



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 23 Medi 2014
Tuesday, 23 September 2014**

**Cynnwys
Contents**

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol
Updates to Previous Petitions

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
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Bethan Jenkins) The Party of Wales (substitute for Bethan Jenkins)
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
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:00.
The meeting began at 09:00.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da, bawb. **William Powell:** Good morning, all.
Croeso yn ôl i'r Pwyllgor Deisebau. Welcome to the Petitions Committee.

[2] Welcome to the first session of the Petitions Committee of our new term. The normal housekeeping arrangements apply. We have received an apology this morning from our colleague Bethan Jenkins and it is good to welcome Rhodri Glyn Thomas as her substitute this morning. Rhodri has indicated that he needs to leave at approximately 10.25 a.m. I am grateful that you are able to join us this morning, in any event. As we have probably one of the largest agendas ever in the recent history of the committee, I suggest that we move straight into agenda item 2.

09:01

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[3] **William Powell:** We begin with P-04-579, Reinstate funding for Skomer Island's Guillemot monitoring. This petition was submitted by Cardiff University ornithological society and an associated petition collected 1,687 signatures. It says:

[4] 'Natural Resources Wales have cut the £12,000 annual funding they provide for the on-going Guillemot monitoring study on Skomer Island. This is a hugely important study, and gives valuable insights into seabird life and what affects their populations. Not only is it a shame to end such a long running (and therefore valuable) data set, but the cut couldn't have come at a worse time, considering the huge impact the recent storms have had on seabird populations (current death toll 25,000 and rising). This is a very bad decision on the part of Natural Resources Wales, and we'd like to see it amended.'

[5] I suppose in the context of my membership of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, which I share with two fellow members of this committee, I should indicate that I was recently part of a visit to this very place, which was co-hosted by NRW and gave us some insight into the wider issues.

[6] **Russell George:** Chair, could I suggest that we write to the Minister for Natural

Resources in the first instance?

[7] **William Powell:** I think that that is the appropriate and natural thing for us to do. Let us do that. Joyce, do you have any comment?

[8] **Joyce Watson:** Only to declare that I am a member of the RSPB and the body that oversees the landing fees of Skomer island.

[9] **William Powell:** Thank you for putting that on the record, Joyce. I am very happy to write to the new Minister, Carl Sargeant, in this regard.

[10] We move on to P-04-580, Restrictions on Donating Blood. This petition was submitted by Scott Dymond and has the support of 83 signatures. It says:

[11] ‘Giving blood is a very honourable and helpful thing for someone to do in this country to help out people in desperate need of it. However, not everyone is eligible to donate blood, some for reasons that are very understandable, but there is one reason that it not understandable at all. Homosexual men are not allowed to give blood if they have engaged in sexual intercourse with someone within the last year, it is wrong and unfair. The NHS is worried about getting blood infected with HIV/AIDS, however, anyone can contract AIDS, not only homosexuals, all the blood is processed and tested before offering it anyway, so there is no reason why a homosexual man should have to remain abstinent for a year in order to do a noble act. This inequality needs to end now and we must allow people of all sexual orientations the option to donate blood.’

[12] **Joyce Watson:** I suggest that we write to the Minister for Health and Social Services.

[13] **William Powell:** I think that we need to write to Mark Drakeford on this matter. I know that it has been an issue that has had quite a bit of discussion recently in the media and I daresay that the Minister will respond to us fully on this matter.

[14] **Russell George:** Chair, could I suggest as well that we ask the clerk to prepare a brief factual briefing that we can review when we have the letter back from the Minister?

[15] **William Powell:** It would be useful to have context, possibly from the Welsh Blood Service as well. I would be happy to do that.

[16] The next petition is P-04-581, Opposition to cuts in provision for learners of English as an Additional Language. This petition was submitted by Helen Myers and has collected 37 signatures. It says:

[17] ‘We, the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reconsider its cuts to pupils acquiring English as an Additional Language (EAL) in schools. Additional funding is required to prevent the marginalisation of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds in schools through specialist support which aims to raise educational standards and ensure equality of opportunity for all.’

[18] The reduction in the minority ethnic achievement grant

[19] ‘impacts exclusively upon ethnic minority pupils at a time when unprecedented numbers of EAL learners are in our schools. Lack of consultation fails to examine the scale, scope and impact of our support upon individuals, their families and whole school achievement.’

[20] I propose that we write to Huw Lewis, the Minister for Education and Skills, on this

matter, if colleagues are agreeable.

[21] **Joyce Watson:** Could we also write to the City and County of Swansea for its view, because it has come from Swansea?

[22] **William Powell:** Yes, I would be very happy to write to the new leader of Swansea council in that regard. Okay; that is agreed.

[23] We now move to P-04-582, Much Needed Change to the Rules in our Schools with Regards to Head Lice and Nits. This petition was submitted by Marnie Hill and has collected 31 signatures. The text reads as follows:

[24] ‘There needs to be a change in the rules with regards to Head Lice in school children. Currently school staff are not permitted to point out, even to the offending child’s parent, who it is in the class has Head Lice and a generic letter is just handed out. Why can’t a parent, whose child is visibly infected and infecting a class, be informed and asked to collect said child. This child should then be kept off school until they have been deemed clear by a member of staff to return as they do in some schools in the US! If a child vomits in school, they are sent home immediately. Head Lice are just as infectious and cause just as much distress to our children. This can be done discreetly, nobody has to know. Unless the parent themselves choose to share the information. It is not a violation of anybody’s human rights, if anything it would protect the children of us who are diligent and care, and subsequently spending a lot of money to treat our children to no avail!’

[25] I think that this is another case for Huw Lewis, the Minister for Education and Skills, if colleagues support me on that.

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

[27] **Joyce Watson:** I also think the Minister for health.

[28] **William Powell:** Yes, there is crossover there, is there not? I would be happy to write to both and see who emerges as the lead on head lice in schools.

[29] We now move to P-04-583, Ban all Growing and Selling of all GM seeds/Foods and Animal/Fish Feed in Wales. This petition was submitted by Sovereign Wales and has the support of 13 signatures. It says:

[30] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to establish, as far as that is consistent with EU law, an Act banning all GM food, plants and seeds from being grown and sold in Wales, as well as GMO used in all animal, game and fish feed. Food sovereignty and health is a crucial issue to the future of Wales and the world and is something that will further positively distinguish Welsh food products in the worldwide market. As presented by the great work done by GM Free Cymru and by key scientists such as Irina Ermakova, Professor Vyvyan Howard and Malcolm Hooper, Dr Stanley Ewen, Dr Arpad Pusztai, Manuela Malatesta and colleagues at the Universities of Pavia and Urbino in Italy to name a few, there is now overwhelming evidence available about the inherent dangers of GM foods.’

[31] **Russell George:** May I suggest, Chair, that in the first instance we write to the Minister for Natural Resources? Could I also commend you on your pronunciation—it was very good?

[32] **William Powell:** That is very kind of you; thank you very much. I will be happy to write as you indicated and I can see that colleagues are agreeable.

[33] We move on to P-04-584, Wales Planning Bill to Protect Town and Village Greens in Wales. This petition was submitted by Nortridge Perrott, and collected 19 signatures, with a further 194 signatures collected on an alternative e-petition website. It reads:

[34] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to legislate to ensure that the public and their needs for public open space in Wales is favoured against private developers, land bankers, and Local authority Local development plans. Because the notion of accessible open space in Wales used for sports, recreation and pastimes for over 20 years should be protected and enhanced in the public interest for the citizens in Wales. The guidance and law should reflect the importance of town and village greens to the many communities in Wales.’

[35] It seems a particularly timely issue for us to consider, in the context of the emerging Planning Bill. I propose that we write to Carl Sargeant, with his new brief, as the Minister for Natural Resources, to seek his views. I see that you are agreed. Okay; good.

[36] The next petition is P-04-585, Changes to A494/A470 Junction Dolgellau. This petition was submitted by Kathryn White, and collected 2,869 signatures in total—1,288 electronic signatures, and 1,581 on paper. The petitioner states:

[37] ‘In the six weeks since the completion of changes to the junction of the A494/A470 at Dolgellau there have been three serious road traffic collisions, two fatalities, two seriously injured and two ‘minor injuries’. Many people have expressed concerns locally and with the coming summer holidays and an increase to the traffic at this junction there are likely to be more such incidents. We call on the Welsh Government to consider, urgently, changes to this junction before more lives are lost or changed for the worse.’

[38] I think that this is something that we need to take up with the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, and also we need to seek an update as to how things have developed in the intervening eight to 10 weeks since this petition was submitted, because, obviously, it was submitted early in the summer. It is a matter of great local concern, as is evidenced by the support for the petition. So, if colleagues are agreeable, I shall write to Edwina Hart on this matter. I see that you are agreed.

[39] We now move to P-04-586, All NHS Wales staff to be Paid at least the Hourly Living Wage Rate of £7.65. This petition was submitted by UNISON Cymru/Wales, and collected 174 signatures. Before continuing, I think that I should declare that my wife is a member of UNISON, and works within the NHS. The petition reads:

[40] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to recognise the vital work undertaken by staff working for the NHS in Wales, and urge the Welsh Government to implement the recommendation made by the NHS pay review body, and ensure that all NHS Wales staff are paid at least the hourly living wage rate of £7.65.’

[41] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, may I also declare that my daughter is a nurse, while she might not be a member of UNISON?

[42] **William Powell:** Thank you, Joyce, for putting that on the record.

[43] **Russell George:** Shall we write to the Minister, Chair?

[44] **William Powell:** I think that this is certainly something that we need to write to Mark Drakeford about. Happy to put that in hand. Okay; I see that colleagues are all agreed.

[45] We now move to P-04-587, A Dedicated Support Team for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.), Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, and Fibromyalgia Sufferers in South East Wales. This petition was submitted by M.E.S.I.G., which is short for M.E. Support in Glamorgan, and collected 1,196 signatures in total—368 electronically, and the majority, 826, on paper. It reads:

09:15

[46] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that a dedicated Consultant/Clinic and medical support team for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.), Chronic Fatigue Syndrome & Fibromyalgia sufferers is set up in South East Wales. I request that this petition be treated as an official voice of M.E. sufferers, their families, carers and interested parties.

[47] Currently, sufferers of the above ailments are not being supported, with a few exceptions, by the medical profession. They are unable to work but the government bodies assessing them do not appear to understand their problems. This is the basis for this petition.’

[48] **Russell George:** Chair, may I suggest that we write to the Minister, Mark Drakeford?

[49] **William Powell:** Yes, I would be happy to do that on behalf of this committee.

[50] The next petition is P-04-588, Charter for Children and Fathers. This petition was submitted by FNF Both Parents Matter Cymru and collected 335 signatures. It reads:

[51] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to adopt all six points in the Charter for Action for Children & Fathers in Wales.

1. All Welsh Government funded programmes to record gender of parents / carers they work with.
2. Set S.M.A.R.T. targets to increase participation of fathers and all other Non Resident Parents with Welsh Government services.
3. First Minister to make annual statement on the importance of fathers AND what the Welsh Government has done to help them in the past 12 months.
4. Encourage improved shared care of children to allow more parents (particularly single parents) to take up training or employment programmes.
5. Recognition of Parental Alienation as a form of emotional abuse of children.
6. Establish a work group under the Family Justice Network for Wales to co-ordinate improved collaboration for those organisations who hold the DWP’s Help and Support for Separated Families (HSSF) Mark in Wales’

[52] We also have additional information, which colleagues have had the opportunity to study, to set this in its wider context. I would propose, if colleagues are agreeable, to take this issue up with, first of all, Mark Drakeford, the Minister for Health and Social Services. Are colleagues agreeable?

[53] **Russell George:** Yes.

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

[55] **William Powell:** The next petition is P-04-589, Reduce the Number of Councillors and Executive Members in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. This petition was submitted by Julian Price and collected 34 signatures. It reads:

[56] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to instruct the Local Government Boundary Commission to review the number of Councillors and Executive Members for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council with a view to reducing their numbers.’

[57] As a precaution, I should probably put on record the fact that I am a member of an adjacent local authority, Powys County Council, in case this proposed cull of councillors were to be extended.

[58] **Russell George:** I will make the same declaration, Chair.

[59] **William Powell:** This is probably a matter for the new Minister for Public Services to assess what appetite he has for taking this forward, and that is our colleague Leighton Andrews.

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

[61] **Russell George:** I can probably guess what his reply will say—we could probably write it—but we had better follow the protocol.

[62] **William Powell:** Let us not anticipate anything, and see what Mr Leighton Andrews has to say about this one. Thank you, colleagues.

[63] The next petition is P-04-590, Funding for the Cardi Bach Coastal Bus Service. This petition was submitted by Janet Richardson and collected a total of 1,205 signatures: 1,084 paper signatures and 121 electronically. It simply reads:

[64] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reinstate the funding of the Cardi Bach coastal bus service in Ceredigion.’

[65] There is significant additional information available there to help us to consider this matter.

[66] **Mr George:** We also have a letter from the Deputy Minister to the petitioner.

[67] **William Powell:** We have a letter, indeed, from Rebecca Evans in her new role, addressing this issue, particularly in the context of the RDP.

[68] **Mr George:** The Deputy Minister wrote to the petitioner and the petitioners have let us have a copy of that letter. So, there have already been ministerial comments on this petition.

[69] **Russell George:** In line with what we normally do, shall we write to the Minister, Edwina Hart, in any case, because that is what we should do?

[70] **William Powell:** Yes. I think that that exchange was at a time when our colleague Deputy Minister Rebecca Evans was under the sort of oversight of Mrs Edwina Hart, presumably.

[71] **Mr George:** Well, it is dated 12 September. The only point I would make is that the Deputy Minister seems to be suggesting quite strongly that Ceredigion local authority has

some locus in this.

[72] **Joyce Watson:** She suggests that they contact Ceredigion County Council to discuss their plans. So, in that case, I think that we ought to do the same.

[73] **William Powell:** I would be happy to write to Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, as leader of Ceredigion council, and also probably, for completeness, Edwina Hart as the principal Minister in this area.

[74] **Joyce Watson:** It does suggest in the letter to write to Gareth Rowlands, community regeneration manager at Ceredigion County Council.

[75] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I would be happy to write to him, copying it to the leader, just as is our normal practice, and to Edwina Hart. Thanks, colleagues, for that clarification.

[76] We will move on now to petition P-04-591, Fair Funding for Local Government. This petition was submitted by Unison. Again, I restate the declaration I made earlier regarding my wife's membership of Unison. It collected 180 electronic signatures and in excess of 800 signatures via an associated petition. It reads:

[77] 'UNISON Neath Port Talbot Branch call for the Welsh Government to reconsider the proposed budget cuts of up to -4.5% to Local Government funding. Local Government budgets are at breaking point and any further cuts will have a devastating effect on local services which the most vulnerable of society rely upon. Cuts to local government services will put further pressure on an already over-loaded NHS. These cuts are short sighted and the funds that are being diverted from local government to the NHS will not have the desired effect. Local government social services has a positive effect on keeping people out of hospital and maintaining these services is imperative in order to ease pressures on the NHS.'

[78] I think that this is clearly a matter for us to take to Leighton Andrews, the Minister for Public Services.

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

[80] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** There is a certain irony in the fact that this petition was initiated by a certain Leighton Andrews when he was a backbench Member, before he had ministerial responsibility. So, it will be very interesting to know what his response is to the petition.

[81] **William Powell:** Thank you very much for providing that context, which I was not aware of. That is very helpful for our further consideration.

[82] We will move on to petition P-04-592, Democratically Binding Plebiscites at Local Government Level. This petition was submitted by Plebeian Laboratories and collected 38 signatures. It reads:

[83] 'We, the undersigned, call upon the Welsh Government to legislate to allow for Welsh citizens to call plebiscites on issues at the level of Local Government, and for such votes to have the effect of, either [1] calling-in decisions made by Councils for reconsideration, or [2] allowing votes above a two-thirds majority to be democratically binding.'

[84] We have some additional information regarding how Plebeian Laboratories envisage this matter operating.

[85] **Russell George:** Chair, may I suggest that we write to the Minister for Public Services in the first instance?

[86] **William Powell:** Indeed. It will be very interesting to see what Leighton Andrews has to say on this petition also.

[87] **Joyce Watson:** Unless things have completely changed since I was a councillor—and you two are councillors—you can call in decisions.

[88] **William Powell:** There is a call-in mechanism, I am sure, which is—

[89] **Joyce Watson:** It might be worth apprising the petitioner of that.

[90] **William Powell:** Possibly, at a later stage, we may involve the Welsh Local Government Association in giving a view too. However, I think that, at the moment, if we confine things to Leighton Andrews, it will serve the cause of clarity. Good.

[91] We will move on to petition P-04-593, Advise schools on visits to Noah's Ark Zoo Farm. This petition was submitted by Jane Henderson and collected 222 signatures. It reads:

[92] 'We request the Minister for Education and Skills in the Welsh Government reviews the suitability of Noah's Ark Zoo Farm for visits from Welsh schools. We consider the zoo unsuitable because: 1. It undermines the understanding of science and contradicts the national curriculum. 2. The zoo was expelled from the zoo industry body, BIAZA, in 2009.

[93] Going on school trips is a vital part of our children's learning, helping them to get hands on experience of the world around them. Teachers and parents value this, and put in a lot of time and effort to making sure that the trips they run support children's learning and are safe. In order to do this, they rely on guidance and information. We ask that you investigate Noah's Ark Zoo Farm immediately and make sure that all schools are made aware of the findings of the investigation.'

[94] I draw colleagues' attention to something that you have undoubtedly already seen and taken account of, which is some explanatory material from Noah's Ark Zoo Farm, and we have also had, in the last 24 hours, an e-mail from the lead petitioner, Jane Henderson, giving some further context to her concerns about the appropriateness of this particular facility for school visits. I suggest that we write to the Minister for Education and Skills, seeking his views on the petition. Given the particular context, I think it might be appropriate to enclose, for his study also, the other correspondence that we have had to give it a fuller context. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are.

[95] We now move to P-04-594, Cilmeri Community Council Appeal for The Prince Llywelyn Monument. This petition was submitted by Cilmeri Community Council and collected 305 signatures. At this point, I should declare that I have met members of the council on this matter, and I have given them some procedural advice as to how they could go forward. I also, in recent years, have attended the commemoration in December at Cilmeri. That is best stated for the record. The text of this petition reads as follows:

[96] 'Due to the National importance of our Prince Llywelyn Monument we, the Community of Cilmeri call, on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to:

[97] Install locational signage boards, incorporating a brown signage battlefield icon, to denote the historical significance of our village, on the A483 at both main road entrances to

the village;

[98] Work in partnership with Powys County Council, Cilmeri Community Council and CADW to help maintain the famous monument, so that visitors can enjoy our national historical amenity in a safe and befitting environment;

[99] Help identify resources to implement, in a phased manner, the Lloyd Brown Interpretation Plan (January 2013), commissioned by CADW.'

[100] There is also some additional information that has been provided by the petitioners. I would be grateful for a steer from colleagues as to how to take this forward.

[101] **Joyce Watson:** We should write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport to seek her views in the first instance.

[102] **William Powell:** I would be happy to do that, if colleagues are agreeable. I see that you are.

[103] The next petition is P-04-595, Foresight Pathway. This petition was submitted by Radnorshire resident and farmer David Hardwick, and collected 91 signatures in total—two electronically and 89 in paper form. This was received yesterday from Mr Hardwick, who made the journey to Cardiff to present it. It reads:

[104] 'We the undersigned, call upon The National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to safeguard the vital future health and wellbeing of the people of Wales by making food security the direct responsibility of an independent person to ensure future overview of food production. He or she must be answerable to the First Minister. The security of food production is of the first order in importance to the people of Wales. Energy already is the First Minister's remit.'

[105] Mr Hardwick goes on to provide additional information in support of his views as to the importance of this measure.

09:30

[106] **Joyce Watson:** We could write to the Minister for Natural Resources seeking views.

[107] **William Powell:** Yes, I would be happy to do that and see what his perspective is on the matter.

[108] **Russell George:** I do not think that the First Minister is responsible for energy any longer.

[109] **William Powell:** No, indeed. Things have moved on since Mr Hardwick initiated this petition. Things have obviously changed, as you say.

[110] **Joyce Watson:** Nonetheless, it does not change—

[111] **William Powell:** The point stands, absolutely. Good. We will move on now to petition P-04-596, Save Porth Fire Station – SECONDS COST LIVES! This petition was submitted by Gerwyn James and collected five electronic signatures, and in excess of 9,000 paper signatures.

[112] 'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to review the proposal to close Porth fire station leaving the communities of Porth 10 - 15

minutes away from the nearest fire engine located at either Tonypandy or Treforest.’

[113] ‘Due to the public sector cuts and the fire review cover being carried out, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has made a proposal to permanently close Porth fire station. This will leave no fire cover within the Porth community.’

[114] In this context, I recall not so long ago receiving a petition from our colleague, Rhodri Glyn, and his parliamentary colleague, Jonathan Edwards, on wider issues of fire service cuts across Wales.

[115] **Russell George:** Chair, I suggest that we write to the Minister for Public Services.

[116] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Obviously, Leighton Andrews will have an interesting perspective there, given his ministerial, but also his constituency, commitments.

[117] **Mr George:** Can I just also draw Members’ attention to the fact that the other petition that was just mentioned in relation to Pontypridd fire station is also on the agenda later on under item 3.24? There is, in fact, a response from the Minister there, which you will want to be aware of.

[118] **William Powell:** Thank you for that. The next is petition P-04-597, Protect the Future of Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales. This petition was submitted by Catherine Patricia Jones on behalf of Funky Dragon and collected a total of 1,641 signatures: 1,212 electronically and 429 on paper.

[119] ‘We, the undersigned, call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to protect the future of Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People’s Assembly for Wales by restoring core funding. Wales must have an independent, youth led, publicly funded, national platform for children and young people, democratically elected at a local level, to give voice to their views and opinions and to hold the Welsh Government to account. The national platform must be empowered to work with all elected members to further children and young people’s issues and to report directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as Funky Dragon did so successfully in 2008.’

[120] ‘Funky Dragon still believes that:

[121] Young people, democratically elected, at a local level should have a National Platform to voice their views and opinions.

[122] That platform should be called the Youth Assembly for Wales.

[123] It should be able to work with all Elected Members, including Assembly Members and Members of Parliament to further young peoples’ issues.

[124] It should be supported to allow Welsh young people to report directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.’

[125] ‘The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in commenting on the last UK State report stated: Concluding observation 33. That governments’ ‘Support forums for children’s participation, such as the United Kingdom Youth Parliament, Funky Dragon in Wales and Youth Parliament in Scotland should be implemented.’

[126] This is a very time-sensitive petition. Clearly, many of us received representations back in the summer on this matter, and the presentation was made to us by a large number of Funky Dragon members just last week. Given the imminent cessation of its grant at the end of

this month, clearly, we need to be alert to that. I propose writing to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, but I suspect that colleagues may have additional actions.

[127] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Byddwn i'n awgrymu hefyd eich bod yn ysgrifennu at y Llywydd—a hoffwn nodi buddiant fel Comisiynydd yn y Cynulliad—oherwydd mae yna drafodaethau wedi bod yn y Comisiwn ynglŷn â sefydlu senedd ieuentid a fyddai, wrth gwrs, yn annibynnol. Mae'n rhaid cofio bod Funky Dragon yn cael ei noddi gan Lywodraeth Cymru, ac mae'r cwestiwn yn codi ai mudiad wedi'i ariannu gan lywodraeth a chan un blaid neu glymblaid a ddylai fod yn fforwm trafod ar gyfer ieuentid, neu ai rhywbeth annibynnol wedi'i sefydlu gan y Cynulliad. Felly, rwy'n awgrymu ein bod yn ysgrifennu at y Llywydd i ofyn pa fwriadau sydd gan Gomisiwn y Cynulliad yn y maes hwn.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I would also suggest that you write to the Presiding Officer—and I declare an interest as an Assembly Commissioner—because there have been discussions in the Commission about setting up a youth parliament, which would be independent, of course. We have to bear in mind that Funky Dragon is funded by the Welsh Government, and the question arises as to whether a discussion forum for young people should be a government-funded body of one party or a coalition, or whether it should be something independent that is established by the Assembly. So, I suggest that we write to the Presiding Officer to ask what intentions the Assembly Commission has in this area.

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

[129] **William Powell:** Diolch yn fawr iawn. It is extremely helpful to have that input, particularly given your insights as a Commissioner, because apart from anything else the deletion of this funding clearly impacts on the work of the Commission. It is obviously an issue that the Presiding Officer has been leading on in lots of ways, including her recent visit to Iceland, on these wider matters, to try to identify best practice.

[130] **Russell George:** Chair, I agree with Rhodri Glyn's suggestion and actions. I think that we all agree that the voice of young people is extremely important. When we do have replies back, I think that we should agree now that it would be useful, depending on the reply that we have, to involve younger people somehow in taking this petition forward, even if we invite them to come to our committee. I think that we will wait until we have the responses back first.

[131] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I do understand that the Funky Dragon charitable status will continue, and that that trust will continue in any event for a certain period, as will some of its individually funded projects. However, the critical blow for it is the deletion of funding for the staff who help to give continuity and support to its activities.

[132] I should also mention that we have had correspondence shared with us, which is on page 29 of our papers, from the former Minister, Jeff Cuthbert, in response to Tricia Jones, the Funky Dragon chair, giving some explanation as to the Government's motivation in this area. However, I think that it is nevertheless appropriate, as stated, to write to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty. I am very happy to take on board and support Rhodri Glyn's suggestion that we write also to the Presiding Officer. I wonder whether there might also be scope and value in writing to the children's commissioner.

[133] **Russell George:** Yes, absolutely.

[134] **William Powell:** I would be happy to do that, if colleagues are amenable to it. I see that you are. Thank you very much indeed.

[135] Another suggestion, which we have previously discussed, is that it might potentially

be a useful final action to write to Children in Wales, the umbrella body, in this regard, particularly given the time sensitivity of this and the level of concern across Wales.

[136] **Russell George:** Yes. That is good.

[137] **William Powell:** Good. We now move to petition P-04-598, Disability Awareness Training. This petition was submitted by Visualise Training and Consultancy, and it collected 62 signatures.

[138] ‘We want to make disability awareness training compulsory across any organisation providing face to face customer service. So that staff know how to assist and support a disabled person confidently, safely, effectively and equally. The Equality Act 2010 states that all organisations should make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person, however there are many organisations that are unsure how to do this correctly and reasonably. Therefore we would like to see a more inclusive society and a law put into place so that people are aware of disability and raise the quality of customers experiences for disabled people or currently know how to support disabled people. The training should incorporate adequate time of each element of disability separately. Mental health, visual impairment, learning, hearing and physical. I recommend half day training per element. This training should be renewed every 3 years to keep up to date.’

[139] **Russell George:** I suggest, Chair, that we write to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty in the first instance.

[140] **William Powell:** Yes. I am happy to do that, if colleagues agree. I see that you do. Good.

[141] Let us move on to petition P-04-599 on the impact of domestic rating on self-catering accommodation. This petition was submitted by Mr Chris Harris and has the support of 27 signatures.

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

1. Undertake a thorough review and impact assessment of the Non Domestic Rating (Definition of Domestic Property) (Wales) Order 2010, with particular reference to:
 - a. the potential for adverse impact on new self catering tourism businesses, as they develop their marketing strategies during the first two years of trading;
 - b. the critical impact of severe weather events on marketing strategies and hence occupancy rates during a particular calendar year.
2. Have regard to the findings of such a review, specifically by instructing the Valuation Office for Non Domestic Rates in Wales to adopt a flexible and business friendly approach, including potential for the retrospective waiving of Council Tax, where there is clear evidence of a genuine case.
3. Review its overall tourism marketing strategy, to ensure that Visit Wales registered self catering businesses are not disadvantaged by disproportionate emphasis upon coastal tourism and serviced accommodation, such as cruising and hotels.’

[143] Clearly, this is a multilayered petition, and I am sure that it will be of interest to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, Edwina Hart, if we write to her in this connection, which I propose to do. Are colleagues amenable? I see that you are, thank you

very much.

[144] That concludes the new petitions for this time, which I think is a record number for a single meeting.

09:41

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[145] **William Powell:** First up is P-04-549, Make ‘Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau’ the Official Welsh National Anthem, which was submitted, as colleagues will recall, by Stuart Evans and was first considered on 29 April this year. It was supported by 1,012 signatures. We considered it, as I said, on 29 April, and we agreed to write to the Minister for Culture and Sport, seeking views. We have received a response from the First Minister, which is in our public papers. It is a very interesting response in terms of some of the points of detail and also the way in which the First Minister makes clear the extent, or the lack, of powers that exist in this area to do as the petitioner is requesting. We have not as yet had a response from the petitioner, Mr Evans, with regard to the First Minister’s letter, so I suggest that we chase up on that matter to see whether he has some thoughts to share with us ahead of a future consideration.

[146] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I think that you can ask the petitioner for their comments, but the point is that we have not got the powers. That is the ultimate point here.

[147] **William Powell:** You can see where this is going.

[148] **Joyce Watson:** Therefore, we cannot do what is being asked, even if we wanted to. I am sure that there would be the will to do so, if we could. That said, there is a finality to this petition in any case, so I would suggest that we do write but that we close.

[149] **William Powell:** I think that we can advise the petitioner that it is our intention to close, because, as you say, the position is crystal clear in the First Minister’s letter.

[150] **Joyce Watson:** There is not anybody in this room who would not support this, but we simply cannot do it.

[151] **William Powell:** The First Minister gives us chapter and verse.

<p>[152] Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Hoffwn dim ond nodi bod rhyw eironi rhyfedd nad oes gan Gynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru y pwerau i ddynodi anthem genedlaethol ar gyfer Cymru. Os nad oes gan Gynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yr hawl i wneud hynny, gan bwy y mae’r hawl? Fodd bynnag, rwy’n derbyn yr esboniad gan y Prif Weinidog.</p>	<p>Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I only want to note that there is a strange irony in the fact that the National Assembly for Wales does not have the power to designate the official national anthem of Wales. If the National Assembly for Wales does not have the power to do that, who does? However, I accept the First Minister’s explanation.</p>
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[153] **William Powell:** I am grateful for that contribution, and I think that we might well sign up to that view as well, but we are where we are in this particular regard. I look forward to writing to Mr Evans, as has been suggested by Joyce. Thank you very much.

[154] Moving now to P-04-319, the Newtown traffic petition, this was submitted by Paul Pavia and was first considered way back on 21 June 2011. It has the support of 10 signatures. A related petition collected approximately 5,000 signatures.

09:45

[155] **Russell George:** Chair, may I declare an interest as someone heavily involved in collecting signatures for this petition? I also note that the petitioner worked and still works for my office in some capacity. Other than that, I do not think that there is much we can do at the moment other than wait to receive updates from the Minister as and when they come forward.

[156] **William Powell:** We have a helpful response from Edwina Hart on this issue. I propose to write to her to thank her for that, and asking to be kept in the picture as to how the next critical steps develop towards delivering that project. Are colleagues happy?

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

[158] **William Powell:** We move on to P-04-555, Stop the unethical and draconian proposed compulsory microchipping of dogs. This petition was submitted by Sovereign Wales and the ChipMeNot lobby group, and was first considered on 13 May 2014. It has the support of 11 signatures. You will recall the main thrust of this petition and its text is available for us to refresh our memories. We considered the petition, as I said, for the first time back in May, and we agreed to write to the petitioners seeking further information. To be fair to the petitioner, he has given us a very full level of detail in the response that we have in our public papers. It would probably be sensible for us to share that information with Carl Sargeant, with his new responsibilities, so that he potentially will also share that with his new Deputy Minister, Rebecca Evans, who is leading on issues around animal welfare and the microchipping proposals. Are colleagues happy with that approach? You are.

[159] **Mr George:** I would just draw to Members' attention that the Deputy Minister made a statement on this piece of proposed legislation yesterday, which seemed to suggest that there is some delay in bringing this in, but no doubt she will be able to explain it more fully.

[160] **William Powell:** I think it would be useful if we were to send a copy of that statement to the lead petitioner, in case he is not immediately up to speed on that issue. That is the best way to proceed.

[161] We move on to P-04-556, No to Junction 41 closure. This petition was submitted by Rose David in a fanfare of singing and a carnival-like atmosphere back in May. It has the support of 1,652 signatures. We recall the depth of feeling in the local community about this matter. We considered it back in May and agreed at that time to write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport seeking views on the petition. We also agreed to write to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council seeking its perspectives as well. As colleagues will see, we have responses in our papers from Mrs Edwina Hart and the chief executive of Neath Port Talbot council. It is interesting to see the full extent of the issue in terms of some of the detailed responses from the council that give some wider context to this matter.

[162] We have written to the lead petitioner asking for comments on that correspondence; we have not yet received a response. I think it would probably be sensible for us to chase up the lead petitioner in that respect, if colleagues think that that is an appropriate way forward. It will also be interesting to see how things have developed as recent months have borne out in terms of experience.

[163] **Russell George:** I was just going to suggest that, as we have a number of petitions that are awaiting comments from petitioners, we should resolve that we note those and that we are seeking further comments.

[164] **William Powell:** There are a number. I was going to make a very similar suggestion.

There are a number of petitions within the updates, as colleagues will have seen in preparing for this meeting, where the action is basically just to chase up a response from the petitioner. I propose to take Members briefly through those agenda items, purely for the record. If colleagues are happy, I think it is the best use of our time in this meeting to proceed in that way. The petitions that we have identified in that category are the following: P-04-565, Revive disused railway lines for leisure, on which we are seeking feedback from the lead petitioner; P-04-492, Diagnosis of autism in children, which, as you will recall, has been proposed by the Pembrokeshire branch of the National Autistic Society, for which we are in a similar situation of awaiting feedback; P-04-538, Involving lecturers to ensure a Further Education Inspection Framework that is fit for purpose, and, again, we are at that stage of needing feedback from the lead petitioner; P-04-551, Basic First Aid To Be Taught In Schools, and we are in a similar situation with that petition; P-04-569, Stop National Tests for Primary School Children, on which we have a full response from the Minister but we need to gain the perspective of the petitioner; P-04-572, Grants for Flood Resilience; P-04-550, Planning Powers, particularly in the area of derelict and neglected sites; and, finally, P-04-563, on Pontypridd fire station, which was part of our wider discussion earlier. On that last one, we have had a response from the Minister, but we need to see what the petitioner's response to that is. So, if colleagues are happy for that approach to be taken with that whole group of petitions, that would be the best use of our time.

[165] **Joyce Watson:** Absolutely.

[166] **William Powell:** I am grateful to colleagues for their co-operation.

[167] I therefore propose to continue with the agenda in relation to the petitions that have a different set of possible actions. I will just take you on now to P-04-574, Bus Services in Burryport. Are colleagues on that agenda item? Joyce, you have a comment.

[168] **Joyce Watson:** We have had a response from the Minister and it says that she has given £25 million in grants this year to allow local authorities to meet the needs as described in this petition. I therefore think that it would be pertinent and right for us to write to Carmarthenshire County Council to seek its views.

[169] **William Powell:** I would be very happy to write to Councillor Kevin Madge and, indeed, to Mark James, the chief executive of Carmarthenshire County Council, in that regard. I am very grateful to Edwina Hart for a very full response to that particular petition. Are colleagues in agreement? You are.

[170] We now move on to P-04-539, Save Cardiff Coal Exchange. This was the subject of a discussion this morning on BBC *Good Morning Wales*, I think.

[171] **Russell George:** Yes, it was.

[172] **William Powell:** There has been widespread concern regarding the future of this iconic building. The petition, as we will recall, was submitted by Mr Jon Avent and was first considered on 11 March of this year and has the support of 389 signatures. An associated petition hosted elsewhere has the support of 2,680 signatures. Now, we considered this back in June and we agreed that the petitioner could attend a proposed site visit to the Coal Exchange and that it would also be helpful if we could have a representative from the council planning department on this matter. It has proved quite complex to arrange that, and we have not, up to this point, been able to arrange such a visit. There have also been significant developments in terms of the status of the building and it is our understanding that the company that owned it when the petition came in has gone into administration. Therefore, the building itself and its freehold has reverted to the Crown. We understand that the Treasury Solicitor has therefore taken ownership and we are seeking confirmation as to what the status

is.

[173] The lead petitioner has been invited to provide a brief update, and I think he participated in the programme, but I think we are still awaiting a substantive update from Mr Avent. We hope that he will provide that shortly. I will ask Steve to perhaps add to my comments, because I know that this has been quite a major point of interest over the summer as things have unfolded.

[174] **Mr George:** We had difficulty arranging the site visit, mainly because large parts of the building itself pose health and safety problems, which means that, even if we got access to it, it probably would not be to the areas that are in imminent danger of decay or falling down, or whatever it may be. The added complication is that, although there was a company that owned it and was seeking to develop it in conjunction with Cardiff Council, as I understand it, and, therefore, there was a degree of co-operation between the council and that company, through whose good offices we were trying to arrange the visit, because we think it is now owned by the Crown, which means the Treasury Solicitor—

[175] **William Powell:** We are awaiting confirmation, are we not?

[176] **Mr George:**—then we would obviously have to get permission from the Treasury Solicitor, if they own it, to arrange site visits and so on. So, it has become a very complicated situation in terms of developing the building and the future of it and so on. I am not really sure that I have a complete handle on that. We did take the step of writing to the Treasury Solicitor to seek some confirmation of what the status is and I have had an interim response that suggests that they will write back to us very soon. Hopefully, we will have some more information in time for the next meeting.

[177] **William Powell:** Thank you very much for that. If I read the mood of the meeting correctly, I think we would still like to progress the opportunity of some form of site visit as far as that is possible and consistent with health and safety concerns, given the wider concerns about the future of this building. If we can do that, I do not think that there is a lot more that we can add other than pursuing the route that you have identified. Thanks for that.

[178] We move on now to P-04-440, Say NO to Asset Stripping Bronllys Hospital. This petition was submitted by Mr Michael Eccles, and was first considered on 4 December 2012 and has the support of 3,144 signatures.

[179] **Russell George:** Chair, may I suggest that, obviously Bronglais is a key hospital in Wales—

[180] **William Powell:** It is Bronllys hospital.

[181] **Russell George:** Oh, sorry. Yes, I see; I will reserve my comments then. I misread that headline.

[182] **Joyce Watson:** May I say, since a comprehensive plan has been put forward by the local action group to the local health board, that it would be right, I think, for us to write to the health board seeking its perspective and views on its proposals?

[183] **William Powell:** I think that that is a very sensible approach. I gather that there was a meeting between representatives of that body and Mr Bob Hudson, the chief executive of Powys Teaching Local Health Board as recently as last week. Hopefully, that meeting will inform the response that we will seek from him. Are colleagues happy? You are. Good.

[184] We have dealt with the petition in relation to the diagnosis of autism in children under

our earlier agreement. We move now to P-04-505, Eating Disorder Unit in Wales. This petition was submitted by Miss Keira Marlow and was first considered by us on 8 October 2013. It has the support of 526 signatures. We considered correspondence on this petition in our meeting on 1 July and we agreed to consider this petition and petition P-04-408—where the lead petitioner was Helen Missen of Montgomeryshire—separately.

10:00

[185] We also agreed to write to the petitioner—in this case, Keira Marlow—asking for information on her recent ‘cwtch’ campaign, which she has kindly supplied us with. Clearly, this is very much an ongoing issue, and will not be one where there is going to be immediate resolution. I propose that we maintain a watching brief on this issue. Obviously, it is of particular interest to our committee colleague Bethan Jenkins, as Chair of the cross-party group, and I am sure that, at a future meeting, she will wish to update us on some of the wider issues. I see that colleagues are agreed. Good.

[186] We now move to P-04-568, Public Inquiry into ABMU Health Board. This petition was submitted by the ABMU victim support group, and was first considered by us on 1 July 2014. It has the support of 778 signatures, and a further 87 online. Now, this petition is obviously dealing with an issue that has been quite fast moving. We know that, when we first considered it, we agreed to write to the Minister for Health and Social Services, seeking his views. We now have the Minister’s response, and we have significant additional information that has come forward from the lead petitioner, in the context of promoting the cause at the heart of this petition. Clearly, in terms of the police activity and the pending court case, there is significant delicacy about the way in which we can proceed. I would suggest to Members that we seek the Minister’s views on the additional, very comprehensive document that we have received from the petitioners.

[187] **Russell George:** Can we also keep the Health and Social Care Committee updated, Chair?

[188] **William Powell:** I think that it would make a lot of sense to write to our colleague David Rees, as the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, to see where this might well fit into their forward work programme, because this is an enormous issue, and there is a very significant level of public interest and, clearly, it is a developing situation, but we do need to be cautious in the way that we approach the matter.

[189] **Joyce Watson:** I declared an interest last time on this, and took no part. I wish to do exactly the same again.

[190] **William Powell:** Okay. Thanks for putting that on the record, Joyce. If colleagues are happy with that approach, I think that that is the best way forward. Good.

[191] The next petition is P-04-571, Treating Pernicious Anaemia. This petition was submitted by the Pernicious Anaemia Society and we first considered it on 15 July, which was our last meeting before recess. It has the support of 126 signatures. We considered it back then, and wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services, seeking his views. We have a full response from the Minister and, within that, the indication that he intends to seek advice from the Haematology National Specialist Advisory Group, known as NSAG, and that then he will write to us further in the light of that. We have also sought the views of the Pernicious Anaemia Society, and we do not have those as yet. So, I think that, on both of those actions, we should await the Minister’s further detailed response and seek the perspective of the Pernicious Anaemia Society on what the Minister has already said. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are.

[192] We now move to P-04-528, All Primary Schools in Wales Taught through the medium of Welsh. The petition was submitted by Mr Phillip Worth, and was first considered on 21 January of this year. Mr Worth has the support of 528 fellow signatories. We considered this most recently on 1 July.

[193] **Russell George:** Chair, I can see that we have had a response back from the petitioners, but we have not yet passed that response on to the Minister. So, may I suggest that that is our action—that we pass the petitioners' comments on to the Minister?

[194] **William Powell:** Yes. The Minister's response, as you will have seen, is pretty clear. However, it would be useful to seek the Minister's further thoughts on that, but I am not convinced that this petition is going to go a whole lot further. However, I think that that is a sensible approach.

[195] We dealt with the issue of lecturers in terms of the FE inspection framework as part of our earlier resolution, so I suggest that we move to P-04-543, No Increase to University Tuition Fees. Colleagues will recall that this petition was submitted by a group of A-level students and arose out of the National Assembly for Wales's conference for A-level students. It was first considered by us as a committee on 29 April this year and it has the support of 22 signatures.

[196] We agreed to write to the Minister seeking information on the outcome of the Sir Ian Diamond review, and we sought and made serious efforts to re-engage with the petitioners themselves. However, probably because many of those students have moved on in their careers—some will have left school or made other arrangements—we have not succeeded in re-engaging with those. Therefore, if we do not have an engaged petitioner who we can relay this to, I do not think that there is anything that we can usefully do in this regard, so I propose that we close this particular petition, important though it is.

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

[198] **William Powell:** I see that colleagues are happy with that.

[199] Agenda item 3.16 has been dealt with previously. We now move on to P-04-567, A Fair Deal for Welsh Students. This petition was submitted by Mr Trevor Mayes and was first considered on 1 July 2014. It has the support of 18 signatures. We considered this for the first time on 1 July and agreed to write to the Minister for Education and Skills, seeking his views on the petition and also to review our records as a committee of any previous petitions where issues similar in nature had been raised. The Minister has now sent us a full reply and Members may also wish to note that the Minister's response indicates the actions that were taken on a previous petition that was sourced from the same lead petitioner, Mr Trevor Mayes. Both letters are in the public pack.

[200] **Russell George:** I think that the Minister's response is quite definite. Our role on the committee is to obtain responses from the Ministers and take a petition forward, but I do not know if we can do much more on this, so I am erring more on the side of closing the petition, if colleagues agree.

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

[202] **William Powell:** I think that that is the emerging view. I think that we should proceed in that direction given the clarity of the Minister's correspondence. I am grateful for that, colleagues.

[203] Agenda 3.18 on national testing has been dealt with. We now move to P-04-544, Ban

the Shooting of Greenland White-fronted Geese. This petition was submitted by Aaron Davies and was first considered on 29 April 2014, and it has the support of 240 signatures. We first considered correspondence on this back in July and we agreed to seek the petitioner's views in the light of the information that was provided by the Welsh Ornithological Society, for which we are very grateful, and, of course, the former Minister for Natural Resources and Food had also taken a position on this issue. However, because of the realignment of Government responsibilities and the departure from Government of Alun Davies, I think that it would be particularly useful to write to the Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant, to see what his particular angle is on this issue. Are colleagues happy with that?

[204] **William Powell:** The next petition is P-04-547, Ban Polystyrene (EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging. This petition was submitted by Friends of Barry Beaches and was first considered on 29 April 2014. It has the support of 295 signatures. In our consideration of this back in April, we agreed to write to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food, seeking his perspective, and to alert the Environment and Sustainability Committee of the petition. Finally, we resolved at that time to consider undertaking a piece of work on the issues raised by this petition. We have the ministerial response and we also have some fairly comprehensive comments from the Friends of Barry Beaches, who are the lead petitioners on this matter, commenting on that ministerial response and, interestingly, seeming to be expressing a degree of satisfaction with what the Minister has said. Nevertheless, that does not undercut the value in us potentially doing a piece of work on this. I welcome colleagues' views as to how best to take it forward.

[205] **Joyce Watson:** I would be very supportive of doing a piece of work on this. There is very little work done on sea littering—I know quite a lot about sea littering. The enforcement elements are weak, if not almost non-existent. So, I would be particularly interested, simply because I have grown, through the summer, an awful lot of interest in it, because it was the dissertation my daughter did for her degree.

[206] **William Powell:** Thanks for that personal input.

[207] **Russell George:** We have had quite a comprehensive reply from the Minister. In the first instance, before we agree to do any work on it, we should at least engage with the petitioner to see if they are satisfied with how the petition has proceeded. They might be happy with the petition as it is. If you can have that conversation in a letter or other correspondence—

[208] **William Powell:** It would be sensible to engage with Friends of Barry Beaches to gain the group's particular slant as to where we might go on it, but in parallel with that I would like to charge the team with scoping out various approaches that we could take, and hopefully we can make some progress on this.

[209] **Russell George:** If that is the will of others on the committee, Chair, I am happy with that.

[210] **William Powell:** Are colleagues happy with that? Good.

[211] We have, in the next two agenda items, issues around flood resilience—agenda items 3.21 and 3.22. We have dealt with those under the previous resolution. I therefore suggest that we move to P-04-557, Valuation Tribunal Service. This petition was submitted by Mr David Grant from Ceredigion and was first considered by us on 3 June this year. It had the support of eight signatures online and an additional five in support of the paper petition. We considered this matter, as I said, back in June and we agreed to write to the Minister for Local Government and Government Business at that time, seeking her views on the petition. We have a full response from the Minister and the petitioner has given us quite a detailed

response on the ministerial comments. What could be useful here is for us to write to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, seeking views on those additional comments to maintain the consistency that colleagues always insist upon.

[212] **Russell George:** I am not sure, Chair, whether we need to do that. We have had a response and it has gone to the ombudsman. The ombudsman has considered it, so I do not think we can take it much further.

[213] **William Powell:** I understand that there is no significant further distance that we can take this, but thinking in terms of the fact that we have comments back—

[214] **Russell George:** Well, why do we not write to the Minister, forwarding the comments, and then agree to close the petition.

[215] **William Powell:** Yes, coupled with a resolution to close. I am happy to accept that if that is the will of colleagues.

[216] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, you cannot do anything else.

[217] **William Powell:** Agenda item 3.24 has been dealt with in the context of our previous resolution and, therefore, we move to the final update on this petition, which is P-04-577, Reinstate Funding to the Real Opportunities Fund. This petition was submitted by Mr Aled Davies and was first considered on 15 July 2014. It has the support of 25 signatures, and there is an associate petition, which has the support of 226 signatures.

10:15

[218] **Joyce Watson:** I think that we could seek the Minister's view on the outlined proposal that has been put forward by the petitioner.

[219] **William Powell:** I would be very happy to do that. I was really impressed with the approach taken by the petitioners in coming forward with a well-thought-through and well-developed proposal, accepting the initiation that Jane Hutt had issued. However, to come back with such a detailed proposal is highly likely to meet a positive outcome, and I look forward to hearing what Jane Hutt has to say on that matter. It is obviously a matter that impacts on loads of young people across Wales who are on the autistic spectrum and who benefited from the previous provision supported by the European social fund.

[220] I think that we have almost surprised ourselves by being able to deal, I hope, adequately and appropriately with the agenda before us this morning. I would like to thank colleagues very much for their contributions. I am particularly grateful to Rhodri Glyn for acting as a substitute for Bethan Jenkins this morning. I would also like to remind colleagues that, at 1 p.m. today, we have the presentation of a petition calling for further funding for general practice in Wales. I very much hope to see colleagues on the steps of the Senedd at 1 p.m.

[221] Diolch yn fawr am y sesiwn y bore Thank you for this morning's session.
yma.

[222] Thank you very much indeed for your contributions and I look forward to seeing you later. Diolch yn fawr.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10:17.
The meeting ended at 10:17.*