



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

## **Y Pwyllgor Deisebau** **The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 19 Mawrth 2013**  
**Tuesday, 19 March 2013**

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi 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
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
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 chroeso **William Powell:** Good morning and a warm welcome.

[2] I welcome everyone to the last meeting of the Petitions Committee this term. Normal housekeeping arrangements apply. Participants are welcome to speak in Welsh or English, as they prefer and are able to do so, and translation facilities are available. A recording of the meeting will be available at [www.senedd.tv](http://www.senedd.tv) shortly after the meeting. We have had no apologies this morning and we will hopefully be joined shortly by our colleague Elin Jones. I also welcome members of the public who have joined us in the public gallery this morning.

**Deisebau Newydd**  
**New Petitions**

[3] **William Powell:** We start with P-04-459, A direct rail connection from Cardiff Airport to Cardiff central and west Wales. This petition was submitted by Sovereign Wales and collected 35 signatures. It calls

[4] ‘on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government develop a direct rail connection from Cardiff Airport itself to Cardiff central and west Wales.’

[5] As yet, we have undertaken no action on this one. I propose that we write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport to seek her views on this. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

[6] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and I would also like to tell you that there was an integrated transport inquiry done by the Enterprise and Business Committee, of which I am a member, and this was also discussed there. So, it might be worth looking at that.

[7] **William Powell:** Excellent. In that case, we should also write, immediately, to Nick Ramsay, as Chair of that committee to ask him for his views on that. Thank you for bringing that to our attention, Joyce.

[8] We now move on to P-04-460, Lives not Airports. This petition was submitted by Jeremy Derl-Davis and has the support of 51 signatories. It says,

[9] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to consider the following. Procedures currently in place that decide case by case the delivery of specialised medicines to patients through the Welsh Health Special Services Committee (WHSSC) are fundamentally flawed, damaging and extremely distressing to patients. New protocols and procedures are now required as a matter of urgency...The Welsh Government must review the whole procedure of allocating specialised medicines to patients. The system needs to be made far simpler to navigate. Doctors must have more say in the decision making process as they are the best judge of a ‘patients’ needs. Alternative ways to fund medicines, such as negotiating with manufacturers more realistic pricing structures and the possibility of individual short term free trials should be looked at.’

[10] I met the petitioner when he presented this a number of weeks ago. I know that our colleague Elin Jones, as the immediate local Member, has had some involvement in this, as well. Elin, if I could defer to you on this one briefly for any comments.

[11] **Elin Jones:** I suggest that we write to the Minister for Health and Social Services to seek his views on the petition. I think that that is probably the place to start, because the Minister for Health and Social Services sets the policy on the ways of deciding which drugs are purchased on the NHS or not. I think that that is the best place to start, even though he has had correspondence from me, and probably from you as well, Chair. I think that this is a general petition, not one on the specific drug that this constituent is concerned with.

[12] **William Powell:** It is a particularly poignant case.

[13] **Elin Jones:** It is about the policy in general, which affects not only this constituent’s family, but a lot of other people throughout Wales who find this process very difficult to navigate their way through.

[14] **William Powell:** Russell, did you indicate that you wished to speak?

[15] **Russell George:** No, it is fine, Chair.

[16] **William Powell:** Are you happy with that?

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

[18] **William Powell:** That is excellent. We will therefore agree that at the moment. I also suggest to colleagues that we should, at this early stage, write to WHSSC seeking its views on the petition. Does that make sense? I see that you are all happy with that approach.

[19] We now move to agenda item 2.3, which is petition P-04-461, Save Ponty Paddling Pool. I should probably register an interest on this in that one of the lead petitioners, Ms Karen Roberts, is a member of the support staff of the Welsh Liberal Democrat group within the Assembly. Other members of the petitioning group are also active within the wider Welsh party. This petition was submitted by Karen Roberts and collected 345 signatures. It reads:

[20] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to designate the paddling pool at Ynysangharad war Memorial Park as a Grade 2 listed building, as is the Lido, on the grounds of its historic importance as part of the Park.’

[21] **Joyce Watson:** If I may seek legal advice, is it the case that the Welsh Government

gives designations to listed buildings, or is it the bodies that we employ, such as Cadw?

[22] **Ms Roberts:** That is a very relevant question, Joyce. I have not looked at this particular petition in any detail, but in the light of your question, and in order to provide definitive and accurate legal advice, I would need to do some research on the point just to double-check that nothing has changed, basically. If it is okay with you, I will come back before the next meeting with an answer to the legal question that you have raised.

[23] **William Powell:** Thank you very much for that. I think that that would be helpful to the whole committee.

[24] **Joyce Watson:** So, can we leave it there until the next meeting? If it is the case that the Welsh Government does not designate anything, that answers the question to the petitioners.

[25] **William Powell:** Yes, I think that that legal clarification would be helpful. It strikes me, given that there is a wider scheme emerging there, we could, nevertheless, potentially write to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council asking it for some more information regarding this very substantial redevelopment plan which, I understand, is coming up the track, and as to why the paddling pool has been excluded. That is not related to the important issue that Joyce has raised, but nevertheless it gives us the context.

[26] **Russell George:** I am happy with that suggestion, Chair, as long as we do not take it any further and beyond that until the next meeting or until we have had that legal advice.

[27] **William Powell:** Indeed; we need that legal clarification and I am grateful that Joyce raised the point. We will just write to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and await the outcome of the legal advice. That is the best way forward at this time.

[28] We now move to agenda item 2.4, which is petition P-04-462, 'Ban the flying of Union flags from official Welsh buildings'. This petition was submitted by Plaid Glyndwr, and has the support of 200 signatures. The petitioners

[29] 'call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ban the flying of the British union flags outside official Welsh government buildings.'

[30] As yet, we have not undertaken any work in relation to this. Given the nature of it, we probably need to go straight to the First Minister because it is probably a matter at his pay grade. I do not know how colleagues feel about this one. Did you indicate that you wished to speak, Elin?

[31] **Elin Jones:** No. However, I am interested to know what the policy is on the flying of flags. I noticed, a few weeks ago, that, when a third flag is flown instead of either the European Union or the Welsh Dragon flag, it is the European flag that is taken down. I cannot remember what the day was—maybe it was Commonwealth Day; I cannot recall—but I saw it in Aberystwyth, outside the Government offices there. It just struck me that there was a policy decision on which of the flags to take down.

[32] **William Powell:** Indeed, and that is sending out a message, is it not?

[33] **Elin Jones:** I do not feel strongly about this particular petition. Do we have to do anything about petitions if we consider that we do not want to?

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

[35] **Elin Jones:** There is another one, under item 2.6—

[36] **William Powell:** Indeed, absolutely. I would be interested in the First Minister's view on the matter, to give the petitioners a steer, because they obviously have some measure of support for their aspiration. I am rather—

[37] **Russell George:** Chair, I am intrigued and am interested in what his reply would be, so let us do that.

[38] **William Powell:** Are we happy to do that? Yes? I see that you are, so I shall write to Carwyn Jones on this matter. Thank you, colleagues.

[39] The next petition is P-04-463, Reduction of Salt Levels in Food. This was submitted by Harry Hayfield and has collected 11 signatures. It states:

[40] 'We, the undersigned, call upon the Welsh Government to reduce the amount of salt in food so that people are able to choose healthy lifestyles in Wales.'

[41] I think that this is a job for Mark Drakeford, the new Minister for health, potentially.

[42] **Elin Jones:** Does the Welsh Government have the powers to reduce the level of salt? I am looking at the legal adviser, because I do not think that it does.

[43] **Ms Roberts:** Thank you for raising the issue. This is another one that I have not had prior warning of, so I have not had time to consider it. I am more than happy to look into it legally. Things do change from a legal perspective, so it is very important that I go back to check what the primary legislation says and what the secondary legislation says before giving you advice. This is another one, Chair, on which I am more than happy to come back to provide some definitive information.

[44] **William Powell:** I think that, in the context, we will await that advice and come back to the issue at the next appropriate meeting.

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

[46] **William Powell:** The next petition is P-04-464, Make Wenglish a recognised official language in Wales like Scots is in Scotland! This petition was submitted by Adam Rhys Davies and it has the support of 10 signatures. It states:

[47] 'We call upon the Welsh Government to make Wenglish a recognised official language in Wales like Scots is in Scotland.'

[48] I think that we could usefully write to the Minister for Education and Skills, who also has responsibility, I think, even post reshuffle, for the Welsh language, to seek his views on the matter. Do colleagues think that that is a sensible way forward?

[49] **Elin Jones:** I am not sure that it is sensible for the Petitions Committee to ask Welsh Government officials to draft an answer for a Minister on this particular issue. The Welsh language has only just received, in the last two or three years, official status in Wales.

[50] **William Powell:** This person is running ahead, rather.

[51] **Elin Jones:** I think that somebody is having a laugh, but if we want to play along with it, as the Petitions Committee, that is fine. I think that, at times, we need to consider, as a Petitions Committee, that something has no merit.

[52] **William Powell:** We have encountered other petitions, prior to your joining the committee, about which we had similar discussions. Some view the sheep statue as being potentially frivolous, although it had some merit in the eyes of others. Joyce, we would value your input on this one.

[53] **Joyce Watson:** I am with Elin: I would throw this one out, because it is pointless to consider this petition at this point. First of all, you would have to go through the whole thing of what is Wenglish—there is no official definition, as far as I am aware, unless others can tell me otherwise. In my opinion, it will not go anywhere—that is my opinion; I am not here to make a judgment. I think that Elin is right to say that we have only just made Welsh an official language, having reinstated it as such, which is fantastic.

[54] **William Powell:** For completeness, Russell, what do you think?

[55] **Russell George:** Chair, if we believe as a committee that, in writing to a Minister, we almost know what the reply is going to be, we are just pushing bits of paper around. So, on this occasion, I am happy to agree that we should not take this petition any further.

9.15 a.m.

[56] **William Powell:** There is a potential sense of trivialisation that is also of concern to Members. I am happy to go with that approach. It may potentially send out a useful message as well.

[57] **Russell George:** That is a good point, Chair, because it can dilute other petitions that will come before us. So, on this occasion, I think that this is the right decision.

[58] **William Powell:** I am also conscious of pressure on agenda time today. Thank you for your proposals on that one. That is excellent.

[59] We will move on to discuss P-04-465, Save Welsh Milk, its infrastructure and its jobs. This petition was submitted by Richard Arnold and has the support of 426 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales

[60] ‘to urge the Welsh Government to protect Welsh Milk Production, Processing and the Dairy Infrastructure within Wales, rather than rely on the facilities centrally managed within the greater UK, a long way from the many Welsh farms particularly in the West of the country.’

[61] As yet, we have not undertaken any action on this matter. I would be minded to write to the newly promoted and appointed Minister for Natural Resources and Food to seek his views, as it seems to be central to his portfolio. To be fair to him, he has been active within this field as, indeed, in her time, was our colleague Elin Jones. So, is that a sensible way forward? I see that you agree that it is.

[62] We will move on to discuss P-04-466, Medical Emergency—Preventing the introduction of a poorer Health Service for North Wales. This petition was submitted by Mike Parry and collected 306 signatures. The petition reads:

[63] ‘We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the proposals contained within the Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board consultation- ‘Health Care in North Wales is Changing’ does not result in poorer health provision and unnecessary deaths and suffering.’

[64] We have not, as yet, undertaken any action on this, and this is our first consideration of the petition. Colleagues will be aware that the Betsi Cadwaladr Community Health Council has referred some elements of that health board's plans to the Minister. The First Minister has previously stated in Plenary that he would be taking the decision on whether or not to call in parts of the scheme or, indeed, the entire scheme. In terms of adopting a consistent approach with similar petitions that we have received from other concerned residents in other health board areas, we should write to the Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board to seek its views on the petition and also copy in, in this case, the new Minister for health and, indeed, the Health and Social Care Committee. Are colleagues happy that that represents a consistent approach? I see that you are. Therefore, we will do just that.

[65] I would just like to point out that the next petition, P-04-467, January Exams, was submitted by a group of A-level students and had the support of 90 signatories. It had its origins in the recent A-level government and politics conference at the Assembly, which I briefly addressed, and I am particularly grateful to our Petitions Committee team for their input into that really useful event. The petition reads:

[66] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to continue to support the provision of January examinations at GCSE, AS and A Level.'

[67] I propose that we write to the Minister for education to seek his views on that petition. We might have a sense of what the outcome will be, but I think that it is still entirely legitimate to write to seek his full comments on that. Do you agree? I see that you do.

[68] We will move on to discuss P-04-468, Road Safety Concerns A48 Chepstow. This petition was submitted by Chepstow Town Council and an associated petition gathered over 1,000 signatures locally. The petition calls upon the National Assembly for Wales

[69] 'to urge the Welsh Government to reduce the speed limit on the A48 Bridge at Chepstow from 50mph to 30mph.'

[70] This is the first consideration of this petition, so no work has been undertaken as yet. I suggest that, with her new responsibility for transport, we write to Mrs Edwina Hart, the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, for an initial take on her views on this matter. I see that you all agree. Therefore, we will do that. That represents the end of the new petitions in this final meeting of term. Given the pressure on our agenda, I suggest that we move swiftly on to the next agenda item.

9.20 a.m.

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

[71] **William Powell:** The first update is on P-04-333, Stop neglect and abandonment of horses and ponies by enforcement of microchipping laws. This petition was submitted by the Society for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies in October 2011 and has the support of 2,114 signatures. We last considered this back in January, and we wrote to the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes, as he was at that stage, and we have his response in the public papers; he has been fairly active in this field. A consultation was launched by Welsh Government on fly-grazing, which closes on 29 April. There was a recent event on fly-grazing here in the Senedd. We have also highlighted this issue with the newly elected police and crime commissioners across Wales. What are colleagues' views on the best way to take this one forward?

[72] **Russell George:** Chair, can we write to the Minister and ask him to keep us updated on the consultation findings?

[73] **William Powell:** I think that that makes good sense. They will not have time to take stock of those responses until, realistically, the first half of May, I suspect. That is probably a sensible way forward. This is a long-term problem. There has also been concern expressed in some quarters at the abolition of the equine database. I know that the Minister for Natural Resources and Food, in his previous guise, expressed quite significant concerns regarding that. We should potentially write to the Rt Hon Owen Paterson, seeking an explanation and comments on the rationale for the discontinuation of that database. Are colleagues happy with that?

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

[75] **Russell George:** I am happy for us to do that as well.

[76] **William Powell:** Excellent; let us do that.

[77] The next update is on P-04-383, Against NVZ Designation for Llangorse Lake. This petition was submitted by Kaye Davies in March 2012 and had the support of 43 signatures. We last considered this back in December and we agreed to seek the petitioner's views on the correspondence that we had received from the Minister. At this time, no response has been forthcoming. In that context, it is probably time to close this petition; we have sought the petitioner's views and we have not had feedback. Russell, did you want to add anything?

[78] **Russell George:** No, I was going to suggest just that, Chair.

[79] **William Powell:** Excellent. I think that the time is right to do that, in light of a lack of feedback.

[80] The next update is on P-04-390, Designate Penrhos Holyhead Nature reserve (coastal park) a National reserve. It was submitted by Jennie Jones in May 2012 and collected 826 signatures. An associated petition has collected a further 1,100 signatures. We last looked at this as a committee in November 2012, and we wrote to the soon to be reconstituted Countryside Council for Wales. The response, along with additional information from the petitioners, is available in our public papers today. We also wrote to Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn to highlight the petitioners' concerns. It seems that the real problem is that this site just does not meet the relevant criteria. What are colleagues' views on this one, as to a sensible way forward?

[81] **Joyce Watson:** Close it.

[82] **William Powell:** I think that that is probably the natural final step on this one. Are colleagues agreed? I see that you are. Excellent. Let us do that.

[83] The next update is on P-04-399, Slaughter Practices. This was submitted by Royce Clifford in June 2012 with the support of 400 signatures. We last considered this back in January. We wrote to the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development. We have John Griffiths's response here in the public papers. The Welsh Government intends to retain the current provision, as you can see from those papers, with the exception of the legal requirement to stun before slaughter in relation to religious slaughter. However, there is a commitment to revisit this in the longer term. In light of that, and also given the recent reallocation of responsibilities in the reshuffle, would it not be sensible to write to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food to ask for clarification on the time frame, in terms of revisiting this issue, and for us to be kept abreast of developments? Is that a sensible way



forward?

[84] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I agree.

[85] **Russell George:** I agree with that.

[86] **William Powell:** Let us do that; thank you.

[87] Moving now to P-04-417, Save Morfa Beach and Prevent the Closure of Public Footpaths 92 and 93. This issue is of considerable concern in the Neath Port Talbot area. We last considered this petition in December and we sought the petitioners' views on the response that we had received from the Minister. That is among our public papers. It would be sensible for us to write to Councillor Ali Thomas, the leader of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, to highlight the concerns that the petitioner has about this closure order, and to get some clarity on the timing of the deliberations of the Planning Inspectorate. Would that make sense?

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

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

[90] **William Powell:** Okay; let us do that.

[91] The next petition is P-04-422, on the contentious issue of fracking. This petition was submitted by Friends of the Earth Cymru in October 2012 and collected approximately 1,000 signatures. We last considered this petition in December when we wrote to the Welsh Local Government Association and we have a response in our papers from Tim Peppin of the WLGA. In addition, we also wrote to Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, flagging up this issue. Russell George and I are members of that committee, and, in this context, we took evidence on shale gas and gasification on 7 March; it was a very interesting and illuminating session. The petitioners were among those who gave evidence and further evidence sessions on this topic are planned for the summer term. So, it would probably be sensible to write to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration—post-reshuffle—to highlight the concerns of the WLGA. Russell, do you have something to input?

[92] **Russell George:** Yes, Chair. I agree that we should do that. I also agree that it was a very interesting session that we had just two weeks ago on this issue. We should formally write, as a committee, to the Environment and Sustainability Committee asking to be kept updated on the progress of that piece of work.

[93] **William Powell:** Yes. I think that this will be a high-profile issue for the time to come. It is timely that we are considering this petition and that our colleagues in the Environment and Sustainability Committee are also doing so. So, yes, I am happy with that approach. Are colleagues happy with that?

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

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

[96] **William Powell:** Good. We now move to P-04-433, CCTV in Slaughterhouses. This petition was submitted by Animal Aid in November 2012 and has the support of 1,066 signatures. We last considered this petition in January and agreed to write to the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development and his response is in our public papers today. We also commissioned a research paper on how this matter is dealt with elsewhere in the

European Union. I must say that our Research Service, which is always a trusty source in these situations, did not really come up with any information; that is not for a lack of work, but probably because the whole issue of CCTV in slaughterhouses is not something that is on the radar of colleagues across Europe. Therefore, we have drawn a blank on that one, but we are grateful to the service for attempting to get some information. I would value colleagues' comments on this one.

[97] **Russell George:** I have had some constituents contact me on this issue and I have written to one of the four Welsh Members of the European Parliament asking them to pursue this as well.

[98] **Elin Jones:** Which one?

[99] **Russell George:** Kay Swinburne MEP.

[100] It would also be right for us to write to the new Minister. We seem to be keeping him busy in his new job today, Chair, with various letters asking for us, as a committee, to be kept updated, but we should do that.

9.30 a.m.

[101] **William Powell:** That is right and because of the reconfigured portfolio, we are now dealing with one Minister on this issue, as opposed to previously, when the wider issue was of interest to at least two Ministers. So, it makes good sense to write to Alun Davies in his new function.

[102] **Russell George:** Yes; that would be helpful.

[103] **William Powell:** We now move on to P-04-439, Ancient veteran and heritage trees of Wales to be given greater protection. This petition was submitted by Coed Cadw Cymru in December 2012 and has the support of 5,320 signatures. We first considered this in December and we wrote to the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, and we have a substantial response in our public papers. We also noted that it would be sensible to write to the new natural resources Wales body, once it is vested, which is imminent. So, it is probably time for us to send a letter to the chief executive of natural resources Wales to get in there early—it is obviously a matter of significant interest and concern—to see what the body's perspective is on this important petition. Are colleagues happy with that approach? Are there any other suggestions at this stage?

[104] **Russell George:** No; I agree with that suggestion, Chair.

[105] **William Powell:** Okay; thank you.

[106] **Joyce Watson:** I agree, as long as there is a smooth transition. I would not want to see—I am sure that it will not happen—a gap between the new body assuming this responsibility and taking it seriously and the existing body being dismantled, I suppose. So, I would like it included in the letter to ensure that, for the protection of trees—although it is complex—it is a smooth transition and it is up there, high on the agenda.

[107] **William Powell:** Yes. I will be happy to ensure that that sentiment is conveyed loud and clear in the letter, so that there is that emphasis and that there is no loss of prioritisation or, indeed, a loss of knowledge capital that exists within the predecessor bodies. That has been a matter of concern to those of us who have been keenly scrutinising the NRW, as it has been coming up the track. So, we shall ensure that that is reflected. I take it that that view is shared by colleagues across the table.

[108] **Russell George:** Chair, we have heard, as members of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, from the chair and chief executive of the new body that there will be a smooth transition. So, we have to believe that that will happen.

[109] **Joyce Watson:** I am sure that it will.

[110] **William Powell:** Indeed. It is a useful point to flag up. I know that it is an issue of considerable concern across the length and breadth of Wales. So, let us do that.

[111] The next petition is P-04-445, Save our Welsh cats & dogs from death on the roads. This petition was submitted by Monima O'Connor in January 2013, and has the support of 10 signatures. An associated petition has collected in excess of 500 signatures. We first considered this in January and we wrote to the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, under whose portfolio it fell. His response, along with further information, which has kindly been provided by the petitioner, is available in our public papers. At this point, I am aware that the petitioner is more than a little disappointed by the response that has been forthcoming. At this stage, it would be useful for us to write to the Companion Animal Welfare Council, to whom we have not previously written, to seek its views on this petition. Is that a sensible approach? Elin Jones, I know that you have had some previous involvement in the matter.

[112] **Elin Jones:** Yes, I have, as the Minister at the time of introducing these regulations, and Ms O'Connor is a constituent of mine as well. So, I have discussed this issue with her. It is right to write to the Companion Animal Welfare Council, because there is an issue of contention here between the Minister's response to us and Ms O'Connor's view on the views of the Companion Animal Welfare Council. So, it is right to get clarity from that body.

[113] There is one thing that slightly concerns me about the Minister's response—perhaps we do not need to refer it back to him at this point, but we might want to do so once we have received a response from the Companion Animal Welfare Council—which is the point that he makes that the Welsh Government would always want to review regulations after they have been in force for a period of time to ensure that they are still fit for purpose. However, he does not go on to address when and how it intends to do that. As a general practice, it is right for Welsh Government to review legislation for unintended consequences, or for its success. So, perhaps, at some point, we need to go back to him to address that. However, the first point to follow up is the view of the Companion Animal Welfare Council. This is a point that my constituent has made to me—it is not about the collars themselves; it is about the fences, because the regulations were all-encompassing.

[114] **William Powell:** Indeed; that has also been explained to me.

[115] **Elin Jones:** This related to the particular use of fences.

[116] **William Powell:** That is particularly helpful, given that you were the relevant Minister at the time that these regulations were introduced. We have now passed through the period of John Griffiths's involvement as Minister in relation to these issues, so when we do write, it will be to Alun Davies, given that it is my understanding that this will now come under his portfolio. Therefore, it will be useful to flag up the issue of timescale of that review that you have advocated, and colleagues around the table might well empathise with that view. So, let us do that, but, first, we will await feedback from the Companion Animal Welfare Council on the content of this petition. Are you all agreed? I see that you are.

[117] We move on now to P-04-346, Free Childcare for 3-4 Year Olds in Wales. This petition was submitted by Zelda Smith in November 2011 and collected 67 signatures. We

last considered this petition in January and it was agreed to defer consideration until we had further information from the Welsh Government, which is here in the public papers. As colleagues will see, the Minister Leighton Andrews refers to the fact that there will be a pilot study undertaken. If he is looking for areas to undertake this research pilot, I wonder whether colleagues would agree that it would make sense, in this context, to flag up to the Minister the fact that we have an already interested group within the Vale of Glamorgan, which would be very happy to participate in this. It is down to the Minister to decide these matters and, clearly, he is very much of his own mind, but he might, nevertheless, find it relevant that there is an interested group in the Vale of Glamorgan. Do colleagues think that it would be a worthwhile endeavour to bring that to his attention?

[118] **Russell George:** I agree with your suggestion, Chair.

[119] **William Powell:** I sense a degree of scepticism from Joyce.

[120] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, because I am not sure that you are not going a little beyond the remit of what we are being asked to do, but there you go—it is in that vein, more than anything else.

[121] **William Powell:** Okay, but you will let us get away with it this time.

[122] **Joyce Watson:** I do not know that I will, actually. [*Laughter.*]

[123] **William Powell:** Okay. Let us move on to P-04-437, Opposing compulsory registration for home educating children. This petition was submitted by Wendy Charles-Warner in November 2012 and collected 1,614 signatures. It was a particularly lively presentation, as colleagues might recall. We last considered this in January in our first meeting of the new year and we wrote to the Minister for Education and Skills, and his response is in our public papers. We probably need to await the consultation analysis on this one, do we not?

[124] **Russell George:** I was going to suggest the same, Chair. Let us defer this until we have that analysis of the consultation.

[125] **William Powell:** Yes, I think that the petitioners were heartened that he was not minded to take things forward in the way that they had feared. So, it is now time to get that detail. Good.

[126] We now move on to P-04-443. This petition was submitted by Balchder Cymru/Pride of Wales in January 2013 and collected 597 signatures. We considered this petition for the first time in January, we wrote to Leighton Andrews on the matter and, again, we have quite a clear response from him on this matter.

[127] **Russell George:** Could we write to the petitioners, Chair, and ask for their views on that response?

[128] **William Powell:** That would be a sensible way forward. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are, so we will see what feedback they have on Leighton Andrews's take on this matter.

[129] Moving on to P-04-362, Ambulance Services in Monmouth, this was submitted by Mathew Davies in February 2012 and collected approximately 450 signatures. We recall the poignant circumstances around the petitioner's own experience of the ambulance service at that time. The committee last considered this petition back in January and we wrote to the then Minister for Health and Social Services and to Professor McClelland. We have the

response from the former Minister in our papers, and of course we are aware of the ongoing McClelland review. We have to await the findings of that study; there is no other way forward. If colleagues are happy, we must do that and come back to it in light of that review. I see that you are agreed.

[130] P-04-395 is Wales Air Ambulance should receive government funding. This petition was submitted by Leslie Wilkins in June 2012 and had the support of 63 signatures. It calls on

[131] ‘the Welsh Assembly to provide the necessary funding to ensure that the Wales Air Ambulance can continue providing’

[132] its services. We first considered this back in June 2012, and we wrote to the then Minister for Health and Social Services, and indeed the petitioner, and we have both responses here in our public papers. In the light of the petitioner’s response, and the wider issue that the Wales Air Ambulance is not seeking such funding, it is probably sensible to move this to closure. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are. It is probably the only sensible way forward.

[133] I will just draw breath and colleagues can recharge their glasses. We now move to a set of petitions that all relate to the reconfiguration plans emerging from the Hywel Dda Local Health Board. Since they relate to different elements of the Hywel Dda reconfiguration plans, it may well be sensible for us to look at the four petitions that follow holistically, without any lessening of our consideration of the individual petitions. I think that that would benefit our consideration. Those petitions are: P-04-367, Save our Hospital Services; P-04-394, Save Our Services—Prince Philip Hospital, which has previously been grouped, as you will recall, at earlier considerations; P-04-430, Proposed closure of Tenby Minor Injuries Unit; and finally, P-04-431, Against Health Cuts from the Residents of Pembrokeshire. We have received correspondence from the health board that relates to all four of these petitions, and indeed correspondence from most of the petitioners. I suggest that we consider them as a group for this particular instance. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are.

[134] I should also declare that two of us attended a meeting at the invitation of Llanelli Town Council and Llanelli Rural Council—a combined meeting in the chamber of the rural council, last Thursday evening. We were there with other regional Members for Mid and West Wales, and indeed the constituency Member for Llanelli, Mr Keith Davies. We were subject to a range of questions on our positions on this matter, and both of us also referred to our involvement in this committee and its consideration. In case you should read anything in the *Llanelli Star* or elsewhere about that meeting, it is only right that I should declare an interest, and I hope that Joyce is content for me to refer to her presence there also.

9.45 a.m.

[135] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed, I am; I would have done the same and declared that I was at that meeting and several other meetings. The list is too long and time is short.

[136] **William Powell:** As colleagues will be aware, the community health council referred the plans to the then Minister for Health and Social Services. It stated that it does not feel that the plans are in the best interests of health service users and it raised specific concerns about the consultation process and also about the lack of detail, particularly pertaining to business continuity and business planning. What emerged during the course of Thursday was that, in fact, in one of her last acts in post as Minister for Health and Social Services, Lesley Griffiths wrote to the Hywel Dda CHC and put the issue back in its court and gave it until—correct me if I am wrong, Joyce—5 April to resubmit further details of its counterproposals. That is also correct. Colleagues, what action would you now like to take at this stage in relation to these petitions?

[137] **Joyce Watson:** It is all very complex. First of all, we are right to take all these petitions as one, Chair, simply so that we are not seen to be favouring one petition over the other, because, as you have pointed out, every one of us represents a part of that area. We made that clear on Thursday evening. We understand the constituent parts and the interests therein.

[138] First of all, we will have to write to and inform the new Minister, Mark Drakeford, that these petitions are here. That is the first thing that we will clearly have to do. We also need to write to each petitioner as individuals and inform them, if they are not already informed—I am sure that they will be—that there is an extension now, where the Minister has asked the CHC to write back by 5 April outlining its case for calling it in, and that they have an opportunity if they so wish—I do not know if it is available to them—to approach the relevant CHC with further information, if they feel that it is necessary.

[139] **William Powell:** It may well be that the CHC, with such a tight time frame, which includes the whole Easter period, would welcome any support from some of these petitioners.

[140] **Joyce Watson:** I think that those are the things that we clearly need to do to make sure that we are doing our duty of engagement to those people. I do not know whether colleagues have anything further to add.

[141] **William Powell:** We are all, in different ways, associated with these different petitions and that is a sensible set of actions. We will write to Professor Mark Drakeford, as Minister for Health, to bring him up to speed with the level of concern and the nature of the concerns. At this stage, it is probably not appropriate for us to engage with the CHC, and Tony Wales and his colleagues, but he and his colleagues are watching this closely, and if they wish to engage with us, they may do so because they have a tight job of work to do in a very ambitious timescale, particularly with the intervention of the Easter period as well. It is no mean feat to do what the former Minister has asked. My understanding is that the new Minister is aware of those actions and will run with the approach of his predecessor.

[142] **Joyce Watson:** We can ask in the letter.

[143] **William Powell:** Indeed. We will ask in detail about that. Do colleagues feel that it would be appropriate to express any concern about the tightness of that time frame? Clearly, it was a matter of some concern to the representatives whom we met on Thursday.

[144] **Joyce Watson:** We could express that concerns have been raised.

[145] **William Powell:** Indeed. I think that it would be wrong not to do that. However, we will not take a view on this issue at this time. Are colleagues content with that? I see that you are. It is important that we do that, and that we send individual letters relating to each specific petition.

[146] We now move to petition P-04-400, NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health. This petition was submitted by Action for Mental Health in June 2012, and has collected approximately 200 signatures. We last considered this petition in January, and we wrote to the relevant Minister, Gofal, Hafal and Mind Cymru. We have full responses, in our public papers, to those letters. At this stage, I think that it would probably be appropriate for us to write to Mark Drakeford, the new Minister for Health, highlighting in particular the significant concerns that have been flagged up by Hafal and Mind Cymru in relation to Part 2 of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 and on the level of Welsh involvement in developing the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence standards. Do colleagues think that that would be a useful step to take in this matter? This issue has been raised by

more than one of the bodies, which indicates that there is significant concern that we need to bottom out. I see that Members agree; therefore, as our next step we will do precisely that.

[147] We move on to petition P-04-440, Say NO to Asset Stripping Bronllys Hospital. This petition was submitted by Michael Eccles in December 2012, and has the support of 2,200 signatures. I am happy to welcome Michael Eccles and a fellow petitioner, Lydia Powell, to the public gallery this morning to watch our deliberations on these matters. I should declare that I have a degree of association with this petition and I am also a member of the extended family of one of the leading petitioners. I think that it would be fair to put that on the record at this time.

[148] The committee first considered this petition in December, and wrote to Powys Teaching Local Health Board. At that stage, according to the practice that we have adopted, we copied in the Minister for Health and Social Services at the time, Lesley Griffiths, and the Health and Social Care Committee, chaired by Professor Mark Drakeford; there is a degree of continuity here in that respect. The response from the health board is in the public papers. I know that Joyce Watson, as a fellow regional Member, is fully aware of the sensitivities around this particular matter. We have also received correspondence from Michael Eccles, as lead petitioner, flagging up, in stark terms, the concerns that he and fellow petitioners have regarding the potential consequences of this route being followed. I think that it is fair to say that there is very significant concern in this particular community about the view taken by the community health council that the plans for the moving of the stroke unit, which are central to this petition, should go forward. These concerns are rather similar to those raised in some of the earlier petitions that we have been considering, in that the plans are contrary to the views of over 80% of those responding to the consultation; that is a matter of public record. I probably should not say much more on this matter at this time; I should, rather, open up the issue to colleagues. Joyce, I ask for your initial comments, given that I know that you have a fair handle on this issue.

[149] **Joyce Watson:** As with all petitions, the truth is that there are two sides to the coin. While I have heard representations on the concerns regarding asset stripping, I have also read the response by Andrew Cotton, the chief executive, which denies that it is anything to do with asset stripping and says that it is, more importantly, to do with the delivery of health services and the reconfiguration of those services. I also note that he says that he and his officers would be more than happy to be invited to the committee, if we felt that that was required and appropriate. I know that there are those who are happy that the unit has been resited and it seems to make good sense to them, but, equally, there are the 2,000 plus who have signed this petition who clearly do not feel that their concerns have been answered. That is always going to be the case, I suppose, when you have two sides to the coin. With that in mind, perhaps we need to write to Powys community health council and share the petitioner's correspondence and seek its views on this. It is up to us whether we decide to call in, as was offered to us, the chief executive and his officers, for an explanation. However, if we did that, we would have to balance that out by inviting in a representative or representatives chosen by the petitioner.

[150] **William Powell:** We would need to give the petitioner a shout; the lead petitioner and colleagues would have to determine who it would be.

[151] **Joyce Watson:** We would also have to decide, if we went down that route, what we were expecting to come out of it, where we would send that information and what is the time frame in reality for influencing any decisions. If we are going to do a piece of work, we want to do it to at least try to answer the calls of the petitioners. It has to have a value.

[152] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Russell, you have indicated.

[153] **Russell George:** Yes, thank you, Chair. Joyce has raised some of the issues I was going to raise. I have looked at this in detail and read Andrew Cotton's response. I agree with Joyce's suggestion that we should write to the community health council to seek its views.

[154] **William Powell:** I am happy, on behalf of the committee, to write to county councillor Gillian Thomas, who, I think, chairs the Brecknock and Radnor Community Health Council, to seek its views on the matter. Also, thank you, Joyce, for reminding us that Andrew Cotton, the chief executive of Powys Teaching Local Health Board, stands ready to come and account for the actions of the proposals of the health board. I hope that the petitioner, if we did that, would also be in a position to give us the benefit of his opinion and appraisal of the situation.

[155] I should also note that I have just received—colleagues may also have received—correspondence from Jacqui Wilding, lead of Talgarth town council, on this matter. I am not sure whether other colleagues have received the same correspondence. It very much reworks some of the key points flagged up by Michael Eccles and colleagues.

[156] So, thanks very much for that. At this time, we will write to the CHC to seek its views, but we may well revisit some of the other issues that Joyce has outlined.

[157] **Elin Jones:** I have to leave, I am sorry.

[158] **William Powell:** Okay. Thanks, Elin. Diolch yn fawr.

[159] Moving to petition P-04-451, Save the Royal Glamorgan Hospital Services, the petition was submitted by Councillor Mark Adams in January 2013 and has the support of 1,077 signatures. We first considered this petition in January and wrote to Cwm Taf LHB about the petition. The response to that is in our public papers. I am minded at this stage to write to the LHB asking for this petition and the views of the in excess of 1,000 people that it represents to be considered as part of the ongoing consultation on the reconfiguration plans. Are colleagues content with that approach? I see that you are.

10.00 a.m.

[160] Moving now to petition P-03-263, List Stradey Park, this petition was submitted by Vaughan Jones back in November 2009 and collected 4,383 signatures. We last considered this petition back in December, and we agreed to await the publication of the report on protecting Wales's sporting heritage. Correspondence has been received from the then Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, Huw Lewis. I think it would be useful if we went back to the original petitioner, Vaughan Jones, to seek his views on that recent ministerial feedback. Is that a sensible approach? Given that the portfolio has been affected by the reshuffle, we could write to Huw Lewis's successor in these matters, the new Minister for Culture and Sport. It is an interesting pairing—culture and sport has been brought together in the figure of John Griffiths. We could write to him asking for the petitioners to be included in any forthcoming consultation on the heritage Bill. We could probably do both at the same time to maintain progress.

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

[162] **William Powell:** Are colleagues content? I see that you are.

[163] Moving now to petition P-04-322, A call to revise Cadw's hold upon churches in Wales, this petition was submitted by Graham John in June 2011 and collected 147 signatures. We last considered this petition in January, and we wrote to the then Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, and we have a response from Huw Lewis here in our



papers. Given that there is ongoing work with this task and finish group, all we can do at this point is probably to seek any further updates on the work of that particular group, so that it can inform our considerations. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are.

[164] **Russell George:** We just need to wait at the moment. We do not need any further correspondence.

[165] **William Powell:** That is probably right. We are not going to lose sight of this one. I know that that work is continuing, but, if we do not hear anything in due course, we will send a chase.

[166] Moving now to petition P-04-365, Protect buildings of note on the Mid Wales Hospital site, this petition was submitted by a local resident to the Mid Wales Hospital, Mr John Tushingam, in February 2012, and collected 206 signatures. We last considered this petition in November 2012, and we wrote to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's director of planning, Mr Christopher Morgan. We have the response in the public papers. One issue that is flagged up in that response is that the most recent planning proposals on that site did not find favour with the planning authority. Therefore, the potential developer is considering his options. It is also a very much a live issue within the ongoing local development plan hearings. I suggest that we should probably write to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to seek clarity on whether the hospital site has been included, once the local list of buildings of heritage value has been compiled. Is that a sensible way forward at this time?

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

[168] **William Powell:** I think that would be useful. There was also a recent site meeting that we have a note of from SAVE Britain Heritage's, which is the heritage campaign group involving Marcus Binney and his colleagues, in relation to this matter. It is useful to see that it continues to take a keen interest in the merits of this site and has been giving some advice and support to the petitioners, I understand.

[169] The next petition is P-04-381, Restoration for North Wales Hospital. This petition was submitted by Paul Sharrock in March 2012 and he had the support of 29 signatures. Joyce Watson and I took part in an outreach visit in 2012 to the former Denbigh Hospital, as part of a programme of visits in north Wales. It was quite a sight and an extraordinary thing to see the sheer scale of all of those buildings. We last considered the petition following that visit in October 2012. We wrote to Denbighshire County Council and there is a full response in our public papers from Mr Phil Ebbrell, who is leading on that work.

[170] My sense is that, in the context of the extraordinary commitment that Denbighshire County Council is showing here and the difficulty of it, it is probably time for us to consider closing this petition, because I am not clear about what we are achieving by keeping it open. However, it is certainly a matter that we will keep an eye on and I think that colleagues would wish Denbighshire County Council well in its endeavours to bring some life back to this extraordinary site and maintain the maximum level of heritage protection within it. Its commitment to the cause seems to me commendable.

[171] **Russell George:** In light of the developments, Chair, I support closing the petition.

[172] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I do, too.

[173] **William Powell:** Let us do that. Thank you.

[174] Moving now to P-04-403, Saving Plas Cwrt yn Dre/Old Parliament House, this

petition was submitted by Sian Ifan in July 2012 and has collected 218 signatures. We last considered this petition in December and agreed to seek the petitioner's view on the ministerial correspondence and this is included in our public papers. We have quite a substantial body of information here and some fascinating reading, as colleagues will have seen. I think it would probably be sensible to seek the views of the newly-styled Minister for Culture and Sport, John Griffiths, on the petitioner's correspondence, because there are some matters of real interest there and some points that perhaps take up and contest some of what we have previously heard. So, I think that would be sensible. Obviously there will be a degree of continuity in terms of the advice from officials on this matter, but we would invite John Griffiths to give his own considered view to these matters. Is that a sensible way forward, colleagues?

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

[176] **William Powell:** Okay. Moving now to P-04-407, Save Kennard Court Sheltered Accommodation for Older People, this petition was submitted by Georgina James in July 2012 and collected 19 signatures. We last considered this at our most recent meeting and we agreed to defer consideration to allow us time to get a handle on the substantial body of information that was supplied by our colleague, the local Member for Torfaen, Lynne Neagle. This information has now been circulated as a private paper, considering the sensitivity of some of the issues that it contains. Obviously, those are related to casework matters that Lynne has been and is dealing with. In the light of what I have read in those papers, my take on this is that is being taken forward by Lynne Neagle, as the constituency Member, in the context of her casework. I do not see what value we can add to that, but I would welcome colleagues' views as to whether or not there is some additional action that they would welcome. However, my proposal is that we close the petition.

[177] **Joyce Watson:** I agree with that.

[178] **Russell George:** I would agree to close the petition as long as we can at least write to the petitioners, and, if they confirm that they are happy for us to close the petition, we then close it.

[179] **Joyce Watson:** I think that we should write to the petitioners to say that we are closing the petition in the light of everything that we have seen and that we cannot see that we can add any more to their requests. I firmly believe that, when you have gone through the full life cycle of what you can do, the right thing to do is to express that clearly to people by saying why you have reached that decision and stand by that decision. In this case, I am more than happy and content that we have exhausted every avenue. We find ourselves in a position of being unable to add any further value by keeping this petition open. I am happy to do that.

[180] **William Powell:** It was in that spirit that I made the proposal.

[181] **Russell George:** What Joyce has just said could, perhaps, be put in a letter to the petitioners, explaining that we have exhausted this fully, but that we do not feel that we can take it further. We can ask whether they are content for the petition to be closed. I know that there is a different view from Joyce, but I stand by my view.

[182] **William Powell:** I think that 95% is common ground. I was proposing that we inform them that it is our intention to close the petition. If we adopt the principle of seeking permission to close, we are abrogating our responsibility to some degree.

[183] **Joyce Watson:** We would have to do it in every case.

[184] **William Powell:** I think that we can agree on the vast bulk of the content of this

letter. In terms of the final paragraph, if colleagues are content to allow me to sign that off in light of my own proposal, we could perhaps agree that by a majority vote.

[185] **Russell George:** I accept the majority vote, Chair.

[186] **William Powell:** Thank you. That is appreciated, and we can progress. Diolch yn fawr.

[187] We now move to consider petition P-04-420, Construct an Owain Glyndŵr Monument. The petition was submitted by Russell Gwilym Morris in October 2012 and collected 74 signatures. The petition's wording is as follows:

[188] 'We call upon the Welsh Government to construct a Monument to Owain Glyndwr, on the scale and grandeur of the William Wallace Monument at Stirling, Scotland.'

[189] We last considered this petition in December and we agreed to seek the petitioners views on the correspondence received from the then Minister. The considerations are contained in the public papers. Given that Mr Russell Gwilym Morris and his colleagues were interested in this, but do not appear to be interested in spearheading a fundraising endeavour to make this happen in light of the absence of public funds, I think that probably the only thing that we can do at this time is to close the petition. Are colleagues content with that approach?

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

[191] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, Chair.

[192] **William Powell:** All right. Let us do that. Thank you.

[193] We now move to consider petition P-04-404, Aberporth Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. The petition was submitted by Cymdeithas y Cymod in July 2012 and had the support of 1,730 signatures. We last considered this petition in January and we wrote to the then Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science; obviously, the portfolio has now been reconfigured and has a different title, but the response from Mrs Edwina Hart is in our public papers. It is clear that the Minister stated that she does not intend to withdraw support, so it is probably time to close the petition. Some in the agricultural section of the rural affairs Ministry have expressed an interest in this petition in the context of the use of drones or unmanned air vehicles, but that is probably a matter for a separate petition, if anyone wishes to bring that forward. That is not consistent with this particular petition, so I think that we should close the petition and leave that other matter of the use of drone technology to any future petition that might be forthcoming.

10.15 a.m.

[194] We now move to consider petition P-04-414, Welsh Jobs. This petition was submitted by Royston Jones in October 2012, with the support of 65 signatures. We last considered this in February, when we agreed to defer consideration. We gave some thought to these matters, and, clearly, there is some sensitivity around these issues, as we discussed in a private session at the previous meeting. It was also the settled view of the committee that we should close this petition. Nothing has changed and, therefore, I propose that the committee closes the petition. I see that you are agreed.

[195] To move to P-03-187, Abolish the Severn Bridge Toll, this petition was submitted by John Warman in March 2009 and collected 23 signatures. We last considered this petition in January. We wrote to the then Minister for Local Government and Communities, Carl

Sargeant, and his response is in our public papers this morning. As there is no prospect of the tolls being abolished in the short term and given the geographical inconvenience of one of the two bridges being entirely in England, in any event, it is probably time for us to close this petition also. Is that a view that finds favour with colleagues? I see that it is agreed.

[196] P-03-240, Road safety on the A40 in Llanddewi Velfrey, was submitted by Llanddewi Velfrey Community Council in September 2009 with the support of 154 signatures. We last considered this in January and wrote to the then Minister for Local Government and Communities. The response is among the public papers, so we can see what the direction of travel, if I may use that expression, was on this issue. In addition, I have recently had correspondence from Lynda Hill, clerk to the Llanddewi Velfrey Community Council, but because it came in so recently, I have not had the opportunity to share it with colleagues. It refers to the council having been pleased to host a recent site visit by our colleague Joyce Watson AM to take a first-hand account. Indeed, I am told that Joyce has taken a series of photographs to illustrate some of the issues. Rather than reading this and reporting it at second hand, I will hand over to Joyce to give us some context about the recent visit, which they were pleased to host.

[197] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I did a site visit a week last Thursday, I think. I have a series of photos. They are not the best in the world, but they demonstrate clearly the proximity of the traffic to pedestrians, namely me and others. It was pouring with rain, visibility was poor—

[198] **William Powell:** I hope that you were wearing high-visibility equipment.

[199] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, it was purple. So, in terms of getting a real feel for how things are, on the ground, the bad conditions were the best conditions to get an idea of what they are petitioning about. A few issues were raised at that meeting, beyond the pictures, bad weather and traffic, about the commitment on the bypass and the wish of the community council to understand where that is, recognising that you would hardly make major alterations there if you were going to make major alterations on a bypass. It sensibly accepted that. I think that that is a piece of information that we need to have. I think that I recall that it was said that there might be a move towards installing some traffic-calming measures at each end of the village, which would fulfil part of the request in the petition. However, I shall give you the photos—

[200] **William Powell:** Yes, if you could please circulate those, that would be helpful to us.

[201] **Joyce Watson:** They were taken on my BlackBerry in the pouring rain, so they are not high-definition photos, but they are photos nonetheless.

[202] **William Powell:** Are these still photographs or videos?

[203] **Joyce Watson:** They are stills, because that is all I had. Nevertheless, they make you realise how close it is. Also, it was rather distressing that one of the community councillors was telling me that he was walking his dog along there, and his dog had just turned round to have a look as a lorry was passing and, as a consequence, he got his neck broken. So, that gives you an idea, as do the pictures, of what they are putting up with. I found it useful; I am glad that I did it. I drive through there, as I keep saying, twice if not four times a week, but the experience of walking there, however, is somewhat different to driving past.

[204] **William Powell:** Yes, it gives you quite a distinct perspective, does it not?

[205] **Joyce Watson:** I thank them for their hospitality and for arranging the visit.

[206] **William Powell:** I do not know whether you are copied into this very recent

correspondence, but I will very happily forward this e-mail to you so that you can take stock of its content. As I said, the trouble that you took in attending is much appreciated.

[207] There is also a reference to a visit by Sergeant Gary Jones of Dyfed-Powys Police and some of the points that he made relating to the monitoring of speed. One thing that we have not done in relation to this petition is that we have not flagged it up with the new police and crime commissioner, Mr Christopher Salmon. I wonder whether that would be useful, so that it could be on his radar. I think that that might, potentially, support the work of the local officers on the ground.

[208] As a final action, I wonder whether it would make sense for us to write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, with her newly configured brief, possibly inviting her to consider joining us on a site visit at a future time, if she is considering these matters. It is a new area for her to embrace as Minister, but this is obviously a long-standing issue of importance and, potentially, it is an issue that she might consider taking on as part of a familiarisation tour of forthcoming projects. I do not know whether you think that that would be excessive, Joyce, but it would at least put a marker down from the point of view of the committee.

[209] **Joyce Watson:** I have no problem with your suggestion, except that—and this would be my genuine concern—if you start asking Ministers to come to one location, how can you not then, in every single case, apply in equal measure an invitation to every other Minister to come to locations? That is the concern that I have to express.

[210] **William Powell:** I understand the pressure on ministerial diaries and so on; it was purely because she is new to the brief. It is certainly something that her predecessor, Carl Sargeant, and, indeed, his predecessor, Ieuan Wyn Jones, had been wrestling with for some time. I believe that Ieuan Wyn Jones, if I have read the e-mail correctly, had attended a site meeting much earlier in this process, back in the mid noughties, in 2005.

[211] **Joyce Watson:** I am not against it; I am simply saying—

[212] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I understand your point about consistency.

[213] **Joyce Watson:** We have to be consistent, and I do not want to be seen by others to be favouring a visit to one site when we have not afforded the opportunity or the suggestion to others. I do like to be consistent.

[214] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Consistency is really important. There are, as it happens, two petitions, this one and the following one, that relate to issues around traffic and congestion, along with the alleviation of congestion. The second petition is about speeding. I just thought that it might be appropriate. In any event, I suggest that we write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, asking that she keep the committee up to date on the outcome of the most recent bid. That may be sufficient for now, because it will be a significant job of work for her to get up to speed in this new area of work.

[215] We move now to petition P-03-261, Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion, and P-04-319, Newtown traffic petition. We have previously agreed as a committee to group the two petitions. P-04-261 on Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion was submitted by Garry Saady in January 2010, with the support of 37 signatures. P-04-319, Newtown traffic petition, was submitted by Paul Pavia and was supported by 10 signatures. However, an associated petition, which I am sure that my colleague Russell George will wish speak to in a moment, had the support of 5,000 signatures. We last considered these petitions in January, when we wrote to the then Minister for Local Government and Communities. The response to that is in the public papers.

[216] In addition to that, I should observe that Russell George and I were present at a briefing meeting with Andy Falleyn, a senior official within the Welsh Government's directorate, colleagues from Powys County Council—officers and the cabinet member, county councillor Barry Thomas—and other local representatives, getting an update on progress towards the Newtown public inquiry on this matter. I need to put that on the record. Russell, you have indicated to speak.

[217] **Russell George:** First, I would like to declare an interest. The lead petitioner is an associate, in that he works in my office, and I have been heavily involved in the Newtown traffic petition, as I have stated before.

[218] It was useful to have the letter from the Minister with regard to the ongoing traffic concerns in Newtown. I am reasonably content that the construction of the Newtown bypass is progressing as quickly as could be expected, but I was a little alarmed to learn from the letter to the committee on 19 February from the Minister that the start of works will be in early 2015. However, I have a number of pieces of recent correspondence that says late 2014/early 2015. Indeed, at a public meeting in Newtown several months ago, it was stated in a document and by Government officials that construction would start in late 2014/early 2015.

[219] **William Powell:** So, you are concerned about potential slippage.

[220] **Russell George:** It looks as if there is a little slippage there. So, I request, Chair, that we write to the Minister asking her to keep the committee updated in that regard, and also to question the start of the works date and ask why different dates are given in recent correspondence and in the recent public meeting that took place.

[221] My only other point was on the first petition on this issue—P-04-261, Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion. I am wondering whether we should now close that petition, because that petition is asking for a decision on the proposed bypass for Newtown to be deferred. Clearly, the Minister has confirmed the timetable for the construction of the bypass, so I am wondering whether we should close that petition.

[222] **William Powell:** I would be keen to have Joyce's view on that as well, given Russell's declaration of interest and the fact that he made that proposition, although that does not detract from the fact that it may well be common sense to do that. Joyce, do you have any observations on that proposed approach from Russell George?

[223] **Joyce Watson:** I am quite happy to support that approach.

[224] **William Powell:** As indeed I am, but I am grateful for your intervention. I think that it is just recognising the facts of the matter. I strongly agree with Russell that it would eminently make sense for us to write in clear terms to the new Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, because I am sure that she will want to have a clear steer on this, and will have no truck with undue slippage or sloppy thinking. That would be a sensible way forward, because this is a much-needed scheme and I think that that is widely understood.

[225] **Russell George:** In agreeing to close one of the petitions, it should be recognised that what the petitioner is asking for is very important. Sustainable measures should be sought to deal with the traffic congestion, and those measures will have to be part of the bypass process. That is an important point, and closing the petition should not detract from that.

10.30 a.m.

[226] **William Powell:** Taking that one step further, I think that it would be sensible for us, if data protection and other issues allow, to write to Andy Falley, who is the chief officer, flagging up the provenance and existence of the petition, with its expression of concern around environmental issues. There is going to be a public inquiry, and it would be sensible for Mr Falley and the programme officer, as soon as the latter is appointed to manage the process of a public inquiry, to signpost the petitioner to that process. The petitioner can then advance his concerns on environmental and other matters, through that appropriate channel.

[227] **Russell George:** I think that it would probably be right for us to write to the Minister, but I will take your advice on that.

[228] **William Powell:** Absolutely; the Minister can then task the appropriate officials. I am sure that the petitioner concerned would be aware of the process, but we would just be signposting him to it as a matter of courtesy. I see that Members agree. Excellent.

[229] We now move on to P-04-380, Bring back our bus! Petition against the removal of scheduled bus services from east Lampeter, Cwmann & Pencarreg. This petition was submitted by Sharon McNamara in March 2012—a full year ago—and collected 505 signatures. I think that we were all present for quite a lively, feisty and heartfelt presentation of this petition. We last considered it in October 2012, and we wrote to the then Minister for Local Government and Communities and to Ceredigion County Council; their responses are in our public papers. I think that it would be sensible for us to seek the views of Sharon McNamara and her colleagues on the correspondence received. If they can then feed their specific responses to that correspondence back to us, it would be helpful in our further consideration of this petition. I see that Members agree.

[230] We now move to P-04-453, Improvements at Cardiff Airport. This petition was submitted by Kelvin Hayes in January 2013 and has collected 144 signatures. We first considered it in our January meeting. We wrote to the petitioners; you can see that their response is in our public papers. In light of the petitioners' views regarding the First Minister's announcement about the aspiration to acquire Cardiff Airport, thus meeting the aims and aspirations of the petitioner, I think that this is a win and that we should close the petition. The petitioner is clearly happy, and I am sure that the First Minister would be happy that he has additional support for his strategy on this matter.

[231] We now move to P-04-436, Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales. This petition was submitted by Stuart Evans in January 2013 and has collected 27 signatures. It calls on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to put together a Government expenditure and revenue report for Wales. We first considered this petition in January. We wrote to Jane Hutt, Minister for Finance; her response is in our public papers. At this point, I think that it would be sensible to forward a copy of Jane Hutt's correspondence to the petitioner to seek his perspective on the ministerial feedback. Is that a sensible approach? I see that Members agree that it is; excellent.

10.34 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**

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

*in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi), the committee resolves to exclude the*

*public for item 5 on the agenda.*

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

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.*

*Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.34 a.m.*  
*The public part of the meeting ended at 10.34 a.m.*