



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Llun, 2 Gorffennaf 2012
Monday, 2 July 2012

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol

Committee members in attendance

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
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

Eraill yn bresennol

Others in attendance

Myrddin Davies	Theatr y Stiwt Stiwt Theatre
Liz Doyland	CAIS Cyf. CAIS Ltd
Darren Millar	Aelod Cynulliad, Ceidwadwyr Cymru Assembly Member, Welsh Conservatives
Kayleigh Stone	Myfyrwraig, Coleg Llandrillo Student, Llandrillo College
Jenny Taylor	Myfyrwraig, Coleg Llandrillo Student, Llandrillo College
Poppy Thomas	Myfyrwraig, Coleg Llandrillo Student, Llandrillo College
Richard Williams	Myfyriwr, Coleg Llandrillo Student, Llandrillo College
Clive Wolfendale	CAIS Cyf. CAIS Ltd

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol

National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Sarita Marshall	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Abigail Phillips	Clerc Clerk

*Cynhaliwyd y cyfarfod yn Theatr y Stiwt, Wrexham.
The meeting was held at the Stiwt Theatre, Wrexham.*

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.59 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.59 a.m.*

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

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da, a chroeso **William Powell:** Good morning, and a warm welcome.

[2] It is great to be here for the Petitions Committee this morning in this historic building and we look forward very much to hearing your submissions. Full and usual translation facilities are available. All participants can speak in Welsh or English, as they prefer. Please ensure that all mobile phones are switched off for the duration of the meeting. That will help us a great deal. We are ready to get under way. We have no apologies this morning, as we have the full complement of Members.

10.00 a.m.

**P-04-361 Pas Bws am Ddim i Fyfirwyr o dan 25 oed sydd mewn Addysg Llawn
Amser**

P-04-361 Free Bus Passes for Students under 25 and in Full-time Education

[3] **William Powell:** I extend a particular welcome to our colleague, Darren Millar, and to Kayleigh, Poppy, Jenny and Richard for joining us this morning. I understand, Darren, that you are going to make some opening remarks.

[4] **Darren Millar:** Yes, if I can, Chair. I thank the committee for taking this opportunity to take oral evidence from Coleg Llandrillo Cymru students. We appreciate the positive response and the interest shown by the committee when you first discussed this issue earlier this year. I want to paint a background picture and then hand over to the students, who have done the work on this.

[5] I visited Coleg Llandrillo Cymru earlier in the year to speak to students in the health and social care department about my work as an Assembly Member. During the discussion in the classroom, as it were, it became clear that there was a lot of passion in the room about the need for better access to transport. A number of students, most of whom are here today, expressed a desire to access free bus passes in the same way as the concessionary fare scheme operates for older people in Wales. I made them aware of the fact that the Assembly Petitions Committee was a good way to gain access to Assembly Members so that these matters could be given fuller consideration by the National Assembly for Wales. There and then, the students drew up a petition, scribbled on it as many signatures from the classroom as they could get, and I entered into correspondence with you, as Chair of the committee, to ask that the Petitions Committee look at this issue.

[6] As a result of that, you have engaged in correspondence with Ministers, which we may touch on during this evidence session. The individuals sitting with me here today to give evidence have given further thought to the affordability of this exercise. So, without further ado, I wish to hand over to the students so that they can give you more information.

[7] **Ms Thomas:** We are students from Coleg Llandrillo Cymru and we are petitioning for free bus passes for 16 to 25-year-olds who are in full-time education in Wales.

[8] **Ms Taylor:** We each have a different reason for doing this. Our main reason is that it costs too much money to get to and from the college. You cannot get a return ticket on the Arriva buses, so it costs more and you have to be under 19 to get the free Alpine bus that the college provides.

[9] **Ms Stone:** I will talk about how it affects me. I live in Belgrano and, if the bus is full, the driver will not let me on. However, if I stay at my granddad's house, which is in St Georges, I can get the bus, but as I am the only one who gets on there, it does not always stop for me. When that happens, I have to pay £12 to get to college myself. I do not get the education maintenance allowance, so I have no money to pay for it, and my parents are on a budget themselves. I have no money to pay for the bus so I am stuck with days off.

[10] **Mr Williams:** From our research, students would still prefer to walk and drive, regardless of whether there was an Arriva bus pass, which means that you need only provide approximately 5,000 bus passes. That would cost you £2.8 million. You could get that money from cutting down the EMA from £30 a week to £26 a week. You could use that £4 difference to pay for the cost of the Arriva bus passes: 17,180 students get £30 a week EMA

in Wales, so if you take £4 a week off each person, that gives you £68,720 a week, or £2,886,240 a year. That money would pay for free bus passes for services from Monday to Friday, from roughly 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., provided by Arriva.

[11] **William Powell:** Thank you for your personal angles and for the stories and examples that you have given us, particularly Richard, who has obviously been doing some work on a business case and an alternative model. Would you share that with the committee after the meeting? That would be helpful for us in our further consideration of this.

[12] I will now open this up to questions from my colleagues after I kick off with a couple that relate to what you have already asked. In a wider sense, why do you believe that full-time students in Wales under the age of 25 should be provided with free bus travel? You have given us a number of pointers. Would one of you like to develop that a little more fully?

[13] **Ms Thomas:** Sorry, can you repeat the question, please?

[14] **William Powell:** Would you like to tell us why you believe that students in Wales under the age of 25 who are in full-time education should be entitled to free bus passes? Do you believe that it is a barrier to students continuing in education that they are not currently available?

[15] **Ms Thomas:** All of us on the panel have had certain problems with getting to and from college, because it costs a lot of money. From Llandrillo College, it costs £3 to get a single bus ticket to Llandudno, which is less than 3 miles away or something like that. So, it is costing us all lots of money. We say under 25, as that is roughly the age of students at college. Some people can get access to the college buses, but I have been there four times this year asking whether I can get on the college bus, and I have been told that there is no room. So, I have to pay £3 every day to get the bus to college and £3 to get back. On some days, I can get lifts, but that does not help much.

[16] **Russell George:** I just wanted to ask a quick question to Kayleigh. You mentioned that the cost for you is £12. Is that right?

[17] **Ms Stone:** Yes, for a full bus pass for a week.

[18] **Russell George:** Okay, so £12 for a week's travel.

[19] **William Powell:** Oh, a weekly bus pass. I thought that it was a one-off taxi fare. I misunderstood.

[20] **Bethan Jenkins:** I wanted to ask why you cannot get the college bus.

[21] **Ms Thomas:** I thought that you were going to ask that. I have been there four times. The first time I went there was at the start of term, and I was told that there was no room but that, the next time, if I came and asked, people might have dropped off. I went back again and again, but there is still no room on it.

[22] **William Powell:** So, there are not enough seats—

[23] **Ms Thomas:** No, there is not enough room.

[24] **Ms Taylor:** If you lived within 3 miles—

[25] **Ms Thomas:** Yes, because I live 0.1 miles short of the three-mile limit, I am not allowed a bus pass, but I have only just moved this year. It is a nightmare.

[26] **William Powell:** Bethan, I believe that you wanted to ask some questions on issues in rural areas.

[27] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rydym wedi gwneud ymchwil ac mae'n dangos bod mwy o broblemau gan bobl sy'n byw mewn ardaloedd gwledig o'u cymharu â phobl sy'n byw mewn trefi. A ydych yn cael y profiad hwnnw neu a ydych yn cael mwy o broblemau oherwydd eich bod yn byw yn fwy canolog?

Bethan Jenkins: We have carried out research that shows that people who live in rural areas have more problems compared with those who live in towns. Have you had that experience or do you have more problems because you live more centrally?

[28] **Ms Thomas:** There is a problem with rural areas. You live more rurally, do you not, Kayleigh?

[29] **Ms Stone:** My taid does. That is where I get the bus from, but it does not always stop for me, because I am the only one who gets on there, so sometimes it will go straight past. That is when I am stuck with days off from college because I cannot get there.

[30] **Ms Thomas:** You asked about problems for people living in towns. It is still a problem for me, because I am not entitled to an EMA or any sort of funds, so it comes out of my mum and dad's pockets, basically, or mine, to get bus passes to college.

[31] **Darren Millar:** If I may put this into context a little, Chair, one of the issues that the students have is the geographical location of the college. It is not in an urban area to which you can walk safely from any neighbouring village setting, so, as a result, there is a real need for some bus transport. I suspect that this is not the only FE college in Wales that is in a semi-rural location.

[32] **Bethan Jenkins:** On the issue of the EMA, you do not qualify for EMA, so are you saying that the money should be used for everybody, regardless of whether they get an EMA currently? So, the percentage that you said that you would put towards transport would be for everybody.

[33] **Ms Thomas:** Yes. We would take £4 out of the £30 a week EMA, because it does not go on education, I think. Not at all. [*Laughter.*]

[34] **Mr Williams:** Some people use it for—[*Inaudible.*] That way, the money would be spent on what it is supposed to be spent.

[35] **Ms Thomas:** On educational needs.

[36] **William Powell:** Russell, I believe that you want to develop this point further.

[37] **Russell George:** I also thank you for coming today. The college year has finished now, so you are obviously coming here outside of college time, which demonstrates how passionate you are about this. Why is your proposal limited to full-time students under the age of 25 rather than applying to all students or all young people under the age of 25?

[38] **Darren Millar:** Do you want me to chip in here?

[39] **Mr Williams:** Yes.

[40] **Darren Millar:** It is very simply because part-time students have the opportunity to earn some money by working, which alleviates the financial pressures on them. Being in full-

time education minimises people's opportunity to gain extra income by supporting themselves through work.

[41] **Ms Thomas:** Jenny works full time—

[42] **Ms Taylor:** Part time.

[43] **Ms Thomas:** She finished her work at 2 a.m. today, which obviously makes her tired, and she is here this morning. She does that during college time, too, to pay for petrol to go to college, because there are not any free bus passes available for her.

[44] **Russell George:** So you are limiting your proposal because you want it to be recognised as being balanced and proportionate. Is that right?

[45] **Ms Thomas:** Yes.

[46] **Ms Taylor:** Once you turn 19, you have to pay for the buses the college provides. It costs about £150 a term. How are you supposed to pay for that if you are not working? It is free for under-19s, but, once you are over 19, and there is no room on the bus, you have to pay.

[47] **Russell George:** You have costed all your proposals, have you not? I can see that in the document.

[48] **Ms Thomas:** Yes.

[49] **William Powell:** I have a couple of further questions. What is the parking situation at Llandrillo College? Is that a relevant issue? Is there pressure in that respect as well or is there ample parking? That would be an interesting local issue that could be factored in to your dealings with the college. You could try to persuade it to extend provision.

[50] **Darren Millar:** There is plenty of parking at the college. That does not mean that there are not times when it is difficult to find a parking space on the campus, and I get complaints from local residents from time to time about people parking outside the college perimeter. However, that has not been a contributory factor to this petition.

[51] **William Powell:** Okay. Has any consideration been given to environmental factors and the potential gain from having more people travelling by bus? That could be another relevant issue in your business case. Bethan, do you have a further question?

[52] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. We know from what the Minister has said that there are concessionary schemes in place in many areas. Lots of different councils have decided to provide those. Do you not think that such provision would be enough and that it is something for the local authority or the college to sort out, now that we know that there are other concessionary schemes?

[53] **Mr Williams:** Well, from this morning, the letter says that Denbighshire County Council is part of that. The student has to pay 20% of that and the council pays the rest. However, I paid £5.10 just to get from Rhyl to Coleg Llandrillo, which is quite a big fare if you are in full-time education, not working and living on your own.

[54] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, you would argue that the existing schemes are not good enough anyway.

[55] **Mr Williams:** Yes.

[56] **Darren Millar:** As you have already heard, there is restricted access to those schemes because of the affordability for local government. So, if the bus is fully subscribed, as is the case for Poppy, you cannot access the bus in any case.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, all. It is great that you are this morning giving up your time, particularly you, Jenny, as you were working until 2 a.m. today. It is great that we have an opportunity to hear your views and that your Assembly Member has given you that chance. We know that the Welsh Government funds concessionary fares and free bus travel for over-60s and disabled people. We also know that it has said in its letter that it cannot afford provision for students. How do you feel about that? We know that you have come up with a scheme, which we did not expect, and that is great. Do you feel that you are somehow marginalised by that response?

10.15 a.m.

[58] **Ms Thomas:** Yes, I do not understand why there are concessions for older people, but not for students, because we are going to college and learning to take over older people's roles. We will work and we will obviously go to university and stuff like that. It is making it difficult for us to access our education. I do not understand why the Government is making it difficult for us. It is not easy. It should be easy, but nothing is easy.

[59] **Joyce Watson:** How would you feel if you were met halfway? I am not suggesting that it will happen, but what if there were a 50% reduction?

[60] **Ms Thomas:** That would be better than nothing.

[61] **Joyce Watson:** Do you all think that a 50% reduction might help?

[62] **Ms Taylor:** We are saying, 'Take £4 out of our EMA'. It is not going to cost the Government money. It provides the EMA but, if it takes £4 out, it is we who will pay for it, really.

[63] **Russell George:** You are saying that your proposals are cost-neutral. That is what you are saying, is it not?

[64] **Bethan Jenkins:** My concern with that, however, is that some people who have a car would not support money coming out of the EMA, because, as you suggested, they are using it for other things and they are quite happy with that eventuality. If you took a percentage out of everybody's allowance, you would have to negotiate that, would you not, if some young people did not want to—

[65] **Ms Thomas:** We have discussed it before in college.

[66] **Russell George:** What was the outcome?

[67] **William Powell:** Poppy, what was the outcome of that consultation?

[68] **Ms Thomas:** We went around asking people whether, if there were free Arriva bus passes, they would still walk or drive and so on. I cannot remember what—

[69] **Ms Taylor:** Most people said that they would get on the Arriva bus.

[70] **William Powell:** So, it would change behaviours and it would change—

[71] **Ms Thomas:** Yes, it would be more environmentally friendly as well, I think, if they did that instead of driving.

[72] **Ms Taylor:** If I drive, it costs me £8 in petrol to get to and from college—£4 there and £4 back.

[73] **Darren Millar:** With respect to the Welsh Government, there has been a little bit of silo thinking in the response that has been received. The committee approached Leighton Andrews as the Minister with responsibility for education, who passed it on to his Cabinet colleague with responsibility for transport, but this is, effectively, about access to education and the students feel strongly that that is why they want Leighton Andrews to look at it and why they have tried to ensure that the scheme that they are proposing is cost-neutral and affordable to the Welsh Government and accessible. To be fair, the fact that it is not pinching money from any other age group or portfolio makes it a reasonable suggestion. It is something that the students themselves have come up with and it is quite a creative scheme. I was a little disappointed with the ministerial response, because I thought that it was a little narrow and was not thinking of the wider benefits of access to education or the environmental and green benefits, which you have quite rightly spelled out.

[74] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for your observations, but it is the observations of the students that we are here to hear. Moving on from that, it is great that the students have thought outside the box, to use one phrase, and been innovative, to use another, but that £30—and Bethan has raised this issue—might be used to support some people in a different way to keep them in education. So, did you ask those questions? It might be that they are living on their own and might need it to put some money in a meter. Did you ask, when you put forward that proposal of taking £4 away from students, whether they were content to lose £4? My experience tells me that most people are not content to lose their money. I would like to hear the answer.

[75] **Ms Taylor:** Most people were okay with that. When we went around to do a survey, most people were fine with £4 being taken out. They knew that they were going to have a bus pass from it, when a bus pass usually costs £12 a week. It goes up every term. It started off being £9. I have been in college for three years, and it is £12 now. It has gone up each term.

[76] **Russell George:** Perhaps you could share that specific survey information: the question that you asked, how many people you asked, and what the results were.

[77] **Ms Taylor:** Was it 29 people that we asked?

[78] **Mr Williams:** We asked 30 people, and four people out of the 30—that is where we got the figure of 14%—

[79] **Russell George:** Perhaps you could send us that information. As we come to the end of this session, my final question is this: what would you like us, as a committee, to do? Obviously, we are not the decision makers, but what is your one message to us? What would you finally ask us to do on your behalf as a committee?

[80] **Ms Thomas:** It would be to consider free bus passes for us all, because it is difficult for us all. I would appreciate it if it could just be taken into consideration.

[81] **Darren Millar:** We discussed this earlier, and the students asked whether I could sum up effectively.

[82] **William Powell:** I was just about to ask for a brief final statement from the students and yourself.

[83] **Darren Millar:** I thank the committee for taking oral evidence today. I know that the students really appreciate it. I have been here only to support the students, not simply to give my opinion, as has been alluded to by a particular committee member. I want to make it clear that the students have gone to a lot of effort to try to come up with a scheme that is affordable, green and targeted at students, and which would not cost the Government any additional money whatsoever. Fundamentally, this is about improving access to education, not simply doling out freebies to students who do not need it. It is about supporting them to access that education. There is a danger in the existence of the current concessionary fares schemes that students feel marginalised and that the support goes to older people only and not necessarily to younger people.

[84] I ask that the committee—and again, this is something that we have discussed and not a suggestion off the hoof—whether the committee could write to Leighton Andrews as the Minister responsible for education to request that he consider funding this sort of scheme through the education maintenance allowance in some way. That would be really appreciated. You have heard that it would cost just £4 per week and that access would be restricted to term times only between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m.. The students are not asking for anything more than that targeted support for access to education.

[85] **William Powell:** I am not alone in being impressed by the clarity and the passion with which you have spoken this morning, particularly after limited sleep in at least one case. Thank you for that. We will be considering what we have heard in the next few moments. As I requested earlier, if you could submit to us any further details of the business case and some of the supporting documents that you have, it would really help us with any actions that we undertake. Diolch yn fawr. Thank you for coming this morning and for your contributions.

[86] In the circumstances, it would probably be better if we had the opportunity to see some of the documents that were referred to. I suggest that we defer consideration of this so that we can give it full justice until our final meeting of this term, when we will have had the opportunity to see some of the documents that were alluded to. Do colleagues think that that would make sense?

[87] **Russell George:** I am happy with that, but there has been a recommendation from the students that we write to Leighton Andrews. We can discuss that later, but, in principle, that is what I would like to see the committee doing. All we can do today is say that we agree to do that in principle, but that we will give it further consideration—

[88] **William Powell:** I would certainly back that, but I think that it would be helpful to have some of the detail of the working and some of the other documents that would help to back that up so that the Minister could be made aware of the detail.

[89] **Russell George:** So, we agree to write to the Minister and, at the next meeting, we agree to look at the further evidence.

[90] **William Powell:** In the light of the supporting documents, yes. Are we agreed? I see that we are. Thank you.

10.27 a.m.

**P-04-381 Adfer Ysbyty Gogledd Cymru
P-04-381 Restoration for North Wales Hospital**

[91] **William Powell:** We had the opportunity yesterday to visit the site of the former North Wales Hospital at Denbigh. It was quite an extraordinary experience in many ways to

see that once magnificent building in the difficult straits it is in at the moment, but it was quite heartening to see the commitment that the local authority is showing and its leadership to find a way through. That is why it is such a special opportunity today to hear from witnesses who represent two examples of heritage buildings where there is a good story to tell.

[92] At this point, I welcome Clive Wolfendale, Liz Doyland and Myrddin Davies, who will be telling us the stories of their particular projects and how they have come from probably not as difficult a place as the North Wales Hospital, but challenging circumstances nevertheless, to something that is really special.

[93] For the record, I ask you to introduce yourselves and to speak very briefly about your project. We will then move to questions.

[94] **Mr Wolfendale:** Bore da. Good morning. I am Clive Wolfendale, chief executive of CAIS, which is an agency and charity delivering drug and alcohol services to clients principally in north Wales and Powys, but also, in some ways, across Wales. I am assisted today by Liz Doyland, who is a project office within CAIS with particular responsibility for the schemes at issue.

[95] CAIS is a charity and limited company with about 30 years' experience of delivering services for drug and alcohol clients. Interestingly, 10 of my staff originally worked in Denbigh hospital, where among the services delivered there were treatments for people who had drug and alcohol problems and mental health problems, in, as you say, a very fine but rather unsuitable setting. So, there is some symmetry there. I also recall using the building for training exercises, probably rather carelessly, during my last role with North Wales Police. I agree that it is a fine building that ought to be protected.

10.30 a.m.

[96] We have some background packs about the work done by CAIS, which you can read at leisure afterwards, because time will prohibit much exploration of that this morning. The important thing, as far as this evidence is concerned, is that, particularly during the past two years, it has been clear to me and my team that a pivotal, important aspect of enabling someone to recover from the problems of substance misuse is the ability to gain worthwhile, long-term, sustained employment. Increasingly, our work has been associated with that ambition through schemes such as Progress to Work, Flexible New Deal, Intermediate Labour Market and, latterly, the creation of social enterprises, which usually involves the use of a building. With partners such as the Welsh Highland Railway, the National Trust and our own work generation, we have been pretty successful in times of great difficulty at creating and sustaining jobs and putting people into full-time employment. Of necessity, that will be a continuing theme of our work.

[97] The journey started, particularly in relation to the detail of this session, nearly two years ago when, as part of our endeavours, we aspired to create a social enterprise in the centre of Llandudno that would serve as a fully functioning cafe and retail outlet and a visitor facility for people arriving in Llandudno at the central coach park. There was a derelict building on the site, which had been empty for about five years. Interestingly, on its history, a century ago it was a tin tab—an old tin tabernacle—used as a Baptist church. It fell into disrepair and was regenerated as a cafe on a couple of occasions, but it faltered and never actually proved its worth. The toilet facilities alongside it had also fallen into disrepair. The roof was in on both buildings and it was an eyesore to the whole visitor experience in Llandudno.

[98] This was a CAIS initiative, and the building was owned by Conwy County Borough Council's highways department, I suppose, and ultimately Mostyn Estates. We began the

business of actually acquiring the building on lease, finding the capital funding to refurbish it and then dealing with the planning issues. It is those three things that underpin everything that I suspect might be said this morning in respect of a project such as this. Myrddin may also have something to say about it, and I am sure that it applies to the North Wales Hospital, which is a hugely bigger project. You are juggling three things, principally: the acquisition of funding for the redevelopment; the acquisition of the building itself from whoever happens to be the owner, and there are multiple examples of that currently, with Colwyn Bay pier probably being the most notable; and the acquisition of planning consent that is associated with whatever you are going to do with the building.

[99] I was rather new to the whole business, but juggling those three issues has been at the heart of the dilemmas, problems, frustrations and, sometimes, the successes of what we do and do not achieve. We managed to get all those things in place for the cafe in Llandudno, which has been up and running now for exactly 12 months, and successfully so. It is a self-financing social enterprise with no revenue support, and we have trained 24 individuals through that cafe in the past 12 months and put at least half of them into full-time employment. That programme will continue. Within that, the lessons for me were particularly to do with the co-ordination of various departments associated with the planning issue. On this occasion, CAIS led the development, but it was very much in association with Conwy County Borough Council. I think that it would agree that, sometimes, the co-ordination between the various departments within the county was not as strong as it might have been, thereby resulting in some misunderstandings and lack of adherence to timescales for the planning permission, the various licences for entertainment and food, and so on.

[100] I come now, just in the opening statement, to the main project that we are now concerned with, which is a listed building in Colwyn Bay. I think that you have some handouts associated with it. This is a building that sits right in the centre of Colwyn Bay, on Station Road. It is about a century old, or maybe a bit more. It was the first major municipal building in the town, used also in its lifetime as a police station, a courthouse and as a range of administrative buildings for the Pwllcrochan estate, which covers a large part of the upper town. It is a very fine building with a significant heritage in Colwyn Bay. In the past 30 or 40 years, it has fallen into a significant state of disrepair. The ground floor is currently a public house, and the upper two floors are, broadly speaking, in a significant state of disrepair.

[101] On this occasion, the initiative came from the local authority's drug and alcohol team, which very inspirationally and creatively suggested that there was an opportunity here, because the building was for sale, to create another social enterprise in the middle of Colwyn Bay this time, building on successes elsewhere. With that, there was the potential to relocate some training and business development facilities, which were being done in different places, in a scheme which, overall, would be focused on regeneration, on individuals in the town and on creating employment opportunities, which has been at the heart of this. That is the scheme some 12 months in.

[102] This has been problematic to a much greater order in juggling the three components that I have mentioned. Interestingly, probably the least problematic has been garnering the funding, about two thirds of which is coming directly from the Welsh Government's substance misuse action fund, and the remainder from the townscape heritage initiative. Both are appropriate funders for the purpose of the building and the nature of its refurbishment, which will be to an extremely high standard, restoring the key features to their late Victorian heritage.

[103] The second component has been about the acquisition of the building, which is still in train. For in excess of 12 months now, I have been in a sensitive, delicate and uncertain negotiation with the private vendor on acquiring the building. That is a direct dialogue between CAIS Ltd and the vendor. Behind all that has been the prospect of obtaining

planning permission, which has taken around nine months. It is all very much a situation of the chicken, egg and whatever the third bit might be, because one thing has to follow the other. We cannot buy the building without planning consent because it would just be useless to us. We cannot achieve the planning consent without some certainty around funding—and there have been significant costs in getting to where we are. So, we have been trying to juggle those three things in a period of some uncertainty across two financial years, which I will come to in a moment, with some resistance in the area to the planning application. To cut a long story short, as of just two weeks ago, the planning application was granted. We hope to move forward with the building acquisition within the next month, with the invocation of the capital funding and a programme of redevelopment, opening probably around 12 months from now.

[104] I have probably gone on too long, but I must thank you for the invitation to come to talk to you as a committee today. It is interesting, and I am really grateful that someone understands that there are glitches with this, and that something might be done about them. This project is worth just over £1 million. From experience, my suggestion to you, as a committee, is that, for large-scale projects such as this, a level of co-ordination needs to be established somewhere between the Welsh Government and the local authority vested with a particular building, so that the chronological and funding timetable can be properly assessed and put in place, and some flexibility exercised, where necessary. Given that the capital funding was split over two years, we found ourselves in some difficulty a couple of months ago, transitioning from one year to the next. Given that the rules are tight around that, we entered into some difficulty getting consent for that. I am hopeful that that is now in place, but it was not an easy or particularly happy situation to be in. I think that I have probably said enough.

[105] **William Powell:** Thank you very much for an extremely comprehensive opening statement and for setting so much of this into context. For balance, I will ask our host today to sum up at the end of the session, later. We have a number of areas of questioning that we have identified and that we hope will tease out some of the issues that you referred to, and involve you fully. Thank you again very much for that, and congratulations on having secured that planning consent just a couple of weeks ago. When we were setting this meeting up, we would not have been aware that you had had that good news.

[106] Specifically on the funding issues, if I could kick off, to what extent is suitable funding available for the kind of projects that you have been involved in? I am particularly interested in the balance of funding, not just the initial capital costs, but also the core funding, the revenue, for those projects that you have been involved in that have gone on for some time. Myrddin, I wonder whether you could lead on that one.

[107] **Mr Davies:** Yes, good morning. The funding is the basic problem when you start a project such as this. For example, the total cost originally estimated by the experts who were called in was £2.3 million. It turned out to be £4.7 million. When we started going out to tender, for example, the scheme was worked out by theatre consultants—reputable people who drew up the plans with a high specification and so on. It was on the basis of that recommendation and specification that the lottery grant was made, so we were granted something like £2.3 million from the heritage lottery fund.

[108] As we went out to tender, tenders were coming back two or three times more than the original specification. There were desperate meetings in one of the rooms in the building—the only room that we could occupy at the time—on almost a monthly basis where we would say, ‘Okay, let us leave that’, and, ‘We’ll find the funding for that from somewhere else’, or, ‘We’ll reduce the specification, thus reducing the overall cost’. The result was that, at the end of the project, the contractors went into liquidation. We were left with a situation in which we had a building that was in a reasonable condition, but I will give you an example. In the

auditorium, which some of you have already seen, we had a state-of-the-art sound system with speakers and everything—and those people at the back will know all about this—but we had no microphones. They had been left out of the project and had to be funded from somewhere else. We had a fantastic stage area with a 25 counterweight fly tower and all the rest of it, but there were no drapes, no curtains. In a place like Rhos, where we have all the choirs and all the rest of it, there was not a single piano in the building. The chairs in the auditorium had been left out, for another project. The first thing I did when I joined the board in 1998 was go through the specifications to see what had been left out, and we ended up with a shortfall of about £460,000, and that was just for the basics that would enable us to open.

10.45 a.m.

[109] We were aiming for an opening day on the anniversary of the original opening on 21 September 1999. In January 1999, we had no hope of opening because the basics had been left out. So, we went back to the heritage lottery fund, but the rules were that we only got one bite of the cherry and that was our limit. I must admit that it was also early days for the lottery, and I think that they were on a learning curve, so they came back to us and said that there was no chance of us getting £460,000 as there was no way that they could do that. They told us to have another look at our list and see whether there was anything that we could do to bring it down. We did just that. For example, we bought two second-hand pianos from Siop Eifionydd—to give them a plug. They hire pianos to the National Eisteddfod for two years, after which, they sell the pianos off. Bryn Terfel bought the first, Annette Bryn Parry bought the second and we bought the third Schimmel grand piano. We saved some £10,000. Those of you who are musical will understand that, for a grand piano, it was just run in, but it was a saving. We then managed to reduce the sum from £460,000 to around £210,000. Instead of having two sets of drapes, greys and blacks, which are usual in a theatre, we ended up with just black ones, so we do not have any greys. We ended up with £260,000.

[110] The lottery then came back to us and said that they had found a way through and, apparently, they were allowed to give us up to 75% of the estimated cost and they had only given us 65% so far, so they could give us another £160,000. So, we got £160,000 and then we had to match fund that with another £50,000. The community council, through the kindness of its heart, gave us a loan of £50,000. We still have that loan hanging over our heads. It is held by the community council, which could have given us a grant, but, in its wisdom, decided to give us a £50,000 loan. With interest, that is now around £69,000, and we could be called on to pay it but for the goodwill of some of the local councillors. We could have gone to the wall within a few weeks. We are constantly having to do this kind of thing. We are funded by two bodies: a local authority, Wrexham County Borough Council; and a national body, the Arts Council of Wales. Wrexham council gives us some basic annual funding, which just about covers salaries. It does not, in fact, but it nearly does. We get project funding from the arts council for programme support, and it supports the manageress. Otherwise, we would not be open. At this stage in time, as I have explained, we could be closed in a month's time. Our finances are in such dire straits that we cannot continue. It costs approximately £800 a day just to open this building.

[111] **William Powell:** Thank you for giving us insight into the initial capital challenges that you face, and now the ongoing revenue side.

[112] **Mr Davies:** There was never a revenue settlement from the heritage lottery fund. That was the mistake. The heritage lottery fund in England gave three years' worth of revenue support to every project that it financed, but, in Wales, it did that only for certain projects.

[113] **William Powell:** So, that was limited at that stage.

[114] **Mr Davies:** Yes, we were on a hiding to nothing right from day one, quite frankly.

[115] **William Powell:** I want to open this up to Liz too, particularly in light of the ability of her project to sustain itself. Could you give some insights into how that has been achieved, because it is no mean feat?

[116] **Ms Doyland:** The cafe is probably the best example of how we are doing that at the moment. We have been lucky, in that we have had funding from the intermediate labour market programme, which has helped to fund the training placements for the 24 participants that we have had over the last 12 months. There have been good and bad sides, in that the management team there have had to train those participants up, which has been quite time consuming. However, once they have reached a certain level, they have then been able to help staff the cafe. We have a management team of four professionals there, who are a family team. The revenue from the cafe then helps to pay their wages. There is no outside funding for this project other than the money that it generates. We now have to push marketing as much as possible; we have just set up a website for the cafe, which I think came out of the set up fees for the cafe.

[117] **Mr Wolfendale:** The cafe is self-sustaining, as Liz said. The marketing continues, and is local in nature, with leaflet drops and so on. There is a website, and the cafe is on Facebook and Twitter—the usual things that go along with a package these days. It is very seasonal with regard to its use; we are coping with that after the first year. However, we are confident—and it is broadly in line with our business plan—that this will be self-sustaining.

[118] On the issue of a publicly funded project of this nature, an issue that has cropped up in Llandudno and Colwyn Bay is that there is some scepticism and resistance—even a little stronger than that, sometimes—about a social enterprise being a direct competitor to existing businesses. That is a relationship that needs careful attention. People feel that, because it is a charitable endeavour, our overheads are necessarily lower and so on, we represent unfair competition. It is surmountable, but it is a challenge, without question, to get comfortable with the community. We have learned some lessons in Llandudno that we are exercising in Colwyn Bay. However, I suspect that it is an issue that will return on this and other projects.

[119] **Bethan Jenkins:** Diolch am eith tystiolaeth ddiddorol. Rwy'n ymwybodol bod y profiadau wedi bod yn wahanol yn eich achosion penodol o ran cael gafael ar gyllid a'ch perthynas â Llywodraeth Cymru a Chyngor Celfyddydau Cymru. A ydych wedi cael unrhyw fewnbwn i'r Bil treftadaeth y mae'r Gweinidog, Huw Lewis, yn mynd i'w roi gerbron y Cynulliad? Mae pwyllgor yr wyf yn eistedd arno ar hyn o bryd yn mynd i edrych ar hynny yn y Cynulliad. A yw hynny'n rhywbeth yr hoffech ymwneud ag ef, a beth fydddech yn hoffi'i gynnwys yn y Bil hwnnw o ran eich profiadau gyda chynllunio neu eich profiadau o ran mynediad at gyllid, o feddwl am natur yr adeiladau hyn?

Bethan Jenkins: Thank you for your interesting evidence. I am aware that the experiences have been different in your specific cases with regard to securing funding and your relationship with the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales. Have you had any kind of input into the heritage Bill that the Minister, Huw Lewis, is introducing at the Assembly? A committee of which I am a member at the moment will be looking at that at the Assembly. Is that something in which you would like to be involved, and what would you like to include in that Bill from the point of view of your experiences of planning or your experiences of accessing funding, given the nature of these buildings?

[120] **Mr Davies:** Byddem yn croesawu cael cyfle i rannu ein profiad, ac efallai gael rhyw syniad a oes unrhyw le arall y gallwn gael cyllid ohono.

Mr Davies: We would welcome an opportunity to share our experience, and perhaps get some idea of whether there are any alternative sources of funding.

[121] One thing of which we should, perhaps, be aware is that we have had numerous reports on our situation here—reports commissioned by the arts council and by the local authority. That is fine; they just come here, they ask us their questions and they end up with a report at the end of the period that basically puts down on paper what we have told them we are aware of. Then they come out with a statement that there are grants available to support this kind of work. Lovely. Where? If we have got this sort of money to spend on expertise, it would be far better if those experts sat down with us and said, ‘Look, have you applied to so and so? There is money available in such and such a trust. We will sit down with you and work through the application’. You can see how thick the application form in my hand is. That is just one application form for £10,000. That is four or five weeks’ work for our manager, including providing quotations in triplicate and all of that business. It is necessary, but is it? The money being spent on experts coming to tell us what we already know is a waste. The assistance needs to be much more practical. There are people who really know their way around the grants system. There are grants available. There is also a certain language that you need to use in applying for grants. There is a grant-speak, as they say, and if you do not understand it or you are not completely au fait with it, it really leads you astray.

[122] **William Powell:** People need signposting and support.

[123] **Mr Davies:** Yes, that is the sort of support organisations such as ours need. We have one full-time manager and we have a technical manager. Everyone else on site is part-time, doing 16 hours a week, because otherwise they would go over their limit for benefits. That is the sort of staffing that we have for the whole building.

[124] **William Powell:** Joyce, I believe that you have some questions on local authority support, which ties in with this.

[125] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I do. Before I launch into those, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action is charged with the responsibility of doing the work that you have just outlined needs to be done, and it is supported in that by the Welsh Government. Have you approached the WCVA?

[126] **Mr Davies:** Yes, we have worked with the Association of Volunteer Organisations in Wrexham, AVOW. We have worked with it, but again it is about time between it and our people, and it does not always come up with the goods. It has come up with some. The other issue is that many of these things are projects. Our lighting board went, so we needed a new one. We worked with AVOW, got in touch with the landfill tax people, and managed to get a new board through the landfill communities fund, but it took us ages to do that. It bought us a new lighting board, but it did not pay the manager’s salary. That is where we are lacking. It is about core funding. We could do with a marketing person. That is one of our problems. We need bums on seats. We depend on that. We cannot get out there to distribute posters and marketing materials and do deals with local hotels and businesses. We need a marketing person, but we cannot afford one. We are not funded sufficiently. It is the core funding that is the problem.

[127] With regard to the work that we do in the community, we had school concerts on last week. We had more than 500 junior-school children over two nights and the place was full. On Saturday night, we had a local talent competition, which covered the whole of north Wales and Merseyside. There were people here from all over the place and the place was full. Next week, we have the local drama group production. We might get 50 or 60 people, but the place still needs heating and lighting.

11.00 a.m.

[128] If I may, I will quote something that came out of a meeting. The Wales arts review

was done in 2006; some of you were around then. There was an older gentleman sitting in the front row in Theatr Clwyd. Aneirin Davies, who was the chair of the arts council at the time, I think, was giving a talk, and this little voice piped up from the front row saying ‘Excuse me’. They were talking about the development of all the new theatres in Wales—fine, they are great and the Wales Millennium Centre is great, but he chimed in and said ‘Roses will bloom for short periods, the vase may add or detract from its beauty, but rootstock must constantly be nurtured in a stable and well-regulated environment’. That tells the whole story: without the basics, without community theatre and without community facilities, there will be no stars in the future.

[129] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for that. To come back to where we are now, because we are trying to talk about buildings and their restoration, in that context, did you have much contact with local government during the work that you have all been engaged in and, if you did, how helpful was that to you in delivering your projects?

[130] **Mr Wolfendale:** I ateb y cwestiwn mae Miss Jenkins newydd ei ofyn, ‘Dim eto’ yw’r ateb gyda’r corff treftadaeth. Fel Myrddin, rydym yn croesawu’r siawns i siarad gyda’r corff treftadaeth. Mae tipyn o broblem hefyd gyda’r cysylltiad gyda Cadw a’r corff treftadaeth. Roeddem yn aflwyddiannus yn ein cais am grant gan Cadw ar gyfer yr adeilad ym Mae Colwyn, felly mae problem gyda hynny.

Mr Wolfendale: To answer the question that Miss Jenkins just asked, the answer is ‘Not yet’ as regards the heritage body. Like Myrddin, we welcome the opportunity to speak with the heritage body. There is also quite a problem as regards the link with Cadw and the heritage body. We were unsuccessful in securing a grant from Cadw for the building in Colwyn Bay, so there is a problem there.

[131] On the subject of local government involvement, it is absolutely critical to both our projects. In general terms, we have found Conwy County Borough Council to be extremely supportive. As I mentioned in my preface, sometimes the co-ordination between different departments has been, it is fair to say, lacking in terms of an understanding of the project and the respective roles. So, we have had some small planning glitches with the cafe in Llandudno and a major hurdle to overcome by way of the planning debate in Colwyn Bay, which, frankly, was as much political as it was regulatory. However, as an overall approach towards this magnificent building, what we are trying to do in Colwyn Bay and what many others are trying to do, is follow the similar experience—and you may have heard about it—in Llandrindod Wells with the bakery building. It is likely, certainly for the foreseeable future, that this sort of work will be done through public grant or charitable grant funding, because private money is so hard to come by. In any event, the payback on that is likely to be prohibitive. That being the case, we would have welcomed, and maybe Myrddin would have, too—we have mentioned the WCVA, which can offer some advice—co-ordination at central or local government level in terms of the assimilation of the grants, given the trepidation about timescales for funding and planning. Liz has been at the heart of this—and she can correct me if I am wrong—and she has felt quite isolated and nervous at times, because it is a big weight of responsibility. You should speak for yourself.

[132] **Ms Doyland:** You feel out on a limb. You are expected to jump and you are told afterwards if you went wrong. You are not given much guidance—

[133] **Mr Wolfendale:** You are talking about some eye-watering amounts of money.

[134] **Joyce Watson:** You have touched on the planning systems and experiences therein. We would like, because we know that it is critical, to explore that a little more. If you have anything to add on your experiences with planning, we would like to hear about it—albeit briefly, because we are running short of time.

[135] **Mr Davies:** One of the problems that we have had with the building is that it is an old building, built in 1926. The severe snow and frost we had the winter before last penetrated the outer surface of the front of the building, which is a simulated stone construction, and now bits of it are dropping off. We are frightened that something will drop on clients' heads as they come in to see a show or something. It is one of those things that we are insured against.

[136] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am not sure that that is good marketing. [*Laughter.*]

[137] **Mr Davies:** Yes, well. We are now trying to get a suitable grant. Going back to the Cadw situation, Cadw will give us 40%, but we need to find the other 60%, and it is that that is killing the project.

[138] **Russell George:** Very briefly, have you faced any opposition from the local community to the project at all?

[139] **Mr Wolfendale:** We certainly have. In both cases, there has been scepticism and, going further, resistance. There has been a hue and cry about what we are trying to achieve. In our case, our client group is not an immediately popular or well-supported set of individuals, and that is something that we struggle with all the time as a charity, to get the message across about what can be done and what needs to be done. That is at the heart of the difficulties in what we are trying to achieve, as well as the issues to do with what is regarded as unfair competition.

[140] In the case of Llandudno, by dint of experience and what we believe we have achieved there, in terms of the better environment and facility, that has improved enormously and there is a better understanding all round of the overall benefit.

[141] **Russell George:** How did you manage the opposition?

[142] **Mr Wolfendale:** In both cases, my first step was to call in all the local town and county councillors to explain what we were trying to do and why. That proved beneficial, broadly speaking, in both cases. Let me just tell you this story. In the second one, the Colwyn Bay one, I said that I wanted to take it into the wider environment and asked whether they wanted me to go on the road to talk to local groups. The answer was, 'I think that we should put it in the newspaper', and we did that around Christmas time. I am not sure that that was a good idea. I do not know what was behind it, but it probably raised more problems than it solved in that it precipitated a long, drawn-out debate with people with vested interests, which probably would have been better done face-to-face than through the media. I noted a similar situation with the Llandrindod project and others. That is a difficulty.

[143] I do not regret for a minute going out and talking to people, because nobody can accuse us of not being directly engaged. There are two things, however. First of all, if this was a project that was not publicly sponsored and did not have our client group, there would be a lot of commercially sensitive issues that would go nowhere near the public domain. We do not enjoy the benefit of that at all. Secondly, it does politicise the issue in some ways, or gives an opportunity for politicisation, which is certainly what happened when we ended up doing this in the middle of the last election, and it got a little unpleasant at times, frankly.

[144] **William Powell:** As was the case in Llandrindod.

[145] **Mr Wolfendale:** Indeed. We have learned lessons from that all round, I hope, and we hope that both projects will prove to be successful in their own right despite that, and win the public support that they both deserve.

[146] **William Powell:** Thank you very much indeed for hosting us today in this wonderful

building, and thank you all for your contributions. You have really given us some insight into the struggles that you have faced and continue to face at the different stages of your projects.

[147] **Mr Wolfendale:** Thank you, Mr Cadeirydd. We welcome the invitation. It is nice to meet Myrddin again and to talk and it is really nice to know, from our point of view, that there are people who understand that there are some issues here and care enough to know that something needs to be done to help things along. Given that, I think that you will find that people will continue to want to come forward with some useful and creative projects. Diolch.

11.10 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[148] **William Powell:** The first petition under this item is P-04-402, which concerns council prayers. Russell, I believe that you want to open up the discussion on this one.

[149] **Russell George:** I have a minor declaration of interest to make in that I know the petitioner from Montgomeryshire and I have publicly supported what this petition asks for. This is a consequence of the Bideford judgment in February. Where previously councils in England and Wales had council prayers on their agenda, they are now not able to do so following legal advice. The Minister in England is changing the law to facilitate that. Some constituents of mine have written to the Minister on this issue and he has responded, in summary, by saying that there is no need to change the law and that there is still a legal way for councils to have prayers in council meetings.

[150] However, we have had some evidence from Jim Stewart, which we all have in our possession. I have looked through this information and I think that we should take it very seriously as a piece of work, because he has referenced extremely well his evidence from the councils. There were previously 12 councils across Wales that had prayers in council meetings, but they have all now taken them off the agenda. His evidence, which is very well referenced, shows how those councils have taken legal advice. So, in many ways, it contradicts the content of the Minister's reply to some of my constituents, which states that that is the case. We always write to the Minister first, so I think that we should write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities to seek his views on the petition. However, I would like us to include Jim Stewart's evidence and ask the Minister to comment specifically on his research. I am also keen that the committee should take some legal advice on this issue, because there is obviously a contradiction between what the evidence is saying and what I suspect the Minister, although he has not told us it yet, might tell us when he writes back to us.

[151] **William Powell:** Okay. Thank you very much for leading on that one. Obviously, we appreciate the trouble that the Reverend Jim Stewart has gone to in collating information regarding what is happening on the ground. Colleagues, are you comfortable for us to forward that in its entirety to the Minister for his edification and, hopefully, to inform his response to us? I see that you agree, so let us do that.

[152] **Russell George:** I did also suggest that we get our own legal advice on this as a committee.

[153] **William Powell:** Absolutely. That is something that we can pursue between now and the final meeting of the term. That is agreed. Good.

[154] The next petition is P-04-403, on saving Plas Cwrt yn Dre/Old Parliament House for the nation. This petition was submitted by Siân Ifan and collected 218 signatures. There is

also another associated petition with a further eight signatures. The petition calls upon the National Assembly for Wales

[155] ‘to instruct the Welsh Government to purchase Plas Cwrt yn Dre also known as Dolgellau’s Old Parliament House before this national treasure is sold on the open market and lost for ever.’

[156] As yet, we have not undertaken any work on this. What views do you have as to how we should proceed?

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** Credaf y dylem ysgrifennu at y Gweinidog ond hefyd, dywedais yn gynharach o ran y sesiwn drafod fod y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol yn edrych i mewn i’r mater hwn o ran y Bil treftadaeth, felly byddwn yn sicr yn meddwl y byddai’n dda pe bai’r deisebwyr yn gallu ymwneud â’r broses honno ac inni hwyluso’r broses honno oherwydd mae’n berthnasol i’r hyn sy’n cael ei drafod ar hyn o bryd.

Bethan Jenkins: I think that we should write to the Minister, but also, I said earlier in relation to the discussion session that the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee is looking into this matter in relation to the heritage Bill, so I certainly think that it would be good if the petitioners could be involved in that process and for us to facilitate that process because it is relevant to what is being discussed at the moment.

11.15 a.m.

[158] **William Powell:** Absolutely. We will write to the Minister and encourage these petitioners and others who have something to contribute to take full part in the run-up to the heritage Bill. Good. Excellent.

[159] The next new petition is P-04-404, on Aberporth unmanned aerial vehicle. This petition was submitted by Cymdeithas y Cymod and collected 534 signatures. It calls on

[160] ‘the Welsh Government to withdraw the support given for UK unmanned aircraft to be tested at Aberporth and to fly across a large area of Wales.’

[161] These aircraft are perceived to be a significant dangerous development in the weapons arsenal and are used all too easily, according to the petitioners, without taking into account the lives of innocent people that are often lost. Joyce, do you have any perspectives on this one?

[162] **Joyce Watson:** I have views on these aircraft that I have been asked for and have expressed many times. I support the drones that are up there, having lived in the area for many years. That is on the record, so it might as well be on this record, because that will offer you some consistency. That is my take on it. However, it is not about my take on whether I support them or not; it is about asking us as a committee how we move this forward. The petitioners are asking that we request the Government to withdraw its support, so it is about how we move that forward, which is, clearly, to write to the Minister.

[163] **William Powell:** Absolutely. In this case, the First Minister is the obvious port of call. He has got involved in some quite high-profile discussions around defence matters in the last week or so, and I think that this would be the correct course of action. Does that enjoy everyone’s support? I see that it does. Excellent. We will write to Carwyn Jones on that important matter.

[164] The next new petition is P-04-405, medieval manuscript of the laws of Hywel Dda. This petition was submitted by Russell Gwilym Morris with the support of 53 signatures. It is

worth noting that it was only open for signature for two days, and that is in the context of the urgency of this particular matter. The petition calls

[165] ‘on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to purchase the Medieval manuscript The Laws of Hywel Dda’,

[166] which is up for auction in just a few days’ time on 10 July at Sotheby’s. The petitioners are clearly very troubled by the danger of the manuscript going into the hands of a private collector and being denied to the nation. I wrote immediately to the Minister on that matter and I am awaiting his reply.

[167] **Russell George:** On what date did you write?

[168] **William Powell:** Last Thursday. I hope that we will have a response within the next 24 hours. There may be one waiting when we get back, but I shall chase—

[169] **Bethan Jenkins:** Dyna’r broblem gyda hyn. Rwyf wedi cefnogi’r ddeiseb hon. Y broblem yw’r amser rhwng pryd y bydd yn cael ei werthu ac ymateb y Gweinidog. Mae angen inni wthio hyn ymlaen, os yw’n bosibl. Rwy’n bwriadu codi hyn yn y Cynulliad yr wythnos hon, ond mae angen inni bwysu am ymateb. Nid wyf yn gweld beth arall y galleu ei wneud ar hyn o bryd.

Bethan Jenkins: That is the problem with this. I have supported this petition. The problem is the time between when it will be sold and the response of the Minister. We need to push this forward, if possible. I intend to raise this in the Assembly this week, but we need to press for a response. I do not see what else we can do at the moment.

[170] **William Powell:** This could be raised as an urgent item in Plenary tomorrow. This needs energy and urgent action, because time is of the essence. I think that we are all agreed on that. Excellent.

[171] The next new petition is P-04-406, against proposed marine coastal zones in north Wales, which relates to the controversial current proposals around MCZs in north Wales. This petition was submitted by Claire Russell Griffiths and has collected in excess of 2,686 signatures. It calls

[172] ‘upon the Welsh Assembly Government NOT to include any of the six proposed sites’

[173] that are named in the text that you have in front of you. There is a particular emphasis here on the economic impact that their introduction would have. Clearly, at present, a consultation is ongoing and all of us are probably being approached through e-mail and other routes by people with diverse views on this issue, but I propose to write, as a matter of course, to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development to flag up this petition and the obvious strength of feeling here, which we cannot not be aware of. I would also urge all the petitioners and those involved here to engage in the process directly and to have their say.

[174] **Joyce Watson:** It is clearly the case that these are proposals. We are in a consultation period and it has to be the case that people understand and are made aware of ways in which they can engage and express their views to that consultation process. So, in order to fulfil our role, we must make sure that they are aware of how they can do that, and I am sure that there are a number of ways in which that can be achieved. That is the very first thing that we have to do. Like every consultation, it is time limited and we do not want them—not to use a pun—to miss the boat on this. That is the most urgent thing that we can do.

[175] **Russell George:** I think that the fact that 1,186 signatures have been collected

demonstrates the strength of feeling. There is obviously a huge concern for the fishing industry, tourism and the economy of the area, and we should take this petition very seriously. As Joyce has said, a consultation is under way and we should make it very clear to the petitioners in writing back to them that we encourage them to submit their own submissions to the consultation. That should be a very clear message from the committee. You suggested, Chair, that we write to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development to seek his views on the issue, and I would support that.

[176] **William Powell:** Excellent. Are we all agreed on that course of action? I see that we are.

11.22 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[177] **William Powell:** We will first consider P-04-355 on the proposal to establish a Welsh cricket team. This was submitted by Matthew Richard Bumford and collected 187 signatures, calling upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to support the establishment of a Welsh international cricket team. We had the round table on this earlier on in the term and took oral evidence from a number of experts, including armchair cricketers, players and commentators, and that was very helpful. We have also received correspondence from Cricket Ireland and Cricket Scotland, which is included in our papers today, as you will have seen. The petitioner has submitted a recent news article showing the level to which Wales is already competing as a national side in the Carmel Euro Twenty20 tournament. In addition to that, the petitioner has been very busy and has submitted further evidence on the funding that has been available in the case of Scotland and Ireland, and we have the opportunity through links to follow that up. In that wider context, what do colleagues think would be a sensible way forward on this one?

[178] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid oeddwn yn rhan o'r drafodaeth yn y pwyllgor—roedd rhywun arall yno yn fy lle—ond deallaf ei fod wedi cyffroi pobl ac ennyn trafodaeth ehangach. Efallai y gallwn ni gael trafodaeth ar lawr y Senedd er mwyn i fwy o Aelodau'r Cynulliad ymwneud ag e. Hefyd, os oes grwpiau o fewn y Cynulliad—efallai grŵp trawsbleidiol newydd—a fyddai'n hoffi edrych mewn i hyn, efallai byddai hynny'n ongl i ni hefyd fel pwyllgor.

Bethan Jenkins: I was not part of the discussion in the committee—someone else was substituting for me—but I understand that it has excited people and engendered a broader discussion. Perhaps we could have a discussion on the floor of the Senedd so that more Assembly Members could get involved. Also, if there are groups within the Assembly—perhaps a new cross-party group—that might like to look into this, that could be an angle for us as well, as a committee.

[179] **William Powell:** That would be a very good idea. If we can investigate the practicalities of a Plenary debate, we can then look to that being delivered in the autumn, after the current cricket season. That would be a good way of focusing things. If we could get all the papers that have been part of this drawn together as a briefing paper, and if that could be done with the launch of the cross-party group on sport in which we are both involved, I think that that would make a lot of sense and, hopefully, it would be a sensible and useful early subject for that group. Do you agree with that as a way forward? I see that you do.

[180] Moving now to P-03-085, Surgeries in Flintshire. It is appropriate that we should consider this during our visit to north Wales. This may be the longest-standing petition—

[181] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is as long-standing as I am.

[182] **William Graham:** Okay; so, we are maturing together. The petition was submitted by Gillian Robinson in February 2008—early in the third Assembly—and collected 412 signatures at that time. The frustration that the petitioners felt at that time is evident in the wording of the petition before us. The perspectives of the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Assembly Member for this area are included in our papers today. In the light of what Lesley Griffiths has to say, what do you think would be the best way forward?

[183] **Bethan Jenkins:** Credaf y dylem dynnu popeth at ei gilydd, rhoi'r wybodaeth i Aelodau'r Cynulliad lleol a'u hannog i gymryd rhan mewn trafodaethau gyda'r byrddau iechyd lleol ac os oes problemau yn y dyfodol, efallai y galleu ailystyried hyn gyda'r deisebwyr. O ystyried hynny, dylem yn awr gau'r ddeiseb hon.

Bethan Jenkins: I think that we should bring everything together, give the local Assembly Members the information and encourage them to take part in discussions with the health boards and if there are problems in the future, perhaps we could reconsider this with the petitioners. Given that, we should now close this petition.

[184] **William Powell:** That is probably the sensible way forward. So, we agree to forward the latest information to the local Members. I urge that we include the four regional Members for north Wales because they will have a perspective on issues across the wider Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board area.

[185] Our next petition is P-03-221, Improved NHS Chiropody Treatment. This was submitted some time ago in 2009 by the Cynon Valley's 50 Plus Older People's Forum and had the support of 49 signatures, calling on the Welsh Government to deliver a greater commitment to chiropody services. We have the correspondence from the Minister, which we received some time ago; we also have the more recent comments from the petitioners on that. In addition, we note the recent announcements regarding the new basic foot care standards that local health boards must adhere to. So, in the light of that, we have a couple of options: we could write to the Minister on the two outstanding points that have been raised and close the petition when we receive the response, if it is a favourable one. What would you suggest?

[186] **Bethan Jenkins:** Dylem ysgrifennu yn ôl ac yna cau'r ddeiseb oherwydd mae safon 6 yn sôn am '*basic foot care*', felly efallai y byddai pedair awr yn iawn ar gyfer triniaeth syml. Hoffem glywed yr hyn sydd gan y Gweinidog i'w ddweud am hynny. Pe bai mwy o arbenigedd yn ofynnol, efallai y byddai angen inni ystyried hyn ymhellach, ond mae hynny'n ymddangos yn rhesymol i mi, o ran y ffaith bod y driniaeth yn syml ac yn fwy sylfaenol yn hytrach nac arbenigol. Credaf mai dyna un o'r prif bryderon.

Bethan Jenkins: We should write back and then close the petition because standard 6 mentions 'basic foot care', so perhaps four hours would be fine for a simple treatment. I would like to hear what the Minister has to say on that. If more specialism were required, then perhaps we would need to consider this further, but that seems reasonable to me given that the treatment is simple and is more basic rather than specialist. I believe that that is one of the main concerns.

[187] **William Powell:** Yes, that is probably one of the best ways for us to approach this. If we write to the Minister for health, stressing those two points, hopefully, we will be in a position to close this petition and it can be seen as having played some part in securing that improvement, which is what we are about, at our best.

11.30 p.m.

[188] The next petition is P-03-222 from the National Osteoporosis Society. This was submitted back in July 2009 and has 22 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales,

[189] 'to urge the Welsh government to fully implement the Falls and Fractures Standard in the National Service Framework for Older People'.

[190] We have an update on the national service framework from the Minister, as we requested. The petitioners have had sight of this, but, as yet, have not commented.

[191] **Joyce Watson:** We need to wait for that then.

[192] **William Powell:** I am not quite sure when we forwarded that to the petitioners.

[193] **Ms Phillips:** It was about two weeks ago.

[194] **William Powell:** Perhaps we could chase that up. It is a positive story. If we can chase that up, we might be in a position to move to close the petition by the last meeting of this term.

[195] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, can we chase that up and ask the petitioners whether they are satisfied for us to consider closing it?

[196] **William Powell:** Yes, we should indicate what our plan would be.

[197] **Joyce Watson:** So that we know.

[198] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. Good.

[199] The final petition on the health side today is P-03-318, on cross-border maternity services. It was submitted in March 2011 by Helen Jervis, and it collected 164 signatures. We have correspondence from Andrew Cottom from the Powys Teaching Local Health Board. We also have the maternity services strategy and implementation plan. So, we have quite a body of feedback from the LHB on this. Clearly, there is a real problem here in that the main decisions are being taken outside Wales, which limits things. Nevertheless, we can apply pressure.

[200] **Russell George:** I think that there was frustration that the Welsh Government had not been more active at an earlier stage. However, given the decision at the hospital and the fact that this is now beyond the control of the Government, there does not seem to be much more we can do as a committee. However, I think that we should at least write to the petitioners to state the view that the committee has taken this as far as it can.

[201] **William Powell:** This is the natural point to close it.

[202] **Russell George:** We should ask the petitioners whether they are happy for us to close the petition. I assume that they would write back to agree to that, but I would not want to close it straight away.

[203] **William Powell:** I think we should state our intention to close it rather than seeking their approval.

[204] **Russell George:** Yes, we should state our intention to close it and ask them to make us aware if they feel that we could take it further in any other way.

[205] **Joyce Watson:** I have been involved in the issue of cross-border maternity services a lot longer than anyone else around this table. There has been some good feedback here, and there has been some very positive engagement, recognising that, because this is a cross-border

issue, there were particular issues facing this region when they decided on the other side of the border—the side we do not control—to move those services further away from those who need them. I am quite happy to do what you have said, namely to write to the petitioners to say that we have done everything that was requested and that if they are happy that we have gone as far as we can, which I think we have, we will close the petition. I am quite happy to support that. They can come back to us as Members representing that area at any time. If they want to open a new petition at any time, they can do that.

[206] **William Powell:** Of course. This issue needs ongoing monitoring—

[207] **Joyce Watson:** But we do that anyway.

[208] **William Powell:** Absolutely. It is part of the day job.

[209] **Russell George:** I think, Chair, that, as a committee, we can agree that this is still a real issue in mid Wales. There are some real concerns about these issues. In writing back to the petitioners, we can state the view of the committee that we recognise these big concerns as genuine.

[210] **William Powell:** We certainly would not want to create the impression that it is not an ongoing issue that needs careful monitoring by closing it. We would just be saying that this has gone the distance in terms of our capacity to handle it at this time.

[211] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed. It is the process, because this is a process.

[212] **William Powell:** We now move to P-04-366, on the closure of Aberystwyth day centre. This petition was submitted by Pamela Ellis in February, with 10 signatures. An associated petition has the support of more than 6,000 signatories. We had the privilege of visiting Aberystwyth a couple of weeks ago and were joined by Elin Jones as the local Assembly Member, who has been active on this particular matter. We have all had an opportunity to study the note of our visit that I referred to briefly at the last committee meeting. It was a special opportunity to engage particularly with the service users to get their differing perspectives. There were some divided opinions there. It almost fell into thirds: a third was positive about the new facilities, a third had significant criticisms and a third was fairly philosophical, grateful for what it provides, but regretting aspects of what has been lost. We are where we are with the development. As Ellen ap Gwyn, the new leader of Ceredigion council, made quite clear, there is no way back to the former day centre, and that is well understood by pretty much everybody involved.

[213] However, we prioritised a number of issues in our previous discussion on this and I think that we could restate that today. I propose that we write to Councillor Ellen ap Gwyn, as leader of the council, highlighting the issues that were flagged up to us on the day of our visit and asking that they be monitored extremely closely and, where possible, implemented in the coming months in terms of the physical improvements. The other issue that found favour with the leader of the council was an externally validated inspection on the running of the centre. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales was referred to as the appropriate body to take that work forward.

[214] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ni fyddwn o blaid cau'r ddeiseb nes inni anfon y nodyn hwn i'r cyngor, achos mae'r mater hwnnw o gael asesiad annibynnol o fewn blwyddyn yn bwysig. Dywedwyd hynny wrthym ac rwy'n hyderus y bydd y cyngor yn cadw at ei air, ond buasai'n dda ei gael yn ysgrifenedig bod **Bethan Jenkins:** I would not be in favour of closing the petition until we send this note to the council, because that issue of getting an independent assessment within a year is important. That is what we were told and I am confident that the council will keep to its word, but it would be good to have it in

y cyngor yn mynd i wneud asesiad annibynnol o'r gwasanaethau i weld sut y gallai ehangu ar y gwasanaethau. Un o'r pryderon oedd nad oedd pobl yn gallu cymdeithasu gyda'i gilydd ac nad oeddynt yn cael eu rhoi yno drwy'r gwasanaethau cymdeithasol, felly nid oeddynt yn teimlo eu bod yn rhan o'r gymuned. Efallai, drwy gael asesiad, gallwn weld sut y mae'r cyngor yn datblygu gwasanaethau. Nid wyf eisiau ei gau heddiw heb roi cyfle i'r cyngor ddod yn ôl atom a rhoi rhai o'r atebion hyn ar bapur.

writing that the council is going to carry out an independent assessment of the services to see how it could expand on the services. One of the concerns was that people were not able to socialise with each other and that they were not placed there through the social services, so they did not feel that they were part of the community. By having an assessment, we may be able to see how the council is developing services. I do not want to close it today without giving the council an opportunity to come back to us and give us some of these answers in writing.

[215] **William Powell:** It would be premature to close it at this time, because there are a number of issues, and you flagged several of them up, on which we need an answer. Are we happy with that course of action? In the letter, we will express our thanks and appreciation for the trouble that the representatives went to to host that visit. Are we happy with that combination of actions? I see that we are

[216] **Bethan Jenkins:** Efallai y gallwn roi copi hefyd i Elin Jones a'r Aelodau sy'n cynrychioli'r rhanbarth.

Bethan Jenkins: Perhaps we can also send a copy to Elin Jones and the Members who represent the region.

[217] **William Powell:** Yes, we can send it to the four regional AMs, two of whom are present, and to Elin, naturally. That can be done.

[218] The next petition is P-04-369 against the proposed Cardiff to Newport coastal path. This was submitted by Roger Price in February with the support of 14 signatures, calling

[219] 'upon the National Assembly for Wales, to urge the Welsh Government and the Countryside Council for Wales to terminate the Proposed Coastal Path around Wales, at Cardiff.'

[220] We have been in correspondence with the Minister on this issue, in which it was evident that he did not share the view of the petitioner, but set out the consideration that had already been given to this issue in the wider area. We have now received correspondence, as you will have seen, from the RSPB as well as the petitioner's response on this issue. Joyce, do you have any comments on this?

[221] **Joyce Watson:** First of all, I declare that I am a member of the RSPB for the record. Where do we go, if anywhere, on this? I do not know.

[222] **William Powell:** Perhaps it would be more comfortable, again, for the rest of us as well to reflect that the process has run out on this one, has it not? I cannot see any productive use in extending consideration of it, because we are at the end of the line. The Minister's view is there and we have the RSPB perspective; that is reassurance enough, is it not?

[223] **Joyce Watson:** I think so.

[224] **William Powell:** Are you all content on that? I see that you are. In that case and in the light of that unanimous view, we close this petition.

[225] We move now to an update on P-04-378, on extending the Gower area of outstanding natural beauty. This was submitted by the Gower Society in March with one corporate

signature from that organisation, which has an extensive membership, calling

[226] ‘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’.

[227] Given that the request had been in play for some considerable time, since 2005, there was evidence that members of the society, including its president, were getting more than a little impatient with the lack of progress here. As you will have seen, we have correspondence from the CCW on this, setting out its reasons why this cannot go forward at this time. The Minister had previously told us that this was entirely a matter for CCW.

[228] I am very concerned about the explicit message in this letter from the chief executive of CCW. It appears that there is a question mark about the ability of the organisation to operate effectively and appropriately in the run-up to the creation of the single body. This runs contrary to the assurances that we have been given about business continuity. Russell George and I sit on the Environment and Sustainability Committee, and we have had a considerable opportunity to look at these issues in greater depth. I am concerned about this and I would wish to write to the Minister highlighting the concerns that relate to this petition, but there are also wider concerns that we need to take seriously. I welcome your views.

[229] **Bethan Jenkins:** Mae tuedd gan y Llywodraeth gyda'r cyngor celfyddydau a mudiadau fel hyn i'w cadw ar hyd braich, ond wedyn mae Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru yn dweud, 'Rydym yn dilyn y llythyr cyloch gwaith sy'n dod oddi wrth y Gweinidog'. Felly rydym angen bod yn glir: naill ai mae Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru yn cael cyfrifoldeb llawn neu mae arweinyddiaeth wedi dod oddi wrth y Llywodraeth ynglŷn â'r hyn y mae'n gallu ei wneud a'r hyn na all ei wneud.

Bethan Jenkins: There is a trend for the Government to keep the arts council and similar organisations at arm's length, and yet the Countryside Council for Wales then says, 'We're following the remit letter issued by the Minister'. So, we need to be clear: either the Countryside Council for Wales has full responsibility or the Government gives it directions as regards what it can do and what it cannot.

11.45 a.m.

[230] Os oes sefyllfa o broblemau ariannol yn awr, yn wyneb y ffaith eu bod yn mynd i uno, bydd angen i'r Gweinidog gyfeirio at hynny. Wrth gwrs, mae cyfle yn y Bil amgylcheddol i ddatblygu'r cysyniad hwn o ymestyn yr ardal o harddwch naturiol yng Ngŵyr, ond, wedyn, mae angen i rywun cymryd cyfrifoldeb. Ar hyn o bryd, nid wyf yn gweld bod y Gweinidog yn barod i gymryd y cyfrifoldeb hwnnw, felly mae angen inni geisio cael hynny'n glir i ni fel pwyllgor ac i'r deisebwyr.

If there is a position of financial difficulties now, in the light of the fact that they are going to be amalgamated, that needs to be referred to by the Minister. Of course, there is an opportunity within the environment Bill to develop this concept of extending the area of natural beauty in Gower, but, then, someone has to take the responsibility. At the moment, I do not think that the Minister is willing to take that responsibility, therefore we have to get clarity on that as a committee and for the petitioners.

[231] **Russell George:** Chair, I support your views. There is no point reiterating what you said; I support your views. We should write to the Minister along those lines, and we should also make sure that we send correspondence to the Environment and Sustainability Committee. We would want to keep the committee updated, of course, as we would expect it to keep us updated on issues that it is interested in and which we may be looking at.

[232] **William Powell:** Absolutely. We should write to the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, naturally, on this matter.

[233] **Bethan Jenkins:** What is the timing for the environment Bill? That is mentioned as a way to sort this situation out. I was just wondering what the timeline for that was.

[234] **William Powell:** We should make sure that we build that in and get clarity on the exact proposed time frame for that from the Minister.

[235] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is the same with the heritage Bill. They could then get involved via that process as opposed to knocking at closed doors.

[236] **William Powell:** That is right. We probably need to make sure that the president of the Gower society and the others are also kept alert to this, because they are obviously really concerned about this matter, which has been in train now for seven years. This letter seems to be a recipe for sclerosis for another two or three years, which is troubling.

[237] We will now move on to petition P-04-360, the Penylan notspot petition. It was submitted by Penylan residents back in January of this year with the support of 348 signatories and with the involvement of our colleague, Jenny Rathbone AM. The committee has received an update from BT on the timing of this, and it is due to go live in December of this year. In the light of that, we seem to have two options: we can either close the petition now or park it until we have confirmation that this work is in hand. I would welcome your steer as to which route you would prefer to follow on this one. Clearly, it looks as though progress is imminent, but it is not there yet.

[238] **Bethan Jenkins:** We have the date now, have we not?

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

[240] **Bethan Jenkins:** In the light of that, we should close it.

[241] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, we should close it.

[242] **Bethan Jenkins:** If it does not happen, I am sure that they will let us know.

[243] **William Powell:** Let us move to close, as that makes good sense.

[244] The final petition is P-04-364, fibre optic for rural areas. This was submitted by Kai Childheart in February of this year with the support of 17 signatures. It reads:

[245] ‘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.’

[246] During our journey across Wales in the last 24 hours, we have had a varying degree of service ourselves. That is a useful experience and a reality check for us. What are your views as to how we should take this one forward?

[247] **Russell George:** Given the Minister’s response, we should close the petition, Chair.

[248] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. That is all that we can do.

[249] **William Powell:** Following procedure, that is what we must do. Let us do that.

11.49 a.m.

Papur i'w Nodi
Paper to Note

[250] **William Powell:** We have a paper to note on waste and incineration, which you have with you. That is noted.

[251] Thank you for your attendance and contributions. I thank everyone within the wider team who has made this fixture possible. I am extremely grateful to the entire team—the technical, security, translation teams and every other aspect. I would also like to put on record our thanks to our hosts today for having us in this wonderful building, which I hope we will have an opportunity to have a brief look at after the meeting. I advise that the next meeting takes place on 17 July back at the Senedd. Following this meeting, the petition on marine conservation zones will be presented to us. Diolch yn fawr.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.50 a.m.
The meeting ended at 11.50 a.m.