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[The Petitions Committee](#)

24/11/2015

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Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cynnwys Contents

- 4 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions
- 4 Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions
- 10 Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol
Updates to Previous Petitions
- 21 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
- 22 Sesiwn Dystiolaeth—P-04-522 Asbestos mewn Ysgolion
Evidence Session—P-04-522 Asbestos in Schools
- 30 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

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi 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

Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Joyce Watson) Labour (substituting for Joyce Watson)
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)

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Huw Lewis	Aelod Cynulliad (Llafur), y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau Assembly Member (Labour), Minister for Education and Skills
Joanne Larnar	Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government

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

Gill Eveleigh	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Steve George	Clerc Clerk
Matthew Richards	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:17.
The meeting began at 09:17.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** *Bore da, bawb.* Good morning, all, and welcome to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. We have apologies this morning from Joyce Watson and it's very good to welcome Jeff Cuthbert in as her substitute for this morning's session. Normal housekeeping arrangements apply. So, if we do hear the fire alarm, it's the real thing and we're in the hands of the ushers.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[2] **William Powell:** So, moving straight away to agenda item 2, new petitions, we start with agenda item 2.1, P-04-655, 'Demanding our Rights for the Welsh Language in the Private Sector'. This petition was submitted by Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg and collected 442 signatures. The text reads as follows:

[3] 'We call upon the National Assembly to insist that the Welsh Government ensures that all private and voluntary sectors that come within the scope of the Welsh Language Measure 2011 offer enhanced Welsh-language services by collaborating with the Welsh Language Commissioner to introduce regulations to the National Assembly prior to the 2016 Assembly election or at the earliest possible opportunity.

[4] 'Hundreds of thousands of people in Wales are being deprived of basic Welsh-language services every day by a large number of organisations, such as telephone, broadband, energy and transport companies. This totally unnecessary injustice occurs because the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner have not fully implemented the powers that they have under the Welsh Language Measure, which was unanimously passed by the Assembly almost five years ago. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner are, therefore, hampering the democratic will of the people of Wales.

[5] 'Furthermore, we believe that the Welsh Language Measure should be amended in order to speed up and simplify the process of imposing Welsh-language Standards on organisations and companies, establishing general rights for the Welsh language and extending the scope of the Measure to cover the remainder of the private sector, including supermarkets and

banks.'

[6] A first-consideration letter was sent to the First Minister back on 29 September, as the relevant Minister with overall remit for the Welsh language. The First Minister has responded and colleagues will have had the opportunity to read his response in the public papers. I think it's fair to say that there is something short of a meeting of minds here. But, there's a number of actions that I think we probably need to take. I'd very much like to hear colleagues' views on this one, if there are any indications. Bethan.

[7] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwyf jest **Bethan Jenkins:** I'd just like to say eisiau dweud bod yna nifer o ofynion that there are a number of gan y deisebwyr yn hynny o beth, a requirements from the petitioners in byddai'n dda i ni allu ysgrifennu at that regard, and it would be good for Gomisiynydd y Gymraeg i ofyn am yr us to be able to write to the Welsh amserlen ar gyfer adolygu safonau ar Language Commissioner, to ask for gyfer y cyrff preifat hynny nad oedd the timetable for reviewing the yn rhan o'r cylch gorchwyl standards for those private bodies gwreiddiol, gan nad oedd y that weren't part of the original rheoliadau yn eu lle, ac i ofyn i'r remit, as the regulations were not in Llywodraeth i gadarnhau eu bod place, and to ask Government to nhw'n bwriadu cydymffurfio â'r confirm that they intend to comply amserlen honno, a gofyn hefyd i'r with that timetable, and also ask the Llywodraeth ddarparu rhagor o Government to provide more wybodaeth am eu bwriadau o ran information about its intentions in diwygio Mesur y Gymraeg (Cymru) terms of amending the Welsh 2011. Maen nhw wedi dweud ar y Language (Wales) Measure 2011. record eu bod nhw'n fodlon gwneud They have said on record that they hynny, ond, hyd yn hyn, nid ydym are willing to do so, but, so far, we wedi cael amser penodedig, neu haven't been given any specified amserlen, i wneud y gwaith hwnnw. time, or timetable, to do that work. Felly, mae pum mlynedd wedi mynd, So, five years have gone past and efallai ei bod yn amser iddyn nhw i now it's time, perhaps, for them to asesu'r sefyllfa nawr. assess that situation.

[8] **William Powell:** Diolch yn fawr. I think that makes a lot of sense. Clearly, we need to—partly because she's been name checked, and there are various assertions made about her activities—be in touch with the commissioner in any event, and building in the request for the timetable that you mentioned. I think the other two points we need to raise in a follow-up letter to the First Minister.

[9] **Bethan Jenkins:** Byddai'n dda i fi wybod hefyd pam bod y Llywodraeth wedi gofyn i rai o'r busnesau o fewn y trydydd cylch o ymchwiliadau safonau gael eu tynnu allan, oherwydd, yn ôl ein tystiolaeth yma heddiw, rôl y comisiynydd yw penderfynu hynny, ond roedd y penderfyniad wedi cael ei ddwyn allan o'u rheolaeth nhw. Efallai y gallwn ni ofyn hynny i'r Llywodraeth hefyd.

Bethan Jenkins: It would be good for me to know as well why the Government has asked for some of these businesses within the third round of standards investigations to be withdrawn, because, according to our evidence here today, it's the role of the commissioner to decide that, but the decision was taken out of their control. So, perhaps we could ask Government about that too.

[10] **William Powell:** Do we know whether that was the result of some sort of impact assessment, or do we not have that information?

[11] **Bethan Jenkins:** I don't know.

[12] **William Powell:** Okay, well that we need to establish, I think.

[13] **Bethan Jenkins:** Efallai y bydd Cymdeithas yr Iaith yn gwybod. Efallai y gallem ni fynd nôl at y deisebwr a gofyn hynny cyn mynd at y Llywodraeth.

Bethan Jenkins: Perhaps the Welsh Language Society will know. Perhaps we could go back to the petitioner to ask that before we go to Government.

[14] **William Powell:** lawn, cytuno. **William Powell:** Okay, agreed.

[15] Good. I think we can go ahead on that basis, then, if other colleagues are content.

[16] The second agenda item under 'New Petitions' is 2.2, P-04-657, 'Charging for Parking and the Relationship to High Streets and Their Success'. This petition was submitted by Ann Dierikx, and collected 89 signatures on the Assembly's website; a further 60 signatures have been collected on a paper petition. The text of this reads as follows:

[17] 'We, the undersigned, call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to commission research, in partnership with local authorities in Wales, to assess fully the relationship between car parking

charges and successful local high streets.

[18] ‘Prof Calvin Jones of Cardiff Business School has emphasised the negative economic impact of car parking charges, especially in market towns. In the light of this—and a current Ministerial study on the issue—we call upon the Welsh Government to urge Welsh local authorities to impose a moratorium on the introduction of car parking charges at new sites in their ownership and any increase in parking fees until the 2017 election.

[19] ‘In addition, we urge the Welsh Government to ensure that local authorities engage proactively with relevant town and community councils, before implementing any changes in the local car parking regime. Town and community councils should be given the opportunity to adopt car parks in their area—as no one is better placed to understand the dynamics of the local high street—before any other options, notably outsourcing of management, is contemplated.

[20] ‘Finally, we call upon the Welsh Government to make clear and transparent regulations governing the procedures relating to car parking charges to be followed by local authorities.’

[21] Before we go further, I should declare that I gave some procedural advice to this particular petitioner, ahead of its submission. Also, she has had some involvement with petitions, because she appeared as the photographer at our memorable 11 November visit to the Mid Wales Hospital in Talgarth, where she was an informal photographer for a local website, and so she is known to us in that connection.

[22] But, apart from that, a first-consideration letter was sent to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, back on 12 October. We’ve got a response here, together with an executive summary of a report that she refers to. And I think, probably, that the petition does refer to a current study, so, possibly, that’s what she had in mind. The Minister’s comments have been forwarded to the petitioner, but we haven’t had any responses yet. I do know that the petitioner has actually been in hospital and has been significantly unwell and had an operation from which she is convalescing. So, it’s perhaps not surprising that we have not heard back just yet. Anyway, I value colleagues’ opinions. Russell George.

[23] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. I think that we do need to get the petitioner’s comments before we do anything else on this because the

petitioner is aware that research has been done, but she's commenting that perhaps more research needs to be done. So, although the Minister has provided us with that research, I think we need to get the petitioner's view on this. And given, as you said, that she's perhaps unwell at the moment, I think we should give her a bit of time to allow that. So, perhaps we should wait for that response and bring this forward to a future meeting.

[24] **William Powell:** Yes. I think that would make a lot of sense. We've got three indications. Bethan.

[25] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ie, roeddwn i jest eisiau dweud yn fras fy mod i'n meddwl bod angen inni, os ydym yn gallu, ofyn i'r Llywodraeth beth y maen nhw wedi'i wneud gyda'r darn hwn o waith gan fod yr argymhellion yn dweud y dylai awdurdodau lleol ystyried ffactorau ehangach pan fyddant yn rhoi taliadau ar barcio. Dylai'r awdurdod lleol fesur yr impact ar y bobl leol. Nid wyf yn gwybod beth sydd wedi digwydd gyda hynny: a yw awdurdodau lleol wedi cael gweld hwn, ac a ydyn nhw wedi ymateb. A ydym yn gallu gofyn i'r WLGA a ydynt wedi ei weld, achos nid yw'n mynd i gael unrhyw effaith heblaw bod yr awdurdodau lleol yn gwybod? Rydym wedi dysgu gwersi, efallai, o gymryd gwyliau yn ystod cyfnod ysgol, ac o'r sefyllfa gydag asbestos, bod angen inni ddilyn drwyddo i weld sut y mae polisi'r Llywodraeth wedyn yn effeithio ar lawr gwlad.

Bethan Jenkins: Yes, I just wanted to briefly say that I think that, if we can, we need to ask the Government what it has done with this piece of work because the recommendations do state that local authorities should take wider factors into account when they impose car parking charges. The local authority should measure the impact on local people. I don't know what has happened with that: whether local authorities have had sight of it, and whether they've responded to it. Can we ask the WLGA whether they have seen it, because it is not going to have any kind of effect unless the local authorities do know? We have learned lessons, perhaps, from taking holidays during school term times, and the situation with asbestos, that we need to follow this through to see how the Government's policy then impact at the grass-roots level.

[26] **William Powell:** Yes. I think you make a good point and I think we should probably consider writing to the WLGA on that connection because they're crucial to any implementation, aren't they? Jeff Cuthbert.

[27] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I think the fairest decision at this point is to give the

petitioner a little bit more time if she has indeed been hospitalised and is recovering. That would be only fair. Six weeks, as suggested here, would seem a reasonable point in time. I don't know how unwell she is or the nature of the operation. I don't know.

[28] **William Powell:** I think she's making progress, from what I understand.

[29] **Jeff Cuthbert:** If she is I think six weeks is reasonable. The only thing is that I understand fairly well—and I'm sure we all do around here—the very difficult financial position that local authorities are in. They do need to look to raise money from other sources. We've got the comprehensive spending review tomorrow.

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

[31] **Jeff Cuthbert:** That may have further bad news for local public services. So, I would be rather reluctant to make any recommendation at this stage about whether car parking charges should cease or be altered in some way. I think, at this stage, all we should do is give the petitioner a bit more time to respond so that we can look at it in the round.

[32] **William Powell:** Yes. Absolutely. Okay. I certainly think that the idea of contacting the WLGA makes a lot of sense, whether now or post any feedback.

[33] **Bethan Jenkins:** But also what I said about writing back to the Welsh Government to see if they've flag that up. You know, where has the report gone in terms of—?

[34] **William Powell:** Yes, it's on a shelf somewhere.

[35] **Bethan Jenkins:** These recommendations are for local authorities. So, you know, we need to know that it's got to them and that they've seen it. I wouldn't want to say that people shouldn't charge for parking. It does vary and local people sometimes have been priced out of being able to shop in their local towns.

[36] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. I think that one other feature of this petition was the flagging up of the crucial role of town and community councils and the possibility that they might operate it on a devolved basis. That seems to be a different strand that isn't really picked up particularly in

the executive summary of the research. But, anyway, that's maybe for another time. Okay. Thank you very much for your contributions.

09:29

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

[37] **William Powell:** Agenda item 3—updates to previous petitions. We start with agenda item 3.1: P-04-633, 'To Raise Awareness of the Poor Broadband in Our Area'. This petition was submitted by Geraint and Jane Evans. It was first considered by us back on 12 May 2015. It has the support of 60 signatures. We recall the particular local frustrations about the level of service that are referred to in the petition. We considered it at our last meeting and agreed to allow the petitioners some additional time to provide comments on correspondence that we'd had with the Deputy Minister. We've now got responses from residents, indicating that broadband speeds remain slow. It is also clear that this matter is timetabled in to be addressed, and it seems that they've got the energetic support of their own constituency Assembly Member, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, who's clearly involved in the correspondence as well. We recall the reassurances that we had from the Deputy Minister with regard to the Superfast Cymru broadband programme in this particular area. I'd very much appreciate colleagues' thoughts as to whether or not we proceed further or whether we may have come towards the end of the road. Jeff Cuthbert.

09:30

[38] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I assume, when they refer to 'cab', they mean 'cabinet' in the petition.

[39] **William Powell:** I think so.

[40] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Too far from the cabinet, I assume.

[41] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. I think that's the cabinet, yes.

[42] **Jeff Cuthbert:** My view is—and I know Dafydd El very well, of course—if he's pursuing it, as he's perfectly entitled to as a constituency case, there's no point in duplicating effort, and if he's well in hand with that, I suggest that we leave it with him. I know from my own work as the Deputy Minister

that, by the end of next year, the pledge is that 96 per cent of Wales will be covered by Superfast Cymru, and I suggest that will be the same sort of information that Dafydd Elis-Thomas would get back.

[43] **William Powell:** Yes—in these deep rural locations. Russell George.

[44] **Russell George:** I think part of the frustration perhaps on many of these issues is that people are not aware whether their area will be covered or not by the date of next spring. So, I think there's frustration—

[45] **William Powell:** Communication is the key to it, isn't it?

[46] **Russell George:** Yes. There is bad communication from the Superfast Cymru website, which doesn't give enough information about specific areas, but I think that we've probably taken this as far as we can as a committee. So, I perhaps would propose we do close the petition, because I can see Dafydd Elis-Thomas is pursuing the case—

[47] **William Powell:** Absolutely, yes.

[48] **Russell George:** The Deputy Minister did issue a letter to Assembly Members on this about a month ago or three weeks ago, so I think we should send the petitioner a copy of that letter if we haven't already done so. Also, as a bit of a plug, there is a cross-party group tonight, which I chair, on this, which the Deputy Minister and the director of the project are attending. So, I will make a note of pointing that out to Dafydd Elis-Thomas today—

[49] **William Powell:** And you're chairing that meeting.

[50] **Russell George:** —and ask him to attend. I am chairing that meeting, yes.

[51] **William Powell:** Okay—just for the record. Good. Excellent. I think we've got a consensus on that one.

[52] We move now to agenda item 3.2: P-04-468, 'Road Safety Concerns A48 Chepstow'. This petition was submitted by Chepstow Town Council and was first considered by us back on 19 March 2013. An associated petition had collected in excess of 1,000 signatures, simply calling, as we recall on Welsh Government to deliver the reduction in the speed limit on the A48 at Chepstow from 50 mph to 30 mph. We last considered this on 3 February,

and we had a letter at that time from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, indicating that Government officials had, and I quote,

[53] 'completed the speed limit review of all trunk roads within Wales. The results will be available shortly.'

[54] In light of this, we agreed to note the position and await further action, and we've not heard anything further from the Minister and, as you'll see, the letter that we have in our pack today is actually something to which we've been copied in. It is addressed to the Minister, and it's quite trenchant in parts. They're clearly seeking some information as to what action they can expect in their own community. So, I would be inclined that we, as a committee, should write and give some support to the sentiment in the letter, if colleagues are agreeable to that.

[55] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

[56] **William Powell:** Okay. Good. Agreed.

[57] **Jeff Cuthbert:** If it's the bridge that I'm thinking of, I'm surprised there's a 50 mph limit on it, I must say.

[58] **William Powell:** Precisely. I think they are too. That's right. Indeed. I think that's the one in question.

[59] Agenda item 3.3 is P-04-539, 'Save Cardiff Coal Exchange'. This petition was submitted by Jon Avent and was first considered on 11 March 2014, having collected 389 signatures. An associated petition hosted on another website collected 2,680. We've got the detailed text of the petition, and Mr Avent is a very dedicated and tenacious petitioner. Some of us have had the opportunity to meet him on a site visit at the Coal Exchange, which was quite helpful. Just as a summary of recent actions, the committee last considered the petition on 6 October, and we had sight of a feasibility report on the Coal Exchange, which had been prepared by Capita, in association with the economy, science and transport department and Cadw, and we also had brief comments at that stage from Mann Williams Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers, which is the same company for which Mr Avent works. The committee agreed to await comments from Mr Avent himself, before considering further steps. We've got some additional comments from the petitioner, as you can see in the public pack, and he retains his concerns about a number of aspects, particularly surrounding Cardiff council and

some of the ways in which they've approached this matter, and some of the ways in which they've called into action certain of the permissions that they have in extreme situations in terms of building safety. And, all the way along, Mr Avent has contested whether or not that's a valid use of those powers. What do colleagues think we should do in this case? Bethan Jenkins.

[60] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwy'n credu y dylem ni roi'r wybodaeth yma i'r Gweinidog, ond byddwn i eisiau ffeindio mas gan y Gweinidog beth mae e'n ymwybodol ohono o ran yr hyn y mae CCSE wedi gwneud. Yn ein gwybodaeth, mae'n dweud bod Stephen Doughty a Ken Skates wedi cael gwybodaeth ynglŷn â'r *demand for payment notice* a oedd ar wal yr adeilad, ond mae'r wybodaeth gan Jon Avent, er ei fod e'n weddol gynhwysfawr, nid yw'n dweud yn gwmws beth mae Stephen Doughty, neu Ken Skates, fel Gweinidog, wedi gwneud am y peth, neu os ydyn nhw'n mynd i wneud unrhyw beth am y peth.

Bethan Jenkins: I think that we should give this information to the Minister, but I would want to find out from the Minister what he's aware of with regard to what CCSE has done. In our information, it states that Stephen Doughty and Ken Skates have received information about the demand for payment notice that was on the wall of the building, but the information from Jon Avent, even though it's fairly comprehensive, it doesn't say exactly what Stephen Doughty, or Ken Skates, as Minister, have done about this, or if they are going to do anything about it.

[61] Yn ôl beth rwy'n ei wybod, bydd beth fydd yn digwydd yn y fanna yn golygu lot ynglŷn â sut mae'r adeilad yn gallu cael ei ddatblygu yn y dyfodol. Mae rhai o'r materion sy'n cael eu codi ynglŷn â chyngor Caerdydd ynglŷn â mynediad i'r maes parcio yn dod â ni yn ôl at y drafodaeth ynglŷn â'r cyngor a'n perthynas gyda'r cyngor. A oes gwerth cysylltu â nhw eto gyda rhai o'r pwyntiau sydd yn y ddogfen yma? Cwestiwn i'r Aelodau Cynulliad eraill yw hwnnw efallai. [*Chwerthin.*]

According to what I know, what will be happening there will mean a lot regarding how the building can be developed in the future. Some of the issues arising with regard to Cardiff council in terms of access to the car park bring us back to the discussion about the council and our relationship with the council. Is there value in contacting them again with some of the points in this document? That's a question to the other Assembly Members perhaps. [*Laughter.*]

[62] **William Powell:** Indeed. We recall the difficulty that we had, over many

months, in securing arrangements for the site visit, which, in the end, happened, and to beneficial effect, from our point of view. I think we probably need to write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, but also maybe copy in her deputy, given that he's been name-checked in subsequent correspondence. And obviously, their party colleague Stephen Doughty has taken a constituency interest in the matter because he obviously appears to be concerned about the demise of the building. Are there any other comments from colleagues, because I think it's really important that we try to get some progress on this one, particularly given the fact that we're in very much the latter stages of this Assembly, and this particular committee? The issue isn't going to go away. Okay. Agreed.

[63] Item 3.4: P-04-565, 'Revive Disused Railway Lines for Leisure'. This petition was submitted by Albert Fox, and was first considered on 17 June 2014. It had the support of 14 signatures. We recall Mr Fox's aspirations to harness these particular disused railway lines for leisure activities, and in the petition he cites a whole range of possible uses that they could have. We last considered this on 2 June and agreed to await comments from Mr Fox as lead petitioner on comments both from the Minister and from Sustrans. We've now got replies indicating that their priority, as the Government, and Sustrans, was for active travel routes to be used for everyday journeys, rather than those for tourism. We've received petitioner comments on that also in our public papers. I'm not clear that we can do a whole lot more on this matter, usefully, but there is the possibility of linking up Mr Fox with Sustrans.

[64] **Bethan Jenkins:** Also, I'm part of the campaign to reopen the Rhondda tunnel between Blaen-cwm and Blaengwynfi, and, at the moment, there's work by Sustrans to look at—it's not particularly on the Rhondda tunnel but on feasibility in this regard across Wales. So, I wouldn't want to close the petition until we get that piece of work done by Sustrans, because this might inform the petition further. Also, just to tell the petitioner that it's not actually the Welsh Government that owns these tunnels, it's the highways department in England.

[65] **William Powell:** That's the legacy body going way back from—

[66] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yeah, it's a heritage body as part of the heritage railways, as part of the transport department for England. I've written to the UK Government asking for them to transfer the ownership of the Rhondda tunnel to the Welsh Government.

[67] **William Powell:** With what response?

[68] **Bethan Jenkins:** The UK Government want to do it, but Edwina Hart, as Minister, is minded to wait for the Sustrans review. She says she needs compelling evidence from the Sustrans review first. So, if it's possible—obviously, I'm declaring an interest in this regard—to keep it open just so that we at least have an idea as to whether this one is viable, so that it could potentially set the way for future tunnels being transferred over.

[69] **William Powell:** Yes, it could be a pilot project, in a sense, couldn't it?

[70] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yeah. I mean, there are hundreds of tunnels that are not being utilised, but they're being maintained only for safety reasons at the moment.

[71] **William Powell:** Okay. That's interesting. Are colleagues happy with that? Jeff Cuthbert.

[72] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I've got no objection in principle to the issues that they're calling for. I take the point about ownership, however, in south-east Wales, of course, many of these former lines could well be used for the new metro. So, it may not be quite as clear cut. There are other priorities.

[73] **William Powell:** Understood. Yes, that's a very good point. So, if colleagues are happy with that approach. Do we have a timeline for this piece of work? I suppose Sustrans are going to be the gatekeepers—

[74] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, but it's being done—the Minister has asked them to do it, so it'll go back to her. Perhaps we could write to the Minister saying, 'We are aware of your work in relation to the call by the Rhondda Tunnel Society. Could you keep us, as a committee, in the loop with when that study will be completed?'

[75] **William Powell:** That would be good, because that would guide us as to whether or not it's feasible to keep this open for the duration or otherwise. But I think we should make sure that Mr Fox is aware of this, because it seems to be exactly the kind of initiative that he's seeking support.

[76] **Bethan Jenkins:** He might want to contact the UK Government separately.

[77] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. He might be interested in a site visit or goodness knows what. Yeas, absolutely. Good.

[78] Agenda item 3.5 is P-04-540, 'Stop Sexism In Domestic Abuse'. This petition was submitted by Healing Men and was first considered on 11 March 2014, having collected 238 signatures. You'll recall the sentiments underlying the petition and the call for a reappraisal of the way in which domestic abuse is viewed. We've been wrestling with this for some time. The committee last considered the petition on 20 October and we agreed to await the views of the petitioner, Mr Stott, before considering whether to close the petition. We've now got that response and that is in the public papers. It's not quite clear whether there is more of a journey to travel on this one, but I'd appreciate colleagues' thoughts. I believe Joyce Watson, our absent colleague, has engaged quite robustly with the issue, as well. Russell George.

[79] **Russell George:** I think, Chair, sometimes, we have to just remember what our petition is about. It's not for us to make decisions in this committee. Our committee is about seeing a democratic process. I think that we've probably exhausted this as best we can. So, as we have—. Over 12 months ago, our thoughts were that we'd come to the close of this petition. I'm probably minded that we've reached as far as we can and we should close the petition, but I'm open to other Members'—

[80] **William Powell:** It has served to air a very important issue and to, maybe, open up perspectives that some of us or those who follow our activities wouldn't have been aware of. Bethan Jenkins.

[81] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwy'n credu y dylem ni gau'r ddeiseb. Nid yw'n pŵer ni'n caniatáu i ni orfodi'r Gweinidog i ymateb i'r hyn mae'r deisebwr yn ei ddweud. Felly, byddwn i'n argymhell i'r deisebwr, os oes materion o fewn ei lythyron i ni ynglŷn â sut mae'r Llywodraeth yn gwario arian, y dylai drafod hynny, efallai, gyda'r swyddfa archwilio. Mae'r pethau y mae'n ei ddweud ynglŷn â sut mae arian yn cael ei rannu yn bwysig iddo fe, ond nid

Bethan Jenkins: I think we should close the petition. Our powers don't allow us to compel the Minister to respond to what the petitioner says. So, I would recommend to the petitioner that, if there are matters within his letters to us about how the Government spends money, then he should discuss that with the audit office. There are things that he says about how money is being allocated, and those issues are important to him, but it's not something that we,

yw'n rhywbeth rydym ni, fel pwyllgor, as a committee, can do anything yn gallu gwneud rhywbeth amdano about now. nawr.

[82] Felly, rwy'n credu ein bod wedi rhoi lot o ystyriaeth i hyn, ac nid wyf am danseilio'r hyn mae'n ei ddweud, ond nid wyf yn deall sut rŷm ni, nawr, fel pwyllgor, yn gallu parhau. Rwy'n siŵr y bydd Aelodau'r Cynulliad unigol yn gallu ymwneud ag ef mewn ffyrdd gwahanol. So, I think we have given a great deal of consideration to these issues, and not to undermine what he says, but I don't understand how we now, as a committee, can continue. I'm sure that individual Assembly Members can be involved with this in different ways.

09:45

[83] **William Powell:** I think that is correct. I think anything further is beyond our remit. I think we have, in fairness to ourselves, given this as full an airing as we can from a number of different angles. Russell George, you want to come back in.

[84] **Russell George:** I suppose, Chair, it's also that the petitioner is clearly very frustrated with the Minister. I think he should be reminded—this isn't political—that there's an election coming up and we don't know who the next Government's going to be. So, I think obviously there's an opportunity for this petitioner to get involved in the campaign, whichever way his politics go, and make the points on his frustrations with the Minister, if that's what his view is.

[85] **William Powell:** Absolutely, and there's a whole range of possible different policy offers that could be coming up the track from different parties contesting the election. Absolutely; very good. I think that's a good point to make and I think we have unanimity that we should close the petition, writing to Mr Stott and thanking him and his campaign group for engaging with the petitions process.

[86] Moving now to agenda item 3.6: P-04-519, 'Abolition of Park Homes Sales Commission'. This petition was submitted by Caerwnon Park Residents Association. It was first considered by us, as a committee, on 10 December 2013 and it's this niche but important issue around a commission in the case of the sale of park homes. Of course, we're conscious of the new piece of legislation that was piloted through the Assembly by my colleague, Peter

Black.

[87] We last considered this petition on 2 June, when a response from the Minister indicated that a research proposal was being developed to look at the economics of the wider park home industry, which would gather information, both from owners and residents. In the light of that, we agreed to await comments from the petitioner on that correspondence. We've now got a response and it's clear that those comments are in the public papers. There's evidently disappointment from the residents' association that this research will not be forthcoming until July next year. Possibly it's a detailed and comprehensive piece of work. Nevertheless, it does seem to be quite a long time frame. We've got a couple of options here and I'd appreciate—. Perhaps I'm a little close to the issue, given the interests by my party colleagues—Peter Black, and Kirsty Williams as the constituency Member here. I'd very much appreciate your views, colleagues, on how best to proceed. We could wait, but on the other hand, there's no likelihood—

[88] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid wyf yn gwybod beth yw'r rheolau ar argymell cadw deiseb ar agor a bod y pwyllgor newydd yn ei drafod, achos ar hyn o bryd, nid ydym yn gwybod pa bwyllgorau fydd yn bodoli ar ôl etholiad y Cynulliad y tro nesaf. Dim i ddweud na fydd Pwyllgor Deisebau, ond nid ydym yn gwybod y *set-up*, felly ni fyddwn yn hoffi argymell hynny. Rwy'n credu ein bod ni wedi gwneud cymaint ag y gallwn, ond mae'r adolygiad yn digwydd ar ôl yr etholiad, felly, nid wyf yn siŵr beth i'w gynnig—ei gadw ar agor neu ei gau ac wedyn gofyn iddyn nhw roi deiseb newydd i mewn.

Bethan Jenkins: I don't know what the rules are regarding keeping a petition open and for it to be discussed by the new committee, because at the moment, we don't know which committees will exist after the next Assembly election. That is not to say that there won't be a Petitions Committee, but we don't know what the set-up will be, so I wouldn't like to recommend that. I think we've done as much as we can, but the review is happening after the election, so I'm not sure what to suggest—whether to keep it open or to close it and then ask them to submit a new petition after the election.

[89] **William Powell:** It's a difficult judgment call, isn't it? Russell George.

[90] **Russell George:** I think it's right—we don't know what's going to happen after the next election with this committee, but I think we could just resolve to keep the petition open.

[91] **William Powell:** We can't bind the hands of any future members of this committee.

[92] **Russell George:** No. Why don't we just keep the petition open at the current time?

[93] **William Powell:** That's sending a message, I suppose, isn't it? Because the piece of work is ongoing, clearly. Jeff Cuthbert.

[94] **Jeff Cuthbert:** My only view was that, in light of—and it's not a precedent, I realise that—what we agreed in terms of the superfast Cymru issue, which, as it was being pursued by the local AM, perhaps we should leave it there. I don't know the details of all this, but I can't see any real justification for doing anything differently.

[95] **William Powell:** So, a call for consistency there.

[96] **Russell George:** I would just keep it open for now, with no further action.

[97] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I don't feel strongly on this.

[98] **William Powell:** Okay. It's useful to have the appeal for consistency. It often comes from that chair, so that's good.

[99] **Bethan Jenkins:** Perhaps we can think about that in terms of how any new committee would look, in terms of consistency.

[100] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think we're also looking, a little later on in the agenda, at issues around the review of the process. So, that maybe is another little strand that we need to give thought to. Good.

[101] Agenda item 3.7: P-04-537, 'Planting Trees to Reduce Flooding'. The petition was submitted by Coed Cadw and was first considered by us on 18 February 2014 with the support of 2,708 signatures. We last considered this on 14 July of this year, in the last meeting before summer recess, and agreed to await the petitioner's views on correspondence received from the Minister. We've now got a response, and the letter is in the public papers, as colleagues will have seen. I think, clearly, there is the request from Coed Cadw to write to the Minister, putting a series of questions. I think, probably,

that's the best way to pursue this.

[102] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

[103] **William Powell:** Okay. Good.

[104] Agenda item 3.8: P-04-581, 'Opposition to Cuts in Provision for Learners of English as an Additional Language'. The petition was submitted by Helen Myers and was first considered by us on 23 September 2014. It has the support of 37 signatures. Colleagues will recall the issues that were of concern, in terms of the reduction of the minority ethnic achievement grant and the impact it would have, disproportionately, on members of the ethnic minority community. We last considered this, again, at the same meeting on 14 July and agreed to await the petitioner's comments on the ministerial correspondence. We've now got that and you can see the petitioner's response indicates that the whole issue has been overtaken by events, really. So, I think, probably, in the light of that, we should take the opportunity to write and thank them for engaging with us, but to close the petition. Happy? Yes.

[105] Agenda item 3.9—the last update on this section of our agenda—is P-04-516, 'Make Political Science Compulsory in Education'. This petition was submitted by Mark Griffiths and was first considered by us on 26 November 2013. It has the support of 12 signatures. We last considered it back in March of this year, on 24 March, when we agreed to write to the petitioner asking whether he had any comments on Professor Donaldson's report or, indeed, on the related ministerial statement of 4 March. We've got a response from the petitioner, and it seems to me, again, that we've—

[106] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to ask whether we—I can't remember—whether we'd asked in relation to Donaldson of the Minister—you know, he's setting up these groups, these task and finish groups—whether there was a strand on political education that the petitioner could be either involved in or could be kept abreast of what the work of the group is doing, so that we could close, but on that basis. I thought I'd asked, but I may have just dreamt it.

[107] **William Powell:** I don't recall us asking that specific question or—

[108] **Mr George:** I don't recall.

[109] **Bethan Jenkins:** Can we do that, then? We're minded to close, but to—

[110] **William Powell:** And in doing so, make that point and see if we can get a response on it, because I don't recall us going down that—

[111] **Bethan Jenkins:** It would be useful for me to know, because people come to me—young people—all the time saying that they want more political education. So, if I know that there's going to be a strand of the task and finish group looking into it, for Donaldson, then I think that's something we could all use as AMs anyway, to encourage people to get involved in the process.

[112] **William Powell:** Absolutely, that's right. Our education service, I think, is busy organising the special conference on that theme for February of this year. I saw some correspondence relating to that. But that would be a useful question to ask, while moving to close the petition, because I think we've got to respect the observations of the lead petitioner, Mr Griffiths. Good. Okay.

09:54

**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**

Cynnig:

Motion:

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to
gwahardd y cyhoedd o'r cyfarfod ar exclude the public from the meeting
gyfer eitemau 5 a 6, yn unol â Rheol for items 5 and 6, in accordance with
Sefydlog 17.42(vi). Standing Order 17.42(vi).*

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

[113] **William Powell:** I now propose that we have a brief, five-minute recess before moving to the remainder of the agenda.

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 09:54.
The public part of the meeting ended at 09:54.*

*Ailymgynullodd y pwyllgor yn gyhoeddus am 10.29.
The committee reconvened in public at 10.29.*

Sesiwn Dystiolaeth—P-04-522 Asbestos mewn Ysgolion Evidence Session—P-04-522 Asbestos in Schools

[114] **William Powell:** Bore da. We move now to agenda item 7, our evidence session on petition P-04-522, 'Asbestos in Schools'. The petition was submitted by Cenric Clement-Evans. It was first considered by this committee on 10 December 2013 and has the support of 448 signatures. It's a great pleasure to welcome the Minister for Education and Skills, Huw Lewis, and your colleague Joanne Larner this morning. I wonder if you could just introduce yourself, please, for levels, and then, if we can move straight into questions, that would be great.

[115] **The Minister for Education and Skills (Huw Lewis):** Okay. My name is Huw Lewis, and I'm the Minister for Education and Skills.

[116] **Ms Larner:** My name is Jo Larner. I'm acting programme director for the twenty-first century schools and education programme.

10:30

[117] **William Powell:** Excellent. Okay. Russell George, I believe you wanted to kick off.

[118] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. Can I just ask in general, first of all, what you believe are your responsibilities, and the Welsh Government's responsibilities, with regard to asbestos in schools? In what ways do you support duty holders in schools?

[119] **Huw Lewis:** Well, thank you, Chair, and thank you, Russell, for the question. In part, you've answered your own question in some regard. Our role is primarily to support the duty holder. It's also, of course, to be aware of developments that might be happening elsewhere in the UK and respond accordingly, and to ensure that current guidance is being adhered to. We regularly review that guidance. The current iteration was published in the spring of 2014, if I remember rightly. We periodically remind the duty

holders of their responsibilities in regard to the management and removal of asbestos. We are, of course—and it's worth mentioning this—undertaking a very large and ambitious capital programme across our school estate, which supports duty holders in either new build, which, of course, doesn't by definition contain any banned asbestos, and the management of, and/or removal of asbestos in terms of refurbishment. So, there is a rolling programme of removing this stuff from the environment around children.

[120] **Russell George:** Do you feel that there is a more prominent role that the Welsh Government could play in providing a strategic direction?

[121] **Huw Lewis:** Well, the strategic direction is really a matter for the Health and Safety Executive, which is the body charged with the enforcement of the legislation of health and safety law around asbestos. It's hard to interpret what you might mean by prominence. We are continually revising, updating and ensuring that we do have the very best information and supply the very best information to duty holders. For instance, Joanne and her colleagues now are working very closely with colleagues across the border in England, in terms of the review that has gone on in England, to ensure that we have all the information that that review can supply to us so that we're satisfied that everything we do in Wales is the best it possibly can be.

[122] **Russell George:** I asked the question of whether there is a more prominent role, and you said, 'Well, that's a matter for the HSE', but there is some guidance that you are already providing to schools.

[123] **Huw Lewis:** Yes.

[124] **Russell George:** So, where is the balance between it being your responsibility and the HSE's responsibility? Where's that point?

[125] **Huw Lewis:** Well, the duties are very clear. The management of asbestos is the duty and business of the duty holders—that's local authorities, a diocese, or a board of governors, depending on the status of the school. HSE then is the England-and-Wales body charged with the enforcement of the legislation. Our role in Welsh Government is an enabling role, I suppose, and one of ensuring that information that's available is up to date, that it's as rigorous as it can possibly be, in terms of guidance, and that we're on top of any developments in the field that might lead us to the conclusion that we need to tighten up procedures in any particular area.

[126] **Russell George:** So, my final question would be, in the roles that you have identified as your responsibilities, rather than the HSE's, is there anything that you can do, do you feel, to be more proactive in supporting a strategic direction in the areas that you are specifically responsible for?

[127] **Huw Lewis:** No. My conclusion was, given the information and the law as it stands, I don't see that there's much more that the Welsh Government could be doing.

[128] **William Powell:** Minister, as you're aware, in recent years there have been some particularly high-profile examples, and Cwmcarn High School obviously comes to mind. Teacher representative trade unions in Wales have been taking quite a high-profile role in campaigning on this issue on behalf of their members, but are you aware of any surge in demand from parents or, indeed, school staff to be informed of the presence of asbestos in their schools?

[129] **Huw Lewis:** No. Aside from this current petition, I'm not aware of any real upsurge or notable quantity of requests for information or voicing of concerns coming from parents, teachers or other organisations.

[130] **William Powell:** Okay, thank you for that. Up to this point, you've resisted calls, I think it's fair to say, for information on asbestos to be made available online. What do you consider would be the benefits and drawbacks of such an initiative?

[131] **Huw Lewis:** The reason we haven't gone down that path is that I find it difficult to see what the benefits might be. It is, of course, perfectly in order for anyone with an interest to ask a school or local authority for information on the current state of play as regards the asbestos management plan for that school. It's worth bearing in mind also that it's not just schools that contain asbestos; right across the public realm and, indeed, the domestic realm, we spent 30 years building this stuff into our buildings, and it's ubiquitous—this stuff is all around us all the time, unless we're spending all our time in very modern buildings.

[132] As regards the school estate, as I say, that information is there and available on demand. I would be wary of placing onerous duties on local authorities to proactively publish details on each and every school. It would be quite an enormous job, and obviously it would have to be kept up to date if it were to be reliable and, again, there would be a burden on local

authorities in that regard.

[133] **William Powell:** Thank you. Jeff Cuthbert, on this point?

[134] **Jeff Cuthbert:** On this point, thank you. You're quite right that, in the 1970s, we built almost everything with asbestos; it's present everywhere. But asbestos becomes a problem when it's disturbed. So, do you think there's any scope in terms of giving information to parents and other interested people to forewarn people of significant remediation works in school where it is a possibility that asbestos could be disturbed?

[135] **Huw Lewis:** As I say, the duty holder has a responsibility to have a management plan in place, and, of course, that plan would be utilised if, for instance, refurbishment work was to be undertaken in a school. Those are the steps and actions that the local authority might take as it's going through that building work. Whether that information should be publically available on request from members of the public—I don't know, Joanne, if you want to come in on this one.

[136] **Ms Larner:** Yes, of course. There are two types of review you can do with asbestos. One is a normal, day-to-day management of asbestos review, and the second is a specific review that's used if you're going to refurbish a property. That is then incorporated into the plan. And I think it's very clear, in terms of our guidance, what we tell the duty holders and what they have to do under law is to inform those who might disturb asbestos and those who are going to be working with it, and ensure that appropriate people are put in place to remove it safely.

[137] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you.

[138] **William Powell:** Bethan Jenkins.

[139] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to come back to the issue with regard to the responsibility, because the HSE has said that regulations do not include any requirement to provide information to parents or online, and the Welsh Government could decide to do this. So, I just wonder why, as Minister, you decide not to do this, given the fact that there have been high-profile cases in Wales and the fact that Wales is not included in the steering group on a UK level; in fact, they're only looking at English schools. So, how do we know that there will be a read-through to Wales without Wales being a clear part of that discussion at the moment?

[140] **Huw Lewis:** To answer the final part of your question first, we may not be a part of the English steering group, but we have our own working group and we do observe on the English working group. We have interplay between officials in terms of making sure that anything that goes on in England we're absolutely satisfied here in Wales that we're doing something that is at least as rigorous in terms of those issues.

[141] In terms of the proactivity around information, I can only repeat my previous point, really: this would be a very onerous burden in terms of public buildings. It would be hard to argue, for instance, that it should be just confined to schools, in my view. If we were to head down that path, we'd have to consider very carefully what the worth of it would be. As Jeff Cuthbert has mentioned, we know that asbestos, when undisturbed, is safe, and so the benefits of some kind of rolling register of what's happening—and it would have to be a live register, because of course refurbishment and rebuilding are going on continually—the maintenance of that, in terms of keeping it up to date, would be quite an onerous job for local authorities to undertake.

[142] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, in relation to the steering group, you're keeping a watching brief on it. Do you know, therefore, when that finalises its work, whether you would be adopting the recommendations in full, or whether you would be asking your working group to adapt any of them so that they correspond to Wales? Can you give us an idea as to what you would be doing with that work in relation to Wales, therefore?

[143] **Huw Lewis:** Well, I'll bring Joanne in in a second, but the recommendations were for England, and we reviewed those, obviously, as they came forward, and there wasn't anything within those recommendations that brought anything new to the debate, in my view. There is the issue of—. Well, they are going ahead with sampling in England of air quality within schools. We'll keep a very close eye on that. Our understanding is that it'll be a limited sampling amongst a selection of school environments, beginning next year. We'll keep a very close eye on that, obviously, to see if it informs the debate further, and to see if there are any other actions or updates of guidance that we need to make. Was there anything that you wanted to add?

[144] **Ms Larnar:** I just think that we have very carefully looked at their review, we have compared it to Wales, and the things that stood out were that they would continue to fund asbestos in schools removal, as we do

through our twenty-first century schools programme; they would update their guidance, and our guidance is updated and compares very favourably to that of England; and the two other areas, which the Minister referred to, were in terms of their sampling. We're actually working with them to understand what they're going to do, and we're using our working group to ensure that we have a Welsh perspective on what we should do in Wales.

[145] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just want to finish on the comment the Minister made with regard to there not being the demand from people about having access to information. In my mind, that's quite worrying, because I don't think always parents or guardians would be potentially aware of what asbestos is, what it does, and its effects. For me, I would rather that the school, or the duty holder, be more proactive in at least advising on what it is and the potential dangers, so that if something did happen, or if the school were changed in any way, they'd be fully aware of the situation. So, I just wanted to ask whether you would commit to what might be a desktop study of how the local authorities or schools are communicating with the parents or the guardians of children, so that we would know across Wales if there's a trend, or if they're not communicating and just waiting for people to ask them questions, so that we can at least have an understanding as to how it's operating currently in Wales. For me, it's a bit concerning that it's all on demand when some people will not know that that's a question they need to be asking of the school.

[146] **Huw Lewis:** Well, if such a desktop survey were to be done, it would pretty much consist of the management plans that are currently in place under the auspices of local authorities and are available to the public. It would be hard to see—. Those things have got a statutory underpinning. By necessity, they are rigorous and should be up to date, and they're the things that should be consulted if any kind of disturbance of asbestos is about to be undertaken through building work or refurbishment. So, the information is there. The question around proactivity and the publishing of this information on a regular basis is perhaps where we part company. To my mind, it doesn't add to public safety in any way in particular, but it would certainly add a tremendous bureaucratic burden onto local authorities.

[147] **William Powell:** Minister, following up on that last question from Bethan Jenkins, you often refer to the crucial role that governors play in terms of the governance and forward planning of schools.

10:45

[148] Is it the case that asbestos awareness currently constitutes a component of initial governor training, when they first are recruited as governors? I'm a governor myself and although I may not be up to date in this regard, I don't believe that I've had any specific guidance on this, although the issue does arise from time to time in the two governing bodies to which I belong.

[149] **Huw Lewis:** I'll need to get back to you on that, Chair. I would have assumed that it would be part of the general health and safety training that governors should embark upon, periodically obviously.

[150] **William Powell:** In each case, there is a dedicated governor for that, so it may be that there's additional training made available for the person who holds that portfolio, but it's something I'm not quite aware of.

[151] **Huw Lewis:** No; I'll write to you with details on that one. Of course, some governing bodies have more onerous responsibilities than others, obviously, in terms of the being themselves—

[152] **William Powell:** Depending on the nature of the estate that they're managing.

[153] **Huw Lewis:** Yes; and they could be themselves the duty holders.

[154] **William Powell:** Thank you for that. A final question from me on this one: following the Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment's report on the vulnerability of children to exposure to asbestos, have you given any consideration to undertaking a formal consultation on the issue of asbestos in schools, with a view to adapting policy?

[155] **Huw Lewis:** Well, as I said, we regularly review our guidance. The last iteration was very recent—in the spring of 2014—and we are now alive to the developments in England, and will take any lessons that emerge from the English sampling survey, for instance. We are satisfied that our guidance is every bit as good as that across the border, and that has been very recently looked at, as you know. So, I believe we are up to date, but always alert to the possibilities that more may be learned about the situation that could improve guidance or toughen up the regulations around the problem.

[156] **William Powell:** Excellent. Minister, thank you very much for—

[157] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wondered if we could have details—and perhaps they are in the public domain—of the people who are on the working group for you.

[158] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, of course.

[159] **Bethan Jenkins:** To understand their terms of reference and the work that they do in terms of advising you, so that we can understand better.

[160] **Huw Lewis:** Absolutely. Of course. I'm unaware of the names—and I can get you the names—but we have the NHS, the Health and Safety Executive, Public Health Wales, and Welsh Government. Is that everyone?

[161] **Ms Larnar:** Yes.

[162] **Huw Lewis:** That's the lot. But, obviously, there will be—

[163] **Bethan Jenkins:** Do they publicly produce their minutes or their agenda items?

[164] **Ms Larnar:** We will be. We've established membership of the group. The group will be meeting in January or February next year, because that's straight after the English steering group, so we can then—

[165] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, this is a new group, is it?

[166] **Ms Larnar:** The group had a first meeting back in June or July last year, following the review that came out. We've now established it formally as a working group, because we felt it was of value to Wales.

[167] **Bethan Jenkins:** How have you decided upon the membership of that group, then?

[168] **Ms Larnar:** These are the Welsh bodies that are most appropriate to represent the views of Wales, and—

[169] **Bethan Jenkins:** And are there trade unions or trade union bodies on that group?

[170] **Ms Larner:** We've kept it as being officials from HSE, NHS Wales, Welsh Government and Public Health Wales at present.

[171] **Bethan Jenkins:** But would you be open to considering wider membership of the group?

[172] **Huw Lewis:** If there were usefulness in terms of the role of the steering group. What the group is there to do at the moment is to reassure Welsh Government, and by extension the Welsh public, that we are as up to date as we can possibly be and that there is no shortfall in terms of the way that we approach this very serious issue in Wales, as compared to how it may be approached elsewhere in the UK or further afield.

[173] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay; thanks.

[174] **William Powell:** Minister, I'm particularly pleased that we have such a full public gallery, including young people from schools in Wales, and also our lead petitioner this morning who has brought this matter to our attention. Thank you very much indeed for coming this morning and to your colleague Jo Larner for having contributed so fully to our discussion of this petition. Thank you very much indeed.

[175] **Huw Lewis:** You're very welcome, Chair. Thank you.

[176] **Bethan Jenkins:** Are we considering this petition now?

[177] **William Powell:** We have a couple of moments in which to consider our next steps.

10:49

**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**

Cynnig:

Motion:

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to
gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the*

*cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog remainder of the meeting in
17.42. accordance with Standing Order
17.42.*

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[178] **William Powell:** I resolve, in that context, that we move to private session to consider giving weight to the evidence we've just received. There are no objections.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10:49.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10:49.*