



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau The Petitions Committee

**Dydd Mawrth, 24 Mawrth 2015
Tuesday, 24 March 2015**

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

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

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Steve George	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:03.
The meeting began at 09:03.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da, bawb. Good morning, all. Welcome to this final meeting of the Petitions Committee for this term. Normal housekeeping arrangements apply. If there's a fire alarm, it's for real, and we're in the hands of the ushers. No apologies—a full complement of Members.

09:04

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

[2] **William Powell:** I suggest that we move straight to agenda item 2, which is on the discussion of the really full and useful evidence session that we had from the Friends of Barry Beaches just a fortnight ago, with regard to petition P-04-547, 'Ban Polystyrene (EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging'. As colleagues will recall, this petition was submitted by Friends of Barry Beaches. It was first considered by us on 29 April 2014 and it had the support of 295

signatures. Now, as an aide-mémoire, we've got a full transcript of that evidence session, but I'm sure we recall it in some good detail. I think I speak for the committee in the sense that we both found it a useful evidence session and also had more of an appetite at the end of it to take the matters forward. But what I'd very much appreciate is a steer from you as to how you would particularly like to do that. Joyce Watson.

[3] **Joyce Watson:** It was, indeed, an interesting debate and evidence session. I would think that, whilst we've taken the evidence we've taken off the people that we have, we need to certainly take further oral evidence, perhaps from the catering side. I would like to examine in more detail the alternatives. They presented us with alternative packaging, and I would like to know a little bit more detail about the constitution and make-up of the alternative packaging and any effect that equally might have on the environment.

[4] **William Powell:** I think that would be very useful indeed, to see how technology is moving on with regard to reducing the impacts. Also, I think we should say for the record that we are grateful to the catering business from Oxford that has proactively submitted some thoughts with regard to this petition, because, obviously, the example of Oxford City Council was referenced in the evidence session. Russell George.

[5] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. I, too, like Joyce, found this a very useful session. I think this is a petition that probably has a wider interest across Wales. So, I think that's certainly something we should progress as a committee. I am wondering whether, because part of this will—. Perhaps a reluctance of smaller—. Well, what was interesting was that it was smaller businesses that were perhaps using polystyrene, but some of the larger international companies weren't, and I think—

[6] **William Powell:** They've got the scale to investigate alternatives more.

[7] **Russell George:** They have, and I think that what would be useful to us in taking this forward is if we were to have some costings, and perhaps a research brief that could provide us with that would enable us to take this forward as well.

[8] **William Powell:** Yes, I think a research brief would certainly help. Bethan.

[9] **Bethan Jenkins:** Roeddwn i jest yn moyndweud, yr wythnos diwethaf, mewn cwestiynau i Jane Hutt, codais y mater o'r potensial i ddefnyddio cronfa gymunedol tirlenwi, *landfill fund*, y Llywodraeth ar gyfer ariannu efallai elusennau fel hyn sydd yn ymgyrchu yn erbyn polystyren neu ymgyrchu dros agweddau amgylcheddol. Rwy'n meddwl y dylai'r deisebwyr edrych yn ôl ar hynny. Hefyd, dylem ni fel pwyllgor edrych ar sut—neu os—fyddai'r gronfa hynny yn gallu hwyluso'r broses yma, achos rwy'n credu y byddai'n gyfle euraidd i edrych ar y system hynny. Hefyd, rwy'n credu, nawr ein bod ni wedi cael y deisebwyr i mewn, efallai y gallwn gael y Gweinidog i mewn i weld os yw'n meddwl ei fod yn syniad da, achos, ar ddiwedd y dydd, gwnaeth y lefi ar fagiâu plastig cychwyn yn fan hyn, ac efallai y gall hwn gychwyn yn fan hyn hefyd, Felly, mae'n gyfle gwych i wneud hyn.

Bethan Jenkins: I just wanted to say that, last week, in questions to Jane Hutt, I raised the matter of the potential to use the Government's community landfill fund to perhaps fund charities like this that campaign to ban polystyrene or campaign for environmental aspects. I think that the petitioners should look back at that. Also, we as a committee should look at how—or whether—that fund could facilitate this process, because I think that it would be a golden opportunity to look at that system. I also think that, now that we have had evidence from the petitioners, perhaps we should also invite the Minister in to see whether he thinks that it's a good idea, because, ultimately, the plastic bag levy started in this place, and perhaps this could start here, too. So, it's an excellent opportunity to do this.

[10] **William Powell:** Yes, thank you. I think there's a number of really useful suggestions there, and also it would be quite feasible for us to capture that section of the Cofnod and, maybe, to send the Record of Proceedings through to the petitioners and to Ms Bell from the Marine Conservation Society so they've got sight of that exchange and the answers that you received from Jane Hutt with respect to that.

[11] **Bethan Jenkins:** There's a consultation phase, you see, so the reason why I was raising it was perhaps the Minister might be more inclined to look at—

[12] **William Powell:** Yes, it's exactly the right time to do it.

[13] **Bethan Jenkins:** —charities or organisations that are environmental that would gain from this landfill tax, as opposed to just general charities.

[14] **William Powell:** Absolutely; that's much more in the spirit of how it was planned. Russell.

[15] **Russell George:** I think, Chair, as well that we should keep the Environment and Sustainability Committee in the loop on this as well. I don't propose that they've got time in their schedule to look at this, but we should at least keep them in the loop, I think.

[16] **William Powell:** I think both the Environment and Sustainability Committee and the Minister will maybe have a pause in their—in our legislative challenges, if I can speak for three of the four of us who currently serve on the committee. But I'm certainly happy to write to Alun Ffred Jones as Chair in that regard, and also to seek as early a slot within Carl Sargeant's diary as possible to see whether he is able to come to speak to us. One other suggestion that maybe occurs is whether or not it would be sensible to try to contact Oxford City Council, where they've introduced this and which is obviously the source of the information from Ms Wilkins, the business lady who's been in touch with us, to see whether they could either submit written evidence or potentially have somebody who would be able to come with us because they've obviously been something of a leader in this field as well. I don't know whether colleagues think that would be useful.

[17] **Ms Roberts:** Chair, if I could just come in on this, I've undertaken some research on this and, based on information available on websites et cetera, it appears that Oxford City Council, through its licensing committee, did propose this ban but it was in relation to street food traders. What they proposed was a new street trader licensing policy, which stipulated that all packaging and utensils should be biodegradable and also recyclable. But, from what I've seen on the internet, there was a consultation period and this wasn't taken forward any further. So, that's what happened there as far as I could see.

[18] **Bethan Jenkins:** Could that sort of licensing happen here, then? Could a council decide to do the same type of thing? Obviously, I don't know the powers in England.

[19] **Ms Roberts:** I haven't actually looked at that in any detail, Bethan, but I'm more than happy to do so in assisting the committee taking this forward, really. It's just that I wanted to highlight that it was something that that particular council considered. However, for whatever reason, that wasn't taken forward. I'm more than happy to pick up on that point.

[20] **William Powell:** We're grateful for that briefing.

[21] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, thank you.

[22] **William Powell:** Also, in papers that we have to inform our consideration, there is an

indication from Welsh Government that, actually, they do have the capacity to take this forward—and the competence, more to the point.

[23] **Mr George:** That's from our own legal advisers.

[24] **William Powell:** Oh, that's from our own legal advisers rather than from Welsh Government. So, that's an encouraging point, really, in terms of our further consideration of these matters. Okay. Good, I think we have a range of actions there to take forward. Again, thanks to Friends of Barry Beaches and to the Marine Conservation Society for their excellent evidence session.

09:12

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[25] **William Powell:** Moving now to agenda item 3, new petitions, we have agenda item 3.1, P-04-619, 'Localism in Planning and Compensation for Third Parties Re. Infrastructure Projects'. This petition was submitted by Mr Michael Halsey and has the support of 462 signatures. We are happy to welcome Mr Halsey to the public gallery today; he is following our deliberations. The text of this petition reads as follows:

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

[27] So reads the text of the petition. Now, a first-consideration letter was submitted, as is our practice, to the Minister for Public Services, seeking his views on the petition. In fact, a reply has come, perhaps not surprisingly, from the Minister for Natural Resources, who's very exercised by these matters currently in the context of the Planning (Wales) Bill in any event. He's replied on the petition as it relates to the planning system. We've got a fairly full letter from Carl Sargeant, which I invite you to have a look at at the moment, just to refresh your memory. We also have quite a detailed set of comments back from Mr Halsey as lead petitioner. There are a number of issues there where he is airing points of detail, and clearly he is of a different view on a number of key points in relation to this. So, obviously, I think there's scope for some further exchange here to tease out what the key issues are. Russell George, you've indicated.

[28] **Russell George:** Yes, thanks, Chair. I have spoken to the petitioner about this myself. I was quite pleased that, for a new petition being looked at the first time, it has developed quite quickly.

[29] **William Powell:** It speaks in favour of the new way in which we are approaching things, doesn't it?

[30] **Russell George:** It does. I think it's good that the Minister did reply. Credit to the Minister for replying quickly, because, clearly, we're looking at this piece of legislation at the moment so we need to move quite quickly. The Minister's response was quite detailed. What was telling to me in the Minister's response was towards the end of the first page where it said:

[31] ‘These proposals will strengthen, rather than weaken, community engagement.’

09:15

[32] I fully appreciate there’ll be different views, perhaps, amongst us committee members here. This certainly wasn’t my view when I read the letter, but I appreciate that others will have a different opinion. But, when I looked at the petitioner’s response, they picked up the same view as me as well, and as I look through the petitioner’s response, I find myself in full agreement with what the petitioner says, but that’s just my view. I think that it’s part of our process in this committee to forward correspondence being received to the Minister, so I would propose that what we do is forward Mr and Mrs Halsey’s letter to us to Carl Sargeant and ask him for further comment.

[33] **William Powell:** I’d be happy to support that. Just looking around the table, I’m aware that all of us, at different points, do take up causes on behalf of communities, whether it be opencast, whether it be very large-scale farm developments or whatever other things. At different points, we all relate to these kind of large-scale issues and large-scale infrastructure projects in different respects. I don’t know whether, at this stage, if there are further comments or whether that is sufficient at the moment?

[34] **Bethan Jenkins:** I don’t sit on the environment committee, and lots of these issues in the letter from the petitioner are related to that, in terms of how the community are consulted in terms of the plans, the place plans and so forth. So, I think that if you’re voting on amendments, potentially, that’s for you on that committee, to see whether it can be incorporated in there, because this is the best time to be looking at it. But, I’m not on the committee.

[35] **William Powell:** I just want to confirm with the clerk as to whether or not we have shared it with the Environment and Sustainability Committee as such. Obviously, the three of us who are Members—. No, we haven’t. I think that we should propose that we do so, because I think that would make a lot of sense.

[36] **Bethan Jenkins:** I mean, I don’t know the timelines and whether it’s too difficult.

[37] **William Powell:** We’re in the heart of that process right now.

[38] **Bethan Jenkins:** It does seem odd not to, because so much of it refers to the planning Bill.

[39] **Russell George:** Yes, I agree with Bethan. It might be that it’s a bit late coming to the committee, but that’s for the committee to decide, isn’t it? The members should at least see it, I think.

[40] **William Powell:** We’re still at the cut and thrust of amendment, really, aren’t we, on that?

[41] **Bethan Jenkins:** That’s fine, then. I didn’t say it was too late. I just meant that I hope it’s not too late.

[42] **William Powell:** It’s high time, I think, is the term. Joyce.

[43] **Joyce Watson:** Right. Can we come back to the petition? And it is timely, as you say—we are in the middle of putting in our thoughts into the process, and we’ll be doing that again on Thursday—

[44] **William Powell:** Thursday morning, indeed, at 9 o'clock.

[45] **Joyce Watson:** —when we finish off the amendments. In terms of whether we let that committee know, yes of course we should let that committee know that we have this petition in, and whether that affects debate there will be for people around the table, but there has been debate like this already in that committee, raising some of these issues. But, how we go on from here is really what we need to decide this morning. The Minister has written his letter, the petitioner has responded to that letter, and our job here right now is, I think, to give a copy of that letter back to the Minister and see what he wants to do in response to that, and I'm sure, you know, that that will be equally timely. And I think that's the progress that we need to make this morning.

[46] **William Powell:** Indeed. Well, I shall ensure that no time is lost in writing to Carl Sargeant in that regard, and I'm also grateful to the petitioner for having gone through in such a forensic fashion, addressing particular points and assisting the Minister then in identifying the key issues that are of concern. So, we'll do that without delay. Thank you very much. Good.

[47] Moving now to the next item on the agenda, which is agenda item 3.2, P-04-618, 'Protection of Banking Services in Vulnerable Communities'. Again, this is a cause dear all of our hearts in different locations, I've no doubt. This petition was submitted by Martin Crumpton and has collected 13 signatures:

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

[49] Our first-consideration letter was sent to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty seeking her views on this, and we've got a full response from Lesley Griffiths on this matter. Bethan Jenkins.

[50] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwyf jest eisiau dweud rwy'n meddwl dylem ni ysgrifennu yn ôl at y Gweinidog yma. Mae hi'n siarad am beth mae'r Gweinidog dros yr economi yn ei wneud, ac mae hynny'n ddigon teg, ond dylai'r Gweinidog wybod bod hi ei hun wedi lansio grŵp i ailwampio y strategaeth cynhwysiant ariannol a fydd yn cychwyn cyn hir. Mae gen i gynrychiolaeth ar hynny yn sgil fy ngwaith ar fy Mil addysg a chynhwysiant ariannol. Felly, byddwn i'n ysgrifennu nôl at Lesley Griffiths yn dweud, 'A fedrwech chi siarad am y ddeiseb yma yng nghyd-destun y gwaith y bydd y grŵp penodol hwnnw yn ei wneud?' achos bydd hwnnw wedyn yn mynd mas i ymgynghoriad cyhoeddus, ac mae'n rhan hynod o bwysig o'r gwaith y bydd y strategaeth yn ei wneud. Mae lot o bobl, yn enwedig mewn ardaloedd gwledig, yn ffeindio nad ydyn nhw'n gallu cael mynediad i arian, ac wedyn maen nhw'n

Bethan Jenkins: I just want to say I think we should write back to this Minister. She is talking about what the Minister for the economy is doing, and that is fair enough, but the Minister that she herself has launched a group to revamp the financial inclusion strategy which will be starting soon. I have representation on that as a result of my work on my financial education and inclusion Bill. So, we should write back to Lesley Griffiths asking her, 'Can you talk about this petition in the context of the work that that specific group will be undertaking?' because that will then go out to public consultation, and it's an extremely important part of the work that the strategy will do. Many people, especially in rural areas, find that they can't have access to money, and then they are priced out of normal things in everyday life. Therefore, that's what I would say needs to be done now, as well as chasing up the petitioner for a

cael eu prisio allan o bethau normal mewn response.
bywyd bob dydd. Felly, dyna fyddwn i'n ei
ddweud sydd angen ei wneud nawr, yn
ogystal â siaso lan y deisebwr am ateb.

[51] **William Powell:** Exactly. Thanks for that, and thank you for all the work that you've been doing to lead this agenda. As you say, increasingly we've got a situation where people haven't got financial options and then, in the end, we'll have people storing money under the mattress again and going back to previous ways of doing things, which probably don't make sense in the long term, but people do feel abandoned. Would it be possible for Mr Crumpton to actually input directly into the consultation, or even to have a say with the wider—

[52] **Bethan Jenkins:** The reason I suggested the Minister first was because it hasn't been launched or anything yet.

[53] **William Powell:** Okay, so it's still at a formative stage.

[54] **Bethan Jenkins:** It's still at a formative stage; I just happen to be part of it, so that's why I'm giving information.

[55] **William Powell:** Excellent. Thanks for sharing your particular insights on that one. Are colleagues happy with that approach and sharing the comments back with Mr Crumpton? So, we've got a letter in both directions on this matter, really. Good. Excellent.

[56] Moving now to agenda item 3.3, P-04-626, 'De-Trunk the A487 Through Penparcau, Trefechan & Aberystwyth TC'. This petition was submitted by Penparcau Community Forum and has the support of 65 signatures, calling on the Welsh Government

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

[58] **Joyce Watson:** Chair.

[59] **William Powell:** I'd be happy to call Joyce Watson as one of the representatives of this particular community. Joyce.

[60] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you, Chair. I did go and meet with Penparcau Community Forum just some months ago, and this was one of the issues raised then. And they were gathering the petition at that time, and I advised them who to get in contact with, because they didn't seem clear about the process and procedure, so I did that. And, clearly, it's gone forward and it's in front of us today, so that's good community action.

[61] I want to come back to the letter that we've received from the Minister, and she does say that there is a commitment contained in the draft plan in part of the national transport plan to de-trunk sections of the road network where appropriate, and to trunk alternative routes. She says in her letter that the A44 and the A487 in Aberystwyth are identified in that as one of the proposals for potential progression. So, that will run its course and there will be consultation. I think the best that we can do now is ask for Penparcau community council's response to that letter, and where they would like us to go.

[62] **William Powell:** Absolutely, I'm happy to do that. Just to clarify, it's a community forum group for Penparcau, is it?

[63] **Joyce Watson:** I'm sorry, I didn't mean to say 'council'; it just slipped in. It is a forum.

[64] **William Powell:** That's right. My understanding is that it comes, presumably, under the wider Aberystwyth Town Council area, I believe—

[65] **Joyce Watson:** It has membership.

[66] **William Powell:** Oh, it has a representation within it. Okay. Well, I'd be happy to seek the petitioner's views, but also, maybe, it would be useful to drill down further and find out an idea of timescale from the Minister, or would that be premature at this stage? What do colleagues think?

[67] **Joyce Watson:** We can point them in our letter—

[68] **William Powell:** There's an absence of any timeline in the Minister's letter.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed, it's a fair point. Maybe we could suggest that.

[70] **William Powell:** I presume there would be significant consultation with both the business community and the town council as a part of that process, so we probably don't need to fire off correspondence, at this stage, in that direction, but we need to keep a close eye on it. I'd be happy to make sure that correspondence goes off well ahead of Easter, so that we get a response during the summer term. Any other comments from colleagues? No. Okay.

[71] Moving on now to agenda item 3.4, P-04-625, 'Support for Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill'. This petition was submitted by Richard Jones MBE, and collected 1,579 signatures:

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

[73] So, that is the text of the petition. I believe none of us, actually, serve on that committee currently, is that correct? Yes. So, that point probably needs to be stated for the record. We've got a first consideration letter that we sent to the Minister for Health and Social Services, and we have a response from the Minister, in the pack. Indeed, because of the timeliness of this, the clerking team brought both the petition and the Minister's response to it to the attention of the Health and Social Care Committee in time for their meeting on 19 March, which was the final oral evidence session on the Bill with Kirsty Williams AM, the sponsor of the Bill. The petitioner has been asked for his views, but at the time when the agenda papers closed, we hadn't heard from him. I suggest that we await that response, possibly chase it if we don't hear, but I suspect it's quite a tight timescale, isn't it, so we could well hear shortly from Richard Jones.

[74] **Mr George:** There is a letter from Richard Jones. It arrived late.

[75] **William Powell:** Oh, we've had a further response. Sorry, I missed the fact that we've had that. So, we've got that, but if we could have a further response on the Minister's more recent comments, that would be helpful. Are there any other points at this stage that colleagues would suggest we undertake? We could formally refer the petition to the Health

and Social Care Committee while it's drawing up its Stage 1 report on the Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill, asking them to keep us informed. Given that they're expressly name-checked in the petition, it would seem to be quite a sensible suggestion, which I would seek support for.

[76] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid oes pwynt i ni gychwyn ymchwiliad newydd i'r maes yma, gan fod y pwyllgor arall yn gwneud gwaith ar y ddeddfwriaeth. Byddwn i jest eisiau sicrhau bod y ddeiseb yn cael digon o chwarae teg pan rydym ni'n ei throsglwyddo hi draw i'r pwyllgor—dyna'r unig beth. Rwy'n credu ei fod e'n syniad da, ond nid yw'n rhywbeth y gallwn ni wneud rhywbeth, fel ein gwaith ymchwil ein hunain, arno ar hyn o bryd.

Bethan Jenkins: There's no point for us to start a new inquiry in this field, because the other committee is undertaking work on the legislation. I would just want to ensure that the petition has enough fair play when we do transfer it to the committee—that's the only thing. I think it is a good idea, but it's not something that we can do something about, such as our own research, at the moment.

[77] **William Powell:** No, absolutely. What we want to do is to avoid duplication, and I think the right arena for this to be taken forward is the Health and Social Care Committee. I think, if we do formally refer it, then we have that protection and that guarantee that it will be given the due status and consideration, so I'm happy to do that on behalf of the committee.

[78] Agenda item 3.5, P-04-627, 'Improve Commuter Train Services in North Wales'. This petition was submitted by Professor Tom Rippeth, and has collected 36 signatures. The text reads as follows:

[79] 'Although train fares across North Wales have risen at above the rate of inflation over a number of recent years, the service offered to commuters has been reduced. In particular, the service offered at times convenient for most commuters to Bangor—home of one of Wales largest Universities, and also a major hospital (as well as North Wales busiest railway station in terms of passenger numbers!)—have been greatly cut over the last couple of years. In particular we call for the reintroduction of the Chester-Bangor service which used to arrive at in Bangor at 09.36. (Ironically, whilst this service has been cut on week days, it still runs on a Saturday!).'

09:30

[80] The petitioner informs us. So, the first consideration letter on this topic was sent to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, and indeed we've got a response from her. We've also got some comments from the petitioner, particularly pointing out some areas where he and his fellow petitioners are not actually satisfied with some of the points of detail within the ministerial response. Are colleagues happy for me to share the petitioners' feedback with the Minister to see if we can draw out some of those additional answers?

[81] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I think that's a sensible way forward.

[82] **William Powell:** Okay. Good. I'm happy to do that.

[83] Agenda item 3.6 is petition P-04-628, 'To improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language'. This petition was submitted by Cathie Robins-Talbot on behalf of DEFFO—Deaf for Equality and Fair Opportunities—and collected 1,162 signatures. That's the total amount. I think it was quite a dynamic situation and that is the final total. So, 1,162 signatures. The petition reads as follows:

[84] 'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to

improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language to improve the quality of life for Deaf people of all ages.’

[85] We had a very full and memorable presentation just last week and a significant opportunity to engage with the petitioners. I think they were a very impressive and passionate group of young people. Also, I should note the support that our colleague Mike Hedges has brought to their campaign. He was present as well for the duration of that presentation. They’ve been very active on social media in getting their message across. In fact, they are watching our proceedings, I believe, if Senedd.tv is doing its best, and they’re gathering in Swansea, I think, to follow proceedings. So, we hope that we find them well this morning.

[86] The first consideration letter on this petition was sent to the Minister for Education and Skills, seeking his views on the petition. We’ve got a response from the Minister. Also, as a sign of quite how passionate and up-to-the-minute they are, we’ve also got a little initial feedback in terms of their correspondence, which has just been brought to my attention by our clerk, from Cathie Robins-Talbot. It relates to a couple of specific points within the Minister’s letter, where I think there’s a difference. Maybe I can share this with—. I’ll ask Steve to come in on the specific point because you’ve had a little more opportunity to familiarise yourself with that than I have.

[87] **Mr George:** Yes. I think the Minister, in his letter, said that BSL language provision is provided at a local level by local authorities. I think the point that the petitioners are making is that they’ve made an inquiry of a number of local authorities and haven’t actually been able to find that provision in the way described. So, I think they’re wondering if that’s a specific point that could be taken up with the Minister.

[88] **William Powell:** Okay. That’s useful. Maybe that’s an aspiration rather than something that’s actually available on the ground, by the sound of it. So, I’m sure the Minister would wish to do some further investigation on that issue. Colleagues, how would you propose that we take this one forward? Bethan.

[89] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. I just want to say, given the young people are watching, ‘Thank you very much for coming down’. I think, actually, it was really good to have the presentation and the DVD. It might be something that we would—. I know it’s time-consuming, but it was actually a really good way of presenting a petition, as opposed to just having a photo outside the Assembly, to hear their own experiences.

[90] **William Powell:** [*Inaudible.*]

[91] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, and I’m following some of them on Twitter now. So, I just wanted to say that I sit on the Children, Young People and Education Committee. I just happened to speak to the Chair this morning and I think that we should write to the Chair of that committee, saying that we would consider it as part of looking at the legislation, the law on this area—the special educational needs law—and I think that then, potentially, we could get the young people in or we could talk to them further. So, I think that’s something. We haven’t had a timeline yet; I think it’s supposed to be coming to us in July, and so I think that, for the education stuff that they talk about in the petition, that will really help them. So, that’s what I wanted to say on that front, and, obviously, concur with you on the local authority aspect.

[92] The only other thing, perhaps I’m showing that I don’t know all of the laws here, but I was really quite shocked to read that we have power to legislate for only the Welsh language. So I just wondered whether we could have some clarity for my purpose on this, because, obviously, what they’re asking for is for BSL to become a language, and have the same status as Welsh and English. So, I didn’t actually know that you couldn’t legislate for

more than just those two languages.

[93] **William Powell:** So if we can have a focused legal brief on that particular point, on issues of competence.

[94] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, that would be helpful for me, as an AM.

[95] **Ms Roberts:** That's fine.

[96] **William Powell:** Russell George, and then Joyce Watson.

[97] **Russell George:** Thanks, Chair. To also thank the young people last week—it was good to meet them. I think that, particularly, a point that I'm interested in is this area where the Minister's saying the local authority is responsible. I don't want to suggest yet that we write to every local authority to ask them for their view, but we should write to the Minister first, to give him the opportunity to clarify and expand on what he's said, but we should also flag this up, and if the answer does come back and there is still some possible misinterpretation, I think at that point perhaps we should write to local authorities.

[98] **William Powell:** We could write to all local authorities, or maybe initially through Chris Llewelyn at the Welsh Local Government Association, who might be an initial point of contact. These are things we can take forward when we've got a ministerial response. Joyce Watson.

[99] **Joyce Watson:** There is, of course, an all-party group on deaf issues.

[100] **William Powell:** Indeed, chaired by Ann Jones.

[101] **Joyce Watson:** The founding member and chair of that is the very same person who is now the Chair of the education committee.

[102] **William Powell:** Absolutely.

[103] **Joyce Watson:** So there is a connectedness and an awareness there of that Chair. So, she will be aware—fully aware—of this. And it is possible that this issue of access to BSL has indeed been discussed at that group, and I'm sure it has, because I've sat in on a few myself. But, in terms of where do we go, I think we feed back the rapid response that we've had to the Minister, and see where we go from there.

[104] **William Powell:** Absolutely. And I, for one, would look forward to an evidence session to which DEFFO would contribute, because I think it would be an evidence session like no other because of the particular energy and style that they brought to last week's petition and presentation.

[105] **Joyce Watson:** I'm sure you're right.

[106] **William Powell:** And hope that that will be possible in the fullness of time. Thank you very much.

[107] Our final new petition, at this stage, is agenda item 3.7, P-04-620, 'Reintroduce the National Speed Limit on the Cardigan Bypass'. Now, this petition was submitted by Councillor Gethin James of Aberporth and collected 196 signatures on Change.org. The text of the petition reads as follows:

[108] 'Reintroduce the national speed limit on the northern section of the A487 Cardigan

bypass. From the entrance to Penlan farm to a point 77 metres north east of the U5005 Cae Morgan road. Amend traffic order 201 to reflect this.’

[109] There’s some very specific points there for us to check up on a road map, to have sight of that. We have written to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, seeking her views on the petition, and indeed, as good as her word, we have a response from the Minister. The petitioner has been asked, in turn, for his views, but, at this time, Councillor Gethin James hasn’t responded, but I’m sure that, given his interest in the petition, and in the wider issues around this particular stretch of road, it won’t be long before we do hear.

[110] The petitioner had previously written, I should say, to the committee, and we have his letters amongst the public papers. One of these, I should say, was a formal objection to the proposed traffic order introducing the new speed limit. So, we need to await feedback from the petitioner, but, at this time, we could also write to the Minister, seeking points of detail, as requested. I appreciate your feedback on this one. Joyce Watson.

[111] **Joyce Watson:** I know this road well; my sister lives virtually alongside it, so I know it well. And I know the reason why the calming measures were put in place: that was because of the number of fatalities on this road. The last fatality was a pedestrian child. So, I know why speed limits were put in place and there’s an enormous history and none of it makes for good reading about this particular section of this particular road. But, anyway, I only add that as a point of interest here. I also have to be quite clear and quite straight and say that I would not support, personally, reintroducing a national speed limit on such a dangerous road. So, I put my cards on the table. But, it isn’t my decision, so in that regard, the only thing that we can do is—. You’ve written to the Minister and we’ve had a response, so it’s to write back to the petitioner; we must await that response.

[112] **William Powell:** I’d be happy to do both of those and particularly also ask the Minister to give due consideration to the petition and to keep us in the loop as to what decision comes forward. Are there any further comments from colleagues? I don’t suppose anybody is more familiar than Joyce is with this particular stretch of road. Her comments are well made. So, we will agree those set of actions.

09:41

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[113] **William Powell:** Moving now to agenda item 4: updates to previous petitions. We start with agenda item 4.1, P-03-240 on road safety—sticking with the topic of road safety—on the A40 in Llanddewi Velfrey. This petition was submitted, as colleagues will recall, by Llanddewi Velfrey Community Council and was first considered on 11 July 2011, with the support of 154 signatures. So, it’s been around a significant period of time and was one of the very first petitions that we considered as a committee. We last considered it in March 2014 and we agreed to write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, seeking her views on the petitioner’s suggestion regarding the speed limit warning signs and, in particular, to seek her views on the petitioner’s assertion that signs that show the actual speed of vehicles would be considerably less costly and more effective and better value for money. We also sought further information on costs for the different warning signs and, finally, an update on progress to appoint an employer’s agent with regard to the planned programme of works.

[114] The Minister has responded and, indeed, has given an apology for the delay that has applied in this case, which is certainly exceptional, in dealing with Welsh Government and, particularly, with a Minister with whom we have a lot of correspondence traffic; this was due to an administrative error. The letter is in the public pack. We have, at this point, asked for the

petitioner's views and we've just recently got the response. I believe you have it as hard copy, colleagues?

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

[116] **William Powell:** Okay. So, how do you feel we should take this one forward? Joyce, could I ask you to lead on this because I know you've done some rapporteur work with this particular community council with regard to some of their points of detail and some of their aspirations?

[117] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. It's obvious, isn't it, that there is a sense of frustration here that's going on—equally, on the one side and equally in terms of a commitment from a Minister on the other side to progress some work. I think the last paragraph of the Minister's letter, where she says that she's passed the community council's comments to her officials for them to be included as part of a future update of this speed limit review, is useful. There is dialogue and decisions going on, as we speak, in terms of announcements that have been made on this stretch of the road and others. So, I think it is, again, about seeking the views and seeing how it is progressing, from the community council and whether they are happy with the suggestion and the progress—where we are now. We can't do anything about the past, but we can certainly—and this is what they're hoping to do—influence the future.

09:45

[118] **William Powell:** Yes. I think it's important that we recall, as you've implied really, how it must seem from a community point of view when these things are all trundling along, along with 1,001 other priorities or other work streams. But, obviously, from their point of view, this is the most important, because this is the one that they're living with on a daily basis. It would be helpful, it seems to me, if we had something of an indication as to the timescale. It says here that it will be completed in May. If that is the case, that actually isn't so long for us to wait now, and if we can urge the Minister to task her officials to be in direct touch with the community clerk on these points, I'm sure it will help to restore their faith, because they've obviously had a period of months when they've not heard a great deal. Are colleagues happy if we adopt that approach? Russell George.

[119] **Russell George:** I think it's particularly telling that, in the letter, it actually states that the Welsh Government website itself is saying that there is a poor safety record and poor alignment on this stretch. So, I think that that should just be highlighted.

[120] **William Powell:** That is a matter of public record, I think, to be fair, isn't it?

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

[122] **William Powell:** Indeed. So, hopefully, we'll have some further good news in the not too distant future for the good people of Llanddewi Velfrey.

[123] Moving to agenda item 4.2, petition P-04-525, 'Funding for CREST Awards in Wales', was submitted by See Science—British Science Association and was first considered by us on 21 January 2014. It calls on the Welsh Government

[124] 'to reinstate the required funding for the Crest Awards in Wales'

[125] and for the National Science Academy to recognise the value of those awards to primary and secondary education.

[126] It is very timely that we should be revisiting this petition, when last week was, I

think, British Science Week and there were loads of really inspirational events taking place here and throughout Wales. The petition was last considered by us in March 2014, and Members agreed to a number of actions, including writing to the petitioner seeking their views on the Minister's letter and also seeking further information on their plans in relation to submitting their business case for funding to the Welsh Government. Also, we were to write to the Minister asking her to notify the committee of the outcome of that funding request once it was received. We didn't actually receive a response from either the Minister or the petitioner, despite some significant reminders from the clerking team. I think probably we need on this one to be in touch with the Minister and also with the petitioner to find out what the outcome was. It may be that this is a situation that's resolved itself, but I think it would be useful from our point of view to know where we stand, really, because it was obviously a matter of significance for them at the time, and I hope that it's had a positive resolution.

[127] **Russell George:** With the last petition, Chair, there was a delay due to a bit of administrative error, so maybe there's been an administrative error on this one as well. I think we should write to both again.

[128] **William Powell:** Yes, I'm happy to do that on behalf of the committee. Good.

[129] Agenda item 4.3 is P-04-487, 'A Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh home buyers'. The petition was submitted by Sovereign Wales and first considered on 18 June 2013, with the support of 17 signatures. We last considered this in November 2014 and the committee agreed to seek the Minister's views on the petitioner's further comments. To be fair, we have a response from the Minister, which, as you will see, is in the public papers. We've also had, as is customary, the petitioner's further comments on the Minister's response, which are also in the public papers. It seems to me that this exchange of views has probably run its course now, and it's been quite fruitful in some respects, but I think everything needs to come to an end at some stage, and I think we've probably reached that point.

[130] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do want to say, though—. I mean, I know that people say that we shouldn't have an opinion so much but be objective, but I do agree with the petitioner because I think that it's wrong that the Minister has said that the petitioner hasn't addressed what the previous Minister had said. Every time the petitioner's come back, he's scrupulously taken apart what the Minister has said in terms of the proposals, so I think that is quite unfair—

[131] **William Powell:** In that regard, this petitioner is certainly attentive to detail.

[132] **Bethan Jenkins:** We can't really take it further. I think it's for the petitioner now to contact the respective political parties and see whether they can take it forward, because the Minister's clearly said that he and, now, this current Minister, are not going to do anything.

[133] **William Powell:** No. And also, of course, it's the time when the parties represented in the Assembly, and those that aren't currently represented, are looking at their programmes for government, and this is potentially something that could find its way in through that route. But I think closing it seems to be the wish of the committee. Joyce Watson.

[134] **Joyce Watson:** I don't know whether it's necessarily our role to tell people how they should lobby political parties. I think they're all too aware of that. So, if we can keep to what is our role, I think it would be useful. And in this case, what is our role here? It's when a petition has run its course, and we can't do anything further—

[135] **William Powell:** To stick to the Standing Orders.

[136] **Joyce Watson:** We then will have to decide that that is the case and close the

petition. So, I move to close.

[137] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Very happy to concur with that, Joyce.

[138] We move now to agenda item 4.4, which is P-04-516, ‘Make Political Science Compulsory in Education’. This petition was submitted by Mark Griffiths and first considered on 26 November 2013. It had the support of 12 signatures at that point, simply calling on

[139] ‘the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make political science a compulsory part of the school curriculum.’

[140] We last considered this in January of this year and we agreed to pass the petitioner’s comments on to Professor Donaldson, asking for them to be taken into account as part of the review, which has received very significant attention in the sector and across Wales in recent weeks, and also to consider that petition once again post the publication of the Donaldson report. We’ve got access now to Professor Donaldson’s report ‘Successful Futures’; it was published late last month, and we’ve had a statement from the Minister for Education and Skills on the matter on 4 March. We’ve asked the petitioner for his views. We haven’t heard from him as yet. Russell George, you’ve indicated.

[141] **Russell George:** I was going to say, if we’ve written to him, the petitioner, that’s different, but I was going to suggest we specifically write to the petitioner and ask him to comment on the report and the Minister’s statement.

[142] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think that makes good sense, really, because I recall Bethan Jenkins advocating that we feed into the Donaldson deliberations and await the outcomes, so I think—

[143] **Bethan Jenkins:** We’ve got the Great Debate happening now, so I suppose we can say to the petitioner, you know, there will be consultations around the country about anything coming from Donaldson. That would be the perfect opportunity—if I’m allowed to say—for them to lobby the Minister as to what would then be in the curriculum, potentially, on this level.

[144] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think makes perfect sense. I’m happy to undertake that on behalf of committee.

[145] **Joyce Watson:** Absolutely.

[146] **William Powell:** We move to agenda item 4.5, P-04-523, ‘Protect the Elderly and Vulnerable in Care Homes’. This petition was submitted by Justice for Jasmine and was first considered on 10 December 2013, with the support of 4,216 signatures, so clearly a matter of very significant public concern, calling on the National Assembly for Wales

[147] ‘to urge the Welsh Government to hold a Public Inquiry into the events that led to Operation Jasmine, which investigated alleged neglect of older people in nursing homes in Wales.’

[148] Now, we last considered this back in December 2013, and we agreed as committee to ask the petitioners for their response to the announcement, which at that time was recent, by the First Minister, and whether it had sufficiently addressed their concerns, and secondly to await the findings of the independent review. The petitioner, at that time, was content to await the findings of the independent review led by Dr Margaret Flynn, which was due to report by the end of 2014. Now, it seems to me that we need an update from the First Minister as to the progress on the review, because that’s obviously out of time now, and hopefully not far short

of being pulled together and published, and also, at least to find out whether there is such a timescale and maybe an indication of interim findings. Are there any other actions that colleagues would advocate at this point?

[149] **Joyce Watson:** I think that's correct.

[150] **William Powell:** Okay, but we do need to see some movement here, definitely.

[151] Agenda item 4.6, P-04-608, 'Inquiry into the Welsh NHS'. This petition was submitted by P.J. Vanston and was first considered on 9 December 2014 with the support of 146 signatures, It calls upon:

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

[153] We last considered this in February of 2014, and we agreed as a committee to seek the petitioner's views on a letter from the Minister for Health and Social Services, which we now have, and that's in our public papers. Apologies: there was a typo there, which I fell into the trap of. It was February 2015, not February 2014, when we last considered the petition. Will you please correct that for the record? I think, probably, what we should do at this point, since we have a response from the petitioner, from P.J. Vanston as well, and some specific points of detail that need addressing, is ask Mark Drakeford to address those points from P.J. Vanston. Potentially, there are other actions we can undertake, but I think we need to do things in a step-by-step way. Okay. So, we agree to do that.

[154] That concludes the updates to previous petitions. We now move to agenda item 5.

09:56

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod ar gyfer y Canlynol: Blaenraglen Waith
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Meeting for the Following Business: Forward Work Programme**

Cynnig:

Motion:

y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42(vi).

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[155] **William Powell:** As we go to consider our forward work programme and other matters, I propose the motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of our session today. I see no objection, so we move into private session. Good.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 09:57.

The public part of the meeting ended at 09:57.