



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

The Petitions Committee

Completion Report

**Summary of the Petitions Committee's consideration of
P-03-130 St Brides Wentlooge Broadband 'notspot'**

November 2008

Petition Received

28 March 2008

Ruled Admissible

April 2008

Initial Consideration**8 May 2008**

The Committee gave initial consideration to the petition, and agreed to write to the Deputy First Minister to ask that it provides the Committee with information on the provision of broadband to this specific area, and what plans it has to enable provision in the future.

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract from the transcript of the meeting on 8 May 2008, and Annex 2 for the letter sent by the Chair to the Deputy First Minister)

25 June 2008

The Committee considered a response from the Deputy First Minister, and agreed to write to the petitioners to recommend that they register their 'notspot', and point them in the direction of an agency that can provide them with impartial advice on alternative high-speed internet provision.

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract of the transcript of the meeting on 25 June 2008, and Annex 2 for the response received from the Deputy First Minister)

2 October 2008

The Committee considered an update to this petition, and agreed to establish the Welsh Assembly Government's policy on 'notspots'.

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract from the transcript of the meeting on 2 October 2008)

6 November 2008

The Committee considered an update to this petition, and agreed to close the petition as they were unable to progress it any further.

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract of the transcript of the meeting on 6 November 2008)

Annex 1

Extracts from Petitions Committee meetings

8 May 2008

Val Lloyd: Our third new petition is for broadband in the St Brides Wentlooge and Lighthouse Park regions of Newport. The petitioners are requesting guidance and help from the Assembly with the provision of broadband in that area. All that we can do is write and acquire that information to see what steps we can take next.

Michael German: It might well be that there is a technical issue that might require getting in the company, BT, or others to address that issue. Again, that is a good first step. They are not alone; other places have the same problem.

Val Lloyd: It is probably a technical problem.

Bethan Jenkins: What is the new Broadcasting Committee discussing? Would this be within its remit?

Val Lloyd: I do not think so. I have not seen its terms of reference, but I do not think that it would be. Broadcasting and the provision of broadband are two different issues. They may come back and tell us, in which case, we will apologise to Bethan.

25 June 2008

Val Lloyd: The final update petition is on broadband in St Brides Wentlooge and Lighthouse Park regions of Newport. We have received a reply from the Minister.

Bethan Jenkins: [Inaudible.]—to keep it open until they think that their area had been considered and potentially taken out of the not-spot area.

Val Lloyd: The petitioners will have received this letter, so I hope that they will have registered. It says that, in this area, there have been 17 registrations from the residents on the Assembly's database. Perhaps we could write to the petitioners to ask them to follow that up in light of the Deputy First Minister's letter, so that they can register.

Kirsty Williams: They need to campaign within their community to make sure that as many people as possible are registered.

Andrew R.T. Davies: There was an interesting piece on Wales Today on Monday regarding a community in Montgomeryshire, I think, which was in a not spot. It had looked into the options and is bringing broadband into the community through the wireless system. The cost was a fraction of that involved in bringing in broadband by other means. The cost was around £1,000 per household to bring it in through the conventional model, but the cost was reduced to around £200 per household using the wireless model. The monthly cost was also reduced to £5 as opposed to a hell of a big figure for the monthly subscription under the conventional broadband model that we would understand. So, there are many alternatives available for communities. The community was featured in the February edition, which was about not spots in Wales that cannot access broadband. It might be worth trying to get more of an understanding on that.

Val Lloyd: I wonder whether it would be possible to get a copy of that, so that we could send it to the petitioners.

Kirsty Williams: Who is responsible for providing impartial advice on the other options? Would it be Ofcom? Who could we put the petitioners in touch with that could explain impartially other options and support them in looking at their options?

Andrew R.T. Davies: This community in Montgomeryshire did it off its own bat and found the alternative, which is used extensively in Australia.

Val Lloyd: It sounds wonderful, and like a much better option. I think that Kirsty is right; we need to refer the petitioners to an independent adviser. There could be even better solutions.

Kirsty Williams: We need to find an organisation that can provide the petitioners with independent advice on the alternative options. I do not know whether that is Ofcom's job.

Mr Sanchez: I suggest that the secretariat finds out who that body is and writes a letter along the lines that you have suggested. It may be Ofcom or someone else.

Kirsty Williams: I do not know, off the top of my head, who would be able to provide them with independent advice on the range of options available and who could support them.

Val Lloyd: I am sure that the secretariat would update us on its progress.

Kirsty Williams: For some of these communities, satellite will be the only option available. We will never be able to run cable everywhere. Even if you run cable, it can be unreliable. I have a business that is setting up in Llanbadarn Fynydd via a satellite system, because it cannot do it in any other way.

Val Lloyd: So, we will take a two-pronged approach to that. We will find an independent body and give its address to the petitioners. We will also urge them to sign up to the database. Do we want it to come back to us?

Bethan Jenkins: I think so, yes.

Andrew R.T. Davies: It would be good to keep an eye on it—out of interest, more than anything.

2 October 2008

Val Lloyd: On petition P-03-130, requesting broadband in the St Brides Wentloog and Lighthouse Park areas of Newport city, we wrote back to the petitioners with details of how they could register their not spot and get in touch with Ofcom, but they told us that they had already done so. When they requested guidance and help for the provision of broadband, I rather think that they were hoping that we would wave a magic wand of some type, but we cannot.

Michael German: There were questions on this in the Chamber last week. The Welsh Assembly Government must have some form of policy or guidance on not spots. Could we provide that to the petitioners, if it is available?

Val Lloyd: We could write to the Assembly Government to find out whether it has such guidance.

Michael German: The Assembly Government has put huge amounts of money into dealing with not spots, so it must have a policy on how it gives its money out.

Mr Davidson: We can check the correspondence that we have already received from the Minister, and, if there is no direct reference to the policy, we can write again to ask for it.

Andrew R.T. Davies: William Graham is on the case, as well.

Val Lloyd: I think that William has already asked questions in the Chamber about it. We are not partisan in this committee. [Interruption.] Not at all. I have great admiration for your chief whip.

6 November 2008

Val Lloyd: We will now move to petition P-03-130 on broadband in a specific area of Newport city. I think that we can do nothing other than close the petition. We raised the issue on behalf of the petitioners, the Minister replied, we sent his guidance to the petitioners, and they told us that they already knew that. I do not think that there is anything else that we can do.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I believe that you are correct, Chair. We have done what we can, as the Petitions Committee of the National Assembly for Wales. Therefore, the petition should be closed.

Val Lloyd: Thank you. Is everybody in agreement? I see that you are.

Annex 2

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Ieuan Wyn Jones AM
Minister for Economy and Transport
Welsh Assembly Government
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our ref: PET-03-130

13 May 2008

PETITION: ST BRIDES BROADBAND

The above petition was considered by the Petitions Committee for the first time on 8 May 2008. It requests 'guidance and help from the Welsh Assembly for the provision of Broadband' in St Brides Wentlooge and Lighthouse Park areas of Newport.

Before we proceed with further consideration of the petition can you please provide the Committee with information on the provision of broadband to this specific area, and what plans the Welsh Assembly Government has to enable provision in the future.

I should be grateful if you could consider this request and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Val Lloyd,
Chair, Petitions Committee

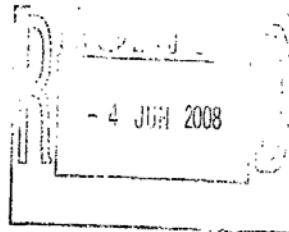
130

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister

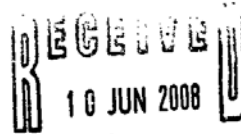


Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/00980/08



Val Lloyd AM
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



3 May 2008

Dez Val

Thank you for your letter dated 13th May 2008 regarding the petition currently under consideration by the Petitions Committee about broadband provision in St Brides.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that widespread access to affordable, secure broadband is important to businesses and citizens across Wales. To this end, the Welsh Assembly Government is working with the telecommunications industry and the communications regulator, Ofcom to share information on communications infrastructure issues, understand barriers to investment, including regulatory and economic issues, and inform future policy making in this area.

St Brides is connected to the Castleton telephone exchange. The Welsh Assembly Government is aware that St Brides is a broadband notspot due to its distance from the local telephone exchange at Castleton. Broadband signal strength degrades the further it has to travel from the telephone exchange and if a signal has to travel further than 5km it is unlikely that a viable broadband signal can be obtained by end users.

You will know that on 9th April I announced steps I am taking to address broadband notspots in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government will shortly be undertaking a procurement to engage with a telecommunications company or consortium to address identified broadband notspots in Wales, where it is feasible and economically viable to do so. It is important that constituents in broadband notspots register their inability to access broadband services via the Welsh Assembly Government notspot registration website at www.brnw.org.uk or www.cadbec.org.uk for the Welsh version or by telephoning 01443 846700. So far, we have 17 registrations from St Brides' residents on our database.

In addition, we are working with BT in areas where it has acknowledged it might be able to provide a solution to broadband notspots. We hope to reach agreement with BT soon. Details will be published on our website as contractual terms are agreed.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Ffacs * Fax 029 2089 8198
PS.DeputyFirstMinister@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Of course I cannot guarantee that all identified notspots across Wales will receive broadband through this procurement. Ultimately, commercial, technical and funding considerations will apply. However, I remain committed to addressing the problem of broadband notspots and hope my recent announcement demonstrates this.



Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport