



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 2 Hydref 2012
Tuesday, 2 October 2012

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The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Bethan Jenkins) Party of Wales (substitute for Bethan Jenkins)
Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
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	Clerc Clerk
Abigail Phillips	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9 a.m.
The meeting began at 9 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da a chroeso **William Powell:** Good morning and a warm
cynnes i bawb. welcome to everyone.

[2] Welcome to this, the first meeting of the Petitions Committee of the new term. The normal housekeeping remarks apply. Participants can speak in Welsh or English as they wish. Headsets are available for the translation from Welsh into English. Also, a recording of the meeting will be available on Senedd.tv shortly after the meeting.

[3] We have had apologies from Bethan Jenkins and I am glad to see that Jocelyn Davies is able to join us this morning.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[4] **William Powell:** Quite a number of new petitions have come in during the summer. The first petition is P-04-409, Welsh names for new trunk roads in Wales. This was submitted by Stuart Evans, and it has collected 47 signatures. It reads:

[5] ‘We call upon the Welsh Government to ensure that all new trunk roads in Wales have names in Welsh. Not only does this help preserve the identity of our cities, towns and villages. It also helps non Welsh speakers learn basic Welsh pronunciation and spelling.’

[6] I suppose that I should make a declaration on this, in as far as I have been involved in promoting a particular cause—that was not for a Welsh-language name, however; it was for the Royal Welsh Way for the A470, which some of you will recall and which, indeed, a number of you supported. I thought that I ought to make mention of that in relation to this matter and to a later item on the agenda.

[7] This is the first time that we have considered this petition. What do colleagues think

we should do on this particular petition?

[8] **Joyce Watson:** I think that the first thing we ought to do is write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities to seek his views.

[9] **William Powell:** Yes. I think in the first instance that that would make a lot of sense. Are colleagues agreeable? I see that you are, so that is what we shall do.

[10] The next petition is P-04-410, a permanent memorial to Wales's workers. This petition was submitted by the Bevan Foundation and it collected 23 signatures. It also has the backing of the wider Bevan Foundation, with its extensive membership. It calls

[11] 'on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to fund, either directly or through the Arts Council of Wales, a permanent workers memorial.'

[12] The text of the petition goes on to highlight recent tragedies, including the Gleision disaster last year, and the context of historic disasters in Welsh industrial history. It also refers to the importance of International Workers' Memorial Day and the fifth anniversary of the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007. In common with certain colleagues, I am a member of the foundation, which I should also put on the record. I would very much like us to see us take this forward and give it really positive consideration. Joyce, I think that you have a view.

[13] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. We do inquiries here, and I think that this would be a really good piece of work. The witnesses that we could call to give evidence—either way, in support or otherwise—are extensive. I am also a member of the Bevan Foundation, for the record, and I think that it is a really timely petition and one that we could do justice to by looking at it. However, I also support writing to the Minister at the same time.

[14] **William Powell:** Yes, we should certainly do that in the first instance, and write back to the foundation to express the sentiments that you have just expressed and which I certainly share. Colleagues, are there any other views on this one?

[15] **Jocelyn Davies:** I would definitely support that. I am sure that this sort of thing would strike a chord with a lot of ordinary people. I am sure that we could get a productive input from the unions and other organisations, say. I think that this would be a nice one, and it is nice to have something promoted in a positive way rather than people being against something.

[16] **William Powell:** It makes a change, does it not?

[17] **Jocelyn Davies:** It does. It would be a nice piece of work for the committee to undertake.

[18] **William Powell:** I am certainly of that view. Russell, are you happy to go forward with that?

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

[20] **William Powell:** Excellent, so that is agreed.

[21] The next new petition is P-04-411, which is against marine conservation zones in Pembrokeshire. The petition was submitted by Stephen De-Waine and collected 586 signatures. It reads as follows:

[22] 'I call upon The National Assembly of Wales, to urge the Welsh Government to not include the three proposed Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zones in Pembrokeshire to be designated as no Take Zones for the inshore fishing industry'.

[23] Clearly, there are strong feelings on this issue in Pembrokeshire, as we experienced previously on our visit to Wrexham, where we received a petition that was even more strongly supported in respect of other zones in north and west Wales. So, this is the first time that we have considered this, but we have the ministerial response to the earlier petition, which has been included in our papers for item 3.17. We have also had a really useful Research Service brief on the subject, which Members have had the opportunity to read. In many ways, I think that it would be sensible for us to group this petition with the earlier one that we received, and possibly also with the petition that comes in from the other direction, so that we are looking at it holistically. Would colleagues support that?

[24] **Russell George:** I agree. We received that petition when we were in north Wales and the Minister has given a response to that, so it may be useful in the short term to send the petitioners a copy of the letter that we have already received with regard to the other petition, for their information. I agree that it would be sensible to group at least this petition and the one that we received in north Wales. I am open about the other petition, although I am a little bit sceptical about whether we should group it with this as it is on the other side of the debate. Perhaps we should keep them separate. However, I do not have a particularly strong view on that.

[25] **William Powell:** We should certainly write to the Minister as well, to highlight the fact that we have had something coming in from Pembrokeshire.

[26] **Russell George:** Absolutely, yes.

[27] **William Powell:** Joyce, what are your views on this?

[28] **Joyce Watson:** I do not see any problem with grouping them all together, whether they are in support of or against the marine conservation zones. I went right up to Bardsey during the summer, following feedback from the Welsh Fishermen's Association when it gave its presentation here in the Assembly. I wanted to apprise myself of its views, and so I just wanted to say that I have done that. In the process of any evidence gathering, we would automatically invite people who support and people who oppose a particular view on something, because that is the balance that we have to have. Given that we do not have a huge amount of time at our disposal, to me—and others may not agree—it makes perfectly good sense to group them at least to get that evidence at our disposal and to make representations to the Minister of both those opinions, equally and fairly.

[29] **William Powell:** Jocelyn, did you indicate that you wanted to speak?

[30] **Jocelyn Davies:** I do not disagree with what is being said. I suppose that the problem is that these are different geographical areas, so the case for not including Pembrokeshire might be different from the case for not including somewhere else.

[31] **William Powell:** Oh, yes. I am sure that there are differences in emphasis, certainly.

[32] **Jocelyn Davies:** I take Joyce's point, but it will be very difficult to get both sides of the argument, I think, given the geographical considerations. It will be difficult to get expertise on this, as well, I think, but I agree with the approach that Joyce has suggested.

[33] **William Powell:** On balance, I am certainly in favour of grouping the three while taking on board the issues that Russell flagged up and the fact that there are distinct

arguments.

[34] **Russell George:** As I said, I do not have any strong views on this, Chair, but as long as we can loosely group them together so that we can at least discuss each one, that is fine. As Jocelyn said, there are very different circumstances in each case, even in looking at the same view.

[35] **William Powell:** When I was in Nant Gwrtheyrn on the Llŷn peninsula in the summer, I became aware of some of the particular arguments that apply in that location, such as concerns around faith-based tourism and other things that do not necessarily apply in the other locations. So, as you say, there are different arguments, but I think that it would be a rational use of our time and our team's time to do that. There is a precedent in relation to grouping the Newtown traffic petitions, as well, which I have just been reminded of, which I think worked quite successfully.

[36] **Russell George:** That was my concern, Chair, actually. When we grouped those together, there was a mix-up of the two views when we discussed it. That was my concern on this petition, but as long as we take them very loosely together, I am content with that.

[37] **William Powell:** You are putting the marker down that we need to be particularly attentive to that danger. I think that we can go forward on that basis.

[38] We move on to P-04-412, which is a call to abolish collective worship. This petition was submitted by Richy Thompson of the British Humanist Association, and it collected 828 signatures. It says

[39] 'As it stands, the law requires all schools to hold an act of collective worship every day. Even in schools that aren't 'faith' schools, this must be 'broadly Christian' in character.'

[40] Mr Thompson goes on to flesh out the argument, as he sees it, regarding why the Government should repeal the requirement for compulsory collective worship, regardless of religion or non-religious belief.

[41] We have not acted on this one as yet, but I remind colleagues that we recently closed a petition that had 3,915 signatures and which called for worship in schools to be protected as a legal requirement, because we had quite a clear steer from the Minister for Education and Skills that he had no plans to change the current arrangements. In the light of that, what do colleagues feel that we should do?

[42] **Russell George:** In one sense, it would not be particularly useful to write to the Minister, because we know what his answer would be, as he has already written back to us with his views. On those grounds, I suggest that we cannot do anything further, other than to send the petitioners a copy of the letter that we received with regard to the other petition. I do not think that we can take this petition any further, since the Minister has given his views.

[43] **William Powell:** I tend to agree with that. The Minister is known for having a settled view on this matter, and I think it unlikely that that view, recently expressed, will be any different if we write to him now. So, I support that course of action. Do other colleagues agree? I see that you do. In that case, that is exactly what we shall do.

[44] We move on to P-04-413 on maternity services in the Cynon valley. This was submitted by Sarah Gait and it collected 406 signatures. It says

[45] 'We the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to reinstate maternity services in the Cynon valley by completing the Tair Afon birthing centre as

originally planned in Ysbyty Cwm Cynon.’

[46] We also have some supporting information about what was previously planned in relation to that facility. It says that, as a result of that not being taken forward, Cynon valley mothers-to-be must travel to Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr Tydfil or opt for a home birth. The withdrawal of these services is clearly of real concern in the area. Colleagues, what do you wish to do?

[47] **Jocelyn Davies:** I can see the suggestion that we write to the Minister for health to seek her views, but whenever I write to the Minister on matters like these, she usually says that it is not a matter for her but for the local health board. It is the same response during questions in the Chamber, so I think that we can predict the response and it would be a waste of time. It is a matter for the local health board, but I would prefer to refer it to the Health and Social Care Committee, because at least it can scrutinise the local health board if it comes before it, and so on. I think that referring it to the Minister, when she has made it clear that she is not prepared to interfere with these local changes is a waste of time.

9.15 a.m.

[48] **William Powell:** Would you consider it appropriate for us to write to the chief executive or the chair of the local health board on this matter? I would have thought that that would be a sensible move. We are all familiar with the default answer on any local issues, as you have just said, and we could just cut to the chase by writing to the health board. We have had an indication, on other matters, of workload issues within the health committee, so should we write to the health committee immediately or await the response from the LHB?

[49] **Jocelyn Davies:** We could certainly copy the letter to the health committee to make it aware that that is the action that this committee is taking. At least then, committee members will know what action is being taken and that the petition exists.

[50] **William Powell:** Okay, let us copy it to the Chair, Mark Drakeford. Do you think that we should also copy the Minister, so that she is aware of it? I see that you do. I think that it is probably sensible to treat them on an even basis. Excellent, we will go forward in that way.

[51] We will now move on to discuss P-04-414 on Welsh jobs. This petition was submitted by Mr Royston Jones, with the support of 65 signatures.

[52] ‘We, the undersigned, call on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to encourage employers relocating to Wales, or opening new facilities and outlets here, to recruit and, where necessary, train local staff.’

[53] The petitioner has supplied some additional context to the text of the petition relating to the definition of ‘key worker’, and some of the views that he holds in this area. I ask our legal adviser to explain the context of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to this, as I think that it is relevant to our consideration of this petition.

[54] **Ms Roberts:** I have considered this, Chair, and have looked at the general law. Equality law is now contained in the Equality Act 2010, which consolidates many of the previous provisions. Employers have a legal responsibility to avoid unlawful discrimination, as we are all aware, and to ensure that all job applicants are treated fairly and are not discriminated against, particularly with regard to the protected characteristics set out in section 4 of the Equality Act, which include things like race, religion or belief, et cetera.

[55] In the briefing note, I have quite simply summarised section 159 of the Equality Act, which allows for positive action to be taken in relation to certain categories of people. That

provision allows for an employer to take into account protected characteristics, which, once again, can include race and a range of other things, such as disability, in deciding whether to recruit or promote people who have a protected characteristic but who are at a disadvantage or are under-represented. I suppose that an example of that could be a particular police force that does not have enough black and minority ethnic staff or police officers. However, I would emphasise—and, once again, this is a very general, broad-brush approach—that each case has to be considered on its own merit, and any action taken by an employer has to be proportionate and has to be a means of addressing any disadvantage or under-representation. So, what that means, in essence, is that it does not allow employers to have a policy or practice that automatically treats people who share a protected characteristic more favourably than those who do not. Much depends on the circumstances and the particular facts. This is very general.

[56] I have noted that a report was published recently, in August 2012, called ‘Maximising the Impact of Welsh Procurement Policy’. There are some references in that report to some suppliers who, in open competition, have Welsh offices and employ local people as part of the procurement framework, and they are required to provide a local supply chain, and provide training and development opportunities to those people.

[57] So, I suppose that that is what I have to say on this point, Chair. I did look and do some research on a definition of a ‘key worker’ in legislation, but I was not able to find anything that would have been helpful to the committee in this instance.

[58] **William Powell:** Thank you very much. That is a really useful context setting for us to discuss. Joyce has indicated that she wishes to speak.

[59] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Again, over the summer I have been doing some work on procurement and how people have interpreted the law favourably. It is a very complex law, and that is what you will be into when you are discussing something like this. The legislation comes clearly from the European Union; so, we would need a much greater understanding of that. Living in Pembrokeshire, I am all too aware of such issues that have resonated within the oil industry there. My understanding and reading of such cases previously are simply that no employer can bring in all its workforce with it because European Union employment law does not allow that to happen in any case, and neither would it allow what you have just described because it is about circumstances as they arise. This piece of law is extremely complex. It is not as simple as stated here. To that end, I think that the first thing that we should do is write to the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science. You were right to say what you did about that procurement report because that was done out of the Enterprise and Business Committee and it was discussed just the other day. However, the complexities cannot be overstated here because there are many levels of different law that will come into play. Perhaps we could get some views from the Minister first and then decide what we are going to do afterwards. That might be a good starting point.

[60] **William Powell:** Yes, I think that that is good advice. Thank you, Joyce. Jocelyn has indicated that she wishes to speak.

[61] **Jocelyn Davies:** I know, certainly, that there are efforts to encourage local and social clauses in Government and public sector contracts, and I know that some private companies also use them; therefore it is a matter of spreading our message, really. I am aware of the i2i toolkit that was developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing, which does not have to be restricted to housing. It was developed in Wales, but it has been used in other countries to ensure that you can stay on the right side of the EU legislation, as Joyce mentioned. I do not think that I would restrict it just to the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science because some of the other Ministers hold large budgets and some of that money goes into contracting. I wonder whether the Minister for Finance would—

- [62] **William Powell:** With her equalities brief as well—
- [63] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes, because procurement, I think, comes under the Minister for Finance. Really, it is a way for us to be satisfied that this strategy is effective.
- [64] **William Powell:** Yes. It has to be cross-cutting, has it not?
- [65] **Joyce Watson:** That is a good idea.
- [66] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. Spreading that message to the private sector is a challenge, but I think that that would be most welcome. I think that writing to the Government is the most effective way, but I would not restrict myself to that.
- [67] **William Powell:** Therefore, you are suggesting that we also write to the Minister for Finance and Leader of the House.
- [68] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes.
- [69] **William Powell:** Excellent. That is exactly what we will do. We will see what comes back to take this one forward.
- [70] We now turn to the next item, which looks at petition P-04-415 on support for the designation of highly protected marine conservation zones. I just need to reinforce the fact that this is endorsing the Welsh Government's policy to designate the highly protected MCZs, urging the Government to adhere firmly to that policy. We see that quite a high degree of detail is given to justify that position. However, in the context of the earlier petition, we have decided on our way forward on that. I think that all colleagues are happy to endorse that. So, we shall adopt that same approach.
- [71] We turn to petition P-04-416 on north-south rail services. This petition was submitted by Mr Neil Taylor and collected 19 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales
- [72] 'to urge the Welsh Government to work with Arriva Trains to increase the number of direct express rail services between Holyhead and Cardiff.'
- [73] I know that this was one of a number of issues raised just yesterday at the future of rail conference that was addressed by the Minister for Local Government and Communities, who has responsibility for transport. I suggest that probably the first port of call for us is to write to Carl Sargeant to flag up this petition and to seek his views, and to Arriva, which would be responsible for delivering that in the event that that were possible. So, if colleagues are happy, we will write to the Minister and to Arriva on this one. I see that you are. Good.
- [74] We move on to P-04-417, 'Save Morfa Beach and Prevent the Closure of Public Footpaths 92 and 93'. This petition was submitted by the community group Save Morfa Beach (Friends of Morfa) and collected 1,191 signatures. The petition wording states:
- [75] 'Morfa Beach is a stretch of coastline lying between Port Talbot Steelworks and Sker Beach, adjacent to Kenfig Nature Reserve. Access to the beach is only possible on foot or bicycle, so it has become a precious place of peace and solitude. In 2011 the community group, Save Morfa Beach (Friends of Morfa), was formed in response to a threat via TATA Steelworks seeking to discontinue access to the beach.'
- [76] We have some additional information regarding the detail of this petition. A Facebook group has been set up on this issue. We have received a very useful research brief

on this topic, which takes us through the various categories of legislation that relate to this. We have had an opportunity to study that brief. We have been advised that the Planning Inspectorate is due to launch a public inquiry on this issue between now and Christmas, which would limit the scope of the Welsh Government to say anything at this time. So, we should write to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development to seek his views, but we may find him being a little bit cagey at this time because he has to be. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

[77] **Jocelyn Davies:** Should we also write to the local authority concerned to make it aware of the petition?

[78] **William Powell:** That would be sensible. I suspect that it is probably aware of it, but it would be helpful for it to know that we are starting to consider it, albeit with the constraints of the forthcoming public inquiry. So, we will write to the Minister and to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. Good.

[79] **Joyce Watson:** Given that Tata Steel owns the land, should we write to it as well? We might as well catch everyone.

[80] **William Powell:** Absolutely. It would be remiss of us not to do that. Thank you for drawing our attention to that omission.

[81] We now move on to P-04-418, on naming the A470 ‘prif ffordd tywysog Owain Glyndŵr’. This petition was submitted by Siân Ifan and collected 111 signatures. The petition wording states:

[82] ‘We the undersigned, call upon the Welsh Assembly Government to name the entire A470, “Prif Ffordd Tywysog Owain Glyndwr” in memory of the long campaign of the greatest of our national heroes and his Cymric compatriots to re-establish Cymric Independence.’

[83] We are all pretty familiar with the A470—

[84] **Jocelyn Davies:** I cannot imagine calling it anything else, myself.

[85] **William Powell:** I notice that there was a recent comparison between the length of the journey between Cardiff and Llandudno and a flight to Istanbul. [*Laughter.*] That is something that we are aware of on a bad day. However, it is an iconic route and, as I said, I am personally rather attached to it.

[86] **Russell George:** We have decided to write quite a few letters to the Minister for Local Government and Communities today, but this has to be another one that we write to him about because we need to seek his views on it.

[87] **William Powell:** Indeed, that would be helpful. We must give full weight to this petition.

[88] **Russell George:** He is going to receive a big postbag from us following this committee.

[89] **William Powell:** We should note that a portion of the A470, to the north, has officially been styled the Royal Welsh Way by a decision of the local authority, but that would clearly not undercut the possibility that the entire route could have this designation as well.

[90] **Jocelyn Davies:** I agree.

[91] **Joyce Watson:** I will have a go at the pronunciation: prif ffordd Tywysog Owain Glyndŵr.

[92] **William Powell:** Da iawn.

William Powell: Well done.

9.30 a.m.

[93] **Joyce Watson:** I agree that people would certainly learn how to twist their tongue around some pronunciations. I hope I gave it fair justice, but nonetheless, it is here in front of us as a suggestion and the reasons behind it have been researched. In order to give it due consideration, instead of the A470, which you and I know from end to end because we cover the whole area, it is only right and proper that we write to the Minister. I know that he would have jurisdiction over naming a road, but I am not sure whether it also falls under heritage.

[94] **William Powell:** That occurred to me.

[95] **Joyce Watson:** It might be worth looking at both of those avenues. So, that would be for Huw as well.

[96] **William Powell:** I reflected that, possibly given the Welsh culture and Welsh language dimension, it might be suitable to include Leighton Andrews.

[97] **Joyce Watson:** It certainly includes culture.

[98] **William Powell:** Maybe that would be a step too far, but we can write to the Minister with responsibility for culture and the Minister with responsibility for transport to see what feedback we get on that.

[99] We now move on to P-04-419 on a windfarm moratorium, which was submitted by James Shepherd Foster, with the support of 1,332 signatures. It states:

[100] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to ask Welsh Government for a moratorium on wind farm and wind turbine developments for which it has devolved responsibility. The moratorium will be used as a period of reflection, during which time a cross party committee will be convened’—

[101] or that is what they are seeking—

[102] ‘to examine the effects of operation of wind turbines upon the health, social well-being, property value, effects on tourism, and the local economy within 15Km of installations.’

[103] The text goes on to say that the petition

[104] ‘excludes wind power controlled by National Infrastructure Directorate’

[105] For context, Mr Shepherd Foster was the person who submitted the petition on noise emissions from wind farms, which led to a report and quite a lot of subsequent interest around the work of the committee. We have reference in our papers to the text of that, which is still getting a lot of attention. At this stage, I propose that we write to John Griffiths on this one, potentially also, the Minister for Local Government and Communities, given the community aspect and community safety aspect of this.

[106] **Russell George:** It comes as no surprise to you that I agree with many of the sentiments in the petition and with the moratorium on windfarms and turbines. It is also worth pointing out that the Environment and Sustainability Committee has made recommendations with regard to the effects on tourism, to which we are awaiting the Government's response. That is useful to point out. I agree that there is a bit of overlap here. We should write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities and to John Griffiths, seeking his view on this. It is interesting that Mr Foster suggests that a local referendum should be held. In many ways, that is done through local elected representatives, I suppose, but I would like to suggest that that is included in the letter that we write to the Minister for Local Government and Communities to ask for his views on that aspect as well. I agree that there is a bit of overlap regarding the two Ministers.

[107] **William Powell:** That is helpful. The reason that the Minister for Local Government and Communities needs to be involved in this is partly around the implicit issue of transport and transport plans, which are an important part of the wider issue. If we are happy to go forward on that basis, that is good.

[108] We now move to P-04-420, on constructing an Owain Glyndŵr monument. This was submitted by Russell Gwilym Morris and has collected 74 signatures. It calls upon

[109] 'the Welsh Government to construct a Monument to Owain Glyndŵr, on the scale and grandeur of the William Wallace Monument at Stirling, Scotland.'

[110] Again, there are a number of potential locations for this. You can see the reference here to the story that was circulating in the early summer regarding the potential refurbishment of a part of the adjacent building. Nevertheless, the matter needs to be looked at on its own terms and we need to give it every due consideration. How do you feel that we should take this forward?

[111] **Joyce Watson:** Again, this is heritage, so, in the first case, I think that we should write to that Minister. We are giving the Ministers some stuff to go through this morning, but that is right and proper and it is about democracy. I can imagine a rather lively debate on where the statue should be sited, if it were agreed. Nonetheless, lively debates are always good in a democratic setting. So, I think that that is the first port of call.

[112] **William Powell:** Are colleagues agreeable to that?

[113] **Russell George:** Yes, I agree with writing to the Minister on this. I agree with Joyce that it probably would be a lively debate—Machynlleth would probably be the outcome, I would imagine. [*Laughter.*]

[114] **William Powell:** I sense that we have a slightly partisan Member here, but I support the same, so I will not object.

[115] **Russell George:** For the record, I should say that I was teasing Joyce about that, Chair.

[116] **William Powell:** Joyce is also a representative of that fine town, which we all cherish.

[117] Moving on to petition P-04-421, 'Oppose Trident moving to Wales', this is a petition that was submitted by Mabon ap Gwynfor and has the support of 1,236 signatures. The First Minister, Carwyn Jones, said—and I am quoting from the petition—

[118] 'that the UK's nuclear fleet (Trident) would be more than welcome in Milford Haven

if an Independent Scotland decided that they were no longer welcomed there.’

[119] The petition goes on to say:

[120] ‘We oppose having these WMDs in Wales and urge the Welsh Government to oppose the idea of allowing the UK’s nuclear fleet to move to Wales.’

[121] This petition is motivated by some remarks that we all heard and the subsequent discussion on those. I suggest that we write to the First Minister, since he was the source of the initial remarks, to get his perspective on this. We might anticipate it, but nevertheless it is important that we write to him and flag up this petition, which obviously has quite a lot of support. Are colleagues agreeable to that? I see that you are. Okay, let us do that.

[122] The next petition is P-04-422, on fracking, which was submitted by Friends of the Earth Cymru with the support of 914 signatures, calling on the National Assembly for Wales

[123] ‘to urge the Minister for Environment, Planning and Housing to produce a Ministerial Interim Minerals Planning Policy Statement as well as a new technical advice note to strengthen the precautionary principle with regard to planning applications for onshore oil and gas, including fracking.’

[124] We have had a particularly useful and up-to-date briefing note from the research department on this for which I am grateful and which we have had the opportunity to study. In the light of that, in the first instance, I believe that we should write again to the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development to seek his perspective on this. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are. So, that is what we shall do.

[125] The next petition is P-04-423, relating to Brooklands Nursing Home, which was submitted by Darren Umanee and collected 115 signatures. Associated petitions on the same theme collected in excess of 4,400 signatures. It calls on the National Assembly for Wales to

[126] ‘urge the Welsh Government to consider if residents of Brooklands Nursing Home would have their human rights infringed by the siting of the civic amenity site 30 metres from the home.’

[127] This particular issue has been quite high profile in the Welsh media: in the *Western Mail* and in the Welsh news. There are very strong feelings in this part of the world about this issue. A number of us have been approached and have been in direct contact with the lead petitioner and others on this matter. Indeed, we memorably received the petition last week when relatives of residents of the home and of former residents, other community members and staff were present. I think that we need to write to the Minister straight away about this.

[128] **Joyce Watson:** This is, to say the least, a topic of discussion in Pembrokeshire at present. It is obviously an emotive issue, but it is also about precedent, and that was impressed upon us when the petition was delivered to us. If everyone is agreeable, I would like us to do a short inquiry into this—everyone else is overloaded, although I am not saying that we are not, of course. As I understand it, an application has not gone forward as yet. Therefore, we are in this sort of peculiar situation where the council has clearly said that it intends to do this, but it has not done so yet. I would be very keen to look at whether such a proposal has ever gone forward before near the location of a nursing home. I believe that that is not the case. Therefore, to head off a precedent that might set the scene for many others, it would be useful for us to have a look at some key issues that we could perhaps bring to the attention of all concerned.

[129] **William Powell:** Thank you for that, Joyce. I would welcome that approach—I think

that it would be a useful piece of work for us to do. Another issue that was flagged up last week by some of the petitioners is the difficulty around the decision making in this case. If this comes forward, it will be determined by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, the membership of which comprises, I believe, 12 of its 18 members, and members of Pembrokeshire County Council, which is, effectively, the applicant. Therefore, it creates a situation of some tension in relation to that matter; obviously, that is a matter for that authority and its individual members to determine. However, it may well be that those circumstances are where a call-in might be appropriate, and, by doing this piece of work, we would possibly be gathering some important evidence that could be of use in this arena and elsewhere. Therefore, I would certainly strongly support that. Does anyone else wish to comment on that?

[130] **Jocelyn Davies:** Do local authorities not consider applications from themselves all the time?

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

[132] **Jocelyn Davies:** That happens all the time; the fact that the local authority makes an application to itself is nothing different. So, I suppose that the general issue is whether you can consider an application from yourself.

[133] **William Powell:** Yes. There are provisions around that, but I think that what Joyce has suggested would be a useful piece of work. Are colleagues happy with our going forward in that way? I see that you are. Thank you. The emphasis that we have is very much that this needs to be the issue of the principle rather than the detail of that one; it is important to keep that in mind.

[134] The next petition is P-04-424, on retaining services at Neath Port Talbot Hospital. This petition was submitted by Carolyn Edwards. We received it just this time last week, and it has collected 193 signatures; associated petitions collected in excess of 5,000 signatures. The petition states:

[135] ‘We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to halt the decision to move all CT2 Doctors from Neath Port Talbot Hospital in the autumn, without prior consultation’.

[136] This is obviously a matter of great concern in the locality, and we have to take it as such, and take it forward with some urgency. We should copy the Minister into our correspondence, but I suspect again, as Jocelyn said earlier, that we should be writing to the local health board on this one, and copying in the Health and Social Care Committee.

[137] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. The petition specifically mentions no consultation. What about the community health council, which is supposed to be consulted?

[138] **William Powell:** What, the watchdog for that very thing?

[139] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. It is supposed to be part of the consultation, so it would be interesting to hear what it has to say on the matter. I think that this is one of those issues that has been raised by Members of all parties in the Chamber. As I said before, I do not see the point in involving the Minister if we know that the answer is going to be that this is not a matter for her. I think that that is the answer that has been given when this has been raised in the Chamber.

9.45 a.m.

[140] **William Powell:** Indeed—on a number of occasions.

[141] **Jocelyn Davies:** We should also make sure that we use whatever process we decided on last time, but I would like to include the community health council.

[142] **William Powell:** Yes, we will include the community health council and the chief executive of the local health board. We will also copy in the Minister and, to be consistent, the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee.

[143] The next petition is P-04-425, Team Wales. This was submitted by Russell Gwilym Morris and collected 208 signatures. It calls on

[144] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to seek an agreement with the International Olympic Committee to amend the Olympic Charter to recognise the devolved administrations of Great Britain in their own right, in order that the Welsh Government could form a National Olympic Committee and our athletes can compete as Team Wales / Cymru in the future.’

[145] There is further supportive context in the latter part of our text. As yet, we have not undertaken anything on this recent petition. I think that we should probably write to the First Minister to seek his views on this matter. Do Members agree? I see that you do.

[146] **Jocelyn Davies:** Did I hear that name earlier today, Russell Gwilym Morris? Is this his second petition?

[147] **William Powell:** Yes. We are grateful to Mr Russell Gwilym Morris for being vigilant and for promoting the work that we can do through this committee. Excellent.

9.46 a.m.

Y Diweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[148] **William Powell:** We have a number of updates. The first is P-03-144 on guide dogs for the blind—shared space. This is now one of the longest-standing petitions before the committee. It collected 10 signatures, but obviously has the wider backing of the organisation. It is petitioning

[149] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to lay specific responsibility on local authorities to be aware of their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Equality Duty, and comply with them by not creating town centres, high streets and residential streets with shared surfaces’.

[150] We have a very thorough response to the Minister’s comments from Ms Gordon of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. It goes into considerable detail and gives examples from across the UK of where the shared space issue has caused difficulties and has been highly controversial. Colleagues will have had the opportunity to read that. I think that it would be sensible for us to share that paper with the Minister for his information, because he did indicate in his submission to us that he was open-minded should compelling evidence be made available. I think that that piece of work that we have in our papers is really quite instructive and comprehensive. Should we also write to the Welsh Local Government Association on this one to seek its views on the implementation of such a scheme, and also send it a copy of the paper that we have had from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association? Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are, so let us take that approach.

[151] The next petition is P-04-391, the Llandeilo by-pass. This petition was submitted by Tim ap Hywel in May this year with the support of 31 signatures. It calls for

[152] ‘an amendment to the adopted eastern route to be along the far (south east) bank of the river Tywi, rather than along the foot of the town bank, and to cross the river near the railway bridge.’

[153] We wrote to the Minister for Local Government and Communities seeking his views on this in May and the Minister’s response is among our papers for today, as is a letter from the petitioner to Carmarthenshire County Council. Given the Minister’s advice that this, like all such schemes, will be subject to draft statutory orders, an environment statement and other related assessments and, ultimately, will probably go to public inquiry, the suggestion is that we should refer the petitioner at this point to that process, which is very well established and understood, and close the petition. I think that that is probably the best way forward and would be the most direct way of dealing with this. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

[154] **Joyce Watson:** I agree. We have done all that we can.

[155] **William Powell:** I believe that that is true. It is a clear route-map for the petitioner and his colleagues to take forward their concerns. I think that that is the best way of dealing with it.

[156] The next petition is P-04-361, on free bus passes for students under 25 and in full-time education. Given that it cross-references a similar topic, we have decided to group this with P-04-371, on reduced fares on public transport for all children up to the age of 18, and P-04-382, student fares on public transport. We will recall the excellent evidence session that took place in Wrexham, in the Stiwt Theatre. The first of the petitions was submitted by students of Llandrillo College in January of this year. The second, P-04-371, was submitted by Simon Williams-Jones in March with the support of 26 signatures and calls upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to require reduced fares for public transport passengers aged under 18 years. Finally, P-04-382 was submitted by a group of A-level students in March of this year and had the support of 93 signatures. It calls upon the Welsh Government to secure reduced fares on public transport for those in full-time education. We sent a transcript of our evidence session in Wrexham to the Minister for his consideration, along with the petitioners’ worked-up proposals, which we have in our papers. We have a fairly clear response from the Minister on this one. I think that the best thing for us to do is to contact the petitioners with the Minister’s response.

[157] **Russell George:** Yes, I think that that is right. However, the students did spend a lot of time working up their proposals and costing them out and, although it is quite a kind letter, it is still saying ‘no’. I think that the students will be disappointed by that. The Minister has pointed out that they can write to the local authority and to the college, but knowing the students and the work that they have done, they have already investigated that route, which is why they are going to be disappointed. The Minister has given his view and it is as it is. All we can do is write to the petitioners and ask them for their views to go forward.

[158] **William Powell:** I think that we should do that, and stress how seriously we took the petition, as we did, at the time, the work that they had done. We should also enclose a copy of the Minister’s response. I think that the Minister’s response applies equally to all three petitions, although the first one was accompanied by the worked-up example as to how it might work. We should then await their feedback to us.

[159] **Joyce Watson:** I think that the one thing that we would all like to say is that this is democracy in action. This demonstrated it really well. The students really did take time out to produce their paper and gather their evidence and the Minister has paid tribute to that. The

problem is money—it is always going to be the same—and tight budgets. I would join everybody here in commending the students for taking part in that democracy in action and doing a really good piece of work. Sadly, because of financial constraints, the Government is not able to accommodate it.

[160] **Jocelyn Davies:** At this time.

[161] **Joyce Watson:** At this stage, but who knows. It is a moving feast. I would encourage them to take it forward, as the Minister has said, to the local authority and to the colleges, because it is possible that they might come up with a local solution.

[162] **William Powell:** I think that others locally, possibly even commercial partners, could be impressed by the kind of original thinking and the clarity of the business plan that they have worked up. I think that that is a sensible way for us to go forward. Thank you, colleagues.

[163] The next update is on petition P-04-393 relating to the Llanymynech and Pant bypass action group. The petition was submitted by Duncan Borthwick and has the support of 84 signatures. There is a substantial piece of text describing the potential advantages of the scheme and the desirability of it coming forward. We first considered this petition in May this year. At the time, we wrote to the Minister for Local Government and Communities as well as the then UK Secretary of State for Transport, Justine Greening. Their responses are in the public papers. It would probably be sensible for us to forward the ministerial response to the action group so that it is appraised of the situation. Russell, I know that you are closer to this one in some ways.

[164] **Russell George:** Yes, I have been a little bit involved with this one. I encouraged the petitioners to start the petition. I do not think that the responses that we received from the UK Department for Transport or the Welsh Government were unexpected. It would be very useful if we were to write to the petitioners to ask them for any records that they have of safety issues along the trunk road, because I know that they have been recording those. I think that that would be a sensible thing to do. Clearly, the Welsh Government will have a record of the safety issues as far as it is concerned, but we do not have a record of the safety issues on the English side of the border. Therefore, I suggest that we write to the relevant body there. That might be the West Midlands Regional Transport Board or the Department for Transport—

[165] **William Powell:** Potentially, we should write to Shropshire Council and Powys County Council or possibly West Mercia Police and Dyfed-Powys Police. I am not quite sure where it would sit.

[166] **Russell George:** Yes, we should write to whatever is the correct body to get that information on the English side. We should ask for a record. I am conscious that the Department for Transport and the Welsh Government have suggested that they are willing to discuss it with each other, but that is all they have said. We have had the letters back, but what is going to happen next? As they both indicated that, it would perhaps be useful to write back to the Minister to ask whether he would be prepared for his officials to start that contact. Otherwise, it will just sit and nothing will happen.

[167] **Jocelyn Davies:** No-one is dancing because no-one is asking. *[Laughter.]*

[168] **William Powell:** Good point. Excellent. Let us go forward on that basis and try to get those vital accident data as well in order to inform the case.

[169] The next update is on petition P-04-366, about the closure of Aberystwyth day centre. This petition was submitted by Pam Ellis in February this year with the support of 10

signatures. There was an associated petition that collected approximately 6,000 signatures. The petition called upon the Welsh Government to consider the proposals for day care for the vulnerable elderly and the plans, which have now been implemented, to move from the purpose-built day centre to the basement of Aberystwyth town hall. The context of this is a rapporteur visit that we made on 2 July. On behalf of the committee, Bethan Jenkins and I attended the centre, where we received certain undertakings from the new cabinet team in Ceredigion Council. The meeting was attended by Ellen ap Gwynn, leader of the council, and the relevant portfolio holder.

[170] In the correspondence that we sent, we flagged up particular concerns, which were described in our note of the rapporteur visit. Particular issues were around access to the centre and the lack of bathing facilities. In addition, there was concern about the access ramp and the fact that it was liable to be slippery and unpleasant in wet weather because of its exposure to the elements. A number of those concerns have not really been picked up in the response that we have had from Ceredigion Council, because it has discussed referring it to the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales. We can see that that is not really picking up some of the key concerns.

10.00 a.m.

[171] On behalf of the committee, as the only person present who was on the site visit—although I know that others have taken an interest in the matter—I feel that we should write back seeking specific answers to the specific concerns that we all picked up on on the day. I would very much appreciate it if colleagues could support that. I think that there are still some issues that we need to bottom out here, because they were what we heard on the day, and it would be a dereliction of our duty to the residents and petitioners not to take that forward. It was a rather generalised letter. There was the acceptance of the potential usefulness of external verification, but that is a rather woolly thing. The specific concerns have not been addressed. Week in, week out, people are living with those issues and I think that we need to take it forward. Therefore, if I enjoy your support in that, we will write again to Ellen ap Gwynn seeking assurance on those particular points. Are you happy with that? I see that you are.

[172] **Joyce Watson:** I could not join you on that day, but I had been there 18 months previously, when the issue was first raised. Quite frankly, I am disappointed with the response by Ceredigion Council, because it has dodged the bullets, so to speak. We need to fire them back again, and I certainly support you.

[173] **William Powell:** We will now move to petition P-03-263, list Stradey Park. This, again, is quite a long-standing petition, which was originally submitted in November 2009 by Mr Vaughan Jones. He had the support of 4,383 signatories, calling upon the National Assembly for Wales

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

[175] We last considered this petition in committee in November 2011, when it was agreed to await the outcomes of the Cadw consultation and then to write to the developers. Now, the response of the developers is included in our public papers and we have received the following information from the Welsh Government:

[176] ‘The consultation specifically on sports heritage guidance did not take place as, while the matter was under further consideration there was a new Government and it was announced that there would be a Heritage Bill.’

[177] Therefore, we are working in a different overall context. I think that we have all received a copy of the e-mail from Mr Vaughan Jones detailing the specific reasons as to why there were some anomalies that he feels need to be better understood. Mr Jones requests that the committee receives a full copy of the Cadw report on sports heritage so that this matter is more fully understood, and that the original intention of the authority is respected. Colleagues, what are your views on this?

[178] **Joyce Watson:** I think that we can keep it open and wait for the results, to see whether the criteria are to be amended to include historic sports pitches. I think that that would be the only way forward, and the sensible way forward, to respect the petitioners.

[179] **William Powell:** I think that it would probably be sensible for us to share the latest e-mail with the Minister, so that he and his officials can take account of those legitimate concerns.

[180] **Joyce Watson:** That is quite right.

[181] **William Powell:** We will now move to petition P-04-322, which is a call to revise Cadw's hold upon churches. This petition was submitted by Graham John in June 2011 and was supported by 147 signatures. It calls

[182] 'upon the National Assembly for Wales to investigate the inflexible way in which Cadw enforces its regulations upon active, vibrant congregations using listed buildings across Wales, thereby keeping them in a state of architectural inertia, unable to take advantage of modern developments in building materials and making it difficult for churches to make changes necessary for them to serve the coming generation and the local community.'

[183] On 27 March, we wrote to the Minister to request that independent churches be included in the overall proposed historical building taskforce working group and we also requested details of when public meetings on the heritage protection Bill will be held. We have the Minister's response in our pack and we have his assurance that these issues will be taken on board.

[184] **Russell George:** I have some sympathy with this petition. I have had some casework on a similar basis, and I would like us to press the Minister a little further as to whether a historical building taskforce working group will be set up, if that is acceptable.

[185] **Joyce Watson:** I am fine with that.

[186] **William Powell:** Excellent. I have heard the Minister on a number of occasions praising particularly innovative schemes such as the library in Bargoed, which is shared as part of a living church community, so I know that he is alive to these issues, and I think that we need to write in the terms that you have described.

[187] **Russell George:** It might also be useful if we copy this information to the Environment and Sustainability Committee, not asking for a response, but letting it know, because, at some point, it may take it forward in its work.

[188] **William Powell:** In the context of the wider planning issues. That is excellent—

[189] **Jocelyn Davies:** We call upon these institutions to diversify in that their buildings should be used for other purposes—

[190] **William Powell:** Yes, for sustainability, co-location and so on.

[191] **Jocelyn Davies:** Sometimes, that can be very difficult within these rules.

[192] **William Powell:** Absolutely. That is a good point.

[193] The next item is P-04-381, on restoration for the North Wales Hospital. This petition was submitted by Paul Sharrock in March, with the support of 29 signatures, calling,

[194] ‘on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to assess the architectural heritage of the North Wales Hospital and to ensure that the bat roosts located there are protected. We would like this truly unique building to be preserved and restored for the nation.’

[195] We undertook a visit earlier this year, in July—and a memorable visit it was—to the former Denbigh asylum, the North Wales Hospital, and had the opportunity to see for ourselves what was going on there. I was impressed by the tenacity of the local authority in trying to pull around what has been a very difficult situation, and I think that that view was shared by others who were present. Joyce, as you were present, would you like to suggest a way forward on this?

[196] **Joyce Watson:** You are right to say that when we were on site and, given all that we heard, there was some level of reassurance for the future of this particular site and the parts of the building that can be saved, because a lot of it has fallen down or is about to. That said, what we are asked to do here is slightly different. So, if we write to the council to formally request that it considers the petitioners’ issue in its communication strategy with the community, that would probably be the right way forward at this stage, because I remember hearing that a compulsory purchase order was made by the council on this building, and I do not think that that has been resolved.

[197] **William Powell:** Absolutely. The one thing for us to be aware of is the sensitivity because of the particular strategy that it needs to adopt in taking this forward. Total openness and widespread communication are not necessarily compatible with making progress and, therefore, we need to be conscious of that. Nevertheless, there is a need for the local community and other enthusiasts, such as the petitioners, some of whom do not live immediately locally, to have an understanding and an assurance with regard to the overall plan. Are colleagues happy with that approach? I see that you are.

[198] We move now to P-04-407, ‘Save Kennard Court Sheltered Accommodation’. This petition was submitted by Georgina James in July of this year with the support of 19 signatures. It reads:

[199] ‘Sheltered Accommodation for older people. They have been forced to leave the building and find a new place to live with a bogus reason of asbestos. The residents of the Accommodation have had no backing for them, and they’re starting to give up. We need to support and help them to remain in their home.’

[200] There has been quite a lot of correspondence on this one. We initially considered this matter in July of this year, when we agreed to write the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, and we also wrote to Bron Afon Community Housing Ltd, seeking its views and any other context on the subject of the petition. We have responses from Huw Lewis and the chief executive of Bron Afon Community Housing—that is quite an extensive letter. We have also had correspondence from the local member for Torfaen, Lynne Neagle, who is keen to offer some context and her own perspective on this issue.

[201] I would quite like for us to go to view this on-site and to maybe take some local

views from the different stakeholders, including some from whom we have already heard, and indeed some of the residents at first hand. I think that it was of real benefit, for example, on the dialysis petition, when we took that opportunity. Would colleagues support that approach?

[202] **Jocelyn Davies:** I would make the point that sheltered accommodation was very much in vogue perhaps 30 years ago. It has now become hard to let. There is sheltered accommodation all over Wales owned by local authorities and housing associations that is hard to let. I know that you are suggesting visiting this particular one, but I hope that that is to learn what could happen for all the sheltered accommodation that is now hard to let and very expensive to bring up to a decent standard. There have been some very good examples of reconfiguration, where bedsit accommodation has been made into larger flats, or where it has been used for those who are perhaps non-retired, such as the learning disabled. I would ask that you just look at it in the round. I know that I am not a member of this committee, but if you do agree to go ahead with this approach, I hope that you would take a wider view of the future of sheltered accommodation throughout Wales, because it is a problem.

[203] **William Powell:** That was really helpful—partly drawing, I am sure, on your ministerial experience in relation to housing matters. I think that that is a useful wider context that could frame our visit. Are colleagues happy in principle with taking on such a visit?

[204] **Joyce Watson:** I am, and I have no objections to it, but I do take the point that has been made by an expert—a former Deputy Minister who has huge expertise—and also the comments made by the local Member, who seems to have an awful lot of knowledge about this case. I would like to know more from her first.

[205] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think that that is important.

[206] **Jocelyn Davies:** You will find that this accommodation is difficult to let, and that it is not always let to the most appropriate people, or perhaps you have a mixture of people now in sheltered accommodation—

[207] **William Powell:** Whose needs may not be compatible.

[208] **Jocelyn Davies:** —because you cannot leave the property empty. So, you might have very elderly people mixed in with others who are considerably younger, perhaps by 30 years, and that can then cause difficulties.

[209] **William Powell:** Conflict and the like.

[210] **Jocelyn Davies:** What I am saying is that there perhaps needs to be a general look at what those—

[211] **Joyce Watson:** [*Inaudible.*]

[212] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. I think that you will probably find the local context here can be repeated throughout Wales.

[213] **William Powell:** Okay, that could be an interesting template for us, possibly.

[214] **Jocelyn Davies:** I think that it could be a very important piece of work to learn from.

[215] **William Powell:** Thanks. We are agreed on that one.

[216] **Joyce Watson:** Sorry, Chair; can I understand what we are agreed on? I am not sure that we will gain from agreeing to a site visit, particularly at this stage. Before I agree to that,

I would like to consider the matter further. As I understand it, from the very latest information that we have had, it does not seem that there will be anyone left to speak to. So, I do not want us to waste our time and energies in one direction.

10.15 a.m.

[217] I very much take on board the point about looking at this in the round, because I know that this appertains to this particular time and place, but I am reminded by the correspondence that we had yesterday that things have changed there. I think that we need to take note and examine that before we agree to go on a site visit. That is my opinion.

[218] **William Powell:** On balance, that is probably a sensible approach. Would Community Housing Cymru be a sensible partner with whom to have some dialogue on the wider issues that you have spoken of, Jocelyn? That would also allow us the scope to engage with, and get more feedback from, the local Member, because the correspondence is quite recent—we have not necessarily had the opportunity to take account of it fully. So, we will come back to consider this at an early future meeting in the light of that. In the meantime, we will write to Community Housing Cymru to raise some of the wider issues that you mentioned.

[219] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes, and it may be able to provide some very good examples of good practice. I visited sheltered accommodation that was just 20 years old that was being demolished to be replaced by an extra-care scheme because it was so hard to let and so expensive to bring up to a decent standard. I thought that that was the building that I was going to see because it looked so new, but it was being demolished, and that was going to be the new site. As I said, I think that this would apply across Wales, and I think that there is a lot to be learnt from it. I agree with Joyce that things have moved on in that particular case.

[220] **William Powell:** So, maybe that would be the right step?

[221] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes.

[222] **William Powell:** You have provided a really useful perspective. Thank you for that.

[223] We now move on to agenda item 3.12, which is P-04-378 on extending the Gower area of outstanding natural beauty. This petition was submitted by the Gower Society in March 2012, and therefore did not require any additional signatures because the society has quite a substantial membership base locally and further afield. It calls upon,

[224] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the Gower Society’s proposal for the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to be extended is expedited, given that the request has been with the CCW for consideration since 2005 and the fact that, as of December 2011, the CCW is no longer considering such proposals due to the potential establishment of a new Single Environment Body for Wales.’

[225] Following our meeting on 2 July, we wrote to the Minister outlining concerns that the Countryside Council for Wales seemed to indicate in that correspondence that it would be providing a lower level of service in some ways in this transitional period. It was particularly frustrating for the Gower Society members who have found themselves to be in a state that could be described as ‘limbo’ since 2005, in trying to promote this matter.

[226] As you will have seen in the Minister’s response, he seems content that CCW is delivering its essential functions in this regard, and does not seem minded to direct it to take an alternative course. We are at something of an impasse. Are there any views from colleagues?

[227] **Joyce Watson:** Can we do anything more? That is the question that we have to ask ourselves.

[228] **William Powell:** That is what I am asking myself.

[229] **Joyce Watson:** I do not think that we can.

[230] **William Powell:** We should probably, at this point—

[231] **Joyce Watson:** Close it.

[232] **William Powell:** I was going to suggest that we forward the response.

[233] **Ms Marshall:** We have already done it.

[234] **William Powell:** We have already forwarded the response. Have we heard back from the petitioners?

[235] **Ms Marshall:** Yes.

[236] **William Powell:** Okay. Sorry, I had failed to pick up on that.

[237] **Joyce Watson:** We have seen the response.

[238] **William Powell:** In the light of that, and with considerable disappointment, we have to close the petition at this time and Mr Ridge has acknowledged that in the correspondence. So that is what we must, regrettably, do.

[239] Moving on to P-04-324, ‘Say No to TAN 8—Windfarms and High Voltage Power Lines’, you will recall that this was submitted back in June 2011 by John Day with the backing of 3,249 signatures. Associated petitions had in excess of 13,500 signatures. We are very well aware of the content of this petition and the strength of feeling across large parts of Wales on this issue. We have now had the petitioner’s response, and I must say that he has been appreciative of the way in which we have handled this matter and very complimentary about how the clerk’s team has approached it, as well. Clearly, he is not content with the outcome, but I think that we have gone as far as we can on it, and we should therefore close the petition, acknowledging the lead petitioner’s work on this and his extreme courtesy and appreciation of the Petitions Committee and the due process.

[240] Moving now to P-04-383, which is against NVZ designation for Llangorse lake, this was submitted by Kaye Davies in March of this year and collected 43 signatures. It calls upon the Welsh Government to

[241] ‘overturn the proposed Nitrate Vulnerable Zone designation on the basin of Llangorse Lake, which is likely to affect approximately 25 farm businesses’.

[242] The background to this is that we last considered this back in May of this year, and agreed to await the publication of the Minister’s decision on areas that would be designated NVZs. That has now been published, and the worst fears of the Llangorse farming community have been realised in that Llangorse lake is included. As you will recall, we undertook a site visit as part of our north Wales visit in July, and that was a useful occasion from our point of view, as we gained some understanding of the practical implications for farm businesses that find themselves in these circumstances. The petitioners have outlined in the public papers that we have today the reasons why they are opposed to the designation, but clearly we are now

faced with a situation where the designation has been made and we need to forward the petitioner's specific concerns about this location to the Minister. However, I am also thinking, particularly as Joyce was present for the visit to Mr Williams's farm near Denbigh, that it would be helpful for us to share some of what we learned there about the availability of Government support to obviate some of the costs. If you recall, there was specific grant aid that had been available for some of the additional costs, and we need to get clarity on whether such support will be available for farms across Wales that are affected in the latest designation.

[243] **Joyce Watson:** Well, we could, but I do not know quite what that has to do with this petition, which calls on us to look at the designation in a particular area, space and time. We could do that; if you want to do it, I am sure that you can. However, the petition does not actually ask us to do that. I would rather stick to what the petition is asking for, and the responses that we have had consequently. It is right and proper that we feed our findings into the Minister and that the Minister considers them. That is the role of the committee, to deal with what is in front of us rather than expand it when that was not asked of us. That is my view.

[244] **William Powell:** I just thought that that was one of the practical issues that arose out of our visit and that it might be useful. The nub of the issue is to share with the Minister the specific points of objection and the rationale for why farmers locally are not content with the designation and do not feel that it will necessarily achieve the outcomes that it seeks to promote.

[245] **Joyce Watson:** I agree with that.

[246] **William Powell:** Are there any comments from colleagues on that? I see that there are not. Okay, so we are agreed to share these concerns with the Minister and to establish what level of support there might be, although that might be a matter for subsequently rather than our mixing up the issues at this time.

[247] We move on to P-04-390, on Penrhos Holyhead nature reserve, which is a coastal park. This petition was submitted by Jenny Amelia Jones in May of this year and collected 826 signatures. An associated petition collected 1,100. The petition wording states:

[248] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to designate Penrhos Holyhead Nature reserve (coastal park) a National Nature Reserve.'

[249] The committee first considered this petition in May. We wrote at that time to John Griffiths and to the Isle of Anglesey County Council for their views and for further context. We have their responses before us. As you can see from the Anglesey county council response, it seems that the calls to designate Penrhos as a national nature reserve stem from opposition to potential plans to develop the site, and we have a reference to a particular news story relating to that. However, we cannot deal or involve ourselves in specific planning applications, as was referred to earlier. We therefore probably need to take a broader approach on this. Are colleagues of the view that we should write to the Countryside Council for Wales, which is currently still the relevant body, to seek its views on this request and on whether it has a prospect of success?

[250] **Russell George:** I agree with that course of action, Chair.

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

[252] **William Powell:** Excellent. Let us do just that.

[253] We move on to P-04-399, on slaughter practices. This petition was submitted by Royce Clifford in June of this year and collected 400 signatures. The petition wording states:

[254] ‘We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to ban the practise of slaughtering animals without pre-stunning them.’

[255] Once again, the Research Service has given us a really useful and concise briefing on the issue, for which I am grateful. The committee considered this petition for the first time in June and we wrote to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development and to the Minister for Finance and Leader of the House to seek their views, which we have before us. I should also refer to the short debate promoted by our colleague, Rebecca Evans, just last Wednesday on related issues of slaughterhouse practice. That was a very informative and useful debate in which some of these issues were brought up by one of the other contributors. We probably need to establish what the timing will be on the consultation, and request that we as a committee be kept fully apprised of it. Is that a sensible way forward? I see that the committee is in agreement.

[256] We move on to P-04-406, which is against proposed MCZ zones in north Wales. As you will recall, this was submitted to us at the Stiwt Theatre Wrexham during our visit by Claire Russell Griffiths in July of this year. It has the backing of 6,501 signatures, and an associated *Caernarfon Herald* petition delivered a further 180 signatures. We are familiar with the details of this petition. In the context of our consideration of the earlier petition, we have pretty much set out how we will take this forward. So, if we remain consistent in that, it is best for all concerned, so let us do just that and group it as we have agreed to do.

10.29 a.m.

Papurau i’w Nodi Papers to Note

[257] **William Powell:** We have two items of correspondence to note. I see that we agree to note those. There are a couple of items to bring forward.

10.30 a.m.

[258] First, I remind Members that we have a formal presentation of the fracking petition today at 1 p.m.. There will also be a formal presentation of the petition on unmanned aerial vehicles in Aberporth on the steps of the Senedd at 1 p.m. on 9 October. I also advise Members that the Plenary debate on our committee report on cockle mortality in the Burry inlet is rapidly approaching. That will take place on Wednesday, 10 October. Our next scheduled meeting is on Tuesday, 16 October.

[259] Diolch yn fawr am ddod heddiw. Thank you for your attendance today.

[260] Today has been clerked, and clerked very well indeed, by Sarita, our deputy clerk, who has done the majority of the work that has fed into today’s meeting. We are very grateful to you for that, Sarita. I also note that Abi, as part of her return to work, will be stepping back from her role as committee clerk for the time to come, and I would like to put on record my thanks for all the work that she has done over significantly more than a year, now, in taking forward the work in partnership with the wider team. However, we also have some good news, in a sense, in that Naomi, who did a significant amount of work earlier in the life of the Petitions Committee, will come forward to take on the role of the clerk of the Petitions Committee for the time to come, and I am glad that she could be with us today. So, thank you very much, Abi, for all that you have done. We know that you will be around and will be very much a part of the wider picture. We look forward to staying in touch. Thank you, Sarita, for

today. We look forward to Naomi re-joining the team from next time. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.32 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.32 a.m.