



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

The Petitions Committee

Completion Report

**Summary of the Petitions Committee's consideration of P-03-142
to remove a statue of Margaret Thatcher from the Senedd**

October 2008

Petition Received

20 May 2008

Ruled Admissible

1 July 2008

Initial Consideration**9 July 2008**

The Committee gave initial consideration to the petition and agreed to write to the Assembly Commission to ask:

- That it provides details of the rules, regulations and procedures for the displaying of artwork in the Senedd
- Who determines these rules , regulations and procedures, and, in this instance, who made the decision to allow this artwork to be displayed

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract from the transcript of the meeting on 9 July 2008, and Annex 2 for the letter sent by the Chair to the Presiding Officer)

Further Consideration**2 October 2008**

The Committee considered a response from the Presiding Officer, and agreed to close the petition as it could not progress it any further.

(See Annex 1 for the relevant extract from the transcript of the meeting on 2 October, and Annex 2 for the response received from the Presiding Officer)

Petitions Clerk

October 2008

Annex 1

Extracts from Petitions Committee Meetings

9 July 2008

Janice Gregory: The first petition is to remove the statue of Margaret Thatcher from the Senedd. The petition wording is:

'We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to remove the statue of Margaret Thatcher from the National Assembly building (Y Senedd).'

This petition was submitted as an e-petition by Mr Aubrey Jenkins.

Kirsty Williams: I declare an interest in that I know Mr Aubrey Jenkins, because he is a constituent of mine and is a Liberal Democrat party member.

Bethan Jenkins: I also declare an interest, because I have signed the petition. That obviously means that I concur with the content of the petition, so I will not be able to partake in the decision about it. I do not know where that puts Kirsty, because we have both declared an interest.

Kirsty Williams: Under the code, because I have not signed the petition, I can still participate in the discussion, but for the sake of transparency I wanted Members to be aware that I know Mr Jenkins and that I advised him that he had the opportunity of submitting a petition to express his views on this subject.

Janice Gregory: Thank you both. I think that Stefan wants to come in.

Mr Sanchez: I just wanted to clarify that it is not a statue, as you are aware; it is artwork, and we understood the petition to mean that.

Bethan Jenkins: As it is an e-petition, there is some flexibility around how you would word it.

Janice Gregory: Stefan is right. I have not seen a statue or any other image of Margaret Thatcher in this building—only the one that is hanging up at the front. I assumed that that was the one that Mr Jenkins was referring to.

As Andrew has just come in, I will bring him up to speed. We have gone through the agenda and we are now on item 4, which is on new petitions. We are talking about the petition from Mr Aubrey Jenkins to remove the statue of Margaret Thatcher from the Senedd, so that will be in your papers. You may wish to make a comment.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I think that it has raised the whole profile of our institution, and I think that the fact that art that can do such a thing is greatly appreciated.

Bethan Jenkins: We are not usually political on this committee, but this is an issue on which we have to be political.

Janice Gregory: Yes, we will probably have some debate about this, and of course it is a political issue. Kirsty and Bethan have declared an interest. The action for the committee is that we can write to the Assembly Commission and ask that it provides the reasons for the installation's presence and for details of how long it will remain in situ. I think that we would all recall that, when it was put up there, a number of questions were asked about how long it would be there. I understand that it was to

remain in place for 12 weeks from the time that it was installed, so I assume that we are coming fairly close to the time when it will be taken down.

Mr Sanchez: Yes.

Janice Gregory: So, I invite your comments on this.

Kirsty Williams: The installation of any artwork in the Assembly could potentially cause strong feeling and emotions for a variety of reasons. That is one of the reasons why art exists—to challenge people’s thinking and to stimulate debate. I understand why people felt upset about this particular image, and people need to be aware of the rules and regulations that surround the installation of art at the Assembly. We should make the Assembly Commission aware of this petition, and ask it to explain the rules around art installations at the Assembly and why it felt that this piece was appropriate. I think that that is the very least that we owe those who have taken the trouble to submit a petition.

Janice Gregory: I agree. Does anyone else wish to comment? Bethan?

Kirsty Williams: She cannot say anything.

Janice Gregory: I beg your pardon. I can go back to the debacle over the image of Greenham common in the old Chamber, which Kirsty will also remember. I was under the impression that this issue had been resolved. The issue had been raised and there was a whole host of difficulties. I sat on the House Committee at the time, so I remember it well. I would like us to write to the Assembly Commission on this, because I am now very confused about the artwork and who made the decision. Was it the Presiding Officer or the Assembly Commission that took the decision?

Kirsty Williams: Or is it an issue for the four Assembly Members who sponsored it? My understanding is that four individual Assembly Members sponsored it. I am also aware that the Assembly Members may not have been aware of the nature of what was going to be installed—the content—when they agreed to sponsor the event. I think that we need some clarity about the rules, regulations and procedures.

Andrew R.T. Davies: I understood that there was no problem with clarity. I was led to believe that the four Assembly Members were in full possession of the facts when they agreed to support the presentation of the art in the Assembly. I concur with Kirsty’s suggestion and what I believe is the general sentiment from you, Chair, that we should liaise with the Commission to clarify the situation. However, at the end of the day, while I have heard people say that it has caused offence, there are also a lot of admirers of Margaret Thatcher and if there is one thing that is true, it is that she was a dominant figure in the latter part of the twentieth century—love it or loathe it—as was Aneurin Bevan. I would hope that a lot of other figures will be exhibited in the Assembly showing both sides of any argument, because that is what this institution is about. However, the correct approach here would be to approach the Commission to find out exactly what steps were taken to bring that art into the public domain.

Kirsty Williams: The petitioner is very concerned about the nature of this particular piece of artwork, but as Janice just said, when the statue depicting the women of Greenham common was placed in the old building, I can assure you that party colleagues of yours were extremely offended by the presence of that image, while others of us were very comfortable to see that image in the Assembly. Rather than discussing the specific piece of art, we need to be clear about how the Assembly

makes these decisions, because, next time around, it might be another statue of a Greenham common woman and you will be personally offended.

Andrew R.T. Davies: No; good luck to you, I say. Good luck to them.

Janice Gregory: I am afraid that your colleagues did not think that at the time. As much as I would love to continue this lovely discussion, I do not think that it is within my remit to do so. Are we content with the suggestion that we write to the Commission? Should we also write to the Presiding Officer or just the Commission?

Kirsty Williams: Does he not chair the Commission?

Janice Gregory: He does chair it.

Kirsty Williams: Therefore, I think that he will get the message.

Janice Gregory: Okay. I see that you are happy with that. Thank you.

2 October 2008

Val Lloyd: The next petition, which is to remove the statue of Margaret Thatcher from the Senedd, is a little past its sell-by date. We have no alternative but to close this petition as we cannot progress it any further.

Andrew R.T. Davies: She is coming back.

David Lloyd: She is not coming back.

Andrew R.T. Davies: She is, and she will be bigger.

David Lloyd: She is gone and good riddance.

Annex 2

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM
Presiding Officer
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Our ref: P-03-142

31 July 2008

Dear Presiding Officer

**RE: PETITION TO REMOVE MARGARET THATCHER ARTWORK FROM THE
SENEDD**

As you will be aware, the Petitions Committee has been considering a petition calling for the removal of the Margaret Thatcher artwork from the Senedd. The Committee is aware that this artwork is only being displayed for a set period of time. However, in discussing this petition, several questions were raised in relation to the displaying of artwork in the Senedd, and the Committee agreed to write to the Assembly Commission to ask that it provides:

- Details of the rules, regulations and procedures for the displaying of artwork in the Senedd
- Details of who determines this and, in this instance, who made the decision to allow this artwork to be displayed

I look forward to your response, which will be considered by the Committee in the autumn term.

Yours sincerely

Val Lloyd

Val Lloyd
Chair, Petitions Committee

Val Lloyd AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Pierhead Street
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Y Gwir Anrh yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC,
Llywydd
The Rt Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas AM,
Presiding Officer

13 August 2008

Dear Val

PETITION TO REMOVE MARGARET THATCHER ARTWORK FROM THE SENEDD

Thank you for your letter regarding the above petition which asked for further information in relation to displaying artwork in the Senedd.

In relation to the rules, regulations and procedures for the displaying of artwork in the Senedd, guidance for short term, temporary displays is contained in the Guidance for use of the public areas of the Senedd for events and exhibitions. The guidance states that artwork exhibitions must be sponsored by an Assembly Member and the maximum period for display is normally three days. Artwork exhibitions sponsored by a Member which will not interfere with the proper use of the Senedd are normally approved as a matter of routine, although anything out of the ordinary is the subject of discussion with relevant Commissioners.

The display of the above artwork which features both Aneurin Bevan and Margaret Thatcher was not suitable for temporary, short term display in the Senedd due to the nature and size of the artwork. The artwork was specifically developed by the artist for display in the Senedd to complement and integrate with the structure of the front glass windows so that the artwork could be viewed from both inside and outside of the building. Therefore, the artist's proposal in this case was different to the majority of requests received to display artwork in the Oriel which can be quickly and easily installed and subsequently removed.

In addition, it was considered that the artwork and its location did not impede or prevent the large number of other events and activities which take place in the Senedd. A longer display period was agreed in these circumstances, although it will be dismantled and removed shortly.

In terms of approving this installation, the artist, Dylan Hammond gained support and sponsorship for his installation from the following cross party grouping of Assembly Members:

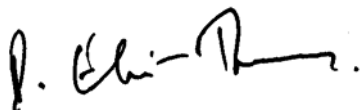
Alun Cairns AM
Jocelyn Davies AM
Andrew Davies AM

Jenny Randerson AM

The artist's application was considered in detail, both in terms of health and safety and in relation to the standard policy. After thorough discussion with both myself and the Commissioner whose portfolio includes Assembly buildings (Lorraine Barratt AM), the installation was approved. Its stated intention was to generate debate and discussion about political figures who have had significant impact on Wales, and the level of discussion in the Welsh, UK and international media, as well as comments from visitors to the Senedd and the generation of a petition seem to indicate that this intention has been achieved.

I hope this answers the questions raised in your letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Elis-Thomas', is written on a white background. A thin vertical red line is positioned to the right of the signature.

Y Gwir Anrh yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC, Llywydd
The Rt Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas AM, Presiding Officer