



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

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

**Dydd Mawrth, 15 Tachwedd 2011**  
**Tuesday, 15 November 2011**

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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
Abigail Phillips	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.31 a.m.  
The meeting began at 9.31 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon  
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da a chroeso i **William Powell:** Good morning and bawb. welcome everyone.

[2] As you know, participants are able to speak in Welsh or English, according to their choice. Headsets are available for translation and amplification—channel 0 is for amplification only and channel 1 is for translation. I have switched off my mobile phone, and it would be helpful if you would all do so as well. There are no scheduled fire drills, so if the alarm goes off it is probably the real thing and we are in the hands of the ushers. We are all present and correct; there are no apologies.

9.32 a.m.

**Deisebau Newydd  
New Petitions**

[3] **William Powell:** The first new petition to be considered is P-04-341 on waste and incineration. This petition was submitted by Terry Evans and collected 13,286 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to review Prosiect Gwyrdd, which is against Welsh Government policy of localised facilities, and allow councils to choose their own waste technology and waste management procurement. It refers to the flawed Wales waste survey that only gave people a two-choice option on waste disposal. Finally, it asks that, by 2020, it should be illegal to burn recyclable waste that would promote councils to recycle.

[4] In line with our protocols, I have written to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development seeking his views on the petition. A call for evidence on the issue is also under way. What are the committee's views as to how we should proceed on this petition?

[5] **Bethan Jenkins:** The call for evidence comes to an end on 14 December, but is there anything that the current Environment and Sustainability Committee can do—some of these schemes are over 50 MW, and that committee’s current inquiry is on planning guidance for schemes over 50 MW. I know that this particular petition is not specifically about planning, but it may be considered in the mix, because it has been a grievance in many communities that these big developments have been imposed on them.

[6] On the other, more specific issues, it would be unwise for us to make a judgment until we get the evidence.

[7] **William Powell:** Yes, we should not judge before the close of our call for evidence. I would be happy to write to the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, on which Russell and I sit anyway. Are we happy for that to happen?

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

[9] **William Powell:** Okay. So, we will write to the Chair of the committee, because, as you said, it cross-relates to the ongoing energy inquiry. That would make a lot of sense. We are also still awaiting a response from John Griffiths, so we can probably take that forward at the first meeting of the new year.

[10] **Bethan Jenkins:** With regard to the call for evidence, are we clear that organisations such as the Welsh Local Government Association and councils will definitely respond? I am conscious that this has a lot to do with local authorities and, if they do not respond to the call for evidence, we may have gaps in the knowledge. It is a question of clarification, so that the petitioners are clear as well.

[11] **William Powell:** We need to keep an eye on the responses coming in. If there are obvious gaps, it might be appropriate to send a chaser. We have come across similarly contentious waste-related issues previously, and the WLGA and regional waste plans are crucial. So, we will make sure that that happens.

[12] The next petition is P-04-342, submitted last Wednesday by the Multiple Sclerosis Society Cymru. At points, we were all present for the wider reception on that day. It is being promoted by the society and its staff member, Joseph Carter. At this stage, it has collected 342 signatures and there are is additional gathering going on as we speak. It states that

[13] ‘we, the undersigned, believe that MS specialist nurses provide a vital service for people living with MS and their families and should be protected from Health Board cuts. We therefore call on the Welsh Government to ensure that the numbers of MS specialist nurses are not reduced over the length of the Fourth Assembly and that investment continues to provide 1 nurse for every 300 people living with MS.’

[14] I have already written to Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Health and Social Services, on this matter. A number of us were present for questions to the Minister on this issue last Wednesday.

[15] **Russell George:** MS nurses provide a valuable service. You and I visited some of the nurses at work in mid Wales the week before last. I was going to suggest that we write to the Minister, but you have already done so. We should wait for her response.

[16] **Bethan Jenkins:** This has already been raised in Plenary, so we could look at the Record to see what the Minister said and compare it with what she says in the letter. I am not saying that she would say anything different in a letter, but she may do.

[17] **William Powell:** That makes a lot of sense. What about writing to the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee?

[18] **Bethan Jenkins.** It depends on the committee's workload.

[19] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, we can do that. However, I am sure that all of us are mindful that committees have a huge workload, and if all we do is load them up even more, the resolution element takes much longer, because we are waiting for them to report. I speak as somebody who has a close family member with MS, so I understand the work that the nurses do and the challenges that those people face. I do not think that any of us would want to park this while we wait for a committee to go through its current workload, because that could take us 12 months down the line.

[20] **William Powell:** We should take it step by step.

[21] **Joyce Watson:** We should be writing to the Minister, looking back at the Record and trying to move it forward. Ultimately, it is the health boards that will decide their budgets, so why do we not also write to the health boards, to see if they have any plans in their budgets to expand or reduce this provision?

[22] **William Powell:** That would be a sensible approach. Do colleagues agree? I see that you do. So, we will write to the Minister and to the chief executives of the health boards.

[23] We move on to petition P-04-343, on the prevention of the destruction of amenities on common land in Anglesey. The petition was submitted by J.E. Futter and collected 156 signatures. It reads as follows:

[24] 'We call upon the Welsh Government to examine ways to prevent the destruction of amenities on common land, including for example the Marian Common in Llangoed, Ynys Môn.'

[25] As yet, we have not taken any action on this one. We could usefully write to the petitioners to bring their concerns to us, because I would suggest that there is a lack of information about some of their concerns. What do colleagues feel?

[26] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, and we should write to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development and call for evidence.

[27] **William Powell:** Indeed. It would be helpful to invite the petitioners to join us to set out their concerns. Good. That concludes our consideration of new petitions for today.

9.41 a.m.

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

[28] **William Powell:** The first petition is P-03-144 from Guide Dogs for the Blind on shared space. It collected 10 signatures. It reads as follows:

[29] 'We, the undersigned representatives, petition the National Assembly for Wales to lay specific responsibility on local authorities to be aware of their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Equality Duty, and comply with them by not creating town centres, high streets and residential streets with shared surfaces that discriminate against blind and partially sighted and other disabled people, effectively excluding them from the street

environment.’

[30] We have had some correspondence on this, which I have been alerted to this morning. Perhaps we could share that with Members. I think that it would be better if we could consider that and share it with the Minister, because we are due to take evidence from the Minister early in the new year. That would probably be the most sensible approach, as I understand that it is quite a substantial amount of correspondence.

[31] **Bethan Jenkins:** It can be the basis for questions to the Minister about the concerns of the petitioners.

[32] **William Powell:** Okay, we will share that among the committee members and ensure that Carl Sargeant has access to it soon so that he can build it into his preparation. If you recall, the Petitions Committee in the last Assembly decided to await the outcome of the UK Department for Transport study, which has now been produced. In fact, Members have copies of that. So, we will write to Carl Sargeant on that and include a pack of the recent correspondence received. We can take it forward at that session.

[33] The next petition is P-03-170, which relates to increasing the number of people with a learning disability employed by the public sector in Wales. It was submitted by Mencap Cymru and collected 134 signatures. It reads as follows:

[34] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Assembly Commission and the Welsh Assembly Government to take a lead in employing more people with a learning disability, and to encourage other public sector employers, such as the NHS and Local Authorities, to employ more people with a learning disability.’

[35] It also states that:

[36] ‘Only 1 in 10 people with a learning disability who want to work are in any form of paid employment. This is unfair.’

[37] In fact, the petitioners have asked the committee to draw its consideration of the petition to a close. My sense is that we should probably respect that. I see that you agree. Therefore, respecting their views on the matter, it has run its course and we should close the petition.

[38] Under the education and skills section of this agenda item, we have petition P-03-298 on financing Welsh-language provision for people with dyslexia. This petition was submitted by Wales Dyslexia and collected 151 signatures. It reads as follows:

[39] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to encourage the Welsh Government to fund Wales Dyslexia so that it can develop some of the resources that were recommended by the Enterprise and Learning Committees report, entitled Support for People with Dyslexia in Wales, which was published in July 2008, with a follow-up report published in October 2009. These include a Welsh-language screening test, dedicated and appropriate Welsh-language resources and meeting the costs of the free Wales Dyslexia helpline.’

9.45 a.m.

[40] You will recall that the Minister has written to confirm that his officials are in contact with Estyn to discuss the types of Welsh-language materials that may be required and that the view is that these should be commissioned for production. So, in many ways, this is a positive outcome, and I welcome that. My sense is that we should probably move to close this petition, but we also need to keep an eye on the final step of producing these materials. What do you

think?

[41] **Bethan Jenkins:** I agree.

[42] **William Powell:** So, we will close that petition, with the caveat that the petitioner can get back in touch with us if there is any slippage on the delivery.

[43] We move on to P-04-325, Funding for people with a learning disability to access mainstream post-16 education. Again, this was submitted by Mencap Cymru with 45 signatures:

[44] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to increase funding for people with a learning disability to access mainstream post-16 education.’

[45] Again, the Minister accepted all the recommendations of a task and finish group that was established to consider future arrangements in this area. A development and implementation group is taking these recommendations forward and Mencap Cymru has made a presentation to that specialist group. Given the state of play, which is, again, a positive outcome, I propose that we also close this petition. Is that agreed?

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

[47] **William Powell:** Okay, good.

[48] P-03-320 is on the theme of social housing policy. This petition was submitted by Mr Adam Brown with 45 signatures in support.

[49] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to review its Social Housing policy in relation of the indigenous population of the country.’

[50] Additional information on this was supplied stating:

[51] ‘With constant housing issues within Wales this campaign urges the Welsh Assembly Government to recognise this fact and to act by reviewing the Social Housing Policy as soon as possible.’

[52] The last time that we considered this petition, we agreed to seek clarification of the term ‘local connection’, which is at the heart of the petition, and then to close it. We wrote to the petitioner on 20 October stating:

[53] ‘The Committee requested that clarification of...[‘local connection’] be forwarded to you. Given the provision for local authorities to take ‘local connections’ into consideration, the Committee is minded to draw its consideration of your petition to a close.’

[54] I signed off stating:

[55] ‘I would be pleased to receive any comments you may have on this’.

[56] We have not, to date, received any response from the petitioner. In the light of that, I suggest that we move to close the petition.

[57] **Russell George:** I agree.

[58] **Bethan Jenkins:** If the petitioner has not got back to us then it is outside our control.

- [59] **William Powell:** There has been a reasonable gap.
- [60] **Russell George:** If he has not got back to us, that is probably a good thing, as he probably thinks that it has been resolved.
- [61] **William Powell:** We can safely draw that conclusion.
- [62] **Russell George:** We are closing a lot of petitions today, but that is a good thing, because it means that we are doing something.
- [63] **William Powell:** It means that we are able to focus in more detail on the fresh petitions that come forward. In this case, there appears to be a result with which the petitioner appears to be satisfied. Therefore, let us do that.
- [64] We move on to P-04-336, A Welsh-language daily newspaper for Wales. This petition was submitted by Mr Ben Screen, with 37 signatures in support. It states:
- [65] ‘We call on the Government to award a grant to the Welsh Books Council that would enable it to support and fund a Welsh-language daily newspaper’.
- [66] We received a response from the Minister referring to £200,000 of funding in the current financial year that was provided through the Welsh Books Council to *Golwg 360*, the Welsh-language daily online newspaper. The petition asks for a Welsh-language daily, and what we need to consider is what that term entails, because what we do have is an online-only publication, and there is also a monthly magazine provided in print. I would just like to open the issue up, because you may well have some views.
- [67] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that the issue is closed, really. The previous Government insisted that it was unaffordable, and that this would be an alternative. *Golwg 360* has been exceptional in bringing new readers to the table. I know that we could consider the further need for a printed newspaper; we have a task and finish group on the media in Wales, and it is something that we are looking into now, so you could refer the petitioner to that task and finish group looking at alternatives for the media in the future. However, I think that we should close the petition on the basis that it is not on the table for consideration by the Government.
- [68] **William Powell:** It kinder financial times, the judgment call was that it was unaffordable.
- [69] **Bethan Jenkins:** The newspaper industry is not sustainable in Wales at the moment, even as it is.
- [70] **Russell George:** Many printed papers are moving to online-only editions, and that is the direction in which the media is moving.
- [71] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could just refer the petitioner to the work that the task and finish group is doing.
- [72] **William Powell:** I am happy to do that, because clearly there is a lot of crossover between that work and these aspirations. We have unanimity breaking out here, so I am happy to close that petition.
- [73] We move on to the environment and sustainable development section of our agenda. Petition P-04-329 is on the control of noise nuisance from wind turbines, and was submitted

by James Shepherd Foster with the support of 1,074 signatures. It reads:

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

[75] We have gathered some information through the consultation on the experiences of residents affected by the noise of wind turbines, particularly in Carmarthenshire. We have had the opportunity to read a body of their testimonies and logs of their experiences. The Minister has also responded to my letter, as you will have seen. What are your thoughts on how we should take this forward?

[76] **Russell George:** I was just going to say that I have read the consultation response and thought that it was fascinating.

[77] **William Powell:** It was a real eye-opener.

[78] **Russell George:** One thing that jumped out at me was that the guidelines have not been reviewed since the 1990s, and hydro-turbines have obviously increased in number in recent years, which could have an impact on the noise level; I do not know, but I thought it might be sensible to at least commission some further independent research on this, and bring that back to the committee.

[79] **William Powell:** I think that in most areas, guidance on a developing technology would be refreshed more frequently than that. That struck me as well when I read it.

[80] **Joyce Watson:** I agree, because we have already seen that the evidence says that it is not about the size and scale of the turbines, but the type of technology that they drives them. Evidence has suggested that the smaller, older wind turbines produce more noise than the larger, newly produced, up-to-date wind turbines. So, we do not know. We already have some conflicts coming through within the evidence. In order for people to see that we really do take all things this seriously, as we always do, I propose a site visit, and, if we do that, we need to take in both those elements: the newer technology and the older technology.

[81] **William Powell:** To experience both.

[82] **Joyce Watson:** To see whether what we are being told is right and also, because it is outside our remit as Assembly Members to refuse any very large developments—we do not have that jurisdiction—whether there is another way that we can consider the impact, because, most of us, if not all of us, are concerned. I would be quite happy to go on a site visit.

[83] **William Powell:** Personally, I would support one. I know that you went on a site visit with another committee last week. It is beneficial to see things with your own eyes.

[84] **Joyce Watson:** It is, as well as being beneficial to the people visited, who understand that we have taken that time to visit.

[85] **William Powell:** Should the whole committee do the visit?

[86] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that a rapporteur group would be good.

[87] **Joyce Watson:** I think that those who want to go should go.



[88] **William Powell:** Okay, we can discuss the details afterwards. In principle, that would make a lot of sense. In the meantime, given that the Environment and Sustainability Committee has an ongoing inquiry, it would be sensible to forward the body of submissions already received to that committee. It would not necessarily be at the centre of its concerns, but, nonetheless, it is of relevant consideration within the wider energy inquiry.

[89] **Russell George:** Perhaps that should be brought up in that committee, because that committee might decide to go on a site visit as well; we do not know.

[90] **William Powell:** If they did, then we could consolidate and that would drive down costs. We will scope that out and liaise with our committee colleagues, as well as keeping open the option of commissioning specific research. I sense that we will come back to this.

[91] We move on to P-03-162, Road Safety in Llanspyddid. It is near Brecon on the A40. The petition was submitted by the Llanspyddid residents association with the backing of 67 signatures, which is a substantial part of that immediate local community, I believe. The petition states:

[92] ‘We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Welsh Assembly Government to improve road safety in the village of Llanspyddid, Brecon, Powys through implementation of traffic calming measures such as a reduction in the current speed limit, improved roadside lighting and improved signage on the A40.’

[93] We have considered previously an update from the Minister that said that, apart from the lighting, all the other safety enhancements that the petitioners were seeking had been granted. We wrote to the Minister once more to revisit the issue of lighting, and we are due to have Carl Sargeant before us on 10 January, in our first meeting in the new year. Would it be sensible to put this on hold until then and seek his views? Then we will know better what the way forward is.

[94] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would like some clarification. He says that there is no history of night-time traffic collisions and that is why lighting will not be put on the road. What policy background has been used to come to that conclusion? Is it the same as the policy for roads when traffic-calming measures requests are only granted if there have been fatalities or injuries? In my view, if there are no lights on a main road, that could facilitate problems in terms of collisions. How do you balance the lighting and people’s visual capabilities, and then decide to put no lighting whatsoever on those particular roads? I would like some more clarification.

[95] **William Powell:** It would be sensible to alert the Minister and his officials to this area of our interest, so that they can focus on that in preparation for our next meeting.

[96] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, that is fine and I agree with Bethan. However, there is another element at play here, is there not? Powys was one of the first to switch off its lights. There is very little advantage to those people if we decide that lighting is what is needed through our inquiry, if Powys County Council then decides that it is going to switch them off. So, we need to be realistic and bring in all of those elements and we need to find answers to all of the questions. If it is decided that those lights are needed for safety reasons and then the plug is pulled by the county council, we will have invested huge amounts of money at our end in order to try to protect people, only for the lights to be switched off at the other end.

10.00 a.m.

[97] **William Powell:** I appreciate that there is a possible conflict and my understanding is that this particular area is probably under the remit of the trunk road agency, but the village

probably has lights that may or may not be switched off, which might be a relevant factor. That is something that we can alert the Minister to in the detail so that he is briefed fully in advance of coming in to see us.

[98] We move on to P-04-332, which has been submitted by Jacqui Thompson from Carmarthenshire. It calls upon local authorities to disclose spending details over £500 and has the backing of 77 signatories. The petition states:

[99] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to place a statutory requirement on all local authorities in Wales to publish details of all spending over £500 in the interests of openness and transparency. The details should be published online and in a format accessible to the public with the freedom to re-use the data.’

[100] Sorry, I have stepped ahead and have confused myself. We will park that and return to P-03-304, Amendment to the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. This petition was submitted by Arfon Jones, and he collected 17 signatures. The petition states:

[101] ‘We the undersigned call upon the National Assembly of Wales to urge the Welsh Government to amend the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, so that the definition of the nearest suitable school for the purposes of provision of free/subsidised transport includes a reference to the fact that it provides the Welsh Curriculum/Cwricwlwm Cymreig.’

[102] We have received correspondence from the petitioner on this.

[103] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not think that the petitioner is happy, but if the Minister will not move on this, then where can we go?

[104] **William Powell:** Indeed. That is the reality of the situation. We have a clear result. As you said, it is not the result that Arfon Jones was looking for. We have no choice but to close this petition, because it will not go anywhere. Okay.

[105] We will now move back to discuss the petition submitted by Jacqui Thompson. The first of two petitions from her that we are considering today is P-04-331, Filming and Recording of Council Meetings. This has been supported by 223 signatories. At this juncture, I think that I should declare that I have promoted a related issue in the form of a statement of opinion regarding the filming and webcasting of national park authority meetings, and I also supported a statement of opinion by William Graham, which pre-dated mine, which broadly supported these issues.

[106] **Russell George:** I am very much in support of what this petition asks for. This committee meeting is being filmed, as are meetings in Parliament and all meetings in the Assembly. Reporters and members of the public are allowed into council meetings, so it seems silly, in light of the technology available today, that councils should forbid people from filming the meetings that take place. We should be transparent and open and people should have access to that information. As well as supporting the petition, we should raise this with the Minister when he comes before the committee in the new year.

[107] **William Powell:** It was certainly my intention to propose that.

[108] **Joyce Watson:** I understand from the evidence that Pembrokeshire County Council will discuss this. When I was a councillor, I called for openness, and I am not going to change my mind on this. Proper recorded and televised accounts of what we do remove the factor that perhaps underpins this, which is the idea that people are trying to hide behind what they say or do not want to put it out in the first place. As Assembly Members, we are all signed up to transparency, because it is the world that we operate in. It is absolutely right that we put this

on the agenda for the Minister for Local Government and Communities when he comes to the committee in January. There is not a single Assembly Member, and probably not many councillors, who would not agree with the principle. It is the practicalities that sometimes seem to get in the way. It would be interesting to see what the Minister has to say about that.

[109] **William Powell:** I agree. The best thing is for us to set aside time to have a thorough discussion with Carl Sargeant on 10 January about this.

[110] **Bethan Jenkins:** Many of the issues are to do with cost. Can we do any background research on local authorities' budgets? Money that they allocate for publicity or promotion could perhaps be allocated to this, instead of to other things that they do. It costs a lot of money to record and televise our Plenary meetings, but that does not mean that we should not do it. Perhaps we need to do some research before the Minister comes in.

[111] **William Powell:** That is a good idea. We were talking earlier about the difficult climate that newspapers operate in, and quite a lot of adverse comments are sometimes made about the cost and resources committed to the production of council newspapers, glossy brochures and so on. Those are probably drawn from the authorities' overall communications and marketing budget, and having a piece of work in the round on that would be useful. We could also perhaps draw on the Welsh Local Government Association's thoughts.

[112] **Russell George:** With nearly every petition that we look at, in these times, I automatically think, 'How much will this cost?' On this occasion, I know that Powys County Council had a meeting in June that 2,000 people attended; it was a huge cost to get the building and facilitate the staff. It has hired another building for a meeting the week after next—it is moving from the council chamber to another building—that it expects a lot of people to attend. If people knew that it would be televised, that might reduce the cost, as there might not then be a need to move meetings to another building and have additional staff. It could be a cost saver, if people knew that they could view the meeting online or if it was televised.

[113] **William Powell:** They would also not need to make the journey, which can be an issue, particularly in some of our deep rural areas.

[114] **Russell George:** That is another reason why I support this.

[115] **Joyce Watson:** We do not want to close down one avenue in opening up another; it has to be balanced. An awful lot of people who are hugely interested in what is happening in their communities and in rural Wales will either not have the means to go online or will not have the capacity, because their internet provision could be intermittent and slow. The IT support that would be needed for something like this might not be at their disposal. It is absolutely right that we look at the funding issue and the current allocation, but we should not say that the new technologies are the answer for everyone all of the time, because they will not be. That has to be part of our consideration, and I am sure it will be. We should not shut down one avenue in opening another.

[116] **William Powell:** That is right. There is an inclusion issue there.

[117] **Russell George:** The Minister said that all businesses and residents will have super-fast broadband by 2015, and I am pleased that he said that.

[118] **Joyce Watson:** I agree—if you can afford it.

[119] **William Powell:** We will have quite a full session with the Minister for Local Government and Communities on 10 January. I look forward to that session.

[120] I prematurely brought us to this petition earlier, for which you have my apologies again. We will now look at it in the correct order on the agenda. It is P-04-332 and, appropriately enough, it concerns local authority spending details over £500. This petition was also submitted by Jacqui Thompson and has collected 77 signatures. It states:

[121] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to place a statutory requirement on all local authorities in Wales to publish details of all spending over £500 in the interest of openness and transparency. The details should be published online and in a format accessible to the public’—

[122] that perhaps picks up on Joyce’s point—

[123] ‘with the freedom to re-use the data.’

[124] In line with the earlier petition, this is a sensible one for us to have a fairly robust discussion with the Minister on.

[125] **Joyce Watson:** I agree.

[126] **Bethan Jenkins:** I hope that we have booked a long session, as we have a lot to discuss with the Minister.

[127] **William Powell:** That is right.

[128] **Russell George:** The television people should expect to be here for the day. [*Laughter.*]

[129] **William Powell:** We will have to have a break for coffee and Welsh cakes if we go on too long.

[130] **Joyce Watson:** Coming back to the issue of cost, there is no point, in my opinion, in asking local authorities to publish the detail of anything that they spend over £500 if the cost of doing so is greater than £500, because that would be just nonsense, especially given the constraints we are under. We need to know some of the answers beforehand, if possible—I hate to do this to the team around the table. I have looked at the written evidence, and there are claims—it might be from the Welsh Local Government Association, although I am not sure—about concerns in that area. While this appears to be a good thing to do on paper, and I would absolutely support it, if what it does is to divert the much-needed resources that local government has at its disposal down an avenue that does not make a difference to people’s lives, then we have to be very nervous about it. So, we need to know the answers to those questions.

[131] **William Powell:** If we could commission a piece of research into that, it would be really helpful to inform our discussion with Carl Sargeant on 10 January.

[132] **Russell George:** I agree with Joyce; again, it is about the cost. It would be useful to know, because many local authorities are receiving freedom of information requests, and it could be that this would relieve pressure in that regard. We just do not know, but knowing the answers to those questions would be useful, and that would inform our questioning.

[133] **William Powell:** That is perhaps an unintended consequence of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I know of one local authority that recently received an FOI request on the budgets for every school in its area, and that was a colossal piece of work to collate. I am sure that the request may well have been well-intentioned and relevant, but it was a hugely

burdensome piece of work for the authority's information manager to put together. That is nevertheless one for our extended session on 10 January.

[134] We move now to petitions on health and social services, and P-03-085, Surgeries in Flintshire. This petition was submitted by Gillian Robinson with the support of 412 other signatories. It reads:

[135] 'We, the doctors at the Laurels Surgery, Eyton Place Surgery and Allt Goch Medical Centre are frustrated...by our difficulties in offering enough appointments for our patients.'

[136] They say that they are

[137] 'totally constrained by the size of our building and desperately need to move to larger premises—preferably in a new Primary Care Centre.

[138] Progress towards this has stopped following the recent appointment of the new Health Minister and we wish to bring our concerns to her notice.'

[139] This is one of the longest standing petitions that we have before us. It was submitted back in February 2008—early in the third Assembly. I am really keen to have your input, particularly yours, Bethan, on this one.

10.15 a.m.

[140] **Bethan Jenkins:** I feel sorry for them, because they have been on it just as long as I have, and they obviously feel it more than me.

[141] **William Powell:** You have matured with the petition. [*Laughter.*]

[142] **Bethan Jenkins:** Has the community health council been involved at all? From personal experience, I know that in the Vale of Neath there is a consultation on a new primary healthcare centre. Obviously, that has progressed much more quickly than this seems to have done. Perhaps it can shed some light on whether it has been consulted. We might have had evidence from it—I cannot remember because it has been going on for so long. That would be one avenue, and the local authority is another.

[143] **William Powell:** We have correspondence from Mr Geoff Lang, the director of primary care in the local health board. He writes:

[144] 'The Health Board attended an initial stakeholder meeting on 6th October 2011 with Flintshire County Council relating to its proposed re-development of the Town Centre. The opportunity to connect the provision of a new Primary Care Centre with this development is to be explored. This could offer the potential benefit of linking primary care with social care'.

[145] So he is referring to co-location of services. That meeting was quite recent. Given that this has come from Betsi Cadwaladr health board, it would be sensible for us to go straight to Flintshire County Council to get some sense of the timescale for this wider town-centre development. What do you think?

[146] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, but we should also contact the community health council, which has an interest in that.

[147] **William Powell:** Yes, indeed, as the watchdog, because it has that level of independence.

[148] **Bethan Jenkins:** If there is a formal consultation, it will be running that, will it not?

[149] **William Powell:** Exactly. So, we will contact CHC on one hand, and the local authority on the other—in this case, Flintshire—to see where they are at and what the timescale is for this redevelopment in Flint town centre. We should also copy in our colleague Sandy Mewies to this correspondence. Obviously, that would be done as a matter of course.

[150] **Bethan Jenkins:** Should we copy in the regional Members?

[151] **William Powell:** Yes, we should copy in our four regional colleagues. That makes sense. Sandy Mewies was referred to in the original petition, but she is obviously still around as well, so that makes a lot of sense.

[152] We move on to P-03-295, Kyle Beere—Paediatric Neuro Rehabilitation Services. The petition was submitted by Kyle's Goal. It had the backing of more than 9,000 signatures, and it reads:

[153] 'We, the undersigned, call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to recognise and deliver services for the rehabilitation of brain injured children. There is currently no facility in Wales to provide this vital service. Despite there being a purpose built children's hospital being built in Cardiff, there is still no provision included in its design.'

[154] I think that one of the things we need to give some thought to here is the demand for such a service and the frequency with which it would be called upon. We had a statement from the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee, which stated that, to date this year, no parents from Wales have had children with complex neuro-rehabilitation needs that have required their admission to the service, which is currently available at Tadworth. That was correspondence to the Minister for Health and Social Services, in response to her request for the numbers of children and parents affected by the issue over the past five years in order to get a wider grasp of the subject. What are your thoughts on this?

[155] **Bethan Jenkins:** Have the petitioners seen what WHSSC has said about no parents in Wales requiring this service to date?

[156] **William Powell:** No, I do not think that they have. It is a public paper, but it would probably be sensible to bring it to their attention.

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** I went to a fundraising event for this charity a few years ago in Cardiff. They do exceptional work on raising awareness of this issue. There is no provision in Wales, but there are obviously children who need that provision—

[158] **William Powell:** One would assume so. I found it odd, I must say.

[159] **Bethan Jenkins:** I know that WHSSC is referring to only one year, but we need to expand on that. It cannot base its whole analysis of the situation on one year in Wales. Unfortunately, there will be demands for this in the future.

[160] **William Powell:** It is going to be sporadic, I suppose, according to events.

[161] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am not really happy with that statement, because it has not even recognised what has happened and what needs to happen in future.

[162] **William Powell:** So, we need to drill down a bit more.

[163] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would like to go back to it and get a clear opinion from the petitioners who are working hard on this issue.

[164] **William Powell:** This petition clearly enjoys a substantial amount of support. So, we must take that on board.

[165] **Joyce Watson:** Bethan's comments are right, and I support them.

[166] **William Powell:** Okay. So, we will write to Kyle's Goal explicitly flagging up this correspondence and give them the opportunity to come back to us. Perhaps we can then take it forward.

[167] **Bethan Jenkins:** Could we also write back to the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee?

[168] **William Powell:** Yes, we could do that. It would make sense to ensure that there are no crossed wires on this issue. In light of that, we can consider how to take this forward in the new year.

[169] **Bethan Jenkins:** I know that it is another charity, but Headway deals with people with brain injuries and it may have an opinion.

[170] **William Powell:** I believe that it has a fundraiser coming up early next month.

[171] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is worth asking that charity, because it may have a view.

[172] **William Powell:** Yes, indeed, given that there will be a lot of overlap with regard to the people whom they serve. Okay, that concludes that update.

10.22 a.m.

**Papur i'w Nodi—P-04-337 Tenovus: Tenovus: Eli Haul am Ddim**  
**Paper to Note—P-04-337 Tenovus: Free Sunscreen**

[173] **William Powell:** For your information, we have received a letter from the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the Tenovus petition that we received in October, which calls for the provision of free sunscreen. It is included as a paper to note as we will share that letter with the Children and Young People Committee, as we had agreed previously to request that it carries out some inquiry work in this area.

[174] I have no other points and I have not been advised of any other business. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, 29 November, when the Minister for Health and Social Services will be attending to give oral evidence. Thank you very much for your attendance this morning and for your support and participation.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.22 a.m.*  
*The meeting ended at 10.22 a.m.*