

Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date:

24 March 2015

Meeting time:

09.00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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- 2 Discussion of Evidence Session – P-04-547 Ban Polystyrene(EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging** (Pages 1 – 28)
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Item 6.

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Agenda Item 2

P-04-547 Ban Polystyrene(EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging

Petition wording:

The time has come to halt the sight of millions of polystyrene food and drinks cartons littering the beaches and countryside of Wales.

Polystyrene(EPS) is a major component of urban litter and marine debris. It is detrimental to wildlife that ingests it and costs millions for Welsh Councils to remove from our streets. Polystyrene takes hundreds of years to degrade.

Over 100 US (including New York),Canadian, and also European cities have banned polystyrene food packaging as a result of the negative impacts of the Environment. We hope that wales will have the vision to join that list.

Therefore, with so many alternatives to polystyrene(EPS) packaging now available which has significantly less impact on the environment and human health and also to save Welsh taxpayers millions of pounds in street cleansing costs we, the undersigned, request that the Welsh Government introduces a ban on all polystyrene fast food and drink packaging.

Petition raised by: Friends of Barry Beaches

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 29 April 2014

Number of signatures: 295

**Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: P-04-547 Gwahardd Deunydd Pacio Polystyren ar gyfer
Bwyd a Diod Cyflym
Evidence Session: P-04-547 Ban Polystyrene (EPS) Fast Food and Drinks
Packaging**

[133] **William Powell:** Croeso. You are most welcome this morning. We move now to agenda item 4, our evidence session on petition P-04-547, Ban Polystyrene (EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging, submitted by Friends of Barry Beaches and first considered on 29 April 2014. It's got the support of 295 signatures. I'm very happy to welcome Rob Curtis, the chairman of Friends of Barry Beaches and colleague Gill Bell, to contribute to our deliberations on this petition, which, I think it's fair to say, has captured our imaginations. It is, indeed, a matter that was recently discussed in the margins of a committee meeting by our sister committee, the Environment and Sustainability Committee, looking at issues around marine litter, which is again highly relevant.

10:00

[134] So, I'd ask you please to introduce yourself for the record and to make any opening remarks that you wish. Then we've got quite a number of questions that we'd like to run past you. Over to you.

[135] **Mr Curtis:** Do I just press that, yes?

[136] **Mr George:** You don't need to.

[137] **William Powell:** No, it's absolutely hands-free.

[138] **Mr Curtis:** I'm glad that I've brought the Barrybados weather here as well today. I'd like to start off by just handing out some information. It's from a quality newspaper, *The Guardian*, but one is on New York—if I pass these around—and one is on the cancer concerns of polystyrene. What I would urge you to do is spend some time on the New York information, because that's some of the latest information talking about the city of New York and their commitment to ban polystyrene single-use cartons by 1 July this year. I think that's very, very relevant, because this is the first time that a very major city of 8 million people have committed to doing this policy. Just to make sure that there is no confusion, I've brought some presents from Barry as well, just to show the committee the type of thing that we're talking about.

[139] **William Powell:** The witness is bearing gifts.

[140] **Mr Curtis:** Yes. Barry boys bearing gifts. Now, the first is a compostable food wrapper, and the second item is the polystyrene containers that we're trying to get banned. I think the difference is, when we're on the beaches at Barry—we do our monthly litter picks—time and time again those polystyrene ones are always there. They're always there because the fast food outlets are just packaging everything in polystyrene. But the major players now—the McDonald's of the world, Burger King and KFC—have all converted to cardboard, and that is compostable. That is so important because polystyrene is a finite item. It's made of oil, and lasts tens—if not hundreds—of years in the environment. I know Gill, from the Marine Conservation Society, will talk more about that. So, the petition was brought about mainly because we were just sick and tired of picking up this item, day in, day out. If ever anyone's visited Barry island—

[141] **William Powell:** Happy memories.

[142] **Mr Curtis:** At the end of the day, you will see literally thousands of those polystyrene cartons left on the beach. Now, people might say, 'Why don't the council clear them up?', but the problem is you have people sitting on that beach until way after the sun sets, on good days, such as today. The council then cleans the beaches at 6.00 a.m.—in the morning—but in between that time the tides come in, taking all that rubbish and polystyrene out to the marine environment.

[143] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Yes.

[144] **Mr Curtis:** So, it doesn't disappear. It just goes into that marine environment. We just felt that it's about time that we could design this waste stream out of the system. You know, what we want you to do is either ban it, as New York is going to do on 1 July, or, as you did with the single-use plastic bags, put a charge on each item. So, the cost to the environment is truly delivered to the traders that are giving away these things. As I said, our aim is to try to design this stuff out of the system. That's the simplest way to do it. Towards zero waste: you've got it in your own policies—that's what you wish to do. I know one of the key reasons that New York is banning polystyrene is because they're trying to compost most of their compostable waste, but if you have chips in a polystyrene carton and you put it into a bin, that's useless, because you cannot separate those two things. Recycling of

polystyrene is notoriously low throughout the world, not just in Wales. I don't think there's any active recycling of polystyrene in Wales at the moment. But, if you add cardboard, then that cardboard container could go in with the chips and it's fully compostable. Cardboard, once it goes into the sea or a stream or a river, will compost and just go into tiny bits of wood, and that's a natural material.

[145] I'll finish really just by saying that our aim is to try and get cleaner towns, a cleaner countryside and a cleaner marine environment. I know that this product will either be banned or phased out; I've got no doubt on that. It's whether Wales wants to be one of the leading countries that does that, or whether we follow everyone else. I believe that you should have the initiative and the courage to actually be out there trying to ban this stuff for a start. Thank you, Chair.

[146] **William Powell:** Thank you very much indeed for making such a compelling case, and indeed for bringing some realia here to remind us of exactly what is causing the problem, because there's nothing like having something in hand as a physical reminder of that. I'd just like to ask you to indicate, if you will, your preference as to whether you want to go down the route of a ban, or whether you would advocate more the approach around the implementation of some sort of levy, such as you've referenced in terms of the groundbreaking single-use carrier bag charge? Which do you feel would be your preferred approach, if indeed you have one—or perhaps you're agnostic on that? It would be useful to have a steer from you as to which way you'd like to see Wales going.

[147] **Mr Curtis:** My preference would be as New York and numerous other US and European cities have managed to do, and that's a complete ban on single-use food items, so it's the coffee cups, and the chip containers. So, you just ban them from the system. That would be the simplest. Otherwise, if you just put the 5p tax on it, you will have the difficulty of collecting that tax, and you will have the difficulty of traders still giving out polystyrene and not charging the 5p. So, my preference would be as New York is doing, and I've got no doubt that—it's a city of 8 million people and Wales has 3 million people—we're quite capable of doing that. So, that would be my preference.

[148] **William Powell:** Okay, thank you. Gill?

[149] **Ms Bell:** I would just like to add that we would like it to be compostable. We have to be careful with the word 'biodegradable', because

some biodegradable materials do still contain plastic, but the bonds between them break down, so there is still some plastic in some things that are termed 'biodegradable'. So, the alternative should be compostable. We would also add to that not only fast-food wrappers, but also any of the utensils that are used, because a lot of those are plastic, and again that's a resource that shouldn't really be a single-use item because of the length of time it will remain in the environment.

[150] I've got lots of statistics and things for you, if you'd like to know about them. We've got a lot on the impacts, the amounts of litter, and the legislation. From our point of view, we would like to see Wales as in 'The Wales We Want', which was just produced, as you know, last week.

[151] **William Powell:** Absolutely, launched just last week.

[152] **Ms Bell:** It does say in No. 3, 'Living within global environmental limits, managing our resources efficiently and valuing our environment is critical', and I would like to see Wales become a leader and be the first in Europe to ban polystyrene and fast-food waste on single-use items, such as the utensils and the fast-food cups and things like that, because, as Rob says, they're a blight on our beaches. You're aware, as I've presented to you, about the amount of litter on Welsh beaches, unfortunately. It is staggeringly high compared to the rest of the UK, and this would be a real incentive and would put Wales on the map, demonstrating how much commitment you have. You have a commitment now to an ecosystem-based approach and to take a more holistic approach, and so I think that this would demonstrate to Europe that Wales was at the forefront of this.

[153] **William Powell:** Absolutely. It couldn't be more timely that this evidence session takes place today, obviously, in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill debate just later this afternoon, and obviously the contribution that 'The Wales We Want' has had to that has been considerable.

[154] One further brief question from me, and then I've got a number of indications from colleagues. My second question is whether, in your view, local authorities are using currently the statutory instruments available to them that were listed by the Minister in his response to the petition, and also whether or not it is your view that there is any effectiveness in that approach. I suspect I know the answer, but I'm asking anyway.

[155] **Mr Curtis:** Well, no. I think that local authorities are doing their best with this tide of polystyrene and plastic and other waste, but I think it really would help local authorities to just design this from the start, so that this waste is not hitting our beaches, not hitting our streets. You walk down Cardiff, and it'll be full of polystyrene. It means that people have got to go out there and pick up that polystyrene. Again, if it was cardboard items, you know, within a few months, they will biodegrade. So, I would definitely go for that. I don't think that local authorities have got enough money and I think they're facing a tough time as it is, and I really feel that if we could design this out from the start, then that would solve the situation.

[156] **Ms Bell:** I think we should go on to the plastic bag levy. Obviously, we could instigate behavioural change and people could take their own bags with fast food, but the idea is that it's fast food, and you don't carry your own Tupperware around to go and get your fast food in. So, it's difficult. Obviously, we want to see the littering decreased, but with fast-food litter, we would like to see the councils instigate more fixed-penalty notices for littering, to decrease the amount of littering. For those who do dispose of the wrappings illegally, and for accidental disposal, then at least if they were compostable, as Rob has indicated, they would then be able to biodegrade. What we're talking about, the polystyrene, will be around in the environment for a very long time and it has serious impacts right the way down the food chain, right the way from the tiny little filter feeders. Polystyrene will break down into smaller and smaller pieces. When it has a bigger surface area, all the toxins and pollutants stick to them and then, when the animals eat them, they then get infected with all the toxins as well. So, it affects right the way down the food chain, and by the time you get up to the top predators, it's concentrated within them.

[157] So, we have the ability now, if Wales could ban polystyrene outright, and then implement, perhaps if need be, a levy, because the alternatives may be slightly more expensive. But, obviously, demand drives that, and if we were to instigate having a ban on polystyrene, then hopefully, the cost of the alternatives would come down. It would then be easier to police because you would have this ban outright rather than having a levy where you would have to try and investigate who was giving out compostables. If you just had a levy on the polystyrene, that wouldn't actually change behaviour and change them from giving out the polystyrene; they would just pass on that levy to the consumer and it wouldn't actually have an impact. So, if there was to be a levy, it would need to incentivise having a compostable scheme and disincentivise having polystyrene given out.

[158] **William Powell:** So, it's somewhat more complex than was the case in terms of the single-use carrier bag. Joyce Watson has indicated and then Russell George.

[159] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you. Your passion is matched by your enthusiasm in this, which I share actually. I wanted to ask the question about compostable cardboard and plastics, so you've already answered that question for me. I'd like to know what other EU cities have done this, because I think that would be useful for us to know, because that's a bit closer to home for us to examine and to look at. I particularly want to get across this message that the litter that finds itself on the land doesn't stay on the land; it finds its way very quickly into the sea in the way that you've just described. I would like you to make some further comments, if you like, about the effect that that has because, at the same time, we're looking at our marines and fishery policy, and I think we need to do some joined-up thinking here. So, if you would assist with that, please.

[160] **Ms Bell:** Okay. As far as I'm aware, there are no other European countries that have banned polystyrene, so Wales would be the first to do that. There is a little bit about the legislation, in that there's a packaging directive, which indicates that all packaging should be able to circulate freely within the European Union.

10:15

[161] However, within that directive, there is an expression within it that, for community objectives, you can justify certain limitations on the principle of free movement of goods, so you can put limitations within that. So, I don't think any other European country has done this. Oxford City Council recently tried to do it, within, and they were advised that they would be breaking EU law, but I've actually consulted some environmental lawyers, and they have indicated that, although there is this 'to circulate freely' all packaging, so, therefore, if you're banning polystyrene, you're not allowing free circulation within Wales of this material, there is this overriding principle where environmental objectives can be taken, and used as an example, too.

[162] With regard to the plastic bag levy or tax, obviously, you have the ability to apply a levy, and that's not at an EU level. The ban is generally at an EU level, but they're actually amending the packaging directive now to take into account plastic bags, because so many countries have implemented a

tax on plastic bags. So, it is slightly more complex, in that none of the European countries so far have implemented it, but I believe that Wales can, and I would think that you should set an example, and be the first to do so.

[163] **Joyce Watson:** I thought you said EU cities. You did say that.

[164] **Mr Curtis:** Could I just add as well that, when we put the petition together, we were doing our research, and we did find some European cities had done it?

[165] **William Powell:** That would be really helpful—thank you.

[166] **Mr Curtis:** I haven't got that list at the moment, but I can certainly forward to the committee the list as well, because that's on the internet. So, that's where we got that information from. So, I'll forward it. But no countries have done it.

[167] **Ms Bell:** Yes, because you can do it at a local level—the packaging directive says it can be done at a local level, but not on a country-wide level, so sorry if I wasn't clear on that.

[168] With regard to the impacts, do you want to be really depressed? We've seen a trebling of the amount of polystyrene fast-food litter on beaches in the last 10 years, from our beach-watch data. Fast food makes up about 5 per cent to 10 per cent of that polystyrene waste, which, on average, for the last 10 years, is about 20 items per kilometre that you walk along on every beach. That's just the fast food that we can identify. Polystyrene pieces—so, the breakdown of this polystyrene—make up between 50 per cent and 75 per cent, and you've got between 120 and 280 items per kilometre of tiny little pieces of polystyrene. Now, obviously, it will break down—it breaks down into smaller pieces.

[169] I don't know if any of you are aware, but, obviously, a lot of the animals can't differentiate between what's a food item. As I've just briefly mentioned, there's a lot of evidence that indicates that the marine debris can impact animals in four main ways. They can get entangled in it, or they can ingest it, and when they ingest it, there are four ways: one, it blocks their stomach, so that they can't actually pass any further food, and that will kill them, because, obviously, they're not digesting anything; it can make them feel full, because their stomach's full of plastic, and then they're eating less, and they get ill; it can pass through the gut, and it damages the gut, because

it's a hard material, and your gut's very sensitive, to be able to absorb things; but also there's the toxicity effect. They've been looking at this and it's quite difficult to differentiate in some of the evidence between plastics and polystyrene, which is why we would advocate all plastic fast food and single-use items are banned within this, if we could.

[170] But we do know that it's demonstrated right the way from things from plankton and barnacles to fish. I personally have worked on harbour porpoise blubber, and have seen that they become immuno-compromised, which means that, basically, their immune system is compromised because of all the toxins that they've taken. Now, these things like PCBs, PAHs—all the persistent organic chlorines, persistent organic materials—they're all artificial materials that we've made. They're very difficult to biodegrade, if they do biodegrade, and they have long-term effects. We know that at least 700 species have been affected by ingesting entanglements; 17 of these are on the red list, and, of these, about 92 per cent of those had ingested plastic.

[171] We do see a decrease in reproduction. We see embryonic development issues, abnormalities. They affect the cellular membranes, because the pollutants themselves don't like to be in water, they like to stick to something like the plastic, so they like to stick to cell membranes, which are lipids. So, the whole cell structure gets affected from that. They have neuro-toxic effects, because they're toxins, and, from that, we're then seeing potentially that they have genetic effects, right the way through, so we're talking about right the way from the cellular level of the very bottom of the food chain, and this is then concentrated up.

[172] In the work I did on the harbour porpoise, we saw that what happened was that they were more predisposed to getting an infectious disease that would kill them. Normally, what would happen, when you have a look at these statistics, is that you would say, 'Oh, well, we've got no control on that. We don't know which animals have died from infectious disease mortality, as it's called, or those that were healthy, and how do we know?' But, with the harbour porpoise work that we did, because they were caught as bycatch—accidental catch in fishing nets—those were deemed to be healthy animals, and so we could say conclusively that these were affected by the toxins, and it was particularly PCBs that I looked at. It collects in their fat, and when the fat is metabolised to feed the offspring, it's transferred directly to their offspring. So, the new calves are born with the pollutants already in them before they've even, you know, come out. And then it's passed in the

milk as well.

[173] **William Powell:** Thank you very much. Joyce.

[174] **Joyce Watson:** Just one small question, following on from that, and we'll have to have a brief answer, I'm afraid: can it find its way into the food chain? You said that it starts at the very bottom of that food chain, and therefore the fish feed on it, and so it goes on. I've seen some evidence that it's coming into the food chain. Do you concur that that is the case?

[175] **Ms Bell:** We do concur—there's evidence ongoing. One of the things for the regional action plan from OSPAR for marine litter is to:

[176] 'investigate the prevalence and impact of expanded polystyrene in the marine environment, and...to reduce its impacts'.

[177] There is growing evidence that it is impacting, because, as you say, they're looking at—it's difficult, obviously, we're talking about very small animals, but, in laboratory conditions, it's certainly been demonstrated that it would be, and, as they're the bottom of the food chain, this would then move up the food chain. There has been some work done in fish, which are obviously higher up the food chain, and they have been demonstrated to have had effects of ingesting plastic and polystyrene. So, there is a growing body of evidence, but, so far, I would say that there isn't conclusive evidence, but I would say that there's definitely a growing body of evidence to support that.

[178] **William Powell:** Thank you very much. Russell George.

[179] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. Your props—the props that were handed around earlier on—I recognise them, unfortunately. I recognise them because I see them in hedges and on roadsides, and sometimes I go and get a takeaway. What I've noticed is that the cardboard ones are what you would find from a national chain company, and polystyrene from a small independent shop. So, that indicates to me it's a local issue. So, it's the big companies that are best reacting to public pressure and changing their ways. I'm always someone who prefers to change things without creating laws, so I'm just wondering whether it is a local issue. Is that your view as well? What could be done, perhaps, to persuade small businesses—small independents—to change their ways, because, clearly, national companies are, so why aren't they doing the same? The reason is because the

structure's a bit different and there's not so much public pressure on them, but, maybe if there was local pressure or if help or support was given to them to look at other options, then perhaps that would be a way of addressing this. What are your views on that, really?

[180] **Mr Curtis:** Interesting point, but I've got no doubt that New York went through the same process. I've got no doubt that there was probably—. I don't know what their councillors did, or whoever it is who sit there, but I suspect there were people there pointing out, 'Can we do this in a mild-mannered way and phase it out?' Obviously, New York came to the decision that that is not the effective way to do it and that, actually, they'll keep on using Styrofoam because it is such a cheap alternative. So, we need to get the economies of scale in, so that the compostable alternatives compete directly with that Styrofoam. To me, it's so much better to ban it from the start and then they haven't got the option of using the wrong thing. You rightly point out that the chains have sat there and they've said, 'Environmentally, we can see that this is dangerous stuff. We can see that this is leading down a dangerous road that we don't want to go down.' Because, they can subsequently be taken through litigation and court proceedings. So, they've sat there and they've made the wise decision, where the smaller companies, as you say, on the high street—and it's the only thing that you'll see on the high street—use polystyrene. I'm afraid, if the New York example goes there, I would say it's easier to ban it from the start.

[181] **Russell George:** I'm not disagreeing with you at all; I'm just playing devil's advocate to work the point through. But, I suppose, if—what you're saying is correct, it's cost-effective, it's cheaper to use polystyrene, so that's what they're doing—that was taken away, if it wasn't cheaper, if either that was made more expensive through some way or the cardboard was made cheaper, then that would go away, in that sense, wouldn't it? That's what I'm putting to you to comment on it, I suppose.

[182] **Ms Bell:** Can I just comment that, several years ago, DEFRA tried to do this with a food campaign, called Food on the Go? It wasn't to ban polystyrene, but it was to try and encourage local vendors to have a bin and to keep outside of their shop fronts clear of litter, because, obviously, of all that litter. It failed quite spectacularly because it was only a voluntary measure. So, my experience of that has been that it needs to be national legislation. I do have concerns, obviously, in these economic times, that there was some research done that it may cost more for the vendors to have compostable, but, as I mentioned earlier, if there is a demand, that should

bring the price of it down. Also, if that is a major concern for the committee, you could think about introducing a levy and, again, this could cover their cost, like the plastic bag levy.

[183] What I would hope to see would be, outside of vending places and hotspots where you know that people go, is to have compostable bins. From that, we can look at the whole lifecycle analysis and make sure that this waste—. As Rob quite rightly pointed out, you can't recycle polystyrene waste. I'm lucky to live in Monmouthshire, which has the highest recycling rates in Wales, but you can't recycle polystyrene. Even if you could recycle polystyrene, because it's contaminated with the food waste, you can't use it. So, what I would like to see is that we have compostable bins, and, obviously, the food contamination then is of benefit because it helps with the compostable.

[184] So, I think that Wales can make a real change and be the first to do this. I think that, if there are economic considerations, then the Welsh public were fully behind the carrier bag levy and have accepted it very well. One of the recommendations in the UNEP report suggests that, prior to introducing a tax, you develop an effective communication campaign to advertise the rationale behind the tax. So, if we were, obviously, to go down this, we would need to make sure that the Welsh public were aware why we were going to do it. We don't want to penalise small businesses. They don't have a corporate social responsibility like the larger ones, which is why they've gone down this. So, we need to just make a consideration for them, but we do need to do something about our polystyrene and plastic fast-food single-use wrappers.

[185] **William Powell:** Thank you. Bethan Jenkins.

[186] **Bethan Jenkins:** I'm going to go back a step again and say we need to have much fewer fast-food outlets on our streets. We did have a petition about trying to stop vans parking outside schools and selling. I think that's part of the problem, as well, because planning offices are allowing much more fast-food outlets and then that's creating the possibility of more litter from these particular takeaway outlets. But, that's just my view. I was just asking why you concentrated on fast food, because, for example, I've gone into Neath market and I've had some fish and—being posh now—I've had some scallops and they put them in a polystyrene thing—

[187] **Russell George:** I don't mind having my—*[Inaudible]*—if you're

having your scallops.

[188] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, I know. See, Merthyr girl here—my roots.

[189] They put cling film over it—I know cling film is another discussion for another day. But, for me, it's probably not just fast food, because, you know, supermarkets do the same with fish, actually—some of them. So, for me, it wouldn't be just a ban for single use, it would be across the board. Because, if the health effects are there for fast food, the health effects are there for other outlets as well. So, I just wonder whether it is because you want to target the fast-food area or whether it was something that—

[190] **Ms Bell:** I would suggest that you buying a scallop is a single use, because you're getting that scallop, you're using it, and then you're disposing of it. So, that is a single use.

[191] **Bethan Jenkins:** But, I don't eat it like there and then.

[192] **Ms Bell:** No, but it is still single use.

[193] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, you just define that as single use.

[194] **Ms Bell:** About 75 per cent of the waste that we throw away is single use from supermarkets and things like that. Seattle, I believe—I would have to check, but I believe it was Seattle—introduced a ban and they had a reduction of down to two thirds of what they were using in the amount of polystyrene, but they said it would be much lower. It was everything that was imported into the city that was food wrapping, like on meat—the polystyrene things that the meat and things are put in. I would certainly advocate, if Welsh Government could do that, that it would be fantastic. Last year, I did a plastic-free month—I tried to live for a whole month without buying any plastic, and it's very difficult to do. I'd advocate you trying to do it even just for a day and see how you get on. If you could implement that not only, obviously, for fast-food waste, but for any store that's dispensing anything— . There's no need for your mushrooms to be in a plastic container.

10:30

[195] **William Powell:** Just a final contribution, Rob.

[196] **Mr Curtis:** I think Friends of Barry Beaches came at it from the angle

of what we were finding on the beaches and the frustration of finding that these cartons, day in day out, just completely getting there. Also, in the knowledge that if you ban things, then it's a difficult process and it will take time, and legislation gets more complicated the more things that you try to capture in that net, we felt that by picking on one type of item in our society, which we can all see on our streets, in our countryside and on our beaches, it would be the simplest thing for you to do and in the most effective way. Now, from there, you can go on, but this is the first step, as New York are doing.

[197] **Ms Bell:** And there's the UNEP report—to do with the effect of communication—and the third thing that is recommended is to make sure that, when the tax is designed, it has an inbuilt flexibility to adapt to changing economic climates, but it could also adapt to changes, once people have accepted, maybe, fast food, then you could move on from that, because the Welsh public are very supportive of these measures, and they're very proud, and nobody wants to see this litter. We know that. And if Welsh Government could be demonstrated to be tackling it, I think that it would, you know, they would be in favour of it.

[198] **Mr Curtis:** Ironically, even the vendors that sell these admit to me that, 'Yeah, we know that polystyrene is bad, we now it's bad for the environment, but, hey, we're going to carry on doing it until someone tells us not to do it.'

[199] **Bethan Jenkins:** And would the cost go down for your cleaning operations then? Does it cost you anything to be disposing of the polystyrene over the other types of things that you pick up?

[200] **Mr Curtis:** It does for the councils, because we—.

[201] **Bethan Jenkins:** Not for you?

[202] **Mr Curtis:** As Friends of Barry Beaches, we remove the polystyrene from the beaches and we just put it into the civic waste stream, for which you then have to pay on landfill tax. So, you are paying, as taxpayers, for the privilege of having a throw-away polystyrene carton chucked on your beach. So, there is a cost.

[203] **William Powell:** Diolch yn **William Powell:** Thank you very much fawr iawn am y sesiwn ddiddorol y for the interesting session this

bore yma.

morning.

[204] It's been a really powerful evidence session. I think you've been a great combination of witnesses as well, and I've got a sense that this petition has got quite a lot more life in it. I was going to to speculate as to whether or not you'd be prepared to accept a group of volunteers in the cause of learning more about this, but that may be a subject for another day.

[205] **Mr Curtis:** And there's always an invitation to come down to the beaches of Barry and help us clean up these items.

[206] **William Powell:** Absolutely. You'll receive a full transcript of today's session to check for accuracy. Gill and Rob, you've both referred to additional material that you haven't been able to cover today. If you could share that with us as a committee, we'll give it due study and we'll be back in touch as to how this goes to the next stages of our consideration.

[207] Diolch yn fawr iawn am ddod Thank you very much for coming heddiw. today.

[208] Thank you very much indeed for attending today and for such an excellent session.

[209] **Mr Curtis:** Diolch yn fawr iawn.

[210] **Ms Bell:** Thank you.

10:33

Document is Restricted

**P-04-547 Ban Polystyrene(EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging –
Correspondence from the Marine Conservation Society to the Committee,
18.03.15.**

Dear Petition Committee,

Please find attached further evidence as requested by the committee re banning polystyrene fast food and drink packaging.

We look forward to liaising with you over further developments on this matter.

Should you require any further evidence please don't hesitate to contact me contact me.

Gill Bell

Wales Programme Manager Marine Conservation Society

Written Evidence for Petitions Committee

P-04-547 Ban Polystyrene(EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging

**In support of verbal evidence given by Gill Bell, Marine Conservation Society on
10th March 2015 to National Assembly for Wales Petition Committee**

Background

Rob Curtis Chairman “Friends of Barry Beaches” submitted an on-line petition calling on the Welsh Government to:

*“The time has come to halt the sight of millions of polystyrene food and drinks cartons littering the beaches and countryside of Wales. Polystyrene (EPS) is a major component of urban litter and marine debris. It is detrimental to wildlife that ingests it and costs millions for Welsh Councils to remove from our streets. Polystyrene takes hundreds of years to degrade. **Over 100 US (including New York), Canadian, and also European cities have banned or are about to ban polystyrene food packaging as a result of the negative impacts of the Environment. We hope that Wales will have the vision to join that list. Many alternatives to polystyrene (EPS) packaging are now available which have significantly less impact on the environment and human health***

and also have the potential to save Welsh taxpayers millions of pounds in **street cleansing costs**.

MCS additional request to consider

*“We believe that tackling just polystyrene fast food litter is a wasted opportunity to tackle an easily identifiable and preventable source of litter and that Welsh Government should become a world leader as the first country to **ban on all single use fast food wrappers made from non-compostable material.**”*

Introduction

Polystyrene in the marine environment is of particular concern, because of the large densities of this product on UK beaches and because of the potential hazards it pose to marine wildlife and to human health.

Polystyrene products are easily broken down into very small fragments and then form part of the microplastic problem. Microplastics (defined as particles smaller than 5mm), consist of microbeads from the cosmetics industry, plastic pellets produced by chemical companies for use in the plastics manufacturing industry and the degradation products of larger plastic items.

These microplastics have the ability not only to release toxic chemicals into the surrounding water, but also to attract toxic chemicals onto their surface. The fate of these chemicals if ingested by marine life is, as yet, uncertain but there is the real concern that these toxins may be passed up the food chain and ultimately to ourselves as seafood consumers.

Extent of microplastics including polystyrene

As plastic items slowly break down smaller and smaller fragments and fibres are created. In a study of the quantities of microscopic plastic fibres in Northumbrian sand samples, microscopic fibres (0.1 mm – several mm in length) were found in 100% of 45 samples collected, some with more than 10,000 fibres per litre of sand (Thompson and Hoare, 1997). Even beaches that were considered visually clean were found to have up to 5,000 fibres per litre of sand.

Studies of sediments taken from 6 sites around Plymouth, Devon, and 17 other sites around the UK coastline found microplastics to be common in sedimentary habitats, and most common in subtidal sediments (Thompson *et al.*, 2004).

Microscopic plastics have also been found in plankton samples and show a significant increase in abundance from the 1960s to the present day (Thompson *et al.*, 2004). According to surveys collected by Continuous Plankton Recorder (CPR), microscopic plastic fragments appear to be increasing in the NE Atlantic and have been doing so over the last 40 years. The incidence of

monofilament netting snagged by the CPR towed body also seems to be increasing, particularly in the southern North Sea (Edwards *et al.*, 2007).

Polystyrene on UK beaches

During the last 10 years, MCS beach litter surveys have shown:

- Percentage of polystyrene has remained about same but quantity has trebled (200–605 items/km).
- Fast food/cups make up 5–10% of polystyrene waste – 20–27 items /km.
- Polystyrene pieces make up 50 – 75% of total polystyrene.

Material Type	Year	%	Items/km	Year	%	Items/km	Ranges
Total polystyrene	2005	9.4%	200 i/km	2014	10	605	9–14%
Polystyrene Fast Food	2005	10	20	2014	5	27	5–10%
Polystyrene Pieces	2005	60	120	2014	47	282	47–75%

Table 1. Polystyrene on UK beaches (data taken from MCS marine litter database)

Usage and recycling

Although polystyrene is technically recyclable in reality:

- The majority of polystyrene goes to landfill or ends up as litter on streets and on our rivers, beaches and seas. The most effective way to reduce this type of pollution would be at source rather than expensive and ineffective end of line solutions
- Recycling of polystyrene in the UK is minimal and there would be a great cost in setting up a nationwide infrastructure, whereas there is already compostable schemes around Wales, which this could feed directly into.

- Most products would be prohibitively difficult to recycle, given their light weight and high degree of food contamination.
- In San Francisco, where a polystyrene ban aligned with a mandatory composting ordinance, restaurants actually saw lowered costs from municipal garbage pickup fees when they made the switch to compostable materials.
- In San Jose, which approved a polystyrene ban in August 2013, initial resistance was quashed by a robust education and outreach program and declining costs for alternative packaging materials. Wholesale prices for recyclable and compostable alternatives have come down as more cities ban polystyrene
- New York determined that EPS (polystyrene) was effectively non recyclable, a hazard to wildlife, and a contamination to their city organics programme.
- Seattle has had a ban on polystyrene foam single-use packaging since January 2009. In 2008, the city recorded 516 tons of expanded polystyrene used for food packaging. By 2012, that had dropped to 174 tons. The reason the figure wasn't zero is because the city cannot regulate packaged foods imported from outside of the city, such as those used for meat trays in supermarkets.

Within the evidence session, it was also discussed that perhaps once single use fast food wrappers had been tackled that the legislation be adaptable to encompass other sources such as other single use packaged goods.

- Polystyrene is estimated to take hundreds of years to break down and merely breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces which create real problems if littered.
- Polystyrene is made from non-renewable fossil fuels and synthetic chemicals
- Animals can mistake polystyrene for food or nesting materials.
- April 2013: avg. Briton has **12 fast food plastic packaging / per month** spending £100/mth
- World production of polystyrene is 14.6m tonnes of which 37% is packaging (including fast food cups and containers). It is estimated that at least **10%** of this plastic ends up in the oceans.

Impacts

700 marine species are known to have been affected by marine debris through ingestion and entanglement. 92 % of the debris was plastic and 17% of species affected are on ICUN Red List.

The suspension of tiny plastic fibres in the water column can potentially clog the feeding apparatus of small invertebrates. Laboratory studies have shown that amphipods, lugworms,

and barnacles kept in aquaria with microscopic plastic present will ingest the plastics within a few days (Thompson *et al.*, 2004).

Lusher et al have demonstrated that 36% of fish species in English channel had plastic debris in their guts, with an average of almost 2 pieces of litter per fish and that both demersal and pelagic fish were affected demonstrating that this affects both bottom feeders and mid water species.

Toxic compounds are incorporated into plastics and polystyrene during production as plasticizers and other additives (Mato *et al.*, 2001). Plastic particles in the marine environment can therefore carry two types of organic micropollutants. Firstly, the additives and their degraded products such as nonylphenols (an endocrine disruptor), and secondly pollutants adsorbed from seawater such as Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and Dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylenes (DDEs) (Takada *et al.*, 2006).

Pellets can concentrate PCBs and DDEs from seawater to levels up to a million times greater than in the surrounding seawater, posing a potential hazard for birds and fish which mistake the pellets for food such as fish eggs (Ananthaswamy, 2000). Ultimately, these pollutants may then be passed up the food chain to fish and to human consumers.

PCBs have also been linked to the masculinisation of female polar bears and spontaneous abortions and declines in seal populations. In 1988, Ryan *et al.*, obtained evidence that PCBs in the tissues of Great Shearwaters were derived from ingested plastic particles (from Derraik, 2002).

Toxins adsorbed onto plastics/polystyrene may be ingested by filter feeders (Thompson, 2004), and could be passed up the food chain to fish and ultimately to human consumers. The accumulation of microscopic plastic fibres in sand substrates may leech out toxins such as PCBs and heavy metals (Thompson and Hoare, 1997). These can be absorbed by micro-algae and thus also potentially enter the food chain. The ecological impact, if any, is currently unknown and further research is needed in this area.

The National Research Council (NRC) in the States has recently affirmed the National Toxicology Program's 2011 finding that the organic compound styrene can "reasonably be anticipated to be a human carcinogen."

In terms of consumer hazards, the biggest styrene concern is with food packaging, as studies have shown that this substance can leech out of polystyrene takeout food and drink containers, says Mike Schade of Safer Chemicals. "If you drink coffee or soup or eat Chinese food from a polystyrene foam container you can potentially be exposed to this chemical, which government agencies consider reasonably anticipated being a human carcinogen."

Polystyrene is already recognised as a potential threat to the environment in the Regional Action Plan (RAP) for Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in the North–East Atlantic (OSPAR Agreement 2014–1). The UK government are signatories to the RAP and have stated that they intend to use this as part of their obligation for reaching Good Environment Status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The MSFD obligations apply to the whole of the UK – Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Section 49 of the RAP states that Contracting Parties should:

‘Investigate the prevalence and impact of expanded polystyrene (EPS) in the marine environment, and engage with industry to make proposals for alternative materials and/or how to reduce its impacts.’

Who has already banned polystyrene?

Over 100 cities and counties in the USA including New York, San Francisco, Portland Oregon and Seattle as well as Toronto in Canada and Antarctica.

Ban or levy?

EU legislation fixes provisions for packaging and stipulates in article 18 that all packaging which complies with the requirements of the Directive (Directive 94/62) must be able to circulate freely within the EU.

This excludes, in principle, the taking of measures at local level to ban a specific form of packaging.

The EU has just amended Directive 94/62 on packaging and packaging waste to reduce the use of plastic bags by way of taxes or otherwise. . The directive could also be amended for polystyrene packaging, although this would take a much longer time period. However, prior to this change in legislation, Welsh Government implemented a charge on plastic carrier bags and could also in theory do this for single use fast food waste.

In the EU document on Treaty provisions governing the free movement of goods, although protection of the environment is not expressly mentioned in Article 36 TFEU, it has been recognised by the Court as constituting an overriding mandatory requirement. The Court takes the view that ‘... the protection of the environment is “one of the Community’s essential objectives”, which may as such justify certain limitations of the principle of free movement of goods’ (194). (Case 302/86 Commission v Denmark [1988] ECR 4607, paragraph 8. Hence Welsh government could deem protection of the environment from this type of litter justified the ban.

A report to UNEP (Sherrington *et al.*, 2014) recommended:

- Applying taxes to items where alternatives are clearly available (this is likely to ensure a reasonable response to the tax);
- Continual review of the tax to ensure that its effectiveness is not being eroded over time (e.g. through inflation);
- Ensure the tax is designed with sufficient inbuilt flexibility to adapt to changing economic conditions; and
- Prior to introducing the tax, develop an effective communication campaign to advertise the rationale behind the tax. In this respect, there should be a clear rationale for the tax.

Alternative to non-compostable wrappers

Alternative to polystyrene fast food wrapper are readily available and are usually made of either sugar cane or cardboard, such as those used by MacDonalD's and KFC. MacDonalD's have stated. 'In 2012 89% of all packaging used by MacDonalD's UK was made from renewable resources. We removed the last of our polystyrene foam food packaging several years ago and replaced it with a paper card alternative. Many of our other non-food items such as drink carriers and napkins are made from 100% recycled materials.'

Larger companies have adopted corporate social responsibility to address this issue but smaller vendors have so far not been incentivised to do so but given the success of the plastic bag charge we would hope that this would readily accepted but given the success of the plastic bag charge we would hope that this would readily accepted b both vendors and public.

Alternatives to the ban

If a ban is deemed unfeasible, we would advocate that all single use polystyrene fast food waste / cups and utensils (plastic and polystyrene) should be subject to a levy and that compostable alternatives be incentivised.

We would suggest a charge on all fast food wrappers/containers. To incentivise the use of compostable materials we suggest the vendor retains 60% of levy to cover any additional costs and the 40% goes to Welsh Government, ring fenced for environmental and litter collection schemes. This would ensure that any additional cost in purchasing compostable wrappers is not passed onto the vendor and good practice is rewarded. To ensure that polystyrene is phased out and dis-incentivised we would suggest that for those vendors continuing to use polystyrene, all levy goes back to Welsh Government or an environmental levy is imposed on the vendor as a penalty which cannot be passed onto the customer.

Fixed penalty notices and recycling

When implementing the carrier bag charge, there was a change of behavior from the customers rewarding their behavior for reusing shopping bags. However this is not feasible for fast food which by its very nature is unpredictable and difficult to replace.

The transition from non-compostable to compostable fast food wrappers will not in itself instigate a behavior change against littering but it will ensure that any illegally disposed of wrappers will decompose naturally and not remain in the environment for centuries to come. Therefore this ban or levy should also be combined with a campaign to reduce littering in Wales, which has the highest beach litter in the UK.

We would suggest that Welsh Government encourage local authorities to use their right to issue fixed penalty notices for litter and that a public campaign to make littering socially unacceptable is developed. This could be funded from monies received from the ban and levy. Recent Welsh government statistics reveal an increase in the number of fines issued by local authorities for environmental crimes across Wales.

The total amount received by all local authorities was £656,129. The maximum fine offenders can receive is £75. Conwy and Denbighshire councils issued fixed penalty notices totaling £176,925 and £106,395 respectively for the period of April 2013 to March 2014.

Wales recycling continues to increase with a 5% rise from July–Sept 2014, with an overall waste generation of 51 kg per person, which is a decrease of 2%, demonstrating that if given the opportunity people will recycle. As further evidence that polystyrene should be banned, Monmouthshire has the highest rates in Wales at 61% for recycling, composting and reuse rate but they don't have the facilities or infrastructure to recycle polystyrene.

We would also advocate a similar scheme to 'Food on the Go' where vendors have fast food waste bins outside their premises which can be collected and fed into the local food waste collection service to encourage recycling.

Plastic Bottle refund/deposit Scheme

We would suggest that the problem of plastic drink bottle and aluminium cans on beaches could best be resolved through introduction of a deposit/ refund system. Such a system has already been trialled in Scotland and is already established across Europe in such countries as Sweden Denmark and Germany. We would be happy to discuss this further with the committee

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For any further information please contact:

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gill.bell@mcsuk.org

Gill Bell would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their assistance in collating this information:

Dr. Sue Kinsey and Charlotte Coombes, MCS

Chris Sherrington and Chiarina Darrah, Euonmia

Ludwig Kramer Client Earth

Prof. Richard Thompson Plymouth University

Rob Curtis and Friends of Barry Beaches for submitting the petition

All MCS volunteers who have surveyed and collected litter from Welsh beaches which provided the statics for this report.

P-04-547 Ban Polystyrene Fast Food and Drinks Packaging – Unsolicited correspondence from interested party, 18.03.15

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to comment on the following petition:

P-04-547 Ban Polystyrene (EPS) fast food and drinks packaging.

I understand that a committee meeting was held on December 9th 2014, to discuss the matter above. As a result of this, a focused inquiry will be now held, and I would like the opportunity to pass my comments on for consideration?

I am a food business owner and have been working in the food and drink sector for 15years. I have been using biodegradable and compostable containers and cups for the past 3 years.

I wholly support the ban of polystyrene for take away food and drink, and I see no benefits or purpose for its continued use in a sustainable Wales.

The county of Oxfordshire (UK) are moving towards a similar ban, and I urge the Welsh government and the Environmental committee to do the same across Wales.

Please contact me if my name can be added to the petition at this point. I would also welcome the opportunity to add further comments, as the opinion of a food trader in favour of this ban might be of interest to the inquiry committee.

Kind Regards,

Michelle Wilkins

Agenda Item 3.2

P-04-619 LOCALISM IN PLANNING and COMPENSATION FOR THIRD PARTIES RE. INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government during its reform of the Welsh planning system, to ensure/guarantee that planning decisions will be taken at the most local level as possible to enable sufficient community engagement and support. Moreover, it encourages the Welsh Government to examine in detail, the impact that major infrastructure schemes have on Third Parties in Wales and considers the implementation of legislation to properly protect and compensate all Third Parties suffering actual loss from the construction, commissioning and operation of major infrastructure projects.

Lead petitioner: Mr Michael Halsey

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 462

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-619
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00243/15

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

 February 2015

Dear Bill

Thank you for your letter dated 10 February addressed to Leighton Andrews AM seeking his views on proposals relating to “localism in planning and compensation for third parties re. infrastructure projects (P-04-519)”. As the matter relates to reforms to the planning system, I have been asked to reply.

The matters raised by the petition are addressed in turn below:

The level of planning decisions

It is my intention to introduce a new development management hierarchy in the planning system, the proposals for which are detailed in my Positive Planning consultation paper (November 2013) at pages 25-30. This clear hierarchy allows different types of planning application to be dealt with in a proportionate way dependent on their likely benefits and impacts. I consider that these proposals strike the correct balance in allowing decisions to be made in a proportionate way, while enabling applications to be scrutinised at the appropriate level dependent on whether they have impacts which are of national, major or local significance.

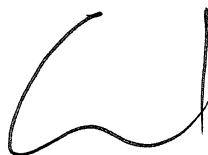
Each year, around 25,000 planning applications are decided in Wales. It is expected that no more than ten of these decisions per year will be made by the Welsh Ministers. Local planning authorities will still determine local and major applications in the first instance.

Measures contained in the Planning (Wales) Bill place duties on developers to engage proactively with the public when preparing applications for major and nationally significant developments and there will be opportunity for the public to submit their views throughout the application process. These proposals will strengthen, rather than weaken, community engagement.

Impact of major infrastructure schemes on third parties

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 contains a series of provisions in relation to compensation and planning blight. In October 2011, the then Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development established an Independent Advisory Group ("IAG") to review the delivery of the planning system in Wales as part of the evidence base for a consultation paper, leading ultimately to a Welsh Planning Bill. The IAG did not receive evidence suggesting that a review is required of compensation provisions in the realm of town and country planning. The Environment and Sustainability Committee, of which you are a member, also did not receive evidence in this respect.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CS', written in a cursive style.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources

Michael and Claudi Halsey

Mr. William Powell
Chair
The Petitions Committee
Welsh Assembly
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay, CARDIFF
CF99 1NA
16th March, 2015

Dear Mr. Powell

**PETITION ON : LOCALISM IN PLANNING and INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT COMPENSATION
TO THIRD PARTIES.**

We refer to the above petition which closed on 6th March which achieved nearly 500 signatories throughout the whole of Wales. But for computer glitches on your petition site towards the end of the petition period, we believe this would have exceeded this figure. Nevertheless, we understand this Petition will be heard by your Committee on **Tuesday 24th March, 2015**. Please advise the time. You have received a response dated 23rd February from Minister Carl Sargeant (CS), to which we now reply in point form below (for ease of reference):-

1) THE LEVEL OF PLANNING DECISIONS (Localism in Planning)

- 1.1** In para 3 of his letter CS refers to “*different types of planning applications to be dealt with in a proportionate way dependent on their likely benefits and impacts*”-he doesn't define “proportionate” neither say to whom these “impacts and benefits “ pertain?
- 1.2** End of para.3 he states”*whether they have impacts which are of national, major or local significance.*” With respect, **all projects must have a local impact and will have local significance?**
- 1.3** Para 4 - CS refers to 10 planning decisions p.a. to be made by Welsh Ministers but fails to state what type or nature of planning applications he is alluding to? If this is to include for instance major Wind Farm developments *we would no doubt, in view of WAG policy, already have a proliferation of developments approved for construction on the beautiful hills of Powys (together with their necessary pylons networks)* **were it not for the intervention of our Local Authority who are best placed to understand the topography, economy and sensitivity to development of the county and have some democratic accountability that can reflect local views and concerns ?**
- 1.4** Public Consultation -is alluded to in para 5 where he states ”*Developers to engage pro-actively with the public*”. In Mid-Wales we have a great deal of experience in this regard where we find in many instances “show case “ presentations by developers who then fail to heed the very real concerns of local residents and businesses etc.(see points below)
- 1.5** We really fail to see how in his words” *These proposals will strengthen, rather than weaken, community engagement.*” **Additionally would comment as follows:-**

1.5.1 Local Development Plans-The Planning (Wales) Bill states that: ‘*Local communities and their elected representatives remain best placed to make local decisions with community involvement by reference to the Local Development Plan (LDP)*’ . This is an important

principle but in practice the Bill will serve to weaken the weight given to LDPs and increase the area over which a single LDP is applicable becoming less responsive to local variation in community needs. *No substantive measures are proposed that will increase local involvement.*

1.5.2 'Consultation' on major planning projects, such as wind farms, already takes place and developers are careful to ensure that they tick the boxes. Whilst recognising that the Welsh Government have now signed up to a set of criteria regarding consultation this is more around the mechanics than ensuring it is informative, inclusive and that stakeholders can see how their views are taken into account. *Substantiated objections where proposals deviate from local plans should be a consideration in rejecting a proposal in its entirety.* (see also 1.5.7 below)

1.5.3 Localism. Across much of the UK there has been a genuine attempt to embed localism into the planning agenda which has been effectively monitored at Ministerial level. Welsh communities should not have lesser rights and protection. Elsewhere, Local / Parish Plans are actively funded and supported including the translation into a democratically adopted and robust Neighbourhood Plan as a material factor in planning determinations. The Planning (Wales) Bill initially had passing reference to, relatively low level, 'Place Plans' that now appears to have been removed? *Full democratic community involvement in shaping their living environments is central to the very different concepts of engagement and empowerment.* In a democratic society communities must be able to see how their local plans inform their LDP.

1.5.4 Devolved Powers. In other areas of the UK, government is moving to devolve powers to larger Local Authorities acknowledging they are best placed to respond to local circumstances. *Conversely the Welsh Planning Bill centralises ever more control.* None of the measures in this or the Reforming Local Government White Paper appear to promote or reinforce local empowerment. *Dilution of local autonomy reduces transparency removing a layer of accountability and is a retrograde step for localism.*

1.5.5 Planning Ethos- The underpinning principle of all planning should be *the right development in the right place* in a timely and proportionate manner to ensure the continuing socio-economic well being of existing communities and an environmental balance. *This Planning Bill seeks to shift the balance to a presumption in favour of development removing the whole purpose of planning and distorting the system.*

1.5.6 Urban v. Rural Planning. Much centralised policy in Wales is urban. There are very real economic and regeneration issues in South Wales that can be addressed through the planning system BUT Wales is a very diverse nation and local autonomy is a pre-requisite to responding appropriately to this diversity, particularly the rural two thirds of Wales. *Every development must be examined on it's own merits and within it's own context not routinely assessed against urban standards.* Concentration of expenditure at LPA level ensures better local administration and delivery that will not be achieved through creation of additional government bodies.

1.5.7 Site Identification /selection.- Central government's identification of designated development sites under TAN 8 is a particularly disastrous bad example in our area; having effectively dis-empowered the people without any prior consultation with those communities most affected and also preventing proper consideration of local demographic or topographic factors. TAN 8 is also a stark example of designated wind farm SSAs that have failed to deliver for either developers or communities. *They have imposed a presumption in favour of wind development without reference to affected communities; local economies or material planning constraints with inappropriate and arbitrary 'targets'.*

1.5.8 Democratic Accountability TAN8 showed the futility of consultation *with the carefully reasoned views of the overwhelming majority who were aware of the consultation totally rejected or ignored.*

Furthermore elected local Members ability to 'call in' planning applications is a necessary part of democratic accountability and limiting this, as proposed in the Bill through arbitrary 'targets', again reduces the capacity for community involvement.

The Planning (Wales) Bill seeks to extend and embed a divisive top down system that utterly denies local determination, meaningful community consultation and the democratisation of landscapes, as required under the European Landscape Convention.

2) IMPACT OF MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS ON THIRD PARTIES (Infrastructure Project Compensation to Third Parties)

2.1 Planning Blight - CS states on page 2 para 1 that "*the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 contains a series of provisions in relation to compensation & planning blight*". Presumably the Minister considers these adequate as he sees no reason to incorporate provisions in the new Bill? We are aware of numerous cases locally where residents have been unable to sell their residential homes ***over a number of years*** owing to proposed Wind farm developments in proximity to their property.

In our own case we bought this isolated and peaceful small-holding in 2004 just before the announcement of TAN 8 in 2005. Encouraged by this and the financial incentives offered by Government, developers put in planning applications for 2 wind farm developments immediately adjacent to 3 sides of our home (within 700metres) and for 10 years we have been fighting these and other local developments.

These developments are still not determined and last summer we decided to attempt to move. Despite tremendous interest from as far away as the Channel Islands, as soon as interested parties learnt of the full potential impact of these wind farms-they seemed to lose interest. After 4 months we received **not one offer**, prompting our ESTATE AGENTS TO COMMENT THAT WE ARE "***TOTALLY BLIGHTED***".

2.2 Compensation-despite what CS has stated, we,our advisers and neighbours are unaware of any compensation payable to us as innocent victims of this planning blight. Whilst we are aware of compensation for infrastructure projects **funded** by government, i.e. the Newtown By-pass, this doesn't apply to government **backed (and encouraged)** projects which are funded by privately. ***This is of course totally unjust and unfair-leaving residents effectively "trapped" in their own properties or being forced to accept greatly reduced sale prices.***

NB1. We have evidence of the above and would be prepared to submit this to your Committee.

NB2. CS states the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) review in 2011 "*did not receive evidence suggesting a review is required of compensation provisions---*" Circumstances change as evidence emerges; the fact that anything is not raised at a certain stage and time, for whatever reason, is totally immaterial to whether it should be raised in the future and the petition now before the Committee identifies a very serious gap in respect of adequate compensation within our planning laws.

REQUEST: That in accordance with our Petition, that the Minister now acts to safeguard the democratic decision making processes of local communities. Also to acknowledge the shortcomings of existing planning law and take this very timely opportunity to incorporate within the new Planning (Wales) Bill, adequate protection and compensation for innocent victims of major infrastructure projects in Wales.

Yours sincerely

Michael A. Halsey

Claudi Halsey(Mrs.)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son Jesus Christ that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3v.16

Agenda Item 3.3

P-04-618 Protection of Banking Services in Vulnerable Communities

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to recognise the increasing withdrawal of banking services from vulnerable communities and urge the Welsh Government to work with representatives of the finance and banking sector to ensure that all communities in Wales have and retain local access to financial services, including alternatives such as community banking and credit unions.

Additional Information

I have indicated that I'm unwilling to give evidence, but this is purely because I'm disabled and cannot endure travelling long distances.

Lead petitioner: Martin Crumpton

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures:13

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-618
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00082/15

William Powell AM
Chair - petitions committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

27

January 2015

Dear Bill,

Thank you for your letter of 21 January, bringing to my attention a petition on the protection of banking services in vulnerable communities received by the Petitions Committee. You asked for my views on the issues raised in advance of consideration by the Committee.

Whilst the decision to maintain a branch is a commercial decision for the banks, the Welsh Government is committed to maintaining access to mainstream financial services, particularly in relation to tackling the problem of financial and social exclusion in our most vulnerable communities – this is the area which I am most concerned about as Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, and which I can provide views on.

Where possible, the Welsh Government wants to help mitigate any adverse impacts of bank branch closures and measures have been put in place to help mitigate this. For example, one of the main reasons the Welsh Government have provided support for local post offices throughout Wales is because of the social role these offices play in the communities they serve. They can, and do, provide free access to cash and banking services in areas where banks have closed branches.

In fact, all Welsh post offices provide a range of banking and financial services. These include free access to cash withdrawals over the counter. Many post offices also host free-to-access ATM machines. All Welsh post offices offer access to current accounts (including basic bank accounts) for most high street banks. Customers can generally withdraw cash, deposit cash or cheques and check the balance of their accounts at the post office.

Officials are also working with communities, businesses and ICT suppliers to deliver value for money solutions which allow Welsh businesses and citizens to engage with the digital age. Our Broadband Support Scheme is proving an effective tool in addressing gaps in internet access.

In addition to our support for post offices, the Welsh Government also provides funding to Credit Unions which provide a wide range of practical, affordable and straightforward financial services for local communities. In April 2014, the previous Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty committed funding of almost £1.9m to support Credit Unions over the next 3 years. This money will be used to enable Credit Unions to provide support to financially excluded people who may not be able to access mainstream financial products.

The petition referenced community banking. I understand the Department for Economy, Science and Transport is currently looking at the feasibility of the creation of a Development Bank for Wales and this work is being led by Professor Dylan Jones Evans. I understand the Professor will be submitting his report to the Minister very shortly.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchgu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

Agenda Item 3.4

P-04-626 De-Trunk the A487 Road Through Penparcau, Trefechan & Aberystwyth Town Centre

Petition wording

We call on the Welsh Government to take all necessary action to initiate the 'De-Trunking' of the A487 (the removal of 'trunk road status") on a specific section of road that runs through the residential and urban communities of Penparcau, Trefechan, and Aberystwyth town centre. This action would encourage the alleviation of traffic congestion and enhance road safety within these communities and town centre, and as a consequence would facilitate wider social, environmental, economic and health & well-being benefits within an area that the Welsh Government has already deemed necessary of significant regeneration investment and support.

Additional Information

Penparcau Community Forum, a community development partnership providing a strong collective voice for the community of Penparcau, are actively campaigning for the section of the A487 road running through Penparcau, Trefechan and Aberystwyth town centre to be removed of its 'Trunk Road' status. This would enable greater local accountability and provide enhanced flexibility for the provision of traffic calming measures and enhancements, which would promote a safer road and environment, and encourage alternative activities such as cycling and walking. The A487 'trunk road' currently runs through Great Darkgate Street, the main shopping street within Aberystwyth town centre, which is part of a Welsh Government, sponsored Strategic Regeneration Area.

Penparcau Community Forum

Lead petitioner Dylan Jones

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 65 online signatures.

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00951/15

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

10 March 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 26 February enclosing petition P-04-626 regarding de-trunking the A487 through Penparcau, Trefechan and Aberystwyth town centre.

Our draft National Transport Plan is currently out for consultation. This sets out our objectives and priorities improving transport infrastructure across Wales. Further information can be found at the following link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/transport/draft-national-transport-plan/?lang=en>

One of the commitments contained in the draft Plan is to de-trunk sections of the road network and where appropriate, trunk alternative routes. The A44 and A487 in Aberystwyth have been identified as one of the proposals for potential progression.

Edwina Hart

Agenda Item 3.5

P-04-625 Support for Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill

Petition wording

We the undersigned call upon Members of the National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care Committee to vote in favour of the Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill once it is introduced into the Assembly.

Additional Information

Kirsty Williams AM is soon going to be introducing the Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill into the National Assembly for Wales. This bill would enshrine in law Chief Nursing Officer in Wales' core principles regarding staffing levels on all medical and surgical wards. The Royal College of Nursing believes that this piece of legislation is necessary to improve patient safety and will help to restore patients faith in the Welsh NHS as well as ensuring that patients in hospitals in Wales receive the nursing care and attention they need and deserve and allows Nurses to be able to deliver care to the standard that they are trained and want to deliver.

Lead petitioner: Richard Jones MBE

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 1,579 online signatures.

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-625
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/00797/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
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CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

11 March 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 26 February on behalf of the Petitions Committee and Richard Jones MBE regarding petition P-04-625, Support for the Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill.

I support wholeheartedly the principle behind Kirsty Williams' suggested legislation, which is to ensure the appropriate numbers of nurses are available on our hospital wards to deliver safe and high-quality nursing care. For this reason, I would like to engage constructively with the legislative process, to see whether the proposed legislation can contribute positively to the range of tools and levers we already have available to achieve that ambition.

However, I also believe it is entirely possible to achieve the policy aims set out in the member's bill under existing powers. We are investing £10m recurrent funding for hospital nurse staffing as part of our response to the Francis enquiry and a new calculation system known as an acuity tool was introduced into the Welsh NHS in April 2014. Used in conjunction with nurse-sensitive data and professional judgement, this nuanced approach provides staffing levels based on patient needs, not a rigid formula.

Providing the right number of staff in any given situation is a complex matter. Current practice is to use a triangulated approach to determine nurse staffing levels, using professional judgement; the acuity tool, and nurse-sensitive indicators. Such an approach does not lend itself to incorporating a fixed minimum ratio, and I am concerned that the bill focuses solely on nursing staffing, ignoring the vital role of the other health professions. It also misunderstands the role of health boards, whose responsibility it is to ensure safe services.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford @wales.gsi.gov.uk

In conclusion, I am concerned that the bill in its current format would propose an onerous monitoring and reporting regime, and would require amendment to add value to the current policy direction.

I hope you have found my reply helpful and that it has helped to clarify my position on these issues.

Best wishes,

Mark

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

P-04-625 – Support for the Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 16.03.2015

RICHARD JONES MBE

16th March 2015,

Mr William Powell AM

Chair – Petitions Committee

Ty Hywel

Cardiff Bay

Cardiff

CF99 1NA

Dear Mr Powell

Re: P-04-625 ‘Support for the Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill

I am a Registered Nurse (RN) with 44 years experience of working in or with the NHS in Wales. I have had experience of working in Clinical Environments, Management and Nurse Education and latterly towards the end of my career, had the opportunity to work strategically at a Wales-wide level with Health Boards and with the National Assembly for Wales.

I decided to submit this e-petition for public consideration because I sincerely believe, that there can be no more important duty in Healthcare, than to protect patients and their safety and wellbeing.

A study of United Kingdom hospital wards by Professor Anne-Marie Rafferty, found that patient mortality increased by 26% on wards with lower numbers of Registered Nurses. In California where a similar law was introduced, 30 day mortality rates fell by 10-13%. This is an incredible statistic, which the

Committee should take serious note, for the Health and Wellbeing of their local constituents whom they represent.

I am aware the Health & Social Services Committee is currently scrutinising the proposed Safe Nurse Staffing Levels Bill but (and quite properly) this inquiry has focused on the important evidence of organisations such as the Health Boards. I hope that this petition signed by over 1,500 people will demonstrate to your committee the strength of feeling behind the Bill from ordinary members of the public. I have spoken personally to family friends and neighbours, in support of this petition and many of them have been very surprised to find that we do not currently have this legislation already within the NHS in Wales.

I have always believed that the people of Wales all deserve the highest standards of healthcare being delivered by the appropriate numbers of Registered Nurses and Trained Healthcare Support Workers.

I think that this Law would put Wales and the National Assembly for Wales in the vanguard across the United Kingdom, in ensuring that Safe Nurse Staffing Levels are enshrined within the legal framework of Law.

I believe that your constituents will overwhelmingly support the introduction of such an important Law and respectfully ask that all members of the committee support the passage of the Bill into Law.

Yours sincerely

Richard Jones

RICHARD JONES MBE

Agenda Item 3.6

P-04-627 Improved Commuter Train Services for North Wales Residents

Petition wording

Although train fares across North Wales have risen at above the rate of inflation over a number of recent years the service offered to commuters has been reduced.

In particular the service offered at times convenient for most commuters to Bangor – home of one of Wales largest Universities, and also a major hospital (as well as North Wales busiest railway station in terms of passenger numbers!) – have been greatly cut over the last couple of years.

In particular we call for the reintroduction of the Chester – Bangor service which used to arrive at in Bangor at 09.36. (Ironically, whilst this service has been cut on week days, it still runs on a Saturday!).

Lead petitioner: Professor Tom Rippeth

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 36 online signatures.

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00954/15

William Powell AM

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

9 March 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 26 February requesting comments on Petition P-04-627 regarding improved commuter train services for North Wales residents.

We are committed to improving services across the rail network in Wales. Arriva Trains Wales currently provides 19 services from the west into Bangor and 19 from the east. This is above the level of 15 required under the terms of the Wales and Borders franchise agreement. In addition Virgin Trains provide 7 return services between Bangor and London/Birmingham.

The 0936 arrival into Bangor was replaced in September 2012 for the current 1008 arrival. This resulted from changing an existing Manchester-Llandudno service with a Cardiff-Holyhead service in order to better match the distribution of two-car and three-car trains with passenger demand. Similarly, the December 2014 timetable change (which included the introduction of additional loco-hauled services) has delivered significantly increased peak capacity for North Wales rail passengers including those travelling to/from Bangor. The new loco-hauled services have also delivered extra capacity on busy boat trains from Holyhead and provide additional capacity to/from North Wales on event days.

Edwina Hart

**P-04-627 Improve Commuter Services in North Wales – Correspondence
from the Petitioner to the Committee, 18.03.15**

**Note on Petition to Assembly concerning Rail Services for commuters travelling to
Bangor**

Petition Text: *“Although train fares across North Wales have risen at above the rate of inflation over a number of recent years the service offered to commuters has been reduced.*

In particular the service offered at times convenient for most commuters to Bangor – home of one of Wales largest Universities, and also a major hospital (as well as North Wales busiest railway station in terms of passenger numbers!) – have been greatly cut over the last couple of years.

In particular we call for the reintroduction of the Chester – Bangor service which used to arrive at in Bangor at 09.36. (Ironically, whilst this service has been cut on week days, it still runs on a Saturday!).”

The aim of this petition is to raise awareness within the Welsh Government of both the demand for, and the recent decline in the frequency of, the rail services offered to commuters travelling to Bangor for work.

Key facts justifying the petition:

- There are very limited services along the North Wales coast in the early morning on week days. For example, there is only one service from Flint to Bangor between 7am and 9am (this contrasts with no fewer than 5 services advertised to Cardiff!).
- This one service is invariably standing room only by the time the train leaves Llandudno Junction.
- A service leaving Flint (and calling at Bangor) about an hour later was withdrawn in September 2012. (Apparently, according to the minister in her response, because of the need to balance the needs for 2 and 3 coach trains. As the number of coaches on the evening services seems to change nightly this appears a very poor excuse!)

- I personally know of a number of people who no longer use the train, being forced to drive to work instead, because of the inconvenience caused by the withdrawal of this one service. Many of these are young mothers who have very tight time constraints imposed by family responsibilities.
- In the evening the situation is worse with only one train leaving Bangor between 3.04pm and 7.02pm which stops at stations between Llandudno Junction and Chester.
- This train leaves Bangor at 5.18pm (note lectures at the University finish at 6pm).
- This train is often packed with passengers from the Irish Ferries before it even arrives at Bangor station. As a result Bangor passengers have even been turned away. The serious overcrowding on this train was widely reported in the press earlier in the year, with passengers apparently sharing the drivers cabin with the guard!
- In terms of foot full Bangor is probably the busiest station in North Wales as evidenced by the fact that it is the only station in North Wales with 2 ticket dispensing machines.
- As well as University and Hospital staff, many local students use these services to commute into Bangor. In particular nursing and teaching students rely on the train as they spend time on placements across North Wales. These services are also used by children travelling to Schools along the North Wales Coast.

Clearly demand for the Chester – Bangor commuter rail services is high. Furthermore this service directly improves accessibility to higher education and social infrastructure thereby contributing to improving quality of life for communities and individuals in North Wales.

Fit to Welsh Government Priorities:

A recent Assembly Government Ministerial Task Force on North Wales transport identified the “lack of viable and affordable alternatives to the car to access key employment sites.” In particular it is noted Welsh Government Priorities, in the short to medium term, are to build on recent increases in rail use for travel to work (Draft Consultation Document, Welsh Route Study: <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/welsh-route-study/>). This petition therefore clearly

supports the aspiration of WAG in calling for improved commuter services to/ from Bangor.

A WAG transport priority is for North Wales rail modification, potentially including electrification. This is clearly to be welcomed as it will cut journey times. However such an upgrade is dependent on the return on investment. In terms of numbers of journeys made and therefore fares paid, daily commuters offer a substantial source of income. Therefore the current decline in services offered to Bangor bound commuters, and the consequent drop in the number of commuters using the services, are working directly against achieving WAG priorities.

Comments on the Ministers Response:

In her response of the 9th March 2015 the Minister largely fails to answer the call made in the petition.

As outlined above, she makes a rather feeble excuse as to the withdrawal of the 09.36 weekday service into Bangor.

She then makes a number of largely irrelevant comments regarding the increased capacity achieved through the introduction of loco hauled services. The timetable for this service is shown below. This train only call in Bangor once in each direction, very late in the morning travelling west and lunchtime travelling east, and so is unsuitable for commuters. Furthermore the one service which might be of use to Flint based commuters, the 16:50 out of Manchester, does not actually stop in Flint!

The Daily timetable for the loco hauled service:

07:16 Crewe – Chester

07:40 Chester – Manchester Piccadilly

09:50 Manchester Piccadilly – Holyhead

12:59 Holyhead – Manchester Piccadilly

16:50 Manchester Piccadilly – Llandudno.

19:13 Llandudno – Llandudno Junction

19:28 Llandudno Junction – Llandudno

19:38 Llandudno – Crewe

Agenda Item 3.7

P-04-628 Access to BSL for All

Petition wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language to improve the quality of life for Deaf people of all ages.

Improve Access for families to learn BSL: When a child is diagnosed as being Deaf/hard of hearing parents should be offered free/subsidised BSL lessons (BSL level one costs approximately £300 per person). By using speech alone, Deaf children struggle/fail to develop communication skills missing important milestones. Learning other languages through BSL (English/Welsh) will improve the child's understanding and comprehension.

Introduce BSL on the National Curriculum: Deaf Children and young people who are taught BSL at an early age will have better access to their education and an improved wellbeing. BSL should be available in schools and taught by qualified Deaf teachers, for all to learn as this would achieve better access for all in society. We believe that BSL should be offered as a language for all learners as a qualification. GCSE Welsh (and other modern languages) are not always offered to Deaf students: this also needs to be improved.

Improving access to Education in BSL for Deaf Children and Young People: currently they have limited access to Education in BSL, and often experience under qualified support. There is a massive gap in the education of Deaf children, as many are wrongly treated as having a Learning Disability. This has a negative impact on their development in life, reducing independence with poor education, resulting in under-employment. They need adequately qualified Communication Support Workers available in school.

Making Services and resources accessible in BSL for Deaf young people: enabling BSL users to access information in their preferred language via digital resources to services such as Education, Health care, Social Services and public transport, giving them equality to access as an equivalent to Welsh Language access.

Organisation: Deffo!

Lead petitioner: Cathie Robins-Talbot

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 502 online signatures. 660 paper signatures . total
=1162 signatures



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-628
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/00474/15

William Powell AM
Chair - petitions committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

6 March 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 26 February regarding the petition from Deffo! entitled *Access to BSL for All*, which calls on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language (BSL) to improve the quality of life for deaf people of all ages.

I have addressed each of the points in the petition as follows.

Improve access for families to learn BSL: When a child is diagnosed as being Deaf/hard of hearing parents should be offered free/subsidised BSL lessons (BSL level one costs approximately £300 per person). By using speech alone, Deaf children struggle/fail to develop communication skills missing important milestones. Learning other languages through BSL (English/Welsh) will improve the child's understanding and comprehension.

Welsh Government have introduced the Families First Programme which is available to all children, including those with disabilities. It is there to support Children, Young People & Families to improve their outcomes in life. This will include provision of support to assist parents who have a child who has been diagnosed as being deaf/hard of hearing. Families First is a strengths-based approach in which families are supported to recognise what is working well in their situations to support empowerment and ownership of their growth and development. Families are referred into the programme through either a key agency, for example, school, a GP, Social Services, or through self referral.

BSL language provision is provided at a local level. Many local authorities (LAs) provide training and make courses available via adult learning centres. In Further and Higher education, BSL can now be learnt through a range of learning providers including colleges and universities. There are 16 qualifications that aim to develop skills in using BSL approved for use in Wales including two level 6 qualifications for learners age 19 plus .

As BSL provision is made available at a local level, any request for free/subsidised BSL lessons will be for LAs to consider.

Introduce BSL to the National Curriculum: Deaf children and young people who are taught BSL at an early age will have better access to their education and an improved wellbeing. BSL should be available in schools and taught by qualified deaf teachers, for all to learn as this would achieve better access for all in society. We believe that BSL should be offered as a language for all learners as a qualification. GCSE Welsh (and other modern languages) are not always offered to Deaf students: this also needs to be improved.

In schools in Wales, Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) is a statutory subject at key stage 3. Schools may choose which languages they teach taking into account demand, interest, progression routes and resources. There is however no requirement to teach BSL in schools.

Nevertheless, under the Education Act 1996, LAs have a duty to provide suitable education for all children, including those who have special educational needs (SEN). Therefore a school/LA should provide for BSL where a child's needs have been identified as requiring such provision to enable them to access the curriculum. This of course applies to both English and Welsh medium schools. As regards to Welsh it is a statutory subject at all key stages.

Improving access to education in BSL for deaf children and young people: currently they have limited access to Education in BSL, and often experience under qualified support. There is a massive gap in the education of Deaf children, as many are wrongly treated as having a learning disability. This has a negative impact on their development in life, reducing independence with poor education, resulting in under-employment. They need adequately qualified Communication Support Workers available in school.

Under current legislation, learners who are deaf are identified as having a learning difficulty and thus SEN. The definition of SEN under the Education Act 1996 states:

Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

Children have a learning difficulty if they:

- (a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or*
- (b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority*
- (c) are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them.*

Special educational provision means:

- (a) for children of two or over, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the LEA, other than special schools, in the area*
- (b) for children under two, educational provision of any kind.*

Ensuring SEN provision is made available to deaf children and young people is the responsibility of the LA. LAs have a statutory duty to identify, assess and make provision for children with SEN. This includes the responsibility to ensure that appropriately qualified staff are available in schools where a learner have been identified as requiring BSL provision.

The Welsh Government is reforming the current legislative framework for supporting learners with SEN by introducing a unified legislative framework to support children and young people aged 0 to 25 with additional learning needs (ALN). ALN includes learners currently defined as having SEN.

The focus of our reforms is to improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision necessary to meet the child's or young person's ALN. The reforms focus on the child's or young person's needs, providing them with a single statutory plan. This plan will replace the assortment of statutory and non statutory plans that currently exist which are typically based on the perceived complexity of needs.

Making services and resources accessible in BSL for Deaf young people: enabling BSL users to access information in their preferred language via digital resources to service in Education, Health Care, Social Services and public transport, giving them equality to access as an equivalent to Welsh Language access.

The National Assembly for Wales does not have the power to legislate about any language other than Welsh. However, the Equality Act 2010 and the specific duties imposed on public authorities by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 have strengthened the requirement on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for disabled people, as for people with the other protected characteristics. Public authorities must consciously consider these aims in the development of policies and in the design and delivery of services, and must set themselves equality objectives. A more practical way of widening the provision of BSL services may therefore be through equality objectives set by public authorities.

Welsh Government is committed to creating an inclusive education system for all learners and schools play a crucial role in today's society to ensure that this generation and the next adopts an inclusive mindset. Our schools should accommodate for all children, regardless of their needs. This includes those who require access to education by other means, such as British Sign Language (BSL). All Welsh Government policy on education gives consideration to inclusivity and children's rights and we disseminate our policies to all schools accordingly.

In respect of deaf people of all ages, the Welsh Government has published Quality Standards for Paediatric Audiology and also Quality Standards for Adult Rehabilitation Services which audiology services in Wales must ensure delivery of the standards within their service.

The Welsh Government is also working to scope where progress can be made for the delivery of improved audiology services for paediatrics and adults across Wales and will be holding a workshop event for health professionals in March, with a follow up workshop to be held in June to include wider stakeholders, LA and third sector representatives.

I hope that you find this information useful in consideration of this petition.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis'.

Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Deffo!
57a Neath Road,
Hafod
Swansea
Wales
SA1 2HW

The voice for Youth Deaf youth in Wales

William Powell AM
Chair – Petitions Committee

17th March 2015

Dear Mr Powell

Deffo! Petition – Access to BSL for All

Many thanks for forwarding the response from the Minister, Huw Lewis in relation to the petition submitted by ourselves. I have pleasure in enclosing our response.

Improve access for families to learn BSL: When a child is diagnosed as being Deaf/hard of hearing parents should be offered free/subsidised BSL lessons (BSL level one costs approximately £300 per person). By using speech alone, Deaf children struggle/fail to develop communication skills missing important milestones. Learning other languages through BSL (English/Welsh) will improve the child's understanding and comprehension.

We are aware of the availability of BSL courses within adult learning; although our understanding is that this provision is reducing in-line with funding cuts. We would respectfully highlight that the Minister's response does not address the fact that there is currently a lack of provision for Deaf children and young people under the age of 16 to learn BSL without incurring high costs.

We have knowledge of a parent seeking BSL provision, who has had to access this through the support of a local charity, rather than any local authority provision. The charity has also sought to link with local colleges to access funding, for this individual and others in their peer group and this has been rejected, without any signposting to alternative provision.

Equally it is important that provision of BSL is an appropriate format, parents wish to learn BSL with their child and siblings, and this is not feasible under the provision that we are aware of, or that referenced by the Minister in relation to adult learning. We must remember it is not just the Deaf child who needs to learn BSL; it is also, at a minimum their immediate support group.

We note the Minister's comment that requests for free/subsidised BSL lessons is for local authorities to consider, however we would suggest that there should be a requirement for this to be provided as opposed to considered for example we have contacted one local authority and inquiry for the BSL courses where families and Deaf Children can learn, their response was not as far as they are aware of this is available within their authority.

The situation and outlook for Deaf people is challenging. Cuts to funding and service provision have resulted in the removal of specialist advocacy services for Deaf young people and their families, and the suspension of the Deaf youth service. For example, 42 trained Deaf youth workers in Wales, only one is presently in part-time employment with a local authority.

There is clearly a lack of support for Deaf young people and their families, and whilst there is pressure and a policy direction for these Deaf young people to access mainstream services, we are failing to provide the basic steps to make this possible and sustainable for the young people.

It is worth recognising that Deaf children are diagnosed as Deaf at an early age; deafness is seen as a disability under the medical model, being in the environment with medical practitioners rather than a

language minority group. Most families are given options by health professionals in ways to improve their hearing by providing equipment- hearing aids, cochlea implants, speech therapy and other medical related aids to adapt into their childhood but nothing to offer social, networking and language support.

Few practitioners suggest liaising with D/deaf professionals where families can meet with other parents who are going through similar cases, to meet with Deaf peers for support making a decision based on a person centred approach. This could initiate a lifetime of support for their Child by having 'contact' with Deaf peers. Deaf young people need to learn in sign language first, before learning English, in same way as Welsh students are taught Welsh first then English and then other subjects once they understand the basic structure of language. This is exactly how it should be for Deaf children and will lead to better outcomes and life-chances for this group.

Introduce BSL to the National Curriculum: Deaf children and young people who are taught BSL at an early age will have better access to their education and an improved wellbeing. BSL should be available in schools and taught by qualified deaf teachers, for all to learn, as this would achieve better access for all in society. We believe that BSL should be offered as a language for all learners as a qualification. GCSE Welsh (and other modern languages) are not always offered to Deaf students: this also needs to be improved.

The current situation as outlined by the Minister is failing Children and Deaf young people.

The majority of Deaf children in mainstream school provision, and by association their peers, do not have access to BSL in school. They are taught SSE (Sign Supported English). This follows the English language structure and is different from BSL. BSL makes use of space, movement of hands, body and face as visual indicators. It has its own structure, grammar, syntax etc. and was recognised as a legal language in its own right by the UK Government on 18th March 2003.

Children who learn SSE find that this language learning does not transfer to the external environment. When they leave school, the wider deaf community utilises BSL, and Deaf young people find themselves having to re-learn a language in order to be able to interact with their own community. This is a risk to the quality of BSL, and a duplication of resource and investment, which should be addressed through the provision of BSL in school, delivered by qualified Deaf practitioners at early ages.

If BSL were included on the national curriculum the use of BSL would extend, Deaf young people would be able to interact as equals with their peers in social, economic and learning networks. Equally importantly is that in the long-term business and public services would be in a position to engage with the Deaf population.

Improving access to education in BSL for Deaf children and young people: currently they have limited access to Education in BSL, and often experience under qualified support. There is a massive gap in the education of Deaf children, as many are wrongly treated as having a learning disability. This has a negative impact on their development in life, reducing independence with poor education, resulting in under-employment. They need adequately qualified Communication Support Workers available in school.

The Minister's response does not re-assure, nor make any comment in relation to the quality of provision, which exists, within schools for Deaf children.

The recent survey report, CRIDE 2015 confirms that there are at least 48,125 Deaf children in the UK, with approximately 2,880 of these in Wales. 90% of Deaf children are educated in mainstream education settings. This means there is the potential for a Deaf child to be alone in a class / school without access to Deaf peers. Given under present arrangements support is often offered by Communication Support Workers (CSW) who are trained at below level 2 in BSL. We believe that a level 3 qualifications in BSL is appropriate given that we are asking young people to use this as their first language. This lack of

appropriately skilled workers is further compounded with evidence suggesting that many Teachers of the Deaf are being replaced by teaching assistants.

Deaf young people whom are BSL users have to be regarded as having limited access to BSL. Many Teachers of the Deaf (TOD) do not have a BSL qualification, and this needs to be addressed to ensure that Deaf children and young people have the opportunity to access their life chances.

The CRIDE report (2014) confirms this concern in relation to Teachers of the Deaf. There are currently 67 qualified TOD by 38% of these are due to retire within 15 years, leading to a capacity crunch in this provision to meet the future needs. This has the potential to further negatively impact on a poor situation. It is fact that the average TOD contact is 3 hours a week, significantly less than the recommended 270 hours per year and also highlights that the number of Deaf young people in Wales not receiving support from a speech therapist is increasing on a year-by-year basis.

The CRIDE report goes further highlighting that only 13% of Deaf pupils have designated BSL lessons, only 27% receive 1-2-1 tuition and 40% of respondents feel that they have access to Deaf role models.

This data appears to evidence that SEN provision is not working appropriately to ensure access to BSL. Deffo! feel from observations that local authorities are making decisions in relation to the support of Deaf young people based on the supply and provision that is available, rather than on the demands of Deaf young people and there should be a requirement on local authorities to meet this unmet demand.

Making services and resources accessible in BSL for Deaf young people: enabling BSL users to access information in their preferred language via digital resources to service in Education, Health Care, Social Services and public transport, giving them equality to access as an equivalent to Welsh Language access.

The Minister's comments in respect of this are noted.

Evidence received by Deffo! highlights that many Deaf young people fail to access services with the reasonable adjustment that they are entitled to under the Equalities Act 2010. A recent survey by the BBC indicates that this is as high as 90% in respect of health provision within GP surgeries.

Deffo! believe that the solution to ensuring parity of access for Deaf young people is linked to appropriate addressing of the prior points and creating an environment in which high quality BSL is available throughout Wales.

I hope that this information is useful in respect of consideration of this petition.

Yours sincerely

Cathie Robins Talbot

Deffo! Principal Petitioner

P-03-240 Improvements to the A40 in Llanddewi Velfrey

Petition Wording

Due to the increasing levels of traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles, on the A40 and due to the inadequate provision of safe pavements and pedestrian crossings acknowledged by the Trunk Road Agency through research on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government we, the undersigned, hereby demand the Welsh Assembly Government, as a matter of urgency, improve road safety in the village of Llanddewi Velfrey, Narberth, Pembrokeshire through implementation of the following measures:

1. Improve the inadequate pavement along the southern side of the A40 between Llandaff Row and the far eastern end of the village to ensure that it meets current safety standards, that it is sufficiently wide for the safe use of pedestrians, pushchairs and wheel chair users taking into consideration the proximity of heavy goods traffic passing by at speeds often in excess of the current limit of 40mph.
2. Install speed cameras at the eastern and western ends of the village.
3. Utilise the existing electrical installation for road crossing signs to provide flashing warning lights at times when children will be crossing the A40 to catch their school bus.
4. Install traffic calming measures at each end of the village and at road junctions to emphasise the need to reduce speed.
5. Reduce the speed limit to 30mph.

Petition raised by: Llanddewi Velfrey Community Council

Date petition first considered by Committee: September 2009

Number of signatures: 154

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-240
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00961/15

William Powell AM
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

10 March 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 30 April 2014 regarding petition P-03-240 Road safety on the A40 in Llanddewi Velfrey. I am sorry that you have not received a response until now, this was down to an administrative error.

My officials are currently undertaking a study to explore additional ways to improve the A40, including the potential for dualling. This work will be completed in May. The appointment of an Employer's Agent for the A40 Llanddewi Velfrey to Penblewin scheme will be completed following the conclusion of this study.

There are no current plans to replace the flashing speed limit warning signs. However, I have passed the Community Council's comments to my officials so that they can be included as part of the future update of the speed limit review.

Edwina Hart

Agenda Item 4.2

P-04-525 Funding for CREST Awards in Wales

Petition wording:

We, the undersigned, call on the Welsh Government to reinstate the required funding for the Crest Awards in Wales, and want the National Science Academy to recognise the value of the Crest Awards to primary and secondary education, and the requirement of funding for the Crest Awards to continue.

Additional information:

CREST is a project-based awards scheme for the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths). It links students to curriculum-based learning. Last year over 30,000 CREST Awards were undertaken in the UK giving 5-19yr olds opportunities to explore real-world projects in an exciting way. Over 10% of the Awards in the UK were awarded to pupils in Wales. The success of the increase in number of CREST Awards in Wales has been achieved with funding from the Welsh Government (NSA) to coordinate and increase activities in Welsh schools. This has enabled the scheme to be offered bilingually, subsidised the pupils' registration fee, provided grants and other supportive structures provided through See Science. CREST Awards have brought considerable benefit schools and the implications of the withdrawal of funding will be felt directly by the pupils and teaching staff. CREST Awards are recognised by all Universities in the UK and provides strong evidence of contextual data

Petition raised by: See Science – British Science Association

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 21 January 2014

Number of signatures: 210

Agenda Item 4.3

P-04-487 A Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh home buyers

Petition wording:

We call on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to offer an annual deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh house buyers and/or renters.

It is proposed that Welsh mortgage companies would also need to take part in this scheme and agree to ask for no more than 5% of a deposit on any suitable property (as well as offer a low interest own what you pay for mortgage). This for example would all mean that up to 15,000 Welsh first time house buyers (first time buyers whose earnings are below a certain threshold and have lived or worked in Wales continuously for at least 10 years, or have full time business links to Wales) could be helped annually with a deposit loan of around £7,500 each for an averaged priced house, with the loan back payments deferred for at least one year. Once sellers and buyers agree to the scheme, the property in question would keep its eligible occupancy clause, as happens with similar schemes in the Peak District and North York Moors National parks.

Supporting information:

Although the Welsh Government can't interfere with private properties, owners including second homeowners could be encouraged to consider selling through the scheme if they decide to sell their property. First time renovators of derelict properties/farmhouses should also be eligible for the scheme. It's proposed that Welsh estate agents and the house sellers would be paid a monthly fee (paid for by the interest on the deposit loans) for taking part in the voluntary scheme by agreeing to only advertise, sell or rent within Wales and to eligible Welsh citizens for the first 6 months of a property being put on the market – after which time it would be open to anyone.

This scheme would help to give families and individuals a chance to live and work within their own areas and not be priced out of the market by

unreasonable average wage to property price ratios, whilst also ensuring more money stays within local economies, boosting a more sustainable and productive Welsh economy in general.

Petition raised by: Sovereign Wales

Date petition first considered by Committee: 18 June 2013

Number of signatures: 17

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-487
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00288/15

William Powell AM
Chair - petitions committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

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March 2015

Dear Bill

Thank you for your recent letter, regarding your Petitioner's proposal for a Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time buyers.

I have reviewed the correspondence between yourself and my predecessor, Carl Sargeant AM, on the matter and I agree with his view that this proposal is unworkable. I also note Carl Sargeant AM was very clear on the issues relating to the proposal and, subsequently, these have not been addressed by the Petitioner.

For these reasons, I feel the matter is now closed.

Regards

Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

P-04-487 A Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh home buyers – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 11 March 2015.

Dear all,

The new Minister Lesley Griffiths is incorrect to say that I (the petitioner) have not addressed the issues relating to the proposal as made by Minister Carl Sargeant. I have previously addressed all the issues he raised and not only shown that his own proposals are very dangerous to the Welsh Government in terms of the massive guarantee that they give to house builders, but also highly unethical for the very same reasons – in theory subsidising the private companies who wish to build new houses.

My petition highlights that it is a deposit that first time home buyers in Wales need more than anything in order to get them on the housing ladder. For both Carl Sargeant and new Minister Lesley Griffiths to try to dismiss this is simply unacceptable. In other words I do not accept her remarks in any way. I believe that a deposit loan scheme for first time home buyers in Wales is now more needed than ever and should be taken on by the Welsh Government, by opposition parties and by whomever will be in government next.

Sincerely,

G.Meredith

Agenda Item 4.4

P-04-516 Make political science compulsory in education

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make political science a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

Petition raised by: Mark Griffiths

Date petition first considered by Committee: 26 November 2013

Number of signatures: 12

STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

The Donaldson Review of Curriculum and Assessment: Next Steps

4 March 2015

Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills

It was just under a year ago when I asked Professor Donaldson to undertake a fundamental and wide-ranging review of the school curriculum and of our assessment arrangements here in Wales.

Professor Donaldson brought with him a wealth of experience of education both in Scotland, where he was Chief Inspector for a number of years and played a key role in the introduction of their Curriculum for Excellence, as well as having an important international reputation.

I know that he has been tireless in this task and I am sincerely grateful to him for the dedication and care that he has taken to produce his final report– *Successful Futures*, which was published last week.

I believe this is a seminal piece of work – and I welcome it.

During the review I know that Professor Donaldson met with very significant numbers of children and young people, practitioners and other interested parties. In addition, his call for evidence received over 700 responses, over 300 of which came from children and young people themselves. He also undertook research and looked at a range of international curriculum models.

I know the evidence was very positive about key aspects of our education system, and that Professor Donaldson's recommendations have built on those. They include, the Foundation Phase, Routes for Learning, our focus

on literacy and numeracy and our emphasis on the Welsh language and culture. We should be proud of *all* of this.

But Professor Donaldson's report also builds a powerful case for change – which he argues is necessary if we are to give our children the best chance of a successful future in the twenty first and indeed the twenty second centuries.

As he points out in his report – the first national curriculum was introduced as long ago as 1988. This was before the World Wide Web, and before the very significant advances in technology and globalisation which have fundamentally changed the way we live and work today

Professor Donaldson's report argues that our curriculum needs to be simplified, reorganised, and modernised – if we are to ensure our learners have the best chance of a successful future.

His proposals are radical and wide ranging and envisage a new and exciting approach to the curriculum that will generate better learning and higher standards. Better learning because it focuses on what really matters in a modern school curriculum – higher standards because it will set high expectations for learning and seek to help young people meet and exceed them.

At the heart of his report is a vision for what a well educated young person in Wales should look like. He articulates this vision through four *purposes* of the curriculum and argues that they should underpin everything that happens in schools – including providing us with a measure for our success.

He recommends that the four purposes should help all our children and young people to become:

- ambitious, capable learners;
- enterprising, creative contributors;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- healthy, confident individuals.

One of Professor Donaldson's principles of curriculum design is that of subsidiarity – and in this vein he argues that to enable schools to achieve this vision, schools need to have much greater scope to provide a creative, engaging and challenging curriculum – within the context of an overarching national curriculum framework.

I believe that Professor Donaldson has set out an exciting vision of the future of learning in Wales – a vision that I find extremely convincing and inspiring.

But neither I, nor the Department for Education and Skills, can or should develop this curriculum on our own. I am clear that it has to be built for the profession, by the profession.

As I said earlier – Professor Donaldson's report has at its core the principle of subsidiarity – and I think he is right. That's why I am determined that we engage – from the outset – with as many people from across Wales as possible. With the profession, parents, children and young people and with the wider community, including businesses. I intend to listen to what they have to say about Professor Donaldson's recommendations and about how we implement them. That is why, today, I am launching the Great Debate.

I will ensure that the Great Debate gives maximum opportunity for engagement by providing a programme of activities that include classroom debates, webinar sessions and some face-to face sessions with Professor Donaldson. The on-line engagement pack will contain information about the report and film clips from Professor Donaldson explaining his vision.

I want to make sure everyone has a chance to contribute, so the pack will contain an adult and child friendly questionnaire.

I would urge everyone to take time to complete this questionnaire. In this way – I can be sure that my formal response to the report – which I intend to publish in the summer – reflects the views of the citizens of Wales.

If change is to come, which I firmly believe it must, that change will take many years to achieve. We will need to maintain pace and momentum – and hold our nerve.

The ongoing Great Debate will sustain that momentum and will help us develop manageable and realistic plans. We need to take time to get this right, whilst maintaining pace, passion and professionalism.

Critically, we also need to focus on building understanding, commitment and capacity– Professor Furlong’s review of Initial Teacher Education and Training and the New Deal to improve teachers’ professional development, details of which I will be announcing in the next few weeks, will help do just that.

At this stage, it would be neither appropriate nor possible for me to quantify the exact cost of implementing the new curriculum envisaged by Professor Donaldson. That said, I have already identified £1m to support initial scoping work. I have also earmarked a further £2m in 2015–16 to begin to develop the new curriculum and the New Deal.

Professor Donaldson has given us a blue print for a world class curriculum – which will give us better learning and higher standards. We must work together to embrace this opportunity to build a successful future of all our children and young people.

Agenda Item 4.5

P-04-523 Protect the elderly and vulnerable in care homes

Petition wording:

We, the undersigned, call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to hold a Public Inquiry into the events that led to Operation Jasmine, which investigated alleged neglect of older people in nursing homes in Wales.

Additional information:

With the collapse of Operation Jasmine, where the police investigated more than 100 cases of alleged neglect and spent more than £13 million, it has meant that those affected have had no justice and those responsible for the neglect have not been held accountable. We call for a Public Inquiry to take place to ensure that all aspects of the cause of neglect are fully investigated and that new legislation is passed to make certain that people in nursing homes will receive a higher standard of care and if they do not, that they can then obtain redress via the appropriate agencies and the legal system.

Petition raised by: Justice for Jasmine

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 10 December 2013

Number of signatures: 4216

Agenda Item 4.6

P-04-608 Inquiry into the Welsh NHS

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to hold a full and comprehensive inquiry into the Welsh NHS. This diagnostic inquiry will ensure that all matters of concern are identified and addressed, and that standards in the Welsh health service are continually improved for the sake of NHS staff, patients and the people of Wales

Petitioner : PJ Vanston

First considered by the Committee: 9 December 2014

Number of Signatures: 146

**P-04-608: Inquiry into the Welsh NHS – Petitioner to the Committee,
15.03.2015**

Reply to Welsh Assembly (15 March 2015)

Petition P-04-608: Inquiry into the Welsh NHS

Petitioner: PJ Vanston

Firstly, many thanks for forwarding the reply to my statement from Mark Drakeford AM, Minister for Health and Social Services.

I would like to comment on some of the points he makes in his letter of 5 February.

Mr Drakeford states that “surveys and patient feedback consistently demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the NHS in Wales.” Firstly, no health campaigner I know of has ever argued the majority of what goes on in the Welsh NHS is bad, just that it can do much better. Secondly, surveys and feedback methods can often mean that patients are in fact rating their approval of the NHS as an institution, even if they are unhappy with treatment times, for example. However, if Mr Drakeford holds great store by surveys, maybe he could ponder the fact that surveys consistently show that over 70% of Welsh people want to see an inquiry into the Welsh NHS as they believe something is deeply wrong with it – and most of these people are reluctant to sign petitions because of the mistaken belief they represent an attack on the NHS or its staff. Fact: surveys show 7 out of 10 people in Wales would like to see an inquiry.

But Mr Drakeford’s main argument against holding an inquiry (or a review) seems to be about cost – and he yet again makes the false argument than a “penny spent on an inquiry is a penny less for frontline care.” One could use the same argument for any Welsh government expenditure (for example, spending on the Senedd building itself, or the salaries and expenses of AMs, or the Welsh language, or roads, or anything else). The cost of an inquiry therefore need have no effect on patient care, and to claim it would is, frankly, dishonest and scaremongering of the worst kind.

The budget for an inquiry or review could come from the general Welsh government budget – or perhaps even as an additional payment from the UK government. I assume that as Mr Drakeford is so preoccupied with cost, he would agree on the spot to a Welsh NHS inquiry if the Westminster UK government were to offer to pay

for it with additional funding? Governments seem to find a few million (or billion) with great ease to fight exotic faraway wars or to bail out irresponsible banks; surely finding the cash to improve the health service of Wales for future generations merits some financial investment from a government in Cardiff (and London) which purports to serve the people of Wales and have their best interests at heart?

In national terms, £13 million (as cited by Mr Drakeford) for an inquiry/review is not a huge sum if it ensures an ever-improving first class health service for Welsh people in the future. I don't wish to be rude, but perhaps Mr Drakeford's apparent obsession with costs do rather make him appear as a man who knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing. The Welsh people deserve a review/inquiry into their NHS.

Moreover, an NHS inquiry or a review would pay for itself in the long term by creating more efficient systems (and ones which would not need hundreds of millions to be spent on private consultants – which is what the Welsh government does at the moment). It would improve staff morale too, in my opinion.

Mr Drakeford states that “inquiries by their very nature focus on looking back and can hinder any progress with ongoing continuous improvement.” This is a very odd point to make – after all, the entire legal system is based on looking back at evidence for wrong-doing, negligence, error etc, yet that does not make it hinder present and future improvement in law enforcement, surely? But if Mr Drakeford feels inquiries are such a waste of time, maybe he should spend some time with those who fought hard and long for the inquiries into Mid-Staffs, Hillsborough, or the murder of Stephen Lawrence and ask them why they wasted their time and money.

Some further relevant points:

- Around half of Welsh cancer sufferers have to wait more than 6 weeks for tests and scans (a much higher percentage than in England).
- The Royal College of Surgeons has stated that the Welsh NHS is in ‘meltdown’ and merits an investigation.
- Sir Bruce Keogh has stated that 6 Welsh hospitals should be investigated for persistently high mortality rates.

- The Welsh government has, until recently, been cutting NHS spending by 1% a year when all other nations of the UK have been increasing their NHS spending by the same amount.
- The reason Wales has more “bodies charged with ensuring quality and safety standards” is because an outdated post-war structure still exists with 7 regional health boards here, each with different criteria to assess quality and safety (a system that seems hideously inefficient and inconsistent).
- 1400 Welsh patients wait more than a year for hospital treatment at the moment.
- Only 81% of patients are seen within 4 hours of arrival at Welsh A&E departments, compared to 90.2% in England (the target is 95%).
- Welsh ambulance arrival times are the worst in Britain, with some injured people waiting 2 or 3 or more hours before an ambulance arrives (leading many to be taken to hospital in police cars).

There are more – many more – points which can be made about disgracefully long waiting times in Wales for operations and tests, ambulance arrival times, and targets being continually missed in many areas – and by margins much higher than in England when targets are missed there.

I do understand that health services everywhere are under great pressure for multifarious reasons. I would also like to say that I fully support the Welsh NHS and staff within it, and that is why I started my whole campaign for an inquiry or review into our NHS – so any argument that aims to silence all criticism or brand all campaigners as anti-NHS is, frankly, inaccurate and dishonest.

At this point, I would just like to say that I utterly disassociate myself from those health campaigns and campaigners who launch personal, sometimes abusive *ad hominem attacks* on Mr Drakeford or others from the Welsh government – or, indeed, NHS staff and managers. I always play the ball, not the man. I also still have faith that eventually, possibly because of electoral results, the Welsh government will one day commission an inquiry, or at least a review, into the Welsh NHS.

I think it a shame, actually, that the proposed Welsh NHS Commission – (which I cautiously welcomed, and which was at least partly a result of pressure put on the

Welsh government by me and many other health campaigners) – will not now be going ahead. Having said that, the timing was awful, what with a UK election just weeks away and a Welsh Assembly election next year. The suspicion was obviously that this was a Labour attempt to defuse and water down the issue before these elections (it may well have worked fine in 2013 or even 2014, as would an inquiry/review – in the manner of the 2013 Keogh review in England).

I hope that things will improve in the Welsh NHS. However, almost every single set of statistics which are released show the Welsh NHS to be the worst in the UK and getting worse too. To live in a state of denial about that is just plain wrong. An independent review or inquiry would stop this issue being the party political football it has unfortunately now become. I can see no other way forward.

One final question I would like to put to Mr Drakeford – and, indeed, the First Minister – and it's this:

Will you be attending the funerals of all those who die as a direct result of the Welsh government's refusal to commission an inquiry into the Welsh NHS and their failure to fund it adequately?

Many thanks in advance for the opportunity to state my views at this Petitions Committee.

Yours,

PJ Vanston

Swansea