



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 3 Mehefin 2014
Tuesday, 3 June 2014

Cynnwys **Contents**

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol
Updates to Previous Petitions

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

Bethan Jenkins

Ceidwadwyr Cymreig
Welsh Conservatives
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
Steve George	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:01.
The meeting began at 09:01.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da, bawb, a **William Powell:** Good morning, everyone, chroeso yn ôl. and welcome back.

[2] Welcome to this meeting of the Petitions Committee, in the home straight before the summer period. We have no indications of any apologies and we hope to be joined by our colleague Russell George shortly. Normal housekeeping arrangements apply, so I propose that we move straight to agenda item 2.

09:02

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[3] **William Powell:** This item kicks off with P-04-557, Valuation Tribunal Service. This petition was submitted by Mr David Grant and it collected eight signatures online and a further five signatures on a paper petition. The text reads:

[4] ‘We, the undersigned, call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge Welsh Government to undertake a full review of the procedures, management and administration of the Valuation Tribunal Service for Wales and to produce an effective, transparent and accountable service for the people of Wales.’

[5] A couple of us were present—I think it was Bethan and I—to receive this particular petition from Mr Grant, and he elaborated on some of his issues at that time. However, we have not undertaken anything as yet. Given the subject area of concern, I would suggest that we write to the Minister for Local Government and Government Business first of all to seek her views on the petition. Are you happy with that approach? I see that you are. Thank you, colleagues.

09:03

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[6] **William Powell:** Moving now to agenda item 3, namely updates to previous petitions, we start with P-04-526, Please make Senedd TV accessible to deaf people. This petition was submitted, as you will recall, by Mr Mervyn James and it was first considered by the committee in January 2014. Mr James had collected 25 signatures in support. It calls on the National Assembly for Wales,

[7] ‘to provide subtitling and signed language access to televised debates and proceedings, to enable the 300,000 with hearing loss and deafness in Wales to follow the democratic processes hearing people already enjoy.’

[8] We last considered this petition on 25 March and we undertook a series of actions, including asking the petitioner for his response to the Presiding Officer’s earlier response and highlighting the Presiding Officer’s offer to facilitate a meeting to discuss the issues that were of concern. We also agreed to write to the Presiding Officer to seek clarification on the work that had been undertaken in relation to the pilot scheme, and for further information on why that had been put on hold. So, we have today, in our public papers, the latest response from the Presiding Officer on this issue and we have further comments from the petitioner. There seems to be some sort of crossover here in terms of some of the issues and perhaps a lack of clarity, from my reading of things, as to exactly what the petitioner is seeking. I would very much appreciate colleagues’ views on this as well. If I am missing the point somewhat, I hold my hands up. Joyce, did you indicate?

[9] **Joyce Watson:** I think that what we need to do now is to seek clarity. We have this information and it is possible that letters have crossed over—

[10] **William Powell:** It is possible, yes.

[11] **Joyce Watson:** —and I think that just to ascertain that would be a good thing. So, I think we should write back asking for clarity and whether the response that we received from the Presiding Officer addresses their needs to see whether, as an Assembly and as a committee, we are, as best we can, meeting what it is that they are requesting.

[12] **William Powell:** Yes. I was a little surprised that there does not seem to have been much in the way of take-up of the Presiding Officer’s kind offer to facilitate a meeting, which seems to be the best way forward, and, potentially, we can build that into the letter now to the lead petitioner. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

[13] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid wyf yn deall y ddeiseb, i fod yn onest. Nid wyf yn deall beth maen nhw’n gofyn amdano. Nid wyf yn siŵr os ydynt yn dweud ynglŷn ag iaith arwyddion eu bod eisiau cael symbol ar y sgrin i ddweud nad yw’r iaith arwyddion yn ddwyieithog, neu ei bod yn Saesneg yn unig. Felly, byddwn i jest yn licio deall beth yn union maen nhw am gael. Yn amlwg, maen nhw wedi deall nad ydym ni’n deall, ac felly byddai ysgrifennu yn ôl atynt i gael eglurder ar y sefyllfa yn dda. Fodd bynnag, os yw Rosemary Butler yn erfyn cyfarfod â nhw, byddai hynny’n ffordd well ymlaen. A ydym

Bethan Jenkins: I do not understand the petition, to be honest. I am not sure what they are asking for. I am not sure whether they are saying that they want a symbol on the screen to show that the sign language is not bilingual, or that it is English BSL only. So, I would just want to understand specifically what they are asking for. Clearly, they have understood that we do not understand, and so we should write back to them to ask for clarification. However, if Rosemary Butler wants to have a meeting with them, that would be a better way forward. Have we written to the BBC about this?

wedi ysgrifennu at y BBC ynglŷn â hyn?

[14] **William Powell:** I do not think so.

[15] **Bethan Jenkins:** Mae'n dweud am yr hyn y mae'r BBC yn ei wneud neu nad yw'n ei wneud, felly, efallai gallwn ni— **Bethan Jenkins:** It says about what the BBC is or is not doing, so perhaps we could—

[16] **Mr George:** Nid ydym wedi ysgrifennu at y BBC, ond mae rhywbeth yn llythyr y Llywydd sy'n esbonio'r trafodaethau maen nhw wedi eu cael gyda'r BBC, neu S4C efallai. **Mr George:** We have not written to the BBC, but there is something in the Presiding Officer's letter that explains the discussions that they have had so far with the BBC, or maybe S4C.

[17] **Bethan Jenkins:** Efallai byddai cyfarfod gyda Rosemary Butler yn dda, er mwyn iddi hi esbonio'r hyn mae'r BBC wedi ei ddweud wrthynt. **Bethan Jenkins:** Perhaps a meeting with Rosemary Butler would be good, then, for her to clarify what the BBC has told them.

[18] **William Powell:** I am very happy to make that happen and to build that into the next round of correspondence to get the clarity that Joyce was talking about. Obviously, Bethan is right to seek the specific points that the petitioner needs addressing. So, I think that we have a way forward on that one.

[19] We move on now to P-04-319, Newtown traffic petition. This petition was submitted by Paul Pavia and was first considered by the committee way back in June 2011, right at the start of this Assembly. It had collected 10 signatures, but an associated petition had collected approximately 5,000 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to undertake a series of actions that are detailed in the petition regarding the roundabout at the Kerry Road junction in Montgomeryshire and also seeks an early start date for construction of the Newtown bypass.

[20] We have considered this periodically during the course of the first half of this Assembly and most recently we considered correspondence on this petition back on 26 November last year. We agreed to write to the Minister, Mrs Edwina Hart, asking to be kept informed of further developments and she has been as good as her word in that respect and we have that update here in our public papers today. I know that those who either live in the centre of Newtown, or have offices on Park Street, as I do, will be aware of one of the two pieces of progress that have happened to which the Minister refers. I think, at this point, I should defer to Russell George, because he has indicated, and he is also fairly closely associated with this petition.

[21] **Russell George:** Yes. Thank you, Chair. I will just put on the record that I have been very closely involved with this petition, if I may. I agree with you. I live and have an office in Newtown as well, so I agree with your comments. I do not think that there is much that we can do at the moment other than thank the Minister for her letter and ask her to keep us updated.

[22] **William Powell:** Yes. I think that the emergence of the main contract winner and the communications exercise that is going on in the town are really positive, and I agree with you. Joyce has been involved with this issue over a long period as well. Do you have any comments to add at this stage, Joyce?

[23] **Joyce Watson:** Only to welcome progress because it has been some time coming. However, the Minister, as you say, has delivered. I think that that is good news. I think that it

is good news for the town.

[24] **William Powell:** Yes, indeed, and it is good for the wider economy, as we all understand. Excellent. Well, in that case, I think that we are agreed to await further updates from the Minister as they come forward.

[25] Sticking with the theme of transport and a Montgomeryshire/Powys-Gwynedd border issue, the next petition is P-03-315, which calls for a new Dyfi river crossing. As we remember, this petition was submitted by the South Meirionnydd Older People's Forum and was first considered by the previous committee to this, on which Bethan Jenkins served, in February 2011. It had gathered 3,204 signatures. We recall the themes that are emphasised in the petition about the importance of the Dyfi crossing linking south Merionethshire with Powys, Dyfed and, indeed, Ceredigion for people's quality of life and access to healthcare, concerns about which are emphasised again in the correspondence that we have received recently. Colleagues will recall that there had been a lengthy absence of response from the petitioners. However, I am pleased to say that Mrs Gwen Stevens has now re-engaged with the process and expressed some concerns about aspects of the detail, particularly around the routing proposals for the new crossing. However, at the same time, she welcomes the Minister's commitment to delivering it. We have a comprehensive update from the Minister on the next stage of this, but I think that what we see here is perhaps a bit of a conflict between the interests of the Machynlleth town economy, where the emphasis is on the fact that there should not be a bypass, and, potentially, the preferred route of some people who do not necessarily have that as their prime focus who have other concerns and who would prefer a route a bit further removed from the town. I think that that is the heart of the concerns I read in the petitioner's correspondence. However, at this stage, I think that it would be useful to share the views of the petitioner with the Minister. Russell George, you have indicated.

[26] **Russell George:** Yes. Thank you, Chair. I can see the views of the petitioner. There have been quite a few surveys and studies done within the town itself that have indicated that there should not be a bypass and I think that, in fairness, the Minister has responded to that and been quite clear that she does not think that there should be a bypass either. However, I am very pleased with the Minister on this—on the progress. She has kept her word on updating us and she has given us a comprehensive timetable of what is happening. So, I am very pleased with that. However, by all means, we can share the correspondence from the petitioner with the Minister in order to get her comments.

[27] **William Powell:** Indeed. As colleagues will be aware, the Minister has met representatives of the local business community in Machynlleth—Mr Hennighan and his colleagues on the local business forum as well as the town council—and their view has been pretty clear that they wish the route to progress along the lines that the Minister has decided on. Nevertheless, it would be inappropriate not to share the petitioner's views and I am sure that they may in some way influence some of the detailed implementation of this. However, again, I think that it is a positive—

[28] **Joyce Watson:** I do too.

[29] **William Powell:** It is a positive welcome we give to the steps to take this forward because it has taken a long time. Excellent. Thank you very much indeed.

[30] We move on now to P-04-487, A Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh home buyers. This petition was submitted by Sovereign Wales and was first considered by us back in June last year. It has the support of 17 signatures. As colleagues can see, we have quite an extensive wording to this petition explaining the petitioners' vision as to how such a scheme would enable up to 15,000 Welsh first-time home-buyers to benefit from its provisions, and how it would not just help to provide homes but also have regard to the

needs of the local economy.

09:15

[31] The petitioner references schemes that have been implemented successfully in the Peak district and in the north york moors national parks. It was interesting that just this morning I woke up to hear some comments from the European Commission about issues around schemes for encouraging home buying and so on, which sort of relates to aspects of what the petitioner is taking forward here. We have had quite a strong engagement from the Minister on these matters, and we can see the exchange of correspondence here between the Minister and the petitioner in terms of their ideas. Colleagues, what do you see as the best way forward here? We do not have a meeting of minds, but we do have an open ear and a listening Minister, I think, in terms of the last paragraph or so of his letter.

[32] **Joyce Watson:** I think that the only thing that we can do here as a committee—the debate between the petitioner and the Minister will happen, and is happening—is to round it off and to go back to the Minister, asking—

[33] **William Powell:** Yes, and we have some detail back from the petitioner, do we not?

[34] **Joyce Watson:** —for his views on the petitioners' further suggestions, which he actually said that he would welcome in his letter to them.

[35] **William Powell:** Yes. I noted that in the final paragraph. It is positively wanting to engage, which is encouraging.

[36] **Joyce Watson:** Exactly. I do not think that there is anything else that we can do.

[37] **William Powell:** No. Okay. We will share that latest response with the Minister for further feedback and consideration.

[38] We now move to P-04-536, Stop Factory Dairy Farming in Wales. This petition was submitted by the World Society for the Protection of Animals, and first considered by the committee in February 2014. It collected 9,246 signatures. We can see referenced in the text of this petition the particular highly controversial development at Lower Leighton Farm, near Welshpool, and the decision made on that, which was taken by the Minister on behalf of the Welsh Government. Clearly, it is a matter of significant local interest, and I am aware that Joyce might wish to speak briefly on this matter because she has previously declared involvement in the issues. Just to set the context, we first considered the petition on 18 February 2014, and we agreed to write to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration and, given the wider context, we agreed also to write to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food, seeking their views on the petition. We have a response from the Minister for planning, which is in our public papers. At this point, before we go any further, I should observe that we have had a detailed response from the petitioners in response to the Minister's earlier letter. However, given the continuing High Court case that is mentioned in the Minister's letter, I think that there may well be some issues concerning our rules on sub judice matters. I also understand that there may well be some data protection issues that need to be properly considered. Given that these documents are quite lengthy and arrived very shortly before the deadline for sending out papers, our legal advisers have not been in a position to give them full consideration. In that context, I would ask you to consider accepting that we defer consideration of this matter until our next meeting, which will enable us to give fuller consideration with the benefit of legal advice.

[39] **Russell George:** I am happy to do that, Chair.

[40] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I am happy to do that, Chair. We do not want to do anything that will jeopardise either position on this, and certainly not this committee. So, I do not think that we have any—

[41] **William Powell:** I feel it would expose us if we did. Given the lateness of the documentation and the sensitivity of the matter, that would certainly be my recommendation to the committee.

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

[43] **Bethan Jenkins:** Os ydym yn mynd i siarad am lythyr y Gweinidog yn y cyfarfod nesaf, rwyf eisiau pigo lan ar y paragraff lle mae'r Gweinidog yn dweud bod lles 10 anifail yr un mor bwysig â lles 1,000 o anifeiliaid. Rwy'n cydnabod hynny, wrth gwrs, ond mae'r sefyllfa o gael 1,000 o anifeiliaid mewn un lle yn wahanol i gael 10 anifail mewn lle arall. Felly, a allem fynd yn ôl at y deisebwyr i ofyn am eu barn nhw ar lythyr y Gweinidog inni, neu rwy'n hapus i aros os ydym yn mynd i fod yn trafod hyn mewn cyd-destun gwahanol yn y cyfarfod nesaf?

Bethan Jenkins: If we are going to talk about the Minister's letter in the next meeting, I want to pick up on the paragraph where the Minister says that the welfare of 10 animals is as important as that of 1,000 animals. I recognise that, of course, but the situation of having 1,000 animals in one place is different to having 10 animals in another place. So, could we go back to the petitioners to ask for their opinion on the Minister's letter to us, or I am happy to wait if we are going to be discussing this in a different context in the next meeting?

[44] **William Powell:** I would be happy to take advice from our legal section as to whether or not we can address that discrete item with the petitioners, so that we do not extend our discussion today.

[45] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am happy to wait.

[46] **William Powell:** I think that that would be neater overall.

[47] **Mr George:** There is a very lengthy response from the petitioners. I cannot say, hand on heart, that that particular point is addressed, but it may well be, so addressing it may be pre-empting it.

[48] **William Powell:** Okay, that is now on the record, and we will make sure that that particular point is built in when we discuss this at the earliest possible opportunity this term, because this matter obviously needs to be progressed. Thank you very much for your co-operation, colleagues.

[49] The next update is to P-04-447, Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke. This petition was submitted, as we will recall, by Nathen Amin and was first considered by the committee in January of last year. It enjoyed the support of 144 signatures. It quite simply calls upon the National Assembly for Wales to

[50] 'to urge the Welsh Government to fund a statue of Henry VII in Pembroke, town of his birth and birthplace of the Tudor Dynasty.'

[51] We will recall that there was previously a clear statement from the Welsh Government that it did not see itself in a position to fund this. Nevertheless, there has been very considerable interest locally and across Wales and broad support for the petition and its aims. We agreed when we last considered this back in January to highlight the petition to our fellow regional Members, to the constituency Assembly Members within the Pembrokeshire

area and also to request a research paper on what organisations might be best placed for the petitioner to be signposted to with regards to funding issues. We are grateful to the research service for the brief that it has supplied to us, which could also be of interest to people across Wales who are looking to take forward similar initiatives. It is a welcome piece of work. At this stage it would be sensible just to share that with Mr Amin and also with our fellow constituency and regional Members, so that they can take it forward themselves. Are colleagues happy with that?

[52] **Bethan Jenkins:** A ydym ni'n cau'r ddeiseb hon felly, achos mae'r Gweinidog wedi dweud nad yw'r Llywodraeth yn mynd i'w ariannu? Nid wyf yn gweld y pwynt i unrhyw beth ddod yn ôl atom ni. Rwy'n credu y byddai'n well i Aelodau Cynulliad lleol ymwneud â hwn.

Bethan Jenkins: Are we therefore closing the petition, because the Minister said that the Government is not going to fund it? I do not see the point in anything coming back to us. I think that it would be better for local Assembly Members to deal with this.

[53] **Joyce Watson:** I agree; we have done everything on this.

[54] **William Powell:** I think that we have exhausted every route, and this is the final action to enable those interested parties to take it forward. It appears that the petitioner, from earlier feedback that we have received, is pleased with his engagement with the petitions process in promoting something that obviously matters to him and to his colleagues. Okay, thank you very much.

[55] The next update is to P-04-539, Save Cardiff Coal Exchange. This petition was submitted by Mr Jon Avent and first considered by our committee in March of this year. It has the support of 389 signatures. An associated petition hosted elsewhere had collected 2,680 signatures. As we recall, the petition seeks,

[56] 'a commitment from the Welsh Government to set up a public enquiry into the events surrounding the Coal Exchange and to support public opinion which seeks to protect and conserve the building.'

[57] We have a kind of timeline outlined here, as we have previously read, from the petitioner's perspective, of what has gone on with regard to this precious building, which is so close to where we are sitting today. Obviously, there are a number of points of detail here that we have already been taking up. We considered correspondence on the petition last time and agreed to seek an urgent response from Cardiff Council to our request for information and, indeed, a visit to the building. We have got a response from Cardiff Council now on this matter in our public papers. We still have to chase up one of the attachments, because it still has not been forthcoming.

[58] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ai 'Saving the Coal Exchange' yw hwn?

Bethan Jenkins: Is this 'Saving the Coal Exchange'?

[59] **William Powell:** Indeed, yes.

[60] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwyf wedi darllen y pethau eraill, ond mae'n anodd cael cyd-destun heb ddarllen yr hyn y mae'r cyngor ei hun wedi'i gytuno ym mis Ionawr. Ai dyna'r ddogfen?

Bethan Jenkins: I have read the other things, but it is hard to get the context without reading what the council itself has agreed in January. That is the document, is it?

[61] **William Powell:** Absolutely. The most important thing is that we have an agreement from the council to take forward a site visit by this committee to the building. That was the

key point that we were seeking clarity on, and it is really welcome that we have that opportunity. We have also got late correspondence from the leader's office—

[62] **Mr George:** [*Inaudible.*]—

[63] **William Powell:** As I said, this is a late piece of correspondence from Mr Avent, and he has kindly supplied us with the letter. As this letter has just landed on the table, perhaps colleagues could take a brief opportunity to familiarise themselves with its content. It is indeed a commentary on the most recent letter of 7 May from the leader of the council, Councillor Phil Bale, to me. The key point that we have got from the council is its readiness to allow us to undertake a site visit.

[64] **Joyce Watson:** I also note, Chair, that it says that it is quite happy for the petitioner, with the agreement, of course, of all bodies concerned with this, to come along to the site visit. I always like balanced site visits. I always like to hear the whole story, so I would be happier if we had both sides, if you like, there so that we can hear the reason why the development is going the way that it is going and the reason why the petitioner thinks that it should not. For me, that completes the picture, and in the Petitions Committee we have to complete the picture for our understanding. In that vein, I would be keen to see both groups of people concerned at that meeting, to give us some explanation—I think that I would then get far more from it than listening to just one perspective.

[65] **William Powell:** I think that that call for a balanced approach to the site visit is very welcome, and in fact it ties in with the way in which this committee, in relatively recent times, has conducted two site visits in similar situations—to the former Denbigh asylum and indeed the mid Wales hospital. Bethan and I were involved in that particular rapporteur visit to the mid Wales hospital, where we met the would-be developer, Mr Phil Collins. We also had representatives from Save Britain's Heritage there. That kind of template—having both parties present—is good, and I welcome the fact that Councillor Phil Bale and Cardiff Council have indicated a readiness for the petitioner to be present, obviously subject to the approval of this committee, and I sense that that approval is here. However, it would also be useful to have the relevant section of the council giving an account of why it is seeking to take things forward in this particular way. Given the very last-minute nature of this correspondence, we cannot give the fullest consideration to this or make a textual analysis of every paragraph of it, but I think that we need to progress.

09:30

[66] I know that our team is already in live discussion with Cardiff Council, looking at dates that fit in with our timetable. We are conscious of entering the last phase of this Assembly term and this really needs to happen in the coming weeks. I hope that it will also be possible for those dates to be appropriate both for Mr Avent and for the relevant sections of the council senior officer wing to feed into the process as well. However, your point is very well made and it has certainly been the basis of successful and useful site visits in the past.

[67] **Bethan Jenkins:** I ddod yn ôl at y pwynt ynglŷn â'r adroddiad cabinet, mae nifer o bwyntiau'r deisebwr, hyd y gwelaf i, wedi'u cynnwys yn yr adroddiad hwnnw. Mae angen inni ei weld cyn ein bod yn mynd ar unrhyw ymweliad. Hefyd, nodaf gonsŷrn am y ffaith ei bod yn amlwg i mi nad yw'r deisebwyr yn ymwybodol o hynny, ac roedd y drafodaeth cabinet ym mis Ionawr. Felly, rhaid inni gwestiynu, os ydym yn cwrdd â'r **Bethan Jenkins:** To come back to the point about the cabinet report, a number of points that have come from the petitioner are, as far as I can see, included in that report. We need to see that before we go on any visit. Also, I note concern about the fact that it is obvious to me that the petitioners are not aware of that, and that cabinet discussion was in January. So, we have to question, if we are to meet with the council, how it has advertised

cyngor, sut y mae wedi hysbysebu yn eang yr hyn y mae'n ei wneud yn y maes hwn, o feddwl bod y deisebwyr yn *proactive* iawn, ond hyd y gwn i, ddim yn deall yn iawn beth sy'n digwydd.

what it is doing widely in this area, knowing that the petitioner is very proactive, but, as far as I am aware, does not know exactly what is happening.

[68] **William Powell:** That is absolutely true. The other issue is the ongoing concern that the petitioner emphasises in this most recently laid correspondence with regard to the appropriateness or otherwise of the section 78 powers that can—

[69] **Bethan Jenkins:** That is what I mean. It says that that was referred to in the cabinet papers, and we do not know—

[70] **William Powell:** We need to have sight of that. That is probably the missing piece of the jigsaw that we are still actively chasing, so we will stay on the case for that. Thanks for your participation in that one, and also, I very much welcome the fact that we have a commitment from the committee to go forward with a visit between now and the end of this term, because these matters are obviously of some urgency.

[71] We will move now to P-04-436, Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales. This petition was submitted by Stuart Evans and we first considered the matter in January of 2013. Mr Evans got an 27 additional signatures in support of the petition. It calls on the National Assembly for Wales

[72] ‘to urge the Welsh Government to put together a Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales report.’

[73] Mr Evans cited the Scottish example and the way in which the Scottish Government manages information around financial statistics. As colleagues will recall, we have considered this on a number of occasions, most recently on 10 September, and we agreed to write to the Minister again, asking her to specifically address the issues around the revenue part of the petition, particularly in the light of the recent Silk commission recommendations. We have had a couple of exchanges between the Minister on the one hand and then the feedback from the petitioner on the other. I am not clear that we are going to progress this a lot further, but I welcome colleagues' views and Bethan has indicated that she wants to speak.

[74] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwyf am ofyn a allem—nid wyf am gadw rhywbeth ar agor heb unrhyw fath o ddatblygiad—hala adroddiad yr Alban, y *government expenditure and revenue Scotland report*, i Weinidog Cymru, Jane Hutt, i dynnu sylw at y ffaith mai dyma'r union beth y mae'r deisebwr am i Gymru ei wneud, yn hytrach na chael trafodaeth yn ôl ac ymlaen ynglŷn â'r diffiniad o 'refeniw' ac yn y blaen. Gallem ddweud yn y llythyr, 'Dyma'r union beth y mae'r deisebwr yn gofyn amdano: a fedrwch chi wneud hyn?' Efallai y byddai hynny'n gliriach, ac wedyn gallem gael ateb 'ie' neu 'na' oddi wrth y Gweinidog. Mae ychydig yn annelwig hyd yn hyn, o'm persbectif i, ond byddai hynny yn un weithred derfynol er mwyn cael rhywbeth mas o'r sefyllfa, efallai.

Bethan Jenkins: I just wanted to ask whether we could—I do not want to keep something open without any sort of development—send the Scottish report, the government expenditure and revenue Scotland report, to the Welsh Minister, Jane Hutt, to draw attention to the fact that this is exactly what the petitioner wants Wales to do, rather than have a discussion going back and forth in terms of the definition of 'revenue' and so on. We could say in the letter, 'This is the exact thing that the petitioner is asking for: can you do this?' Perhaps that would be clearer, and then we could have some sort of 'yes' or 'no' response from the Minister. It is a little bit vague at present, from my perspective, but that would be one final action to perhaps draw something out of this situation.

[75] **William Powell:** I will need to check whether or not we have forwarded the substantive report.

[76] **Mr George:** We have forwarded it. I would be somewhat surprised if the Minister's officials have not accessed it, but we do not explicitly know that—

[77] **Bethan Jenkins:** No, we do not explicitly know that.

[78] **Mr George:** So, I am sure that our research department can dig that out, and if the committee wishes, we can send that to the Minister.

[79] **William Powell:** That might provide clarity because there has obviously been a bit of difficulty in addressing the specifics.

[80] **Bethan Jenkins:** We can close it if it does not.

[81] **William Powell:** Yes.

[82] **Joyce Watson:** Are we going to forward it? I would expect them to have looked at that, but, for clarity, I am quite happy to agree that. Are we moving to close it as well? That is what I wanted to be clear about.

[83] **Russell George:** I think so, Chair. Looking at the Minister's previous correspondence to us, I think that it looks like—

[84] **William Powell:** I think that there has been an extended exchange, and I think that Bethan's proposal is welcome, just in case this matter has not been addressed specifically by means of accessing the report. I think that that would make a lot of sense, while moving to close. It is a very dynamic situation, as we know—we have interesting proposals on the lockstep emerging from colleagues in Scotland—and it is one that we need to keep a close eye on. Thank you very much for your proposals in that regard.

[85] We now move to petition P-04-437, Opposing compulsory registration for home educating children. We have two related petitions here. The other petition is P-04-517, which I will come to in a moment. The first petition was submitted by Wendy Charles-Warner, and was first considered by the committee in November 2012. It had collected 1,614 signatures. It calls on the Welsh Assembly to abandon plans for a compulsory register for home-educated children as part of the draft Education (Wales) Bill, at that time.

[86] As I referred to earlier, there is a grouped petition—this was a decision that we made previously, to deal with them in a grouped fashion. It is P-04-517, Stop the Welsh Assembly Government from bringing in the monitoring of electively home-educated children under the guise of safeguarding. This latter petition was submitted by New Foundation Home Education, and was first considered by this committee in November of last year. It had the support of 864 signatures. We last considered the petition on 21 January of this year, and we agreed to await the petitioners' views on the Minister's earlier response. Critically, we have now a copy of Huw Lewis's written statement of 6 May, which is relatively recently—less than a month ago—in which he specifically addresses this issue. From my reading of it, he actually addresses the petitioners' concerns—I use 'petitioners' in the plural, because both petitioners are seeking something that he seems to exclude for the foreseeable future. So, in that context, I do not know whether I am being precipitative in suggesting that we close both petitions, but it does appear to me that we certainly need to write to both petitioners, flagging up the ministerial statement of 6 May.

[87] **Russell George:** I suggest, Chair, that we send the statement to the petitioners; I expect that they have seen it, but just for their information. If we do not hear back after that, then we move to close the petition, and we can agree to that now.

[88] **William Powell:** Yes, okay.

[89] **Joyce Watson:** There is an issue that has come up for me on this petition, namely that there has been a request by one of the groups of petitioners that we recommend to the Minister. I think that they need to be clear of our role in that—for some clarity. Also, they want to be actively involved in the next stage of development, and I suppose that that is at the Minister's discretion. So, they clearly asked us to write in that vein—that they are kept up to date, and are actively involved in the process as it moves forward. So, I am quite happy for us, as a committee, to write with that request to the Minister, but I also agree with Russell, and with your previous comments, Chair, that we have gone as far as we can, and that we need to close the petition.

[90] **William Powell:** Thank you very much for picking up on that point. I am very happy to write to Huw Lewis, sharing the kind offer from the lead petitioner, from the earlier of the two petitions—P-04-437—seeking an involvement in the work of developing non-statutory guidance on home education. I think that the target date for producing that is May next year, so that offer will be on the table and then the Minister will be able to respond directly. Potentially, we have a result here for both parties. We will all recall that, at the time of receiving these petitions, there was a real vehemence and a real concern out there that they were going to get caught up in an issue that did not really relate to them. It would be useful to share that written statement of 6 May with them both.

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

[92] **William Powell:** We move on now to P-04-448, Improve Sexual health services for Western Vale. This petition was submitted by Rebecca Lowrie and was first considered by this committee in January of last year. It has the support of 16 signatures. I will take the initial preamble:

[93] '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.'

[94] There is a significant body of additional information provided, with which we have had the opportunity to familiarise ourselves. We last considered this petition on 26 November and we agreed to write to the chief executive of Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board expressing concern at the lack of a response to our earlier correspondence and also copying in the Minister for Health and Social Services so that he is aware of a communications issue there. Despite further requests that I have put in writing and other acknowledgements and holding responses that we have had from the health board, we still have no substantive response on this issue, which is clearly of ongoing concern to the petitioners.

[95] I see no alternative now but to write to the Minister expressing our extreme concern about the lack of response from the health board. Given his previous statements and what we all know of him and his approach to these things, I can only assume that that matter will be of considerable concern to him and that he will seek to expedite a response and some explanation as to why we have not had one.

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

[97] **Bethan Jenkins:** Mae nodyn sy'n dweud ei fod wedi anfon e-byst—'holding e-mails'. Mae'n dweud ei fod yn mynd i ddod yn ôl atom, ond nid yw wedi dod yn ôl gydag unrhyw beth cynhwysfawr yn hynny o beth.

Bethan Jenkins: There is a note saying that it has sent holding e-mails. It has said that it will come back to us, but it has not come back to us with anything comprehensive in that regard.

[98] **William Powell:** Yes. I think that they are just standard, template acknowledgements, from what I recall. So, I think that enough is enough and—

[99] **Bethan Jenkins:** A yw'r cyngor iechyd cymuned lleol yn ymwybodol o hyn hefyd? Efallai y byddai'n dda dweud wrth y cyngor hefyd, fel y corff sy'n craffu ar y bwrdd iechyd.

Bethan Jenkins: Is the local community health council aware of this as well? Perhaps it would be good to let it know about this, as the body that scrutinises the health board.

[100] **William Powell:** Yes. In the normal course of events, we would have gone to the health board and then extended it to the CHC. We have just hit the buffers really, with a lack of response. That is a sensible additional action for us to undertake, but I think that the prime thing is to contact the Minister and flag up that there is something dysfunctional here that needs to be sorted out.

[101] **Joyce Watson:** I think that the community health council—

[102] **Bethan Jenkins:** Gan ofyn iddo a yw wedi gwneud unrhyw asesiad o'r pwnc dan sylw, nid dim ond i ddweud nad yw'r bwrdd iechyd lleol wedi ymateb. Dylem ofyn a oes ganddo unrhyw fath o ymchwiliadau ar y gweill ar y mater hwn.

Bethan Jenkins: We should ask whether it has carried out any assessment of this particular subject, not just say that the local health board has not responded. We should ask whether it has any ongoing investigations on this matter.

[103] Hefyd, cefais gyfarfod yn ddiweddar gyda *Healthcare Inspectorate Wales* ac roedd yn dweud ei fod yn hapus i gymryd unrhyw fath o farn neu sylwadau gan y cyhoedd. Felly, efallai y byddai'n syniad i'r deisebwyr gysylltu â'r corff hwnnw, er mwyn iddo edrych ar sut mae'r gwasanaethau hyn yn cael eu rhedeg yn y bwrdd iechyd lleol penodol hwn a gweld a yw *Healthcare Inspectorate Wales* wedi gwneud unrhyw fath o waith ar hyn. Mae wastad siawns ei fod wedi bod i mewn i edrych.

Also, I had a meeting recently with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and it said that it was happy to take any sort of views or representations from the public. Therefore, it could be a good idea for the petitioners to get in touch with that body, so that it could perhaps look at how these services are run in this particular LHB and see whether Healthcare Inspectorate Wales has done any work on this. There is always a chance that it has been in there to do some work.

[104] **William Powell:** That is absolutely right. We need to undertake both actions and we need to get some response for the petitioner who has been over-patient on this matter and it is some—

[105] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is awful.

[106] **William Powell:** Mae'n hen bryd. **William Powell:** It is high time.

[107] The next petition is P-04-449, Bridgend Princess Of Wales—Save Our Services—Stop the Downgrade! This petition was submitted by Ian Matthew Spiller and it was first considered by the committee in January 2013. It had the support of 4,218 signatures, and an associated petition collected 154 signatures. I will just read from the preamble.

09:45

[108] ‘On Wednesday 26th September 2012, Abertawe Bro Morgannwg Health Board announced changes that could radically affect the way our hospital services are delivered in Bridgend. Although nothing has been set in stone, it is probable that, if implemented, this will result in the loss of some paediatric, obstetric, neonatal, and accident and emergency care.’

[109] It then goes on to elaborate on the concerns that the petitioners felt at the time, about the impacts that these changes would have. We last considered the petition on 16 April 2013, and we agreed at that time to seek the petitioners’ views on the correspondence that we had received—to be fair, on this occasion—from Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board, and to await the publication of the service plans for the wider south Wales reconfiguration. We now have correspondence from the petitioner in our public papers. Clearly, in the light of the petitioner’s comments, which welcome the particular direction of travel of the reconfiguration plans, I would suggest that we probably move to close. However, it may well be that we have some comments to make in doing so.

[110] **Joyce Watson:** The only comment that I have is that the petitioners feel happy that they no longer need to be concerned about their original concerns. They have addressed that in a letter to us. They particularly say that

[111] ‘there is no need for this petition to be heard at this time as it is no longer relevant.’

[112] That is a quote from the petitioner’s comment in a letter to us. Therefore, I think that we should close the petition.

[113] **William Powell:** Yes. It would be churlish not to follow that request. I think that we have unanimity there, which is not a bad thing.

[114] We now move to petition P-04-456, Dementia—This Could Happen to you. This petition was submitted, as we recall, by Helen Jones. It was first considered by the committee in February of last year. It has the support of 1,413 signatures. We recall the particular emphasis of the petition around bringing an end to the discrimination against dementia sufferers in Wales, who apply for NHS continuing care funding, but are jeopardised by the particular way in which that is interpreted. We also recall the request from Helen Jones and her colleagues to direct local health boards to implement the national framework for NHS continuing care funding correctly in terms of patient eligibility and, crucially, from the petitioners’ perspective, without regard to budgetary constraints. We last considered this petition on 29 April, and we agreed to ask the petitioner to keep us informed of developments with regard to contact with the Minister’s officials, and indeed to consider the petition again, following an update from the petitioner.

[115] To be fair, we all know that Helen is a very active and assiduous petitioner, and indeed a follower of our proceedings. It is a rarity for her not to be actually present in the public gallery to observe our deliberations. I am pleased to say that she is having a short break away, and she sends her best wishes. However, she has sent us an e-mail update in the last couple of days. Do colleagues have access to the e-mail? If not, I will read the text of it briefly. Helen Jones states that she has been asked to assist with the training of front-line staff by Welsh Government official Lynda Chandler—

[116] ‘simply by offering my experience of having, as a layperson, experienced the complex jargon filled system presented to me with all of its complexities at a time when I needed support and not to be faced with a system one would need a degree in medical administration to comprehend’.

[117] My sense is that the petitioner's particular skill set will be drawn on by the Welsh Government official in taking forward this work. Indeed, we have other papers, including e-mail exchanges between a member of the Alzheimer's Society's volunteer CHC support group and the same Lynda Chandler, who is a Welsh Government official, in our public papers. So, I think that we can see that we have the start of some useful communications here. There were some glitches earlier, but I think that we have moved on from those. In the words of the petitioner in her e-mail—it is what she has writ large: 'Watch this space'. So, at this stage, I think that it is probably wise for us to keep a watching brief on this. Also, I can write on behalf of the committee requesting that the Minister keeps this committee informed of any further developments in this area with regard to emerging policy. Are colleagues happy with that?

[118] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is that about the taskforce specifically? In one of the e-mails, Helen mentions wanting to be part of the taskforce and then Lynda says that she will consider the idea. Is that something that we can be specifically kept up to date on?

[119] **William Powell:** My understanding is that the role that she has referred to in this latest e-mail update before setting off on her short break is her being drawn in to inform policy making. I think that that may be a sub-group or an activity that relates to the work of the taskforce.

[120] **Mr George:** I am not really sure, to be honest, Chair.

[121] **Bethan Jenkins:** If we can just clarify that—

[122] **William Powell:** Yes, we can seek clarity on that point, but it is really good that the experience is being harnessed here.

[123] **Bethan Jenkins:** I know that it is good that she is involved now, albeit in a roundabout way, but I suppose that what we want to try to do—as I think I have mentioned before—is understand whether this is something that the Welsh Government will use as a case in point for other types of causes. We do not just want it to be a flash in the pan; we want it to talk to carers and include them in taskforce initiatives. That is my point: can we have some understanding of what it will change in the process so that people like her will know in future how to take part in the consultations?

[124] **William Powell:** Yes, I think that it makes a lot of sense, to use the jargon again, for this to be mainstreamed in the way the business is done. That is something that we need to seek clarity on from the Minister, because this sort of approach can be shared and transferred across portfolios to other areas for consultation.

[125] **Bethan Jenkins:** When I have asked for it previously on other health issues it has been rejected, sadly. Well, it was another Minister, to be fair. If it is being done for dementia, surely we can look to do it for other things as well.

[126] **William Powell:** Yes, if we are looking at planning policy, culture policy or whatever, I think that that makes a lot of sense. However, our first point of contact, of course, is Mark Drakeford with regard to how he is going to take this forward and then share this across Cabinet and Government. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are. Good.

[127] Moving on, petition P-04-502, which calls for a wellbeing centre for Wales, was submitted by Wellbeing Wales and was first considered by the committee in September 2013. It has the support of 52 signatures. It calls

[128] ‘on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to establish a new Wellbeing Centre for Wales that would put individual and community wellbeing(1) at the heart of Welsh politics, and that would be core-funded by government.’

[129] In the additional information, we have some further detail as to how the petitioner is seeking to take this matter forward. We last considered this petition on 4 February this year, and we agreed to await the petitioner’s response to the Minister’s letter. Indeed, in our public papers today we have copies of the Minister’s letter from October 2013, just to give the context because this has been going on for a while; my letter to the petitioner of March, so that was relatively recent; and subsequent feedback we have had from the petitioner with regard to the matter. I think that we are coming close to looking to close this petition. However, one issue that occurred to me—and on which I would welcome any feedback from colleagues—following a briefing I had from the Cabinet Minister who is developing the future generations Bill, Jeff Cuthbert, who is keen to emphasise the importance of wellbeing issues in the emerging Bill, was whether it would be worth sharing the petition with him given the cross-over and the fact that that is the direction that the future generations Bill seems to be going in with the emphasis on the importance of wellbeing in its various forms. Possibly, we would be missing a trick not to share this with Jeff Cuthbert. So, would colleagues be happy for me to do that, prior to us closing it? I see that you would. I am happy to go forward with that approach.

[130] P-04-530, Bilingual Labeling, was submitted by Simon Foster and was first considered by our committee in January this year. It has the support of 98 signatories. The petition reads as follows:

[131] ‘Like all self-respecting officially bilingual countries, (such as Canada), Wales needs legislation to ensure that all food products sold in Wales be labeled in both Welsh and English. We therefore demand that the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government enact said legislation without undue delay.’

[132] We have got some fairly robust exchanges here between the Minister and the petitioner coming back. We last considered correspondence on this on 11 March and we agreed to write to the petitioner, and, as I said, the petitioner has come back. The petitioner seems somewhat exasperated at the Minister’s stance on this issue, but it is pretty clear to me that much of the legislative framework here is not within the gift of the Minister for Natural Resources and Food, which, to be fair to the Minister, he makes clear in his earlier response. Colleagues, I welcome your thoughts on this matter, because, clearly, there is a wider European framework of law with regard to this area. What are your thoughts? I call on Joyce.

[133] **Joyce Watson:** My thoughts are that we do not have the power to do what is being asked and, looking at it purely in those terms, which is, of course, what we have to do when we are dealing with petitions before we go any further, we have ascertained whether we have the power and what we can do. We have had the answer, which tells us that we do not have the power and, therefore, we cannot do what is being requested. We have, as far as I am concerned, fulfilled our role as a Petitions Committee in finding out where the jurisdiction lies and whether we can take it any further. Jurisdiction does not lie with the Assembly; that is clear. It does not lie with the Minister; that is clear. As much as we all may want to pursue it, we are going to come back full circle to the same reply. Sadly, that being the case, the only thing that I can suggest is that we close the petition.

[134] **William Powell:** I have given some thought to whether it would be appropriate to extend the circle to contain the newly elected MEPs in this regard, but, on balance, that is probably one action too far. I am not sure. I know that, Bethan, you had indicated previously that you had an interest in teasing this out a little further.

[135] **Bethan Jenkins:** Roeddwn i jest yn meddwl tybed a allwn ni gael cyngor gan ein cynghorwyr cyfreithiol, ar ôl iddynt gael amser i edrych ar yr hyn y mae'r deisebwr wedi dweud yn ei ymateb, achos rwyf ar ddeall bod ffactorau o fewn Deddf Llywodraeth Cymru y gallem ni edrych arnynt, ac wedyn mynd at yr Aelodau o Senedd Ewrop. Nid wyf yn siŵr a yw hyn yn rhywbeth y gallwn ni ei wneud.

Bethan Jenkins: I am just wondering whether we could have some advice from our legal advisers here, after they have had some time to look at what the petitioner has said in his response, because I am given to understand that there are factors within the Government of Wales Act that we could look at and we can then go to the MEPs. I am not sure whether this is something that we can do.

[136] **Ms Roberts:** Yes. Just to respond to the points that have been raised this morning, this petition, like many others that you consider as a committee, does raise complex and involved issues. This one in particular, as Joyce has outlined, involves European Union law, and there is a number of aspects of European law, directives, et cetera. There is also, side-by-side with the European Union law aspect, a domestic law aspect. So, there is the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Food Labelling Regulations 1996. As Bethan has just pointed to, there is also the devolution context and the Government of Wales Act 2006. There are designation Orders as well, such as the European Communities (Designation) (No. 2) Order 2005. So, there are a lot of issues to take into account.

[137] However, in response to the last point that Bethan raised, I have not been asked to give specific legal advice. I have looked at a number of initial pointers, and I am more than happy to come back to the committee with a more definitive view in the light of what legislative competence there may be within Schedule 7 to the Government of Wales Act 2006, if that is what you as a committee wish me to do.

10:00

[138] **William Powell:** In the light of that advice, it is probably best that we await your fuller response to that and then we can decide as to whether, given the advice that we have from the Minister, we move to close or, indeed, engage with the new European parliamentarians, or those who are returning, and the new Member of the European Parliament. Thank you very much, colleagues, for that.

[139] Moving now to P-04-500, Call for Regulation of Animal Welfare Establishments in Wales, you will recall that this petition was submitted by Lisa Winnett, and first considered by our committee in September of last year. It has the support of 265 signatures. I will read a couple of lines from the preamble:

[140] 'We the undersigned, call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to regulate Animal Welfare Establishments and legislate for compulsory requirements be met by all animal rescue establishments in line with the report produced by the AWNW Animal Welfare Establishments Working Group October 2012.'

[141] We last considered this petition in private session on 13 May and agreed a number of actions—first, to do what we are doing today, which is putting it back on the public agenda, so that the wider public policy issues raised by the petition can be addressed. We also agreed to write to the Minister to explain the actions that have been taken and to draw concerns to the attention of the relevant prosecuting authorities, and similarly to write to local authorities. What we have today in our public papers is a detailed report from the RSPCA, for which we are grateful, and also further comments from the petitioner, which are included there. We also have, for which we are grateful, a private briefing from our legal department in terms of the way in which we are addressing these matters. I think that, at this stage, it would be sensible to write to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food to seek his response to what the

RSPCA is doing with regard to the matter. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

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

[143] **William Powell:** Let us do that, then.

[144] Remarkably, at 10.02 a.m. we seem to have exhausted the agenda. Thank you very much for your contributions this morning, colleagues. I would just flag up a couple of important presentations that are taking place this week—the first at 1 p.m. today on the provision of IBD services, that is, inflammatory bowel disease services, in Wales; then, tomorrow at 1 p.m., we have a petition presentation on the provision of services at Pontypridd fire station. I hope that you will be able to join me on the steps of the Senedd today and tomorrow to receive those petitions and to engage with the petitioners. We next meet on Tuesday 17 June. Thank you very much indeed. Diolch yn fawr. I hope to see you later on.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10:03.
The meeting ended at 10:03.*