



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

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

**Dydd Mawrth, 19 Chwefror 2013**  
**Tuesday, 19 February 2013**

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir  
trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

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

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Elin Jones) The Party of Wales (substitute for Elin Jones)
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.01 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.01 a.m.*

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

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

[2] I welcome everyone to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. We have received no  
apologies for absence, but Bethan Jenkins will be arriving shortly to substitute this morning  
for Elin Jones. Normal housekeeping arrangements apply.

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

[3] **William Powell:** With no further ado, we will move on. The first new petition is P-  
04-456, Dementia—This Could Happen to you. It was submitted by Helen Jones and  
collected 1,413 signatures. It reads:

[4] ‘We, the undersigned, call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh  
Government to:

[5] i. Bring to an end the discrimination against dementia sufferers in Wales who apply  
for N.H.S. Continuing Care Funding, by allowing for the cognition category of need (known  
as the domain) to go up to the level Severe in the Welsh version of the Decision Support Tool.  
This would bring it in line with the English version; and

[6] ii. Direct Local Health Boards to implement the National Framework for N.H.S.,  
Continuing Care Funding correctly in terms of patient eligibility and without regard to  
budgetary constraints.’

[7] As yet, no action has been taken on this. We are due to receive this petition at 1 p.m.

today; I hope that colleagues will be available to attend that event, to meet Helen and to discuss a little further the background to this petition. I am aware of Helen's campaign already as a follower of hers on Twitter, and I know that some colleagues may also be. A lot of the material that she posts is extremely poignant and personal, given her experience. There are a number of potential actions. Russell, you have indicated that you want to speak.

[8] **Russell George:** I think that we should seek the views of Dementia UK and the Alzheimer's Society. It would be good to write to them to ask their views on this petition. Also, as a matter of course, we should write to the Minister.

[9] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I would add to that that we have an opportunity to speak to Helen Jones later today and, potentially, to invite her to give evidence. Whether that is immediately or whether we will await the outcome of the approaches that you suggested is a matter for us to discuss. Joyce, do you have any views on this at the moment?

[10] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I do. I have no problem whatsoever with inviting the petitioner to give oral evidence to the committee. However, it might be best to do the other two actions first.

[11] **William Powell:** We are agreed on that, and then we can come back, in the light of the responses, to see Helen again in person before the committee.

[12] The next petition is P-04-457, The Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign, which was submitted by the Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign. The petition reads:

[13] 'We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to cease the use of National Health Service budget for religious care and to work with the leaders of organised religion to establish a charitable trust to fund religious care in the hospitals of Wales.'

[14] As yet, we have not undertaken any action on this petition, and in our papers today, which we have had an opportunity to study, we have further information from the petitioner. I would propose that, on this one, we write to the Minister for Health and Social Services, seeking her views on the matter. That is fundamental. Then, depending on the response that is forthcoming from Lesley Griffiths, we could potentially look at launching a focused consultation exercise on this.

[15] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Fine.

[16] **William Powell:** Russell, do you have any views on this at this time?

[17] **Russell George:** No, I do not.

[18] **William Powell:** Okay. We will go forward on that basis and see what comes back from the Minister for Health and Social Services.

[19] The next petition is P-04-458, Keep Further Education in the Public Sector. This petition was submitted by the Crosskeys branch of the University and College Union and collected 246 signatures. It reads:

[20] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure:

[21] 1. Further education, along with publicly funded assets, is retained within the public sector.

[22] 2. Colleges continue to be bound by the national agreements in FE, such as the national pay scales.

[23] 3. The introduction of an all-Wales contract for FE lecturers.

[24] 4. Welsh Ministers do not dissolve colleges and give colleges the ability to transfer the property, rights and liabilities to another body.'

[25] As yet, we have not undertaken any work on this. As you will have seen, there is a body of supporting information that has been supplied by the petitioner to inform our consideration of this. I would propose, in the first instance, that we write to Leighton Andrews, the Minister for Education and Skills, seeking his views on the petition. Are Members agreed that that is a sensible way forward?

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

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

[28] **William Powell:** Okay, let us do just that.

9.07 a.m.

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

[29] **William Powell:** The first petition is P-03-317, Hijinx Funding for Arts. This petition was submitted by Mike Clark, chair of the Hijinx trustees, back in March 2011. It collected 1,893 signatures, and was clearly motivated by the substantial reduction in funding that Hijinx Theatre, alongside other arts organisations, suffered at that time. We last considered this as a committee in February last year. It is difficult to believe that it was almost 12 months ago, at nearly the equivalent meeting last year, that we last studied this. At that time, we agreed to await the publication of the report by the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales. We have copies of that document and the associated information in our papers today. I am also aware that we have, in our team, someone who served on that task and finish group. Joyce, could you lead briefly on this important issue?

[30] **Joyce Watson:** The fact is that there was a realignment of the Arts Council of Wales's funding, and there were also reductions in its budget. Hijinx was clearly one of the losers, in as much as its budget was reduced. It was not the only one to lose out, of course, although it argues that its case was a specific one. We undertook a short inquiry, and made eight recommendations, I believe, to the Government, which are outlined in that report. The issue here was specifically about funding, and about whether Hijinx was able to continue delivering, in the way that it had previously done, the things that it wanted to deliver through its various projects. I think that we now ought to go back to Hijinx to see whether it has managed to obtain additional funding from anywhere else. The report is here and it speaks for itself. Fundamentally, this is a funding issue. We could now see whether it has managed to resolve its funding through other means. I think that that is perhaps what we could do.

[31] **William Powell:** Thank you very much, Joyce. The piece of work that you and your colleagues produced in your task and finish group was substantial and it showed how complex the issue is. There were so many contributors, and I am aware that Val Hill, artistic director of Hijinx, and Mike Clark, the lead petitioner, gave oral evidence in March of last year. One thing that was obvious was that there were a number of different views as to which groups preferred long-term funding and which valued the availability of special-project

smaller pots and so on, but all groups agreed that, understandably, a lack of funding was constraining their work, and Hijinx has been adversely affected. It would be sensible to get back in touch with Mike Clark as the lead petitioner to get an assessment of where the company stands now. I visited its website yesterday, and I am aware that it has ambitious plans for continuing its work this year. It is seeking a number of people to contribute in different ways, not just financially, but in terms of giving up volunteer time and making skills available. It continues to do very important work. However, because of the time lag that has been, we are not clear how it stands now with regard to its finance. It would be sensible for us, as a committee, to write to its representatives to get an update as to where it stands. Clearly, it does valuable work, as do other groups that have contributed to the study that Joyce served upon the task group for. Russell, do you want to contribute?

[32] **Russell George:** No, that is fine.

[33] **William Powell:** Okay. We agree on that action to seek feedback from Hijinx as to where it stands, and we will make sure that that letter gets sent off later this week.

[34] We will now move on to petition P-04-407, Save Kennard Court Sheltered Accommodation for Older People. This petition was submitted by Georgina James in July 2012 and collected 19 signatures. This has been a matter of considerable controversy in Torfaen. It also appears to be quite a complex case. I advise committee members that we have received a substantial body of additional information recently from our colleague Lynne Neagle, the Assembly Member for Torfaen. In the light of that information and the fact that it is too much to absorb now in today's meeting, since it arrived yesterday afternoon, I propose that we defer this item until the next committee. Do colleagues agree? Are you happy with that approach? I see that you agree.

[35] We will now move on to petition P-04-366, the Closure of Aberystwyth Day Centre. This petition was submitted by Pamela Ellis in February 2012 and collected 10 signatures, but associated petitions that have been collecting signatures in and around the Aberystwyth area collected approximately 6,000 signatures, so it is a substantial concern in the area. Colleagues will recall that we undertook a rapporteur visit, and Bethan Jenkins and I were present on that occasion, as was Elin Jones, the Assembly Member for Ceredigion. We were hosted at the day centre by the leader of Ceredigion County Council, Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, and her cabinet colleague responsible for social services. We had the opportunity to meet some of the service users at the new facility in the basement of the town hall. We last considered this petition in November last year when we agreed to write to Ceredigion County Council. We have a response and there was an apology from the officer at Ceredigion council that it has taken some time for our November letter to receive a response, which we received in late January and is in our papers today.

9.15 a.m.

[36] As you will see, we have details of the proposed independent review, which was an outcome of the round table discussion that we had with senior officers and the political lead at Ceredigion council on that occasion. So, we have the name of the independent reviewer and some details of the proposed form that the review will take. As colleagues will have seen, we also have some feedback from the petitioners. They raise some issues of concern as to whether the person who has emerged as the independent reviewer is, in fact, sufficiently independent, because various professional bodies that operate within the social service world lead back to the overall president of the professional body to which the independent reviewer belongs and whom is actually the head of Ceredigion social services. So, in their view, they have identified a potential conflict of interest. I would value colleagues' views on that.

[37] I would also like colleagues' views on the ramp and the covering of the ramp, which

is exposed to the elements and which, in light of recent weather, has been a particular concern to service users and their relatives. Do we need to write more emphatically about the importance of that being addressed sooner rather than later, for the benefit of the service users? I have spoken for too long. I would appreciate colleagues' views on this matter.

[38] **Joyce Watson:** I first visited the day centre some two years ago when they were in the original day centre and being charged with being moved. I heard all their frustrations at that time. I think that what we see on paper is still an awful lot of frustration and almost disbelief at the way in which they feel that they have been and continue to be treated as individuals in this new day centre. They have raised a number of issues and we need to find out if there is any reason for them and if they are going to be addressed. We have to go back to the petition, which called on us to ask for them to remain where they were at that time, which is not the case anymore. Our hands are somewhat tied as to how far we can stray beyond the wording of the petition. We have to be upfront and state that to the petitioners. Having said all that, I am concerned about what I read, as we all are, and we need some assurances. We will need to await the findings of the independent review and see what those findings are, but at the same time, we will have to raise the allegations that are being made by the petitioners that they do not feel that that independent review, or the person heading it, is independent enough. As we have been made aware of that, we have to investigate those allegations by writing a letter to raise them with the relevant body, which is Ceredigion County Council.

[39] **William Powell:** Indeed. To be specific about what I said earlier, the independent reviewer is identified as Sheila Wentworth. She is a member of the All Wales Adult Service Heads, or AWASH, and Mr Parry Davies, the head of Ceredigion County Council social services, is president of that body. It is in that context that they are suggesting that there may be some complication or conflict of interest; prima facie, I think that we can appreciate why they might think that. I support, therefore, what you have suggested, Joyce, which is that we write to seek some clarification on that particular point.

[40] In terms of the issue around protection and the prioritisation of providing some shelter for the access ramp, I know that you were present during those discussions, Bethan. Do you think that we should raise that issue in this context?

[41] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not think that that needs to wait for the review; I thought that we were raising that as being an imminent threat. We do not get good weather all the time in Wales and people are getting wet as they access the building.

[42] I am still concerned that they have to move activities from the centre when more people are involved in them. We cannot change that, as Joyce said, but for the future, we have to raise awareness of the fact that they need to consider space when they are arranging these things.

[43] The independence of the chair is also something that we need to raise, but because we have seen the timelines and the fact that they want to finish the work by March, it is going to be difficult now to effect change with regard to ensuring the independence of the chair. However, we should raise those concerns again.

[44] **William Powell:** I think that we need to seek reassurance on those matters, given that there is concern among the petitioners. They obviously treat this matter with great seriousness, as they naturally would. I think that we are agreed on those actions, and I hope that we are then in a position to get a more timely response from Ceredigion County Council to our next letter, given the time-lag that we suffered the last time around.

[45] **Joyce Watson:** The other issue that jumped out at me was that visitors are barred

from entering the day centre, so there is no social interaction. For many people, this is the only time that they leave their homes and they hope to have some interaction with as many people as possible.

[46] **William Powell:** We need some clarification on what the house rules are in that respect, because that is one of a significant number of points that the petitioners are making. We need to drill down as to what is happening there. I see that we are agreed on that.

[47] We move on to petition P-04-424, Retain services at Neath Port Talbot Hospital. This petition was submitted by Carolyn Edwards in October 2012 and has the support of 193 signatures. Associated petitions collected locally secured a further 5,000 signatures. We last considered this petition in December 2012 and agreed to write to the Wales Deanery. The response that we have received, together with further information from the petitioner, is among our public papers today. We understand that this forms part of the wider review of service provision in the south-east Wales area. Sorry, I meant to say 'south-west Wales'; my geography was letting me down rather badly there. We need to view this in the round. I would, therefore, propose that we await the outcome of that consultation. However, on this matter, I would like to defer to the local regional Member to give a view.

[48] **Bethan Jenkins:** It is, obviously, important to us all, because all the services are changing. However, I am unhappy with the response from the deanery in relation to the exact wording of the petition, with regard to the fact that it was discussing this for over two years. We were told at the very last minute about these changes. If the deanery had been discussing the changes for two years with regard to the problems with recruitment, then the least it could have done would have been to consult with local people prior to taking these services away from Neath Port Talbot Hospital. I would like it to be made clear to the Wales Deanery that it cannot try to fob us off with that type of response given that Lesley Griffiths has said in the Chamber that she regrets that it made that decision without prior consultation. I think that we should await the formal public consultation, but ask that the health board takes this petition into regard as a way of including those who have very strong feelings locally, now that services have moved from Neath Port Talbot and that waiting times at Morriston Hospital are growing by the day due to the fact that there are no services at Neath Port Talbot Hospital.

[49] **William Powell:** Also, people are removed from their support base if they have to travel extra distances from their homes.

[50] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. We cannot speak to the health board yet, because the statutory consultation will be launched soon, but I think that we need to write to the Wales Deanery with regard to the timeline and how AMs and local people were only notified a day before it made the announcement, and with regard to ongoing concerns in the local community.

[51] **William Powell:** If discussions to scope this out have been going on for 18 months or two years, there does seem to be an extraordinary lack of transparency and engagement. I recall well how this appeared to come from nowhere.

[52] **Bethan Jenkins:** I had a phone call from the then chair, Win Griffiths, at 4 p.m. on the day before they were making the announcement. That is not how you should treat people. We should be given the respect of enough time to inform constituents of the changes so that everyone can adapt to them.

[53] **William Powell:** Local community representatives such as us need to be afforded that courtesy, so that we can manage the situation.

[54] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that we should keep the petition open, so that we can track the changes, as we did with the Llanelli petition. We want to treat every petition on these

issues fairly.

[55] **William Powell:** Indeed. We have been stressing the importance of consistency in the whole round of health issues.

[56] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have not seen the community health council's response to you; it is not in my folder. I was wondering whether we could make that point to the CHC and ask whether it has a view on the lack of consultation.

[57] **William Powell:** I would have thought that that is a prime issue in which it should take a keen interest. We can certainly look into that. I sense that there is a consensus that we should await the running of the consultation, and respond to the deanery on the points that Bethan Jenkins has outlined.

[58] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am sorry, but I am passionate about it.

[59] **William Powell:** That is fine.

[60] We move on to P-04-343, Prevent the destruction of amenities on common land—Anglesey. As colleagues will recall, this petition was submitted by J.E. Futter in November 2011 and collected 156 signatures. It calls upon the Welsh Government to examine ways to prevent the destruction of amenities on common land, including, for example, the Marian common in Llangoed, Ynys Môn. We last considered this petition in July 2012, and we agreed to await the outcome of the investigation by the Rural Inspectorate for Wales. We have since received correspondence from Alun Davies, the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and European Programmes, which is included in our public papers. The petitioners have received a copy of that correspondence. As we have not heard further from them, it would be sensible for us to follow up with a chaser letter, seeking their views on that correspondence, and be guided as to the way forward in the light of whether we hear from them. It may be that we are nearing the end of the road on this matter, but the petitioners deserve the opportunity to comment on the Deputy Minister's views as expressed in his recent letter. Do colleagues agree? I see that they do.

[61] Moving on to P-04-385, this is a petition regarding balloon and lantern releases. This was submitted by Bryony Bromley in May 2012 and collected 564 signatures. It reads:

[62] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to legislate against the intentional release of balloons and Chinese (or Air) lanterns into the air.'

[63] We last considered this petition back in May of last year and updated the petitioners on work being undertaken by the Welsh Government. We have received a recent update from John Griffiths, the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, which is in our public papers today.

9.30 a.m.

[64] **Russell George:** This is an interesting petition. I have looked at the letter from the Minister to the committee, and the petitioner should be pleased that the Minister has written to us saying that research will be undertaken on this. Therefore, at this stage, all that we can do is write to the Minister and ask him to keep us updated when that research comes to its conclusion.

[65] **William Powell:** It would be useful for us to have a time frame on that particular piece of work. Hopefully, given the importance of this issue for the petitioner and her colleagues, it will be a relatively short, focused piece of work that does not take too long and



that gets some answers. That is a sensible way forward. Do colleagues agree that we respond to the Minister thanking him for the information provided up to this point and requesting that we are kept informed on progress? I see that we are agreed on that.

[66] To move on, P-04-398, the Campaign for a Welsh Animal Offenders Register, was submitted by Mari Roberts and Sara Roberts in June 2012, and collected 69 signatures. It calls for the creation of an animal offenders register, as a central Welsh database of those convicted of related crime.

[67] We last considered this last November and agreed to conduct a written consultation, which we launched before Christmas. We had a somewhat disappointing response—there were only seven responses. As you will have seen, these are included in our public papers. We also have correspondence from the Association of Chief Police Officers on the issue. We have agreed to undertake a site visit to an animal sanctuary to inform our views. As I said, we had a somewhat disappointing response. Would it be sensible, at this point, for us to seek the views of certain stakeholders who have not, as yet, taken the opportunity to respond? There are a number of stakeholders whose views would be useful. I am thinking of the Welsh Local Government Association, the Federation of Small Businesses, Dogs Trust and Cats Protection, along with similar organisations whose views would be welcomed here. On reflection, the timing of our consultation, in the run-up to Christmas, may have been at a busy time and may account for the rather disappointing response—I am speculating. Would colleagues be happy for us to undertake a chaser on this issue, to give people one more opportunity this side of the new year to inform us? I see that we are agreed.

[68] The other thing that occurred to me on reviewing this matter was that we should write to the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, because this is a cross-border issue—we have a land border with England, which is his area of responsibility. Potentially, we could extend that to writing to the relevant Scottish Minister and the relevant Minister at Stormont to seek views on the approach in Scotland and the north of Ireland. While we are about it, and if colleagues do not consider it excessive, we could write to the relevant Minister in the Irish Republic as well, because there is quite a trade of livestock, sheepdogs and other animals with the Irish Republic. Potentially, if we viewed this as a British isles issue, it would be adopting a belt and braces approach. I welcome colleagues' views.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, I have no problem in supporting you writing to other jurisdictions within the UK and Ireland to see if they have done anything with this. It might help, if they have looked at it, to inform our brief consideration of this issue. They may have done work that could save us an awful lot of time. As far as I am concerned, that makes good sense. I agree with extending an invitation to those organisations that have not responded to our request for information, but we need to put a time limit on it. We cannot keep rolling it over.

[70] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I was thinking about something like the middle of March, at the outside. That gives people enough time to turn things around. I suppose that the WLGA would cover, for example, the dog warden service within Welsh local authorities. That would open one dimension.

[71] **Joyce Watson:** It usually does, as long as the authority has not outsourced it.

[72] **William Powell:** Absolutely. That is a problem in some situations. We have a raft of actions there that could push this further forward. At that time, we could consider a potential site visit to a sanctuary.

[73] **Russell George:** I agree with your comments.

[74] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have one comment. I know that we are writing to all these different bodies, but you sit on the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly—

[75] **William Powell:** Yes, as does Joyce.

[76] **Bethan Jenkins:** The Blue Cross has said that, if there was a register for Wales, it would be difficult to police people going to other parts of the UK or Ireland. Perhaps you could try to work on a discussion or motion with colleagues in BIPA, so that you could discuss it further with parliamentarians.

[77] **William Powell:** Yes, it might be sensible to promote that as a BIPA motion, or to get it on the agenda of one of the relevant committees. That is a good thought. We can raise that with the head of our delegation, David Melding, the Deputy Presiding Officer.

[78] **Bethan Jenkins:** That would make sense, because if there was a register for Wales, on which I am yet to be convinced, you could dodge it by going to England or Ireland to buy a pet.

[79] **William Powell:** That is, potentially, an apt issue for the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly to look at. Advocating that we cast our net of correspondence to the different jurisdictions, as I suggested, is very much in the same spirit. We can consider a site visit, and, in light of the responses that we have already received and those that we are anticipating, we can consider taking oral evidence on the matter at a suitable time in the fairly near future.

[80] Moving on to P-03-144, Guide Dogs for the Blind—Shared Space, this was a fairly early petition in the life of this committee. It was submitted in June 2008 by Guide Dogs for the Blind and collected the support of 10 organisations, which puts substantial weight behind it. We last considered this petition back in October 2012 and wrote to the Minister and the WLGA. Their responses are included in the papers and we also have further information from the petitioners. It is timely that this comes back on our agenda today, after a period in abeyance while other work was being undertaken, because the Active Travel (Wales) Bill was introduced yesterday. We have an opportunity to write to the Enterprise and Business Committee to ask it to take these issues strongly on board. I am conscious that that creates work for one of the members of this committee, who serves on the Enterprise and Business Committee, but I think that it would be useful for that committee to take this on board when scrutinising the proposed Bill.

[81] **Joyce Watson:** As the Member who sits on that committee, I think that that is eminently sensible. Also, the Minister's reply says that he will take on all the views. He responded positively and said that he would take those views on board. So, equally, we as a committee can take them on board in that inquiry. That is a good way forward.

[82] **William Powell:** Excellent. In addition to writing to Nick Ramsay, Chair of the Enterprise and Business Committee, we should write to Carl Sargeant, Minister for Local Government and Communities, and request that he keep us updated on the issue. Do you all agree? I see that you do.

[83] We now move on to P-04-370, Petition for the improvement of Psychic and Intuitive services in Wales. This was submitted by Ant Edwards in March 2012 and collected 38 signatures. It called upon,

[84] 'the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to raise awareness with providers of Psychic services and the public of the Consumer Protection from unfair Trading Regulations 2008.'

[85] We last considered this petition in October, when we agreed to write to the Welsh heads of trading standards and the Welsh Local Government Authority to flag up this issue. We did not ask for a response, but we found one forthcoming from Powys County Council trading standards, which is very heartening, and it is in our public papers. I would appreciate your thoughts on this matter. In the work that we have done, we have achieved a level of greater awareness of the issues, which is at least part of what the petitioners were seeking in bringing it forward. Do colleagues have any observations on this matter? We are probably close to closing the petition. It is not clear that we can achieve a great deal more than we have done, but if colleagues have any views, that would be helpful.

[86] **Bethan Jenkins:** Have the petitioners been made aware of the responses?

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

[88] **Bethan Jenkins:** Have they made any comments on the responses?

[89] **Ms Stocks:** No, we have had difficulty locating the petitioners, using the contact details that we had. We have not had any response.

[90] **William Powell:** Okay. It is possible that they have moved on, or that they are facing other challenges. I was not aware that we have had difficulty engaging with them. So, in the light of that, it would be wise to close the petition. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are, so we will do just that.

[91] Petition P-04-393 is entitled Llanymynech and Pant Bypass Action Group, which was submitted by Duncan Borthwick in May 2012 and had the support of 84 signatures. We are aware, from the text of the petition and other information that has been forthcoming, of how major an issue this is in this border community between Montgomeryshire and Shropshire. We last considered it in October 2012 and wrote to a number of agencies, including the Highways Agency, Shropshire Council, West Mercia Police and the Minister for Local Government and Communities, whose responses are in our papers. We should write to Powys County Council on this issue and to the cabinet member, who is Councillor Barry Thomas, to seek his views on it. Russell, I am conscious that you have taken a lead interest in this matter. What are your thoughts on this one?

[92] **Russell George:** I have met with the petitioners and the wider campaign group on a number of occasions and there is a degree of frustration that this has not moved on more quickly. I think that the letter from Shropshire Council, which gave a detailed response, is very interesting. In summary, I think that it is very much in support of a bypass. Given that we have had such a comprehensive response from the council, it would be very productive, as you suggested, Chair, to write to Powys County Council to seek its views as well. On the letter from the Minister on 5 November, he has written to his colleagues in area 9 of the Highways Agency in Birmingham. I am not sure what area 9 is, but he has written to his colleagues there and he has not yet received a response. I am not sure whether the delay is with the Minister's office or the Highways Agency in Birmingham, but it would be worth us contacting the Minister's office to ask whether they have received a response, or whether the letter has gone to the Highways Agency. I agree with your suggestion, Chair, that we write to Powys County Council to seek its views.

9.45 a.m.

[93] **William Powell:** Would it also be appropriate to write to the Member of Parliament for North Shropshire whose seat this falls into?

[94] **Russell George:** That would be Owen Paterson. He attended a meeting that I also attended on this issue.

[95] **William Powell:** Maybe, as a courtesy, it would be sensible to write to him. He is informally aware of this.

[96] **Joyce Watson:** I do not mind being courteous to anyone; I would rather be courteous than not be courteous. However, if we are going to go down the road of writing to MPs because we think that it courteous in this case, are we not saying that we have to write to MPs in every single case? That is the only thing that I have to say on this. I understand that it is a cross-border issue, but I do not want the committee to be hostage to fortune in the near future when MPs will claim quite rightly that we have written to one MP and we have not written to the others. My word of caution is this: do not write to the MP unless you are going to write to them all. If you are going to write to them all, then you can write to him. That is my view.

[97] **William Powell:** I am grateful to you for making that point. The only reason that I suggested this was because that part of the marches does not have what may be perceived as the benefit of this level of government and, therefore, given the cross-border nature of it, it may be appropriate. However, I take on board your views, and I am clear that Russell has already engaged with him on this issue and maybe that is more than sufficient.

[98] **Russell George:** If it is helpful, I will write to the MP.

[99] **William Powell:** That is probably the best way forward. Ultimately, we may find ourselves having to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, because the Highways Agency is ultimately answerable to him. However, I appreciate Joyce's intervention, because it is a safeguard against inconsistency.

[100] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could be writing to MPs about everything, because it affects all of the petitions. It is a dangerous way to go.

[101] **William Powell:** The point is well made.

[102] **Bethan Jenkins:** They do not write to us on things.

[103] **Russell George:** The difference is that Pant is in England and Llanymynech is in Wales. This is very much a cross-border issue, but I take the points that were made.

[104] **Bethan Jenkins:** You can write to him. I am sure that you will do it well.

[105] **Russell George:** I will write to him.

[106] **William Powell:** Russell can wrap in all those concerns in his correspondence.

[107] We will now move on to petition P-04-402, Council Prayers. This petition was submitted by the Reverend Alan Hewitt in July 2012 and it collected 155 signatures. It calls on the Welsh Government to amend the Local Government Act 1972 to support local authorities in this particular matter. We last considered this as a committee back in October 2012, and we agreed to write to the Welsh Local Government Association, One Voice Wales and National Parks Wales, which is the representative body of the three national parks. We have received responses from the WLGA and National Parks Wales, and those points are in our papers. It is a matter of some disappointment that we have not heard back from One Voice Wales. Have we had late correspondence on that?

[108] **Ms Stocks:** No.

[109] **William Powell:** I know that this matter is of considerable concern in some town and community councils. I suggest that, at this stage, we should probably pick up one of the points made by the WLGA in respect of writing to the Minister for Local Government and Communities requesting that he issues a guidance note summarising the legal advice that he has received, if he is prepared to share that with us.

[110] **Russell George:** It would be useful to hear the views of One Voice Wales, so perhaps we could send a further letter, asking for its views.

[111] **William Powell:** We will write to chief executive of One Voice Wales. It would be a useful chaser.

[112] **Russell George:** The letter from Steve Thomas, the chief executive of the WLGA, was comprehensive and balanced. He is saying that a degree of clarity is needed. We have had different advice at this committee, the Welsh Government has received different advice again, and county councils have taken different stances on this. I think that we should certainly write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities, asking him to summarise the legal advice from his point of view, as the WLGA has requested.

[113] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think that it would be useful if we could secure some guidance from the Minister for Local Government and Communities giving the wider legal advice that he has received, if he is willing to share it.

[114] **Russell George:** Perhaps we could share with the Minister, in our correspondence, the letter from the WLGA, along with the documents submitted by the petitioners because they provided quite substantial evidence. I do not think that it was a petitioner, but someone else wrote to the committee, having done their own research and contacted the clerk of each county council throughout Wales. Perhaps we could include that, as it would be helpful to the Minister in making his conclusions.

[115] **William Powell:** Yes. I think that local authorities would value that clarity because people are bound to be anxious that they might be open to challenge or whatever. It would assist considerably. Are there any other views across the table on this one at present? I see that there are none.

[116] We will now move to petition P-04-416, North-South Rail Services. This petition was submitted by Neil Taylor in October 2012. He collected 19 signatures. He is urging the National Assembly to bring pressure to bear on the Welsh Government to

[117] ‘work with Arriva Trains to increase the number of direct express rail services between Holyhead and Cardiff.’

[118] We first considered this petition in October and we wrote to Carl Sargeant, Minister for Local Government and Communities, and to Arriva Trains Wales. We have responses from both in our public papers. It is also heartening to see, among the other comments that he makes, the Minister for Local Government and Communities stressing that he is a regular user of these services on his way to and from his constituency on a weekly basis. So, that is very useful.

[119] It would probably be helpful if we were to write back to Carl Sargeant including the specific points that have been made by the petitioner regarding the difficulties around timetabling and the linking of connecting services, asking him to consider these matters in further detail. Do colleagues think that that would be a useful way forward?

[120] **Joyce Watson:** There is also, Chair, an inquiry into integrated transport being undertaken by the Enterprise and Business Committee as we speak.

[121] **William Powell:** That is ongoing work, Joyce.

[122] **Joyce Watson:** I am a member of that committee.

[123] **William Powell:** Is that piece of work being done by the whole committee?

[124] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. It has been quite a significant piece of work on integrated transport, which this mentions, in a way.

[125] **William Powell:** Indeed.

[126] **Joyce Watson:** So, you can have sight of that soon-to-be published piece of work. However, I agree that we should write to the Minister by all means.

[127] **Bethan Jenkins:** Arriva said that it was happy to meet with the Welsh Government. Do we know whether Arriva and the Welsh Government have met specifically to discuss this issue?

[128] **Ms Stocks:** We are not aware of that. We could find out.

[129] **William Powell:** We could build that into our letter to Carl Sargeant.

[130] **Ms Stocks:** Yes.

[131] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could then understand the situation. Arriva's letter is quite positive about looking into it. If we do not know how those discussions went, it is hard to judge.

[132] **William Powell:** Absolutely. That makes a lot of sense. Let us do that. Also, given what Joyce has just flagged up, we should also write to Nick Ramsay as Chair of the Enterprise and Business Committee to alert him to the petition, if we have not already done so. I do not think that we have.

[133] **Ms Stocks:** We have not.

[134] **William Powell:** Perhaps we could formally request what Joyce has just offered: that it is wrapped into the consideration of the committee's work.

[135] **Bethan Jenkins:** Has that not finished?

[136] **Joyce Watson:** It has finished now.

[137] **William Powell:** I see; it has already finished.

[138] **Joyce Watson:** The piece of work has finished. What I am saying is that you might want to read it when it is published.

[139] **William Powell:** Okay. That is fine. I did not realise; I thought that it was still ongoing.

[140] **Joyce Watson:** No.

[141] **Bethan Jenkins:** Perhaps we could refer it to the petitioner and see whether any of the issues there are relevant.

[142] **William Powell:** I would hope that some of them will be. Thank you very much for that suggestion, Joyce.

[143] We now move to petition P-04-426 concerning the introduction of a mandatory 40 mph speed limit on the A487 at Blaenporth in Ceredigion. This petition was submitted by Aberporth Community Council in October 2012, calling on the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to introduce such a speed limit in the community. We last considered this petition in October, and we wrote to Carl Sargeant, the Minister for Local Government and Communities, Ceredigion County Council and Dyfed-Powys Police, and we have their responses here. The fact that we have a speed limit review under way must be positive news for Aberporth Community Council. I propose that we write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities seeking a time frame and an update on that review, and also to seek confirmation that it will be carried out in this current financial year.

[144] **Joyce Watson:** I did a piece of work on reduced speed limits outside schools just before we broke up for recess. As a result of that piece of work, I found that Ceredigion was at the bottom of the pile in terms of reducing speed limits. This is a trunk road, and it is an area I know extremely well because I go to Cardigan and up to Aberaeron regularly. It would be quite dangerous to ask children to cross that road, because it seems that there are a few factors driving this. One of them is the closing of the local school, if I remember correctly from reading the papers, so the children are now asked to access a bus stop on the other side of the road to catch the bus to school. That changes things significantly.

[145] When we write to the Minister, I ask that we make him aware of all the additional information that has come to light from the petitioners to us when he is undertaking that review, because that would be of significant importance and interest to the Minister.

[146] **William Powell:** That is a really useful point, because I have done similar work recently on issues around safe routes to school. The fact that children have to cross a busy trunk road to access transport to take them to a school that is no longer in the immediate community but in an adjacent community is a real point of danger, particularly at the start of the day and at the end of the day when children's focus is perhaps elsewhere. So, that is a really useful point. Do colleagues have any other observations on this one? I see not. I am sure that it would be valuable to write to Carl Sargeant with these specific points, particularly in trying to drill down to know the time frame of this review. We will also make sure that we keep the clerk of Aberporth Community Council apprised of developments.

[147] The next petition is P-04-428, Alternative energy for street lighting. This was submitted by Ethan Gwyn in October 2012 with the support of 22 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government

[148] 'to convert streetlights on the trunk road system in Wales to an alternative energy source and to issue guidelines to the local authorities requesting day convert local streetlights to alternative energy.'

[149] We first considered this petition back in October 2012, and we wrote to the Minister for Local Government and Communities and the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development because of the natural cross-over between portfolios on this issue. We have the response from the Minister for Local Government and Communities in our papers today. We also agreed to undertake a short piece of work on this issue, starting with gathering evidence from local authorities across Wales. We have been unable to identify such local authorities that are currently drawing on alternative sources of energy for street lighting. However,

energy lighting in north Wales and south Wales is procured through the two purchasing groups that are linked to Électricité de France, EDF, which provides certification that it is green energy supplied in accordance with the green energy tariff. All local authorities in Wales are covered by these contracts. At this stage, it might be useful for us to write to Steve Thomas at the Welsh Local Government Association to seek its views on this petition. What do colleagues feel is appropriate here? I shall go gently on the issue of issuing correspondence across the border in light of the earlier caution, but I think that the WLGA would clearly have a useful view to express on this one. Russell, do you have any thoughts on this one?

10.00 a.m.

[150] **Russell George:** No.

[151] **William Powell:** Okay, so let us do that. We will write to Steve Thomas seeking his views on this. Clearly it is a matter that would have real benefits if it could be taken forward more widely.

[152] Moving on to P-04-438 on issues around shopping access, which was submitted by Mencap Cymru and Ysgol Erw'r Delyn in November 2012 and had the support of 55 signatures. There were a number of very specific actions that the petitioners were seeking in respect of improving and guaranteeing better access for the widest range of shoppers to our high street facilities. We first considered this as a committee back in November 2012, and we wrote to the Minister for Local Government and Communities and the WLGA. Their responses are within our papers. Also, the petitioners have invited us as a committee to go out with them in Cardiff to gain first-hand insight into some of the experiences that they have on a daily basis. I am minded to accept that invitation, and I think that it could only be of benefit for us to go out to get that first-hand knowledge and insight, which would inform our consideration of the petition. I would very much value colleagues' thoughts on this.

[153] **Joyce Watson:** I am quite happy to go out, but our time here in Cardiff is somewhat restricted—our free time. I am happy to go out to gain the experience of users, but we would have to do it within a committee slot. That is the only time that would be available to me in Cardiff, and I am sure that my colleagues and you, Chair, might be in the same position.

[154] **William Powell:** Clearly, it needs to be timetabled appropriately. Time is obviously at a premium, as we know because of other issues that have recently been brought to our attention about the potential rescheduling of committee and so on. We cannot just book a whole slice of time, but at the same time there is real value in this and we have to find time, as you suggest.

[155] **Russell George:** I am happy with that approach in principle, Chair. I just think that we need to co-ordinate appropriate times outside the meeting.

[156] **William Powell:** I am sure that that approach would get unanimous support. Let us do that, and then in the light of the experience that we gain, we may well have further particular issues to share with the Minister, and possibly also with the WLGA. There would be real merit in doing that, and I look forward to doing so.

[157] We will take agenda item 3.16 later—that is petition P-04-414 on Welsh Jobs—so I will just re-order the agenda and move on to P-04-446, Business Rate Relief for Welsh Charity Shops. This was submitted by the Charity Retail Association in January 2013, and this and associated petitions have collected 22,000 signatures. I am sure that colleagues, like me, will have continued to receive approaches from various charities, individual charity supporters and so on regarding this matter, but also from other businesses with different perspectives. It is clearly an issue that raises considerable interest and considerable passions



around Wales and beyond. We note the petitioner is actually based in England, but has extensive support across Wales.

[158] We first considered this petition in our January meeting, and we have written to the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science—the correspondence is among the public papers. At this stage, clearly, we are awaiting the decision of Mrs Edwina Hart, Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science, on this matter. I propose that we write to her to ask her department to keep us updated on her decision making on this issue, because that is not going to be far away now, I suspect. I see that you are all agreed.

[159] We turn now to P-04-396, Emergency Life Support Skills (ELS) for Wales's Schoolchildren. This petition was submitted by the British Heart Foundation in June 2012. An associated petition collected over 400 signatures. This petition calls on the National Assembly

[160] 'to urge the Welsh Government to make ELS skills training, including vital cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) a compulsory part of the curriculum at secondary schools in Wales'.

[161] We last considered this back in October. We wrote to the Children and Young People Committee, and we also wrote to the Children's Commissioner for Wales. We have the correspondence with both of them in our public papers.

[162] Again, we have a clear response from the Minister that he has no plans to review the personal and social education framework at this time. However, I am of the view that it would be sensible for us to re-engage at this point with the petitioners, to get their considered view as to whether they could add any further value to the consideration of this petition in the light of the position that the Government is adopting. Do colleagues think that it would be useful to write once more to the British Heart Foundation on this matter? I think that it would be rather hasty to close it at this time. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

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

[164] **Bethan Jenkins:** We in the Children and Young People Committee are doing an investigation into qualifications. I wonder whether that is something that could be included in the amended Welsh baccalaureate. They are perhaps doing some elements of it already, but as it is to be amended, there may be a compromise, if it cannot get into the PSE framework. I am just throwing it out there, because we seem to be struggling with how to take it forward.

[165] **William Powell:** That is an interesting point, because the Welsh baccalaureate does include issues to do with community engagement and a wider awareness, and I think that that would be—

[166] **Bethan Jenkins:** It might be, or it might not.

[167] **William Powell:** That is an interesting avenue to pursue, I think, if we could give some thought to that. We will write to the petitioners and, perhaps separately, scope out whether or not there is some—

[168] **Bethan Jenkins:** Perhaps we could do a bit of research to see where they are at with that, because I am not 100% certain myself.

[169] **William Powell:** That would be interesting, and it may be appropriate to have some informal discussion with our colleague Keith Davies, as he was involved in the genesis of the Welsh baccalaureate. He may have some thoughts to share on the matter and some relevant interest. Good.

[170] We turn now to P-04-441, Gwaith i Gymru—Work for Wales. This petition was submitted by Cerith Rhys Jones in December 2012 and it collected a 124 signatures. It is promoted by Plaid Cymru Youth and it takes up the issue of the Welsh unemployment figures, calling on the Welsh Government to put

[171] ‘positive steps in place to ensure a brighter future for this generation of young people.’

[172] We wrote in December to Jeff Cuthbert, the Deputy Minister for Skills. We had quite a positive response from him—it is quite an in-depth and thoughtful response. I suggest that we write back to the petitioners with a copy of Jeff Cuthbert’s response to seek their views. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are. Good.

10.09 a.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o  
Weddill y Cyfarfod**

**Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from  
the Remainder of the Meeting**

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

*the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(ix).*

[174] Are all Members content?

[175] **Russell George:** Chair, we have not discussed item 3.16.

[176] **William Powell:** Are colleagues content that when we consider item 5 we include 3.16, because of the sensitivities around it? I should have made that clearer. Are Members content? I see that you are. Thank you very much.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.  
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.10 a.m.  
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.10 a.m.*