



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 30 Ebrill 2013
Tuesday, 30 April 2013

Cynnwys **Contents**

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol
Updates to Previous Petitions

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi 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

Elin Jones	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Matthew Richards	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior 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] Welcome to the last Petitions Committee meeting for April. Participants are welcome to speak in Welsh or English as they wish and are able, and normal housekeeping conditions apply. We have no apologies this morning; we have a full complement of Members. We move straight to agenda item 2, which is the consideration of new petitions.

9.01 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[3] **William Powell:** The first petition before us today is P-04-475, Wanted—Buses for Meirionnydd. This petition was submitted by Barbara Snowball, with 174 signatures collected. The petition reads as follows:

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

[5] Review the funding for rural bus services to ensure adequate levels of service for the whole of Gwynedd but particularly south Meirionnydd.

[6] Consider funding to be ensured for additional services to improve access to health services, education, and employment, and thus support the economy and tourism of the area.’

[7] So, the aspirations are very clearly stated. As yet, we have not taken any action on this petition, but we have received, as Members will have seen, some additional supporting papers from Barbara Snowball, the petitioner. At this stage, I would propose that we write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport to bring the petition to her attention and to seek her views. Are colleagues agreed on that approach?

[8] **Joyce Watson:** I agree with that. The only other thing, Chair, is that I am in that area on 13 June, which I think is a Thursday.

[9] **William Powell:** Would it be in order for you to meet Ms Snowball?

[10] **Joyce Watson:** I would be quite happy to meet a small group of people, if you can help organise that around the diary appointment that I already have. It might be on 14 June.

[11] **William Powell:** Excellent. It would be really useful if you were prepared to undertake a rapporteur role in that context.

[12] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and I will feed back to the committee.

[13] **William Powell:** That would be helpful. Thank you very much.

[14] We now move to the next petition, P-04-476, Restructuring in National Museum Wales. This petition was submitted by the Public and Commercial Services Union, with 1,716 signatures collected. The petition reads as follows:

[15] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reconsider its funding settlement for National Museum Wales, with a view to protecting the Museum’s services and the jobs, pay and conditions of its staff. The freezing of the National Museum’s grant by the Welsh Government has led to cuts of up to £2.5 million being announced, along with restructuring proposals, which would see the loss of some 35 posts, potentially detrimental impacts for more than 160 staff and the possible loss of allowances, resulting in a 20 per cent cut in take-home pay, for some of the Museum’s lowest-paid employees. We believe that the proposed cuts threaten not only the living standards, jobs and security of the National Museum’s loyal staff but the unique services that they offer to the people of Wales and the one and a half million visitors that come every year, including school and educational visits.’

[16] I should say that I have also very recently received, and I believe that colleagues have as well, a representation from another trade union that represents a slice of the employees there. I do not have the text with me, but we will ensure that that is built into the consideration of this because the views expressed in that were very supportive of this petition. We will make sure that that is built into the record and into our consideration of proceedings. I am sure that we are all content with that. Are there any thoughts as to how best to proceed with this one?

[17] **Joyce Watson:** I think that we ought to write to the Minister for Culture and Sport to get some views, in the first place.

[18] **William Powell:** Ahead of writing to the museum authorities?

[19] **Joyce Watson:** Well, maybe at the same time.

[20] **William Powell:** Okay. So, we will write a letter to the Government Minister, John Griffiths, Minister for Culture and Sport, and to the senior management at the museum, because they are implicated in the wording of the petition in terms of the decisions that they have so far made. That is a good set of initial actions.

[21] The next petition, P-04-477, Support for the Control of Dogs (Wales) Bill, relates to a fairly substantial recent petition presentation by Councillor Dilwar Ali and his supporters. This petition was submitted by Councillor Dilwar Ali and he collected 14 signatures, but an associated petition has collected 1,119 signatures. There is also a strong level of support from

the Communications Workers Union and a number of postmen were present at this presentation, several of whom had suffered attacks by dogs in the course of carrying out their job. The petition reads as follows:

[22] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to proceed with the Control of Dogs (Wales) Bill. We, the undersigned, residents of Wales, call on the Welsh Government to proceed with its Control of Dogs (Wales) Bill in tackling the issue of dangerous and menacing dogs and not rely on the piecemeal proposals of the UK Government set out in its draft Anti-social Behaviour Bill and initially explained in the its White Paper “Putting Victims First, More Effective Responses to Anti-social Behaviour”.’

[23] In the substantial support text, Councillor Ali refers to his strong support for the Welsh Government’s statement on the advantages of a proposed dog control notice, or DCN, and the benefits that the petitioner considers that that would bring in terms of it being a better fit and a more specific set of measures for the control of dogs, rather than it being blurred—which I think would be fair to say from the petitioner’s perspective—in this wider piece of legislation. There is substantial additional support material there.

[24] **Russell George:** Like most of us on the committee, I attended that presentation—was it last week or the week before? Time is going fast. I thought that it was one of the most powerful presentations that I had gone to on the steps. Although we have been to petition hand-ins where there have been many thousands of people, some of the pictures I saw in the information they were giving out really struck me as—

[25] **William Powell:** Extremely poignant—

[26] **Russell George:** I thought so. I spoke to the post workers there and they gave me a handout to look at, which was really poignant to me. I suggest that, as with all new petitions, we write to the Minister first to seek his views. So, I suggest we write to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food.

[27] **William Powell:** That is a sensible way forward. I should, at the outset, declare that I have attended a couple of meetings, convened by Julie Morgan and addressed by Councillor Dilwar Ali, on this matter. We have probably all got declarations of experience associated with dogs in pursuit of our day job, or associated activities to the day job, but I should declare that, because I have been at a couple of meetings. Julie Morgan is obviously a key promoter of this cause, as well. I am very happy to second that proposal. Are colleagues happy with that initial approach? There is a lot of work going in from Alun Davies and his legal advisers on this matter, because it is quite a complex area. Clearly, it is a matter of frustration to Councillor Ali and his colleagues that this late intervention has come from Westminster on this issue. I see that you all agree. Thank you.

9.10 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[28] **William Powell:** The first petition is P-03-150, National Cancer Standards. This petition was originally submitted in 2008 by Rhondda Breast Friends and collected 43 signatures. In addition, Rhondda Breast Friends have developed a charter regarding improvements required to cancer care services, and that is supported by 1,475 signatures. We last considered this petition on 4 December and went on to write to the petitioner following the ministerial scrutiny session that we had with the former Minister for Health and Social Services, Lesley Griffiths, which was a really useful and comprehensive session. The

petitioner's response is in our public papers. I propose that we share that response and a little bit of the background context with Professor Mark Drakeford, the new Minister for Health and Social Services, so that he can be aware of the background, and we should highlight some of the areas that still concern the petitioners. Is that a sensible way of approaching that, particularly with the transition between Ministers? We should also ask him how he sees this going forward. Are you content with that? I see that you are.

[29] Agenda item 3.2 is P-04-396, Emergency Life Support Skills (ELS) for Wales Schoolchildren. This was submitted by the British Heart Foundation in June 2012 and collected 4,000 signatures. There has been quite a lot of activity across Wales and there was also a fairly major event at the National Eisteddfod, which was attended by the former First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, promoting this very issue, which is of concern to him and others. We last considered this petition in February last year when we wrote to the petitioner and undertook a research briefing, if you recall, as to the practicality and possibility of the Welsh baccalaureate encompassing emergency life skills. As you will have seen, we have the petitioner's response in the public papers, and we also have the research briefing as a private paper.

[30] I am in a bit of a dilemma as to which way to go here. It seems to me that we have a couple of options. Elin, do you have any thoughts on the best way to approach this one? Have you given this some consideration?

[31] **Elin Jones:** I still think that we could make an approach to the Welsh Minister for Education and Skills on the appropriateness of the baccalaureate itself for consideration of emergency life support skills.

[32] **William Powell:** It seems to fit quite well with what the baccalaureate is all about in terms of community service, solidarity and a particular Welsh approach to things.

[33] **Elin Jones:** I would like us to pursue that avenue.

[34] **William Powell:** Yes. I think that it would probably be premature to close without pushing that at least a step further, even though the Minister has previously been fairly clear in his statements. I think that this is a new avenue. Are colleagues happy with that way of approaching it?

[35] **Elin Jones:** Yes.

[36] **William Powell:** Okay. So, we will write to Leighton Andrews on the particular point around the potential for it to be woven into the Welsh baccalaureate curriculum. Good.

[37] We move on to P-04-424, Retain services at Neath Port Talbot Hospital. This was submitted by Carolyn Edwards in October 2012 and has the support of 193 signatures, and associated petitions have gathered over 5,000 signatures. We last considered this in February and we wrote to the Wales Deanery. As you will recall, we were concerned at the time about what seemed to be a lack of notice that elected representatives had had with regard to their plans, when, in fact, there had been quite a lengthy lead-in time. We have had the opportunity to study that correspondence. It is in the public papers today.

9.15 a.m.

[38] The south Wales programme board will launch its consultation imminently. It would probably be sensible for us to hold off anything further until we can see the exact shape of what is being proposed. Does that make sense?

[39] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, it does.

[40] **Elin Jones:** Yes.

[41] **William Powell:** I see that you are all happy with that. Okay; let us do that at this stage. So, we await the launch of the consultation and then we will revisit it in the light of that.

[42] We now turn to P-04-450, Barry & Vale needs a fully functioning hospital. This was submitted by Jeffrey Heathfield in January of this year. He has the support of 50 signatories. We last looked at it in January, soon after it came in, and we wrote to Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board. Consistent with our previous practice, we also wrote to the then Minister for Health and Social Services and, indeed, the Health and Social Care Committee. We have the response in our papers. We probably need to seek Mr Heathfield's view on the correspondence that has come from the health board at this point.

[43] **Elin Jones:** Yes.

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

[45] **William Powell:** That is probably the best step forward to see what his response will be.

[46] We previously agreed to group agenda items 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7. To be consistent with that, we need to look at them all in that light.

[47] We have petition P-04-361, Free bus passes for students under 25, and in full-time education, which, if you recall, was brought to us by students of Llandrillo College in January 2012, with the support of 15 signatures, following a lively session and visit by our colleague, Darren Millar, to their college. Then, we followed that up with an evidence session in the Stiwt Theatre in Wrexham, as you will recall, which was very useful to get a better understanding of their position. Petition P-04-371, which is a separate petition, was calling for reduced fares on public transport for all children up to the age of 18. This was submitted by Simon Williams-Jones in March 2012, with the support of 26 signatures. Finally, we had an additional petition, which is P-04-382, Student fares on public transport. This petition was submitted by A-level students in March 2012, following last year's education conference. At the moment, we have a live petition from this year's conference, as you will also recall. It is good to see that they are well embedded in our system. They were calling for the Welsh Government to secure reduced fares on public transport for all those in full-time education.

[48] Having said all of that, we last considered this group of petitions in October, and we wrote to the P-04-361 petitioners. Unfortunately, we have not had a response to our letter. Probably, despite the energy that has gone into this previously, and given the response that we have had back, and the lack of response from petitioners, it is probably time to draw consideration of these petitions to a close. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

[49] **Joyce Watson:** I went with you, Chair.

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

[51] **Joyce Watson:** It was a really good opportunity that they were afforded to engage with this process, and us—

[52] **William Powell:** They were also articulate and had done a lot of background work.

[53] **Joyce Watson:** Absolutely; and us with them. So, we all gained from that.

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

[55] **Joyce Watson:** The fact is that there have been opportunities to engage further that have not been taken. We have to assume from that, perhaps, that those who were there at that time are no longer there, and those who are—

[56] **William Powell:** I think that, in the course of a two or three-year course, it may well be that they have dispersed to their new studies, work or whatever. That could well be the case, but we cannot know for definite.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** It is an assumption. We have to make assumptions because we are not hearing anything.

[58] **William Powell:** Yes, in the absence of anything else. Exactly.

[59] **Joyce Watson:** In the light of that, we have not really any choice but to close it.

[60] **William Powell:** No. It is regrettable, in a sense, because of all the work that has gone into it, but that has some value in itself.

[61] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed.

[62] **William Powell:** So, colleagues are agreed on that approach, and that is what we shall do.

[63] The next petition is P-04-393, Llanymynech and Pant Bypass Action Group, which was submitted by Duncan Borthwick in May of last year. He had the support of 84 signatories, though I am aware from driving through that community that there are other people who have strong views, as I have seen some billboards and posters, so it is obviously a matter of some concern in the area. The committee last considered this back in February, and we wrote to Carl Sargeant, who was at that stage the Minister for Local Government and Communities, and to Powys County Council. We have their responses here. We have previously engaged with the UK Minister for transport on this issue and have not drawn out a particularly positive response from that quarter. Russell George, I know that you take a close interest in this one.

[64] **Russell George:** I went to some of the early meetings of this group prior to their petition submission. The two letters that we have received from Powys County Council and Carl Sargeant are not particularly encouraging, but the letter from the Minister does state that there needs to be co-operation with the trunk road agency across the border. The last sentence says:

[65] ‘Therefore, we will need to reconsider our options along the Welsh trunk road length.’

[66] I am not quite sure what that means, really, so in order to take this petition forward we should write to the new Minister, Edwina Hart, and ask her how she intends to reconsider those options. That could be sensible.

[67] **William Powell:** That could be timely, and relevant to the wrapping together of transport and the economy. She may have a view that that corridor has a role within the wider economic development of the area.

[68] **Joyce Watson:** I read it with interest. This particular area, because it is on the border, needs joint working and joint funding. Clearly, on the English side, the Highways Agency does not regard this area as a high priority, and therefore it is coming up against a significant obstacle, which is financing. I have no opposition to seeking the views of the new Minister, and that, in itself, I suppose is worth doing, but unless there are changes the other side of the border at Westminster to do something about this, it will be pretty difficult going. However, I will go along with this and support the local Member in that.

[69] **William Powell:** One thing that comes to mind is that I know that, several years ago, there was a protocol or memorandum of understanding signed between the Welsh Government and the UK Government—I think that it may have been at the level of the department for environment, was it, when Carwyn Jones was Minister there?

[70] **Elin Jones:** It was all departments.

[71] **William Powell:** I remember that there was an event in Ludlow where this was signed. I am sure that it was cross-cutting, involving all departments. It may have been during the One Wales administration; I am not clear, but perhaps Elin would remember that more sharply. Would it be sensible for us to seek a short research briefing on where that work has gone? It relates to other petitions that we have had in the past regarding ambulance services and cross-border issues. We would take stock of that and make such a request; it would inform this and other petitions, some of which are still open.

[72] **Russell George:** That is an excellent idea because so many petitions are relevant to what you just said. There are many advantages of devolution, as we know, but one of the disadvantages is that you get these kinds of problems, which I do not think would have been there in the past.

[73] **William Powell:** We come across that with planning issues, energy planning and a gamut of other stuff.

[74] We move now to P-04-409, Welsh names for new trunk roads in Wales. This was submitted by WelshnotBritish.com in October 2012, with the support of 47 signatures. We last considered this petition in January, and we wrote to the Welsh Language Commissioner and to the then Minister for Local Government and Communities. We have a response from both Meri Huws and Carl Sargeant. Given the nature of the response and the consistent message from Welsh Government on this issue, I think that it is probably time to draw a line under this petition. Colleagues, do you think that that is a sensible approach?

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

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

[77] **Elin Jones:** May I just ask for some information? When we receive a petition from an e-mail address or an internet address, do we have—

[78] **William Powell:** Do we have some due diligence?

[79] **Elin Jones:** Do we get the name and address that is behind it? It does not have to be published, but we would know that these are citizens of Wales that have submitted the petition.

[80] **Ms Stocks:** There always has to be a lead petitioner, even if it is submitted by an organisation, so that we always have a main contact.

[81] **William Powell:** In future, would it be sensible for us to have the name of the lead petitioner, for consistency? Very often, you have somebody who is working for an agency, a charity or a brand of some sort. This petition does look a little odd, and when I revisited it, I had the same kind of thought that Elin had. I could not recall, because I did not have the papers immediately to hand, whether there was a lead petitioner. It would be useful, I think, to make it more consistent.

[82] The next item is P-04-416, North-South Rail Services. It was submitted by Mr Neil Taylor in October 2012, with the support of 19 signatures. We last considered this petition in February. We wrote to Carl Sargeant, the then Minister for Local Government and Communities, and we have had a response, which has come in the crossover, from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport. Colleagues will have had an opportunity to see that. I think that, probably, at this stage, it would be sensible for us to thank the Minister for her response and to ask her to keep us updated on any progress in this area, because it is a very important service for many people, including our colleagues and employees of this organisation—we know that from first-hand experience.

[83] The next item is P-04-438, Shopping Access. We undertook a piece of fieldwork a number of weeks ago on a fairly bitter March morning, if you recall. The petition was submitted by Mencap Cymru and Ysgol Erw'r Delyn in November last year. It had 55 signatures supporting it. The text of the petition gave a series of priorities for improvements to access to shops, detailing some of the particular problems that the petitioners had encountered in Cardiff city centre. Of course, we saw that for ourselves and, very much at first-hand, we could see the difficulties that some wheelchair users and their colleagues were encountering. I think that it is fair to say that we were very grateful to the manager of the St David's centre for spending some time with us and addressing some of the issues. We last considered the petition back in February, rather than in March, as I wrongly stated earlier. We have a note of the visit, as a summary of the concerns that we encountered. I think that it would be useful for us, in following up the visit, to write to the gentleman we met, the centre manager, to ask for an update on the signage strategy. He took us through some of the key points when we met him, but it would be useful to have a follow-up to see how it relates to the Changing Places toilets. We could also write to Cardiff Council regarding some of the obstacles that we saw, and about the issue of the sequencing of the lights, because there was a concern about the adequacy of the time lag between activating the system and safely crossing the roads. That set of actions would take it forward at this stage. Are there any other items?

9.30 a.m.

[84] **Elin Jones:** I think that we do need to do both, because we heard representations on issues within the centre but also outside it relating to the council, rather than the shopping centre itself. So, I think that doing both is appropriate.

[85] **William Powell:** So, if we write to the appropriate head of section at Cardiff Council and the leader of the council, I think that would make a lot of sense.

[86] **Joyce Watson:** I agree with all of that. Coming back to the petition and what it is asking us to do—and we can do the other things—it seeks to do specific things, such as set a standard higher fine and to create a law stating the minimum number and dimensions of disabled spaces. I want legal advice here—and if you cannot give it now, I want it later—in terms of whether these are issues that are determined locally and not nationally. If that is the case, then we need to do our job and let the petitioners know that that is the case so that they pursue the right avenue, not the wrong one. I do not know.

[87] **William Powell:** My sense is that some of it is Welsh national planning policy, is it not, with regard to certain of these issues?

[88] **Joyce Watson:** We need to know; that is what I am saying.

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

[90] **Mr Richards:** I am afraid, Chair, that I cannot give an answer to that here now, but I can certainly look into it and provide a note for the committee, if that would be helpful.

[91] **William Powell:** That would be very helpful as it is important to have clarity, as you said, Joyce.

[92] **Joyce Watson:** That is part of our role. If we cannot do something, we signpost people.

[93] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. There may be issues here that are not even devolved. It would be useful to go through it.

[94] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and signpost people accordingly.

[95] **William Powell:** Thank you very much for undertaking to do that. That will inform us for the next consideration of that petition.

[96] We will move on to discuss P-04-343, Prevent the destruction of amenities on common land—Anglesey. Colleagues will recall that this petition was submitted by J.E. Futter in November 2011 and collected 156 signatures. We last considered it back in February. We wrote to the petitioner and have received a response, which can be found in our public papers. There is a lot of focus on Ynys Môn at the moment, with an election imminent. Perhaps we should write to the council to seek its views on the petition and particularly to ask why no action has been taken. We could ask for the views of its countryside section as to the adequacy of the protection of this particular piece of common land. I think that that would take things several steps forward. I see that you agree with those actions.

[97] The next petition is P-04-465, Save Welsh Milk, its infrastructure & its jobs. This was submitted by Richard Arnold in March 2013 and collected 426 signatures. We first considered it very soon after receiving it back in March, and we wrote to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food and, indeed, Alun Davies's response is in our public papers. We need to share that response with Mr Arnold to get his views on the Minister's response. In his current and previous role, the Minister has been very involved in issues relating to the future of the Welsh milk industry. So, perhaps, if we can promote that dialogue as part of the consideration of the petition, we will be doing something worthwhile. I see that you agree.

[98] We will now discuss P-04-427, A new Welsh language law for Wales. This petition was submitted by Gethin Kurtis Sugar in October 2012 and had the support of 93 signatures. It calls for a new Welsh language law, given what the petitioner felt to be the inadequacy of the protection for the rights of Welsh speakers. We last considered this in January at our first meeting of 2013. We wrote both to the Minister for Education and Skills, who has responsibility for the Welsh language as well, and the Welsh Language Commissioner. Once again, the responses from both are in the papers. It is fair to say that we have a pretty consistent view emerging here that there is no prospect of such a law. I do not think that there is anything significant that we can do to add further value to this. Would colleagues be agreeable to closing this petition?

[99] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, on the grounds that the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 has been passed. As you say, there is not going to be any other form of legislation. In that light, and as we have gone as far as we can on behalf of the petitioners, while making them

aware of that, I agree that we should close it. The avenue to reopen a petition is open to everyone.

[100] **William Powell:** I see that Members are content to do precisely that.

[101] The next update is on P-04-432, Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools. This was submitted by the Fellowship of Reconciliation in November 2012 and collected 374 signatures. An associated petition carries approximately 700 further signatures. We last considered this petition in January, and launched a public consultation exercise. We had a healthy response—27 responses came back, and they are all in our public papers.

[102] **Joyce Watson:** We are going to look at our forward work programme later on, and I suggest that we take oral evidence on this petition and that we decide who to invite, in order to get a balanced view.

[103] **William Powell:** The balance is certainly important.

[104] **Joyce Watson:** Shall we move that way?

[105] **William Powell:** That is the probably the best way to progress it, when we have the full team to discuss that. We will build in appropriate time in our forward work programme.

[106] **Joyce Watson:** It would be a good piece of work.

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

[108] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[109] **William Powell:** The next update is on P-04-467, January exams. I referred earlier to the A- level government and politics conference, which generated a petition last year that we looked at in March 2013. A total of 90 signatures were collected by A-level students who came here to the Senedd. The petition calls upon the National Assembly for Wales

[110] ‘to urge the Welsh Government to continue to support the provision of January examinations at GCSE, AS and A Level’.

[111] We first considered this very soon after it was received back in March of this year, and we wrote to the Minister for Education and Skills. As you can see, his response is among our papers. It is timely that we also had a written statement from the Minister, homing in on the concerns of the petition in many ways. It will be of some satisfaction to those who are arguing for this that the Minister has said that, at least for the time being, January exams are secure. He will be making a further statement about the longer-term future shortly. That is a very positive development, from the petitioners’ perspective. We will share the Minister’s statement with the petitioners via the contact details that we have. At the same time, we will pursue the wider issue of writing to the Minister asking for a time frame as to when he is likely to make a decision on January assessments in the round. Are colleagues happy with that way of dealing with this issue?

[112] **Joyce Watson:** It sounds sensible to me.

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

9.39 a.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**
**Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

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

in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi), the committee resolves to exclude the public for item 5 on the agenda.

[115] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 9.39 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 9.39 a.m.*