



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 27 Medi 2011
Tuesday, 27 September 2011

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

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

Sarita Marshall	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Abigail Phillips	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.15 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.15 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

- [1] **William Powell:** Welcome to the Petitions Committee.
- [2] Bore da a chroeso cynnes i bawb. Good morning and welcome to everyone.
- [3] Everyone may speak Welsh or English throughout the proceedings. I remind everyone that channel 0 on the headsets is for amplification only and that channel 1 is for translation. I have just switched off my mobile phone, and I ask you to do the same if you have not done so. There are no fire alarms scheduled this morning, so if they go off, the ushers will tell us what to do and direct us to the fire exits. We have not received any apologies this morning; we are all present and correct.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[4] **William Powell:** The first new petition is P-04-329 on control of noise nuisance from wind turbines. This petition was submitted, as you will have read, by James Shepherd Foster and it has collected over 1,000 signatures so far. It says:

[5] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to pass a statute controlling the noise nuisance from wind turbines during anti-social hours. We ask for the implementation of respite periods during which time turbines would be switched off.’

[6] We are due to receive this petition formally at 12.45 p.m. today. As Chair, I have written to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development to seek his views on the petition. A call for evidence on the issue has also been made. What does the committee feel that we should do in this regard?

[7] **Russell George:** Can we also write to the Chairman of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, given that the committee is already looking at other issues around windfarms and energy, and ask it to include that with the other petitions that it is currently looking at?

[8] **William Powell:** I would have thought that that would be a sensible move as it obviously relates to the committee's wider consideration under the energy review. I should also flag up that Russell and I are involved in that as members of the Environment and Sustainability Committee. Are there any other thoughts on this one?

[9] **Joyce Watson:** We need to consider all the evidence and that will not be in until the petition closes on 3 November. As a way forward for us, we should defer the consideration of that evidence until we have received all of it.

[10] **William Powell:** Yes, until the first convenient meeting after 3 November. Are we agreed on that? I see that we are.

[11] The next new petition is P-04-330 regarding a Welsh-language Record in our Assembly, submitted by Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, and which has collected 1,334 signatures. It says:

[12] 'We are concerned about the status and use of the Welsh language in the National Assembly. Welsh is now an official language in Wales, and we are very proud of this development. Nevertheless, the decision to allow the Record—a document of the highest symbolic importance—to become, essentially, a monolingual English document...runs counter to this development and denigrates the official status of the Welsh language.'

[13] In line with our protocols, I have written to the Presiding Officer to seek her views, but, as yet, a call for evidence has not been issued. I suggest that we await the Presiding Officer's response, but I would welcome the committee's views on this.

[14] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yr wyf yn credu bod angen inni ysgrifennu at Rhodri Glyn Thomas sy'n gyfrifol am yr iaith Gymraeg o fewn Comisiwn y Cynulliad. Ef sydd â'r prif gyfrifoldeb am unrhyw beth sy'n ymwneud â'r iaith Gymraeg. Eto, yr wyf ar ddeall y bydd penderfyniad yn cael ei wneud ar hyn cyn bo hir.

Bethan Jenkins: I think that we should write to Rhodri Glyn Thomas who is responsible for the Welsh language within the Assembly Commission. He has prime responsibility for anything to do with the Welsh language. Again, I am given to understand that a decision will be made on this shortly.

[15] I think that I am doing a monologue again—

[16] **William Powell:** Can you run that by us again please, Bethan?

[17] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yr wyf yn cydnabod ein bod yn aros i'r Llywydd ymateb, ond mae angen inni ysgrifennu at Rhodri Glyn Thomas, gan mai ef sydd yn gyfrifol am yr iaith Gymraeg o fewn y Comisiwn. Wedi dweud hynny, yr wyf ar ddeall y bydd y Comisiwn yn gwneud penderfyniad cyn bo hir. Felly, mae'n rhaid inni ysgrifennu at Rhodri Glyn Thomas, ond, eto i gyd, yr wyf yn deall y bydd datganiad. Dywedodd Rhodri Glyn Thomas mewn

Bethan Jenkins: I recognise that we are waiting for the Presiding Officer to respond on this, but we need to write to Rhodri Glyn Thomas, since he is responsible for the Welsh language within the Commission. Having said that, I am given to understand that a decision will be made by the Commission before long. So, we need to write to Rhodri Glyn Thomas; however, I understand that a statement is forthcoming. Rhodri Glyn Thomas said at a public event yesterday that

digwyddiad cyhoeddus ddoe y byddai'n he would be making a statement quite soon.
gwneud datganiad cyn bo hir.

[18] **William Powell:** Thank you for that contribution. I would be in favour of writing to Rhodri Glyn on this because of his involvement and the fact that it falls within his brief in the Commission. Are there any other contributions? Joyce, what are your thoughts on this?

[19] **Joyce Watson:** It is in hand, is it not? There is nothing further to add.

[20] **William Powell:** I am happy to write to Rhodri Glyn Thomas on this, but we are expecting an announcement shortly and so there could be a positive development for these petitioners. So, let us do that and await any news from the Presiding Officer.

[21] The third petition is P-04-331 on the filming and recording of council meetings. This was submitted by Jacqui Thompson of Carmarthenshire, and she has collected 223 signatures. I should flag up that I issued a statement of opinion on a related matter, namely the recording and webcasting of national park authority meetings. I have also made comments in support of this as I believe that others around the table may also have done. In line with protocol, I have written to the Minister for Local Government and Communities seeking his views on the petition, and we have issued a call for evidence. Are there any views on this?

[22] **Russell George:** I think that this is a sensible petition; it is one that I would support. I think that I signed your statement of opinion, which was slightly different but similar. This asks not only that the proceedings be recorded but that people can reuse the material afterwards. Is that what happens here in the Assembly? Can material be reused without prior permission?

[23] **William Powell:** I would have thought so. I need to seek advice on this.

[24] **Ms Phillips:** As far as I am aware, yes, that is what happens, but we can check that.

[25] **Russell George:** It would be interesting if that were the case, because it would give weight to the petition if the petitioners were asking for the same powers that the Assembly has to submit to.

[26] **Ms Phillips:** We can provide a note on that.

[27] **Joyce Watson:** Again, there is a call for evidence on this and that is open until 3 November, so, whatever our views are on this, we will have to wait. We are open, transparent and recorded and people enjoy that, or so they tell me frequently. If it is a matter of bringing equality to the way that meetings are conducted or recorded, that cannot be a bad thing for transparency, can it? However, we should wait for the response to the call for evidence, because I am sure that issues will be raised and we can discuss them then.

[28] **William Powell:** I support that. I think that most of us will be aware of the level of attention that Ms Thompson has brought to the issue, and some councils around Wales have already started to move in this direction, which is really encouraging. Do you have any observations on this, Bethan? I see that you do not.

[29] We now move to another petition that has been promoted by Jacqui Thompson, P-04-332 on local authority spending details over £500. This petition has 77 signatures. This is again on the theme of promoting openness, transparency and access to the public. I have written to the Minister for Local Government and Communities seeking his views on this petition also and, as with the earlier petition, there may be a case for us to hold back until the close of the call for evidence on 3 November. I would appreciate any thoughts that you have

on this.

[30] **Joyce Watson:** I can see why people want an open and transparent record of spending details, but at a time when everyone has to take austere measures, it is important that it does not end up costing more money trying to be open than is perhaps justified, and that will come out in evidence. So, I will wait to read the evidence on that. Having as much information readily available as possible is, in principle, a good thing. However, we should wait to see what the evidence says.

[31] **William Powell:** It is an issue of proportionality really, is it not?

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

[33] **Russell George:** I take a slightly different view to Joyce. I will of course wait for the evidence, but I think that this is another sensible petition, and if the other petition that we previously looked at comes to pass, people can then view decisions that are being made—

[34] **William Powell:** They would complement each other.

[35] **Russell George:** Yes, they would.

[36] **William Powell:** I see that we are happy to go forward on that basis.

9.26 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[37] **William Powell:** As we have agreed, we are now operating an agenda that groups the petitions according to the ministerial areas under which they fall, which we are all agreed is a good way forward.

[38] The first petition is P-03-150, which calls for compliance with national cancer standards. We could invite the Minister for Health and Social Services to give oral evidence to update us on the latest compliance rates. Are there any thoughts on how best to go forward on this one, because it has been in the system for a while? Bethan, do you have any observations on this one?

[39] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid wyf yn erbyn cael y Gweinidog mewn, ond mae'n dweud yn ei llythyr ei bod yn datblygu cynllun gweithredu cenedlaethol ar gyfer cancr ar hyn o bryd, felly efallai byddai'n rhy gynnar i'w gwahodd, er ein bod yn cael yr ystadegau yn ein pecynnau. Mae'n Weinidog newydd hefyd ac mae'n siŵr ei bod am roi ei marc ar hyn, felly efallai y dylem roi amser iddi ddatblygu'r cynllun ac wedyn gofyn iddi ddod i mewn. Efallai byddai hynny'n fwy pragmataidd.

Bethan Jenkins: I am not against having the Minister in, but she does state in her letter that she is currently developing a national delivery plan for cancer, so it may be too early to invite her, even though we have the statistics in our packs. She is also a new Minister and I am sure that she will want to put her mark on this, so perhaps we should give her time to develop the plan and then ask her to come in. That may be a more pragmatic approach.

[40] **William Powell:** That approach would have a lot of merit to it, to allow the Minister to reflect and draw on advice in this area, given the significant progress that has been seen in this area. This petition was originally submitted in 2008, so it is certainly something that we could do in a meeting a little later in the term.

[41] **Bethan Jenkins:** Gellid gofyn iddi am amserlen y cynllun, oherwydd byddai hynny'n rhoi mwy o syniad inni erbyn pa bryd y bydd y cynllun yn cael ei wireddu. Gallem wedyn ofyn iddi ddod mewn pan fydd hi wedi datgan y cynllun.

Bethan Jenkins: We could ask her for the timetable for the plan, because that would give us more of an idea as to when this plan will be realised. We could then ask her to come in when she has announced the plan.

[42] **William Powell:** That would enable us to monitor the planned implementation and makes good sense. That is excellent.

[43] We now move to P-03-136 on parking in Heath and Birchgrove. We have had some recent correspondence on this one from Mr John Jones, one of the petitioners, and I think that it is fair to say that he has expressed some frustration as to the way in which this petition has proceeded. We have now received news that Cardiff Council's eligibility conditions for controlled resident parking have been amended, which is clearly a relevant factor. You will also recall that the local health board was not inclined to come to give evidence when the committee previously wrote to it in the third Assembly.

9.30 a.m.

[44] **Joyce Watson:** First, I declare an interest, because my daughter works there. That is the first thing that I want to put out there. Secondly, we have had some movement, but I raise the question of why we are looking at it at all, because we do not have any jurisdiction over parking in this area. That said, I am new to the committee and we are where we are and we have had movement, which is a good thing, certainly for the petitioners. I would suggest that we are where we are; we have done what we can and we should, perhaps, think about closing it.

[45] **William Powell:** Bethan, you have previous experience of this.

[46] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yr wyf yn cydnabod yr hyn mae Joyce yn ei ddweud o ran yr hyn sydd o fewn pwerau'r cyngor lleol a'r bwrdd iechyd lleol, ond mae angen inni holi'r Gweinidog sydd â phwerau dros gynlluniau teithio cynaliadwy, i ofyn iddo sut y mae'n monitro'r cynlluniau hynny. Yr ydym wedi derbyn tystiolaeth gan y Llywodraeth yn dweud bod y cynlluniau hyn ar waith, ond ni fyddai'r deisebwyr yn cytuno bod y cynllun teithio cynaliadwy yn gweithio ar lawr gwlad. Felly, efallai ei bod yn syniad inni holi'r Gweinidog ar yr elfen honno, gan gydnabod nad yw'r elfennau eraill o fewn ein rheolaeth ni.

Bethan Jenkins: I acknowledge what Joyce is saying in terms of what is within the powers of the local council and the local health board, but we need to question the Minister who has powers over sustainable travel plans, and ask him how they will be monitored. We have received evidence from the Government that these schemes are in place, but the petitioners would not agree that the sustainable travel plan is working at the grass-roots level. Therefore, we should, perhaps, question the Minister on that element of the petition, while recognising that the other elements are not within our control.

[47] **William Powell:** There clearly has been an element of progress here, as we have seen. However, as you say, Bethan, there are generic issues here that will relate to other sites regarding the wider issue of sustainable travel plans where you have a conflict of this kind between work and residential issues. I would support calling in the Minister to give evidence at the earliest convenient time, which I hope would also give the petitioners the sense that we are taking this a step further. We also need to be aware that, in the fullness of time, we will need to draw this to a close, because there is a limit to what more we can do, as Joyce has observed. Do you have anything to add, Russell?

[48] **Russell George:** No, I agree with Bethan's comments.

[49] **William Powell:** So, if we are content, that is the way in which we should proceed, by inviting the Minister on to address the issue. Thank you.

[50] We will move on to P-03-219 on pharmacies in Barry. If you recall, this petition calls for the National Health Service (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1992 to be updated, allowing relocations in order to serve new surgeries. The timetable for consultation on this has slipped somewhat, so the consultation is now expected to be issued in January 2012. In the light of this, if you recall, the petitioners called upon the National Assembly to urge the Government to save pharmacies. Given the Government's forthcoming review, there is an argument for us to close this petition because of the new situation, and I would tend to favour that. I would appreciate your views on this one. I see that Members are in agreement. Okay, we will proceed in that direction.

[51] The next petition is P-03-221, which calls for improved NHS chiropody treatment, particularly for elderly citizens who are housebound. It would probably be sensible for us to call the Minister in on this one to give oral evidence to the committee, so that we can look at some of the wider issues that relate to this. What are your thoughts on this one?

[52] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, I agree.

[53] **William Powell:** I see that we are all agreed.

[54] The next petition is P-03-222 from the National Osteoporosis Society, which calls on the Government to fully implement the falls and fractures standard in the national service framework. I suggest that we should await the outcomes of the position statement and audit mentioned in the Minister's letter, which you will have read. Are there any other suggestions on this one?

[55] **Joyce Watson:** First, I fully support the National Osteoporosis Society in its call. In looking at this and at the evidence, we should look at the cost benefit analysis of providing it and not providing it. If we are going to move forward, we have to give a reason for our recommendation. So, if we start at the beginning by doing a cost benefit analysis, at least we will know where we are going. I would like to see that written in at a very early stage. I know that that has been done by the National Osteoporosis Society. That is the only thing that I would like to add.

[56] **William Powell:** I see that there are no further comments on this. I strongly support what you have said, Joyce, about the importance of the call and, more widely, of the society's work. I suggest that we go forward on that basis.

[57] The next petition is P-04-327, entitled 'Keep Our Community Hospital'. We have a slightly different position to report here. This calls for the retention of the Blaina and District Hospital. I think that we are all aware that this hospital has now closed. In fact, it appears that this decision was well in train at the time when the petition was received. Therefore, as part of the wider reconfiguration of health provision in the Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board area, the hospital is now closed. So, I can propose with some confidence that we should now close the petition. There does not seem to be any profit in it going forward. Are there any other thoughts on that? I see that there are none. Okay, so we should do that. Excellent.

[58] The next petition is P-03-301 on equality for the transgender community. It calls on the Welsh Government to ensure that the transgender community is given equal support and direct assistance to promote equality and awareness. We could await the outcomes of the

work done by the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee, which was mentioned in the Minister's letter, which we have read. I think that it would be unwise to proceed far while we are still awaiting those outcomes. Are there any other thoughts on this one?

[59] **Bethan Jenkins:** A ydym yn gwybod a fydd y pwyllgor hwn yn ymgynghori â phobl allanol? Efallai y bydd WHSSC yn gallu siarad â'r deisebwyr ynglŷn â'u barn. Mae gennym ddigon o dystiolaeth y gallem ei chyflwyno i'r pwyllgor hwnnw i sicrhau eu bod yn cysylltu â'i gilydd.

Bethan Jenkins: Do we know whether this committee will be consulting with external stakeholders? Perhaps WHSSC should talk to the petitioners to get their opinion. We have enough evidence that we could pass to that committee to ensure that they link up.

[60] **William Powell:** In many ways, I think that it would be useful to re-engage with the petitioners in that way and to act as a conduit for the evidence that we already have. Are there any other comments or thoughts on that? We also have the option of calling the Minister to give oral evidence in light of that next step. Good. Let us take it forward in that way.

[61] The next petition is P-03-292, which relates to public toilet provision in Wales, calling for an investigation into the health and social wellbeing implications of public toilet closures. We have had some very recent correspondence by e-mail from Louise Hughes of Gwynedd, the petitioner. She has given some examples from her local area, in the Snowdonia National Park, of some of the extreme pressure created that is associated with the local tourism and visitor economy. She makes some pretty direct and heartfelt remarks about the importance of this issue, so I think that we should circulate it and give it full and due consideration. However, this has come in so very recently that we cannot deal with that right now. Are there any thoughts or observations on that or on the way forward on this important petition?

[62] **Bethan Jenkins:** Dylai'r Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol benderfynu yn awr a yw'n mynd i fabwysiadu'r ddeiseb hon. Felly credaf ei bod yn bwysig inni anfon yr e-bost at y pwyllgor, gan y byddai'n atgyfnerthu'r ddadl bod angen iddynt edrych ar y broblem hon. Mae pethau fel hyn yn bwysig os ydym am ddenu twristiaid, felly dylem annog y pwyllgor i wneud gwaith arno.

Bethan Jenkins: The Health and Social Care Committee should now decide whether it is going to take on this petition. So, I think that it is important that we send this e-mail on to that committee, as it would strengthen the argument that it should consider this problem. These things are important if we are to attract tourists, so we should encourage the committee to work on it.

[63] **William Powell:** One thing that I particularly had in mind when I read Louise Hughes's contribution earlier was that, although the main thrust of this is to do with health and social care, it is, as you said Bethan, relevant to the tourism economy, so there is the possibility of engaging with the Enterprise and Business Committee. If we are trying to encourage sustainable tourism, destination management and the issues that are strongly raised in Louise Hughes's e-mail, it might be of relevance to that committee. I welcome your thoughts on that.

[64] **Joyce Watson:** I am on that committee.

[65] **William Powell:** Would you welcome an extra work stream?

[66] **Joyce Watson:** I think that my colleagues would be delighted to have an extra work stream. We are doing a town-centre management inquiry anyway, and this could form part of that. I know that it is not about town centres—I fully understand that it is about rural areas—but it would at least be a starting point. It is a critical issue; that is my feeling about this. It

needs to stay very much in people's thoughts. It would be absolute nonsense to look at the health aspects separately, without looking at business development, so I would fully support that it goes to that committee.

[67] **William Powell:** Good. If that is the general view, I suggest that we also put that in hand.

[68] We move now to petition P-03-162, calling for road safety improvements on the A40 in the Llanspyddid area near Brecon. The Minister for Local Government and Communities has written to us previously stating that road-marking works are now complete and that signage would be complete this summer. At the time that the agenda was being assembled, we had not received a response to our correspondence to the petitioner, but that has since changed. We have now received correspondence from Angharad Woodland on behalf of the petitioners. The update is that there is now, in that location, red tarmac with 'araf' and 'slow' written on it and some chevrons in the middle of the road. The petitioner speculates about whether those improvements will be of significant benefit because the location remains unlit, which was the other matter of concern. I would welcome your thoughts on this. We have a partial result, but what are your thoughts on the way forward? We had anticipated closing this petition in light of the gains made.

9.45 a.m.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** This is interesting—this falls in the area of three of us. Yes, we should recognise that there has been some movement. The petitioners are calling for lighting, which clearly has not happened. Perhaps it is worth pursuing how that could happen. There are some innovative ways for those things to happen that have been taken forward in Ceredigion. I think that lighting is critical. Lighting that stays on and that does not get switched off is even more critical. In an area such as this it would be advantageous to look at that.

[70] **William Powell:** Okay, so you are not happy to close the petition at this time.

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

[72] **William Powell:** Bethan, do you have any thoughts on this?

[73] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yr wyf yn cydnabod nad yw'r goleuadau wedi eu gwneud. Efallai gallem ysgrifennu at y Gweinidog unwaith eto a gofyn pam mae'r pethau eraill wedi'u gwneud, ond nid y goleuadau, ac wedyn cau'r ddeiseb. Yr wyf yn awgrymu hynny er mwyn cael cyfiawnhad i'r deisebwyr pam mae'r goleuadau heb eu gwneud pan fo popeth arall wedi'i wneud.

Bethan Jenkins: I acknowledge that the lights have not been done. Perhaps we could write to the Minister once again and ask why the other things have been done, but not the lights, and then close the petition. I suggest that in order to get a justification for the petitioners as to why the lights have not been done when everything else has been.

[74] **Russell George:** I say that the petition should be closed, but Bethan has suggested some middle ground, so I will support that.

[75] **William Powell:** I was going to ask Joyce how she thought we could achieve that extra step, but I think that Bethan has made a suggestion on how we can pinpoint that prior to the likely closure of the petition. Good. I think that we have agreed on a way forward.

[76] The next petition is P-03-316, 'Make maintenance of existing School Crossing Patrols a non-negotiable part of WAG Transport Grant to local councils'. It calls for the

continued employment of school crossing patrol personnel to be maintained as a condition of the grant. We have had a pretty clear response from the Minister. I suggest that we close this petition.

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

[78] **William Powell:** Okay, I think that that is probably the way forward. We have a clear result there. Good.

[79] Turning to updates on petitions that relate to the environment and sustainable development, the first petition is P-03-273, which relates to the transportation of wind turbines in mid Wales. This is a very contentious issue, as Russell, Joyce and I are particularly aware, given the volume of correspondence that we receive on this. Given that this is at the very heart of the review that the Environment and Sustainability Committee is undertaking, I ask you to consider whether we should close the petition because it is now where it belongs—in that committee.

[80] **Russell George:** I would not like to close the petition now. I would like to suspend it until the end of the committee's inquiry. It might be that the petitioners feel that their particular issue was not looked at fully. They may not have an opportunity to give evidence to that committee, for example. So, I suggest that we wait for the outcome of the inquiry and suspend the petition until then. To save me speaking again, I would say the same about petition P-04-324.

[81] **William Powell:** I think that that is probably the best approach as it is now in the place where it will get some very high-level scrutiny over the coming weeks and months. So, we will take that proposal on board.

[82] We now move on to petition P-03-302, which relates to the compost processing plant. It calls for the suspension of operations at Bryn composting at Gelligaer until odour problems are resolved. Given the improvements that have been made and the evident improved relationship between the local community and the Environment Agency, we have the opportunity to consider closing the petition but recommend that the Minister keeps us apprised of the ongoing situation. What are your thoughts on this one?

[83] **Bethan Jenkins:** Credaf y dylem gau'r ddeiseb. Er bod y broblem yn dal i fodoli, ni welaf faint yn fwy y gall y pwyllgor hwn ei wneud. Mae pethau wedi gwella o ran Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd. Gobeithio, os bydd unrhyw broblemau'n codi, y bydd y Gweinidog yn cysylltu â ni eto. **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that we should close the petition. Although the problem still exists, I do not see what more the committee can do. Things have improved with regard to the Environment Agency. Hopefully, if any problems arise, the Minister will contact us again.

[84] **William Powell:** A single environmental safeguarding authority is to come forward imminently—or in the middle distance. It is another issue in relation to which we should urge the Minister to remain well versed. However, it is really good news. If the committee, in its previous work, has helped to contribute to that improved relationship, that is a result. I sense that we are unanimous in closing the petition, but with that proviso.

[85] We have, effectively, dealt with petition P-04-324, but for the record we need to confirm that we intend to deal with it in the same way as we will deal with P-03-273, the petition on the transportation of wind turbines. I see that Members are agreed.

[86] We now move on to P-03-326, 'No to incineration', which calls for the Welsh Government to revise its planning policy guidance to include a presumption against

incineration. We have received a further petition, from Terry Evans, and it carries in excess of 13,000 signatures. It calls for a review of the waste survey, which gave only two options for waste disposal. It also calls for incineration to be made illegal, which is stronger again. Given the current inquiry that is being undertaken by the Environment and Sustainability Committee, we could either park the petition or close it. We have already made a decision on two petitions in a particular direction. What are your thoughts on this one?

[87] **Bethan Jenkins:** Byddwn eisiau gallu dod yn ôl at y ddeiseb hon. Mae hwn yn fater eithaf eang, ac fel y dywedodd Russell ynglŷn ag ynni gwynt, efallai na fydd yn cael ei ystyried i'r graddau a hoffai'r deisebwyr. Nid wyf eisiau dweud bod y ddeiseb hon yn bwysicach na deisebau eraill oherwydd bod miloedd o bobl wedi'i harwyddo. Fodd bynnag, mae llawer o bobl wedi'i harwyddo, a ni fyddwn eisiau ei chau nes inni gael trafodaeth gyflawn ar y mater pwysig hwn.

Bethan Jenkins: I would want to be able to come back to this petition. It is quite a broad issue, and as Russell said in relation to wind, it would perhaps not be considered to the extent that the petitioners would want. I do not want to say that the petition is more important than others because thousands of people have signed it. However, many people have signed it, and I would not want to close it until we have had a full discussion on this important issue.

[88] **Russell George:** There is a large number of signatures on the petition. Is it the largest number of signatures that we have seen?

[89] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that the petition on the badger cull had more signatures. That is off the top of my head.

[90] **William Powell:** Clearly, it is a major exercise to get in excess of 13,000 signatures. That is a clear indication that this matters to a lot of people. I would support keeping it open, but not actively working on it while it is in the hands of the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

[91] **Bethan Jenkins:** It would help me, because I am not a member of that committee, to have the committee's terms of reference. I sometimes feel that we refer the petitions and then I do not know what happens. That would be just in order to have calmness and clarity of mind, so that I know that it will deal with incineration as part of its inquiry.

[92] **William Powell:** That is a very good point. I shall write to Lord Elis-Thomas to request that those elements of the terms of reference are shared with you and Joyce, and retained by the clerking team so that we have clarity on that, to prevent things slipping off the radar.

[93] **Russell George:** I wonder whether it would be useful to invite Lord Elis-Thomas to come to the committee with the clerks just to run through the things that we have asked them to take up, and to update the committee in more of an official capacity. That might be helpful.

[94] **William Powell:** Given the scale of several of these petitions that we are dealing with, both this one and the ones relating to the windfarm issues, that would have a lot of merit. We will see whether he can accommodate that in his diary later in the autumn. It is a really good idea. Is everyone happy with that? I see that you are.

[95] We now move on to the petitions on housing, regeneration and heritage. Petition P-03-320 calls for the Welsh Government to review its social housing policy

[96] 'in relation of the indigenous population'.

[97] We are aware from correspondence that the phrase 'local connections' is now

included in the draft guidance with regard to social housing allocation, so there is something of a case for closing this petition, and that would be my recommendation. What are your views on this one?

[98] **Joyce Watson:** You are right; we can close it. We have had positive movement in the direction that the petitioners were asking for. In light of that, we can move to close it.

[99] **William Powell:** At the moment we have a draft code as opposed to the final code. Nevertheless, as I said earlier, there is a case for closing the petition. Are there any other thoughts on this one?

[100] **Bethan Jenkins:** A yw'r deisebwyr yn gwybod beth yw'r diffiniad 'cysylltiadau lleol'? A ydynt yn ymwybodol? A fyddant yn hapus? Maent yn galw am rywbeth gwahanol. A allem ofyn i'r deisebwyr a ydynt yn hapus gyda'r diffiniad, ac a yw'n mynd yn ddigon pell iddynt?

Bethan Jenkins: Do the petitioners know the definition of 'local connections'? Are they aware? Will they be happy with that? They are calling for something different. Could we ask the petitioners if they are happy with the definition, and whether it goes far enough for them?

[101] **William Powell:** I have not got the definition to hand, and I sense that there may be some gap between what they were seeking and this. We can certainly write to them to bring that to their attention, gathering in any other relevant guidance as to what sits under that in the draft guidance.

[102] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would be happier if we did that before closing it.

[103] **William Powell:** Okay. We will do that, with a mind to closure if we get that information.

[104] We move on to P-03-124, the Cysgliad petition, which calls for the Cysgliad software for Windows to be made available for free download. It was developed by Canolfan Bedwyr at Bangor University, partly through funding from the Welsh Language Board. Previously, the Minister for Education and Skills had written to us stating that the matter needs to be considered further as the Government continues to develop its strategy for the Welsh language. He committed to writing to us again as soon as this was resolved. We therefore have no choice but to await that correspondence from the Minister. Are there any other thoughts on this one? I see that there are not, so we will do that.

[105] We move on to the petitions on business, enterprise, technology and science. Petition P-03-307 is on design for innovation in Wales. This calls for a consideration of the future of design and innovation in Wales. Because the Enterprise and Business Committee has stated its intention to consider this as a future item, I would have thought that there is a case either for parking or for closing, but given the precedent we have set, maybe it is more parking than closing. What are your thoughts? Joyce, as a member of that committee, you may have some more insight into the timetable and the planning on this issue.

10.00 a.m.

[106] **Joyce Watson:** The point is that the committee has made a firm commitment to look at this issue, so it will be looked at. In terms of the timetable, I do not think that it is on it yet, but you are asking me to trust my memory, which is not really a good thing on a Tuesday morning. I do not mind which way you go with this. You could close it because it is on the agenda. I will go with what the majority wants.

[107] **William Powell:** In relation to what we have done earlier—

[108] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, it would be consistent.

[109] **William Powell:** It would also be good for Russell, myself and Bethan, as we do not sit on that committee, to request again to have the details fleshed out by your new committee Chair and that is Nick Ramsay, I believe. Does he chair your committee?

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

[111] **William Powell:** I was briefly on that committee, under its previous chairmanship. If we request that, then at least we will be up to speed on how that and the next petitions are shaping up. Those petitions are P-03-271 and P-03-286, which we decided to group together, as one deals with business rates in Narberth, and the other with Ceredigion business rates. As you recall, they call for an impact assessment on the changes to business rates. Again, Joyce, I believe from my rather hazier memory than yours, because I left the committee before the end of last term, that this is on the agenda in a wider context.

[112] **Joyce Watson:** It is certainly on the agenda in relation to the town centre regeneration inquiry, because it would form a big part of that. We are only going to start that inquiry this week—my memory is better on this one. Therefore, I would suggest that, for consistency, we should just park it.

[113] **William Powell:** Are we all happy with that? Good. Now we move to a petition that has been in the system for some time, namely P-03-204, 'Public Accountability and Consultation in Higher Education'. We have got responses from the petitioner and the Minister also on this matter. As you recall, the petition calls on the Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to introduce a more open and transparent system to scrutinise standards of service and value for money offered by the higher education sector in Wales, ensuring that changes and service levels are subject to public consultation. The Government has announced its intention to address some of these areas of concern in response to a higher education review. There is, potentially, a case on a different basis to close this petition. What are your thoughts on this matter?

[114] **Joyce Watson:** I agree. Close it.

[115] **William Powell:** I will just flag up that we should be cautious in undertaking significant additional areas of work because there are currently related matters with the ombudsman as well.

[116] **Bethan Jenkins:** Pan fydd yr adolygiad wedi digwydd, cymeraf y bydd y Gweinidog naill ai yn cyhoeddi datganiad ysgrifenedig atom neu yn gwneud datganiad i'r Cynulliad. Felly, gallai'r deisebwr gysylltu â ni yn unigol, fel Aelodau'r Cynulliad, a gofyn i ni ofyn cwestiynau i'r Gweinidog. Felly, galleu annog y deisebwr i ddilyn llwybr arall os penderfynwn gau'r ddeiseb heddiw.

Bethan Jenkins: When the review has taken place, I take it that the Minister, will either issue us with a written statement or make a statement to the Assembly. So, the petitioner could contact us as individual Assembly Members and ask us to question the Minister. So, we could encourage the petitioner to take a different route if we choose to close the petition today.

[117] **William Powell:** Yes, he would have that recourse to us as individual Assembly Members. I am happy to go either way on this one, to close or to await that statement. Russell, do you have any comments?

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

[119] **William Powell:** Okay. We probably have a consensus to close this, but being open to approaches in the normal way.

[120] To move to the children and social services segment of the agenda, and P-03-236, 'The Charter for Grandchildren'. This calls for a statutory charter for grandchildren. I suggest that as we are awaiting the final report, it would probably be best not to undertake significant further work until we know the outcome of the Welsh Government's response to the family justice review. Bethan, do you have any thoughts on this?

[121] **Bethan Jenkins:** We should wait for the review to finish. It is different because it involves a UK Government review, so we should keep this petition open until that ends.

[122] **William Powell:** It would be a mistake to move to close it at this stage, because there are a lot of issues that need to be worked through.

[123] That concludes our review of petitions in the system. At this point, I thank Abi, Sarita and the team for the work that they have done over the summer in reviewing and in helping to support us in moving to new ways of working. I also thank the team and the outreach team that supported our presence at the Royal Welsh Show and at the Eisteddfod at Wrexham, which were useful opportunities to engage with a whole range of stakeholders—those visits have led to a number of fresh petitions that are under way, or have sown the seeds of future petitions. Those were enjoyable opportunities, and it was refreshing to see how our work is received. In addition, in July, at the time of the Westminster e-petitions launch, there was an extra edge to the interest in the work of the Petitions Committee, so that was useful.

[124] I thank you for your attendance today and would flag up that, apart from the regular receipt of petitions in the coming weeks—we are aware of several that are coming forward—our next regular meeting is set for Tuesday, 11 October.

[125] **Bethan Jenkins:** May I just ask one thing on the record? Are we making it clear on the website that we are issuing a general call for evidence? It would be good if people understand, even if they are watching now, that that process has changed, as there will be more scope for people who have not presented a petition, but have a view on it, to send us an e-mail or written correspondence—

[126] **William Powell:** To check that there is compliance and that—

[127] **Bethan Jenkins:** No; if there is a petition, a normal person can send in their views on it. That is a change of process that we have had over the summer.

[128] **Ms Phillips:** We are working with the media at the moment to ensure that the message is getting out as much as possible. If there are any specific things that you would like us to do, please get in touch, but we are trying to promote that as much as we can.

[129] **William Powell:** Thanks very much. The meeting is closed.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.09 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.09 a.m.*