



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 4 Chwefror 2014
Tuesday, 4 February 2014

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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

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Steve George	Clerc Clerk
Matthew Richards	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:03.
The meeting started at 09:03.

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 this meeting of the Petitions Committee. We have no apologies for
absence this morning. I hope that we will shortly be joined by our colleague Joyce Watson.
The normal housekeeping arrangements apply. If the fire alarm sounds, we are in the hands of
the ushers. We have no updates at this time, so I propose that we move straight to the next
agenda item.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[3] **William Powell:** The first petition is P-04-532, Improving specialised neuromuscular
services in Wales. This petition was submitted by the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign. The
text reads as follows:

[4] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to
ensure that Health Boards implement the investment proposed by the Welsh Neuromuscular
Network Vision Document for improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales.’

[5] To clarify, it further states that

[6] ‘The Welsh Neuromuscular Network is recommending the following priority
developments: 1. Increase in Family Care Advisors and support. 2. Specialist adult
neuromuscular physiotherapists. 3. Appointment of consultant in adult neuromuscular
disease. 4. Increase in clinical psychology. 5. An equipment budget to enable minor purchases
and lease arrangements.’

[7] This is our first consideration of this petition, so I propose that we write, in the first instance, to the Minister for Health and Social Services. Are colleagues happy with that as an initial approach?

[8] **Bethan Jenkins:** Hoffwn ddweud fy mod yn cadeirio'r grŵp trawsbleidiol ar y mater hwn—fel ei fod ar y record. Gan fod y ddeiseb yn sôn am y byrddau iechyd, a fydd yn bosibl inni hefyd ysgrifennu atynt hwy i ffeindio allan beth maent yn ei wneud ar lawr gwlad, ar yr un pryd ag ysgrifennu at y Gweinidog?

Bethan Jenkins: I would like to say that I chair the cross-party group on this issue—just so that that is on the record. Given that the petition mentions the health boards, would it be possible for us to also write to the health boards to find out what they are doing on the grass-roots level, at the same time as writing to the Minister?

[9] **William Powell:** That might well be an economical way of doing things to cut to the chase. Are colleagues happy with that?

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

[11] **William Powell:** Okay. Let us do that.

[12] The next petition is P-04-533, Environmental Planning for Small Scale Wind Turbine Sites. This petition was submitted by GALAR and collected 433 signatures. The main text of the petition reads as follows:

[13] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to ask the Welsh Government to pass legislation to enable the following planning law. The laws would place conditions on all wind turbine applications, which do not form part of a commercial wind farm development. 1) We ask that such turbines shall not exceed 47metres to blade tip. 2) That the consent of 50% of residents, over the age of sixteen, living within 3Km.of the proposed site give signed approval of the plan. 3) That all turbines outside Wind Farm Developments are restricted to an operational period between 06.00 Hrs and 21.00Hrs to protect nocturnal birds and mammals. 4) That public consultation and written evidence is offered, and supplied to all residences within 4Km. of a proposed site to comply with the Aarhus convention. 5) All turbines should be constructed of materials which are 100% recyclable and all ground works removed at the end of operations.’

[14] Further information has been supplied to substantiate the claims and assertions made in the petition, which are there for us to read to inform our consideration. This is clearly a planning issue. Russell, you have indicated that you would like to speak.

[15] **Russell George:** I was just going to suggest, Chair, that we write to Carl Sargeant, the Minister for Housing and Regeneration.

[16] **William Powell:** In the first instance, that is a sensible way forward. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are. Good.

[17] The next petition is P-04-534, A campaign to secure CARDIGAN HOSPITAL. We were all present, together with many other colleagues, for the high-profile presentation of this petition just last week. It is clearly a matter of very considerable local concern. This petition was submitted by Cardigan Hospital and Community League of Friends and Cardigan Town Council and collected, as we will recall from the placards, 11,042 signatures. Its text reads simply as follows:

[18] ‘We sign this petition to show our support for CARDIGAN TOWN COUNCIL and

CARDIGAN HOSPITAL & COMMUNITY LEAGUE OF FRIENDS who are calling on Hywel Dda Health Board to: (a) overturn the recent decision to close all in-patient beds in Cardigan Community Hospital; (b) provide a clear timetable regarding future health provision in the Cardigan area; (c) proceed with plans to provide a new Cardigan Hospital, with beds, as soon as possible.’

[19] Joyce, you have indicated that you wish to speak.

[20] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you, Chair. I have written to the health board and I have had answers, certainly to the first question, so I can send that to the committee.

[21] **William Powell:** We would appreciate anything that you have.

[22] **Joyce Watson:** There will be an all-party meeting to discuss all of these elements, so that will also feed into this. However, those are asides. As a committee, I feel that we need to write to the Minister, but we also need to write to the health board, because it has made that decision.

[23] **William Powell:** Yes. That would be consistent with the earlier decision to write to health boards on the first petition. So, let us undertake both of those actions. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are. Okay. Let us do that to see whether we can get some progress on this issue. That concludes the consideration of new petitions.

09:10

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[24] **William Powell:** We have a substantial number of updates to previous petitions. We have five items that we have previously taken as a group for consideration because, again, they all relate to health service matters and health reconfiguration issues. The first petition is P-04-367, Save our Hospital Services. This was submitted by Rhydwyn Ifan and was first considered by our committee in February 2012. It had collected in excess of 9,000 signatures and calls for the maintenance and protection of all local health services at Prince Philip Hospital in Llanelli, opposing the downgrading, and asks for a review from the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Welsh Government on these matters.

[25] The second petition is P-040-394, Save our Services—Prince Philip Hospital. This petition was submitted by the Prince Phillip Action Network and was first considered by the committee in May 2012. It has collected in excess of 24,000 signatures. It is very much along the same lines as the previous petition and is particularly concerned with the level of staffing at the five intensive therapy unit beds, and also that a consultant-led accident and emergency facility should be maintained, providing support for doctors on the ground.

[26] The next petition is P-04-430, which was against what was, at that stage, the proposed closure of Tenby minor injuries unit. We are aware, particularly those of us with a regional responsibility, that this particular issue has also moved on and that the unit is now closed, to the dismay of many local residents. This petition was submitted by Andrew James Davies and was first considered in November 2012, with the support of 157 signatures and an associated petition was supported by 581 signatures. It calls upon the health board to preserve the facility and not to go forward with the proposals in its ‘Your Health, Your Future’ document.

[27] The next petition is P-04-431, Against Health Cuts from the Residents of Pembrokeshire. This petition was submitted by SWAT—Save Withybush Action Team—and

was first considered, again, in November 2012. An associated petition carried in excess of 14,000 signatures. There was particular emphasis around the special care baby unit at Withybush, which was of major concern. This is, again, still very much a live issue in terms of recent protests and statements that have been made.

[28] The final petition in this group is P-04-455, Save Prince Philip Hospital A&E. This petition was submitted by Angharad Howells and was first considered by us in January of last year. It had the support of 1,038 signatures. This is, again, very much along the lines of the earlier two Prince Philip petitions, with regard to the retention of A&E services at Prince Philip Hospital.

[29] We are all aware that there has been an enormous amount of focus, not just locally but also in the Chamber, on these matters. We have had responses from the Hywel Dda Local Health Board, and, indeed, from the Minister for Health and Social Services, and these are, among other things, in our public pack today. We have had some response from the petitioner with regard to P-04-394, and we also note that the case of Prince Philip Hospital is subject to judicial review. I think, therefore—and I think that this accords with advice—that we are not in a position to discuss or make any comment on those petitions at this time. Are colleagues confident that that is the correct approach in those cases?

[30] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, Chair.

[31] **Russell George:** Can I ask for more information, Chair, about why we would not be able to comment? I am not questioning it; I just want to understand the logic behind why, as a committee, we cannot progress this petition in the meantime.

09:15

[32] **William Powell:** I defer to the clerk.

[33] **Mr George:** It is not legal advice on this occasion; it is simply that the petitioners themselves have said that they are not prepared, and do not want to comment—

[34] **William Powell:** It might prejudice their position.

[35] **Mr George:** Yes. If they do not want to comment, I thought that that would be something that you would want to take into account.

[36] **Russell George:** I think that that is quite sensible then, if that is what they are suggesting.

[37] **William Powell:** Yes, it is at the instigation of the petitioners. However, I think that it is probably a sensible position to adopt with regard to that matter. With regard to the Tenby minor injuries unit, as I stated earlier, that closed on 1 December, and it is not clear to me really whether we can do anything to promote its reopening. I know that Joyce Watson and I, particularly, have been active on other fronts on this matter, but I am not confident that we can progress this in a positive direction.

[38] **Joyce Watson:** The decision has been taken. I have certainly—and I know that you have, Chair—written many, many letters, and that is not going to change. What concerns people now is that they were led to understand that the re-provision would be provided within the GP services in the town, and that is the case, as long as you are registered with those GPs. Therefore, it has sort of moved on to that being the debate now, and, again, I have written accordingly.

[39] However, the petition actually asks that the MIU stays open; the MIU has not stayed open, it is not going to reopen, according to the health board, and the CHC did not ask us to call it in either. Therefore, I do not think that there is anything further that we can do as a committee. There are many other things that can happen, of course, in the community—I am sure that they will happen, and I am sure that they are happening, because we get the notices of action. However, we are looking at the petition, and at how the petition is worded, and, in terms of how it is worded, as a committee, I have to say that, even though I have outlined other factors in this, they are not the ones that we are being asked to look at.

[40] **William Powell:** Before I call on Russell George to make his contribution, I will mention one thing that is of concern locally. Mr Andrew James Davies is the town clerk of Tenby, and I know, from the most recent meeting that I attended, that there is real concern at the lack of engagement from the health board with the general practitioners. It seemed at best to be tokenism. I am not clear whether it would be beyond the remit of this committee to enquire as to what active involvement there has been, to ensure that this is a robust replacement for the facility that has now closed. As you say, Joyce, there is concern that you need to be registered with those GPs, and, given the nature of Tenby and its surrounding area, in terms of the vast influx of visitors at particular periods, that seems to be placing considerable additional strain.

[41] **Joyce Watson:** May I reply to that?

[42] **William Powell:** If you could conclude then, Joyce, and then Russell would like to make a contribution.

[43] **Joyce Watson:** That is really what I was outlining. I agree with all that you have said, Chair, but we are dealing with a petition; we are the Petitions Committee, dealing with the petition, and to do those things is outside what the petitioners have asked for. I am not saying that they should not be done; what I am trying to say here is that I am not sure that we can deal with them. I would like some advice about our going beyond what the petition asks for.

[44] **William Powell:** Yes. Russell has been very patient, as he often is. I will ask you to make your contribution, Russell.

[45] **Russell George:** I have not been involved as you have, Chair, but I think that I agree with Joyce that it goes beyond what our petition is asking for. It sounds as if there are other avenues for approaching this, and perhaps it is not by this committee.

[46] **William Powell:** Perhaps the regional representational role that we have—

[47] **Russell George:** Perhaps that is better, but I just think that, to be consistent, we cannot go beyond what the petition is asking for. It might be that, informally, in conversation, there could be a suggestion that another petition is raised, but that is perhaps going a bit further again. I do not think that we can take this further. I move that we have to close this petition.

[48] **William Powell:** Yes. Perhaps we could draw on some legal advice on that point, as that would be helpful.

[49] **Mr Richards:** Standing Order 23.9 states that the committee may,

[50] ‘take any other action which the committee considers appropriate.’

[51] On the basis of Standing Orders, it is a matter for the committee to decide whether

you want to take it as far as you can as an Assembly committee.

[52] **William Powell:** Yes. Okay.

[53] **Russell George:** I think that we should be consistent with others.

[54] **Bethan Jenkins:** I did not quite understand the general practice issue.

[55] **William Powell:** The issue of the replacement service, which is being delivered in partnership with the—

[56] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, you want to find out whether that is working sufficiently at the moment.

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

[58] **Bethan Jenkins:** Personally, I do not see any harm in that.

[59] **William Powell:** We need to close this but, at the same time, if we could write along those lines, I think that it would be appreciated by the petitioner; that is something that has been intimated to me and I sense, also, to Joyce, in other contacts that you have had.

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

[61] **William Powell:** That leaves us, in this grouping, the special care baby unit decision. Again, as is the case with the Tenby minor injuries unit, that decision has also pretty clearly been taken. I suppose that, for consistency, we should also close that. I am seeking views on this matter.

[62] **Joyce Watson:** If I may, Chair.

[63] **William Powell:** Please.

[64] **Joyce Watson:** The decision to close the special care baby unit has been taken. It has not closed, but the decision to close has been taken. There are many issues wider than that, and consequent to that. If we are going to look at the re-provision of a minor injuries unit, we have to be consistent and look at the re-provision of a special care baby unit and what that might mean. So, we have to be careful as to what we want to do and what we want to ask. I have outlined what I think we need to ask, about any possible knock-on or consequential effects of closing that unit, and all of those things being put in place. I do not think that this one is as clear cut, because when the Minister made his statement he said that he approved the closure of the SCBU, providing that—and there was a whole list of things that had to come in place. So, it is not quite as clear cut as with the MIU.

[65] **William Powell:** That service remains at this present time, as you said.

[66] **Joyce Watson:** There were lots of things. There were transport issues—

[67] **William Powell:** Capacity issues would be another.

[68] **Joyce Watson:** There were capacity issues. I think that that separates them out, quite frankly. At this stage, I would say that we should not close it, because, in terms of consistency, they are not the same.

[69] **William Powell:** No; they are not at the same stage.

[70] **Joyce Watson:** That is my view.

[71] **William Powell:** Have we written to the petitioners seeking their views on the most recent—

[72] **Mr George:** We would have informed them of the recent position, but we have not had any response from them.

[73] **William Powell:** No. I think that, given what Joyce has said, which I broadly agree with—I sense that colleagues are happy with this—it would be sensible to contact the petitioner on that matter and seek their views on how we best take it forward. Thank you, colleagues. It was a little complicated to deal with that round of groupings, but I think that it is the best way to proceed.

[74] We now move to petition P-04-502, Wellbeing Centre for Wales. This was submitted by Wellbeing Wales with the support of 52 signatures, and was first considered by the committee in September 2013. As we will recall, it called upon us to,

[75] ‘urge the Welsh Government to establish a new Wellbeing Centre for Wales that would put individual and community wellbeing...at the heart of Welsh politics, and that would be core-funded by government.’

[76] We considered this back in September and wrote to the Minister. We have duly received a response from the Minister, although, uncharacteristically, the letter was dated 21 October but was only received relatively recently. That is very unusual; there must have been some sort of glitch. I propose that we share that letter from Mark Drakeford with the petitioners and seek their views. Are you happy with that? I see that you are. Thank you.

[77] The next item is P-04-385, Petition regarding balloon and lantern releases. This was submitted by Bryony Bromley and we first considered it in May 2013. It has 564 signatures and calls,

[78] ‘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.’

[79] This was made particularly topical by the Smethwick fire and has been subject to a debate in the Chamber. There is also an individual Member’s Bill being brought forward by our colleague Antoinette Sandbach.

[80] We last considered this petition on 16 July last year and agreed to write to Alun Davies, the Minister for Natural Resources and Food, asking to be kept updated on any change in the approach following the Smethwick fire. We also wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Owen Paterson, asking what actions the Secretary of State proposed to take given that air lanterns, like many other things, do not respect national boundaries. We have a response from Alun Davies, but at this time, we have not received any response from the Secretary of State—he is not normally shy in sharing his opinions. So, possibly, it would be sensible for us to chase up that matter, to see if we can get some clarity on his view with regard to this, because there is considerable support among the farming communities and other animal welfare organisations to progress on this. Russell, you have indicated.

[81] **Russell George:** Yes, I think that we should write again formally to the Secretary of State. I think that he is busy with one or two other things at the moment, but that is no excuse for not replying to our committee. [*Laughter.*]

[82] **William Powell:** Absolutely; he has plenty on.

[83] **Russell George:** I think that we should write to him formally.

[84] **William Powell:** Yes, I think that that is the most sensible way forward. Once we have a response, we can see what the petitioner thinks of the issue in the round. As a courtesy, it is also useful to keep our colleague Antoinette Sandbach in the loop on these matters, as I am sure that she will be interested in our deliberations.

[85] The next petition is P-04-445, Save our Welsh cats and dogs from death on the roads. This petition was submitted by Monima O'Connor, having collected 10 signatures, and we first considered it in January 2013. An associated petition carries approximately 500 signatures. We last considered this on 10 December and asked the Minister to keep the petitioner informed of the start, and indeed, the ongoing progress, of the review that is due to start in the summer this year. We also wrote to the RSPCA seeking its views on the petitioner's response of 23 November to its unsolicited letter, which it contributed on this matter. We have the view of the RSPCA, and we also have further comments from Monima O'Connor, offering the following correction. She says that her mistake was to say that there is only one collar under the British accreditation. She goes on to say that the truth is that there are only five manufacturers who are approved by the British accreditation out of 170 different types of collar in the whole world. Given that the petitioner took the trouble to point out that error, I thought that it was only right to mention that matter on the record.

09.30

[86] Are colleagues clear and happy about that amendment? I see that you are. We are grateful to the petitioner for having done that. I think, at this time, given that the review has not begun and it is obviously a live issue, that it is probably best for us to keep a watching brief on this and to return to the matter when the review has been concluded. Is that a sensible approach?

[87] **Bethan Jenkins:** Gallem wastad roi'r hyn mae'r deisebwyr wedi'i roi i ni fel rhan o'r adolygiad hwnnw, ac wedyn rydym yn sicrhau bod eu barn hwy wedi cael ei chynrychioli, yn hytrach nag ein bod ni'n gwneud darn o waith cyn bod yr adolygiad yn digwydd. **Bethan Jenkins:** We could always provide what the petitioners have given us as part of that review, and then we are ensuring that their opinions have been represented rather than us undertaking work before the review takes place.

[88] **William Powell:** I think that that is a sensible way forward because we, obviously, have sought out the views of various stakeholders. We have had some discussion around it. I think it is sensible for us to feed that information in, which can all be part of keeping a watching brief on the review itself, which is due to commence in the summer. So, I am happy to do that.

[89] **Joyce Watson:** I want to put on record that I will be commenting on the review and I will be saying that I am on the same side as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals when it comes to these matters.

[90] **William Powell:** Thank you for that clarity, Joyce. That is helpful from the point of view of knowing where we, as individual members of the committee, are coming from.

[91] We now move to P-03-263, List Stradey Park. This was submitted by Vaughan Jones in November 2009, so it is one of our historic petitions. It had collected at that time 4,383

signatures. It reads:

[92] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Minister for Heritage to grant listed status to Stradey Park, in order to protect the heritage of this world famous rugby ground and cultural icon for the people of Wales.’

[93] We last had discussion around this topic on 8 October. We agreed to write to the Minister for Culture and Sport seeking clarification on the time frame for the proposed heritage Bill and whether it would contain proposals that were relevant to local listing. We also wrote to Cadw asking for more information on discussions that have taken place with the developer and the reasons why sporting venues cannot be listed. We also undertook to write to Carmarthenshire County Council regarding local listing. We have received a response from the Minister for Culture and Sport and from Carmarthenshire County Council. As you can see, these are available for us today. I think it would be fair to say that we found a degree of churlishness from the local authority. I have had sight of e-mails from the local authority officers that fall some way short of courtesy to the team that supports this committee and to us. I think we should put on record that that is regrettable. Possibly, we might wish to bring these matters regarding the curt and somewhat inappropriate tone of the correspondence to the attention of the leader or chief executive of Carmarthenshire council. I would value any thoughts that you might have on this.

[94] **Joyce Watson:** I think courtesy is the least that anyone can expect. Are you telling me that what is printed here—I read this a few times—is what you received? Was this it?

[95] **Mr George:** No, this was the second response that we received. The first response was shorter than this.

[96] **William Powell:** I believe that it was, ‘No, no and no’

[97] **Joyce Watson:** That sounded—

[98] **Mr George:** I went back to say that the response was likely to be put before the committee and, maybe, they wanted to reconsider. We then got this response instead.

[99] **Joyce Watson:** To that end, I move that we write to the leader of the authority, Councillor Kevin Madge, and to the chief executive.

[100] **William Powell:** Mr Mark James.

[101] **Joyce Watson:** We should simply say that, in our opinion, it is not normally the way we receive correspondence from those that we ask questions of. For as long as I have been on this committee—you have been here longer, Bethan—I have not seen anything so brief, so blunt and which lacks complete engagement, quite frankly. So, I agree with you.

[102] **William Powell:** It may, at the least, flag-up some sort of training need and the need for people to be called to account.

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

[104] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid wyf yn credu bod llythyr y Gweinidog yn helpu llawer chwaith, achos gwnaethom ofyn am eglurhad ynglŷn â beth fydd yn y Bil treftadaeth ac a fyddai hynny yn cynnwys rhestru lleol. Nid oes lot o wybodaeth yn y llythyr yn hyn o **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not think that the Minister’s letter helps either, because we asked for a clarification on what would be in the heritage Bill and whether that would include local listing. There is not much information on that, just to say that this

beth, dim ond i ddweud nad yw'r mater hwn o fewn eu rheolaeth hwy. Fodd bynnag, rydym wedi dysgu heddiw ein bod yn gallu gofyn cwestiynau ehangach. Byddwn wedi hoffi pe bai'r Gweinidog wedi ymateb i hynny. Fodd bynnag, rwyf wedi bod yn aelod o'r pwyllgor hwn ers sbel, ac rydym wedi cael y ddeiseb hon ers sbel. Rwy'n credu ein bod wedi ei chymryd mor bell ag rydym yn gallu. Yn anffodus, nid yw yn siwtio'r hyn y mae'r deisebwyr yn gofyn amdano, na'r rhai ohonom sydd am barchu treftadaeth Cymru. Fodd bynnag, nid wyf yn gweld lle gallwn fynd ar hyn o bryd gyda hyn.

matter is not within their remit. However, we have learnt today that we can ask wider questions. I would have liked it if the Minister would have responded to that. However, I have been on this committee for a number of years, and we have this petition for a while. I believe that we have now taken it as far as we can. Unfortunately, it does not suit what the petitioners want, or those of us who want to respect the heritage of Wales. However, I cannot see where we can go with this at the moment.

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

[106] **William Powell:** So, was that, in other words, a proposal to close the petition?

[107] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, I did say that I think we should close it. We can carry this on for another four years, but I think that the petitioners now need to say, 'We'll take it to the committee that deals with the heritage Bill' and raise those key points. I do not see, as a Petitions Committee, how we can pull out any more from this. Since 2009, we have tried everything in terms of what we can do.

[108] **William Powell:** As a member of this committee and its predecessor committee, you have spent hours that you will not get back on trying to progress this issue.

[109] **Bethan Jenkins:** Neither will the petitioners, sadly.

[110] **William Powell:** I think that there is unanimity here that we do that. It is worth stating, though, that there are areas that are missing in the Minister's letter, but it is not an issue regarding the tone or courtesy; I know that you were not implying that at all. However, it would be useful for us to write to the chief officer and the leader of Carmarthenshire County Council just to flag up that matter, because it shows a discourtesy to the committee, to our team and, indeed, to the petitioners to have adopted such a tone. Thank you very much for your comments; it is appropriate that you should have had the last word on that particular one, Bethan, given the fact that you have matured with the petition.

[111] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have grown up with this petition. [*Laughter.*]

[112] **William Powell:** Excellent. Thank you very much. We now move to P-04-509 Save the Welsh National Tennis Centre. This was submitted in October 2013 by the Save the Welsh National Tennis Centre Group. It has the support of 496 signatures. We last considered it on 8 October, and we agreed a suite of actions: to write to the Minister for Culture and Sport seeking his views on the petition and clarity on the current position regarding the designation of the facility as the Welsh National Tennis Centre; to write to Virgin Active seeking clarification on whether it has any contract with the council or the Welsh Government; and to write to the Swansea Tennis Centre seeking information on its recent experience regarding issues around funding.

[113] We have responses in our pack from all three of the above, and they are in the public domain. It would be quite useful to seek the views of Cardiff Council on the proposals, and on the participation model outlined by Tennis Wales, to see whether the council would be prepared to consider some sort of partnership working with Tennis Wales in the way that is

quite usefully set out in the letter that it has sent to us. I do not know what colleagues think about that as a potential way forward.

[114] **Bethan Jenkins:** Why do we not ask Tennis Wales whether it can speak to Swansea and the petitioners? It is coming via us, but I think that, if they came together and had a conversation about the models, it would be very useful. There is nothing to say that we could not help to facilitate that, because having that human-level discussion might then help Swansea to say what models would be best because it has a clear, successful model working now—

[115] **William Powell:** Yes, and it seems to be more engaging on a wider range of levels and more accessible—

[116] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am not sure as we have not done it before, but I suppose that we could say that we could help to facilitate it—they might want to do it in the Assembly, if they are willing. Swansea could discuss it with Tennis Wales and Cardiff Council, but only if it is willing. Really, they have to learn from the Swansea model now. We do not know the timelines. It just says in Tennis Wales's letter that, at some point, it would be very happy if Cardiff developed a different business model. We do not really know the timelines yet, do we?

[117] **William Powell:** I think it would be useful to try, because the longer this facility is left in its mothballed state, the less likely it is that anything will be progressed.

[118] **Bethan Jenkins:** When we spoke to Cardiff people, they did not really know exactly what was happening in Swansea. It would help to empower them if they fully understood what is happening in Swansea. I am happy to be at a meeting, if it would take one of the Petitions Committee members to be there—like a sort of rapporteur-type thing—

[119] **William Powell:** I would be happy to play some role in that myself alongside you.

[120] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that that would be really beneficial.

[121] **William Powell:** Yes, because, otherwise, there is this non-time-specific readiness to do it, which might well mean it does not happen unless we move to encourage it. If we write along those lines and if it would be appropriate for us to offer to assist in facilitating that—

[122] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, it does not have to be all of us, but just some of us.

[123] **William Powell:** Yes, as availability dictates. Are colleagues happy with that? Yes. Excellent. That is, potentially, a profitable way forward on that.

[124] The next petition is P-04-365, Protect buildings of note on the Mid Wales Hospital site. This petition was submitted by John Tushingham and it was first considered by the committee in February of 2012. It had the support of 206 signatures. We recall the issues here regarding the heritage buildings on this particular former hospital site. We last considered this on 10 December, following a visit that some of us were part of on the weekend of Remembrance Sunday as you will recall. We agreed to write to Mr Phil Collins, clarifying the role of the committee, as Mr Collins showed that he did not necessarily fully understand the remit of the committee and was asking some questions around that. We also agreed to write to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority asking for an update on the latest position, including the question of local listing, the local development plan and the views of the planning inspector on the need for a development brief. We have the response from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority in our public papers. I just want to have a quick look to refresh my memory of that.

[125] **Bethan Jenkins:** We are having a meeting on 7 February.

[126] **William Powell:** Yes, that is right. Absolutely. That was the position as of 15 January. I should re-declare my familiarity with the site and some of the issues, as I have previously done.

[127] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think we are all familiar with the site now. [*Laughter.*]

[128] **William Powell:** Absolutely, and indeed with the security service on the site as well. Also, I spoke informally over the weekend in a different context to a member of the national park authority, who told me that this particular issue has now been deferred by another month. So, that is more recent information. However, that is an oral update from a member of the authority.

[129] **Bethan Jenkins:** Shall we get a formal update?

[130] **William Powell:** I think it would be useful to write to Miss Tracy Nettleton, who is the author of this letter, just to seek a further update on that matter. We accept the factual content there, but the update I have received is that the matter has been further delayed by at least a month, and it would be useful just to be kept informed on the issue. I do not know whether there is anything further we can do at this time. As it states in the letter, the LDP has now been formally adopted, so that does kind of change things. However, let us write to get an additional update to make sure that we are in the loop on the relevant concerns. Okay. Thanks for that.

09:45

[131] Next is P-04-397, Living Wage. This petition was submitted by Save the Children and was first considered in June 2012, calling

[132] ‘on the Welsh Government to stand by their promise to work towards a living wage for every worker in Wales and tell us when and how they will make it happen.’

[133] We last considered this on 26 November 2013, and we agreed to write to the Workforce Partnership Council asking for a time frame for development of a living wage. We have a response from the Minister for Local Government and Government Business.

[134] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think we should keep it open until we have an update from the Workforce Partnership Council, which will be discussing it in March. The whole rationale for us going back to the Minister was that we did not feel that we had enough detail about what exactly was being discussed. I would be more comfortable if we waited until then, so that we can see whether the petitioners are happy with progress or not.

[135] **William Powell:** I think that is right. It would do no harm at all to wait until that partnership has met and deliberated. As you said, that is in a month or so’s time. So, that makes good sense. That is agreed.

[136] Next is P-04-446, Business Rate Relief for Welsh Charity Shops. This petition was submitted by the Charity Retail Association and we first considered it approximately a year ago, in January 2013. It has the support of 22,600 signatures, and clearly we are fully aware of the high-profile nature of this campaign. Of course, it is an England-and-Wales campaign as well. We last considered it on 26 November, and we agreed to write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, forwarding the petitioners’ latest correspondence and asking to be kept informed of the results of inquiries elsewhere in the UK, and, indeed, the

devolved administrations. We have a response from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, which is available to us. I think, probably, it would be sensible to seek the petitioners' response to this, but, clearly, the Minister is adopting a very thoughtful approach here, and we need to be kept in the loop as to the way her thinking is shaping up as she gets responses from elsewhere in the UK. In the meantime, we can write to the petitioners and seek their views on her interim thoughts. Is that a sensible way forward? Thank you.

[137] The following three petitions we have agreed to group: P-04-475, Wanted—Buses for Meirionydd, P-04-513, Save the Wrexham/Barmouth X94 Bus Service, and, finally, P-04-516, Increase Funding for Welsh Bus Services.

[138] The first of those, P-04-457, the buses for Meirionydd petition, was submitted by Barbara Snowball—*[Interruption.]* Oh, I am sorry. It is P-04-475, not 457. I am developing late-onset dyslexia. It is 475, that is right. This petition was submitted by Barbara Snowball and was first considered by our committee in April of last year. It had 174 signatures. You will recall that Joyce Watson has kindly undertaken a rapporteur role with regard to this matter. May I ask you to make a contribution, Joyce?

[139] **Joyce Watson:** First of all, I would like to pay tribute to the people on the ground, who have done considerable work in trying to bring this to our attention and to resolve the issues locally. I have now done the rapporteur visit twice, actually, because I met them again just a few weeks back, and they are, if anything, determined, and also well informed. It is the well-informed bit, and the consistency, that has, I think resulted in this being taken forward in the way that we have been updated. I also met a group of petitioners in Aberystwyth, as well, when their buses were affected by Arriva's withdrawal from that service completely last December. I note what the Minister has done in terms of very quickly putting replacements in place until June this year. All those things are really welcomed by everybody here, but I do note that there is a recommendation that we should perhaps carry out a piece of work, and I would support that, because the issues have grown and the significance and importance of buses along some of this route have increased because there are issues with the rail network, which would have been the other mode of transport that people would have used. So, I do not know. I will go along with my colleagues, but I would like to do some more work on this.

[140] **William Powell:** I would very much like us to return to considering that in the context, later on in the meeting, of our forward work programme, because we have a very useful research brief and we have some options as to how to take this forward. If colleagues would be happy to park that aspect until we consider the work programme in the round, I think that that would be useful, but—

[141] **Bethan Jenkins:** As long as we agree that we are going to carry out a piece of work—that would be great.

[142] **William Powell:** There is a commitment there to do that, but it is just the nature of that and how it fits into the wider streams of work—

[143] **Bethan Jenkins:** I feel that, with regard to a lot of the letters and the changes that are happening, we cannot go on looking at short-term fixes. I appreciate that the Minister has put in funding until June, but we have to understand what is happening after that. I think that it would be very helpful, with the three petitions that we have, to garner those opinions fully.

[144] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I am fully supportive of that.

[145] **Russell George:** I agree with what has been said. I think that we should do a detailed piece of work on this. I am happy, of course, for us to discuss it at the end of the meeting, when we look at our forward work programme, but want to put on the record—

[146] **William Powell:** We put on the record now that we are making a commitment to do that. Clearly, Bethan is right that something that has been put in place until June is not a long-term fix, but, clearly, it is welcome at the moment, particularly in the context of what Joyce referred to, which is the disaster of the demise of a slice of the rail line that links some of these communities. Hopefully, that will be fully resolved by mid to late May. So, it was very timely that we got some additional facilities secured in the meantime.

[147] **Joyce Watson:** I just want to add, to be fair to all, that the interim period, where the buses are being funded until June, is running alongside a solution being found by the Minister and that is stated. I think that it would be very unfair if we did not state that. Also, our inquiry should take note of that and be informed by it.

[148] **William Powell:** Absolutely, and, as we are aware from the Minister's most recent statement, she has put together a panel of stakeholders and service providers who know what they are talking about, so that should give us—

[149] **Bethan Jenkins:** We like our panels in Wales. [*Laughter.*]

[150] **William Powell:** We do. We used to like our committees, and now panels are doing some of the heavy lifting. Okay, point taken. So, that is the state of play for that group of petitions, and I think that we have now stated quite clearly that we are looking to undertake a piece of work, the detail of which we can work up later on in the context of our wider forward work programme. Good.

[151] Next is P-04-498, To get Wales educated. This was submitted by Matthew Hopkins—we first considered it as a committee in September 2013—having collected 12 signatures.

[152] ‘We the undersigned call on the Welsh Government to encourage children from primary school age to stay in education to university level.’

[153] We last considered it on 11 November and we agreed to write to seek the petitioner's views. We have received no response from the petitioner, despite a chase-up. I think that, in that context, it is wise for us to move to close this, if colleagues are content with that. Let us do that, then.

[154] Next is P-04-499, Kick Start The Welsh Language Curriculum. This was submitted by Eva Bowers and Lauren Davies and was first considered by the committee in September 2013. The petitioners had collected 19 signatures. It called

[155] ‘upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to change the Welsh Language Curriculum in Secondary Schools; in order to encourage the Welsh Language to be used in a conversational manner rather than teaching Cymraeg to pass an examination.’

[156] The petitioners offered some additional explanation as to what they meant by that, which we have in front of us. The committee last considered the petition on 11 November and we agreed to seek the petitioners' views on the ministerial correspondence that had been received. Eva Bowers has written back and given us some further clarification and that is in the public domain. I think it would be useful if we were to write to Huw Lewis to seek his views, given that the petitioner has taken the trouble and committed the energy to consider the issues, and also, possibly, Estyn, but I would be advised on that.

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** Roeddwn jest yn **Bethan Jenkins:** I was just thinking perhaps meddwl efallai y gallen ni roi *transcript* o we could provide a transcript of Plaid

ddadl Plaid Cymru yn y Senedd ynglŷn â'r iaith Gymraeg. Yn y ddadl honno, siaradais ynglŷn â sut y gall dysgu Cymraeg fel ail iaith newid, wedi'i selio ar adolygiad gan y Llywodraeth. Nid yw'r Llywodraeth eto wedi rhoi unrhyw fath o gamau yn ei le ar sail yr adroddiad hwnnw. Felly, efallai y byddai'r deisebwr â diddordeb i ddarllen y ddadl honno a'r hyn oedd gan Huw Lewis i'w ddweud o ran hynny o beth, a gweld wedyn sut y gallai hyn ddatblygu fel rhan o unrhyw fath o bolisi i'r dyfodol. Credaf fod yr hyn y mae hi yn ei ddweud yn yr esboniad yn cydfynd â llawer o bethau rwyf wedi siarad â phlant amdanynt yn yr ysgolion ail iaith, sef eu bod nhw eisiau dysgu pethau sy'n mynd i fod yn berthnasol iddynt yn eu bywydau bob dydd, yn hytrach na dysgu Cymraeg pur, gloyw, achos maent eisiau gallu cymdeithasu yn yr iaith. Felly, rwy'n credu byddai hynny yn helpu.

Cymru's debate in the Senedd on the Welsh language. In that debate, I spoke about how teaching Welsh as a second language could be changed, based on a review undertaken by the Government. The Government has not as yet put any steps in place on the basis of that report. So, perhaps the petitioner would be interested to read a transcript of that debate and of what Huw Lewis had to say about that, to see then how this could be developed to be part of some sort of policy for the future. I think that what she says in her explanation is in line with a lot of things that I have spoken about with children in second-language Welsh schools, which is that they want to learn things that are relevant to them in their day-to-day lives, rather than learning perfect Welsh, because they want to be able to socialise in the language. So, I think that would be helpful.

[158] **William Powell:** I think that also ties in with some comments that I have heard the First Minister make with regard to the way that we need to progress this. I would be very happy to signpost the petitioners to the transcript, because I think there were some interesting and thoughtful contributions from all sides of the Chamber, including your own.

[159] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, also, the First Minister, who is responsible—

[160] **William Powell:** He has overarching responsibility, has he not?

[161] **Joyce Watson:** —for the Welsh language, has made a written statement, which I read yesterday—that does not mean it was made yesterday; it could have been Friday—which might be of equal interest to the petitioners.

[162] **William Powell:** I am happy to do that, and also throw in the idea of possibly contacting Estyn, although that may be premature, but I think it would be useful to bring the petition to its attention as well. Are you happy with that approach?

[163] **Joyce Watson:** That is fine.

09:58

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod

Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

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

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of today's meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

[165] Are Members content with that? Excellent. Diolch yn fawr.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 09:58.
The public part of the meeting ended at 09:58.*