



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 15 Ionawr 2013
Tuesday, 15 January 2013

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol **Committee members in attendance**

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Elin Jones	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

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

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da a **William Powell:** Good morning and a happy
blwyddyn newydd dda i chi gyd. new year to you all.

[2] Welcome to the first meeting of the spring term of the Petitions Committee. Normal housekeeping arrangements apply. Participants may speak in Welsh or English, as they wish and are able and there are headsets available for translation purposes. A recording of the meeting will be available shortly after the meeting at www.senedd.tv. We do not have any apologies this morning, and there is a full complement of members. So, I suggest that we get straight into it.

9.01 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[3] **William Powell:** We have P-04-436, Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales. This petition was submitted by Stuart Evans and he has collected 27 signatures. It says,

[4] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to put together a Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales report.’

[5] The petitioner makes some parallels with what is available in Scotland and there are some interesting issues here for us to discuss. As yet, no action has been taken and I would welcome any steer from colleagues as to how we take this one forward.

[6] **Russell George:** Can I suggest, Chair, that we write to the Minister for Finance and Leader of the House, as a first point-of-call?

[7] **William Powell:** Yes. I would be happy to do that. Do all colleagues agree? I see that you do. Let us do that.

[8] Next, we have P-04-443, Welsh History. This petition was submitted by Balchder Cymru/Pride of Wales and collected 597 signatures. It says,

[9] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make Welsh History Compulsory in our schools from the age of 7.’

[10] As yet, no action has been undertaken, but we are all aware that the Welsh Government has established a task and finish group to look at this topic—the teaching of

Welsh history, the story of Wales and the overall cwricwlwm Cymreig—and that is due to report on its findings in July of this year. In that context, I propose that we write to the Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews, to seek his views and to link it in with the work of the task and finish group. Do all colleagues agree?

[11] **Joyce Watson:** Agreed.

[12] **Elin Jones:** Agreed.

[13] **Russell George:** Agreed.

[14] **William Powell:** Excellent.

[15] Moving on now to P-04-444, Dig for Victory. This petition was submitted by Plaid Cymru Aberavon and has the support of 13 signatures. It says,

[16] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to introduce via local Councils a modern day Dig For Victory campaign.’

[17] The petitioners go on to extol the virtues of local growing, making parallels with the dig for victory initiative during the second world war, and giving a warm encouragement to people across Wales to be self-sufficient. This, it seems to me, is a timely and attractive petition in many ways. Joyce, what is your view on this one?

[18] **Joyce Watson:** My views are that I would agree with what the petitioners are asking. We are going to discuss it later, but my concern is that a political party is using the Petitions Committee as a way to express its views. My understanding, and the wider public’s understanding, of the setting up of this committee, and this avenue of getting your voice heard, was that this was not for enabling those who are already enabled to seek their voice. Political parties are already enabled and empowered in terms of getting that done. I am not having a go at this particular party; I would say the same if it was my own party that had a petition on the table, but we are going to discuss that later. I wanted to put on the record that I am concerned about political party petitions coming in to a political forum, when they already have the means at their disposal to do that.

[19] Coming back to the petition, I think that it is a fabulous idea. We could take it forward in the first place by looking at what the Welsh Local Government Association might do to assist, and then the Government in second place.

[20] **William Powell:** Issues around admissibility will be a topic of conversation later. There is a degree of consensus around the table from earlier discussions that we need to refine things. However, we are not criticising these petitioners, or any others, because they are just approaching things as they are allowed to do at present. We may need to make some amendments, but, in terms of the topic here, we are all alive to issues around food prices and the value of local growing. The WLGA would certainly have something to offer. I would also propose that, having just come from the Farmers Union of Wales farmhouse breakfast, I am conscious of the dimension that the Deputy Minister for agriculture might have to bring as well. Also, given the vital role of local authorities, we should write, if colleagues are agreeable, to Carl Sargeant, the Minister for Local Government and Communities, because local authorities play a key role in facilitating allotments. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

[21] **Joyce Watson:** A piece of work was done on allotments by a committee in the last Assembly. I was involved with it, but I cannot remember which committee did the work at the moment. However, it is worth looking at.

[22] **William Powell:** We will dig down—I did not intend that pun—and research that to make sure that we are not reinventing the wheel. If a good piece of work has been done, then we will identify that through our support staff. I see that we are all agreed.

[23] We move on to petition P-04-445, Save our Welsh cats & dogs from death on the roads. Any of us who have suffered the loss of a loved animal to the motorcar will have sympathy with this petition. We will seek to support it in whatever way we can. The petition was submitted by Monima O'Connor and collected 10 signatures. Associated petitions collected over 500. The petition states:

[24] 'We, the undersigned, call on all Welsh Residents who own cats and dogs to support our petition to the Welsh Government to remove the ban on electronic collars linked with invisible boundary fencing/hidden fencing so that we can protect our companion pets from harm either from: a) Road Traffic b) Straying into Danger c) Causing accidents for which we owners of cats & dogs might legally be held liable.'

[25] As yet, no action has been taken. We have all had the opportunity to watch the moving video footage provided for us. The relevant regulations to this matter are the Animal Welfare (Electronic Collars) (Wales) Regulations 2010. In that context, I will ask Elin to comment, since she had some involvement in this as part of her ministerial brief.

[26] **Elin Jones:** Yes, I did, and I have also met the petitioner, who is a constituent of mine.

[27] **William Powell:** I have also met the petitioner.

[28] **Elin Jones:** In light of the fact that it has been two or three years since the legislation came into force in Wales, it would be appropriate for us to write to the Minister, asking for his views on the petition but also for his views at this point on the effectiveness of the legislation and whether he intends to review it in any way. It would be a timely point for that consideration by the Government. So, I agree that we should take up the matter with the Minister and seek his views initially.

[29] **Joyce Watson:** While I agree that that is the right way forward, you asked for expressions of views and mine is that I will be working against this petition to remove the ban, which I wholeheartedly supported in the first place. I will undoubtedly, at some stage, be on record with those views, as I am already. So, I think that it is fair to say that I cannot and will not ever support using electronic collars either to limit the movement of or to train dogs or cats, or anything else for that matter, in any way.

[30] **William Powell:** Thank you, Joyce, for that clear expression of your position on this. We will have the opportunity later, at 1 p.m., to meet the petitioner, possibly to engage on these issues a little further, and I hope that some colleagues will be able to attend and be part of that presentation. I take it that colleagues are agreeable to Elin's proposal to write to John Griffiths on this matter. I see that it is agreed.

[31] To move to P-04-446, Business Rate Relief for Welsh Charity Shops, this petition was submitted by the Charity Retail Association, and associated petitions collected over 22,000 signatures. It reads:

[32] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reject proposals which will restrict the vital business rate relief for Welsh charity shops.'

[33] I thank those colleagues who were able to attend, along with other Assembly

Members, the high-profile petition presentation last week. It was presented on the steps of the Senedd on 9 January. No action has been taken as yet. I propose to write, and to do so swiftly, given the current focus on this topic, to the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science to seek her views on the petition. Are colleagues happy for me to do that on behalf of the committee?

[34] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and to the Minister for Finance.

[35] **William Powell:** That would be a sensible addition, given the wider equalities issues and the financial implications. Are colleagues happy with that proposal? I see that you are; good.

[36] To move to P-04-447, Campaign for Statue of Henry VII in Pembroke, which was submitted by Nathen Amin, this petition collected 144 signatures from a wide geographical base of support, as I discovered when I met the petitioner last week. This petition reads:

[37] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to fund a statue of Henry VII in Pembroke, town of his birth and birthplace of the Tudor Dynasty. There is no statue or memorial in the town of this man. A statue could improve the economy of the town as a Tudor must-visit place.’

[38] The enthusiasm of this particular petitioner was palpable when we met him and had a chance to discuss the petition when it was presented on 8 January. So far, I have not undertaken anything and we have not done anything to take this forward. I welcome colleagues’ views on this.

[39] **Joyce Watson:** I like enthusiasm, and anything that will bring money into Pembrokeshire and its local economy is worth doing. We ought to write to the Welsh Government, but it would also be worth writing to Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and Pembrokeshire Tourism to seek wider views than the Government’s on this particular proposal. I do not disagree with it, but I think that is what we have to do. We have to cast the net wider, if you like, just to get a real flavour of what people think about it.

9.15 a.m.

[40] **William Powell:** That is a sensible suggestion that I think colleagues would support. I would be happy to write to the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, then Bryn Parry-Jones, the chief executive of Pembrokeshire County Council, Tegryn Jones of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and then to whoever leads the Pembrokeshire tourism association, and possibly also to Mr Gary Davies, who I think is the head of the tourism partnership for west Wales, which covers that area. I think that would be a belt-and-braces approach for now.

[41] **Joyce Watson:** We could also include any historic or—

[42] **William Powell:** Yes, maybe via our research colleagues, we can scope out a suitable circulation for that letter. I think that would give an extra shot in the arm to this and would also inform our consideration of the petition. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are.

9.16 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[43] **William Powell:** The first petition under this item is P-04-404, Aberporth Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. The petition was submitted by Cymdeithas y Cymod in July at a very memorable presentation event for those of us who were present, and it has collected over 1,730 signatures. It calls on the Welsh Government to withdraw support for the UK unmanned aircraft to be tested at Aberporth. We last considered this petition in October, when it was agreed to seek the views of the petitioner on the correspondence that we have received from the Minister, which has been included in our papers. I would welcome a steer as to how colleagues would like to move forward with this. Elin, do you have any thoughts on this?

[44] **Elin Jones:** A number of questions have been raised by the petitioners and some of the answers are quite straightforward for the Minister to give, while others may be more political. However, I think that it is appropriate for her to be asked to share more detail with us and with the petitioners on some of their questions.

[45] **William Powell:** The petitioners are clearly keen for some deeper answers on some of the topics and maybe a slightly wider take on it all. So, if we share the views expressed by Cymdeithas y Cymod in this respect with the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science and then ask her to respond to the points in a little more detail, I am sure that would be a good approach. I see that you agree.

[46] We now move to P-04-346, Free Childcare for 3-4 Year Olds in Wales. This petition was submitted by Zelda Smith in November 2011 and received the support of 67 signatures. It calls on the Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that free childcare for three to four-year-olds is delivered more flexibly across Wales. We need to be aware, as we all are, of the fact that the Welsh Government currently funds 10 free hours per week for early-years education, but this is distinct from childcare, although there can be a degree of confusion in the understanding of that. We considered this petition at our meeting in November and we agreed to seek clarity on it. The Welsh Government sent what I think we could term a 'holding response', which you will have seen in the public papers. The Minister is holding a meeting this week to take this topic forward.

[47] **Russell George:** This is a very good petition to bring forward. I have had a number of meetings in my constituency and, only yesterday, I had a meeting with one provider—a nursery—which has given me quite a bit of evidence to show that childcare was not being delivered very flexibly in parts of my constituency. So, I have a particular interest in this petition. It is very difficult for us to do anything on this until we receive a response from the Government. It has been stated that the Minister is likely to respond to the committee shortly. So, all I can suggest at the moment is that we put this back to a future meeting until we have had that response, which we hope will be received very shortly.

[48] **William Powell:** Yes, if we can defer the item to an early future meeting when we have that clarity and the outcome of the ministerial meeting to be held this week, it would make a lot of sense. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are.

[49] We now move on to petition P-04-432, Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools, which was submitted by the Fellowship of Reconciliation back in November with the support of 374 signatures, and an associate petition collected approximately 700 signatures. It calls on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to recommend that the armed forces should not go into schools to recruit.

[50] We first considered this back in November, when we agreed to write to the Minister

for Education and Skills. Indeed, Jeff Cuthbert, the Deputy Minister, has responded. Both his response and further information from the petitioners are in our public papers today. In addition, because of the level of interest that the petition raised in committee during its first consideration, we also commissioned a short research paper that is also available to us. I am very grateful to the Research Service for that because it has given us some very interesting data. Also, as part of that, we have some freedom of information material that shows some very interesting statistical analysis of the overall recruitment arrangements that apply. At this stage, with the benefit of that initial paper and with the correspondence thus far received, I would appreciate a steer from you on whether we take this a stage further to scope out consultation on this and to see how widely the views of the petitioners are shared across Wales.

[51] **Joyce Watson:** I am quite happy to scope out consultation if we have time to do that and the wherewithal to support it. It would be worth knowing both sides in order to get a measured response to it. I am quite happy to do that.

[52] **William Powell:** Various avenues are open to us. I just wonder what the best starting point is; it could be a consultation exercise initially.

[53] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and then to have some sessions here, depending on the results of that consultation exercise.

[54] **William Powell:** It would be my instinct to consult in the first instance to draw opinions in from across Wales. That work could then inform the selection of people across the opinion spectrum to potentially offer oral evidence to the committee. Are colleagues happy with that?

[55] **Elin Jones:** Yes. It is an area of work that no other Assembly committee is likely to take any interest in, so it is a discrete piece of work on which we could do some further investigation. I agree with Joyce that it is important that we get the breadth of views and experience out there in hearing evidence.

[56] **William Powell:** Russell, are you happy with that approach?

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

[58] **William Powell:** Excellent. We will go forward in that way then.

[59] We now move to the local government and communities section of our agenda. We have the previously grouped petitions of P-03-261, Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion, and P-04-319, Newtown traffic petition. I recall that Russell has previously declared an interest as a result of his involvement in this matter prior to election, and I also have a degree of involvement in this as does Joyce. I am aware that there is soon to be a meeting in Newtown to discuss some of these issues. As a reminder, P-03-261 was submitted by Gary Saady in January 2010 with the support of 37 signatures, calling for a deferment of any decision on the proposed Newtown bypass. That is the angle from which that petition is coming. Then, we have P-04-319, which I believe is the petition with which our colleague Russell George was more associated. It was submitted by Paul Pavia, with 10 signatures in support. However, there was an associate petition with almost 5,000 signatures, calling for particular actions around the Kerry junction, and calling for a more dynamic approach to delivering the Newtown bypass. We last considered the petition in June 2012, and we agreed to seek views on the Newtown traffic issues report. We have received correspondence from the petitioner relating to P-04-319, Mr Pavia, and that is available to us. I would therefore propose that we share Mr Pavia's comments with the Minister for Local Government and Communities.

[60] **Russell George:** This is an issue with which I have been involved. I have been involved with the petition and I am associated with the petitioner. There was a meeting during the summer period that was attended by a few hundred people.

[61] **William Powell:** It was in Newtown. Was it at the Black Boy?

[62] **Russell George:** It was at the Elephant and Castle.

[63] **Elin Jones:** The committee does not need to know which pub the meeting was held at. [*Laughter.*]

[64] **Russell George:** No; I am not going to go into any more detail. [*Laughter.*] There was an opportunity for people to ask questions, but the petitioner has now listed some of the questions that were not addressed at the meeting. Therefore, I agree that it would be very good if we could share this letter with the Minister and ask him to respond to these points. The petitioner asks whether the Minister could come to give evidence to the committee. I am not suggesting that at this point, but if the Minister does come to the committee in the future, it would be worth us considering whether we can raise this issue with him.

[65] **William Powell:** Excellent. It would be useful for the wider consideration of both petitions if we could secure a note of the key decision and action points that are brought up at the forthcoming meeting, so that colleagues who do not attend but who are part of this committee are up to speed.

[66] **Russell George:** Could we also ask the Minister if he could provide a detailed timetable of the Newtown bypass project, which he has already committed to? It would be very useful if we could share details of the timetable with the petitioner and others.

[67] **William Powell:** Yes, I am very happy to write to Carl Sargeant, asking for confirmation of the latest status of the move towards delivering this public inquiry and all of the other necessary steps that must take place, if colleagues are agreeable to that proposal. I see that they are. Excellent.

[68] We now move on to P-04-418, Naming the A470 'Prif Ffordd Tywysog Owain Glyndŵr'. This petition was submitted by Sian Ifan in October 2012, and she had secured 111 signatures. It calls upon the Welsh Government

[69] 'to name the entire A470, 'Prif Ffordd Tywysog Owain Glyndwr' in memory of the ... greatest of our national heroes and his Cymric compatriots to re-establish Cymric Independence.'

[70] The committee first considered this petition in October 2012. We agreed to seek the views of the Minister for Local Government and Communities. We have all seen his response, which is very clear and reasonably consistent with the response that he has given to other initiatives, some of which I have been associated with, to restyle the A470. It is quite clear what his stance is on this. Do colleagues think that it would be sensible to write to the petitioner, sharing Carl Sargeant's latest thinking? I see that everyone does. Thank you very much.

[71] We now move on to the largest portion of our agenda today, which is reviewing previously received petitions on health and social services. First, we have P-04-334, which is the Petition for a new renal unit at Prince Charles Hospital. This was submitted by doughty campaigner Mr Robert Kendrick in October 2011, with the support of 56 signatures. The petition calls on the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to build a new renal

unit at Prince Charles Hospital.

9.30 a.m.

[72] My colleague Bethan Jenkins and I had the opportunity to visit the renal unit, along with the petitions team, last year. I was moved and somewhat shocked by the situation there in terms of the physical fabric of the building. The quality of care was, with no doubt, in excellent order, but the actual physical environment and circumstances were very far from that. We have some positive news on this in that there has been a decision to build a new renal unit on a site in the Merthyr Tydfil area, and that is confirmed in the correspondence. It seems to be a very positive outcome, and I propose that we consider closing this petition, given that what has been asked for has been delivered, but that we write in the strongest possible terms to congratulate Mr Kendrick and his fellow campaigners for their persistence in promoting this, giving our hearty congratulations, saying that we are looking forward to having a firm date for the completion and opening of this unit. I hope that this will deliver a better, more sustainable quality of healthcare for Mr Kendrick and future dialysis patients. I see that Members are in agreement. We will do that with our very best wishes.

[73] We now move to consider P-04-362, Ambulance Services in Monmouth. This was submitted in February 2012 by Mathew Davies, with the support of approximately 450 signatures. Mr Davies detailed his reasons for calling for an enhanced ambulance provision in Monmouth for a host of reasons that are before us. This topic is frequently raised by us and other colleagues in Plenary, by others across Wales and by those local and regional representatives for Monmouth. We last considered this petition in May 2012 when we agreed to refer the matter to the Auditor General for Wales. We have correspondence from him and the petitioner included in our papers today.

[74] More recently—and as recent as 29 November—Lesley Griffiths, the Minister for Health and Social Services, announced the review of Welsh ambulance services to be led by Professor Siobhan McClelland. As we know, this review will focus on three main areas: relationship with local health boards, organisational structure, and performance. It is due to start imminently and it is expected to take around 10 weeks. In that context, I would suggest that we take one step back while that piece of work is under way, because there is nothing that we can do at this time to add to that, although potentially it would be appropriate to write to Professor McClelland just to flag up this particular example of a concern from a particular community in Wales, if colleagues feel that that would make sense. However, I do not think that we can undertake anything further than that at this time.

[75] Also, I should just bring colleagues up to speed by saying that Mr Davies, the lead petitioner, had written to the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, Mark Drakeford, to seek an inquiry into ambulance services. Clearly, this has been overtaken by events to a degree. I think that he and his fellow petitioners are content with this approach and are awaiting the outcome of the review.

[76] **Russell George:** Could we write to the Minister to ask her to keep us up to date on the progress of the review?

[77] **William Powell:** Yes; certainly. I would be happy to do that. I think that that would be eminently sensible. She will be reporting approximately this side of Easter, or at the beginning of the summer term, depending on how it progresses. I would be happy to do that.

[78] **William Powell:** We now turn to consider P-04-367, Save our Hospital Services. This is one of a number of major petitions in terms of the support base. We are all aware that, as we speak, the Hywel Dda Local Health Board is holding an extraordinary meeting to reveal its thinking following the consultation that closed in October on the wider reconfiguration.

So, we are conscious that these matters are being taken forward in another place. We have previously agreed to group this petition with P-04-394, Save Our Services—Prince Philip Hospital. That is the most sensible way forward.

[79] The first of these petitions, P-04-367, was submitted by Rhydwyn Ifan in February 2012, with the support of approximately 9,000 signatures calling on the local health board to maintain and protect services at Prince Philip Hospital. The second petition, P-04-394, has a similar theme. It was submitted by the Prince Philip Action Network in May 2012; it has an enormous petition base of 24,000 signatures, the active support of the *Llanelli Star*, and was memorably launched with the high-profile musical accompaniment of a male voice choir, which we all recall.

[80] When we last considered this issue, the committee took oral evidence from the Hywel Dda LHB and, following that, it agreed to provide details of the various methodologies of communication that it had used during the engagement process. These have been received and are included in the body of our public papers. As I said earlier, the formal consultation on service change and reconfiguration by Hywel Dda LHB closed on 29 October, and that is the principal item in the meeting of the health board that is about to get under way.

[81] I should also say that a further petition calling for the protection of accident and emergency services at Prince Philip Hospital will be coming to the committee for initial consideration at our next meeting on 29 January, so that the associated petitioners do not feel that they are not in the loop. They are, and we will give that petition our due consideration.

[82] I would welcome colleagues' thoughts on how best to proceed at this delicate point in the overall process. I would welcome any contributions.

[83] **Elin Jones:** I think that we should write to the two sets of petitioners to ask them for their views on the consultation and the end result of the Hywel Dda process with regard to their concerns in Llanelli and see whether they want to progress any further. We should also write to Hywel Dda LHB to ask how it took on board the various views that were expressed in these two petitions during the consultation process so that we get both aspects covered at the same time before we consider whether there is any further progress to be made on these petitions.

[84] **William Powell:** That would make sense and it would be of relevance to the forthcoming A&E petition that we will be considering at our next meeting.

[85] **Joyce Watson:** I agree with what Elin has said. What petitioners really want to know is whether they are being listened to, accepting some of the things that I said earlier. In this case, people are concerned about whether they are being listened to. Therefore, it is eminently sensible to progress in the way that Elin has proposed.

[86] **William Powell:** I am happy to run with that, as is Russell. So, we will write to the health board to seek feedback on the impact that the consultation responses, and the strength of feeling that is evident behind both of these petitions, which we are already actively considering, have had on the decision-making that is under way.

[87] Moving on to P-04-400, NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health, this petition was submitted by Action for Mental Health in June 2012 and collected approximately 200 signatures. It calls on

[88] 'the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to adopt and implement the NICE quality standard for service user experience in adult mental health in its entirety.'

[89] We last considered this petition in October 2012, when we wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services. Her response and further information from the petitioners are included in our papers for today's meeting. I would very much appreciate your views on this. I favour writing to Lesley Griffiths again raising the specific concerns that have been raised in the correspondence from the petitioner and asking that she direct her thoughts specifically to those points, because quite specific issues have been raised that were not necessarily fully addressed in the earlier correspondence. Do colleagues think that that would be a sensible way forward?

[90] **Russell George:** Yes, I agree, Chair. In addition, we could perhaps write to some of the mental health charities.

[91] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I agree. Let us seek their views.

[92] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Gofal, Hafal and Mind Cymru come to mind immediately as three relevant charities that would be well-placed to comment on this issue and give it a bit more breadth, so let us do that also.

[93] Next is P-04-413, Maternity Services in the Cynon Valley, which was submitted by Sarah Gait in October 2012 and has the support of 406 signatures. It calls

[94] 'upon the National Assembly for Wales to reinstate maternity services in the Cynon Valley by completing the Tair Afon birthing centre'.

[95] We considered this petition for the first time in October and agreed to write to Cwm Taf Local Health Board. We have its response in our papers. It would be useful to have a steer from the health board as to when the decision will be made. Would colleagues be happy for me to write on behalf of the committee to seek more specific information as to when it proposes to deliver on the commitments that it makes in general terms?

[96] I see that that is agreed. Okay. So, I will write to Cwm Taf LHB chief executive to that effect.

[97] Moving now to P-04-430, Proposed closure of Tenby Minor Injuries Unit, this petition was submitted by Mr Andrew Davies in November last year and has the support of 157 signatures. Associated petitions collected over 581 signatures, and a number of local activists and the mayor of Tenby were present for that presentation. It calls

[98] 'on the National Assembly of Wales to ensure the proposals set out in the Hywel Dda health board document are not carried out and that the MIU in Tenby remains open.'

[99] Last Saturday, I had the opportunity to visit the Tenby minor injuries unit with a senior member of the Hywel Dda community health council to get a flavour of the issues there. I can understand the strength of sentiment regarding that facility. It is one of the many issues that will be raised at the LHB meeting, which is well under way. What do colleagues feel would be the best way forward on this one?

[100] **Joyce Watson:** I think that the best way forward is to be consistent. Earlier, we proposed writing to the local health board to ask whether it has considered the views that have been expressed to us and taken them on board in its final decision. So, I think that we should do exactly the same again and also write to the petitioners to see whether they feel that their views have been taken on board. If we do anything at all here, we have to be absolutely consistent in our approach.

9.45 a.m.

[101] **William Powell:** Clearly, there is a separate letter, but the approach should be a carbon copy because the same issues run through all of these petitions in their different ways.

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

[103] **William Powell:** It is all subject to the Hywel Dda Local Health Board decision-making process. I am happy to do that. Are colleagues content? I see that you are.

[104] We now move to P-04-431, Against Health Cuts from the Residents of Pembrokeshire. This petition was submitted by Save Withybush Action Team, sometimes known as SWAT, in November 2012. Associated petitions collected approximately 14,000 signatures. Of those 14,000 signatures, I should emphasise that over 10,000 signatures were collected for a petition that specifically called for the special care baby unit at Withybush General Hospital to be saved, and 4,000 signatures for petitions that called for all services at Withybush hospital to be protected. The petition reads as follows:

[105] ‘On behalf of SWAT I call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the plans for Secondary Healthcare provision currently being consulted on in the Hywel Dda Health Board area will maintain the present level of services available at Withybush Hospital.’

[106] At the risk of repeating myself, these matters are the very essence of today’s meeting of the health board. I propose that we write, in the way that Joyce earlier suggested that we did in relation to the Tenby case, to the Hywel Dda Local Health Board seeking exactly the same feedback on the impact that this enormous petition has had on the thinking of the health board as it comes to refine its plans. Also, given the particular importance accorded by 10,000 of the signatures to the special care baby unit, I think that we should particularly flag that up as the single largest constituent part of this petition on the Withybush case. Are colleagues agreeable to move forward in that way, in the spirit of consistency, as Joyce has correctly advocated?

[107] **Russell George:** I think that the Hywel Dda Local Health Board will have a full postbag over the next few days, Chair.

[108] **William Powell:** Indeed. We will only account for a small part of it. We will try to ensure that our correspondence is both consistent and concise.

[109] Moving forward now to P-04-333, Stop neglect and abandonment of horses, this petition was submitted by the Society for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies in October 2011 and collected 2,114 signatures. You may recall the occasion when a very attractive little pony was brought here and was grazing on the area to the side of the Senedd steps. That attracted quite a lot of attention at the time. This petition calls upon the National Assembly for Wales

[110] ‘to urge the Welsh Government to ensure effective enforcement of microchipping and Equine passports as laid down in the 2009 Legislation.’

[111] We last considered this petition in February 2012 and we agreed to defer consideration until the cross-party group on the horse had completed its consideration of these matters. Correspondence has been received from Angela Burns, who chairs the group, and also from the petitioners, and all of that is included in our public papers. Recently, the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes has issued two written statements on issues around the fly-grazing of horses and ponies, and, in the latest, he states that he will be consulting on the legislation that is currently available and on that which may

need to be implemented in the future around this contentious problem of fly-grazing. Perhaps I could ask our colleague Elin Jones to comment on these matters, given that she has very recently had responsibility for some of these difficult issues and intractable problems and may have some light to cast on this matter.

[112] **Elin Jones:** I have very little light to cast on the matter, but I think that it is appropriate for us to write to the Deputy Minister to seek his views on the current legislation and whether he has any proposals to take on board some of the matters raised by the petitioners.

[113] **William Powell:** I wonder whether colleagues would consider it appropriate to share the issues around this petition with Mr Alun Michael, the police commissioner for south Wales, and possibly all commissioners across Wales. I am conscious that these matters have come to quite an acute stage in this part of Wales. Would it be a sensible issue to flag with the new team of police commissioners, given that they are still shaping up their approach to their new tasks? Do colleagues think that would be a sensible way forward? That can then be built into their thinking, and it will be in their in-tray at least, as they have come into post well after this petition was presented. I see that you are in agreement. Excellent; we will do that. We will write to the police commissioners of the Welsh forces and to the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes to keep him up to the mark as best we can on this issue.

[114] We now have three petitions on marine conservation zones. Two petitions are broadly opposed to them—P-04-406, Against Proposed MCZ zones in North Wales, and P-04-411, Against Marine Conservation Zones in Pembrokeshire, and, on the other side of the coin, so to speak, we have P-04-415, which is in broad support of the designation of highly-protected conservation zones in general. We have agreed to group these petitions, but I know that there was some concern among petitioners that the grouping may have in some way blunted our focus. I re-emphasise, therefore, that P-04-406, Against Proposed MCZ zones in North Wales, was submitted by Claire Griffiths on the occasion of our visit to Wrexham and of a series of site visits that we undertook. We met her in July 2012 and she presented us with the petition with 6,500 signatures. In addition, the local newspaper, the *Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald*, also got involved and collected in excess of 180 signatures and coupons. Miss Griffiths's petition calls

[115] 'upon the Welsh Assembly Government NOT to include any of the six proposed sites within North Wales to become Marine Conservation Zones'.

[116] Those are listed there in the body of her petition, which enjoys very considerable support.

[117] P-04-411, as I said earlier, was the petition that we have grouped formally with these others for consideration, and is against marine conservation zones in Pembrokeshire. It was submitted by Stephen De-Waine in October 2012, with the support of 586 signatures. It calls

[118] 'upon The National Assembly of Wales, to urge the Welsh Government to not include the three proposed Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zones in Pembrokeshire',

[119] in particular because of their impact on the in-shore fishing industry. That was the emphasis there again. Then we have the petition submitted in October 2012 by Blaise Bullimore, with the support of 298 signatures, expressing strong support for going forward with this MCZ designation.

[120] We last considered this set of petitions in our October meeting when we agreed to group them. We also wrote to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development,

alerting him to the latest petition in support of MCZs. The written statement on the establishment of the task and finish group that has been set up stated that, following the work of that group, there will be further consideration and that the emphasis was especially with local communities. So, I think that there is broad acceptance that the engagement levels with the relevant stakeholders and local communities have not been an example of good practice, to put it mildly. I think that that is broadly accepted and is an uncontroversial thing to say. Therefore, there is now a commitment to make good on that at this stage in the process.

[121] Petitioners for P-04-415 in support of MCZs have provided further information, which is in our public papers today. I would very much value the input of colleagues as to what is the best way forward on this.

[122] **Joyce Watson:** I went up to north Wales and met with the fishermen who Elin hosted at the Assembly, and it was as a consequence of that hosting.

[123] **William Powell:** Obviously, Jim Evans and his colleagues.

[124] **Joyce Watson:** I was received well, and I met the local grey seals on Bardsey island, but I also met the business people who felt that they could be adversely affected by any decision that was taken without taking into account what they had to say. I have fed that back to the Minister; Elin was also active in this. I welcome what the Minister has done, and that is to go back to the drawing board, because there was undoubtedly a deficiency in consultation.

[125] Moving forward, because we have two sides here, I think that to take the same approach that we have taken to the previous health petitions that we have discussed would serve us well in terms of that consistency being applied, whatever the subject is. We know that this consultation is ongoing, but we could test—I was going to say ‘test the water’, but I did not mean to make a pun. To see how people feel that that is going at this stage would be useful, because the Minister has said that he is taking it on board that the Government needs to go back out to consultation. I think that it is a good time to ask people, some months later, whether they feel that they are being fully engaged in that consultation, since that is why that decision was taken in the first place.

[126] **William Powell:** I think that that would enrich and guarantee the work of the task and finish group as well.

[127] **Joyce Watson:** I think so. It helps both sides.

[128] **William Powell:** Yes, because I think that feedback is so critical in consultation. That is one of the things that we heard quite consistently in the Environment and Sustainability Committee’s consideration of these matters; that there was an absence of feedback on quite complicated and extensive consultation responses, and that there seemed to be a vacuum in terms of Welsh Government feedback. We need to try to ensure that there is something closer to a dialogue and a listening environment than there has been. Are there any other views from my colleagues on this one?

[129] **Russell George:** It is important that you write as Chair, to the Minister, to ask to be kept updated on the task and finish group.

[130] **William Powell:** I see that everyone is agreed. Okay, let us do that. Thank you.

[131] The next update is to petition P-04-419, Wind Farm Moratorium. This petition was submitted by James Shepherd Foster—an active petitioner, it is fair to say—in October 2012 and collected 1,332 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales

[132] ‘to ask the Welsh Government for a moratorium on wind farm and wind turbine developments for which it has devolved responsibility.’

[133] So, it is about those windfarms that do not fall under the Department for Energy and Climate Change’s responsibility. At our initial consideration of this back in October, we agreed to write to the relevant Ministers, namely the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development and the Minister for Local Government and Communities, particularly given the local government planning function that is so critical in determining these weighty matters. Responses from both Ministers have been received and are in the public papers.

10.00 a.m.

[134] In addition, we agreed to await the Government’s response to the Environment and Sustainability Committee’s energy policy and planning report, particularly on the alleged impacts on the tourist economy. In the report, you will recall that the committee recommended that the Government should commission research to measure the economic impact of windfarms and associated grid infrastructure on the tourism industry in Wales. In responding to that, the Welsh Government agreed to go forward and commission this research and additionally will give consideration to investigating attitudes to windfarm development in its current tourism research programme. So, it would probably be useful at this point to write to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, feeding back some of the additional views expressed by the petitioner, but also asking for a little more detail to be fleshed out around this study of potential impacts on tourism because there is an interesting piece of work there and it is very important that it is taken forward in a timely manner. What do you think?

[135] **Russell George:** I would agree with that. Perhaps you could include in your letter a request for a timetable as to when that information will be available.

[136] **William Powell:** Yes, I would be happy to do that. It would also be appropriate to engage with the petitioners to see whether they have any specific responses to the correspondence that we have received from the Ministers.

[137] **Russell George:** I agree that that would be a good idea.

[138] **William Powell:** Okay, I see that we are agreed on that.

[139] We move now to P-04-414, Welsh Jobs, which was submitted, as we will recall, by Royston Jones in October 2012 and had the support of 65 signatures:

[140] ‘We, the undersigned, call on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to encourage employers relocating to Wales, or opening new facilities and outlets here, to recruit and, where necessary, train local staff.’

[141] When we initially considered the petition, the committee agreed to write to the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science and to the Minister for Finance to seek their views on these matters. The response that we received from the Minister for business is included in our papers today. I would appreciate a steer from colleagues as to how best to take this forward. Some fairly clear views are expressed in the letter from Mrs Edwina Hart. Should we share that letter with Mr Royston Jones to see what his view is?

[142] **Russell George:** Let us write to the petitioner to ask for his views.

[143] **William Powell:** I think that that is probably the best way forward. I sense that we

may be moving towards the final phase of this particular petition, but let us ensure that the petitioner has the opportunity to have his say on the Minister's response.

[144] That concludes this section of the agenda, reviewing previously considered petitions.

10.03 a.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

[145] **William Powell:** I move that

in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi), the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting to consider item 5 on the agenda.

[146] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.04 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.04 a.m.*