the Welsh Government's support for rural tourism have affected the development of the sector?

[48] **Mr Hanna:** The first thing to say is that constant change is never good. You need a period of settlement to be able to plan. Like any industry, we need planning. As I said earlier, we have to be responsive, but we must have some sort of structure to enable us to respond quickly to change in the marketplace—and I am not talking about the Government changes. To do that, we need a period of continuity. The back-and-forth change that has gone on is very difficult. I also think that the relationship between the central body, Visit Wales, and its local delivery agencies, the regional tourism partnerships, is sometimes confusing. I do not want to devalue the work that the partnerships do, because I think that they are extraordinarily good. They are at the front end of delivery with the user and the deliverer. It is a very good starting point, so I certainly would not want to see those go; if anything, they should be strengthened.

[49] In our paper, we talk about the creation of tourism innovation groups, which have been very successful in Scotland. In many ways, the partnerships' work could be around that sort of thing. In Scotland, they have brought the user and the delivery agencies together to work on innovating and fast-tracking new ideas into the marketplace. That is the key thing. It is about bringing products quickly to the marketplace and being able to get them out there effectively. As the central body, Visit Wales can provide the delivery mechanisms—the internet, the mobile structures, the communication systems with the bigger audiences that we are trying to attract.

[50] **Kirsty Williams:** I am sorry to interrupt, Joyce, but could you give us an example of one of these innovative new tourism products that have been brought quickly to the market in Scotland. What does that mean?

[51] **Mr Hanna:** Certainly I can give you an example of something. Last year, we worked with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, with some funding from the sustainable development fund, to develop a product called eTrails, which was looking at how consumers can take information online from a web environment to a mobile environment. Effectively, we have given them what we call a 'mobile guidebook'. At the moment, the consumer gets information in leaflets, through leaflet drops. I spent my summer touring Wales with my granddaughter and, without being avaricious about it, we collected the stuff that was given to us, and it came to 4.5 kg of paper. It was a phenomenal amount of paper. Of course, you do not read most of it; it ends up in the bin, and you always feel guilty about it—you do not know what to do. It is not a very sustainable way of providing information. So, with eTrails or other mechanisms, we are looking at how we can provide people with a richer information content in a more sustainable way, using podcasting or video-casting for example, and link to the tourism office, so that you can tell them where the nearest pub serving local Welsh beer is, where they can find local Welsh food or where they can go to a local singsong event or a ceilidh or whatever, so that they can get a broader, richer experience. It is all about information. I do not know about you, but my decision making tends to be immediate—when I am in a place, I want to find out what is going on now. I do not think that I am unusual in that; that is fairly typical of what is happening in the market at the moment. People are much more prepared to go off for the weekend, but they need an information resource in front of them so that they can see the options and make decisions. So, we have to put that information there. With funding from the sustainable development fund and working with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, we brought the eTrails product forward, and we are now in the second stage of testing it in the Valleys regional park, which has secured some funding for work with three communities. I want to stress that what we have done as a ramblers' organisation is to work to transfer the skills and knowledge into those communities; that is a crucial part of the process for us. The product is the end product, but it is the process that is

important.

[52] **Kirsty Williams:** It seems ironic, Chair, that we have been marketing Wales for years as a place where you can come because your mobile phone will not work.

[53] **Mr Hanna:** There is something in that, too. You can switch it off once you have your information, of course.

[54] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Connectivity with regard to mobile phones has improved over the years, mind you. There are not that many areas where you do not get a connection these days.

[55] **Kirsty Williams:** I do not know about that.

[56] **Joyce Watson:** I can tell you, Chair, where you cannot get the connection in my area—I know where they all go down. Ceredigion is the worst place in Wales for connectivity.

[57] I live in Pembrokeshire and two of my favourite pastimes are walking and photography, linked to bird-watching. I have noticed on my travels that there are large numbers of people who use walking as the medium for their holiday. When I ask them where they are from, I find that most of them are local people—when I say ‘local’, I mean local to Wales, not local to Pembrokeshire. I have also noticed that large numbers of those are in the 50-plus age group and they are also using this modern technology. So, I absolutely agree with you on that.

[58] To survive in a modern world, we need to react now, because if we wait too long, we will miss the boat, or the walk in your case. So, how do you suggest that we should move forward sooner rather than later on modern technology? If we do not, we are going to miss the 30-somethings or the 40-somethings—I have children in those age brackets—who completely rely on it. They are the generation that will sustain tourism, wherever it happens to be.

[59] **Mr Hanna:** There are investment programmes, as you know. Visit Wales has its digital innovation programme, which is about to be launched, and there is a focus in that on communities. As one of the agencies in this sector—we are involved in the tourist business, as an organisation—I would say that there are so many things going on that we need better co-ordination, because there is a lot of what I would call diluted effort and duplication. We do not have a clear dialogue with other agencies, and there is no mechanism for that to happen either. That dialogue stems from hard networking and by getting agencies together, which we have often tried to do. We have held two or three events in the past 12 months to bring those agencies together to talk about it. However, it is very frustrating when that does not happen. There is a need for clear leadership, by Visit Wales or someone else, and, as with anything, an audit needs to be done of what is going on to be able to find where those opportunities are. The talent is here in Wales, without a doubt. The University of Glamorgan is leading in many ways on some of these technology developments, and there is some very exciting work being done there. As I hope that you know, we have recently got a research project going with Swansea Metropolitan University, with support from the knowledge economy skills scholarships programme, to try to do some research into this work. So, there are opportunities, but there is a need for leadership from Visit Wales.

[60] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You have been quite critical of Visit Wales and the amalgamation of the Wales Tourist Board with the Government. How is Visit Wales performing with regard to its marketing campaign? The European-funded marketing project came to an end in March 2009. How do you feel that that marketing campaign is working now?

9.50 a.m.

[61] **Mr Hanna:** There are two things that I wish to say. I hope that I have not come across as being too critical of Visit Wales. I think that it plays an important role in what it does. My contact with it has been fairly positive, in terms of key departments within the organisation. One of the things that I personally find frustrating is that these organisations need to be made more visible in terms of who does what, who your contacts are and where the opportunities are, so that we, as an external body, can recognise the opportunities and links. It has been very difficult just to get simple things like an organogram of who is who and who does what within the organisation. That is the first thing that I want to say.

[62] Secondly, I am not too familiar with the marketing campaigns that have been running. I have not been here long enough; I have only been in Wales for 18 months. It is not something that I have personally been involved with; therefore, I would not want to comment on that.

[63] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Okay. That is fine. I now call on Kirsty.

[64] **Kirsty Williams:** What assessment do you feel able to make with regard to the support for rural tourism that is currently offered by the Welsh Assembly Government? Given your assertion in your paper that the sector could employ significantly more people than it currently does and that you outline areas where you would like to see the tourism sector go—spreading the benefit, the growth of the domestic market, and an extension of the season—what, if anything, needs to change in the approach of the Welsh Assembly Government to support that?

[65] **Mr Hanna:** There are examples that I can give you that might help to illustrate what I want to say. There has been a growth all over Wales of an activity called ‘walking festivals’. Obviously, people come here for the walking, because the festivals are promoted as walking festivals, but what happens after the walk? People want to go to a local pub and eat local food; they want to hear the language spoken very much and they want to hear the music. They want to experience the culture of rural Wales. That is a major part of the offer. In many ways, you do it very well here, particularly in terms of how the language is promoted, yet there is no way of co-ordinating it at present. In Wales, we have walking festivals happening in neighbouring towns on the same weekend. It is crazy. There is a very simple fix for some of these issues, to be honest, and we have suggestions, which we have put forward, and we are in discussions on them.

[66] It is the same with walking activity generally. There are 106 agencies and organisations in Wales that deliver led-walk programmes, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the National Trust, but you try to find them. They all advertise and market themselves in their own communication channels. There is no one place that you can pick up and collect these data online or even on your phone. Again, these are simple fixes. There needs to be what I call ‘social innovation counts’—we have organised one of these—where we bring people together from different sectors and say, ‘Look; here is how the consumers want to receive this information. How do we provide information at the moment? What do we need to do to give them the information where they want it?’.

[67] **Kirsty Williams:** Do you think that the Welsh Assembly Government has a role in enabling those fora to be created and sustained, and spread—

[68] **Mr Hanna:** Absolutely. I think that you have a very important role in giving advice to Visit Wales and saying, ‘Let us get together these people who have a passion and an interest in promoting Wales in all areas’. Obviously, this includes the landscape, food and

culture. It is a very broad experience. It is not a widget; it is a whole collection of things delivered by a whole range of interests. Let us bring them together in groups and focus on products and delivering, not talking. Let us focus on what we need to do to deliver a better quality of product, a better experience, and to see how technology and other means of communication can enable us to do that better.

[69] **Kirsty Williams:** You said in your evidence earlier that you had been speaking to a businessperson from Rhayader, who was quite frustrated by his or her inability to grab hold of the opportunities that could be seen in other places. Could you give us a flavour of what he or she and other such businesspeople are missing out on? What steps can we recommend to the Welsh Assembly Government so that such people, who employ people and want to get ahead, can stop feeling frustrated and can push their energies and that frustration into developing more jobs and better, more sustainable businesses?

[70] **Mr Hanna:** One of the clear things is communicating the value of the tourism industry to the Welsh economy, giving it status alongside the other industries. I cannot put words into his mouth, and he is only one person with whom I have talked, but his frustration is that he lives in a rural community that is dominated by the farming lobby and farming—I am the first to say that the farming lobby does a fabulous job. This is a terrific opportunity for farming. One of the things that I have been saying to the NFU recently is, ‘Access onto your land should be seen as a positive thing. How better to communicate to your customer the quality of the food production and the landscape than to let them walk it and see it? It is like going to the factory to see your car being made’. It is a fabulous opportunity. It should be seen as a marketing opportunity, not a problem. We must shatter the historical prejudices or whatever they are that exist, and say that this is a positive thing from which communities and tourists benefit and that we should promote it.

[71] **Kirsty Williams:** Do you regard the Government’s decision not to include tourism as one of its key sectors in its economic renewal programme as a negative step? If the crucial thing is to give tourism status, not mentioning tourism as a key focus in developing our economy surely degrades its status even further.

[72] **Mr Hanna:** I totally agree with you.

[73] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch am eich presenoldeb y bore yma, Rob, ac am y dystiolaeth. Yr ydym wedi cyffwrdd ar nifer o faterion sydd yn bwysig o ran hyrwyddo trwristiaeth mewn ardaloedd gwledig.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you for your attendance this morning, Rob, and for the evidence. We have touched on a number of important issues in terms of the promotion of tourism in rural areas.

[74] **Mr Hanna:** It was my pleasure; thank you very much indeed.

[75] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We will take a break for a minute or two. If anyone wants to grab a coffee or anything, they can do so now.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 9.57 a.m. a 10.00 a.m.  
The meeting adjourned between 9.57 a.m. and 10.00 a.m.*

### **Ymchwiliad i Dwristiaeth Wledig yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Rural Tourism: Evidence Session**

[76] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Croeso i'r ddau dyst y bore yma. Yr ydym yn ddiolchgar iawn am eich presenoldeb. Fe'ch gwahoddaf i wneud rhai sylwadau agoriadol,

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I welcome both witnesses this morning. We are very grateful for your attendance. I invite you to make some opening remarks, after which we will

a symudwn wedyn i gwestiynau.

move to questions.

[77] **Mr Littlechild:** Good morning, everybody. My name is Sam Littlechild and I am the national policy manager for Youth Hostels Association England and Wales. I have come down from our head office in Derbyshire this morning. Next to me is my colleague, Rowland, who has been involved in the YHA for well over 30 years in Wales. Rowland assists us on a voluntary basis in looking at Welsh Assembly Government policy, and generally sets the scene for us in Wales to understand how we can better involve ourselves in the economy.

[78] **Mr Pittard:** The YHA has been in Wales for a long time—we have already celebrated our eightieth birthday, and some of the very early hostelling activities started in north Wales. So, the organisation is well-embedded in Wales, and our members have been coming from around Wales and into Wales for many years. It must also be remembered that we are an international organisation, so anything that we publicise with regard to our facilities in Wales is publicised on an international basis, rather than just on a Great Britain basis.

[79] The YHA likes to focus on young people, because they are our future, and it is important that young people get to appreciate, respect and use the countryside in a manner that does not detract from, but rather enhances it. So, we are always looking at opportunities to get young people into the countryside, whether it is through funding, school parties or their family bringing them into the countryside. We think that the Welsh countryside has a lot to offer, and a lot of people think of it as a safe countryside, because, unlike other areas, we have a not-too-rugged landscape where people can take the opportunity to walk in and visit the countryside in a very safe manner. That is important these days, because even in our hostels we have to ensure quite high standards of security—when we are entrusted with hosting school parties or young children at those hostels, we have to ensure that they are safe places.

[80] The second thing that I wish to focus on is that we are a large organisation, or seen as being a large organisation. Unfortunately, that precludes us from some of the grant streams that are only available to small and medium-sized enterprises. We feel that we lose out on quite a number of the opportunities open to some of our competitors that have single-building establishments and offer similar accommodation to the YHA. However, I do not think that it is possible for anyone else to offer the unique experience that the YHA provides.

[81] I heard the earlier speakers talk about the digital network. To operate our business, such as when taking bookings between hostels, it is essential that we have good forms of communication within our hostels. However, it is increasingly important in attracting younger people, as they like to bring their mobile phones and laptops—it is not unusual to see five or six laptops being used to send photographs and messages home from these hostels, so the digital network is important to us and it is also important to the computers that we provide in the hostels for people to get information. We are moving away from paper—we used to have large quantities of leaflets giving information on the rural areas surrounding our hostels, but it is nice to have that information available on the internet in that particular form.

[82] I find it difficult—although I try to do it to the best of my ability for the YHA—to know what is going on in Wales. There is so much going at a local level, and perhaps there are opportunities that we can grasp. There are so many initiatives, such as the rural development plan carried out by local authorities. The Valleys initiative spreads across five or six local authorities. We just do not have the capacity to see the work that they are doing. Only the other day, I heard of a project being undertaken by the Valleys initiative—we have already done it in YHA. We have the experience, as we have done it very successfully for a number of years in parts of England. We could help and be a part of these projects, but it is a matter of knowing where synergy can be created between our organisation and the work that is being done in Wales.

[83] There is one very important network, which Rob mentioned earlier, namely the Wales Environment Link. That brings together all of the voluntary organisations in the environmental field in Wales and gives us an opportunity to exchange ideas. However, we need more fora with local authorities, with the information coming out so that we know what is happening in Wales.

[84] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very much; you have touched on a number of very interesting issues in your introductory remarks. I would like to follow up your comment that the YHA is losing out because you are seen as a large organisation in that, whereas smaller organisations can get support from Government, your organisation feels that it is unable to apply for those grants and that support.

[85] **Mr Littlechilds:** It is a bit of a problem for us—not just in Wales, but in England as well. We try to treat our sites as part of a network, and as standalone businesses. You may have seen in the press that we sometimes have to consolidate our portfolio of properties by selling some places. We have had sites in England and Wales where, over the last few years, there has been a 9 per cent occupancy rate. You cannot run a residential business on those figures. So, we want to keep a rural network in both countries, but particularly in Wales. However, the trends have shifted in terms of who uses which places—the long-distance walking routes have changed, and young people tend to want to do an activity when they stay somewhere, rather than just going to a place to go walking. So, as I said, we try to treat our hostels as small businesses, and they live or die on good management at that site. However, because we are part of an organisation, it is impossible for us to lock in to some of the SME funding that is available. In places where we are trying to start new initiatives and new activities and to get more young people to visit, it is more difficult for us to say that those places are viable when they cannot have statutory support.

[86] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You said in your paper that you had support in the past, but that seems to have changed.

[87] **Mr Littlechilds:** The last time we had significant statutory support was during the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. That saved much of our network in Wales. Do you remember how much that was, Rowland?

[88] **Mr Pittard:** Yes, I think that we lost a total of four hostels because of the financial implications at the end of that. We were not fully compensated for our loss of business, unlike the farmers. I remember being with the First Minister on the evening when he was asked for his first £1 million to go to a farmer. I asked him whether he would look after the YHA as well, and he said that he would do his best. However, we could get only 50 per cent through the grants that were available for improvements at some of our hostels. So, it secured the future of a number of hostels in Wales, but we also saw the demise of some because of the lack of income that winter and therefore the lack of money to continue with the maintenance of those hostels.

[89] For many years, we have wished to upgrade the facilities that we have in Cardiff. We have a hostel near Roath park that does not really do justice to the city or to the association. We have identified a site in Cardiff for a hostel. It would be nice to think that we could get external funding so that we could build a hostel in Cardiff. You might ask how that affects the rural part of our work, but it is important. We have a good quality hostel at Conwy in north Wales that feeds into Snowdonia; it captures people as they move along the north Wales coast, taking them into Snowdonia by acting as a base to attract visitors. We need a base in south Wales to attract people into the Brecon Beacons National Park and into Pembrokeshire. What better way than to have a real quality, good value hostel as a base in Cardiff that can move people into those two national parks. That is another example of where it would be nice to get external funding, but it does not come.



10.10 a.m.

[90] In the early days of the Countryside Commission for Wales, which pre-dated the Countryside Council for Wales, we had substantial grants for a number of hostels to improve our facilities for education. That gave us some good quality classrooms that we still use for school parties. We have tried to upgrade the facilities in those to provide what present-day teachers and school parties require, but it is an uphill battle because the funding is not coming for us to continue to maintain and upgrade the facilities in the way that we would like in those hostels.

[91] **Mr Littlechild:** Some 2 million people a year visit our sites in both countries. Many of them are young people from overseas. About 400,000 of our visits are made by overseas visitors. They tend to come into London as the gateway to our network. We have seven huge hostels in London, and if they are coming to Britain to see what is going on, they use us as a gateway and they ask us for information about where to go from there. We are talking about European backpackers and those from Australasia. As much as possible, we like to give them opportunities to come to Wales. As Rowland says, the lack of a new Cardiff site is partly down to our administrative failings to find the funding internally. We have also lost a bit of the momentum in getting the young people who come from all over the world into Wales. The current Cardiff site is what we would describe as very tired.

[92] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Congratulations; I think that you are the first organisation to use a Cardiff example as something that can stimulate rural tourism, but the point that you make is valid—it leads out to the Brecon Beacons. That is very important. Joyce, do you want to ask some questions about infrastructure?

[93] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. You say that you have previously received funding for the improvement of individual hostels, and in your paper you mention infrastructure in Wales, such as broadband and public transport. So it is not only about the fabric of the building, but what you would need to develop it. What sort of Government interventions do you think have had the most success in developing rural tourism? Do you think that it has been grants targeted directly at the sector, or is it broader measures aimed at enhancing rural areas?

[94] **Mr Pittard:** It is both, and I would like to give examples of both. The one that is foremost in our minds as an organisation is the development of the Wales coastal path. We are going to be the first country in the world to have a coastal path. It has also been said that the scenery in Pembrokeshire is among the most spectacular in the world, if not the second-best in the world. So, as an organisation, we are thinking about how we can achieve this. This is a continuation of what happened with the path along Offa's Dyke. When it was opened, we endeavoured to have a chain of hostels along Offa's Dyke, using some bed and breakfast accommodation as well so that visitors could use the path. We also had a little bit of stimulus from CCW at the time to promote the network. It is there, but it is not publicised greatly now because, unfortunately, we have lost a couple of hostels along that route.

[95] We hope that, with the new coastal path, we will not lose any further hostels and that, perhaps with partners, there will be an opportunity to get more facilities using bed and breakfast accommodation and other organisations, to ensure that we have a network of hostels so that people can move from one to the other and walk the coastal path. This requires planning in advance of the opening of the coastal path. With that happening in two years' time, it is important for organisations such as Visit Wales and the local councils to get together to put the infrastructure in place so that it is ready for visitors when the path opens. That is one area that the Government can promote. This is going to be very important in promoting rural tourism along the Welsh coast.

[96] Inevitably, there is a need for funding for infrastructure. It is worrying to hear that transport may be hit by the budget. I heard a story the other day about a tourist who was travelling on the Swansea to Shrewsbury train. He got off at Llandrindod Wells, wanting to get to our hostel at Glascwm. He asked when the next bus was and was told that it was two days later. These tourists had obviously come expecting that there would be a service. I think that people are a little better informed these days, with modern communications about transport facilities.

[97] There is a good network of information, to a certain degree, on the net, which is also available by telephone. However, it is not always available on the ground, so I think that information is important, and that is an area where Government can assist to ensure that it is available in the right places. How often do you arrive somewhere in the evening, looking for information, and find that the tourist office is closed? This is another area where it becomes important that there are other ways of accessing information about the locality. Thirdly, infrastructure is important to get tourists into the country—rail infrastructure, express coaches and airlines. How many people come directly to Cardiff airport to start their holidays? Perhaps we need more facilities to entice tourists to come just to Wales, so that Wales is not an add-on to a visit to England, Scotland or Ireland. It is important to try to make Wales a destination in its own right and to market it as such.

[98] **Mr Littlechild:** By definition, our members and guests do not mind roughing it; they are prepared to hike across hills and bring their bikes and maybe wait for the bus in the pub. In that sense, we have an advantage in that we can market that kind of rural idyll, rather than people turning up in big cars and staying in a converted barn. Rowland is right; it is about communicating that. Wales in general has done a really good job at selling itself in terms of tourism. People who come through the gateway of England—our overseas travellers—know that Wales is a tourist destination. I think that that has changed over the last five or six years, which is good, and it is just about how we get them here with better information.

[99] **Joyce Watson:** Moving on, you have already touched on the lessons that should be learned from the foot and mouth disease outbreak, should such a situation arise in the future. What do you think that those lessons are? I will be controversial: is it possible, if the badger cull goes ahead in Pembrokeshire, that lessons will have to be learned in that regard as well?

[100] **Mr Littlechild:** The outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001 decimated tourism, because the countryside was, basically, closed. People just did not come to our sites. It was a big problem for us. After a few weeks there was a u-turn, because the Governments and authorities in both Wales and England realised that it was a mistake in terms of local revenue. As an accommodation provider, we would not like to see footpaths, in particular, closed again. Hopefully, there would be a more innovative way of keeping open not just our sites, but the places where people want to go—with all the necessary restrictions on movement into farmland and so on. I do not know enough about the badger proposals.

[101] **Mr Pittard:** I do not think that they will have a great effect. It is more a domestic issue. One hopes that it will not have an effect, because it is about the interaction between animals and farmers rather than other people and farmers. Our main concern is to have a good relationship between farmers and visitors to the countryside; that is important. As an organisation, we would not take sides and say whether we were for or against a badger cull, because we have to be diplomatic in order to keep that balance. We do not want to antagonise people. We want to provide a peaceful and enjoyable holiday for people, while being sympathetic to those who have to work in the countryside and earn their living in the countryside. We would like to work alongside them.

10.20 a.m.

[102] It is nice when a farmer can supply local produce to a hostel and it is nice when a local farmer says, 'Yes, you can bring your school party here to see what a working farm is'. It is also nice to think that you can walk along a footpath on a farm and that the farmer is quite happy for inner-city children who are not aware of the countryside to stop to look at the animals and to take photographs of them. We therefore maintain our stance on the badger cull: we do not want to be involved and we do not wish to pass comment on it. That is our policy in the countryside.

[103] **Joyce Watson:** Okay, fine. You have raised concerns about the merger of the Wales Tourist Board and the Welsh Government. How do you think that organisational changes within the Welsh Government's support for rural tourism have affected the development of the sector?

[104] **Mr Pittard:** I think that the Wales Tourist Board was far more active. We had more consultation with it and it was seen as the provider and as a sister organisation of the other organisations in the tourist industry in Wales. A lot of the tourism functions have been now handed to local authorities, so many people are now employed to look at tourism in their local patch. It is very difficult for an organisation such as YHA to meet and talk about our facilities with local officers. Given the nature of our business across Wales, we would like to have a one-stop shop, and we would like to think that that one-stop shop could be Visit Wales, pulling all of these threads together for us, rather than us having to approach each local authority.

[105] We work well with the national parks; they are good to us. We have regular meetings with them and they understand our developments and they are sympathetic to the work that we are doing within national parks. However, we cannot build such a relationship with all of the local authorities in Wales. That is why we would like to see a more pro-active Visit Wales. We understand, as far as grant aid is concerned, that there has been a little loosening of the strings for Visit Wales since October, as part of the economic renewal programme. However, again, it is very difficult for us as an organisation to be able to take advantage of the grants that are becoming available because of our size.

[106] **Joyce Watson:** You have mentioned Visit Wales just now and also in your paper. How do you evaluate the success of Visit Wales's marketing operations, now that it has come to the end of its European funded marketing project?

[107] **Mr Littlechild:** As I mentioned before, it has been a success. I think that our younger members in particular are aware that Wales is a destination that they want to visit. It is massively important for us to help Welsh tourism in getting those people here. So, all in all, it has been quite a good result, but it is a shame to hear that the funding has ran out.

[108] **Joyce Watson:** What indication have you received of the likelihood of funds being made available to the rural tourism sector as part of the economic renewal programme? To what extent has the Welsh Government consulted with the rural tourism sector regarding that development?

[109] **Mr Pittard:** We have not been consulted as an organisation. We feel that funding should be targeted more towards the wellbeing of the people of Wales, so that they can enjoy and appreciate the countryside. The funding is concentrated on the areas that it needs to be concentrated on, admittedly, but the inhabitants of those areas also need to be able to get away from those areas to enjoy the countryside and to have the facilities to enjoy the countryside. A number of employers will come to Wales because of the nature of the countryside and because they feel that it gives a good quality of life to their employees. So, I think that it has to be marketed in that way as well. We not only have to provide the

infrastructure to ensure that the Welsh economy moves forward, but we must also realise that tourism is part of the structure that can move the economy forward.

[110] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you both for your evidence this morning. Mr Pittard, thank you for your obvious enthusiasm and commitment over many years to serving the tourism sector in Wales; it is inspirational. So, thank you very much for the work that you have done. I think that you have done yourselves a disservice this morning. You have talked a lot about young people, and that is obviously an important part of your work, but your facilities for families are improving all the time and that is another thing that we should perhaps concentrate on, as the Youth Hostels Association provides cost-effective and reasonably priced facilities for families that allow them to get out into the countryside. You have talked a lot this morning about the difficulties that you have had in engaging with the Government and the obvious difficulties of trying to co-ordinate activities across 22 local authorities. Do you have any ideas about how the Welsh Assembly Government could make it easier for an organisation such as yours to have an input into policy proposals and the discussions that the Government is having, and to enable you to communicate more effectively with other partners in the tourism industry in Wales? What could we change that would make it easier for you to do that?

[111] **Mr Pittard:** When you have contact with the Government at Cathays park, you very often have to repeat everything to each department. It would be nice to think that, somewhere, there is a database of organisations such as ours and other voluntary organisations so that the departments can be fully aware of the work that we are doing and the areas that we are interested in, and so draw from this database and make us aware of consultations that are relevant to our organisation, make us aware of developments with regard to grants that could be of interest to our organisation, and also areas where our organisation can help with Government policies and strategies.

[112] I will give an example of a few areas of work that we have done in England and perhaps Sam will elaborate on those. In England, we have succeeded in getting a large grant from the Big Lottery Fund to get children, mainly from deprived backgrounds, into the countryside. We have been able to work alongside the Council for National Parks on a project called Mosaic to get people from minority ethnic and deprived communities into the countryside. That project has been going on for a number of years and continues to be supported by the Government. There are projects that we have delivered successfully because we have been recognised by central Government and have had one block loan. However, much of the work that is done in Wales is split between the local authorities, and they get the funding. We think—and I am sure that this is true of a number of voluntary organisations—that work could be done more efficiently on a pan-Wales basis than it is done through local authorities. So, it is about synergy and getting departments within the Welsh Assembly Government to appreciate the role of voluntary organisations and the work that they do, and, secondly, to be able to use those organisations to deliver the kind of policies and strategies that the Welsh Assembly Government would like to see being delivered in Wales.

[113] **Mr Littlechild:** I think that that is right. I also think that organisations such as ours have to get better at dealing with local authorities, both in Wales and England. The comprehensive spending review has made it fairly clear that the funding will be devolved down. So, as an organisation, we need to become smarter at approaching people. Devolution has caused us a few problems. Rowland has mentioned the funding from the Big Lottery Fund, which evolved into a programme of summer camps for young people. We were taking up to 12,000 per year, but that was in England only. We have had many phone calls from people asking why, as an organisation that covers two countries, we are not providing this in Wales, but our hands are tied. We got really frustrated by that.

[114] That was interesting, because it laid out devolution starkly for us. If you live in a

community two miles over the border in England, you can access our provision for schools and young people in your community to go away on summer camps, yet if you live in a community in Wales you cannot. I suspect that there will be funding anomalies such as that.

10.30 a.m.

[115] We are all going to have to get a bit smarter at dealing with things at a local level. However, with a network the size of ours and the resources that we have at head office, that is quite difficult sometimes.

[116] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I would like to bring Joyce in on this point.

[117] **Joyce Watson:** I wish to ask a supplementary question so that we can clearly understand what Mr Littlechild is saying about devolution. Mr Littlechild, in terms of grants, I do not know whether you were talking about the Mosaic project of the national parks or about National Lottery grants aimed at bringing young children into the countryside. This is about making sure that these things are clearly understood. To whichever organisation you were referring, when you were filling in the form, did you say that you were a cross-border provider?

[118] **Mr Littlechild:** Yes, we did.

[119] **Joyce Watson:** Was it recognised that there was a need to spread the project wider, or do they just work in English and Welsh silos, making that impossible?

[120] **Mr Littlechild:** The Big Lottery Fund project is called 'Do it 4 Real' and is a summer camp programme. It started as a programme funded by the Big Lottery and was an England-only submission. When we were bidding, it was stipulated that it was England-only. There was other funding involved in Wales, but we could not link the two, however much we battered the door down.

[121] The Do it 4 Real programme was picked up by the Department for Education in England. The education budget in Wales is devolved, so our hands were tied again, and we were told that it was England-only. The Mosaic project on bringing ethnic minorities into national parks is still going on. For the first six years of the programme, it was funded by the Big Lottery and Nationwide Building Society. It was an England-and-Wales project and we were based in the Brecon Beacons. However, for the last three years, it has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and has carried another England-only stipulation from them. We have tried, but it has been difficult.

[122] If we find a significant pot of money in either England or Wales, it is very difficult to link that in with something that we are doing in the other country, or to submit a proposal to an organisation so that we can receive funding in both countries at the same time for the same project.

[123] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very much. I think that this has been a very stimulating session. You have raised a number of issues that we had not previously touched on, so we are very grateful to you both for coming in.

[124] **Mr Littlechild:** If any of you would like to come to see a hostel, please let us know.

[125] **Joyce Watson:** I have two just down the road from me.

[126] **Mr Pittard:** Thank you very much for inviting us. Diolch yn fawr.

10.33 a.m.

### **Ymchwiliad i Dwristiaeth Wledig yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Rural Tourism: Evidence Session**

[127] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Estynnaf groeso cynnes iawn yn awr i Huw Jones, prif weithredwr Chwaraeon Cymru. Diolch am ddod i rhoi tystiolaeth i ni, Huw. Os oes gennych unrhyw sylwadau agoriadol yr hoffech eu gwneud cyn inni symud ymlaen at y cwestiynau, mae croeso ichi wneud y sylwadau hynny yn awr.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I extend a warm welcome to Huw Jones, chief executive of Sport Wales. Thank you for coming to give evidence, Huw. If you have any opening remarks to make before we move on to questions, you are welcome to make them now.

[128] **Huw Jones:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd, a diolch am y cyfle i gael siarad â'r pwyllgor heddiw ac i gyfrannu at eich ymchwiliad.

**Huw Jones:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to come to talk to the sub-committee today and to contribute to your inquiry.

[129] Everybody around the table knows enough about Sport Wales for me not to have to talk about our role and functions as an organisation. However, in discharging our two main functions—increasing participation and improving performance and excellence in Welsh sport—we can and do contribute to initiatives related to active sport and tourism and event tourism. Those initiatives are important. We make this contribution through the provision of facilities in rural areas, including those in the built facilities market, which are essential not only for local people, but tourists, and through the fantastic natural facilities that we have in Wales.

[130] We have identified three challenges in terms of developing rural tourism. The first is the challenge that we have in terms of the coincidence of sport and nature conversation, which is a continuous, ongoing issue, and not just in the three national parks in Wales. Something like half of all of the natural facilities identified in Wales have some form of nature conservation designation. How those facilities are used is a very important question.

[131] The second issue is capacity in rural areas. That is a real challenge for us, whether we are talking about accommodation capacity, the capacity to host events and undertake initiatives, or people capacity. We certainly should not underestimate the latter: it is a real challenge for us in relation to major events generally, but particularly in rural areas. An example of that would be the work that we do with the Welsh Yachting Association on promoting sailing events. In those sorts of circumstances, it usually falls to the same clubs and people to organise the events and to provide the safety boats and so on.

[132] The third issue is the fragility of the economy of rural Wales, because in this area it very much relies on small organisations, bodies, small and medium-sized enterprises and so on, whether they are outdoor centres, youth hostels, sports providers in the private or public sector, or even those that are part of the local authority's provision, such as leisure centres, which will come under increasing pressure as a result of the challenges that we are all facing with regard to budgets. So, some of the challenges will probably be more marked in rural areas.

[133] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yr ydych wedi sôn am y ffaith bod nifer helaeth o weithgareddau chwaraeon yn digwydd yng Nghymru, ac yn eich papur yr ydych yn sôn am Gymru fel cyrchfan o ran gweithgareddau

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You have mentioned the fact that many sporting activities take place in Wales, and in your paper you say that Wales is a destination for those wishing to partake of sporting activities. How do such

chwaraeon. Sut y mae gweithgareddau felly yn cyfrannu at dwristiaeth mewn ardaloedd gwledig?

[134] **Mr Jones:** Mae'n dibynnu ar yr hyn yr ydym yn sôn amdano, a ydym yn sôn am gyfranogiad, sef unigolion yn dod yma i chwarae golff, beicio mynydd ac yn y blaen, neu a ydym yn sôn am ryw fath o ddiwyddiadau chwaraeon â phobl yn dod i wylïo gwahanol weithgareddau. Mae'r sialensau sydd ynghlwm â'r ddwy agwedd honno, o ran ariannu a pharatoi ac yn y blaen, yn hollol wahanol.

[135] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** A yw'r cyngor chwaraeon wedi gwneud asesiad o gyfraniad chwaraeon mewn ardaloedd gwledig at yr economi wledig?

[136] **Mr Jones:** Nid ydym wedi gwneud hynny ar gyfer ardaloedd gwledig yn benodol, ond yr ydym wedi gwneud asesiad cyffredinol o gyfraniad chwaraeon at economi Cymru. Er enghraifft, mae tua 25,000 o swyddi yng Nghymru yn dibynnu ar chwaraeon. Mae'n anodd dweud beth yw'r ganran mewn ardaloedd gwledig; fodd bynnag, yr ydym yn gwybod pa fath o gyfleusterau sydd ar gael mewn ardaloedd gwledig. Er enghraifft, mae tua 100 canolfan awyr agored yng Nghymru. Mae tua 28 o'r rheini'n cael eu rhedeg gan awdurdodau lleol o Gymru, ond mae'r rhan fwyaf yn cael eu rhedeg gan awdurdodau lleol o Loegr. Hefyd, mae tua hanner dwsin o gwmnïau preifat, fel PGL, yn rhedeg canolfannau ac yn targedu plant a phobl ifanc yn enwedig. Felly, nid ydym yn gwybod beth yw'r union gyfraniad, ond mae gennym syniad o bwysigrwydd gweithgareddau chwaraeon i ardaloedd gwledig.

[137] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. My first question is on the transport infrastructure and its suitability to the development of rural sports tourism. Would you like to make some comments on the extent to which the transport infrastructure helps or hinders the development of rural sports tourism?

10.40 a.m.

[138] **Mr Jones:** Are you referring to our paper, Joyce?

[139] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, Sport Wales's paper. You state that there is a need to ensure that built and natural facilities are accessible to tourists, so the built facility might be a road.

activities contribute to tourism in rural areas?

**Mr Jones:** It depends on what we are talking about, whether we are talking about participation, that is, individuals coming here to play golf, to go mountain biking and so on, or about sporting events with people coming to watch the various activities. The challenges in relation to both those aspects, as regards funding and preparation and so on, are completely different.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Has the sports council undertaken an assessment of the contribution of sports in rural areas to the rural economy?

**Mr Jones:** We have not done so for rural areas specifically, but we have carried out a general assessment of the contribution of sports to the Welsh economy. For example, around 25,000 jobs in Wales depend on sports. It is difficult to say what the percentage is in rural areas; however, we do know what facilities are available in rural areas. For example, there are around 100 outdoor pursuits centres in Wales. Around 28 of those are run by Welsh local authorities, but most are run by English local authorities. There are also around half a dozen private companies, such as PGL, that run various centres that target children and young people in particular. Therefore, we do not know what the exact contribution is, but we do have an idea of the importance of sporting activities to rural areas.

[140] **Mr Jones:** In that regard, we are referring primarily to built facilities.

[141] **Joyce Watson:** You also mention a co-ordinated transport policy.

[142] **Mr Jones:** That is true of the challenges that we face in rural areas regarding facilities that are accessible to the indigenous community as well as to tourists. The transport infrastructure may shut down at 5 p.m., which makes life difficult in getting children to and from activities during the evenings and so on. That also applies in a tourism context, particularly during the summer months.

[143] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. We have received evidence that the natural and historic environment should be recognised by the tourism sector as a resource that needs to be well managed and cared for. With that in mind, to what extent is rural sports tourism compatible with the Welsh Government's sustainable development aims?

[144] **Mr Jones:** It is very compatible if promoted carefully. It goes back to my point about the coincidence between sport and nature conservation designations. For many years, we have had a policy that is very similar to 'access for all', where we say, 'access for all, but not access to everywhere'. That recognises the fragility of some of our natural environments and the importance of planning for that, so that whatever type of environment that we have, that is taken into account. However, it is not just in some instances that there are issues between sport and the fragility regarding nature conservation; there are also conflicts between different activities within the natural environment. We gave evidence some time ago about the canoeing and angling issue, but there are even issues in places such as Llangorse lake about how you manage a resource for the different activities that will take place there, in terms of the designation of time and space. We have produced guidance at various levels over the years. Sometimes, you only need a simple leaflet or a sign on a riverbank saying, 'Please don't do this', 'Please don't climb these cliffs between certain periods of the year because birds are nesting', or 'Please don't go up Snowdon at these times'. That can sometimes be done quite simply. At other times, you require a more complex management arrangement where you get people to formally agree when they are going to utilise those natural facilities, for what purpose and for what period of time. So, these things need to be considered at various levels, if we are to maintain the sustainability of our natural environment.

[145] **Joyce Watson:** I want to ask another question on management. We know all about the canoeist versus fisherman issue, because I think that we all sat on that committee inquiry. I am going to ask again about those possible clashes. I would like to talk about watersports because my area covers so much of the coast. Young people want to use fast boats near the shore or they want to keep fit using the boards that have a sail on—I do not what they are called—and whizz up and down the beach at the expense of unsuspecting people who are walking on the beach. How should we be trying to keep young people engaged and active—we need to do so because of the obesity problem that is fast coming this way—and also keep that environment as an enjoyable place for everyone else, because that is what we are talking about?

[146] **Mr Jones:** You are absolutely right to say that there has been a growth in activities such as extreme sports, but that growth is from a very low base. When we consider this as a percentage of the population of young people who take part in activities, we see that this is a very small number. When compared with the participation numbers for rugby, football, hockey and netball, these numbers are almost negligible. They do not show up as statistically significant numbers in surveys.

[147] Having said that, when health and safety issues occur, they can be quite serious at a local level. There has been an issue with jet-skis for many years, particularly in Gwynedd, as well as some of the boarding activities that were mentioned earlier. These issues need to be



managed properly. The challenge, in many of these instances, tends to reside with some of our local authority partners in the context of beach management and related issues. That is a difficult challenge for the authorities. The last thing that anyone wants is for us all to be governed by rules, with someone standing there saying, 'You can do this, but you cannot do that'. It is a real challenge to develop a balance between health and safety in its truest sense, not a bureaucratic sense, and people being given opportunities to participate in a free environment. At the moment, we certainly have not detected any huge problems. They will occur periodically and they will occur locally, but we have not detected any major issues that concern us.

[148] **Kirsty Williams:** Good morning, Huw. You will be aware that, back in 2006, the former Wales Tourist Board published 'Sports tourism in Wales: a framework for action'. Have the aspirations and goals set out in that document been achieved?

[149] **Mr Jones:** Partly. We all know what happened soon after the publication of that report, with the amalgamation of the Wales Tourist Board into the Welsh Assembly Government. I suspect that that has affected the speed with which everyone would like to see some of the elements in that report taken forward. To be fair to Assembly Government colleagues, much of that agenda is now being taken forward through the major events strategy that was published recently. That makes it clear that this is about attracting major events not just to Cardiff and the Millennium Stadium but also to rural areas. If that is to become a reality, specific consideration will need to be given to that objective. I do not think that it will just happen. Big organisations such as the Welsh Rugby Union are going to go out and attract activities to the Millennium Stadium because it is good business. However, who is doing that for rural areas in Wales? There are no obvious people to do that job, so that probably needs to be given specific consideration.

[150] **Kirsty Williams:** So, we need a greater focus from the Welsh Assembly Government on making that happen for rural Wales. What would be the most useful interventions by the Welsh Assembly Government to make that a reality? Do you have examples of actions that the Assembly Government has taken that have worked really well and have made a difference? In renewing the focus on that strategy, what could the Welsh Assembly Government most usefully do?

[151] **Mr Jones:** There are probably a few things. A lot of good things are happening already, and the first challenge is to build on those. Let us take the national shooting centre near Caersws in mid Wales for example. It is an excellent facility, it has good traps, and it is managed well. So, it is a case of asking what else we can do with that. I went to the European clay target shooting championships, which was a fantastic event with around 200 competitors, all of whom needed to stay somewhere for about four or five days. That made a significant contribution to the economy of that area. There are things like that to be looked at.

10.50 a.m.

[152] We could even look at how a site like the Royal Welsh Show ground could be used better for elements of sports tourism. There are already lots of facilities in place there, for horses and so on, and the staff there handle horses very well and are used to doing that kind of thing. It is a matter of whether there are things such as that which can be built on. That is what people in rural areas want, not just one-off activities. Having something this year is nice, but you really need something that happens on a frequent basis, this year, next year, and the year afterwards, so that they know that they can invest, whether in a bus or minibus service, in accommodation or whatever. Looking for those sorts of examples is very much the challenge.

[153] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yr ydym **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We have referred to a

wedi cyfeirio at nifer o bethau sy'n digwydd yng Nghymru. Mae gennych chi, fel prif weithredwr Chwaraeon Cymru, brofiad helaeth iawn o chwaraeon, nid yn unig yng Nghymru ond o fewn y cyd-destun Ewropeaidd ac yn rhyngwladol. A allwch feddwl am unrhyw beth yn y cyd-destun hwnnw a allai fod yn ddefnyddiol o ran hyrwyddo twristiaeth yng Nghymru neu gyfrannu tuag at yr economi wledig? A oes cyfleoedd nad ydym wedi manteisio arnynt hyd yma?

[154] **Mr Jones:** Mae un yr ydym wedi manteisio arno yn ddiweddar, wrth gwrs, ac sy'n enghraifft dda, sef golff, gyda Cwpan Ryder. Gwnaed gwelliannau i nifer o glybiau golff oherwydd Cwpan Ryder. Mae tua 41 o brosiectau wedi'u hariannu oherwydd arian etifeddol Cwpan Ryder. Wrth ddrafftio'r cais am y Cwpan Ryder, rhoddwyd ystyriaeth nid yn unig i'r digwyddiad ei hun ar y pedwar diwrnod yng Nghasnewydd, ond hefyd i'r hyn a gaem ohono a'r effaith ar Gymru gyfan. Mae honno'n enghraifft dda o'r math o beth y dylem ei ystyried. Credaf hefyd ein bod wedi dysgu oddi wrth wledydd eraill, yn enwedig Iwerddon a'r Alban.

[155] O ran enghreifftiau Ewropeaidd, pan edrychwn ar ddigwyddiadau ar yr arfordir, yn enwedig yn sir Benfro, credaf fod enghreifftiau da o ddysgu gwersi. Cafwyd cydweithrediad rhwng sir Benfro a lleoedd megis Llydaw ynghylch hwylio a gweithgareddau tebyg, a sut y medrwn ddefnyddio'r rheiny wrth gael pobl i groesi o Lydaw a dod i sir Benfro a de Cymru, a hefyd i ehangu'r math o weithgareddau y mae pobl yn eu gwneud. Gallant fod yn hwylio, hwylyfyrddio ac ati. Felly, credaf fod gennym enghreifftiau da, ond dyma'r math o beth yr wyf yn awyddus iawn inni wneud llawer yn well fel sector chwaraeon. Credaf ein bod yn dda am wneud rhai pethau, ond nid ydym yn dysgu cymaint nac yn cael rhyw fath o ddiwylliant dysgu. Dyna'r math o beth y dylem ganolbwyntio mwy arno.

[156] **Kirsty Williams:** In 2012, arguably the greatest sporting event will happen—

[157] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** In Powys, presumably.

[158] **Kirsty Williams:** Of course—at least not very far away from us. From an outsider's

number of things that are happening within Wales. As chief executive of Sport Wales, you have vast experience of sport, not only in Wales but also on a European level and internationally. Can you think of anything in that context that could be useful to us in promoting tourism in Wales or in contributing to the rural economy? Are there any opportunities that we have not yet taken full advantage of?

**Mr Jones:** There is one that we have taken advantage of recently, of course, and which is a good example, namely golf on the back of the Ryder Cup. Improvements have been made to several golf courses thanks to the Ryder Cup. Some 41 projects have been funded from the Ryder Cup legacy fund. In putting together the bid for the Ryder Cup, consideration was given not only to the event itself over the four days in Newport, but also to what we would gain from it and to the legacy for Wales. That is a good example of the kind of thing that we should be considering. I also think that we have learned lessons from other nations, particularly Ireland and Scotland.

As for European examples, when we look at coastal events, particularly in Pembrokeshire, I think that there are good examples where lessons have been learned. There has been collaboration between Pembrokeshire and places such as Brittany on sailing and other similar activities, and how we can use those activities to get people to travel over from Brittany to Pembrokeshire and south Wales, and also to expand on the kinds of activities that people participate in. It may be sailing, sailboarding or whatever. So, I think that we do have some good examples, but this is the kind of thing that I am very keen for us to do better as a sports sector. I think that we are effective at doing some things, but we do not learn enough lessons or promote a culture of learning. That is the kind of thing that we should focus more on.

perspective, since the announcement that London was to hold the Olympic Games, Wales seems to have struggled to engage in that and to tap into the potential that all these visitors to London provide for us, as potential visitors to Wales. Could you give us any indication of whether that view, that we are really struggling to engage in that process, is the correct one, and of whether we, as a nation, can benefit from having the Olympics literally a couple of hours' train ride away from our capital city?

[159] **Mr Jones:** The Olympics are always a sensitive issue, are they not? As I said, the Ryder Cup was a good example, as a lot of the planning for the legacy of the Ryder Cup was done right at the outset. In all honesty, I think that everyone accepts that that has not been the case with the Olympics. There was planning for the event itself, but not for its legacy. Suddenly, everyone is asking what the legacy will be and, of course, there is no money specifically for that. There was for the Ryder Cup, because it was part of the bid and it was part of the planning. That is the challenge that is faced throughout the UK, whether in Wales, Scotland, Newcastle or Cornwall. So, we have to do our best to use the PR and the profile that that will generate and link it to the existing things that we are trying to do. So, we will use that in Dragon Sport and the 5x60 programme to engage children. We will also try to link the Olympics in with the national curriculum and so on.

[160] You would need to ask Visit Wales how it plans to bring in tourists and link that in, but of course everyone want tourists to London to come to Wales, Edinburgh, Stratford, Cornwall and everywhere. So, it is very difficult and it will be a tight market.

[161] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I thought for a moment that you were going to inform us of a major sporting events taking place in Brecon in 2012.

[162] **Kirsty Williams:** We just had the Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships in Rhayader. Teams from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand came to participate and all stayed in Rhayader. So, we just had that major sporting event. I am surprised that you were not there, Chair.

[163] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Dyna nodyn cadarnhaol inni ddod â'r sesiwn dystiolaeth hon i ben arno. Diolch yn fawr am eich cyfraniad, Huw. Codwyd pwyntiau pwysig, nid yn unig o ran yr hyn sydd yn digwydd ond hefyd o ran y pethau a allai digwydd yng Nghymru gan ddefnyddio ein harfordir yn arbennig a'r hyn sydd gennym i'w gynnis yn ein hardaloedd gwledig fel lleoliadau ar gyfer chwaraeon a gweithgareddau a allent fod yn rhyngwladol. Diolch am eich parodrwydd i ddod a chyflwyno tystiolaeth i'n hymchwiliad.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** That is a positive note on which to draw this evidence session to a close. Thank you for your contribution, Huw, in which important points were raised, not only about what is happening, but also about what could potentially happen in Wales by using our coast especially and what we have to offer in our rural areas as destinations for sports and activities that could be international. Thank you for your willingness to come here and provide evidence to our inquiry.

[164] Bydd cyfarfod nesaf yr is-bwyllgor ar 25 Tachwedd am 11 a.m., pan fyddwn yn holi'r Gweinidog am oblygiadau'r gyllideb ddrafft sydd newydd gael ei chyhoeddi ar y portffolio materion gwledig. Dyna ddiwedd y cyfarfod.

The next meeting of the sub-committee will be held on 25 November at 11 a.m., when we will question the Minister about the implications of the draft budget that has just been published for the rural affairs portfolio. That brings us to the end of the meeting.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.57 a.m.  
The meeting ended at 10.57 a.m.*