



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 30 Tachwedd 2010
Tuesday, 30 November 2010**

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

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

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

Joanest Jackson	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Andrew Minnis	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Naomi Stocks	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] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning everyone and welcome to the Assembly's Petitions Committee. I remind you to switch off any mobile phones. If the fire alarm goes off the ushers will tell everyone what to do, and, if necessary, direct you to the fire exits. We have not received any apologies.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[2] **Christine Chapman:** We have received a number of new petitions, so I will update you on them. The first new petition is P-03-266, to re-open the Mold railway, which collected 226 signatures. It calls for consideration to be given to reopening the Mold railway. In line with committee protocols, I have written to the Deputy First Minister to seek his views on the petition. Are you happy for me to await the response? I see that you are.

[3] The second new petition, P-03-288, was raised by Disability Wales and collected 719 signatures. It calls for a national strategy on independent living to be introduced. I have written to the Deputy Minister for Social Services to seek his views on the petition. This petition was officially presented to the committee on 24 November. Are you happy for me to await the response? I see that you are.

[4] The third new petition, P-03-308, Save Gwent Theatre, was raised by George Davis-Stewart and collected over 1,000 signatures. A related petition has collected 3,700 signatures. This one calls for funding to be continued for Gwent Theatre. I have written to the Minister for Heritage to seek his views on this. The petitioners will be presenting their petition at lunchtime. Are you happy for me to await the response from the Minister? I see that you are.

[5] **Bethan Jenkins:** There is also an inquiry by the Communities and Culture Committee into accessibility of the arts, so it might be something that it would want to consider, because accessibility would be questionable if Gwent Theatre closes.

[6] **Christine Chapman:** Do we know the timescale of that inquiry?

[7] **Ms Stocks:** My understanding is that the committee has finished taking evidence, but it did receive a written submission from Gwent Theatre.

[8] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay, fine.

[9] **Christine Chapman:** The next new petition is P-03-309, Cardiff Against the Incinerator. This was raised by Rick Newnham and collected 2,203 signatures. It calls for the plans to build an incinerator in Cardiff to be stopped. In line with committee protocols, I have written to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing to seek her views on the petition. The petitioners will visit the Assembly tomorrow. Unfortunately, I will not be available but other Members will be to receive the petition. Are you happy to await the Minister's response before we take any action?

[10] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is it not a decision for Cardiff Council?

[11] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Environment Agency is the licensing body, which is accountable to the Minister.

[12] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay, I just did not want to tread on anyone's toes.

[13] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Planning is the responsibility of the council, but the licensing of the plant is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. May I check, Chair, that we have petitioners of Save Gwent Theatre coming in lunchtime today—there seems to be a lot of petition presentations at the moment—and that we then have the petitioners of Cardiff Against the Incinerator tomorrow?

[14] **Christine Chapman:** Yes.

[15] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Both at 12.30 p.m.?

[16] **Christine Chapman:** Yes. The last new petition is P-03-310, on policies to help protect pupils' needs and rights, which was raised by Mandy Howells and collected 112 signatures. A related petition collected over 2,000 signatures, and it calls for improved consultation processes relating to the proposed closures of sixth forms. I have written to the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning to seek his views on the petition. This one was presented last week. Are you happy for us to await the response from the Minister? I see that you are.

9.34 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[17] **Christine Chapman:** The first update is on P-03-085, Surgeries in Flintshire. It calls for the development of a primary care centre in Flint to improve GP services. We have received correspondence from Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board. Are there any thoughts on this one?

[18] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I note that the local health board is looking to include the petitioners in its development, and we need to ensure that the petitioners feel that they are being taken on board and that it is not just something on a piece of paper. Perhaps we could find out how the petitioners feel that they are being engaged with, and, ultimately, ask the LHB to keep us informed of developments in relation to the petition.

[19] **Christine Chapman:** I think that they need to be involved.

[20] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is one thing to say it, but doing it is another.

[21] **Christine Chapman:** We will do that then. The next update is on petition P-03-150, which calls for an investigation into whether local health boards will have the tools in place to meet the national cancer standards. Again, I have received correspondence from the Minister for Health and Social Services. A summary of responses from the local health boards about their ability to comply with the cancer standards has also been provided. Would you be happy for us to write to the petitioners to obtain their views on the findings of the report?

[22] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The issue is that the LHBs are not compliant with the cancer standards. The Minister has confirmed that in written answers. So, it is a question of how we take this forward to find out whether they will be compliant with the standards within a given time. Two deadlines have passed already: September of this year and March of last year, and the standards were devised in March 2005. So, we are in no man's land, to some extent, because two deadlines have passed already. It is a question of how we bring some influence to bear so that we can get a time frame from the Minister for when she expects the LHBs to be compliant with the cancer standards, and to find out whether she does see the standards as being what local health boards should work to, given that the standards came into existence in 2005.

[23] **Christine Chapman:** I think that we need to get the petitioners' response to the report initially, and then we can look specifically at what more needs to be done.

[24] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could we write to the Minister on the two points that I mentioned? The first is whether she expects a new time frame for compliance with the cancer standards, and the second is whether, if they are not to be compliant by a certain date, she sees the cancer standards as being what LHBs should subscribe to. We are working to a tight time frame, and we will not meet again until January. Unless we push a bit hard on some of the petitions, we will not get them cleared up by 31 March.

[25] **Christine Chapman:** I am happy with that. Bethan, are you happy with that?

[26] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

[27] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. We will do that. The next petition, P-03-200, called for support to be given to the creation of a Glamorganshire canal historic route. We have received correspondence from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Cardiff Council. Do Members have any thoughts on this one?

[28] **Bethan Jenkins:** We need to keep the petitioners involved and informed about what the councils have said, because they have indicated that they would like to hear their opinions. We can also ask whether we can be kept informed about the South East Wales Transport Alliance bid and Cardiff Council's progress on the cycle network plan. I cannot think of anything else.

[29] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I am happy to go with that.

[30] **Christine Chapman:** That would be useful. We will do that.

[31] The next petition, P-03-207, Support for the Unemployed in Monmouth, is quite a long-standing one. It calls for the reinstatement of job centre facilities in Monmouth. We agreed that we would revisit the petition in the autumn. We have not received any further information or an update from the petitioners. Would Members be happy to close the petition and produce a summary report? I see that you are.

[32] The next petition, P-03-211, is on care facilities for dementia sufferers. It calls for sufficient and appropriate provision of specialist care homes and centres for people with dementia. We have received correspondence from the petitioners and the Welsh Local Government Association. Do Members have any thoughts on this one?

[33] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It strikes a chord with the other petitions that we have dealt with on dementia services. For example, we had one in relation to Cardiff when the joint working grant was going to be taken away, stating that early-onset dementia services in Cardiff would suffer. That grant will come to an end on 31 March. So, I think that it would be appropriate for us to write to the Minister about support. I appreciate that this petition does not relate to that grant, but services are provided via the grant. So, it might be opportune to write to the Minister to find out exactly what type of services will be in place in future for people suffering from dementia.

[34] **Christine Chapman:** Are you happy with that, Bethan?

[35] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. We could flag up specifically what the WLGA was saying about the budgetary concerns and ask whether that can be alleviated in any way.

[36] **Christine Chapman:** The next petition, P-03-226, came from Sands, and calls on the Welsh Assembly Government to reduce the number of stillbirths and neonatal deaths. We have contacted the petitioner on a number of occasions, but we have not received any response to our requests for their views. Again, are you happy for us to close this petition and produce a summary report?

9.40 a.m.

[37] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes. I think that the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee did some work on neonatal services. As you put the closing report together, it might be worth scanning the health committee's work. I am sure that it involved Bliss and the provision of services. It might be worth seeing whether any of that links into the work that we have done.

[38] **Christine Chapman:** We can do that.

[39] The next petition, P-03-231, calls for the minimum distance of wind turbines from homes to be increased from 500m to 2 km. We have received a letter from the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing. Do you have any thoughts on this?

[40] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I would suggest that the WLGA's views are important on this, because planning authorities are part of local authorities, so it would be good to get an understanding of its views as the voice of the authorities that determine the type of buffer zone that is requested in this petition. It might be able to provide us with specific experiences or examples. Powys should be the first port of call, I would think, because quite a few applications have gone through its system.

[41] **Christine Chapman:** That would be sensible, because the decision making has to

happen there.

[42] **Bethan Jenkins:** Did we not ask about technical advice note 8 and when the review had come to an end? I thought that the Minister said that there was going to be an announcement about the review of TAN 8.

[43] **Christine Chapman:** I do not think that it would have particularly affected this.

[44] **Ms Stocks:** We did ask, and the letter that we have received from the Minister was in response to those questions about the revision of TAN 8 and whether any consideration would be given to amending the buffer zone. The Minister has stated that she does not feel that that would be appropriate.

[45] **Christine Chapman:** The next petition, P-03-234, calls for an increase in native tree plantation by 1,500 ha by 2012 and a doubling by 2050. We have received correspondence from the petitioners. Do you have any views on this?

[46] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is interesting that the Minister sets so much store by the Glastir scheme, given, as many will be aware, the low uptake of that scheme to date. That said, it is appropriate that we write to the Minister raising the petitioners' concerns about the minimum threshold for grant eligibility, asking her to clarify what actions she deems can be taken under the Glastir scheme to address some of those concerns and whether the review group that she has set up will look specifically at the woodlands element or prescription, as I think that it is called, of the scheme.

[47] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we will do that.

[48] The next update is on P-03-237, Welsh Countryside, which calls for large industrial buildings that are built on brownfield sites to be environmentally friendly and not eyesores. We have tried to contact the petitioners, but we have not received any response to our request for their views. So, are you happy for us to close this petition and produce a report? I see that you are.

[49] The next petition, P-03-241, Save Our Sewers—Llanelli Star, calls for the sewage system in Llanelli to be improved. We have received correspondence from the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing. Are you happy for us to write to the petitioners to seek their views on the Minister's response? I see that you are.

[50] The next petition, P-03-243, calls for the withdrawal from the West Cheshire/north-east Wales sub-regional strategy. As you will remember, we took evidence on this. We have received correspondence from the Minister for Business and Budget and the petitioners. I understand that the petitioners are still not happy with the process.

[51] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** With the process of the petitions system, or with the process of the strategy?

[52] **Christine Chapman:** Probably both. We can work only within the limitations of this committee. I perfectly understand people's frustration if they feel that things could be resolved immediately, but—

[53] **Bethan Jenkins:** Did we ask for their opinion of Jane Hutt's evidence?

[54] **Christine Chapman:** I think that we did.

[55] **Ms Stocks:** I would need to check.

[56] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that they flagged up that they believed that they did not have a fair hearing, as they believed that there was misinformation from or misinterpretation of the facts by the Minister. We have not had that so much in the past because we have not had Ministers giving evidence, so perhaps we could just check that. Obviously, we have to manage expectations and the petitioners have to realise that we cannot just effect change instantly, but then again, we have to give them the chance to come to give evidence or to provide evidence via e-mail, which they have done. However, perhaps we need to clarify that before closing it.

[57] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think that it would be fair to say that because the Minister did give some sort of response on the petitioners' concerns, especially on engagement and consultation. It is a fact that you will not satisfy everyone, but when genuine and structured concerns are brought forward, they need an adequate response. To be fair, the Minister did respond to those concerns, and I thought that she was talking about a review. She certainly mentioned looking at the strategy from a Welsh perspective and said that they would come forward with amendments if they saw fit to do so. That might not be the case, but unless my memory is playing tricks with me, that is how I read the evidence that the Minister gave to us.

[58] **Ms Stocks:** She said in the evidence that she was seeking to review it, and in the correspondence that we have now, she has said that they are taking it to the Mersey Dee Alliance annual general meeting in January. She has said that, without pre-empting the board's decision, it is likely to draw a line under the strategy rather than review it, and that she will update us after the AGM in January 2011. It seems, therefore, that rather than reviewing it, they will draw a line under the strategy. That decision has not yet been made, but that is what she envisages will happen.

[59] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Am I being limited in my understanding? What does 'draw a line under it' mean? Does that mean that we are not going to use it anymore, or does it mean that it is what it is and that is what we have to work to? When most people say that they are going to draw a line under something, it means that they are not going to take it any further. In this case, does it mean that that is the strategy and it has been consulted on? It might be worth trying to get clarity as to what 'draw a line' actually means.

[60] **Christine Chapman:** The AGM is in January, so we might want to wait for that.

[61] **Ms Stocks:** We could try to see if we could get clarity on that, so that when we get the response on the decision at the AGM, we would already have clarification on what 'drawing a line under it' means. We would have all that in one go, so we could proceed without delay.

[62] **Christine Chapman:** That is sensible. The next one is P-03-263, calling for Stradey Park to be protected. You will have seen the correspondence from the petitioners and there has been a lot of discussion about this. Do you have any views on this one?

[63] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The council is the key player in this, is it not? I am not familiar with the area as such, but it would be good to try to get an understanding from the council as to what its plans are. Is it a heritage park or a memorial park that it is talking about?

[64] **Christine Chapman:** It is a memorial park.

[65] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The petitioners' concerns need to be highlighted to the council, although I have no doubt that they will have done so already. However, there is no harm in us seeking that clarification and then asking the Minister to see what the position is

on the call-in. I presume that it is not a question for the Minister for Heritage, but the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, because she is the one who deals with call-ins.

[66] **Christine Chapman:** We need further information on that. The next one is P-03-265 from Shelter Cymru, calling for leaving home education to be included in the national curriculum. We have had correspondence from the petitioner. As you know, the Communities and Culture Committee has published its report on financial inclusion and the impact of financial education, and its recommendation is that financial education should be a compulsory element of the personal and social education framework. Again, would you be happy to await further details on the housemate evaluation? I see that you would.

[67] The next one is P-03-274, calling for a boiler scrappage scheme matching the scheme in England to be introduced in Wales. We have repeatedly contacted the petitioner, but we have not received a response to a request for views. Again, would you be happy to close this petition and produce a report? I see that you would.

[68] The next one is P-03-276 on motion for women from Sustrans. It calls for priority to be given to the creation of environments that support and encourage cycling. The walking and cycling action plan annual report has been published, and it is included in your papers. Again, would you be happy to seek the petitioners' views on the progress that is outlined in the walking and cycling action plan report? Is there anything to add to that?

9.50 a.m.

[69] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** No, that seems sensible.

[70] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next one is P-03-279, entitled 'Save Welsh Universities'. This calls for funding for Welsh universities to be brought in line with that in Europe and the US. Correspondence has been received from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Higher Education Wales. Are there any thoughts on this one?

[71] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Minister is making a statement in Plenary this afternoon on this issue; that is appropriate timing. [*Laughter.*]

[72] **Bethan Jenkins:** We will have to wait for that statement before we do anything further.

[73] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next one, P-03-284, is on social housing in Brynmawr and calls for the Government to reconsider the use of Government-owned land in Brynmawr for social housing. We have had correspondence from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, which outlines its stance on this. Are there any thoughts on this one?

[74] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I believe that we need to close the petition and produce a summary report. We have taken this as far as we can, to be fair. Given the time constraints that we face as a committee, I believe that that is appropriate.

[75] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next petition, P-03-285, calls for the badger cull to be stopped. We have had correspondence from the Minister for Rural Affairs, outlining that a public consultation is taking place. What is the deadline for that consultation?

[76] **Ms Stocks:** It is 17 December.

[77] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Again, are you happy to await the findings of the public consultation?

- [78] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes.
- [79] **Bethan Jenkins:** The petitioners know about the public consultation, do they not, and the fact that they can give evidence?
- [80] **Ms Stocks:** We will double check that, and remind them.
- [81] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, that is important. The next update is on petition P-03-290, which calls for a decision to be made in relation to funding Dowlais engine house. We have had correspondence from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, which, again, outlines several aspects. We have not been able to speak to the petitioners and they have not responded to requests for further information. Would you therefore be happy to close this petition?
- [82] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes.
- [83] **Christine Chapman:** We can send the Minister's letter to them.
- [84] **Ms Stocks:** That will be included as part of the closure report.
- [85] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next petition, P-03-292, calls for improvements in public toilet provision. We have had correspondence from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government and from the Welsh Local Government Association. There is a summary of responses from local planning authorities in relation to the requirements for public toilets. Again, would you be happy to seek further views from the petitioners on some of the correspondence that we have received?
- [86] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.
- [87] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes. There has also been a short debate in Plenary on this issue.
- [88] **Christine Chapman:** Who introduced that debate?
- [89] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It was Jenny Randerson. It might be worth the clerking team having a quick look at the Minister's response to that debate—it might provide something that we could send to the petitioners. If my mind serves me correctly, I do not believe that it was that long ago, so it is topical.
- [90] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next petition, P-03-295, calls for paediatric neuro rehabilitation services to be available in Wales. Correspondence has been received from the Minister for Health and Social Services and the petitioners. Are there any views on this one?
- [91] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We need to write to the Minister, requesting information on the expected timescales for completion and detailing the paediatric neurology service specification for Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board—there are issues around that. We also need to highlight the petitioners' concerns regarding the funding that the rehabilitation service will require.
- [92] **Christine Chapman:** Are you happy with that one, Bethan?
- [93] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.
- [94] **Christine Chapman:** The next petition, P-03-299, calls for the Welsh Government to consider whether recent proposed changes to staffing and working arrangements at the South

Wales Fire and Rescue Service are in line with the national service framework, and, if they are not, to take appropriate action to ensure that they are brought in line with that framework. Again, you will see that we have had correspondence from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, each of the fire services, and the Fire Brigades Union. Would you be happy to close this petition and produce a report?

[95] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

[96] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes.

[97] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. The final petition, P-03-301, calls for greater equality for the transgender community. Again, we have had correspondence from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government. Would you be happy to invite the petitioners to give oral evidence?

[98] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes. We have the Heath and Birchgrove residents coming in to give evidence, do we not?

[99] **Ms Stocks:** We have the local health board coming in—

[100] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Sorry, I stand corrected.

[101] **Ms Stocks:** We have invited the local health board to come to the first meeting of the next term.

[102] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I was just thinking that we will have certainly no more than five meetings next term.

[103] **Ms Stocks:** I think that there will be five.

[104] **Christine Chapman:** So, we could accommodate that if you were happy to invite the petitioners.

[105] **Bethan Jenkins:** Can we seek clarification first as to why they did not seek funding? The Minister states that, in the equality fund bidding round, there were no bids from organisations that deal specifically with transgender issues.

[106] **Christine Chapman:** Do you mean to seek clarification from that particular group?

[107] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, from the petitioners.

[108] **Christine Chapman:** We could do that in advance so that we do not waste time. Are you happy for the group to give evidence? I see that you are.

[109] Thank you. That is the end of the update. We will now need to go into private session for the final item.

9.56 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[110] **Christine Chapman:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37(vi).

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

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 9.56 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 9.56 a.m.