



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 12 Gorffennaf 2011
Tuesday, 12 July 2011**

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

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

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

Sarita Marshall	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.30 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.30 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Good morning. I welcome you all to the second meeting of the Petitions Committee in the fourth Assembly, and the first with me in the Chair. I extend a particularly warm welcome to Joyce, who is joining the Petitions Committee for the first time; it is great to have you on board. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of Christine Chapman, who was Chair of the committee for the last 18 months and who now goes on to chair the Children and Young People Committee. I have a few housekeeping announcements. Participants are welcome to speak in Welsh or English as they prefer. Headsets are available for public translation and amplification—channel 0 for amplification only and channel 1 for translation. Please switch off any mobile phones. If the fire alarms go off, the ushers will tell everyone what to do and, if necessary, direct us to the fire exits. As far as we are aware, there are no alarm tests planned for this morning. No apologies have been received and we are all present, so we will proceed to the next item on the agenda.

9.31 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[2] **William Powell:** The first petition is P-04-321, Arriva Trains Wales services between South West and South East Wales. This petition was raised by Mr Bjorn Rödde and he collected 162 signatures. The petition calls for improvements to Arriva Trains Wales's services between south-west and south-east Wales. In line with our protocols, I have written to the Minister for Local Government and Communities seeking his views on the petition. What do colleagues feel would be the best course of action at this point?

[3] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could write to Arriva Trains Wales seeking its views, but I also think that we could look at contacting the transport forum or the users' forum—I am not sure what it is called—to get the users' perspective as well.

[4] **William Powell:** Okay, so we will get in touch with the transport users' forum, and we await the correspondence back from the Minister; the letter was sent only recently. Are we agreed on that? I see that we are. Thank you very much. The next petition is P-04-327, Keep Our Community Hospital. It was raised by Mandy Howells, who collected 40 signatures. The petition calls for the proposed closure of Blaina and District Hospital to be investigated and addressed. In line with our protocols, I have written to the Minister for Health and Social Services, seeking her views. Are there any proposals from the committee as to what we should do? I think that we probably first need to wait for the outcome of that correspondence. Are there any other actions that you would suggest at this stage?

[5] **Bethan Jenkins:** Not at the moment.

[6] **William Powell:** Okay, fine.

[7] **Joyce Watson:** What about contacting the local health board?

[8] **William Powell:** The Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board?

[9] **Joyce Watson:** It would be sensible, I think.

[10] **William Powell:** Okay. We could include that as an action. Fine, that is agreed.

[11] The next petition is P-04-328, MCA Modernising Coastguard Proposals, which we received just last Tuesday from Graham Warlow and his colleagues. They have collected 220 signatures, calling, as we know, for an independent risk assessment to be undertaken into the impact of the proposed closure and downgrading of coastguard stations across Wales. I have written to the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science seeking her views on this. Apart from awaiting that response, what other action would you suggest at this point?

[12] **Joyce Watson:** May I just check something? I have signed petitions—although not this one—calling for the safeguarding of the coastguard stations, so I do not know where that leaves me. I have not signed this particular one that is before us, but I have made my views well known in the public eye, and I do not want to fall foul of anything.

[13] **William Powell:** Thank you for that clarification, Joyce. It also occurs to me that I have signed up to a Facebook group related to this issue.

[14] **Bethan Jenkins:** So have I.

[15] **William Powell:** Russell? Are you hiding anything?

[16] **Russell George:** I must be the only one making a decision then.

[17] **Bethan Jenkins:** There may be an issue if we were to have to vote on this, but I do not think it will affect us in any other way.

[18] **Russell George:** Shall we seek legal advice? [*Laughter.*]

[19] **William Powell:** Not at this point, but thanks for raising that, Joyce. It triggered Bethan and me to recall that we had done something similar. So, the petition was presented last week, as we recall, and we had better await the outcome of the correspondence from the

Minister.

[20] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not know whether Joyce knows, but have any trade unions of staff who work in this sector been in contact? We have attended public meetings, but could we consult with the staff? I know that the Public and Commercial Services Union, for example, has been doing the broader campaign.

[21] **William Powell:** We could do that in tandem with waiting for the Minister's response. Is that agreed? I see that it is.

[22] **Joyce Watson:** The petition refers to tourism in particular, and there is a very active tourism association in Pembrokeshire, which would have a view on that. There are also an awful lot of marinas in the area and there might be a marinas organisation that we can contact, as it would certainly wish to express a view.

[23] **William Powell:** That is good; we are drawing on your local knowledge.

[24] **Joyce Watson:** I would also have thought that the local authority would have a view on this, especially as authorities try to keep the coast and beach areas safe.

[25] **Bethan Jenkins:** It would probably be better to get a national perspective from Visit Wales or a similar organisation, because Swansea would be affected if the coastguard station is downgraded, not just the Milford area.

[26] **Joyce Watson:** You are right, but we are talking about Milford here; the petition refers to Milford in particular. However, you are right about the impact.

[27] **Bethan Jenkins:** It would widen it out a bit.

[28] **William Powell:** So, drawing those strands together, we will contact the Pembrokeshire Tourism Association and potentially Visit Wales, because of the national concern. Then you referred to the local authority, Joyce, which would be Pembrokeshire County Council, and presumably we should also contact Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, as it would clearly be a stakeholder. Are we agreed on that?

[29] **Ms Stokes:** Would you also want to write to the local authorities that cover Holyhead and Swansea?

[30] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I think so.

[31] **William Powell:** Yes, to broaden it out. Excellent.

9.37 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[32] **William Powell:** The first update is on P-03-143, Ysgol Penmaes. As you will recall, this calls for improvements to rural transport, especially in Powys. Correspondence has been received from the Minister for Local Government and Communities. Are there any views on what we can take forward at this stage in light of the Minister's comments?

[33] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that we should consult the petitioners in light of the information about £11 million being available for local authorities in this area, as to whether

that would suffice in terms of covering the rural dimension that the petition is concerned with.

[34] **William Powell:** Okay. So the suggestion is that we go back to the petitioners to seek their views on the information that we have received. I see that we are agreed on that.

[35] The second update is on P-03-150, National Cancer Standards. As you will recall, this calls for an investigation into whether local health boards will have the tools in place to meet the national cancer standards. As you will have seen, correspondence has been received from the Minister for Health and Social Services. What does the committee feel that we should take forward at this point?

[36] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could write to the new Minister for health to seek an update on the current levels of compliance with the national cancer standards and on the action that the Government is taking to ensure full compliance across the board. The concern was that there were areas that were not so strong.

[37] **William Powell:** Yes, there were inconsistencies, were there not?

[38] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. I know that this has been going on for some time, so I am not sure whether we want to make this more of an awareness issue.

[39] **William Powell:** Exactly, because this petition has been in for some time. The Petitions Committee in the third Assembly considered this for some time, so how could we take this to a higher level of awareness? What are your suggestions?

[40] **Ms Stokes:** It may depend upon what the response from the Minister is. After we have considered that, the committee could revisit it and decide.

[41] **William Powell:** I suppose that, in the first instance, we could await that and then revisit in the autumn.

[42] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am not sure whether the petitioners have given evidence.

[43] **Ms Stokes:** I would need to check.

[44] **Bethan Jenkins:** That could be the next stage, if we are still in this predicament.

[45] **William Powell:** Yes, and in light of the correspondence from the new Minister as well. That will be helpful.

[46] The next update is on P-03-153, Body Piercing. This petition calls for age restrictions to be introduced for body piercing. We have correspondence from the Minister. Are there any views on the way forward?

[47] **Russell George:** I think that we should write to ask the petitioners for their views before we take any further action.

[48] **William Powell:** Okay. So, you want their take on what the Minister has to say. I see that we are all agreed on that.

[49] The next update is on P-03-156, Sleep Apnoea, which, as you will recall, calls for an effective policy for all patients with sleep disorders, including the provision of constant positive airway pressure, or CPAP, machines for diagnosed sufferers of obstructive sleep apnoea. We have received correspondence from the former Minister. What would colleagues propose at this stage? Should we write to the new Minister for Health and Social Services to

seek, in particular, any information regarding compliance with the directives? I think that that is probably the best way of taking this forward. Are there any other thoughts?

[50] **Bethan Jenkins:** No, that is fine.

[51] **William Powell:** Okay. The next update is on P-03-170, from Mencap Cymru, on increasing the number of people with a learning disability employed by the public sector in Wales. There have been calls for increased employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties within the National Assembly, the Welsh Government and the wider public sector. We have received correspondence from the former Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, now the Minister for Education and Skills. I suggest that we write to the Assembly Commission to ask that we be updated on any future decisions on this front. Are there any other thoughts?

[52] **Joyce Watson:** It is stated in the reply that a development and implementation group has met and that an invitation was sent to Mencap Cymru for it to present its employment model. An update as to whether that has happened and about any outcomes from that would be useful.

[53] **William Powell:** Okay, so you would like an update on that dedicated group that has been set up. What about writing to the petitioners on the wider issues? I think that that would probably also be a good idea.

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

[55] **William Powell:** Good. Are we all happy with that? I see that we are.

[56] The next update is on P-03-187, concerning the abolition of the Severn bridge toll. Correspondence was received from the then Deputy First Minister. I suggest that we now contact the Minister for Local Government and Communities to seek his perspective on this. We also need to know the timing of the economic impact work.

[57] **Bethan Jenkins:** That is UK Government work, is it not?

[58] **Ms Stocks:** No, it has been commissioned by the Welsh Government.

[59] **William Powell:** That work will be honoured in the fourth Assembly and we need to know when it will be completed. We cannot really do anything until those data are available to us.

[60] **Bethan Jenkins:** Do we know the detail of how that study is to be carried out and whether the petitioners could potentially feed into it? I do not know whether we have seen any detail on that.

[61] **William Powell:** It would probably be useful to get a steer on the methods that will be used.

[62] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, and to see how it will be measured.

[63] **William Powell:** Yes, and to be reassured that the petitioners will have some input into that work. So, we will write to the Minister in those terms. Are we are happy with that? I see that we are.

[64] The next update is on P-03-188, Special Care Baby Unit, and calls for the special care baby unit at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital to be reinstated to a full level 3 intensive care unit.

As you will recall, the previous committee wrote to the petitioners seeking their views. However, we have not received a response, despite them being contacted several times by the committee. I therefore suggest that we close this petition and produce a summary report. Is that acceptable to everyone?

[65] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. If they have not responded, then there is nothing more that we can do.

[66] **William Powell:** We have no choice really; we have to move things forward.

9.45 a.m.

[67] The next update is on P-03-204, Public Accountability and Consultation in Higher Education. The petition calls for more accountability and consultation. We have received correspondence from the petitioner. I suggest that we write to the Minister for Education and Skills, as the relevant Minister on this. What are your thoughts, colleagues?

[68] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could write to him about the higher education governance review, the concerns about it, how it will be implemented and how the petitioner's concerns will be taken into consideration.

[69] **William Powell:** Good, let us do that. I see that everyone is happy with that.

[70] The next petition is P-03-205, Keep Abergavenny Livestock Market. It does what it says on the tin, namely call for the livestock market to be retained in Abergavenny. We have received correspondence from Monmouthshire County Council and the petitioners. There has been a recent development: planning consent has been granted by the local authority for the redevelopment of the Abergavenny livestock market in the centre of the town. We could write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities to highlight the petitioners' concerns regarding the adequacy of the consultation process. Do you think that that is suitable? There is a particular issue with this petition, in that we probably need to seek further information on how consultation on the repeal of the specific improvement Acts associated with Abergavenny livestock market will be undertaken. Are there any other thoughts as to how we should proceed on this?

[71] **Bethan Jenkins:** We need to ensure that the petitioners are involved in that consultation process with the Minister.

[72] **William Powell:** Yes, we must ensure that there is proper involvement.

[73] The next petition is P-03-219, Pharmacies in Barry. It calls for the protection of high street pharmacies in relation to the restrictions on the relocation of those pharmacies. We have received correspondence from the Minister for Health and Social Services, which you have seen. However, the ministerial correspondence refers to a letter sent on 30 March; we have been informed that that was an error, as no letter was issued on that date. So, we will have to go back to the drawing board and write to the Minister to get some feedback on the findings of the task and finish group.

[74] **Joyce Watson:** That will be in mid-September.

[75] **William Powell:** So, we will pick that up in the first committee meeting of the autumn term. Is that agreed? I see that it is.

[76] The next two petitions have been grouped together. They are P-03-220, Lower the speed limit on the A40 near Abergavenny, and P-03-240, Improvements to the A40 in

Llandewi Velfrey. They have been grouped because of the related nature of their content. Both call for speed restrictions and improved road safety on different parts of the A40. We have received correspondence from the petitioners and the Minister for Local Government and Communities in relation to Llandewi Velfrey. In October 2010, the then Deputy First Minister stated that the speed limit reviews on both sections of the road would be completed within the next six months. Do you have any views as to how we chase this up?

[77] **Bethan Jenkins:** We should ask whether the speed limit reviews have taken place, because we seem to have been waiting a long time, as we usually do for responses on these petitions. The petitioners are concerned with the need for swift resolution, because the roads continue to be dangerous. From what we have seen, there has been little change, so we need to get an answer.

[78] **William Powell:** That is right. There seems to have been slippage; a year will have passed by our next committee meeting.

[79] **Russell George:** I suggest that we write to the new Minister to give him some backdated information.

[80] **William Powell:** To check that nothing has been lost in the handover. Okay, that is agreed.

[81] The next petition is P-03-221, Improved NHS Chiropody Treatment. We have received correspondence from the petitioner. What are your views on this petition? Shall we write to the Minister in the first instance to check for an update on the consultation findings and to highlight the petitioner's concerns about timing on the whole issue? Are we agreed? I see that we are.

[82] The next petition is P-03-222 from the National Osteoporosis Society, which is calling for the falls and fractures standards in the national service framework for older people to be fully implemented and for universal provision of fracture liaison services across Wales. Again, I think that we should probably write to the Minister for Health and Social Services. Are there any other thoughts?

[83] **Bethan Jenkins:** There was going to be a review of the national service framework, so I think that we need an update on that.

[84] **William Powell:** Okay, so we need an update on the national service framework from the Minister and to ask what progress local health boards are making on introducing this new guarantee.

[85] The next petition is P-03-253 on the adoption of private sewers. There have been calls, as we know, for the swift adoption of private sewers. The regulations that will transfer responsibility for private sewers and lateral drains from householders to the statutory authorities were passed in Plenary on 21 June. So, these regulations will come into force on 1 October this year. So, I suggest that we close this petition as the outcome has been achieved and produce a summary report. Is everybody happy with that?

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

[87] **William Powell:** It is a good result.

[88] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, it is a really good result.

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

[90] **Bethan Jenkins:** May I just clarify whether that was a result of this coming to us as a petition? Or was the Government undertaking this review of private sewers anyway?

[91] **Ms Stocks:** I think that it is one of those examples of a petition where we cannot be exactly sure. It might be that it happened to tie in with work that the Government was doing at the time, but I am sure that the committee's persistence in pursuing it will have helped.

[92] **William Powell:** The next petition is P-03-260 from the Campaign for Dark Skies. It calls for light pollution to be tackled. Correspondence has been received from the petitioners, as you will have seen. I think that we need to write to the Minister now responsible for transport, the Minister for Local Government and Communities, to bring to his attention examples, from the petitioners' perspective, of excessive street lighting, particularly on the trunk road network, to ask what the Welsh Government is considering doing about 'full cutoff' of street lighting. Are there any thoughts on this?

[93] **Joyce Watson:** Horror. [*Laughter.*]

[94] **Bethan Jenkins:** My only concern in all of this is the safety aspect of switching lights off on trunk roads.

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

[96] **Bethan Jenkins:** However, I think that they were referring to different types of lighting. I think that we need to seek advice. I do not know what body we would speak to about the safety implications. I support the use of energy-saving lightbulbs, but I have had complaints that they could affect people with epilepsy. I say 'could' because there is not enough evidence.

[97] **William Powell:** No, it is anecdotal.

[98] **Bethan Jenkins:** However, if they are going to change the type of lighting used, it could affect people's capacity to drive safely, so I would want to check that out.

[99] **William Powell:** Yes. Prior to our election, Russell and I were very familiar with concerns about the reduction in street lighting in large parts of mid Wales.

[100] **Russell George:** Yes, at one time in the Powys County Council area, two in every three lights were turned off. Then, when legal advice was sought on the safety aspect, it was shown that there was no legal obligation to have street lights in the first place. That is the other side of it.

[101] **William Powell:** This is particularly about the trunk road network.

[102] **Joyce Watson:** A previous petition, Chair—rightly, to my mind—asked us to keep an area on the A40 safe.

[103] **Russell George:** Yes, Llanddewi Velfrey.

[104] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and in Abergavenny. I drive these roads, as you will soon do. You have to think about mid-winter and the rain coming down and people often walking in dark clothing. I have serious reservations about turning the lights off on trunk roads, which could result in various users of that road—whether cyclists, pedestrians or drivers—meeting with a tragic outcome. So, I have huge reservations. I do not know enough. I also share the concerns about the types of lighting and the impact on people with medical conditions that

might make it impossible for them to drive, in any case, and about the fact that they might not find out that they have a problem until something awful happens. I am really concerned about this—I will put my cards on the table here. However, we have been asked to look at the petition, so look at it we must.

[105] **William Powell:** Indeed. I think that we should proceed with caution, as you are suggesting. Last weekend, there was a tragedy on a trunk road in Monmouthshire, where someone died. Potentially, this may have been a factor. Nevertheless, the petitioners clearly have an issue on which they want further study.

[106] **Bethan Jenkins:** We can look at local authority local development plans for references to light pollution.

[107] **Ms Stocks:** To be absolutely clear, the petitioners have clarified this in previous correspondence. They are not necessarily talking about turning off lights; it is about different sorts of light and lighting design rather than turning them off.

[108] **William Powell:** It is also about minimising the impact of lights.

[109] **Ms Stocks:** Yes. The issue about excessive lighting on trunk roads emerged from the committee's correspondence with Powys County Council, Ceredigion County Council and one other local authority. They came back and said that they had concerns about excessive amounts of lighting on some trunk roads.

[110] **William Powell:** So, that is from a third party rather than from the petitioners. That is interesting. Thank you for that clarification. Therefore, in summary, we will write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities and to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development regarding the LDP framework that Bethan flagged up. Are there any other issues?

[111] **Ms Stocks:** Do you want us to write to someone about health issues?

[112] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, but I do not know to which body. That is the problem. Perhaps you could do some research on that.

[113] **Ms Stocks:** We can look into it.

[114] **William Powell:** We could write to a road safety body, perhaps. We can do some research on that. It is good to air those points.

[115] The next petition is P-03-261, on local solutions to the Newtown traffic congestion.

[116] **Russell George:** This is the complete opposite to the other petition. All that we can do on this is ask the petitioners for their views on the latest correspondence on this issue. I also notice that the other petition on the Newtown traffic congestion, which is looking for different solutions, is not on the agenda this week. Is there a reason for that?

[117] **Ms Stocks:** It is because we are awaiting correspondence from the Minister in direct relation to that petition.

[118] **Russell George:** Okay.

[119] **William Powell:** As Russell outlined, this petition calls for a decision on the bypass in Newtown, which is a very big issue locally, to be deferred until sustainable measures have been trialled to address local traffic congestion. We have received ministerial correspondence,

as you have seen. We will go back to the petitioners to seek their views on what the Minister had to say.

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

[121] **William Powell:** The next petition is P-03-262, Academi Heddwch Cymru—Wales Peace Institute. As you will recall, this has been with the committee for a while now and it calls for further investigation into the potential establishment of a Welsh peace institute. The committee has previously taken a great deal of oral and written evidence on this from the petitioners and from European peace institutes. The committee previously wrote to the Flemish Peace Institute asking for further details of a potential offer to conduct further research to aid the development of such a peace institute, but, at that time, made it clear that the committee is not well placed to commission such research. In this context, I refer you to the very recent correspondence that Naomi has kindly copied for us, which was an exchange between Stephen Thomas, one of the petitioners, and me yesterday. I will give you a moment to read this—it was on the desk when you arrived so you might not have had a chance to read it. I will just allow you to get up to speed.

[122] **Russell George:** I have looked through it.

[123] **William Powell:** I see that you all have looked through it. That is fantastic.

10.00 a.m.

[124] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that they are trying to get the Presiding Officer to formally request that the Flemish Peace Institute carry out this work. We need to clarify whether we can do that. I understand that it can afford to carry out a study, but we need to clarify whether that can be done through formal channels here.

[125] **William Powell:** We need clarity on what can and cannot be done within the protocols and so on. As you say, Bethan, the institute seems to be reasonably confident that it has access to the resources to support such a study. However, it depends on whether it is permissible and appropriate to go down that route.

[126] **Bethan Jenkins:** I know that I signed the petition, but I just think that it would be sad for it to fall down at this stage, because we have invested a lot of time in taking evidence from the various institutes.

[127] **William Powell:** It is an incredibly important cause.

[128] **Bethan Jenkins:** It may be that the committee that discusses European affairs should look at it, because the petition is to do with other countries.

[129] **William Powell:** Yes, it relates to internationalism and so on.

[130] **Bethan Jenkins:** That committee may be able to look at it, but I am not sure what its work plan is because I do not sit on the committee. We could contemplate talking to that committee if we were to hear about the financial aspects or that it is permissible.

[131] **William Powell:** Indeed. We need to seek guidance on that from the relevant authorities in the Assembly.

[132] **Ms Stocks:** We will look into whether it is appropriate for the Presiding Officer to write such a letter and come back to the committee. We will be in recess, but we would not want to delay that process, so we will come back to the committee via e-mail either later this

week or at the beginning of recess. We can then take it forward from there.

[133] **William Powell:** Are Members content with that?

[134] **Bethan Jenkins:** When we are in Builth and at the Eisteddfod, with regard to those petitions that are still open and on which we have not had sufficient engagement from the Ministers yet, and which we currently do not have an answer to, we could talk to people and ask them what actions they think would be interesting to take forward. That would be something constructive for us to do.

[135] **William Powell:** That would be a good outreach opportunity and would be a way of making really meaningful use of that time. In the meantime, we should write to the petitioners more formally than in the form of an e-mail exchange, just to make sure that they are kept in the loop and to assure them that we are taking this matter seriously. Are Members agreed? I see that you are.

[136] We now move to P-03-265, which calls for the inclusion of leaving-home information and education in the national curriculum. We have received correspondence from the petitioner in the light of the Minister for Education and Skills' response. It seems to me that the best course of action is to close the petition and to produce a completion report. Are Members agreed?

[137] **Bethan Jenkins:** May I just clarify why the Minister rejected the evaluation in relation to that petition? I do not want to close it without—

[138] **William Powell:** Let us check that.

[139] **Ms Stocks:** My recollection is that it was a case of not wanting to overburden the personal and social education framework, and the view was that the resources are made available to schools and that it is for individual schools to decide exactly what they want to cover.

[140] **William Powell:** He did not want to overprescribe and for there to be a cluttered curriculum. That seems to be the sentiment that I recall from the letter.

[141] **Ms Stocks:** In the letter the Minister said:

[142] 'The delivery of the curriculum is delegated to schools working in partnership with their local authority. It is for them to decide where the emphasis should be placed in terms of priorities, time given to this area of learning and the strategies for learning to be adopted...To support schools, the PSE guidance website provides a link to the Shelter Cymru 'Housemate' website...Whilst I acknowledge Shelter Cymru's commitment to leaving home education, I am unable to support the submission's recommendations. At present, there are no plans to review the school curriculum for Wales but I will ask my officials to take note of the 'Housemate' evaluation findings and research evidence when potential future changes to the PSE framework for 7 to 19-year-olds are being considered.

[143] Given that I am not proposing to change the PSE framework at present, now is not the right time to make commitments to developing guidance for the provision of leaving home education or to fund the evaluation, development and promotion of housing resources for schools.'

[144] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that the petitioners, in their response, accept the fact that the Minister does not want to move.

[145] **William Powell:** Yes; that is in the letter from Rhian Jones. They seem to be reasonably content and it has raised the profile of the issue as Shelter Cymru would have wanted.

[146] The next petition is P-03-268, which calls for accident and emergency facilities at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan. We have received correspondence from the Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board and, in the light of that, I propose that we close this petition and produce a closure report. Are you agreed?

[147] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

[148] **William Powell:** Now we have a pair of petitions that have been grouped together: P-03-271 on business rates in Narberth and P-03-286 on business rates in Ceredigion. They have obviously been grouped because they relate to similar issues. They call for an impact assessment to be undertaken in Narberth and across Ceredigion to understand the impact that business rates are having on local communities and businesses. We have received correspondence from the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science. At the last meeting we agreed to also seek the views of the Federation of Small Businesses. We hope to have feedback from the FSB for the first committee meeting of the autumn term. Do you have any thoughts on this one? Joyce, this is an area close to your base.

[149] **Joyce Watson:** They both are; absolutely. If you go back to the wording in the petition, it asks for,

[150] ‘an impact assessment on how businesses in the town will be affected by the changes’.

[151] We have had a reply from the Minister. I do know a little about Narberth, to say the least, and the problem was to do with high rents, and nothing to do with us. I do not know where you are going with this. You have had the reply from the Minister that explains the impact, which is what they have asked for. Did I hear you say that you will ask the Federation of Small Businesses for its opinion?

[152] **William Powell:** That was fed in at the last meeting as an additional suggestion.

[153] **Joyce Watson:** This is not to say that I do not have sympathy for and understanding of the situation to which the Narberth petition relates, because I have both, but as far as I can see—unless I have misunderstood what it is asking for—the petition has been answered. That applies to them both. We have set out what the new business rates will be and explained how they will affect businesses, and that is what they have asked for.

[154] **William Powell:** Are they not looking for a wider assessment of the impact on the health of their businesses, rather than a tabulation of how the charges will be applied? What do colleagues think?

[155] **Joyce Watson:** I do not mind what we do. I am quite happy to go forward and do a wider impact assessment—I do not want you to think that I am not in favour of it. I am just not sure that we have not answered the question.

[156] **Ms Stocks:** William is right; it was asking for a wider assessment of the impact on businesses in those areas, rather than the specific level of the rates. The petitioners’ concern is that the rateable values have increased greatly in areas like Narberth, and, as they see it, there are particular reasons for that. They wanted some consideration given to how that might impact on the viability of businesses in that area and the broader impact that that might have on employment opportunities in Narberth and Ceredigion. So, it is looking at a slightly

broader impact than just the exact cost.

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could refer it to the Enterprise and Business Committee, and ask it to consider it. It may ignore it entirely; that is not something that we can control, but we can ask.

[158] **William Powell:** It may form part of a wider study that it wishes to take forward.

[159] **Joyce Watson:** I am on that committee.

[160] **William Powell:** You are therefore ideally placed.

[161] **Joyce Watson:** One of the first issues that we are to look at is town centre regeneration, so it could form part of that. It could be done sensibly and in a timely way as part of that.

[162] **William Powell:** It could be considered as one aspect of that work. That is good.

[163] The next petition is P-03-273, on the transportation of wind turbines and, presumably, wind turbine components in mid Wales. It calls for guidance to be issued to ensure that communities are consulted on such developments and it requests that the impact of transporting components be fully assessed. We have received correspondence from the Minister for Local Government and Communities and from a petitioner. What are your thoughts on this?

[164] **Russell George:** I note that the committee wrote to the Welsh Local Government Association, asking whether local authorities had sufficient powers through the planning process to address the issues raised by the petition. What was the reply?

[165] **Ms Stocks:** The WLGA says that it understands that discussions are to take place with Welsh Government planning officials on these matters in the near future. There are some means in existence by which local planning authorities can seek to mitigate the impact of developments on road infrastructure: for example, they can refuse applications on access grounds; they can condition the submission of construction management plans, where approvals deal with delivery routes; and the use of anything larger than standard-sized vehicles can be controlled under abnormal load legislation. The discussions with Welsh Government officials will look at ways in which a firmer basis can be established for controlling activity on the highway network.

[166] **Joyce Watson:** Is it not the case that for any of the really large ones—and this is the concern here—the remit for decision making rests outside the Assembly, not only for the large applications and the very large wind turbines, but for all the infrastructure that goes with them?

[167] **William Powell:** That would include the pylons and all the rest of it.

[168] **Joyce Watson:** It is all of it; the transport as well.

[169] **Russell George:** It does not cover the transport.

[170] **Joyce Watson:** I think that you will find that it does.

[171] **Russell George:** I do not think so.

[172] **Joyce Watson:** You will find that it does. Could we have clarity on that? I have read

it and re-read it 100 times—and I am sure that you all have, too—and my understanding is quite clear that responsibility for the application and the infrastructure includes transport. Your understanding seems to be different. So, we need clarity on that point first of all.

[173] **William Powell:** Yes. It is not clear to me as to where the transport element sits. The item on planning for the larger installations is clear and the issue has been fairly widely aired on the floor of the Assembly.

[174] **Russell George:** That is an important point and it would be useful to have clarity. My understanding of the matter is different, so I would be very interested in having clarity on that. It makes a big difference with regard to where this will go. I was also going to suggest, William, that the Environment and Sustainability Committee take this up with regard to the wider issue of transport. I will raise it at the next meeting.

[175] **William Powell:** We both sit on that committee and we have an opportunity perhaps to feed that in as we develop the work programme.

[176] **Russell George:** We could look at it as a separate strand—not this specifically, but the wider issues of transport in relation to large-scale windfarm development.

[177] **William Powell:** That is right. Also, listed among our potential actions, we need to think about writing to the Department of Energy and Climate Change on this matter, depending on the outcome of this query into the apportionment of responsibilities. We will therefore be writing to Westminster, as well as to Welsh-based institutions, as Joyce suggested.

[178] **Ms Stocks:** Just to clarify, this petition predates the developments in mid Wales, so I think that it is talking about the transport impact of all windfarm developments, some of which will be small enough to be the responsibility of local planning authorities. Clearly, the larger windfarm developments are currently the responsibility of the Infrastructure Planning Commission. Events have clearly overtaken us, but the petition is broadly about all windfarm developments, not just the current proposals for windfarms and connections in mid Wales.

[179] **William Powell:** Okay.

[180] The next item is P-03-280, on Cardiff Royal Infirmary. It seeks to have the Cardiff Royal Infirmary reopened and refurbished, to include an accident and emergency department and an intensive care unit. Petitioners have informed the clerking team that they have not been able to view the development plans. This is quite an odd development, since a meeting had been arranged specifically to enable them to do that. We were given the impression that the health board would facilitate that, and it does not seem to have done so. What are your views on how we take this matter forward?

10.15 a.m.

[181] **Bethan Jenkins:** We need to seek clarification as to why they could not see those plans; it may be to do with confidentiality.

[182] **William Powell:** We will write to Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board to follow up on that.

[183] The next petition is P-03-283, on NHS charging for alcohol-related incidents, which calls for a charging regime to be brought in. Correspondence has been received from the former Minister for Health and Social Services, and we have also been provided with a legal briefing on the issue of charging, at the previous committee's request. Now that we have

reached this point, do Members have any views on this issue?

[184] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could close the petition.

[185] **William Powell:** I think that we need to close it.

[186] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not agree with it anyway, but there we are. I do not think that we can go any further.

[187] **William Powell:** Sometimes, I think that you have to pause and take a breath. We will close the petition and produce a summary closure report, as there appears to be no appetite for charging.

[188] The next petition is P-03-291, on the development of HIV and sexual health services, which calls for a multiplatform sexual health resource. The previous committee wrote to the petitioners asking for comments on this action plan. Despite the repeated chasing up of the petitioners, they do not appear to have the appetite to respond, so we will probably have to close the petition and have a summary closure report on it. I see that you are all agreed. It is rather a strange situation, but the petitioners' concerns have obviously moved on and they have not been back in touch.

[189] The next petition is P-03-296, on unfair proposals on student loans, which calls for such proposals to be resisted. We have received correspondence from the petitioner. What course of action do you suggest? Should we write to the Minister for Education and Skills?

[190] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes; we should gather information on the variable rates of interest that graduates will be charged and on the widening access clauses for those institutions that want to charge higher fees. We may want to seek clarification on today's events regarding fee plans and how they might impact on this particular petition.

[191] **William Powell:** We will send a detailed letter to the Minister seeking clarification on those points.

[192] The next petition is P-03-301, on equality for the transgender community. We have received correspondence from the petitioners, which you will have had the opportunity to study. The committee has referred the petition to the Health and Social Care Committee and to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, asking if it would consider undertaking a further investigation into the issues raised by the petitioners. We have already committed ourselves to those two important actions; are there any other proposals as to how we should take this important issue forward?

[193] **Joyce Watson:** We should wait and see whether those two committees take the matter up and remind them that the request has been made, especially now.

[194] **William Powell:** Yes, now that those committees have new memberships and Chairs.

[195] **Bethan Jenkins:** There is guidance for general practitioners, but it seems that it is not being widely disseminated or used. Perhaps we should contact the British Medical Association on that issue.

[196] **William Powell:** We could write to BMA Cymru and potentially to the Minister for Health and Social Services to seek reassurance that the guidance is being properly distributed and taken into account.

[197] **Bethan Jenkins:** A similar situation arose with eating disorders, in that GPs may not

be aware of the different processes. Can we ask the BMA about training for GPs on knowing where to go? Much of the problem stems from GPs feeling that they cannot be specialists in every area. However, if they are not aware of the detail, they cannot even refer people onward.

[198] **William Powell:** No; they cannot point people to the right places. We will write to the BMA for reassurance on those issues, and to the Minister, as discussed.

[199] The next petition is P-03-303, Against Homophobic Bullying. It calls on the Welsh Government to introduce compulsory guidance on homophobic bullying urgently for all schools. Correspondence has been received from the Minister for Education and Skills. Are there any suggestions as to how to proceed? We probably need to go back to the petitioner.

[200] **Joyce Watson:** We should contact the petitioner. I am sure that we have done so already, but I do not know what he has said.

[201] **William Powell:** I do not think that we have done so as yet, because it is a very recent petition.

[202] **Ms Stocks:** We have not, because the papers were only published on Thursday.

[203] **Joyce Watson:** We should also keep an eye on this to ensure that what is noted in the petition will happen.

[204] **William Powell:** Yes, in order to make sure that that is followed up. Are there any other issues? I see that there are none.

[205] The next petition is P-03-304, Amendment to the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. It calls for the Measure to be amended so that the definition of the 'nearest' suitable school for free and subsidised travel includes reference to the Welsh curriculum. Correspondence has been received from the Minister for Local Government and Communities. What shall we do at this point?

[206] **Bethan Jenkins:** We should ask for comments from the petitioner on the Minister's response.

[207] **William Powell:** We can see what they make of the Minister's response.

[208] The next petition is P-03-305, which calls for school libraries to be made statutory, as they are not at the moment. We have received correspondence from the petitioner. What should we do? I think that we should get in touch with Estyn to seek its views on the issues raised in the petition as regards its responsibility for school standards and so on. Do you think that is sensible? Do you have any further suggestions?

[209] **Bethan Jenkins:** Perhaps the Children and Young People Committee would like to look at it.

[210] **William Powell:** Yes, potentially, if we contact that committee.

[211] **Bethan Jenkins:** Christine is the Chair, so she may want to look at the petition—if she does not, we will have to take her to task for it.

[212] **William Powell:** We have had some potentially useful clarity from the Minister for Education and Skills on other issues; maybe it would be useful to write to him at this stage.

[213] **Bethan Jenkins:** My only concern about making school libraries statutory is what that would mean for other libraries. It would probably be within the remit of a different Minister, but there are potential implications for the sector.

[214] **William Powell:** There is already a lot of good partnership work going on in communities between libraries and schools. Some libraries are co-located in schools, so there would be a potential impact that it would be interesting to consider.

[215] **Bethan Jenkins:** Perhaps we could look at that. There is a group that represents libraries, although I cannot remember its name at the moment.

[216] **William Powell:** Is it CyMAL: Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales, which sets the Welsh public library standards.

[217] **Bethan Jenkins:** CyMAL could potentially have a view, so we could ask that organisation.

[218] **Ms Stocks:** The previous committee wrote to the former Minister for Heritage to seek his views, but there is a new Minister who is responsible for that.

[219] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could ask the new Minister.

[220] **Ms Stocks:** We could ask the new Minister with responsibility for heritage about the implications.

[221] **William Powell:** That is a good point: we need to think about the wider impact. Are there any other issues? I see that there are none.

[222] The next petition is P-03-307, Design for Innovation in Wales. It calls for the role for design in future innovation, public service and social enterprise policies and programmes to be considered. We have received correspondence from the petitioners. Are there any thoughts on the way forward here?

[223] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could write to the committee.

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

[225] **Bethan Jenkins:** There seems to be a theme here.

[226] **William Powell:** We could write to the Enterprise and Business Committee, which will meet tomorrow.

[227] **Bethan Jenkins:** We are just giving the committees their work plan for the year.

[228] **William Powell:** It is a critical time to get involved at this early stage.

[229] The next petition is P-03-310, Policies to Help Pupils' Needs and Rights. It calls for improved consultation, particularly in relation to the proposed closure of sixth forms. Correspondence has been received from the Minister, which you will have had the chance to study. Are there any thoughts as to the way forward?

[230] **Joyce Watson:** There are statutory requirements built in anyway, which is more or less the information that we have received from the Minister.

[231] **William Powell:** He has played it with a straight bat, as regards the wider framework.

[232] **Joyce Watson:** They have to consult, and the community is part of that consultation. The petitioners appear to be suggesting that that process has not happened.

[233] **William Powell:** Or that it is not adequate.

[234] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. The petition talks about making it ‘sturdy, strong and easier for the public to access’.

[235] **William Powell:** The petition seeks to strengthen the community element. Are there any thoughts from other colleagues on this one?

[236] **Joyce Watson:** The closure of sixth forms is a serious issue, but there is not a lot of clarity in the words ‘sturdy, strong and easier’. I do not really know—

[237] **William Powell:** We definitely need to get back to the petitioners to seek their views.

[238] **Joyce Watson:** It is not clear, is it?

[239] **William Powell:** No; we need to seek further clarity from what has come forward from earlier correspondence.

[240] **Bethan Jenkins:** It says in the summary that the Welsh Government is currently considering what legislative opportunities exist for the implementation of changes to the process of school organisation. We could ask for information on that basis and ask how this would be improved by the potential—

[241] **William Powell:** We should stress the points that the petitioner considers are inadequate at the moment.

[242] The next petition is P-03-313, on the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2011. This calls for further consultation to be undertaken on the draft regulations prior to their implementation, and we have received correspondence from the petitioners, as you have seen. What do you feel we should do here?

[243] **Russell George:** Did the Minister issue a statement on this last week?

[244] **Ms Stocks:** Yes. He said that Welsh Government officials would be having discussions with interested parties to identify the concerns of the original draft legislation and, where relevant, consider them in the new draft legislation. There will then be a consultation on the amended legislation in the autumn.

[245] **Bethan Jenkins:** We need to wait for that, do we not?

[246] **Russell George:** We can write back to the petitioners advising them of that; I expect they already know, but—

[247] **William Powell:** Yes, we could draw on the Record of Proceedings to flag that up.

[248] **Joyce Watson:** We also need to ask them what their exact position is when it comes to hobby breeders.

[249] **William Powell:** Yes, because there is concern about quite legitimate small-scale hobby breeders being caught up in other issues.

[250] **Bethan Jenkins:** There is debate around that; that is the whole reason why it has been looked at again, to be honest.

[251] **William Powell:** That is right. The next petition is P-03-315, New Dyfi River Crossing. I raised this matter a couple of weeks ago with the Minister with responsibility for transport. I am sure that others present would have probably done so in previous Assemblies. This petition calls for a new crossing, or the rerouting of the A487 over the Dyfi river. Correspondence has been revived from the Minister for Local Government and Communities, and we must await the options development report before we can do anything significant there.

[252] Finally, P-03-324 was the first petition that was received in the fourth Assembly. It calls for a review of the TAN 8 policy to include more public consultation. As we all know, we are awaiting a response from the Welsh Government on this, and you will recall that the Welsh Conservative motion calling for a public review of TAN 8, and the Plaid Cymru motion calling for an inquiry into Welsh Government planning and renewable energy policy, were both defeated in Plenary on 22 June.

[253] **Russell George:** Can I ask a question on that?

[254] **William Powell:** Yes, of course.

[255] **Russell George:** We have already written to the Minister, have we not?

[256] **Ms Stocks:** Yes; we are awaiting a response.

[257] **Russell George:** So, this is just on the agenda to let us know that we are waiting for a response.

[258] **Ms Stocks:** It has also been included in order to see if the committee wishes to take any further action in light of the developments that have subsequently taken place.

[259] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, it can be referred to the Environment and Sustainability Committee, as in the case of the petition discussed earlier regarding the transportation of wind turbines.

[260] **William Powell:** I think with the newly constituted Environment and Sustainability Committee—

[261] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am not on it.

[262] **William Powell:** Two of us are, so—

[263] **Bethan Jenkins:** We never refer anything to the committee that I am on, so I am quite happy about that. [*Laughter.*]

[264] **William Powell:** We will have to address that.

10.30 a.m.

[265] **Joyce Watson:** Which one do you sit on?

[266] **Bethan Jenkins:** I sit on the Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee.

[267] **William Powell:** That is a key committee; I am amazed that we have not referred an issue to it. We will have to address that in the autumn.

[268] **Russell George:** On the transport issue, the Newtown bypass was not on the agenda, because we are still awaiting a response, but this is, however, on the agenda. It would be useful to put items on the agenda even if there are no action points, just so that we are aware of them and they do not drop off.

[269] **William Powell:** Is that a practical consideration?

[270] **Ms Stocks:** This was put back on the agenda after discussions with the Chair because the Environment and Sustainability Committee has been constituted; if the committee wanted to do so, it would be appropriate to refer it to that committee. We have mechanisms for ensuring that things do not fall off the agenda. We make sure that responses are received from the Government and from other bodies in a timely fashion, and that they go on the agenda as soon as we have received them.

[271] **Russell George:** I have another 3,000 names to add to the petition. Is that in keeping—

[272] **Ms Stocks:** We can discuss that outside of committee.

[273] **Russell George:** That is fine; no problem.

[274] **William Powell:** That is very much a live issue. We appear to have reached the end of our formal agenda, so I would like to—

[275] **Russell George:** I received an e-mail from Councillor John Fletcher regarding accidents on Somerset Road in Monmouth. He asked me for advice about when he could hand in a petition about that. I said that I would write to you. What happens over the nine-week recess if people want to hand in petitions?

[276] **Ms Stocks:** People can submit petitions as normal, but we would arrange any petition presentations for the first few weeks of the autumn term.

[277] **Bethan Jenkins:** Unless you want to come in over the summer to receive them on your own.

[278] **Russell George:** Who lives the nearest? [*Laughter.*]

[279] **Ms Stocks:** I have been in touch with your office and with Nick Ramsay's office in relation to that petition, so I am waiting for some more information.

[280] **William Powell:** That person can, therefore, be reassured. In the meantime, I thank you all for your attendance and wish you a happy and productive recess.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.32 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.32 a.m.*