



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau The Petitions Committee

**Dydd Mawrth, 29 Ionawr 2013
Tuesday, 29 January 2013**

Cynnwys Contents

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol
Updates to Previous Petitions

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

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

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Elin Jones) The Party of Wales (substitute for Elin Jones)
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.01 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.01 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da a chroeso **William Powell:** Good morning and a warm
cynnes i chi gyd. welcome to you all.

[2] The normal housekeeping arrangements apply. We have an apology from Elin Jones and it is great to welcome our long-standing former member, Bethan Jenkins, back as her substitute this morning. We will move straight on to the new petitions that are before us today.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[3] **William Powell:** The first petition under this item is P-04-448, Improve Sexual Health Services for Western Vale. This petition was submitted by Rebecca Lowrie and has the support of 16 fellow signatories. It says,

[4] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to increase funding to the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. This increased funding should be directed towards improving sexual health services for the Western Vale.’

[5] As yet, we have not undertaken any action on this one. I propose that we write to the Minister for Health and Social Services to seek her views. Do colleagues have any other thoughts as to the best way forward on this? Joyce?

[6] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I do. I think that the health board should deliver such services on the ground. So, we must write to the health board asking it to respond to this, because, ultimately, it is down to its delivery. I agree that we should also write to the Minister.

[7] **William Powell:** Excellent. So, we will write to the Minister for Health and Social Services and Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board asking whether it feels that it is

allocating sufficient funding to this area, and implicit in this is the possibility of the threat to remove current services. So, we could possibly seek reassurance as to the state of play on that one. Are all colleagues agreed? I see that you are.

[8] **William Powell:** We will move on to P-04-449, Bridgend Princess Of Wales—Save Our Services— Stop the Downgrade! This petition was submitted by Ian Matthew Spiller who collected 4,218 signatures in support. It reads,

[9] ‘We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to protect services in Bridgend, Princess of Wales Hospital, and ensure that the hospital retains all of these essential services without a downgrading.’

[10] Once again, we have not undertaken any action on this, as yet, but we have established a pattern in dealing with similar petitions from other health board areas. I suggest that, as previously agreed, we go for a consistent approach here. Are colleagues content with that? In summary, that involves writing to Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board, copying in the Minister for Health and Social Services and seeking its views on the petition, asking what consultation has been undertaken thus far and what the state of play is. I think that all Members received an update yesterday from Madeline Brindley, who works in communications—

[11] **Bethan Jenkins:** No. That was on the mental health specialised services—

[12] **William Powell:** Sorry. I have not had the opportunity to open that yet. That did not relate to this. I assumed that it was such an update.

[13] **Bethan Jenkins:** No. The engagement process finished before Christmas in this area, and it is now awaiting formal consultation. We have not been notified as regional or constituency Assembly Members yet.

[14] **William Powell:** It is imminent, I think, is it not?

[15] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is imminent. The letter yesterday was about specialised services.

[16] **William Powell:** I see. That was on another matter. I was on the move and I did not have the opportunity to get into the detail.

[17] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is worth asking Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board when it proposes to go forward with the formal consultation.

[18] **William Powell:** Yes; so that people can get themselves geared up. That is a demanding process in itself, as we all know. That is excellent. So, we agree to adopt that consistent approach. Are you happy on that, Russell?

[19] **Russell George:** Yes.

[20] **William Powell:** That is excellent. We will now move to look at petition P-04-450, Barry & Vale needs a fully functioning hospital. This was submitted by Jeffrey Heathfield, and he had the support of 50 fellow signatories. The petition calls on the National Assembly for Wales

[21] ‘to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that Barry Hospital has a fully functioning minor injuries unit that is open to patients 8 hours a day, 5 days a week.’

[22] Those are his aspirations and those of his fellow petitioners. Once again, we have not

yet undertaken anything on this petition. I suggest that we write, in the first instance, on this particular issue, to Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board, to ask what the current arrangements are. It is implicit in this petition that the health board is currently not operating the kind of service that the petitioners are seeking. There are obviously some issues locally, and I guess that it is probably best addressed by the health board rather than involving the Minister at this stage.

[23] **Joyce Watson:** I think so.

[24] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could always ask whether that involves doctors and professional training in the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board area. That was the reason why services moved from Port Talbot hospital.

[25] **William Powell:** Yes, exactly.

[26] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could ask the question.

[27] **William Powell:** Yes, we can build that in because it might well be relevant.

[28] **Russell George:** As long as we do write to the Minister at some point—if not now, sometime in the future. After all, the petitioner does call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Government and not the health board. I am happy to write to the health board—

[29] **William Powell:** Would you advocate copying in the Minister at this stage?

[30] **Russell George:** Yes; let us do that, Chair.

[31] **William Powell:** That is agreed.

[32] We now move to look at petition P-04-451, Save the Royal Glamorgan Hospital Services. The petition was submitted by Councillor Mark Adams, and has the support of 1,077 signatures. The petition reads as follows:

[33] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to save our health services at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital’.

[34] For the sake of consistency, I think that we must adopt exactly the same approach. Are colleagues happy with that? We will then see what the feedback is that is specific to the Royal Glamorgan petition. I see that you are all content with that.

[35] We now move to look at petition P-04-452, Equal Rights for Tube-fed Youngsters. This petition was submitted by Dr Tymandra Blewett-Silcock, and has the support of 142 signatures. The petition reads as follows:

[36] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that funding is made available to ensure that the vital equipment and services required by tube-fed children and young people are made available to them.’

[37] What are your views on this matter, colleagues?

[38] **Joyce Watson:** What you read here is a sort of debate going on out there whether this is a matter of social health needs. According to what is written on the paper before us, it does not seem to have been resolved. Also, there is the child in the middle. It does not seem fair that parents should be in the middle of this sort of situation. I do not know whether the Health

and Social Care Committee has time or the resources to do an inquiry to see what is happening with this—and I do not know whether we do, either—but I certainly think that it merits some investigation and due diligence so that we can get to the answers. That is my view on it, but I do not know whether others share that view, or not.

[39] **William Powell:** There is a discrete piece of work that could be done.

[40] **Joyce Watson:** There definitely is.

[41] **William Powell:** It might not be too vast in scale.

[42] **Joyce Watson:** Exactly.

[43] **Bethan Jenkins:** Does the Children’s Commissioner for Wales have a view, if it is to do with the rights of the child?

[44] **William Powell:** That is another really good avenue to pursue.

[45] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes; if they are saying that there are discrepancies in this particular area of Wales.

[46] **William Powell:** We have a number of actions arising from this. Perhaps we could write to Mark Drakeford as the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, and also to the Minister, for completeness.

[47] **Joyce Watson:** Yes.

[48] **William Powell:** We will also write to the children’s commissioner to open up on that angle.

[49] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and to Caerphilly.

[50] **William Powell:** Indeed, and to the local authority.

[51] **Joyce Watson:** I always seem to be suggesting work for us, but if it comes back—I suspect that it might—that the Health and Social Care Committee has no time, if we had even one evidence session—

[52] **William Powell:** We may need to stand ready to do that.

[53] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think we should do that.

[54] **Joyce Watson:** I think so.

[55] **William Powell:** Excellent.

[56] We will move on to what has recently become a controversial topic, although I believe that this petition predates recent activity around Cardiff Airport. P-04-453, Improvements at Cardiff Airport, was submitted by Kelvin Hayes, and was supported by 144 signatures.

[57] ‘This petition aims to attract voices at concern over our national airports lack of services. We want to attract more airlines and business into Cardiff Airport, the city of Cardiff and the wider South Wales communities. Fly Cardiff hopes to work alongside the airport and act as a bridge between it, its customers and the Welsh Government.’

[58] There has been a lot of activity around this, and I am also aware, Joyce, that you have been involved in the Enterprise and Business Committee study on this issue, so I must ask you to lead off.

[59] **Joyce Watson:** We are also taking evidence from the First Minister tomorrow. The point is that the situation has moved on significantly. I suggest that we write back with information about the progress that has happened and ask the petitioner if he feels that that satisfies his request in the petition at this stage.

[60] **William Powell:** That would have a lot of merit, because if the events that have taken place since then address the petition, that would resolve the issue without further ado. However, it may be that there are wider issues that he and his supporters wish—

[61] **Joyce Watson:** He can tell us that.

[62] **William Powell:** It is his judgment, then. Are colleagues happy with that approach at this time or do you have other perspectives?

[63] **Bethan Jenkins:** That is fine for now, I think.

[64] **William Powell:** Okay. It is certainly a lively topic; I think that we are all agreed on that.

[65] **Bethan Jenkins:** The new dimension in this is just concerning the new service from Swansea to Bristol Airport, because that would potentially take more services away from Cardiff.

[66] **William Powell:** Absolutely, that could denude the airport still further, which would then be very serious, because it could lose the critical mass to continue at all.

[67] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

[68] **William Powell:** On P-04-454, Call to end Councillor and Assembly Member Dual Role, I immediately need to declare an interest in that I am in such a situation and have a dual role as I am a member of a principal local authority, namely Powys County Council, and a Member in this place. I believe that my colleague wishes to make a similar declaration.

[69] **Russell George:** Yes, I would like to declare—I have already declared this—and put on the record that I am also a Member of the National Assembly for Wales and a county councillor.

[70] **William Powell:** I am also aware of several colleagues in the Assembly that are in that situation, but the text of the petition refers to seven, which I struggled to account for, but this is probably not the time to dispute the veracity of that figure. The petitioner is Mr Nortridge Perrott and he has 52 immediate supporters to hand. The petition reads

[71] ‘The petitioner asks the Welsh Government to bring forward legislation to bar the practice currently exhibited by 7 currently serving Assembly Members to hold TWO elected positions simultaneously, namely holding office as a Councillor within the Welsh Jurisdiction and also holding office as an elected Assembly Member in the National Assembly of Wales.’

[72] There are a couple of points on this. We might need to seek legal advice on this, because it may be that this also refers to being a town or community councillor, which may be captured by this definition, and that might account for the enlarged figure. I am not quite clear

about that, but that may be a possibility. I do not know whether you have any thoughts on that.

9.15 a.m.

[73] **Ms Roberts:** Thank you, Chair, for asking me to provide some initial legal advice on this. Obviously, I have not looked at the actual definition, but I will do that and come back to the committee. I have some general points in relation to the issue: as the committee is fully aware, basically, the current list of disqualifications for Assembly Members is contained within the National Assembly for Wales (Disqualification) Order 2010.

[74] **William Powell:** That is quite an extensive document as I recall.

[75] **Ms Roberts:** It is indeed, Chair. Article 2 and Parts 1 and 2 of the Schedule to the 2010 Order basically set out the offices and bodies that disqualify holders from membership of the National Assembly for Wales. Currently, there is nothing in the Order that would prohibit that dual role. In addition, there are some provisions in the Local Government Act 1972; section 80 sets out disqualifications for election and holding office as a member of a local council. You would take into consideration both the Order and the Local Government Act 1972 in addition to Schedule 7 to the Government of Wales Act 2006. As Members will be aware, local government is contained within Schedule 7, so a Bill could be introduced to amend the current provisions, and if the Assembly were so minded, to amend the 2010 Order, for example, to change the position.

[76] On your point about the specific definition of a councillor, I would need to look into that.

[77] **William Powell:** I would also like to check whether such a piece of work could be introduced retrospectively, or whether it would apply only to the subsequent election. That would be useful to know for peace of mind.

[78] **Ms Roberts:** I will look into those issues, Chair.

[79] **William Powell:** Thank you very much.

[80] **Russell George:** Of course, there is already a provision to prevent people from being a county councillor and an Assembly Member, and that is through an election, which is a democratic process. The people in an electoral division can decide whether they want their representative to have two roles. Clearly, I do not agree with what the petition asks for. It is a reasonable view to hold; it is just not one that I share.

[81] **William Powell:** It is entirely legitimate.

[82] **Russell George:** We could write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities seeking his views, and also write to the Assembly Commission to ask its views on this petition.

[83] **William Powell:** That would be excellent.

[84] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is there still a constitutional committee?

[85] **William Powell:** Yes, there is the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee presided over by David Melding.

[86] **Bethan Jenkins:** Does it usually deal with things like this?

[87] **William Powell:** Possibly. We could copy in David Melding. For good measure, I am not clear whether the Counsel General might have a view.

[88] **Bethan Jenkins:** He does not usually have a view.

[89] **William Powell:** He is very discreet, but there might be an opportunity to draw him into the discussion.

[90] **Joyce Watson:** As I understand this, the only person who would seek to change this would be the Minister for local government, and he has not indicated anything like that to me. Legislation is always possible, but it is not on the Government's list of things to do. Maybe what we need to do is write a letter in that respect calling this to the Minister's attention, and asking whether there is any intention to bring in such legislation or amend those rules. They were amended as recently as 2007, as would-be Assembly Members are now very aware. We could take it from there. Frankly, if the Government is not going to bring forward legislation, and has no intention of supporting it, then in a way we have our answer. That is perhaps the best place for us to go.

[91] **William Powell:** I appreciate all of those contributions. It is important that Mr Perrott and his colleagues feel that this has been appropriately handled, as all other petitions. We have a good set of actions to take forward there. Thanks also for the input on the legal side.

[92] We now move on to P-04-455, Save Prince Philip Hospital A&E. This petition was submitted by Angharad Howells with the support of 1,038 signatories. The petition states:

[93] 'Hywel Dda Health Board is planning to downgrade or close A&E services at Prince Philip Hospital. This is an essential service for Llanelli and the surrounding communities and the community needs to act to save our A&E. Please sign this Petition to prevent the closure of this essential service, and to ensure lives are not put at risk.'

[94] Things have moved quite significantly on this, as we know. Following its meeting, which coincided with our previous meeting a fortnight ago, if you recall, Hywel Dda Local Health Board disclosed its chosen way forward. Clearly, those proposals are now in the public domain. Following up on that, I have written to Trevor Purt and his colleagues at Hywel Dda Local Health Board, seeking their views on a range of issues to do with the impact of the petition and the wider issues that came out in the consultation on the decision that has come forward. At this time, given that that was responding to two or three other petitions, and this petition was already referenced at this point, it would probably be wise to await a response, because that will take account of this and all of the other petitions. Is that a sensible way forward for now? I see that you agree that it is. We will then revert to this one.

9.21 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[95] **William Powell:** The first petition under this item, P-04-421, Oppose Trident moving to Wales, was submitted by Mabon ap Gwynfor in October 2012 and had the support of 1,236 signatures. As we recall, this relates to the First Minister's comments back in the summer regarding the hypothetical relocation of this facility to Wales. There has been correspondence from the First Minister. There was a feeling by the committee—and I think that Joyce, perhaps, led on this last time—that it would be worth going back to Carwyn Jones to seek a little further clarity. I think that it is fair to say that he is not showing any disposition to really

engage with this hypothetical question. That is clear from the letter that we have in our papers today. I would really value a steer from colleagues as to the best way forward. Bethan, you indicated first.

[96] **Bethan Jenkins:** I know that you have said that this is hypothetical, but, obviously, there will be a referendum in Scotland, with the potential for Scotland to become independent. To say that it is just hypothetical is dodging the issue. Is there not a possibility that Governments, on a Welsh and a UK level, would have to and will need to discuss this issue? Therefore, can we not write to the UK Government to ask whether it has had any discussions with the Welsh Government on this, because I feel that saying 'This is hypothetical, I cannot discuss it', when he has actively invited the discussion previously is a dereliction of his duty as First Minister. That is my opinion. I have not signed the petition.

[97] **William Powell:** We could certainly write to Philip Hammond, who, I think, is the Secretary of State for Defence, following the demise of Mr Fox.

[98] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that it is harmless enough to try to see whether there has been any discussion or even to ask whether there will be discussions, knowing that the Scottish independence referendum is coming up in 2014.

[99] **William Powell:** I would certainly be happy to write to Philip Hammond on this issue from a wider angle, because I think that it is fair to say that all of these issues are, by their nature, very much long term in their planning. The high speed rail link will take 20 years to deliver, so, clearly, these matters take many years to prepare. I understand what you are saying, because the Scottish referendum has been timetabled.

[100] **Bethan Jenkins:** There has to be more clarity on what the Welsh Government does and does not have an opinion on. The Welsh Government has an opinion on benefit changes and so forth that will impact on Wales but will not necessarily be our decision. So, there has to be consistency on its part.

[101] **William Powell:** Would there be any merit in writing to the Milford Haven Port Authority? I have recently had a meeting with the management team there and I think that it might value this kind of engagement. I know that the team there values any opportunity it has to be involved in policy formulation. Joyce, you have been very patient.

[102] **Joyce Watson:** I have. The First Minister is saying that it is hypothetical and the remit is not here to bring Trident to Wales. To that end, it is absolutely right. However, having said that, obviously, you will write to the petitioners to let them know what the First Minister has said. He is, in fact, right to say that the decision will be taken in Westminster, so we can, as Bethan suggested, write to the Minister there. It would also be right and proper to seek the views of Milford Haven Port Authority.

[103] **William Powell:** Okay, so we will escalate it to Phillip Hammond and the Milford Haven Port Authority. Russell may want to escalate it further.

[104] **Russell George:** No, I do not want to escalate it to anyone. I think that it has been escalated too far, because writing to the UK Government goes beyond what the petition is asking for, but I am quite happy to do that because it is in the public interest.

[105] **William Powell:** To bottom out the issue.

[106] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that the petitioners would be happy.

[107] **Russell George:** I think that they would be, because it is a wider issue.

[108] **William Powell:** I think that Mr ap Gwynfor is going to be pleased with the way in which this is being progressed.

[109] **Joyce Watson:** We are only writing to the UK Government in the terms that Bethan has outlined, asking if any discussion has taken place between the UK Government and the Welsh Government, because that is the piece of information that we need.

[110] **William Powell:** Yes, it would be frivolous to do anything more. That is entirely sound.

[111] We will move on to petition P-04-434, The Welsh and Somalilanders have common love of poetry. This petition was submitted by the Wales Somaliland Communities Link in November 2012 with the support of 30 signatures. It was submitted in the wider context of the Cultural Olympiad and much besides that was going on last summer, including the National Eisteddfod, which was very much in their minds. It received a very warm response from the Presiding Officer, which is noted in our papers today.

[112] I had the opportunity on Sunday evening to share that response in person with a couple of the instigators at the London end of this petition, because I happened to meet Mr Abdi Adan and Mr David Wardrop of the United Nations Association for a meeting of some Somali groups in London. They were delighted with this engagement, and they see this as potentially being a step by which to engage the local Somali community.

[113] There is great excitement in Cardiff and London at the imminent visit of the President of Somalia to the UK, which is apparently due to take place in the next couple of weeks. So, I think that we should thank the Presiding Officer very much for her warm remarks, but in the context of the petition, I think that it has run its course. Do colleagues agree that we should close it? I see that you do. Thank you.

[114] We will move on to petition P-04-322, A call to revise Cadw's hold upon churches in Wales, which was submitted back in 2011 by Mr Graham John and received 147 signatures in support. A number of issues have come up since the submission of this petition. We last considered this petition just before Christmas, December 2012. We wrote to the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, and Mr John has provided some further information. All of the responses are included in our public papers today.

[115] One of the key issues that seems to be of particular concern is the status of independent chapels. I think that it would be useful if we were to write to the Minister to seek a time frame for the work of the task and finish group on this issue. Are there any other issues that you think would be sensible to take forward at this time?

[116] **Bethan Jenkins:** In looking at the letter, I think that the letter from Rev Graham John wanted to make sure that everyone is involved in the consultation on ecclesiastical exemption.

[117] **William Powell:** Indeed, it is about having a level playing field and everyone engaged. We will write to the Minister asking him to keep us up to speed on this with a time frame. We will also make specific reference to the inclusion of all chapels, because we do not want there to be a certain category that does not benefit from any new arrangements.

[118] Moving on to petition P-03-236, The Charter for Grandchildren, this petition was submitted in the early days of the Petitions Committee back in October 2009 by Grandparents Apart Wales. It collected 19 signatures.

9.30 a.m.

[119] The committee last considered this petition back in November, and we agreed to alert the Health and Social Care Committee to this petition, particularly in the context of its upcoming consideration of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill. At this point, it would probably be useful to get back in touch with Mark Drakeford to request that we are kept in the loop on this, and maybe get some indication of the time frame so that we can be aware of the relevant sessions that the committee runs. We could then possibly have a transcript of the relevant discussions, because this is obviously a matter of considerable importance, not just to parents, where the arrangements for access to children can be difficult, but also, crucially, to grandparents, who play such a key role in the support networks. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are.

[120] We move on to P-03-187, Abolish the Severn Bridge Toll. Again, this is a relatively early petition, from March 2009, submitted by a Mr John Warman, with the support of 23 signatures. It calls upon

[121] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to urge the UK Government in Westminster to do everything in its power to abolish the two Severn Bridge tolls.’

[122] We agreed to revisit this petition once the Welsh Government had published the report on the economic impact of the Severn tolls, and we have the relevant documentation here in our papers. There are a couple of issues to take on board here. Clearly, the non-devolved nature of the petition, and what has already happened, might suggest that it is time to draw this to a conclusion. I just wonder, Joyce, whether there is anything that has happened recently in terms of your own committee looking at the economic impacts around this in the light of the Government report.

[123] **Joyce Watson:** No. The point is, you are not going to change the starting point, which is that it is not devolved. When we are looking at petitions, unless we are very clear about the things that we can do, we will find it very difficult to remove the things that we cannot do. We had our visitors here from Scotland saying that they start with Standing Orders, and I think maybe that that would be a good place for us to start. In this case, it is clear that, frankly, as much as we will all have views around here about the Severn bridge tolls, and I pay them quite often, it is not in our remit to do anything about them, sadly.

[124] **William Powell:** That is right, and it is probably fair to say that, if this were to be submitted today, the bar might be somewhat higher in terms of admissibility. Clearly, this was submitted in the early days when the whole institution of the Petitions Committee was at an earlier stage of its development. Obviously, there has been a significant amount of consideration and work done, but the time is probably right to close, if colleagues are agreeable to that.

[125] **Bethan Jenkins:** Has the Minister responded at all to the study? I do not know about the issue in depth, because I am not on the committee that Joyce is on, but just so that we know what the Government’s stance is—

[126] **William Powell:** I am not aware of any statement in Plenary, or indeed any questions to the Minister in Plenary on this issue. That might be a useful final action.

[127] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is only because I do not know.

[128] **William Powell:** You are not alone in not knowing.

[129] **Bethan Jenkins:** It might help the petitioners.

[130] **William Powell:** That would probably be a sensible rounding off of this after some four years of the petition being live. Joyce, are you happy to do that?

[131] **Joyce Watson:** I still think that we have to make an agreement here today to close this petition, because we can do nothing more.

[132] **Bethan Jenkins:** But it might help them.

[133] **William Powell:** We will just secure a ministerial update and response to the latest report.

[134] **Joyce Watson:** And then close it.

[135] **William Powell:** Absolutely. There is no question about that. Thanks, colleagues.

[136] We now move on to P-03-243, which is, again, a long-standing petition regarding road safety on the A40 in Llanddewi Velfrey. It was submitted back in September 2009 with 154 signatures in support. The text of the petition, which I do not intend to rehearse verbatim, goes through a number of specific points of concern, some of which have been addressed, I think. However, a number of substantial items have not been addressed. The committee last considered this petition in November 2012. We wrote to the Minister for Local Government and Communities at that time, and his response, together with further information from the petitioners, is included in our papers today. The critical issue here is the likely time running up to the big road project that is coming up, but that will still be a number of years away. Joyce, I believe that you have had a degree of involvement in this, probably for longer than any other member of the committee.

[137] **Joyce Watson:** I have not had any real involvement in this.

[138] **William Powell:** I am sorry; I misunderstood that.

[139] **Joyce Watson:** However, I do use it at least twice a week; four times mostly.

[140] **William Powell:** I am a fairly frequent user of that road as well.

[141] **Joyce Watson:** That is my degree of involvement in it. So, I know the road extremely well and have done for a long time. There are concerns, quite clearly. The petitioners are right in saying that the pavement is challenging, or missing in places, and that it has a 40 mph speed limit and that they want to bring it down to 30 mph. All of those things are factual. We have seen the response from the Minister. He refers to a process in place that will appoint an employer's agent for the A40 Llanddewi Velfrey to Penblewin improvement scheme. We need to be kept updated about when that is happening and the actions that might be taken. He discusses footway improvements not being promoted because that could be disruptive and unnecessary if they have the bypass. It is that 'if they have the bypass' bit that is the issue.

[142] **William Powell:** Yes, because the capital is not absolutely secure and the timetable is not absolutely clear either.

[143] **Joyce Watson:** No. Listening to it all, I think that we could take this in stages, one of which could be the reduced speed down to 30 mph, which is normal anyway for a built-up area. I think that the highway code would state that—in a built-up area with lights you should only do 30 mph in any case. That said, if the bypass is not going to happen until an awful long way in the future—and we do not know yet—is there any interim work that could be done to make this safe, and if so, would the Minister consider it? Those are the key questions, certainly at the moment, that we need to ask in order to progress.

[144] **William Powell:** I think that we need to write to the Minister, as you have said, seeking clarity on the likely timescale, and also requesting to be kept in the picture with regard to this. If there is to be a public inquiry on these matters, the existence of a live petition is potentially a useful avenue for the local residents to maintain their pressure on these matters, and particularly to ensure that community liaison is of the appropriate level going into such an inquiry. That is absolutely crucial. This has been a local aspiration over many years.

[145] **Joyce Watson:** I am happy to meet with the local community council. I did not, and have not, received that letter. However, I will put it on the table again that I can meet, and I am quite happy to do a site visit. It would be very easy, as I said last time, since I will be going through again on Friday, and probably back again on Sunday.

[146] **William Powell:** Joyce, I would be very happy to join you on such an occasion if we could align diaries. You are a more frequent visitor than I am, for obvious reasons, because it is on your immediate route home; but, as a regional Member, in addition to my role within this committee, I would also be very happy to play some part in this, should that be helpful. That is fine. Are other colleagues happy to go forward in that way? I see that you are. Good.

[147] We will move on now to P-04-345, Rail and Bus Links between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen, and P-04-429, Re-opening of the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth Train Line. The committee has previously agreed, as colleagues will note, to group these two petitions because of the common aspiration that underlines them, although there is a difference of a year in terms of when they were submitted. The first was submitted by Craig Owen Lewis in November 2011 and he collected 555 signatures, and more recently in November 2012, Mark Worrall presented his petition, which I received, along with colleagues, in person. That petition has collected 1,191 signatures. We last considered both of these—grouped, as I said—in November 2012 and we wrote to the Minister for Local Government and Communities. It is fair to say that his response, which is included in our public papers, is pretty clear. We have further petitioner input as well.

[148] Given the clarity of the Welsh Government position and the other practical and ownership difficulties of progressing with these, we probably need to move to close both petitions. Are colleagues content with that approach? That appears to be the clear message from Carl Sargeant.

[149] **Bethan Jenkins:** There is no movement from the Government.

[150] **William Powell:** There is no movement, in terms of deliverability and petitioner expectation management, and we are in a difficult place if we do anything else. This is clear, is it not? Are colleagues happy with that approach?

[151] **Joyce Watson:** Not happy, no.

[152] **William Powell:** Not happy, but content. We express our regret at having to do that, but it is the only way forward, I am afraid.

[153] The next petition is P-04-363, Town Centre Improvement Scheme for Fishguard. This petition was submitted by Councillor Bob Kilmister in February 2012, and there were over 1,000 signatures collected from all shades of the Fishguard and Goodwick community—political and non-political views, no doubt—to support this. There is a very interesting study in our public papers here from TownCentred, which is an excellent piece of work.

[154] We last considered this petition back in May 2012 and wrote to the Minister for Local

Government and Communities seeking an update following the recent local meeting on the issue. We have been given a good record of that meeting, which involved local stakeholders and a key role for the local chamber of trade and so on. However, we have not had a substantive response on this. The Government has advised that the Minister is waiting on further developments before sending a response, so there is a sense that the committee, to some degree, and also the petitioners have something of a feeling of being in limbo or in a vacuum here. Is it not time to write to the Minister to seek an indication of timescale on this one?

[155] **Joyce Watson:** When I was a county councillor, and that was a good period of time ago, the proposals for improvement in Fishguard and Goodwick were on the table and involved many players. That has changed and there are new players and new plans in the offing, and there has been movement last week. The first thing that we need to do is to update ourselves on the progress and on where exactly these things are at the moment. We need to look at what the county council is doing and at its involvement. Let us be clear about this, because it all hinges, or a large part of it, on its ownership of a now-empty school and the rebuilding, with Welsh Government money, of the new school. That now-empty school lies in the centre of Fishguard and is an eyesore quite frankly—

9.45 a.m.

[156] **William Powell:** There is also a danger in the longer term, potentially, of dereliction.

[157] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, indeed. There is also the question of the re-routing, and so on, that is being asked for.

[158] **William Powell:** There is also a potential supermarket scheme, which I understand is in some uncertainty.

[159] **Joyce Watson:** However, there have been movements, and I think that the committee needs to be aware of them—I am aware of them. That would be useful to the committee. We can then take it from there, and see where we are going. Let us see whether there is any money on the table from the county council, whether it has any plans to progress that, and where it fits into its work programme. Ultimately, the council will be the driver on the ground, although it will be working in partnership, of course, with many other people. Fishguard is a fantastic little town, and we will do anything that we can to help to make it better, for everyone. That is where we are at, I think.

[160] **Russell George:** What is the action, therefore, Chair?

[161] **William Powell:** I was advocating writing to the Minister for Local Government and Communities. However, the county council is also a key player, so, as well as writing to Carl Sargeant, we could write to Bryn Parry-Jones. Would you suggest that we also write to Jamie Adams, the leader of Pembrokeshire County Council? Would that be a useful action? I believe that that might have some merit.

[162] **Joyce Watson:** Let us try writing to him. However, he has a cabinet member for economic development, so let us see. We must also keep the petitioners and the chamber of trade in the loop.

[163] **William Powell:** Absolutely. It is vital to keep the chamber of trade and Councillor Kilmister, the lead petitioner, in the loop on this one.

[164] **Russell George:** So, just to be clear, we are writing to Carl Sargeant and to the cabinet member: is that right?

[165] **William Powell:** Yes. We are writing to Carl Sargeant, and to the leader and chief executive of Pembrokeshire council. We will also keep the petitioners up to date.

[166] The next update is on petition P-04-409, Welsh names for new trunk roads in Wales. This petition was submitted by WelshnotBritish.com in October 2012, with the support of 47 signatures. In the context of the feedback that we have had, I will read the short text of the petition in its entirety:

[167] ‘We call upon the Welsh Government to ensure that all new trunk roads in Wales have names in Welsh. Not only does this help preserve the identity of our cities, towns and villages. It also helps non Welsh speakers learn basic Welsh pronunciation and spelling.’

[168] That is the text of the petition. We last considered it in November, and we agreed to seek the petitioners’ response to the ministerial correspondence, which we have in our public papers. I should clarify that at no time has the committee refused to accept this petition—certainly, that was not the intention, and I do not think that that would accord with the facts.

[169] **Bethan Jenkins:** What did the Minister say?

[170] **William Powell:** I believe that it is fair to say that the Minister has adopted a somewhat sceptical approach to this. He has not completely ruled it out, but he is not giving it his support, as such.

[171] **Bethan Jenkins:** Why? That is not in my documents; sorry.

[172] **Joyce Watson:** Cost.

[173] **William Powell:** Cost is the principal issue. It is interesting to note that this petition refers to new trunk roads, as in new schemes, whereas there have been a number of previous approaches to the re-styling of long-standing existing roads, not just new roads. However, the petitioner had gained the impression that this petition, as well as two earlier petitions, which were associated with different approaches to the renaming of the A470, were being dealt with in a way that was not entirely consistent. It is important for us to restate that we are not in any way refusing to accept this petition; it has been admitted, and it is an entirely valid petition. I thought that it was important to clarify that there is quite a distinction here. The WelshnotBritish.com petition is a much more limited petition, which looks at new stretches of road. We might speculate as to the way in which the Newtown bypass could be styled in future years, as a new project, or indeed the Cwmbach bypass, any other bypasses throughout Wales, or any other enhanced stretches of road. We are not in a phase of vast development of the trunk road network anyway, so this is a limited but important petition, and we need to be alert to it. If you are talking about new roads, issues about the additional cost do not really kick in, because you have new signage anyway.

[174] **Bethan Jenkins:** That is what I am confused about: what the Minister said about cost.

[175] **Joyce Watson:** That was on the old one.

[176] **Bethan Jenkins:** That was because it was retrospective, was it? The Minister thought that it was to re-name—

[177] **William Powell:** It was about restyling. There were two aspirations: one was to name the road ‘Prif Ffordd Tywysog Owain Glyndŵr’ and the other was to name it ‘The Royal Welsh Way’. You will recall the issues around those. We should probably write to the

Minister to clarify the difference between the two issues, because this is a much more limited and potentially deliverable request.

[178] **Bethan Jenkins:** Also, does the Welsh Language Commissioner have a view on this? I have done some work on street names in certain local authorities. It is a different issue, because those are street names rather than road names, but it would still include the cost of putting up new signs and so forth. That might be something that the Welsh Language Commissioner would—*[Interruption.]*

[179] **William Powell:** That is an avenue that we have not gone down, but I think that it would be very useful.

[180] **Bethan Jenkins:** I wonder whether we could compare the two issues, because sometimes you just have a Welsh street name now. I know that, in Bridgend, in lots of places, they just have a Welsh street name so that they do not have the translation issue. That is something that we can look into.

[181] **William Powell:** If that is acceptable locally and it accords with local traditions and whatever, that is fine. There are some issues to consider here. I express regret if the impression has been created that we are not open to this, because we very much are. We have drilled down to a couple of relevant issues that we can reopen by writing to the Welsh Language Commissioner and seeking clarity from the Minister for Local Government and Communities. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are.

[182] We now move to the section of our agenda on education and skills, and turn to petition P-04-376, Reorganise Education in Powys. This petition was submitted by Sarah Wheeler in March 2012 and collected 1,177 signatures. The petition was last considered in May 2012. I think that it is fair to say that there was quite a significant furore in the Builth Wells area and its hinterland around the plans that came forward from Powys County Council at the time, regarding the change of arrangements in terms of the Welsh-medium proposals that were brought forward. Those proposals have now been withdrawn by the county council. In that context, I propose that we move to close this petition, because the situation has fundamentally moved on. I see that all Members are content to do so.

[183] We now move to P-04-427, A new Welsh language law for Wales. This petition was submitted by Gethin Kurtis Sugar in October 2012 and he secured 93 signatures in support of it. The petition calls on the Welsh Government to create a new Welsh language law. In Mr Sugar's view, the current laws regarding the language do not go far enough to protect the rights of Welsh speakers. Clearly, we have the recent census and the analysis that some of us will have been doing around the census figures, which might make this a more timely and relevant petition again. I suggest that we write to the Welsh Language Commissioner on this, asking her views as to whether she feels that current legislation affords sufficient protection and, if not, what, in her view, would be a sensible strengthening of the legislation. Do colleagues think that that is a sensible way forward?

[184] **Joyce Watson:** I do, Chair, but I think that we also need to understand the legal issues around this matter. We need to ask the Government whether it can move forward in the way that the petitioner is proposing.

[185] **William Powell:** That is an important caveat, Joyce. Are colleagues happy to write to the Welsh Language Commissioner, because I am sure that she would offer us soundly based advice in terms of constitutional restraints as well? I see that you are. Let us go forward on that basis. Thank you for your input.

[186] The next petition is P-04-437, Opposing compulsory registration for home educating

children. This was submitted by Wendy Charles-Warner. We met a substantial party of home educators and their children, who we had a really good chat with, on the occasion back in November when they presented the petition. The petition enjoys support from all over Wales with 1,614 signatures. The petition states:

[187] ‘We call upon the Welsh Assembly for Wales to abandon plans for a compulsory register for home educated children as part of the draft Education (Wales) Bill.’

[188] We first considered this back in November 2012. We wrote to the Minister and the response is in the public papers. The written statement that followed in December stated that, due to the large number of consultation responses received on this issue, detailed analysis was under way. Leighton Andrews stated that he was not going to take forward legislative proposals in this area. So, in this context, it is clear that the consultation has been a genuine one and that, on this topic, the Government has listened and the outcome has been secured. So, in the context of that, we should move to close the petition. Russell, do you have a view on that?

[189] **Russell George:** I am not quite clear on the Government’s position on this yet. Could we wait and write to the Minister seeking an update for the committee once a final decision has been made on the way forward? Could we do that rather than close the petition?

[190] **William Powell:** That would probably be a more cautious and sensible approach, on reflection, just to get that clarity. However, I felt that there was clarity in the written statement that we were sent early in the Christmas recess. Nevertheless, it would be useful to write to get that absolute clarity.

[191] **Russell George:** I think that the petitioners would welcome that extra reassurance. For their information, it would be useful for them to have that further reply.

[192] **William Powell:** Okay, and then we can report back on that at the earliest appropriate meeting, when we have the opportunity to share that. That would be a belt and braces approach. I think that that would be sensible, if colleagues are in agreement. Joyce?

[193] **Joyce Watson:** I agree with that, but there are two issues here and we have to deal with the one in front of us. The one in front of us asks for a commitment from the Welsh Assembly Government, or the Welsh Government, to provide education for children with special educational needs. In that respect, I think that—

[194] **Bethan Jenkins:** It said, ‘the Welsh Assembly’.

[195] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Sorry; I meant to say ‘the National Assembly’.

[196] **William Powell:** Sorry, Joyce, but I believe that you have run on to agenda item 3.14, which is a critical petition, but we are looking at the previous one. At the moment, we have not closed our consideration of the petition opposing compulsory registration for home educators.

[197] **Joyce Watson:** Sorry; I had moved on. I am getting ahead of myself; I am speeding things up. Sorry.

[198] **William Powell:** No problem. I see that we are agreed on the action of writing to Leighton Andrews to get absolute clarity on the fact that he is not going to go forward with that, which is in accord with the petitioners’ aspirations.

[199] Now we move forward, quite rightly, to petition P-04-442, Guarantee good support

close to home for disabled children and their families. This petition was submitted by Scope Cymru in December 2012 and collected 2,606 signatures. For clarity, I shall read the short text:

[200] ‘We, the undersigned, call on the Welsh Government to guarantee good support close to home for disabled children and their families.

[201] In order to achieve this, we call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make sure the new Educational (Wales) Bill includes a ‘Provide Local’ principle in the Bill’.

[202] We first considered this back in our last meeting of last term in December. We wrote to the Minister for Education and Skills, and that is included in the public papers. At that stage, we reflected that, depending upon the ministerial response, we would potentially invite the petitioners and the Minister to give oral evidence.

10.00 a.m.

[203] We have a couple of options. We could invite the petitioners to come in in association with the Welsh Local Government Association. Also, it would be of considerable benefit to have input from the Minister for Education and Skills on this issue. It is a question of the order in which they come in and in what combination we bring them in. I would value colleagues’ thoughts on that. Joyce, you are keen to contribute.

[204] **Joyce Watson:** The three organisations that are around the table are right, because it is about delivering on the ground. You can have as many policies as you like, but if it is not delivered on the ground, which is what they are asking for, it is of no use at all. To that end, I agree that we should invite those three witnesses, representing the organisations behind them, to give us some evidence.

[205] **William Powell:** That makes a lot of sense. The other consideration is whether we have the petitioners and WLGA in earlier than the Minister, because we are aware of pressure on the ministerial diary.

[206] **Bethan Jenkins:** In his letter, the Minister notes that there are consultation responses that are yet to be published. Is that something that we are waiting for? I would not want to take evidence before we see that from the Government. It is in the paragraph where he mentions the 206 responses received and where that is summarized.

[207] **William Powell:** On which page is that?

[208] **Joyce Watson:** It is on page 103.

[209] **William Powell:** I see.

[210] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is in the second paragraph on that page.

[211] **William Powell:** I am with you.

[212] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not know, I am just questioning whether that has come out yet.

[213] **William Powell:** That is unlikely as this is a relatively recent letter.

[214] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am just throwing that in. Could we agree to that before we take evidence?

[215] **William Powell:** That would probably be sensible, given the issues around the ministerial commitments and what you have just raised.

[216] **Bethan Jenkins:** Also, the paragraph underneath it states that the special educational needs reforms would not be included in the education Bill. We would need to take that into account if we took evidence, because that would be a separate piece of legislation.

[217] **William Powell:** That is right, and this one addresses one of the key aspirations of the petitioners, because they are seeking for it to be included. Clearly, the statement here is that there will be a subsequent piece of legislation in any event. However, it may well be beyond our capacity to influence that. Nonetheless, we have to be extremely grateful to the Minister for a very thorough response to these issues, clearly engaging with them in a serious fashion. However, my sense is that it would probably be premature to expect too early a session, because this analysis is under way and has been under way since the middle of this month. So, I suspect that we would probably need to allow for a little additional time.

[218] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just think that it would help to see that first.

[219] **William Powell:** That is right, but it would probably be useful to respond, thanking him for the fullness of this consideration and asking for a slot as soon as is convenient, taking account of the analysis and feedback from this extensive consultation. It takes some time to take account of 206 substantial responses and to feed back on them.

[220] **Joyce Watson:** Absolutely, and I read that the responses were being received and that in early 2013 we would have the reply to those and then that it would form perhaps another piece of legislation. I had read all of that. It is the case on every committee that you will ask witnesses in first and then the Minister in at the end to respond. You would not do anything other than that.

[221] **William Powell:** No.

[222] **Joyce Watson:** We do not have an absolute date for when we will know that he has received all of those responses and when all of that work has been done. However, I am keen to progress this, because I think that the time is right. I know that we are awaiting the responses, but there is no better time than now to try to influence a potential system that is in progress. So, to that end, I suggest that we do as Bethan said; find out when we will have responses—

[223] **William Powell:** Yes, write to the Minister and find out what is meant by ‘early 2013’.

[224] **Bethan Jenkins:** The responses to the letter have come in; it is just the summary of those that we need.

[225] **Joyce Watson:** Yes; exactly.

[226] **William Powell:** Absolutely. The consultation closed in late October. Clearly, the analysis of the contents was still ongoing 10 days or a fortnight ago when this letter was drafted.

[227] **Joyce Watson:** In terms of the people who have responded, it might be worth looking at whether there are other witnesses or organisations that we can consider in terms of giving us some information.

[228] **William Powell:** I am sure that, potentially, there are other significant leads among the very extensive responses to this consultation. It is an issue that matters to people all over Wales; that is pretty obvious. So, that is a sensible way forward. The only thing that we have not mentioned is the involvement of the WLGA. Everything hinges on when we are likely to receive the publication of the summary of the overall responses and the feedback on that.

[229] **Joyce Watson:** We do need to talk to the WLGA, because that is the body of elected representatives. However, there is another body that, in my view, keeps getting missed out, namely the body of senior executives on councils, which also has leads in their areas—I think that it used to be called SOLACE, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives.

[230] **William Powell:** Yes, SOLACE is the chief executives' body.

[231] **Joyce Watson:** That is supposed to deliver, quite frankly, and there have been failures; I will not rehearse them now. So, let us get to where that delivery happens and the people who represent those who deliver, rather than politicians, who should be directing. Let us write to both.

[232] **Bethan Jenkins:** I guess Estyn would also have an interest here, as well.

[233] **Joyce Watson:** Yes; absolutely.

[234] **Bethan Jenkins:** We discussed this on the Children and Young People Committee as well. It is important that the WLGA has a view, but if there are any responses from the consultation that might pinpoint one local authority doing something differently to another; it might be interesting to bring in a specific council, as opposed to the WLGA as a whole. You might learn more from having a specific council here.

[235] **William Powell:** Yes, that might be too general an approach. Recently, on the committee that Russell George and I sit on, we had an excellent evidence session on local development plan issues, purely because a relevant choice of councils that had something to say was present. That was one of the most rewarding sessions that we have had of that kind for some time and we could replicate it here. So, that has been a really useful discussion following a very full ministerial response; we just need to get clarity as to when we will receive the overall analysis of the substantial response to the consultation and then we will take it forward, as agreed. Thank you, colleagues, for that.

[236] We will move on now to P-04-399, Slaughter Practices. This petition was submitted by Royce Clifford in June 2012, with the support of 400 signatures. It says,

[237] 'We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to ban the practise of slaughtering animals without pre-stunning them.'

[238] We last considered this petition in October 2012 and agreed to seek further details on the consultation that was being undertaken and that is in our public papers today. I would favour writing to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development asking him to keep us updated on the overall findings of this consultation, because that will give us a basis upon which to study that further. That and any impact that that will have on compliance with European Union regulations will be absolutely critical. Animal welfare is hugely important in this and all legitimate people operating in this field would share that view. We need to get clarity from the Minister in the first instance. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are, so let us do that.

[239] The next petition is P-04-433, CCTV in Slaughterhouses. It was submitted by Animal Aid in November 2012 and has collected 1,066 signatures. It calls upon the National

Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to introduce mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses for the reasons that are outlined in the petition.

[240] We first considered this in November 2012 and we wrote to the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. The Minister also attended a drop-in session in the autumn that was organised by the Assembly Member, Rebecca Evans. He had the opportunity at that time to meet the petitioners and engage with them. In light of that, it would be sensible for us to write again to John Griffiths on this issue, asking for his clarification as to how he intends to take forward the issue of CCTV in slaughterhouses and the time frame. One other issue that I would like us to give some consideration to is the avoidance of an excessive burden on small and medium-sized abattoirs, particularly because of issues around their sustainability. I know that that has been a real issue and a matter of real concern within the Assembly; the future existence of small and micro abattoirs has been under threat in recent years. Obviously, we need a level playing field in terms of this issue.

[241] **Bethan Jenkins:** How is that related to this issue?

[242] **William Powell:** Purely in relation to the capital cost of the installation of CCTV.

[243] **Bethan Jenkins:** If it was in legislation, they would have to comply.

[244] **William Powell:** They would have to comply, but the Minister has made some references to this.

[245] **Russell George:** I agree with everything that you have said, Chair. What you are stating is that, if legislation was brought in in Wales, but other parts of the country and Europe did not have that legislation, it would be unfair on those small abattoirs and there would not be a level playing field. In one sense, the petition is worded correctly for its purposes here, but in one sense it does not go far enough. Perhaps we should be looking at what legislation is being brought forward across Europe. That goes beyond what this petition is asking for, but it might be useful if we could have a small research paper looking at the wider European issues.

[246] **William Powell:** That would have merit. I was also going to suggest, although relatively soon after breakfast might not be the best time to suggest it, the possibility of a site visit. I know that Dunbia, the substantial abattoir at Llanybydder, has had CCTV installed for some time, and it has been relatively successful. That is something that we could consider, although it may not be something that we would wish to take forward.

[247] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would like to understand the cost issue. I do not think that people should be given any exemptions because they are smaller. If this legislation is introduced, it should apply across the board.

[248] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I am not suggesting an exemption of any kind.

[249] **Bethan Jenkins:** My question is legal: I have not read all of the documents, so I do not understand why it cannot be included within the current regulation and why there has to be a new piece of legislation. May I ask that question?

[250] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. I would be very happy to seek that clarification. I also want to make it absolutely clear that I am not seeking exemptions for operators of any scale. It is the issue of potential support in meeting the necessary standards. There is certainly not an issue around exemption, because that would imply a difference in equality with regard to animal welfare. Joyce, you have indicated that you would like to speak.

[251] **Joyce Watson:** That was the question that I had.

[252] **William Powell:** If we take our legal advice, we can then act accordingly.

[253] **Ms Roberts:** As the committee is aware, European Union law issues and European legislative issues generally are complex and involved. I am not in a position to give you the definitive answer at the moment, but I am more than happy to look into the issue and come back to you at a later stage with the current legal position. I am sorry about that answer, but that is all that I can do at this stage, because I am not in a position—

10.15 a.m.

[254] **William Powell:** It is a complex area.

[255] **Ms Roberts:** It is a complex area, but I am happy to—

[256] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, that is why I asked the question.

[257] **Russell George:** May I ask, Chair, whether there is any reason why we cannot group this and the previous petition together, because if we are to do a site visit, the previous petition is closely related?

[258] **William Powell:** They obviously have a lot in common, and I am sure that animal welfare is at the heart of Mr Royce Clifford and Animal Aid's concerns. Perhaps that would give us a more coherent overall approach, as long as we do not lose the distinctiveness of the individual petitions. Are colleagues content with that approach?

[259] **Bethan Jenkins:** Could we ask them?

[260] **William Powell:** We have not previously sought permission—

[261] **Russell George:** Chair, I am happy to leave it with you to discuss.

[262] **William Powell:** We will discuss the feasibility of that, and that will determine the way that we go forward with our future consideration. Joyce, did we stifle a contribution from you earlier?

[263] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, you did. First, I will not be going on a site visit, just so you know.

[264] **Bethan Jenkins:** As a vegetarian, I will not either.

[265] **Joyce Watson:** I am not a vegetarian, and I am not against it. It is simply because I do not see what you will gain from it. I lived in Llanybydder, so you do not need to tell me about Dunbia and other surrounding issues, because I know about them. I remember it when it was Oriel Jones and Son Ltd., long before. Having said all of that, I will not go on a site visit, because I do not see what you will get from it. I think that we are going off on a tangent with this, and I do not know why we are doing it. That is my view and that is what I wanted to tell you. I will not go.

[266] **William Powell:** I appreciate that, Joyce. It is good to have clarity. We will await the specific legal advice as to how to take it forward, and we will return to this at the earliest convenient time. Thank you for that, colleagues.

10.17 a.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**
**Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

[267] **William Powell:** I move that

in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi), the committee resolves to exclude the public for items 5 and 6 on the agenda.

[268] Are all Members content? I see that you are.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.17 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.17 a.m.*