



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**  
**The National Assembly for Wales**  
**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau**  
**The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 15 Mai 2012**  
**Tuesday, 15 May 2012**

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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<br>Welsh Conservatives   |
| Simon Thomas    | Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Bethan Jenkins)<br>The Party of Wales (substitute for Bethan Jenkins)                         |
| Joyce Watson    | Llafur<br>Labour  |
| Kirsty Williams | Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran William Powell)<br>Welsh Liberal Democrats (substitute for William Powell) |

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

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Joanest Jackson  | Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol<br>Senior Legal Adviser |
| Sarita Marshall  | Dirprwy Glerc<br>Deputy Clerk                       |
| Abigail Phillips | Clerc<br>Clerk                                      |

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.04 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.04 a.m.*

**Ethol Cadeirydd Dros Dro**  
**Election of a Temporary Chair**

[1] **Ms Phillips:** Good morning and welcome to the Petitions Committee meeting. In the absence of the Chair, and under Standing Order No. 17.22, I call for nominations for a temporary Chair.

[2] **Russell George:** I nominate Joyce Watson.

[3] **Ms Phillips:** Are there any other nominations?

[4] **Kirsty Williams:** I second that nomination.

[5] **Ms Phillips:** Thank you. I therefore declare Joyce Watson to be the temporary Chair.

*Penodwyd Joyce Watson yn Gadeirydd dros dro.*  
*Joyce Watson was appointed temporary Chair.*

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

[6] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for electing me as temporary Chair. First, I welcome Kirsty to the meeting as a substitute. I also remind Members that you are entitled to speak in Welsh or English, and that headsets are available for translation and amplification of the sound: channel 0 offers amplification and channel 1 the translation. Please switch off all mobile phones. If the fire alarm sounds, the ushers will tell everyone what to do and, if necessary, they will direct us to the exits.

[7] I have received apologies from William Powell and Bethan Jenkins. Kirsty is substituting for William Powell and Simon Thomas is substituting for Bethan Jenkins. I welcome Simon here this morning. We will move swiftly on because we have quite a long agenda.

9.05 a.m.

**P-03-238 Llygredd ym Mornant Porth Tywyn—Trafod y Dystiolaeth**  
**P-03-238 Pollution of the Burry Inlet—Discussion of Evidence Received**

[8] **Joyce Watson:** The first item is on the petition regarding the pollution of the Burry inlet. We also had a discussion day in Burry Port. The petition was submitted by Rhys Williams in September and collected 2,240 signatures. I should declare that Rhys Williams works for me on a part-time basis. I welcome your comments.

[9] **Russell George:** Perhaps we could write to the Minister and ask that the issue be kept under review and close the petition. We may want to write to the petitioner first, to ask him if that is agreeable to him.

[10] **Joyce Watson:** This petition has been around for a long time and there are some serious concerns in relation to this subject. There were some admissions by Environment Agency Wales and Welsh Water that there have been some problems around there. It may be the case that, as a committee, we could examine the effects of the sewage pollution in the area and produce a report to that effect.

[11] **Simon Thomas:** Will that be for this committee to do or will it be referred to the appropriate subject committee? Like you, I am aware from constituency work that there are a lot of problems in this area, and the Environment Agency held a day-long seminar in the area recently to look at those. So, there is a lot of work going on, and I think that the petitioner's work has, in effect, been done in raising the issue and getting things actioned. Would there be any value in another committee keeping this on its agenda? That is the only thing I can think of that is an appropriate way forward because I know that the other agencies are at least now active in the area and are aware of residents' concerns.

[12] **Joyce Watson:** You are right. You and I share the same region and there are serious concerns about this, and I do not think that we would be doing justice to this particular petition if we just put it to rest before these problems have been resolved. We could refer it to another committee, but the problem is that the relevant committee probably has its work scheduled, so we could not be sure when the matter would be placed on its schedule. Alternatively, we could take it upon ourselves to look at the evidence and write our own report.

[13] **Kirsty Williams:** I agree with you, Chair, in that the probability is that the Environment and Sustainability Committee would not have sufficient time available in its diary to consider this. I support your suggestion; if there is capacity in this committee to do a short report that could then be tabled and discussed at a Plenary session, that would be the appropriate response for all those people in that area who have concerns. I second your approach.

[14] **Joyce Watson:** Does everyone agree? I see that you do. Therefore, that is what we will do.

9.09 a.m.

**P-04-341 Llosgi Gwastraff—Trafod y Dystiolaeth**  
**P-04-341 Waste and Incineration—Discussion of Evidence Received**

[15] **Joyce Watson:** The waste and incineration petition was submitted by Terry Evans in November 2011 and it has collected 21 signatures. There is an associated petition that has over 13,000 signatures. The petitioner states:

[16] ‘We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to review

1. Prosiect Gwyrdd, which is against WAG policy of localised facilities, and allow our councils to choose their own waste technology and waste management procurement;
2. The flawed Wales waste survey that only gave people a 2 choice option on waste disposal;
3. By 2020, make it illegal to burn recyclable waste which would promote councils to recycle.’

[17] We have had evidence from Friends of the Earth. We have had written evidence from the Health Protection Agency, and that was published as part of the public papers for the meeting on 1 May.

[18] We also have another two petitions against incineration under consideration: one is P-03-309, ‘Cardiff Against the Incinerator’, which we will consider later, and the other is P-04-326, ‘No to Incineration’, which was referred to the Environment and Sustainability Committee, and it has considered it as part of its review of energy policy. So, in light of all that, what do you feel would be the appropriate action? We could await the last planned evidence session with Professor Vyvyan Howard, professor of toxico-pathology, at the next committee meeting on 29 May. That seems to me to be eminently sensible. I see that we are agreed.

9.11 a.m.

**P-03-295 Kyle Beere: Gwasanaethau Niwroadsefydlu Paediatrig—Trafod y**  
**Dystiolaeth**  
**P-03-295 Kyle Beere: Paediatric Neuro-rehabilitation—Discussion of the**  
**Evidence Received**

[19] **Joyce Watson:** We have received evidence. This petition was submitted by Kyle’s Goal in June 2010 and collected 9,128 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales

[20] ‘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’.

[21] We have previously referred the petition to the Health and Social Care Committee, and its Chair has written to say that the committee will await the outcome of the evidence session before taking any further action. Again, we need to decide what to do. The petition has gone to the Health and Social Care Committee. We could update that committee with the outcome of today’s evidence and close the petition, because it has moved on into that

committee, where it rightly belongs.

[22] **Simon Thomas:** I wonder whether there is any value in this committee writing to the Minister with, not a report as such, but just a letter. I do not know the details behind this, but this is a strategic, national decision and, therefore, it would be appropriate for the Minister to look at it. If she has not been alerted, so far, to the petitioner's concerns, I think it would be appropriate for that to happen.

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

[24] **Kirsty Williams:** The Minister is aware of the petition.

[25] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, the Minister is very aware of this.

[26] **Simon Thomas:** Is she? Have you had a response as a committee?

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

[28] **Simon Thomas:** I think that the Health and Social Care Committee is the best place to take it forward.

[29] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. If it sits here, it is only going to sit here. I would rather it be with a committee that can really do something with it.

[30] **Simon Thomas:** We can only be a receptacle or something, can we not? Something has to happen to the petitions at the end of the day.

[31] **Russell George:** I agree that we can close the petition, I think, Chair.

[32] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Is everyone agreed? Do you agree, Kirsty?

[33] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes, that is fine.

9.14 a.m.

### **Deisebau Newydd New Petitions**

[34] **Joyce Watson:** The first new petition is P-04-389, entitled Arts, Agriculture and the Assembly Sheep. It has been submitted by the Reverend Christopher Trefor Davies and it has collected 17 signatures.

[35] 'We, the undersigned, call upon the National Assembly to make a statement of support for Welsh agriculture by the commissioning and erection in the Senedd of a permanent statue of a sheep.'

[36] We have had supporting information from the petitioner and it is included in the papers that you have. I think that the only way forward for this is to write to the Presiding Officer and ask for views on the petition. Is everyone agreed? I see that we are agreed.

[37] We have had a new petition, P-04-390, Designate Penrhos Holyhead nature reserve (coastal park) a National reserve. It was submitted by Jenny Amelia Jones and collected approximately 1,100 signatures. It calls on the National Assembly for Wales to

[38] 'urge the Welsh Government to designate Holyhead Penrhos Nature reserve (coastal park) a National Nature Reserve.'

9.15 a.m.

[39] Again, I need to ask you what action you think we should take, but I think that a sensible first step would be to write to John Griffiths, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, and to Anglesey county council asking for their views. Are we agreed? I see that we are.

[40] The next petition is P-04-391 on the Llandeilo bypass. It was submitted by Tim ap Hywel and collected 31 signatures. It calls for

[41] 'an amendment to the adopted eastern route to be along the far (south east) bank of the river Tywi, rather than along the foot of the town bank, and to cross the river near the railway bridge.'

[42] Again, I feel that a sensible way forward would be to write to Carl Sargeant, Minister for Local Government and Communities, seeking his views on the petition. Are Members agreed? I see that you are.

[43] The next petition is P-04-392 on community transport. It was submitted by Joan Smith and collected 26 signatures. It calls upon the Welsh Government

[44] 'to continue to fund Community Transport Schemes currently funded by the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative.'

[45] We have another petition under consideration that relates to the community transport scheme and the continuation of concessionary fares on public transport, which collected nearly 5,000 signatures. The first thing we need to decide is whether to group those two petitions together. That seems sensible to me. I see that everyone agrees. Having done that, we need to await the Minister's response to the letter that we sent seeking views on the related petition. We can then consider the two petitions together.

[46] **Simon Thomas:** The Minister is currently looking at this, is he not?

[47] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, he is.

[48] **Simon Thomas:** There was a period of grace to consider it.

[49] **Joyce Watson:** That is right. He is seriously considering it. We should wait to see what the outcome is.

[50] **Simon Thomas:** These are timely petitions as evidence to the Minister.

[51] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes, if the Minister is currently considering the situation, his attention needs to be brought to the strength of feeling expressed in both petitions as part of his evidence gathering and his reconsideration of the policy decision.

[52] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed. Are we all agreed? I see that we are. Thank you.

9.18 a.m.

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

[53] **Joyce Watson:** I am now going to provide a brief update on previous petitions. Petition P-04-355 entitled ‘Cymru not Wales’ was submitted by Dennis Morris in January 2011 and collected 119 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales

[54] ‘to urge the Welsh Government to formally drop the name “Wales & Welsh”. Wales comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *Waleas* meaning “foreigner” We find this word insulting and that our nation should only be known as its original name ‘Cymru’ (land of comrades or countrymen). After over a thousand years of being called “foreigner” we feel its time this degrading word should be relinquished.’

[55] We have written to the First Minister, and he indicated quite clearly that the Welsh Government is not intending to use ‘Cymru’ instead of ‘Wales’. We have received a response from the Presiding Officer, and her views concur with those of the First Minister. I think it was you, Russell, who asked for confirmation of the translation of the word, so the clerks were asked to confirm whether the etymology of the word in the petition was accurate. The clerk has confirmed this through a number of sources and can confirm the accuracy of the petitioners’ claims. We now need to decide whether, having received the response from the First Minister and the Presiding Officer, and bearing in mind that there are lots of legal aspects to changing names, we should close the petition.

[56] **Simon Thomas:** I would recommend that. The petitioner has raised something that concerns him. The word ‘Welsh’ also means foreigner/slave and comes from the same root as ‘walnut’, which means foreign nut. Many places in England are called ‘Wal-’ something or other, and that means that the Welsh once lived there. That is the English word, and we just have to live with 1,000 years of history and cope with it as part of our future.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** I did not know that we had such expertise around the table. Are Members happy to close the petition?

[58] **Simon Thomas:** I am happy to, so I propose that we close it.

[59] **Kirsty Williams:** I second that.

[60] **Russell George:** Chair, I think that we have done our job in seeking the views of the First Minister and Presiding Officer, so we can only close the petition now.

[61] **Joyce Watson:** Agreed. We shall close that petition. The next petition update is P-04-3709 on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. It was submitted by Eilian Williams in March 2012 and has collected 262 signatures. It asks for the National Assembly to designate 24 April in Wales as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. We have had a written response from the First Minister, quite clearly stating that we do not have the jurisdiction here to do anything more than we have done. That is the case. It seems to me that there are only two possible ways forward in this. A statement of opinion has been circulated and has collected signatures. We might suggest that one of its signatories lead a Member’s debate on the issue or sponsor an event or exhibition to be held on the Assembly estate, or both. However, I do not think that we can do anything else.

[62] **Simon Thomas:** The First Minister’s response was interesting because the petitioner was asking for the Assembly, not the Government, to recognise this. A statement of opinion is an appropriate way. I have signed it, just to declare an interest, and Members can take appropriate action in the Assembly, including raising it around that period with the First

Minister, if appropriate. I think it is in Members' hands rather than the Government's now.

[63] **Joyce Watson:** Fair enough, but we will have to close the petition. Is everyone agreed? I see that you are.

[64] Moving on to the business, enterprise, technology and science portfolio, there are two items—P-03-271 and P-03-286 on business rates in Narberth and Ceredigion respectively. With your agreement, I would like to consider them together. The petition from Narberth was submitted by Narberth Chamber of Trade, as business rate payers in Narberth, in January 2010, collecting 91 signatures. The petition calls upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to conduct an impact assessment of how businesses in the town will be affected by changes in rateable values, and the assessment should include the effect on jobs and business closures. Ceredigion business rate payers have asked for more or less exactly the same.

[65] The petitions were given to the Enterprise and Business Committee, of which I am a member. We considered them as part of our inquiry into the regeneration of town centres. We also held an evidence session in Narberth, which was useful, and consequently wrote a report. As a Petitions Committee, I feel that we have done everything that we can. The petitions have gone to the Enterprise and Business Committee and the matter is included in its report. I do not think that there is anything else that we can do as a committee, and so I feel that it is appropriate to close the petition.

[66] **Kirsty Williams:** The Government is currently carrying out a review of business rates. While these petitions do not provide any solutions, I just wonder whether the people carrying out the business rate review are aware that these petitions have been received by this committee. That is one more thing that could be done before closing them. The chairman of that review would then be aware of the strength of feeling in this particular part of the world about what revaluation has meant for those businesses.

[67] **Joyce Watson:** That is a fair comment. I am happy to refer it to them.

[68] **Simon Thomas:** I think that that would be appropriate.

[69] **Kirsty Williams:** Just to make the review body aware.

[70] **Russell George:** Chair, perhaps we can do that but, in the meantime, we can welcome the report. We could do as Kirsty has suggested, then close the petition.

[71] **Joyce Watson:** I am happy with that. Is everybody happy? I see that you are.

[72] The next petition is P-03-307 on design for innovation in Wales. It was submitted by Gavin Cawood in November 2010 and has collected 369 signatures. The petition reads:

[73] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to consider the potential significant role for design in future innovation, public service and social enterprise policies and programmes. This is in the light of increased commitment to design agenda by other nations around the world and in preparation for a new Innovation Policy due to be published by the European Commission. This imminent new policy is likely to include a broader definition of innovation that embraces services in the public & private sectors and social enterprise on equal terms with traditional research and development (R&D).'

[74] We have had an update from the petitioners. They seem to be saying that they are happy that the Government is looking at this as they asked it to. We can refer this to the



current consultation that the Welsh Government is undertaking and close the petition. Is everybody happy with that? I see that you are.

[75] The next petition is P-04-364 on fibre optic for rural areas. It was submitted by Kai Childheart in February 2012 and collected 17 signatures. The petition reads:

[76] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to do more to support the roll-out of next generation/fibre optic broadband and to ensure that it is available to everyone in Wales by 2013, including Ecommerce, new communication businesses (IT Industry) and enhanced communication between current businesses’.

[77] We know that a programme is under way and that the Minister has given a commitment to roll out next-generation broadband to all residents and business premises by 2015. That is happening. They are asking for it to happen by 2013, but the Minister has committed to 2015. So, as I see it, we have two choices: one is to close the petition because we know that the Minister has set a date, and the other is to write again to push for an earlier target date, if we feel that that is warranted and feasible.

[78] **Russell George:** I think that what he said was that it would be rolled out by 2015, but perhaps we could write back and ask for a more specific date of when that area may be covered.

[79] **Joyce Watson:** What do others feel?

[80] **Simon Thomas:** I feel that the Minister has responded and there is a programme in place. Therefore, while the petitioners may not get the date that they want, they have the security of knowing that this matter is on the Government’s agenda. Therefore, I tend towards thinking that we should close the petition—although I would not argue against sending a letter.

[81] **Russell George:** What I am saying is that the Minister might write back to say that there is a programme in place and that it will be done by 2015, so I am suggesting that we follow up that letter by asking when, during the programme, it will take place. If he writes back to say that he cannot provide those details at the moment, that would be fine. That is my suggestion.

[82] **Kirsty Williams:** If we are to write to the Minister, we need to establish how far we have got with the public procurement side of the process, because a lot of this is to be delivered with Government money.

9.30 p.m.

[83] It is my understanding that a decision on the partners still has not been made. Therefore, to try to establish a date by which the Government will make a decision about partners is the crucial thing, because once the partners are named, the programme will roll out. Perhaps this committee can then expect a decision to be made by that date.

[84] **Russell George:** Perhaps there is a compromise between the views, but we could ask the Minister for a timeline so that we could advise the petitioners about what is happening and at what dates.

[85] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes.

[86] **Joyce Watson:** Are you happy with that, Simon?

[87] **Simon Thomas:** I would be happy with that. As we are going to write in any case, and as the petitioner was particularly concerned about rural areas, perhaps we could ask the Minister to ensure that rural areas will be included within that timeline, because it would be easy to do the quick and easy areas first and then not address the rural areas, which is what we have seen in the past, of course.

[88] **Joyce Watson:** We have, indeed.

[89] **Kirsty Williams:** Also, of course, the Minister has committed to including all residential properties and businesses. That will be some job in rural Wales.

[90] **Simon Thomas:** Although not necessarily to this technology.

[91] **Joyce Watson:** If everyone is happy, that is what we will do. Are you happy? I see that you are.

[92] We now turn to the environment and sustainable development petitions. First, we have petition P-03-315 regarding a new Dyfi river crossing, submitted by South Meirionnydd Older People's Forum in February 2011, having collected 3,204 signatures. It reads as follows:

[93] 'We, the undersigned, are in favour of and support, any proposition to create a new crossing of the Dyfi River (or the re-routing of the A487) linking South Meirionnydd with Powys, Dyfed and Ceredigion, to accommodate and suite the demands of modern day traffic and urge prioritisation of funding and action. We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to create this crossing as a matter of priority.'

[94] We have had a letter. I think that we should urge the petitioners to get involved in the forthcoming consultation and keep the petition open until the final plans for the bridge are known, following the consultation in autumn 2013. I think that that would be the most sensible way forward. Does everyone agree? I see that you do.

[95] We now move to petition P-03-309, Cardiff Against the Incinerator. While discussing a previous petition, I said that we would come to this petition. The details are much the same. Perhaps we could write to John Griffiths, the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, asking him to call in the planning application. That is one route. However, it is up to us to decide.

[96] We need to be aware that the petitioner has made a complaint against Cardiff County Council to the ombudsman. The petition was suspended until the outcome of that investigation. The ombudsman has confirmed that Cardiff County Council had a case to answer and that the consultation exercise undertaken by the council about that proposed incinerator was inadequate. However, the ombudsman's judgment states that there was

[97] 'no evidence that the decision taken with respect to the planning application was either manifestly unreasonable or perverse. In light of that, I cannot question the merits of the decision.'

[98] **Simon Thomas:** That is from the ombudsman, of course. It is not from the planning inspectorate. Therefore, it is still a planning issue, which is what the petitioners were really interested in. It seems slightly unresolved to me because, clearly, the consultation was not sufficient. I think that the Minister should be looking at this, because it is quite an important part of the whole project that has been set up. It might be appropriate to do that.

[99] **Russell George:** Do we have the ability, as a committee, to ask the Minister to call in

the application, and do the petitioners have the ability to ask the Minister to call in the application?

[100] **Simon Thomas:** They do that all the time. [*Laughter.*]

[101] **Joyce Watson:** I think that we have, but I will take legal advice on that.

[102] **Russell George:** I am asking whether the petitioners can also ask the Minister to call in the application. [*Inaudible.*] I thought so.

[103] **Kirsty Williams:** [*Inaudible.*]

[104] **Joyce Watson:** I think that we have, but I want to be absolutely certain.

[105] **Russell George:** Perhaps we could ask Joaneest what we should do?

[106] **Ms Jackson:** Please bear with me, because I am also a substitute this morning. I am not clear whether the planning application has been granted or not in this case.

[107] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, it has.

[108] **Ms Jackson:** It could then be difficult to call it in, because you normally call in an application before it is determined.

[109] **Simon Thomas:** I can think of at least one that was recently called in after it was determined by Powys County Council, I think.

[110] **Russell George:** Yes, that is right.

[111] **Simon Thomas:** Time might make it impractical, but that is a different question.

[112] **Russell George:** Why do we not check that advice and put it on the agenda for the next meeting?

[113] **Joyce Watson:** Why do we not ask the Minister to look at it, even though the planning application has been agreed? He could perhaps look at the system and processes and make some comment on that, if that is all he can do.

[114] **Simon Thomas:** Yes, so that we get the assurances that this is being handled in an appropriate way.

[115] **Joyce Watson:** Also, there will probably be other applications of this type in the future. It is therefore about trying to get it right now and being seen to be fair to people. That is what people object to—thinking that they are not being treated fairly and equally, which is what has brought this petition before us here. Is everyone agreed?

[116] **Russell George:** I am happy with that, Chair.

[117] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes.

[118] **Joyce Watson:** Moving on to P-04-343, which is a petition to prevent the destruction of amenities on common land, this was submitted by J.E. Futter in November 2011 and it collected 156 signatures. The petition calls on 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. The committee requested further information from the

petitioner on the issue, which we have now received.

[119] In previous correspondence, the Minister indicated that there are a number of controls relating to common land. We therefore need to consider what further action we should take on the issue. We could write to John Griffiths, the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, asking him whether the work that was carried out on the common land was, or should have been, subject to a screening direction under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Uncultivated Land and Semi-Natural Areas) (Wales) Regulations 2002, and any other regulations, given that there are wider regulations than that. That is perhaps the way forward.

[120] **Kirsty Williams:** I agree with that.

[121] **Joyce Watson:** Good. The next petition is P-04-344, on a Freshwater East public sewer. The householders of Freshwater East ask the Welsh Government not to take enforcement action against Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water concerning the installation of a public sewer in Freshwater East. An Environment Agency survey will be carried out in May and June of this year, and it seems sensible to me that we await the outcome of that survey.

[122] **Simon Thomas:** I agree with that action.

[123] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you. The next petition is P-04-374, which calls for all dogs to be kept on leads at all times in public places. The petition was submitted by Wyndham Mark Jones in March 2012 and it collected 17 signatures. The petitioner states that,

[124] ‘Due to the rising amount of irresponsible dog owners allowing their dogs to approach intimidate and endanger members of the public and their children and pets whilst off leads in public places i propose all dogs be legally required to be under leashed control in public places or places that are accesable to the public their leashed animals and children.’

[125] We have had a response from the Minister, and he outlines quite clearly the existing legislation to keep dogs under control. I have read that and I am happy to suggest closing the petition. I see that you agree.

[126] The next petition is P-04-378, Extend the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which was submitted by the Gower Society in March 2012 and signed by that organisation. The petition reads:

[127] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the Gower Society’s proposal for the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to be extended is expedited, given that the request has been with the CCW for consideration since 2005 and the fact that, as of December 2011, the CCW is no longer considering such proposals due to the potential establishment of a new Single Environment Body for Wales.’

[128] I think that the only possible action is to write to the Countryside Council for Wales stating that the committee recognises that the council must focus on implementation of the natural environment framework at this time, but requests that consideration of the extension of the Gower AONB is given priority at the earliest convenience, because we have no jurisdiction over this here.

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

[130] **Joyce Watson:** Does everyone else agree? I see that you do.

[131] We now move to P-04-383, Against NVZ Designation for Llangorse Lake, which

was submitted by Kaye Davis in March 2012, collecting 43 signatures. It calls

[132] ‘on the Welsh Assembly Government to overturn the proposed Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designation on the basin of Llangorse Lake, which is likely to affect approximately 25 farm businesses.’

[133] We had a response from the Minister. He is drawing up a timetable for the decision of designations, which will be published. Maybe we should wait for that. We will also take some evidence in north Wales on this particular subject. At this stage, waiting until some of that work has been done would be sensible. Do you agree? I see that you do.

[134] **Simon Thomas:** I was concerned to see that the people there felt that they had not been consulted. This is in my region, but in other parts of my region, people very much came to me suddenly once a consultation had been announced. They were very concerned about it. So, there seems to have been some oversight in this area and people were perhaps not as aware as they should have been. I know that that is by the by now, but I wanted to note that. It is unfortunate that people feel that there has not been communication.

[135] **Joyce Watson:** It is, absolutely, and yet, you have seen all the correspondence in which people are saying that they did and some people are saying that they did not. There are obviously strong feelings.

[136] **Simon Thomas:** It is a matter of explaining to people. This is a general issue for the Government to explain to people what it means, because this is a rather technical-looking type of consultation, whereas it has a real impact on people’s businesses.

[137] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed. I support that.

[138] We will move on to education and skills. P-04-346, free childcare for 3 to 4-year-olds in Wales, was submitted by Zelda Smith in 2011 and it collected 67 signatures. It calls

[139] ‘on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that free childcare for 3-4 year olds is delivered more flexibly across Wales allowing parents, and in particular working parents, to choose when and where they access the free childcare.’

[140] There is a lot of confusion, it seems, about what is meant by ‘free childcare’. We are left to assume what that means, which is not satisfactory for anybody. So, I suggest that we hold an evidence session with Leighton Andrews, Minister for Education and Skills, and the Welsh Local Government Association to explore how the provision currently considers the needs of working parents, so that we can unpick the confusion that surrounds this petition at the moment.

9.45 a.m.

[141] **Simon Thomas:** I agree with that, because you could add Flying Start to this as well.

[142] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed. Is everybody happy?

[143] **Russell George:** I would agree with that, Chair. I have received quite a bit of casework in my constituency on this, and I think that it would be useful to hold that evidence session.

[144] **Kirsty Williams:** I agree.

[145] **Joyce Watson:** We move on to P-04-376, on the reorganisation of education in

Powys. The petition was submitted by Sarah Wheeler in March 2012, collecting 1,177 signatures and calling on

[146] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to call in Powys County Council’s proposals to reorganise education in Powys, which would lead to Builth Wells’ bilingual dual stream English-medium sixth form becoming a Welsh designated sixth form’.

[147] The Minister has written to the committee to explain that a decision to change from a dual stream to Welsh-only provision would be referred to him should objections arise. He also states that the change is not inevitable at this stage. So, what we need to decide as a committee is what action we are going to take.

[148] **Kirsty Williams:** Just as an aside, I am substituting today and, if Members will forgive me, I do not have to hand previous correspondence that I have had as the constituency Member on this issue, but if memory serves me right, what the Minister has told you is directly contradicted by what he has previously told me. However, I may be misreading what I have previously been told.

[149] **Simon Thomas:** Is that in terms of how it would be referred to him—because it is not a school closure?

[150] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes. It is not a school closure, so my understanding of the situation is that there would not be a statutory process that would require the Minister to make a decision. If you will bear with me, I will try to furnish you with that, but I think that it would be appropriate to write to the Minister and to the local authority. The local authority is well aware of the views in the local area.

[151] **Russell George:** If Kirsty has that information, Chair, perhaps we could defer this to the next meeting, because that would be useful. As a side issue, I am not quite sure who to write to at the local authority, because it has not decided its governance yet.

[152] **Kirsty Williams:** You cannot do anything at the moment. There is no-one to write to.

[153] **Russell George:** It would be useful to wait until the next meeting.

[154] **Kirsty Williams:** I will double check, but my memory is telling me that I have something that says the opposite to this. However, I may be mistaken—that is the caveat.

[155] **Russell George:** Our usual Chair may be able to throw some light on this as well. I am sure that he will.

[156] **Joyce Watson:** So would I.

[157] **Russell George:** Yes, of course.

[158] **Joyce Watson:** So, we will defer this issue to the next meeting.

[159] Moving on, under the equality agenda, P-03-294 is a petition from the Wales Women’s National Coalition. I will put it on record at this time that this is an organisation that I was responsible for running before coming into my current position. I want to make it absolutely clear that the WWNC was my previous employer, before I say anything else. The petition that we are about to discuss was submitted by the WWNC in June 2010, and collected 51 signatures. It reads:

[160] ‘We the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to publish firm plans which state how, in the absence of Wales Women’s National Coalition, the voice, needs and views of women in Wales will be reflected into policy and decision-making in Wales, the UK, Europe and the UN.’

[161] We have had a response from the petitioners, and they still call for clarity on how the Welsh Government will continue to ensure that the voice of women in Wales can be made loud and clear in policy and decision making at a local, national and international level. We sat through a statement last week, I believe, in Plenary when Jane Hutt clearly said that she was funding another women’s organisation for that to happen. At this stage, I feel that it would be appropriate to pass a copy of that statement on to the perhaps defunct, sadly, WWNC to see if it is satisfied. I cannot think of anything else that we can do at this stage. Is everybody happy with that? I see that you are.

[162] Under the heading of health and social services, we have P-03-085 on surgeries in Flintshire. The petition was submitted by Gillian Robinson in February 2008 and it collected 412 signatures. The petition is really about the provision of GP services in that area. As you can see, it has been going on for a considerable time—since 2008. Flintshire County Council says that it would welcome Welsh Government support in its discussions with Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board on future primary healthcare facilities in the redeveloped Flint town centre.

[163] A stalemate in funding talks for further GPs and additional personnel is reported between the Laurels Surgery and Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board. Mark Isherwood AM told the committee that no talks have taken place for years between the Laurels Surgery and the local health board, other than talks over a portakabin. The local health board states that work is ongoing.

[164] This matter seems to have been ongoing for a long time. We can write to the Minister, asking her to review progress made in the negotiations for the provision of a new primary care centre in Flintshire and to actively support new negotiations, given the indication from Mark Isherwood AM that the situation is becoming ‘clinically unsafe’. We could also write to the local health board, stressing the importance of the issue and urging it to give the issue priority status. I cannot see that there is anything else that we can do.

[165] **Kirsty Williams:** I think that it would be appropriate to urge the Minister for Health and Social Services to knock some heads together.

[166] **Joyce Watson:** Yes—quote, unquote.

[167] Next is P-04-342 on MS nurses. The petition was submitted by Joseph Carter in 2011 and it collected 2,163 signatures. The petition reads:

[168] ‘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.’

[169] We have had correspondence back from the petitioners, and it seems that they are now quite content that those services are being protected. Given that, I think that we can close the petition. I see that we are all agreed.

[170] P-04-362 on ambulance services in Monmouth is next. The petition was submitted by Mathew Davies in February 2012 and it collected 450 signatures. It says:

[171] ‘We believe that Monmouth should be granted the appropriate ambulance provision. With its population set to rise, and the Minor Injuries Unit at Monnow Vale recently closed

down, demand will increase for the ambulance service.’

[172] To the National Assembly for Wales, the petition states:

[173] ‘We request the Health and Social Committee of the National Assembly to undertake a scrutiny inquiry into the ambulance service in rural Wales. We would urge the Committee to investigate the particular problems in Monmouth and the impact of the closure of the Monnow Vale Minor Injuries Unit on the ambulance service.’

[174] The petitioners ask the Welsh Government to

[175] ‘urge the Minister for Health and Social Care to use her powers to require the Wales NHS Ambulance Trust to provide a uniformly high standard of ambulance provision throughout Wales and especially rural areas such as Monmouthshire.’

[176] They ask the Welsh Ambulance NHS Trust

[177] ‘to increase provision for Monmouth in real terms, with a high dependency unit and/or ambulance based within Monmouth town.’

[178] We have referred the petition to the Health and Social Care Committee, and it has indicated that it will await the response included in the information pack for this meeting before deciding on a course of action. The Auditor General for Wales is currently carrying out follow-up work on unscheduled care services. So, it is currently with the auditor general. That being the case, it would be sensible for us to await the outcome of that work rather than duplicate it. Does everyone agree? I see that you do.

[179] The next petition is P-04-367, Save our Hospital Services, which was submitted by Rhydwyn Ifan in February 2012, and it collected 9,000 signatures. The petition states that:

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

[181] We have had a response from the Minister, who has stated yet again that there are no proposals to downgrade Prince Philip Hospital and that a consultation exercise is about to be started. I know that another petition on this hospital will come in next week. I think that there are two ways to take this forward. We need to make the petitioners aware of the forthcoming consultation process. I am sure that they already are aware, but it is our duty to make sure that they are. We should also make the health board and the Minister for Health and Social Services aware of the strength of feeling—I have no doubt that they are aware of that, but the committee should do so formally. At this stage, we cannot do any more.

[182] **Simon Thomas:** It is important that we make Hywel Dda Local Health Board aware that it should take these views on board. One reason people have got into this state is because Hywel Dda has not been consulting as the petitioners feel is appropriate. As you said, we are aware that another petition will be coming in, so I do not think that you should close this petition, because you will have two petitions coming in on the same matter. We could, presumably, combine them in the future. This is something that we are all aware is an active topic, particularly the meaning of the word ‘downgrade’, or what that will mean in the light of the changes that have been recommended to accident and emergency departments in Wales. So, I am sure that you will need to keep an eye on this as things emerge.

[183] **Joyce Watson:** We will all be engaged in it. So, we definitely cannot close it.



[184] **Kirsty Williams:** Given that I suspect that this committee will be dealing with many similar petitions in the months to come, it is important that there be uniformity of approach for each of them. It is not a matter for me, because I am only a substitute member, but it might be wise to develop a protocol at the beginning of this process regarding how we will deal with health petitions of this kind, because the committee will be inundated and it will want to ensure that there is a uniform approach to how it deals with each of them so that the committee cannot be accused of championing one petition over another. There will be more and more of these petitions, will there not?

[185] **Joyce Watson:** To be fair to the committee, even though I am a substitute Chair, I have to say that there is a uniform approach and we treat all petitioners with the same level of consideration. The fact that only 10 people need to endorse a petition for it to be considered by this committee is testament to that commitment. So, I want to put to bed any suggestion that things are not treated fairly.

[186] **Kirsty Williams:** I did not mean to suggest that they are not; I am just saying that the committee is likely to be inundated with petitions of this sort.

[187] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, we undoubtedly will be.

[188] **Kirsty Williams:** Therefore, it might be helpful to know exactly what the route is for each of these petitions so that each one can go through the same route.

[189] **Russell George:** I think that we should take forward Simon's suggestion. If the petition is kept open, we can possibly amalgamate the petitions and deal with them all in the same way by grouping them.

[190] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. We are not going to close it.

[191] **Russell George:** That is fine.

10.00 a.m.

[192] **Joyce Watson:** The next update is on petition P-04-368 to Promote Physical Activity and Health in Further Education Colleges. It calls on the National Assembly for Wales

[193] 'to urge the Welsh Government to promote physical activity and health in Further Education colleges.'

[194] We issued a targeted consultation on the petition, which has now closed, and we had two responses. We have also had a response from the Minister. I think that we ought to forward the consultation responses to her for consideration by the officials tasked with extending the Welsh network of healthy school schemes into colleges in the programme for government 2011-16, and close this petition. Is everyone happy with that? I see that you are.

[195] The next update is on P-04-375, Stop Opt-Out Organ Donation, which was submitted by Bablin Molik in March 2011 and which collected 98 signatures. It calls on the Welsh Government

[196] 'to stop proposals for its opt-out organ donation system.'

[197] It goes on to say that it thinks that it is

[198] 'completely unethical for the Welsh Government to be pushing through an opt out

system for organ donation.’

[199] It is clear that the Minister is committed to the system and that it was put in the manifesto for a Labour administration. We have referred the petition to the Health and Social Care Committee asking it to consider it alongside other evidence when scrutinising the Bill on organ donation. The petitioner has, from the outset, intended for this petition to act as a voice for those people who would otherwise not have spoken out about the issue, and was content for the petition to be referred to that scrutiny committee. I do not feel that we, as a committee, can do any more than what we have done, given the responses that we have had, and I am quite happy to suggest closing the petition.

[200] **Simon Thomas:** I agree, because there is a consultation process.

[201] **Joyce Watson:** Are you happy?

[202] **Kirsty Williams:** The only other thing that we can do is to write back to the petitioner to explain what the Government’s next steps are. My understanding is that the Government’s next steps are to publish a draft Bill, rather than a Bill in its complete form, for further public consultation on the measure. It may be an idea to make the petitioners aware that that is what the Government intends to do next, and that they will have an opportunity to respond to that consultation on the draft legislation, as it gives them another opportunity to make their views known. It is just to make them aware that that is what the Government intends to do.

[203] **Simon Thomas:** The Government cannot get any legislation through without one member of the opposition supporting it. That includes this piece of legislation.

[204] **Russell George:** I suggest that we follow Kirsty’s suggestion, but ask the petitioners at the end of the letter if they are content for us to close the petition. So, rather than our agreeing to do it today, we should wait to hear their reply first.

[205] **Joyce Watson:** We can do that.

[206] **Russell George:** I am sure that they will be happy and content to hear that their views can be put forward to the consultation, and I would be happy to write back to them and say that, but they may write back and say something else.

[207] **Joyce Watson:** I have no problem with that.

[208] **Kirsty Williams:** It would also make them aware of what they can do next.

[209] **Joyce Watson:** Great. The next update is on P-03-197, Save the Vulcan. This petition was submitted by Rachel Thomas in March 2009 and collected 5,000 signatures. It refers to the Vulcan Hotel in Adam Street, which was one of Cardiff’s oldest pubs. We have had information that the petitioners have contacted Bethan Jenkins and the clerk, asking for the petition to be reconsidered, as the pub was due to cease trading. The pub has closed, and an agreement has been reached between the developer and St Fagans National History Museum to move the building to that museum. The petitioners have reluctantly resigned themselves to the prospect of the building moving, but recognise that it is better that it stands somewhere than that it is completely demolished. We could write to the developer and the museum to confirm that that is the case and, on receipt of that confirmation, close the petition then. Does everyone agree? I see that you do.

[210] The next petition is P-04-381, Restoration for North Wales Hospital, which was submitted by Paul Sharrock in March 2012. It collected 29 signatures and it calls on:

[211] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to assess the architectural heritage of the North Wales Hospital and to ensure that the bat roosts located there are protected.’

[212] We have had a response from the Minister. We could write to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development regarding the protection of bats on this site. That seems to be the only way forward. Is everyone agreed? I see that you are.

10.06 a.m.

**Papurau i’w Nodi**  
**Papers to Note**

[213] **Joyce Watson:** We have a paper to note, which is P-03-170, to increase the number of people with a learning disability employed by the public sector in Wales. As long as people are happy to note that, I thank everyone for attending and advise Members that the next Petitions Committee meeting will be on 29 May. There is also a petition presentation at 1 p.m. tomorrow for a petition entitled, ‘Protect elective worship as a legal requirement’. That will be in the usual place on the Senedd steps. There is also a committee rapporteur visit that will take place on the afternoon of 24 May, next Thursday, to the Pentwyn renal unit. Thank you.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.07 a.m.*  
*The meeting ended at 10.07 a.m.*