



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

**Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus
The Public Accounts Committee**

**Dydd Llun, 18 Chwefror 2013
Monday, 18 February 2013**

Cynnwys
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Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Mae hon yn fersiwn ddrafft o'r cofnod. Cyhoeddir fersiwn derfynol ymhen pum diwrnod gwaith.

The proceedings are recorded in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included. This is a draft version of the record. The final version will be published within five working days.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Darren Millar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
Gwyn R. Price	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Anne Evans	Cydgysylltydd Cydnerthedd Lleol, Ysgrifenyddiaeth Fforwm Lleol Cymru Gydnerth y Gogledd Local Resilience Co-ordinator, North Wales Resilience Forum Secretariat
Alyson Francis	Dirprwy Bennaeth Diogelwch Cymunedol, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Head of Community Safety, Welsh Government
Rhodri Jones	Cynghorydd Gweithrediadau, St Ioan Cymru Operations Adviser, St John Cymru Wales
Gavin Macho	Rheolwr Cynllunio at Argyfwng, Cyngor Sir Caerdydd Emergency Planning Manager, Cardiff County Council
Dr June Milligan	Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau, Llywodraeth Cymru Director General, Local Government and Communities, Welsh Government
Yr Uwcharolygydd / Superintendent Claire Parmenter	Cydgysylltydd Argyfyngau Sifil Posibl Gwasanaethau Brys Cymru, y Cyd-grŵp Gwasanaethau Brys Emergency Services Civil Contingencies Co-ordinator Wales, Joint Emergency Services Group
Dr Wyn Price	Pennaeth Argyfyngau, Llywodraeth Cymru Head of Emergencies, Welsh Government
Christina Scott	Cyfarwyddwr yr Ysgrifenyddiaeth Argyfyngau Sifil Posibl, Swyddfa'r Cabinet Director, Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office
James Shaughnessy	Cynghorydd Gweithrediadau, St Ioan Cymru Director of Operations, St John Cymru Wales
Simon Wilkinson	Swyddog Polisi Gwasanaethau Rheoliadol, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Regulatory Services Policy Officer, Welsh Local Government Association

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

Dan Collier	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
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Joanest Jackson Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol
Senior Legal Adviser
Tom Jackson Clerc
Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 2.00 p.m.
The meeting began at 2.00 p.m.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Darren Millar:** Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's meeting of the Public Accounts Committee. I remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones and pagers, because they can interfere with the broadcasting and other equipment. We are a bilingual institution, as the National Assembly for Wales, so if anybody wants to speak in Welsh, please feel free to do so. For those who are not proficient in the language yet, you can access a translation on channel 1 on the headsets that are available in front of you. These can also be used for amplification purposes. In the event of an emergency, we should follow the direction of the ushers, who will take us to the nearest safe exit. We have received one apology for absence from Mohammad Asghar, which is noted. Also, the Auditor General for Wales, who usually attends, is not here today.

2.01 p.m.

Argyfyngau Sifil yng Nghymru—Tystiolaeth gan Lywodraeth Cymru a Swyddfa'r Cabinet Civil Emergencies in Wales—Evidence from the Welsh Government and Cabinet Office

[2] **Darren Millar:** We will move straight into item 2 on our agenda. This afternoon's meeting is dedicated entirely to the subject of civil emergencies in Wales, and we have had a briefing from the auditor general on the report of the Wales Audit Office on civil emergencies.

[3] I welcome to the table representatives of the Welsh Government and the Cabinet Office for the first part of our meeting. We all recognise that the Welsh Government does not have devolved powers for civil contingencies, even though it has devolved responsibility for a number of organisations that are category 1 and category 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The paper that the Welsh Government and Cabinet Office have prepared for us sets out the constitutional position and a description of the respective roles of the UK and Welsh Governments. It is worth noting that the Welsh Government has today published its response to the Silk commission part 2, which indicates that it is seeking responsibility for civil contingencies in the future.

[4] Before we go into questions, could I ask each of you to introduce yourselves for the record, please?

[5] **Ms Scott:** Good afternoon, Chair. My name is Christina Scott and I am the director of the civil contingencies secretariat, which sits in the Cabinet Office.

[6] **Darren Millar:** Welcome.

[7] **Dr Price:** I am Wyn Price and I am head of resilience at the Welsh Government.

[8] **Dr Milligan:** Good afternoon. I am June Milligan, the director general for local government and communities in the Welsh Government.

[9] **Ms Francis:** Good afternoon. I am Alyson Francis, deputy head of community safety in the Welsh Government.

[10] **Darren Millar:** Thank you for that. You have had the opportunity to look at the Wales Audit Office report. How would you sum up the impact of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 in Wales against its aims of establishing clearer roles and responsibilities for local responders, particularly given the confusion as a result of the Act not referring to the Welsh Government as a category 1 responder? Perhaps you, June, would you like to answer that first, and then we will go to Christina.

[11] **Dr Milligan:** We would find it helpful to set out some context, Chair, to explain how we see the responsibilities.

[12] **Darren Millar:** Yes. That is fine.

[13] **Dr Milligan:** In the joint evidence paper, we have tried to set out the constitutional arrangements that contribute to the preparedness and resilience of Wales for civil emergencies, describing our respective roles and how we work together and with others in practice. It is fair to say that the team is very proud of the work that it has done and will probably want to explain to you some recent incidents where we feel we have worked together with UK and local responders. There are good records of where effective multi-agency working on civil emergencies in Wales has brought around a very close collaboration with emergency services, the NHS, local authorities and the other responder agencies. The Wales Audit Office recorded in the report that the arrangements for emergency planning and resilience provide protection for the public.

[14] That is at the core, really, of the evidence that we bring to you. We are doing considerable work to strengthen our ability to respond effectively, which is done as part of a wider programme of building preparedness and resilience across the UK. Work that we do in Wales is necessarily part of that bigger picture. Wales does not respond on its own to any civil emergency, and therefore we do have a close working relationship with the UK Government, and particularly with the civil contingencies secretariat. UK-wide planning is, and will always remain, an important feature of civil emergency work, and I think that that was demonstrated well in the lead up to, and in the work done through the Olympics last year where Wales played its part.

[15] So, although civil contingencies as a discrete function are not devolved, the Wales Audit Office also drew attention to the fact that there is a public expectation that Welsh Ministers, in particular, will provide political leadership during an emergency. It was the recognition of that political reality that led, early following devolution, the Welsh Government and Welsh Ministers themselves to become involved in the preparedness that is necessary ahead of any emergency occurring, that the Welsh Government, in terms of the team that Wyn heads, should take a lead in co-ordinating and supporting emergency services and other responder agencies in Wales. Again, the Wales Audit Office mentions in that regard that the Welsh Government is effectively supporting partners and seeking opportunities to add value to the civil contingency response in Wales.

[16] The programme for government commits to strengthening resilience in Wales, including through the Wales resilience forum, which the First Minister chairs and which Cabinet Office is a member of, alongside all of the leaders of the responder agencies in Wales. It is to that forum that the resilience team works to co-ordinate activity at an all-Wales level, establishing the links between a local response and a Cabinet Office response. The

Wales Audit Office described the team, in particular, in its report as an effective mentor and critical friend to category 1 responders and to other responders as part of a broader approach to improving public services in Wales.

[17] Two particular areas have added value, which I would like to mention up front. First is the investment in our network of strategic co-ordination centres across Wales, linking to the emergency co-ordination centre in Cardiff. As response centres, they provide everything that the local responders need to manage an incident occurring, and, as multi-agency training centres, they provide the facilities for responder agencies in Wales to plan and to train together. Last year, the centre in Dyfed-Powys hosted an all-Wales event that focused on learning and sharing the lessons from the incidents that had occurred across Wales during the previous year.

[18] We feel that we are also adding value through effort in training and exercises across Wales, contributing funding, and taking forward training on an all-Wales level. The most recent example of this is the Exercise Wales Gold or Ymarfer Aur Cymru course, which has been developed jointly to provide representatives from all of those who would participate in a strategic gold command with the opportunity to train and exercise together ahead of something occurring in scenarios where they may meet when they act together.

[19] Finally, as Members, you will have had communication from the First Minister today and seen the evidence to the Silk commission, where the Welsh Government is presenting the case for the devolution of executive powers in relation to civil contingencies. The transfer of ministerial functions in Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, with full transfer of the necessary resources, would recognise the Welsh Ministers' existing de facto role and the co-ordination that the Welsh Government undertakes, and clarify accountability in the way that the Wales Audit Office recommendation suggests.

[20] **Darren Millar:** Thank you for that little bit of background. Just to go back to my original opening question, do you think that the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 was deficient in failing to refer to the Welsh Government and the role it might have in delivering emergency response and resilience on the ground?

[21] **Dr Milligan:** Christina may wish to add more, but the statutory guidance that the Cabinet Office prepared on the back of the Civil Contingencies Act, which is called 'Emergency Preparedness', has a chapter on Wales and the role that Welsh Ministers and the arrangements in Wales play as part of the overall picture. Similarly, it talks about Scotland and a number of other areas of preparedness.

[22] **Darren Millar:** That is not the question that I asked. I asked you whether you think that it is deficient. You have mentioned the fact that there is this chapter in this guidance that was attached to it, but you have just referred to the fact that the Welsh Government is specifically seeking some executive functions, which would indicate that it feels that the Act was insufficient in recognising the role that it plays. Would you concur with that?

[23] **Dr Milligan:** The position now is that we feel that the clarity that the Welsh Audit Office pointed to as being lacking could be given by a transfer of functions of those powers and responsibilities under Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. As to whether it was deficient at the time, there are now arrangements in place that we could build on in taking on those further responsibilities.

[24] **Darren Millar:** What discussion was there between the UK Government and the Welsh Government in the development of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004?

[25] **Dr Milligan:** There was quite a lot of discussion. Christina, do you want to pick this

up?

[26] **Ms Scott:** It predates my time, but there would have been close discussion, and a consequence of that would have been the requirement set out in the statutory guidance for London Ministers to consult Welsh colleagues on any regulations or guidance that has a significant impact in Wales. That is at the core of the development of policy and that is reflected in our day-to-day working relationships.

[27] **Darren Millar:** Was a specific request put by the Welsh Government at that time for these executive functions to be transferred when the Bill was being developed?

[28] **Dr Price:** No, I believe that there was not.

[29] **Darren Millar:** Okay, thank you.

[30] **Jocelyn Davies:** On a point of clarification, the progress being made on what is going into the Welsh Government response to Silk about civil emergencies in Wales is due to the deficiencies that have been identified by the auditor general in this report. Do I take it that that is what you said?

[31] **Dr Milligan:** The Silk evidence makes reference to the auditor general's report, which found that there was a lack of clarity in the arrangements that the current proposals to Silk would remedy.

[32] **Jocelyn Davies:** That came about because of this report; or did it just back up what the Welsh Government already knew and already thought?

[33] **Dr Milligan:** It is part of the evidence that is being presented. The other significant element is the way in which, since devolution and the assumption of a de facto role, with Ministers providing political leadership that the team has backed up, there is more of an expectation growing that there will be official leadership also in Wales—

[34] **Jocelyn Davies:** But the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is post devolution, so we have not had devolution since the Act. The Act is since devolution, so the co-ordinating role existed prior to the Act.

[35] **Dr Milligan:** Not quite in the same way, because the Act changed the arrangements for civil contingencies across the UK as a whole, replacing some very old legislation and, therefore, bringing into being a new form of co-ordination for a local response, with the emphasis on that. What has been evident is that there has been a role for us to play in Wales in bringing that together on a Wales scale, which perhaps was not envisaged ahead of the Act.

[36] **Darren Millar:** May I explore the close working relationship that you have mentioned between the Welsh Government and the UK Government, which we are pleased to hear about? What does that involve on a day-to-day basis in terms of activities?

[37] **Ms Scott:** Shall I kick off on that, and then you can say whether you agree, June? Certain things are set out in the guidance to us about how we need to formally consult with Welsh Ministers in terms of any formal documentation coming from London. In practice, the way that that works on a day-to-day basis is that there is representation from Wyn and colleagues on almost all of the senior committees that are developing policy in thinking about how that will be implemented. June is a member of the UK's CONTEST board, which meets quarterly and is responsible for our counter-terrorism strategy. We both sit on that together. Welsh colleagues are present at the main senior officials' meeting, which meets quarterly for resilience planning as well.

2.15 p.m.

[38] There is a great deal of day-to-day contact across a wide range of issues in taking forward generic plans that would apply across England and Wales, or specific projects in which we try to use Welsh energies to come up with pathfinder projects that we can also use across the rest of the country. So, it is both specific and general across all of our policy development. However, there is really nothing that we would do, certainly from the perspective of the civil contingencies secretariat, that would not involve and be open to Wyn and other colleagues—when we move into an activation period, and when we begin to identify possible disruptive challenges, such as last spring's potential impacts on fuel, or when we are thinking about winter and we have forecasts, there will always be an invitation to colleagues to be on the line in telephone conferences or to join us, where appropriate, in COBRA meetings, if we get to that stage. So, it is really hand in glove, and I would hope that colleagues feel that they can pick up the phone at any stage and ask for whatever they need from our end.

[39] **Darren Millar:** Clearly, Dr Milligan, you are part of the Department for Communities and Local Government, so how do you ensure that colleagues in other departments work in concert with you in preparing for emergency responses?

[40] **Dr Milligan:** I chair a civil contingencies group within the Welsh Government that involves colleagues from every other department who have some interest. The areas of health, energy, food and fuel are represented within the Welsh Government, and that means that we are able, through one channel, to talk to Cabinet Office about a wide range of Welsh Government responsibilities, and similarly to link in to the lead departments in Whitehall that would be dealing with those things. Alyson covers many of our responsibilities in terms of relationships with the UK Government. Would it be okay for Alyson to say something about that?

[41] **Darren Millar:** Yes. That would be helpful.

[42] **Ms Francis:** As Christina mentioned, there is a formal network in place, and I attend many of the meetings that she referred to. In fact, we are going through the suite of those at the moment. In addition to that formal framework, there is a much more informal framework in place as well. There is the regular sort of business that we talked about, but there are also a lot of ad hoc things that might be coming up, which mean that we pick up the phone to the relevant members of the team. So, there is a lot of ongoing discussion, if you like, at the formal level, periodically—every quarter at least—and there are meetings with the other devolved administrations. We have a multilayered relationship, I think it fair to say.

[43] Also in the Welsh Government, June alluded to the different sectors that are in place, and we make contact with the sector leads that are in every policy department and make sure that they are linked with their corresponding lead at the relevant Whitehall departments. We also link quite regularly with the Wales Office as another route into the UK Government, and with our colleagues just the other side of the border who are part of the Department for Communities and Local Government—as we know, things do not stop at our geographical boundaries, so we make sure that we have good working relationships there and meet periodically with our peers in those areas, too.

[44] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Thanks for that.

[45] **Jocelyn Davies:** We have heard some of the existing framework described today, and it is also set out in the report. This includes the Wales resilience forum, the local resilience fora, the joint emergency service groups and the partnership team. An awful lot of people

seem to be co-ordinating with an awful lot of other people. How is it that the inconsistencies and weaknesses identified in this report were not identified before? Or were they identified and we were just not aware of it?

[46] **Dr Milligan:** It would be fair to say that a lot of work is already in place. I referred to work that we are doing all the time to strengthen the various arrangements. You are right to point to it going on in different fora. I think that we would sometimes feel that to be a strain, but, at other times, we concur that it could lead to some confusion. An example it might be worth alluding to is work that was done recently—I think since the evidence-gathering period of the audit office report—with local resilience fora, in which they have undertaken peer reviews of each other's plans. That is, they were using, if you like, an aggregation of the very local work that is undertaken and examining that. I believe that Claire Parmenter will be one of your later witnesses. She plays a key role as the joint emergency service groups' co-ordinator in Wales, and she has been linking all of that together by making sure for us that there is a joint emergency service group presence on each of those local resilience fora peer reviews. So, an attempt is being made to ensure that each of the groups is sighted on the work that is being taken forward to strengthen it, but we have to do that consciously. We have to make an effort to make sure that that is linked through.

[47] **Jocelyn Davies:** Sorry if I gave you the impression that that that was some sort of criticism that there are all these different fora for discussion. My question really was: given that you have all of those people regularly meeting together and co-ordinating, why were the weaknesses that had been identified by the auditor general not identified before and addressed—or did the problems highlighted in this report come as a surprise to you?

[48] **Dr Milligan:** There is always a need to strengthen what is there, and I think that local responders would say the same—that there is always a need to refresh their plans, and to stay on top of them. Right from the very beginning, when the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 was introduced, and the statutory guidance, a role was envisaged for auditors and regulators of the individual responders, and it was specifically drawn out that some knowledge would come through that route. Certainly, talking to the Cabinet Office about it in preparation for today, we welcome the fact that the Wales Audit Office has taken the role that was envisaged, and has drawn this to light. What we now need to do is look to see whether the work undertaken in the peer reviews has addressed all of the concerns that have been brought forward in this report, and then consider how we might do some joint work further to support—

[49] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, were the weaknesses that have been identified known before, or not? Perhaps it is the way that I am wording the question.

[50] **Dr Milligan:** They were not known in the form of being brought to national view through the regulator or auditor's work. Locally, there has always been work going on to improve. It is a process of continually improving them.

[51] **Jocelyn Davies:** Perhaps I could ask a question of Christina Scott. Are there any reasons to assume that the problems identified here are unique to Wales, or are they something that you see elsewhere?

[52] **Ms Scott:** What we have seen over the last seven or eight years since the Act came into force is a process of maturation, really, of emergency planning. We had very old legislation in place prior to that and we learned the hard way during the foot-and-mouth-disease crisis and the fuel dispute back in the early 2000s, as you will remember, that planning was not being done properly and systematically, nor was it being done on a multi-agency basis. What the Act did, for the first time, was to put a set of duties on local responders, and very much running through its core is the principle of subsidiarity and saying that decisions really should be taken at the lowest appropriate level, but allowing for co-

ordination at a higher level where necessary.

[53] That has been a process of growing pains and, in some areas, senior people have come together around the table in local resilience fora and have actively gripped the agenda and built local capabilities and worked together to plan. In other areas, it has taken a little longer, but it has been a new learning process, I think, for everybody, and we are now, as June said, beginning to get helpful reports through from independent inspectorates, which is one invaluable route through which we can get some assessment back on a multi-agency basis. We also get that through peer review, which is still quite a new process, and we are trying to encourage LRFs to go and look at other LRFs—not necessarily neighbours, but ones that might have common risks. If you are an LRF with a nuclear power plant on your patch, you could actually go ahead and challenge someone at the other end of the country who also has a nuclear power plant on their patch, and you could test each other on your principles.

[54] We are also trying to encourage, where possible, those people who have responsibility for performance within individual category 1 or category 2 responders to use individual inspection regimes on a single responder basis, so that those people with a responsibility for inspecting the police, or with specific duties in relation to local authorities and others, can play a really valuable role not just in setting the priorities through strategic frameworks, but by then following through with inspection.

[55] There are two last things. The first is self-assessment. There is no statutory duty for self-assessment in the Act, but we do provide tools to encourage local authorities to assess themselves, and to know how they do against other local authorities. Then, I suppose, the final strand, which colleagues may want to pick up on, is what you learn from real life and from testing and exercises, with real life being one of the key learning experiences. If you are a mature, learning organisation, and working genuinely together on a multi-agency basis, you learn lessons, whether it is a table-top exercise, or whether it is a real response to a winter storm, and you feed that back into your planning round. So, it should be a continual process of evolution and development of plans to keep trying to improve capabilities and learning.

[56] **Jocelyn Davies:** What I asked was whether there was anything unique about Wales, or were the problems that we see here in the report—

[57] **Ms Scott:** From my perspective, there is nothing particularly difficult or problematic about Wales. These are challenges faced by local resilience fora right across the country.

[58] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, there are probably lessons—if there are lessons to be learnt from this report—that you as the Cabinet Office can apply to parts of England just because this report refers to Wales; there is nothing unique about it and you can apply the lessons to be learnt elsewhere.

[59] **Ms Scott:** There certainly may be some things, yes.

[60] **Gwyn R. Price:** With the First Minister calling for the transfer of powers, do you think that a transfer of powers to Wales will back up to category 1 responders and other responders across all organisations, because it is better to go for a one-stop-shop approach instead of jumping from one to the other? Do you think that the powers transferred to Wales will even this out?

[61] **Dr Milligan:** The transfer of functions of the part 1 responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 would, in practice, give Welsh Ministers the same responsibilities as Ministers currently have in Scotland. Currently, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 gives UK Ministers and Ministers in Scotland certain powers to require information from local resilience fora or local responders about their planning, and some powers to act on that, if

there is what the statutory guidance refers to as a systemic failure. So, it has always been envisaged that those powers would be used only in extremis, but those powers at the moment rest with UK Ministers and Scottish Ministers and not with Welsh Ministers. Transferring those functions would probably add some of the clarity to which the Wales Office draws attention as currently lacking under the current arrangements.

[62] **Gwyn R. Price:** So, you agree with the First Minister that clarity would bring accountability across the piece.

[63] **Dr Milligan:** The accountability already lies with the category 1 and category 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, and that would not be changed under any transfer of functions to Welsh Ministers.

[64] **Gwyn R. Price:** The level of clarity would.

[65] **Dr Milligan:** It may help clarity, and the monitoring functions and powers to act would then lie in Wales rather than elsewhere.

[66] **Jocelyn Davies:** I want to ask about the expectation set. What is your reaction to the reasons given by some emergency planning officers to justify why they have not used the Cabinet Office expectation sets? Some officers have said that they were not aware that they existed.

[67] **Ms Scott:** We provide a range of tools, and the bible is the Act and the statutory guidance. We have, over the last two or three years, provided some additional tools, which are all available publicly and on our website, to support local planners in various considerations, and we disseminate those.

[68] **Jocelyn Davies:** Were you surprised when the report said that there were some that emergency planning officers said they did not use for a range of reasons, including one which was cited because they did not know it existed?

[69] **Ms Scott:** That is something that we will need to take away and think about. We need to ensure that we are getting information out to people and that they are aware of the tools that are available. However, we would not necessarily expect everybody to use everything. As we have just discussed, in terms of providing assurance and audit, there may be a range of tools, so I would not necessarily expect absolutely everybody to do absolutely everything. It is for individual organisations and LRFs to think about what tools they are going to use to provide that assurance to their senior leaders.

[70] **Jocelyn Davies:** How is your emergency preparedness guidance being communicated across Wales? I know you said that it is publicly available and that it is on your website.

[71] **Ms Scott:** When we have done revisions and refreshers on the guidance that comes with the Act, first of all, it will have been cleared with Welsh Ministers and will then have been disseminated through Wyn and colleagues to local resilience forum partners.

2.30 p.m.

[72] **Jocelyn Davies:** Were you surprised that some emergency planning officers said that they were not aware of the expectations set?

[73] **Dr Milligan:** I was slightly surprised, as it is quite a chunky document. It was published a little while ago now, and I guess that it is not the sort of thing that you refer to on a daily basis; it is the sort of thing that you might have regard to when you are going into an

exercise to refresh your plans.

[74] **Dr Price:** Just to add to that, we have a process that was initiated by the Cabinet Office called a resilience gateway. When any piece of information or initiative is created at the UK level, it is cascaded down through the LRFs to every responder. The same happens with the expectations set; when it came out first, it went through that gateway, so everyone should be aware of it.

[75] **Jocelyn Davies:** What role do you expect the new police and crime commissioners to take in emergency planning arrangements?

[76] **Ms Scott:** The strategic policing requirement sets out a number of strategic objectives from the Home Secretary to police and crime commissioners. It makes a number of references to issues related to civil contingencies. First, it requires PCCs to have regard to the high-impact risks in the national risk assessment, which is the document that we produce annually. The purpose of putting that in there is to ensure that they maintain a focus on the need to think in an interoperable manner, so that they can work across police force boundaries and are willing and able to respond—and have plans in place locally—to deal with the higher-impact risks in the national risk assessment. Ministers have put into the strategic policing requirement quite a clear expectation that police and crime commissioners think about things that they may need to work on outside their areas and then support them.

[77] **Aled Roberts:** Gan droi yn ôl at y ddogfen disgwyliadau, rwy'n deall bod gwybodaeth wedi mynd allan o Swyddfa'r Cabinet yn Llundain, ond ai Llywodraeth Cymru sy'n trefnu'r hyfforddiant ar lefel genedlaethol yng Nghymru neu Swyddfa'r Cabinet? O ran y fforymau yng Nghymru, a ydych yn trefnu'r hyfforddiant yn ganolog? **Aled Roberts:** Returning to the expectations document, I understand that information has gone out from the Cabinet Office in London, but is it the Welsh Government that arranges the training at a national level in Wales, or is it the Cabinet Office? With regard to the fora in Wales, do you arrange the training centrally?

[78] **Ms Scott:** I will start with the national picture, if that is all right. There is a range of different training exercises that will take place and that it is important to get right for civil emergencies. At a national level, around twice a year, normally, we will do what we call a tier 1 exercise. This is an exercise that involves Ministers playing in COBRA over a period of two or three days and it will involve live play by people at all levels of Government, from Whitehall down to the local level.

[79] A couple of years ago, for example, we did a big exercise called Exercise Watermark. Somewhere in the region of 15,000 people were involved in that one-week exercise. It was a simulation of a flood along the east coast and various different parts of the country. Ministers were sitting in Whitehall with their Welsh colleagues on the phone, I believe, and it went right down to people flooding reservoirs in Lincolnshire and practising taking people off roofs with helicopters. These are expensive and big exercises. They tend to involve the top risks in the national risk assessments in terms of complexity, and scale of challenge and response. We use these exercises to test how the different layers talk to each other and how information moves up and down the chain between central Government and the local level; that is a really important thing to test. We did similar exercises in advance of the Olympics.

[80] Exercises and training can happen at other levels. Sometimes, they can happen with a civil contingencies hat on, and I will leave my Welsh colleagues to explain how it happens here. There are very good exercises that can be done on an LRF level that, again, try to bring together people to practise plans. We have the Emergency Planning College, which is part of my team, and that rolls out something called the gold standard. It brings along a computer-simulation package that goes into a local resilience forum. For two days, plans are tested, and

the package uses the real assets that those local resilience fora have to practice how they would respond to a flood or various different types of incidents.

[81] **Aled Roberts:** Rwy'n deall bod ymarferion yn digwydd ar wahanol lefelau, ond mae'n anghredadwy bod swyddogion yng Nghymru nad ydynt hyd yn oed yn gwybod am fodolaeth dogfen sy'n swnio'n eithaf elfennol. Felly, a ydych chi fel Llywodraeth Cymru yn rhoi hyfforddiant i'r swyddogion hyn ar lefel genedlaethol ac, os ydych, a yw'r hyfforddiant yn nodi bod hon yn ddogfen elfennol o ran disgwyliadau?

Aled Roberts: I understand that exercises take place at different levels, but it is unbelievable that there are officers in Wales who do not even know about the existence of a document that sounds quite fundamental. So, are you as the Welsh Government providing training to these officers at the national level and, if so, does the training state that this is a fundamental document in terms of expectations?

[82] **Dr Milligan:** I know that Wyn wants to say something about the training, and we will make sure that we address that particular point, and perhaps also something about how we work with the national exercises and what we did particularly in terms of Watermark, which might start to address some of those points.

[83] **Dr Price:** Watermark was a national exercise, but we also set up a few exercises in Wales, linked in at the local level—there were quite a few exercises built into that, including water rescue at Bala lake, which came in particularly handy, because everyone who was training at that exercise responded in reality in the Ceredigion floods. So, that level of training is important. Each LRF sets aside some funding for multi-agency training and exercises. For example, Dyfed-Powys local resilience forum has a training and co-ordination group and discusses its priorities for training at that level. We have also set aside funding of £50,000 a year at the national level in Wales for the Wales resilience forum to train people to the levels that they require. One of the key learning and development opportunities that we are putting in place now is Ymarfer Aur Cymru, or Exercise Wales Gold, where we are training strategic-level people for various scenarios in which they might find themselves in reality.

[84] **Aled Roberts:** I will just bring you back to the point that I am asking about, which is that a document is referred to in the report as an expectation set. The evidence in the report suggests that the use of that document had been very limited. As Jocelyn Davies has already stated, a number of officers did not even know that it existed. The question I am asking, therefore, is: was there training at a Welsh level regarding the existence of this document, or does the fact that its use has been very limited in Wales indicate that the document is a bit meaningless in any event?

[85] **Dr Milligan:** I would hope that it is not meaningless. We have said that we are slightly surprised that there are people who do not recognise it, because it forms part of the tools that the Cabinet Office provides to everybody involved in emergency planning and everyone with those statutory responsibilities. It has been made available through our own set of resilience documents that we make available to the resilience community in Wales. Clearly, we will have to do more to make sure that everybody is aware of it. That will form part of the actions that we take on the basis of this report, because it is something that they should be aware of.

[86] **Ms Scott:** The thing that I care that they know about is 'Emergency Preparedness', which is the statutory guidance, and 'Emergency Response and Recovery', which is the non-statutory guidance. Those are the two key documents that support the Act from my perspective. I would be very surprised if any emergency planner in Wales did not have copies of those on his or her desk. The expectation set was designed to help to draw out some of the themes from that, but the two key documents are the ones. You can test that later with the planners when you get them in, but those would be the ones that I would be most worried

about.

[87] **Darren Millar:** Julie, did you want to come in on this specific issue?

[88] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, I have further questions on training and something further to ask about the police commissioners.

[89] It does seem that there is not a very firm basis for the training in terms of the finance. Could you explain exactly how the training is financed and whether the money is definitely there for the training?

[90] **Dr Milligan:** The money is definitely there in terms of an annual budget for training in Wales. There is £50,000 available, of which the Welsh Government provides £20,000. The joint emergency support group provides £20,000 and the WLGA provides £10,000. That is then taken together into one fund, so that everyone can benefit from it. A training programme is agreed through the joint emergency services group, which is the emergency responders and senior officers. Then, between Wyn's team and Claire Parmenter—the joint emergency services group co-ordinator, who you will meet later—a programme of training is agreed and promulgated, and people from the whole community in Wales participate in that. Sometimes, as with last year, we will use some of those resources to hold an all-Wales event, in order to learn lessons. We would agree with what Christina has suggested, which is that the best lessons are the ones that are learned in practice. Therefore, last year, we pulled the whole community together to learn the lessons from the four incidents that dominated last year—Gleision, Chevron, Fforestfach and the Brynglas tunnels. There were presentations from those who had been active in leading each of those exercises, with opportunities for people to explore with the people who had been involved there exactly what was happening. That was not a very big call on those funds, but feedback from that event suggested that we got significant value from pulling that together at an all-Wales level. Therefore, that is an example. The Welsh gold training, which Wyn has already described, is another one that has been funded and prepared on a joint basis by us and the joint emergency services group, using those resources. Are there other examples that you wish to offer, Wyn?

[91] **Dr Price:** I think that Simpson identified that training is possibly one area that can be delivered nationally. However, training can be local, regional and national. There are some things that we can deliver nationally, such as developing a pool of people who can debrief emergencies. So, you have that. At a local level, each individual agency will need to train its staff and exercise its plans. At the LRF level, there is multi-agency funding, which each agency contributes to, to ensure that you have that multi-agency training programme in place. As June mentioned, we also have this national initiative, working with the joint emergency services group, whereby we are identifying things that we can deliver at a national level, and deliver it cost-effectively. Training is quite expensive; therefore, the more we pool resources, the better it gets for us.

[92] **Julie Morgan:** Do you feel that you have adequate money for training, and are there any gaps? Do you feel that there is more that should be done that you cannot afford to do with the funding that you have at present?

[93] **Dr Milligan:** That national money has been used pretty much in line with budget over recent years—it is slightly undersubscribed in some years, and slightly under pressure in others.

[94] **Dr Price:** We are getting better at delivering it, which makes it more cost effective. I will give you an example. The Wales gold exercise was considerably more expensive when we had to have the National Policing Improvement Agency to deliver it. What we are trying to do is deliver it ourselves, in a package that is tailored to each area of Wales. We are cutting

costs by doing that, which means that the money that we have goes much further.

[95] **Ms Scott:** This plays very much into the work that is going on, which is being led nationally, namely the joint emergency services interoperability programme. That looks specifically at the blue-light services, but is also trying to think about what are the common strands of doctrine and training that are required in response to complex, multi-agency events, and which need to be taught in each single service's basic entry training. If you start as a policeman or as an ambulance man, you get generic training for your whole job and there will be elements of your job, which may not come along often in your career, where you will have to respond to a challenging, complex event under pressure, working with other agencies. We are developing a programme now that looks at the doctrine that is taught individually to the police, the fire and the ambulance services, to ensure that the core, common elements are genuinely interoperable and that they are being taught the same thing, so that, when they turn up to an event, everyone knows what they need to do, and they all agree what they need to do. That is being taught through single service training. Therefore, that crucial, multi-agency training is important, but so too is ensuring that the single service training that people receive also supports that objective that we are trying to work towards.

2.45 p.m.

[96] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you. I would like to go back quickly to the police and crime commissioners. Given such a big change in the service as the introduction of the PCCs, I was surprised at the lack of response, in a way, regarding the difference that would make. I think, Christina, it was you who said that it was important for them to think across borders, or somebody said that. I wondered whether there were any more comments about the advent of this. Do you not think that they make any difference?

[97] **Ms Scott:** There is a strategic policing requirement and it is pretty clear that they need to have regard to working in a joined-up way across some of the biggest risks that the UK faces. It is still early days in terms of what day-to-day impact they will have in terms of setting objectives.

[98] **Julie Morgan:** So, you do not have any particular expectations?

[99] **Ms Scott:** Well, the expectations are set out in the strategic policing requirement. It is too soon to say how it is working on the ground.

[100] **Julie Morgan:** Okay. Thanks.

[101] **Darren Millar:** Before I come on to Mike, I know that Jocelyn had a further question.

[102] **Jocelyn Davies:** My questions is on expectations, coming back to the expectation sets, because there are 175 expectations within the expectation set, and 80 of those are mandatory and statutory. So, my question is for clarification, really, because these are not irrelevant things; they are very important things. Without the use of the expectation set—we have emergency planning officers saying that they do not use it for a range of reasons, but some do not know that it exists—what evidence do you have that the weaknesses revealed by this report would have been at hand for you? Surely, the expectation set is a vital tool for assessing the readiness to respond and the training needs and so on. These expectations sets are not put there for no reason. As nearly half of them are statutory and mandatory, I share the auditor general's concern that these sets are not being used. Therefore, without this report, I cannot see what evidence you would have had in terms of knowing where the weaknesses are in civil contingencies, which you described at the beginning of the meeting as having the protection of the public at their very core.

[103] **Dr Milligan:** I think that we are agreeing that we will take further effort to make the expectation set known, so that there would not be anybody involved in emergency planning who would be unaware of its existence. It is a tool that has been provided and therefore should be used.

[104] **Jocelyn Davies:** It is a tool that has 80 mandatory or statutory expectations within it.

[105] **Mike Hedges:** The disasters that we have had in Wales have been dealt with very effectively. That is something that should not be lost in this discussion. The auditor general refers to the 'very effective and skilful response' of the organisations involved in recent emergencies, including the Gleision disaster, the grounding of the MV Carrier cargo ship and the explosion at the Chevron oil refinery. I would add another one, the Fforestfach tyre fire, to that list. If you had been drawing up a disaster plan, two of those events would have probably have been in it, and two probably would not have been. They were unexpected events. I know, at least in the case of the Fforestfach fire, that the first port of call the local authority looked to was the Welsh Government, rather than the Cabinet Office. What involvement, if any, did the Cabinet Office or other UK Government departments have in the response to those four events?

[106] **Dr Milligan:** That could be a rather long answer, so we had better be careful of the time, Chair. There are all sorts of communications all the time about incidents that are happening. There are very few incidents that happen in Wales, if any at all, that can be managed entirely in Wales. I will say a little about why that would be the case in Fforestfach. Wyn may wish to offer some comment on the other ones. Fforestfach, as you know, raised important issues around environmental sampling. Environmental sampling resource is an area where we would have to look beyond our borders to ensure that we had the best expertise available. We would do that very keenly, because we would want to bring the best of the resource that is available, wherever it is in the UK, to that community. That is what happened in Fforestfach through the use of a scientific and technical advisory cell as part of the formal arrangements, which allow us to draw on all of the scientific expertise available throughout UK Government and its agencies. That is a particularly good example of where we would immediately call for technical expertise that goes beyond what is available locally. We would use the channels established through the Welsh Government's liaison with the UK Government to facilitate that.

[107] **Dr Price:** You are absolutely right: Fforestfach was an unforeseen risk that was handled very professionally on the ground and lessons were learnt from that. There was a national recovery workshop in London sometime after and Fforestfach was one of the featured areas of lessons learnt because of its uniqueness. Generally, there is a good relationship in terms of responding to emergencies. If you take the Gleision incident, for example, you will know that there was a very professional, dedicated and committed response to it. I sat on the goal group and saw that for myself. It was useful because we were a single point of contact, and the Cabinet Office and the Wales Office wished to support us as best they could. We had teleconference meetings with them to ensure that we could get anything required to help respond to that incident at a moment's notice. It reflected how closely we work when there are incidents on the ground in Wales and how well it worked in terms of communication links.

[108] **Aled Roberts:** Rwyf eisiau gofyn cwestiwn am arbenigedd technegol. Pa mor ddibynnol ydych ar Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd ynghylch asesiadau risg llifogydd? Bu nifer o achosion yng Nghymru dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf lle nad oedd **Aled Roberts:** I want to ask a question about technical expertise. How dependent are you on the Environment Agency in relation to flood risk assessments? There have been several cases in Wales over the past year where the Environment Agency had not

Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd wedi rhagweld risg. Er enghraifft, yn Rhuthun, yn y gogledd, roedd wedi asesu'r risg fel un isel iawn ac eto cafodd dros 100 o dai eu heffeithio gan lifogydd. Felly, pa mor ddibynnol ydych chi ar Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd ac a oes gofyn erbyn hyn i rai o'r asesiadau risg gael eu hail-wneud?

foreseen risk. For example, in Ruthun, in north Wales, it had assessed the risk as being very low, but over 100 homes were affected by flooding. So, how dependent are you on the Environment Agency and is there a requirement now for some risk assessments to be redone?

[109] **Dr Milligan:** We are reliant on the Environment Agency, whose statutory responsibility it is to prepare for flooding and to provide risk assessments for communities. It provides risk maps that are used for planning at a local level and by Government at a Wales and UK level. Its technical expertise is used to inform that work, along with the expertise of the Met Office. We are reliant on them for flood risk advice.

[110] **Aled Roberts:** Ers y problemau â llifogydd dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf, a ydych chi wedi mynd yn ôl at yr asiantaeth i ofyn a yw'r asesiadau'n gywir?

Aled Roberts: Since the flooding problems over the past year, have you gone back to the agency to ask whether the assessments are accurate?

[111] **Dr Milligan:** The response that I can best offer to that question is that immediately after last summer's flooding, there was a meeting of the Wales resilience forum. Chris Mills, the senior person in Environment Agency Wales, came to present the agency's assessment, which included the assessment of its own risk assessments. He also talked about the further work that the agency was doing to draw on the work done in Lincolnshire on widespread coastal flooding, which was both a risk and a reality there. He talked about how the agency was using some of the new techniques that had been developed there and bringing them into risk assessment more widely across Environment Agency Wales. I am speaking on his behalf now, because that is something that I have heard him talk about, rather than something that I have seen directly reported. That was encouraging, because it indicated to the forum that it was reaching out to bring in new expertise and learning from incidents elsewhere.

[112] **Aled Roberts:** Os ydych yn cynnal prosiectau sy'n ymwneud â dysgu gwersi, pryd byddwch chi'n edrych ar y gwersi sydd i'w dysgu yng Ngheredigion ac yn y gogledd? Roedd Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd wedi gwneud asesiad yn 2010 a ddangosodd fod y risg o lifogydd yn isel.

Aled Roberts: If you are running projects in relation to learning lessons, when will you look at the lessons to be learnt in Ceredigion and north Wales? The Environment Agency had made an assessment in 2010 showing that the risk of flooding was low.

[113] **Dr Price:** There has been a debriefing on the Ceredigion incident and a report has been produced with all agencies involved. The north Wales debriefing is due shortly. A similar process will be put in place and all agencies will feed into that and any lessons learnt will be identified and recommendations will be taken forward. So, that process is in place.

[114] **Darren Millar:** There was also the disruption on the major trunk road network in north Wales, and I know that work is going on to remedy that.

[115] **Mike Hedges:** I am glad that you have mentioned the tyre fire, because I was going to do so. Had it not been for the local authority being prepared to take the risk of funding the action to deal with that fire, it would still be burning now. The fire service and everybody else sat at the back asked who was going to fund it, and the chief executive of the local authority took the risk of funding it on behalf of the local authority, in the hope of getting some of the money back from the Welsh Government. Do you not think that there should be a process by which the funding could be made available at a much earlier date? In a different local

authority area in the same situation, the fire may still be burning several months later because no-one was prepared to fund it upfront.

[116] **Dr Milligan:** The arrangements for reimbursing local authorities are intended to offer that reassurance and allow people to go ahead in the knowledge that there are arrangements in place so that a claim can be made and it will be reimbursed, as it was through a section 31 grant in respect of Swansea and the Fforestfach incident.

[117] **Mike Hedges:** Do you think that Swansea has been fully reimbursed?

[118] **Dr Milligan:** I believe that Swansea has been reimbursed in respect of the business case that it put forward. I am afraid that I do not have the exact figures with me.

[119] **Mike Hedges:** If I can be helpful, Swansea does not think that it has been fully reimbursed. It took that risk for the benefit of the community. When relying on a local authority being prepared to take that huge financial risk, especially some of the smaller authorities where it would mean a much larger part of their budgets, do you not think that there needs to be some mechanism by which you can give them reassurance at the beginning that the money is going to be found? Swansea did not feel that it had that reassurance at the beginning.

[120] **Dr Milligan:** The arrangements that we have in place relate to emergency financial assistance for the immediate impacts of an incident. Further discretionary funding, including a section 31 grant, for longer term recovery or, as in the case of Swansea, for something that was novel. Therefore, there was some reimbursement of additional costs, over and above the contingency funding that the local authority might be expected to make.

[121] **Jocelyn Davies:** Section 31 of what legislation are you referring to?

[122] **Dr Milligan:** Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

[123] **Jocelyn Davies:** Sorry, I thought that you were referring to the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

[124] **Dr Milligan:** No, it is not a civil contingencies grant.

[125] **Darren Millar:** How do people access the emergency financial assistance scheme? Is it easy to trigger a payment under that?

[126] **Dr Milligan:** It is well known within the local government finance community and the civil contingencies community as the mechanism by which local government makes provision within its own resources for emergency planning, because money was transferred into the revenue support grant for emergency planning following the implementation of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. So, that is for planning. There is a recognition that you cannot plan for everything and you do not know where incidents are going to occur, as in Fforestfach. Therefore, there should be a mechanism in place so that local government—or any other responder covering it from its own resources—is prepared to respond and spend the moneys necessary but, in the case of local government, with the reassurance that there is the emergency financial assistance fund from which it can seek compensation. There are particular rules and thresholds in relation to the level of its own funding that it would have been expected to bear before becoming eligible for the emergency financial assistance. I think that the arrangements are fairly well known within the local government community.

[127] **Mike Hedges:** Could we have a note saying what percentage of the money that Swansea spent was reimbursed?

[128] **Dr Milligan:** Yes, I would be happy to provide that.

[129] **Darren Millar:** It would be interesting to get a number of examples from some of the recent emergencies that have accessed the fund to show how consistently it is applied. Sometimes, it is not a public sector partner that is responding to an event: it might be the British Red Cross or WRVS, or other agencies that are out there providing front-line support. Are they able to access any support?

[130] 3.00 p.m.

[131] **Dr Milligan:** No, not emergency financial assistance. The emergency financial assistance scheme is for local authorities that respond. So, that is part of the local government finance system.

[132] **Aled Roberts:** Hoffwn symud ymlaen at yr agenda rhanbarthol. Pa mor llwyddiannus ydych chi wedi bod o ran derbyn ymateb positif oddi wrth awdurdodau lleol? A oes problemau oherwydd bod rhai awdurdodau bach yn anfodlon â cholli rheolaeth dros gynllunio ar gyfer argyfwng? Yn ogystal, a oes tueddiad i rai awdurdodau mawr feddwl ei fod yn bosibl iddynt barhau ar eu liwt eu hunain?

Aled Roberts: I would like to move on to the regional agenda. How successful have you been in getting a positive response from local authorities? Are there problems because some smaller authorities are unwilling to lose control over emergency planning? In addition, is there a tendency for some larger authorities to think that they can continue on their own?

[133] **Dr Milligan:** I will ask Alyson to fill in the detail on what I think that you are referring to as the Simpson work, or the work under the local government compact, which is about corralling the resources at a regional level where that would seem more appropriate than at a local level. That is what has been agreed between Government and local government in respect of emergency planning. Both parties have agreed a programme of work to look at whether this could be done better at the local-resilience-forum scale in Wales: so, four times instead of 22 times in the case of local government. All of the business cases for the first stage of the Simpson work are now in, but I will let Alyson provide the detail.

[134] **Ms Francis:** Following the agreement of the compact, which June mentioned, in each LRF area we asked for a task and finish group to be set up, as a sort of subset of the LRF. Those groups are to look at a number of things and involve a range of different partners. Over last summer, each of those task and finish groups considered how to evaluate where they were at in terms of their existing collaboration; assessed areas for improvement—and each area identified some of those, and it will not surprise you that there was some commonality across the piece; identified further efficiencies that could be made; and also considered what impact any changes might have on the service delivery.

[135] In that context, each of the LRF areas came up with a business case, to which June alluded. Each business case identified a range of options for delivering the civil contingency arrangements that we have been speaking about. Those business cases were signed off by the task and finish groups and were discussed regularly at the LRF meetings, which took place during that time. They were also signed off by each local authority area that would be affected by the initial commitment around the regionalisation of emergency planning at a local authority level.

[136] So, each local authority area has had an input into those business cases and signed them off, and each area has come up with its preferred option for going forward. Those were scrutinised at the oversight board in January and agreed at that point. Each of the areas has

come up with what they think is going to work for them and arrangements are in place in each one to ensure that each local authority is engaged in the work. Where there may be some big local authorities, as you mentioned, in some of the smaller ones, what is happening is that they are working together to try to reduce any duplication of effort, particularly in planning arrangements. They are also working to ensure that a lot of knowledge within that LRF area is shared, so they are strengthening the resilience of their resilience arrangements. That is the work that has been done so far. They were signed off, as I mentioned, in January, so we are now in the implementation phase, which takes us through to September. From the summer, we will be looking at the commitment in terms of the regionalisation of multi-agency partners. So, going forward, local authorities will be engaged again through that process.

[137] **Aled Roberts:** Rwy'n derbyn eich bod yn awyddus i weld patrwm o ranbarthau'n datblygu, ac maent wedi gwneud ceisiadau yn ôl eu cynlluniau busnes unigol. Wrth feddwl am rai o'r gwersi a ddysgwyd o'r consortia addysg, lle mae patrymau gwahanol wedi datblygu—ac mae'r Gweinidog yn cwestiynu a yw'r patrymau gwahanol yn creu system effeithiol—hoffwn ddwyn eich sylw at dystiolaeth cydlynedd y gogledd, sy'n dweud, ar ôl ei 10 mis cyntaf yn y swydd,

Aled Roberts: I accept that you are keen to see a pattern of the regions developing, and they have made cases according to their individual business plans. Thinking about some of the lessons that have been learnt from the education consortia, where different patterns have emerged—and the Minister is questioning whether the different patterns are creating an effective system—could I draw your attention to the evidence from the north Wales co-ordinator, who says, after her first 10 months in the job, that

[138] 'Mae lle i wella bob amser ac rwy'n credu bod strwythurau gwahanol Ysgrifenyddiaeth pob Fforwm Lleol Cymru Gydnerth yn rhannol yn rhwystro i raddau helaethach o lwyddiant'.

'There is always room for improvement and I think that the differing structures of the LRF Secretariats are in part a barrier to a greater degree of success'.

[139] A oes perygl, wrth i chi adael i'r rhanbarthau hyn ddatblygu mewn ffyrdd gwahanol, y bydd hyn yn rhwystro llwyddiant ar lefel genedlaethol yng Nghymru?

Is there a danger, as you permit these regions to develop in different ways, that that will prevent success at the national level in Wales?

[140] **Ms Francis:** When the oversight board met last September, one of the challenges that it had was about how we ensure that best practice is shared across each of the four areas, and if something is considered best practice in one area, what is the case for it not being best practice in another. As the areas looked at the business cases and the detail within them, they found that what is right for one is not right for the other, and there are a number of reasons for that: some are down to geography and others to risk. We have talked today about the different levels of activity and engagement that are in place to ensure that we try to draw the best out of the best and share that more widely, where it is appropriate to do so. So, it is right that each area has considered a range of possible, valid options and thought about what is best for them, and recognised the things that are good in other areas and that there are mechanisms in place to draw them in, but I do not think that there is one size that fits all; it is about recognising the complexities that are in place and the differences that there are across Wales. I was thinking of two points as I was talking, but they have gone out of my head.

[141] **Aled Roberts:** Do not worry; that happens to me as well.

[142] **Ms Scott:** While Alyson is drawing her thoughts together, I would add that that is true across England as well. So, there are different approaches to meeting the same requirements under the Act. That is entirely consistent.

[143] **Dr Milligan:** The other thing that I would say that I recall from looking at that, Alyson, is that they were in a different starting place. In north Wales, for example, they had already travelled some considerable distance to organise themselves at the local resilience forum level before the Simpson work came along. In south Wales, it is fair to say that they were already starting to work virtually and to share the expertise that they had in a different way than they were in north Wales. Both were saying, ‘This is working really well for us; this is much stronger’. So, there is something about respecting the starting place and not requiring people to go back and introduce a new model when they have already begun to evolve something. It is a difficult balance, because there is a neatness in having the same structural arrangement everywhere, but there is also something about local determination, even at a regional level, that is quite important.

[144] **Ms Francis:** The point that I was going to add earlier was that, even though there are different approaches, there are similarities as well through the business cases that have come through. Three out of the four are looking at a model that is drawing personnel, resources and expertise together almost in a virtual way, rather than creating set, individual-type teams. So, some similarity as well as difference is in place as a result.

[145] **Aled Roberts:** A oes rhwystrau ar lefel genhedlaeth yng Nghymru sydd yn effeithio ar y gwaith hwn o ddatblygu’n rhanbarthol? Rwyf eisiau darllen rhan o’r dystiolaeth i chi eto.

Aled Roberts: Are there any barriers at the national level in Wales that affect this work of regional development? I want to read a part of the evidence to you again.

[146] ‘Mae rhai o’n gweithgorau’n aros am ddeddfwriaeth genedlaethol neu ganllawiau ac ymddengys ei fod yn eithriadol o araf yn cael ei gyhoeddi. Mae hyn yn peri oedi cynllun gwaith y grŵp rhag symud yn ei flaen ac rydym yn dechrau gweld efallai y bydd yn rhaid i’r grwpiau hyn fod yn segur nes y bydd y gwaith papur cenedlaethol wedi ei orffen.’

‘Some of our workgroups are awaiting national legislation or guidance that seems to be exceptionally slow in being published. This causes a delay in the group moving forward with their work plan and we are starting to recognise that these groups may need to fall dormant until the national paperwork is finalised.’

[147] A yw’n sôn yn y fan hon am waith ar lefel genedlaethol yng Nghymru neu ym Mhrydain?

Is this referring to work at a national level in Wales or in Britain?

[148] **Dr Milligan:** I am not quite sure what it is referring to.

[149] **Aled Roberts:** Okay. Perhaps I will ask the forum.

[150] **Dr Milligan:** Yes, maybe you should. There will always be something in progress. There is always a suite of guidance being prepared; for example, pandemic flu guidance is being updated at the moment and further work is ongoing on some of the all-Wales guidance. There always will be ongoing work and if we were to wait for all that to be in place, we would never move forward on any of the other issues.

[151] **Aled Roberts:** The suggestion here is that the work of the regional groups is being hampered by outstanding documentation—that is what it sounds like—and it is not clear to me whether that is at the Welsh level or not. Let us put it this way: are you aware of anything that is affecting the opportunity for these groups to develop at the pace that you might expect them to?

[152] **Dr Price:** The only thing that I can think of is the LRF pandemic flu guidance, which is due. That should not hinder the work that still needs to be taken on at the local level, however. There is always work to be done. The risks are known. The guidance will help in structuring that, but it should not act as a barrier or be used in any way to stop work being done at the local level. There is always a need for local-level work to be done.

[153] **Aled Roberts:** Mae gennyf gwestiwn cyflym. Wrth i ni symud ymlaen at newidiadau i lefel ranbarthol, a oedd y cynlluniau busnes yn amlinellu'n glir y costau tebygol, y manteision a hwyrach risgiau posibl wrth symud i system ranbarthol? **Aled Roberts:** I have a quick question. As we move on to regionalisation changes, did the business plans outline clearly the likely costs, advantages and the possible risks in moving to a regional system?

[154] **Ms Francis:** They completed full business cases, including information about costs, benefits and risks, and so, as part of the implementation, we will track those elements going through to September.

[155] **Mike Hedges:** Just over a decade ago, I was the chair of a joint emergency planning committee covering Bridgend, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. One of the problems that existed there was that we were all in the South Wales Police region, but we were in two different fire service regions. What proposals do you have to ensure that any of these things that are joined together actually have exactly the same blue-light organisations involved, so that you would be talking to the same people, rather than having a joint emergency planning group that deals with two different fire services or two different police services?

[156] **Dr Milligan:** It has been agreed that the regional arrangements will be at local resilience forum level. That is the one that has been established under the Act right across England and Wales, and it aligns with the police force areas. Now, in Wales, as you know, we have four police forces and three fire and rescue services. However, the local authorities do align, in aggregate, with police force areas, so it is only—and I say 'only' not because it is not important, but because it is the fire and rescue service one that we are already well used to working with, and which we will have to continue working with if we use the local resilience forum geography.

[157] **Darren Millar:** May I ask another question? Obviously, there are other key risks around Wales that might require the involvement in the resilience fora of people who are not from public sector organisations—Wylfa power station, for example, and Welsh Water, perhaps, from a flooding and drainage perspective. On water, it is much easier in Wales than it is in England, of course, because we have only one responsible body. Then, perhaps caravan park owners would need to be included in flood-risk areas. How are they involved in the local partnerships and resilience fora?

[158] **Dr Milligan:** There is a requirement in the statutory guidance for the local resilience fora to involve in their work what are called, in the case of the utilities, category 2 responders as well as others, including communities and the voluntary sector, where it has a resource that can assist in building overall resilience. So, they would be involved in the local resilience forum meetings and in its processes.

[159] **Darren Millar:** On utilities, okay, I understand that and their key role, if you like. What about caravan park owners, for example? We saw a caravan park in Ceredigion that had been flooded out. Other caravan parks in Wales are in very low-lying areas that are at a severe risk of flooding. What is being done to engage with those key areas of risk that are not part of the public sector or the former public sector?

[160] **Dr Milligan:** They would be part of the community that would be recognised—

[161] **Darren Millar:** Are caravan park owners being engaged?

[162] **Dr Milligan:** I do not know. I would hope that local resilience fora are engaging with those in communities who have a direct interest. Again, from the same presentation that I referred to earlier, there was quite a lot about caravan parks being affected and the need for the Environment Agency to work closely with the commercial interests involved. From that discussion, it would seem to me that the Environment Agency was certainly involved with the commercial interests around caravan tourism. On whether that extends to local resilience fora, I cannot give you that assurance because I do not know.

3.15 p.m.

[163] **Darren Millar:** With respect, you are the person responsible at the Welsh Government level for making sure that we have sufficient resilience in place. Surely, you ought to know this, in terms of whether these key areas of risk are at the table actively involved in discussions about minimising risk to life, at the end of the day, in those sorts of areas in the future. Is that not a fair comment?

[164] **Ms Scott:** The statutory duty is on the LRF, not on June.

[165] **Darren Millar:** I appreciate that.

[166] **Ms Scott:** On the whole, caravan owners and other owners of crowded places generally, such as shopping centres, sports centres and so on, will not be formal members of local resilience fora. They are not there as category 2 responders. Category 2 responders are the big utilities and others that you mentioned. As June said, there will be an expectation that local planners, in thinking about the risks in their areas, would be thinking and talking to the community in its broadest possible sense, and that would include, where there are low-lying areas, the communities that might be affected by possible flood events, if that is the nature of the risk in that area. I would not necessarily expect a systematic discussion with caravan park owners if they are sitting on top of a hill and there are no risks that might impact there. So, it is as driven by the risk profile.

[167] **Darren Millar:** However, they are involved in parts of England, for example.

[168] **Ms Scott:** They would be; absolutely. In Lincolnshire, where you have a particular risk, which is the risk of east-coast flooding and a large number of caravan parks, there are well-developed plans for warning and informing people who may be itinerant populations coming into the area and who are not on landlines and so on. There are plans for how to get urgent information to them about a possible east coast surge. That is exactly the focus of Lincolnshire LRF, and it will be talking to park owners.

[169] **Darren Millar:** However, you are not able to tell me whether that same level of involvement is taking place in Wales, June.

[170] **Dr Milligan:** I am able to reflect the Environment Agency presentation, which I regard as a positive report to our formal forum, where it was learning lessons from Lincolnshire about the way that it had gone about engaging communities. Yes, it is for the local resilience forum to decide who to involve, but my expectation would be that that would be those involved in the community at risk.

[171] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Did you want to ask another question, Mike?

[172] **Mike Hedges:** It is a simple question. How does local authority expenditure, on a per authority basis, vary from the amount of money that is in the standard spending assessment for civil contingency? Also, when I last dealt with the issue, civil contingency was dealt with on a per head of population basis, rather than by taking into account possible risks. I do not know if that is still the case, whether the risk factor is in it or whether it is still on a per head basis.

[173] **Dr Milligan:** The arrangements for the funding of local government in respect of civil contingencies link up with what we were saying earlier about the Act. When we moved away from the civil defence grant, there was a transfer from the UK Government to the Welsh Government, through a Barnett formula transfer, so that moneys could be placed in Wales in the same way as they were about to be placed in England in the revenue support grant, so that local authorities could use them as part of the totality of their spending to meet civil contingency responsibilities. That transfer took place in 2008-09 in Wales and is distributed on the normal revenue support grant formula, as you suggest.

[174] **Mike Hedges:** The revenue support grant formula, as Aled Roberts will confirm, varies enormously. Some of it depends on population. Take road funding, for example; it is 50% road length, and 50% population. Education is other things. So, the grant is not totally on population. There is rurality, sparsity, deprivation. They are all thrown in there. I take it from this that this is solely on population. Do you not think that perhaps it needs looking at, so that those authorities with greater risk have better funding than those with a lesser risk?

[175] **Dr Milligan:** The funding, which was transferred from the UK Government and then transferred into the revenue support grant, is for emergency planning. While there is a relationship between the local risk assessment and the plans that are put in place, the money is to support planning arrangements rather than to support a particular response to a particular risk, since we would not know where a risk would be realised, such as in your example of Fforestfach. So, one would not know where to put specific money in advance to respond to a particular incident that was going to occur.

[176] **Mike Hedges:** Down in Pembrokeshire, they would have to plan for oil spillage problems; they would not have to plan for that in Denbighshire.

[177] **Dr Milligan:** That is right, but in Ynys Môn they would have to plan because they have a nuclear power station, and they would have to plan for flooding in some coastal areas of Wales. So, people are planning for different things, and they are all funded through the revenue support grant for their planning function, rather than in relation to a specific risk that might occur in that particular area of Wales.

[178] **Ms Scott:** For sites that are covered by the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001 or the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999—specific large sites that have specific safety legislation attached to them—there are additional requirements on people on those sites to have plans in place and to work with local authorities and others. With regard to money, we really struggle when people in Westminster ask us the same sets of questions, as the money that goes to local authorities for planning is only a very small part of the amount of money flowing through to provide capabilities and plans across the emergency services and all of the other partners that are involved. It is very difficult to ask the ambulance service, ‘How much money do you put into civil contingencies?’, because the service is building a capability across a range of risks, some of which are about shipping old ladies to hospital. The same piece of kit is used to respond to a major complex incident. So, it is as important for those of us who can influence some of these other responders to try to ensure that when the police or fire and rescue services are thinking about their strategic funding priorities, they have regard to the national level risks and the really complex situations, as well as to the day job.

[179] **Gwyn R. Price:** Why has the Cabinet Office not produced its own guidance on the number and capability of emergency planning officers and other human resources that it would expect to see category 1 responders putting in place?

[180] **Ms Scott:** The Act sets out a range of duties on local resilience forums relating to risk assessment and planning. The view is that it would not be appropriate to be prescriptive about the numbers of individuals that are required to do a task. That task will vary in size depending on the LRF area, it may vary in complexity over time and it would be a slightly artificial exercise to simply say that everyone needs to have three emergency planning officers.

[181] **Gwyn R. Price:** Do you not think that it leaves a grey area that is confusing? Who do you think should give guidance to planning officers?

[182] **Ms Scott:** We set pretty clear guidance on the standards that we expect and the types of tasks that LRFs need to conduct. How they choose to go about doing that and which partners in the LRF contribute and in what ways is down to local decision making. The view is that decisions taken locally will best reflect the local geography, the risks and the requirements at a local level, and the individual skills and expertise that can be brought to the table. It is not possible to be prescriptive from London as to what is right for LRFs around the country.

[183] **Gwyn R. Price:** Do you believe that there are enough guidelines for local authorities that are not using them?

[184] **Ms Scott:** I suspect that many local authority emergency planning officers would say that there is rather too much guidance coming from London as it is. There is clear guidance in the statutory guidance, and we can provide additional guidance if there is an appetite for it. The expectations are set, as challenges, to make sure that everyone is clear about them, and that we can help them cope with any complexities.

[185] **Gwyn R. Price:** So, you do not agree with the auditor general's report that there is no guidance available to help category 1 responders?

[186] **Ms Scott:** For the numbers of emergency planning officers, that is correct, if that was the point in his report.

[187] **Darren Millar:** The national occupational standards for civil contingencies developed by Skills for Justice have been promoted in Wales. How has that been done and why are more local authorities not adopting that guidance?

[188] **Dr Milligan:** That is guidance that is provided at a UK level in terms of the work of the sector skill panel, and it is available to local authority professionals in the same way that they would draw on advice from other sector skills panels, namely through the professional networks. I guess it is back to expectations: you would expect those who are going to fulfil that role professionally to draw on those occupational standards.

[189] **Darren Millar:** Has the Welsh Government been actively promoting the adoption of that guidance by local authorities?

[190] **Dr Milligan:** It goes back to making available the information about them rather than making requirements of people. It is about allowing them to make their own choices about what is there for them as professionals.

[191] **Darren Millar:** Okay. I think we have covered most of the training side of things, but

Julie has a question on information technology.

[192] **Julie Morgan:** What methods are in place to make sure that people share new information and new technology and are able to take advantage of it?

[193] **Dr Milligan:** There are two ways in which new technology can help in this sphere. We have benefitted from and been in the lead in testing some of the new technology for interoperability between emergency services, and, if I may, I will ask Wyn to mention that. It is one of the areas to which Christina referred where we have been a pathfinder for the UK. More broadly, another area of new technology that has become a very current topic of conversation among emergency planning and civil contingency communities is the use of social media. This was one of the areas of dialogue that was particularly evident in the event last year, which I mentioned, where we pulled together the experience from the four incidents that had happened. It was really interesting listening to those people who had been leading those incidents because there were both negative and positive impacts of social media. For example, on the positive side, there was the opportunity to get messages out really quickly about things that were happening, and the challenge, if you like, was to be professional in doing that and using that well.

[194] The Environment Agency has been at the forefront in its warning and informing on flooding, and has been using text technology, and there is now the next stage for that. So, there was a real appetite for that and work is now being done in one of the Wales resilience forum work streams to identify best practice and make sure that each of the local resilience fora are available to pick up best practice on the positive use of social media.

[195] However, equally, a real challenge was presented to those who had been leading the response to those incidents. I think of Gleision in particular, where social media was being used to pass information very quickly that perhaps would have been available in a more formal way previously. Therefore, those who were leading on the ground were finding that information was being circulated ahead of the arrangements they had in place to deal with it. That was something on which they again wanted to increase their professional competence so that they could understand how to deal with a real appetite for information coming from the scene of an incident.

[196] I mention both of those because it is double-edged, in that social media can be really advantageous in getting messages out where you want a community to become aware and take action—and there are obvious examples of where that would be good—but there are other circumstances where you are managing information about an incident that still has uncertainty and where you do not want information to start moving too quickly.

[197] **Julie Morgan:** Who would be putting forward that information that was going up too quickly?

[198] **Dr Milligan:** People who are around the scene. So, there would be people saying that they had seen families attending at a family centre, or that they had seen particular resources arriving and then making assumptions about what those resources would mean. The time of those who are strategically managing the incident then gets caught up in denying or sending rebuttals to messages that are already transmitting. That is important to the extent that it was fed back to us from the event that we held, and it has become a very active work stream with a lot of local interest. We need to be able to manage better and to increase the way that we can collectively use that. I do not believe that that is unique to Wales.

3.30 p.m.

[199] **Ms Scott:** It is an exciting area. We are trying to get to the front of the curve. One

challenge is situational awareness and how we can use social media to get better situational awareness, particularly in wide-area incidents. For example, we have been talking to Yahoo! and Google—and Google is a very good example—about how you can use search terms to get information about what is going on on the ground. Therefore, the number of people in an area who are searching for ‘winter vomiting’, or whatever, gives you a sense of—and might give you a sense before you get the clinical impact—the number of people who are falling sick with something. How we tap into that and use that across organisations to try to source situational awareness before it starts hitting us, in the response sense, is exciting and difficult.

[200] **Dr Milligan:** It is not only an incident. For example, one of the best examples at UK level this year, in terms of winter resilience, has been the Torfaen County Borough Council ‘In the Depot’ video, which was put out through social media. This was almost a reality picture of the sorts of things that they were doing and which, therefore, communities should have been doing, to prepare for winter. I believe that it got about 400,000 hits.

[201] **Ms Scott:** We were musing just before we came in that that video had pretty much as many hits as the Met Office’s ‘Get Ready for Winter’ campaign. It will probably have had an impact on people’s behaviour, because you want people to shift their behaviour in advance of a risk crystallising, and to think about what that might mean for them and their families. Therefore, something that gets to people in the way in which they want to receive information, rather than it being pushed out from central Government, is very exciting, if you can do that right.

[202] **Julie Morgan:** So it is an evolving field.

[203] **Dr Milligan:** New technology has loads of potential. Do you want to describe quickly some of the things that we have been testing, Wyn?

[204] **Darren Millar:** Could you please be brief? We are up against the clock, and there is one more area that we want to cover.

[205] **Dr Price:** Social media can be a help and a hindrance. You have to manage misinformation. What we are trying to do at the Wales level is to set in place a protocol where you get definitive advice from the emergency services. They are working together to monitor social media and to make certain that the positive elements of social media are put forward.

[206] **Dr Milligan:** Did you also want to say something about the electronic transfer of information in incidents, Wyn?

[207] **Dr Price:** This is one of the pilot schemes, working with the Cabinet Office. It is data electronic transfer between emergency services, and it is being piloted in the Newport area. It will hopefully be rolled out once that pilot scheme is finished. Therefore, it is positive in the work that we are doing, using new technology.

[208] **Darren Millar:** There are also iPhone apps that are being developed by the Environment Agency, for example, on flood risk. To what extent are those being marketed, or promoted, among people who live in areas of flood risk? I live in a flood risk area and no-one has ever approached me to encourage me to download the app or anything like that. Furthermore, in terms of updating individuals—I see that Mike is laughing; he thinks that his area will not be flooded—and ensuring that people have access to the latest news on flooding, or any other risk in their area, we have the flood alert system in Wales, which has been used effectively. However, it fails at times, because some people do not register with it, or they move into an area and they have been missed out of the work that was done five years ago to get people registered. How are we helping to overcome those sorts of challenges? You can tell us about what is being done elsewhere.

[209] **Ms Scott:** I will mention two broad points. First, we are trying to move towards an opt-out system rather than an opt-in system for flood areas, so that you will automatically get that push-call through. The second thing, which we are in the process of doing now, is kicking off pilot schemes for what is called 'cell broadcasting'. That means pushing alert messages through to mobile phones in a geographical area without someone being required to register. It will be good if we can get that right. The Dutch and the Israelis do it—they are the only people in the world who do it at present. If we can get something like that in the UK, it could be used not just for flooding, but for other risks, and it would catch transient populations. Therefore, you would not need to have a landline in a geographical area. However, it is fiendishly complicated and probably quite expensive. Therefore, we are kicking off, we have some funding, and we are going to do some pilot schemes this year.

[210] **Darren Millar:** That is being looked at by the UK Government, is it?

[211] **Ms Scott:** The Cabinet Office tries to come in where there are complicated new technologies that require some pump-priming. We can help to kick things off and do the pilot schemes, before something is rolled out more widely. The work that we did with Wales is a good example. If we can get it right in Newport, the rest of the country can also benefit, potentially.

[212] **Darren Millar:** In terms of an opt-out system, rather than an opt-in system on flood risk, could we take that forward in Wales sooner than other parts of the UK, for example?

[213] **Dr Milligan:** No, I do not believe that we would be able to do it ahead of the Cabinet Office work, for the reasons that Christina mentioned. We are focusing our work with the community in terms of learning how we can use technologies that are already there, such as Twitter and other mechanisms, for good.

[214] **Darren Millar:** I have one final question on the role of the voluntary sector. The Wales resilience forum does not have representation from the voluntary sector on it anymore. It used to, I understand, but it does not now. To what extent does that disadvantage the forum from being able to learn valuable lessons and receive valuable input from people in the voluntary sector in terms of responding to emergencies?

[215] **Dr Milligan:** It is an action that we are taking now on the back of the report and one that we have had to put back on the agenda. In fact, at the next meeting of the Wales resilience forum we are going to look again at the representation from the voluntary sector, starting with the question about who could best represent the voluntary sector on the forum. Previously, it was the Red Cross, which found it difficult to represent the wide range of interests, because they range from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and mountain rescue services to St John Ambulance. It is a huge sector. Therefore, for any one of those organisations to take on the national representation role has proved challenging. However, we are going to take it back to the forum to see whether we can find a mechanism—if not present around the table—for ensuring that we have that engagement. There is, of course, good engagement both required and happening at a more local level. We know that, because we hear in the lessons learned exercises about the role that voluntary sector organisations have played in handling incidents.

[216] **Darren Millar:** It is inconsistent with their involvement on the local resilience fora is it not?

[217] **Ms Francis:** There is engagement within the structure that supports the local resilience fora. That is in place across Wales. One of the other things that we are doing this year, which we alluded to, is a civil contingencies conference that we have held previously.

This year, as well as flooding, the focus is going to be on the strategic engagement of the voluntary sector. It is an opportunity for those that are responding to meet with a wide range of voluntary sector partners. They are still finalising the detail, but there will be some sort of workshop and information sharing to think collectively about what this looks like in terms of the relationship at a more strategic level and how we can take that forward. That is going to involve the breadth of voluntary sector organisations that is a difficult thing to do in other fora. That is going to be our mechanism for engagement at the very broad level.

[218] **Darren Millar:** We have also been told by the north Wales resilience forum in its paper that opening out the charring of working groups to category 2 responders or voluntary groups might be a useful way of ensuring that they are more widely included. However, apparently, the guidance restricts the charring of the working groups to statutory agencies. Can you clarify that for us? It is obviously guidance from the Cabinet Office, I would assume.

[219] **Ms Scott:** You are putting me on the spot here, I am afraid. I would have to go away and check. I would not want to make a mistake.

[220] **Darren Millar:** That is okay.

[221] **Dr Price:** We have a Wales utilities group, for instance, which is chaired by Scottish Power. It is a central engagement point for the utilities in Wales. Therefore, we already have somebody who is a category 2 chairman.

[222] **Ms Scott:** [*Inaudible.*]

[223] **Darren Millar:** Perhaps you are breaking the rules. [*Laughter.*] Thank you very much. That brings us to the end of this evidence session. We are very grateful for your help with our inquiry and you will get a copy of the transcript so that you can correct anything that is inaccurate. We look forward to receiving the clarification that you have promised us. Thank you.

3.40 p.m.

Argyfyngau Sifil yng Nghymru—Tystiolaeth ynghylch y Safbwynt Lleol Civil Emergencies in Wales—Evidence on the Local Position

[224] **Darren Millar:** Good afternoon. Welcome to the Public Accounts Committee. We will continue to take evidence on civil contingencies in Wales. I welcome the members of the panel who will comment on the evidence on the local position across Wales. Could you introduce yourselves for the record, please?

[225] **Ms Parmenter:** Prynawn da. I am Superintendent Claire Parmenter from Dyfed-Powys Police. I have recently moved back to the force, but, for the last two years, I have been working on behalf of the four police forces, the three fire services and the Welsh ambulance service as their civil contingencies co-ordinator.

[226] **Ms Evans:** Prynawn da. I am Anne Evans, the local resilience forum co-ordinator for north Wales.

[227] **Mr Macho:** I am Gavin Macho, the emergency planning officer for Cardiff Council, but I am here today representing the Welsh Local Government Association.

[228] **Mr Wilkinson:** Good afternoon. I am Simon Wilkinson and I work for the WLGA. I am the policy officer for regulatory services, which is primarily trading standards and environmental health, but my policy area also covers emergency planning—that is why we

have asked one of my colleagues, an advisor to the WLGA, to come along as well.

[229] **Darren Millar:** Thank you very much. We are grateful to you for helping us with our inquiry. We have lots of areas that we want to cover over the next hour or so, but, to open, what do you think are the main messages in this report for people like you on the ground delivering emergency planning and responding to emergencies in Wales?

[230] **Ms Parmenter:** There are many positives in the report. We have come a long way in Wales, certainly in the two years that I have been working on emergency planning. We have made a lot of progress in many areas. There is further work that can be done to make us more fit for purpose. There is a really good working relationship between all emergency services in Wales and the Welsh Government through the Wales resilience forum. We have strengthened links and tried to achieve a consistent approach across the four LRFs in Wales—for one of which Anne is a representative—to try to achieve some consistency and continuity in the way in which we deal with emergencies in Wales. For me, that is the main progress. We have also done a lot in relation to learning and development, which has been instrumental in improving our response to emergencies in Wales.

[231] **Ms Evans:** I concur with what Claire said. I am new in post; I only started last May. I was not around when the report was commissioned. My comments should be taken on the basis of naivety, if you like. The four LRFs work particularly well together and have come a long way since the report was written, certainly in terms of how I have looked at it and in talking to the other three co-ordinators.

[232] **Darren Millar:** Gavin, on behalf of the WLGA, do you concur with that view?

[233] **Mr Macho:** We are a very small service. Some 52 people are employed across all local authorities in Wales in emergency management. We do not have huge budgets and do not get paid a lot of attention. This is a platform where we can have a proper discussion around where civil emergencies are, which we obviously think is very important. Across a spectrum of things, that does not get a great deal of scrutiny. So, we welcome the chance to have a discussion on the issues, which are many and plentiful.

[234] **Mr Wilkinson:** I agree wholeheartedly with Gavin. We are a small service area. I put in my submission that the report shines a spotlight for the first time in a long time on this service. There will be areas that we can look to improve on using the report as a backdrop and there are challenges presented by the Simpson agenda to improve the resilience and critical mass of local authorities when delivering this service area. We welcome the opportunity to use what is in the report to put those improvements in place.

[235] **Darren Millar:** The WLGA has raised concerns about some of the issues identified in the auditor general's report. You said that you disagreed with some of the findings. What areas of concern did you have in particular?

3.45 p.m.

[236] **Mr Wilkinson:** The report was commissioned quite a long time ago. Quite a lot of work has taken place in the period between the start of the work undertaken by the WAO and the final publication, specifically with regard to Simpson. In the final report, we wanted to see recognition of the fact that some of the things that were picked up on then might not be the case now, but they are still being reported as deficiencies or areas of improvement. There might be some examples in the report, of which Gavin might be able to give you a better idea, that we did not agree with, in terms of the context of the way in which local authorities operate practically, as well.

[237] **Darren Millar:** We will come on to those as we go through our questions. We will now move on to Gwyn.

[238] **Gwyn R. Price:** The auditor general's report describes the very effective and skilful response of those organisations involved in recent emergencies, including the Gleision colliery disaster, the grounding of the MV carrier cargo ship and the explosion at Chevron oil refinery. What lessons do you think that we can learn from these events?

[239] **Mr Macho:** I was lucky enough to be involved in the de-brief of the Gleision event. The key lesson that we learn from these events is that they are all unique; each emergency is unique, but generic lessons can be learned from each of them. I am a trained de-briefer; we have trained de-briefers who work for local resilience fora, the police, the ambulance service and the fire service. It is their job to tease out the lessons that can be learned from an event and share them. By going into the regional mould that we are going into, we have conduits to allow all that information to be shared. As each incident is unique and happens at different times, it might seem quite fractious, but each of these elements—the time of year, the weather, the people who are available to respond, the communities involved—highlight issues that we need to address and lessons we need to learn. Last week, the family liaison officer who was involved in the Gleision incident spoke to all the emergency management officers and managers in south Wales and said, 'I was involved in that event and there were issues that arose that I could not resolve. How can you help me to resolve them?' So, an event in itself is a spark that creates an environment in which we question what we did and we learn the lessons and do it better next time so that, hopefully, those problems will not arise again.

[240] **Gwyn R. Price:** That is good; thank you.

[241] **Julie Morgan:** What about the different roles of the Welsh Government and the Cabinet Office? Do you think that there is confusion between them?

[242] **Mr Wilkinson:** No. We have a very good working relationship with Welsh Government officers who are involved—Wyn, Alyson and all those whom you spoke to. We would go through them to the Cabinet Office if we needed to do so. I noticed your interesting debate on the Cabinet Office's guidance. We are all very familiar with that guidance and when it turned out that somebody was not, I was quite surprised. The bottom line is standardisation, documentation and talking to each other. We are a very small group of people and we are like a small family. We all talk to each other and share information and I am not confused in any way about the different roles and who does what. If we want to get strategic evidence going forward, I would go to Wyn, June, or Alyson and they would go to London if need be. I do not think that there is any confusion at all.

[243] **Darren Millar:** You are nodding, Anne. Is that your experience?

[244] **Ms Evans:** It is, yes. In addition to that, in north Wales, we have the Welsh Government liaison officers based in the Llandudno Junction office and that is replicated in Aberystwyth as well. That is yet another link into the Welsh Government for us. We would not go directly to the Cabinet Office; we would go through Wyn and Alyson's team.

[245] **Ms Parmenter:** I would agree. The Welsh Government has set up a number of sub-groups, which are replicated in the English structure. Part of my responsibility was to chair two of those groups—the Wales learning and development group and the mass evacuation group. Through that mass evacuation group for example, we had strong links—through Wyn and the Wales Resilience team—with the English structure to ensure that anything that we were doing was aligned and was fit for purpose for Wales, but also took cognisance of what was happening on a UK level, so that we could learn the lessons from that. In terms of that connectivity; it is quite good.

[246] **Julie Morgan:** It is encouraging that you feel that it is all very clear. Do you think that there is any need for the Welsh Government's role to be put on more of a statutory footing?

[247] **Mr Macho:** It is not going to impact the way in which I do my job. The onus would be on you as politicians; you would have to take on new responsibilities. Dealing with disasters and major incidents is difficult and onerous. If you wanted to take that on, it would be a challenge and we would support you in doing that, but you would have to find new structures with which to work, because you would be looking at us and assessing us on how we work. So, necessarily, you would have to find out various things and there would be more meetings such as this one where we would discuss all the issues. We would not say, 'No, don't do it', but we would say that it is a lot of extra work for a lot of people.

[248] **Julie Morgan:** You do not think that it is necessary, from what you are saying, do you?

[249] **Mr Macho:** No, I do not think so.

[250] **Julie Morgan:** Does anyone else have any views on that?

[251] **Darren Millar:** Just to get this clear, the Welsh Government has announced that it would like to draw down executive powers for Welsh Ministers under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. You do not think that that is needed.

[252] **Mr Macho:** No. The reason I say that—and I do not do it in any fatuous way—is because we know quite clearly that we can go to the civil servants that we need clarity from, and they have a conduit to London. You could take all of what the Cabinet Office does and bring it here, but I necessarily think that you would need to hire more civil servants. You would need more paperwork et cetera, et cetera. It is a responsibility. If you want to take it on, it is there, but it will be a lot more work for everyone here.

[253] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Would you share those views, Claire?

[254] **Ms Parmenter:** I also sit on the Wales resilience partnership team, which sits underneath the WRF, and there have been occasions perhaps when—I know that the First Minister raised an issue around one area of business; I think that it was around the emergency mortuaries setup—there has been a little bit of confusion as to who would fund issues. If extra powers were given to the Welsh Government in terms of that clarity of responsibility, I think that his concern was very much around, 'Who will foot the bill?' There seemed to be a bit of blurring around who would foot the bill for something like that and that I think that it would probably increase clarity if there was a bit more detail around that.

[255] **Mr Macho:** Claire brings up a very interesting point. We now have something called NEMA, the national emergency mortuary arrangements. If we had over a certain amount of casualties—probably over 200—we would not have the facilities and we would have to bring in this massive infrastructure. That is owned solely by the English or British Government or whatever you wish to call it, and, therefore, we would then have to write out agreements wherein we would say, 'We need an agreement with you now to use this, because we have now taken on the responsibility'. I am not a lawyer and I would look to your adviser to go through all of these things with you, but I think that you would get engaged in a whole bunch of teasing out a lot of legislation to consider all the different things to be put in place, because we are talking about a vast area. We are talking about security, infrastructure and tons of things.

[256] **Darren Millar:** Mike wanted to come in, and then I will come to Jocelyn.

[257] **Mike Hedges:** Is it because the Welsh Government at the moment sort of intervenes? Is it not true that the Welsh Government—correct me if I am wrong—could say, ‘Thank you very much for contacting us about this problem, but it really does not come under our remit. We will send it straight on to the Cabinet Office’. The fact that it intervenes in areas where it has some influence, but not necessarily control, makes it so much easier for you.

[258] **Mr Macho:** Yes.

[259] **Jocelyn Davies:** I do not know why you contact the Welsh Government about civil contingency matters at all. It does not feature in the legislation, so why do you not go straight to elsewhere. Why are you clogging up the civil service in Cardiff? The civil servants have other things to get on with, perhaps, here. Why do you not go straight to—

[260] **Mr Macho:** Because they are there—

[261] **Jocelyn Davies:** Because they are there. So, they—

[262] **Mr Macho:** They are employed; they exist. It would be extremely rude of me to ignore them. They do give us help and advice. They do provide support and assistance to the local resilience fora, and they do advise Ministers, et cetera, et cetera. As I was describing, because this is such a complex area—take pandemic flu, for example—we then have to get legislation that comes from the World Health Organization, the British Government, the Welsh Government, and all the devolved Governments, that then has to be overlaid across through a translation process, et cetera, et cetera. So, they are conduits for all of those things that move. Local government could not do that on its own; it needs the civil servants to be our interpreters.

[263] **Jocelyn Davies:** I imagine that the Welsh Government feels that it might just as well have the executive functions devolved to it, because it is carrying out those executive functions anyway. So, I think that your argument that it should not bother is rather weak, considering that you say that the local authorities in Wales, and others, rely heavily on the services of the Welsh Government in this regard. That was not a question, so you do not need to respond to it. My question is: why do you think that, despite the existing framework—I know that there is a plethora of fora and so on—this report still highlights some significant inconsistencies and weaknesses in emergency planning arrangements across Wales? Why do think that is, despite all of the organisation and so on?

[264] **Mr Macho:** It is because, as Simon pointed out, this was predicated on information that was collected in 2010. Since 2010 and since Simpson, we have consistently worked towards what we have been asked to do, which is to provide a new, more resilient framework that cuts out those things that it talks about. So, as Simon was saying, we feel very aggrieved that the report, as it stands, suggests one thing, when we are in a completely different place now. We have responded as we were asked to, and that is what ODSI, the organisational development and Simpson implementation board, was all about. Chief Constable Vaughan went to the ODSI board, presented these new systems, and that is where we are going. So, whatever it was like in 2010 is not what it is like now.

[265] **Jocelyn Davies:** Well, the nature of audit is that you are, generally, looking back, so that is the nature of what we generally deal with on this committee and it is not unusual to find that, by the time that we come to take evidence, things have moved on. Perhaps you can tell us what role the WLGA has played to encourage the adoption by local authorities of existing guidance on emergency planning and to promote effective scrutiny by the scrutiny committees of local authorities in this area. I realise that, in relation to all of the other

functions of local authorities, this might take up a tiny proportion of a local authority's budget, but it is important.

[266] **Mr Wilkinson:** It is a symptom of the size of the service, as we said earlier. I am not entirely sure how I can answer the questions that were raised about local authorities not being aware of some of the guidance et cetera. I would imagine that—

[267] **Jocelyn Davies:** Would you as the WLGA play a role here? You said that you worked on a range of regulations, not just this one, in terms of your portfolio area. Do you have a role as the WLGA in disseminating good practice and making sure that local authorities are well aware of what their statutory and mandatory duties are?

[268] **Mr Wilkinson:** Absolutely. That is a central and key role and something that the WLGA should be doing proactively. One of the good things that is coming out of the work from the WAO report and the Simpson work, we are now finding, is that we need to reinvent the way that emergency planning services work within local authorities. We will group ourselves in different ways around Wales and there is also a group at the moment of 22 local authority emergency services managers, which meets fairly regularly and discusses the current issues and the best practice et cetera. However, I think we need to reinvent the way that that particular group works and addresses some of the concerns that are in this report and to take forward the business planning work that has come about from Simpson as well. It is at a very early stage of development. The ODSI committee considered the business cases only last month. The emergency planning managers do not meet until next month, and it will be a central, key theme that we take on board some of those issues and plan for the future to be able to become much more fit for purpose, bearing in mind some of the things that have been drawn out in the report.

[269] **Jocelyn Davies:** In relation to the expectation set, which we spent a little bit of time on with the last witnesses, the Wales Audit Office report says that it surveyed 39 people. I think that you said earlier that about 50 or 52 people are emergency planning officers across Wales, but 39 of them were sent the surveys and only 18 responded—so, this is a small sample of people—but from the 18 respondents a plethora of reasons are cited here as to why they did not use the expectation set and some of them said that they—

[270] **Mr Wilkinson:** One was not aware of it.

[271] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. So, the comments made in this report are based on evidence. Do you have evidence that contradicts what that says?

[272] **Mr Macho:** I was listening with interest to the weight that was put on this guidance document. It is a guidance document, not a statutory piece of guidance. It is a guidance document, giving guidance as to how you interpret what is statutory. The Act is the statutory piece, the document on dealing with emergencies is the guidance to the Act, and this is a document that tells you how you might want to write plans. I am not defending anyone—everyone should know what it is—but there are many other documents that you can refer to, and also there is—

4.00 p.m.

[273] **Jocelyn Davies:** I do not think that there was any suggestion that the statutory duties that are outlined there are not being carried out. That was not what was being said. If you think that we had a robust discussion earlier on, if we thought that that was the case, I can assure you that the discussion would have been a bit more robust than that. All I am saying is that, if you are going to refute this, then present us with the evidence.

[274] **Mr Wilkinson:** I am not sure, with all due respect, that we are refuting that particular—

[275] **Jocelyn Davies:** If the argument is that it is irrelevant anyway, because this document does not really matter, then that is a different argument than saying that what is contained in this report is to be disputed.

[276] **Mr Macho:** The bottom line is that the Wales Audit Office called in our major incident plans. We write numerous plans across the board for all sorts of different things, so we are talking about one plan. The major incident plan is a statement by a local authority about how it will strategically deal with emergencies. If you read any of them, you will find that they are statements of intent. They go into very little operational detail. The guidance document is a very long and complicated document that says that you take cognisance of this and that, but it goes across all different plans. The plans that were called in, like I said, are now two years out of date, and all of them would have been revised in one shape or another, using all sorts of different methodologies. All of our plans are scrutinised locally by our risk officers and all sorts of different people to see that we are capable of responding. So, to me, it is not a huge issue. In the report, it is captured as this big issue, but I talk to all my colleagues across the country, and one of our disappointments in all of this is that there is this perception that there is a big vacuum where there are all these problems. It started off in Simpson, which said that there was an urgent need to look at emergency planning. We all asked, 'Why?' and there was no evidence. We were never presented with any evidence. We then get the Wales Audit Office report, which again suggests that there is this big vacuum and a problem. There are inconsistencies and problems, but that is the case with anything. Over the last two years, we have worked extremely hard with Simon, Alyson, Wyn, Claire and a lot of people to make things better, and I think that that needs to be recognised.

[277] **Jocelyn Davies:** I do not think that anybody would not recognise it, and it has been recognised in this committee today that the response to emergencies, when people actually go out there and respond, has been superb, so there must be something correct in the planning or I do not think that that would necessarily come together. However, that is not to say that there should not be a spotlight on an area of policy that, as you said earlier, is very rarely in that spotlight. So, I would think that you could welcome this. If you have evidence that contradicts what is in this report then we would be delighted to hear it.

[278] You mentioned better co-ordination in your paper, and said that perhaps there should be a new post at an all-Wales level to help with co-ordination. Has there been any movement on that?

[279] **Mr Wilkinson:** A business case or a paper is currently being written. It is coming from the Gwent region and that will, hopefully, set out in good detail exactly what the expectations would be for that particular post and position. Similar Wales co-ordinators exist in other areas of policy that I deal with, specifically in trading standards and environmental health. The trading standards co-ordinator position has been in existence for about 12 or 15 years now, and the advantage that that has is that it takes an awful lot of day-to-day co-ordination pressure off the heads of service, who can then deal with the operational issues that they need to deal with day to day. The environmental health service has only just, in the last three or four months, been fortunate enough to have a co-ordinator put in place as well, and it has already seen significant benefits. The amount of work that the co-ordinator can do on a three or four-day basis has released an awful lot of time so that the work of some of the heads of service—the chair, or a secretary of the Welsh heads group—would usually do can now be done by the regional co-ordinator, and that can include looking at such things as areas of best practice. There is a set of best practice material that is being reviewed at the moment by that regional co-ordinator, so there are real and significant quick wins that can be gained by that.

[280] **Jocelyn Davies:** Well, you have sold it to us, but we are not going to be funding the post. What is your expectation in terms of funding for that post? Would all the local authorities come together, or are you not in a position to tell us?

[281] **Mr Wilkinson:** I have some ideas.

[282] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, there would be a range of options in terms of funding the post.

[283] **Mr Wilkinson:** Yes, there would.

[284] **Jocelyn Davies:** Right, okay. So, we would expect to have some news on that.

[285] **Mr Wilkinson:** I am hopeful that I will receive a paper within the next three to four weeks, which will then be taken as a discussion document before the all-Wales emergency planning managers meeting in March. From there, if it gets broad agreement among the managers, I will discuss it with my chief executive at the WLGA, and hopefully look to source some funding options as well thereafter.

[286] **Jocelyn Davies:** On the police and crime commissioners, what is the expectation with regard to their role in the scrutiny of emergency planning?

[287] **Ms Parmenter:** It is still very early days, in that the commissioners across Wales are finding their feet, so to speak, and developing relationships. It is important that we keep that link between the strategic and the operational, and the chief constable obviously being the operational person. I know that all of the chiefs in Wales are very keen to make sure that the PCCs are fully sighted and fully on board with the developments in terms of how we are progressing resilience in Wales generally. I very recently left the post, but a fire officer has taken over the post now and one of the key challenges for that individual will be building those relationships with the PCCs across Wales to make sure that they are fully sighted and are able to support and audit the work of the joint emergency services group.

[288] **Darren Millar:** On the role of the PCCs, has there been anything from the Welsh Government encouraging you to engage with the new PCCs since their election? Has there been anything specifically, or is there something that you have done on your own?

[289] **Ms Parmenter:** Certainly, in terms of my role as the JESG co-ordinator, the answer to that would be 'no', but I cannot speak for the four chiefs in Wales; something might have been done directly through the four chief constables, and potentially, through the Association of Chief Police Officers Cymru as well. So, to be fair, I would have to check that with the chief constables.

[290] **Aled Roberts:** O ran yr agenda rhanbarthol, clywsom dystiolaeth gan Lywodraeth Cymru ei bod yn awyddus i ranbarthau ddod â chynigion gerbron yn hytrach na chreu un system ar draws Cymru. Mae eich tystiolaeth chi'n cadarnhau bod achos busnes wedi cael ei dderbyn gan y grŵp ym mis Ionawr, a bod y patrwm o fewn y pedwar rhanbarth, i ryw raddau, yn wahanol. A yw hynny oherwydd nad yw rhai awdurdodau lleol bach yn awyddus i drosglwyddo cyfrifoldebau i'r rhanbarth, a hwyrach nad yw rhai awdurdodau mawr yn awyddus i ganiatáu bod rhan o'u grym yn

Aled Roberts: In relation to the regional agenda, we heard evidence from the Welsh Government that it was eager for regions to bring forward cases rather than creating one system across Wales. Your evidence confirms that a business case has been accepted by the group in January and that the pattern within the four regions is, to some extent, different. Is that because there are some smaller local authorities that are not eager to transfer responsibilities to the region, and perhaps that there are some larger authorities that are not eager for part of their powers to be transferred to the region?

mynd i'r rhanbarth?

[291] A oes perygl, gan fod y pedwar model yn rhai cwbl wahanol, ein bod yn mynd i gael sefyllfa debyg i'r un gyda'r consortia addysg mewn rhyw flwyddyn? Gan fod gwendidau a chryfderau, hwyrach fod patrwm cenedlaethol yn cael ei osod gan y Llywodraeth a fydd yn creu ansicrwydd o fewn y gyfundrefn.

Is there a danger, because the four models are entirely different, that we are going to have a situation that is similar to the one with the education consortia a year down the line? Given that there are weaknesses and strengths, perhaps a national pattern is being put in place by the Government that will create some uncertainty within the arrangements.

[292] **Mr Macho:** I do not think so, no. In Cardiff—we are joined up with the other six local authorities across south Wales, but obviously we are the biggest one—everyone is very anxious to work together because they see the benefits of sharing resources, experience and training opportunities. I think that is the case across the four regions, because, previously, we were all working together anyway. Dyfed-Powys has a fantastic record of joint working on Wednesdays. North Wales is the most different of the three schemes, but all of these schemes have been realised by local people with local autonomy. It has been massively pleasing that LRFs and the WLGA were accepting of that, because we have the strength of the command in our local areas, but then we have the strategic control and co-ordination at the higher level, which all marries together nicely. You must be embedded in a local authority and understand all the real issues there, and if that is taken away, you do not have the same connectivity. I have seen no hostility towards joining; in fact, everyone is very positive about it; they all think it is the best way to go forward, and I think that that view is shared by chief executives. In south Wales, we have our local resilience board, which is all our chief officers, who meet at the LRF meetings, and they work very closely together to realise this—this was their vision going forward, which we supported. So, my experience of it has all been very positive so far.

[293] **Aled Roberts:** O ran y trefniadau yn y de, mae eich tystiolaeth yn disgrifio creu bwrdd cyfnerthu ar gyfer awdurdodau lleol. A oes rhaid i chi reoli'r risg y bydd ychwanegu lefel arall yn creu dryswch, neu a ydych chi, ar sail eich ateb blaenorol, yn eithaf cyfforddus gyda'r ffordd y mae pethau'n datblygu?

Aled Roberts: In relation to arrangements in the south, your evidence describes the creation of a resilience board for local authorities. Do you have to manage the risk that adding another level will create confusion, or are you, based on your previous answer, fairly comfortable about how things are developing?

[294] **Mr Macho:** Jeremy Stephens is the chair of that—from Swansea. He works very closely with his opposite numbers. They e-mail each other all the time, they talk to each other and they meet up, as I said before, as a group. They are all in close contact with the managers, so we all understand quite clearly what they want us to do. So, my experience in south Wales is that it is coherent, clear, regulated and developed. We have a shared business plan et cetera. I have no evidence to suggest that it is any different in Gwent, Dyfed-Powys or north Wales.

[295] **Aled Roberts:** Gan droi at Anne yn awr, mae eich tystiolaeth chi, a bod braidd yn blwyfol, yn cydnabod bod wastad lle i wella. Rydych yn dweud:

Aled Roberts: Turning to Anne now, your evidence, to be rather parochial, acknowledges that there is always room to improve. You state:

[296] 'rwy'n credu bod strwythurau gwahanol...pob Fforwm Lleol Cymru Gydnerth yn rhannol yn rhwysstr i raddau helaethach o lwyddiant'.

'I think that the differing structures of the LRF...are in part a barrier to a greater degree of success'.

[297] A yw hynny oherwydd y gwahanol Is that because of these different patterns? batrymau hyn?

[298] **Ms Evans:** The comment that I have made there is specifically about the LRF secretariat and the way in which the secretariat supports the wider local resilience fora.

[299] **Aled Roberts:** Right, okay. And there are different arrangements in each of the four regions as far as—

[300] **Ms Evans:** There are different responsibilities for each co-ordinator.

[301] **Aled Roberts:** Right, okay.

[302] **Ms Parmenter:** There is something that we have tried to do, certainly in my force. I sit on the four LRFs in Wales, and I have tried to achieve some sort of consistency and continuity of approach. Granted, one size does not fit all, so that what suits Dyfed-Powys, for example, geographically may not suit north Wales. South Wales and Gwent work very closely together, because of their proximity. So, they are able to share work groups. We have tried to create mechanisms for the four LRF co-ordinators in Wales to share, to work together through the LRF co-ordinators' forum so that we are not doing things x4. For example, with learning and development, the north Wales resilience forum has developed an introduction to civil contingencies package. We do not go to south Wales and say, 'Where's yours?', but we have made all of that available now, pan-Wales, on the national resilience extranet. We have tried to cut down on the duplication of effort. The team in Dyfed-Powys is made up of three people, whereas Anne's team has two and a half. So, rather than trying to say that Anne needs more people, it is more about trying to see what we can take from the Dyfed-Powys area that is good practice and sharing it, to work smarter. That is a practical example of how we have tried to do that.

[303] **Ms Evans:** The other thing that the four secretariats are looking at now on an ongoing basis is drawing together the plans that we have. So, instead of having four separate plans for, say, flooding or humanitarian assistance, we will have one plan and then regionalise that as an appendix. That is just one example of how we are trying to work smarter.

[304] **Aled Roberts:** A gaf i esboniad o ddarn arall o'ch tystiolaeth? Rydych yn sôn am gynlluniau gwaith y grwpiau gwahanol. Mae pwynt yn cael ei wneud bod rhai o'ch gweithgareddau yn aros am ddeddfwriaeth genedlaethol neu ganllawiau. Yr ydych hefyd yn sôn bod rhai dogfennau neu waith papur ar lefel genedlaethol heb gael eu cwblhau eto. Ai ar lefel Cymru neu ar lefel Prydain y mae'r aros hwnnw am ddeddfwriaeth, canllawiau neu ddogfennau priodol?

Aled Roberts: Can I have an explanation of another part of your evidence? You talk about the work plans of the different groups. The point has been made that some of your activities are waiting for national legislation or guidance. You also mentioned that some documents or paperwork at a national level have not yet been completed. Is that wait for legislation, guidance or appropriate documentation on a Wales level or a UK level?

[305] **Ms Evans:** I heard the same question posed to Wyn, and so I heard his response. As Wyn said, it is not a barrier to our doing the work. I think that the fear is that the LRF will spend precious resources doing the work and developing a plan around the pandemic and then the guidance will come out and we will have to amend or reinvent the wheel.

4.15 p.m.

[306] **Aled Roberts:** And that is at a UK level?

[307] **Ms Evans:** Yes.

[308] **Darren Millar:** Out of interest, how long have you been waiting for that guidance?

[309] **Ms Evans:** It predates me.

[310] **Ms Parmenter:** I believe that it is about eight to 10 months.

[311] **Darren Millar:** So, waiting for information to come back from any central Government, whether that is Cardiff or Westminster, is a long, arduous process.

[312] **Ms Evans:** Yes. However, we recognise—because we are very much at the grass-roots, local level—that there may be a developing situation, either in the Welsh Government office or in the civil contingency secretariat, which is precluding the publication.

[313] **Darren Millar:** Okay, thank you for that. You are obviously sharing good practice in Wales. However, what about learning lessons from outside of Wales, which you might be able to apply here? How is that done?

[314] **Ms Parmenter:** That is another issue that we have picked up. Lessons have been identified. For example, regarding some of the things that came out of the 7/7 bombings in terms of inter-operability for the emergency services, we were keen to learn those lessons in Wales as well. Therefore, it started off as an emergency-service-only group, picking up those lessons and signposting them back to chief constables, where relevant. However, we realised quite quickly that it needed to be much wider. Therefore, the Welsh Government sits closely with that now, and we have developed a database of lessons that have been identified, again on the national resilience extranet. That is at its early stages. It is quite a lengthy list, as you can imagine. Some of the issues will be a short-term, 'Yes, this is a one-agency issue that we can fix very quickly'; others might be longer term, inter-operability issues, for which we may need support from the Welsh Government. However, what we have built in to that is some sort of audit trail, through the Wales resilience partnership team, so that we can say, 'These are the issues that we believe are the top three priorities for this year; what do you think, as the strategic leads for that meeting?'. Anything for which we then need support gets elevated to the Wales resilience forum. Therefore, while that is in its infancy, it provides an audit trail for someone who is new to resilience in Wales, so that they can see the lessons that we have learnt over the last 12 or 18 months, from a Wales, UK and international point of view. It is also a starting point for us, so that we can start to capture some of those issues.

[315] **Ms Evans:** That applies not only to incidents that have occurred, but also to exercises that we have, which are multi-agency and multiregion. We will capture the lessons learnt from those exercises, and put those onto the national resilience extranet database as well. Local resilience fora are also encouraged—in north Wales, we have built strong links with Cheshire LRF, and we are forging links with West Mercia and Merseyside—to share good practice. As I believe I stated in my evidence, a disaster does not recognise a geographical boundary. In north Wales, with the tidal situation and so on, that could come across us.

[316] **Mr Macho:** Dyfed-Powys works closely with the Marches. In Cardiff, we work with the core cities group, which includes the larger cities. Through the Welsh Government, we have also been involved with Belfast, Edinburgh and Dublin, again looking at devolved Governments, or Governments, and all the issues in a city as well.

[317] **Darren Millar:** That is encouraging news. Mike Hedges has the next questions.

[318] **Mike Hedges:** I speak as someone who is in favour of regionalisation. However, I live in Swansea, which creates a certain problem. We belong to one police authority—

alongside the rest of the old Glamorgan—but we belong to a different fire authority. Do you see any problems with that, and is there anything that can be done—short of reorganising the fire service—to try to ensure that problems do not exist?

[319] **Ms Parmenter:** The joint emergency services group is set up in Wales. That is the collective of the chief officers in Wales, and the fire chiefs sit on that. Any strategic issues—anything that is around emergency planning or resilience—are taken to that meeting, and they all work together. The other thing that happens is that the chief officers of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service work closely together. Often, I will go to one or another of the LRFs, and I might see a different face there. Therefore, one of the chief officers will go, and they will share issues across the board. Therefore, I believe that there is a good level of co-operation between the chief fire officers. Through those structures, there are different levels of checking and testing, to ensure that nothing slips through the net.

[320] **Mike Hedges:** Should anything be done to put the funding for the training and exercises of local resilience fora on a permanent footing?

[321] **Ms Parmenter:** You will see in my submission—and, certainly, having worked in that role for two years—that the areas for development that I see are in relation to the huge benefits that we had in procuring training, and learning and development activities, on a pan-Wales basis. For example, the emerging social media world became quite a challenge for some organisations. As a result, we procured a bespoke emergencies social media course for Wales, which is very pertinent in that the off-the-shelf-packages that you get are sometimes not cognisant of the structures in Wales, because they are very English-centric. I do not mean that in a derogatory way; they are just very different. By procuring on a pan-Wales basis, we were able to make it fit-for-purpose and achieve significant cost efficiencies as well. So, although some of the training would need to be generic for that particular LRF, a lot could be done x1 instead of x4.

[322] **Julie Morgan:** How are you incorporating new technology in your communication with the public? What are you doing about that?

[323] **Ms Evans:** The north Wales resilience forum has developed a Twitter site and a Facebook site. We recognise that it is not going to be the first place that people will go to as a result of an incident if they want information. We struggle constantly to keep up with the generation that prefers to look at a keyboard than engage face to face in conversation.

[324] In terms of exercises and incidents, it can be a very good way of managing misinformation, as we saw with the Olympics planning and the flooding. It is just another way to get information out there to people.

[325] **Julie Morgan:** Our previous witnesses said that there were some advantages and some disadvantages. Do you think that there are disadvantages?

[326] **Ms Evans:** Yes. It has to be accurate and timely information, and it has to be updated very quickly. You will always have someone out there who has a better take or a more recent photograph. It is a way of managing that, and it is another communication tool.

[327] **Ms Parmenter:** Each of the LRFs in Wales has a warning and informing group that links into the Wales warning and informing group. One of the key tasks that they have been given over the last couple of months is to pull together a consistent social media policy that, in the event of an emergency, all the agencies will use. So, if a member of the public were to go to Dyfed-Powys Police's website, for example, they would get exactly the same information as they would if they went to Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service's

website, depending on the emergency. The work that we did in Wales on social media learning has springboarded a lot of that—a lot of people went back to their organisations and thought, ‘Oh, my goodness; are we sufficiently set up for this?’ I checked a few examples of this before coming today: Dyfed-Powys Police has gone from 100 Twitter followers to 12,500 in the last six months. Unfortunately, we have had some big incidents, some of which have been quite sad ones, but people have been interested and have kept following as a result of the information that they got.

[328] The other interesting thing that has developed from that is that we held a Wales civil contingencies conference—I do not know whether you have been briefed on that. Bearing in mind the four major incidents that we had in Wales—Gleision colliery, the Fforestfach fire, the Chevron explosion and the Brynglas tunnel fire—we felt, as a group, that there was a lot of significant learning to come from that for strategic level officers across the services in Wales. We held a conference where we gave them all those issues and said, ‘We want you to go back to your organisations to see how this affects you’. That was held up by the Emergency Planning College as an example of good practice. Social media featured very heavily in that conference, and that is another means by which we have got that out there.

[329] **Julie Morgan:** Do you have funding to develop social media and new technology?

[330] **Ms Parmenter:** The funding for the initial courses came from the Wales learning and development budget, which all the JESG organisations, the WLGA and the Welsh Government contribute to. Individual organisations have gone back to their own organisations if they needed developmental work done on their own sites, et cetera.

[331] **Julie Morgan:** So, there is no specific fund.

[332] **Ms Parmenter:** No, there is not.

[333] **Aled Roberts:** I understand the point that you made on consistency of approach, but on the point that you raised about misinformation, is there guidance or an understanding as to who monitors that? I guess that misinformation can be almost as dangerous, or even more so, than no information. The use of Twitter and Facebook might mean that the completely wrong story starts to be spread around. Are there protocols with regard to the monitoring of activity on Facebook and Twitter?

[334] **Ms Parmenter:** Each organisation will have its own social media policy on usage for staff, et cetera. What we cannot do in an emergency is manage what the public is putting on there. However, when a strategic co-ordination group is called for severe flooding, or for whatever emergency it might be, there is an agreement in place that nothing will go out until it goes through the chair of that strategic co-ordination group. So, you would have representatives of the police, fire, ambulance and health services and the Environment Agency sitting around the table, all linking back to their own organisations. However, until the chair of the SCG releases the information, it will not go anywhere. So, that should ensure that a consistent message is put out.

[335] Picking up the point about the monitoring side of things, it would be down to the press and corporate communications people of the representative agencies to monitor their own sites. They all have their own policies on what they pick up. For example, if someone puts a derogatory comment about policing on there, we are not necessarily going to go back and respond. However, we would reinforce the correct information and say, ‘Actually, the correct information is this’. We would not get into a—

[336] **Aled Roberts:** Okay. The Cabinet Office representative made a point about being behind the curve, for example, when there is stuff going around saying that rest centres are

being set up when that is not officially the case at that stage. Who would assume responsibility for correcting that type of misleading information?

[337] **Ms Parmenter:** I think that that would come through the SCG. If that was a specific issue, the SCG would reinforce where the authorised rest centres were. We cannot stop Mr Jones putting what he wants out there. However, at the end of the day, all that we can do is to reinforce the correct message and the official line that is coming from the SCG.

[338] **Darren Millar:** We will now go over to some tweeters over on this side; I bring in Mr Price.

[339] **Gwyn R. Price:** This is a question to you all, although mainly to Gavin, perhaps, because he touched on this before. Do you think that there is a need for further national guidance regarding the number and capability of emergency planning officers and other human resources that category 1 responders should have in place, or do you think that this is already adequately covered?

[340] **Mr Macho:** No. I think that this is one of the things that our profession has suffered from over time. Simon and I were talking about this earlier. For trading standards and environmental health, it is simple: you go to college, you study, and you become a trading standards or an environmental health officer. With emergency planning, there are many degrees and postgraduate courses that you can do, but because our profession is not large enough, our society has never got to the status of an institute, as such. We have the Skills for Justice people who have set the standards and we need to ensure over time that, as people come into the business, those standards are put in place. We are doing that now with our new regional group. We have done a standards and skills audit across the piece. So, we can see where we are, where we need to improve and what we need to bring in. We are trying to become a greater and more recognised profession.

[341] On the number of individuals employed by local authorities, when the Civil Contingencies Act was being formulated and the then First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, was asked in Parliament whether Wales had enough emergency planners, he said that it would not do any harm if each local authority had a couple more. We all went, 'Hurrah', but we did not get them. It would have been a damn good idea, that is for sure. I would say that we need a better level of recognised skills to which we all aspire, and we could do with more officers as well. I started off by saying that there are only 52 of us currently, so we are not legion, so to speak.

[342] **Gwyn R. Price:** Do you think that there is any merit in putting these requirements on a statutory footing?

[343] **Mr Macho:** I would say 'yes', but I do not know if many people would agree with me. I would think that, with statute, people would recognise that that is the number of people we have. However, the WLGA says that all local authorities get a certain amount of money and that how they spend it is down to them. So, the decision lies there currently. Each council must make its own decision about this.

[344] **Darren Millar:** Does anyone else want to come in on this issue?

[345] **Mr Wilkinson:** Gavin hit the nail on the head there, really. There is no formal qualification standard for becoming an emergency planning officer within a local authority. If you asked Gavin, I think that he would have plenty of examples of officers being moved from one department, where they would have been made redundant, into an emergency planning role. That may raise some initial concerns, until the specific competence of those officers is raised to a standard where they can deal with the issues that they would need to deal with day

to day. So, to put something on a firmer basis would be helpful for the profession. Part of the process of going through that is the skills audit that has already been undertaken. Again, as part of the challenging process that we are going through with the regionalisation and with the emergency planning managers reforming themselves, I would expect that that would be one of the things that they would want to discuss in the near future.

4.30 p.m.

[346] **Julie Morgan:** This question is for the north Wales resilience forum. You say in your paper that you ought to know where the vulnerable people are. What efforts are you making to ensure that and who do you mean by ‘vulnerable people’?

[347] **Ms Evans:** That is the holy grail of information. It is an old chestnut that anyone can be vulnerable in an emergency and we all recognise that. The message that we are trying to get out there in community resilience is around people making arrangements for themselves. It is then about the people who are left behind who cannot self-evacuate, for example, those who are stuck in nursing homes or who are stuck in their own houses. We can concentrate our efforts on those people in terms of the response from the emergency services. It is a pertinent point that, at times of resource restrictions, we cannot be everywhere and we cannot help everybody. It was mentioned before that we are losing a generation of people who went through the war and who were very resilient, and we are coming to a generation now who are at a bit of a loss if things do not happen in technology. So, we are focusing our efforts on going into colleges and schools and are looking towards the voluntary sector to help us more and more to address the needs of the vulnerable. However, in terms of identifying vulnerable people, we are working closely with GPs, the health service and utility services—anyone who could provide input to this list of people who would require help.

[348] **Julie Morgan:** So, you would plan to have a mapping exercise, where you could see where the vulnerable groups were on a geographical basis.

[349] **Ms Evans:** Yes. On the north Wales coast, there is an exercise going on at the moment through Conwy County Borough Council, where it is looking to do a flood-mapping exercise around the Kinmel Bay area. That is an area of high population and many of those people are on low incomes and are quite elderly. In terms of addressing the evacuation and shelter requirements of people in that area, we would be able to map out who would need our help quickly through the use of what used to be called flood wardens—I believe that they are called ‘incident management wardens’ now, or some such terminology—and they would be familiar with the local community and would quickly know who in that area might need assistance or help. It is about going back to basics and to knowing who your next-door neighbour is. That is the message that we try to get over when we go into colleges and schools as well—certainly to the young people. We tell them, ‘Don’t disrespect the elderly and don’t disrespect disabled people; they may be the ones who will need your help’.

[350] **Julie Morgan:** What about knowing where your assets are that you can use to help? Do you have a clear idea of that?

[351] **Ms Evans:** That is an ever-evolving picture. I do not think that we will ever have a clear picture on that—it changes all the time.

[352] **Mr Macho:** A lot of it is seasonal, in the sense that if there were a mass evacuation in Cardiff when the students were not in their accommodation, we could accommodate people there, but obviously when the students are in there, you cannot do that. So, when you talk about mass evacuation and the vulnerable, it is always about including the seasonal picture in particular. However, the work that they have done in north Wales is brilliant; it really is good.

[353] **Darren Millar:** You touched on the voluntary sector, Anne, and you make an interesting point in your paper about the role of the voluntary sector in helping to respond to emergencies. You also suggest that there might be some merit to having the voluntary sector or category 2 responders chairing some of the working groups. What advantages do you see in having the voluntary sector and category 2 responders chairing working groups?

[354] **Ms Evans:** This is twofold: it is about getting the best person for the job in terms of recognising their skills and experience, but it also widens the pool of people who are linked with the resilience community. In north Wales, we have six local authorities, one police force, one health board and one fire service, however, the pool of people who attend meetings and who contribute to the work of the LRF is quite small. I think that in recognising the skills of the voluntary sector and the category 2 responders, and sometimes the private sector as well, we are opening the door. It is about engaging more and more with diverse people who do not have a duty to respond but who have an awful lot to contribute.

[355] **Darren Millar:** That is very useful. You mentioned the private sector. You will have seen that we had a discussion about caravan parks, for example, on the north Wales and west Wales coast, where the private sector was actively engaged in the resilience work on the ground.

[356] **Ms Evans:** I believe that issues around caravan and camping sites are a growing piece of work, certainly on the back of recent flooding incidents. There are huge caravan parks and camping grounds in north Wales, and there is a sub-group of the Wales flood group that looks specifically at caravan and camping facilities and at the risks involved there. It is that balancing act between owners not wanting to denigrate their business and making people aware of the risk in that area, but not to the point where they do not want to come to that particular site because it could be a flood risk.

[357] **Darren Millar:** So, in terms of engaging with that industry, that is going on, but it is work that is developing and ongoing.

[358] **Ms Evans:** Yes, it is. It is about getting the message over to the caravan park and campsite owners that it will not be detrimental to their business if they recognise the risks and look to have some plans in place.

[359] **Darren Millar:** Do you want to come in on this point, Aled?

[360] **Aled Roberts:** Yes. In your earlier evidence, you mentioned Lincolnshire and the fact that there seem to be robust processes in place there, probably because of the eastern tidal surge scenario. What degree of best practice learning is there, not only intra-Wales, but perhaps with some of the more established processes that might be available in other parts of England?

[361] **Ms Evans:** I believe that this comes back to the database that Claire alluded to on the national resilience extranet, which is fed into not only by Wales, but the whole of the UK. Any lessons that have been learned, through exercise or through incident, are picked up there nationwide—through Wales and the whole of the UK. Lincolnshire is a good example. I believe that we all look at Lincolnshire for examples of good practice, and there is a lot to be learned from there. However, I believe that it comes down to the individual caravan or campsite owner—they have to want to engage, and it is about getting that message out there to them.

[362] **Ms Parmenter:** We have also had a few presentations, certainly at the Wales resilience forum, whereby the Welsh Government has identified somewhere in Wales, or beyond, that is doing something particularly good and which it feels strategic leaders need to

be aware of and need to take action on. That is generally brought to the WRF as a presentation, and actions come out of that in terms of spreading it across the LRFs and the wider resilience communities. Therefore, there are opportunities for that to be shared.

[363] **Darren Millar:** Can you clarify one issue for us, Anne, which is still unclear in my mind? Is there a statutory barrier to allowing category 2 responders, or voluntary or private sector people, who are participating in those fora, to chair some of the working groups? Do you believe that that exists, or is it just a perception?

[364] **Ms Evans:** Personally, I believe that it is a perception. It comes back to the fact that the category 1 responders are the ones with the duty to respond, and are the ones with the legislation behind them. Category 2 responders, as well as the voluntary sector, have not been engaged with as much as they could have been, possibly, and it is a group that we could engage with further.

[365] **Darren Millar:** I see that you are nodding there, Gavin. That is your experience as well, is it?

[366] **Mr Macho:** Yes. There is no statutory bar to their chairing things. I believe that what they are afraid of is that, if they take decisions, there will be some comeback on them. We should assure them that there will not be, and that it is about chairing meetings, gathering people together and, sometimes, giving a different face. I believe that, sometimes, we can be a bit insular and we do not draw in as many people as we should maybe.

[367] **Darren Millar:** Okay. On that note, I thank you for your evidence. I do not believe that we have any further questions that we want to ask you. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings and, if there is anything inaccurate that needs to be corrected, please let us know. We are grateful for the evidence that you have put on the record. Thank you.

4.39 p.m.

Argyfyngau Sifil yng Nghymru—Tystiolaeth gan y Sector Gwirfoddol Civil Emergencies in Wales—Evidence from the Voluntary Sector

[368] **Darren Millar:** We will now take evidence on civil emergencies in Wales from the voluntary sector. I am delighted that our witnesses have been able to join us. Do you want to introduce yourselves for the record? We will then move to questions.

[369] **Mr Jones:** My name is Rhodri Jones and I am the operations adviser for St John Cymru Wales.

[370] **Mr Shaughnessy:** I am James Shaughnessy, director of operations for St John Cymru Wales.

[371] **Darren Millar:** Welcome to you both. I am grateful to you for attending today. You have obviously seen the report, which contains some clear messages about the good responses that have been to civil emergencies and the role of the voluntary sector in delivering those positive outcomes. What do you think are the main messages for the voluntary sector and resilience people engaged on emergency planning and response across Wales?

[372] **Mr Jones:** I think that one of the biggest things is communicating the right messages across the various voluntary sector bodies. It is quite difficult. You have national bodies such as St John, Red Cross and the WRVS. It a wide-ranging group of organisations who all do good work and are called upon in times of need across the country. It is a matter of getting the

communication right at a national, regional and local level. How these organisations interact with the various organisations, be it at a local authority level, at the local resilience forum or even with Welsh Government or a national level, is important. It is all about communicating what these organisations can bring to the table and, once they are around that table, that they are communicating with the right people at the right level.

[373] **Darren Millar:** How involved are you in the emergency planning in different parts of Wales? Does it vary across Wales?

[374] **Mr Jones:** It does vary quite a bit across Wales. I would say that, at a local authority level, there is a good working relationship. That is pretty much the situation across Wales in general; there are probably the odd pockets here and there. Across Wales, it is generally pretty good at that level. When you get to the regional level, I think it is a bit less clear because of the way the local resilience fora are set up with an array of sub-groups. Not all of the local resilience fora have the same sub-groups. From our organisation's involvement with the local resilience fora, the view is that it is a bit random. We have been involved with some areas and sub-groups, and not with others. However, the involvement is not reflected at the same sort of level between the four local resilience fora.

[375] **Darren Millar:** Do you think there would be merit in following up the Wales Audit Office recommendation that there ought to be a more consistent approach across Wales with regard to the involvement on a regional level?

[376] **Mr Jones:** The report is clear in suggesting that things should be set out on more of a regional basis, but I would not like to lose that local base. For example, during the Aberystwyth floods in 2012, our relationship with the local authority, Ceredigion County Council, which was very involved in that, was paramount, because they were trying times and it was something that was not expected on that scale. That relationship meant that we were able to support the authority at various levels pretty much instantly. It is important. I am not sure whether we can guarantee that same approach across Wales as a national organisation. If you are an organisation that works in only one local authority, then it is easy, because you link in to that local authority plan et cetera. We want to see some consistency from a national, regional and local point of view.

[377] **Gwyn R. Price:** Which stages of planning, training and exercising, emergency response and post-emergency recovery do you think need particularly strengthening with regard to the engagement of the voluntary sector, and how?

[378] **Mr Jones:** We said in our evidence that we have been involved in several of the larger scale exercises, not just the local exercises that happen on a more regular basis. One example would be exercise Oystercatcher, which was a large-scale exercise. We were heavily involved in that. It is important that we get involved in these exercises. For example, with Oystercatcher, we chose to participate in that but we did not even cover our expenses. We put in six vehicles and we travelled to Fishguard, Haverfordwest and one of the refineries in Pembrokeshire. Obviously, we do not expect to gain funds from participating in these exercises, but I do not think that the voluntary sector should be at a personal loss as a result of engaging in important exercises.

4.45 p.m.

[379] It is very important that we do participate in exercises because that is the only chance that we get to interact with some services and plan for disasters and whatever. It is also important that you meet and work with people. You get to know people and, when things do go wrong, it is quite nice to be working with the same Silver group, where you know the faces and you know people's names as opposed to just turning up and thinking, 'Who is that

person?'. When I walked into Aberystwyth, there were around three people around the table who said, 'Hi, Rhodri. How are you?'. That is the sort of relationship that I think you need. Also, you have to learn from the lessons. The whole point of exercises is that things do not go according to plan, and organisations should be able to learn from it. That is a very important aspect.

[380] **Mike Hedges:** The auditor general praises the collective response to some recent major emergencies, and I concur with him. When the chips have been down and there have been major emergencies, people have dealt with them very well. We always need to remember that when we discuss these things. In your paper, you talk about the involvement of St John Cymru Wales in some of these and other events. What lessons can be learned from these events, specifically regarding the engagement of the voluntary sector, which I know, in some of these cases, played a very major part?

[381] **Mr Jones:** It is quite interesting that, luckily, we have not had many serious incidents of a civil contingency nature across Wales over the last couple of years. The biggest problems that we have had have been due to adverse weather, be it snow or flooding. Adverse weather is the top one in that field. However, it is quite important that organisations work together. It is a matter of knowing what the organisation can provide. As an organisation, St John works very closely with the ambulance service through the work that we do on a daily basis, not just when the chips are down. We work with them at events and as first responders. So, when it happens, we have that relationship; the ambulance service knows who to contact and it knows our capabilities.

[382] I do not think that we have that same relationship with other category 1 responders, when we could possibly provide support to them. I know that people see us as a sort of ambulance reserve—that is a term that I use, which is an old-fashioned term, really. People see us as St John Ambulance because we provide ambulances. Outside the NHS, we have the largest fleet of ambulances in Wales, so it is a natural perception. However, we have 4,000 volunteers. We have only 100 vehicles, so putting two people on each vehicle would mean only 200 of our volunteers being utilised. We have another 3,800 somewhere that we could utilise for other things. So, that is just a snippet, really, although we were involved during much of the adverse weather, with the snow and the flooding.

[383] **Mr Shaughnessy:** Just to follow on from what Rhodri said, during the recent snow, while we were supporting the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust very closely, we could also have been helping the police or the fire service. In taking staff into work in our 4x4 vehicles, we could have driven past a policeman who needed to get to work but could not get in. While we have a heavy involvement health-wise—we are a healthcare charity—there is potential for us to help if we know more of what is required in other areas.

[384] **Julie Morgan:** The voluntary sector is very diverse. Which organisations do you think are best placed to represent the sector nationally and regionally?

[385] **Mr Jones:** Nationally, there are some key players, such as St John Ambulance, the WRVS and the Red Cross. There are some other supplementary organisations, such as RAYNET and these 4x4 groups. So, there are plenty of national groups that can assist. The major players are probably St John, WRVS and the Red Cross. There are other charities, obviously. Where an incident goes on for a long time, and when we go into a recovery phase—or possibly prior to that—there are other charities and groups that you would want to get involved. There was a question earlier about identifying vulnerable groups or individuals, but there is a whole host of national and local groups out there in the voluntary sector that are engaging with these people through work that they are doing—Age Cymru and carers' associations—so they should be able to help in identifying these individuals.

[386] **Julie Morgan:** Would you have the capacity to become much more involved in the local resilience fora, or at a national level?

[387] **Mr Shaughnessy:** We are set up to link up with both. We are a national organisation, but we run very much locally as well. We are split into six regions in Wales and each region has a regional commissioner, as we call them—that is an old-fashioned term now; perhaps a regional manager would be a better phrase—and there is a network underneath that. So, we have national guidance with regional support. We go from Anglesey to Barry and we have volunteers in all parts of Wales, so I am sure there is more we can do.

[388] **Mr Jones:** The problem is that a lot of our regional or local units are run and operated by volunteers. So, a problem arises when you expect them to go to meetings in the working week. When engaging with the voluntary sector, you need to think about whether you can have the meetings in the evening or at weekends. That is something just to think about. I am not saying it is a major impact, but it is something to consider if your volunteers are working and so have to take time off to attend these meetings. I suppose it depends on how onerous the meetings are. If it is only three or four times a year, then it is not a problem, but if it is once a month it is yet more effort for a volunteer, is it not?

[389] **Julie Morgan:** Yes. Bearing those points in mind, do you think there is the capacity for more involvement than there is?

[390] **Mr Jones:** I think that there is the capacity. What we should be doing is that we should be involved; we need to be around the table and to be part of the discussions. Traditionally, what has happened is that voluntary sector groups have been set up, and St John, Red Cross and the WRVS would have a meeting and they would form the voluntary sector group or whatever, and that group would talk about themselves and what they do and how they work or whatever. It is for that interaction with the category 1 responders and the other category 2 responders that we need to be around the table, and not just to have the voluntary sector talking around the table as the voluntary sector. There needs to be that engagement and clear terms of reference, so that everybody knows what is going on.

[391] **Mr Shaughnessy:** With volunteers—Rhodri is a volunteer—it is about planning in advance and being aware of what is required. Many companies and organisations are very supportive of our volunteers and the things they do, so, as long as they know what we want and can plan their diaries ahead of time, they can get that support from where they work, and we find that they can attend and be involved with lots of things. We depend on volunteers to operate, really, and that is that. As long as the diary is planned out well ahead of time, they will usually be able to find the time.

[392] **Mr Jones:** St John is not alone in using volunteers. The rest of the sector is, in effect, primarily made up of volunteers; the meals on wheels service gets delivered on a daily basis by WRVS volunteers, et cetera, et cetera. It is not a new thing, but it something to be mindful of. If you are engaging with volunteers, you need to think about when you are meeting. It is quite simple, really.

[393] **Darren Millar:** In terms of the national resilience forum, if there was only one seat available on it for the voluntary sector in terms of the emergency response that you, the Red Cross, WRVS et cetera provide, who should determine who that appointed person would be?

[394] **Mr Jones:** That is a difficult question. It is quite difficult—because of the nature of representing the voluntary sector at that level and because the organisations do disparate things, it is a big ask to nominate one person to be on the forum representing the voluntary sector. I know that it has been done in other places, but it is a big ask.

[395] **Darren Millar:** Is it a big ask to ask for three people to be on there? Did you want to come in on that, James?

[396] **Mr Shaughnessy:** I was wondering whether it could be a changeable thing, with a period of so long for St John, then for the Red Cross, and then the WRVS.

[397] **Darren Millar:** If that is a suggestion, we are happy to receive it.

[398] **Mr Shaughnessy:** It would be a bit like with the EU.

[399] **Jocelyn Davies:** I wanted to ask about your engagement with local authorities. It says in your paper that you have a good working relationship with local authority emergency planning officers in certain areas, but that this varies across Wales. However, when you were responding to the Chair, I got the impression that the engagement was quite consistent and fine across Wales.

[400] **Mr Jones:** I do not think that we are in a position to say that we engage with all local authorities across Wales. That is what we are trying to say.

[401] **Jocelyn Davies:** Can you give an explanation as to why that might be a bit patchy?

[402] **Mr Jones:** I do not think that there is a specific reason for it. It is just that we rely on volunteers who are, effectively, managing in all the areas and I suppose that it is down to those individuals that they have not engaged with the local authority or, vice versa, that the local authority has not engaged with them. We submitted this response quite swiftly. I suppose that what we should do is to do a mapping exercise to find out the exact facts, and, where there are gaps, to try to find the reasons why there are gaps.

[403] **Jocelyn Davies:** If you were listening earlier on to the response from the WLGA, it said that this report is outdated, and is two years old—it sounded as if the past was a completely different country. It said that there had been huge improvements in those two years, so, in terms of your engagement with local authorities, have you detected an improvement over the last two years?

[404] **Mr Jones:** I think that the engagement with local authorities varies according to what is going on in the civil contingencies world. The things of note that we have seen over the last five or six years have been fuel tanker strikes and pandemic influenza. When there have been civil contingency issues, engagement has risen. When the issues subside, the engagement reduces. That is what I am seeing.

[405] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, it is down to events and you would not include the publication of this report as one of those things that has resulted in better engagement, would you?

[406] **Mr Jones:** No, I do not think so.

[407] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, it has made no difference. Okay. Thank you.

[408] **Aled Roberts:** Rwyf eisiau gofyn cwestiwn yn Gymraeg. I droi at y canllawiau a gyhoeddwyd gan Swyddfa'r Cabinet ym mis Hydref 2011, pa mor ymwybodol yw'r sector gwirfoddol o'r canllawiau hyn, a pha mor effeithiol yw'r cynghorau lleol a Llywodraeth Cymru wrth ddilyn y canllawiau? **Aled Roberts:** I would like to ask my question in Welsh. Turning to the guidance published by the Cabinet Office in October 2011, how aware is the voluntary sector of that guidance, and how effective are local authorities and the Welsh Government in following the guidance?

[409] **Mr Jones:** Rwy'n credu bod y canllawiau wedi bod yn help mawr, ac rwy'n credu bod y cynghorau wedi gwneud rhywbeth am hyn. Rydym wedi bod yn gwneud hyn ers blynyddoedd o ran helpu pobl; mae St Ioan wedi bodoli ers cannoedd o flynyddoedd, yn gwneud pethau fel hyn. Mae'n dibynnu ar beth mae cynghorau yn mo'yn i ni ei wneud, ond rwy'n credu bod y canllawiau wedi bod o help.

Mr Jones: I think that the guidance has been of great help, and I think that local authorities have done something about it. We have been doing this for years in terms of helping people; St John has been around for hundreds of years doing things like this. It depends on what the councils want us to do, but I think that the guidance has been of help.

[410] **Aled Roberts:** Mae'r archwilydd cyffredinol yn sôn yn un o'r astudiaethau achos yn yr adroddiad am brotocol sydd wedi cael ei sefydlu rhwng awdurdod swydd Lincoln â'r sector gwirfoddol. A oes unrhyw drafodaeth wedi bod ynglŷn â sefydlu protocol tebyg yng Nghymru?

Aled Roberts: The auditor general mentions a protocol in one of the case studies in the report that has been established between Lincolnshire authority and the voluntary sector. Has there been any discussion about establishing a similar protocol in Wales?

[411] **Mr Jones:** Nid i mi wybod amdano.

Mr Jones: Not that I am aware of.

[412] **Aled Roberts:** I symud ymlaen at enghraifft arall o ddefnyddio'r sector gwirfoddol, mae wardeiniaid llifogydd yn cael eu defnyddio mewn rhai ardaloedd. A oes esiamplau eraill lle'r ydych yn teimlo y gallai mwy o ddefnydd gael ei wneud o'r sector gwirfoddol nag sy'n cael ei wneud ar hyn o bryd?

Aled Roberts: Moving on to another example of using the voluntary sector, flood wardens are used in some areas. Are there other examples where you feel that more use could be made of the voluntary sector than is made at present?

[413] **Mr Jones:** Y trwbwl yw bod y sector gwirfoddol yno yn barod, ac mae'r *infrastructure* a'r cysylltiadau yno, felly gallech ddefnyddio'r sector gwirfoddol i wneud beth bynnag yr ydych mo'yn iddo ei wneud. Os ydych chi'n mo'yn i'r sector gwirfoddol weithredu fel wardeiniaid llifogydd yn rhywle, gellid ei ddefnyddio i wneud hynny, neu i alw ar bobl mewn oed os oes problem. Gallech ddefnyddio'r sector gwirfoddol i fynd o gwmpas a churo ar ddrysau i ofyn a yw pobl yn iawn.

Mr Jones: The trouble is that the voluntary sector is there already, and the infrastructure and the link are there, so you could use the voluntary sector to do whatever you want it to do. If you want the voluntary sector to act as flood wardens somewhere, it can be used to do that, or to check in on the elderly if there is a problem. You could use the voluntary sector to knock on doors to ask whether people are okay.

5.00 p.m.

[414] Mae'r sector yno, ac mae gwiriadau gan y Criminal Records Bureau a'r Disclosure and Barring Service wedi'u gwneud ac yn y blaen. Mae'r aelodau wedi cael eu gwirio. Mae'r *infrastructure* yno'n barod.

The checks by the Criminal Records Bureau and the Disclosure and Barring Service have been carried out. The members have been vetted. The infrastructure is already there.

[415] **Aled Roberts:** Wrth i ni symud at systemau rhanbarthol, yr oeddech yn dweud

Aled Roberts: As we move towards regional systems, you say that the situation between

bod y sefyllfa'n anghyson rhwng awdurdodau lleol. A oes rhai rhanbarthau sy'n gryfach o ran cydweithio â'r sector gwirfoddol? Mae pedwar rhanbarth. A yw'r berthynas yn well mewn rhai rhanbarthau nag eraill?

local authorities is inconsistent. Are there some regions that are stronger in terms of collaborating with the voluntary sector? There are four regions. Is the relationship better with some regions than others?

[416] **Mr Jones:** Mae'r berthynas ranbarthol yn eithaf isel yn barod. Nid wyf yn dweud nad yw'n bodoli, ond mae'n eithaf isel. Nid wyf yn credu ei bod yn well mewn unrhyw ardal; mae'n eithaf isel ar draws Cymru.

Mr Jones: The regional relationships are on quite a low level already. I am not saying that they are not there, but they are on a low level. It is not better in one area than another. It is quite low across Wales.

[417] **Aled Roberts:** A oes gennych bryder, felly, wrth i'r system fynd yn fwy rhanbarthol, y bydd y berthynas gref â rhai awdurdodau lleol yn gwanhau o achos hynny?

Aled Roberts: Do you have a concern, therefore, if we move to a more regional system, that the strong relationship with some local authorities will weaken because of that?

[418] **Mr Jones:** Mater i ni fel mudiad yw gwneud yn siŵr ein bod yn gwneud mwy yn rhanbarthol. Ar hyn o bryd, rydym yn gweithio'n lleol. Os bydd yn mynd yn rhanbarthol, bydd yn rhaid i ni wneud yn siŵr ein bod yn gweithio yn fwy rhanbarthol. Rhaid i ni wneud yn siŵr ein bod yn gweithio'n genedlaethol ac ar bob lefel o dan hynny.

Mr Jones: It is up to us as a group to ensure that we do more on a regional basis. At present, we are operating on a local basis. If it develops into a regional system, we have to ensure that we work on a more regional basis. We have to ensure that we work on a national basis and every level below that.

[419] **Aled Roberts:** Digon teg.

Aled Roberts: Fair enough.

[420] **Jocelyn Davies:** Do you have a regional structure?

[421] **Aled Roberts:** Yes, there are six regions.

[422] **Mr Jones:** At the moment, we have six regions. We are currently in the process of splitting one to create seven, but they do not mirror the local resilience fora. For instance, in Dyfed Powys, we have the west Wales region, which is, effectively, Dyfed, and then Powys as a separate region.

[423] **Jocelyn Davies:** What is the logic behind the way in which you have structured your regional basis? What was that based on? Why did you come up with seven?

[424] **Mr Shaughnessy:** It was before our time.

[425] **Mr Jones:** It has been there since 2001. St John used to have a county structure, and then in 2001, I think, it was decided that some of the counties were too small and there was not much going on in them, so some counties were merged. However, at the moment, it does not mirror.

[426] **Mr Shaughnessy:** When we had 22, each needed a management structure and volunteers to look after it, and it got quite difficult to manage.

[427] **Jocelyn Davies:** That sounds like other organisations that I will not mention at this

stage. [*Laughter.*]

[428] **Mr Jones:** If we were reorganising the organisation now, we would probably consider aligning ourselves with local health board areas, because the work that we do is in the health arena. However, by the time we would be aligned with the local health boards, they would probably have changed. So, in 10 years' time, you would still be asking why we are different.

[429] **Mr Shaughnessy:** I should have said that we are very closely bound to the Lord Lieutenancies, because the chairs of our councils are the Lord Lieutenants, which are very much in the old county structure.

[430] **Darren Millar:** Those are very old counties—the reserved counties.

[431] **Jocelyn Davies:** I do not know whether I feel better about that or not.

[432] **Darren Millar:** Before we close, because you have been really helpful in this evidence session, I would just like to touch on funding arrangements. We touched on it earlier when you mentioned the capacity to participate in training exercises et cetera. In terms of your involvement in emergency exercises, major incident exercises, are you involved, and, if so, to what extent does funding dictate the level of your involvement?

[433] **Mr Jones:** To my knowledge, we have never not played an active part in exercises—certainly over the last eight years or so. We are not saying that we would not participate because of a lack of funding. We are a charity and we are involved in covering public events across Wales, so the only time we would probably not participate in an exercise would be if, as an organisation, we did not have the capacity to do so. On funding, people just need to be made aware that, if you are involving the voluntary sector, it should not be out of pocket as a result of being involved in the exercises.

[434] **Darren Millar:** Public bodies can try to recover some of their costs if there has been a sudden emergency that they have needed to attend. What is your view on whether you ought to be able to recover some costs? If you have been the only respondent, and the public sector has not been up to the job for whatever reason, and you have been there on site, delivering an emergency response, do you think that you ought to be able to access some money?

[435] **Mr Jones:** Our view as a charity, which goes with our motto, is that, at the end of the day, we are a lifesaving charity. We would not not get involved because of an issue with funding. That is not to say that we would not look at funding post-event to recoup some costs. However, as a charity, we would give of our best and try to recoup costs via whatever organisation. For instance, when we assist the ambulance service during adverse weather, we look at recouping our costs via the ambulance service.

[436] **Darren Millar:** Finally, in terms of volunteers participating in local, national or regional fora, I assume that, at the moment, you are not able to claim travel or subsistence costs associated with those activities. Do you think that ought to be made available to people to encourage participation?

[437] **Mr Jones:** If we do participate, the volunteers put in claims, which are paid out of the charity's funds. However, as I said, the charity should not be out of pocket because it is helping a public body or an organisation. That would be a good step towards—

[438] **Mr Shaughnessy:** 'Yes' is the answer.

[439] **Darren Millar:** Okay. That is very good.

[440] **Jocelyn Davies:** Do you make a distinction between practice exercises and actual events in terms of when you would expect to be refunded? If there was a disaster and you turn up, you would not necessarily send a bill for that, but you said that there might be some reluctance to be involved in exercises. Is that how it works in practice?

[441] **Mr Jones:** We do not have a reluctance to be involved in exercises. What I was trying to say is that we should be looking at recouping our costs when we are involved in exercises. It is not that we would not participate if we were not recouping the costs.

[442] **Darren Millar:** I see that there are no further questions. That brings us to the end of the evidence session. Thank you very much indeed. It was very useful evidence, and I am sure it will contribute to our report. You will be sent a copy of the transcript in case there are factual inaccuracies in it that you want to correct. Thank you very much—speak to you again.

5.07 p.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd
o'r Cyfarfod**
**Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public
from the Meeting**

[443] **Darren Millar:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi).

[444] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 5.07 p.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 5.07 p.m.*