



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

**Dydd Mercher, 15 Mai 2013
Wednesday, 15 May 2013**

Cynnwys Contents

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

Sesiwn Graffu ar Waith y Gweinidog: Y Gweinidog Diwylliant a Chwaraeon
Ministerial Scrutiny Session: Minister for Culture and Sport

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

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.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol Committee members in attendance

Peter Black

Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru
Welsh Liberal Democrats

Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Janet Finch-Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Gwyn R. Price	Llafur Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur Labour
Kenneth Skates	Llafur Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

**Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance**

John Griffiths	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur, (Y Gweinidog Diwylliant a Chwaraeon) Assembly Member, Labour, (The Minister for Culture and Sport)
Gareth Jones	Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol, Dyfodol Cynaliadwy, Llywodraeth Cymru Director General, Sustainable Futures, Welsh Government
Marilyn Lewis	Pennaeth yr Is-adran Cadw, Llywodraeth Cymru Head of Cadw Division, Welsh Government

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Rhys Iorwerth	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil The Research Service
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.16 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.16 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Bore da, and welcome to the Assembly's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. We have not received any apologies today.

9.17 a.m.

**Sesiwn Graffu ar Waith y Gweinidog: Y Gweinidog Diwylliant a Chwaraeon
Ministerial Scrutiny Session: Minister for Culture and Sport**

[2] **Christine Chapman:** This morning we have a ministerial scrutiny session. I welcome the Minister for Culture and Sport, John Griffiths; Gareth Jones, director general, Sustainable Futures; and Marilyn Lewis, head of Cadw.

[3] This is the Minister's first attendance at the committee in relation to his new portfolio. The committee is looking forward to working with you, Minister. Thank you for attending today. We have received your paper in advance, and Members have read it. Therefore, we will go straight into questions.

[4] This is a new portfolio, so will you outline how the portfolio fits together? Would you like to say a few words about that?

[5] **The Minister for Culture and Sport (John Griffiths):** I look forward to working with the committee as we take forward these areas of mutual interest and responsibility. It is important to set out how the new configuration for the portfolio fits together, because it is new. It coheres very well indeed. If we look at the intrinsic value of the areas of responsibility, including the arts, culture, sport, media, physical activity and access to the countryside, as a package, it is about quality of life for the people of Wales and they add an awful lot to life experiences. We need to make sure that we widen access and participation across the board for my areas of responsibility. If we succeed in doing that, we will do a good job in terms of improving quality of life in Wales.

[6] All of those areas are important to the economy. One of our great challenges, as a nation, is to drive forward the economy and economic development. Businesses thinking of locating or remaining and growing in Wales, and highly mobile professional people, who are a precious commodity in the modern world, look at overall quality of life in deciding where they want to base and grow their businesses and where they want to use their professional skills. So, having a good offer in terms of arts, culture, sport and the great outdoors that we have in Wales is an important selling point for Wales as a country, and important, as I said earlier, to the people who live here.

[7] If we look at the Wales coast path, for example, its importance to the economy is clear. We had fabulous coverage for the opening of the Wales coast path from *Lonely Planet*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, and we have had a lot more visits to Wales as a result. We have the heritage tourism project, which works with the national parks, which are also in my portfolio. We know that many people who come to Wales as tourists cite a visit to a museum as the prime reason for coming to Wales, and there is a lot of employment and activity around sport. If we drive the Active Travel (Wales) Bill forward then we will see a sea change in people walking and cycling rather than driving cars, and that is good for physical activity and health. Much of my portfolio is relevant to health, but it also eases congestion and that has good economic benefits as well.

[8] If we look at how it all sits together, Chair, there are many benefits that we can bring to the economy and quality of life in Wales. The other theme that I would like to mention, in terms of how it all sits together and configures, is the social justice agenda—widening access and participation, getting people more physically active, enjoying sport in Wales, attending arts events, participating themselves, visiting our national parks, walking our Wales coast path and getting along to the Cadw heritage sites. Although we have made progress, there is still quite a lot to do in terms of widening that access and participation further, and making sure that we fulfil our responsibilities in terms of social justice in Wales.

[9] It does sit together well, Chair, and there are some themes that run through this set of responsibilities.

[10] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Minister, for outlining that. I know that we will probably consider some of this in more detail now. On the specifics, I just want to ask a few questions, particularly about the historic environment and the landscape. I just wondered why you felt the need to publish a revised historic environment strategy last week. How do your priorities for the sector differ from those of your predecessor in this regard?

[11] **John Griffiths:** In answering that, Cadeirydd, I would echo what I said in my opening remarks: because it is a new configuration, and a new set of responsibilities, I felt that it was important to embody that in the new revised strategy. It was significant to incorporate those new aspects and show how they linked together in terms of our historic environment and our strategy, and at the same time reinforce some aspects that are particularly important, such as that widening access agenda.

[12] **Christine Chapman:** When I took on the role of Chair of this committee there was a lot of discussion about the possible merger of Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. What is your view on whether the royal commission and Cadw should be merged within the Welsh Government, bearing in mind the evidence that the committee has received on this?

[13] **John Griffiths:** I have looked at the evidence that the committee received on this, and we will consider that evidence as we go forward and eventually make decisions. The starting point is that there is a widespread acceptance of the case for change, and that there is a need for change. Obviously, the question is what form that change should take. I will carefully consider the business case, which I have not received as yet, before coming to any decision. I am open-minded on the matter, Chair. I will carefully consider that business case, the evidence that committee took, and the wide range of opinions that exist.

[14] **Christine Chapman:** Could you remind me of the timescales on this, Minister?

[15] **John Griffiths:** I expect to receive the business case in the next couple of weeks, Chair. Obviously, I will consider that very carefully and then set out the way forward.

[16] **Christine Chapman:** Did you want to come in, Peter?

[17] **Peter Black:** Yes, thank you, Chair. On that particular issue, I understand that the business case is only being developed on the basis of bringing the royal commission and Cadw together within the Welsh Government. Is that correct?

[18] **John Griffiths:** It was commissioned on the basis that that was the preferred option, but it is being evaluated in terms of a five-case Treasury business model, which looks at several options. As I say, I have not seen the business case yet, but it will look at a range of possible ways forward, and not just that one preferred solution.

[19] **Peter Black:** I am a bit concerned about how flexible five-case Treasury business models are in relation to understanding the unique nature of the royal commission. Does it take into account the very strong arguments why that should be outside of Government?

[20] **John Griffiths:** As I have said, I have not seen it yet; so, I cannot go into detail. I know that Gareth Jones is very familiar with five-case business models. Could you add a bit of detail on this, Gareth, as to exactly what it will consider?

[21] **Mr Jones:** This is a great cure for insomnia, Chair. Five-case business models are

based on generic issues, such as people issues, finance issues et cetera. They force you to look at a number of different outcomes; therefore, a number of different options emerge from them. As the Minister said, the previous Minister commissioned the option appraisal on the basis that a merger of the royal commission and Cadw within Government was the preferred option, as it were, and to be compared with an improved status quo. However, the way in which the process drives us to complete that business case means that we will naturally look at a number of other options, and they will all be presented to the Minister. If he wants one of the other options worked up in more detail, we can do that, of course.

[22] **Peter Black:** Are you aware of what has happened in Scotland? I understand that the equivalent merger there is taking place outside of Government.

[23] **John Griffiths:** Yes, but they were in a different position in terms of not having Historic Scotland within the Scottish Government. So, they had a different starting point and a different configuration to begin with.

[24] **Peter Black:** It would still be nice for the Government to relinquish something rather than take it into itself, but I am sure that that will emerge in due course.

[25] The other issue that I wanted to raise, Minister, is on listed buildings. Historic ruins are very attractive when they are Tintern Abbey, Neath Abbey or even Stonehenge, but when they are basically four walls surrounded by a pile of rubble, which is the case in my own area in Cwmbwrla, with Libanus chapel, they are not so attractive and not exactly good neighbours. The fact that listed status still applies to the building causes a problem for everyone in terms of how we can develop the site. My concern is that we got to that situation simply because you list a building and then you effectively walk away from it and rely on the owner to maintain that building and keep it in a good condition. It seems that no-one is prepared to take responsibility, in most cases, when it comes to maintaining a listed building and finding alternative uses for it. I wonder whether you are looking at the listing criteria and regime as part of your work on the heritage Bill, and whether you might be taking a more pragmatic approach to how it should work out in communities like that—particularly with grade II listed buildings, such as Libanus chapel.

[26] **John Griffiths:** I very much recognise the issues that Peter Black raises. They are important issues. I think that we need to be more balanced and pragmatic. That will very much be the thrust of the heritage Bill. Obviously, we have a lot of work to do in terms of consultation and seeking views around these matters, but I think that we are all familiar, within our own constituencies, of examples such as the one that you mentioned, Peter, where nothing constructive is being achieved with regard to a particular site or building. Very often, we must understand that it is difficult, because it is a question of resource. It is one thing to urge a local authority to take action, as it were, and take over responsibility, but if it does not have the resource to do the necessary work, that does not achieve very much.

9.30 a.m.

[27] If the owner of the building is not in a position, or does not have the will, to do the necessary work, there is a limit to what can be achieved in terms of working with that owner. It can be very difficult, but we can have a better balance and a more pragmatic approach. As you say, we can hopefully find new uses for buildings to a greater extent than currently happens. That would be a very important part of the heritage Bill, and I look forward to working with the committee in trying to get the balance right.

[28] **Peter Black:** Given that we have split regeneration off from the culture side of things, the concern is that the message being sent out is that, when you have a building in an urban area that would require regeneration, the Government is not interested in regeneration

alongside heritage.

[29] **John Griffiths:** Whenever there is a reshuffle and a new configuration of responsibilities, it throws up all sorts of issues of that nature, does it not? That is the nature of Government. However, we are still very much wedded to knitting together our heritage responsibilities within my department and the general regeneration effort. I will be working very closely with ministerial colleagues to ensure that those connections stay in place. It is still very much the Welsh Government view that heritage and our policies around this area sit very well with our regeneration strategy. I would assure the committee that we will continue to work across Government to ensure that we marry up these areas of Government.

[30] **Mr Jones:** May I add to that, Chair? The regeneration framework that was launched earlier this year, 'Vibrant and Viable Places', makes clear that one outcome expected from the new framework is a well-managed historic environment. That is a very clear criterion within the new regeneration framework, for which bids will come forward from local authorities later this year.

[31] **John Griffiths:** It is probably useful that Gareth's position overlaps the Minister with responsibility for regeneration and the Minister with responsibility for culture and sport. That helps to knit this together as well.

[32] **Christine Chapman:** Before we move on to another theme, three Members have indicated that they wish to ask supplementary questions. We will have Rhodri Glyn first, followed by Mike and Jenny.

[33] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Cyfeiriodd y Gweinidog at y ffaith bod elfen o gysylltu treftadaeth gydag adfywio. Fodd bynnag, mae problemau ymarferol bellach yn codi. Mae gennym ddegau—a chyn bo hir bydd gennym gannoedd—o gapeli ac eglwysi heb werth enfawr o ran treftadaeth. Bydd problemau ymarferol yn codi o ran eu gwerthu ac o ran ailddatblygu'r safleoedd hynny. Hoffwn annog y Gweinidog i gael trafodaethau brys gyda'r enwadau crefyddol yng Nghymru er mwyn sicrhau bod ei adran a Cadw yn cydweithio'n agos gydag adrannau cynllunio awdurdodau lleol. Deallaf fod y problemau ymarferol hyn yn aml iawn yn gorwedd gydag adrannau cynllunio ac adrannau treftadaeth awdurdodau lleol. Mae hyn yn arwain at sefyllfaoedd fel sefyllfa Capel Salem, Coedpoeth, lle mae'r broses o geisio gwerthu'r safle wedi bod yn mynd rhagddi ers blynnyddoedd. Rwy'n dibynnu ar fy nghof yn awr, ond credaf fod problemau diogelwch mewn perthynas â'r adeilad hwnnw. Serch hynny, mae'r broses o aildefnyddio'r safle yn cael ei hatal yn llwyr gan fethiant i gael cydlyniant rhwng y Llywodraeth a llywodraeth leol, a hynny er mwyn caniatáu gwerthu'r adeilad ac aildefnyddio'r safle.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: The Minister referred to the fact that there is an element of linkage between heritage and regeneration. However, we are now seeing practical problems. We have dozens—and we will soon have hundreds—of chapels and churches that do not have much heritage value. Practical problems will arise in terms of selling them and redeveloping those sites. I would encourage the Minister to have urgent talks with the religious denominations in Wales to ensure that his department and Cadw collaborate closely with local authority planning departments. I understand that these practical problems often lie with the planning and heritage departments of local authorities. This leads to situations such as that with Salem Chapel in Coedpoeth, where the process of trying to sell the site has been going on for years. I am relying on my memory now, but I believe that there are safety issues with that building. However, the process of reusing that site is being stymied by a failure to secure co-ordination between the Government and local government, in order to allow the sale of the building and the reuse of the site.

[34] **John Griffiths:** We will, of course, be taking forward planning legislation, as a Government, in this Assembly term. I will be meeting with the Minister with responsibility for planning to discuss our heritage Bill and our activities around listed buildings, in terms of the shape of planning legislation. I hope that we achieve better systems as a result of that planning Bill. I recognise the issues that you raise, Rhodri Glyn. I am very happy to meet churches in Wales to discuss these issues, to see if we can find ways forward in advance of new legislation, as it were. I am sure that they would want to, and will, play a full role in the legislative process, to make sure that those issues feature.

[35] Before I bring in Marilyn, who I can see is anxious to contribute on these matters, I would just say that we are all very familiar with churches and chapels in our own constituencies, many of which have actually found alternative uses and are being used in all sorts of ways— some of them quite ironic, such as public houses, for example, while others are more fitting. Nevertheless, a lot have found alternative uses, and I think it is very good to see that. Even in my area, in some of the rural parts—there are rural parts to Newport East—some old chapels that had considerable protection have been converted into what are now very attractive residences. Often, imagination and flexibility are shown by the planning authorities, but there are nonetheless many examples of where further progress is needed, and you have mentioned one, Rhodri Glyn. Perhaps, Marilyn, you can add to that.

[36] **Mrs Lewis:** I will respond very quickly, Chair. This matter was raised in consultations, and has been raised on many occasions. One of the commitments that we have made is to produce some best practice guidance on alternative uses for chapels and all places of worship for conversion. We are working with the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has funded quite a lot of that sort of work. So, we hope to be able to give a very clear steer to local authorities on what is possible, rather than the default position being one of caution.

[37] **Mike Hedges:** Sorry, Minister, but there is going to be a theme, as a lot of what I am going to say this morning will be to nag you on what I nagged your predecessor about. There are three issues. The first is that your predecessor said that he was going to meet nonconformist organisations to discuss chapels and which ones really do need saving.

[38] On my second point, I did not get anywhere with your predecessor, and I may not get anywhere with you, but it is something that does have cross-party support. It concerns whether we can get to the 100 chapels that must be saved. I do not know whether you know, although I am sure that you do, but there are over 1,000 grade I listed and over 6,000 grade II listed religious buildings of one kind or another—that was an answer that your predecessor gave me. With the best will in the world, and even with huge growth in the Welsh economy, you are not going to be able to look after that sort of number. So, the second point is this: will you look at which are the really iconic ones? I talk about Tabernacle Chapel in Morriston being one of the great iconic religious buildings, but I would, would I not, because I live in Morriston and I represent Swansea East? I am sure that if the people representing parts of Pembrokeshire were here, they would talk about St David's, just as people from every other constituency would name what is in theirs. So, can we look at that?

[39] The third point is aimed at Cadw. At the moment, when Cadw lists something, if it gets burnt down, it will get left until it reaches the stage of falling down, and it could be a grade II listed building that, in my view, does not have huge merit as there are a lot of others like it around, as there are in my constituency and in the ward and region of Peter Black. We have four wards at the moment that are surrounded by rubble that is probably going to stay listed for the next 50 years, unless something happens. We are just waiting for the rest of the walls to fall down. Surely, something can be done.

[40] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Christianity is about saving individuals rather than buildings. [*Laughter.*]

[41] **John Griffiths:** Indeed. I am familiar with these points, Mike, because they have been raised regularly—although, obviously, I did not have ministerial responsibility at the time. However, I know that Members across the Assembly and across Wales, and many others, feel very strongly that we need a better balance in these issues. I am very happy to meet all sorts of organisations, Mike, and if a request is made, I would be very happy to meet the one you mentioned.

[42] We have a system of grading in terms of listed buildings, and it is well-established and well-known. To move beyond that and have an identification of buildings that are considered to be of greater merit would be problematic because, as we could imagine, there would be many and eclectic views on which buildings were most worthy of an enhanced status. However, I am always willing to consider ideas and, as I have said, to work with the committee.

[43] **Mike Hedges:** I was going to suggest a grade I* rating. As an A* is better than an A with regard to GCSEs, a grade I* rating would mean that not only is something grade I listed, but it is so iconic that we cannot afford to lose it.

[44] **John Griffiths:** In terms of taking the heritage Bill forward, ideas are most welcome and will be carefully considered. However, as I said, the current system has been in place for quite some time. We certainly need to improve it in terms of flexibility and practicality, as we mentioned earlier. Categorisation is another issue, but we can certainly look at that. I do not know whether Marilyn would like to add anything.

[45] **Mrs Lewis:** Obviously, the listing system is one of the things that has been most actively consulted upon and there has been considerable interest in the process. We are looking at listing, including local listing. However, just on the subject of derelict listed buildings, whether they are religious buildings or any other type of building, applications can be made for listed building consent to demolish a building, and applications can be made for buildings to be de-listed. Both of these things are possible.

[46] **Christine Chapman:** I think that Peter wants to clarify a point before I bring Jenny in.

[47] **Peter Black:** In terms of the merit of a building, you make that judgment now when you decide whether a building is grade I or grade II, or grade III, even. So, you can decide that something should be grade I*.

[48] **John Griffiths:** The point is that it is a very well-established and accepted system, is it not? Adding to that system would bring forth a considerable range of views. However, we are very open to ideas as we take the Bill forward.

[49] **Christine Chapman:** Before I bring Jenny in, Ken wants to come in, very briefly. We then need to move on, because your portfolio covers many other areas as well.

[50] **Kenneth Skates:** Do you think that, within the listing system, the choice is all too often stark: you either apply for demolition, or you restore a building that is basically four walls and rubble? As you can see, across Europe and in parts of the UK, including parts of Wales, you can sometimes keep what remains, but build within or around it and maintain what exists right now without having to restore the building. That allows the developer to build in a way that would provide a reward or a return on their investment.

[51] **John Griffiths:** That does happen in Wales, Ken, but whether it is recognised enough or happens often enough is another matter. Once again, perhaps Marilyn would like to come

in on this point.

[52] **Mrs Lewis:** I have brought a prop for this eventuality. This document considers urban characterisation, which looks at the fabric, massing and orientation of buildings, and the materials that the buildings are made of. It is possible to reflect and pay due regard to the historic character of an area without necessarily having to restore like for like. This is where things like alternative uses, imaginative new uses, and conversions that look at the traces of the past—the things that make an area of a town, a waterfront or a street seem very special and distinctive—can be brought in and used in exciting and modern ways. That is part of what we need to start promoting and developing in our guidance.

[53] **Jenny Rathbone:** That is very encouraging news. I want to go back to the decoupling of regeneration and heritage in the portfolios and to find out who will be the standard bearer of good design in regeneration. Too often, regeneration means throwing up instant slums that, 10 years later, need to be demolished. Obviously, some of the ideas that Marilyn has just talked about are very good, but who will be the standard bearer of good design?

[54] **John Griffiths:** The Design Commission for Wales is in a very strong position and is a very good organisation that looks across the piece in terms of regeneration, development and planning issues. In my old position, in which I had responsibility for planning, I attended a number of presentations by the commission, which were very good indeed, because it really does look at all aspects involved in development. Its approach is very wide-ranging, and I think that it is the standard bearer for good design in Wales. It is the starting point whenever any regeneration project or development is being considered and taken forward. So, I would see it as having a key role.

9.45 a.m.

[55] **Jenny Rathbone:** However, it is not always present. Therefore, are you the person who is going to make sure that the Minister who now has the planning brief will maintain this respect for good design?

[56] **John Griffiths:** I think that the Minister for planning will have the prime responsibility in terms of regeneration and good planning and design.

[57] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, thank you.

[58] **Christine Chapman:** Finally, Mark on this and then I will move on.

[59] **Mark Isherwood:** Natural and built heritage have a key role to play in regeneration, but they have suffered some sad losses recently. We lost the oldest tree in Wales. As Ken knows, we had damage to Brymbo heritage buildings and heritage site. In each case, the Welsh Government, Cadw and other relevant bodies had been pre-warned that this damage could occur. Should we not have some form of emergency service to protect until the time and resource is available to further develop the potential of those sites?

[60] **John Griffiths:** I am very happy to look at those issues and the examples that you mentioned, Mark, to see if there is anything more that the Welsh Government, working with local authorities and others, might do. It is perfectly possible for emergency work to take place, and that has happened in various examples in Wales. I am happy to look at whether there is anything more strategic or centrally driven from the Welsh Government that might help with that agenda, to see if more might be done.

[61] **Christine Chapman:** Could you send us a note on that once you have had a look at that, Minister? That would be helpful.

[62] **John Griffiths:** Yes, certainly, Chair.

[63] **Christine Chapman:** I want to move on now to some questions regarding the arts sector. I will bring in Gwyn now.

[64] **Gwyn R. Price:** Good morning, everybody. Within the arts sector, can you provide us with an update on the steps being taken to remove some of the specific barriers to participation that were highlighted as a major issue in the committee's task and finish group's report?

[65] **John Griffiths:** In terms of barriers to participation in the arts, as I said earlier I am very determined to drive progress to deal with these barriers because they are central to the Welsh Government's social justice and tackling poverty agendas. The Arts Council of Wales has a key role to play here. It is tasked with making sure that its activities and the revenue-funded organisations to which it provides finance address these issues in terms of ensuring that these barriers are overcome as much as possible.

[66] We also have the review by Dai Smith of arts provision in schools and that will report shortly. That will be very important in making sure that we understand how we can get young people from more deprived backgrounds in particular to be better engaged in the arts and through the arts in their general education.

[67] So, I think that there are a number of important developments in place, including the significance that my predecessor attached to child poverty strategies, and making sure that organisations address those issues. I will also be very keen to make connections to my wider portfolio, where organisations such as the national park authorities have responsibility to widen participation and activity. All of it sits together. The national park authorities run the Mosaic scheme that reaches out to ethnic minorities in particular. So, I think that we need to look at best practice in different parts of the portfolio and make sure that we all learn from each other to drive progress.

[68] **Gwyn R. Price:** Can you explain the comments in the latest remit letter to the arts council that organisations need to provide better evidence of the cultural, social and economic benefits of the arts? Can you similarly explain the comments in the remit letter that,

[69] 'no sector can stand apart and expect to receive special treatment'?

[70] Why was this said in relation to arts organisations in Wales?

[71] **John Griffiths:** The letter was reminding the Arts Council of Wales of the need to not just do the job, but to evidence the doing of the job, if I can put it that way. It is perhaps not the most eloquent way of putting it. It is about evidence and Government needing to base decision making on evidence. We are in difficult financial times; we are all aware of that. Budgets are pressured and difficult decisions will have to be made. I want to maximise the resource available to the arts sector in Wales and right across my portfolio. We need strong evidence of what is being delivered for the funding that is provided. So, I do not think that there is any suggestion of special treatment. The point is that, if anybody was to raise those sorts of issues around evidence of the benefits of the arts sector in Wales, we need to have that evidence. Organisations like the arts council can do a lot to provide it.

[72] **Christine Chapman:** Do you feel that we have made improvements regarding our profile across the world in terms of Welsh culture and arts, or is there more to be done?

[73] **John Griffiths:** There is more to be done, Chair, but I think that we have made a deal

of progress. One key aspect of the arts, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, is that international profile can be greatly boosted by arts activity in Wales. Some of our top artists are well known across the world, as are some of our arts organisations, like Welsh National Opera. We link these organisations and our activity with trade missions. For example, we have had performances by some of our elite organisations in countries like Japan and China. Those are areas of the world where we have prioritisation in terms of economic benefits. Having met a delegation from China in Cardiff, within the first few weeks of having this portfolio, I was struck by the importance that they attached to the arts. We then had an exhibition in China, in a neighbouring province to theirs. They set great store by that relationship and their perception of Wales was that of a country where the arts and culture were important and well developed.

[74] We have the Venice Biennale coming up shortly, showcasing a Welsh artist. There will be organisations and people there from across the globe. So, we use international events and we use our best performing arts organisations. We are very fortunate to have that strength as it is very beneficial to our international profile. The only thing I would say in addition is that we are all familiar with the conversations that take place when you travel across the globe and you mention that you are from Wales, and, too often, people either have not heard of Wales or say, ‘Oh yes, isn’t that a county in England?’ or whatever. So, picking up on what you said, there is still progress to be made, but we have real strengths to build on and the arts offer great potential.

[75] **Christine Chapman:** Do you think that we are doing enough as far as possible sponsorship of arts is concerned? For example, I know that The Old Vic is sponsored by American Airlines and that Kevin Spacey has been doing an awful lot as the artistic director. Do you think that more can be done regarding the sponsorship of arts? I am thinking about your dialogue with the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport.

[76] **John Griffiths:** Absolutely; I think that more can be done. As I said, we live in difficult financial times with great strain on budgets. If we can lever in more money to the arts in Wales from business, that would be beneficial. We have Arts and Business Cymru, which does a job, but it needs to be wider than that. Yesterday evening, I had conversations with businesses that had come to the Assembly for other purposes around what they do in terms of sponsoring the arts in Wales. They were delivering that sponsorship, but I was interested in how we might have a more strategic Welsh Government approach. There is quite a lot happening across Wales. More could happen, but, for us in Welsh Government, it is important to have an overview of what is taking place at the moment and how we could structure that and develop it more strategically.

[77] **Mark Isherwood:** I have two points, which are linked to that and the barriers to participation issue in particular. In the second Assembly, the Minister at the time funded Clwyd Theatre Cymru to take theatre out to excluded communities. In the last Assembly, the previous Minister established the English-language National Theatre Wales to fulfil the same role. I understand that both are still funded to play this role. Could we have some information on what is happening with taking theatre to those communities? My second and final point is related to disability. There has been a series of reports, not least by Action on Hearing Loss—formerly the RNID—on the barriers to access to theatre and cinema for people with sensory impairments. The response thus far seems to be that special sessions will be held so that people with an impairment can go at a particular time—which is usually an inconvenient time—rather than with their family or friends to enable mainstream participation. As regards your contact and discussions with businesses, what action have you taken, can you take or do you propose to take to engage with the private sector or bodies funded by the Welsh Government to start finally tackling those barriers to access for people with disabilities, particularly sensory impairments, by engaging with the experts or those who have impairments?

[78] **John Griffiths:** The effort to reach out from the companies continues, Mark. The Nights Out scheme is a good example. We know that if we are going to widen the enjoyment of the arts in Wales, we need to take the offer out into our communities, and particularly the communities that are not accessing the arts as much as they should. That is one very important aspect of widening participation and overcoming the barriers. There are also issues around transport and transport costs in particular areas of Wales that have geographical issues as well. Taking the performances out into our more disadvantaged communities particularly is very important, and I am keen to ensure that that continues, even in the current financially difficult times.

[79] The issues that you raise around disability and the enjoyment of the arts and cinema are very interesting issues for us. I am willing to have those conversations with the companies that provide the performances—cinemas and so on. As you said, special performances are one offer that the industry has traditionally made to address these issues. However, I know that many groups that represent disabled people think that that is rather tokenistic, and they want something much more mainstream that does not take them to one side from the general population but treats them as part of the general population, which of course they are. There are a lot of issues around this and there are a lot of practical issues. I would be very happy to have those conversations with industry and if you want to come along to some of those meetings, Mark, I would be happy to accommodate that as well.

[80] **Mark Isherwood:** Could we have some information on the outreach work that the national English-language theatre and others are doing?

[81] **John Griffiths:** Yes, absolutely. Shall we include that in a note for the committee?

[82] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, a note. Also, perhaps you could send us some information about any discussions or meetings that you have so that we can review that.

[83] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Chair.

[84] **Kenneth Skates:** To pick up on your point on sponsorship earlier, Chair, I think that that is a really important area, including philanthropy, which is a hugely untapped resource. In America, philanthropy maintains a huge number of local theatres and community organisations. With regard to promoting Welsh arts around the globe, do you have any views on the two eisteddfodau—the International Eisteddfod and the National Eisteddfod—as regards how we can improve participations and visitor numbers and to exploit their value around the globe?

[85] **John Griffiths:** I think that the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod is a fabulous example of Wales's international connections, and it has a great history in bringing nations together after world war. That effort to foster relationships and friendship between different countries and different peoples should never be underestimated. We see many examples in the world of terrible conflict because that that has not happened enough. The Llangollen event is superb for Wales and I look forward to going there this year and seeing at first-hand the fabulous offer that it makes.

10.00 a.m.

[86] I know that you have put forward some interesting ideas in terms of the National Eisteddfod of Wales, Ken, and how it might modernise and widen its reach beyond Wales's borders, whether that is to England, or further afield. I know that the Eisteddfod has made great efforts to modernise and to be innovative, and it has made quite a lot of progress with that and is open to ideas. We need to use our well-established, high-profile national events to

better effect, internationally. So, again, we are open to new thinking around this, as are the organisations involved.

[87] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. I want the committee to take a short break, but before we do that, I want to cover a section on museums, archives and libraries. Rhodri, do you want to come in on that?

[88] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr. Mae gan y Llywodraeth strategaeth ar gyfer amgueddfeydd a llyfrgelloedd, a hoffwn ddechrau â'r strategaeth amgueddfeydd, os caf. Mae cynlluniau cyffrous ar y gweill i Amgueddfa Cymru, yn enwedig ar ei safle yn Sain Ffagan. Mae hi'n stori o lwyddiant enfawr; cynyddodd nifer yr ymwelwyr i'w safleoedd yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf i 1.75 miliwn. Mae hynny tua 9% yn uwch na'r targed a osodwyd gan Lywodraeth Cymru. Ond, ar yr un pryd, mae Amgueddfa Cymru'n wynebu problemau ailstrwythuro. Rydym wedi clywed y bydd 23 o swyddi yn cael eu colli ac fe fydd natur dros 150 o swyddi eraill yn cael eu hailddisgrifio. A ydych yn hyderus bod modd cynnal y ddau beth hynny, sef y llwyddiant mawr gyda nifer yr ymwelwyr yn cynyddu, a'r cwtogiad sylweddol yn nifer y staff a'r ailddisgrifio ar natur swyddi eraill? Onid oes anghydbwysedd yn hynny o beth?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you very much. The Government has a strategy for museums and libraries and I want to start with the museums strategy, if I may. There are exciting plans afoot for the National Museum Wales, particularly on its St Fagans site. It is a huge success story; its visitor numbers for the past year increased to 1.75 million. That is about 9% above the target that was set by the Welsh Government. But, at the same time, National Museum Wales is facing restructuring problems. We have heard that 23 jobs will be lost and the job descriptions of over 150 other posts will be redrafted. Are you confident that it is possible to sustain both these things; the huge success with the increase in visitor numbers, and the substantial cut in staff numbers and the re-evaluation of other jobs? Is there not an imbalance there?

[89] **John Griffiths:** It is important that we have in place staffing structures, facilities, sites and museums in Wales that continue to take forward the progress that you mentioned, Rhodri Glyn, and that we do so in what inevitably will be a very pressured funding environment. We know that that is the case. We know that, probably for several years, we will face very considerable financial difficulties with, in real terms, reducing budgets.

[90] So, we have to face that across Government and, obviously, that applies to the museum sector. It is absolutely right that National Museum Wales has recognised the situation. Its funding, in real terms, has reduced in recent years and will probably continue to do so. So, it has had to take a long, hard look at its structures, including staffing, and at the development at St Fagans and what will be required to take that forward and build into its success. So, it is the right approach to do the hard thinking and make the hard decisions, and make National Museum Wales, including St Fagans, increasingly attractive as visitor experiences for the people of Wales and visitors to Wales. That is very much what the restructuring is about. I have discussed it with National Museum Wales at a meeting. I have also met with the trade union to discuss the staffing issues. I think that working together in a true spirit of partnership, we can find a way through that continues to increase participation, access and visitor numbers, and also offers a better experience, with a stronger interpretation of what is on display, and does so in that difficult financial and budget situation. It is an exciting project at St Fagans. St Fagans has been rated the best visitor attraction in the UK in UK-wide surveys, and that is before this work takes place and we greatly improve the offer. So, it is very positive. I understand the issues that you raise, Rhodri Glyn, but I believe that, were those difficult decisions around restructuring not faced up to, then we would be facing even more difficult questions.

[91] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Derbyniaf yr hyn y mae'r Gweinidog yn ei ddweud ynglŷn â'r datblygiadau cyffrous, nid yn unig yn Sain Ffagan, ond ar draws Amgueddfa Cymru, er bod y prosiect yn Sain Ffagan yn arbennig o gyffrous. Fodd bynnag, mae Amgueddfa Cymru wedi wynebu gorfod gwneud arbedion am dros chwe blynedd bellach, ac, yn y pen draw, mae'r arbedion hynny'n sicr o effeithio ar brofiadau pobl sy'n ymweld â'r safleoedd. Hynny yw, mae pen draw i arbedion, a, rhywbryd, bydd Amgueddfa Cymru yn wynebu sefyllfa lle mae'n amhosibl i gadw'r cydbwysedd rhwng gwneud arbedion a sicrhau bod profiadau'r ymwelwyr yn cael eu cynnal. A ydych wedi rhoi unrhyw ystyriaeth i'r polisi o roi mynediad yn rhad ac am ddim, ac a oes sefyllfa'n debygol o godi pan fydd rhaid i chi ail-ystyried y polisi hwnnw?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I accept what the Minister says about exciting developments, not just in St Fagans, but across National Museum Wales, although the project in St Fagans is particularly exciting. However, National Museum Wales has faced having to make savings for over six years now, and, ultimately, those savings are bound to impact on the visitor experience at those sites. That is, there is an end point to savings, and, at some point, National Museum Wales will have to face a situation where it is impossible to keep the balance between making savings and ensuring that the visitor experience is maintained. Have you given any consideration to the policy of free admission, and is a situation likely to arise where you will have to reconsider that policy?

[92] **John Griffiths:** We are committed to free admission. That has been a big part of the success in driving up visitor numbers, and connecting the people of Wales to their culture and their heritage more effectively. What we are seeing around the restructuring are examples of how it is possible to meet the challenges of doing more with less. Although that is no easy thing to do, we are all familiar with the situation that, when budgets become much tighter and more strained, and when there is reduction in real terms, organisations and Governments become more innovative and find better ways of delivering. That must happen—it is of necessity that you get fresh ideas and fresh energy. That is what we are seeing at present around the restructuring that is taking place. That new, enhanced offer at St Fagans, for example, will be delivered by a new staffing structure that understands the skills and the experience that will be necessary for that new offer, and will ensure that those skills are retained and indeed recruited. Although some jobs will go, there will also be recruitment. Therefore, it is a more intelligent, targeted approach. I believe that it is perfectly possible to square that circle, and we see that, across Government responsibility, you can find better and more effective ways of doing things.

[93] Therefore, I believe that it is a very positive picture. Again, I am willing to work with the committee as we go forward, because we will have to look at developments carefully, Rhodri Glyn, and we have a monitoring role, so we work closely with National Museum Wales. As I said, I recently met with the trade union Prospect to ensure that we have an overview on this. We are not in danger of getting to that position that you describe where reductions in budget and staffing mean that the visitor experience—the offer that is made—diminishes.

[94] **Mr Jones:** I would like to add something to the Minister's comments. What is key here is the visitor experience, which is changing markedly, and requires a whole review of the structure of museums. National Museum Wales is clearly moving away from the traditional glass-case-exhibition-type of experience for visitors into a much more participative, involving and engaging experience for people. That move is going to require a serious restructure of the whole organisation, which the director general of the museum is absolutely committed to implementing.

[95] **Kenneth Skates:** I am pleased to hear that. One of the problems that we have in north-east Wales concerning National Museum Wales is that it does not have a presence in

the region. Would the Government be keen to examine the possibility of National Museum Wales having a site in north-east Wales and if so, I suggest that the Brymbo ironworks could be a good location.

[96] **John Griffiths:** That is a joined-up suggestion that you have made, Ken.

[97] **Mike Hedges:** Do you mean steelworks?

[98] **Kenneth Skates:** It is the same thing. It was ironworks from which you extracted—we are getting technical now.

[99] **Christine Chapman:** I am sure that the Minster knows what it is.

[100] **John Griffiths:** We are always open to ideas. National Museum Wales has a presence across Wales. The National Slate Museum is a great and important attraction and asset in north Wales. We are always open to ideas. Obviously, in the current financial situation, Ken, it is very difficult to find new money for development. However, we will not always be in these strained financial times. We have to have a long-term vision as well. We are always open to ideas. However, one aspect of the changes that Gareth has mentioned relating to new ways of presenting our heritage and culture in Wales is about using new technologies. The People's Collection is a good example of how you can make a lot of material available through the new technologies without having to address issues of building an expensive new development.

[101] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae gennyf nifer o gwestiynau, ac nid wyf wedi dechrau ar lyfrgelloedd eto. O ran Amgueddfa Cymru, rwyf yn falch clywed am hyder y Gweinidog. Credaf fod posibiliadau gwych a photensial cyffrous i'r prosiect. Serch hynny, credaf ar ryw bwynt y bydd yn rhaid i chi ystyried y sefyllfa o ran mynediad rhad ac am ddim. Os ydych yn defnyddio ffigwr cyffredinol ac yn dweud, ar gyfartaledd, petai bob ymwelydd wedi cyfrannu £2 o ran tâl mynediad, fe welwch y byddai hynny yn £3.5 miliwn y flwyddyn o arian y gellid ei fuddsoddi yn y prosiect cyffrous hwn. Gadawaf hi ar hynny. Credaf ei fod yn rhywbeth y bydd yn rhaid ei ystyried ar ryw bwynt neu'i gilydd.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I have a number of questions, and I have not started on libraries yet. In terms of the National Museum Wales, I am pleased to hear of the Minister's confidence. I believe that there are excellent possibilities and an exciting potential for the project. However, I believe that at some point you are going to have to consider the situation in terms of free admission. If you use a general figure and say that, on average, if every visitor had contributed £2 as an admission fee, you will see that would be £3.5 million a year of money that could be invested in this exciting project. I will leave it at that. I believe it is something that will have to be considered at some point or other.

[102] O ran llyfrgelloedd, Weinidog, a wnewch chi roi diweddariad i ni ar Lyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru yn Aberystwyth? Rwyf yn siŵr ein bod i gyd yn ymwybodol o'r tân a ddigwyddodd yno. Allwch chi ddweud wrthym beth yw'r sefyllfa gyfredol?

In terms of libraries, Minister, will you give us an update on the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth? I am sure that we are all aware of the fire that happened there. Can you tell us what the current situation is?

[103] **John Griffiths:** I am happy to do that, Rhodri. Before I do so, I want to come back briefly to what you said about free admission. There is a lot that National Museum Wales can do around generating more income from visitors without charging for admission, because there are shops, cafes, car parks and online sales. There is a lot that could be done to lever in more income without charging for admissions, which I think would make it more difficult to continue to increase our visitor numbers and our connections with our culture. I am sure that we will return to these matters.

[104] I visited the National Library of Wales the other week and met the staff who have done an incredible job in dealing with the emergency, putting the emergency plan into action when the fire broke out and doing a lot of important work thereafter, such as moving material and furniture. The immediate crisis was dealt with professionally and effectively by the fire service, the library staff and others. It was impressive to hear how all of that had taken place. There is now a situation where extensive work will be required to the roof. We are not yet in a position to know what the final figure is in relation to that. My officials have been working closely with the library. Of course, we have people in Aberystwyth. We have been working closely with the national library on a day-to-day basis to make sure that we are fully apprised of the developing situation. We are committed to providing the necessary support to the library to deal with the situation that it faces, knowing that it has to be dealt with early, while the work continues on making a final assessment of what will be required and on the legal responsibility for what happened and where the responsibility lies to put it right. However, before we get to bottom out that position, there may well be work that will have to be done. We understand that, and we will work with the library to make sure that the support that is necessary from Welsh Government is put in place.

10.15 a.m.

[105] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae'n faes enfawr, ond fe gyfyngaf fy hun i un cwestiwn ar y strategaeth o ran 'Llyfrgelloedd yn Ysbrydoli'. Mae llywodraeth leol ledled Cymru yn wynebu cyllidebau sy'n golygu y bydd y sefyllfa yn anodd iawn iddo. Bydd rhaid iddo wneud dewisiadau anodd. A ydych yn hyderus bod modd parhau â'r strategaeth hon, gan gofio'r pwysau fydd ar lywodraeth leol, sy'n gyfrifol am lawer o'r llyfrgelloedd hyn ledled Cymru?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: It is a huge area, but I will confine myself to one question on the strategy in terms of 'Libraries Inspire'. Local government across Wales is facing budgets that mean that the situation will be difficult for it. It will have to make difficult choices. Are you confident that it is possible to continue with this strategy, bearing in mind the pressures that will be on local government, which is responsible for many of these libraries across Wales?

[106] **John Griffiths:** Again, it is a difficult situation, and we have to understand that local authorities face the same difficulties that all levels of government do. Dwindling budgets and increasing calls upon those budgets make it difficult to find a way through. Obviously, there are difficult decisions to be made and various people will not be happy with those decisions. We all understand that general position. We continue to provide a lot of assistance to local authorities in terms of library provision, and we will continue with that support. The grants for community libraries have probably reached almost every constituency in Wales, and Members will be familiar with that important work. We are in touch with the local authorities to monitor the situation. So, we have the information on the cuts that they have made, whether they have been in terms of opening hours or financial provision, or whether they have meant, in some cases, closures. We continue to try to urge collaboration between local authorities, because, as we all know, that regionalisation agenda is important and sharing of resources can deliver effectively at times of strained budgets. So, it is a difficult situation, Rhodri Glyn, but our job in the Welsh Government is to keep our finger on the pulse in terms of what is happening around Wales and to continue to provide support and assistance, even given the budgetary difficulties that we have.

[107] **Peter Black:** On the national library, what assessment has been made of the damage to the collections as a result of that fire? How bad is it?

[108] **John Griffiths:** Happily, it is quite minor, in terms of the extent of the fire, because the part of the building that was damaged is not the part where collections are generally held, although some items were there to be worked on. Those items that have been damaged have

gone to specialist restorers as part of an existing contract. So, fortunately, the damage to the collection was fairly minor, but that is not to say that there was not some damage, and work is taking place.

[109] **Mike Hedges:** We have the regionalisation of a whole range of services. However, unfortunately, local council tax payers in places such as Swansea and Cardiff pay for them for the benefit of the people in the surrounding areas; it is not fed into the rate support grant.

[110] **John Griffiths:** I am sure that there are some technical issues there that my colleague the Minister for Local Government and Government Business may well wish to reflect upon, Mike.

[111] **Christine Chapman:** We will be moving on to some other themes, but we will have a break now. We will reconvene at 10.30 a.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.20 a.m. a 10.32 a.m.
The meeting was adjourned between 10.20 a.m. and 10.32 a.m.*

[112] **Christine Chapman:** [*Inaudible.*]*—*we will possibly ask for written responses. We now move on to the theme of sport, physical activity and outdoor recreation. I know that Jenny Rathbone wants to come in on this.

[113] **Jenny Rathbone:** I want to ask about the Active Travel (Wales) Bill. I am particularly interested in the two maps that local authorities will be producing. One map sets out current walking and cycling provision, and the second establishes their long-term plans for a network. Have the authorities already produced those maps, Minister, or are they waiting for you to produce legislation that forces them to produce them?

[114] **John Griffiths:** I think it is patchy across local authorities, Jenny. Some have pretty good maps at the moment, others do not. We want to ensure that adequate mapping takes place consistently across Wales, and that it is up to a required standard. As well as mapping existing provision, we would require local authorities to produce integrated maps that set out how they will improve that network. That is a really important part of this. It will be about continuous improvement, and ensuring that we have a network for cycling and walking in Wales that will really lead to a step change—to get people out of their cars and get them walking and cycling, which will be of big benefit to their physical fitness and health, but will also deal with issues such as congestion and emissions, and help the economy.

[115] **Jenny Rathbone:** I agree that this is a really important Bill. Are your civil servants pressing all local authorities to deliver those two maps now, or are some of them saying that they will wait for the legislation to force the issue?

[116] **John Griffiths:** We are not pressing so much now, because we will need the legislation in place. However, we have been encouraging local authorities to improve their cycle networks for some time. Sustrans has worked closely with local authorities to make improvements, and we have seen substantial improvements. Cardiff is one example of that. However, as ever, there is progress yet to be made and, if we are going to make a step change—and it is about a modal shift in transport—there is a lot more to be done. So, we need the legislative drivers in place.

[117] **Jenny Rathbone:** My anxiety is that local authorities may not be absolutely aware that this will be a must-do in short order, and, in the meantime, are not opportunistically making improvements when other things are happening. A lot of digging up of the road costs an awful lot of money.

[118] **John Griffiths:** There is an ongoing effort that has been in place for some time, working with local authorities in terms of the active travel plan, and much Welsh Government activity working with local authorities and Sustrans around that. We have seen a substantial amount of progress and that effort continues. What the legislation will do is introduce a new dimension to that that really builds on the progress to date, strengthens it and moves it on to a new level. It is that new level that will produce the modal shift that is absolutely crucial.

[119] **Jenny Rathbone:** I agree that it is a very important measure, particularly around getting children to school either by walking or cycling. Looking slightly broader, to people whom we want to encourage to go to work not using cars, have you had any conversations with train companies to enable bikes to be carried on trains so that people can begin and end their journey by bike, even if they are having to travel some distance by train initially?

[120] **John Griffiths:** First, the schools element is very important, and I know that my predecessor in terms of ministerial responsibility, Carl Sargeant, actually launched the Bill at a school in Cardiff to make that very important connection in terms of young people and habits that will stay with them for life, and active, safe routes to school. Interestingly, that school in question was developing a safe route to St Fagans, which makes a nice connection with the cultural aspect of my portfolio as well.

[121] In terms of the Bill itself, we know that there is much that needs to happen around the Bill in promoting active travel with a range of key partner organisations, and the train companies are certainly among those. We will make sure that, as part of a wider effort that complements the legislation, we will have talks with those key organisations to make sure that they do what is necessary to make it much easier for people to cycle instead of driving.

[122] **Jenny Rathbone:** I look forward to progress on that.

[123] **Christine Chapman:** Before you move on, Jenny, I have a supplementary from Peter on the Active Travel (Wales) Bill.

[124] **Peter Black:** Just quickly, Minister, what sort of message is being sent out when the Active Travel (Wales) Bill has been taken away from the Minister for transport? Given that you are doing it, it is almost as if it is a leisure activity, as opposed to mainstream transport policy.

[125] **John Griffiths:** It is really important that I work very closely with the Minister for transport on this. In fact, I met her just yesterday to make sure that we stay joined up. The budget remains within transport, and transport officials remain centrally involved. What we are doing is making sure that active travel remains mainstreamed within the transport department, and that is why the budget stays there. Officials throughout the transport department work on active travel. At the same time, understanding my responsibilities to get people more active, I can drive forward the legislation and work around it in terms of the wider effort on promoting cycling and walking, which links with the coast path and outdoor access. It is very much a joined-up effort between me and the Minister for transport. Active travel remains mainstreamed within the transport department, but I drive the Bill and the wider effort.

[126] **Peter Black:** As far as the public is concerned, however, what you have now is a Bill to do with culture and sport.

[127] **John Griffiths:** Obviously, we will go to great efforts to ensure that the arrangements in place as I have described them are central to our joined-up, Welsh Government efforts. It is always important to understand the cross-Government connections around any legislation and any part of the Welsh Government's programme. That is a challenge for us, but there are

wider connections to be made, as I have described in terms of my portfolio. We know that the Taff trail, for example, would be and is a very important part of the cycle network and the mapping exercises, but, in addition to the modal shift elements of the Taff trail, it is also an important recreational route. So, it is not as if you can easily divorce one from the other.

[128] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just focusing on getting young people to do more physical activity, and this taskforce that is chaired by Baroness Grey-Thompson on the relationship between schools and physical activity, could you tell us when that taskforce is likely to report?

[129] **John Griffiths:** We are hoping to receive Tanni Grey-Thompson's report shortly. In fact, along with the Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews, I met Tanni just a couple of weeks ago for the latest progress report. She very much hopes to finalise that report within the next couple of weeks.

[130] **Jenny Rathbone:** Once you have her report, what steps will you then take, along with the Minister for education?

[131] **John Griffiths:** Along with the Minister for education, we will very carefully consider the report and how it is best taken forward. Obviously, we are currently at the stage where we await that report. Once we receive it, we will want to give it due consideration and look at the wider Welsh Government programme for government and see how we can drive it forward within that context.

[132] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just looking more widely at physical activity—

[133] **Christine Chapman:** Before you move on, Jenny, I would like to bring Mark in with a supplementary question.

[134] **Jenny Rathbone:** Yes, go ahead.

[135] **Mark Isherwood:** In terms of schools and physical activity in children, how, if at all, are you endeavouring to ensure that play, as the Welsh Government used to describe it, is separate from organised recreation and sport? Open play and free play is critical to the physical and psychological development of children and young people, but is not cricket, football, tennis, rugby or even, necessarily, organised recreation on a beach, and yet I understand that the play sufficiency responses that have been returned to the Welsh Government by some of the local authorities have included their sports pitches, and even their beaches.

[136] **John Griffiths:** That illustrates how important it is that we work across Government and crucially, for me, with the Minister for education around this agenda. I think that the foundation phase has been very much based on getting children more active and outdoors, which I think is a very good starting point in terms of creating those good habits that will stay with people throughout their lives. You are right; it is much wider than organised sport or team sport. Anything that gets children more active is of huge benefit to their physical health and their enjoyment of life. So, we do look at it in that wider sense, and we must not become too constrained in terms of the sport element. So, I very much agree with what I think you are saying, Mark, around that wider view, and I will want to work very closely with the Minister for education, not just on Tanni Grey-Thompson's report on the place of sport in schools, but on how we get that wider picture of increasing physical activity.

[137] **Jenny Rathbone:** In terms of tackling the obesity epidemic, which we have in Wales, physical activity is one aspect, and another aspect is what people on limited incomes are forced to eat. I am particularly interested in your suggestions of encouraging more community gardening and growing the number of allotments. Could you tell us how that fits in with your

possible legislation on increasing access to the countryside, rights of way and all that sort of thing?

[138] **John Griffiths:** It is a very important aspect of health that people in Wales eat more healthily as well as exercise more. It is possible for behaviour to change, and sometimes change quite quickly. A recent example of that is the issues around horsemeat in what were allegedly beefburgers and so on. Apparently, there has been quite a dramatic shift away from the consumption of processed meat as a result, which the health experts consider will be very beneficial. So, we can see behavioural change. Obviously, that is a particular example in rather unusual circumstances, but people do take notice of issues around what they eat and health aspects.

10.45 a.m.

[139] I think that we can work with the grain of general concern and the general Government effort to make people more aware of these issues to achieve behavioural change. One example of that is people increasingly growing their own produce. That makes very nice connections with our wider outdoor and environmental agenda. There are all sort of exciting things: people are guerrilla gardening, for example, and taking over areas of land that are not being used properly and using them for community orchards and all sorts of things. It is an empowering and quite radical agenda at times, and I am very interested in that and attracted by many aspects of it.

[140] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Is that Government policy?

[141] **John Griffiths:** We are looking at these issues very carefully, Rhodri Glyn. We know that there is a great demand for allotments and, in terms of the environment Bill, we will look very carefully at how demand for allotments is assessed and will ensure that adequate provision is made. We know that a lot of interesting things happen around allotments. Schools make the connections and get young people to visit the allotments; there are nice inter-generational aspects to that between older people and younger people. Young people need to understand—through allotments and community farms, for example—where food comes from. Sadly, sometimes they do not. There are lots of allotments on school premises and that links with the foundation phase, learning through doing and outdoor activities. There are lots of good connections that we can make around this. Allotments are very important and we want to make those connections between healthy eating and healthy living.

[142] **Jenny Rathbone:** How is the legislation going to increase the number of allotments and opportunities for guerrilla gardening, which I strongly support? Some schools are much better than others at encouraging children to get involved, get their hands dirty, grow their food and make that link. How much of that is your role, or is it the role of the Minister for education?

[143] **John Griffiths:** The latter is very much the Minister for education but we will work closely together. In terms of getting better allotment provision, it is a matter of assessing that demand accurately and meeting that demand. They are the essential component parts of the legislation.

[144] **Jenny Rathbone:** There are still huge waiting lists in Cardiff.

[145] **John Griffiths:** Exactly; that is why we need the legislation.

[146] **Kenneth Skates:** I can see that a lot of Members are going to club together and guerrilla garden the land next to this building. [*Laughter.*] One of the biggest barriers preventing young parents, in particular, from participating in sport, or any physical activity, is

a lack of childcare during week-day evenings and at weekends. Are you working with the Minister, Huw Lewis, in that regard? I wonder whether there is a greater role for Communities First partnerships in tying together fitness classes in leisure centres with the organisation of childcare.

[147] **John Griffiths:** Communities First is our flagship Government initiative to deal with issues around social justice. For all Ministers, in looking at how they can tackle poverty within their own portfolios, it is crucial to make a connection with Communities First and the tackling poverty action plan. I am very keen to work with Huw Lewis on these issues, Ken, and to ensure that I make those connections within my own sphere of responsibility.

[148] **Mike Hedges:** I have four questions; if you could answer 'yes' to each one of them, that might speed things up. The first is: will you talk to the Minister for Local Government and Government Business to ask local authorities to use a proportion of their highways budget to maintain cycle paths? One problem is that cycle paths are put in and are expected to last for ever. The second question relates to an inquiry that we undertook last November on third-generation and fourth-generation pitches, which led to the conclusion that the Welsh Government should develop a strategy. Are you still committed to developing that strategy? The third question relates to what I call the premiership paradox. When teams get into the Premiership, the number of adults actively taking part in sport reduces, because they are watching rather than taking part. Will you work with universities to commission some research into exactly how bad it is? I only have anecdotal evidence on that from Swansea. My fourth point is that I agree with you about allotments. You found £2.6 million for the Splash initiative, and a small sum like that would enthuse local authorities and encourage them to open up allotments, because the amount of money needed to start them off is small. If they could bid for a sum as little as £2.6 million, I think that you would get a substantial number of allotments. So, really, I am hoping that you will say 'yes' to all of those. [*Laughter.*]

[149] **Christine Chapman:** You can give a collective 'yes' if you want to.

[150] **John Griffiths:** I know that it would save time if I was able to do that, Chair, but I need to be a little more circumspect and detailed in my answers, I am afraid.

[151] In terms of the cycle paths, funding has been identified in the regional transport consortia for cycle paths as part of highway development, to make sure that that is a feature. When it comes to maintenance, they are key issues, Mike, and we will want to make sure that paths are properly maintained; otherwise, the initial outlay will be money that is not best used. So, we will be having conversations around that, particularly in taking the Bill forward.

[152] We remain very committed to 3G and 4G pitches. Just this week, I was up at New Tredegar, looking at a new 3G pitch, the quality of which was very impressive. It was also very impressive to hear from Caerphilly County Borough Council about the increase in use that would be part of that development. I know that there are interesting ideas as well for all the Welsh league football clubs to have 3G provision, and the Football Association of Wales and the Football Trust are interested in that. We need quality, and that is an example of it.

[153] In terms of partnership in taking participation forward, rather than the passive watching of Premiership football or anything else, Sport Wales is acutely aware of these issues, and we work with it. Obviously, we want people to be active and to enjoy taking part rather than watching. There is quite a lot of concern about modern-day life, which is in danger of becoming more passive because there are so many new technologies that encourage armchair leisure rather than active leisure. Whether there is much research into that at the moment I do not know, Mike, but we can certainly take a look at it.

[154] On allotments, if we take legislation forward that will place new requirements on

local authorities, there will be a regulatory impact assessment. We have an understanding with local authorities that, where we introduce legislation that imposes new duties that have financial implications, we recognise them and help them to meet those new demands.

[155] **Mike Hedges:** I would still have preferred four yeses.

[156] **Christine Chapman:** We need to move on to the final section. I again remind Members that we need to finish this at 11 a.m., so please bear that in mind.

[157] **Kenneth Skates:** Minister, could you offer the committee an update on the Government's response to the task and finish group's report on the future outlook of the media in Wales?

[158] **John Griffiths:** Yes. The media responsibilities that I have are a significant part of the portfolio, notwithstanding the fact that it is not a devolved area. We do ensure that the report's recommendations are being implemented, and one example of that, Ken, is the broadcasting advisory panel, which is considering a number of the issues that were of concern. The Welsh Government's involvement in this is through the First Minister, to whom the panel reports directly on these issues and others.

[159] We have responded as a Welsh Government to all the main broadcasting consultations that affect Wales, including the draft operating agreement between the BBC Trust and the S4C Authority, which I think is very significant in this area. There is the communications Bill as well—the Welsh Government has been very involved in making sure that there is an input that safeguards Welsh interests and makes sure that the Welsh perspective is part of that. With Ofcom, we are very keen for it to have a duty to take account of Welsh language issues as it exercises its licensing functions. So, we have made a series of inputs in getting our viewpoints across as a Welsh Government in all sorts of ways, and we will very much continue to do that.

[160] Another important aspect of this area of activity is the community radio fund, to which we recently made new allocations. So, even though broadcasting is not devolved, there is a strong role for the Welsh Government and we are very committed to fulfilling that.

[161] **Kenneth Skates:** To what extent are you working with the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport to draw in more television and film production to Wales? The value of that goes way beyond the production value. If carefully selected, it can tie in with the way in which we promote Wales globally.

[162] **John Griffiths:** It can indeed. I have had a number of conversations that recognise that crossover. The creative industries panel is very important with regard to these issues, Ken. I have met a number of organisations that are very keen to make those connections and have input to the creative industries panel and general business activity. I went to the Celtic music festival conference in Swansea recently, and people I met there understood the need to make these connections. So, as we move forward, we are very keen to make sure that we are properly joined up.

[163] **Kenneth Skates:** Since the 1980s, there has been a plethora of media outputs developed through new media and satellite television. Are you confident that the Welsh language and Welsh culture can thrive in what is now a global media environment?

[164] **John Griffiths:** If we were being honest, we would say that it is a rapidly changing scene, is it not? It is very challenging, not just to Government but to companies, broadcasters and the media in general. It changes so quickly that everyone struggles to keep up to speed with it, really. So, we need to work very closely with all of the key partners to make sure that

Welsh interests are safeguarded. That is why it is very important for me to have very regular meetings with all of the key players. I have had a number already, and I will continue with that.

[165] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** As regards the print media, when the media task and finish group took evidence, we raised concerns at the massive number of redundancies and job losses in the print media sector across Wales. In north Wales, there is huge concern at the moment, despite assurances having been given, about whether this will continue. There is a newspaper called the *North Wales Weekly News*, which is a valuable asset in terms of providing community news. I would even go as far as to say that it is a lifeline for many within our community, because there are many people who cannot get broadband and who cannot go online to access newspapers. It is a really valuable paper. However, of late, we have seen some job losses and further redundancies, both involuntary and voluntary. Now, there is a skeleton staff operating within this part of Trinity Mirror, despite being assured only months ago that this would not be the case. Minister, will you write to the owner of Trinity Mirror to point out that we do not want to see the disappearance of the *North Wales Weekly News* nor do we want to see it being taken over by the *Daily Post*? This weekly paper is a tradition. It gets people out of the house to go to walk to get their newspaper. I have been asked on numerous occasions what I can do to ensure that the newspaper company is fully aware of the situation. The distribution figures are very good, but there are concerns that it will disappear overnight. That would really affect the quality of life of many within the communities of north Wales—and nowhere more so than Aberconwy.

[166] **John Griffiths:** First, I would like to say that I understand these issues, and all of us as politicians understand the importance of the media and the importance of people in Wales getting their information from Wales-based media so that there is proper engagement and connection between what Welsh Government does and the impact on communities across the country. It is very important to civic life that people understand what is going on in Wales and have a good relationship with providers of news and those that cover current affairs. So, the importance of that is very obvious. Many newspapers that are read in Wales are UK-based and do not have much content on what is happening in Wales. So, local and regional newspapers are crucial.

11.00 a.m.

[167] The Welsh Government has written to Trinity Mirror on these issues of activity and coverage in Wales, and jobs in Wales. I am very happy to continue with that effort. As a coincidence, I am meeting later today with Alan Edmunds of Media Wales, which is part of the Trinity Mirror group. I would be very happy to raise that specific example as part of my general discussion with him.

[168] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Thank you; that would be much appreciated.

[169] **Christine Chapman:** Perhaps you could drop us a note on any outcome from that.

[170] **John Griffiths:** Certainly, Chair.

[171] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. I thank you, Minister, and your officials for attending today. I think that it has been a very interesting session. We will send you a transcript of the meeting to check for factual accuracy. Thank you all for attending today.

[172] Before I close the meeting, I remind Members to stay behind for a couple of minutes at the end. The next meeting is next Thursday, 23 May, when we will be scrutinising the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty. I close the meeting now.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.01 a.m.
The meeting ended at 11.01 a.m.