



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

# Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Deisebau](#)

[The Petitions Committee](#)

17/01/2017

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi 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
Janet Finch–Saunders <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a> <a href="#">Biography</a>	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a> <a href="#">Biography</a>	Llafur Labour
Dai Lloyd <a href="#">Bywgraffiad</a> <a href="#">Biography</a>	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Neil McEvoy) The Party of Wales (substitute for Neil McEvoy)

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

Jessica England	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Graeme Francis	Clerc Clerk
Lisa Salkeld	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:00.*  
*The meeting began at 09:00.*

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

[1] **Mike Hedges:** It is 9 o'clock. Thank you. Can I welcome everyone to the meeting this morning? I'll remind people you're welcome to speak in Welsh or English. Headsets are available for translation of Welsh to English. There is no need to turn off mobile phones or other electronic devices, but please ensure that any devices are in silent mode. We've received an apology

from Neil McEvoy and David Lloyd is substituting.

### **Deisebau Newydd New Petitions**

[2] **Mike Hedges:** That takes us on now to item 2.1, a petition by Chris Neilsen:

[3] 'How can it be right that NHS workers in Wales some earning as low as £7.80 per hour doing much needed jobs when the welsh government is funding such non jobs as Future's Commissioner on 100k per annum and a Welsh Language Commissioner on 90k and many such newly created non jobs. These new layers of silly non jobs should be abolished and the money given to low paid NHS staff.'

[4] This came in earlier and has been sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport. A response was received on 15 December. We've had a research briefing. The petitioner was informed the petition would be considered by the committee but had not responded when papers for committee were being finalised. Still no response?

[5] **Mr Francis:** No response.

[6] **Mike Hedges:** I ask Members what action they would like to take on this issue. The letter from the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that all NHS employees receive at least the Living Wage Foundation's recommended pay rate of £8.25 per hour. Recommendations on pay for NHS staff are made to the Cabinet Secretary by the independent NHS pay review body. We've got a choice of either waiting for the views of the petitioner before deciding whether to take further action on this issue, or to write to the petitioner telling him what I just read out. What are your wishes?

[7] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Write.

[8] **Dai Lloyd:** Write.

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

[10] Next is a petition to 'Establish Proportional Representation Voting System for Welsh Local Council Elections', with 202 signatures, calling for proportional representation for 22 Welsh councils. It was sent to the Cabinet

Secretary in October. An initial response has been received and a supplementary response was received earlier this month. A research briefing on the petition and related issues has been prepared. Further correspondence has also been received from the petitioner. Janet.

[11] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Thanks, Chair. I think the Minister's responded quite well. There are measures now coming forward. He's even talking about piloting them at local by-elections and things. So, I just thought that those concerns were—

[12] **Mike Hedges:** Well, we could defer it until after the position of the Wales Bill has actually made clear whether we actually have the power to do anything or not. That might be the best thing for us to do with it because—

[13] **Dai Lloyd:** Particularly in view of the fact that that's what the petitioner is requesting there, isn't he? He's asking for a deferment.

[14] **Mike Hedges:** Yes. Are you happy with that?

[15] 'Removal of M4 Speed Restrictions at the Brynglass Tunnels', submitted with 15 signatures—speed restrictions were placed in and around Brynglas tunnels on the eastbound and westbound M4 carriageways. This was considered on 4 November. There was a response on 22 November. A research briefing on the petition I believe has been prepared for Members. The petitioner was informed the petition would be considered by the committee but had not responded when papers for the committee were being finalised. Have we had a response?

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

[17] **Mike Hedges:** There's been a temporary restriction and it is anticipated it will be removed in April following current refurbishment work. A variable speed limit scheme was introduced to the M4 around Newport. We could wait for the views of the petitioner, or the research brief quotes a statement by the First Minister stating that a full assessment of changes to congestion following the introduction of the variable speed limit would be undertaken once sufficient information had been gathered. The committee could write to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure to enquire whether this has been carried out. Should we write?

[18] **Dai Lloyd:** Yes, do that.

[19] **Mike Hedges:** Thank you.

[20] 'Local Government Finance and Funding'—a petition submitted by Unison asking, basically, for more money for local government. It was considered in November and a response was received on 22 November. A research brief is available. The petitioner submitted further comments. What do we want to do? We've had the local government settlement published. The Cabinet Secretary is considering the scope to introduce a general power of competence, which I think has been generally welcomed by everybody in local government and everybody in the Assembly. We don't often all appear in agreement, but the general power of competence is one where we have. The petitioners reiterated the five calls in their petition. The options are—. The budget has been set—well, it's been set for local government. We had the local government debate this afternoon. So, we're not going to affect this year's budget at all. We could write to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government to ask how there will be opportunities for the petitioners to engage in the development of proposals on local government reform.

[21] **Dai Lloyd:** Fine, do that.

[22] **Mike Hedges:** 'Land & Access Lane Sale at Abercwmboi'. The petition was submitted with 66 signatures

[23] 'to urge the Welsh Government to halt their sale of the land and access road to the rear of properties numbered 1 to 67 Park View Terrace'.

[24] First considered on 23 November, a response received 7 December, a research brief on the petition is available. The petitioner was informed the petition would be considered by the committee and has not responded. Still not responded?

[25] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Close it.

[26] **Mike Hedges:** Pardon?

[27] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Close it.

[28] **Mike Hedges:** Yes, Clerk.

[29] **Mr Francis:** This is only the first consideration of this petition. So, the

petitioner won't have had very long since being sent that response—probably a week to 10 days at the most.

[30] **Mike Hedges:** We'll give them until the next meeting to respond.

[31] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes, okay. It's another two weeks, isn't it?

[32] **Mike Hedges:** We'll give them another two weeks and then see what happens then.

[33] **Mr Francis:** Okay.

[34] **Mike Hedges:** 'Unacceptable Waiting Times for NHS patients in A & E Wreccsam/Wrexham Maelor Hospital'. Submitted with 14 signatures:

[35] 'to debate and discuss and implement measures to resolve unacceptable waiting times...at A & E Wreccsam/Wrexham Maelor Hospital.'

[36] Considered on 29 November, Cabinet Secretary responded 16 December. 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 for the committee were being finalised. So, what do you want to do? The Cabinet Secretary has already said that 75 per cent of patients attending A&E were admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours, below the national target of 95 per cent. The Cabinet Secretary also states that close monitoring is undertaken by the Welsh Government throughout the year, and we also know the current situation of Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board as a health board. Should we wait for further views from the petitioners? We can also write to Betsi Cadwaladr to ask what steps are being taken to improve the performance at A&E.

[37] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** I think we should do that.

[38] **Dai Lloyd:** Yes, good.

[39] **Mike Hedges:** Morning, Gareth.

[40] **Gareth Bennett:** Good morning, apologies.

[41] **Mike Hedges:** No problem. 'No Further Actions on Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) In Wales At All'. Submitted with 400 signatures to call

[42] 'on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to take no further actions on NVZ in Wales at all.'

[43] It was considered on 23 November, we've written to the Cabinet Secretary, had a response and a research briefing. The petitioner was informed. Have they responded?

[44] **Mr Francis:** They called committee staff very recently just to say they would like to submit comments, but haven't been able to in time for this meeting.

[45] **Mike Hedges:** Give them another fortnight.

[46] **Dai Lloyd:** Give them another fortnight, yes.

09:08

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

[47] **Mike Hedges:** On to updates on previous petitions. 'Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray & Minor Injuries Unit'. Petition is submitted by Tywyn and District Health Care Action Group, having collected 4,846 signatures, calling upon

[48] 'the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to stop the withdrawal of X-ray facilities'.

[49] Discussed on 20 December 2015. No response has been received from Betsi Cadwaladr health board. The clerking team contacted the petitioners on 19 December to ask if they had anything to report on the current situation of their petition. The petitioner has submitted further comments, which are included in the paper.

[50] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Can I just say, Chairman, it is disappointing that the health board haven't responded?

[51] **Mike Hedges:** I think it's disgraceful. I think that it's over a year and the health board haven't responded. I would make two suggestions: one is



that we write to them again asking them to respond, and if they fail to respond within the next fortnight, we ask the chair of the health board to come along and answer questions themselves.

[52] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes, fair enough.

[53] **Mike Hedges:** And if the chair of the health board will not come along, we'll ask the health Minister to come along to explain why the health board is not responding to us.

[54] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** I just think, as a mere curtesy, they should have responded. But, clearly when, you know—. This is a petitions committee; people have actually petitioned and gone about it the right way, so I think it's really bad form.

[55] **Mike Hedges:** What if we invite the chair to come along?

[56] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes, definitely.

[57] **Mike Hedges:** We've asked them to respond within the next fortnight. If they don't respond in a fortnight's time, we'll ask the chair to come along. If the chair doesn't come along, we'll ask the Minister to come along.

[58] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** I would imagine the chair is unaware that the board haven't responded, because I would have thought it would be somebody else within the board that should respond.

[59] **Dai Lloyd:** Could I just ask which Tywyn hospital this is?

[60] **Mike Hedges:** You can. I'm sure somebody will be able to answer it.

[61] **Dai Lloyd:** Is it the one in Meirionnydd? The one I was born in? Or is a different one, up in Denbighshire?

[62] **Mr Francis:** It's the one in Meirionnydd.

[63] **Dai Lloyd:** There we are. Right. Okay.

[64] **Mike Hedges:** Which you were born in?

[65] **Dai Lloyd:** Yes. Only about 20 years ago. [*Laughter.*]

[66] **Mike Hedges:** I'm sure they've got a plaque there. [*Laughter.*]

[67] **Dai Lloyd:** Well, if they haven't, they ought to.

[68] **Gareth Bennett:** We'd better start a petition about that.

[69] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes, we'll start a petition. Yes.

[70] **Dai Lloyd:** That's obviously not going to get you anywhere with Betsi Cadwaladr. [*Laughter.*]

[71] **Mr Francis:** I think, Chair, the only other thing to add on that was: because of the timings of this, and the timing of dissolution, we, as a committee staff, perhaps didn't chase them in the way we would normally chase for this kind of letter.

[72] **Mike Hedges:** If we're writing to a body such as a health board, they should not need to be chased. They should be responding to correspondence from us and every other committee of this Assembly. Much as I might want to hold you responsible, I don't. [*Laughter.*]

[73] **Mr Francis:** Thank you.

[74] **Mike Hedges:** 'Stop Closure of Consultant-led Maternity Unit at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd'. This was first considered on 2 June 2015, with 562 signatures. It was last considered by us on 13 December. The petitioner has now submitted further comments, which are included in the papers to the meeting. The petitioner has confirmed that because the potential changes that were the subject of this petition have not happened, they feel that they have reached a successful conclusion on this issue. So, we close it.

[75] **Dai Lloyd:** Happy to close it. The petitioner says that, so actually, we'll agree.

[76] **Mike Hedges:** A success. 'Food in Welsh Hospitals'—a petition from 19 January last year, having collected 40 signatures.

[77] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Well, I await the report that's due in the spring, but I hope that report will address some of the issues raised on this petition, because clearly there are people who go into hospital with various different

needs, dietary needs—gluten-free and things like that—and the choice on offer is not always available. I do know of one high-profile case last year—I think this is actually the petitioner. But they actually pointed this out, and when you’ve got people in hospital unable to eat because there’s nothing that they can eat that wouldn’t do them harm, I think this could be something that we may take forward, I hope, as a committee. It’s a big issue, food in Welsh hospitals, and there’s an inconsistency as well.

[78] **Mike Hedges:** I think the other problem is that people deliver food to the patient, take the food away from the patient, the patient hasn’t eaten any of it, and that just happens. The Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General for Wales have been looking at this for some time, and I would suggest that we keep on waiting to see where they’re getting on it. It is—

[79] **Dai Lloyd:** Excellent suggestion, Chair.

[80] **Mike Hedges:** Sorry; can I just finish? It varies not just from hospital to hospital, but ward to ward—

[81] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Ward to ward, yes.

[82] **Mike Hedges:** —including adjacent wards. You could be in ward X, where somebody makes sure you get fed, and you could be in ward Y, where they just deliver the food and take it away, and they don’t even help people sit up in order to eat it. So, it is a major issue; the auditor general is on it and the Public Accounts Committee are on it. Can I just suggest that any correspondence, any public documents created by them, are sent to the petitioner?

[83] **Dai Lloyd:** Yes.

[84] **Mike Hedges:** Welsh language. ‘Establish a Welsh Language Champion in our Communities in Wales’. Submitted in February 2016 with 10 signatures, the petition is

[85] ‘a starting point in the campaign to establish a Welsh language champion in our communities in Wales. The role would be a voluntary one, based in the community, and the champion would be appointed to promote the use of the Welsh language in Wales and to support developments in our communities.’

[86] Last considered on 1 November, we agreed to write to the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language to seek his views. We've had a response from the Minister. The petitioner has also provided further comments. All of the above correspondence, you've received. What do you want to do? The Minister is supportive of the initiative, and he said he's going to write to One Voice Wales, the body representing community councils, encouraging them to appoint Welsh language champions.

09:15

[87] The petitioner has welcomed this and has offered to work voluntarily on behalf of the Government to support initiatives of this kind. Shall we share the offer made by the petitioner to support and develop a communities language champion with the Welsh Government and One Voice Wales?

[88] **Dai Lloyd:** Yes.

[89] **Mike Hedges:** I thank the petitioner for his engagement and close the petition.

[90] **Dai Lloyd:** Yes.

[91] **Mike Hedges:** 'Allow Public Recording of Local Government Meetings'. It was submitted with 186 signatures in March last year. It asked the Welsh Government to give,

[92] 'the people and electors of Wales the same ability to record their Local Government meetings as their English counterparts have.'

[93] 'The detailed provisions are contained in the secondary legislation made under the 2000 Act, that is the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. The regulations were enacted in September 2012 and announced on the Department for Communities and Local Government website.'

[94] It was last considered on 1 November. We had a response on 30 December. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered, but has not responded. Janet, I know you want to say something on this.

[95] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I fully support this and especially given the

money that Lesley Griffiths, the Minister at that time, gave—£40,000—to each local authority to instigate this and a lot now have the equipment, but simply do not—. We've just done a piece of work on this and I think there are more than half not actually recording any meetings. It's very difficult when people are working and they want to see how members have voted or the direction in which any policy is going. I raised it with the Minister last week. I can see his response and he says here that he is

[96] 'pleased to see that broadcasting...is now a regular practice in many local authorities.'

[97] There are many local authorities where it is not a regular practice, so I have some sympathy with the petitioner. It is disappointing that they haven't responded to this. Maybe if we were to write back to them to find out exactly what they want us to do. I wouldn't be happy with this response, knowing it on the ground as I know it.

[98] **Mike Hedges:** We are awaiting a White Paper, aren't we?

[99] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** The Minister said last week that he may bring forward a Bill that would include recording, and make it compulsory. I can't see what the issue is that this is recorded. Most of what we do in the Assembly and in Parliament is recorded. I just can't see what the issue is.

[100] **Gareth Bennett:** If they've been given money—this £40,000—

[101] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes, they should be doing it.

[102] **Gareth Bennett:** —there should be some measure of—

[103] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I know.

[104] **Gareth Bennett:** —recourse, I would have thought, because, otherwise, what the heck is it going to be used for?

[105] **Mike Hedges:** Shall we write again to the Minister, asking how they're going to ensure that they're recording these meetings?

[106] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** And could we send the petitioner a copy, so that they know that we do take it seriously?

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

[108] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Thank you.

[109] **Mike Hedges:** Everything done should have the spotlight of the public on it.

[110] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** It just creates tensions with the public, if they're kept out of things.

[111] **Mike Hedges:** Next: communities and children and 'Protect Families First Funding', submitted by Whitehead–Ross Education and UNISON, considered on 13 December, with 24 signatures. It's calling

[112] 'on the National Assembly...to urge the Welsh Government to protect the Families First budget in order to protect the most vulnerable families across Wales, including...Neath Port Talbot'.

[113] 'The Cabinet Secretary is expected to make a formal announcement on the future of the programme in the autumn and budgetary allocations for each local authority will not be known until late December 2016. With Communities First coming to an end in March 2017, this reinforces the need for Families First to be protected.'

[114] The committee considered this on 13 December 2016. The petitioner's comments have been received, which state that they are pleased to learn that the budget for Families First will be maintained for 2017–18.

[115] As they've achieved what they asked for—

[116] **Dai Lloyd:** Yes, close. Job done, or whatever phrase you use, Chair.

[117] **Mike Hedges:** The 'Penegoes Speed Limit Petition', considered on 13 December 2016 with 298 signatures. It calls on the,

[118] 'National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to introduce a 30 miles per hour speed limit throughout the village of Penegoes (from the Penegoes village sign entering from Machynlleth, to the other side of the Maesperthi Caravan Park's Proposed new entrance) on the A489 road towards Newtown; and a 40 miles per hour speed limit from Machynlleth to Penegoes.'

[119] It was last considered on 13 December and the petitioner has now submitted the results of a traffic monitoring scheme carried out by Gwynedd Council, along with his views on the findings. The results of the traffic monitoring survey show that the majority of vehicles on the stretch of road monitored were travelling between 30 mph and 50 mph, with 400 recorded between 60 mph and 80 mph. A 2.2 per cent of vehicles recorded in this study were travelling at 30 mph or under, as desired by the petitioner. Shall we share those figures with the Cabinet Secretary and ask for a response?

[120] **Dai Lloyd:** Sounds good.

09:20

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd  
o'r Cyfarfod**

**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public  
from the Meeting**

*Cynnig:*

*Motion:*

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd  
y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â  
Rheol Sefydlog 17.42(ix).*

*that the committee resolves to  
exclude the public from the  
remainder of the meeting in  
accordance with Standing Order  
17.42(ix).*

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.*

*Motion moved.*

[121] **Mike Hedges:** Can I move the motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting? I propose, in accordance with Standing Order 17.42, that the committee resolves to meet in private for the remainder of this meeting. Are Members content?

[122] **Dai Lloyd:** Content.

[123] **Mike Hedges:** Content.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.*  
*Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 09:20.*  
*The public part of the meeting ended at 09:20.*