



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 16 Ebrill 2013
Tuesday, 16 April 2013

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi 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
Elin Jones	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
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
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. welcome.

[2] Welcome to this meeting of the Petitions Committee, the first of the summer term. We do not have any apologies, and I can see that Elin Jones is just joining us as we speak. The usual housekeeping arrangements apply. Participants can speak in Welsh or English as they wish and are able, and a recording of the meeting will be available on Senedd.tv shortly after the meeting. We now have a full complement of Members.

9.01 a.m.

**Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions**

[3] **William Powell:** The first new petition is P-04-469, Remove the Right-To-Buy Regional Price Cap. This petition was submitted by James Jackson and has the support of 171 signatories. The text reads:

[4] ‘Removal the regional price cap of the Right-To-Buy scheme in Wales. Wales has yet again been left in the dark ages with policies. The UK government have outlined plans for a maximum of £75,000 discount in England yet it is still capped at a measly £16,000. The disparity in wealth will continue to grow and council tenants will never fulfil their ambitions of ever purchasing their own home.’

[5] As yet, we have not undertaken any action on this petition. I do not think that there is a huge amount of activity out there in relation to the purchase of council properties in comparison with earlier years. Colleagues, what do you feel that we should do here? I suppose that it is fairly obvious in the first instance to take the petition to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration to seek his views.

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

[7] **William Powell:** Let us do that. The next petition is P-04-470, Against the nationalisation of Cardiff Airport. This petition was submitted by Madeleine Thornton and collected 97 signatures. Just prior to the meeting, we received an associated petition that I understand has been gathered in the Montgomeryshire area, or at least it was handed in there. Russell, could I ask you to speak to that very briefly?

[8] **Russell George:** The petitioner had taken some paper signatures as well as online signatures. The petitioner handed them in to my office last week, and I said that I would pass them on to the committee.

[9] **William Powell:** Okay, we are grateful to you for delivering those this morning. We have not had an opportunity to tally up how many signatures there are, but nevertheless they are clearly in support of Madeleine Thornton's petition. The text of her petition reads:

[10] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to fully justify its decision to nationalize Cardiff Airport and provide evidence that its purchase will bring value for money and benefits for Welsh taxpayers wherever they live in Wales.'

[11] This is our first consideration of the petition and we have not taken anything forward to date. The First Minister released a statement during recess on 27 March stating that the Welsh Government had bought the assets and operations of the airport, and that further details of due diligence and the business case will be provided shortly. I suggest that we write to Carwyn Jones on this matter, bringing the petition to his attention. Do colleagues have any other views on this one?

[12] **Russell George:** The Welsh Government has now bought the assets, but it would be right that we write to the First Minister asking him to provide a timetable for the business case, and when it will be provided. That is all that we can do for the petitioner at this stage.

[13] **William Powell:** Things have moved on since this petition was launched in the first instance, but issues around the thoroughness of the due diligence and the business case are still very much captured within the wider spirit of the petition. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are.

[14] The next petition is P-04-471, Mandatory Welsh legislation to ensure Defibrillators in all public places. This petition was submitted by Phil Hill, and Phil has the support of 78 signatures. The petition states:

[15] 'We call on the Welsh Government to provide funding to ensure that, as with basic fire fighting equipment (eg. Extinguishers), Automated External Defibrillators are available in all Welsh Public places (either NHS, Charity or Privately funded) to ensure the rapid treatment of any Victim of Cardiac arrest.'

[16] Again, this is our first consideration of this petition. The petitioner has provided a body of additional information, which is in the public papers and which we have had the opportunity to study. I propose that we write to Professor Mark Drakeford, the Minister for Health and Social Services, to seek his views in the first instance on this one.

[17] **Joyce Watson:** I absolutely agree, but it would also, in my view, be worth writing to the emergency services, because a lot of them carry defibrillators with them. When I was on Dyfed-Powys Police Authority there was a drive for them to carry them. It is about trying to understand who is carrying them at the moment and where the gaps are. An awful lot of railway stations have them. The petition is about public places. I absolutely support this petition.

[18] **William Powell:** I think they have also been rolled out with community groups and town and community councils, but it does strike me as being rather patchy and a little random as to whether groups come forward to take responsibility.

[19] **Joyce Watson:** Also, perhaps they could be rolled out in local government places, where the public gathers—I am thinking of gyms, swimming pools, and those sorts of places. We could see whether there is any information out there and whether local government is equally minded to do this, or whether it is currently in possession of defibrillators.

[20] **William Powell:** Are you advocating also that we write to the Welsh Local Government Association to count it in?

[21] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and to ask it in turn to write to the 22 authorities. It is about capturing what is out there. That is what I am after. A lot of big supermarkets currently have defibrillators as well. I fully support this because there was a case in Carmarthenshire just last year of a youngster whose life was saved by a defibrillator. We have this condition in my family, so I am all too aware of how devastating it can be.

[22] **William Powell:** So we will write to the WLGA. Which body were you suggesting in terms of the emergency services?

[23] **Joyce Watson:** The fire and rescue authorities and the police—just to see what they are doing now. Then we can perhaps capture where the gaps are.

[24] **William Powell:** That would be useful.

[25] **Joyce Watson:** I do not know whether we have thought about town centre managers in various places. I know a lot of town centres have defibrillators, but I do not know how you would capture that information.

[26] **William Powell:** One of the recommendations in the report of the Enterprise and Business Committee is to extend the number of town centre managers. Again, that is rather patchy provision, is it not?

[27] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and it is a big area for you to capture, but there we are.

[28] **William Powell:** Possibly One Voice Wales could be a way in to town and community councils, which would be another route into that matter, and I think that it has been. So, in summary, we will write to fire and rescue authorities, the WLGA and One Voice Wales. That would be a good starting point.

[29] **Elin Jones:** Just in terms of the supermarkets that you made reference to, it would be useful to write to the umbrella body for supermarkets—there is some kind of body like that—to ask whether its members have a policy of having defibrillators in their various superstores.

[30] **William Powell:** Yes, because they have been rolled out fairly evidently over the last few years, have they not? That is a good body of actions on that one. Excellent; agreed.

[31] The next petition is P-04-472, Make the MTAN law. This petition was submitted by John Cox, and he has collected 680 signatures, and there are 330 on an associated petition. There has been quite a lot of e-mail activity on this matter and on the related matters. The text reads:

[32] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make the MTAN Guidance Notes, notably those relating to a 500 metre buffer zone around open cast workings, mandatory in planning law for Wales.’

[33] As colleagues understand, this is the first time that we have considered this matter. I think that we need to go to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration as he becomes more deeply conversant with his new planning responsibilities. That would be a good starting point, I think, colleagues. Are there any other comments on that?

[34] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I think that to truly understand what this is all about, and the effect that it may or may not have, if we have time, Chair, and with the agreement of other

Members, I would like to do a couple of evidence sessions on this, so that we have an opportunity perhaps to apprise ourselves fully of the implications either way, whether we take action or not. I do not know whether my colleagues agree.

[35] **William Powell:** I think that that would be a very good idea, Joyce. Are colleagues happy with that? We gave quite a significant amount of airtime, and rightly so, to the issues around windfarm noise emissions, particularly those that came to light in Carmarthenshire. Again, there was a buffering aspect to that, so there are some parallels. I think that, having had an initial look at the forward plans, there is certainly space for that, and I believe that the petitioners would look favourably on the opportunity. Obviously, we need to look at taking a rounded approach, taking on board the views of the potential developers as well. So, let us do that and come back to it at an early future meeting. Is that agreed? I see that it is.

[36] We move now to P-04-473, Wind Farm Public Inquiry Financial Support. Before going any further, because of the reference in the body of the text to Powys County Council, of which I am a member—perhaps my colleague will also wish to make a brief statement on this—I should declare an obvious interest. I understand that arrangements are well in hand for the public inquiry, which will be based at the Royal Oak in Welshpool for many weeks to deliberate on these matters. I know that the financial provision within Powys County Council’s forward budget is obviously a matter of some concern to councillors and the wider council tax paying public in relation to this matter. So, I will not go any further. I do not know, Russell, whether it is convenient at this time for you to say what you might wish to say.

[37] **Russell George:** Well, Chair, I would just put on record that I, too, am a member of Powys County Council. With this petition—it is part of our agenda—the petitioner has included a letter from himself to the First Minister. The letter quotes a Government official, saying that Powys County Council

[38] ‘were aware of the financial implications when they decided to object to these schemes.’

[39] What, I think, is not in the context of the petition, but is behind the petition, is a sense of frustration that there was a signal from Welsh Government to say that Powys County Council should not have objected to these schemes if it could not afford to do so. I think that there is real frustration, and that the petitioners feel that that is an affront to democracy. So, I think that the petitioner is particularly looking for answers to that issue. As far as taking it forward goes, I think that all we can do is to write to the relevant Minister with responsibility for planning, which would be the Minister for Housing and Regeneration. That is how I would suggest we take this forward.

[40] **William Powell:** For consistency, before I take further contributions, I should read the short text of the petition, as I have done with all the other new petitions today. This petition was submitted by John Day, a previous petitioner on related themes, and he collected 1,247 signatures.

9.15 a.m.

[41] The text reads:

[42] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to provide substantial additional financial support to help Powys County Council defend its position during the forthcoming Combined Public Inquiry into wind farm developments in Powys.’

[43] Joyce, you indicated that you wanted to speak.

[44] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I did. Writing to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration is one thing, but I would like, when people are declaring an interest, to find out a little more about how they can then proceed to speak thereafter in this matter. That is another area that we need to be apprised of before we start making political speeches. What I would say is that we do need to write to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration; we do need to seek his views, but I understand the strength of feeling in the area. Powys County Council must have known that there would be a cost element here, as the Minister has stated in his letter, and it made a decision accordingly. I understand why it made the decision, and it is entirely up to it and up to you as county councillors to make those decisions on behalf of the people you represent. However, I am a little concerned about people who have taken part in a decision sitting here on a committee and making another speech, using both positions. I want to be a little bit clearer about those in the future.

[45] **William Powell:** Thank you, Joyce, for that contribution. I am sure that we can obtain further clarification of the various roles and issues around declaration. I sought to make my declaration early without major intervention in the matter, but I understand the concern and sensitivity around it and I am sure that, ahead of any future consideration, we will have that available to us.

[46] **Ms Stocks:** What I can say, initially, is that, in terms of how it has proceeded previously, the practice has always been that, if a committee member has an interest, they declare it and they can then participate in discussions on that petition, but, if it ever came to a vote, they would not be involved in that vote. Obviously, the committee tends to work on a consensual basis, so we have never been in a situation where we have come to a vote on any of the petitions where Members have a particular interest, but we can certainly go away and have a look at that. There is nothing in the Standing Orders at the moment that prohibits members of the committee from taking part in discussions on matters where they may have an interest.

[47] **Joyce Watson:** Okay; thank you.

[48] **William Powell:** Excellent. So, we will write to Carl Sargeant on this matter. I am not clear as to whether it would be sensible practice to alert the chief executive of the council named here to the fact that the petition has come forward—not seeking his views, necessarily, but just to alert him and possibly the leader of the council, Councillor David Jones, to the existence of the petition so that they can possibly take some interest in these matters if they are not aware of them. I will take advice on that if it is controversial, but it seems to me a sensible approach.

[49] **Ms Stocks:** If that is what the committee wants to do, then that is what we can do.

[50] **Joyce Watson:** Is that the normal procedure? Do we do that in every case? I am always mindful of consistency of approach.

[51] **Ms Stocks:** Certainly, with petitions that have a particular local authority angle, we tend to write to the local authority at some stage. I do not know whether we would just alert them; it is usually to seek their views on the particular petition, but, again, it is entirely up to the committee to decide what it wishes to do.

[52] **William Powell:** Perhaps we could ask the two non-members of the council whether they think that it would be appropriate either to alert the council or possibly to ask a more comprehensive question.

[53] **Elin Jones:** I think, if we are going to write to the council, then it should be to

ascertain its position on the request for financial support. I do not know whether Powys County Council has, for example, made a formal request for support.

[54] **William Powell:** My understanding is that representations have been made.

[55] **Elin Jones:** It would be good, however, for it to clarify how it has made those representations, and to give it the opportunity to do that.

[56] **William Powell:** Possibly, I was being a bit modest in my aspiration just to alert it; it would make sense to do that. If it is agreeable to colleagues, it would probably help us to take things forward a little more smartly, particularly given the fact that the train has had to leave the station in relation to the wider issues. Excellent; thank you.

[57] There is one further new petition to consider before we move to the updates on previously received petitions. This is petition P-04-474, Support for NHS chaplaincy services. This petition was submitted by Jim Stewart, and he has the support of 1,077 signatures. The text reads as follows:

[58] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to continue with its commitment to funding hospital chaplaincy services and to extend the benefits of chaplaincy services to other care settings, including primary and social care settings.’

[59] This is our first consideration of this petition, and I think that it is fair to view this substantially as a counter-petition to the previously received P-04-457—the charitable chaplaincy petition—which is on today’s agenda for update, although other aspects have been flagged up here, with proposals around the extension to other care settings, which make it very interesting. I would value colleagues’ comments on this. I think it would make a lot of sense for us to view both petitions in the round, as that would make for a more time and cost effective use of our resources, and would enable us to give them fuller consideration. I am open to views from colleagues.

[60] **Elin Jones:** I have no objection to doing that, as long as we respect the integrity of each individual petition, because they directly contradict each other. It is quite interesting—and exciting—that we have a petition that is presented in contradiction, almost, to another petition. It is democratically quite buoyant to see that kind of response. I have met the petitioner from the other perspective, as he is a constituent of mine. This is an issue of which I was not particularly aware before I had a conversation with him—apologies, as I do not think that I was at the meeting when that last petition was discussed. However, I think that it is an area of some interest. It is not an area that we have publicly discussed, to my recollection, in the Assembly, so there has been no scrutiny, really, of the issue. Perhaps we could think of this in a similar vein to the work that was suggested earlier on the buffer zone, as a discrete inquiry, because we have two petitions—

[61] **William Powell:** There is a natural structure there, in a sense.

[62] **Elin Jones:** Yes. We have people out there already involved and interested in the debate around this. I think that it would be interesting to have some kind of public debate on this.

[63] **William Powell:** I would be happy with that. It would provide a useful context for further work. I can, potentially, see it leading to a short report and even going to the floor of the Assembly. Are colleagues content to hold a short series of evidence sessions?

[64] **Russell George:** I think that that would be sensible. I have also met a petitioner, but I

have met the one who presented this petition.

[65] **William Powell:** That makes it even more even-handed.

[66] **Russell George:** I agree with everything that Elin has said. It would be very useful for the committee to do that.

[67] **William Powell:** I should declare that I have responded to some e-mail correspondence from the petitioner on the charitable chaplaincy campaign, who has been fairly active.

[68] Excellent; let us do that. In addition, in line with our normal practice, we should write to the Minister for Health and Social Services on this matter, making him aware of this petition. It would also make sense to alert him to the existence of the other petition and the fact that we have already received correspondence from his predecessor, Lesley Griffiths, on that issue. He may wish to take a slightly different position or, indeed, a radically different position, but we will await the outcome of that. However, it would make good sense to deal with this in the round.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed.

9.24 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[70] **William Powell:** The first petition here is P-04-421, Oppose Trident moving to Wales. This petition was submitted by Mabon ap Gwynfor in October 2012, and Mabon had the support of 1,236 petitioners. We recall the context of this: the First Minister's remark in Plenary, back in the summer, I believe, if my time frame is correct. We last considered this petition in January 2013 and we wrote to the UK Government and the Milford Haven Port Authority. We have a very clear response from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces that there is not any scenario planning around this eventuality. We have also had a fairly clear response from Mr Alec Don at Milford Haven Port Authority that it is not high on his agenda either. So, in the context of the clarity of what we have heard from Carwyn Jones, Mr Robathan and the port authority, and the lack of response from Mabon ap Gwynfor—who, I think it is fair to say, has been fairly responsive on issues in the past—I would suggest that we should move to close this petition. I do not know whether colleagues would support me in that move. Joyce, you indicated that you wished to come in.

[71] **Joyce Watson:** I did, because I happen to live not too far from Milford Haven. I move that, at this stage, we close the petition. It is always open to people to present another petition, should there be any difference of opinion or movement later on—

[72] **William Powell:** Yes, as a result of the referendum itself—

[73] **Joyce Watson:** I have no doubt that they will. So, I think that, at this stage, with the very clear messages that Trident is not coming to Milford Haven, that is all that we can do.

[74] **William Powell:** I am grateful for that contribution. Are colleagues agreed on that course of action? I see that you are.

[75] We now move to P-04-366, Closure of Aberystwyth Day Centre. As we will recall, this was submitted by Pamela Ellis in February 2012 with the support of 10 signatures, and

associated petitioning had led to in excess of 6,000 signatures being received. We have done a significant body of work as a committee on this. We had the rapporteur visit, which was attended by Bethan Jenkins and me. Also, prior to her joining the committee, Elin Jones was present at that session as the local constituency Member. I also know that Joyce has had significant involvement with this issue at an earlier stage. We last considered this petition in February and we wrote to Ceredigion County Council. In addition, the petitioner has provided further information. We have access to both sets of information in our public papers. The key thing now, it appears to me, is to have sight of the findings of the independent review. You will see that the concerns expressed by the petitioners around the potential conflicts of interest or contamination in some way of the independence of the reviewer were not regarded as having a basis by the county council, which might or might not seem surprising. The key thing now, I would have thought, is to get access to that information. Would it not make sense for us to write to Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn at Ceredigion council to request—we cannot do any more than that—that the cabinet shares the findings of the independent review with this committee, so that we may hopefully bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion? Without seeing that report and its key findings, we are rather in the dark.

[76] **Elin Jones:** It would seem perfectly fine to do that.

[77] **William Powell:** Are colleagues happy with that approach to take this forward? I see that you are.

[78] The next petition is P-04-408, Child and Adolescent Eating Disorder Service. This petition was submitted by Helen Missen in July 2012 and collected 246 signatures. It is looking for an equalisation of service level between child and adolescent eating disorder services in Wales and those available to adults. We wrote, in October 2012, to Beat Cymru and we have received significant further information from the petitioner. We have access to that information in our papers. There are some really quite alarming implications according to the material that has been submitted, particularly around the difficulties that exist because of the fact that the critical phase is the early years, which is when eating disorders become established. So, I think that there are things that we need to take forward here. I will just open this up to colleagues for them to comment as to how best to achieve that. Joyce, you have indicated that you have a comment.

9.30 a.m.

[79] **Joyce Watson:** There is an all-party group on eating disorders. I know it is not normal for a committee to ask an all-party group to do things, but I am just trying to think how we are going to fit in the work that we need to do. I read this with interest, and there were several issues here, not least GP referrals and awareness-raising among GPs, which was one of the key issues. That would be a key issue, quite clearly, because it is at that point that people go into the right treatment or not. I do not know whether the all-party group on eating disorders could help us out here—I do not know whether we can even ask it to do that. The alternative, of course, is that we try to find some time and I do not know how much time we have to look at this.

[80] **William Powell:** I think it would be sensible for us to write to Bethan Jenkins as chair of the cross-party group, of which I am also a member, to seek her views around the capacity issues. I know that there has been quite a bit of recent activity involving Beat Cymru, and some awareness-raising work has been done recently. I think it would be sensible for us to write to Bethan on that matter. Also, given some of the issues that have been raised in the papers that we have received, it would, surely, be sensible for us to write to the new Minister for health. Again, it would be his first connection with the petition. In light of the answers, we could possibly look to invite both the petitioner and the Minister, and possibly representatives from the cross-party group, to come here to give evidence before the end of this term, if that

can be scheduled. If we do it in a step-by-step way, it makes sense, but this is something that we need to do some further work on, for the reasons that we have identified.

[81] Moving now to P-04-413, Maternity Services in the Cynon Valley, submitted by Sarah Gait in October 2012 with the support of 406 signatures, we last considered this petition back in January, and we wrote to Cwm Taf Local Health Board. We have quite a substantial response to our letter, which is available in the papers, and it explains fairly clearly the rationale for the action that it has taken. There would potentially be merit in our sharing that with the petitioners. I am not quite clear how much more mileage there is here, but perhaps we could write to the petitioners to share that information. The petitioners may have already received that information separately, but just to bottom that out. Are colleagues happy with that approach, and then we will see what the response is? I see that you are. Thank you.

[82] Moving now to P-04-448, Improve Sexual health services for Western Vale, this petition was submitted by Rebecca Lowrie in January of this year, and collected 16 signatures. As you will recall, we first considered this back in January, and wrote to the then Minister for Health and Social Services and Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board, and we have the responses from both here. As you will have read, there is no present threat to the current service provision in the western vale according to the LHB, but clearly there is, in the view of the petitioner, significant inequality of service in terms of the number of sexual health clinics provided in areas such as Barry and elsewhere in the vale and this particular service, which covers a much wider area. We have had the opportunity to read about the review being carried out into sexual health services in the area. So, I would suggest that we write back to Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board to seek clarity on the time frame of the review of sexual health service provision. In the light of that, we can, potentially, revisit this once we get a response. Are colleagues happy with that way of approaching it?

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

[84] **Russell George:** I agree.

[85] **William Powell:** I see that you agree. Good.

[86] We now move to P-04-449, Bridgend Princess of Wales—Save Our Services—Stop the Downgrade. This petition was submitted by Ian Matthew Spiller in January 2013 and has the support of 4,218 signatories. The text will refresh colleagues' memory about the different services that the petitioner feels are under threat as part of this exercise. We first considered this petition in January, and we wrote to the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board, and its response can be seen in the public papers. We have to be mindful of dealing with this in a way that is consistent with the whole raft of previous petitions that we have had in relation to Hywel Dda LHB and others. If we seek the petitioner's views on what we have heard from the chief executive of Abertawe Bro Morgannwg LHB in the first instance, that would probably make sense. Before proceeding very far, we need to await the publication of the service plans, which I think is imminent. If we write in the interim to seek the petitioner's views on the LHB's correspondence, that would make sense.

[87] **Joyce Watson:** I agree.

[88] **Elin Jones:** Yes.

[89] **William Powell:** Good.

[90] We move to P-04-452, Equal Rights for Tube-fed Youngsters. This petition was submitted by Dr Tyandra Blewett-Silcock in January 2013 with the support of 142 signatories. We first considered this petition in January and, at that stage, we wrote to a

number of different individuals and bodies. We wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services at the time, who was Lesley Griffiths, and we wrote to the Children and Young People Committee, to the Children's Commissioner for Wales and to Caerphilly County Borough Council. Their responses, along with additional information from Dr Blewett-Silcock, are in our papers today.

[91] As I recall from that January meeting, we as a committee indicated that we wished to undertake further work on this matter. I think that you, Joyce, made that suggestion, which we were happy to support. With that in mind, it is a question of who can best assist us in that. It depends on the readiness or otherwise of the Children and Young People Committee, for example, to take this forward. I think that this matter will be discussed at a future meeting. We cannot anticipate the outcome in terms of capacity, but we as a committee need to stand ready, potentially, to take this forward should we have a response that suggests that the Children and Young People Committee does not have the capacity in the fairly near future, because this matter needs to be taken forward reasonably promptly. So, let us see what the outcome is.

[92] Given that the petitioner has submitted more information, it would be sensible to share that, and I think that the petitioner would be happy with that and would support our writing to Caerphilly County Borough Council to share the additional concern. Given the change of Minister, it would probably make sense to write to Mark Drakeford, the new Minister, to check that this has reached him as part of the handover after the reshuffle. Are colleagues happy to follow that set of actions at the moment, while keeping in mind our commitment to do further work on this? I see that you agree.

[93] Next is P-04-457, The Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign, which was submitted in January 2013. We discussed this earlier in the context of the petition from Jim Stewart and agreed a set of actions. So, just to confirm, given the split in the way in which these appear in the agenda, that our plan, as agreed, is to take things forward and move to evidence sessions. Are colleagues happy to confirm that approach for the record?

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

[95] **William Powell:** Excellent. It may be useful for us to write to the Welsh NHS Confederation to seek its views on the wider issue. I did not mention that in relation to Jim Stewart's proposal, but I think that that would make a lot of sense, because it may have a relevant perspective on this. So, in other respects, we agree to go forward as we previously indicated.

[96] **Russell George:** Are we suggesting taking evidence not only from the petitioners, but from external bodies as well? Was that the suggestion earlier or did we not discuss that?

[97] **William Powell:** We did not get involved in the detail; we will scope that out when we are preparing the sessions. We would certainly wish to hear the views of all key stakeholders and the petitioners may well feed in some views themselves in terms of the people whose views they would like to see reflected.

[98] **Ms Stocks:** If there are people whom the committee feels that it particularly wants to take evidence from, it would be useful to know who those people are.

[99] **William Powell:** Yes, so that we ensure a fairly balanced approach to the whole thing. That is the commitment that we have.

[100] **Russell George:** Perhaps some thought could be given to that when the scoping work is carried out, as you said, Chair. We would obviously write to whoever is giving evidence

beforehand, asking them to submit evidence prior to them coming to committee, so that would be part of the process.

[101] **William Powell:** Yes, that makes sense. Also, the aspiration in Mr Stewart's petition to go into the realm of social care, which obviously relates to the local government family in terms of its side of things, moves away from the health service. So, at some stage, perhaps we need to involve either certain representative councils, the Welsh Local Government Association or someone from the Association of Directors for Social Services Cymru, because that would clearly be an additional aspect. However, I think that this is a level of detail that we should best return to when we have set aside more time.

[102] **Russell George:** That is fine.

[103] **William Powell:** Thank you for seeking that clarification.

[104] We move now to P-04-418, Naming the A470 'Prif Ffordd Tywysog Owain Glyndŵr'. This petition was submitted by Sian Ifan in October 2012, with the support of 111 signatures. We last considered this petition in January 2013 when we decided to seek the petitioner's response to correspondence from the then Minister, Carl Sargeant. We have not received a response from Sian Ifan, who is active in other petitioning activity at the moment. So, I think that it may be fair to conclude that this particular proposal has run its course and that we should close the petition. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

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

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

[107] **William Powell:** Excellent. We move on to P-04-435, Wales & Border Railways Franchise 2018 to be Operated on a Not-for-Dividend Basis. This petition was submitted by Merlyn Cooper in November 2012 and he had the support of 35 signatures. The petition states:

[108] 'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the next the Wales & the Border franchise is operated on a not-for-dividend basis.'

[109] We first considered this petition in November, shortly after its submission, and we wrote at that stage to the then Minister for Local Government and Communities, whose brief included transport. We have a response from Carl Sargeant in the public papers. This is quite interesting, given that we have had a change of Minister in the interim, and so we will have to contemplate whether we should have this matter refreshed with the new Minister. It would be useful to share the ministerial correspondence that we have with the petitioners to seek their views on it, because it appears that they seem to be on the money, potentially, in terms of the Government's thinking, or that the Government seems to be open to this sort of approach. What do colleagues think about this? Would that be a sensible step?

9.45 a.m.

[110] **Joyce Watson:** I agree with that and I know that we will all agree with Carl Sargeant's letter on the mess that there was in the south-east, where they got that franchise wrong and it cost a great deal of money. So, the precautionary approach that we have is the right one. Let the petitioner know that and see where we go from there. However, we will not go anywhere until we are at the end of what will probably be a very long process.

[111] **William Powell:** I agree. It would be sensible for us to write to Merlyn Cooper, flagging up the correspondence. Also, it would seem to be consistent with our earlier

approach to flag up the existence of this petition with Edwina Hart, the new Minister with responsibility for the transport portfolio, because it might not be uppermost in the hand-over brief and it would be useful for her to be aware of it.

[112] We move now to another issue where that particular Minister plays a key role, namely P-04-446, Business Rate Relief for Welsh Charity Shops. The petition was submitted by the Charity Retail Association, which is a major UK umbrella body, in January 2013. Associated petitions collected 22,000 signatures, and all of us will have had these matters brought to our attention in our mailbags and e-mail boxes. The petition calls on,

[113] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reject proposals which will restrict the vital business rate relief for Welsh charity shops.’

[114] We wrote to Mrs Edwina Hart back in February 2013 and you can see her response among the public papers. Her message is the old John Major adage of ‘wait and see’ what the Minister has to say on this matter. So, that is probably our best strategy at this time. There is no further action other than to hold off and see what is in the detail of the Minister’s announcement on this matter before we can take anything further forward. Are colleagues happy with that?

[115] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, but not with your quote. [*Laughter.*]

[116] **William Powell:** It is in a different context. They are two very different personalities, clearly.

[117] We will now move to P-04-441, Gwaith i Gymru—Work for Wales. This petition was submitted by Cerith Rhys Jones in December 2012 with the support of 129 signatures. We last considered this back in February and we wrote to the petitioner. We have the petitioner’s response in our public papers. Also, the Deputy Minister for Skills, Jeff Cuthbert, made a statement to Plenary back in March on additional funding for apprenticeships, which was broadly welcomed across the board. It would make sense for us at this time to write to Colegau Cymru, the National Training Federation for Wales and potentially also to Careers Wales to broaden out our understanding of their perspective on this petition, just to get a fuller picture.

[118] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, you are absolutely spot-on. There are things that we all understand and it is great to see that people are interested, as are we all, in employing and securing the future of young people. I believe that there are ways of doing that. I absolutely support the idea that the Petitions Committee is one way to seek information. However, I have to say—and I said this last time—that I cannot support what is clearly political parties, which already have in-roads into the Assembly, using this as an avenue to gain information that they could clearly have gained anyway as members of that party, whichever party it was. I would be saying this even if it were a youth wing of the Labour Party. I think that it works against this Petitions Committee and the way that it was set up in order to give a voice to those who do not have one. I clearly do not like some of the things stated in the letter because they are pure politics. Again, it just adds to my thinking that this is not about political parties using this as an opportunity to hit another political party over the head with their statements. However, having said all that—and I had to say all that, and I would say it, as I say, whichever party was involved—I agree that we can write, as you suggested, Chair, to the other organisations, and see what responses we get.

[119] **William Powell:** Thank you for that. I think that it is fair to note that, partly, this petition coming forward, with a party name in its main text, has triggered some review of practice in this area, which is now in place, with regard to the future. However, we cannot disallow this petition, because it came through in the regime as it was previously. Therefore,

your comments may well have merit in that respect. I feel that I ought to give Elin Jones the right to comment as, although Joyce's comment was not partisan in the way that it was delivered, it nonetheless contained some criticism for this particular petition, which is in Elin's party's name. I think that I ought to give you the opportunity to comment, Elin, should you so wish.

[120] **Elin Jones:** I will only comment on the fact that I believe that it is right that this committee is considering further how it deals with situations such as this. To be fair to the petitioner, in this respect, he has not chosen in any way in his response to hide the fact that this petition has a party political slant to it. So, at least he is upfront and honest with the committee in that respect. Therefore, I will not comment on the content of the petition, in light of my party membership.

[121] **William Powell:** In the spirit of not intruding on any partisan disturbance, I see that Russell George has indicated that he wishes to speak.

[122] **Russell George:** It is interesting to note that Elin Jones, a member of Plaid, has just spoken, and she was right to speak. It contradicts what Joyce Watson said earlier in the meeting. I believe that, if you are a member of a particular organisation, you can still speak in this committee, as Joyce Watson has done on many occasions. That is a point that I would like to make, Chair.

[123] **Elin Jones:** I will just comment on the fact that I made no comment on the content of the petition, only on the process.

[124] **William Powell:** If we can end on a note of consensus, we have agreed to write to Colegau Cymru, which is vital in delivering the training and making people work-ready, as well as to the National Training Federation for Wales, and to Careers Wales. They are three bodies that have something major to contribute to the consideration of this petition, which we are committed to doing.

[125] The next petition is P-04-458, Keep Further Education in the Public Sector. This petition was submitted by the Crosskeys branch of the University and College Union in February, and it collected 246 signatures. We first considered this petition in February, soon after receiving it, and we wrote at that time to the Minister for Education and Skills. The response, as well as further information from the petitioner, is included in the public papers. It might have merit for us to share some of the additional specific concerns that the Crosskeys branch of UCU has flagged up in its letter. We could share these concerns with Leighton Andrews, the Minister for Education and Skills, because there is that sense that his correspondence did not address the first section of the petition, namely bullet point 1. Therefore, if we do that, it will move things a step or two further forward. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are.

[126] We now move on to P-03-144, Guide Dogs for the Blind—Shared Space. This is one of the longest standing petitions that is still open before the committee; it dates from June 2008. It was submitted by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and it collected the support of 10 organisations, so it had very significant support at that stage. We last considered the petition in February, and we wrote to the Chair of the Enterprise and Business Committee, Nick Ramsay, as well as to the then Minister for Local Government and Communities, whose brief included transport. The response from the Enterprise and Business Committee can be seen in the public papers. The petitioners themselves are giving evidence later this week to the Enterprise and Business Committee, on which we have a Member in the form of Joyce Watson. So, I think that the best thing is to await the consideration of the Active Travel (Wales) Bill by the committee. Would you like to say anything, Joyce, in anticipation of taking that evidence later this week?

[127] **Joyce Watson:** We have taken comprehensive evidence from all sides, so when that report comes out, it will have considered all the angles and this will be one of them in relation to that Bill. It would not add any value for us to do anything additional to that at this stage.

[128] **William Powell:** Excellent. It is good to have you as part of that committee, so that you are able to feed back specifically and directly at the appropriate time. Are colleagues happy with that approach to allow that to take its course? I see that you are.

[129] The next petition is P-03-447, Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke. This petition was submitted by Nathen Amin in January of this year and he had the support of 144 signatures. The committee first considered this interesting petition back in January and we wrote to the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage and a number of stakeholders with a potential interest in the matter. We received responses from the then Minister, Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, and indeed the petitioners, and these are all available to us in our public papers. There are a couple of people whose views would be useful in this matter. We have not as yet consulted Pembroke Castle Trust, and, as a courtesy, it would also be sensible to write to the chair and clerk of Pembroke Town Council, given that the proposal is very much in its manor, so to speak, to seek its views on the petition. Clearly, there is no money coming forward to erect this particular statue, but the petitioner has a partial win in terms of the proposal to look at dedicating some interpretation work within Pembroke to pick up this theme, particularly the heritage of the Tudors locally. So, that is a useful gain in any event. Are colleagues happy that I write on the committee's behalf to Pembroke Castle Trust and the town council? I see that Members agree. It would also be useful to write to John Griffiths, the new Minister, to flag up the existence of this petition, which may well be a matter of interest to him, and also to get some more information as to the time frame for the development of the interpretation panels for the later Middle Ages in Pembroke. I see that everyone agrees.

[130] The next petition is P-04-344, Freshwater East Public Sewer. We received this petition from Royston Thomas in November 2011, so this has been around for a certain period, and he has collected 106 signatures. We last considered this petition in October 2012 and we agreed to return to the issue once the then Environment Agency Wales had made its recommendations. A response was received from the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development. So, I think this is win-win. Enforcement action has not been taken, so we will write to Royston Thomas noting that fact, and it will perhaps be a matter of some celebration locally that this is happening in a way that accords with local opinion. Are colleagues happy that we close the petition? I see that you are.

[131] We will move on now to a major issue on our agendas during the course of the last year or so. We have already established the pattern of considering the following three petitions collectively. These petitions are P-04-406, Against Proposed MCZ zones in North Wales; P-04-411, Petition Against Marine Conservation Zones in Pembrokeshire; and P-04-415, Support for Designation of Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zones.

10.00 a.m.

[132] Colleagues who were present will recall that we received the first of these petitions from Claire Griffiths in July 2012 when we were in north Wales on other business at Wrexham. This has the support of 6,501 signatures, and the *Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald* was also very active in promoting this particular campaign. The specific petition to Pembrokeshire is P-04-411, which is the Petition Against Marine Conservation Zones in Pembrokeshire. That was submitted by Stephen De-Waine in October 2012, and he had the support of 586 signatures. Finally, on the counter side of this matter, we have P-04-415, Support for Designation of Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zones. This petition was

submitted by Blaise Bullimore in October 2012, and Mr Bullimore had the support of 298 signatures. This was endorsing in a fairly robust way the Welsh Government's proposed development of MCZs, and runs contrary to the direction of the two earlier petitions. We last considered all three petitions in January, when we wrote to the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development and to the petitioners. The responses in the public papers are interesting; everybody feels that the others have had more air time than them. Perhaps in some sense the consultation was more successful and even-handed than we had thought. However, everybody has a feeling that the other side of the argument has had more air time.

[133] I should also acknowledge the meeting that Elin Jones organised on matters related to this with the Welsh Fishermen's Association last summer, which was extremely well-attended. That was an important opportunity, and maybe Elin will wish to speak briefly on that. On balance, I think it would be sensible for us to write to the newly appointed Minister for Natural Resources and Food to bring him up to speed with the views coming back from the petitioners, with their different perspectives on the issue, highlighting that both sides have significant concerns about the consultation process, and to discuss with Alun Davies, if he is in listening mode, the lessons that might be learned in relation to taking forward future consultations. Of course, we need to await the findings of the MCZ task and finish group. Are colleagues happy with that broad approach? Elin, given that you have taken a lead on some of these matters with the Welsh fishermen, is there any particular aspect that was of interest to you on this one?

[134] **Elin Jones:** No, I do not think that I need to add anything to that. The critical part will be the Minister's response to the task and finish group.

[135] **William Powell:** Indeed. So, we will share the feedback from both petitioners. I should note that the Pembrokeshire petitioners did not take the opportunity to respond, and therefore I was not able to refer to their views, because we have not heard them. We will take that forward and see what the Minister has to say when this is at the top of his agenda for us.

[136] The next petition is P-04-419, Wind Farm Moratorium. This petition was submitted by James Shepherd Foster in October 2012 and had the support of 1,332 signatures. We have extensive text here that we are familiar with from previous consideration regarding the case, as the petitioners see it, for such a moratorium. I should say that this petition excludes wind power controlled by the National Infrastructure Directorate. We last wrote as a committee in January to the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development and to the petitioner, Mr James Shepherd Foster, and we have their responses in our public papers.

[137] We now have a new Minister moving into this brief in the form of Carl Sargeant, the Minister for Housing and Regeneration who has responsibility for planning; he is entering the wind energy arena in a major way. So, it would be sensible for us to write to Carl Sargeant to flag up the issues raised by the petitioners and what they have highlighted in their correspondence to give him a flavour of their views. Are colleagues happy with that way of going forward?

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

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

[140] **William Powell:** Okay. The next petition is P-04-428, Alternative energy for street lighting. This petition was submitted by Ethan Gwyn in October 2012, and has the support of 22 signatures. We last considered it in January and wrote to Tim Peppin, director of regeneration with responsibility for energy at the Welsh Local Government Association. The WLGA's response is in our public papers. It is clear that the WLGA and, from previous correspondence, the Welsh Government, are not in favour of producing guidance in this area

and do not see this as a relevant priority for their portfolios. So, it is probably time for us to close this petition. I do not know of any further action that we can usefully undertake, unless colleagues have a different view. Do you have any thoughts on this at all?

[141] **Russell George:** I am happy with that approach.

[142] **Elin Jones:** Have we had a response from the petitioner to the WLGA's response?

[143] **William Powell:** No, we have not. Rather than taking that judgment call, on reflection, I suppose that, for consistency, we should do precisely that.

[144] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, we should get that response.

[145] **William Powell:** Yes, let us write to the petitioner to seek his views on this matter. In the light of his response, we will decide how to take forward the petition, or to close it, as I advocated earlier. I see that you are all in agreement with that.

[146] The next petition is P-04-363, Town Centre Improvement Scheme for Fishguard. This petition was submitted by Bob Kilmister in February 2012 and has the support of over 1,000 signatures. It calls on the Welsh Government to work actively with Pembrokeshire County Council and other partners to ensure further improvement in Fishguard town centre. We last considered this in January and we wrote to the then Minister for Local Government and Communities, Carl Sargeant. We also wrote to Bryn Parry-Jones at Pembrokeshire County Council to seek his views on the matter.

[147] Interestingly, we are again in a wait-and-see situation here. There is a sense that there could well be something in the pipeline, but we do not have clarity on it at present. It might be sensible, particularly now that economy and transport have been brought together in Edwina Hart's portfolio, for us to flag this up with her and see whether we can get more clarity on what is cooking here, because there is something under way. Joyce, you will be familiar with this, as it is on your home patch; so, you will be aware that there are significant local needs there. Let us see whether we can coax out some more information, so that the chamber of commerce, Councillor Kilmister and colleagues there are made aware of developments. Let us keep the petition open and write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport and, potentially, the new Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Carl Sargeant, to ask for a time frame and about how he feels that the new regeneration framework may be relevant to bringing forward this particular scheme. Are colleagues happy with that combined approach? I see that you are; excellent.

[148] Thank you very much for your attendance and contributions this morning. I note that the next meeting will be on 30 April. I remind colleagues that we have two petition presentations, one of which is on 23 April and that is with regard to the control of dogs. That is on Tuesday next week, and, on Wednesday next week, on 24 April, there is a presentation on a petition regarding road safety on the A48 at Chepstow. Diolch yn fawr iawn. Thank you very much indeed.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.10 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.10 a.m.*