



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 10 Chwefror 2009
Tuesday, 10 February 2009**

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Andrew R.T. Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Michael German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Val Lloyd	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)

Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol
Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance

Alun Davidson	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Joanest Jackson	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Siân Phipps	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.30 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.30 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Val Lloyd:** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to this morning's meeting of the Petitions Committee. We have our full complement of Members, so there are no apologies and no substitutions. I remind everybody to turn off all electronic devices and that the translation facilities are on channel 1 with sound amplification available on channel 0.

9.31 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[2] **Val Lloyd:** We have two new petitions this morning. The first one is P-03-153 in relation to body piercing, which states the following.

[3] 'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to place restrictions on the age at which a minor can have body piercing. The age for body piercings, other than the ears and nose, should be regulated up to the age of 16 years.'

[4] The petition was raised by councillor Russell Downe and received 14 signatures. I will open the subject up for discussion.

[5] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I have young children. Many of us will have seen body piercings on young people, as it seems to have been a fashionable course of action to take in recent years. However, we need more information on this. I suggest that we write to the Minister, or to whoever has responsibility for it, because I am not sure whether it is a devolved area. Is it devolved?

- [6] **Val Lloyd:** I am not certain, but we could ask for a legal opinion.
- [7] **Bethan Jenkins:** We do not have the legal competence to introduce a new offence, but perhaps we could ask the lawyers or the Members' research service to look into licensing, which I believe is done by local authorities. Perhaps they can amend the licences.
- [8] **Val Lloyd:** I think that they are responsible for licensing, but they have to follow some guidelines that may be devolved. However, I understand that they do have some latitude in licensing.
- [9] **Ms Jackson:** At the moment, as it says in your note, licensing is restricted to considerations of the cleanliness of an establishment and the equipment used. We could look at it further and bring you some more information on what happens in London, which has a different regulatory basis for what they call 'special treatments', including body piercing, tattooing and the like. We could bring you a note on that, with some possible options for what can be done now or what might be available under the enhanced competence of the Assembly.
- [10] **Val Lloyd:** Would Members be content with that?
- [11] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes. I am speaking personally now, because my constituents have shown quite a bit of interest in this subject in correspondence. Is there any mileage in the idea of the committee undertaking a visit to a body piercing establishment to understand the regulations better? The petition clearly asks for some form of action, and I do not know about other committee members, but I do not have too clear a picture of the regulatory aspect, let alone how the establishments operate. So, would there be any mileage in the idea of the committee undertaking a visit to such an establishment to gain further understanding of the issues at hand?
- [12] **Val Lloyd:** What do other committee members feel about that?
- [13] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would be supportive of that idea. We took a trip to Llandysul yesterday, which was very informative, so I think that the more we can do of that sort of thing, the better.
- [14] **Val Lloyd:** May I suggest that we get the legal advice first, so that we have that in our heads and then we can look forward? We do not all have to make that visit. As long as we can send two Members, that will be okay. We can take this forward. It is probably a good idea for us to see it for ourselves.
- [15] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not want any piercing done. [*Laughter.*]
- [16] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The infection rates related to something like this are quite horrifying, really.
- [17] **Val Lloyd:** It can also lead to permanent damage—
- [18] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes, scarring.
- [19] **Val Lloyd:** Scarring at best. We will get a paper from Joaneest on the legal issues and then we will have a greater understanding of the subject and we can look to arrange a visit.
- [20] The second new petition, P-03-185, is again raised by councillor Russell Downe, and it received 491 signatures. It is in relation to the regeneration of Llantwit Major and calls on the National Assembly for Wales,

[21] 'to support the appeal of the Boverton Road Regeneration Scheme for the historic town of Llantwit Major, Britain's earliest centre of learning'.

[22] I have learned something today.

[23] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** May I seek your guidance, Chair? I am a former chairman of Creative Rural Communities, which is the awarding body of the particular grant that the petition seeks to address, although I no longer have any contact with the organisation, other than on a constituency basis. Would it be appropriate for me to stand down on this matter, or, given that I no longer have contact with the organisation—

[24] **Michael German:** It is not the awarding body; it is the receiving body. It made the bid.

[25] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Sorry, it is the facilitating body.

[26] **Val Lloyd:** As long as you do not vote on it, it would be in line with what we have all done when we have an interest in a petition. Does anyone have any comments on the petition?

[27] **Michael German:** This concerns the rejection of the grant, and I think that it would be sensible to find out from the Welsh Assembly Government why it rejected the grant first. Is it because it did not score highly or because it did not meet the criteria? We need to know that, so that we can make a judgment as to whether to take it further.

[28] **Val Lloyd:** I am in agreement with that. Is everyone else? I see that you are, so we will take it forward on that basis.

9.36 a.m.

Yr Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates on Previous Petitions

[29] **Val Lloyd:** The first update is on petition P-03-089, the Powys Community Schools Action. We have been considering this since 6 December 2007. A committee was set up to produce a report on the reorganisation of rural schools, and that is now being debated by the Assembly. I think that we have probably taken the petition as far as we can. Are there any other ideas?

[30] **Michael German:** Can we ensure that Powys Community Schools Action receives all the Record of Proceedings transcripts, the report of the Rural Development Subcommittee, and the Minister's response? I think that that would be helpful. There is a substantial amount of documentation as a result of the petition that it could receive. I think that we have taken the petition as far as we can, and anything further to come from it would require a separate petition.

[31] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, I agree with that. Is everyone agreed? I see that you are. So, we will close the petition but ensure that the petitioners are sent every piece of documentation that applies. Thank you very much.

[32] The next update is to petition P-03-109, on anti-bullying schemes. This petition came from the pupils of Pembroke School, who wanted us to fund anti-bullying schemes in schools and in the wider community, and for those schemes to be inclusive.

[33] **Bethan Jenkins:** I thank the Children's Commissioner for Wales for writing a

comprehensive response. I know that it does not address the petition in itself, but he raises a few points that we should follow up, namely how we carry out consultation or how committees work. I want to open that up for suggestions as to who or what could take that investigation further, which I think is necessary. The commissioner mentions the national standards for children and young people's participation, to which we should conform, and perhaps we could look at ways in which we can adapt or progress that agenda.

[34] He also notes something that I said in a conference about digital stories, and I wonder whether we could write to the body that carries out those digital stories with local community groups. It is about older people taking part in democracy, and increasing their interest in the petition system. While I acknowledge that we cannot progress the petition any further, the points made at the meeting were valid, and we could have a follow-up discussion with the commissioner's office.

[35] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you, Bethan. Are there any comments?

[36] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I concur with that. Would the children's commissioner's report be referred to the Business Committee?

[37] **Ms Phipps:** At the moment, the head of committee services is talking to the clerks of the various committees to see how we can address the concerns that were raised in the commissioner's letter. So, that is how it is being taken forward at the moment, and a response will be sent.

9.40 a.m.

[38] **Michael German:** This is also a petition that has come from pupils, supported by the Mencap project on increasing democracy, of which we are all aware. I presume that we could send a copy of the children's commissioner's letter to the Mencap project, which originally presented us with the petition that we followed through. It would probably have the mechanism to take that back to its groups and so if they want to take it further forward, they now know how to do that.

[39] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, I agree with that, as well as with what Bethan suggested. What about the digital stories?

[40] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that it was Caerphilly County Borough Council that worked on that particular initiative with the older people's forum in the area. It suggested ways in which it could make the initiative more useful. It did a few voice-overs to pictures. There was one on fuel poverty and others on different issues that affect older people. The people involved wanted somewhere to put those stories so that we could listen to them, because they found that they were not going anywhere once they had been finished. I suggested that the petitions system would be the best way for them to access us. Perhaps we could set up a meeting or ask them to meet us informally and go from there. They will need to word the digital stories in line with the petitions process to make them relevant to the committee.

[41] **Ms Phipps:** We can do that. I know that Mencap is interested in developing some sort of project involving digital stories, and one outcome of that would be to submit more petitions. So, we can talk to it as well.

[42] **Val Lloyd:** That sounds like a good way forward.

[43] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It would be on an informal basis, because we have not received a petition that we can take forward.

[44] **Val Lloyd:** However, if the clerk takes it forward informally, she can report back to the committee and we can make progress on two different fronts. We will formally close the petition, in that case, but we will take the other actions forward as discussed.

[45] That takes us to petition P-03-122 on Hafod Quarry. We have received a comprehensive letter from the Countryside Council for Wales, following our request. It is summarised for you. I thought that it was an interesting and detailed response. Its conclusion is that there is no scientific justification for including the whole of the quarry within the boundaries of the site of special scientific interest and the special area of conservation.

[46] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have not read the Record of Proceedings of that meeting, but I think that I asked that we receive information from CCW and then I suggested that we inform the petitioners of its response. I think that that is what was agreed, namely that the response would tell us how these particular sites of special scientific interest were designated, and then we would go back to the petitioners to see what they thought. I would prefer to go back to them before closing the petition to see whether they have a different opinion from that of the countryside council.

[47] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I would not be averse to that.

[48] **Val Lloyd:** No, that is an open way forward. We will do that.

[49] The next petition is P-03-137 on hypothyroidism. We received a response from the Minister for Health and Social Services, which we sent to the petitioners, and we now have the petitioners' response to that letter. It is quite a technical response, is it not? I am not sure that we—

[50] **Michael German:** We need to raise these concerns again with the Minister, because we are now drilling down to a much deeper level. We need a more detailed response from the Minister on the concerns raised in the letter, which amplify what was demanded in the petition.

[51] **Val Lloyd:** I do not think that any one of us is technically qualified to make a judgment on that evidence. So, it would be a good way forward to send it to the Minister asking for her comments or actions.

[52] **Michael German:** When we get the response, perhaps we could measure it against the queries raised in the Members' briefing note, so that those of us who have less technical skill in this matter might be able to make a judgment.

[53] **Val Lloyd:** That sounds like a good way forward. Thank you.

[54] The next item on the list is petition number P-03-141/149 on Llanbedr airfield. If you remember, we received two petitions—one for and one against Llanbedr airfield. The situation is that the Deputy First Minister, in his role as the Minister for the Economy and Transport, has awarded the contract, but we asked for clarification on how he met his responsibilities under section 11A, I think, and requirements of him because of the national park. He has replied and the reply is before us.

[55] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I am not quite sure how we could take this petition any further, Chair. We sought clarification, the Minister has made his decision, and it goes back to many things that we might say at certain junctures of petitions. We might not like the decision but someone has to make the decision somewhere along the line. Therefore, I think that this petition has reached the end of the road, as far as we, as the Petitions Committee can take it. Therefore, I would propose closure of the petition.

[56] **Val Lloyd:** The Minister has replied comprehensively to our request.

[57] **Michael German:** Could we make sure that both sides receive information on the one issue that had been left outstanding, the section 11A duty, which was raised with us when we received evidence? Can we make sure that both petitioners, who are for and against, receive that statement from the Welsh Assembly Government, so that they are aware that we have taken that matter seriously?

[58] **Val Lloyd:** Yes; certainly.

[59] **Ms Phipps:** We will do that. We will also make sure that we close both petitions.

[60] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. Thank you.

[61] The next petition on the list is petition number P-03-144 on guide dogs for the blind.

[62] **Bethan Jenkins:** The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association has responded. We have written back to the association and it has requested a moratorium on any decision until a review is carried out by Westminster. This is supported by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee. I wonder whether we should just write to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing to ask whether she would consider a moratorium on any future shared-use paths in the light of its concerns. She can only say ‘no’.

[63] **Michael German:** I have another, slightly contradictory, concern. We received a petition from Sustrans, which we passed on to another committee. I believe that that committee pursued that as an inquiry. I am just worried whether there is a contradiction here. One of the committee’s recommendations, I believe, was to seek a legislative competence Order to be able to provide a joint cycle and pathway. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association was opposed to that. I am worried, at this point, about asking for a moratorium on shared-use developments without taking into account the Sustainability Committee’s findings. I would certainly write to the Minister, but before we ask the Minister to go for a moratorium, I wonder whether we should also ask the Sustainability Committee—

[64] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It was the Enterprise and Learning Committee.

[65] **Michael German:** Sorry. We should seek the Enterprise and Learning Committee’s view on this petition, given the work that it has done on the Sustrans petition.

[66] **Val Lloyd:** I think that the point is well made.

[67] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Enterprise and Learning Committee had a meeting two weeks ago with the Minister in attendance. It was decided to hold the application for an LCO in abeyance, because the Minister’s department was bringing forward imminently—the Minister’s own word—its walking and cycling strategy. It was felt favourable to wait to see what the strategy contained in respect of shared routes and progression of access for cycling and walking across Wales. The Minister has indicated to the committee that the Government will not support the application for an LCO. It is currently being held in abeyance, pending the release of the report or the initiatives that the Minister sees fit to take forward for walking and cycling.

9.50 a.m.

[68] **Michael German:** The work of that committee must come back here before we can deal with this petition. We now have two, potentially different, views. We must reconcile that

before we take a decision.

[69] **Val Lloyd:** We also had two views with the previous petitions on Llanbedr airfield.

[70] **Michael German:** I know, but we have not had both views before us, alongside each other, because work has not been finished or whatever.

[71] **Val Lloyd:** I agree with you; I think that we should ask for a view from the committee.

[72] **Michael German:** We should do that before we take a view on this petition.

[73] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could just write to the Minister and say that someone has called for a moratorium and ask for her view; that is not to say that we advocate a moratorium.

[74] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I would have thought that, in the walking and cycling strategy—I am only surmising now—organisations such as the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and Sustrans would have presented their thoughts and aspirations at the consultation stage. Hopefully, the strategy will reflect, although not all the aspirations and hopes, a large amount of them. So, we are in a similar situation to the Enterprise and Learning Committee in that we are waiting for the Government to bring this strategy forward, because it will shape the guidance to local authorities and other providers of pathways and walkways.

[75] **Michael German:** The issue that relates to the Sustrans petition is whether the committee recommends that there should be an LCO—the committee, of course, has the power to bring forward its own LCO. So, what it is going to do is an issue that should come back here, because we need to know whether or not to close the petition. If it is going to be held in abeyance—there is an issue in relation to this petition—we can hold this one in abeyance at the same time, until we can make a judgment.

[76] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Enterprise and Learning Committee was hopeful of being able to make a decision by the end of the spring term.

[77] **Michael German:** That is fine.

[78] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Minister indicated that this strategy on walking and cycling was imminent—to use his word. We were hopeful that the strategy would be out in the next few weeks. All the preparatory work for the proposed LCO has been done, and the evidence gathering and the final scrutiny of the Minister has also been done, so it is now a question of the committee deciding whether to progress.

[79] **Val Lloyd:** So, on your suggestion with regard to the Sustrans petition, Mike, would you like us to refer this petition to the Enterprise and Learning Committee?

[80] **Michael German:** It should certainly be drawn to its attention, given that it has done work on this issue.

[81] **Val Lloyd:** So, we want to draw its attention to it and get its view.

[82] **Michael German:** Yes, and ask at the same time how it is getting on with the Sustrans petition, even though we have had an informal update from Andrew.

[83] **Val Lloyd:** We never miss an opportunity.

[84] Our next petition is P-03-150 on national cancer standards. We received further

communication on 30 January and we have received the petitioners' response, which you have before you.

[85] **Michael German:** I suppose that we should ask the Minister for Health and Social Services to tell us whether the standards have been reached by the local health boards following the deadline at the end of March. I suggest that we hold this petition until then.

[86] **Val Lloyd:** Should we also let the petitioner know of the LHB's letter so that she can respond to the suggestion regarding Macmillan patient involvement?

[87] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Is there a role here for the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee? From the wording in the petition, they are national cancer standards, and although the petition refers to Rhondda Cynon Taf, it also refers to Wales as a whole as a matter of urgency. As that committee is the scrutiny committee, would it be worth seeking the view of that committee as to whether it would be interested in undertaking any work on these standards?

[88] **Val Lloyd:** We have done so. It would be helpful to refer it to that committee—I sit on that committee, so I speak as a member. I am sure that the Chair would appreciate it, because we have done some scrutiny on issues around cancer networks and standards. He could then take a view on how to take that forward.

[89] The next petition is P-03-170 from Mencap Cymru.

[90] **Michael German:** Perhaps we ought to ask Mencap to respond to the responses, and see whether it wishes to raise any further queries, or is satisfied with the proposals.

[91] **Val Lloyd:** Is everyone content?

[92] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could I float the suggestion that we have Mencap in to give evidence? We have gathered information, and virtually every public body that we speak to, and many private bodies, talk about the duty of equality. However, when we meet up with organisations such as Mencap, we sadly find that various obstacles are put in the way of equality. It would be beneficial to get some oral evidence on the back of the written evidence that we have received from the various respondents to date.

[93] **Val Lloyd:** We could only ask Mencap about the subject of its petition—that is, whether it is content with the responses that we have received. I am not averse to Mencap coming in, but that is what we would focus on.

[94] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I am just highlighting the fact that only one in 10 people with learning disabilities who want to work are in paid employment. It would be interesting to gather that evidence first-hand in an oral session on the depth of this problem, despite many years of so-called positive action to try to increase opportunities.

[95] **Michael German:** May I suggest a compromise? We could write to ask Mencap to respond and suggest that it indicates whether it would like to send representatives to present that response in person?

[96] **Bethan Jenkins:** I was previously on the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, and we did a lot of work on the single equality scheme, and scrutinised the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I wonder whether it is worth drafting a note on this and sending it to the Chair of that committee, because we have asked for progress on discussions with organisations like Mencap, with a structured approach rather than just having meetings. That was indicated in the disabled users forum, but it has not been progressed yet, so perhaps this

would be a way of bringing that forward.

[97] **Val Lloyd:** Is everyone content with those two suggestions? The first is to write to Mencap, and the second involves passing this to the chair of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. I see that you are content.

[98] The next petition is P-03-178, on the new prison in Cwmbran, and is therefore out of date.

[99] **Michael German:** It was this committee what done it, Chair. [*Laughter.*]

[100] **Val Lloyd:** I was driving when I heard the announcement about the new prison—

[101] **Michael German:** We can happily close this one.

[102] **Bethan Jenkins:** They are happy in north Wales—they want the prison there.

[103] **Michael German:** Everyone is happy, and this committee has done its job.

[104] **Val Lloyd:** We will chalk that up as a success, then.

[105] The next petition is P-03-179, on post-19 students with additional learning needs. We await the outcome of the work of the Enterprise and Learning Committee.

[106] **Michael German:** We are waiting eagerly.

[107] **Val Lloyd:** I do not think that there is any action that we can take on this.

[108] **Michael German:** How far off is it, Chair?

[109] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** This has not formally come before the Enterprise and Learning Committee yet. We did not have a meeting last week, and looking at the date of Gareth's response, I think that this will be factored into the forward work programme. The Enterprise and Learning Committee has just started a big piece of work on the Welsh economy, which is scheduled to take the next four or five sessions, at least.

[110] **Val Lloyd:** That is understandable, given the current situation.

[111] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is certainly on the agenda, and as the Chair of that committee indicates, it is an inquiry that we will undertake. To be fair, this committee gives the Enterprise and Learning Committee a lot of work.

[112] **Val Lloyd:** The Chair of the Enterprise and Learning Committee always asks me for work. When I pass him in the corridor he asks, 'Any more work for us?'. He says that he is happy to take any work that we want to send on. So you can blame him, not me. I will tell him you sent it anyway. [*Laughter.*]

10.00 a.m.

[113] Moving to the petition on the special care baby unit, P-03-188, which we have been considering since last November, we have received a letter from Cwm Taf NHS Trust. Shall we make the Minister aware of its concerns and send a copy to the Chair of the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee? I see that Members agree.

[114] **Michael German:** May I suggest that we send a copy to the petitioners so that they

could also respond if they wanted to?

[115] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. There is a long-term potential problem there with the working time directive.

[116] **Michael German:** That is an interesting thought, Chair, because the working times directive issue is being discussed by the Committee on European and External Affairs.

[117] **Val Lloyd:** Would you like a copy to be sent to that committee as well?

[118] **Michael German:** Yes.

[119] **Bethan Jenkins:** We are sending a lot of petitions work to other committees today. *[Laughter.]*

[120] **Michael German:** Well this issue has been raised on that committee, and it will continue to be raised. It is a very important issue about how we are going to manage.

[121] **Val Lloyd:** It is supposed to be fully implemented by August. Everybody has known about it for some time and moves have been made to address it, but it is suddenly not that far away.

[122] Turning to the petition on the Rhymney Valley to Cardiff bus service, P-03-194, I think that this should go back to the local authority. However, there is an overall problem is there not with bus services?

[123] **Michael German:** If I remember rightly, Stagecoach has handed in a number of its contracts for re-tendering because it says that it cannot run them. It would be interesting to know, first, whether this route was re-tendered, and, if so, whether it was let so that services continued but with a different contractor.

[124] I have just realised that this is a commercial service. So, can this service be contracted out in the same way as other non-commercial services? That is the bit that we do not know.

[125] **Val Lloyd:** If it is operated by Stagecoach on a commercial basis, it is its decision.

[126] **Michael German:** It now becomes an issue for the local authority whether it wishes to issue it as a contracted service that it would subsidise.

[127] **Val Lloyd:** That is why I said that we should perhaps refer this to the local authority.

[128] **Michael German:** Yes, sorry, you are quite right.

[129] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The letter from, I think, the managing director of Stagecoach also highlights the double-edged sword of the improvement in the rail service, which has diminished patronage of the bus service. The rail service between Bargoed and Pontypridd has improved greatly in recent times, and that has affected the commercial viability of the bus route. I am not sure how much further this can be taken. It is a commercial route, not a contracted route. The managing director of Stagecoach highlights alternative modes of public transport in the area. I am not averse to doing what Mike said, but, ultimately, we must think about what we can actually do for the petition.

[130] **Michael German:** I think that the right thing to do is to refer it to the local authority. There is an issue about running bus services alongside rail services, in competition with each other. When the rail service has been improved you must consider whether you want to run a

bus service alongside it on a commercial basis. I can understand why one would not perhaps need both. As all the experts tell us, it is much better to have feeder bus services to the railway stations.

[131] **Val Lloyd:** So we will refer it to the local authority. Shall we wait for a response or shall we close the petition now? There is nothing more that we can do.

[132] **Bethan Jenkins:** We can send any response that we receive to the petitioners, so perhaps we should wait.

[133] **Val Lloyd:** I see that we all agree.

[134] The last petition is on Sutent, which is P-03-196.

[135] **Michael German:** The petition is what has done it again with this one.

[136] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The petitions are working well.

[137] **Val Lloyd:** We are agreed that we will close this petition in view of the availability now of Sutent. That completes our update on petitions.

10.04 a.m.

**Protocolau Drafft gyda Chymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru ac Ombwdsmon
Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru
Draft Protocols with the Welsh Local Government Association and the Public
Services Ombudsman for Wales**

[138] **Val Lloyd:** These draft protocols have been drawn up between this committee and the Welsh Local Government Association and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. They are before you.

[139] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It seems clear to me; it gives us clear guidelines. We are all the original members of this committee, and we can all remember the first couple of sessions, when we were feeling about in the dark, and various bodies had grievances because they thought that we were standing on other people's toes. Hopefully this protocol will give us that clarity.

[140] **Val Lloyd:** I think that we would all agree with that. We now have a framework to work within, which we have informally been working within for some time, but it is good to codify it.

[141] **Michael German:** It might be useful to have a copy of the protocol in our papers when they are sent out, just for a couple of weeks, while we get it into our heads, so that we have it there as the rules.

[142] **Val Lloyd:** I am sure that the clerks have heard that.

10.05 a.m.

**Yr Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am P-03-134—System Anrhydeddau i Gymru
Update on P-03-134—Welsh Honours System**

[143] **Val Lloyd:** It is over to you, Siân, for this item.

[144] **Ms Phipps:** At the last meeting, we discussed the fact that the committee wanted to open an online discussion forum on the Welsh honours system, to get some feedback from members of the public, and we are pleased to say that that is going live today. So, hopefully, we will now get some comments back from the petitioners, because I know that some have wanted to submit more ideas.

[145] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that it is good that we are having that discussion. I do not know whether other Members share my concerns about this, but where will the ideas that are out there sit if we take ideas for or against, or if we get new, creative ideas on the type of honours system that people want? It could be that they come up with all these great ideas but then the Assembly Commission and the Welsh Assembly Government say, 'We have the concept of a medal Cymru and of a reception already in place, so this is all well and good, but it does not mean anything'. I would like to have more clarity from those two bodies as to what this means.

[146] **Michael German:** I would like to think that the petition, which is the fundamental issue that we are interested in, is the way in which Welsh people can have their say rather than being directed to a particular approach that we will occasionally hear about from other sources. I would like us to ensure that petitioners have their say properly and openly, and perhaps the way to do that is to write to the commission and to the Welsh Assembly Government to say that we are conducting our inquiry and have been following it through as we believe best, and that we will be taking all these views into account and making our proposals at the end of it. I would like to keep it open.

[147] The only thing that I have to say about the words is that I would like to see not just 'Who would you like to see honoured?', but 'What would you like to see honoured?'—in other words, what sort of things or activities should be honoured? I do not know whether you would just use the words 'who' or 'what'. What I am getting at is that we sometimes want to honour a service and we sometimes want to honour people's achievement. There is a whole series of things to consider, and we might want to probe this a bit more.

[148] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, it could be an organisation.

[149] **Michael German:** It could be an organisation or an individual.

[150] **Val Lloyd:** You could have both; both could be valid.

[151] **Michael German:** I just think that we have to keep it open.

[152] **Val Lloyd:** Correct me if I am wrong, but has the commission not withdrawn its suggestion?

[153] **Michael German:** That is interesting. I did not know that, but that is very helpful.

[154] **Val Lloyd:** I have read that somewhere. Obviously nobody else has, so perhaps it was a dream.

[155] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Perhaps you were dreaming of damehood or something. *[Laughter.]*

[156] **Val Lloyd:** I know that that is incredibly unlikely.

[157] **Michael German:** Perhaps the process of writing to the commission and the Welsh Assembly Government will elucidate whether that has happened.

[158] **Val Lloyd:** Clearly nobody else has picked it up.

[159] **Michael German:** I would very much welcome the fact that neither the commission nor the Welsh Assembly Government were trying to close down the debate before we had that discussion with the Welsh people. If this is an honour that is representative of the views of the Welsh people, we need to ensure that they have engagement in it.

[160] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, we need to ensure that they have an input into it. I think that we are all absolutely agreed on that.

10.10 a.m.

[161] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am also conscious of the fact—and I know that people can go onto the website, and I think that that is great—that we need to do much more work to get people on board to have their say, because there are only so many people who will visit the Petitions Committee website. We have started to do videos; perhaps Mike, Andrew or Val—because I have already done one—could do a video for the website to explain what this is about. We need to do more than simply putting it on the website, because it may pass people by and then they would not have an input into the process.

[162] **Michael German:** The people—I am not sure what they are called—who stand in shops and—

[163] **Val Lloyd:** The public information team.

[164] **Bethan Jenkins:** The education team.

[165] **Val Lloyd:** We could also have someone handing out information to those who come here.

[166] **Michael German:** Yes. We could have lots of literature.

[167] **Val Lloyd:** I know that we are not in our peak time, but as the weather gets warmer, we will get more people. Is there a closing date on this?

[168] **Ms Phipps:** No, we have not put a closing date on it. I think that it is also up to the petitioners to ensure that they have had their say.

[169] **Michael German:** We could ask the BBC and ITV to publicise the fact that we are taking views. We can think of an innovative way of asking them.

[170] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** They have their own press office now, with a press officer—Matt—have they not?

[171] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, Matt Dicks.

[172] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** He deals with this type of thing.

[173] **Michael German:** We could set him a challenge to see how much media coverage he can get for this matter.

[174] **Val Lloyd:** There is another item of business, if you do not mind it being added to the agenda.

[175] **Ms Phipps:** I remind Members that, tomorrow, there is a Plenary debate on plastic bags, which, as you know, initially came through the petitions system.

[176] **Val Lloyd:** That seems like a lifetime ago.

[177] **Michael German:** I will be in Brussels.

[178] **Bethan Jenkins:** One of us will note that in order to try to speak in the debate.

[179] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** There you are, Bethan.

[180] To go back to the honours system, is there any mileage in the committee, in the summer months, undertaking what could almost be outreach meetings—in much the same way that we did yesterday—at the summer shows and events like that. The Royal Welsh Show once again springs to mind, but I am sure that Members will have other examples of places where we might be able to go to raise this issue. It is something that everyone could engage with: whether you are against an honours system or in favour of it, whether it should be a Welsh honours system or a British honours system. It is a topical debate. It is the sort of thing in relation to which people can put their two-penn'orth.

[181] **Val Lloyd:** If people are consulted, they will feel more involved in it. They will come up with a range of ideas that we would not have thought of.

[182] **Michael German:** Groups such as the Round Table organise school debating competitions and have discussions. There are a lot of civic society groups of that sort.

[183] **Bethan Jenkins:** The Council for Education in World Citizenship Cymru also does that.

[184] **Michael German:** Yes, that is right. We could encourage people to have a debate and discussions on this.

[185] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could offer ourselves as guest speakers to these organisations.

[186] **Michael German:** Or adjudicators.

[187] **Val Lloyd:** I have just written that down. It is half term next week and, like all of us, as I have more time in the constituency, I will be speaking to a number of organisations. That is something that I will include. I will ask them to think about it and put their views forward.

[188] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is only when you go out that you find out about the work of certain organisations, as was the case with the anglers yesterday and inquiring whether there is a national angling association. We talked about maybe recognising the work of such organisations. There are organisations in parts of Wales that do not hit the national headlines, but which are working hard, and there needs to be an understanding of what is happening in every community in Wales, looking, perhaps, at community-specific issues. So, rather than trying to grab the national headlines, we want to try to get in under the local headlines so that it is relevant to the locality.

[189] **Michael German:** So, we are offering ourselves as an outreach group as well to support the debate.

[190] **Val Lloyd:** Could we have a petition, please, to have nine days in a week instead of seven?

[191] **Michael German:** We could rename the days.

[192] **Val Lloyd:** I think that it is time to close the meeting. Thank you very much.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.14 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.14 a.m.