



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

# Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Deisebau](#)

[The Petitions Committee](#)

13/12/2016

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w tystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Gareth Bennett <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	UKIP Cymru UKIP Wales
Mike Hedges <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Llafur Labour
Neil McEvoy <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a>   <a href="#">Biography</a>	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Jessica England	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Graeme Francis	Clerc Clerk
Lisa Salkeld	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:08.*  
*The meeting began at 09:08.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datganiadau o Fuddiant**  
**Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

[1] **Mike Hedges:** Bore da, good morning. Can I welcome—? It says 'everybody', but I'll welcome Neil and Gareth to the meeting this morning. I'll remind people you can speak in Welsh or English. Headsets are available for translation of Welsh to English. There is no need to turn off your mobile phones or other electronic devices, but please ensure that any devices are in silent mode. We've received apologies from Janet Finch-Saunders.

09:09

## Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[2] **Mike Hedges:** The first new petition we've got is the 'Penegoes Speed Limit Petition', submitted with 298 signatures. It calls on us to urge the Welsh Government introduce a 30 mph speed limit through the village of Penegoes, from the Penegoes village sign, entering from Machynlleth, to the other side of the Maesperthi caravan park. A first-consideration letter was sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure on 20 October. We received a response on 5 November. We've had a research briefing on the petition and related issues. The petitioner submitted further comments, which are included in the papers for the meeting that you should have before you. They're looking for a 30 mph speed limit. The Cabinet Secretary refers to the Welsh Government's trunk road safety review, which concluded that existing speed limits should be retained but that a detailed study be undertaken as part of the engineering works on the section between Penegoes and Machynlleth sometime from 2019–20 onwards. The petition will be taken into account as part of the ongoing works. The petitioner has informed the committee that a traffic monitoring scheme has recently commenced in Penegoes and has offered to share the findings with the committee once they are available. Do you think it would be best if we wait for the result of the traffic monitoring and bring it back then?

[3] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[4] **Mike Hedges:** Okay. And we'll send on the additional information to the Minister.

[5] 'Protect Special Educational Needs'—submitted by Nicola Butterfield, having collected 553 signatures. It calls on

[6] 'the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that spending on the provision of special educational needs is ringfenced, recognising that this is an investment in the children of Wales, and that local authorities should be directed to ensure that adequate levels of funding are available so that those children who require such services are able to go on and live happy and fulfilled lives, while their families are not left to contend with the fear of competing with one another for placements.'

[7] A letter was sent to the Cabinet Secretary on 25 October, and a response was received from the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language on 16 November. A research briefing has been produced and the petitioner has submitted further comments, which are included in the papers for this meeting.

[8] As we know, education funding is sent out via a formula and the revenue support grant, and funding special educational needs is included in that. We've got a Government policy, which I think is supported by nearly everybody, that local authorities should have discretion on how they spend money, based on local circumstances. SEN provision is budgeted to be £362 million in 2016–17, which is a 1.5 per cent increase. The Government has an additional learning needs transformation programme, including new legislation, which was announced yesterday.

[9] The petitioner's experience in Neath Port Talbot is that there is an annual competition for placements for autistic children, which they feel means that the current arrangements do not work for parents or children. The petitioner also questioned how the Welsh Government ensured that funding provided for SEN is used effectively in order to meet the desired outcomes.

[10] I'm going to suggest that we write to the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language to ask how the Government monitors the effectiveness of such services. As it is specifically about Neath Port Talbot council, although it's a general petition, I think we should write to Neath Port Talbot council and ask them for their views.

[11] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[12] **Mike Hedges:** Then we've had a petition on the 'Rights to Primary Health Care in Welsh'—'Hawliau i ofal iechyd sylfaenol yn Gymraeg'—submitted by Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, with 766 signatures. A first consideration was sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport on 2 November, and a response was received from the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language on 16 November. We've had a research briefing and we've told the petitioner that it will be discussed today. What action do we wish to take?

[13] **Gareth Bennett:** There seems to be a consultation ongoing.

[14] **Mike Hedges:** Yes.

[15] **Gareth Bennett:** I would suggest that we await the outcome of the consultation.

[16] **Mike Hedges:** I think that's one—. I think we should also write to the Welsh Language Commissioner asking them for their views.

[17] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[18] **Mike Hedges:** Are you happy with that?

[19] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[20] **Mike Hedges:** 'Widen the A470 from Pontypridd to Coryton to 3 Lanes'—submitted by Geraint Williams, having collected 130 signatures. It was sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills on 2 November. A response was received on 21 November. We've had a research brief. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered by the committee, but has not responded. Has he still not responded?

09:15

[21] **Mr Francis:** No.

[22] **Mike Hedges:** The letter from the Cabinet Secretary highlights a number of recent improvements to junction on the A470 between Pontypridd and Coryton. The Welsh Government is also seeking to improve park-and-ride and public transport facilities, including through the south Wales Metro. However, the Cabinet Secretary's letter states that there are severe physical constraints, which will make widening the A470

[23] 'particularly complex, environmentally intrusive and costly.'

[24] I suggest we wait for further information from the petitioner, who I personally have a huge amount of sympathy with, having worked in Pontypridd before I came here. And whilst I wasn't involved in the traffic jam coming in, I used to drive past it every day, so I've personally got a huge amount of sympathy for them. Okay. So, we'll wait for their response.

[25] 'Give Rate Relief to Local Authorities for Leisure and Cultural

Facilities’—submitted by Ryan Dansie, having collected 17 signatures. We sent it to the Cabinet Secretary for local government on 2 November and received a response on 26 November. We’ve had a research briefing. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered by the committee but has not responded. I ask Members what actions they would like to take. The petitioner asks for rate relief to local authorities for leisure and cultural facilities. The research brief outlines examples of where community assets such as leisure centres and libraries have been transferred to charitable trusts. The Cabinet Secretary’s letter states that there can be benefits in involving outside organisations in the delivery of local services, and the Cabinet Secretary also states that the Welsh Government will explore different options for the non-domestic rates scheme, with a view to introducing improvements from 2018–19. I think that we perhaps need to know what the Welsh Government intends to do and ask for further information about their plans to explore improvements to non-domestic rates, because it does seem to me unfair if you have leisure centre A, run by the local authority, which is paying rates, and, all of a sudden, leisure centre B, which is run by a trust, which is funded by the local authority, is not paying rates. It doesn’t seem an equitable playing field there. So, I think we perhaps—. Should we write and ask the Welsh Government?

[26] **Neil McEvoy:** Definitely. That’s just happened in Cardiff right now. I believe they’ve effectively privatised the leisure centres to avoid the rates.

[27] **Mike Hedges:** Rates and value added tax. I mean, it’s exempt.

[28] **Neil McEvoy:** And there’s no control then over what is happening.

[29] **Mike Hedges:** You pay the money and then somebody else makes the decisions.

[30] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[31] **Mike Hedges:** ‘Funding for the Education Workforce Council Registration Fee for Learning Support Workers in Schools’—submitted by UNISON, with 752 signatures. It was first considered on—. A letter was sent on 2 November to the Cabinet Secretary for Education, with a response on 25 November. We’ve had a research briefing. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered by the committee but had not responded when papers were finalised. Currently, learning support workers pay a registration fee of £15 per annum, thanks to a Government subsidy of £34.

The Cabinet Secretary's letter states that funding is ring-fenced for 2017-18 and thereafter to subsidise the registration fee for the whole of the education workforce, including learning support workers. The subsidy for each category of worker has not yet been announced. I think we need to wait for the petitioner to come back to us, and we could request further information from the Cabinet Secretary about the process for deciding individual subsidy levels for 2017-18, and whether there will be an opportunity for the petitioner, and others, to contribute their views to this. For learning support workers, who tend to be amongst the lower-paid people in schools, charging them £15 is something that is having an effect on people's lives; it's not like charging Assembly Members £15 to register, which probably wouldn't affect our lives massively. Okay? Yes.

[32] 'Protect Families First Funding'—this was submitted by Whitehead-Ross Education and Unison Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, having collected 24 signatures. At this stage, can I say that I know both Iain Whitehead-Ross, who is of Whitehead-Ross Education, and I know the secretary of Unison in Neath Port Talbot council, but neither has lobbied me on this? I just wanted to put that on the record.

[33] The first consideration was sent to the Cabinet Secretary on 4 November. A response was received on 21 November. We've had a research briefing. The petitioner has not responded. What do you want to do? We know that the Families First budget will be kept at the same level as 2016-17 for 2017-18, which I think is what they were asking for in the first place. The Cabinet Secretary won't commit beyond March 2018. As we have an annual budget, that's not unreasonable. There's a Welsh Government news release saying that they are supporting Flying Start and Families First. I think we've got to wait for a response from the petitioners, but they've actually achieved what they wanted to—the protection of the budget for next year. Whether we'll get another petition in this time next year asking about it is another matter, but I think that what they've asked for has been achieved. Okay?

09:21

### **Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions**

[34] **Mike Hedges:** Updates to previous petitions: this is an issue that I have been involved in as the local Member—'To improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language'. This was submitted by Deffo! and first



considered on 24 March, with 502 online signatures and 660 paper signatures. It says that the Assembly constituency is Swansea East. If I can perhaps give some background and an explanation, it's an organisation of the deaf community based in the deaf centre in Hafod in Swansea. They are very keen that British Sign Language is given better support.

[35] It was last considered on 8 December 2015, and the group have met with Welsh Government officials and with Alun Davies, the Minister. The suggestion is that we write to the Minister asking for an update on the issues raised by the petition, following his recent meeting with the petitioners. It's an issue that I do have some interest in because my sister is profoundly deaf. It is something that is very important to the deaf community—it's support for British Sign Language. I think it's really important that we do bring it back to the attention of the Minister.

[36] **Neil McEvoy:** Is there any way we could engage the wider deaf community in this?

[37] **Mike Hedges:** Yes. It is engaged through the cross-party group that Ann Jones chairs, where they are very keen on promoting sign language. A large number of the deaf community communicate almost wholly through sign.

[38] **Mr Francis:** Yes, and we could ask something like the cross-party group on deaf issues to consider this or to write back to this committee with their own views. For background information, the previous committee, when considering this petition, has taken evidence from the petitioners already. So, it's entirely up to you whether you would like to repeat that exercise, but in the meantime we could seek views from elsewhere.

[39] **Mike Hedges:** I was a member of the cross-party group on deaf issues in the last term, and I'm currently a member. They are very keen on promoting British Sign Language, and one of the things they've been asking for is a GCSE for British Sign Language. A lot of jobs ask for either first language Welsh or first language English at GCSE. That group are looking for first language British Sign Language as well to be treated in exactly the same way and given the same equality, because many people who are deaf are going to have great difficulty in getting a GCSE at grade C or better in either English or Welsh, but may well find it much easier to do it in British Sign Language, which is their main method of communication. They are first language British Sign Language. So, we'll write to the Minister. Okay.

[40] 'Teachers' Training Must Include Statutory Training in Autism'—

[41] **Neil McEvoy:** May I declare an interest here because I know the person, but he hasn't lobbied me on it?

[42] **Mike Hedges:** It was submitted by Tim Thomas and considered on 11 October, and has 316 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 11 October, and has written to the Cabinet Secretary for Education to ask whether the Government intends to address autism in teachers' training through the forthcoming Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill, and the planned timetable for this. We've had a response from the Cabinet Secretary. On 30 November, the Minister for Social Services and Public Health also issued a written statement on autism services. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered by the committee, and provided with copies of these documents, but has yet to respond.

[43] The letter of the Cabinet Secretary states that the Welsh Government has decided not to include specific provisions for autism in the ALN and education tribunal Bill. The Government intends to consider future legislation on autism once the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Welsh Government's refreshed action plan on autism are better understood. Reforms to initial teacher education in Wales are under way, and previous correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary also states that qualified teachers are required to demonstrate that they take account of the needs of pupils with special educational needs as part of their professional standards.

[44] I think we need to wait for the petitioner to come back to us. Amongst our general things, shall we ask the National Autistic Society for their view? One of the things I think we've been very good at is going out to third party bodies who are experts in this. Are we happy to do that? Yes.

[45] 'Trees in Towns': this was submitted by Coed Cadw Woodland Trust and was first considered on 8 March, having collected 2,258 signatures. The committee last considered it on 13 September and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs to ask for guidance to be produced on the benefits that trees can offer in towns and cities and on improving canopy cover, and Natural Resources Wales to ask what support it provides for planting individual street trees in towns and cities. We've had a

response from the Cabinet Secretary on the 11 October; the petitioner has also provided further comments. The committee received a response from Natural Resources Wales on 7 December. Due to the late receipt of the response, the petitioner has not had an opportunity to comment on this prior to the meeting. Can I suggest we give them an opportunity to comment?

[46] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[47] **Mike Hedges:** Economy and infrastructure, 'Include a Mynachdy and Talybont Station as Part of the Cardiff Metro Proposal': the petition was submitted by Dr Ashley Wood and was first considered on 1 November, having collected 137 signatures. The committee last considered the petition on 1 November and agreed to await the views of the petitioner on the Government's response before determining how to progress the petition. The petitioner has now submitted further comments.

[48] The petitioner welcomes the intention of the Welsh Government to consider a new station in the area during the development of the south Wales metro. They are seeking clarity on the potential location of a station, and have provided detailed information on where they believe it should be sited. Can we write to the Cabinet Secretary with their suggestions on potential locations and asking where they're considering in Gabalfa?

[49] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[50] **Mike Hedges:** I look to Neil who knows this area better than I do. They've asked for Mynachdy and Talybont, but somewhere in the Gabalfa area is really what we are likely to be pushing for.

[51] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes, I think that makes sense.

[52] **Mike Hedges:** Okay. 'Restoration of Inpatient Beds, Minor Injuries Cover and X-Ray Unit to the Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital': the petition was submitted in June 2014, with 2,754 signatures, and last considered on 13 September, when it was sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport. The committee have agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary and the petitioner again later in the autumn for a report on progress. The petitioner has recently submitted copies of recent correspondence with the First Minister and the chief executive of Healthcare Inspectorate Wales for the committee's attention.

[53] The First Minister restates that the Welsh Government position is that health services in Blaenau Ffestiniog are a matter for Betsi Cadwaladr. The same position was outlined by the Cabinet Secretary. Healthcare Inspectorate Wales states that it has written to Betsi Cadwaladr on provision of healthcare in the area, and is currently considering the response received. Can we seek a copy of the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales's conclusions? Could we also write to Betsi Cadwaladr and ask them an update on their views on it? When that comes back, we can decide how to take it forward. Are we happy with that?

09:30

[54] 'Stop Closure of Consultant-led Maternity Unit at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd', submitted in June 2015, with 562 signatures: the previous committee last considered it on 2 June 2015 and agreed to seek comments from the petitioner and await the outcome of legal action before deciding how to pursue the petition. As part of the process of bringing existing petitions to the attention of the Petitions Committee, the clerking team has received an update from the Research Service on the current petition in relation to proposed changes pertaining to the petition. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered, but had not responded when the papers for the committee were being finalised. There are no ongoing legal issues at the moment. A formal consultation on temporary changes to obstetrics and gynaecology, and associated changes to neonatal services and breast services, was conducted by Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board between August and October 2015. In December 2015, the board of Betsi Cadwaladr decided there would be no temporary change to existing service configuration or obstetric gynaecology services and consultant-led obstetric services.

[55] In July, the board received a report from the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists in relation to options for the configuration of longer-term services. This concluded that maternity services were safe as a consequence of the actions being taken, but that exceptional working above and beyond by staff within the service, and extremely heavy reliance on locum staff, could not be regarded as sustainable. The report concluded that significant change within both working practices and service design were needed to achieve a long-term sustainable future for the service.

[56] In November 2016, the board received the maternity and neonatal and paediatric framework for the health board, which sets out a framework for

developing a strategy for these services over the coming months, working and engaging with partner organisations and stakeholders, including women and their families, with intent to co-designing future models of care. The proposed temporary changes at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in the petition have not been implemented. I think we can close the petition, but, before we do that, shall we ask the petitioner for their views?

[57] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes, I think so, yes.

[58] **Mike Hedges:** But they appear to have achieved what they set out to achieve. Okay. Can I thank everybody for their attendance at the meeting and close it?

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 09:32.*

*The meeting ended at 09:32.*