



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 27 Ionawr 2009
Tuesday, 27 January 2009**

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

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

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

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

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.59 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.59 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Val Lloyd:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this morning's meeting of the Petitions Committee. I have not received any apologies or substitutions and we are quorate.

[2] We do not have any petitioners presenting petitions today. We have 11 updates on previous petitions and some further work to consider later on in the agenda.

10.00 a.m.

Yr Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol
Updates on Previous Petitions

[3] **Val Lloyd:** We will start by considering the update on the first petition, P-03-061, which relates to the coal MTAN. This petition has been considered by the committee, and our first consideration was in September 2007. We took it as far as we could at the time as we were awaiting the publication of the coal MTAN, but that has now happened. I open the petition up for discussion.

[4] **Bethan Jenkins:** A buffer zone has been introduced, which is to be welcomed. I know that the petition does not address all of the concerns outlined, but I do not see how it can be progressed in this way. If the petitioner has any other concerns with regards to the presumption against opencast mining and the public consultation, I think that they should now go through the Minister.

[5] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I concur with that. Am I right in thinking that this, or a similar, petition has gone to the European Parliament?

- [6] **Val Lloyd:** It might well have done, but I do not recall whether this one has.
- [7] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Perhaps it was not this petition but something on a similar case. To be fair, the Assembly Government has given it its consideration and has reopened the review of the buffer zone, and I believe that we have taken it as far as we can as the Petitions Committee.
- [8] **Val Lloyd:** I agree with you. It was this petition that prompted the Minister to take the issue forward, so the petition has had an excellent hearing. Are we all agreed that we close the petition? I see that we are in agreement.
- [9] We now move on to the next petition on our list, which is P-03-081 on the student loan regulations. This petition was first presented in December 2007, and the last time that we considered it, which was in October, we agreed to await the outcome of the task and finish group established by the Minister. This group was due to report in the autumn, but we have not yet received an update from the Minister. Would you like us to ask the Minister for that update?
- [10] **Bethan Jenkins:** One part of the task and finish group's report has come out, has it not?
- [11] **Michael German:** There are a number of petitions today that are awaiting responses from Ministers. We need to get those responses, but it is almost like poking the Minister's with a stick to ensure that we get the responses to outstanding issues that we have been promised. What is our mechanism for ensuring those responses?
- [12] On this petition, we should finally get the answer from the Minister on the task and finish group. When will the group respond and when we will get its take on this issue?
- [13] **Val Lloyd:** I quite agree. There are a few petitions in a similar situation, but I do not know how we can ensure those responses. I presume that the Minister would be reminded by her officials.
- [14] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I assume that this is the task and finish group that has published an interim report.
- [15] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, part of it has come out.
- [16] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is now awaiting the second tranche, which is due to report at the end of February or beginning of March. Sadly, the Minister does not seem to have extended the courtesy to the committee of writing to us. Although she has made a statement in Plenary on the wider issues of student finance, neither she nor her officials has extended the courtesy to us as a committee of writing to us to inform us of what has been said in Plenary and what her view is on the interim findings of the task and finish group that she established.
- [17] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not think that it says anything about optometry.
- [18] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I do not think so either.
- [19] **Val Lloyd:** I do not recall it either, and I read it with some interest.
- [20] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think that we are talking about the same task and finish group, because I am not aware of another.
- [21] **Val Lloyd:** I am not aware of another one either.

[22] **Bethan Jenkins:** Not chaired by Merfyn Jones.

[23] **Val Lloyd:** I think that we are talking about the same task and finish group. Are we all agreed to ask the Minister for an update? I see that we are in agreement.

[24] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could we also make the point, which Mike alluded to, that the statement in Plenary was made at the end of November and that we are now at the end of January? Perhaps the Minister could consider her procedures for addressing the committee's concerns when we raise issues with her. You would have thought that we would have been kept in the loop as we did raise the issue with her and as she did say that she would come back to us.

[25] **Val Lloyd:** I agree, but I wonder whether we should write a general letter to all Ministers, rather than pinpointing certain Ministers. The same situation will arise with another petition. So, we will send the letter to every Minister and couch it by asking about the procedure, because we realise that they have busy lives.

[26] **Michael German:** Perhaps it would be worth copying it to the Permanent Secretary as well, because it is her responsibility to ensure that procedures are in place for Ministers. You could warn them that we have a long stick, and it can be used for poking them, although we would prefer not to do that.

[27] **Val Lloyd:** I suggested that we send the letter to all Ministers in order to avoid getting fraught about a particular subject. In general, we get replies from Ministers, but we have noticed that there are now a couple outstanding, which rebounds on the petitioners rather than us. So, we will draft a general letter to take that forward.

[28] **Michael German:** And copy in the Permanent Secretary?

[29] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. Sorry, Mike—I took that as read. I thought that I had clarified that. I certainly think that that is a good way forward.

[30] On the petition relating to surgeries in Flintshire, P-03-085, again, we have had a response from the Minister—in fact, we have had two. However, it is quite some time since the last one, which was in June 2008, so perhaps we could write to ask for an update.

[31] **Michael German:** Using your long stick.

[32] **Val Lloyd:** Yes.

[33] The next petition is on the Welsh-language daily newspaper, which is P-03-107. We asked Dr Tony Bianchi for an update, which he has given us. I open this up for discussion.

[34] **Bethan Jenkins:** I am not against asking for clarification on the research that was commissioned through Dyddiol Cyf., but I wonder if we know what we are trying to achieve for the petitioners in doing that. The Minister has already responded, saying that this will not happen. Do other Members have an opinion? I feel that, although we could get that information, it might not lead anywhere. How would it progress the petition?

[35] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I would like to highlight the Enterprise and Learning Committee's rapporteur group on bilingualism. I believe that it is to undertake various case studies in other countries where there is dual language use. The media is obviously an important part of that, and one way of taking this forward would be to ask the rapporteur group to note the petition and bring forward any evidence that it gathers on good practice.

When we took evidence on the media, the Basque country was given as an example; I have limited understanding of what goes on in the Basque country, but the rapporteur group will be focusing quite intently on this issue, and there is scope for it to take this petition on board in its deliberations. I agree with Bethan that, although we could ask for more evidence, it is not clear where that would lead. The Government has made its decision, and although you might not like it, it is the decision.

[36] **Val Lloyd:** Yes—we cannot alter the Government’s decision.

[37] **Michael German:** I agree. The only reason that it might be worth having more evidence on the market research is to understand whether that research, which has been widely quoted, looked at the potential readership for a Welsh-language daily newspaper, or whether, in fact, it looked at the broader issue of how much public subsidy would be required, and how long it would last. Did the research look at the financial aspect, including advertising, and so on? This may end up as a discussion about the method by which public funding is used for such projects. We do not have a clue what the research was looking at—whether it was simply asking people if they would buy the newspaper, which would not necessarily tell you anything about whether it could stand on its own feet. So, I support the comments that have been made, and Andrew’s suggestion, but we also need to get a copy of the market research findings if possible—just to know what it was about, rather than seeing it quoted in the abstract forever.

[38] **Val Lloyd:** What does everyone else think?

[39] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I concur with that.

[40] **Val Lloyd:** Shall we wait for the response to come back?

[41] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The rapporteur group is progressing—

[42] **Val Lloyd:** So we do not want to lose out there.

[43] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** No, we should draw its attention to this issue while it is looking at bilingualism.

10.10 a.m.

[44] **Bethan Jenkins:** We have had the first meeting, but not the second, so it could be considered as part of that.

[45] **Val Lloyd:** We will agree that. We will write to Dyddiol Cyf., and we will also send this to the rapporteur group on education.

[46] The next petition, P-03-136, concerns parking in the Heath and Birchgrove areas of Cardiff. We have received a very comprehensive letter from Councillor Delme Bowen, for which we thank him. This is about the travel plan.

[47] **Michael German:** Yes. It is a question of whether we continue to wait or decide to use the long stick—of whether you want to promote some urgency in getting a response or whether you are happy to wait.

[48] **Val Lloyd:** The plan is due in April 2009, so we would have to wait until then.

[49] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I have been reading the cabinet member for Cardiff Council’s very detailed response. He does not refer to the first plan, which the Minister referred to,

going back to when we initially considered this. The trust's travel plan was submitted in June 2008. Perhaps we could ask the cabinet member whether he has had sight of the travel plan that the Minister referred to in the early days of this petition. The Minister referred to this in her letter at the end of July.

[50] **Val Lloyd:** Where would that sit in relation to the travel plan due in 2009? Clearly, it will supersede that plan.

[51] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That is why I am mentioning it. There must be differences. I am not too familiar with which travel plans are pertinent to which area, but there must be a distinct difference between the two plans, because I would not have thought that they would draw up two back-to-back.

[52] **Val Lloyd:** No, you would not have thought so.

[53] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Minister highlights the fact that she was content with the plan submitted last year. However, I note that the cabinet member does not refer to it at all in his response. I wonder whether he and his officials have looked at it in the scheme of things.

[54] **Val Lloyd:** We could certainly write to him to thank him for his detailed letter and ask him about that.

[55] **Michael German:** I think that he is probably responding to the responsibilities within his remit, rather than those concerning the travel plan.

[56] **Val Lloyd:** I suspect so. The travel plan would be the responsibility of the trust, rather than the local authority.

[57] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** However, one would hope that, as a key stakeholder, the local authority would either have been consulted or would have taken a view on the trust's travel plan.

[58] **Michael German:** That is a good point, because there is an interest there. Has the local authority been afforded the opportunity by the Welsh Assembly Government to respond to or have an input to the travel plan proposals from the trust?

[59] **Val Lloyd:** That may well be the reason why the 2008 plan has morphed into the April 2009 plan.

[60] **Michael German:** So, it is a procedural issue: when a trust draws up a travel plan, does it engage with the local authority? That is a matter of principle, is it not?

[61] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The first point of the Minister's letter of 30 July, which Mike is saying is a key part of the consultation, refers to the development of a brand new public transport interchange and concourse at the University Hospital of Wales. The owner of Cardiff Bus is the local authority. As it is a public transport interchange that is being proposed to alleviate the problems there, one would have hoped that the local authority would have been consulted. However, as I said, the cabinet member's letter does not indicate that.

[62] **Val Lloyd:** We can certainly write to the cabinet member.

[63] **Michael German:** Perhaps we should write to the Minister to ask what arrangements there are, when trusts are drawing up transport plans, for consulting the local authority and whether, in this case, Cardiff Council was consulted on the previous travel plan and whether it will be consulted on the new one.

- [64] **Val Lloyd:** Would that question be better addressed to the chair of the trust?
- [65] **Michael German:** The point is that it is also a matter of principle about trusts in general. You would expect that this would happen anyway, but we are not certain whether it does.
- [66] **Val Lloyd:** Therefore, we will send two letters—one to the chair of the trust and one to the Minister. Do you think that it is still necessary to write to Councillor Bowen?
- [67] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Perhaps, in the first instance, we should see what the process has been. We can then consult Councillor Bowen on that. If he has been consulted, we will just be reinventing the wheel.
- [68] **Val Lloyd:** The next petition, P-03-144, is from Guide Dogs for the Blind. We have had a response from the Minister and from the UK Department for Transport, which has given us a general briefing on shared space, and which I found quite interesting.
- [69] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The Minister came before the Enterprise and Learning Committee last week to discuss the Sustrans petition, which we have discussed. I believe that this Guide Dogs for the Blind Association petition came in on the back of that, given the association's concerns about shared-use paths. The Minister mentioned that the walking and cycling strategy would be coming out imminently—I believe that that was the word that he used. I wonder whether that walking and cycling strategy takes a view on shared use, given that the strategy will inform Government policy making on the issue that the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association highlights in its petition. Would it be pertinent to wait for that strategy to see whether the association's concerns have been addressed?
- [70] **Val Lloyd:** I believe that we should wait. Perhaps we should also ask the petitioners to comment on the briefing note that we have had from the Department for Transport.
- [71] **Michael German:** This petition goes wider than the Sustrans petition, although concerns are expressed about that matter. Presumably, once the committee has finished its deliberations, the Sustrans petition will come back here.
- [72] **Val Lloyd:** I cannot remember. It was one of our early petitions. I am sure that the clerk will let us know whether we closed it and sent it to another committee or whether we left it open. I know that our procedure now is to leave petitions open until we hear from the committee.
- [73] **Ms Phipps:** I believe that we closed that petition.
- [74] **Val Lloyd:** Something told me that that was the case, but we will check it out.
- [75] **Michael German:** If we were looking at the petition now, we would not do that.
- [76] **Val Lloyd:** We have changed our policy, yes.
- [77] The next petition is P-03-166, Abertillery and District Hospital. We have had two letters from the Minister on this.
- [78] **Michael German:** It may be felt that we have taken this as far as we possibly can, but the second letter to you, dated 17 December, interests me. In that, the Minister says,
- [79] 'I am currently reviewing my guidance regarding the sale of NHS land and property'.

[80] The NHS trust in question has not sold the land yet, clearly, and I would presume that any new guidance that came in would prevail, rather than the guidance that exists at present. So, if the review is likely to result in new guidance being issued in the coming months, it would seem to me to be wise to at least have sight of the proposals for changes to the guidance before we close the petition, because the new guidance might have an impact on the petition. It depends what the Minister is going to do with it; we do not know what she will do with it.

[81] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The new guidance was raised in Plenary last week by Jonathan Morgan during the Liberal-Democrat-led debate, and it is my understanding that the threshold at which trusts would lose the right to hold onto the proceeds of sales would be taken down from £2 million to £0.5 million, so that anything over £0.5 million would return to the centre.

[82] **Michael German:** So, it would matter in this case.

[83] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We would be talking about a key change in the regulations. Sales of up to £2 million can be retained by the trusts at present. I am led to believe that the proposals, as they are outlined, bring that threshold down to £0.5 million.

[84] **Val Lloyd:** So, is a consultation being held on that?

[85] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I believe that it is at consultation stage.

[86] **Val Lloyd:** I presume that it must be in the public domain.

[87] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It was raised in Plenary last Wednesday.

[88] **Michael German:** It might be worth knowing what the new guidance is going to be, because that would make a material difference to this, I would guess. I know the site, and it is probably worth more than £0.5 million.

[89] **Val Lloyd:** So, shall we keep it open until that guidance comes through?

[90] **Michael German:** Yes, and perhaps we could ask when the guidance is likely to emerge.

[91] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could we request the guidance? I believe that it is in the public domain.

[92] **Michael German:** The new guidance?

[93] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I believe so, but if I am wrong I will stand corrected. It was referred to in Plenary last Wednesday.

[94] **Val Lloyd:** You assume that it is in the public domain.

[95] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes. If it is not, we need to ask when it will be available and whether we can have sight of it.

[96] **Val Lloyd:** So, we will take that petition forward in that way.

[97] The next petition is P-03-172, Swansea-Cork ferry, and, as in previous discussions on this subject, I shall chair the deliberations but will play no part in them because of my declared interest in the subject. We have had a comprehensive reply from the Deputy First

Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport. I will now open this up for discussion.

10.20 a.m.

[98] **Michael German:** The crucial paragraph in the letter from the Associated British Ports is the one that begins:

[99] ‘The current barrier therefore to the re-establishment of the Swansea-Cork Ferry service is that of a gap in the required funding.’

[100] It later talks about the Welsh Assembly Government’s funding. Would it be wise to ask the Deputy First Minister whether he has had, is about to have, or should have discussions with ABP and others to look in particular at how it could support the reinstatement of the route? The use of European funding should also be considered, because INTERREG money might be available for this proposal. We do not know the answer to that, but it would be useful to know what the Minister has to say on that matter.

[101] **Val Lloyd:** Are there any further comments?

[102] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I am flabbergasted, reading the letter from ABP, that there does not seem to have been—I stand to be corrected on this—much negotiation with the Welsh Assembly Government to provide streams of funding or to identify avenues of funding that might be explored. I concur with Mike’s assessment that the key paragraphs are the last two. The letter does not suggest that there has been any engagement, really, although this seems to be a viable route. All of the reports suggest that the route is viable, providing you can strike a balance between passengers and freight. There is then almost a plea from the sales and marketing manager from ABP asking if anyone can help the company to locate funding.

[103] **Bethan Jenkins:** The letter dated 13 November suggests that Ieuan has been working with it. I know that further meetings between ABP and the Deputy First Minister’s office are imminent.

[104] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It does not say that it has engaged with the Government. It says that:

[105] ‘I understand that both the port authority of Swansea and port of Cork’—

[106] **Bethan Jenkins:** No, Ieuan’s letter.

[107] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes, his letter dated 13 November.

[108] **Bethan Jenkins:** It says that the Welsh Assembly Government,

[109] ‘has been working closely with the port authority in Swansea and colleagues in the Government of Ireland.’

[110] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It says nothing about ABP. The letter does not allude to any dialogue. You have seen the letter. The last paragraph of ABP’s letter is almost a plea for help to get the job going, is it not?

[111] **Michael German:** There is nothing in the written papers to suggest that there has been a meeting with the departments or a discussion of substance about potential financial support. If we do not have the papers, then we cannot make a judgment on it, can we? Nothing is said about it in any of this paperwork.

[112] **Bethan Jenkins:** We can raise that issue then and request that a meeting is facilitated.

[113] **Val Lloyd:** Thank you very much. We move on to P-03-180, Committee for the Improvement of Hospital Services.

[114] **Michael German:** Essentially, the petitioner has asked for a meeting with the Minister, but the Minister has refused. We cannot force the Minister to meet the petitioner.

[115] **Val Lloyd:** No, we cannot. The first part of the petition has been resolved, to a large extent. I agree with Mike; we cannot demand that the petitioner has a meeting with the Minister. That part is out of our control.

[116] **Michael German:** The only part that worries me is the second bullet point in the petitioner's request to us, about access to acute services being at West Wales General Hospital rather than at Morriston Hospital. I can see the sense of it; it is the same problem that people have going from Caerphilly to Newport and Cardiff. So many people go to Cardiff for acute services because it is nearer.

[117] **Val Lloyd:** It is not quite as straightforward as that. That may be the guidance, but when the first responders arrive and the ambulance arrives, depending on their view of it, the patient might be taken to the major accident and emergency department. It may even depend on the particular part of the Llanelli area.

[118] **Michael German:** It depends on what constitutes an acute—

[119] **Val Lloyd:** It would be for the personnel attending the scene to make that decision.

[120] **Michael German:** You are right to say that the first part of the petition has been dealt with—the capital funding. Without knowing more about what happens to someone living in Llanelli who has an acute need, it is difficult to judge whether that is appropriate or not.

[121] **Val Lloyd:** That was not in the original petition, and we should deal with the original petition. The Minister has responded that funding has been provided to improve services, and the Minister has said that she is not prepared to have a meeting with that individual.

[122] **Michael German:** The original petition did mention the ability of people to access acute medical and surgical services in Llanelli—I do not know whether that means people in Llanelli or from Llanelli.

[123] **Val Lloyd:** I think that we should close that petition; I do not think that we can take it further.

[124] The next petition is P-03-184, on concessionary bus fares, which, if you recall, relates in particular to the provision of bus services from Pembrokeshire to Glangwili hospital. We have received a comprehensive reply from the Deputy First Minister. So, I open it up for discussion.

[125] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The petitioner raises some specific issues and the Minister has identified the streams of funding available in his response to us. However, I note that the Minister did not reply about the removal of the bus service operators grant. The Minister was to provide an alternative form of funding to make up the shortfall. However, in light of the Minister's response, it would be pertinent to go back to the lead petitioner to see whether he is satisfied. It is up to authorities to decide how they allocate that funding and if it is about how that money is allocated, then that is a separate issue. However, perhaps it would be pertinent at this point to go back to the lead petitioner in the light of the Deputy First Minister's

response and see whether he is happy or content with gaining a clearer picture of the level of funding available.

[126] **Val Lloyd:** Does anyone wish to add to that? I see that you do not. We will therefore take that course of action.

[127] The next petition is P-03-190, No Ely Valley Airport Road.

[128] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I declare an interest in that I have met the petitioners; I have registered that interest before. I would like to seek some clarification before you discuss the petition. Point 4 in the briefing paper states that the Minister indicates that he hopes to make a decision in September 2009. However, the Minister's paper mentions spring 2009. I cannot find a reference to September 2009 in any of the Minister's papers, so I am just trying to get to the bottom of where that September 2009 date has come from.

[129] **Ms Phipps:** We can write to seek clarification on that.

[130] **Bethan Jenkins:** Where does it say that?

[131] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Under point 4 on page 65. It states that:

[132] 'All responses have now been considered by my officials and before I make the decision, which I hope to be in a position to announce in spring 2009...'

[133] **Val Lloyd:** I see it now. That is quite clear.

[134] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is quite a fundamental difference.

[135] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. I will open it up for discussion.

[136] **Michael German:** We need to know more about what the consultation has thrown up before we probe this further. Could we ask our researchers to look at the responses and summarise the evidence to provide us with an update on the evidence for the need for this project?

[137] **Val Lloyd:** I agree. Bethan, do you have any views?

[138] **Bethan Jenkins:** I also agree.

[139] **Val Lloyd:** We will take that action, therefore, and get further information from the Members' research service. That concludes the general update on new petitions.

10.27 a.m.

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

[140] **Val Lloyd:** If you recall, we had a petition calling on the National Assembly for Wales to introduce an honours system. We have received responses and expressed, at our last meeting, an interest in opening this up to a broader public debate.

[141] **Michael German:** Can we hear what the clerk has to say?

[142] **Ms Phipps:** You asked me to report on progress. I have been talking to the corporate

unit, which has told me that it has set up a meeting with the Welsh Assembly Government. As you are aware, this is a joint project between the Assembly Commission and the Assembly Government. The unit hopes to work out the scoping and timeline for this at that meeting and will report back to me when that discussion has been held.

10.30 a.m.

[143] The Medal Cymru part of the project said that it would very much welcome the committee's trying to generate wider public debate on it. If you remember, we suggested last time that we could have an online web-based discussion on that, and it said that it would be very happy for us to do so to elicit general comments and views from members of the public. Perhaps I could continue to liaise with the corporate unit on that and come back on how we will take that online discussion forward.

[144] **Michael German:** The only thing that I am interested in, of what the clerk has just said, is where that debate will take place. Who is to be engaged in that debate? Did I hear that it is to be between the clerk and the Welsh Assembly Government?

[145] **Ms Phipps:** It will involve the corporate unit, part of the Assembly Commission, and the Welsh Assembly Government because this is a joint project between the two of them.

[146] **Michael German:** I just wonder whether there ought to be some committee involvement in that, Chair. In other words, if this is a public debate, it ought to involve a democratic body so that there is a sense of the outcomes and discussions being heard.

[147] **Bethan Jenkins:** Did the commission not suggest, in the letter from Dafydd Elis-Thomas, holding a debate in Plenary? I know that that is not the answer that you are suggesting, but that was what the commission was suggesting at the time, namely that it should come to a discussion—

[148] **Michael German:** That would be the end.

[149] **Val Lloyd:** Yes, that would be the end point, to decide whether to move forward on it.

[150] **Bethan Jenkins:** I agree that there should be more democratic accountability for what happens.

[151] **Val Lloyd:** There could be more input because the debate will just be a case of, 'This is what we are proposing, and do you agree with it?'. I think that Mike is talking about input.

[152] **Michael German:** We want to tease out the issues and the differences of views. Perhaps we could invite people to come to tell us why they think that one system would be better than another, just so that we could get a feel for it. That could follow the online debate that we intend to provoke on this matter. I think that there is genuinely a big interest in this matter in Wales at the moment.

[153] **Val Lloyd:** Yes. Would the way to deal with that be to initiate that online debate, so that we can see what is coming in, and then consider how we interact with individuals within that debate?

[154] **Michael German:** We could contact various bodies and groups.

[155] **Bethan Jenkins:** Do we need to seek clarification as to who would make that final decision? Would it be us, as an Assembly, or would it be the Assembly Commission?

[156] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It would be the Assembly. The decision would be made following a debate, would it not? A motion would be tabled.

[157] **Michael German:** Yes, but where would the sponsoring part of the debate come from? All I am saying is that, since this arraignment started in the Petitions Committee in the first place, we need to be mindful of the fact that we need to be engaged throughout that process.

[158] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That is a piece of work that we could undertake, is it not? How long will this other inquiry take? It will not take long, will it?

[159] **Val Lloyd:** Let us open up this matter as a discussion first, and see where that takes us, with a view to engaging people. That is for us to do.

[160] **Michael German:** I am suggesting, Chair, that you may want to have appropriate words with appropriate people in appropriate corners to make sure that the engagement is there, on the fourth and fifth floors of Tŷ Hywel.

[161] **Val Lloyd:** I would do so appropriately, of course. [*Laughter.*] We will take the matter forward as discussed.

10.33 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i P-03-118 Cymdeithas Canwio Cymru P-03-118 Welsh Canoeing Association Inquiry

[162] **Val Lloyd:** You raised the issue of our inquiry and that is the next item on our agenda. This was brought about as a result of petition P-03-118 from the Welsh Canoeing Association. We will have a short inquiry into access along inland waterways. Do you want to add anything on that, Siân?

[163] **Ms Phipps:** We would like the committee to sign off the background scoping work for the inquiry, just for the Record, and then we need to make the arrangements for the two proposed site visits to west Wales and Edinburgh.

[164] **Michael German:** This is not really a caveat, but it has just come to my attention that we have not written in to these terms of reference that we would take evidence from the non-canoeing side. Is that implicit in these terms of reference? I received a letter from the Crickhowell and District Angling Society in the last week, and I am sure that others will have as well. I think that we had another from a society on the Teifi.

[165] **Ms Phipps:** That will form part of the fact-finding study in Carmarthenshire. We are proposing to look at the recreational users and to visit some landowners and angling interest groups as well. We will build that into the day.

[166] **Michael German:** The reason I am saying this is because news of this inquiry is obviously reaching the angling societies around Wales, and I do not know whether there is a representative body for angling societies in Wales, like the canoeists have. If there is, it would be useful to get some formal evidence from it; otherwise we will find ourselves taking evidence from people from different parts of Wales with different interests.

[167] **Val Lloyd:** Do remember that we are conducting a short inquiry that will be passed to the relevant scrutiny committee.

[168] **Michael German:** I do, but we have taken evidence from representatives of the Welsh Canoeing Association. That is the point.

[169] **Val Lloyd:** We took their evidence because it is their petition.

[170] **Bethan Jenkins:** Perhaps we could invite the anglers to present a counter-petition.

[171] **Michael German:** I am just wondering whether we could short-cut that approach, if a Welsh angling society exists. If there is not, we are in some difficulty.

[172] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Mike makes a very good point. Given the number of anglers, one would automatically think that a representative body would exist. However, I have to say that, in the 18 months or so that I have been here, I have never come across a Welsh angling association, and I do not know that anybody else has either.

[173] **Michael German:** I suggest that I write back to the authors of this letter telling them that I have placed their letter before the Petitions Committee and we are investigating the matter, and if they want to contribute to any discussion, they are to write directly to the committee. The problem is that, if we do that for these people, we are likely to see angling societies all around Wales asking for the same thing.

[174] **Ms Phipps:** The Teifi Trout Association that has written to you is being built into the case study that we are looking at.

[175] **Michael German:** You follow my drift, though. We will now get another one write to us, which may own 9 miles of the river Usk, for example. There are other people and angling societies all over Wales who have an interest in this matter. We are bound to come up against the question of whether angling societies have a general and uniform interest, or whether they have different views, depending on their location. I do not know the answer to that question, and, without any sense of the direction that they might come from, we could end up taking evidence from different parts of Wales as the work emerges.

[176] **Val Lloyd:** We can look into it to see whether an umbrella organisation exists, but I am sure that all the individuals involved will get a hearing from the main scrutiny committee when we have completed our short inquiry.

[177] **Michael German:** May I take the action that I just noted, namely to ask the clerk to circulate the letter?

[178] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have had the same letter.

[179] **Michael German:** Have you?

[180] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** If there is no Welsh angling association as such, the British Field Sports Society would, I believe, cover fishing and angling. It might have an interest in this matter, or it might know of a body that takes a Wales view.

[181] **Ms Phipps:** There is also the Salmon and Trout Association. There are various bodies.

[182] **Mr Davidson:** With regard to the sporting aspects of fishing, I understand that the governing body for coarse angling and game angling may have national bodies that could send representatives. We can look into that.

[183] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think that there is a BASF—a British angling and shooting

federation.

[184] **Val Lloyd:** You are not very well up on this, Andrew. [*Laughter.*]

[185] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I can picture the logo, but I cannot quite see the name. We need to ensure that we have a balanced and informed discussion; otherwise, any piece of work would be meaningless.

[186] **Val Lloyd:** I quite agree with you. It must be balanced.

[187] That brings the meeting to an end. Members may want to remain to discuss informally the arrangements for our visit. I hereby close the meeting.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.38 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.38 a.m.