



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

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[The Petitions Committee](#)

13/06/2017

[Agenda'r Cyfarfod](#)
[Meeting Agenda](#)

[Trawsgrifiadau'r Pwyllgor](#)
[Committee Transcripts](#)

Cynnwys Contents

- 3 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datganiadau o Fuddiant
Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest
- 4 Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions
- 6 Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol
Updates to Previous Petitions

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 Bywgraffiad Biography	UKIP Cymru UKIP Wales
Janet Finch–Saunders Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Neil McEvoy Bywgraffiad Biography	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
Graeme Francis	Clerc Clerk
Sam Mason	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:04.
The meeting began at 09:04.

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

[1] **Mike Hedges:** Bore da, good morning. Can I welcome everyone to the meeting and remind you that you're welcome to speak in either English or Welsh? Headsets are available for translation of Welsh to English. There's no need to turn off your mobile phones or other electronic devices, but please ensure that devices are in silent mode. We're all here, so there are no

apologies.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[2] **Mike Hedges:** The first item is new petitions. The first one is 'Lack of support for children with disabilities at crisis.' The petition that was submitted collected 200 signatures. A first-consideration letter was sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport on 27 March and a response was received on 11 May. We've had a research briefing and a response from the petitioner is also included in the papers for the meeting. So, what do we want to do? The petitioner's experience is that while child and adolescent mental health services have been supportive, there appears to be a lack of capacity and resources there, which I'm sure other people have had experience of. The Cabinet Secretary has outlined additional funding provided. We could write to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport to share the experiences of the petitioner and ask whether it is typical across Wales for children with learning difficulties not to be able to access CAMHS crisis care teams, and whether there are any plans to expand access to these services. When we get that reply, we can send it back to the petitioner and hopefully we can get some progress. Everybody happy with that?

[3] 'Statue to Honour Billy Boston' collected 151 signatures. The difficulty comes in funding. The Cabinet Secretary has said how they could seek funding. The research brief provides additional information, and from personal experience, I know that we collected money in Swansea to put a statue up of Ivor Allchurch, and I think that does seem to be the traditional route of it being led by voluntary bodies. Whether the arts council could actually provide some money is another matter. I know you want to speak on this, Neil.

[4] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes. I mentioned this in the Chamber a while back, and I think I'd like to see the Minister taking a lead on it, really. As well as being the Minister, he's also the AM for the area where Billy came from—one of the biggest names in Welsh rugby league. I think if times had been different, he probably would have been a renowned Welsh rugby union international, but in those days, being black, basically, made life a lot more difficult than it does nowadays. And I think he is so recognised in England. The only place he isn't recognised is in Wales, almost. So yes, I'm keen to support this, and hopefully get the Minister to take a lead on it.

[5] **Mike Hedges:** So, if we write to the petitioners to share the information we've received so far and let them come back to us if they want to take it any further. But I would have thought that they'd be able, by public subscription, to collect money, as we did for Ivor, and I think Cardiff City did for Fred Keenor. Happy with that? Okay.

[6] 'Re-open the Cwmcarn Forest Drive at Easter 2018' collected 1,097 online signatures and 352 paper signatures. We wrote to the Cabinet Secretary on 24 April, and received a response on 9 May. We've had a research briefing. A response from the petitioner has been received and is included in the papers. We could write to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs to ask if the Welsh Government has considered providing funding to Natural Resources Wales to support the re-opening of the forest drive to vehicles, and to highlight the petitioner's concern about the timescales for the proposed study. Are we happy to do that? Yes.

[7] 'Stop Compulsory Welsh Language GCSE' collected 128 signatures. The Cabinet Secretary has stated that she has no plans to change established Welsh Government policy for study of the Welsh language to be compulsory up to key stage 4. She has outlined the benefit to learners. We await the views of the petitioners on the response received from the Cabinet Secretary. The petitioners haven't come back to us. I'm not sure there's going to be a meeting of minds on this, but—

[8] **Gareth Bennett:** I think you can tell that the Government isn't going to do anything to change this, but it's interesting, because there is a lot of support for not having Welsh as a compulsory subject, I know. Lots of people mention it, so I don't know if it's something that should be discussed further, but obviously most of the parties in the Assembly—. I don't know what the Tory view on this is. I know Labour and Plaid aren't going to do anything about changing it.

[9] **Mike Hedges:** Or the Lib Dems.

[10] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** We've had a lot of concerns raised where they just change schools into Welsh-speaking.

[11] **Neil McEvoy:** For me, the English nationalism in Wales is very worrying. Nobody would even mention stopping teaching English in England. Do you stop teaching Spanish in Spain?

[12] **Gareth Bennett:** Oddly, though, the majority language in Wales is English.

[13] **Mike Hedges:** We can get involved in a long discussion about languages—

[14] **Neil McEvoy:** There's always consensus here, usually, Chair, so—

[15] **Mike Hedges:** I don't think we're anywhere near consensus, but one thing is we've got a way forward, where we wait to see what the petitioner says about the response. What I would say is that if you ask the average 16-year-old or 15-year-old, they'd probably give up maths and science before they give up Welsh.

[16] **Neil McEvoy:** Some of us, back in the day, like me, didn't have the opportunity to learn Welsh, and that was outrageous, being brought up in Wales.

[17] **Gareth Bennett:** I actually did get an O-level in Welsh, but my experience was that most kids weren't interested and they dropped it.

[18] **Mike Hedges:** Okay, anyway—

[19] **Neil McEvoy:** It's the same with any subject, really, isn't it?

[20] **Mike Hedges:** We'll move on—

[21] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** It's a debate that needs—*[Inaudible.]*

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

09:10

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[23] **Mike Hedges:** Updates on previous petitions: environmental and rural affairs—'Unconventional Oil and Gas Planning Applications', which has got 1,254 online signatures and 293 paper signatures. The Wales Act 2017 devolves powers over licensing for onshore oil and gas exploration, including

shale oil and gas, to the Welsh Government. These powers are expected in 2018. We could write to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs to ask what implications the devolution of further powers over onshore oil and gas will have on Welsh Government policy. If it's going to be devolved, what's their policy on it? We've got a policy up till now, which is a bit confusing to some, where they can have test drilling, but we oppose any action to extract. I think that we need to find out if there's any change on that.

[24] **For single use items: Introduce a Deposit Return System for drink containers and make fast food containers and utensils compostable**'. We've had just under 2,000 signatures.

[25] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** This is something I'd like to see go forward for further debate, generally. I think it's a huge issue and whilst we're thinking about it and talking about it, our beaches are becoming polluted. Our marine life is suffering as a result of it, and I think that we could be a leading nation, actually, in this.

[26] **Mike Hedges:** Well, some of us are old enough to remember Corona bottles and having to pay 5p and 10p deposits on them. And some of us who were poor also remember wandering around the beach collecting bottles to take back to shops. I think that we can write to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs to seek the clarifications requested by the petitioners, including whether the planned reviews will include an evaluation of the prospects of a deposit return scheme, and an assessment of the legislation required, and—

[27] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Can I tell you now, I think legislation is required? Because, left as things are, more and more are using this kind of damaging—

[28] **Mike Hedges:** We've also had substantial correspondence from the Association of Convenience Stores and others—

[29] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes, I'm aware of that—

[30] **Mike Hedges:** But should we see what happens after we've had this reply, and, if we are so minded, request a debate?

[31] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I'd like to do an inquiry to—

[32] **Mike Hedges:** Request an inquiry and see what happens from there.

[33] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Definitely.

[34] **Mike Hedges:** Yes, okay. So, we'll do an inquiry.

[35] **Mr Francis:** Do I write to the Cabinet Secretary first to get a response as to—?

[36] **Mike Hedges:** Yes—

[37] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** But that—. I've got to be honest, I think we know that we'll get a response back that perhaps tries to pat us on the head and say, 'We know it's a problem, but—'. I think that, you know, if this committee is to have any teeth, we should take something like this seriously. And, it's fair to say that marine environment isn't high on the agenda of the Welsh Labour Government, and I think it should be because our oceans, our beaches, our marine life—we are damaging nature in a huge way, and it's not just that, it's the untidiness, it's how off-putting it is to visitors. If you haven't done a beach clean that weekend, the beach can look horrendous. And in our hedgerows and everything—. Really, really, it's a big issue.

[38] **Neil McEvoy:** Do you mind excusing me?

[39] **Mike Hedges:** Yes, okay. Fine, I will see you later.

[40] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes, thank you.

[41] **Gareth Bennett:** Actually, they've intimated they are considering this at—. But they're not—. Do you think they're just—?

[42] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** No, it's not high on their agenda at all, and it should be.

[43] **Mike Hedges:** Our way forward is to get a reply. If the Government says they're about to take action, then that means that this will close.

[44] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I'll be happy if they say they'll bring in legislation, yes.

[45] **Mike Hedges:** If they're not, we can mount an inquiry. Is everybody okay with that? Yes.

[46] **'Guarantee good support close to home for disabled children and their families', with 2,606 signatures—**

09:15

[47] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Well, they haven't responded, have they?

[48] **Mike Hedges:** No.

[49] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** This was opened in 2012. It needs to close.

[50] **Mike Hedges:** Yes. But, again, I think it's a lesson to us. We can't just let petitions—

[51] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** No, we can't sit on them. Either we—

[52] **Mike Hedges:** Do something or don't do something.

[53] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** —move them through the system, and particularly if they don't respond, they should be just scrapped.

[54] **Mike Hedges:** Should we close this?

[55] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes.

[56] **Mike Hedges:** 'Routine Screening for Type 1 Diabetes in Children and Young People'—

[57] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** I support this, yes.

[58] **Mike Hedges:** It was last considered on 13 February. We've written to the Cabinet Secretary for health and social care and sport to request that he consider a meeting with the petitioners, and to all health boards to request more information on their diagnosis and referral pathways. We've had responses—nothing from Hywel Dda—

[59] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** On this one, Chairman, it does worry me that, again, it says—no consistency. What does it take, really, for Government to

sit up and listen? So, again, I think we ought to be a little bit more robust on this.

[60] **Mike Hedges:** One of the weaknesses of having a series of health boards around Wales is you will not have consistency, because although they all work to ministerial letters, they will have their own local plans and that's something that's a bit further than this petition. The—

[61] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Chairman, from my time on the Health and Social Care Committee, what became quite evident to me was that these local plans are very difficult for people to scrutinise or challenge, because you try finding them on the websites and things like that. As I say, we have sad history as to what's gone wrong here, and I think that, again, we should be taking this seriously, with intervention at an earlier age.

[62] **Mike Hedges:** Can I suggest that we try and arrange to invite this petitioner and Diabetes UK to give evidence to the committee, which will either be towards the end of this term or the beginning of next term? Are we happy to do that?

[63] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes, if we can try and get it towards the end of this term. Again, what we need to do as Petitions Committee is, on the petitions that are valid, the ones where they're still engaging with us—

[64] **Mike Hedges:** Do something—

[65] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** —where it is an issue of such national importance, I think we should be actually moving forward with those.

[66] **Mike Hedges:** Okay, thanks, Happy with that?

[67] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes.

[68] **Mike Hedges:** 'Unacceptable Waiting Times for NHS patients in A & E Wrexham/Wrexham Maelor Hospital'—first considered on 17 January, when it had collected 14 signatures. We've had a response from the Cabinet Secretary, the health board—

[69] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** This is a problem we've got—we've got it in the Betsi board.

[70] **Mike Hedges:** Shall we write to the Cabinet Secretary for health to ask whether A&E waiting times are continuing to improve? There's been an improvement, have they continued to improve? If that's the case, then we can write to the petitioner and tell them. If they haven't improved, then we can decide what we're going to do about it. Happy with that?

[71] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I think we all challenge the health Cabinet Secretary a lot on these types of issues.

[72] **Mike Hedges:** 'Road Safety Improvements Along the A487 Trunk Road between Cardigan and Aberystwyth, to Include Passing Places'—back to September 2016, and last considered on 21 March. Shall we write to the Cabinet Secretary for an update on the outcome of discussions between officials and Ceredigion council as regards further improvements on the A487? Can I declare a potential interest, as my daughter's going to Bangor University, so it's a road I will probably be driving along a lot over the next few years?

[73] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** We'll see you more in north Wales, then, Mike.

[74] **Mike Hedges:** You'll see a lot of me in north Wales. [*Laughter.*]

[75] 'Include a Mynachdy and Talybont Station as Part of the Cardiff Metro Proposal'—first considered in November 2016.

[76] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Cardiff council, have they responded? Have we written to Cardiff council to see what their views are?

[77] **Mr Francis:** We haven't written to Cardiff council. This is part of the Welsh Government's national transport finance plan around new stations. So, previously the Cabinet Secretary had told us that he would update the committee. Since then, there have been a couple of letters to Assembly Members about the next stage, so taking forward 12 potential stations to a more detailed assessment, but none in the area of this petition. So, at stage 1, there was one proposed in Gabalfa. That one doesn't appear to have got past stage 1.

[78] **Mike Hedges:** I think that there are two things we are talking about. One is railway stations, and the other one is metro stations, isn't it? The metro system is going to come in through there. I think we need to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure to get details on what

consideration has been given to a new station as part of the metro system.

[79] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Yes, I would imagine it's something that Cardiff council and the Government can tease out between them.

[80] **Mike Hedges:** The difficulty that there is going to be with the metro system is having enough stations for everybody to get on it, but not having so many stations that it takes so long to travel that people don't use it.

[81] **Gareth Bennett:** Well, this is part of the problem with the Valleys lines, because there are so many stations, it takes an hour to get from Cardiff to Treherbert in the Rhondda valley. But if you have lighter carriages, it is quicker acceleration, so there are ways of doing it.

[82] **Mike Hedges:** So, we can write and find out what proposals there are for a metro station, because it is a metro station they're looking for, isn't it, rather than a proper railway station?

[83] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** Okay. Fine.

[84] **Mike Hedges:** It would be part of the metro system.

[85] 'Public Petition for the Dinas Powys By–Pass'—we dealt with this, and I think many of us received the petition. I know that two of your colleagues were there, Janet. I can't remember if you were there, but Andrew R.T. Davies and David Melding were there. We've had a response. At the moment, we're in a situation where we've also had a letter from the petitioners, where they think there's been a change of view on Vale of Glamorgan Council on this. So, I suggest we write to the Vale of Glamorgan to have clarification from the Vale of Glamorgan Council as to whether they have actually changed their policy. Okay, happy with that?

[86] 'Abolition of Park Homes Sales Commission'—

[87] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** It's a big issue again—if you've got them in your constituency it is.

[88] **Mike Hedges:** I haven't got any in my constituency, but it does seem to me to be incredibly unfair.

[89] **Janet Finch–Saunders:** I know. Well, I sat on the committee when the

Bill was going through, you know, and—.

[90] **Mike Hedges:** A public consultation is taking place, which closes in August. So, shall we hold this petition until the results of the public consultation and the Minister's response? Yes.

[91] Before I close the meeting, can I say that we were hoping to have representatives of Keep Music Alive here today, but we've been unable to arrange that? I don't know what the current situation is.

[92] **Mr Francis:** We are still awaiting a response from the petitioner on that. If he responds to us and is available for the next meeting, there is the possibility of having that evidence session then, alongside the evidence session with the Government on British Sign Language. If he doesn't, we've also written on behalf of the Chair to the Business Committee to ask for the time to debate this petition because it received more than 5,000 signatures. So, we would hope to do that before the end of the summer term, but if we can't take evidence from the petitioner on 27 June, there won't be an opportunity to do that before the debate.

[93] **Gareth Bennett:** Is this Richard Vaughan?

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

[95] **Gareth Bennett:** But he hasn't been responding—because he's been quite proactive with this. I'm surprised he hasn't been in touch.

[96] **Mike Hedges:** We have asked for—. It has passed 5,000—the first one to do so—which I'm very pleased to see, because I think that, once somebody gets 5,000, there's obviously a lot of interest. You can't get 5,000 from friends and family, so there is obviously a lot of interest that has been engendered in it. So, I hope that the Business Committee will give us an opportunity to debate it publicly.

[97] **Gareth Bennett:** I think there's been an issue over live music for about 20 years or more, with venues being closed down because of complaints. So, you know, we've got the devolved powers to do something to change the planning policy, and I think it's an issue that would resonate for a lot of people.

[98] **Mike Hedges:** I'm very interested in sport, for example, and the

number of people who move in next to cricket grounds and football grounds and then complain about cricket balls and footballs and the noise—. Well, they were there. It's the same thing if you move in next to a music venue—you can obviously expect to hear music. You can't move in next to a music venue and then complain that it's got noise. I live near the M4. It's pointless me complaining about the noise from the M4—it was there when I moved in.

[99] **Gareth Bennett:** People used to move in to the streets around Ninian Park, and they would complain about things to do with the football ground. When the football ground was built in 1920, there were no streets in that area. It was crazy. They built the streets after they built the blimming football ground.

[100] **Mike Hedges:** Okay, thank you all very much. We look forward to meeting in a fortnight's time.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 09:25.

The meeting ended at 09:25.