

P-04-441 Work for Wales - Correspondence from the petitioner to the Chair,
03.03.13

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 27 February which I received on St David's Day. May I firstly take this opportunity to thank the Petitions Committee for its work in considering our 'Work for Wales' petition thus far, and say that we very much appreciate the attention that you have given it. Thank you also for writing to the Deputy Minister for Skills as part of your consideration of the petition; I will respond to the Deputy Minister's letter to you below.

I note that the Deputy Minister says at the start of his letter that the Welsh Government's '*absolute priority*' is the creation of jobs and enabling of growth. Youth unemployment is still at one of its highest levels for years, and just last month, we learned that general unemployment in Wales had risen by 6,000, in contrast to the UK trend. When we were collecting signatures for our petition, there was a similar situation with youth unemployment, that is that more and more young people in Wales were out of work, as opposed to less and less throughout the UK as a whole. In that sense, we do not believe that the First Minister or any other member of the Welsh Government can blame the UK Government or the UK economy for the problems which we're facing here in Wales. While Wales does not have many macro-economic powers in its hands, there are other things which it can do, and despite Welsh Labour's perpetual insistence that Jobs Growth Wales would save the day, we maintain that this '*programme...to create 4000 jobs opportunities across Wales each year, for the next three years...for a 6-month period...at or above the National Minimum Wage for a minimum of 25 hours per week*' is ineffective, ineffectual, and insufficient. When there are still around 50,000 young people in Wales without work, it should be clear to our Welsh Government that their plans don't scratch the surface.

That said, we welcome the deal struck between the Welsh Government and our own party last November, in which Party of Wales AMs would abstain on the budget vote in the National Assembly in return for an '*additional £20m in the 2014-15 Draft Budget to support apprenticeships in Wales, targeted especially at those in the 16-24 age group*.' We look forward to seeing thousands more apprenticeships being created for young people in Wales as a result of the Party of Wales' bargain with the Welsh Government, and are confident that these new apprenticeships will go some way further than Jobs Growth Wales to mitigating the problems of youth unemployment in Wales.

We would be interested to know how the Welsh Government's plans for these new apprenticeships are coming along, and specifically what progress has been made at Welsh Government level for the delivery of the new apprenticeships on the ground. We would also be interested to know what else the Welsh Government will be doing to support the new apprenticeships; that is to say that they themselves will not wholly mitigate youth unemployment problems, and that SMEs must be in a position to permanently employ young people after their apprenticeships are done with. The Welsh Government certainly has an

important role to play in that respect, and we would be eager to know what the Welsh Government plans to do in that respect.

In summary, let me say that we would be of the opinion that it is still unclear that tackling young unemployment is a genuine priority of the Welsh Government, and it is quite obvious to us that it took a Party of Wales deal with the Welsh Government to kick-start some action on apprenticeships and youth unemployment. We urge the Welsh Government to extend Jobs Growth Wales, to continue working towards the delivery of the new apprenticeships as a result of the Party of Wales budget deal, and, as ever, to do everything in its power to tackle youth unemployment in Wales, and to provide work for Wales.

Thank you again for the Petition Committee's work in considering our petition. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future as regards what your next steps might be.

Dros Gymru. For Wales,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cerith Rhys Jones". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Cerith" and last name "Rhys Jones" clearly distinguishable.

CERITH RHYS JONES

Cadeirydd Cenedlaethol | *National Chair*

Plaid Cymru Ifanc | *Plaid Cymru Youth*