



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

The Petitions Committee

Completion Report

**Summary of the Petitions Committee's consideration of
P-03-145 Fuel Prices**

April 2009

Petition Received

23 May 2008

Ruled admissible

June 2008

Initial Consideration

25 June 2008

The Committee gave initial consideration to the petition and agreed to:

- Write to the Deputy First Minister to ask for information on any action the Welsh government is taking in relation to the petition
- Ask the Enterprise and Learning Committee to consider establishing a rapporteur group to consider this issue

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract from the transcript of the meeting on 25 June 2008, Annex 2 for the letter sent by the Chair to the Deputy First Minister and Annex 3 for the letter sent to the Chair of the Enterprise and Learning Committee)

Further Consideration

2 October 2008

The Committee considered a response from the Deputy First Minister and agreed to await an update from the Enterprise and Learning Committee

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

4 December 2008

The Committee considered the report from the Enterprise and Learning Committee's rapporteur group and agreed to await the Welsh government's response to the report

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract from the transcript of the meeting on 4 December 2008, and Annex 3 for the response received from the Chair of the Enterprise and Learning Committee)

31 March 2009

The Committee considered the Welsh government's response to the Enterprise and Learning Committee rapporteur group's report, and the subsequent Plenary debate, and agreed to conclude its consideration of the petition as it has taken it as far as it can.

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract from the transcript of the meeting on 31 March 2009)

Petitions Clerk

April 2009

Annex 1

Extracts from Petitions Committee meeting transcripts

25 June 2008

Val Lloyd: The last new petition today is on fuel prices, and it is regarding fuel and road haulage in Wales. It calls upon the National Assembly,

'to recognise the crippling financial impact of rising fuel prices on Welsh haulage businesses... and to instigate a review/inquiry into the competitiveness and future sustainability of the... industry. The outcome from any inquiry should then be used to shape supportive measures for the... industry here in Wales and to lobby the national UK Government where any measures fall outside the National Assembly for Wales' remit.'

It is quite a big ask, is it not? [Laughter.]

Andrew R.T. Davies: I declare an interest here, Chair. I have signed that petition, and I also received it in Cardiff West services about a month ago. I also know the petitioner through business contacts, because he delivers farm goods.

Val Lloyd: Thank you very much; that will be on the record. In view of the protocol that we agreed earlier, that excludes you from making a decision.

Kirsty Williams: I regard this as a hugely significant issue that is also current. While in the first instance it may be useful to write to the Deputy First Minister to ask him what he is doing at the moment, the petition calls for a review/inquiry. I understand that this committee has the right to ask another committee to look at the specific issue, so could the Enterprise and Learning Committee be asked to carry out a very short inquiry into this subject? Some very interesting policy issues could arise out of this—there is the issue about programmes that have been instituted in England but not in Wales.

My understanding is that there is also a European directive that allows national Governments to ask for a derogation with regards to fuel duty in rural areas. That is the case in some parts of the continents. There are different levels of fuel duty to compensate rural communities for the high cost of fuel and public transport issues. That derogation exists under current EU legislation, and the national Government has never pursued it on behalf of rural parts. Some interesting things could come out of an inquiry and could move some of these issues forward. So, I think that we should write to the Minister, but I would be interested in referring this to the Enterprise and Learning Committee to carry out a review.

Val Lloyd: In principle, I totally accept that, but I think that the Enterprise and Learning Committee is overburdened at the moment. What if we did a little bit for that committee, and perhaps asked the Members' research service to do some work? On the issues that you have raised about derogation, perhaps we could get a view from the Members' research service first of all—

Kirsty Williams: We do not need a view from the Members research service; I can do it myself.

Val Lloyd: I am sure that I could too if time permitted.

Kirsty Williams: I could get you the information by the end of the afternoon.
[Laughter.]

The Enterprise and Learning Committee has been good in the past at setting up small working groups, like rapporteur groups, that undertake work above and beyond the working of the committee as a whole. That has worked very well with the dyslexia rapporteur group. It overcomes some of the issues with people's agendas being very busy and difficult. The group on dyslexia has just come to an end, so, potentially, we could ask the Enterprise and Learning Committee to set up a rapporteur group that would report back to the formal committee. That group would work alongside the committee but would not take up formal slots.

Val Lloyd: We cannot dictate to the committee, so we would have to ask it.

Bethan Jenkins: First, I apologise for being late. When we visited Scotland to see how its petitions committee worked, we noted that it carries out its own investigations. Perhaps we could do that more often, because, as you said, there is more pressure on other committees. Could we do that? Rather than relying on the Members' research service and putting the burden on others, perhaps we could undertake our own investigations.

Val Lloyd: We are equally strapped for time in many ways, and we all sit on other committees. We are not precluded from doing so by Standing Orders; they do not state specifically that we can do so, but they do not in any way preclude us from doing so. I think that I would rather give this one to the Enterprise and Learning Committee.

Kirsty Williams: We could ask the Enterprise and Learning Committee to look at it. It is a focused subject; it is not a wide-ranging policy review. Therefore, it could be handled by a rapporteur group over a relatively short period of time. It is topical, so the group would not want to spend a lot of time on it, because, to have an impact, it would have to report now while the issues exist. Why do you not bat it to it and see what it says?

Val Lloyd: We could write to ask the committee if it would consider taking it forward. I still think that we could write to the Minister.

Kirsty Williams: I agree.

Val Lloyd: Perhaps we could also pass it to the Enterprise and Learning Committee, in view of the topicality of the subject. Do you foresee a problem, Stefan?

Mr Sanchez: No, I just want to make it clear for the record that this is not a formal referral of the petition to the Enterprise and Learning Committee; we are simply asking it to look at it for us, and it can choose not to do so. There has been a recent discussion about that, so I wanted to make it clear.

Val Lloyd: Thank you.

2 October 2008

Val Lloyd: The next petition is on fuel and road haulage in Wales. This has been around for a while.

Michael German: How is the committee getting on with it?

Andrew R.T. Davies: It was supposed to have done it by the summer recess. Nothing has been reported back to the Enterprise and Learning Committee. A small group was established from the Enterprise and Learning Committee. David Melding from our party was involved, Kirsty from yours, Mike—I am not sure who else was involved. The group was supposed to report back, so I think that we should find out from the Enterprise and Learning Committee clerk what progress has been made. I know that a programme of work was set up to be done during recess.

Val Lloyd: I am sure that the group has not finished; if it had, the clerk would have pointed us in that direction. So, perhaps a progress report would be applicable. It is one of these cases where we are awaiting their response before we close the petition.

4 December 2008

Val Lloyd: The next petition is that on fuel and road haulage in Wales. We considered this in June and October. The Enterprise and Learning Committee has conducted a short scrutiny inquiry into this petition. The Chair has kindly written to us to say that the committee has laid its report before the Assembly and that Members have requested a Plenary debate on the issues that the committee has raised. So, the committee has asked the Minister for a formal response, and it is happy to share that formal response with us as soon as it receives it. So, shall we put this on hold until we have that formal response? Andrew, you are on that committee, are you not?

Andrew R.T. Davies: Yes. It was agreed the week before last. Hopefully, we will have the debate next term.

31 March 2009

Val Lloyd: We now move on to petition P-03-145, on fuel prices. Do you think that it is time that we closed this petition? I do not think that we can take it any further.

Andrew R. T. Davies: To be fair, Chair, the Enterprise and Learning Committee is a very good host committee for us. We will be calling it a subsidiary of our committee before long, and I mean no offence by that; it is very proactive in dealing with the issues of the Petitions Committee. There has been a full debate on fuel prices in Plenary, and key recommendations have been made within the confines of what we can do in the Assembly. I know that that will probably not address the real concerns of the petitioners, which were around taxation, but hopefully, they will feel that they have had value for money on this petition.

Val Lloyd: Yes, I agree. Are you happy with that, Bethan? I see that you are, so we will formally close this petition and, as is our wont, we will send a summary to the petitioners.

Annex 2

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Ieuan Wyn Jones AM
Deputy First Minister
Welsh Assembly Government
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our ref: PET-03-145

3 July 2008

Dear Ieuan,

Petition - Fuel and Road Haulage in Wales

The Committee considered this petition for the first time on 25th June. The petition wording is quoted below:

'We the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to recognise the crippling financial impact of rising fuel prices on Welsh Haulage businesses and ask the National Assembly for Wales to instigate a review/inquiry into the competitiveness and future sustainability of the Welsh Road Haulage industry. The outcome from any inquiry should then be used to shape supportive measures for the Road Haulage Industry here in Wales and to lobby the National U.K. Government where any measures fall outside the National Assembly for Wales' remit.'

The Committee resolved to ask what action you may already be taking, or propose to take to address the petitioners' concerns.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



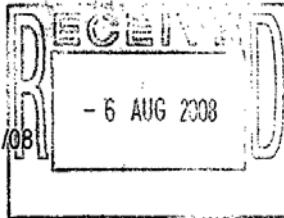
Val Lloyd
Chair, Petitions Committee

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

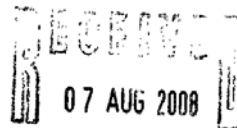


Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref.
Din cyf/Our ref DFM/01321/08



Val Lloyd
Chair of Petitions Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



31 July 2008

Deu Val

ARSD

Thank you for your letter of 3 July regarding the petition received by the National Assembly for Wales on fuel and road haulage in Wales.

I fully appreciate the petitioners' concerns, and recognise that the continuing rise in fuel costs is having a significant impact on haulage businesses in Wales. I recently had a constructive meeting with Welsh road hauliers in order to understand fully the impact of rising fuel costs on the industry.

The recently launched Wales Freight Strategy identifies a number of supportive measures for the freight industry, with specific initiatives to support the road haulage industry. The strategy was developed in partnership with the Wales Freight Group, which comprises of providers and users of freight services across all modes of transport, including representatives from the road haulage industry. The group provided a forum for discussing key issues and preparing the document and will now assist the Welsh Assembly Government in taking forward the measures identified in the strategy.

Due to the commercial nature of freight transport it is essential that we work in partnership with the industry on delivery of the strategy. For example, we recently held the first Freight Conference in Wales in partnership with the Freight Transport Association. The conference looked at key issues such as the threat to the Welsh supply chain due to escalating fuel and logistics costs; the long term vision for the efficient movement of freight in Wales; and the importance of freight to the economic success of Wales.

I am currently considering a number of initiatives that could provide much needed support to the road haulage industry such as the introduction of Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving (SAFEED) training, developing a Freight Direct service and working with the industry to identify possible pilot consolidation centres.

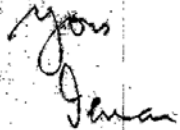
As recognised in your letter, a number of relevant measures are outside the remit of the National Assembly for Wales. I am in correspondence with Angela Eagles, MP, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury seeking her views on possible UK Government interventions that

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PS.DeputyFirstMinister@wales.gsi.gov.uk

could support the industry, such as the introduction of a fuel price regulator or a rebate for hauliers on fuel duty.

We also need to consider EU legislation. We are currently working with the Department for Transport to ensure that the interests of the Welsh haulage industry are taken into account in the development of relevant policies, for example on cabotage, enforcement and interoperable databases.



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

Annex 3

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Gareth Jones AM
Chair, Enterprise and Learning
Committee

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our ref: PET-03-145

27th June 2008

Dear Gareth,

Petition – Fuel and Road Haulage in Wales

The Committee considered this petition for the first time on 25th June. The petition wording is quoted below:

'We the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to recognise the crippling financial impact of rising fuel prices on Welsh Haulage businesses and ask the National Assembly for Wales to instigate a review/inquiry into the competitiveness and future sustainability of the Welsh Road Haulage industry. The outcome from any inquiry should then be used to shape supportive measures for the Road Haulage Industry here in Wales and to lobby the National U.K. Government where any measures fall outside the National Assembly for Wales' remit.'

The Committee considered it would be appropriate to ask your committee to consider conducting a review into this issue under Standing Order 28.9(iii). Please note, this is not a formal referral of the petition to your Committee, and I should be grateful if you could keep me informed of developments with this issue.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Val Lloyd,
Chair, Petitions Committee



Cynulliad National
Cunedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu
Enterprise and Learning Committee
Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Val Lloyd AM
Chair of the Petitions' Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

19 November 2008

Dear Val

Petition – Fuel and Road Haulage in Wales

You wrote to me on 27 June 2008 requesting that the Enterprise and Learning Committee undertake a review of the issues raised by the Fuel and Road Haulage Petition. On 3 July 2008, the Committee elected a rapporteur group to undertake the work on its behalf. The group has now reported and the report was approved by the full Committee today.

The Committee has laid its report before the Assembly. Members have requested that a Plenary debate be held on the issues raised. I have therefore asked the Minister for a formal response to the Committee's report, which I will share with you in due course.

I enclose a copy of our report for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Jones AM
Committee Chair