

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 8 December 2015

Meeting time: 09.00

For further information contact:

Steve George – Committee Clerk

Kath Thomas – Deputy Clerk

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1 Introduction, apologies and substitutions

(Pages 1 – 25)

2 New petitions (09.00–09.15)

2.1 P-04-658 The Brimmon Oak

(Pages 26 – 35)

2.2 P-04-660 The Additional Pressures on Funding for Education Provision
Faced by Sparsely Populated Rural Areas

(Pages 36 – 46)

2.3 P-04-659 Pay Student Nurses Their Full Travel Costs

(Pages 47 – 50)

3 Updates to previous petitions (09.15–09.45)

Health and Social Services

3.1 P-04-638 Emergency Services – Power of Entry

(Pages 51 – 52)

Education and Skills

3.2 P-04-649 Welsh-Medium Education – Garland or Albatross

(Pages 53 – 63)

3.3 P-04-639 Save Further Education in Powys

(Pages 64 – 66)



- 3.4 P-04-628 To Improve Access to Education and Services in British Sign Language
(Pages 67 – 71)
- 3.5 P-04-637 To Protect the Future of Youth Music in Wales
(Pages 72 – 77)
- 3.6 P-04-646 Petition against Welsh Draft Non-statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Elective Home Education.
(Pages 78 – 81)
- 3.7 P-04-644 The Future of Further Education
(Pages 82 – 86)

Economy, Science and Transport

- 3.8 P-04-626 De-Trunk the A487 Through Penparcau, Trefechan & Aberystwyth TC
(Pages 87 – 88)
- 3.9 P-04-632 Mynyddoedd Pawb
(Pages 89 – 96)

Finance and Government Business

- 3.10 P-04-577 Reinstate Funding to the Real Opportunities Project
(Pages 97 – 103)

Communities and Tackling Poverty

- 3.11 P-04-641 Owners of Un-developed Land
(Pages 104 – 108)

4 Evidence Session – Review of the National Assembly for Wales

Petitions System (09.45–10.15) (Pages 109 – 139)

Dr John Cox, Petitioner

Nesta Lloyd – Jones, Welsh NHS Confederation

Robert Southall, Petitioner

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:

Items 6, 7 and 8

6 Discussion of Oral Evidence Session – Review of Petitions System

7 Review of the National Assembly for Wales Petitions System

(Pages 140 – 161)

8 Discussion of Oral Evidence Session – P-04-522 Asbestos in Schools

(Pages 162 – 186)

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 2.1

P-04-658 – The Brimmon Oak

This petition was submitted by Mervyn Lloyd Jones and Rob McBride, having collected 4,730 signatures.

Text of Petition

We, the undersigned, call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to adhere to the recommendations of the appointed arboricultural specialist's report that it commissioned as part of the environmental assessment for the much needed A483 Newtown bypass.

This would result in the preservation of one of the most significant 'Natural Monuments' of Montgomeryshire, whilst facilitating the economic revival of the County Town. People from Montgomeryshire, across Wales and indeed the wider world are aware that sustainability has always been the 'central organising principle' of the Welsh Government since the National Assembly was created in 1999.

The safeguarding of the Brimmon Oak as part of the historic A483 Newtown Bypass will be a demonstration of the Welsh Government's commitment to preserving our birth right for the Wellbeing of Future Generations.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Montgomeryshire
- Mid and West Wales

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-658
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/04446/15

William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair - Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

26 October 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 12 October regarding petition P-04-658 to safeguard the Brimmon Oak in relation to the A483 Newtown bypass.

As you are aware a public inquiry for the bypass has recently been concluded. The Inspector's Report has now been received and is currently being considered by my officials who will report to me on its findings.

I will consider all the issues raised, including protection of the Brimmon Oak, before announcing my decision on the scheme shortly.

Edwina Hart

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

P-04-658 The Brimmon Oak. Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking Team 01.12.15

To all concerned

My aim is to safeguard an ancient oak tree that my family have cared for since the 1600s and is under serious threat from the construction of the Newtown Bypass.

The ancient oak tree that is situated extremely close in proximity of the scheme with the markers just 3.5 m from the tree trunk. On my tree report it states.

The arboricultural impact is high if the current GPS markers for the bypass edge are retained in their location. The proposed edge of the bypass is currently approximately 3.5m from the tree trunk of this veteran tree. This would infringe on the current BS5837.. 2012 recommendations and sever crucial anchorage and feeder roots. The BS5837..2012 recommends a 15m radius from the trunk as RPA for any tree with a stem diameter over 1250+mm.

The calculations for this would have to be imputed onto a scale tree protection plan if this implemented, along with identifying tree protection physical barriers. Also it would be required to provide an arboricultural method statement and site monitoring by the arborist.

It must be noted that i am not in receipt of any further information from the authority planning this work with regards to firstly original tree surveys and ecology surveys mitigating the loss of trees removed with tree planting and habitat areas .Secondly the site specification of embankments drainage pipes etc. I am giving my professional opinion on this one veteran tree and the current location of the planned route as to the effects on its future health. In my opinion where such trees of this nature are to be retained. Particular care should be taken in the design to accommodate them in a setting that aids their long term retention. The current plans proposed would cause irreversible root damage to this veteran tree. This professional information was taken from my tree report by Mathew Owen FDS Sc Arboriculture.

After the public inquiry i had a site visit at the tree and they told me they planned to do advanced geo -technical engineering to protect the roots. I made it clear that i want to save this tree not risk losing it and if it says 15m ring fence around the tree that's what it should be. That's working to BS5837 and these days we all have to work to British standards. These days, the GPS markers are just 3.5m from the tree trunk, not the 15m to British standards. I will enclose a few photos to highlight the issue.

Thanks for listening.

Kind regards

Mervyn Jones

P-04-658 The Brimmon Oak. Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking Team 02.12.15

e-Petition – The Brimmon Oak 4,731 signatories

The Brimmon Oak, Lower Brimmon Farm, Newtown, Powys

The Brimmon Oak e-Petition has seen phenomenal interest and sign up from... Powys; Wales; the United Kingdom; Europe, and in fact from right around the globe. For example the last signatory to the petition was a Ms McCarty from Charleston, West Virginia, USA. The world is watching WALES!

Nearly 5,000 individuals have taken the time – even though there is a plethora of petitions that want us to sign up to these days – to show their support for the retention and proper protection of this ancient Welsh Oak tree, as recommended by the Welsh Assembly Governments (WAG) own commissioned arboricultural report. This is an obvious demonstration of the heartfelt belief that this culturally significant oak tree should be given space to grow on for another 500 years and continue providing habitat and ecosystem services for its many natural residents, whilst at the same time enhancing the locality and region .

The Brimmon Oak petition now gives the WAG the OPPORTUNITY to show just how forward thinking and caring it is for its arboreal gems of the countryside. In fact, it will demonstrate just how it will move forward with regards to economics, balanced up with the protection of natural landscapes and how they can bring many benefits to Wales, including what we like to call #TreeTourism.

For example, many people right across Europe now know that Wales has some exceptional ancient trees through work that I, along with Coed Cadw have done in the last few years. In 2014 I was asked to choose a last minute, first ever, Welsh tree entry (for Coed Cadw), to go forward into the European Tree of the Year (ETOTY) contest. I chose a very special tree. *'The Oak at the Gate of the Dead'* near Chirk is now a TV star in its own right, appearing with

myself and Julia Bradbury on BBC Countryfile along with many other TV news items.

Similarly the '*Lonely Tree*' at Llanfyllin was another tree that I was heavily involved with from the minute it sadly blew down in 2013. As you should know, it later went on to win Welsh Tree of the Year 2014 and do very well at a European level in ETOTY 2015 contest. Llanfyllin Council even published a book on the tree and if you ask them what it did for the town, I am sure that unanimously, they will confirm it brought significant economic benefit and prestige to the town and area.

#TreeTourism, along with nature tourism is increasing year on year right across Europe. Last February I visited all fourteen trees entered into the 2015 contest. There was great deal of media interest with each tree I visited. At the end of the trip I had performed around 30 tv/radio/newspaper interviews. These events are helping lead the way in re-generating many rural areas where residents are struggling to find employment and purpose.

Having hosted the European Tree 2014 award ceremony in the EU Parliament Brussels myself, I know intimately just how much good for an individual area can be gained from such events. Of course I may be guilty of more promotion of the Welsh trees at these glittering events than other contenders!

The Brimmon Oak WILL be nominated next year as a contender in the Welsh Tree of the Year 2016. I have a feeling that it could do very well and even win this contest and go on to the ETOTY 2017. If the WAG do take this opportunity to protect the Oak tree properly along with several more imaginative ideas discussed in the conclusion below, then I see no reason why the **Brimmon Oak could not become the European Tree of the Year 2017. Now imagine that!**

European Legislation...If you will excuse me plagiarising the text below from ithe...

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) *is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. It is dedicated exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The Convention was signed by the UK government on 24th February 2006, ratified on the 21st November 2006, and became binding in this country on 1st March 2007.*

The ELC provides a people-centred and forward-looking way to reconcile environmental management with the socio-economic challenges of the 21st century and to help people and communities to re-connect with place.
(This is absolutely pertinent to the Brimmon Oak case.)

The active participation of citizens in decision-making processes is vital. 'Landscape' should not be the exclusive preserve of specialist scientific and technical bodies. When members of the public are able to take responsibility for what happens in the landscape and influence on their surroundings, they can reinforce local/ regional identity and distinctiveness, leading to greater individual, social and cultural fulfilment.

The Convention embodies a concern for sustainable development as expressed at the Rio de Janeiro conference. Landscape is essential in balancing the preservation of natural and cultural heritage as a reflection of European identity and diversity, and use as an economic resource

Every landscape forms the setting for the lives of a local population, and the quality of those landscapes affects everyone's lives. The Convention does not confine itself to cultural or man-made landscape elements alone, but to all elements and their interconnections.

Contracting Parties undertake to:

- recognise landscapes in law
- establish and implement landscape protection, management and planning policies
- establish procedures for public participation

Specific actions are also set out within the ELC:

- campaigns to raise awareness amongst the public, elected representatives and associations of the value of present and future landscapes
- provision of high-quality specialist training in landscape appraisal and landscape operations, and multidisciplinary training in landscape matters
- identification and evaluation of landscapes, based on characteristics, evolutionary processes, and perceptions of the population concerned
- setting of landscape quality objectives, in consultation with the public and all relevant interests
- introduction of specific legal, administrative, fiscal or financial instruments to protect, manage and plan landscapes within the agreed policy context.

Obviously, the WAG paid for an independent arboricultural survey for the Brimmon Oak, in line with the need to adhere to the ELC & Aarhus Conventions. They now need to abide by the report's recommendations with reference to the British Standard.

BS5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction

The Aarhus Convention is a new kind of environmental agreement. The Convention:

- *Links environmental rights and human rights*
- *Acknowledges that we owe an obligation to future generations*
- *Establishes that sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders*
- *Links government accountability and environmental protection*
- *Focuses on interactions between the public and public authorities in a democratic context.*

The subject of the Convention goes to the heart of the relationship between people and governments. The Convention is not only an environmental agreement, it is also a Convention about government accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

The Aarhus Convention grants the public rights and imposes on Parties and public authorities obligations regarding access to information and public participation and access to justice.

The Aarhus Convention is also forging a new process for public participation in the negotiation and implementation of international agreements.

Source: United Nations Economic Committee for Europe (UNECE)

<http://www.unece.org/env/pp/introduction.html>

It is of course legally binding to member states.

Conclusion:

Forest, woodlands, trees, and especially Ancient Trees, can now play a significant role in the battle to mitigate climate change. They have a greater need than ever to be retained and protected. Only this last week, world leaders at last made some much needed progress on climate change in Paris at the COP21 meeting.

It can clearly be seen from the numbers signing up to the petition, and the new historical/cultural associations that have come to light since the public enquiry, that it may well be considered that not enough time or effort was actually given over to fulfilling the requirements of the European Landscape Convention along with the Aarhus Convention.

The Brimmon Oak presents an obvious and sensible opportunity to show the world that Wales is actually at the forefront of planning a world that is fit for our children, their children and many future generations to come.

The slight moving of the road, – in line with WAGS's own arboricultural report recommendations, whilst we are still at the planning stage – will

hopefully facilitate the tree to live on and be appreciated for another 500 years, whilst also enabling the much needed bypass to go ahead.

Perhaps we can be the first country in the world to actually name a bypass after a historical tree...'**The Newtown Brimmon Oak Bypass**'...lined with many hundreds of Brimmon Oak saplings. Now that truly would show Wales on a world stage, as forward thinking and innovative, a great place to visit for sure.

I do hope that you take this amazing opportunity, thank you for taking the time to consider this petition.

Rob McBride

Agenda Item 2.2

P-04-660 – The Additional Pressures on Funding for Education Provision Faced by Sparsely Populated Rural Areas

This petition was submitted by Save Powys Schools, having collected 1.049 signatures.

Text of Petition

We, the undersigned, call upon the Welsh Government to recognize the financial challenges of providing an appropriate level of educational provision in sparsely populated rural areas. Spending cuts are adversely affecting school communities to the extent that children are leaving their county of residence (and increasingly, in border counties, such as Powys, leaving Wales) in order to continue their education. Schools and sixth forms are at breaking point, exhausted by continual threat of closure. Our children are forced to travel unsustainable distances on minor roads, breaking up friendship groups and adding up to two hours to the school day. Nursery education is now also under threat, and with continuous cuts to school budgets causing round after round of redundancies, it is impossible to deliver the quality of education that teachers trained for and that our young people deserve. We urge the Welsh Government to immediately investigate the additional challenges to education in sparsely populated rural areas, and to increase the funding to areas such as Powys accordingly. The loss of our schools heralds the death of our communities and our local economies. If a devolved Wales

is to thrive, we need our Government to lead the funding discussions in Westminster. We need you on our side!

Assembly Constituency and Region

- N/A
- N/A



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-660
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/02155/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
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CF99 1NA

13 November 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 3 November asking for my view in relation to a petition the Petitions Committee has received from Save Powys Schools.

The petition refers to additional pressures on funding for educational provision in sparsely populated rural areas. It may be useful if I explain how schools in Wales are funded.

Funding for statutory age education is provided mainly on a non-hypothecated basis through the local government settlement (Revenue Support Grant – RSG). The Welsh Government also provides hypothecated grants for a wide range of education policies. The approach to funding is a key part of the Welsh Government's policy that local authorities are best placed to deliver services and that in order to do so well; they need financial flexibility to judge local needs and circumstances and to decide how to allocate their resources. Local authorities are accountable to their electorates for the decisions they make.

RSG funding is determined by a Standard Spending Assessment formula which decides authorities' relative need to provide services. The SSA calculation is broken down between the different services provided by the local authorities. These different elements – Indicator Based Assessments (IBAs) each have their own distribution formula. The main elements of the education formula are pupil numbers and measures of deprivation and sparsity. These recognise that it costs more to deliver education services in more deprived areas and to deliver those same services to more sparsely populated communities.

The revenue funding we provide to local authorities each year through the settlement is distributed according to relative need, using a formula which takes account of a wealth of information on the demographic, physical, economic and social characteristics of authorities.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

This funding formula has been developed in consultation with Local Government through the Distribution Sub Group (DSG) – a technical working group whose members include senior Local Government officers from across Wales, the Welsh Local Government Association and independent experts to ensure fair treatment of the different factors. In the interests of transparency, the detailed methodology is published in an annual *Green Book*.

The formula is kept under a continual programme of review and improvement overseen by the DSG. The Group produces an annual report for consideration by the Finance Sub Group of the Partnership Council for Wales.

Included within the formula are a number of indicators that account for varying degrees of rurality across authorities in Wales. Amongst other areas, these are used throughout the Education part of the formula to take account of the limited ability of rural authorities to benefit from economies of scale.

The ability of authorities to prioritise their spending according to their own particular circumstances is an important part of the budget-setting process. Once funding is distributed it is for the headteacher and governing body of each school to decide how the school's budget should be spent, taking into account the needs of their school and their particular circumstances.



Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

P-04-660 The Additional Pressures on Funding for Education Provision Faced by Sparsely Populated Areas: Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking Team. 30.11.15

Dear Jessica

I am attaching two documents in response to Huw Lewis's letter. The first is our overall view, the second is an example of the effects of cuts in a Powys rural community called Beguildy.

I will bring hard copies with me tomorrow

Thanks for your help

Mary

The Additional Pressures on Funding for Education Provision Faced by Sparsely Populated Rural Areas

Powys in Context:

Powys occupies approximately 25% of the landmass of Wales.

An area of approximately 2,000 sq. miles spread across a large rural county.

Powys has less than 5% of the population of Wales

With a population of just over 133,000 (2011 Census), it is the most sparsely populated Welsh county.

The sparsity of Powys settlements

Only two towns, Ystradgynlais and Newtown have populations of more than 10,000. The third largest settlement, Brecon, has a population of approximately 7,000. The remaining settlements are smaller market towns, villages and isolated hamlets.

The largest road network in Wales

The county has 3,400 miles of road, a high proportion of which are single-track with infrequent passing places. Such roads can only be used by small minibuses, resulting in an often unacknowledged constraint on school transport provision. The Powys landscape is typically upland topography making travel difficult. The public transport infrastructure is limited and currently under further threat because of the forthcoming cuts (of the order of 20%) to the council's overall budget.

A low wage economy

Powys is an area of low wages, with transport and housing pressures leading to high levels of 'waged poverty'. The economy relies heavily on public service, education and health.

An ageing population

The 2013 Welsh Government population projections showed that the Powys population is projected to rise by 1.2% by 2036 as a result of net inward migration. The largest increase, 98%, is expected in the number of people in the 75+ age group.

The current basis for Welsh Government funding for the Rate Support Grant:

The majority of funding, including for education, is un-hypothecated and is based on the Standard Spending Assessment formula. The Indicator Based Assessment formula for education has as its main elements: pupil numbers; deprivation and sparsity. The formula is intended to address the issue of varying degrees of rurality, including the limited ability of rural authorities to benefit from economies of scale.

Why the formula requires review:

The underlying principle recognises that sparsity presents a challenge to the effective delivery of essential public services in rural areas such as Powys but the weighting currently allocated to this fails to provide the necessary protection.

In theory, non-hypothecated funding should allow Local Authorities the flexibility to transfer money from one budget heading to another in order to support services under pressure. In practice, if insufficient funding is available, as a result of flaws in the overall formula, an authority lacks that flexibility to top up spending in order to fund circumstances specific to it.

Impact:

Damage to communities

Powys has implemented a school modernisation/transformation programme, matching the WG 2015 target of 15% surplus places in the primary sector, but this is now at the point where real damage is being done to its communities (see report on the impact of closure of Beguildy Church in Wales Primary School). As parents opt to send their children to the next nearest school, following closure of their community school, friendship groups are redrawn and communities fragment.

Demographic imbalance

The remaining schools are key to community life and essential factors in attracting and retaining the young people needed to redress the demographic imbalance in the age profile of the population as a whole.

Learners lost to Wales

The closure, or threat of closure or reorganisation, of schools along the border with England is resulting in more and more learners being lost from Wales as parents opt to send their children to schools closer to their homes rather than subject them to increasingly long journeys to schools within Wales.

Travel times extended

Children are forced to travel unsustainable distances on minor roads, adding up to two hours to the school day.

Further closures will mean that recommended maximum travel times and distances set out in Welsh Government guidelines become the norm not the exception for many learners.

Delivery of high quality education threatened

Schools and sixth forms are at breaking point, exhausted by continual threat of closure. During the last ten years the people working in the school system have been subject to an almost continuous barrage of threats of closure, actual closures, withdrawn closures, withdrawn closures that turned into actual closures because parents abandoned schools that they perceived as being under threat, and threats of threats. It is no wonder that Powys finds it difficult to recruit teaching staff.

Nursery education is now also under threat.

Continuous cuts to school budgets are causing round after round of redundancies making it impossible to deliver the quality of education that teachers trained for and that our young people deserve.

Delivery of all services is inevitably more expensive in an area with the longest road network in Wales

Travel costs for services such as household waste collection, Home Care and school transport account for a disproportionate of the overall budget, leaving nothing to support the specific problems of providing education in widespread communities.

Action:

If a devolved Wales is to thrive, the Welsh Government must lead the funding discussions in Westminster. The loss of our schools heralds the death of our communities and our local economies, accelerating the demographic time bomb of our increasingly elderly population

The Welsh Government must investigate the additional challenges to education in sparsely populated rural areas, such as Powys, and whether the funding is sufficient to meet the needs. This will require a detailed re-examination of the formula and its relative weightings and a study of the actual amounts of funding generated under the headings of deprivation and sparsity.

BEGUILDY

A case study of the impact on a rural community of the closure of the village primary school

Background:

The catchment area for Beguildy Church in Wales Primary School, which closed on 31st December, 2013, was an area between the south side of the Dolfor Hills and Knucklas village, bounded on the western edge by the Beacon Hill Range. The school was located in the geographical centre of this area in the village of Beguildy. The area, in the upper reaches of the Teme Valley, is approximately 12 miles long and 4 miles wide and is divided by the boundary of the Powys and Shropshire Local Authorities which is the national boundary between Wales and England. The catchment, served by Beguildy Community Council, is made up of the villages of Beguildy and Knucklas, the hamlets of Heyope, Lloyney, Dutlas and Felindre, smaller scattered settlements such as Crug-y-buddar and outlying farmsteads.

The former school site and buildings:

Beguildy School Hall provided the only meeting hall in the village, hosting amongst other events Christmas Fayres, Harvest Festival Suppers, Church Fundraisers and funeral teas. The school grounds, as the only community open space in the upper Teme Valley, provided a venue for outdoor community activities. Beguildy Community Council, anxious to preserve this asset for the community, submitted an Expression of Interest Form to Powys County Council.

The Community Council was unable to pursue its interest because The Church in Wales, as co-owners of the property, although sympathetic in principle, stated: *'As the Diocesan Trust is a charity, it has to deal with its land in accordance with the Charities Act and that means, if it disposes of the land, obtaining the best price for the charitable trust.'* In order to obtain the best price, land and buildings would have to be sold as one lot thus precluding the Community Council from pursuing separate expressions of interest.

The Church added: *'The former school is held by the Diocesan trust on educational trusts. If those trusts fail (i.e. the school closes) then the school has to be sold unless an alternative use is found for it, which includes educational activities.'* It was felt that continued use of the building by the Parent and Toddler Group and the meetings of the YFC would not meet this criterion which could only be met fully by continuing the intended purpose of the building as a school.

The site is zoned in the Local Development Plan for residential use but two years on, a buyer has not been found and it stands as an obvious visual daily reminder of what has been lost. The previously well-maintained grounds, which provided excellent opportunities for outdoor learning and were, as stated, the only outdoor community recreation space in the upper Teme Valley, are now an unloved and untended eyesore at the heart of the village as no maintenance has been carried out behind the locked gates since the closure on 31st December, 2013. The school building itself also shows visible signs of decay as a result of the lack of maintenance.

Education in a Welsh school or in a rural setting?

'I would encourage Powys ... to consider carefully any changes to provision which would result in Welsh pupils being routinely educated at English schools' Leighton Andrews (Then WG Education Minister).

The school drew learners from both Wales and England as the catchment ran along the boundary of the Powys and Shropshire Local Authorities. Powys LA presented Knighton Church in Wales Primary School as the designated receiving school but this did not satisfy

many of the parents who wished their children to continue to receive their education in a small rural school environment such as they had experienced themselves and which they valued so much at Beguildy. As a result, the children are now dispersed to six other schools on both sides of the county/national boundary.

Fragmentation of the community

The parents who used to meet daily as they dropped off their children or attended events and fund raising activities at the school now find that their opportunity for frequent interaction has been diminished and, with it, the feeling of connection and cohesion within the community. The children will be further divorced from their traditional community as they follow their new-found friends on to the different secondary schools in whose catchments their new primary schools are situated. This, in turn, weakens the numbers attending organisations such as the local YFC as, again, they follow their new friends to clubs outside the once close-knit community.

Where once there was life in the village during term time there is now a feeling of 'deadness'. Older members of the community now have little contact with the youngest members, especially if they do not have immediate family living locally. The school had an excellent record of promoting inter-generational contact with weekly events at the school such as the 'Cosy Cafe' and invitations to performances and presentations. Again, the participation of the pupils in Church events provided opportunities for young and old to unite.

Increased journey times for children and less access to extra-curricular activities

Cost saving was one of the arguments used to justify the decision to close the school but data collected by Powys County Council with regard to transport costs was flawed and did not provide a reliable indication of overall cost savings. In calculating transport costs, PCC asserted that 'the cost of home to school transport will be broadly no higher after closure than before' yet had to increase the estimated calculation on which Cabinet had reached its initial decision. In addition to the cost, children are now being ferried to several different schools, many with increased journey times, and are also less able to participate fully in extra-curricular activities.

The Parent and Toddler group

The thriving Parent and Toddler Group was homeless when the school closed and has re-located to Felindre Village Hall. Although still well supported, numbers have fallen because the location is not as accessible as the centrally located school.

Impact on Beguildy Church

The Community Impact Assessment dismissed concerns that the community would be disadvantaged by the closure, citing the fact that it would retain its Church and village shop. The school's strong links with the Church cemented its place at the heart of the community with the children participating regularly in Church events which in turn encouraged the attendance of the parents. Since the closure, attendance has fallen and services have been reduced to two per month from the previous four. The Church also reports a significant drop in responses to fundraising. (An exacerbating factor is that there is perception, justified or otherwise, that the Church was not as vociferous in its support for this Church school as it might have been during the campaign against closure).

The Village shop – hub of the community

The village shop has seen a significant drop in its weekly turnover as the parents who used to call in routinely as they delivered or collected their children and pick up items on a casual basis and enjoy the exchange of local information now pass through and plan to do their weekly shop in larger settlements. When **Paul Page** retires it is unlikely to remain as a village shop.

The future

All of the above detrimental aspects are evident now and will become even more apparent in the years to come as community cohesion is lost because the younger members are forming new bonds elsewhere and drawing their families with them.

The abandoned school site may be developed in the future for housing despite there being other designated sites within the village which are undeveloped. Any houses built will, in all likelihood, be sold to older occupiers thereby accelerating the increasingly elderly age profile of a community in decline.

Agenda Item 2.3

P-04-659 – Pay Student Nurses their full Travel Costs

This petition was submitted by Steffan Thomas, having collected 102 signatures.

Text of Petition

In 2014 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) changed its policy on travel to placements, the work component of a nursing course. Before this change, students were paid travel expenses from their home to their place of work. Now students are paid the cost of travel from their home, or the university at which they study. The smallest distance is then used to calculate the payment they receive.

Student nurses without dependents in Wales receive a bursary of approx. £100 to £500 a month. The higher figure, spread across their work hours, reaches the minimum wage at best. On placements, student nurses are expected to take on an increasing number of the responsibilities of a nurse. They provide care – washing, dressing, feeding patients; talking to patients and families; working with healthcare professionals to improve patients' well-being. They are also called on to show learning from these placements, and hone their skills in patient care.

The cut in travel allowances for these work placements means a total cut in the amount received for being student nurse.

This change has several ill effects It creates an incentive for Universities to place students near as possible to campus – limiting the clinical experience of student nurses before qualification It makes nursing less attractive to people from rural or isolated communities It privileges nurses who live nearer to their university, and could discourage those who are unable to move because of commitments to children and others. It makes nursing less attractive to people in full-time work, or from deprived backgrounds.

We believe that student nurses should be paid their travel costs where they live, to the places they work. We believe this change makes it less likely that people will choose a nursing career, and we believe that it will limit the range of experience that they have prior to qualification. We call on the WAG to reverse this change, for the benefit of student nurses and their patients.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Neath
- South Wales West

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-659
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/03134/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

21 November 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 2 November to Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills, regarding the petition you have received from Steffan Thomas regarding student nurse placement travel costs. The letter was passed to me for reply as Minister for Health and Social Services.

The Welsh NHS Bursary Scheme supports the education and training of a range of healthcare professionals, including nurses. Prior to the change, individuals were able to claim travel expenses for attending all placement venues. The scheme did not distinguish between placements located closer or further from the normal base of study. This was in contrast to the arrangements in place elsewhere in the UK and to the arrangements for employed nurses who would normally receive reimbursement for hours travelled in excess of their normal travelling requirement.

The changes introduced make provision for mileage to be claimed in circumstances where students are required to travel further than they would normally to participate in an educational placement. This means no student should be disadvantaged regardless of where their placements take place.

In addition, as part of the wider changes, the amount which students are able to claim per mile was increased.

The introduction of these arrangements applied to new students only and therefore no student experienced a cut in the funding they could claim under the bursary arrangements.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0300 0603300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0300 0604400
Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Students attend placements to learn about the duties they will undertake on satisfactory completion of their training programmes. During these placements they are supervised and are required to meet educational standards as part of their evidence of competence.

I am able to confirm there are no plans to change the current arrangements.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Mark".

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Agenda Item 3.1

P-04-638 Emergency Services – Power of Entry

Petition wording:

To seek the provision of a legislative power of entry for the Ambulance Service, which would allow its employees, when acting in the lawful execution of their duty, to force entry to property for the purpose of saving life and limb.

Additional Information

Under current legislation, the Fire Service may force entry to property under section 44 Fire and Rescue Services Act and the Police likewise under Section 17 Police & Criminal Evidence Act. The Ambulance Service does not have the protection of such legislation and, for example, may attend an emergency call only to find a casualty lying on the floor of a secure premise. The Ambulance Service must then request Police attendance to exercise its power of entry under Section 17 PACE. This position extends the time before assistance can be offered to the casualty and is a injudicious use of public resources.

Petition raised by: Mr Fran Richley

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 June 2015

Number of signatures: 67 Online signatures

Vaughan Gething AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd
Deputy Minister for Health



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/00906/15

William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

23 November 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your further correspondence of 9 November on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding petition P-04-638 which calls for the provision of a legislative power of entry for the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust.

I note you initially sent this letter in August, however, having done a thorough search my officials can find no record of it being received.

I can only re-iterate that we are not aware of any previous appeals for right of entry by any professional health body in Wales and there is currently no intention to consider creating a power of entry for Welsh ambulance staff.

I hope the committee finds my response helpful.

Yours sincerely

Vaughan Gething AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd
Deputy Minister for Health

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0300 0603300
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Agenda Item 3.2

P-04-649 Welsh Medium Education – Garland or Albatross

Petition wording:

The Welsh Government is rightly committed to achieving best value for money in all Public Services: sadly, the Department for Education and Skills spends £2billion each year only to provide the lowest standard of education in the UK. The Minister has said that “Education today is the Economy tomorrow”; if he is right, the outlook for Wales is truly bleak. When set against International PISA standards, the quality of Education in our Schools has been in catastrophic decline since Devolution. The Government says, in its defence, that delivering Public Services in Wales is hampered by poverty and by a dispersed population: but, GDP is lower in Northern Ireland and there are fewer people per square mile both in Northern Ireland and in Scotland. The Environment seems to be in safer hands. A derelict site cannot be developed without a prior Environmental Impact Assessment; no stone may be turned if there’s the faintest chance of a newt hiding under it or a migratory bird fossicking over it.

Our Children, it seems, don’t warrant such care – there being no corresponding Educational Impact Assessment before each new initiative further disrupts the classroom. Given that, for every aptitude and ability, 50% of the population is – by definition – below average; it was irresponsible of the Government to implement the Welsh Medium Education Policy without first having established that children with below average language skills have the capacity to be bilingual. In the absence of any contrary evidence, it seems entirely possible that it is this extra burden of the bilingual programme that is crippling our young people both for the PISA tests and for life.

We ask that the Welsh Medium Education experiment be abandoned – unless it can be clearly shown that its continuance is doing no harm.

Additional Information

The Government, it seems, is unable to distinguish between MUST and WANT: it must manage the Economy successfully, it must deliver a first rate Education and it must achieve best value for money in all public spending; in addition, as a perfectly legitimate national aspiration, it may want to foster a

thriving Welsh language... but such whims cannot be allowed to interfere with absolute necessity. The execution of Policy is said to be subject to intense scrutiny both from the Assembly and from other, supposedly independent, Public Bodies: it is, then, astonishing – that neither Assembly Committees nor Estyn nor the Auditor General’s Office can produce any evidence to show:

- that Employers value and want workers who are bilingual in English and Welsh;
- that a person with below average language skills has the capacity to be bilingual;
- that it is NOT the extra burden of the bilingual programme that is crippling our young people in the PISA tests;
- that, with particular reference to our deteriorating PISA standings, the Government IS achieving best value for money with regard to its spending on Education;
- that the business of creating wealth is carried out in Welsh; or,
- that, in spite of all indications to the contrary, the DfES is fit for purpose.

As a further illustration of DfES folly, £12m is frittered away, each year, on the Welsh for Adults programme: not in the classroom, on “teaching”, but on administration. Worse, no-one can say how many (if any) learners have emerged fluent in Welsh.

Petition raised by: Norman Hudson

Date petition first considered by Committee: 22 September 2015

Number of signatures: 101 Current Online signatures

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-649
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/02227/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

24 November 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter dated 13 November seeking my views following further comments received from petitioner P-04-649 - *Welsh Medium Education – Garland or Albatross*.

I provided a detailed response to the petition in July and I have no further comments to add.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis'.

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0300 0603300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0300 0604400
Correspondence.Huw.Lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-649
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/01393/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

31 July 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter dated 16 July seeking my views on petition P-04-649 *Welsh Medium Education – Garland or Albatross?*

The petitioner is asking *for the Welsh Medium Education experiment to be abandoned – unless it can be clearly shown that its continuance is doing no harm.*

The Welsh Government is committed to seeing the Welsh language thrive. This is clearly set out in the Welsh language strategy *A living language: a language for living*. In addition, the Welsh Government published a Welsh-medium Education Strategy in 2010, outlining our vision to *have an education and training system ... that enables an increase in the number of people of all ages and backgrounds who are fluent in Welsh and able to use the language with their families, in their communities and in the workplace.*

The provision of Welsh-medium education is not an 'experiment'. Welsh-medium education has always existed in Wales and has become more evident since 1947, when the first state Welsh-medium primary school was opened, and the sector has grown rapidly since then, led primarily by parental demand. In 2014 around 30% of primary, middle and secondary schools in Wales were Welsh-medium or bilingual schools, with 22.2% of 7-year-old pupils assessed in Welsh first language.

Mr Hudson's rationale appears to be conflating two different considerations: the perceived negative effects brought about by Welsh-medium education, and the disadvantages faced by the school population as a whole (as evidenced, he claims, by low PISA results).

Some additional analysis of PISA 2015 results has been undertaken, including analysis of performance by medium of instruction and subject. The analysis showed that in reading and science, the performance of learners attending Welsh-medium and English-medium schools is comparable. However, in mathematics, learners attending the Welsh-medium schools outperform those in English-medium schools by 10 score points. There appears to be no

clear link, therefore, between the medium of instruction and performance in the PISA tests. There is also no evidence to support his assertion that 50% of the population with 'below average' language skills do not have the capacity to become bilingual. The processes involved in learners' acquisition of skills in more than one language are complex. At various stages of these processes learners will be at different levels of development in their ability to use both (or more) languages. In that sense bilingual learners will not necessarily display the same level or type of ability in their two languages at any one stage of their development.

Mr Hudson also suggests that there is no evidence that employers value and want workers who are bilingual in English and Welsh. A report published in April 2014 *Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors* found that over a quarter of establishments (28 per cent) believed that it would benefit them to have more staff able to communicate in Welsh, or more staff with a higher level of Welsh language skills.

He also suggests that *£12m is frittered away, each year, on the Welsh for Adults programme: not in the classroom, on "teaching", but on administration.* Of the £12m invested in the Welsh for Adults programme each year, approximately £10m of this is spent on the delivery of the courses themselves. The remaining £2m is spent on developing specific aspects of the programme e.g. tutor training, e-learning and improved marketing.

In summary, there is no evidence to suggest that Welsh-medium education has a detrimental effect on learners' attainment, and the Welsh Government has no intention of 'abandoning' the 'Welsh-medium experiment'. It is the provision of Welsh-medium education that has generated the greatest gains in the number of young people fluent and confident in their Welsh language skills, and there is no question that the education system has a vitally important role in securing the future of the language. As noted above, Welsh-medium education pre-dates the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales, and is a key part of our education and training system in Wales, driven in the main by parental demand and specific local policies.

Yours sincerely



Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

Norman Hudson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2 October 15

William Powell AM
Petitions Committee Chairman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr Powell

Petition "Welsh Medium Education – Garland or Albatross?"

Agenda item 2.3 (P-04-649) of the Committee's September meeting and the Senedd.TV broadcast of your discussion both refer.

I had thought, from the Ministerial handwringing that accompanies each dismal new batch of PISA and GCSE results, that DfES failure to reverse the deteriorating standards of Education in Wales was a matter of *universal concern*: contrary to this impression, your Committee's rapid move to close my Petition, without any discussion of the issues, suggests an absolute indifference to the continuing damage being done to our children.

Enclosed is a commentary on your proceedings.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

cc

Russell George AM

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Bethan Jenkins AM

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Joyce Watson AM

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Jeff Cuthbert AM

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Alun Ffred Jones

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[27] William Powell: Agenda item 2.3 is P-04-649, "Welsh-Medium Education - Garland or Albatross". This petition was submitted by Norman Hudson, and he has the support of 117 signatures. I'll give a flavour of the text of this petition:

[28] William Powell: "The Welsh Government is rightly committed to achieving best value for money in all Public Services: sadly, the Department for Education and Skills spends £2billion each year only to provide the lowest standard of education in the UK. The Minister has said that "Education today is the Economy tomorrow"; if he is right, the outlook for Wales is truly bleak.

When set against International PISA standards, the quality of Education in our Schools has been in catastrophic decline since Devolution. The Government says, in its defence, that delivering Public Services in Wales is hampered by poverty and by a dispersed population: but, GDP is lower in Northern Ireland and there are fewer people per square mile both in Northern Ireland and in Scotland.

The Environment seems to be in safer hands. A derelict site cannot be developed without a prior Environmental Impact Assessment; no stone may be turned if there's the faintest chance of a newt hiding under it or a migratory bird fossicking over it..."

[29] William Powell: I think that gives colleagues a flavour of Mr Hudson and his concerns. A first consideration letter was sent to Huw Lewis, the Minister for Education and Skills, on 16 July. We've got a response from the Minister, and the petitioner has also been informed of that response and has sent a detailed commentary upon it, as well as additional data that he believes support his case. All of these colleagues have got in the public papers. I'd very much appreciate any perspectives from colleagues. Alun Ffred.

Commentary:

1 Reliance on "*a flavour*" instead of the complete text gave immediate notice that the Chairman had pre-judged the issue and did not intend the Petition to receive serious consideration.

2 Mr Powell's "*flavour*" was not a worthwhile precis – it was merely an incomplete reading of the introduction.

(The template, provided by the Committee's web-page, allows 2000 characters for the Petition Text. If time constraints are really a limiting factor and if just half a page of A4 cannot be read-out in full, to properly present a petition, then the Petition Text should be limited to, say, 1000 characters).

3 There is more than a whiff of condescension in Mr Powell's "*I think that gives colleagues a flavour of Mr Hudson and his concerns*".

[30] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Well, the Minister's response is very comprehensive...

... and it appears from the further response of the petitioner that he has a number of points that are irrelevant in relation to the original allegation that the teaching of Welsh is responsible for, for example, the poor economic performance of Wales...

Pack Page 60

... So, I don't see how we can take this forward because the Minister's response is so clear. I don't think that there is evidence in the petition itself or in the petitioner's response that justifies our continuation of this matter.

4 The Minister's letter of 31 July 15 may well have been long but it was certainly not "*comprehensive*". As catalogued in the response attached to my eMail of 9 September 15, much of the Petition was simply ignored by the Minister and what he did have to say was largely empty rhetoric.

5 If Mr Jones would say which of the points in my response he considers to be irrelevant, I will do my best to address his concerns.

The idea that what is bad for Education is bad for the Economy was spelt-out by Huw Lewis in his Statement of 18 February 14. Education today is in crisis - suggesting that there will be a corresponding crisis in the Economy tomorrow.

If it can be shown that the added pressure on pupils to be bi-lingual, associated with teaching in Welsh, has no detrimental effect on our PISA and GCSE scores – then by all means continue the practice.

But, if not Welsh-medium teaching, what IS the cause of our poor GCSE and PISA performance?

6 Mr Jones has things backwards. It is the Minister who has failed to produce evidence that the Welsh-medium experiment is doing no harm: all the Petition says is that there is no such evidence.

The Petition can only properly be set aside if the Committee is truly indifferent to the causes of falling standards in our schools.

[31] William Powell: Diolch yn fawr. Jeff Cuthbert.

[32] Jeff Cuthbert: Yes, thank you. From the initial text of the petition, the first two paragraphs are opinion...

Pack Page 61

... As far as I can see, the only specific request that we had, at least the first time around, was to ask for the Welsh-medium education experiment to be abandoned unless it can be clearly shown that its continuance is 'doing no harm'. That is a rather strange phrase. You presumably have things in there so that they're improving matters and not just spending money to do no harm...

... I agree with Alun Ffred, I have to say, in terms of his general points. I just get the sense that it's a sort of anti-Welsh-language approach, but I might be wrong on that. But, that's how it came across to me.

7 Mr Cuthbert dismisses the two introductory paragraphs as mere "opinion"; but, the only opinion expressed is the Minister's!

"The Welsh Government is rightly committed to achieving best value for money in all Public Services" [FACT]; *"sadly, the Department for Education and Skills spends £2billion each year only to provide the lowest standard of education in the UK"* [FACT]. *"The Minister has said that 'Education today is the Economy tomorrow'"* [FACT]; *"if he is right, the outlook for Wales is truly bleak"* [by extension, FACT].

"When set against International PISA standards, the quality of Education in our Schools has been in catastrophic decline since Devolution" [FACT]. *"The Government says, in its defence, that delivering Public Services in Wales is hampered by poverty and by a dispersed population"* [FACT]: *"but, GDP is lower in Northern Ireland and there are fewer people per square mile both in Northern Ireland and in Scotland"* [FACT].

8 Mr Cuthbert is correct, in that the Petition's only specific request is that *"the Welsh Medium Education experiment be abandoned – unless it can be clearly shown that its continuance is doing no harm"*.

Mr Cuthbert dislikes the principle *"first, do no harm"* – even though it is said to underpin the entire medical profession – and seeks to dismiss the Petition because its only request is too mild.

9 There is nothing *"anti-Welsh-language"* in the Petition". The point is a simple one: if the People of Wales want to encourage the Welsh language – fine, but not at the expense of our children's education.

[33] **William Powell:** I think we've got absolute clarity from the Minister and then the subsequent feedback from the petitioner makes it clear that we're not going to find a meeting of minds here...

... But I think in this case-and I'll ask Russell if he has a perspective on this as well-I'm minded also at this early stage to close the petition. I don't see that there is a route forward really.

[34] **Russell George:** I think, Chair, in a way, when we look at petitions, we put our views aside, and I think that we obviously have to treat every petition the same. I think, by the letters, I can see that it looks like it's ending its process at committee stage. I perhaps would at least respond to the Minister with the petitioner's further comments. That's what we'd normally do, but bearing in mind that the petition looks like it's coming to an end because there is not a meeting of agreement here. I'm not strong either way.

[35] **William Powell:** For consistency, we should-

[36] **Russell George:** For consistency, we should-. Yes, that's what we normally do.

- 10 The Minister stated unequivocally, in his letter, that (regardless of the Petitions Committee's consideration of the matter) "*the Welsh Government has no intention of 'abandoning' the 'Welsh-medium experiment'*": is not, however, the Committee's role to find consensus – rather, it is to hold the Minister to account and to ensure that the DfES is doing its job properly.
- 11 The way forward is NOT to meekly grant the Minister a veto but, instead, to seek further information from the Research Service; to conduct an inquiry into the matters raised; and, to ask other committees to consider the issue (extract: Petitions Committee leaflet "*Discover, Debate, Decide*").
- 12 The way forward is to seek informed opinion. The question central to the Petition is "*do pupils with below average language skills have the capacity to be bi-lingual?*". Who better to ask than the ex "*Head of German at Hereford Sixth Form College*"?
- 13 **Mr Powell: from your experience, do pupils with below average language skills have the capacity to be bi-lingual?**
- 14 Seemingly content to ignore his supposed commitment to "*Discover, Debate, Decide*", Mr George balks at the prospect of departing from "*what we'd normally do*".

[37] **William Powell:** Okay, we've done that previously and we should do that now and in moving to close, we should share the views. Is that your suggestion?

[38] **Russell George:** I would normally just say that we should share the views with the Minister and then wait for the Minister to respond and then make a decision. But I'm conscious that it looks like-

[39] **William Powell:** It would depart from our previous practice to close at this first stage.

[40] **Russell George:** It would do, yes.

[41] **William Powell:** I understand.

[42] **Alun Ffred Jones:** If that's the case, I suggest that we-. Are we sending these further comments on to the Minister regardless, or not? If not, I agree that we should close the petition.

[43] **William Powell:** That is Russell George's proposal and that is what we, as a committee, have previously done, fairly consistently, with petitions, certainly at this first stage.

[44] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Right. I'm content to do whatever the committee usually does.

[45] **William Powell:** Okay. I think we have an understanding there, but I agree with all other colleagues that this is close to the point of closure.

15

With absolutely no discussion of the issues, the Petition is sliding towards oblivion simply because the Minister says "NO". Whatever happened to our adversarial system of Politics: when did Opposition Assembly Members become Government lickspittles?

Agenda Item 3.3

P-04-639 Save Further Education in Powys

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reconsider the funding cuts that have been made to the NPTC group of colleges and to ensure that the educational futures of the students are safe.

We are students in NPTC Group, Newtown Campus. The Welsh Government have given NPTC group of colleges 12% less money for the next academic year, which equates to approximately £4 million. This means we have lost 50% of our part time courses and 80% of staff have been made redundant. This also means that the teaching we receive on a full-time course will be cut by 50 hours putting strain on the students and the staff. Many of our students depend on college to keep them going and without it we would have little hope and opportunities for the future. The mature students would have to pay an estimate of £400 to attend college which provides a great future for them rather than relying on the benefit system. These cuts are going to make it impossible for some people to make a future for themselves.

Additional Information

In Powys there aren't many job opportunities, and going to college provides the knowledge, skills and experience needed to get a job or progress to university. A levels are not suitable for everyone. We need plumbers, hairdressers, carers, bricklayers etc to ensure the economy of Mid Wales is sustainable and can grow. We need your help to ensure our futures and yours.

Petition raised by: NPTC Group Students

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 June 2015

Number of signatures: 2,047 Online signatures

Julie James AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Sgiliau a Thechnoleg
Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-639
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/00937/15

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

24 November 2015

Dear William

Thank you for the letter dated the 16 November following up NPTC Group's letter about cuts in post-16 funding.

I understand that as, a group of colleges, NPTC Group are concerned about the cuts to the FE budget, not only because of the effect on their staff, but also that they believe the reductions will have a significant impact on their ability to help employed staff improve their skills.

As I said in my previous letter, the cuts imposed on Wales by the government at Westminster means the Welsh Government's budget is around 8% lower in real terms than it was in 2010/11. We have been clear with everyone working in every public service in Wales about the financial challenges this has left us with. The Post-16 FE budget has had to be reduced by £14 million and, as a consequence, part time provision delivered in Further Education has been the hardest hit; with a 50 per cent reduction in funding.

This has understandably had a bigger impact on those colleges that have delivered more part-time provision, such as the NPTC Group. However, the Welsh Government has statutory duties, one of which gives primacy to the educational facilities made available for learners aged 16-18. Therefore, the funding cuts have been designed to protect these learners as much as possible.

As stated previously, we have gone beyond our statutory duty and protected provision for those aged 19, as some of them will be on a second year course at a college. In addition, we have been able to maintain funding for Traineeships, and are continuing to fund Apprenticeships for those aged 16-24 as well as Higher Level Apprenticeships. We fought hard in the recent budget settlement to mitigate some of these cuts and we secured an additional £5m funding for additional apprenticeships in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

We have also protected our most vulnerable learners, so Adult Basic Education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and discrete provision for learners with moderate or profound learning difficulties has not been subject to the 50 per cent cut.

Again, I would like to mention the ways in which we are working towards the future and prioritising in the event that we will continue to have to make tough funding decisions. Our new Policy Statement on Skills is designed to prioritise funding for learners aged 16-24 as well as ensuring continued support for all-age Higher Apprenticeships. Part of this is a recognition that we simply cannot continue with a situation where the Government is the sole source of funding for skills training.

The new Skills Strategy we have put in place is focused on getting employers to make a greater investment in the training of their workforce through co-investment. I agree that this long-term challenge requires cultural change, but is something which must be tackled if we are to achieve our key goal of a financially sustainable skills system in Wales over the next decade.

Officials are also working on establishing a new Skills Priority Programme to deliver part time high level skills training to employed adults. Clearly, we will continue to provide support where we can, but we need to see employers increasing their level of investment.

Our new *Flexible Skills Programme* will receive £3.9 million to support the skills and employment needs of companies that play a strategic role in the economy. It is estimated that 60 companies will receive funding, and benefit 3,200 individuals.

In terms of NPTC Group's comments regarding tuition fees, I must once again stress that all Further Education Institutions in Wales are autonomous bodies and it is therefore up to them to decide on the level of tuition fees charged and they must prioritise their provision in the way that they see fit in line with Welsh Government priorities.

As NPTC Group have stated in their letter, they are already looking at ways to deliver learning through more efficient ways, such as blended learning which will involve a mixture of classroom based and e-learning. This kind of innovative delivery will help lessen the impact of the reductions in funding.

We remain committed to FE provision in Wales and look forward to working with the NPTC Group of colleges in the coming months and years.

Yours sincerely



Julie James AC / AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Sgiliau a Thechnoleg
Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology

Agenda Item 3.4

P-04-628 Access to BSL for All

Petition wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language to improve the quality of life for Deaf people of all ages.

Improve Access for families to learn BSL: When a child is diagnosed as being Deaf/hard of hearing parents should be offered free/subsidised BSL lessons (BSL level one costs approximately £300 per person). By using speech alone, Deaf children struggle/fail to develop communication skills missing important milestones. Learning other languages through BSL (English/Welsh) will improve the child's understanding and comprehension.

Introduce BSL on the National Curriculum: Deaf Children and young people who are taught BSL at an early age will have better access to their education and an improved wellbeing. BSL should be available in schools and taught by qualified Deaf teachers, for all to learn as this would achieve better access for all in society. We believe that BSL should be offered as a language for all learners as a qualification. GCSE Welsh (and other modern languages) are not always offered to Deaf students: this also needs to be improved.

Improving access to Education in BSL for Deaf Children and Young People: currently they have limited access to Education in BSL, and often experience under qualified support. There is a massive gap in the education of Deaf children, as many are wrongly treated as having a Learning Disability. This has a negative impact on their development in life, reducing independence with poor education, resulting in under-employment. They need adequately qualified Communication Support Workers available in school.

Making Services and resources accessible in BSL for Deaf young people: enabling BSL users to access information in their preferred language via digital resources to services such as Education, Health care, Social Services and public transport, giving them equality to access as an equivalent to Welsh Language access.

Organisation: Deffo!

Lead petitioner: Cathie Robins-Talbot

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 502 online signatures. 660 paper signatures . total
=1162 signatures



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-628
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/02225/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

25 November 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 13 November on behalf of the Petitions Committee seeking my views on the enclosed letter from Deffo.

Professor Donaldson's independent review of curriculum and assessment, 'Successful Futures', was published in February 2015. I accepted all 68 recommendations in full in June, and I published an implementation plan called 'A Curriculum for Wales, a Curriculum for Life' on 22 October. The plan sets out how the new curriculum will be developed with education professionals across Wales, with the aim of it being available to settings and schools by September 2018.

Our new curriculum will be a curriculum for all of the children and young people in Wales; with the four purposes at its heart. They are the starting point for all decisions on the content and experiences developed as part of the new curriculum. They are designed to influence how practitioners and teachers plan, teach and assess. The four purposes of the curriculum in Wales should be that children and young people develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

The new curriculum will be developed by some of our best practitioners through a Pioneer Schools model. I announced the first tranche of Pioneer Schools on 5th November. This network will lead on the design and development of the new curriculum, in consultation with their wider networks and other relevant stakeholders. They will initially focus on specific developments – Curriculum, New Deal, and Digital Competence. By working closely

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

together they will ensure what they produce is coherent and aligned to our strategic objectives.

Pioneer Schools are critically important and this is a very exciting opportunity for them to be part of a team that will play a key role in ensuring better learning and higher standards for all of our children and young people and ultimately for Wales itself. A proportion of these schools are special schools, and some will be working as clusters to advise and ensure that the new curriculum is inclusive for all learners.

My officials, unfortunately have no record of receiving the original email from Deffo dated 19 May which was enclosed with their letter to the Committee dated 29 July. I am clear that all stakeholders should be able to be involved as appropriate in the development of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. The approach will be highly collaborative and inclusive, as was the review itself. Therefore, in the first instance I will ask my officials to arrange to meet with representatives from Deffo.

Yours sincerely



Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Deffo!
57a Neath Road,
Hafod
Swansea
Wales
SA1 2HW

The voice for Youth Deaf youth in Wales

William Powell AM
Chair – Petitions Committee

1st December 2015

Dear Mr Powell

Deffo! Petition – Access to BSL for All

Thank you for sharing the response from Huw Lewis concerning the Professor Donaldson Independent Review. We are pleased to hear that the process has been taken forward from the consultation with the stake holders and a decision made. We are very disappointed that our request to be involved in some discussion with the Donaldson report was not received by his officials, however it was also a suggestion made by the petitions committee, and it was for us important to us to be included in the consultation at the time where we feel that Deaf young people's and parents views were not represented in the consultation.

Much of the discussion has taken place with Hum Lewis through your committee; it is evidence that there is a lack of communication channels for stake holders and families of Deaf children to raise their concerns directly with the minister. The lengthy responses which we are sure are part of the process, we would like to suggest a meeting with Huw to consider the issues involved around Education /sign language and Deaf children so that we can move forward to a better understanding together. With such positive outcomes happening in Britain at the moment, the passing of the BSL bill in Scotland, and the recent announcement of the legislative framework for BSL & ISL by Caral Ni Chuilin (MLA), we feel Wales should also be taking a positive stance on these issues and education and sign language access being vital for all Deaf children in Wales.

If the minister would agree to meet, we would like to involve two key organisations we work with to present the evidence for Huw to hear and consider possible actions we could work on to improve the experiences of Deaf Children and families in Wales. There is also some research we would like to share and stories from the parents therefore we would be delighted if Huw to agree in meeting with our representatives and leaders from Deffo! to share our views.

Yours sincerely

Cathie Robins Talbot
Deffo! Principal Petitioner

Agenda Item 3.5

P-04-637 To Protect the Future of Youth Music in Wales

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to protect musical tuition in schools and in particular to:

- Reinstatement of central ring-fencing of budgets for professional instrumental tuition in schools;
- Implement a national strategy to reverse the decline of Youth Music in Wales;
- Offer the children and young people of Wales their right to receive an education that develops their unique personalities, talents and abilities to the full.

Petition raised by: The Friends of Bridgend Youth Music

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 June 2015

Number of signatures: 1,363 Online signatures and 738 paper signatures
=2,101 signatures



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-637
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/02224/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

25 November 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your correspondence of 13 November in relation to Petition P-04-637 to protect the Future of Youth Music in Wales. You asked specifically whether music hubs were being considered as a model for Wales and about specific music related actions within our action plan Creative Learning through the Arts.

The Music Services Task and Finish Group considered the introduction of a 'hub' model for Wales during their deliberations; however it was felt that this approach was too prescriptive. It was decided that the model of delivery (for example, charitable trust, arm's length organisation, consortium, or hub) would be best left as a matter for groups of local authorities to determine, based on what they felt was the most appropriate vehicle for collaborative working in their region.

I am committed to delivering creativity across the curriculum as a tool that teachers can use to open the minds and raise the aspirations of learners. In March this year "Creative Learning through the Arts – an action plan for Wales", a joint programme between the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales, was published. This is a 5-year plan to enhance creative approaches to teaching and learning and encourage greater collaboration between schools, arts and cultural organisations and creative practitioners, making sure good practice is shared and accessible to all. The Welsh Government has committed £10 million over these 5 years to match a further £10 million committed by the Arts Council Wales' lottery fund.

Within the Creative Learning Plan are 2 work streams, the Lead Creative Schools Scheme and the All-Wales Arts and Education Programme. The Lead Creative Schools Programme enables schools to apply to participate in a two-year programme to improve attainment. In this programme, trained creative practitioners work alongside teachers to develop a more creative approach to learning

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The All-Wales Arts and Education Programme will increase and improve opportunities in all art forms for teachers, learners, artists and cultural organisations to work together, through regional networks, improved communications and training.

The plan is not aimed at increasing participation in any particular art form, but instead looks to increase and improve engagement with culture and the arts in general.

More information on the Creative Learning Plan can be found at:

<http://www.artscouncilofwales.org.uk/what-we-do/creative-learning>

The Welsh Government response to the Music Services Task and Finish Group Report has been published and is available at the link below:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/music-services-task-and-finish-group-report/?lang=en>

The Welsh Government recognises the important contribution that music makes to the well-being of young people. Music therefore figures prominently in the statutory areas of learning defined for the Foundation Phase and all pupils have opportunities to develop their skills in performing, composing and appraising while in primary and secondary education.

Local authorities are however responsible for the funding and delivery of music services in Wales as part of the arrangements for funding schools and education.

We believe that local authorities are best placed to judge local needs and circumstances and to fund schools and education accordingly as Local authorities are accountable to their electorates for the decisions they make. That is why support for music services remains the responsibility of local education authorities, who decide the level of support they should give to music services in their area, based on their understanding of local needs and priorities. The schools' governing bodies are responsible for how that funding is allocated for the services provided to pupils.

Yours sincerely



Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



The Petitions Committee

Welsh Government

Cardiff Bay

Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Committee Member

Petition to Protect the Future of Youth Music in Wales

Thank you for allowing this petition to be reconsidered once more. On behalf of the Friends of Bridgend Youth Music, I make the following observations:

1. We were, for some reason, unable to access the link to the Creative Learning Plan, and having only a very basic overview of the initiative, we all applauded the fact that the Minister has identified pupil creativity as an area for development. We did, however, have misgivings about the long term prospects for this. We were, obviously, unable to establish exactly what would happen at the end of the five year plan. As this is not the first initiative of its type, we did, however, consider other similar models. The GEST- funded Music Development Fund, launched by the Westminster Government at the turn of the millennium, was a short term project focussing on pupils' right to receive instrumental tuition. This was extremely successful, but upon removal of its funding it served only to leave young people without the level of instrumental tuition they had previously received. There were, fortunately, exceptions in areas where the local authorities saw its value and continued to fund tuition. C anSing, a similar Welsh Government initiative intended to increase standards in singing and based on an English model, (Sing Up!), also had a

limited shelf life while receiving a great deal of public funding to support it. It relied heavily on support from Music Service managers (authorities left it to them to deal with) and their success in getting schools to participate in the work. Once again, what happens when the activities cease? We wish to ascertain, therefore, whether any decision been made as to the long term outcomes at the end of the five years?

2. We were a little surprised at the Task and Finish Group's response to "Hub" working. Whatever term is used for of this type of service, we were really looking at it as a way of making efficiency savings by having less services (and managers) covering a larger area, not unlike the current local authority reorganisation being considered by the Welsh Government. Members of the Task and Finish Group with responsibility for running LA Music Services have been quite active in working with other authorities. Neath Port Talbot and Swansea had always retained a joint music service post 1996 and went on to collaborate with Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion when consortia were established. Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, likewise, run a joint service as does Gwynedd/Ynys Môn and the former Gwent area. The former Mid Glamorgan area, while running separate services, still collaborates for more ambitious projects. This must surely point to collaborative or hub working having some value.
3. We were concerned that, perhaps, the Minister was not made fully aware of the reasons behind us setting up the petition in the first place. It is true that Local Authorities hold the purse strings to Music Services and this was where many issues arose. In our own authority the Director completely removed the funding for LA ensembles. It is now down to parents paying £5 per pupil per week and to the Friends of Bridgend Youth Music constantly fund-raising that allows this to keep going. There have been consequences, however. The team of 19 staff has reduced to nine and many ensembles have been axed. However hard The Friends try we cannot escape the fact that many families cannot afford to pay these sums and, as a consequence, pupil numbers have dropped by about 40% in just over a year. The centrally-held budget which paid for staffing and for instruments issued to schools was, some years ago devolved to schools where, in theory, it has been protected. This has been a positive move in that some schools have used their own budgets to expand their provision. Some schools have made a small charge to pupils in order to expand their overall provision in different ways. However, there is now evidence of schools charging for lessons so that the music funding can be used to prop up other areas of their budgets or where it is simply creamed off for other uses. The team of 22 staff has now dropped to 14 and is without a specialist music manager. Instrumental teaching staff appointments have been frozen in line with authority generic HR guidelines. These rules do not, on the other hand, apply to school-based teachers in the same way. As a result schools are having to look to other agencies and individuals for tuition when the service is no longer able to provide expertise in

particular areas. Self-employed staff are becoming commonplace now and the authority has no quality control over these people.

4. In order to raise standards at the higher end, it has been necessary since 1996 to collaborate with neighbouring authorities to create Four Counties Youth orchestras and bands. This has until recently been subsidised by each authority contributing a percentage to a central budget based on pupil population. Our own authority, which regularly provides a large number of performers to each ensemble, has now removed this subsidy. Fortunately this is covered by a well know automotive manufacturer and a local car dealership. Without this about sixty pupils per annum from our area would be unable to access these ensembles and corresponding national ensembles. (Entry to many national ensembles is conditional on membership of these county ensembles). It already costs the parents of each child taking part in these activities somewhere in the region of £375 per annum, not including national ensemble fees to fund subsidised activities. If these subsidies disappear then that closes down opportunities for many pupils.
5. We are fully aware of the diminishing budgets and accept that cuts are inevitable. We are asking merely that consideration is given to the fact that decisions made have the potential to destroy decades of excellent work. As stated on many occasions, Wales had the world's first National Youth Orchestra and Glamorgan had the UK's first County Youth Orchestra. The demise of both is almost becoming a reality. It seems that the WJEC, which manages the National Youth Orchestra on behalf of the twenty two authorities is now likely to reduce by half the staff who manage this organisation in the coming months. Please consider the future of our young people. These are all well established, long –term initiatives which we feel need careful consideration.

Yours Sincerely



Jeff Ryan

President

On behalf of the Friends of Bridgend Youth Music

Agenda Item 3.6

P-04-646 Petition against Welsh Draft Non-statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Elective Home Education.

Petition wording:

In May 2014 the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Education announced that new non-statutory guidelines would be drawn up for Elective Home Education, following consultation with home educating families.

Draft guidelines have been published for consultation which do not reflect the previously strongly stated views of those home educating families.

We believe that these draft guidelines are poorly written, misleading and likely to lead to further breakdown in relationships between home educating families and Local Authorities. We call upon the Welsh Assembly Government to retract the draft guidelines as not being fit for purpose.

Instead local authorities should work towards demonstrating their knowledge of the existing law on home education, and adhere to the existing, clearly defined guidelines.

Petition raised by: Lucy Bear

Date petition first considered by Committee: 14 July 2015

Number of signatures: 2,140 Online signatures

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-646
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/02226/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

25 November 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 13 November regarding the petition against the publication of draft non-statutory guidance on Elective Home Education (EHE).

I can assure the Petitions Committee and the EHE community that the Welsh Government's consultation exercise undertaken earlier this year was conducted in accordance with Welsh Government procedures. Despite the apparent premature closing time, my officials have accommodated and considered all of the responses, including those received after the closing date.

We wanted to engage with as many home educators as possible in the production of the guidance, including children and young people, which is why we commissioned an external specialist to produce a children and young people's version. The specialist was careful to ensure that the document was produced within disability and accessibility guidelines and that everything they did was clear, engaging and accessible.

The exercise undertaken by Wavehill was a survey to gather the views of the EHE community, local authorities and others to inform the development of the guidance. Wavehill made every effort to engage with the EHE community and met with all the EHE groups it had arranged meetings with. Wavehill was only unable to make one visit because of bad weather, but I am assured it did manage to visit some members of that group later on and spoke to the others by telephone. Every other group who expressed an interest was visited.

As far as submitting final draft copies of the guidance is concerned, it is neither standard procedure nor is it feasible for the Welsh Government to provide copies of its guidance for sign-off prior to final publication.

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

As I mentioned in my Written Statement on 8 October, it took longer than expected to thoroughly consider all the responses to the consultation and incorporate the changes to the guidance. For this reason, the guidance will be published later than anticipated, this winter.

You have drawn my attention previously to legal issues raised by the petitioner. My officials are considering advice from our Legal Services on these matters and how they may be reflected in the new guidance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis'.

Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

P-04-646: Petition against Welsh Draft Non-statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Elective Home Education – Correspondence from the petitioner – 2.12.15

Dear Jessica,

Thank you for your email and the included letter.

The only additional comments we would like add is that the original petition had 2846 signatures but the committee have since referred to a much lower figure.

We also hope that the legal points will be addressed by someone with relevant experience in all aspects of education and human rights law.

Many Thanks,

Lucy Bear

Agenda Item 3.7

P-04-644 The Future of Further Education

Petition wording:

We note the decision of the Welsh government to cut Further Education funding by £26m for the year 2015/16 and recognise that the 8% cut in the Welsh budget imposed by Westminster, has created financial challenges for Wales. However we fail to understand the decisions of Welsh Government to then allocate money from Westminster in a way that will cause great hardship to a key member of the 'Education Family' in Wales. Colleges have dealt admirably with several years of successive funding cuts and we do not see how they can continue to deliver the remit expected of them by Welsh government. We also note the policy of the Welsh Government to increase reliance on employer contributions to fund employee training, but are not convinced that this will be sufficient to plug the level of Government underfunding. In addition the 50% slash in funding to part time courses will decimate further education provision leaving thousands of adults without access to opportunities to improve their education or to retrain. It will also put hundreds of FE jobs at risk. Further education colleges in Wales have co-operated with Welsh Government over previous funding cuts and a series of mergers, but are now at breaking point. We call upon the Welsh Government not to implement these cuts and to invest properly in lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Additional information

UCU Wales are concerned that:

- * Employers will be unwilling or unable to plug the gap left by the withdrawal of Welsh Government funding.
- * Adults will be restricted to training that is deemed suitable by employers.
- * Adults in low paid, unsatisfactory jobs will be unable to access the education they need to improve their employment opportunities elsewhere.

* Cuts in funding will severely limit choices available to adults. *
Opportunities to improve the life chances of many adults and their families will be removed, which in terms of tackling poverty and improving the economy of Wales, is counterproductive.

* The quality of remaining provision will be reduced as there will be fewer staff, bigger class sizes and less time to teach the courses.

Petition raised by: UCU Wales

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 June 2015

Number of signatures: 1,861 Online signatures

Julie James AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Sgiliau a Thechnoleg
Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-644
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/00917/15

William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

17 November 2015

Dear William

Thank you for your letter regarding Petition P-04-644: The Future of Further Education, in which you ask for my views on further comments raised by the petitioner. I apologise for the delay in responding to you, but unfortunately the letter was not received by my office until earlier this month.

The content of my response does not vary from the message given originally. I can assure you that there is not a single person working within the Welsh Government who would choose to make these cuts if it wasn't absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, this is the reality of the situation we find ourselves in. As mentioned in my previous response, the decisions we make at budget time are guided by the priorities we were elected on in 2011. These priorities for funding have necessitated difficult decisions in other areas of the Welsh Government's budget; and I acknowledge the significant difficulties this has caused for the Further Education (FE) institutions in Wales.

Our focus now must be on ensuring we make the best use of the remaining budget we have available to us. This does not mean that we will stop supporting those adults who are most vulnerable and in need of support, in fact the opposite, we are aiming to prioritise the funding available for those learners.

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The petitioner quotes a note received by a college Principal which outlines an expected in-year reduction to the 2015/16 settlement. I can assure you that there is no intention to reduce the 2015/16 budget in year.

Colleges have been informed that future year funding cannot be guaranteed as the outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review at Westminster, and further impacts on Wales, have not yet been determined. Colleges have therefore been advised that it would be prudent to model the impacts and plan for a number of scenarios.

The Principal also shared some concern about the proposed meeting I had convened with all Principals and Chairs of Governors. As it turned out, the meeting was welcomed as a 'helpful' meeting by those that attended, and allowed me to once again voice my support for the sector. It allowed me to hear first-hand some of the issues faced by the sector but also gave me an opportunity to challenge the sector to look for opportunities for establishing diverse income streams.

The meeting proved to be an excellent opportunity for Welsh Government and the FE sector to work together to evaluate options and work together to minimise the impact of any reductions on learning, including adult education.

The petitioner recommends that we should 'pool resources' instead of 'scattering and diluting available funding', using the Flexible Skills programme as an example.

The Flexible Skills Programme supports those adult learners highlighted as a concern by the petitioner, and by separating the budget we can ensure that we prioritise the funding to those learners that need it the most. The FE Sector will of course play a major role in ensuring the successful delivery of this programme which should also see the sector benefiting financially.

All activity undertaken via this programme will be evaluated in due course to assess the impact of the intervention.

Regarding the comments about apprenticeship provision, I would like to assure you that we continue to strive to deliver world class apprenticeships, to develop high quality Traineeships; and to add value to the many other programmes we support.

Recently, we expanded the delivery of Higher Apprenticeships in Wales, greatly enhancing the Apprenticeship programme. The vocational and academic combination will contribute greatly to economic prosperity by enhancing an individual's skills, whilst supporting employers and the wider labour market.

Furthermore, colleges have received funding to build capacity to deliver these higher level skills (Level 4 and above) and also support Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to help staff deliver literacy and numeracy qualifications and support. The funding can only be used for CPD for staff involved in 'front line' delivery of FE teaching and learning.

To close, I recognise that this is a very difficult time, and I appreciate that the sector is continuing to deliver during a period of financial unrest. We are doing what we can to mitigate the impact of these funding cuts and will continue to work with the sector to deliver the first class education system we all wish to see.

Yours sincerely



Julie James AC / AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Sgiliau a Thechnoleg
Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology

Agenda Item 3.8

P-04-626 De-Trunk the A487 Road Through Penparcau, Trefechan & Aberystwyth Town Centre

Petition wording

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

Additional Information

Penparcau Community Forum, a community development partnership providing a strong collective voice for the community of Penparcau, are actively campaigning for the section of the A487 road running through Penparcau, Trefechan and Aberystwyth town centre to be removed of its 'Trunk Road' status. This would enable greater local accountability and provide enhanced flexibility for the provision of traffic calming measures and enhancements, which would promote a safer road and environment, and encourage alternative activities such as cycling and walking. The A487 'trunk road' currently runs through Great Darkgate Street, the main shopping street within Aberystwyth town centre, which is part of a Welsh Government, sponsored Strategic Regeneration Area.

Penparcau Community Forum

Lead petitioner Dylan Jones

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 65 online signatures.

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-626
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/04937/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

25 November 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your further letter of 13 November regarding petition P-04-626 to de-trunk the A487 through Penparcau, Trefechan and Aberystwyth town centre.

In this financial year, my officials will open a dialogue with all of the authorities involved with the potential de-trunking schemes identified in the National Transport Finance Plan.

Consideration of the progression and timescale for the development of proposals for all of the de-trunking schemes identified will be considered following the outcome of these discussions.

Funding has not been allocated beyond this financial year, so at this point in time it is not possible to identify with certainty the timescales and order in which selected schemes will be progressed.

Edwina Hart

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Agenda Item 3.9

P-04-632 Mynyddoedd Pawb

Petition wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to encourage the Welsh Government to persuade bodies and organisations to protect and respect our wealth of place names in order to:

1) stimulate respect and interest in the Welsh language and to secure and increase the use of it.

2) increase the sense of identity among local communities by sharing the wealth of our cultural heritage with others.

3) engage the interest and awareness of visitors of the richness of our local heritage and thereby bring educational and economic benefits to areas.

This could be achieved through:

- working with outdoor centres in order to raise their awareness of traditional indigenous place names, and in order to support them to use Welsh place names in their day to day work.

- highlight the richness of our place names in terms of our cultural heritage, and what they can communicate through the teaching of history, geography, mythology and historical land use in our country.

- persuade the Welsh Government to bring traditional and long standing place names under planning control.

(A written petition is running concurrently.)

Additional Information

We are of the view that that awareness should be raised of the importance of protection of Welsh place names, and that institutions and voluntary associations at local, regional and national levels have a key role in this.

Also, schools should ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to appreciate the richness of Welsh place names as part of their national heritage.

We believe that place names and the heritage and history associated with them, should be an integral part of environmental studies courses in further and higher education and outdoor pursuits courses run by other bodies. Training organisations, centres and clubs involved in mountaineering and outdoor activities should be encouraged to use Welsh place names.

We ask the National Assembly to stress the importance of all this to the Welsh Government, so that they can persuade local authorities, Natural Resources Wales, the National Trust, the National Park Authorities and other bodies in the statutory, voluntary, public and private sectors to take appropriate steps to safeguard Welsh place names.

Lead petitioner: Mynyddoedd Pawb

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 1,026

Ken Skates AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref KS/01381/15
William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

 November 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 16 November seeking my views on the comments of the Chair of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and the Welsh Language Commissioner on the aims of the Mynyddoedd Pawb petition.

During its scrutiny of the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill, the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee gave thorough consideration to the recognition and protection of Welsh place names and received evidence from the Welsh Place-name Society and the Welsh Language Commissioner. In its report, the committee recommended that historic place names should be referenced in Wales' historic environment records.

I accepted the committee's recommendation and have tabled amendments to the Bill that will place a duty on the Welsh Ministers to create and maintain a list of historic place names in Wales and require historic environment records to provide access to that list. The committee will meet to consider the Stage 2 amendments to the Bill on 26 November.

The historic environment records are key sources of information about historic places and assets. Referencing historic place names in those records would raise awareness of their value and importance by providing better public access to information about them. It would also give local authorities a means to obtain information on historic place names when evaluating development applications and requests for changes to property names.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

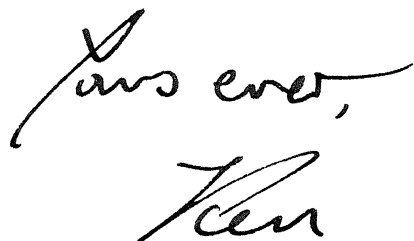
English Enquiry Line 0300 0603300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0300 0604400
Correspondence.Ken.Skates@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

My officials have explored a number of legislative options for the protection of place names. In many cases, an apparent change only involves the adoption of a business or other name alongside a historic place name that continues to appear on Ordnance Survey mapping and in the Royal Mail's official address database. To protect historic place names by formally controlling all changes would require a costly and complex consent system with procedures for application, enforcement and appeal, as well as a body to manage it. Enforcement under such a system would be challenging, and perhaps unworkable.

I have met with the Minister for Natural Resources to consider aspects of the Bill in relation to the planning system and my officials have had discussions on historic place names with their counterparts in the Planning Division. I also recently had a meeting with the First Minister where we considered the linguistic and cultural importance of historic place names. The amendments that I have tabled will raise public awareness of the rich legacy of place names in Wales and will, in turn, support the Welsh language, which falls into the First Minister's portfolio.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Skates', written in a cursive style.

Ken Skates AC / AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism

Ystyriaeth pellach i Ddeiseb Mynyddoedd Pawb (P-04-632) 8fed o Ragfyr, 2015

Sylwadau *Mynyddoedd Pawb* yn dilyn yr ohebiaeth ddiweddaraf i'r Pwyllgor Deisebu

Dirprwy Weinidog dros Ddiwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth

Rydym yn falch fod y Dirprwy Weinidog yn derbyn bod enwau lleoedd Cymraeg yn adnoddau pwysig o ran adnabod a rheoli ein hasedau hanesyddol, ac yn ychwanegu at arbenigrwydd diwylliannol Cymru.

Rydym yn falch fod gwellianau wedi cael eu cymeradwyo i'r Bil Amgylchedd Hanesyddol, gan ddiolch yn fawr am hynny i *Cymdeithas Enwau Lleoedd Cymru* ac eraill am eu cefnogaeth a'u tystiolaeth berthnasol.

Rydym yn siomedig nad oes yma ymgais i fynd i'r afael â'r patrwm sy'n datblygu'n gynyddol o roi enw ar fusnes a fyddai ymhen amser yn debygol iawn o newid enwau llafar y lleoliadau, enghraifft ddiweddar o'r bygythiad yma oedd y sôn am newid enw Plas Glynllifon yn Arfon i *Wynborune*. Mae hwn yn adeilad hanesyddol a restrwyd yn Gradd 1 gan Cadw. Mae'n ddiffyg mawr yn y system restru bod yn adeilad yn cael ei amddiffyn ond nid ei enw.

Rydym yn falch fod y gweinidog wedi cael gair â'r gweinidog dros **Gyfoeth Naturiol a Chynllunio** a Phrifweinidog Cymru sydd a chyfrifoldeb dros **yr iaith Gymraeg**, byddem hefyd yn gwerthfawrogi ymateb uniongyrchol i'n deiseb ganddynt yn ogystal ag ymateb gan y gweinidog **Addysg**.

Fel y gwyddom mae cynydd mewn **addysg** Gymraeg ar hyd a lled Cymru, er hyn rydym yn gwbl hyderus y byddai'r ysgolion Cymraeg yn ategu ei bod yn resyn nad oes darpariaeth ddigonol o siaradwyr Cymraeg ar gael yn ein canolfanau awyr agored ar gyfer darparu gweithgareddau drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, yn enwedig y canolfanau rheinny sydd wedi eu harianu gan y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol. Un enghraifft ydi *Surf Snowdonia* a agorwyd yn ddiweddar yng Nghonwy.

Dylid adeiladu'n sylweddol ar y twf sydd wedi bod dros y ddeng mlynedd diwethaf yn y nifer o siaradwyr Cymraeg sy'n ennill bywoliaeth yn y sector gweithgareddau awyr agored a thwristiaeth amgylcheddol (**tystiolaeth ar gael gan *Menter iaith Conwy***). Rydym yn fwy ymwybodol nag erioed o bwysigrwydd gwarchod a hyrwyddo enwau lleoedd cynhenid er mwyn gwrthsefyll y bygythiad cynyddol gan ddringwyr, caiacwyr, syrffwyr, beicwyr mynydd ayyb sydd yn bathu enwau Saesneg ar ddringfeydd, pyllau a llwybrau gan ddiystyru enwau Cymraeg gwreiddiol sy'n gwanhau arbenigrwydd diwyllianol ein gwlad. Un enghraifft o hyn yw'r cyfeiriad at Y Glyderau fel "The Glyders" ar wefanau *TripAdvisor*, *Summitpostgroup* a *Go4awalk*. Gan gyfeirio at ond ychydig bach iawn o enghreifftiau, mae'r enwau canlynol yn dod yn fwy cyffredin:

Llyn Bochlwyd, Conwy - "Australia Lake"

Tryfan, Eryri - "Triffim"

Bwthyn Ogwen, Nant Ffrancon - "Oggy Cottage"

Tyntywyn, Ynys Môn - "Bog blog beach"

Traeth Llydan, Ynys Môn - "Broad".....

Rhaid pwysleisio unwaith eto' r potensial gwirioneddol sydd yma i gyflwyno'r Gymraeg a hanes Cymru i dwristiaid yn ogystal â phobl leol trwy gyfrwng ein enwau lleoedd. Gyda'n gilydd fe allwn, wrth ddatlu enwau ein tirwedd, drawsnewid agweddau a phontio rhwng y siaradwyr Cymraeg â'r di-Gymraeg, yn bobl leol neu'n ymwelwyr. Credwn fod gan enwau ein tirwedd a'n lleoedd ran allweddol mewn sicrhau ymwybyddiaeth o hanes a chwedloniaeth ein gwlad, a'n defnydd o'r Gymraeg i'r dyfodol.

Ymatebion na ddaethant i law

Rydym yn siomedig nad oes ymateb wedi dod hyd yma gan **Croeso Cymru** a **Cyngrhair Twristiaeth Cymru**, yn siomedig hefyd nad oes ymateb wedi dod gan **Cadw** (gweler yn ein ymateb 06/10/15) gofynwn yn garedig i chi barhau i gysylltu â nhw er mwyn ysgogi trafodaeth adeiladol o ganlyniad i'n deiseb.

Rydym yn gofyn am ystyriaeth uniongyrchol hefyd i amcanion y ddeiseb gan y Gweinidog **Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth**, y gweinidog sydd a chyfrifoldeb dros **Addysg**, y gweinidog sydd a chyfrifoldeb dros **Gyfoeth Naturiol a Chynllunio** a Phrifweinidog Cymru sydd a chyfrifoldeb dros **yr iaith Gymraeg**. Er mwyn gwireddu'r amcanion sydd yn ein deiseb mae cyd-weithio rhwng yr holl adrannau uchod yn angenrheidiol.

Amcanion ein ymgyrch: (gweler mewn mwy o fanylder gydag enghreifftiau yn ein hymateb 06/10/15)

1. Ysgogi parch a diddordeb yn yr iaith Gymraeg ac i sicrhau a chynyddu'r defnydd ohoni.
2. Cynyddu'r ymdeimlad o hunaniaeth ymysg cymunedau lleol drwy rannu cyfoeth ein treftadaeth ddiwyllianol gydag eraill.
3. Ennyn diddordeb ac ymwybyddiaeth ymwelwyr o gyfoeth ein treftadaeth leol a thrwy hynny ddod a buddion addysgol ac economaidd i ardaloedd.

Edrychwn ymlaen at drafodaethau pellach.

Diolch yn fawr.

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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P-04-577 Reinstate Funding to the Real Opportunities Project

Petition Wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to reinstate funding to the Real Opportunities project previously funded by the European Social Fund in Wales, or some new similar project that has the same values as Real Opportunities. The project is vital to helping 14-19 year olds with a learning disability or autistic spectrum disorder to gain life skills and independence.

Additional Information:

The Real Opportunities project enables 14-19 year olds with a learning disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder to develop skills vital for their transition into a college education as well as enabling them to transition into the world of work and develop basic life skills vital to their independence. The project has helped over 1700 young adults with learning disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder and has helped train over 1000 peer mentors with the intention of increasing the levels of integration between mainstream school pupils and those in a special needs unit. The values of this project are vital to these young people who at the start may have little or no awareness of personal hygiene etc and at the end are self aware of their personal hygiene and have completed Agored Cymru qualifications that they would otherwise be unable to do.

Petition raised by: Aled Davies

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 25 - An associated e-petition collected 226 signatures.

P-04-577 Reinstate Funding to the Real Opportunities Project: Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Chair. 20.11.15

Dear Mr Powell

Many thanks for forwarding the response to our Petition from Damien O'Brien, Chief Executive Officer at the Welsh Funding Office. As young petitioners we very much appreciate the thoroughness with which the Committee is treating our concerns.

Mr O'Brien provides a very useful explanation of the roles & responsibilities of the various parties involved with WEFO and the decision making processes. Our concern as petitioners is with the apparent demarcation between what are described as the "soft outcomes" of the Real Opportunities project; which specifically addressed the needs of learning disabled young people, and the "stronger focus on qualifications and job outcomes" of the new proposal, which is focussing on a much broader range of young people classified as "NEET".

The Real Opportunities Project set out to address specific gaps in the support for young people with a learning disability, severe and complex needs and/or an Autistic Spectrum Disorder going through transition. You can view the 2014 Real Opportunities Impact Report here

<https://www.realopportunities.org.uk/news/launch-of-the-real-opportunities-impact-report-2014.aspx>

The Report states quite clearly that **"getting paid jobs was not a target of the project."** A holistic approach was required to address a broad range of long term issues. This was not a plan to deliver sustainable paid employment in the short term. The intention was to provide transition support for learning disabled young people and their families who were otherwise becoming socially isolated and disconnected from education and ultimately the workplace. Improved support meant young learning disabled people and their families could aspire to an inclusive and increasingly independent future through better life and social skills, education and employment opportunities rather than a future of long term dependence and exclusion. The Impact Report identifies Real Opportunities targets as being:

- Individualised transition planning that includes employment as an option
- Support for families in the transition planning process
- Providing summer or part-time jobs while at school for work-experience
- Community-based experiences, including social/leisure activities and work experience
- Age appropriate integration with non-disabled people, including Peer Mentoring in activities

- Availability of job finding and employment support, including job coaching
- Provision of vocational training through specially designed social enterprises
- Assistance with behaviour, independent living and social skills that may restrict future employment
- Provision of early, clear advice on post-school placement and support options to carers.

The outcomes of the project were neither “soft” nor lacking a “**focus on qualifications and job outcomes**”. By the end of the project

- 56 people found paid jobs and 67 had on-going volunteer placements.
- 879 young people were involved in work experience by May 2014.
- 1210 work experience placements were arranged and supported by employment agencies engaged in the Project.
- Placements required the engagement of 751 employers.
- Employment support agencies involved in the project and Hubs delivered training around work
- accredited through Agored Cymru, National Open College Network and Asdan.
- 727 young people gained a vocational accreditation.
- Work experience was most frequently mentioned as the most important service families had received through Real Opportunities.
- The number of families believing that a paid job was a realistic option in the future increased from 27% to 51%
- 50% of the young learning disabled people said they wanted to go to college and 33% wanted to get a paid job after leaving school, with most young people having a clear idea of what they would like to do.
- Travel training had a significant impact on the views of many families of their young people’s independence and potential. The Real Opportunities Hubs provided aspects of training to use public transport to over 400 young people. The employment agencies involved provided additional travel training to enable young people to get to work experience placements independently.
- The Project identified an approximate net saving to the local authority of travel training a person in the first year as £12,314, taking into account reduced LA transport costs, free bus passes and the staff cost of training independent travel.

The reactions of **employers** have been equally impressive, validating that young people with learning

disabilities make good workers, and that they would be hired if funding allowed.

- Employers reported that they were now likely to employ another person with similar disabilities to the person placed (96.2%) and that they would continue to employ the young person if adequate support was provided (82.5%).
- Employers reported that the placements had been beneficial to their company in terms of better productivity of other staff, the attitudes of other staff to work, the public image of the company and customer reaction.

Aside from work and educational outcomes **Independence development** was a crucial aspect of the Real Opportunities project. Families reported that they had seen benefits in the behaviour and confidence of their young relative.

- 1098 young people had received the services of a Transition Key Worker (TKW). They had held 1402 transition meetings and completed 738 transition plans. They were a trusted source of advice for families and contributed to the co-ordination of the input from other services.
- 872 “One-page Profiles” were produced, alongside Essential Lifestyle Plans and PATH formats. There was a significant increase in attendance of young people at their own reviews from 14% to 54%. The average number of people attending reviews rose over time from an average of 4 to 7 suggesting wider involvement.
- Young people and families reported that involvement in inclusion activities had improved the young person’s confidence and fitness, had helped them to learn new skills, to become more independent and outgoing, and improve their communication.
- Independent Living Skills Workers provided services to 939 young people during the project. The comprehensive range of focussed courses offered through the project include
 - Use of Public Transport
 - Introduction to Road Safety
 - Personal Care & Hygiene
 - Sex & Relationships
 - Confidence Building
 - Tackling Bullying
 - Safety with Strangers
 - Internet Safety
 - Anger Management
 - Emotional well-being

- Friends
- Introduction to Community Leisure
- Introduction to Countryside Awareness
- Introduction to Personal Shopping
- Cooking Skills
- Basic Nutrition, Hygiene & Food Skills
- Introduction to Carpentry
- Participating in Leisure Activities
- Outdoor Safety
- Knowing your Local Area
- Working as a team
- Self Advocacy
- Practical Gardening/Allotment
- Taking Part in Sport
- Substance Misuse
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Developing Effective Social Skills
- Disability Awareness
- National Navigation Bronze Award
- Preparing a Meal
- Household Expenses
- Law & Order
- Completing Forms
- Pre-interview Skills
- Person Centred Planning
- Peer Mentoring
- Beauty Therapy
- Developing a Group Performance

As petitioners we should also draw attention to how young people were also given the opportunity, training and confidence to get involved with their learning disabled friends through **Peer Mentoring**.

- By August 2014, 1096 young people had participated in Peer mentoring training, of which 858 young people (78.3%) had gained one or more accredited units relating to the course. The courses were accredited by agencies such as OCN/Agored Cymru as a Level 2 award, & AQA validation.
- A large majority of peer mentors reported that they had gained knowledge through the course about: confidentiality; the needs of people with disabilities; how to include people with disabilities; and building confidence in being with people with disabilities. Most had used the course in some way, usually working in some form of mentoring role in their mainstream school.
- A large majority of mentors agreed that they were more confident with people, had a better CV, more skills, and had a better idea of a career after the course and any mentoring experiences. Smaller majorities said that they were more likely to get a job or to get into college as a

- result of attending the course.
- By the end of the project 105 young people with learning disabilities and/or ASD had taken the peer mentoring course at Entry Level.2

In summary the Real Opportunities Project was holistically focussed on addressing the shortfalls in support for young learning disabled people and their families. The success of the project was achieved through **a specific and integrated focus on the support needs of learning disabled young people and their families. It was not a generic Project to support a broader range of NEET's.** The Project had a simple and inclusive referral process and involved 1766 young people across the 9 participating local authorities. This very bespoke Project demonstrated young learning disabled people are capable of transitioning through education into the world of work where their performance is valued by employers and their social impact appreciated by other workers. The many young Peer Mentors involved also reported positive personal, social and career benefits from being able to support their learning disabled friends. The benefit of Peer Mentors extended across their schools, local communities and into workplaces.

Our petition called for the re-instatement of a similar Project. Can Mr O'Brien re-assure us that the new project will be

- Fully inclusive for age appropriate young learning disabled people with a simple referral process? Support should be available to every young person diagnosed with a learning disability &/or autism. Any new programme must not be about cherry picking from a wider range of NEET's to try and show quick fix outcomes for the few, whilst others are excluded.
- Provide the essential social opportunities needed to help isolated young learning disabled people transition through education into the workplace and wider communities?
- Include a similar comprehensive Peer Mentor programme which has been a clear win win for Mentors, young disabled people and the wider social, educational and workplace communities.

The HM Government Report "Valuing Employment Now" from the Department of Health identifies "the need for a **dedicated employment strategy for people with a learning difficulty**" noting "they have not benefited from the progress made for disabled people generally." The Report says that 65% of learning disabled people would like a paid job. Mr O'Brien is clear that the new project is designed to address young people who are most at risk of becoming long term NEET's. In 2010/11 only 6.6% of adults with a learning disability were reported to be in some form of paid employment. The majority work part time. The number of men working 30+ hours per week is just 1.3%. This figure is even lower for women, at 0.4% (Source: [People with](#)

[Learning Disabilities in England 2011](#)) The Valuing Employment Now Report believes this to be **“a waste of talent and opportunity for people with learning difficulties, employers, and our wider economy and society.”**

Not surprisingly the Impact Report provides evidence from the final family follow-up study that the end of the time-limited project represents a significant loss to families and young people. Real Opportunities demonstrates through creating independence, raising aspiration and awareness of work, and promoting social inclusion, a potential for less dependence on costly services. Projects need a greater emphasis on calculating the cost and benefits of early independence work compared to later support costs. As our petition notes, with no clear follow on plan for disabled young people the Return on Investment for the £9M European funding is already unravelling. The financial costs of failing to support disabled young people are as unacceptable as the social failure.

Once again as Petitioners can we thank the Assembly and the Petitioners Committee in particular for providing a platform to allow us to support our learning disabled friends and their families. We are not prepared to see our learning disabled young friends become socially and politically disenfranchised when there is clear evidence that projects like Real Opportunities can prevent it. A poll of 100 MPs undertaken for not-for-profit support provider Dimensions released in April 2015 shows that more than 60% do not believe that people with learning disabilities can be supported into paid and productive employment, an attitude which contrasts sharply with the views of experts. Over half (58%) of the MPs polled feel that more emphasis should be placed on family support for people with learning disabilities to reduce reliance on paid care. Encamp noted earlier this year that at the last election almost 1 in 5 learning disabled people who attempted to cast their vote were turned away from the polling station. When my co-petitioner and fellow Peer Mentor Tyler Payne and her learning disabled brother Bradley presented at the Senedd as part of the Impact Report launch only a single AM attended. We really need the help of the Petitions Committee to help change these attitudes.

I look forward to receiving a response to our concerns and once again repeat our willingness to meet with any members of the Petitions Committee, the broader Assembly or Mr O'Brien himself if it can be of help in securing the return of these essential support services.

Regards,

Aled Davies

Petitioner.

Agenda Item 3.11

P-04-641 Owners of Un-developed Land.

Petition wording:

We the undersigned urge the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to compel the owners of un-developed or abandoned land to display their name, address and contact details somewhere prominent on the land.

Petition raised by: Paul Hunt

Date petition first considered by Committee: 22 September 2015

Number of signatures: 11 Online signatures

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Agenda Item 7

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Agenda Item 8

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