



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau The Petitions Committee

**Dydd Mawrth, 28 Chwefror 2012
Tuesday, 28 February 2012**

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cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

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

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Stephen Dubé	Cadeirydd Grŵp Gweithredu Blaengwen Chair of Blaengwen Action Group
Caryl Harris	Aelod, Grŵp Gweithredu Blaengwen Member of Blaengwen Action Group
Lynn Morris	Aelod, Grŵp Gweithredu Blaengwen Member of Blaengwen Action Group

Terence Neil

Bleddyn Williams

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

Sarita Marshall	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Abigail Phillips	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Cynhaliwyd y cyfarfod ym Mhrifysgol Cymru y Drindod Dewi Sant, Caerfyrddin.
The meeting was held in the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Carmarthen.

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

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Croeso cynnes i **William Powell:** A warm welcome to bawb. everyone.

[2] Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Petitions Committee. It is great to be here in the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Carmarthen, this morning. Today we have, in effect, a double session: it is a meeting in public and a public meeting. We have approximately half an hour of our regular committee work to deal with first, and we will deal with that as efficiently as possible to maximise the amount of time available for the important evidence session that will follow immediately afterwards.

[3] I have a few housekeeping announcements to make. Obviously, you are welcome speak in Welsh or English, as you wish and are able. There are headsets available for translation and amplification. Please switch off mobile phones, as I have just done with my own, because it will make things more straightforward. There are no fire alarms scheduled for this morning, so we are in the hands of the ushers if something goes off, and I am sure that they will help us to get out safely and efficiently. We have no apologies this morning, other than an apology from Bethan Jenkins, who is today represented by Rhodri Glyn Thomas.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[4] **William Powell:** We will start with the first petition, which is P-04-363, Town Centre Improvement Scheme for Fishguard. This petition was presented by Councillor Bob Kilmister of Pembrokeshire County Council, and it has collected just over 1,000 signatures. It reads:

[5] ‘We, the undersigned, request that the National Assembly supports the call on the Welsh Government to work with Pembrokeshire County Council to ensure that investment is made in a Town Centre Improvement Scheme for Fishguard, including pedestrian and traffic management measures. Such an Improvement Scheme must improve the viability and sustainability of the Town and make it fully accessible for all residents and visitors, including those with mobility and other disability needs.’

[6] In line with committee protocol, the committee has written to the Minister seeking his views on this issue. I ask Members what course of action they would propose at this stage.

[7] **Joyce Watson:** We have written to the Minister, but maybe we ought to write to Pembrokeshire County Council as well, because it calls on both to work together. The petition talks about people with mobility and disability needs, so we could also write to local access groups and await their response.

[8] **William Powell:** Are we all agreed? I see that we are. That would be my suggested course of action, too.

[9] I will move on to the second petition, P-04-365, Protect buildings of note on the Mid Wales Hospital site. This petition was submitted by John Tushingham and has collected 206 signatures. It reads:

[10] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to list or otherwise protect buildings of note on the former Mid Wales Hospital site. Unlisted but in the Conservation Area they are an invaluable part of the architectural and social heritage of Talgarth.’

[11] We have received correspondence from SAVE Britain’s Heritage, which is a campaign group in the buildings conservation area. I have, at this stage, given consideration to what we should do, but have not actually written to the Minister at this point. I think that we should definitely write on this one to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, and potentially also to Powys County Council. The national park is the planning authority, but the county council is responsible for building safety and other issues because of the nature of the site. Are there any other suggested actions, colleagues?

[12] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** At ba **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** To which Minister Weinidog a ydych wedi ysgrifennu, have you written, Chair? Gadeirydd?

[13] **William Powell:** At this stage, none—I have not written to the Minister.

[14] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Y corff a **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** The body that would fyddai â chyfrifoldeb yn y maes hwn yw be responsible for this area would be Cadw Cadw ac felly gallech ysgrifennu'n and you could write directly to Cadw. uniongyrchol at Cadw.

[15] **William Powell:** So, we will write to Cadw on this, and potentially copy in Huw Lewis, the relevant Minister. Finally, I suggest that we write to Mr Marcus Binney, the gentleman from the SAVE campaign group, to get further clarification on the issue. I see that you are agreed.

[16] The next of the new petitions is P-04-366, Closure of Aberystwyth Day Centre. This petition was submitted by Save Park Avenue Day Centre and has collected 10 signatures. An associated petition collected almost 6,000 signatures. It reads,

[17] ‘We the undersigned call on the Welsh Government to consider if proposals for day care for the vulnerable elderly, to be moved from a purpose built thirty year old Day Centre, to an unsuitable basement in an old building, previously used as the Town Hall Aberystwyth, are compliant with statutory requirements, and any relevant guidance. The County Council are planning to demolish the Centre as part of a development to build a car park, supermarket and retail outlet.’

[18] Clearly, this issue is contentious locally, and there is a substantial amount of interest in this matter. At this point, I have written on behalf of the committee to the Minister to seek his views on the matter.

[19] **Russell George:** Six thousand signatures is a lot—that is very impressive.

[20] **William Powell:** That is the number on the associated petition.

[21] **Russell George:** Yes. As you have written to the Minister, I do not think that we can do a lot on this until we have a reply from him, so I think that we should await his response at the moment.

[22] **William Powell:** I think that that is probably the best course of action. In fact, we are due to receive that petition tomorrow, when a large group of people are coming to the National Assembly in connection with the Bronglais hospital campaign, because there is some overlap between the two issues.

[23] The next petition is P-04-367, Save our Hospital Services. This petition was submitted by Rhydwyn Ifan and has collected 3,000 signatures.

[24] ‘We the undersigned want to see ALL of our local health services maintained and protected at Prince Philip Hospital. We oppose the downgrading of our hospital. We ask the Health Minister and the Welsh Labour Government to review their plans as a matter of urgency.’

[25] Again, as evidenced by the number of signatures, this is a very contentious and important local issue. I have written on behalf of the committee to the Minister and to Mr Trevor Purt, the chief executive of Hywel Dda Local Health Board, seeking his views on the issue. At this point, is it best for us to await the outcome of those two letters?

[26] **Mr Ifan:** Just to clarify the position, about a week ago we had over 6,000 signatures.

We arranged with the committee to go to the Assembly next Wednesday, 7 March, to submit the petition and, by then, we expect to have about 8,000 signatures.

[27] **William Powell:** Excellent. We will make arrangements to receive that appropriately on the steps of the Senedd in liaison with the clerking team. Sorry, I did not see—

[28] **Mr Ifan:** That is okay. You are very busy; I can see that. Thanks for that, Chair.

[29] **William Powell:** Thank you. So, we are agreed that we should await the responses and receive the petition formally as requested.

[30] The next item is P-04-368, Promote physical activity and health in Further Education colleges. This petition was submitted by Alun Jones and has collected 23 signatures.

9.10 a.m.

[31] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to promote physical activity and health in further education colleges’.

[32] At this time, I have written on behalf of the committee to the Minister seeking his views on the issue. Shall we await the outcome of the letter to Leighton Andrews? It could be useful, in parallel with that, to launch a small focus consultation. Joyce, what do you think about that?

[33] **Joyce Watson:** I think that that would be really useful, Chair. Physical exercise seems to decline among young people during their teenage years, so that would give us an opportunity to gather some evidence to support those things that the Government is trying to push forward—that is, healthy lifestyles.

[34] **William Powell:** So, we will await the ministerial response and launch this focus consultation. I see that you are agreed, colleagues.

[35] Moving to the final new petition, which is P-04-369, Against the proposed Cardiff to Newport coastal path. This petition was submitted by Roger Price and has collected 14 signatures:

[36] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales, to urge the Welsh Government and the Countryside Council for Wales to terminate the Proposed Coastal Path around Wales, at Cardiff’.

[37] The petition’s supporting information states:

[38] ‘We believe installing the path between Cardiff and Newport and beyond, will cause an excessive and destructive level of disturbance to the 1000’s of wild shorebirds, easily put to flight’.

[39] We have notes here about the tolerance to people of various birds, including curlews and redshank,

[40] ‘which depend for their rest and security on this narrow strip of land and saltmarsh adjacent to their feeding zone. Designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for the purposes of conservation, and part of the internationally ‘Important for birds’, Severn Estuary. This has been a refuge for what must be 1000’s of years, and often under threat. While many other options exist for walking, this is not the case for this coastal habitat’.

[41] Again, I have written to the Minister seeking his views on the matter. Are there any other thoughts?

[42] **Russell George:** I suspect that no-one on this committee has a particularly great amount of experience on this specific issue, so it would be useful to write to the RSPB seeking its views. That would inform the committee.

[43] **William Powell:** I would support that. Are colleagues agreed? I see that you are. We will await the ministerial response and write to the RSPB to get its take on the matter. That concludes our consideration of new petitions.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[44] **William Powell:** The first of these is P-04-333, on stopping the neglect and abandonment of horses. You will recall that this was submitted in October 2011 by the Society for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies with the support of 2,114 signatories. Just to remind you of the first paragraph of that:

[45] ‘The Society for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies has been inundated with calls for assistance from concerned members of the public, horse owners and the Police for horses found abandoned, neglected and injured. Many of them have been injured from wandering on to the roads causing great risk also to Motorists’.

[46] At the last meeting when we considered this, we agreed that it would be referred to the cross-party group on the horse, and we have since received a response from the chair of that group, Angela Burns AM. I believe that that group is meeting later this week, so that will be placed on its agenda, and we will hopefully hear a response shortly after its consideration. I suggest that we await the outcome of that. Is that sensible? I see that you are in agreement.

9.15 a.m.

[47] Moving to the housing, regeneration and heritage section of our agenda, P-04-200 is on the Glamorganshire canal and was submitted in May 2009 by John Williams and collected 14 signatures. It reads:

[48] ‘We call upon the National Assembly of Wales to support the creation of a Glamorganshire Canal historical trail from Merthyr to Cardiff Bay, indicating the major locations en route and other historical sites in proximity to the Canal e.g. Hamadryad Hospital Ship, as a means of encouraging interest in the regional history, tourism and providing an interesting and challenging walking and cycling trail.

[49] We have an update from the petitioner, which you will have seen among the papers. Also, the strategic cycle network for Cardiff has been finalised, and we have had the opportunity to consider that document. What other actions should we take forward at this time? What do you think, Rhodri Glyn?

[50] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae'n anodd iawn gweld beth arall y gellir ei wneud gyda'r mater hwn. Mae'r deisebydd wedi cael cyfle i gwrdd â Chyngor Sir Caerdydd. **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** It is very difficult to see what else can be done with this issue. The petitioner has had the opportunity to meet with Cardiff County Council.

[51] **Russell George:** Perhaps we could write to the petitioner and ask him whether he would be content with us closing the petition.

[52] **William Powell:** I tend to support that. It has been open since 2009 and we clearly have a set of outcomes. It would make sense for us to write to the petitioner in that vein.

[53] The next petition is P-03-317, on Hijinx funding for arts. As you will recall, this was submitted in March 2011 by Councillor Mike Clark with the support of 1,893 signatories. It reads:

[54] ‘Following the disproportionate cut in the revenue funding of Hijinx Theatre we call upon the National Assembly of Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure sufficient funding is available so that the exemplary and ground breaking work undertaken by Hijinx is not threatened. This unique welsh company has spent 30 years developing opportunities for people with learning difficulties to be included at all levels and this cut will result in a serious reduction in their current provision’.

[55] Previously, we decided to refer this to the relevant committee, the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, and close the report. You will see in the papers for today’s meeting the response we received from the committee Chair. There is also correspondence with the Auditor General for Wales, if you recall, who decided not to take the issue forward. Have you any thoughts on this, Rhodri Glyn?

[56] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae’r pwyllgor wedi penderfynu sefydlu grŵp gorchwyl a gorffen i edrych ar y mater hwn. Cynhelir dau gyfarfod y mis nesaf, a bydd adroddiad yn cael ei baratoi erbyn diwedd mis Mawrth. Nid oes llawer mwy y gallwn ei wneud ar hyn o bryd tan inni weld casgliadau’r adroddiad hwnnw, a fydd yn canolbwyntio ar fynediad i’r celfyddydau.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: The committee has decided to establish a task and finish group to look at this issue. Two meetings will be held next month, and a report will be prepared by the end of March. There is not much more that we can do at the moment, until we see that report’s conclusions, which will focus on access to the arts.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** I am on that committee, and it was agreed at the last meeting that we would form the task and finish group. That will happen, we hope, because we must have buy-in from everyone. It will then be as Rhodri has said.

[58] **William Powell:** So, we had better await the report, which will not be that long in coming, and then consider our next step.

[59] The next petition is P-04-357, on allocating social housing in Wales. This was submitted in March 2011 by Royston Jones with the support of 115 signatories. It reads:

[60] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to address the flawed system for allocating social housing in Wales. At present, a person who has never visited Wales can qualify for social housing ahead of someone born and bred in Wales. This is due to the points system giving preference to the homeless, those in unfit accommodation, those recently released from institutions, etc. At first glance, commendable; but when applied on a UK basis we see an endless stream of people with ‘problems’ from outside Wales denying Welsh people social housing and, too often, blighting Welsh communities. To remedy this problem we call on the Welsh Government to introduce a period of five-years’ residency in Wales before anyone qualifies for social housing, exempting only political refugees and others escaping persecution.’

[61] Previously, we wrote to the Minister to seek his views on this petition. Responses, as you will have seen in the public papers, were sent to the petitioner, who also offered us some comments. The petitioner raised a question about the status of the guidance in relation to housing associations. We have requested a legal briefing on the issue. At this stage, we should

give further thought as a committee on how to proceed. Do you have any thoughts on this?

[62] **Russell George:** Did you say that we have already requested a legal briefing on this?

[63] **Ms Roberts:** I would like to add to the discussion on this point. I was requested to provide legal advice, which I have done. I will clarify and confirm some of the issues. As the committee is fully aware, the allocation of social housing in Wales is an incredibly complex and involved issue. Having said that, when I reviewed the legal position—which is contained in the Housing Act 1996, which has been amended—section 167 of the Act requires all local authorities to publish allocation schemes. That is a statutory requirement on all local housing authorities throughout Wales. As part of that scheme, they need to set out the priorities and the procedure on the allocation of housing.

[64] Further to that, there are statutory priorities set out in legislation. As I say, on this issue, the petitioner is of a different view as to what the priorities should be. However, at the end of the day, the current legislative framework sets out clearly what the priorities are. The scheme has to be framed in order to ensure that reasonable preference is given to a number of categories of applicants. Those include, as you would expect, people who are homeless, people who are owed duties by a local housing authority or who are occupying accommodation secured by an authority, as well as people who occupy insanitary or overcrowded housing and people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds and so on. In addition, there are a number of statutory obligations on local authorities to work with housing associations, and those are contained primarily in section 170 of the Housing Act 1996.

[65] You touched on the Welsh Government's guidance earlier. The Welsh Government has guidance to cover this, which is around 320 pages long. It is the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness. That guidance was issued in 2003. I am advised that the Government is in the process of reviewing the guidance and will soon be going out to consultation on a new guidance document. However, the main point to note about the guidance is that decisions on allocations and homelessness must always take into account what is stated in the guidance document. Therefore, local councils and housing associations are expected to follow the Welsh Government's guidance on this issue.

[66] That concisely summarises some of the main points. We have our priorities that are statutory and there is a raft of statutory duties imposed on local councils and local authorities as well as additional duties for local authorities to work in partnership with and to undertake joint working with housing associations. We also have a guidance document that sets out the current position. However, the Welsh Government is seeking to drive forward further changes in this area to reflect current practice—

[67] **William Powell:** With consultation.

[68] **Ms Roberts:** Yes, with consultation, and, clearly, this petitioner could be involved in that consultation process.

[69] **William Powell:** That is exactly what I was about to say. Thank you for that comprehensive and clear legal advice. At this point, the petitioner, who has obviously flagged up his particular concerns, can take that forward within the emerging consultation.

[70] **Russell George:** I would say so, and, on that basis, we could write to the petitioner and suggest that we close the petition.

[71] **William Powell:** I think that we need to move to close this one.

[72] **Russell George:** Alternatively, we could decide now to close the petition and write to the petitioner to say how it could be taken forward through the consultation.

[73] **William Powell:** I think that that would be the best way forward. Let us close this petition and invite the gentleman to participate in the consultation.

[74] We now move on to P-04-347, Property and Asset Review. This petition was submitted by Councillor Arfon Jones in November last year and collected 19 signatures. It reads:

[75] ‘We call upon the National Assembly and the Welsh Government to carry out an Asset and Property Review of their respective buildings and or properties to reduce the number of properties that are underutilised and to use the capital saved to fund the 21st Century Schools Programme’.

[76] The petitioner’s comments on the correspondence that we have exchanged are included in our packs today, as you will have seen. Colleagues, what do you suggest that we should do with this one at this stage?

[77] **Joyce Watson:** We have had positive responses from the Government, and the petitioner’s comments seem to be satisfied by them, so I think that we could move to close it.

[78] **William Powell:** Obviously, we are moving to rationalise buildings anyway, and he seems to pick that one up. Do Members agree that we should close this petition? I see that you do. Excellent.

9.27 a.m.

P-04-329 Rheoli Sŵn o Dyrbinau Gwynt sy’n Peri Diflastod—Sesiwn Meic Agored
P-04-329 Control of Noise Nuisance from Wind Turbines—Open-mike Session

[79] **William Powell:** This petition, in many ways, is the principal reason why we are with you here today at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. It is nearly 9.30 a.m., so we have not lost any time, for which I am grateful. This petition was submitted by James Shepherd Foster in September 2011. Mr Shepherd Foster, are you present? I see that you are. The petition has collected 1,074 signatures. It reads:

[80] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to pass a statute controlling the noise nuisance from wind turbines during anti-social hours. We ask for the implementation of respite periods during which time turbines would be switched off.

[81] Noise respite periods are common in public health legislation. They are called for by the World Health Organisation in their Community Noise report; and are currently implemented in the U.K. on airport operations, construction sites and factories and other evening and overnight noise nuisance.

[82] We ask that this applies to turbines above 1.3 MW, and that respite periods be between 18.00Hrs to 06.00Hrs for turbines within 1.5 Km of individual residences; and 22.00Hrs to 06.00 Hrs for turbines within 2Km of communities. Authorities within Wales determining applications under 50MW Plate Capacity, and the Infrastructure Planning

Commission determining those over 50MW should make developers aware of this Public Health restriction which may affect individual turbines.’

[83] Clearly, this is a very contentious issue in local communities. It has been our privilege in the last 24 hours to undertake several visits, and we have already met some of those of you present today on those visits. Today is very much our opportunity to listen to your views, and that is our priority. You will have seen the nature of this committee’s work. You have had a flavour of some of the issues across Wales that we are currently dealing with. This is the opportunity that we have to hear your views.

9.30 a.m.

[84] We are not, in this regard, the principal decision makers, but we have a role, as I hope you understand, to influence other bodies in the Assembly and the Assembly Government through our contributions in Plenary, our input through the committee structures and our interaction with Ministers. I would like to move to the first speaker, Mr Steve Dubé. We are under significant time restrictions, but we are on time at the moment. We have one and a half hours left. Unfortunately, we need to conclude this meeting at 11.00 a.m. in order to be on our way back to Cardiff to attend today’s Plenary meeting. Therefore, without further ado, I hand over to Steve, whom we had the pleasure of meeting yesterday. You have the microphone and the floor, Steve.

[85] **Mr Dubé:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. With your permission, I will make a presentation during which I will introduce four speakers who will give their personal testimonies. Basically, as you aware, I am the chairman of Grŵp Blaengwen, which is an association of nearly 60 people living in and around Gwyddgrug. We were formed, as you know, after the establishment of the Statkraft turbines. More recently, we have been campaigning against a further 28 turbines up to 145m high—the Brechfa forest west windfarm project. Other wind turbine power stations are proposed. Some group members were initially neutral or even in favour of the turbines. Like the former Minister for environment, Jane Davidson, they may have believed that the only disadvantage of turbines was their visual impact. Wind turbine developers and supporters always ignore the matter of sound. The evidence that you will hear today is of lives disrupted, sleep disturbed and health affected by frequent, unpredictable and uncontrolled turbine noise. You may come to feel that this is something best investigated by the Health and Social Care Committee rather than by the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

[86] After more than two years of recording and investigating turbine nuisance, we are convinced that the whole issue of wind turbine generation should be reconsidered. In the meantime, we are calling for a simple solution: we want the turbines switched off at night so that people can get a decent night’s sleep. That already happens with regard to airports. Heavy goods vehicles are similarly banned from residential areas. There is no obvious reason why wind turbines should be exempt.

[87] Wind turbine power stations are also exempt from other controls. Normal noise legislation does not apply. Instead planners and environmental health officers must use methodology known as ETSU-R-97 to assess turbine noise. As long as the noise created is within the ETSU parameters, they seem powerless to tackle the problem. ETSU-R-97 was drawn up at the request of turbine developers on the basis of data collected in 1995 and 1996, when turbine towers were much smaller and the machinery less powerful. It is now outdated and fails to protect turbine neighbours. It is also perverse in that, uniquely among noise regulations, it permits higher levels of noise at night when, as everyone knows, the countryside is quiet and noise is at its most intrusive. ETSU-R-97 should be scrapped. We call on planners and public protection agencies to use World Health Organization noise limits. The WHO says that measurable effects of noise on sleep begin at 30 decibels. We are getting

into technical matters here, but I am trying to simplify matters. The WHO states that when noise is continuous, the equivalent sound pressure level should not exceed 30 decibels indoors if negative effects on sleep are to be avoided. For noise with a large proportion of low-frequency sound, like the noise from turbines, a still lower guideline value is recommended.

[88] In contrast to the WHO's limits, the ETSU-R-97 limit on night-time noise from wind turbines is 43 decibels. That is nearly 50% higher. You will hear today various people talk about turbine noise. In two of those cases, those affected have consulted their GPs and now take medication to help counter the effects. Members of Grŵp Blaengwen also know of other neighbours who are similarly affected, but who either feel helpless and despondent about the whole issue or say that they will not speak out for fear that it might negatively affect the value of their homes. As a group, we are submitting a dossier today, and I will let your clerk have this statement, which we hope that you will take away and read. It includes scientific opinion and a chart that I have already handed to Members, which might help to explain the different types of turbine noise. There are also statements from the four witnesses here who want to offer their personal stories and give verbal evidence today on the effects on their lives. Their homes range in distance from between 3 miles and 800m from the Alltwalis turbines. Two are long-standing members of the group and two are not. At this point, I will call on Bleddyn Williams, who farms Cwmhwplyn in Pencader, around 5 km, or more than 3 miles, from the windfarm.

[89] **Mr Williams:** Bleddyn Williams, Cwmhwplyn ydw i. Rwyf wedi byw ar y fferm am 60 o flynyddoedd, a hynny mewn tawelwch, yn enwedig yn y nos, ond mae pethau wedi newid yn arw iawn yn ddiweddar. Mae'n cymryd amser i mi fynd i gysgu, ac unwaith yr ydych yn diffodd popeth, mae hymian y tyrbinau i'w glywed yn blaen, er fy mod 3 milltir i ffwrdd. Fe'm deffrowyd gan sŵn y tyrbinau ganol nos pan gychwynnodd y fferm wynt. Rydym wedi cael meter newydd a newidydd newydd, ond nid yw'r sefyllfa wedi newid. Mae'n anodd iawn i'r cymunedau eraill feddwl, cyn iddynt gael eu codi, sut bydd eu sŵn yn effeithio arnynt. Diolch yn fawr.

Mr Williams: I am Bleddyn Williams, Cwmhwplyn, and I have lived on the farm for 60 years, in peace and quiet, especially at night, but things have changed dramatically recently. It takes me a long time to get off to sleep, and once you have turned everything off, the hum of the turbines can plainly be heard, even though I live 3 miles away from them. The noise of the turbines woke me in the middle of the night when the windfarm started up. We have had a new meter and a new transformer, but the situation has not changed. It is very difficult for other communities to imagine, before the things are built, how their noise will affect them. Thank you.

[90] **Mr Dubé:** You will notice from the chart that I have distributed today the observation that when standing beneath a turbine it is not as noisy as it is standing further away. That may explain why Jane Davidson assured us during the TAN 8 roadshow in Carmarthen that she knew that they made no noise, because she had stood directly beneath one. My own experience is of a low-frequency throb that has woken me up on four occasions in the middle of the night. This morning, I was woken up at 3.50 a.m., and the noise was loud. It is a throbbing sound that has been compared to the noise of a washing machine—and that is as close as you can get. It is a sort of 'brum, brum, brum'—something like that. Like Bleddyn, I live some 5 km away, more than 3 miles as the crow flies, but the topography separating our homes from the turbines is completely different, which is why he hears a different sound.

[91] You will also note from our evidence that the presence of noise is dependent on atmospheric and weather conditions. It is not a constant problem; it is completely impossible to predict. This is why we support switching off the turbines at night.

[92] In the next instance, I would like to invite Caryl Harris of Gellifelen, Gwyddgrug, to

speak. She has also provided her statement in writing. Caryl lives about 805m from the nearest turbine.

[93] **Ms Harris:** Following its becoming operational in October 2009, we, and many others, have suffered terribly from the noise emanating from the Alltwalis windfarm. Eventually, following a number of complaints, Statkraft offered to install noise monitoring equipment at our property. We worked collaboratively with Statkraft and Carmarthenshire County Council to try to resolve the problems by monitoring noise levels for 13 months, often getting up late at night and during the very early hours of the morning to switch on the monitors and take them outside. That would be followed by a telephone call to the control room at Rheidol. During this period of monitoring, Statkraft closed down the nearest two turbines following our telephone call at night.

[94] During this period, we collected a huge amount of data, which were downloaded as often as three times a week. Eventually, a fault was detected on the gearbox of turbine 9. Turbine 9 remained operational, but it was closed down following our telephone call to complain of noise nuisance at night. I have been told by an expert in this field that turbine 9 should have been closed down immediately until the problem had been rectified, but that did not happen.

[95] Following repairs to the gearbox, Statkraft considered the problem solved. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The only difference is that when we now telephone the control room at Rheidol to complain about noise nuisance, even during the very early hours of the morning, I am told, 'Sorry, Mrs Harris, there is nothing we can do'. After 13 months of monitoring, and collecting such a huge amount of data, we agreed as a family that we had done all that we could to try to resolve the problem. To be told repeatedly that the noise nuisance that we were experiencing was well within the guidelines made it obvious to us that monitors were not the answer. The ETSU-R-97 guidelines do not offer any protection to those of us living in areas with very low background noise levels; the guidelines need reviewing urgently.

[96] The two turbines nearest to our farmhouse are approximately 815m and 900m away, towering over us and totally dominating our home. Their enormousness makes it feel as though they are in our garden. Our case has proven that both of these turbines have been built far too close, as when they were closed down during periods of noise nuisance, the intensity of the noise was alleviated immediately. It did not get rid of the noise altogether, but it made life bearable.

[97] In our desperate quest for help in this matter we requested a meeting with Jane Davidson, in her role as Minister for environment, via Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, as well as writing and contacting her diary secretary ourselves. She refused to meet with us, but did meet with Statkraft. This infuriated us even further—that a Minister of the Welsh Assembly Government was willing to meet with Statkraft, but not willing to listen to us, the people of Wales.

[98] Recently an application has been submitted to the Infrastructure Planning Commission for another 28 wind turbines, 145m in height this time. If granted permission, they will be adjacent to the existing Alltwalis windfarm. This is a huge worry for us and others living nearby as this will result in cumulative noise and even less respite. We have voiced our concerns to Npower and were told that if there was a noise problem at our property, it would bring monitors. We have asked Npower to consider moving three turbines as they are far too close to homes and to the village of Gwyddgrug. It is not able to justify significantly reducing the energy-generating capacity of the site. Therefore, I have written to the First Minister, Carwyn Jones, to request a meeting regarding our situation. The First Minister did not reply, but did forward our letter to Sustainable Energy and Industry Wales. It

advised us that the Brechfa forest west application was a matter for the IPC. However, the TAN 8 area was designated by the Welsh Assembly Government.

[99] This development has cost us, as a family, an enormous amount of stress, and has impacted severely on our health. I personally now suffer from very high blood pressure for which I am having to take medication. On discussing the effects of this windfarm on us as a family with my GP, I was offered a prescription for antidepressant medication, which I have refused to date as I am determined that this is not going to get the better of me. However, I have had to accept a prescription for sleeping tablets, which I will only take as a last resort.

[100] There is no protection for the people of Wales from noise from windfarms. We, as well as many other residents, feel totally on our own, abandoned by the Welsh Government. We thank Mr Foster and are extremely grateful to him for submitting this petition, highlighting the problems experienced by the people of Gwyddgrug. Getting turbines switched off at night would be an enormous relief for us. [*Applause.*]

[101] **Mr Dubé:** Diolch yn fawr, Caryl. The experience of Caryl and her family is one reason why those of us who are much less affected are determined not to let this one go. Caryl's experience is similar to that suffered by the Davis family, who farm at Deeping St Nicholas in Lincolnshire. Jane and Julian Davis, who were initially supportive of wind turbines, sued local landowners and the owners and operators of a windfarm half a mile from their farmhouse. The couple sought £2.5 million in compensation for the low-frequency hum that made them so ill that they had to move out of their home and rent a house some distance away. The problems began immediately after the eight-turbine windfarm began operating in 2006. The noise disturbed their sleep and gave them headaches and made their house effectively worthless. They had to move out. The case dragged on for more than four years, and when it eventually reached the High Court, last autumn—just before Christmas in fact—the defence claimed that the couple were oversensitive, and were exaggerating and overreacting, arguing that the owners and operators had done everything possible to deal with the couple's concerns. This is a similar situation to Caryl's. Last November, the judge was told that the parties had agreed a settlement under terms of strict confidentiality—an admission, albeit in secret, of culpability by the landowners and the operators. The Davis family was able to sue and eventually achieve compensation and restitution because of a clause in their insurance policy. It took them four years, and they still cannot live in their home. Caryl and Jeff Harris, who live almost exactly the same distance away from the turbines as the Davis family, have no such insurance and no hope of compensation.

[102] Our next speaker from the Blaengwen group is Lynn Morris of Glenydd, Gwyddgrug. She lives in the village of Gwyddgrug.

[103] **Ms Morris:** Yes, I live right in the middle of the village of Gwyddgrug. I personally suffer from sleep disturbance caused by the intrusive noise from the Alltwalis windfarm near my home in Gwyddgrug, and have had to make several lifestyle changes to try to cope with the situation. I am grateful for the opportunity to explain how disruptive this type of noise disturbance can be, in the hope that the decision takers and policy makers of Wales might start listening and taking into consideration the impacts of this type of development on local people, and save others from having to suffer the same as many of the villagers in Gwyddgrug. I am really not alone in this. What I have to say is not full of scientific or technical jargon, and neither is it dramatic and emotional; I am just going to tell you what it is like to live near a windfarm.

[104] 9.45 a.m.

[105] In 2005, I moved from Essex to Gwyddgrug. People said to me, 'Why Gwyddgrug? There's nothing there'. Precisely; there was no school, no pubs and no village hall, just a

lovely close-knit rural community with a chapel and a village post office. It was peaceful and quiet with lovely views and stunning scenery. It was perfect. My new home was intended to be my last move, my retirement home ready for a few years' time, and the equity in it was intended to be part of my pension. So, I put a lot of thought into leaving my family before moving here. It had turned out to be everything that I had expected, but now my way of life here has been horribly blighted. It was upsetting to find out about the proposed windfarm developments. It was bad enough to discover that I could see far more of the turbines than predicted by all the photo montages and wire diagrams. However, far worse has been the way in which I, like others, have been misled by the developers, the energy companies, the local authority and the Welsh Government about the noise—the noise that we were told would not happen.

[106] First, the noise we suffer from is always referred to as 'alleged'. I am sorry, but the noise is not alleged. It exists and it may well be compliant with planning conditions, but it is still intrusive. It has had a lifestyle impact on me and continues to wake me up or prevent me from getting to sleep in certain weather conditions. Since the windfarm became operational, I have had to move from my bedroom at the back of the house to a front bedroom, which is directly over the main road outside my property, the A485, but the noise of the traffic is far less intrusive than the noise of the turbines. There is minimal traffic going past anyway from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. and what does go past rarely wakes me. However, the noise from the turbines still disturbs my sleep, especially if I have the windows open, so now I have to have my bedroom windows closed, even in the summer. When my son is away, I sometimes sleep on his bed as his room is slightly quieter, or I may resort to trying to get some sleep on the sofa downstairs as the noise is sometimes less intrusive there. Leaving the back door open in the summer also lets the noise into the house and there is little pleasure in being in the garden when the turbines are noisy.

[107] In Gwyddgrug, as Caryl has told you, we have undergone intensive noise monitoring for more than 18 months, covering all seasons and all types of weather. This has only confirmed that the noise complies with the ETSU-R-97 guidelines, albeit that they are out of date and no longer relevant to the type of turbines now being commissioned. Anyway, the data are disregarded if one or more turbines are switched off or if it is raining, because that interferes with the monitors, but it is often in damp and rainy weather when they are at their worst. For what it is worth, I also phone Statkraft operational room whenever the noise is so bad that I cannot get to sleep. I keep a record and so does Statkraft, but it has never come up with a solution, just offers of more monitoring. That is pointless.

[108] I have to say that it is not necessarily the volume of the noise that is the disturbing factor; it is the nature of the noise—it is incessant, repetitive, pulsating, whooshing and roaring. It is far more annoying than a constantly dripping tap or a loud ticking clock. It is a continuous rhythm and sometimes it brings on panicky palpitations in the same way as horror film music or the music at the beginning of *Jaws*. It gives you that butterflies-in-the-stomach-type feeling. It gets inside the house and seems to bounce off the walls—it does the same inside your head. I live 2 km from the windfarm, but now I am fearful of the effect of even more, even larger turbines. Another 28 are currently going through the planning process. If the planning permission is granted for all the windfarm developments, there will more than 80 more turbines. The development with the 28 big turbines will be sited a similar distance from my home to the existing one, but in a slightly different direction, therefore increasing the chance of much greater noise disturbance, much more often and with a greater span of wind direction.

[109] Sleep deprivation is most unpleasant. I cannot describe how unpleasant it is. It is also dangerous. I frequently have to make long car journeys and I do not feel that I should be forced into a situation where I have to decide to drive tired, even to my office in Carmarthen, and I cannot just tell my employer that I am too tired to come to work. If all of this was to be

for just a few months during construction, then maybe, just maybe, it might be acceptable, but surely not for the next 25 or more years.

[110] I said at the beginning that the equity in my home was part of my financial planning for old age. My property has gone down in value by some 30%. Apparently, 20% can be attributed to the recession, but I am told that the other 10% is down to being blighted by noise and to the likelihood of further large-scale industrial windpower developments. I have been advised that the best thing that I can do is to sit tight until all the developments are either refused or completed, and then sell to someone who likes windfarms. The whole business is so stressful. The quality of my life and the enjoyment of my property have been blighted by the noise from the turbines, and this is likely to continue for the rest of my life. My property has reduced in value. I have friends and neighbours who are all in similar situations. It does not seem right that we should be expected to suffer in this way. A couple of weeks ago, I went to London. I lie awake at night while the turbines are producing electricity, and London—the Embankment and empty office blocks—was lit up. It was midnight, and office blocks were empty with all of the lights left on. If a factory were disturbing us, it would be made to shut down at night. Thank you for listening, but please do not let that be all that you do. [*Applause.*]

[111] **Mr Dubé:** Thank you very much, Lynn. I repeat that there is no compensation for turbine blight. However, the noise issue is not new; it has been extensively studied and reported. Physicians around the world have recorded ill health among people living near industrial-scale wind turbines. The symptoms begin when the turbines start to turn and are only relieved when the victims leave the area. The symptoms include sleep disturbance, headaches, ringing or buzzing in the ears, tinnitus, ear pressure, dizziness, vertigo, nausea, visual blurring, racing heartbeat, tachycardia, irritability, problems with concentration and memory and panic episodes, with sensations of internal pulsation or quivering that arise while awake or asleep. No wonder many families have had to abandon their homes.

[112] We draw your attention to the problems caused by the Blaen Bowi windfarm—three turbines on Moelfre hill, two and a half miles south of Newcastle Emlyn. In 2006, Gwen Burkhardt felt that she had no option but to sell up and move away. That example shows that the noise problem is not new, even in Carmarthenshire, and that it has been widely studied. We refer you to the report by Barbara J. Frey and Peter J. Hadden on the health effects of wind turbine noise, published in February 2007—I have taken the liberty of providing Members with a copy of the summary and conclusions—and the work of Nina Pierpont of New York, who recommends that large wind turbines are sited no closer than 2 km, or 1.25 miles, from a home.

[113] Our fourth witness is Terence Neil, who lives with his wife Kathryn at Lan Farm in Gwyddgrug. Terence is a former police helicopter pilot; I thought that I would just share that information. [*Laughter.*]

[114] **Mr Neil:** Together, with my wife Kathryn, I live at Lan Farm, which is approximately 900m south-west of the Alltwalis windfarm. From the very beginning, we were concerned about several aspects of the proposal, including noise. The initial developers, Catamount Energy Corporation, stated that we would rarely hear the turbines. Successive developers—Force 9 Energy and then Statkraft—never appeared to take local concerns seriously. I find the fact that there have been three developers to be significant. We were dismissed, and I do not believe that they fully appreciate the implications of the noise footprint of these turbines. As a result of my history as a helicopter pilot, I know something about noise disturbance and whenever I discussed the issue with the developers, my views were not dismissed, but they were not taken seriously either.

[115] From the day that the blades started turning, there has been noise. As Caryl said,

noise-measuring equipment was placed in various locations—Lan being one—and we had the same problems of having to turn the equipment on and off. Measurements were taken and reports were produced. We were then informed that the turbines did not exceed that specified in the noise regulations. We have been visited by staff from the public health services department of Carmarthenshire County Council, who agreed, as they stood in the yard, that there was noise, but they could not do anything about it. As everybody has said, the regulations—ETSU-R-97—relating to noise are useless and need to be updated. What is relevant in an urban area with background noise is not relevant in a quiet, rural and hilly area. Noise travels, follows contours around hills and down valleys and reverberates and echoes around buildings, certainly in our farmyard. It also resonates off water droplets—mist and drizzle. That is when the noise is at its worst, as Lynn has mentioned.

[116] With the wind from the south-east, the turbines sound like a tumble dryer. Statkraft admitted problems with gearboxes. These are dealt with, but this has made no difference to the noise in the local area. The main problem at Lan is blade noise—you can hear the whoosh as the blade passes the mast; you can actually see it. Like Lynn, we moved to Wales 15 years ago for the tranquillity, among other things, that the area offered and the quality of life. My wife now has to wear digital hearing aids, but she cannot wear them constantly. In fact, there is no point in her walking out of the house with them in her ears. We know of a neighbour who has a similar problem. In addition, when there is blade noise and slap at night, which is often, my wife will frequently wake up with a migraine, for which she now has to take prescribed medication.

[117] The noise of the turbines affects the people in this community in differing ways, as you have heard. It is not something that can be ignored, dismissed or treated lightly, as the developers have done. We now have a situation in which a minimum of 55 large turbines have been proposed for location next door to those in existence. The noise problem will get worse, and the long-term health problems will increase, both mental and physical. Something needs to be done about it. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

[118] **Mr Dubé:** Thanks, Terence.

[119] I will wind up as briefly as I can, Mr Chairman. Our dossier, which I am going to leave with you, contains an extract from a study on turbine noise, sleep and health by Dr Christopher Hanning, honorary consultant in sleep disorders medicine to the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, and president of the British Sleep Society, which I certainly did not know existed. We hope that you will take time to read it. It is quite a new study, from April 2010.

[120] Finally, I would like to refer you to the British acoustics expert, Dick Bowdler, a fellow at the Institute of Acoustics since 1977 and a former member of the Government's noise working group. He has this to say of the ETSU-R-97 methodology:

[121] 'The level of noise permitted from wind turbines in rural areas is higher than would be permitted from other industrial developments - even other renewable developments. Therefore people are exposed to higher levels of wind farm noise that they would expect from other new industrial noise sources.

[122] 'If there is AM (amplitude modulation) present (that is the swishing or thumping noise that is sometimes reported) this can be particularly annoying because it is relentless and regular and ETSU-R-97 makes no allowance for it.

[123] 'Most important is the manner in which wind farms are procured. Developers usually have no previous contact with the area and whilst they often make a show of consultation it is almost unknown for them to take local views into account.'

[124] In fact, our experience of these consultations is that they are not so much consultations as presentations. I have not yet seen any of the comments that I know have been raised and put to them actually taken on board by the developers. They ignore local opinion. In fact, they are

[125] ‘supported by governments who simply ignore people’s valid complaints. This divides communities and causes annoyance and stress which can affect people’s health.’

[126] I am not saying that; Dick Bowdler is saying that. Bowdler also says:

[127] ‘The main difficulty with ETSU-R-97 is that it is quite unsuitable for quiet rural areas because, particularly at night, it sets noise limits not by what is acceptable or reasonably protects amenity but by what is the upper limit that can be tolerated. For example it often permits turbine noise levels four times as loud as the background noise level at night and just into the region where the World Health Organisation says that it may cause sleep disturbance.’

[128] So, you may be able to imagine how we felt when a freedom of information request revealed that civil servants in London suppressed warnings over health problems caused by the ETSU-R-97 limits being set too high. This warning came in a draft report by the consultants Hayes MacKenzie Partnership Ltd, which is one of the companies that drew up ETSU-R-97 in the first place. Its document said that the best way to protect members of the public was to cut the maximum permitted noise to 38 decibels, or 33 decibels if the machines create discernible beating noises as they spin. Those warnings and that advice were removed from the final 2006 report. That, in effect, has led to hundreds of windfarms, including that at Gwyddgrug, being allowed to generate noise levels that affect people’s health. I believe that that is a scandal.

10.00 a.m.

[129] We believe that this matter should be properly considered by the Assembly’s Health and Social Care Committee. We appeal to you to contradict Bowdler’s observation referred to earlier that turbine developers are supported by governments, which simply ignore people’s valid complaints. We trust you to take up this matter on our behalf. We call on you to ask the Welsh Government, through the Environment and Sustainability Committee or through the Health and Social Care Committee to turn these turbines off at night and to scrap ETSU-R-97 and to bring into effect in all future developments the World Health Organization’s methodology on turbine noise. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

[130] **William Powell:** Steve, thank you very much for keeping to time with the whole submission from Blaengwen. I have to declare something of an interest in this matter as I have recently been diagnosed with chronic tinnitus in one ear, so I empathise with much of what I have heard today. There are clearly a number of actions that we will be looking to take forward as a result of what we have heard. I would like to open up the discussion to members of the committee. I ask Russell to speak first, then Rhodri Glyn.

[131] **Russell George:** Thank you for all of your contributions this morning. At the end of her contribution, Lynn thanked us for listening, but said that she hoped that we would do more than that. I can say that, out of the dozens of petitions that we have received since the committee started in its current form in May, we have given more attention to this petition than any other by being here this morning. So, you can be sure that that is the case. This is a cross-party committee, so you can be sure that we will relay this information to the relevant committees. Our job is not to give our own opinions today, but to listen. However, I can tell you that my constituency, Montgomeryshire, has more wind turbines than any other part of

Wales and there are plans for 600 more. So, I sympathise. I will not state any more of my own views on that, but I am particularly keen that we take up the suggestion that Steve made to us that we ask the Health and Social Care Committee to investigate this further. I am very keen that we write a lengthy letter to the committee, summarising what we have heard this morning and that we also open it up to health issues beyond noise. As I think Caryl mentioned, there is also the stress and worry. People can argue against some of the statistics and some things that are a matter of opinion, but no-one can argue that some people have health problems even if there are no windfarms near them, because they are worried that a windfarm will be located near them. There is also the worry of blighted properties and house prices. So, when we ask the health committee to look at this, we should widen it out beyond the issue of noise. Chair, that is my contribution.

[132] **William Powell:** Thank you, Russell, for your initial comments. Due to the nature of what we have heard this morning and what we are about to hear in the 50 minutes or so that remain, during which we will hear from more of you, we need to ensure that we provide a full transcript of today's meeting as well as a summary of the key points. There is a lot of detail and people have spoken in their different styles and of their different, but complementary, experiences of this, and no two contributions were identical. There was very little repetition. Some themes came through, but contributions varied according to your particular location and circumstances and we need to ensure that everything that we capture today is taken back to colleagues and also to our political groups, because, ultimately, that is where these decisions and policies are potentially reshaped. Rhodri Glyn, you have clearly been at the front line of this for some time.

[133] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rwy'n cytuno'n llwyr â'r hyn a ddywedodd Russell. Rwy'n meddwl mai'r pwyllgor iechyd yw'r pwyllgor priodol i edrych ar y mater hwn, oherwydd mae'r ddeiseb yn ymwneud yn benodol ag effaith sŵn, ond, fel y dywedodd Russell, mae effeithiau meddygol eraill y gellid eu hystyried hefyd. Felly, buaswn yn hapus pe baem yn annog y pwyllgor iechyd yn gryf i archwilio'r mater hwn.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I entirely agree with what Russell said. I think that the health committee is the appropriate committee to look at this issue, because the petition specifically relates to the effect of noise, but, as Russell said, there are other medical effects that could also be considered. So, I would be happy if we were to encourage the health committee in very strong terms to investigate this issue.

[134] Ar sail y dystiolaeth rydym wedi ei chael y bore yma, buaswn yn awgrymu—nid wyf yn siŵr a yw hyn yn rhywbeth y mae'r Pwyllgor Deisebau wedi ystyried ei wneud yn y gorffennol—ysgrifennu at y cwmnïau, ac, yn benodol, Statkraft, sy'n gyfrifol am fferm wynt Alltwalis. Gallem nodi gyda phryder fod pobl yn dweud nad yw eu cwynion yn derbyn y sylw dyladwy gan y cwmni, a'i annog i edrych ar effeithiau'r fferm wynt hon ar fywydau pobl ac ystyried o ddifrif sut y gall ymateb i hynny, gan gynnwys y posibilrwydd o drafod gyda chwmnïau eraill. Mae'r map a roddodd Steve Dubé i ni yn dangos yn glir beth fyddai effaith gynyddol y datblygiadau hyn pe bai pob cais cynllunio yn cael ei ganiatáu. Byddai rhai o'r ffermydd a'r tai sy'n cael eu heffeithio, i bob pwrpas, yn cael eu hamgylchynu ar dair ochr gan dyrbinau

On the basis of the evidence that we have heard this morning, I would suggest—I am not sure whether this is something that the Petitions Committee has considered doing in the past—that we write to the companies, particularly Statkraft, which is responsible for Alltwalis windfarm. We could note with concern that people are saying that their complaints are not receiving the attention that is their due by the company, and encourage it to look at the effects of this windfarm on residents' lives and to consider seriously how it can respond to that point, including the possibility of discussions with other companies. The map provided by Steve Dubé shows clearly what the cumulative effect of these developments would be if every planning application was granted. Some of the farms and houses affected would, to all intents and purposes, be surrounded on three

gwynt. Felly, mae'n gyfrifoldeb arnom i'w gwneud yn glir i gwmnïau ein bod yn disgwyl iddynt gymryd cwynion a phryderon pobl leol o ddifrif a bod hynny'n rhan o'u cyfrifoldeb cymdeithasol gyda datblygiadau o'r fath.

[135] Hoffwn gael eglurhad ar ddau bwynt. Yn gyntaf, cyfeiriodd Lynn at y ffaith y cyfeirir at y sŵn fel sŵn honedig. Rwy'n cymryd, Gadeirydd, y gallwn dderbyn, wedi cael tystiolaeth gan Statkraft ddoe a oedd yn cydnabod bod problem sŵn—ond nid oedd wedi llwyddo i fynd i'r afael â'r broblem honno yn gyfan gwbl a bod cwynion yn parhau—nad ydym yn sôn am sŵn honedig, ond am sŵn sydd yn bodoli ac sydd yn real. Gallwn hefyd gofnodi nad yw'r ffaith bod y sŵn o fewn canllawiau ETSU yn golygu nad yw'r sŵn hwnnw yn effeithio ar fywydau pobl. Mae Steve Dubé eto wedi cyflwyno tystiolaeth ynglŷn â chanllawiau ETSU sydd yn dangos eu bod yn dod o gyfnod a oedd yn wahanol iawn i'r presennol o ran datblygiadau yn y maes hwn a'u bod yn groes i ganllawiau eraill ar sŵn gan fudiadau rhyngwladol.

[136] Hoffwn eglurhad hefyd gan Caryl, oherwydd rhoddwyd tystiolaeth ddoe gan Statkraft a'm synnodd braidd. Yr oedd y cwmni'n honni ei fod wedi penderfynu diffodd tyrbin 9 yn y nos. Dyna a ddywedodd. Roedd hynny yn fy synnu braidd, oherwydd ysgrifennais at y cwmni gan ofyn iddo ddiffodd tyrbinau 9 a 5 yn y nos, oherwydd ei fod yn cydnabod bod problemau gyda'r ddau dyrbin. Dywedodd ei fod wedi gwneud hynny gyda thyrbin 9. Caryl, a oes modd i ti gadarnhau nad yw hynny yn ôl—

[137] **Ms Harris:** Gwnaeth y cwmni ddiffodd tyrbin 9 ar ôl iddo ddarganfod bod problem gyda'r gerbocs, ond ar ôl trwsio'r gerbocs, ni wnaeth y cwmni ddiffodd tyrbin 9 eto.

[138] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Am ba hyd fu tyrbin 9 wedi ei ddiffodd? Wyt ti'n cofio?

[139] **Ms Harris:** Ni chafodd ei ddiffodd o gwbl, dim ond pan wnaethom ni ffonio, ac

sides by wind turbines. So, it is our responsibility to make it clear to companies that we expect them to take the complaints and concerns of local people seriously and that that is part of their social responsibility within such developments.

I would like clarification on two points. First, Lynn referred to the fact that the noise is referred to as an alleged noise. I take it, Chair, that we can accept, having received evidence from Statkraft yesterday that acknowledged that there was a noise problem—but it had not succeeded in fully getting to grips with that problem and there continue to be complaints—that we are talking not about alleged noise, but existing, real noise. We can also note that the fact that the noise is within ETSU guidelines does not mean that the noise does not have an effect on people's lives. Once again, Steve Dubé has presented evidence in relation to the ETSU guidelines that show that they come from a period that was very different to the present in terms of developments in this area and that they run contrary to other guidelines relating to noise laid down by international organisations.

I would also like clarification from Caryl, because we received evidence yesterday from Statkraft that surprised me somewhat. The company claimed that it had taken a decision to turn off turbine 9 during the night. That is what it said. That surprised me somewhat, because I wrote to the company requesting it to turn off turbines 9 and 5 during the night, because it acknowledged that there were problems with both turbines. It said that it had done that with turbine 9. Caryl, is it possible for you to confirm that that is not back—

Ms Harris: The company switched off turbine 9 after it found that there was a problem with the gearbox, but after fixing the gearbox, it did not switch off turbine 9 again.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: For how long was turbine 9 switched off? Do you remember?

Ms Harris: It was not switched off at all, only when we phoned up, and that was only

roedd hynny ddim ond nes i'r gerbocs gael ei drwsio. Unwaith cafodd y gerbocs ei drwsio, pan ffoniais i'r Rheidol dywedwyd wrthyf: until the gearbox was fixed. As soon as the gearbox was fixed and I phoned Rheidol, I was told:

[140] 'There's nothing we can do tonight, Mrs Harris'.

[141] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Dyma'r pwynt, Gadeirydd, oherwydd dywedodd Statkraft yn glir wrthym—gofynnais yn benodol am hyn—ei fod wedi troi'r tyrbin i ffwrdd o'i wirfodd. **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** This is the point, Chair, because Statkraft said clearly to us—I asked about this specifically—that it had turned off the turbine voluntarily.

[142] **Mr Dubé:** That is what we were told.

[143] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Felly, rwyt ti'n cadarnhau'r hyn roeddwn i'n teimlo, sef mai dim ond pan fyddai rhywun yn ffonio y byddai'r tyrbin yn cael ei droi i ffwrdd. **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** So, you are confirming what I felt was the case, which is that it was only when someone phoned up that the turbine would be switched off.

[144] **Ms Harris:** Ydw.

Ms Harris: Yes.

[145] **Joyce Watson:** We have heard an awful lot of evidence in the past couple of days. We have heard evidence about another windfarm—not this one—where, we are told, there is no noise problem. We looked at two sites, so that we could compare and contrast to satisfy ourselves and you. I agree that this issue needs to go to the Health and Social Care Committee, as well as to the Environment and Sustainability Committee, so that we get a rounded response. However, we also need to look at the differences between the one that we have seen that is not causing a problem and the one that you are telling us is clearly causing a problem, so that something can be worked out so that this situation does not continue or can be rectified.

[146] There is an obvious different pattern of outcome resulting from those windfarms. Llanmiloe village is right by the windfarm that we visited yesterday. The housing is in a different type of area—we have heard evidence about that—but we were told that there have not been any complaints whatsoever. So, in order to move things forward for everyone, we need to compare and contrast. It may be that there are different types of wind turbines in place. I know that that site is older, but, having said that, it has been upgraded recently. So, there were newer-type turbines there, as well as older-type turbines.

[147] What we want at the end of it all, and what you want at the end of it all, is a resolution. I have every sympathy with people who tell us that they are blighted in the way that you have described. We want to get to the bottom of that. So, in answer to your question about whether we are here just to listen or to move things forward, we are definitely here to move things forward. That is the role of this committee. It would have been pretty pointless our coming here if we were just going to listen and not to take that back. [*Applause.*]

[148] **William Powell:** Thank you, Joyce. We are developing several actions here.

[149] **Mr Dubé:** I have one question, Mr Chairman. We would all love to know which is the other windfarm site that you visited.

[150] **William Powell:** The site was just adjacent to Pendine—Parc Cynog. The topography is completely different and you also have the sea adjacent.

[151] **Ms Morris:** It is nearer to the sea, but the turbines are half the size of the turbines

that we are talking about.

[152] **Joyce Watson:** We need to compare and contrast to see what causes this and what does not.

[153] **William Powell:** It is about time that we opened up the floor to the wider group. I see several hands up. I will call Caroline Evans of the Brechfa Forest Energy Action Group first. I ask everyone to say who they are and what organisation they are involved with, if applicable, before making a contribution.

[154] **Ms Evans:** I am Caroline Evans from the Brechfa Forest Energy Action Group. I want to refer to the development that you visited at Pendine, which was enlarged and now has new turbines. Last year, I was beetling around that area working for the census, and, while I was enumerating houses, I pulled up on a lane, on top of a ridge, which had big hedges on either side, to complete the paperwork that I had just done in the previous hour. Over the hedge, I could hear a loud tractor noise. I took no notice, but, about a quarter of an hour later, I thought, ‘That is funny; the tractor isn’t going up and down as you would expect’.

10.15 a.m.

[155] There was a farm gate, and some farm buildings across the lane, and I wondered whether the farmer had fallen off the tractor or something. So I walked across the road, went through the gate, and saw that there was no tractor, but 3 miles away were the Pendine turbines. They were 3 miles away, and it was a loud, roaring noise. There was an onshore breeze. Just then, the farmer came out of the barn and came over, and I explained why I was in his yard, and I said, ‘Gosh, the turbines are loud,’ and he said, ‘Yes, I have had to move my grandma out and we can’t have tenants in’. I asked whether he had complained to the county council, and he said, ‘No, because I might want to sell it’. So he has not lodged a complaint. However, I am telling you, and I can swear on a Bible if you want, that that roar was so loud that I thought that there was a tractor just the other side of the hedge. [*Applause.*]

[156] **Mr Jones:** My name is Robert Jones, and I am a member of the Blaengwen group. I would just like to corroborate what Bleddyn here was telling you earlier. We live about two miles from the centre of Blaengwen windfarm, sometimes known as Alltwalis windfarm, and nearly every night, I can honestly say, we get this humming sound. I believe that it is generated—I am not a physicist or a sound engineer—as a composite sound from all the turbines together. We can see them from our property, as we are in open ground, and the turbines are overlooking us in a sort of shallow basin, if you like, so I think that the topography is perhaps important. Every night I am woken up, and it seems to be much louder at about 3 a.m. or 4 a.m.; that might be my perception, I do not know, but they seem to be much louder at night. Maybe that is because there are no other extraneous noises to detract from the sound that they make, but I can tell you that it is exasperating and absolutely horrendous if you have to live with it. [*Applause.*]

[157] **William Powell:** The lady on the left is next.

[158] **Ms Davies:** I am Olwen Davies, and I live in Gwyddgrug village. I am a partly retired psychiatric nurse. However, over the past few years, because of this noise problem, I would say that I am now partly an inspector in monitoring the wind turbines at Blaengwen. I go walking quite often to monitor them, because of the problems of people like Lynn and Caryl and the others, who have been awake six nights a week. We have been hearing them since the very beginning in Gwyddgrug, because we live on the main road. At 3 a.m. or 4 a.m., I was going around my kitchen, wondering, ‘Is there something wrong with the fridge or the Stanley?’, but everything was fine: it was the wind turbines. As a result of this problem, I now feel that I am half way towards being an expert on the problem of wind turbines—not

that I have wanted to be, but I have had to be. Statkraft does not even monitor the problem. The wind turbines up there in Blaengwen—we go walking to monitor them, so I am also an inspector in monitoring at the moment, as you might well know. Not only do I do that, but once I have heard different noises, I am then on the telephone to Mr Rhodri Thomas, bothering him, or I am on the telephone to Mr Richard Jones in Carmarthenshire County Council. Both of them have always been so helpful to us.

[159] The last time that we monitored, on 14 September 2011, No. 5 was screeching, and I thought, ‘That is odd—I haven’t heard that noise before’. So, what did I do on 15 September? I telephoned the local environmental health department at Carmarthenshire County Council and told Mr Philip Davies, who said, ‘Mrs Davies, leave it with me, I’ll speak to Statkraft, and I’ll see what’s wrong with No. 5—it sounds as if it is the gearbox’. ‘Fine’, I said, ‘I don’t understand anything about what is wrong, but it is screeching’. He gets in touch with Statkraft; I hear nothing. Nothing comes back at all. Then, in about two to three weeks’ time, I hear that Statkraft had admitted that there has been a long-term problem with No. 5 screeching. As far as I understand it, the turbine should have been turned off until it had been inspected properly. I went to Spain on holiday for two or three weeks; I came back, and I had the same problem as Lynn and Caryl—being awake for a couple of nights every week. So, I went to inspect again. On 14 November, I went walking—it is good for the figure, I suppose—to monitor, because no-one else is monitoring. I took friends with me. Two months had gone by and No. 5 was screeching and No. 9 was humming—it was like a song up there.

[160] I went back to the Plaid Cymru office to look for Mr Rhodri Glyn Thomas, and the secretary said. ‘You can go down and see him. I think that you had better tell him this story now. Update him on this’, so I went to Newcastle Emlyn to tell him the story, that it was two months on and nothing had been done. I telephoned Stewart Shaw and he told me, ‘We will make another rope assessment on No. 5. We are waiting for Siemens to come back. We’ve known about the problem for a long time, Mrs Davies, but thank you for letting us know’. That was in November. Nothing happened over Christmas, as you would expect. January came and there was nothing whatsoever. Two weeks ago, because people were complaining, I telephoned Mr Richard Jones again in Carmarthenshire County Council. He likes to speak to me now and I like to speak to him, because I trust him, to be honest. He said, ‘I’ll go again looking for these for you, Mrs Davies’. I spoke to Mrs Ruth Halsby who said, ‘Nothing has been heard; we haven’t heard since November. I’m still waiting’. No. 5 is still screeching and No. 9 is still humming. Is it the company, or is it just that this is the usual routine? Who knows? If there is another windfarm coming, what will we have in our village? I am afraid that the answer is ‘a singing competition’. That is my story. [*Applause.*]

[161] **Ms Evans:** Fy enw i yw Verona Evans o grŵp Blaengwen. Cefais fy ngeni a’m magu ger y fferm wynt ac rwyf wedi byw wrth yr A485 erioed. Yn ystod y gwaith o adeiladu’r heol ar gyfer y safle, roedd yn rhaid i’r cartrefi gerllaw ddiodeff sŵn y *vibrating roller* i galedu’r heol. Yn ystod yr amser hwn, roedd y cartrefi’n cael eu siglo—hyd yn oed y drysau, y ffenestri, ac, yn rhai cartrefi, y llestri ar y seld. Roedd rhai yn gorfod rhoi eu dwylo dros eu clustiau gan fod y sŵn yn rhoi cymaint o ben tost iddynt. Nid ydym yn mofyn byw’r profiad hwnnw eto. Dyna pam rydym yn gofidio: os caiff y cynllun i godi’r fferm wynt nesaf ei basio ac y bydd heol arall yn cael ei hadeiladu, byddem yn gorfod diodeff yr un sŵn. Ers i’r

Ms Evans: My name is Verona Evans from grŵp Blaengwen. I was born and bred near the windfarm and have always lived by the A485. During the construction of the road for the site, nearby homes had to suffer the noise of the vibrating roller to harden the road. During this time, the homes were shaken—even the doors, the windows, and, in some homes, the plates on the dresser. Some people had to put their hands over their ears because the noise was giving them such a headache. We do not want to live through that experience again. That is why we are so concerned: if the scheme to build the next windfarm is permitted and another road built, we would have to suffer the same noise. Since the windfarm has been in operation, we

fferm wynt fod ar waith, rydym wedi gorfod dioddef y sŵn hyd yn oed y tu mewn i'n cartrefi, cael ein deffro yn oriau mân y bore a methu â mynd yn ôl i gysgu. Mae'n anodd disgrifio'r sŵn. Mae'n swnio ambell waith fel trêrn yn codi stêm i adael yr orsaf neu awyren yn cylchdroi uwch ein pennau. Mae'r sŵn yn effeithio ar bobl mewn ffyrdd gwahanol. Mae ein cartref hefyd wedi cael y monitorau ac rydym wedi ffonio Rheidiol sawl gwaith, a hynny bob amser o'r dydd a'r nos. Mae'r ateb a gawsom yr un peth â'r hyn a gafodd pawb arall, sef ei bod '*within the guidelines*' ac mae Rheidiol yn dweud '*pass it on*'. Y peth gwaethaf yw nad yw'r sŵn wedi'i ddatrys hyd heddiw. Gobeithio y byddwch yn deall y gofid sydd gennym. [Cymeradwyaeth.]

have had to put up with noise even inside our homes, have been woken up in the early hours of the morning and have not been able to go back to sleep. It is difficult to describe the noise. It sounds sometimes like a train building up steam to leave the station or an aeroplane circling overhead. The noise affects people in different ways. Our home has also had the monitors and we have phoned Rheidiol several times at all times of the day and night. We have had the same response as everyone else, which is that it is within the guidelines and Rheidiol says that they will pass it on. The worst thing is that the noise has still not been resolved to this day. I hope that you will understand the distress that we are going through. [Applause.]

[162] **Mr Razzell:** My name is Ted Razzell. I have the misfortune to live within less than a kilometre from a proposed windfarm. So, I feel engaged in all this. Earlier, it was mentioned that shortly we will face the problem of having another 80 turbines in our district. This is going to happen fairly soon and time is not on our side. There will be another 80 of these massive turbines. I would like to put a formal question to the committee. Given the ever increasing number of research findings from all over the world that windfarm noise causes health problems to local inhabitants, will the committee consider recommending that, as a matter of urgency, there should be independent research commissioned in Wales to examine this issue and that all decisions on windfarm applications, which entail placing turbines less than 2 km from local dwellings, should be put on hold until necessary research has been completed? [Applause.]

[163] **William Powell:** I see that the county councillor wishes to contribute.

[164] **Ms Evans:** Linda Evans, cynghorydd lleol ardal Llanfihangel-ar-Arth ydw i. Yn gyntaf, hoffwn ddweud fy mod yn cynrychioli'r bobl hyn ar y cyngor sir, a rwy'n gwybod yn union faint maent wedi ei ddiodeff yn ystod y ddwy neu dair blynedd ddiwethaf. Rwyf wedi bod yng nghartref Caryl am 10 p.m. ac 11 p.m. yn profi'r sŵn hwn fy hun. Mae'r sŵn yn annioddefol. Rydych yn mynd adref o'r tŷ ac yn dal i'w glywed yn eich pen.

Ms Evans: I am Linda Evans, local councillor for Llanfihangel-ar-Arth. First, I would like to say that I represent these people on the county council, and I know exactly how much they have suffered during the last two to three years. I have been in Caryl's home at 10 p.m. and 11 p.m., experiencing the noise for myself. The noise is unbearable. You go home and you can still hear it in your head.

[165] Yr hyn sy'n fy mhoeni yw bod tri datblygiad arall ar y gweill. Mae posibilrwydd y bydd y tri datblygiad nesaf hyn yn mynd yn eu blaen. Yr hyn sy'n fy mhoeni yw pan aeth y datblygiad ar fferm Alltwalis yn ei flaen, ni ddaeth unrhyw un mas i weld lle roedd Caryl yn byw. Mae ymgynghoriad mawr yn cael ei gynnal, ond mae pob peth yn cael ei wneud ar *desktop* ac ar bapur. Nid oes neb yn dod i weld. Y

What concerns me is that there are another three developments in the pipeline. There is a possibility that these next three developments will go ahead. What concerns me is that when the Alltwalis farm development went ahead, nobody came out to see where Caryl lived. A wide-ranging consultation is being undertaken, but it is all done on a desktop and on paper. Nobody comes out to see. The biggest problem in Caryl's home and

broblem fwyaf yng nghartrefi Caryl a Bleddyn yw'r dirwedd. Mae'r dirwedd yn cwmpo ac wedyn mae'r sŵn yn cario. Mae mor bwysig i'r cwmnïau hyn ystyried y dirwedd sydd o'n cwmpas. Ni allant wneud y pethau hyn ar bapur. Nid yw'n gweithio. Mae'n rhaid iddynt ddod mas a gweld yn union beth sy'n cael effaith ar bob lle yn uniongyrchol. Ni ddylent ddod i ardal a dweud, 'Mae'r ardal hon yn edrych yn iawn. Ni fydd sŵn. Rydym yn ddigon pell oddi wrtho.'

[166] Hoffwn fynd yn ôl at rywbeth a ddywedodd Caryl ar y dechrau. Roedd Rhodri yn gofyn am dyrbin 9. Hoffwn wneud ychydig o sylwadau ar hwnnw. Flwyddyn a hanner yn ôl, bu cyfarfod cyhoeddus yn festri Capel Gwyddgrug. Yn y cyfarfod hwnnw, roedd cynrychiolwyr o Statkraft yn bresennol. Cyfaddefon nhw fod problemau gyda thyrbîn 9. Gofynnais iddynt yn gyhoeddus yn y cyfarfod hwnnw a fyddent yn cytuno i droi thyrbîn 9 bant, tan fod y broblem honno wedi ei datrys. Yr ateb a gefais yn gyhoeddus, o flaen y gynulleidfa—mae hanner ohonynt yma heddiw—oedd, '*We are here to make money*'. Felly, nid ydynt yn fodlon gwneud. Mae hynny yn dweud y cwbl, onid yw? Mae'r cwmnïau hyn yn dod i ardaloedd ac nid ydynt yn ystyried faint o effaith mae datblygiadau yn eu cael ar bobl leol. Mae'n ddyletswydd arnaf ac ar bob un ohonoch sy'n eistedd yn y blaen i sicrhau bod y trigolion hyn yn cael chwarae teg.

[167] Hoffwn ddweud un peth arall. Rai misoedd yn ôl, cynigais, yng Nghyngor Sir Caerfyrddin, dylai ein cynllun datblygu lleol newydd nodi na ddylid datblygu fferm wynt o fewn 1.5 km i unrhyw dŷ lle mae pobl yn byw. Cefnogodd cynghorwyr sir Gaerfyrddin y cynnig ac felly bydd y fersiwn ddrafft a fydd yn mynd at y Cynulliad yn ystod y misoedd nesaf yn nodi bod Cyngor Sir Caerfyrddin eisiau 1.5 km o bellter rhwng fferm wynt ac unrhyw dŷ. Mawr obeithiaf y byddwch, fel aelodau'r panel, yn mynd â'r gofidiau sydd gennym yn ôl gyda chi ac yn argymhell bwriad Cyngor Sir Caerfyrddin i'r adran gynllunio hefyd. Nid ydym am i chi sôn am ein gofidiau wrth yr adrannau iechyd a'r amgylchedd yn unig, ond dweud wrth yr adran gynllunio beth yw ein gofidiau yn lleol a beth yw ein hargymhellion.

Bleddyn's too is the landscape. The landscape rises and falls and, as a result, the noise gets carried. It is so important for these companies to consider the landscape around us. They cannot do these things on paper. It does not work. They have to come out to see exactly what affects each place directly. They should not come to an area and say, 'This area looks fine. There will not be any noise. We are far enough away from it.'

I would like to return to something Caryl said at the beginning. Rhodri asked about turbine 9. I would like to make some comments on that. A year and a half ago, there was a public meeting in the vestry of Gwyddgrug Chapel. There were representatives from Statkraft at that meeting. They admitted that there were problems with turbine 9. I asked them in public at that meeting if they would agree to switch off turbine 9 until that problem had been solved. The answer that I received publicly, in front of the audience—half of whom are here today—was, 'We are here to make money'. Therefore, they are unwilling. That says it all, does it not? These companies come to our areas and they do not consider how much of an impact developments have on local people. It is my duty and the duty of each one of you sitting in the front to ensure that these residents have fair play.

I wish to say one more thing. Some months ago, I proposed in Carmarthenshire County Council that our new local development plan should note that windfarms should not be developed within 1.5 km of any house where people live. Carmarthenshire councillors supported the proposal and, therefore, the draft version, which will go to the Assembly in the next few months, will note that Carmarthenshire County Council wants a distance of 1.5 km between a windfarm and any house. I greatly hope that, as panel members, you will take our concerns away with you and recommend Carmarthenshire County Council's intention to the planning department also. We do not want you to mention our concerns to only the health and environment departments, but to tell the planning department of our concerns locally

[*Cymeradwyaeth.*] and what our recommendations are.
[*Applause.*]

[168] **William Powell:** Are there any other contributions at the moment that I cannot see? I am conscious that I missed the councillor. I will now go to the gentleman in the second row.

10.30 a.m.

[169] **Mr Hewitt:** I am Roger Hewitt and I live at Blaengwen Isaf. We moved to Wales 14 months ago, like the ladies here, looking for peace, tranquillity and the beauty of Wales. Unless you are actually there and present, I cannot describe to you what the endless whoosh, whoosh, whoosh did. We had a representative of Statkraft come out. It was not just the noise; we also had problems with light reflecting off the blades. We have to keep the windows and the curtains closed, even in the middle of summer on a nice day. The higher the wind, the louder the noise.

[170] I get up every single morning at 4 a.m. to travel to Neath, where I work from 5.30 a.m.. I work in a quarry environment. The noise levels in that quarry, which are governed, are far lower than what I am subjected to in my peaceful life at home—what a joke. You cannot sleep through it. We should not be expected to take drugs to get a decent night's sleep. Thank you.

[171] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I just wish to seek a point of clarification. You referred to the flashing light from the turbine blades, is that problem still occurring?

[172] **Members of the Public:** Yes.

[173] **William Powell:** Is that to do with the issue of coatings that we spoke about yesterday?

[174] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I did ask the question as to whether they had addressed that particular issue, and they assured me that it had been addressed several years ago.

[175] **Mr Hewitt:** May I come back on that? In all the dealings that I have had with Statkraft—obviously, I do not have the same dealings as these people—they are very good on the PR side of things, but the action side of things is non-existent.

[176] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I am concerned about this, Chair, because this is the second example that we have had of contradictory evidence.

[177] **William Powell:** Absolutely. We were all present for that conversation yesterday.

[178] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** It is clear that the information that we were getting from Statkraft yesterday was misleading—[*Laughter.*] Well, I did choose that word carefully, to be fair.

[179] **William Powell:** Exactly. We are getting a very inconsistent picture.

[180] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I am seriously concerned that that information was misleading—

[181] **William Powell:** Both with regard to the glare and the issue of switching off turbines.

[182] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** It begs the question as to whether we can take any of the other evidence the company offered us at face value.

[183] **William Powell:** I think that we share that concern. The lady who has given evidence is next, and then there are two ladies in row three who want come in.

[184] **Ms Morris:** This is really about noise, but I want to add that it is not just the flashing of the sunlight that is an issue because, on a moonlit night, we get strobe lighting on the mountain from the moonlight reflecting off the blades. You get this flashing, strobe lighting going on up there. I also get reflection in my windows. So, I have the windfarm on one side of my garden and the reflection of turbines spinning in my house windows on the other side. So, sitting in the garden is unpleasant. There are a lot of other unpleasant features, but we are focusing on the noise at the moment.

[185] **William Powell:** Indeed, and we need to keep that focus, but that was a really interesting point to raise. Two ladies in row three have a contribution to make, and so does the gentleman on the corner.

[186] **Ms Jones:** I am Norma Jones of the Blaengwen group. I just want to say that I, too, have reported this reflective flicker. To sit in the lounge of my home when the sun is shining on the blades is quite impossible. If an epileptic, or someone who was vulnerable in that way, came into my home, I hate to think what would happen. It is very disturbing. The only way that I can describe it is that it is very similar to someone taking very bright flash photography almost directly in front of your face. Also, we get the same noise that Bleddyn does, but that is overlaid at times by the whoosh, whoosh, whoosh of the blades. The noise is not particularly loud; it is not about the intensity of the noise, but the fact that it is so penetrative and constant. It is as if someone has glued earphones to your ears and is playing the same notes of music over and again without any end at all.

[187] **William Powell:** My colleague has a direct question for you, I believe.

[188] **Joyce Watson:** We did ask about that yesterday and we were assured that coatings had been put on those blades, so I am disappointed if you tell us that that is not the case. You talked about not being able to go out to your garden when the sun is up. I want us all to be clear about how much of a problem that is. Does it happen every day that the sun shines? We know that the sun does not always shine. Do you have that reflected flicker on every occasion that the sun shines, and does it last all of that time? These are the things that we need to know if we are going to feed some information back. That question is for the woman who has just spoken.

[189] **Ms Jones:** It is intermittent, but it is fairly frequent.

[190] **Ms Dubé:** My name is Janet Dubé, and I am a member of the Blaengwen group. You talked about the difficulty of communicating with Statkraft; we are having difficulty in doing so at the moment. A noise report was produced by Hoare Lea in 2010, and when we eventually got a copy of it toward the end of 2010, we criticised it quite strongly. Carmarthenshire County Council did not forward our criticisms of the report to Statkraft, and we are now trying to get the company to comment on it. We also have other questions. On its website, Statkraft says that at the beginning of 2010 it was trying to solve the problems. There is no evidence on its website that it is doing anything. We have already tried to get Statkraft to answer certain questions. If you are going to write to the company, can we send you our letter so that you ask the right questions?

[191] **William Powell:** Yes; please do so. That will inform our questions.

[192] **Mr Prudden:** On Statkraft and the issue of flickering, I have been trying constantly to get hold of Stuart Shaw, and even the council has written on my behalf to get him to

contact me, and he still will not do so. There is all of this talk that the company is helping, but you cannot even contact it to get anything done. There is no point in leaving any messages.

[193] **Mr Morgan:** My name is Keith Morgan. I live about 1,200m or so from the existing turbines. The new ones that are coming are going to be as close to us as they are to Caryl and Geoff, which is about 800m. I will not repeat what everybody has said; we suffer from the same noise and so on. A representative from Statkraft came to our property about 18 months ago to discuss our fears about the new turbines. To sum up what the company thinks about the whole thing, the representative admitted that there is a noise problem, and her words were that we have to live with it. That was said in front of witnesses.

[194] **Mr Shepherd Foster:** I would like the committee to take on board not just what has been said today, but also that Wales is the worst place in Europe regarding the way that we live. We live in the countryside. We are almost unique in Europe in that respect; it is our style of living. It does not happen in Scotland, because the Scots were lucky—or unlucky—in that they had the island clearances, so there are masses of open space. The only thing with which we can mitigate windfarm noise is distance or turning the turbines off; there is no in between. The petition states that we will try our best to live with the noise during the day. However, in the evening and at night, the only way that you can protect health is to turn the turbines off. Unfortunately, the EU has strict controls on water and air, but there is a lot of subsidiarity on noise because it is such a different thing in different places. Mrs Watson brought up the question of topography. Wales is a terrible place in which to put windfarms, because it is the wrong shape. Windfarms work best on flat plateaus, anywhere in the world. We are in a bad situation here. What you are hearing now will be the very tip of the iceberg when the strategic search area in the Valleys comes on board. You will then have masses of acoustic slums, and 0.5 million people live there. You are only seeing the tip of the iceberg at the moment. *[Applause.]*

[195] **William Powell:** We are moving towards the final phase of our meeting. We have about 10 minutes left. I will call you in a moment, Steve, but Russell indicated.

[196] **Russell George:** I was just going to make some useful comments. For this aspect not just to be a talking shop and to do something about it, the evidence that we have heard that contradicts the evidence that we heard from Statkraft yesterday—*[Laughter.]*

[197] **William Powell:** It is in inverted commas.

[198] **Russell George:** That is right. We need that in writing. There is a freepost address in the packs that you have, so I would encourage you to tell other people who are perhaps not here today who have experienced problems to write to us. The clerks will tell me if I am wrong in saying this. We do not need to have typed-out letters; we can forward even a short, quick letter detailing the issue to Statkraft and ask it to respond to that. We need a paper trail of evidence rather than just talk. So, that would be really helpful.

[199] A gentleman asked us a specific question that I do not think that we addressed. I listened carefully to what you said. I have asked for more or less the same in a different form. Apart from being an Assembly Member, I am a county councillor as well, and as a county councillor I have voted that the Welsh Government puts a halt on TAN 8 and a moratorium on any further windfarm developments until there has been a full review of TAN 8. *[Applause.]*

[200] So, in one form, we have already done that. As a committee, we probably cannot do that, because the committee that comes up with a recommendation to the Government needs to have weight and evidence behind it and our job is not to do that work, but to ask another committee to carry it out, and we can pass on the information in order for it to do that. So, that

probably answers that question.

[201] You could also write to the Environment and Sustainability Committee at the same address, but with a different title, in that regard, because it is currently conducting an inquiry on energy that concludes after Easter. I would very much hope that that will contain recommendations that will take in some of what has been said today. So, it is also important to write to that committee. It is not unfair to say that and also to encourage people to write to the Environment and Sustainability Committee on these issues.

[202] **William Powell:** The consultation is still open.

[203] **Russell George:** If you write to the Petitions Committee, we can agree to—

[204] **William Powell:** If we are the conduit for that, that will be fine.

[205] **Russell George:** We can act as a conduit for that, so we will respond to that and pass that on to the committee for its evidence taking.

[206] **William Powell:** Before I summarise the commitments that we as a committee are making and taking forward from today, Rhodri Glyn has indicated, and then I will ask Steve to make a couple of comments. In fact, Steve, you indicated before Rhodri Glyn, so I will take it in that order.

[207] **Mr Dubé:** You cannot fail to have been impressed by the evidence that you have heard today. As a committee, you will know that we in grŵp Blaengwen are also calling for the review of TAN 8 that was promised to us when the system was set up. It was also promised to us by Jane Davidson in a letter that she sent to Rhodri Glyn Thomas—I believe that that was at the end of 2009.

[208] **William Powell:** It was June 2009.

[209] **Mr Dubé:** We think that TAN 8 is past its sell-by date and urgently needs review. As far as Parc Cynog in Pendine is concerned, I wonder who told you that there were no problems. That is one thing that occurs to me. The other thing that might be useful for you to do is to understand that quite a lot of people who are affected by windfarms will not speak out for the simple reason that they believe that, if they do, the value of their property will be affected. That is a real concern. We know of people in and around Gwyddgrug who suffer noise and who take medication for it who will not speak out for that reason. There are some people who supported the arrival of the Statkraft turbines in the first place. There are quite a few people who are in that situation.

10.45 a.m.

[210] As far as Parc Cynog is concerned, I wonder how you can find out what the people there really think. I wonder if you knocked on doors and asked people if they suffered from turbine noise, and if you were to circulate an inquiry and promise full confidentiality, that you might get a different story from the one that you might have received from the operators. It is only a suggestion; I do not know whether that is possible. However, that would seem appropriate because, despite anecdotal evidence of noise such as we heard from Caroline, you come here and tell us that there is no problem there. They also told us that the problem at Blaen Bowi—the three turbines I referred to south of Newcastle Emlyn—had been solved. Of course, the only reason it was solved was because the person who suffered could not take it any longer and moved away. It was not solved; the person had to move. [*Applause.*]

[211] **William Powell:** Thank you, Steve, for those suggestions and for that summary of the

position. We will take advice as to whether we can do that. Accumulatively, there are approximately 50 houses that are identifiably close to the Pendine and Parc Cynog development, and we will give consideration to doing that to corroborate the evidence and the impressions that we were given yesterday. Rhodri Glyn will now speak, and then I will draw together the actions that we take forward from today.

[212] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Un o'r pethau rwy'n gobeithio y bydd y pwyllgor hwn yn ystyried o ddifrif yw'r ffaith bod bron pawb sydd wedi cyfrannu at y sesiwn hon naill ai wedi dweud neu wedi awgrymu nad yw eu cwynion a'u pryderon wedi cael ystyriaeth ddifrifol gan Statkraft. Dyna yn sicr yw fy mhrofiad i wrth geisio cyfathrebu â'r cwmni ar ran etholwyr. Dylem edrych ar hynny a dylem ystyried sut y gallwn weithredu mewn sefyllfa lle mae cwmni, i bob pwrpas, yn anwybyddu'r hyn y mae pobl yn ei ddweud wrtho. Rwy'n gobeithio y rhown ystyriaeth lawn i'r mater. Os oes gennych brofiadau felly, rwy'n eich annog i nodi'r ffaith eich bod yn teimlo bod hynny wedi digwydd wrth i chi ymateb. Pe bai modd i chi gyfeirio at achlysuron penodol byddai hynny o gymorth i ni.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: One of the things that I hope that this committee will seriously consider is the fact that nearly everyone that has contributed to this session have either said or suggested that their fears and complaints have not been taken seriously by Statkraft. That is certainly my experience in trying to communicate with the company on behalf of constituents. We should look at that and we should consider how we can proceed in a situation where a company, to all extents and purposes, is ignoring what people are telling it. I hope that we will give the matter full consideration. If you have had such experiences, I encourage you to note in your response the fact that you feel that that has happened to you. It would be helpful to us if you could refer to specific occasions.

[213] Ar y pwynt gododd Janet Dubé ynglŷn â grŵp Blaengwen, os ydych yn cael trafferth i drafod y materion hyn gyda Statkraft, a fyddai'n ddefnyddiol pe bai'r pwyllgor hwn yn ysgrifennu at Statkraft ac yn awgrymu y dylai gael cyfarfod ffurfiol gyda chi fel grŵp, er mwyn i chi gael cyfle i drafod y materion hynny? Ar sail yr hyn rydym ni wedi clywed, byddai hynny'n fuddiol.

On the point that Janet Dubé raised regarding the Blaengwen group, if you are having difficulties in discussing these matters with Statkraft, would it be useful if this committee were to write to Statkraft suggesting that it holds a formal meeting with you as a group, in order for you to discuss these matters? On the basis of what we have heard, that would be beneficial.

[214] **William Powell:** That would certainly be a useful action. I remind you that you all have a booklet and the opportunity, for those of you who have already spoken and those of you who have chosen not to speak today, to make any additional points to Sarita and Rhodri from our petitions team who will be on the petitions bus, just outside, until 2.00 p.m. today. It is an opportunity to make any additional points that you wish to bring forward and for other local people to contribute, people who may have wished to attend this meeting, but were not able to do so because, as you know, it was fully booked in advance.

[215] There are a number of actions that we need to take forward from today. First, I would like to pay tribute on behalf of the committee to the lead group who have given evidence and the individuals who have given testimony today. You have done so with dignity and restraint, because the circumstances in which you find yourselves are very difficult. We have a community psychiatric nurse here—or a lady with a background in relevant health matters. These matters can, indeed, play on people's minds, because the deprivation of sleep is one of the fundamental things that threaten wellbeing. We recognise that and I am extremely grateful for the way in which you have brought this information to us.

[216] However, as Steve said, we have to do more than listen. As I understand, the principal

actions that we have agreed to take forward today are that we write to the Chairman of the Health and Social Care Committee and the Chairman of the Environment and Sustainability Committee to bring these matters to their attention in detail. We have also agreed to share a transcript of the contributions that we have had today with those committees and that we will have such information available to share within our own groups, because the membership of our groups extends beyond those two committees and we should not just limit things to those two committees. However, they are principal ways that we can take this forward.

[217] I also suggest that we write to the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development because, as Steve mentioned earlier, the Minister for the environment in the third Assembly gave commitments about a review of TAN 8, which would have involved community consultation. Clearly, there are serious questions about whether that was delivered. In fact, there is clear evidence that that has not been delivered in the round and we need to look into that matter now, under her successor, John Griffiths.

[218] The international context has also been mentioned and I think that we need to ensure that we copy in some of the key points to our four Members of the European Parliament, because there is an issue there around the World Health Organization. We have heard comparison with the mainland European context; in some cases, wind energy is more appropriately situated there than is the case here. We need to have that dimension as well, as there is potentially an input for them. They are not answerable to our committee, but we remain in contact with them and I think that that dimension is important. Those are the key actions that we will be undertaking from today. I thank you all, once again, for attending today and for contributing as fully as you have and in the spirit that you have spoken. Thank you very much indeed. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

[219] **Mr Dubé:** Sorry to come back after you have summed up, Mr Chairman—you summed up very well—but I have a question. You have told us today that you have met other people and that a full transcript of what went on here will be publicly available. Will your discussions with other parties also be available publicly? Will we be able to see that?

[220] **William Powell:** There is a note of the meeting, but we did not meet them in a situation like this where a full transcript was taken or was, indeed, possible. However, we will give you an honest appraisal of the key points that were made. Some reference has been made to some of the inconsistencies that appear to exist in the light of today's evidence.

[221] **Mr Dubé:** Okay. Will you be naming the people that you spoke to?

[222] **William Powell:** Yes. We have a record of all of that.

[223] **Mr Dubé:** Thank you very much. Diolch yn fawr.

[224] **William Powell:** Thank you very much indeed. Diolch yn fawr.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.54 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.54 a.m.*