



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau  
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 21 Mehefin 2011  
Tuesday, 21 June 2011**

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

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

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**

**Committee members in attendance**

Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol**

**National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Joanest Jackson	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior Legal Adviser
Sarita Marshall	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.28 a.m.*

*The meeting began at 9.28 a.m.*

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

**Christine Chapman:** Bore da. I welcome everyone to the first meeting of the Petitions Committee in the fourth Assembly. I extend a particular welcome to our new Members, Bill Powell and Russell George.

Participants are welcome to speak in Welsh or English. Headsets are available for the public to hear the translation and for amplification of the sound. Channel 0 provides amplification only, and the translation is available on channel 1. I remind everyone to switch off any mobile phones because they affect the sound system. If the fire alarms sound, the ushers will tell everyone what to do and, if necessary, they will direct you to the fire exits.

We have not received any apologies for absence today.

9.29 a.m.

**Gweithdrefnau ac Arferion Gweithio'r Pwyllgor Deisebau  
Petitions Committee Procedures and Working Practices**

**Christine Chapman:** The previous committee agreed a set of procedures. As a new committee we need to agree on how we wish to work, and the previous committee procedures are a good starting point. Decisions made by the committee are not binding and I think that they should be revisited regularly to ensure that the committee is working effectively. We also have a paper on the approach that the Petitions Committee takes to public engagement work. I know that you will have read these papers, so are there any comments?

**Bethan Jenkins:** I propose that we allocate 10 minutes for presentations on petitions so that we have more flexibility for questioning the petitioners when they come in to see us. With regard to the second paper, on outreach and public engagement, there should be more

emphasis on social media and the way in which we would engage with people who want to take part in the process in that way.

**Christine Chapman:** Are other Members happy with that?

**William Powell:** Yes. I think that some flexibility would be good, because we could then decide whether we wanted a shorter presentation from petitioners or wanted to ask them in-depth questions. In terms of the social media side, it is a no-brainer.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you. We will therefore amend those papers accordingly.

9.30 a.m.

### **Deisebau Newydd New Petitions**

**Christine Chapman:** The first new petition is P-04-319, on Newtown traffic. This petition was raised by Paul Pavia and collected 10 signatures. An associated petition collected approximately 5,000 signatures, and calls for an early start date for the construction of the Newtown bypass and for the installation of a roundabout at the Kerry road junction.

**Russell George:** I declare an interest, as I was involved with that petition.

**Christine Chapman:** Thank you. As a starting point, are you happy for me to write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities to seek views on the issues raised by the petition? I see that you are.

The next new petition is P-04-320, on social housing policy. This petition was raised by Adam Brown and collected 45 signatures. It calls for a review of social housing policy. Again, are you content for me to write to the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage seeking his views on the issues raised by the petition?

**William Powell:** That would be a good first step.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you. The next new petition is P-04-322, to revise Cadw's hold upon churches. This petition was raised by Graham John and collected 147 signatures. It calls for an investigation into the way in which Cadw enforces regulations upon churches. We recently received some more background information to the petition. Again, are you happy for me to write to the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage seeking his views on the issues raised by this petition?

**Bethan Jenkins:** We could also ask him about the Government's plans regarding the heritage protection Bill and how that may fit in to the context of this particular petition, if at all.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, are you happy to do that? I see that you are.

The next new petition is P-04-323, 'Save our small schools from closure'. This petition was raised by Leila Kiersch and collected 244 signatures. It calls for support to be given to enable councils to keep small schools open.

**William Powell:** I declare a general interest. I am not involved with this particular petition, but I have been involved with a number of small schools' campaigns across Powys and elsewhere.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, that is fine. Are you happy for me to write to the Minister for

Education and Skills seeking views on the issue raised by this petition? We could also write to the Children's Commissioner for Wales to seek his views. Should we do anything else?

**Bethan Jenkins:** I think that those two actions are okay for now. It would also be interesting to write to Funky Dragon, the youth parliament, to see if it has any policies on this.

**Christine Chapman:** That would be useful.

The next new petition, which we will receive formally at 12.30 p.m. on the steps of the Senedd, is P-04-324, entitled 'Say no to TAN 8— windfarms and high voltage power lines spoiling our community'. This petition was raised by John Day and collected over 3,000 signatures, and related petitions have collected approximately 13,500 signatures. It calls for the Welsh Government to undertake a public review of technical advice note 8.

**Russell George:** I sound like a right campaigner, but I declare another interest, as I was involved with this petition as well.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, that has been noted, Russell.

**William Powell:** The Liberal Democrat manifesto called for a fundamental review of TAN 8, and the party has since called for a moratorium on windfarm development, so I should probably declare a broad interest, although not as intense an interest as Russell's.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, that has been noted. By way of update, you will also know that the First Minister issued a statement last week stating that the TAN 8 capacity should be regarded as the upper limit and that the Government believes that this level of development is unacceptable in view of its wider impact on the local area. It calls for consents for major energy infrastructure projects to be devolved. There was a discussion on this yesterday. I know that there is a Welsh Conservative debate on this tomorrow. The petition will be formally presented today at 12.30 p.m.. As this is a new petition—although there has been a lot of activity before it formally came to this committee—are you happy initially for us to write to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development seeking views on the issues raised by the petition? Is there any other action that you would like to take on this?

**William Powell:** Would it also be appropriate to write to Chris Huhne, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, or should that be done at a later stage, given the First Minister's call yesterday for the devolution of powers to Wales?

**Russell George:** I agree.

**Bethan Jenkins:** The pylon element and the energy transfer are not within our control, so we could write to the UK Government Minister to ask for the Government's view—not that we could influence it in any way, shape or form on this agenda, unfortunately. Perhaps it is worth contacting groups, such as Friends of the Earth, that you think may be interested in this agenda to get opinions on the future of windfarms.

**Russell George:** We must remember that the petitioners are asking for a review of TAN 8, and the responsibility for the decision on that lies here in the Assembly. However, I am not quite sure what the protocol would be for gathering information. Chair, would you advise our writing to the relevant Minister before asking people to come in to give oral evidence? Is that the normal procedure?

**Christine Chapman:** Yes, that is a way forward. Usually, the correspondence is fairly quick, so we could get a response and then see what happens.

**Bethan Jenkins:** We could see whether we want to call them in after that.

**Christine Chapman:** Yes, we could look at that then.

The next new petition is P-04-325, raised by Mencap Cymru. It collected 45 signatures, and calls for an increase in funding to enable people with a learning disability to access mainstream post-16 education. Again, are you happy for me to write to the Minister for Education and Skills to seek his views? I see that you are.

**Christine Chapman:** The next new petition is P-04-326. It was raised by Friends of the Earth Cymru and collected 1,299 signatures. It calls for planning policy to be revised to provide a presumption against the building of incinerators. Are you happy to write to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development initially? I see that you are. Are there any other suggestions?

**Bethan Jenkins:** We could invite them in to give evidence once we have the response from the Minister.

**Christine Chapman:** Yes, once we have that correspondence. That completes the new petitions. We will look at those in more detail once the correspondence arrives.

9.39 a.m.

### **Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions**

**Christine Chapman:** The first update is on petition P-03-136, calling for solutions to parking problems around the Heath hospital in Cardiff. The previous committee—Bethan and I sat on that committee—agreed that this petition should be revisited as a matter of priority in the new Assembly. We do not have any new correspondence but, in correspondence to the previous Petitions Committee, the then Minister for Health and Social Services stated that all sustainable travel plans are reviewed annually and that this was expected to be completed by the end of July. The petitioner has recently notified us that he has written to the First Minister and to his constituency Assembly Member seeking a meeting with either the First Minister or the Minister for Health and Social Services, and has asked that the petition be deferred until the response has been received. We will wait to see what happens. Is there anything else that we need to do with this one? I see that there is not.

The next update is on P-03-162 calling for improvements to road safety in Llanspyddid. We have received correspondence from the petitioners. Do you have any thoughts on this?

**William Powell:** I make a declaration of interest, Chair. I know one or two of the activists; they have not raised the issue with me, but I know a couple of the people involved.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay. Do you have any thoughts on this one?

**Bethan Jenkins:** I think that we should write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities to ask for an update on when the work will be completed, highlighting the concerns about the length of time taken to complete the work, from what petitioners have told us.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, is everyone happy with that? I see that you are.

The next update is on P-03-236, calling for the adoption of the charter for grandchildren and

that it is made mandatory for those who work in child welfare. You will know that the interim report of the family justice review panel was published on 31 March. A consultation inviting responses closes on 23 June and the final report will be published in the autumn. There have been many discussions around this issue. Do you have any thoughts on this petition?

**Bethan Jenkins:** We could seek the petitioners' views on the interim report of the family justice review and ask whether it raises concerns. We could also write to the Families Need Fathers and Putting Children First charities. I hosted an event last week and met with grandparents who had been denied access to their grandchildren for no proper reason.

**William Powell:** Yes, that is an extra and tragic dimension.

**Christine Chapman:** That is a good idea; thank you. Is there anything else? Do we need to write to the Minister?

**Bethan Jenkins:** The Minister would have taken part in the review. Is there any evidence that we could access?

**Ms Stocks:** We can certainly check. I know that, when the family review was announced, it was a joint announcement between the UK Government and the Welsh Government, so they will, presumably, have fed in to that. We can certainly check on that.

**Bethan Jenkins:** I think that it would be Gwenda Thomas. If there is any evidence that she gave to that review, perhaps we could see it.

**Christine Chapman:** The next update is on P-03-256, which called for additional train services to Fishguard. We received correspondence from the former Deputy First Minister, and there was some good news there. Are you happy to close this petition and to produce a summary report? I see that you are; good.

The next one is P-03-263, which calls for Stradey Park to be protected. We received correspondence from the former Minister for Heritage. Are there any views on this one?

**Bethan Jenkins:** I think that, like the other one on heritage, we should wait to see whether the new heritage protection Bill will have an impact in relation to protecting sites of national interest.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, we can do that.

**Bethan Jenkins:** There was supposed to be a review of local listing, was there not? Can we clarify whether the heritage protection Bill will include a review of local listing, or whether the Government has done away with that?

**Ms Stocks:** In the Government response to the Save the Vulcan petition, that was one of the commitments made. When the committee reviewed that back in January, the then Minister said that the work was ongoing but that it had been put back slightly. So, in the correspondence, we could certainly seek clarity on that work.

**William Powell:** I see in the background papers that the heritage Bill has been delayed, and, although not in the long grass, it will be a lot longer until it comes into force.

**Ms Stocks:** That was the planned UK heritage protection Bill. In the First Minister's statement last week, there was a commitment to a heritage protection Bill for Wales.

**William Powell:** Okay, good.

9.45 a.m.

**Christine Chapman:** The next update is to P-03-271 and P-03-286 on business rates in Narberth and Ceredigion. These petitions are being considered together because they are similar. These call for an impact assessment to be undertaken in Narberth and Ceredigion to understand the impact of business rates on local communities and businesses. You will have seen correspondence from the Valuation Office Agency and from the petitioners. We are still awaiting correspondence from the Welsh Government. We need to chase that correspondence.

**William Powell:** Would it be appropriate to write to the Federation of Small Businesses and seek its view, or would it be unfair to seek out a particular body? I know that it has an extensive membership base.

**Christine Chapman:** We could, yes.

**Russell George:** We could also write to the Minister to ask about what the petitioners are asking for.

**Christine Chapman:** Yes, we could write to the Minister to ask for an analysis. Thank you, Russell. Are you happy with that? I see that you are.

The next petition, P-03-288, calls for a national strategy on independent living to be introduced. We have had correspondence from the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services and the petitioners, which you will have seen. How do you feel about this one? What action is needed?

**Russell George:** Can we ask the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services to give oral evidence to the committee?

**Christine Chapman:** Yes.

**Bethan Jenkins:** I think that the petition is based on the fact that the petitioners feel that, without having an independent strategy, they will get lost in the whole equality agenda. So, I would support that.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you. We will write to the Deputy Minister and invite her to come to the committee.

**William Powell:** Would there be a role here for the Welsh Local Government Association or is it too early in the process? Its services would be involved in supporting independent living.

**Christine Chapman:** It could be involved. Shall we wait for the Deputy Minister to give evidence? Then we can take it from there.

**William Powell:** That is probably the right order, yes.

**Christine Chapman:** The next update is to P-03-292, which calls for improvements to public toilet provision. The previous Petitions Committee felt that the new committee should consider whether it would be appropriate for further investigations to take place. Once the committees are established, you may think about whether we could ask one of those committees to undertake an investigation or review of this.

**Russell George:** It is a matter for county councils.



**Ms Stocks:** Part of the wording relates to the Government placing a statutory duty on local authorities to provide public toilet provision. During its previous consideration, the committee wrote to all local authorities to ask about their planning policy in relation to the provision of public toilets.

**William Powell:** There is also the trunk road dimension and the partnership between national and local authorities. There is a big tourist dimension here as well. I am sure that we need to look at that fully.

**Christine Chapman:** Yes. Are you happy for us to ask the relevant committee once it is established? I see that you are. I think that would be useful.

The next petition is P-03-293, which calls for a review of the school admissions code. We have had correspondence from the petitioners on this. We discussed this quite a bit, and they are happy. They have had the information, and you will have seen that they do not want to take this further.

**Bethan Jenkins:** It is about whether we choose to do the same type of thing and refer it to a committee. I do not know what committee it would be, but perhaps the successor to the Communities and Culture Committee.

**Christine Chapman:** Are you talking about the school admissions code?

**Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

**Christine Chapman:** The petitioners have said that they are happy to leave that one now.

**Ms Stocks:** They said that they accept that this is not likely to go much further and that they accept the Minister's decision.

**William Powell:** In that case, it would be a bit perverse to pursue it. [Laughter.]

**Bethan Jenkins:** Okay, well if they are happy.

**Christine Chapman:** So, are you happy to close the petition and produce a summary report? I see that you are.

The next update is P-03-294 on the representation of women, which calls for plans to be put in place to replace the work of the Wales Women's National Coalition. You may remember that we wrote to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government in October to ask for further details on how he planned to take this issue forward, and to obtain details on the time frame and who would be involved. We have now had a response from Jane Hutt, which I believe Members have seen. Jane Hutt has taken over responsibility for equalities from the former Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, and I will reiterate the details of her response. She says:

'As way of an update for your committee, you will wish to be aware that I am opening up a bidding round through the Advancing Equality Fund 2011-2013 for the establishment of an all Wales Gender Network.

'This network will develop membership comprising representatives of women's groups and communities from across Wales and will consult with this membership ensuring that the priorities and issues of women are heard and fed back to the Welsh Government and Ministers.

‘Once this network is established, which could be as early as September this year, I would be pleased to provide the committee with further details on its aims and objectives.’

Are you happy to write to the petitioners in order to obtain their views on this latest piece of correspondence? I see that you are.

The next petition is P-03-295, which calls for paediatric neuro rehabilitation services to be available in Wales. We received correspondence from the then Minister for Health and Social Services. What would Members like to do with this one?

**Bethan Jenkins:** I believe that the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care has agreed to update the committee once the planning process for 2011-12 has been completed. However, I think that we should write to the institute to seek that update and to ask whether paediatric neuro rehabilitation services have been included in the plan.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay. Are other Members happy with that? I see that you are.

The next petition is P-03-298, which calls for funding to be made available to develop Welsh-language resources for people with dyslexia. Correspondence has been received from the petitioners and from the Minister for Education and Skills. I believe that there was some to-ing and fro-ing on this, in respect of different information.

**Bethan Jenkins:** The Minister said in his letter that the need for Welsh-language materials would be considered and that he and his officials would look into the need for more resources to broaden the range of services. We could write to the Minister to ask him to clarify what he means by that, and to ask what provisions will be put in place. We could also ask whether this will be done as a matter of priority. As the Chair said, there has been some to-ing and fro-ing on this.

**Christine Chapman:** Yes, we need some clarity on this, and so we will proceed with that correspondence.

The next petition is P-03-301, which calls for greater equality for the transgender community. As Members know, the previous Petitions Committee took evidence on this. We suggested that the new committee should consider whether it would be appropriate for a further investigation to take place. We need to seek the petitioners’ views on the information that we have gathered so far. Do Members have any further thoughts? We could possibly write to one of the new committees on this, once they have been established, so that a fuller inquiry could be undertaken.

**Bethan Jenkins:** We need to get that done now because the committees will determine their work programmes quickly.

**Christine Chapman:** Yes.

**Bethan Jenkins:** We need to make sure that they talk about these issues.

**Christine Chapman:** Yes, that is a good idea.

The next petition is P-03-302, which calls for operations to be suspended at the Bryn compost processing plant until the odour pollution is dealt with. We have had a lot of correspondence on this, including correspondence from Environment Agency Wales. Do Members have any thoughts on this?

**Russell George:** I suggest that we ask the petitioners for their views following the

correspondence from Environment Agency Wales.

**Christine Chapman:** Yes, and we could also ask them whether there has been any improvement in the odour levels.

**Russell George:** Yes.

**Christine Chapman:** We now turn to a number of petitions—P-03-308, P-03-311 and P-03-314—that call for funding to be continued for the following theatres: Gwent Theatre, Spectacle Theatre, Theatr Powys and Mid Powys Youth Theatre. These are very similar issues. We have correspondence from the then Minister for Heritage and from each of the petitioners. You will see that we have responses from the Arts Council of Wales, too. So, are there any thoughts on this one?

**Bethan Jenkins:** We have a response from Gregg Taylor of Gwent Theatre, but we should formally seek the petitioners' views on ACW's response. We should also write to the new Minister with responsibility in this area because, in its manifesto, Labour said that it would commit to a review of theatre in education. Now that it is in Government, perhaps it can shine a light on the matter, given its commitment. We can also ask for a copy of the business plan assessment reports. We could not get access to the business plans because of confidentiality issues, but if there are assessment reports, I feel that we should be able to see them, as they may better inform the petitioners as to why they are in this situation.

I welcome the fact that ACW says that it is engaging with theatres, but there are ongoing concerns that need clarification.

**Christine Chapman:** So, there are a number of things that we need to do with this one. We need to seek clarity, and we will write to the new Minister. Are Members happy with that? I see that you are.

The next petition is P-03-316, which calls on the Welsh Government to make councils' acceptance of transport grants conditional to their continued employment of school crossing patrols. Members have had correspondence from the petitioner and from the Welsh Local Government Association on this matter. Are there any thoughts on this?

**Russell George:** We should seek the views of the Minister for Local Government and Communities, who now has responsibility for transport.

**Christine Chapman:** Are Members happy with that? I see that you are, so that is what we shall do.

Next is P-03-317, on Hijinx funding for arts. It calls for sufficient funding to be made available to Hijinx for it to be able to carry out its work with people who have learning disabilities. As you know, this petition was presented to us some months back on the steps of the Senedd. Correspondence has been received from the Arts Council of Wales and from the petitioners. Do we need to take any action on this one?

**Bethan Jenkins:** We need to get the view of the new Minister. My only concern is that the Unity Festival is imminent.

**Christine Chapman:** When is that to be held?

**Bethan Jenkins:** Gosh, I am not sure, but I know that it is soon as I am to attend. I am concerned that the funding issues will have to be dealt with retrospectively.

**Ms Stocks:** The petitioners told us that the critical point will come in the next financial year.

**William Powell:** So, they are secure for the moment, are they?

**Ms Stocks:** They are already having to make staff redundant, but their concerns were to do with having a more sustainable funding stream for the future.

**Russell George:** Could we ask the petitioners in to give oral evidence?

**Christine Chapman:** Are Members happy to do that? I see that you are, so we will do that. It is a good idea.

The final item—

**William Powell:** I should declare an interest for this item, as I am involved in some cross-border work on ambulance response times, and there is a link between that work and this issue with regard to the relevant health trusts.

**Russell George:** I, too, declare an interest in that I am involved in this petition.

**Christine Chapman:** Okay. Just for the record, this petition, P-03-318, calls on the Welsh Government to engage fully with the consultation process for the proposed changes to maternity services in Shropshire. We had correspondence from the then Minister for Health and Social Services. We also have correspondence from the UK Government Department of Health and from the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust. Are there any thoughts on this one?

**Russell George:** Did you say that you have had correspondence from the ministry?

**Christine Chapman:** Yes.

**William Powell:** We should write to the Powys Teaching Local Health Board and the Montgomery Community Health Council and ask for their views.

**Christine Chapman:** Is there anything else? Are you happy with that? I see that you are.

That brings us to the end of today's agenda. I thank you all for your attendance here today, and I thank the members of the public in the gallery. The next meeting of the Petitions Committee is scheduled for 5 July, which is two weeks from today. Thank you very much.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10 a.m.  
The meeting ended at 10 a.m.*