



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 2 Mehefin 2015
Tuesday, 2 June 2015

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru 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 09:07.
The meeting began at 09:07.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da, bawb. **William Powell:** Good morning, all.

[2] Welcome to this first Petitions Committee of the second half of the summer term. We have no apologies registered this morning, the full complement of Members, and the usual housekeeping arrangements apply.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[3] **William Powell:** So, with no further ado, we move to agenda item 2, new petitions, and at agenda item 2.1, we have P-04-629, 'Review and Enforcement of Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014'. Now, this petition was submitted by Lynne Tamblyn and collected 135 signatures, and the text reads as follows:

[4] 'The Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014 is proving not fit for purpose and is doing nothing to improve the welfare of equines turned out to graze on common land. There is no satisfactory system of recording or controlling the numbers of horses and ponies left to suffer and die throughout the winter and early spring months, and those that survive are left to breed and compound the problems year on year. We, the undersigned feel that several additional measures need to be put in place'.

[5] And we've got, from bullets 1 to 5, the specific proposals that our petitioner has. Now, a first-consideration letter of this matter was sent to the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food, seeking her views on the petition, and we've got the Deputy Minister's detailed response in our public pack. We've also got some further comments from the petitioner, which are also available for us. I think, probably, in this context, it would make sense if we were to share those comments back with the Minister. I'd welcome any other comments or

suggestions. Joyce.

[6] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you, Chair. I agree with what you've said, and it would be also, in my opinion, worth pursuing the actions that have been mentioned in the New Forest, if that's at all possible—

[7] **William Powell:** Yes, I think that would make a lot of sense.

[8] **Joyce Watson:** —maybe through the petitioner, and try to understand how that works, because this is an area of concern and if anything additional to what we're doing can be implemented, I'm sure we'd all find that welcome and worth while.

[9] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Bethan.

[10] **Bethan Jenkins:** I'm just picking up on the penultimate paragraphs of both the Minister's letter and the petitioner's letter, in the sense that the Minister clearly recognises that the charities are under pressure, but then says humane destruction is very much a last resort, but the petitioner recognises that, potentially, it may not be the last resort because there isn't enough funding to rehome many of the horses. So, I would like to re-emphasise that point to the Minister, saying, 'Well, what are you doing with the sector to try and find more funding so that that element is prioritised over the most extreme element, which is the humane destruction?' We need to find out, really, how much of that element of that law is being utilised under the current circumstances, where the charities are struggling—

[11] **William Powell:** I think that would make a lot of sense. We could build that into our letter. One other thing that comes to mind is that the Environment and Sustainability Committee undertook a review session relatively recently and I'm not clear that the petitioner will necessarily have had sight of that. If it would be in order, we could forward a transcript of that session that three of us were able to take part in. I think that would probably also be of interest to the petitioner. So, if we can arrange that through the clerks, that would be good. Okay, so there's a set of actions there.

[12] Moving swiftly to agenda item 2.2, P-04-635, 'James Bond at the Welsh Assembly'. Now, this petition was submitted by Paul Glantz and had collected 22 signatures, reading simply,

[13] 'Please support a petition to get the Presiding Officer of the Welsh Assembly to reverse her decision in not allowing scenes for the new James Bond to be filmed at the Assembly.'

[14] Now, a first consideration letter was sent to the Presiding Officer seeking her views and we've got quite a clear setting out of those in the response that we've received. The petitioner has been asked to comment on that letter but hadn't done so when the pack was finalised—

[15] **Joyce Watson:** Wait for the response.

[16] **William Powell:** Wait for the response is the suggestion. Russell is indicating.

[17] **Russell George:** I was going to say, Chair, that I think the difficulty with this is that I think a lot of people would also question why the filming wasn't allowed, including Assembly Members themselves, but I think the difficulty is that the wording of the petition—

[18] **William Powell:** The stable door is well and truly shut.

[19] **Russell George:** —actually isn't able to be enforced because, as the Presiding Officer has pointed out in her letter, the filming has been done, hasn't it, or is about to be done? So, you can hardly reverse the decision—

[20] **William Powell:** The filming, I think, is complete and it's due for release relatively soon, so—

[21] **Russell George:** I'm not sure whether we can—. We can wait, by all means, for the petitioner to respond, but I just think it's disappointing that it wasn't worded slightly differently because we could have taken it forward.

[22] **William Powell:** I agree, actually, because, if the wording had been broader, then, obviously, there would have been some sense in pursuing some of the wider issues, but I'm almost of a mind that we should suggest that we should close straight away, but I know Joyce will raise the issue of consistency, and rightly so, so maybe we should—. I'm in your hands.

[23] **Russell George:** The difference is—. I agree with the consistency issue, but the difficulty is that we're never going to be able to enforce the petition, because it's not possible—

[24] **William Powell:** Absolutely, and we've got such a clear answer from the PO as well.

[25] **Russell George:** But I think, if the petitioner is listening to this—I don't know if it's possible—. Or if somebody else was to reword a petition of a different nature, that could be taken forward—

[26] **William Powell:** Yes. Broader issues about the use of the Assembly estate for filming purposes.

[27] **Russell George:** Absolutely, yes. And I think that issue has been noted. But, on that basis, unfortunately, I propose we close the petition.

[28] **William Powell:** You're proposing that we close on this occasion—

[29] **Joyce Watson:** That's okay.

[30] **William Powell:** And Joyce is happy with that?

[31] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, that's fine.

[32] **William Powell:** Bethan is also happy. So, we're content we have a unanimous decision on that one to close, because of the way in which events have moved on. Agenda item 2.3 is P-04-621, 'Stop Closure of Consultant-led Maternity Unit at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd'. This petition was submitted by Rebecca Roberts and received 562 signatures.

[33] 'We the undersigned request that Betsi Cadwallader University Health Board stop its planned closure of the Consultant-led Maternity Unit at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. We believe its closure will be detrimental to the welfare of expectant mothers and their families, and will endanger lives. We do not believe it is right or fair for patients to have to travel upwards of 30 miles for treatment, particularly in case of emergency. We believe that the additional pressure placed on staff at Ysbyty Maelor and Ysbyty Gwynedd will be detrimental to maternity services at those hospitals. We ask that the BCUHB consider other options (such as closure of unit to elective procedures) and retain consultants at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd for the safety of expectant mothers.'

09:15

[34] Now, the first consideration letter on this matter was sent to the Minister for Health and Social Services on 13 February. We have a reply from him on 13 May. That response is in the public papers. Also, it is clear that this issue has been moving on apace. We've got, in the Minister's letter, a reference to the legal challenge, which may indeed partly explain the reason for the unusual delay in a response. The Minister's reply refers to a substantially similar petition, P-04-622, as colleagues will realise, that was received on the same day, which ultimately didn't receive enough signatures to proceed.

[35] Also, I should refer at this point to the fact that a third petition, with a very substantial number of signatures—15,296—was forwarded by our colleague Ann Jones, Assembly Member, from the editor of the *Daily Post*, Mark Thomas, substantively on the same points. So, we need to be aware of that. Although it was ruled inadmissible, it clearly relates very much to the same theme, which is exercising many minds at present. It seems to me that the legal action very much constrains what we can do at this time. I'd appreciate colleagues' thoughts on this one. Joyce.

[36] **Joyce Watson:** You're right; there is a legal challenge. At the moment, it hasn't determined if it will be meeting later this year. So, the judge did make an injunction to stop the changes taking place until she's handed down her judgment. I think we have to be careful, really—

[37] **William Powell:** Absolutely.

[38] **Joyce Watson:** —in terms of anything that we can say. The Minister's letter, I'm sure, has gone to the petitioner. At this stage we can't really say an awful lot—

[39] **William Powell:** No, but we could invite petitioners' comments on the current state of affairs.

[40] **Joyce Watson:** —beyond inviting the petitioners' comments. You know, next month it seems that things could change again.

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

[42] **Joyce Watson:** I'm sure that we'll hear from the petitioners if that is the case.

[43] **William Powell:** Yes, I agree. Are colleagues of the mind that we should go forward in that way? Yes.

[44] **Bethan Jenkins:** We haven't heard from the petitioners, have we, on this response?

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

[46] **Bethan Jenkins:** I know that there's a legal challenge, but there's nothing stopping us from potentially having the petitioners in to tell us exactly why they believe in what they believe, unless the legal—. Are we not allowed to engage?

[47] **William Powell:** We could seek our own legal view on that particular scenario.

[48] **Ms Roberts:** Thank you, Bethan, for raising the issue. I haven't really looked into this. I haven't got anything further to add to what is in the ministerial letter, really. I mean, based on that, I would say that we should wait, really. I really do think. I don't know if Steve's going to come in with some clerking points, but—

[49] **William Powell:** I think we should proceed with caution.

[50] **Ms Roberts:** I think we should proceed with caution for the reasons stated. As I say, there's reference to a legal challenge. I have been asked to look into this, but bearing in mind an injunction has been granted and the matters are proceeding at court, it's likely that, in June, or after June, the judge will determine the matter, possibly. Then I think, in the circumstances, Bethan, we should proceed with caution.

[51] **William Powell:** Yes, but we shall certainly write, as agreed, to the petitioner seeking comments on where we stand.

[52] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay.

[53] **William Powell:** Okay. Thanks for your indulgence on that.

09:19

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[54] **William Powell:** Agenda item 3 is updates to petitions previously received and considered. We start with agenda item 3.1, petition P-04-546, 'Rearing of Animals in Unnatural Conditions'. This petition was submitted by Jeanii Colbourne and was first considered back on 29 April 2014 and it has the support of 23 signatures. We last considered the petition this year on 20 January, and we agreed, in the light of comments from the petitioner, to write to the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food seeking her opinion on some specific issues raised by the petition. We now do have a response from the Deputy Minister. The petitioner's been asked for feedback, but, at this time, we haven't received such, so I think we should probably chase that, or await comments, allowing that six-week window that we've agreed in previous times.

[55] **Russell George:** Sorry, Chair—has the petitioner been sent a copy of the latest letter from the Minister?

[56] **William Powell:** I believe so.

[57] **Russell George:** That was only on 5 May, so it wasn't that long ago, was it?

[58] **William Powell:** No, absolutely. So it could well be that they'll be back in touch with us.

[59] **Russell George:** By the time they would have received this, it would only have been a couple of weeks ago.

[60] **William Powell:** I agree. Absolutely.

[61] Agenda item 3.2, P-04-605, 'Save the Cwmcarn Forest Drive from Indefinite or Permanent Closure'. This petition was submitted by Robert Jeffrey Southall and was first considered by us on 25 November 2014. It's got the support of a whopping 2,994 signatures, both online and in paper form. Now, we last considered this matter on 24 February 2015, and we agreed to ask the Minister for Natural Resources to ask his officials, and indeed Natural Resources Wales, to work with the group known as the Friends of Cwmcarn Forest Drive in arriving at a solution for the future of the drive. We've got now, as colleagues will see in the

papers, a substantial and quite detailed response from the Minister, but we haven't as yet, again, had a response from the petitioners. But, it's relatively short timing and it's been a turbulent few weeks, maybe, in various people's lives as well, so I think we should allow—

[62] **Russell George:** Shall we just wait a few more weeks?

[63] **William Powell:** Absolutely, and this issue is rearing its head again in terms of some of the felling activities that I think have been covered in the press recently, so it's certainly going to be very much a live issue, I think. Agreed.

[64] Agenda item 3.3, P-04-579, 'Reinstate Funding for Skomer Island's Guillemot Monitoring'. This petition was submitted by Cardiff University Ornithological Society and was first considered on 23 September 2014. It has the support of 1,687 signatures. Now, we last considered this petition back on 24 February of this year, and we agreed to write to Carl Sargeant to ask for his views on the petitioner's comments, and specifically on the concerns expressed by the petitioners that the data collected under the Joint Nature Conservation Committee contract may have produced some flawed results. Now, the Minister has kindly responded, and as colleagues can see, again, that is in the public papers. He does express considerable satisfaction with the monitoring techniques that are being adopted now, and so we have a little bit of a conflict there. We haven't as yet heard back from the petitioner in the light of those latest comments.

[65] **Russell George:** Chair, what I suggest is we do automatically just wait a few weeks until we get a response back—

[66] **William Powell:** I think probably we can refine our technique even further in that respect.

[67] **Russell George:** —from the petitioner, so can I suggest that? And can I also suggest that, for the next petition as well, we also wait to discuss that until we've had the response back.

[68] **William Powell:** So, you're looking ahead to the fracking one.

[69] **Russell George:** I am, yes.

[70] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Joyce, I believe you've indicated on this petition.

[71] **Joyce Watson:** I have, because I need to declare that I'm a member of the Wildlife Trusts.

[72] **William Powell:** The Wildlife Trusts. Okay. Excellent. I thought you were going to mention the RSPB.

[73] **Joyce Watson:** I'm a member of that as well.

[74] **Russell George:** I think I am as well.

[75] **William Powell:** I'm a member of a related wildlife trust, a sister wildlife trust. But Joyce has got a double declaration. Okay. All that is noted. I sense that colleagues are happy with Russell's proposal with regard to Gareth Clubb's fracking petition, because, again, we'll be looking for a response early doors from Gareth Clubb to take that matter forward. Okay, good.

[76] Agenda item 3.5, P-04-628, 'To Improve Access to Education and Services in British

Sign Language’. This petition was submitted by Cathy Robins-Talbot on behalf of DEFFO! and collected 502 signatures. We recall—it would be impossible not to—the really lively and dynamic presentation that we had by DEFFO! I’m also informed that members of DEFFO! are likely to be watching our proceedings on Senedd.tv from their base in Swansea, so we wish them good morning and hope that our deliberations will help to take these matters a little further forward.

[77] We considered the petition for the first time, as colleagues will recall, on 24 March 2015, and we agreed to seek a legal brief on the particular point raised in the Minister’s letter when he asserted that,

[78] ‘The National Assembly for Wales does not have the power to legislate about any language other than Welsh.’

[79] And also to write to the Minister seeking his views on the feedback that we received from Deffo! Now we’ve got a ministerial response—the letter’s in the public papers—and we’ve also now got clarity on that particular point with regard to what is and isn’t permissible in terms of the Minister’s remit with regard to legislation around language. I wonder whether I could ask our legal adviser just to reiterate the points within that legal note, please.

[80] **Ms Roberts:** Thank you, Chair. Yes, it’s the ministerial letter dated 6 March 2015. The point I wanted to make, really, as Members are fully aware, is that the legislative competence of the National Assembly for Wales is set out in Part 1 of Schedule 7 to the Government of Wales Act 2006. Within that Part, obviously there are a number of headings. Heading 20 is the Welsh language, and a direct exception beneath the Welsh language is the use of language in the courts. So, the point I want to make is that, obviously, the National Assembly can legislate specifically in relation to the Welsh language, because it is listed there, provided it does not fall within the exception of the Welsh language and the use of the Welsh language in the courts.

[81] To take that slightly forward, then, the point I would like to make is that the National Assembly would be able to legislate for a language if it related to at least one of the other subjects within Part 1 of Schedule 7, having regard to its purpose and effect in all the circumstances, and provided that it didn’t fall within one of the exceptions. To put that into context and to try to explain it in simpler terms, I’ll give an example, really. So, what I’m trying to say is that the National Assembly for Wales would be able to legislate, for example, under the heading ‘education and training’ in relation to other languages within the curriculum. Obviously, it depends on the detail and it depends on what’s being proposed, and it would also be possible, potentially, as well, to legislate for BSL under the heading of ‘social care’. So, the point I wanted to make is: whilst there’s no general legislative competence specifically over other languages, provided that it relates to at least one of the subjects listed within Part 1 of Schedule 7 and, as I said, providing that it pays regard to the purpose and the effect in all the circumstances, and no exception applies, then there is a possibility there that it is wider than possibly what has been indicated to us.

[82] **William Powell:** Okay. That was really helpful. I think we need, in the appropriate way, to bring that matter to the attention of the Minister so that we can ensure that he’s fully apprised of this.

[83] **Mr George:** That’s actually already been done.

[84] **William Powell:** Right. I’m sorry, I’d missed the point that we’d already brought that to his attention.

[85] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think it is a fundamental point, though, because, of course, that

seemed to shut down the discussion initially when that was in the letter from the Minister, saying that they couldn't legislate. If the petitioners are watching, I would say that we'll wait for the response of the Minister, but also you could be looking at talking to Assembly Members after the May election about what's called a private Member's Bill, where Assembly Members bring forward their own ideas for legislation. So, they could look at the education and social care parts and say, 'Well, this is where BSL would be good to fit into the curriculum, or good to fit into social care'. So, the door is open there, now, for them, which I think is a really good thing. We haven't talked about the rest of the petition, but, for them to be engaged as well in the Donaldson review so that they can take forward the curriculum development in Wales, I know there's going to be a long-term working party on the implementation of that review. So, that's something that I think they can really get engaged with now as well.

[86] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think that's a really useful and full contribution. It's to be noted that the consultation initially closed on 8 May, but I certainly hope that it will be possible for Deffo!, with the quite specific contribution that it could make, to be involved in the next stage of that consultation as it's taken forward. Also, just to reiterate that we will be confirming to the Minister the nature of the legal advice, because I think that helps. It did serve, as Bethan rightly said, to shut things down, rather. So, we'll write to the Minister on that point and also seeking as full an involvement for Deffo! members as possible in taking forward the consultation to the next stage, as you said. Are there any other points that would be useful for us to build in?

09:30

[87] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just thought, you know, the committee I sit on—the Children, Young People and Education Committee—will be looking at the new Bill on special educational needs, so I suppose we should—

[88] **William Powell:** It would be useful to share that with that committee.

[89] **Bethan Jenkins:**—just make Ann Jones aware so that when we do carry out a consultation, which we inevitably will, that they're fully engaged in that process as well.

[90] **William Powell:** Okay. That's a good set of actions to take on that, and our best wishes to Deffo! and its members this morning.

[91] Moving to agenda item 3.6, P-04-548, 'The Reintroduction of Welsh Classes in Rennes University'. This petition was submitted by Cedric Choplin and was first considered on 29 April 2014. It has the support of 14 signatures. It's very simple—I'll just read that one line:

[92] 'We are visitors from Brittany and we would like the National Assembly for Wales to discuss the reintroduction of Welsh classes in Rennes University.'

[93] We've taken this matter to the First Minister previously. We've now had a response from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and, as you can see, it's a fairly minimalist but factual response that they don't have this within their remit. And I'm unaware of any people or organisations that have come forward to assist with the funding of this. I'm afraid we've probably come to the end of the road and we'll need to write to the petitioner and thank Monsieur Choplin for his interest and for taking part in the petitions process. But, I think we probably need to close it at this point, if colleagues are agreeable.

[94] **Joyce Watson:** We do.

[95] **William Powell:** Okay, but it was an interesting issue to have had time to consider.

[96] Moving now to the next section of our agenda, which is 3.7, P-04-601, 'Proposed Ban on the Use of e-cigarettes in Public Places'. This petition was submitted by Simon Thurlow and was first considered back on 7 October 2014, and it's collected 1,196 electronic signatures. We last considered this petition on 24 February this year, and we agreed a series of actions: firstly, to draw the matter to the attention of the Health and Social Care Committee for consideration, should the proposed public health Bill, which, at that stage, was expected to be published before the summer recess, be referred to them for scrutiny. And also we agreed to ask the Minister for Health and Social Services for his views on the petitioner's additional correspondence, particularly his comments on the Scottish Government's engagement with the vaping community, and also his understanding of the decision not to pursue the ban of e-cigarettes in public places in Scotland. We've got a pretty full response from the Minister, and that letter is amongst our public papers. The Health and Social Care Committee considered the petition at its meeting of 29 April, and we've got a response also from our colleague, David Rees AM, who chairs that committee, which is available for us.

[97] The petitioner has been asked for comments, and clearly there's a fair bit to comment on, but at this stage we haven't received those comments, so I think it's only fair that we await those. Are there any other actions or contributions that Members would like to make just at this point?

[98] **Russell George:** Has the petitioner, in the letter that we sent, been made aware that it is likely to be considered as part of that public health Bill? Has he been made aware of that yet?

[99] **William Powell:** I believe that was all part of the content of that letter I signed off.

[100] **Mr George:** The petitioner would have seen the correspondence that you've seen.

[101] **Russell George:** Right, okay. So, the petitioner may well write back and say, 'Look, considering that's happening, then I'm happy that the petition—'

[102] **William Powell:** Particularly given that the specialist committee has committed time to the matter as well.

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

[104] **William Powell:** Okay. So, we'll await the petitioner's response on that one.

[105] Staying with the theme of health, agenda item 3.8, P-04-600, 'Petition to Save General Practice'. This petition was submitted by the Royal College of General Practitioners and first considered by us on 7 October 2014, having collected 15,000 paper signatures and over 500 electronic signatures on an alternative e-petition website. We last considered this on 20 January this year and agreed a series of actions: to write to the Minister seeking his views on the petitioner's comments in relation to earlier correspondence, and also asking the clerking team to establish whether the Health and Social Care Committee have the capacity to consider the issues raised by the petition.

[106] Now, the Health and Social Care Committee did undertake a short, focused inquiry into the GP workforce in Wales, and this included evidence from the royal college. I wrote to the Chair of HSC before that, and the petition was available to members of that committee while they were taking evidence. Also, the committee has written to the Minister, to report on its inquiry, in quite a substantial letter, with a number of salient recommendations, and both of those are, obviously, amongst our public papers today. The Minister has also written to us

as a Petitions Committee, and that letter is also with us. It does appear that this issue has had a pretty good airing; I'd very much appreciate colleagues' thoughts on how to proceed, but I sense we may be better moving to close. Joyce.

[107] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you, Chair. Actually, it's been a very comprehensive response by the health committee to this petition, and they have done all the work that we might have done, had we had time, on this petition, and gained a response from the Minister. We wouldn't be able to do any more than that.

[108] **William Powell:** Absolutely, yes.

[109] **Joyce Watson:** And, since they've written a report, they will also now, as a committee, undoubtedly put the monitoring of that response into their work programme, like all committees do. On that basis, and the fact that we can't do any more than that which has already been done, I would move to close the petition.

[110] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think that's the right way to proceed. I'll just check with our clerk whether the kind of letter/report that the committee has—whether that would be eligible to trigger a Plenary debate. I'm not quite clear, given that it's a letter, rather than a formal report.

[111] **Mr George:** I don't think that that's going to be subject to a Plenary debate, as a result of that report—I'm not absolutely sure, but I don't think so. I think that's why they chose to do it as a letter rather than as a formal report.

[112] **William Powell:** Okay. If it did trigger a debate, obviously, we'd be at liberty to take part in that, from our angle and our experience of things as well, but I think that may not be the case. But, I sense there's a majority, overall—unanimity, in fact—on closing the petition today, and I think that the royal college has had a good airing on a matter that's of real concern to all of us.

[113] **Joyce Watson:** Absolutely.

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

[115] Agenda item 3.9 is P-04-560, 'Provision of IBD services in Wales'. Now, this petition was submitted by South Wales IBD Patient Panel and was first considered on 17 June 2014, and it's collected 664 signatures. Of course, there's been quite a recent focus on IBD, and I think, just before the half term recess, the week coincided with IBD awareness activities, and that had quite a high profile. The committee last considered this petition back on 9 December 2014 and agreed to await further comments from the petitioner, and also to seek the Minister's response to the fact that all of the local health boards that had responded appeared to support an all-Wales gastroenterology plan, which the Minister wasn't minded to support at that time. The Minister has now responded, and that response is in the public papers, and he's sticking with that stance with regard to having a sort of an all-Wales plan approach, but, obviously, in other respects, there's quite significant or some quite positive news for the petitioners. The petitioners also, clearly, have commented here, and their views are also contained within our pack. I'm not quite clear as to which way we best proceed on this. I'd value colleagues' thoughts, really, because the Minister has set his face against the delivery plan. I'm not sure whether we can dig any further, or whether we've come to the end of the road again.

[116] **Joyce Watson:** I'm afraid we have come to the end of the road, in terms of the Minister's word being final in that regard. He has, in his letter, said that there has been a need for improvement in gastroenterology services and he's linked that to IBD standards. The hard

thing for us in all of this, very often, is recognising that we've done all we can whilst, at the same time, the petitioners might not be happy with the outcome. It's always very difficult to put those two things together. And I somehow think that that's where we are.

[117] **William Powell:** Yes, that's my sense, too. Just giving other colleagues the opportunity to comment, I think—

[118] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, it's difficult because, obviously, their concern—and I have sympathy with it—for a national plan is to have that consistency across Wales. I appreciate that he mentions that some health boards haven't responded, but, then again, that may be a reason why there needs to be a national plan, because some health boards are more proactive than others. So—

[119] **William Powell:** And those who have responded are in favour of an overall approach.

[120] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, they may be in favour. So, it's difficult because, at the moment in time, I would say to the petitioners that perhaps if they feel, in five or six months' time, that the workshops and the progress aren't going as planned, they could reintroduce a differently worded petition to say, 'Well, look, we need a national plan more than ever because that particular effort at the time, in May 2015, didn't work out.' Because we can't force the Minister to introduce a national plan.

[121] **William Powell:** No, clearly, but I think that if the IBD patient panel can keep a close watching brief on how things progress in the next period of time, then obviously we, or a successor committee, would be keen to take the matter forward again. Okay. Thanks.

[122] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I'm afraid that's all we can give them.

[123] **William Powell:** Agreed. Agenda item 3.10, P-04-408, 'Child and Adolescent Eating Disorder Service': this petition was submitted by Helen Missen and first considered on 17 July 2012, with the support of 246 signatures. We last considered this petition on 24 February 2015 and we agreed to ask the Minister for Health and Social Services for his comments on Helen Missen's correspondence and also to maintain a watching brief on the wider issue and to ask the Minister to keep us informed of developments. We've got a response now from the Minister and, as you can see, his letter, along with further comments from Helen Missen, is within our public papers. I think we probably really do need to keep a close eye on how this develops. Bethan, I'd appreciate your comments, given your chairmanship of the relevant cross-party group.

[124] **Bethan Jenkins:** I'm happy for it to be kept open, but, while we were in recess, the Minister did do an additional announcement on a £7 million investment in child and adolescent mental health services. I know that this won't be directly towards eating disorders, but I wonder whether we could ask for the detail of that from him because I think it's focused on decreasing waiting times and, potentially, we could ask how that would improve the services for those suffering from eating disorders within that more general pot of money. I obviously sympathise with Helen's viewpoint and I think she needs to be keeping a watching brief over everything in terms of taking part in the Sue Bailey review. There's another conference going to be, I think, held in June now in terms of re-engaging with people on what that review will be doing. So, I think keep a watching brief and then ask the Minister about the £7 million.

[125] **William Powell:** If we can drill down for some more detail from the Minister, we could then forward any relevant detail to Helen Missen as well.

[126] **Bethan Jenkins:** To put it on record, I would suggest that if we could potentially, at some point, look to bringing a report together on this, because I would be conscious of not wanting to keep it open forever either, so that we could—

[127] **William Powell:** But there are things to capture, aren't there?

[128] **Bethan Jenkins:** To capture what's being done and what needs to be done and then we could come up with a few recommendations in a short report, because you can't always keep petitions open forever.

[129] **William Powell:** No, absolutely.

[130] **Bethan Jenkins:** I know that Helen knows that there are other ways in which we can campaign as well—through the cross-party group and through different bodies as well.

[131] **William Powell:** Yes, okay. I think that's a good proposal and sense we're all content to move forward in that way, so thanks for that, Bethan.

[132] We now move to three petitions that we have previously considered in a grouped fashion because they relate to similar issues within the overall health agenda: agenda item 3.11, P-04-564; 3.12, P-04-466; and 3.13, P-04-479. They relate to the 'Restoration of Inpatient Beds, Minor Injuries Cover and X-Ray Unit to the Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital'; 'Medical Emergency—Preventing the Introduction of a Poorer Health Service for North Wales'; and 'Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray & Minor Injuries Unit Petition' respectively.

09:45

[133] In this situation, we've had correspondence—. We last considered them as a group on 28 April, when we as a committee considered an update on the situation locally from Professor Trevor Purt, chief executive of Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board, and also agreed to seek the petitioners' views on the current position. Now, we've received comments from the petitioners on P-04-479 and, indeed, from the petitioner with regard to P-04-466. We've also received a letter from the Minister for Health and Social Services, giving us a wider update in respect of all three petitions. That, again, is on our public pack. There is one of the three petitions that we have not heard from just recently, but it's included here because the Minister's comments were pertinent to all three matters. It has been a while since we've actually heard from Betsi Cadwaladr on these matters. I would appreciate colleagues' thoughts on how we best proceed. Joyce, you have indicated.

[134] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, thank you. Well, there has been some movement—I suppose it is fair to say that—and in the right direction, I would think, as far as the petitioners are concerned. And that, you know, is a positive. Certainly, there is a commitment to capital investment in Blaenau Ffestiniog, and recognising a particular need there, which was clearly brought to our attention and to the Minister's and the health board's. So, in that respect, we have got some positive news for that area. But you're right to say, you know, that we have had a comprehensive letter from the Minister, and they have appointed Dr Ruth Hall and Mr Jack Evershed as independent co-chairs of the Mid Wales Health Collaborative, and that has met. I wasn't able to make that meeting. Neither was I able to make the follow-through meeting in May.

[135] **William Powell:** No, that was my situation also, but I know it's been well received locally by some of the stakeholders.

[136] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, it has. That is the case. But, whilst we would have liked to have been there, and it might have helped us this morning, it's impossible to be everywhere all of

the time. Nonetheless, there will have been a note from that more recent meeting that might help us; I don't know. So, it might be worth asking for that, and also asking the health board again for a response to the letters that we've received and the remarks that we've received from the petitioners who have written to us. But it does feel to me that there is a move. The one thing I found worthy of note was that the minor injuries unit in Tywyn's opening times were out of synch with the other opening times in the area. They suggested—and I tend to agree—that it's possible that that inconsistency will push people in the wrong direction to A&E or GP services elsewhere. So, it might be worth us finding out, you know, whether there has been some move to make those opening times the same as the others. We know that the x-ray facility is there now. So, there is some good news. There are issues that need further pursuance, and there has been a recognition that that needs to happen, so I think—.

[137] **William Powell:** Some of those matters could be raised in the letter that I was going to propose to Professor Trevor Purt for an update. I would also like to know how the independent co-chairs of the new body are proposing to communicate the nature of their work and how they are taking it forward, because you are talking about a fairly dispersed area.

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

[139] **William Powell:** You've got multiple newspapers, and communities that don't always relate to each other, but they have that shared interest. I think it'd be useful to know how they are going to take their communications forward, because you're dealing with southern Gwynedd, you're talking about western Powys and, clearly, Ceredigion, all of which have got a stake in those matters. So, I'd be happy to write in that vein, if colleagues are content with that approach. Yes. Excellent—good.

[140] Moving now to agenda item 3.14, P-04-523, 'Protect the Elderly and Vulnerable in Care Homes', this petition was submitted by Justice for Jasmine and was first considered on 10 December 2013 and has the support of 4,216 signatures. We last considered the petition on 24 March this year and agreed to seek an update from the First Minister on the progress of the review led by Dr Margaret Flynn, including enquiring as to any interim findings that had been given to Welsh Ministers. We've got a full response from the First Minister and an acknowledgement that there has been a measure of delay here, which he's upfront about. In the light of the responses that we've had from the petitioners also, I think, probably, it would be best to get back in touch with the First Minister to ask him to inform us as to when substantive progress is made. Russell George.

[141] **Russell George:** I think the petitioner has appreciated that we need to wait until the review is published, but I think if we just write to the First Minister and ask him to keep us updated when there's some new information to provide us with, Chair—.

[142] **William Powell:** Yes, I'd be happy to do that, if colleagues are content.

[143] Agenda item 3.15, P-04-501, 'Day Centres for the Elderly in Wales to be Made Statutory': now, this petition was submitted by Pamela Hughes of Aberystwyth and was first considered by the committee on 24 September 2013, having collected 1,240 signatures. A simple call:

[144] 'We call on the Welsh Government to make Day Care Centres for older people a statutory requirement for the whole of Wales.'

[145] Clearly, this sector is, as I think I've mentioned before, under particular strain in the current financial climate, and I think we're all aware, across our regions and constituencies, of these matters.

[146] We considered correspondence on this petition on 10 March 2015 from the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, and we agreed to await a response from the petitioner. We have now received a response from the petitioner, and there's also been a further exchange of e-mails between her and our deputy clerk, and that is within the public papers. Now, it's a difficult one as to how best to proceed here, given the way things have developed. I mean, the original petition and the focus of the responses that we have were very much on the need to ensure statutory day-care provision across Wales. As you can see from the latest response, there is very much a refocusing on more local concerns, and that does rather influence our consideration of this, I suppose. Colleagues, have you any thoughts as to how best to take this forward? Bethan and I, way back, went to visit the day centre in Aberystwyth that, obviously, is the local context for the concerns that the petitioners have brought forward.

[147] **Joyce Watson:** And I went to the one before that.

[148] **William Powell:** Yes, you've been to the previous day centre. Absolutely.

[149] **Joyce Watson:** Which was excellent and has since been closed.

[150] **Russell George:** Is there any view, Chair, from the petitioner about who would be responsible for that requirement? Would it be Welsh Government, would it be local authorities—

[151] **William Powell:** For the delivery of it or of funding of it?

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

[153] **Joyce Watson:** Local authorities.

[154] **William Powell:** I think the expectation is that it would be at a local authority level.

[155] **Russell George:** Have we contacted the WGLA at all on their views on this?

[156] **Mr George:** We may have, some time back. I think the difficulty with this was that the petition, as it was submitted, is about a general issue that applies to the whole of Wales, which is admissible. It seems though that the concern of the petitioner is really about a local matter that's actually an operational decision for the local authority. But—

[157] **Russell George:** That's not what the petition says. That's not—

[158] **Mr George:** No, it's not, but it's become particularly clear from the latest correspondence. But having said that, we've got the petition in front of us, so I think it may be that we can be helpful to the petitioner by giving them more information about the processes and so on.

[159] **William Powell:** We could potentially write to the Minister asking for views on the overall current situation across Wales and whether there may be something that would come forward in a second social services Bill in the next Assembly or something.

[160] **Russell George:** Yes, and I'd support that, Chair. I think you said in your remarks that we haven't heard from the Government for some time on this, so let's do that.

[161] **William Powell:** Yes, particularly given the way the situation has developed across Wales in terms of the impact on local authority funding and some of the solutions that have been proposed, because I think this is very much a live topic regardless of the very local focus that comes through in the most recent correspondence.

[162] **Bethan Jenkins:** If they're concerned about privatisation, obviously it's about how they're regulated then by the industry. So, that's something we can advise them on even though—. We've all had it in our areas where certain homes have been privatised and we're concerned about the levels of care then, due to the preponderance of agency staff.

[163] **William Powell:** And raising the entitlements as well, which is often another tactic.

[164] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. So, it's a fair point. It's just how we can deal with that on a national level that is key really.

[165] **William Powell:** Yes. I'd be happy to write to the Minister in that vein, so that we can get some more overall assessment of where we stand on this.

[166] Agenda item 3.16 is P-04-587, 'A Dedicated Support Team for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.), Chronic Fatigue Syndrome & Fibromyalgia Sufferers in South East Wales'. This petition was submitted by M.E.S.I.G, the ME Support in Glamorgan, and was first considered on 23 September 2014, having collected 368 signatures and an additional 826 on paper, so totalling 1,196. As a committee, we last considered correspondence on this petition as recently as 12 May this year and agreed to await a response from the petitioners, and also to write to the Minister for Health and Social Services, thanking him for his detailed reply and also asking to be kept informed of the main actions agreed as a result of the first meeting of the implementation group, which was due to take place on 13 May. We've now got a full response from the petitioners and their letter, as well as the Minister's letter to which it refers, is in the public pack. I would very much like to write to Cardiff and the Vale University Local Health Board, seeking their comments on the specific concerns of the petitioner with regard to that, around the appointment of an ME champion. I don't know whether colleagues would support that, or if you've any other thoughts as to how we should take it forward.

[167] **Bethan Jenkins:** I understand that there's an implementation group for neurological conditions, only because I chair the cross-party group on muscular dystrophy and, at the moment, they are able to bid for funding. I think the group has £1 million recurrent funding every year, and obviously there are a lot of groups within that that come under neurological conditions who are all going to be competing for that money. I don't know the name of the chair of that off the top of my head, but I think that would be something to refer the petitioners to in terms of—. It's a group that comes together from all the different health boards, so I think that that's something that the petitioners could potentially tap into if they're not already there, because I think the concern in the letter that they wrote back is that they don't seem to be fitting into any category at the moment. And it's awful news to hear about the death of one of—

[168] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I was going to raise that matter myself and we need to put that on the record because it's been referred to by the petitioners.

[169] **Bethan Jenkins:** —one of the people who was part of the campaign. So, I'll try and get the details to the clerking team outside of the committee.

10:00

[170] **Mr George:** Is that the group that's referred to in the Minister's letter, or is that a different—

[171] **William Powell:** The letter of 16 April, is it?

[172] **Mr George:** Yes. There's an all-Wales implementation group.

[173] **Bethan Jenkins:** I'm not sure; that's the thing. I think it might be, but it might be a different group, so I'll clarify with the people in the muscular dystrophy campaign and then get back to the clerking team just to double-check that it's the same thing, because, if it's not, then it's a different place to go as well, isn't it?

[174] **William Powell:** Absolutely, yes. It's another option.

[175] **Bethan Jenkins:** That's what sprang to mind initially on that.

[176] **William Powell:** Yes. From the Chair, I'd like to reiterate, Bethan, your comments and condolences on the passing of the person who was referred to by the petitioners in their correspondence. I believe we're also joined today in the public gallery by a member of the group and I'd like to welcome them most warmly and hope that we can take things forward on their behalf. Okay. Good.

[177] We're moving now to agenda item 3.17, P-04-618, 'Protection of Banking Services in Vulnerable Communities'. I think probably all of us have had multiple letters from various high-street banks regarding their regrettable decisions on the closure of keynote buildings in the communities that we represent. So, this petition submitted by Martin Crumpton is something that very much has a resonance for us. Mr Crumpton had 13 signatures in support on that occasion, but we know very much that this is a matter of concern across the whole of Wales. We last considered the petition on 24 March 2015, and we agreed a series of actions: to write to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty asking that the petition be taken into account in the work of the group that's established to look at financial inclusion strategy and also to seek the petitioner's views on the Minister's correspondence of 27 January.

[178] The Minister has responded to indicate that she is content that the petition is taken into account by the group looking at financial inclusion. The petitioner has also responded with further comments and, I think, the frustration felt by the petitioner comes through the very wording of his letter, and I think we can empathise with that too. Bethan, in the context of your particular lead on financial inclusion, you may well have some thoughts on this one.

[179] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, but I know that the financial inclusion strategy group are nearly finalising their work. It's just basically a refresh of the strategy, so I think that, if we ask the Minister immediately to put these comments to the group— Finishing their work—. Sorry, I should be clearer. They came together for a short period of time to then go out to public consultation on a refresh of the strategy—

[180] **William Powell:** So, it's setting the terms in which they're going to do that.

[181] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. So, there will be a public opportunity for the petitioner to engage, but, also, I think these particular concerns should be flagged to the Minister to say, 'Please can you ask the group to deliberate over these particular points because they're really important?'

[182] **William Powell:** If they're going to be tying together their terms of reference just now, then we need to prioritise that letter maybe over some other correspondence. That's really quite time sensitive. So, I'm happy to do that, if colleagues are content. Yes. Thanks.

[183] Agenda item 3.18, P-04-519, 'Abolition of Park Homes Sales Commission'—

[184] **Russell George:** Chair, can I propose that we defer this until we receive an answer

from the petitioner?

[185] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Yes, because—

[186] **Russell George:** For four weeks—

[187] **William Powell:** —it's consistent with earlier action. Agreed.

[188] We have agenda item 3.19, P-04-613, 'AMs Should Reject Recommendation for a 18% Payrise'. This petition was submitted by Mr David Swain and had the support of 12 signatures. We, as a committee, considered this petition for the first time on 28 April 2015, and we agreed to write to the petitioner seeking his comments on the letter from the chair of the National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board. The chair has since written again to say that the board's final determination will be published on 22 May. I think we're all very well aware that that took place. The letter is in the public papers and is there for all to see—

[189] **Russell George:** Are we waiting for a response, Chair, from the petitioner?

[190] **William Powell:** The petitioner has been asked, but when the papers were being pulled together, I think we hadn't had late correspondence either. So, I think—

[191] **Russell George:** So, shall we defer this for four weeks and give them a chance to respond?

[192] **William Powell:** For consistency, we need to await that, but I also recall that, on a previous occasion, we all declared a potential—very much the word 'potential'—interest in this matter and I think we probably should do so again.

[193] **Russell George:** I think, of course, any citizen in Wales could give that potential interest. [*Laughter.*] Any citizen in Wales could potentially be an AM in the future.

[194] **Bethan Jenkins:** The trouble with this petition for me is that it's quite ironic, because I sat on the committee to establish the remuneration board, because it was all about taking the responsibility away from AMs. So, even if we had some sort of decision now, I wouldn't be comfortable with it, because it's not for us to decide. We can decide, if we are re-elected, what we do with that potential increase—and some of us have said publicly—but I wouldn't want to feel that we were influencing decisions on this, because the remuneration board is there for a reason, as an independent body.

[195] **Russell George:** But, if people believe that Assembly Members should decide their own pay in the future, then there needs to be a petition asking for that, I'd suggest. [*Laughter.*]

[196] **William Powell:** Absolutely.

[197] **Bethan Jenkins:** That would be a minority, I think.

[198] **William Powell:** Yes, but we're dealing with a current open petition and we are awaiting the response of Mr David Swain and I'm sure we'll read that with interest when it arrives.

[199] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, we will, I'm sure, but the point is the decision has been made and the petition that has been submitted, in its current form, is asking for something that's not going to happen, because—

- [200] **William Powell:** There is a certain parallel with the James Bond petition.
- [201] **Joyce Watson:** Exactly that.
- [202] **Bethan Jenkins:** I'm happy to wait. I mean, it doesn't—
- [203] **Joyce Watson:** We can wait for the comments, but—
- [204] **William Powell:** We can wait for the comments, but we're cognisant of what you've said also, Joyce.
- [205] **Joyce Watson:** We can't change the outcome and there's your inconsistency in the way that we decided the previous one. It might be sensitive and we know that it is, but—
- [206] **William Powell:** Absolutely. You're right to allude to the sensitivity.
- [207] **Joyce Watson:** When we're talking about consistency in the way that we deal with things in front of us, I think it has to be said that we are not going to change the outcome since, as Bethan pointed out, we are not the determining body here and—
- [208] **William Powell:** And those who are have ruled.
- [209] **Joyce Watson:** And it is right that we are not the determining body.
- [210] **Russell George:** I would fully agree with Joyce's comments, only to say that, because it is sensitive, I wouldn't want this committee to be accused of eagerly closing a petition or—
- [211] **William Powell:** Of trying to shut down debate.
- [212] **Russell George:** —debate. But if we give the petitioner time to respond, and then we haven't had a response, I think then it would be naturally the time to close it.
- [213] **William Powell:** Let's face that when the time comes, but I think we've got an emerging consensus and that's good.
- [214] Agenda item 3.20 is P-04-565, 'Revive Disused Railway Lines for Leisure'. This petition was submitted by Albert Fox and was first considered on 17 June 2014, with the support of 14 signatures.
- [215] **Joyce Watson:** Can I move that since we are awaiting comments from the petitioner that that's—
- [216] **William Powell:** I'd be very happy with that approach. I'm hopeful that Mr Fox will be able to respond to us within the next period of time.
- [217] Agenda item 3.21 is P-03-240, 'Road Safety on the A40 in Llanddewi Velfrey'. This petition was submitted by Llanddewi Velfrey Community Council and it was first considered way back, I think, in one of our first meetings of this fourth Assembly on 11 July 2011, and had collected 154 signatures. We considered ministerial correspondence on the petition on 24 March and we agreed to write asking for a timeline for the study on improvements to the A40. We've got a response from Mrs Edwina Hart in our public papers. I think, in the light of that, we probably need to wait, given that there's work that's unfinished at this time, so that we can deal with the substantive issues with the community council, because they also meet, obviously, on a four or six-weekly cycle. So, there is nothing lost in waiting for a couple of

weeks. Russell George.

[218] **Russell George:** I might be confused with another one, but hasn't the community council responded to us, and have we sent that response to the Minister?

[219] **Mr George:** The community council has responded to the letter that's come from the Minister.

[220] **William Powell:** Yes, that was as recently as 5 May. So, their most recent meeting—

[221] **Russell George:** Then, on 19 May, they responded to us. Has the Minister been sent a copy of that letter?

[222] **Mr George:** No.

[223] **Russell George:** Shall we do that, then?

[224] **Mr George:** But the Minister has indicated she's going to be reporting the results of the study at the end of the month, so if you could just wait to hear what she's got to say.

[225] **Russell George:** Well, we could send her the letter just for interest, then.

[226] **William Powell:** And as a memory jog. I think that would make sense. But then, if we can have one contact with the community council, it'd be the most rational way of doing business.

[227] Agenda item 3.22, staying with the theme of highways, is P-04-626 to de-trunk the A487 through Penparcau, Trefechan and Aberystwyth town centre. This petition was submitted by the Penparcau community forum, which is a very, very active forum in that part of Aberystwyth, and it's collected 65 signatures on this matter. We considered the petition for the first time on 24 March, and agreed to write to the petitioner again seeking views on the Minister's comments. We've now got a response from the petitioner, and his response is in our public papers. I think, given the fact that this is moving forward, we need to share those comments with the Minister without delay so that we can establish whether there's a firmer timetable for considering the de-trunking of the A487, if colleagues are happy. Good.

[228] Agenda item 3.23 is P-04-607: 'Call for the Welsh Government to Purchase Garth Celyn'. This petition was submitted by Kevin Bates and was first considered by the committee on 9 December 2014, having collected 650 signatures. We considered correspondence on the petition back on 10 March 2015, and we agreed to ask the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee to consider the matter, possibly as part of their consideration of the planned heritage Bill, the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill. We've got a response from our colleague, Christine Chapman, who chairs CELG. Her letter's in the public papers. We've also received correspondence from the current owner of Garth Celyn indicating that, due to her own personal circumstances, the property may need to be sold in the near future by public auction on the open market. I've also received some very fulsome correspondence from supporters of the petition, and I suspect I'm not alone in that respect. Clearly, they do seek to make a very compelling case for the status and importance of Garth Celyn to the Welsh nation, and that's beyond doubt.

[229] However, I think probably the best thing we could do at this time, and given the relative urgency of this matter, is to share the correspondence that we've received from Ms Gibson with the Minister to establish the urgency of the potential sale, in case there is something that can be done to assist to resolve this. Bethan, you indicated first.

[230] **Bethan Jenkins:** I probably should declare an interest now, because I have met with Katherine Gibson, and I've been trying to help them seek a way forward. The trouble we've got is that it is very imminent. It's in Savills book of auctions to come up soon to auction, sadly. I don't know whether it's possible, but I think the committee—I'm not saying we should word it as 'The Welsh Government should buy it'—could do a public statement saying what the benefits are of Garth Celyn to Welsh history, so that it's in the public domain. I personally am fearful if it's bought by somebody—and, again, I'm not trying to pre-empt who it will be bought by—who hasn't got that inherent interest in the heritage of the place, which is vast—

[231] **William Powell:** And the readiness to share, which is what is currently so special.

[232] **Bethan Jenkins:** I'm very worried for what that will mean, because it could just become a place that is then cut off from public access to that wealth of history, and so, I think the time is very tight. So, yes, of course, send it back to the Minister, but I think that the Welsh Government, with all the grand statements that they make on heritage, should've been much more proactive from an earlier stage. At least if there were some element of it that could be retained or accessed for the public, they should've made that effort.

10:15

[233] So, my ask is that we do something along those lines, even if it just means putting things on our website or sending a statement to the petitioner that we say we agree that this is what it means for Welsh history, and that may help them then in their future endeavours.

[234] **William Powell:** To raise the profile of its potential financial appeal, or whatever.

[235] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, that's what I mean more than anything. That's my ask, but I don't know whether that's possible at all. I fear that waiting for a Government response again is going to be too late in this instance.

[236] **William Powell:** I think while the clunking bureaucracy is clunking, the property's going to be sold.

[237] **Russell George:** I was going to say, Chair, I agree with everything that's been said and the actions. I think it's just probably incumbent on us all, because the process is slow, perhaps, with the committee processes, perhaps to raise this within our own political groups, and local Members can take it up and spokespeople for each of the different parties.

[238] **William Powell:** I suppose it's also something for which there are other vehicles that we can use. We might consider something in the way of a statement of opinion, which we could just buy into if we wished.

[239] **Russell George:** If someone were to do that, then I would be happy to support that.

[240] **William Powell:** All right, well, we'll give that consideration maybe outside the meeting, because clearly we've got some other items of real importance to discuss also. But this is a key issue, and it clearly matters a lot to a lot of people who've been in touch with us, and the clock's ticking.

[241] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay, it can be a statement of opinion, but I think because it's been discussed by the Petitions Committee it doesn't have to be taking an opinion or a view one way or another per se; it could just be, 'This is a place that has provided heritage opportunities for young people, which has a wealth of history, and the Petitions Committee acknowledges that', and then we sign it off as a committee. I know we haven't done anything

like that before, but it's not to say we can't.

[242] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think we need to give that urgent consideration.

[243] **Russell George:** Are you asking for the Petitions Committee to do a statement of opinion?

[244] **Bethan Jenkins:** No, not a statement of opinion, just a sort of—

[245] **Russell George:** A statement. I was thinking it was that. Yes, that's fine.

[246] **William Powell:** That's open to us as individuals coming together.

[247] **Mr George:** As I understand it, what you're proposing is that the Chair writes to Ms Gibson saying that we've received this petition, that, having considered it, it's clear that there's a lot of history here and that this is a very important historical site, and that the committee acknowledges that and would want to support continuing access to the site, if possible.

[248] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, something like that.

[249] **William Powell:** And actions to secure that, which ultimately—

[250] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, and say 'support your endeavours' too, because, obviously, as I told them when I met them, we can't say we will do that.

[251] **William Powell:** No, we haven't got a corporate chequebook.

[252] **Bethan Jenkins:** But we can sympathise with the aims of what they're trying to do in keeping that continued public access.

[253] **William Powell:** I think that would be about as strong a measure of support as we could bring really, wouldn't it?

[254] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, and make that public as well.

[255] **Russell George:** I think, on this occasion, it would be helpful if, in the letter, we had the Record of Proceedings, particularly of our discussion today, so that they can see the background to our thoughts on this.

[256] **William Powell:** Yes, I'm sure we can make that happen. Do you happen to have a recollection of the date that's scheduled for the sale, or is it just a forthcoming sale?

[257] **Bethan Jenkins:** Not off the top of my head, but it's imminent.

[258] **William Powell:** We need to be very mindful of that.

[259] **Bethan Jenkins:** It needs to be ASAP.

[260] **William Powell:** Agreed. Absolutely. I think that was a useful—

[261] **Bethan Jenkins:** Again, I'm happy to draft a statement of opinion outside of here and then I'll send that around later on.

[262] **William Powell:** We can do something jointly, yes. Excellent. Okay, colleagues,

thanks for that and for your assistance with the whole range of petition updates.

10:19

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod ar Gyfer y Canlynol
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Meeting for the Following Business**

Cynnig:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42.

Motion:

that the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42.

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[263] **William Powell:** We now move to agenda item 4, and I move, under Standing Order 17.42, to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting for agenda item 5, the draft reports before us. Are colleagues content? Okay, thank you.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10:19.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10:19.*