



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee

Dydd Mawrth, 27 Ebrill 2010
Tuesday, 27 April 2010

Cynnwys
Contents

- 3 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions
- 3 Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: P-03-262 Academi Heddwch Cymru
Evidence Session: P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute
- 10 Trafod y Dystiolaeth
Discussion of Evidence
- 12 Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions
- 13 Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol
Updates to Previous Petitions

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi 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
Michael German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Pablo Aguiar	Academi Heddwch Rhyngwladol Catalonia International Catalan Institute for Peace
Tica Font	Cyfarwyddwr, Academi Heddwch Rhyngwladol Catalonia Director, International Catalan Institute for Peace

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. I welcome everyone to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. I remind Members to switch off their mobile phones. We have not received any apologies this morning.

9.30 a.m.

Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: P-03-262 Academi Heddwch Cymru
Evidence Session: P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute

[2] **Christine Chapman:** Our first item will be on the petition for a Wales peace institute. I remind you that the petitioners asked for

[3] 'the National Assembly for Wales to investigate the potential for and practicality of Wales having a Peace Institute concerned with Peace and Human Rights, comparable with those supported by state governments in Flanders, Catalonia and elsewhere in Europe.'

[4] I know that many of us have already supported the petition and we should therefore declare an interest. I will declare an interest first as I supported this petition.

[5] **Bethan Jenkins:** I, too, supported it.

[6] **Michael German:** As did I.

[7] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not think that there will be a conflict of interest in a vote.

[8] **Christine Chapman:** No, I do not think that there will be a problem.

[9] We have two representatives from the International Catalan Institute for Peace, and they will give evidence via the video conference link. There may be some delay because of translation issues, but I am sure that we can accommodate that. First, I welcome Tica Font, who is the director of the institute, and Pablo Aguiar. I welcome you both and thank you very much for participating in this session.

[10] I would be happy if you could give a presentation on your institute's work, and then the Members will ask some questions. I look forward to hearing your evidence.

[11] **Ms Font:** El instituto fue promovido por el movimiento por la paz en Cataluña o organizaciones de un movimiento por la paz, que en la década de los años 90, hicieron propuestas de que desde la administración pública o el Parlamento Catalán se impulsara la creación de un instituto por la paz. Y así, en 1999, a través de uno de los partidos políticos que estaban en el Parlamento, el movimiento propició una Propuesta no de Ley, que aprobara una ley de fomento por la paz. En ese momento el Parlamento la desechó, no fue aprobada esa ley, pero posteriormente, en el año 2003, el movimiento volvió nuevamente a insistir, presentando una Proposición no de Ley en el Parlamento para la creación de una ley de fomento de la paz. Eso fue poco tiempo después de las movilizaciones en contra de la invasión de Iraq, y en esos momentos el Parlamento, por mayoría, aprobó la Propuesta de Ley que se transformó en una ley de fomento por la paz en Cataluña.

[12] **Mr Aguiar:** The institute came from the efforts of the Catalan peace movement in pushing its public administrations to create this kind of institute. In 1999, the Catalan peace movement asked the Parliament of Catalonia to pass a law on the promotion of peace. This law did not have a majority in favour in Parliament, so the law was not passed. However, later, in 2003, just after the beginning of the Iraq war and the rise of the civil society movement against it, the Parliament passed a law calling for peace promotion in 2003. It was approved by a majority of the political groups in the Parliament.

[13] **Ms Font:** Esta ley era una ley de fomento de la paz que contenía o contemplaba la creación de un consejo asesor de fomento de la paz y también contemplaba la creación de este Instituto por la Paz. Justo ya el año siguiente, en el 2004, se creó una comisión de expertos formada por miembros de la universidad del movimiento por la paz y todos los grupos políticos para empezar a debatir la propuesta del Instituto por la Paz.

[14] **Mr Aguiar:** The peace promotion law was approved in 2003. It included many objectives and it also included the creation of a social council with Members of the Parliament, public administrations, universities and the Catalan peace movement. This law also included the provision that the Government, in five years' time, should create a unit within the Government or an institute to fulfil the objectives of the law to promote peace.

[15] In 2004, there was a change in Government in Catalonia. A commission of experts was created to try to draft a law on the creation of the institute. This commission of experts was made up of 15 people from universities, political parties and from the Catalan peace movement.

[16] **Ms Font:** En el 2007, tres años después, se llegó ya a aprobar por ley la creación del instituto. Yo creo que el proceso fue largo, pero que un proceso muy consensuado y muy participado por los diversos actores que estuvieron trabajando. Y yo creo que ese proceso largo fue lo que le dio una identidad característica al instituto, y es que es un instituto público pero independiente políticamente. Los órganos de decisión no están controlados por los partidos, el Parlamento escoge, a propuesta del consejo de fomento de la paz, las personas que tendrán el gobierno de este instituto.

[17] **Mr Aguiar:** In 2007, we had a second law, this time to create the international Catalan peace institute. It was a long process, but during this long process, most of the steps were taken with consensus between civil society, political parties and members of the universities. It was a very consensual process. This is one of the main characteristics of the institute. It is a public institute, but it is independent from the Government of Catalonia. The institute's board of governors—its director, president and board—is independent of the political parties. They have been selected by the Parliament in an indirect way, by a process that we will probably explain later.

[18] **Ms Font:** Y la otra característica del instituto es que tenía que tener como tres clientes a los que dar respuestas a sus preguntas, y eran por una parte el movimiento por la paz y a la ciudadanía, a las universidades, pero también al gobierno catalán.

9.40 a.m.

[19] **Mr Aguiar:** The main characteristic of the institute is that it is a public service, and this public service has three main triumphs. One is the establishment of a peace movement in Catalan civil society. The second involves public administration, either the Government or the Parliament. It also has as a client the universities and researchers on peace issues.

[20] **Ms Font:** Yo creo que esta composición de estas tres características se puede ver en la presentación numérica del máximo órgano del gobierno del instituto, en la Junta, donde hay tres miembros del gobierno, cinco de la universidad y cuatro del movimiento por la paz.

[21] **Mr Aguiar:** The mixed client relationship between the institute and society is clearly seen in the inclusive nature of the institute's structure. On the board of the peace institute are three members selected by the Government of Catalonia. Five members come from the universities, and four more members come from the Catalan peace movement.

[22] **Ms Font:** Y la línea de trabajo que el instituto se ha dotado para estos cuatro años pues tiene o estaría centrado en tres ejes de trabajo que serían la investigación, la formación y la difusión, y la construcción de la paz o la acción que en la intervención—[Inaudible.]—los conflictos.

[23] **Mr Aguiar:** The working plan approved for the next four years has three main areas of work for the International Catalan Institute for Peace. One main area is research. The second main area would be to establish training and foster the culture of peace. The third area involves trying to intervene in terrain conflicts to facilitate peace dealings.

[24] **Ms Font:** En cada una de estas áreas las estamos ahora iniciando en sus trabajos, las áreas de investigación—[Inaudible.]—difusión, y en cierta medida unos productos propios de lo que puede ser el instituto, publicar libros, publicar trabajos, artículos, revistas, la web. Y yo creo que un elemento en el que estamos también queriendo prestarle una atención un poco más especial es utilizar medios de difusión no convencionales, utilizar también formas de difusión más alternativas, útiles, como desde el Youtube o Facebook, etc., videoclips—

[25] **Mr Aguiar:** We are now working on the development of the three areas that we

mentioned earlier. We are still in the incipient phase of developing these three areas. Most of the work that we do nowadays involves transforming publications. We have two digital publications and texts in paper publication, and we have books on the way in the next few months. We work on the web as well, and we try to pay special attention to non-conventional ways of defending, expressing or showing peace culture. That has to do with presenting raw materials on YouTube and social network sites such as Facebook, and making and supporting films and documentaries. There has been one on Iraq, and we have an agreement with Catalan television to make documentaries.

[26] **Ms Font:** Dado que ellos pertenecen al Parlamento yo creo que es importante destacar que tenemos una relación estrecha con el Parlamento. Nosotros solemos tener una audiencia anual con el Parlamento donde rendimos cuentas a todo el Parlamento, tanto de la actividad como del gasto que hemos hecho económico, pero con la comisión de cooperación que es con la que mantenemos una relación más fluida, pues tres, cuatro veces al año mantenemos un contacto muy próximo y muy fluido con la comisión, y nosotros rendimos cuentas en el Parlamento de nuestro trabajo.

[27] **Mr Aguiar:** Taking into account that you are from the National Assembly for Wales, she wants to pinpoint that we have a very close relationship with the Parliament of Catalonia. Once a year, we have to present to the Parliament of Catalonia a memo of activities detailing what we have done, as well as a financing document explaining all of our payments and economic issues. We have an even closer relationship with the commission on co-operation with the Government. Three or four times a year, we communicate with the commission; also, members of the Parliament and the commission sometimes attend our activities. We have an especially fluent relationship with the members of the commission.

[28] **Ms Font:** Con el gobierno mantenemos una relación fluida a través del Ministerio en el cual nosotros estamos escritos y con el cual gestionamos cuestiones pues del espacio, de la ubicación del instituto, la negociación del presupuesto anual, etc. Y por lo pronto también este año hemos tenido una petición del gobierno para que viéramos la viabilidad de la creación de unas fuerzas civiles de paz catalana.

[29] **Mr Aguiar:** We also have a close relationship with the Government, especially with the department to which we belong, in some ways. We have to negotiate things with this department, such as the physical premises that we currently occupy. That was a decision made by the department. Also, we have to negotiate the annual budget with the department, and this year we have a petition from the Government asking us to carry out a feasibility study for a Catalan non-violent peace force, to see what the possibilities are for establishing this kind of unit.

[30] **Ms Font:** Formalmente se nos ha constituido como una empresa pública y nuestro presupuesto en estos momentos, hasta ahora, es totalmente de lo que nos concede el gobierno de la Generalitat de Catalunya, pero sí que tenemos previsto y así está conceptualizado, en que tenemos que tener otras fuentes de financiación que no sean solamente las gubernamentales.

[31] **Mr Aguiar:** Formally, we are a public company of the Catalan Government. Nowadays, 100 per cent of our budget comes from the budget of the Catalan Government. In future, in our working plan, we expect to be able to receive funds from different sources, not only from the Catalan Government, as we do now. That is our presentation; we will now wait for your questions.

[32] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you both. We now have some questions, and we look forward to your responses. I will start with a question in two parts: why was the Catalan Peace Institute established, and what would be the main advice that you would give to a country considering establishing a peace institute?

9.50 a.m.

[33] **Ms Font:** Se creó porque la sociedad civil lo pidió, y las sugerencias en nuestro contexto, yo creo que esta es una forma—[Inaudible.]—Institut de la Pau—[Inaudible.]

[34] **Mr Aguiar:** The institute was mainly created because the Catalan peace movement pushed for it. We asked the Government and the public administration, the Parliament and the Government of Catalonia, to create some kind of institution that would balance the strength of civil society, and at that time there was no answer on the institutional question. On the second question, relating to what we would say about this in Wales, we think that it is important that this work should not be monopolised by the state; it can also be driven by non-state actors, although public actors, in this case.

[35] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. Mike German has the next question.

[36] **Michael German:** Buenos días. Gracias por su presentación. I have two questions about your relationship with the Parliament and the Government. They are about the independence of action that you have. Are you able to act independently, or does the Parliament give you instructions as to what it would like to see from your institute? Does the Government give you instructions? Obviously, the problem is that, if you have all your money from the Government, it could be giving you direction as to how you should operate.

[37] **Ms Font:** Nuestra independencia yo creo que la podemos manifestar en dos o tres elementos. Primera: ni el presidente ni el director son nombrados por el ministro correspondiente, nuestros nombramientos son independientes del gobierno. El presidente es uno de los que forma la Junta del Gobierno, uno de los que, de los nueve, es decir, sin contar a los tres miembros del gobierno, uno de los otros tiene que ser el presidente. Y el director es nombrado por selección pública a la cual hay que presentarse. Por lo tanto no hay intervención del partido que esté en el gobierno que ha hecho un nombramiento de estas personas. El otro elemento es que hasta este momento, no sé en el futuro, pero hasta este momento, por parte del gobierno no se nos han dado instrucciones sobre qué podría hacer el instituto. El instituto ha desarrollado un plan estratégico, y ese plan estratégico lo hemos presentado al gobierno y al Parlamento antes de que sea aprobado, si ellos tenían alguna cuestión también a decir o si querían decir alguna cuestión. Y las relaciones han estado de colaboración pero nunca hemos recibido hasta el momento una intervención directa.

[38] **Mr Aguiar:** We are independent, and that is shown mostly in the way that the president and the director are elected. They do not come from the Government. The governing board of the International Catalan Institute for Peace is made up of 12 persons; three come from the Government, but the other nine are elected by the Parliament. The president is elected from these nine persons from the Parliament of the governing board of the institute. The director is elected following a public contest. The contest is open and publicised, and the governing board selects the best curriculum vitae presented for the post of director. Until now—and she reiterated this three or four times—we have not received any kind of instructions. We have approved a strategic plan for four years, but before we approved it, we sent the strategic plan to the Government and to the Parliament for their consideration of any changes. However, there were no changes and, until now, there has been a collaborative relationship between us.

[39] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you for your evidence this morning. I will ask a few questions around the cost and the financing of the institute. You touched in your evidence to us that, at present, 100 per cent of your finance comes from the Catalan Parliament—

[40] **Mr Aguiar:** No, from the Catalan Government.

[41] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I apologise for that. You talk about the possibility of looking to widen the scope of your financial base, so that you can attract new moneys. Can you give us an idea of what type of moneys you would be looking at and whether that would change the type of work that you were engaging in? What sort of proportion would you be looking to attract in your overall turnover, or is it an open account and you would be looking to get as much money as possible?

[42] **Ms Font:** El escenario actual en el que nos movemos diríamos que está en llegar, en estos momentos el gobierno nos da dos millones y medio de euros, esperamos llegar dentro de dos años a los seis millones de euros por parte del gobierno, y nosotros esperamos llegar en un proceso de dos años a disponer de un 10 hasta 20 por ciento, de un, dos millones de euros que puedan venir de proyectos que estamos intentando tener con otros Institutos de Paz o con otras organizaciones europeas y que puedan venir de financiaciones desde la Unión Europea o de otros proyectos comunes que podamos tener con otros centros afines.

[43] **Mr Aguiar:** The actual scenario is that we are receiving €2.5 million from the Catalan Government this year. We are an institution that is supposed to be growing, in the people attracted and in activities, and that assumes that, in two years' time, we will be receiving more or less €6 million from the Catalan Government. We expect to receive, in two years' time, 10 to 20 per cent of our funding from other sources, mainly from other public administrations and we intend to carry out research projects or other kind of projects in collaboration with other international centres. We have presented to the European Union a research project in collaboration with the International Peace Research Institute and Aberystwyth University in Wales. We expect to receive some funding from this project and from the other projects that we will present in the future, either to the Spanish estate, the European Union or to other places.

10.00 a.m.

[44] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you for that. May I clarify two things? You are moving to a budget of €6 million in two years' time. Is the 10 to 20 per cent of additional money on top of, or inclusive of, the €6 million that you would attract from the Catalan Government? The figures would indicate quite an aggressive expansion in the work of the institute. Is this a model that the institute itself has devised, or is it something that has been requested by the Catalan Government to widen the scope of the institute, in that, because of work that has gone on historically, it believes that the scope can be greatly increased?

[45] **Mr Aguiar:** Si, pregunta si aquest 10 o 20 por ciento és al mes o si—

[46] **Ms Font:** Al mes, al mes.

[47] **Mr Aguiar:** Al mes. I en segon lloc, aquest creixement en dos anys de dos milions a sis milions ho troba una mica exagerat. Si no, si això és hui perquè el govern català vol fer aquest—[Inaudible.]—o per—[Inaudible.]—han demanat o com creien que poguem [inaudible] aquest creixement tan, tan fort—[Inaudible.]

[48] **Ms Font:** [Inaudible.]—els acords que tenim són oberts, d'anar creixent—[Inaudible.]—aquesta manera.

[49] **Mr Aguiar:** The 10 to 20 per cent is on top of the €6 million, so we expect to have €6 million, plus 10 to 20 per cent more from other sources of finance. The growth was negotiated with the Government of Catalonia. We negotiated with it on the basis of the next three years, and that includes this year, next year and two years' time. It accepted that we should begin with a small structure, but that that structure should grow a lot in the next two years. That

implies a much bigger budget, which is why this growth, which we expect to maintain, has been agreed.

[50] **Bethan Jenkins:** Will you explain the main themes of the institute's work and how you agree upon them? Do you decide together, as an institute, what work you carry out or does that get decided upon by other forces or institutes?

[51] **Mr Aguiar:** Can you use the other microphone because I am not sure that that one was working very well.

[52] **Bethan Jenkins:** My question was: how do you decide on which work to prioritise and how do you decide on the themes that the institute takes forward?

[53] **Ms Font:** La Junta, la direcció amb la proposta i la Junta és la que—[*Inaudible.*]

[54] **Mr Aguiar:** There is a governing board of 12 people, which we have spoken about, and which is the main governing board of the institution. The director makes proposals on the main topics and the governing board meets once a month—it will meet tomorrow—to approve those topics or not—it sometimes rejects the director's proposals—and it will prioritise the institute's activity and how it will do things and so on.

[55] **Bethan Jenkins:** Will you tell us what some of those themes would be, and what exactly those ideas are? Will you tell us a bit more about the practical work that you do? You talked earlier about intervening or helping in conflict situations? Will you say a little bit more about that as well?

[56] **Ms Font:** La primera que hem—[*Inaudible.*—i per tant de tota l'estructura, ara en quant a les—[*Inaudible.*—conflicte sobretot—[*Inaudible.*—diria jo, per temes de seguretat humana la cosa—[*Inaudible.*—el tema de la justícia—[*Inaudible.*—de construcció de pau—[*Inaudible.*—Colòmbia—[*Inaudible.*—coses de Guatemala.

[57] **Mr Aguiar:** The first priority has been to get it to work. So, it has been about getting it to work and beginning to set work priorities. On research issues, we have established three research programmes, which we will be developing in the next two years. The first programme deals with violent conflicts that are related to natural resources. The second programme will be studying issues relating to justice in transition countries, and justice following violent conflicts—trying to end impunity and so on. The third programme will deal with human security and related issues. These are the three main areas of our research programme. We would like these three main areas to also help us with two other areas—training and peace building. Therefore, we are not only dealing with research areas, but we hope that these will help us to prioritise the other ambits of our other areas work.

[58] We are very cautious on peace building. We have only worked, let us say, on demand and our work has been very limited. We wish to spend more time working on that. Until now, we have been part of an electoral observatory mission in Bolivia, observing the current Government. We were going to establish our own electoral observatory mission in the Ivory Coast in November, but the elections were delayed and we do not have a new date for them yet. There was a demand for our service from civil society in the Ivory Coast, where we have contacts. We were going to go there in June to hold a training seminar on peace promotion. Therefore, in future, whenever these elections take place, we will probably undertake an observatory mission there. We have also received demands from Guatemalan civil society, as well as from Colombia, to support the projects and activities of non-governmental organisations there.

[59] One of our first big activities was in December 2009, when we held a closed seminar

with Israeli and Palestinian people, and with the negotiators of the Camp David negotiations. We brought together people from Palestine and Israel, including Shlomo Ben-Ami and other people from the Palestinian side, to try to see what the failures of Camp David were, whether it would be possible to build another negotiating team, and what the basis for those negotiations would be. That was in December. We are still working on the proceedings, which will be finished soon.

10.10 a.m.

[60] **Christine Chapman:** Bethan Jenkins has a final question.

[61] **Bethan Jenkins:** Many people say that setting up such an institute would cost a lot of money, and that it should not be a priority for civil society or for Government. Having set your institute up, why has it been important for you? What would you have done if the institute did not exist?

[62] **Ms Font:** [*Inaudible.*]

[63] **Mr Aguiar:** As we are a part of an autonomous Government in Catalonia, we have no army, and therefore no budget that is dedicated to an army. Therefore, we believe that, with this money, and probably more so in the future—little by little—we will be intervening and helping and taking action on peace building. We believe that that is worth it. We are also holding many activities in Catalonia to make the population conscious of the importance of the culture of peace, which is also valuable. The institute is saying that there is a way for the Catalan Government to make itself visible in international relations.

[64] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Tica and Pablo, for your evidence this morning. I know that committee members appreciate your perspectives. We will now discuss this issue as a committee and we are happy for you to continue watching our proceedings on the video link. Many thanks from all of us here in Wales.

[65] **Mr Aguiar:** Thank you. Goodbye.

10.13 a.m.

Trafod y Dystiolaeth Discussion of Evidence

[66] **Christine Chapman:** Members will know that we have received additional correspondence from the petitioners. We have also had written evidence from the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt. What are committee members' thoughts on this?

[67] **Michael German:** The differences in budget are interesting. Fortunately, we can compare the three institutes that we considered as they all deal in the same currency. The Flemish Peace Institute has, roughly, a €1 million annual budget. The Frankfurt budget is about €3.5 million, of which €2.6 million is Government money. The Catalan budget is €2.5 million, going up to €6 million, which is a large increase. We obviously need to wait for the Government's response, but I would value some more understanding on two issues.

[68] The first issue is the split between research, of whatever kind, and practical action, of which we have heard some examples today. Several organisations in the United Kingdom already undertake some of the activities that I have just heard described. Therefore, I would like to know where a peace institute would fit in with those organisations, such as International Aid and International Alert, which undertake some of those sorts of activities in the United Kingdom, and which also do a lot of democracy training and work. Therefore,

there seems to be a split between practical action and research that I would want the Members' research service paper to look at.

[69] The second perspective is the split between national and international work. What focus is there, and which activities take place in your own country that are seen as being of value, and which activities are seen to be undertaken with others, internationally? I need to get a fuller feel for those two areas, and so perhaps we could include those in the MRS brief when it comes out. Perhaps we could also suggest to the First Minister that he might want to consider those issues in his response.

[70] **Christine Chapman:** Are you happy with that suggestion?

[71] **Bethan Jenkins:** We need to differentiate the research, because I noted that the Catalans said that they were working with Aberystwyth University, but I remember that, when the petitioners came in initially, they said that they did not want there to be an academic approach to this. I want to echo what Mike has said on the research, because the petitioners in Wales are calling for something a little different. They note in their letter that they would like to see a task and finish group set up, but I would want to wait to see what the First Minister says to see whether the response is favourable, and then to go on from there. I would support that, because, as a committee, when we have carried out work of our own, it has led to comprehensive investigations on important issues.

[72] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The evidence that we received this morning was enlightening and complementary to what we have already received. The evidence that I found to be most informative was that from the Frankfurt institute on how some of the scenarios panned out. I thought that we were going to be taking oral evidence from the Frankfurt institute. Is there a reason why we have not?

[73] **Christine Chapman:** We should have done that at the last meeting, but there was a problem because the committee was cancelled.

[74] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, we could not take evidence because of the strike.

[75] **Christine Chapman:** They were unable to reschedule for today, unfortunately. That is why they have offered to give—

[76] **Michael German:** While we are waiting for the paper, is there an opportunity to fit them into a future meeting?

[77] **Ms Stocks:** We can certainly speak to the Frankfurt institute to see whether there would be an opportunity for it to give evidence at a later date.

[78] **Michael German:** In this world, it is the oldest.

[79] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The paper is very informative. I like the line about quality control. It mentions the GB model reminds us about faded communist systems and talks about a more vibrant, modern and academic structure. It then goes on to talk about the choices, and says that it boils down to money at the end of the day, because the size of the institute that you create and its capability relates to the budget. We have heard in the evidence today that the budget in Catalonia is not insubstantial and that there are projections for a substantial increase in that budget. It is heartening, from my perspective, that outside financing makes up some 20 per cent of the Catalan budget, which is €1.2 million. As someone who has a limited understanding of what a peace institute in Wales would achieve in the challenging economic environment in which we find ourselves, I think that the Frankfurt institute could offer us a good role model to look at and a deeper understanding of what we in Wales should be looking

at, complementing what the First Minister will come back to us with following his deliberations. Given the sums that we have heard, I am amazed to think where we will find the resources here in Wales to establish such an institute. It might be worth looking outside the governmental structure to see whether there is third-party interest in putting some money in to try to get legs on this organisation, if that were deemed to be the right way forward.

[80] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we will put in another request to the Frankfurt institute to see whether it is able to give evidence. That would be a good idea. We await the responses of the First Minister and the Members' research service. Thank you for that.

10.19 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[81] **Christine Chapman:** The first new petition is P-03-283 on the NHS charging for alcohol-related incidents. To summarise, it was raised by Derek Wynne Rees, collected 116 signatures, and calls for the introduction of charges for NHS treatment and transport in those cases in which the incident is alcohol related and is the fault of the individuals concerned. I have written to the Minister for Health and Social Services. Are you happy to await her response?

[82] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is worth noting, Chair, that there will be a statement in Plenary this afternoon. I am not quite sure what it will cover, but the title refers to alcohol pricing. As we have no tax-raising powers in this institution—and the statement will be made by the Minister for health—I am not sure whether this is an attempt to seek reimbursement for such services. The statement is being made this afternoon.

10.20 a.m.

[83] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The second petition is P-03-284, on Brynmawr social housing, which was raised by Malcolm Broderick. It collected 10 signatures, while a related petition collected 166 signatures, and it calls for the Government to reconsider the use of Government-owned land at Factory Road in Brynmawr for social housing. I understand that the petitioners have also submitted supporting information stating that they are not opposed to some development on the land, but that they feel that the proposals put forward by Melin Homes, the developer, are not appropriate for land of that size, given the potential impact on the wider community. I have written to the Deputy Minister for Housing and Regeneration and we will await her response. Are you happy with that? I see that you are.

[84] The next new petition is P-03-286, on business rates in Ceredigion. This petition was submitted by Luke Evetts, with 68 signatures, calling for an impact assessment of how business in Ceredigion will be affected by changes in rateable values. This is similar to petition P-03-271, which calls for the same assessment on business in Narberth. We had an initial response from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government in relation to Narberth, which stated that there were no plans to undertake impact assessments on individual areas as he felt that business rates were only one factor that could affect the viability of a business. I have written to the Minister to seek his views on the new petition, acknowledging the link to the Narberth petition and asking for an update in the context of correspondence already received on this matter. Are you happy to await the response? I see that you are.

10.22 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[85] **Christine Chapman:** The first petition is P-03-065, on dental charges. This was raised by the Severn Group Women's Institute, calling for a review of NHS dental charges, specifically highlighting the difference in costs between treatment bands 2 and 3. This was last considered by the committee in 2007, when it was agreed that the matter would be revisited as a review of dental charges was thought to be forthcoming. It is envisaged that there may be an NHS price review at some point around 2010-11. Are there any thoughts on this petition?

[86] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I had to rub my eyes when I looked at the date of the petition, but I appreciate that there are certain petitions that have to wait for work that is in progress. The review is pending, but could we seek the view of the British Dental Association on this? More importantly, given that some considerable time has passed, has the clerking team heard from the petitioners? Do they keep in regular contact? If not, given that certain evidence has been submitted—although it has not allowed the petition to be concluded—could that not be put to the petitioners to ask for their opinion on it?

[87] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, we could do that.

[88] **Michael German:** I presume that the review has been completed by now, so can we ask the Minister when she intends to make a decision on it?

[89] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, we can.

[90] The next update is on petition P-03-081, on student loan regulations. This petition calls for the exemption that currently exists for mature students to apply for student loans when studying certain subjects to be extended to any undergraduate degree that is a mandatory legal prerequisite for qualification and registration. The petitioner specifically highlights pharmacy and optometry degree courses. We have written to the petitioner on two occasions to seek an update on the campaign, but we have not had a response. The Modernising Pharmacy Careers programme is looking at the reform of pharmacy education and, as part of that work, it is scheduled to look at the funding framework. Are there any thoughts on this petition?

[91] **Bethan Jenkins:** We should write back to the Minister for health on this, because she promised to raise the matter with the Welsh representative on the board on 16 June 2009, so we should seek an opinion on how that meeting went.

[92] **Christine Chapman:** The next petition is P-03-085, on surgeries in Flintshire: a new primary care centre. This petition calls for the development of a primary care centre in Flint to improve GP services. We are awaiting an update from the Minister on the development of such a primary care centre. You will know that planning for local services in Flintshire was put on hold while a wider clinical strategy was developed in north Wales. We have written to the petitioner on two occasions seeking an update, but no response has been received. Are there any thoughts on this one?

[93] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Again, it is for the Minister to come back to us with an update. I remember this petition coming before us, to be fair. Hopefully, the Minister can inform us, along with the local health board, of what progress has been made to date in commissioning the surgery development programme.

[94] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you.

[95] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** With your permission, Chair, I would like to return to the last petition on student loan regulations. Could we also write to community pharmacists to ask for their views on this petition? A lot of pharmacists offer placements and training to people who are seeking a career in pharmacy, and so maybe we could seek the representative organisation's views on the steps that are being taken, as well as the steps that it might like to see taken, to improve career development, in line with the aims of the petition.

[96] **Christine Chapman:** Are other committee members happy with that? I see that you are. We now move on to P-03-148, on introducing direct train services between Ebbw Vale and Newport. This petition calls for the feasibility of a direct train service between Ebbw Vale and Newport to be investigated. We have written to the petitioners on two occasions, seeking their views on the actions outlined in the Deputy First Minister's letter, but no response has been received. Would committee members be happy to close the petition and produce a summary closure report?

[97] **Michael German:** What worries me about this is that we have a feasibility study, produced largely by Network Rail, which I have read, although it is not attached here, but we do not, as of yet, have a Government response to it. The last paragraph of the letter dated 25 September 2008 stated that there was a process of consultation going ahead on that report. However, I do not recall our getting a response. It would make much more sense not to close the petition until we have seen the Government response to that request for a feasibility study. So, I wonder whether we could have the response from the Government in respect of the actions outlined by the Deputy First Minister in 2008.

[98] **Christine Chapman:** Are committee members happy with that?

[99] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I want to raise one thing, which is that this is the third petition for which you have informed us, Chair, that the petitioners, sadly, have not had a chance to respond after receiving several letters from the clerk. Maybe they have moved out of the area, given that the petitions have been going on for some time. Nevertheless, the petitioners clearly felt strongly enough about these issues to submit petitions. Moreover, regarding this petition on the Ebbw Vale to Newport line, regional and constituency Assembly Members may have an interest in the issue. Is it possible to raise the fact that the petitions have been submitted with those Members, and also the fact that we have lost touch with the petitioners, for whatever reason? They may be able to provide us with some local knowledge. It would be a shame for us to close it and then for the petitioners to come back a few months later to ask what has happened, saying that they have moved home, or that the post has been getting lost.

[100] **Michael German:** Could we simply check the electoral roll to see whether the people have moved?

[101] **Christine Chapman:** We have had a few of these now.

[102] **Michael German:** I presume that we are writing only to the lead petitioner.

[103] **Ms Stocks:** Yes.

[104] **Michael German:** If one person—[*Inaudible.*]

[105] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not know whether we should refer just one petition to the AMs. If this is to become policy, I would say that the other petitions to which we have not had responses should also be referred to regional AMs. Perhaps we could discuss that as a procedure at another point, as opposed to referring just one petition in a piecemeal way.

[106] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I was not referring to just one petition. It was more of a general principle for when we lose contact with petitioners. I am thinking of that one that goes back to 2007, for example. It would not be unreasonable, as Mike said, for things to have changed in the personal circumstances of the lead petitioner, which is the only contact address that we are given, but for the issue still to be pertinent to the relevant locality. This is especially so if there are 400 or 500 signatures attached to the petition.

[107] **Bethan Jenkins:** That is fine, as long as it is done on the premise that it comes back to us. We do not want regional AMs to progress things with constituents outside the committee that we may not be aware of while the petition is still open. It is just a matter of procedure, really.

10.30 a.m.

[108] **Christine Chapman:** The next one is an update on P-03-150, National Cancer Standards. This petition asked for an investigation into whether local health boards would have the tools in place to meet the national cancer standards by March 2009. The Minister has responded to the request by the committee asking for an indication of the areas of non-compliance in the April 2009 self assessment, by stating that the November update indicated that improvements had been made. The Minister also states that all LHBs have produced action plans and are aware of the expectation that the September 2010 deadline should be met. However, no indication has been given of the broad areas in which improvements are needed. Would you be happy for us to write to the Minister emphasising the request that the committee have some indication of those areas of non-compliance?

[109] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I will just raise a point of interest. As health spokesman for my group, I corresponded with all the LHBs and they have plans in place now. What is not clear is the resource implications to meet these obligations. It could also be good to try to get an understanding. While the Minister is, quite correctly, aspiring to hit these targets by September, there is no understanding with the remodelling of who is going to be accountable within the new LHBs to deliver them. Some clarity on that would be helpful to the petitioners as well.

[110] **Christine Chapman:** We will seek those details as well. Petition P-03-169, Welsh Olympic Team, calls for a Welsh Olympic team to participate in the 2012 Olympics. We have written to the International Olympic Committee on two occasions to seek clarity on whether Wales could establish a national Olympic committee, but unfortunately, no response has been received. Does anyone have any thoughts?

[111] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think that we should write to the IOC saying that we are disappointed that it has not even had the decency to respond to us. As well as contacting the British Olympic Association to see whether it can clarify the lack of response by the IOC, we should make the Minister for Heritage aware of the problem, and ask whether he has had any meetings with these bodies, to throw some light on any of the themes that have been discussed, or to say whether this particular issue has come up in such meetings. The IOC should have responded by now.

[112] **Christine Chapman:** Are you happy with that?

[113] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is discourteous not to respond to the letter, but I wonder whether the IOC has responded to the British Olympic Association, because it is the federated member of the IOC. We instigated the letter, but it may well be worth including the British Olympic Association in the loop, because it is the representative body for the United Kingdom on the IOC. Instinctively, in a lot of big organisations, you go to the federated member thinking that that is the correct course of action; I would include it in the

correspondence.

[114] **Christine Chapman:** That is fine. The next one is P-03-172, Restore the Swansea-Cork Ferry, which called for the National Assembly to encourage the early restoration of the Swansea-Cork ferry. The latest correspondence from the Deputy First Minister states that work was ongoing by both Welsh and Irish Governments to help support the reintroduction of the service. As you know, the ferry service was launched in March 2010, so that was a good outcome. Are you happy to close the petition and produce a summary report? I see that you are.

[115] The next one is P-03-182, European funding. This petition called for the Enterprise and Learning Committee to investigate the use of European funding since 2000 and mechanisms for the delivery of the convergence funds in 2007-14. You know that the Chair of the Enterprise and Learning Committee has provided information and clarity on the length and scope of the inquiry, explaining why the inquiry did not look at the use of Objective 1 funding. Are there any thoughts on this?

[116] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is the committee still carrying out the investigation?

[117] **Ms Stocks:** I think that the inquiry has finished taking evidence now.

[118] **Bethan Jenkins:** Do we know whether the petitioners are satisfied?

[119] **Michael German:** They were not satisfied with the terms of reference, which is the problem. When the report is published, they may have a view on what it says. They obviously did not believe that the terms of reference set by the committee were appropriate for what they wanted. That is the committee's decision, which we cannot avoid. Therefore, the only thing left is the report, but, as there will be a debate on the report, they may like to contribute to that when it is finally published.

[120] **Christine Chapman:** Are Members happy for us to wait for the report, and then to possibly write to the petitioners, asking for their views, or inviting them to contribute then?

[121] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Do we know when the report is likely to be published? Could we ask the clerk of the Enterprise and Learning Committee for a time frame, so that we are working in unison with the petitioners as well as with the Enterprise and Learning Committee?

[122] **Ms Stocks:** Yes, we could find that out.

[123] **Christine Chapman:** Fine. The next petition is P-03-219, Pharmacies in Barry. This petition called for the protection of high street pharmacies in relation to the restriction on the location of pharmacies. The Minister for Health and Social Services has stated that the remit, the terms of reference and the timescales for the strategic review group have been agreed, and that she will be meeting with the chair of the group to discuss taking this work forward. Therefore, are Members happy to wait for further updates from the Minister on the work of the strategic review group?

[124] **Michael German:** It might also be helpful to know when the strategic review is likely to end. In much of our correspondence with Ministers, we are told that a review is ongoing, but it would be useful to have some idea on record of when it is likely to end. We can then, if necessary, pursue a different course of action—maybe not to see when the review is being held, but to see when the Minister's response to it will be made.

[125] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Minister's letter mentions meeting the group's chair, its

terms of reference and its timescales. It would be helpful if we could have a timescale, because, again, this petition has been ongoing for a considerable time—since 23 June 2009. We could then at least send a positive message to the petitioners—that this group is working to a timescale of July, August, September, October, or whenever, when the Minister will have the information to make those choices.

[126] **Christine Chapman:** I will check this issue with the clerk. We all receive correspondence, or e-mails, from time to time, from petitioners, wondering what is happening to their petitions, and they may not always follow this committee's proceedings carefully. Is there a procedure for keeping petitioners in the loop about what is happening?

[127] **Ms Stocks:** We contact petitioners in advance of a Petitions Committee meeting when we know that their petition will be considered, and we then contact them after the committee meeting to let them know what actions have been agreed. Therefore, they are kept in the loop regarding what is being done.

[128] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I may be digressing, but some of these petitions are two or three years old. If there has been no correspondence in a given period, is there scope—on a quarterly or half-yearly basis—for the clerking team to make a courtesy contact with the petitioners, to say, 'Sadly, there is nothing more to report', or, 'This is the work that is progressing on the petition'? We could then see whether petitioners are still keen to keep a petition going, so that we do not waste resources if a petitioner feels that an issue has been resolved.

[129] **Christine Chapman:** We can possibly discuss that with the clerking team—that would be a good idea. The more petitions we receive, the more important it is to ensure that we keep the lines of communication open. I think that we can do that.

[130] The next petition P-03-236, the Charter for Grandchildren. This calls for the charter for grandchildren to be made mandatory for those employed in the welfare of children. Response has been received from the petitioner, along with several case studies where they feel that a charter for grandchildren would have helped. They would like to see the Children Act 1989 amended to incorporate the charter, but they understand that the Assembly can only consider those issues for which it has devolved powers. Are there any thoughts on this one?

[131] **Bethan Jenkins:** Gwenda Thomas states in her letter that it could conflict with the Children Act 1989 and the Human Rights Act 1998. We could look at the legal guidance on the rights of grandparents as set out in those Acts. Could we also look at other legislation that may impact on this charter becoming law? There is a family justice board review going on at present, and there will be a consultation in June between Gwenda Thomas's department and the UK Ministry of Justice. They will be looking into many of these issues. I do not think that the terms of reference have been announced yet, but perhaps we could contact the people who are conducting that review and ask whether there is any input in that way.

10.40 a.m.

[132] **Michael German:** I am not certain, Chair, that we have ever, in the Petitions Committee, taken a view from the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Maybe we ought to, because this is of particular interest to him.

[133] **Christine Chapman:** We could look at that, yes.

[134] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Let us have him in, then.

[135] **Ms Jackson:** Could I ask that, if you need a legal briefing on this, you are a little

more specific in what you ask about? An inquiry in this area could occupy me or another member of staff for months, if we were to look at everything. I understand that the Welsh Assembly Government is currently developing a proposed Measure relating to children's rights, which is out to consultation with various relevant stakeholders. Obviously, we would be happy to provide some briefing, but we need a little more specificity as to what you would like us to look at.

[136] **Christine Chapman:** Is everyone happy to do that?

[137] **Bethan Jenkins:** My question was based on the fact that the Deputy Minister said that there could be conflict with the charter. I was trying to ask whether we could compare the charter that we have from them with what is in the Children Act, and then see whether there would be any difficulties in that becoming part of any new legislation. I do not know whether that is possible.

[138] **Ms Jackson:** Yes—that is more specific. Thank you.

[139] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Would it be appropriate to direct this, just for information, to the Children and Young People's Committee, which is meeting next door, to point out that we have received this petition—a substantial petition, to say the least, given what Joaneest has said about the legal implications—and ask whether it has an opinion?

[140] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, we can do that, if other committee members are happy. We will move on to the next petition, P-03-246, on abandoning the 50 mph speed limit on the M4 at Newport between junctions 24 and 28. The Deputy First Minister has provided details of how the speed restrictions were publicised, and to indicate that the variable speed limit will be introduced in spring 2011. Once the variable speed limit is running, the default speed limit will be 70 mph, but this will vary depending on the traffic conditions. Traffic Wales has also provided details of the average journey time since the 50 mph limit was introduced, which indicates that the average journey time has reduced. Any thoughts on this one?

[141] **Michael German:** I would like to understand the letter from Traffic Wales a little better. It may be that I just do not understand the way that it is written, but it says that the impact of the 50 mph speed limit on average journey times is 5.3 minutes compared with 7.7 minutes for 70 mph; I do not understand what that means. Could anyone help me?

[142] **Ms Stocks:** I think that it is comparing the average journey time before the restrictions were introduced with the average journey time under those restrictions.

[143] **Michael German:** So, basically, when you were travelling at 70 mph, the journey took 7.7 minutes, and when you were travelling at 50 mph, the journey took 5.3 minutes. That is counterintuitive to me. That is why I asked the question.

[144] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The point is that the traffic was not necessarily flowing at 70 mph. When it was allowed to go at 70 mph, the journey took 7.7 minutes, which implies that there was greater congestion. So, even though the regulations allowed you to go at 70 mph, you were probably only averaging about 35 or 40 mph. That is why it was taking longer than when the restrictions came into force.

[145] **Michael German:** However, the point is—and I declare an interest, because I use this stretch of motorway every day—there are certain times of day, if you can find a time when the M4 is not closed, because it is often shut between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. through Newport, when there is not much traffic on the motorway, and I can guarantee that, if you travel at 70 mph, your average journey time will be quicker. Is this an average based on the whole 24-hour period, on the peak period, or on the total number of journeys undertaken? I

would have expected more detailed information from Traffic Wales than that which it has provided, looking at traffic flow at peak times and at non-peak times and so on. The big issue raised by the petitioners is that when there is not much traffic on the road you do not need the 50 mph speed limit. I know that that will change when we have the variable speed limits, but I still do not quite get what that letter from Traffic Wales is about.

[146] **Christine Chapman:** Shall we ask for more clarity on that from Traffic Wales?

[147] **Michael German:** Yes. A bit more detail would be helpful.

[148] **Christine Chapman:** We will ask for more detail then. Are you happy with that?

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

[150] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. The next petition is on banning sunbeds. This petition called for a ban on unstaffed coin operated sunbeds and on under-18s being able to use sunbeds. As you know, the Houses of Parliament passed the Sunbeds (Regulation) Bill, which will introduce restrictions that will meet the aims of this petition, so that is good news. Are you happy to close that petition and produce a summary closure report? I see that you are.

[151] The next one is a recent petition, P-03-260—campaign for dark skies—which calls for clear guidance to be issued to local authorities to help curb light pollution. The ministerial response states that while the Welsh Assembly Government has not taken a formal position on the matter, it is being addressed through measures to increase energy efficiency. It highlights that guidance has been issued to local authorities by the Carbon Trust to help increase energy efficiency. Planning authorities are also expected to include policies to control light pollution in their development plans. Are there any thoughts on that?

[152] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I appreciate the letter that the Minister has sent. Much of the responsibility for this lies with local authorities, so I think that it would be pertinent to try to get an overview from the Welsh Local Government Association on what sort of actions its members are taking to help to reduce light pollution. We should also try to get an understanding from the Carbon Trust on what assistance it is giving to local authorities and how much of that help is being taken up by them in their policy documents or development control documents. This could be another paper exercise rather than anything happening on the ground.

[153] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, we will do that. The next petition is P-03-271—business rates in Narberth—which calls for an impact assessment to be undertaken to assess the impact of changes in rateable values in Narberth. As you know, the Enterprise and Learning Committee has responded, highlighting that the recommendation that it made as part of its inquiry into the current economic downturn that more business rate relief should be provided was rejected by the Welsh Assembly Government. The WLGA has also indicated that Pembrokeshire County Council has introduced a number of initiatives as part of a wider response to the economic downturn. It highlights that the Minister has announced some business rate relief, but acknowledges that that may be of limited help in places such as Narberth where businesses have had an above average increase. Are there any thoughts on this?

[154] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Minister has clearly set out the Government's position in the letter, and it is the Government's prerogative as to what assistance it wishes to afford via business rate relief. However, there is a genuine interest among all parties about the ongoing impact of this on local communities, bearing in mind the Ceredigion petition that we had a little earlier. I would not have thought it beyond the realm of possibility for the Government to undertake, some time in the future, an impact study to discover exactly what impact such

dramatic increases in business rates have had on the local community in terms of the provision of essential services and the viability of businesses. I do not think that is beyond us to implore the Minister to undertake an impact study or to seek his interpretation of how the Assembly Government assesses the impact of business rates.

[155] **Christine Chapman:** That sounds okay. We could also write to the petitioners, asking for their views.

10.50 a.m.

[156] The next petition is P-03-279—save Welsh universities. This calls for Welsh universities to be fully funded and for the funding gap between England and Wales to be reduced. The Minister's response, as you will have read, stated this that funding levels are 'broadly flat-lined with last year' and that he expects universities to seek efficiencies to ensure the delivery of front-line services. He says that the efficiencies should be imaginative and not just an attempt 'to tighten belts'. He highlights that when higher education funding is taken along with student finance, this is on a par with funding levels in England. The Enterprise and Learning Committee has sent details of the recent report into the economic contribution of higher education, and all of the recommendations in that report that are relevant to this petition were accepted by the Government. The Chair highlights that

[157] 'the Finance Committee is currently looking at the funding of higher and further education',

[158] while the Minister is undertaking a review of education funding. Do you have any thoughts on this?

[159] **Michael German:** We have a lot of reviews going on at the moment. Perhaps we should undertake a progress check on those reviews and let the petitioners know what those reviews are. We should also seek the higher education funding council's view on the reviews, and, once again, seek further details on timescales, namely when the Minister's review will be complete, and also seek the comparators with England.

[160] **Bethan Jenkins:** I wonder whether we could refer this petition to the review group, because, if these themes are under investigation by the review group, this particular petition would be useful in informing its deliberations. We are all in the dark as to whether the system will be changed altogether or whether the proposed changes to student finances will have to be amended in any way as a result of this review. So, I think that it would be helpful if these comments were put forward to the higher education funding and governance review.

[161] **Michael German:** It could also be sent to the Finance Committee, which is undertaking a review into the funding.

[162] **Christine Chapman:** Okay.

[163] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Chair, you pointed out that the Minister asked for 'imaginative' savings or cost synergies in universities that will, hopefully, help take us down the path towards closing the gap between funding for Welsh universities and for English universities. Can we seek clarification as to what the Minister believes is an imaginative saving or efficiency that will provide substantial revenues for universities? I am a bit lost as to what 'imaginative' means in this context. The Minister obviously has something in mind that his officials have informed him of, so that might be helpful. Once we get the background on what the Minister means by 'imaginative' we can inform the petitioners of that. The reviews will obviously take some time, but, hopefully, we can give the petitioners some information in the interim. As the Minister has given us something to hang a hat on, perhaps he could

explain what ideas he has about 'imaginative' savings.

[164] **Christine Chapman:** We can write to the Minister on that. I see that everyone is content.

[165] That brings the committee meeting to a close. Thank you.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.53 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.53 a.m.