

**BRITISH-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING
ASSOCIATION (BIPRA)**

CONFERENCE 2011

Sunday 24 July 2011 to Wednesday 27 July 2011

**Hosted by the National Assembly for Wales and held
at Nant Gwrtheyrn, North Wales**

Conference Report

Conference reception

The conference opened with an evening reception on Sunday, 24 July. Iolo Roberts welcomed delegates to North Wales and specifically to Nant Gwrtheyrn. He explained a little about the history of the area and the village, as well as the arrangements for the conference over the ensuing three days. Iolo Roberts spoke in Welsh, with simultaneous interpretation provided by the National Assembly for Wales's chief interpreter, Sion Edwards.

There then followed a presentation by the BIPRA Secretary, Simon Burrowes, on DVD. Simon Burrowes looked back at the history of BIPRA since its inception in 2001 and shared some interesting highlights from the BIPRA conferences of the past. A copy of the presentation is available [here](#).

Finally, delegates were reminded that their packs contained a verbatim transcript that would be the subject of an editorial exercise on the Wednesday morning, and all were exhorted to do their homework in advance!

Opening

Delegates were officially welcomed by Mair Parry-Jones, Head of Translation and Reporting at the National Assembly for Wales. Following this, delegates moved to the terrace overlooking Caernarfon Bay for the official photograph. A copy of the photograph is available [here](#).

Efficiencies and Effectiveness

This session was chaired by Mair Parry-Jones, Head of the Translation and Reporting Service, National Assembly for Wales. It consisted of a series of presentations by the representative bodies on the main challenges and developments they had faced over the past year.

Scottish Parliament—presentation by David Cullum and Bronwyn Brady



Everything has changed

But

Nothing has altered

- Final year of a minority government
 - 24 Bills
 - Lots of politics inc. Scotland Bill
 - Many Opinion Polls



• Hybrid Bill passed



• End of Life Bill failed!



Both required ad hoc committees to scrutinise

Dramatic new opinion poll

- LABOUR on course for resounding victory in Holyrood election.
- Voters turn away from Liberal Democrats and SNP

27 Feb 2011



- A "poll of polls" - gathering together the results of the five most recent surveys of voter intentions - points to Labour thrashing the SNP in May Holyrood election.

News Of the World, 3 April 2011

It couldn't happen could it?

- **Scottish National Party** 68
- **Labour** 37
- **Conservative and Unionist Party** 15
- **Liberal Democrats** 5
- **Greens** 2
- **Independent** 1
- **Presiding Officer** 1 (voluntary suspension from SNP)

Total of 129 members



Enough Politics—now for the real story Corporate Change MkII

- Phase 1 concluded August, major re-organisation senior management
- Need more savings, 15% more across the board
- Salami slicing approach



"I know! let's reorganise, then we can lose a group head!"

- Thus came about Henrietta's departure
- 50 fewer posts in total by 2014-15

- Amateur internal consultants conducting office reviews
- Numbers not people
- Quantity above quality

- Most IT developers and other IT specialists volunteer for redundancy (to take up new jobs!) and because it is numbers they are accepted
- Now we are to advertise for more IT specialists

What does it all mean for the official report?

???

Consequences for the official report

- Organisational reviews seek savings of 14.4 per cent
- Official report savings target is 13.5 per cent, or £220,000
 - £217,000 of that is staff costs



Consequences for the official report

- Under the voluntary early retirement/severance scheme we lost:
 - The editor: Stephen Hutchinson
 - Three reporters: Robert Arnott, Nicola Henderson and Mark Taplin
 - One sub-editor: Simon McCartin
- One reporter retired: Lianne Hackett

We are overshooting our savings target by some margin!



Consequences for the official report

- Only the editor has been replaced
- Staff complement now:
 - 1 Editor
 - 6 Sub-editors
 - 19 Reporters (one on secondment, five reduced hours)
 - 2 Editorial support
- Service levels remain the same, with pressure for faster turnaround:
 - "The *Official Report* of a committee meeting should be available to committee members and staff no later than early on the Friday morning of the week in which the meeting took place."

Session 3 Conveners Group legacy paper

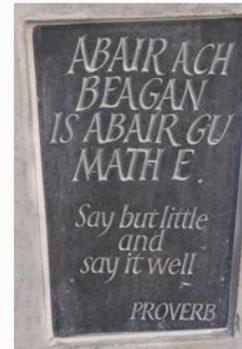
Consequences for the official report

The review

- Work out how to do more with less
 - Four workstreams
 1. Standards, processes and working practices
 2. Technology
 3. Personal and professional development
 4. Office structure and job roles

And so to work

- ❖ A left-field calamity.
A. Member
- ❖ A half-baked poison pill.
A. Minister
- ❖ It is difficult to make suggestions at the margin when there is that fundamental elephant in the room.
A. Witness
- ❖ In any event, it is our understanding that, when matters sat, it was in a court of seven benches.
A. Minister



House of Lords—presentation by John Vice

At last year's BIPRA conference, I gave a one-word summary for 'a year in the life in the Lords', and that word was 'change'; this year, that word could be 'unrelenting', or 'intense' or maybe just 'please help'. There have been major changes in membership and perceived function of the Lords, and that has had a serious impact on Hansard's way of working; we are doing much, much more with a very small increase in staffing, so in that sense major efficiency savings have been made. Whether that has added to effectiveness is not clear.

David Cameron committed to reduce the size of the Commons to 600 Members but is making the Lords larger—much larger. He has created 117 new Peers in less than a year—more than any other Prime Minister. Tony Blair created 70 in his first year. David Lloyd George did not get close to that number, bestowing 91 peerages in his five years as PM.

So we now have a House of Lords with 831 Members, making it the largest legislature in the English-speaking world, followed by the Commons and the US House of Representatives (and, in fourth place—thanks to Google for this—New Hampshire's House of Representatives). If you are wondering, the largest legislative assembly in the world is the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, with 2,987 deputies.

So what difference has this made to Hansard? We have a new government with a large legislative programme, but no majority in the Lords, and a poor working relationship with the Opposition—known as the usual channels—which has increased the Opposition's ability to score political points and disrupt the Government's legislative programme. The Government has lost 20 Divisions this Session. We have therefore been sitting more frequently and sitting longer as these battles are played out. More Members are attending debates—more than 600 attended debates on the Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Bill in February. Members regularly have to sit in the visitors gallery at Question Time. There have also been many more late-night sittings, partly because this new government have used the threat of late sitting as a political tool. We had an all-nighter in February, and several more

threatened all-night sittings, and nearly 70 sittings after 10 p.m. this Session. Inevitably, Lords reform remains firmly on the agenda, with a draft Bill before Parliament. Holidays have been cut and cut again, and there have been health problems among Hansard staff, including RSI.

We have also taken over from Gurney's responsibility for Select Committee transcription; three members of staff work on the transcripts full time and we use the overflow that they cannot cover to fill any spare time in reporters' and managing editors' working weeks. Any work that we cannot report, we send to external contractors. There is a clear efficiency saving here, because you can always ensure that staff are working a full working week. We have also delivered a significant saving over the previous supplier's operational costs.

Interestingly, one of these Select Committee staff is on a four-day contract, and we have another working three days a week, and this may point the way to future efficiency savings. If we cannot always provide work for five days a week for everyone, it seemed like a clear saving to offer a four-days-a-week contract, particularly over holiday periods. The precedent there is the Canadian national parliament, where the Official Report staff work on nine-month contracts.

This year, we have also worked with the Commons in at least two areas to realise efficiency savings. We are jointly developing a new HRS; a significant outlay is involved, of time, money and patience, and development has been extraordinarily slow. At last year's BIPRA conference, I said I thought the finish line is in sight; maybe this time round I hope it really is.

We have also run a recruitment exercise jointly with the Commons to increase the number of freelancers who we can call on when we need them—on average, a couple of times a week. We recruited jointly, ran a joint training course and shared costs, and now both Houses use the freelancers as needed, although they are on separate contracts for Commons and Lords, because we are separate employers. Both are interesting new ways of working, and might show a way forward for other parliaments and assemblies.

One final thought—increasing the number of Lords so dramatically may not be a saving. As Lloyd George said: 'A fully-equipped duke costs as much to keep as two dreadnoughts. They are just as great a terror and they last longer.'

States of Jersey—presentation by Peter Monamy

For the States of Jersey, the previous year has seen debate on the usual 'mixed crop' of many and varied subjects. There have been a number of 3 and 4-day meetings—and even a couple of meetings lasting 5 days! This has particularly been the case as the States approached the end of the First Session of 2011, possibly accentuated by the forthcoming Autumn elections (in October) when, for the first time, (almost) all of the 3 categories of Members—Senators, Connétables and Deputies—will come up for election at the same time! This phenomenon is also giving rise to a degree of uncertainty as to the way ahead, given that it is known that a number of senior Members

will not be seeking re-election; and also as a result of increasing disquiet over the effectiveness of the change in 2005 to a system of Ministerial government—in particular as regards the perceived ‘value’ of the counter-balancing system of Scrutiny.

There is, of course, a tendency for rather more Private Members’ propositions to arise in an election year as prospective candidates for re-election seek to raise their profile. Similarly, the number of questions asked—both written and oral—show a distinct increase, with moves having previously been made to increase the time allowed for oral questions. All this activity on the part of Members has an effect on the workload of those involved in producing the Official Report, all of whom continue to undertake their ‘Hansard’ duties in addition to other roles.

As usual, the previous 12 months have seen an annual States Budget and also a Strategic Plan covering the next 5-year period. A recent development is that, hitherto, rather than an annual budget there will instead be 3-yearly budgets! And where would we be without a number of ‘Votes of No Confidence’ and proposals for Committees of Inquiry.

The on-going ‘Comprehensive Spending Review’, under which the States is committed to achieving budget savings of £65 million over the 3 years to 2013, is progressing—more or less on target—with a reduction in spending of £12 million achieved to date! It remains uncertain precisely to what extent the budgets associated with the States Greffe—and the Official Report in particular—might be affected in the years ahead, but so far so good!

Tynwald—presentation by Ellen Callister

A new and exciting chapter is currently unfolding in the Isle of Man: a new era of straitened financial times, following 25 years’ unbroken economic growth; a complete change in political leadership; a general election in September to the House of Keys; and a new Tynwald about to begin in October.

What has been happening since the last BIPRA conference? Too many things to list them all, so I will pick out some events of interest which have had a direct effect on us in Hansard:

Sunday 21 to Monday 22 November—British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly held its 41st Plenary in the Isle of Man. It was the first time that Tynwald was involved, and I joined the team of six reporters and thoroughly enjoyed it!

December—snow! There was very heavy snowfall in an island where we normally have mild and muggy winters, with some disruption to work and personal life (driving, supplies in shops, frozen pipes).

February—budget. It was not as tough as we were expecting. Very little changed in terms of personal allowances and tax rates, both corporate and individual. Unemployment is still low. Government departmental staff numbers being cut, mainly through ‘natural wastage’, but some were made

redundant/redeployed—in the Clerk of Tynwald’s office, the Tynwald Librarian retired, but was not replaced.

March—farewell to the Lieutenant Governor, Vice Admiral Sir Paul Haddacks, and to the retiring Attorney General, John Corlett QC.

April—first sitting for the new Attorney General, Mr Stephen Harding. The new Lieutenant Governor, Mr Adam Wood, was sworn in at Castle Rushen.

June—Mr President (‘Mr P’ as he is affectionately known) the Hon. Noel Quayle Cringle OBE, announced his intention to retire. Anyone who came to conference in the Isle of Man back in 2004 will remember him singing at dinner! There were tributes to him in Tynwald on 22 June; 28 June was his last Legislative Council (which Hansard team attended); and on 11 June there was a staff party.

Tynwald Day, 5 July—six NASA astronauts who crewed the final mission of the space shuttle Discovery and Professor Brian Cox were present. It was Mr P’s last Tynwald Day, and he was applauded by the public and in the Chapel.

July Tynwald—election of new President. Mrs Christian becomes the first female presiding officer.

August—dissolution of House of Keys.

29 September 2011—general election; popular election by constituency of the 24 Members of the House of Keys.

October 2011—first Tynwald of new Members. A new Chief Minister will be elected to form a Council of Ministers to lead the Isle of Man Government.

To summarise: 2011 has already brought us a new Lieutenant Governor, a new Attorney General and a new President of Tynwald, and, by October, we will have a new Tynwald, a new Chief Minister and a new Isle of Man Government.

What about the Hansard team, within the Clerk of Tynwald’s Office? We are a team of five editors, and we report debates in Tynwald, the House of Keys and the Legislative Council, plus public oral evidence sessions of Standing and Select Committees.

From October 2010 we have seen the final stage of the VR roll-out. The voice recognition system is now in Legislative Council, with the committee oral evidence taken in the Legislative Council Chamber to make full use of the system. VR is now our only system for every session—home transcribers are no more!

March—Scottish Parliament Hansard visitors came to see our system working, and realised that you have to see the system as a tool, or a framework on which to hang Hansard process. VR is not perfect—indeed, it is

often not that accurate—but the digital recording and editing package has transformed our working methods and brought us into the 21st century.

In terms of efficiency and effectiveness, as well as positive, happy teamwork, the Hansard team is still held up as a model section within the Clerk of Tynwald's Office!

What does the future hold? There will be digital recording as a back-up system, replacing cassette tapes and Revox; a new website will be designed by the Tynwald Information Service, leading to direct control and more modern and user-friendly design (it should be up and running by October); and an Australian software developer is working on an upgrade to our system over the summer.

Northern Ireland Assembly—presentation by Rónan O'Reilly

The past year for Hansard in the Northern Ireland Assembly was the busiest on record. With elections in May, there was a sense of urgency due to the high number of pieces of legislation that needed to be passed before purdah at the end of April. As a result, plenary business was up 21% on the previous year, whilst committee business was up around 50%. That led to plenty of opportunities for overtime and some very late nights. For example, the House sat to 1 a.m. and just after 2.30 a.m. on consecutive days, which were the latest sittings we have ever had. In total, there were 17 sittings that we would have considered to be 'late'—after 8 p.m.

On the personnel front, there has been a recruitment freeze across the Assembly. That has meant that, despite the completion of a lengthy recruitment competition, we have had to abandon our search for six parliamentary reporters. To put it bluntly, our staff complements are now based on the numbers we have. We gave up a reporter and Ulster Scots post and are likely to give up two clerical officer posts. The efficiency reviews in the Assembly may lead to further suggested reductions, but there has been a commitment to no redundancies. We have had to identify savings. One big saving is that we now keep only 30 hard copies of bound volumes, and these are for archive purposes. Members must now pay for them if they want them. That is done at a cost of £2,500, which represents a significant saving on the previous arrangement.

There is exciting news in that digital audio is on its way to the Hansard office at Stormont. Sliq Media was appointed to provide the new system—anyone who was at last year's BIPRA conference in Dublin will remember Nick from Sliq. We will be logging electronically on tablets rather than writing on paper and using the sort of digital audio system that I think most of the other legislatures already have. We will finally be able to get rid of the old cassette tapes and transcribing machines! We have started having a look at the new system already, so we hope that it will all be rolled out and ready to go in the coming weeks and months.

The pay and grading process has been completed. After last year's disappointment about the outcome of the job evaluation part of the process, reporters were extremely pleased with the result of the overall process—uplift to the next grade, which is what we had hoped for. There were no changes to the grading of other Hansard posts.

The elections on 5 May copper fastened the dominance of the DUP and Sinn Féin, which both made modest gains. There were losses for the SDLP and UUP, whilst the Alliance Party returned enough MLAs to entitle them to a Ministry in the Executive under the d'Hondt process. That was the cause of some resentment from the SDLP and UUP, because the Alliance Party already hold the Justice Ministry, which is not subject to the d'Hondt process.

One independent Member was elected, David McClarty. Stephen Agnew held on to the Green Party's sole seat, and TUV leader, Jim Allister, has hit the ground running and has certainly provided colour to proceedings. So far in the new mandate, we have probably been busier than expected. That is sure to continue as devolution in Northern Ireland continues to mature.

Oireachtas—presentation by Cormac Ó Cleirigh

Over the past year, many developments, both internal and external, have affected the Debates Office. Internally, the post of Editor of Debates has been filled by the appointment of Anne Maxwell, who had been acting as editor since the retirement of her predecessor, Anne Robinson. Staff numbers have fallen slightly following the retirement of one reporter and at present, there are 35 reporters, of who two work part-time, six assistant editors, two deputy editors and eight administrative staff. Thus far, a total of nine Debates Office staff members have left without being replaced.

On the business side, a business process review project involving the Debates Office was undertaken between January and May of this year. A three-person team led by deputy editor Carl Lombard used the lean six sigma approach to consider improvements to the way in which staff are assigned work. The team's objective was to identify ways to distribute work more evenly and reduce the amount of time spent waiting around for work to arrive, thereby working more optimally. Having studied the office's present processes and having gathered together a large amount of historical data on the work done by it, the project team came up with a number of proposals on the way we work that have been adopted.

First, in April, we changed the way we handle written replies to parliamentary questions. Heretofore, we had processed them on the day on which they were answered but this method was bedevilled by the erratic timing and uncertain quality of the Departments' transmission of the replies to the Oireachtas. Under the new system, we process the replies on the following day, when the answers have been transmitted to the Oireachtas and the relevant departmental staff members are available to react to formatting or content-based errors.

Second, and more significantly, the method used by the Debates Office to produce the Official Report for the Seanad or Upper House has been changed. Heretofore, the Seanad was being reported on a same-day basis by a team of 12 or 13 reporters who logged their own takes or turns and immediately produced their copy before returning to the Chamber to log their next take. This method is also used for the Dáil and has been the basic approach used from the outset. However, the project team's analysis of sitting patterns demonstrated there was scope to make improvements to this roster system. First, it obliged reporters to work late regularly to match the Seanad's sittings, as well as being obliged to start work late on Tuesdays, when the Seanad usually meets at 2.30 p.m. Second, the Seanad suspends frequently, thereby forcing reporters to wait around for work. To get around these shortcomings, it was decided to move in June to a system whereby two reporters log the Seanad proceedings and the other reporters not working in the Dáil report them in the order laid out in a joint Seanad and committee roster. In practice, this means that apart from the Order of Business debate, most Seanad proceedings can be reported up to one day later. So in other words, a considerable portion of Thursday's proceedings, for example, are reported on Friday. The knock-on effect is that some committee debates that heretofore would have been reported on Fridays and Mondays are now being transcribed on Monday and Tuesday mornings instead. This innovation means that reporters now work something that approximates a regular working week every second week. Moreover, in a change that reflects this change in work patterns, the assistant editors now rotate from Dáil to Seanad-committee duties each week. Overall, it is a case of so far, so good.

A third recent innovation is to use administrative staff, as well as part-time loggers, to log committee meetings. This has been possible because of a decision by the Debates Office to no longer produce a daily book of proceedings, thereby freeing the administrative staff to work in the committee rooms. The overall effect of these innovations has been to greatly reduce the time reporters spend in the Seanad Chamber and the committee meeting rooms.

Separately, a value for money review on the Debates Office from 2001 to 2008 was completed last autumn and published last October. The report was fairly positive and concluded the 'Debates Office has substantially and effectively achieved its objectives during the period of the review and that the objectives are all valid and relevant in the context of the Commission's statements of strategy'. The main recommendation concerned the introduction of further measurable performance indicators.

Other internal developments include a number of technology-related changes. For example, the gradual roll-out of the Debates Authoring System, into which debates are recorded, is now complete, an indexing improvement project is under way and reporters now have access to the television recordings from the previous day's sitting.

The electronic attendance management system in use in the Oireachtas finally is being rolled out in the Debates Office. A pilot scheme is under way at

present and it is likely that all staff will be using it before the recess ends, and, in a related move, assistant editors have been assigned increasing supervisory duties regarding leave and attendance management.

The most significant external development was the holding of a general election in February, which resulted in a change of Government. The parties now in government, Fine Gael and the Labour Party, made major gains and won 76 and 37 seats, respectively, and have 113 of the 166 seats in the Dáil. In contrast, the largest opposition party, Fine Fáil, was returned with 20 Members. Naturally, there have been massive personnel changes in both Houses. In the Dáil, 84 new Deputies were elected and no constituency returned the same Deputies. Moreover, of the 166 outgoing Members, 39 retired and 45 lost their seats. The subsequent formation of the Seanad has meant that 40 of its 60 Members are new. Incidentally, female Members now comprise 15% of the Dáil and 30% of the Seanad.

From the perspective of the Debates Office, some interesting side-effects of such a super-majority have emerged. For example, the Dáil is suspending more frequently, as debates conclude earlier than predicted, the number of parliamentary questions has fallen and Opposition leaders tend to endure more heckling than do Cabinet members.

Parliamentary reform comprises a major element of the new programme for Government and some reforms already are under way. For example, apart from cosmetic and abortive proposals to tighten up the Houses' dress codes, session lengths have been increased and the Dáil adjourned for the summer two weeks later and is returning two weeks earlier than last year. In addition, Standing Orders and sitting times have been reviewed. While there will be a small increase in sitting hours, the introduction of regular sittings on one Friday in four is likely to give rise to an increase in workload. At the same time, the number of committees has been reduced but it is too early to tell whether this will lead to a reduction in workload. Initial indications are that they are splitting into functional sub-committees, leading to 36 committees in all, with a resulting increase in the number of committee meetings. Finally, a proposal to abolish the Seanad will be put to the people next October. Its ratification will have implications for the function and staffing of the Debates Office.

Lastly, we have a few office milestones. Fergus Hurley, Lorcan Kennedy and Aislinn McCabe were married this year while David Cass now has a son, Elliott, and two more children are expected. Finally, Colman Cassidy, who joined the Debates Office after a long career in journalism, has retired.

House of Commons—presentation by Adele Dodd

POLITICS BACK TO PARLIAMENT

There have been two big events in the life of Commons Hansard over the recent weeks—phone hacking and something much less well known but, for us, extremely important. I will start with the phone hacking and end with what we are calling 'Sobgate'.

The phone hacking scandal brought big-news politics back to Parliament, and it has been an exciting place to work. There have been some nasty exchanges and bad-tempered debates, but also some more measured and constructive contributions. It culminated in the House going into recess and then sitting the next day for the Prime Minister to make a statement which lasted an unheard of 139 minutes, followed by a debate which he opened and for a large part attended.

In addition, our staff were suddenly keen to work on Select Committees, which are not usually fought over, because we were going to log and report the evidence sessions involving the Murdochs, Rebekah Brooks and the police. Those reports appeared on the internet the next day.

GENERAL ELECTION

The 2010 general election gave us 233 new Members. New faces included Gloria de Piero, the former GMTV political editor, and Zac Goldsmith, brother of Jemima, son of James, and green campaigner. The number of ethnic minorities increased from 14 to 27 and included the first black and Asian female Conservative MPs and the first female Muslim MPs. In fact, the number of female MPs rose to its highest ever total at 141.

COALITION GOVERNMENT

One of the most notable signs of this for Hansard is the open hostility from Conservative Back Benchers and Labour Members towards the Liberal Democrats, with questions to the Deputy Prime Minister being particularly unpleasant.

LONG SITTING

The hours of the House have been particularly gruelling. For weeks on end extra business was tabled every Wednesday, which made the House sitting hours 11.30 a.m. to 9 p.m. and, of course, Wednesdays for us follow a late Tuesday night. We had one terrible sitting on the Finance Bill when the House sat from 2.30 p.m. to 4.27 a.m. We had no warning so no contingency arrangements were in place for staff the next day, and the House reporters had to come back in for 11 a.m. On the night, our printers, TSO, went into meltdown because their plate-making equipment failed and production had to be moved to a more limited facility on the edge of east London, which restricted how much we could print; someone on the list fell ill so we dropped to 15 reporters; and digital audio failed at 4 a.m. for about 15 minutes. In spite of that, we published up to 2.45 a.m., which was available in print at 7.30 a.m., and obviously everything was posted on rolling Hansard, our daily internet version.

SELECTS

We have 30 Select Committees.

SAVINGS PROGRAMME

We are not allowed to say cuts, so we have a Savings Programme. So far, the only parts of our Department, which includes the Clerks, to have made any savings are us and the police.

SLIQ

Prism, our old digital audio, fails at around 5.25 p.m. nearly every day for every single user, so we were very much looking forward to Sliq. There have been delays in this project, although they have nothing to do with Sliq's suppliers, who have been efficient and helpful at every step. All our delays, as in so much in Commons Hansard, have been down to our IT Department, PICT, which covers all IT users in Parliament. However, everyone should be using Sliq from 5 September.

ACCREDITATION

For those of you who went to Jersey, you will have heard my colleague Nick talk about the accreditation process, whereby those who complete our training course get a diploma in parliamentary reporting. This is now entering its final stages. City University, which is the accrediting body, has moved the goalposts a few times, but we aim for the commencement date to be May 2010.

SOBGATE

Hansard's big story of the past few weeks was set off by this innocuous sounding sentence:

'We all bring different stories and different perspectives to the debate.'

This is from a Westminster Hall debate on Housing Market Renewal and the Minister is a Liberal Democrat. Later in the debate, he was asked a fairly lengthy question, which ended with a request for him to withdraw his reference to 'sob stories'. He responded to the rest of the question asked, but did not mention 'sob stories'.

A few hours later, in the main Chamber, Mr Speaker was asked a point of order about it. This Member claimed that this politically sensitive word had been removed from Hansard—the debate was already on rolling Hansard—and asked how it was removed and by whom. She also claimed to have watched a recording of the proceedings and that the Minister definitely said 'sob'. The Speaker agreed to look into it.

The next day, another Member raised a point of order, this time adding:

'Having watched the video, it is absolutely clear that the Minister used the phrase 'sob stories', which vulnerable people trapped in tragic circumstances will find a deeply offensive way to refer to their plight.'

The day after that, the Leader of the House was asked about it. This time, the Member claimed the Minister had got his civil servants to doctor the record. Serious accusations. Obviously, we looked into it as soon as the first point of order was raised and the Editor was entirely satisfied that the Minister did not say 'sob'. The Speaker was informed and given a recording of the debate. The Department involved issued a statement denying it had doctored the record but it did not deny that the Minister had said 'sob'. The Speaker agreed

that we were right. He has written to the Members involved, but, obviously, the problem we all face in those circumstances is how we get the truth of the matter on the official record.

National Assembly for Wales—presentation by Gruffudd Jones

Yn wleidyddol, mae 2011 eisoes wedi bod yn flwyddyn bwysig yng Nghymru. Rydym wedi cael dau refferendwm, un etholiad Cynulliad ac, yn fwy anarferol efallai, helynt y ddau Lib Dem anghymwys.

Politically speaking, 2011 has already been an important year in Wales. We have had two referendums, the Assembly elections and, more unusually perhaps, the saga of the two disqualified Lib Dems.

Ym mis Mawrth, cynhaliwyd refferendwm ar roi rhagor o bwerau i'r Cynulliad. Er bod yr ymgyrch o blaid yn lled nerfus am y canlyniad—roedd y pedair prif blaid wleidyddol o blaid y cynnig—nid oedd sail i'r nerfursrwydd hwn oherwydd pleidlais 'ie' a gafwyd, a hynny o ddau i un. Roedd 63.49% a 36.51% yn erbyn. 'Ydw' oedd y bleidlais mewn 21 o'r 22 awdurdod lleol, gyda'r eithriad o Sir Fynwy. Roedd y nifer a bleidleisiodd, sef 35.2% yn gymharol isel ond ddim mor isel ag oedd rhai wedi ofni.

In March, a referendum was held on more powers for the Assembly. Despite the 'Yes' campaign's concerns about the result—all four main political parties were in favour—they were unfounded, because the result was two to one in favour. There were 63.49% in favour compared with 36.51% against. Twenty-one of the 22 local authority areas voted 'yes'—Monmouthshire being the only exception. Voting numbers, at 35.2%, were relatively low, but not as low as some had feared.

Erbyn hyn mae gan y Cynulliad bwerau i ddeddfu yn yr ugain maes datganoledig. Mae hyn yn golygu nad oes raid i'r Cynulliad fynd i Lundain i ofyn am y pwerau hynny a bod system ddadleuol yr LCOs wedi dod i ben.

The Assembly now has legislative powers in the 20 devolved fields. This means that it no longer has to go to London to ask for those powers, bringing to an end the controversial LCO system.

Yna, ym mis Mai cyhaliwyd etholiad y Cynulliad. Hwn oedd y pedwerydd etholiad Cynulliad, a'r tro hwn arweiniodd at senedd grog. Llafur yw'r blaid fwyaf, gyda 30 o seddi. Ond nid yw hynny'n rhoi mwyafrif clir iddyn nhw. Felly, ar hyn o bryd, o leiaf, mae Carwyn Jones yn arwain llywodraeth leiafrifol ac yn addo ceisio dod o hyd i gonsensws. Dau bwynt difyr yn deillio o'r etholiad: troi at Lafur wnaeth pleidleiswyr yng Nghymru fel ymateb i'r Llywodraeth Glymblaid yn San Steffan yn hytrach nag at yr SNP, fel a ddigwyddodd yn yr Alban. Ac yn ail,

Then, in May, the Assembly elections were held. These were the fourth Assembly elections, resulting this time in a hung parliament. Labour is the largest party, holding 30 seats, but this does not give it a majority. Therefore, Carwyn Jones is currently leading a minority government, promising to govern by consensus. The elections illustrate two interesting points: voters in Wales turned to Labour in response to the Westminster coalition government, rather than to the nationalist party, as happened in Scotland; and, as a

yn dilyn llwyddiant yr SNP yn yr Alban, mae posibilrwydd y caiff pwerau trethiannol eu datganoli.

Yn dilyn yr etholiad hefyd, mae newidiadau wedi bod yng Nghomisiwn y Cynulliad. Mae gennym Lywydd newydd, Rosemary Butler, AC dros Gorllewin Casnewydd.

Prin yr oedd yr Aelodau newydd wedi gorffen rhoi eu llw nad y daeth hi'n amlwg bod dau Aelod—Aled Roberts a John Dixon, ill dau yn aelodau o'r Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol—yn anghymwys i fod yn Aelodau oherwydd eu bod yn aelodau o gyrff eraill adeg yr etholiad. Cafodd y ddau eu gwahardd, wrth i ymchwiliadau gael eu cynnal—yn gyntaf gan yr heddlu, ac yna gan Gomisiwn y Cynulliad. Yn ôl yr ymchwiliad, daeth hi'n amlwg bod Aled Roberts wedi defnyddio'r fersiwn Gymraeg o wefan y Comisiwn Etholiadol er mwyn dilyn y canllawiau o ran pa gyrff a oedd wedi'u gwahardd. Fodd bynnag, roedd y canllawiau hynny yn rhai hen, yn dyddio o 2006, yn hytrach na'r rhai diweddaraf o 2010. Roedd hyn yn ddigon i sicrhau pleidlais gadarnhaol o Aelodau'r Cynulliad o blaid ail-sefydlu Aled Roberts. Nid oedd John Dixon druan mor lwcus.

At faterion yn ymwneud â'r Cofnod: mae'n siŵr i'r rhai ohonoch oedd yn y gynhadledd hon llynedd, a'r flwyddyn gynt o ran hynny, gofio bod Comisiwn y Cynulliad wedi penderfynu peidio â chyfieithu Cofnod o Drafodion y Cynulliad o Saesneg i Gymraeg. Y diweddaraf erbyn hyn yw bod y Comisiwn newydd wedi penderfynu archwilio'r posibilrwydd o ailddechrau ar y cyfieithu.

Datblygiadau TRS

Dechreuwyd prosiect yn 2009 i

result of the SNP's success in Scotland, there is a possibility that powers over taxation will be devolved.

The elections also brought changes to the Assembly Commission. We now have a new Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler, AM for Newport West.

Before Members had settled properly into their new offices, it became clear that two Members—Liberal Democrats Aled Roberts and John Dixon—were ineligible to be Members due to their membership of other bodies at the time of the election. The two were disqualified as inquiries were held—first by the police and then by the Assembly Commission. As a result, it became clear that Aled Roberts had accessed the Welsh version of the Electoral Commission website for guidance on membership of which organisations was not allowed. However, the information there was out of date, dating back to 2006 rather than 2010—when the updated list was published. This was enough to secure a vote of Assembly Members in favour of reinstating Aled Roberts. However, poor John Dixon was not so lucky.

Now to matters affecting the Record: those of you who attended this conference last year—and the previous year, come to think of it—will remember that the Assembly Commission resolved not to translate the Record of Proceedings into Welsh. The latest on that issue is that the new Commission has decided to investigate the possibility of reinstating the translation.

Developments in TRS

A project was established in 2009 to

gaffael system trawsgrifio newydd yn lle meddalwedd trawsgrifio FTR Gold. Mae'r feddalwedd bresennol wedi bod gennym ers dyddiau cynnar y Cynulliad, a heb ei uwchraddio o gwbl ers tua 8 mlynedd. Y bwriad oedd cael 2 gam i'r prosiect, y cyntaf i gael meddalwedd trawsgrifio newydd, a'r ail i gyflwyno system clyweledol gyda thestun y Cofnod yn cael ei arddangos ochr yn ochr â video o'r trafodion. Am nifer o resymau, bu'n rhaid atal y prosiect i gaffael meddalwedd newydd fis Mawrth diwethaf heb ddyfarnu contract, ac yn dilyn archwiliad mewnol, penderfynwyd uno'r ddau gam i greu un prosiect newydd sef prosiect AV (clyweledol) TRS. Cafodd cais gan TRS i gychwyn prosiect newydd ei gymeradwyo fis Mehefin, ac un o'r camau a gymerwyd y tro hwn er mwyn osgoi yr un problemau a gododd gyda'r prosiect blaenorol yw gwahodd person annibynnol i fod yn aelod o'r Bwrdd Prosiect. Rydym yn falch iawn bod Alex Newton, Dirprwy Olygydd o Hansard Ty'r Cyffredin wedi cytuno i fod yn aelod o'n Bwrdd.

Rydym wedi recriwtio pedwar o hyfforddeion newydd ar gynllun 6 mis yn wreiddiol. Ymunodd Anna, Mared, Eleri a Glesni (sydd yma gyda ni heddiw) ym mis Mai, ac mae'r pedair yn gweithio ar bob agwedd ar waith y gangen.

Mae Sarah Dafydd wedi ail ymuno â ni ers mis Ebrill i reoli'r pedair uchod. Mae Cerian wedi ei huwchraddio ac, er mawr siom neu ryddhad i Cerian, mae ei phartner, Rhodri, wedi'n gadael i weithio i Ysgrifenyddiaeth y Pwyllgorau.

Mae'r adran yn parhau yn lle ffrwythlon iawn i weithio ynddo. Yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf, cafodd pedwar o aelodau'r gangen fabis:

procure a new transcription system to replace FTR Gold. We have had the current software since the Assembly's early days, and it has not been refreshed for about eight years. The aim was to have a two-pronged procurement process: the first to procure new transcription software and the second to introduce an audio-visual system with text from the Record appearing alongside a video feed. For a number of reasons, the project to procure new software had to be halted last March, before the contract was awarded, and, following an internal review, it was decided to merge the two strands in order to create one TRS AV project. The TRS bid to set up the new project was approved in June, and one of the steps taken this time round to avoid the problems experienced last time was to appoint an independent member of the project board. We are very pleased that Alex Newton, Deputy Editor of the House of Commons Hansard, has agreed to be a member of our board.

We have recruited four trainees, originally on a six-month programme. We were joined by Anna, Mared, Eleri and Glesni (who is here with us today) in May; all four trainees work on all aspects of our work.

Sarah Dafydd came back to us in April to manage the four trainees. Cerian's post has been upgraded, and, to her relief or disappointment, her partner, Rhodri, has left us to work for the Committee Secretariat.

The department continues to be a very fertile place to work. Over the course of the last year, four members of staff have given birth: Greta, Elen,

mae Greta, Elen, Gruffydd a Gwilym wedi dod i lenwi bywydau Sarah, Nia, Manon a Siân ac mae mwy ar y ffordd, meddan nhw wrthyf fi!

Gruffydd and Gwilym have arrived to fill the worlds of Sarah, Nia, Manon and Siân. I am told that there are more babies on the way!

Streic—cafwyd dirwnod o weithredu diwydiannol ym mis Mehefin yn erbyn cynlluniau'r llywodraeth Glymblaid yn San Steffan i wneud newidiadau i'n pensiynau. Mae'n braf gallu adrodd bod yr ysbryd radicalaidd Cymreig yn fyw ac yn iach yn yr adran, oherwydd llwyddodd TRS i gael 98% o'r gweithlu allan ar streic—y gyfran uchaf yn y Cynulliad.

Strike—there was a day of industrial action in June as a result of the Westminster coalition government's plans to introduce changes to our pensions. It is pleasing to be able to report that the Welsh radical spirit is alive and well in the department: 98% of TRS staff took part in the strike—the highest percentage in the Assembly.

O ran ymwneud â'r cyrff rhyngwladol, bu Meleri yng Nghorc eleni ar gyfer cyfarfod o BIPA. Llynedd, bu Meinir yn ein cynrychioli yng nghynhadledd HAC a bydd Mair yn mynd eleni.

Turning to our links with international organisations, Meleri represented us at BIPA in Cork this year. Meinir represented us last year at the HAC conference in Canada, and Mair will be representing us there this year.

And now for something completely different (a session to share good practice on making the most effective use of staff development opportunities).

This session was led by Stuart Dixon and Fiona Shaw from the Scottish Parliament.

In considering a BIPRA session around training and development, we had two starting points:

- First, we thought it might be useful to develop the “Shuttered Houses” session at the Hansard Association of Canada conference in 2010 (the session was presented by colleagues from Ontario and considered involvement of staff in useful projects during quiet periods). We considered that a discussion around what we might call non-core tasks that nevertheless benefit both the organisation and the individual would be useful and relevant to all BIPRA members.
- Our second inspiration was a comment made by Art O’Leary, the Director of Committees, Information and Communications at the Oireachtas, who gave a speech at a recent Scottish Parliament staff day: “We are in a situation where staff are being asked to contribute outside their normal comfort zone and we are discovering skills, abilities and even resilience which we didn’t know existed.” As was reflected in comments made by BIPRA members during the session on

Efficiencies and Effectiveness, this is true in some form everywhere.
The financial situation means that the climate has changed.

We came to the conclusion that there are really two separate elements to the topic:

- continuous professional development activities
- corporate development activities

At present, when we are at work but not wholly consumed by the core job of producing reports, the Scottish Parliament official report concentrates in the main on CPD and housekeeping activities, such as clearing out papers, revising style guides, updating guidance and so on. Over the years, we have developed a range of activities for editorial staff to get involved in, such as QUIDs (quality improvement discussions in which a turn is reviewed with a sub), peer-review exercises, corporate training, away days, and shadowing/conferences/exchanges.

However, while we will continue our CPD/housekeeping activities, our aspiration is to demonstrate that we are far from being one-trick ponies and that we can add value to the work of offices across the Parliament by finding opportunities that allow us to build on our core skills and develop new ones. Over the past year or so, members of OR staff have been involved in the following corporate activities:

- Membership of the new print contract project board
- Programme managing the Parliament's election programme board
- Providing secretariat support to the election programme board
- Managing the registration of new members project
- Managing the debate recording system project
- Membership of the Parliament's staff forum
- Providing editorial support to the Parliament's Real Action on Carbon Emissions campaign

Bronwyn Brady and Ailsa Kilpatrick (both from the Scottish Parliament) then spoke about their projects in the context of how the organisation benefited and what they personally took from the work. Bronwyn, who was involved in the new print contract, said that her involvement was not confined to recesses and so required ferocious time management on her part, but was overall a terrific experience. Staff from across the organisation, all with different requirements, had to work together and learn from one another's practice. She highlighted that stepping out of the official report and looking across the organisation was a refreshing and rewarding experience. Ailsa, who was involved in the election programme, noted that official report staff involvement in the project was largely a result of the keenness of one of the assistant clerk/chief executives to show to the rest of the organisation that, despite perceptions, the office is not silo-bound and has a lot to offer outside our core purpose of reporting parliamentary proceedings. She found her involvement in both the election programme and in the RACE campaign led to an increase in the visibility of official report staff and was personally satisfying

and rewarding, but noted that there was a knock-on negative impact on the availability of development opportunities for her colleague in editorial support.

Delegates were then asked to consider and discuss in a plenary setting the following questions:

- Do other BIPRA members get involved in *extra-Hansard*/corporate activities?
- How has such involvement come about?
- What have been the positives—and the negatives—of such experience?
- What are the pitfalls/problems to watch out for?
- What other examples of good practice do BIPRA members have of making good use of “quiet” periods?

Ellen Callister (Tynwald, Isle of Man)

- EC explained that the Tynwald has an employee development scheme that is regarded as beneficial.
- The office of the official report must begin to think about succession planning, and the scheme has helped staff with that.
- The training on offer is an Institute of Leadership and Management level 3 certificate, provided via the UK Government.
- Two other staff in the clerk of the Tynwald’s office are also doing the course, which is incorporated into normal working hours, with assignments based on on-going work within the team. For example, EC recently led a project on the development of their voice recognition system. She feels that the course has benefited her, her team and the office.

Iolo Roberts (National Assembly for Wales)

- A number of translation and reporting service staff are doing an ILM level 7 course in coaching and mentoring.

Mair Parry-Jones (National Assembly for Wales)

- A pitfall of developing staff is losing them. The translation and reporting service often has its Welsh-speaking staff poached by other offices.

Iolo Roberts (National Assembly for Wales)

The NAW is always supportive of staff who want to develop, winning an IPP gold award last year. IR noted that taking one person out of the production process for development purposes can make things difficult for those who have to pick up the slack. The point to remember is that while you might have to pick up the slack for a colleague, it will be your turn next.

IR also noted that it was next to impossible to find people to come in on secondment because the job is so specialised—it’s much easier to send staff out in the other direction.

Anne Maxwell and Stephen Rigney (Houses of the Oireachtas)

- Debates office staff are graded as specialists and, as such, have no access to Government-provided training.
- Debates office staff helped out with the new member liaison programme, but were very much the hired help. It was not clear how much empowerment or development they got from that experience.
- Debates office staff are involved in corporate activities such as procurement of print contracts.
- The office's admin staff help out across the directorate.
- The Oireachtas offers a refund of fees paid in pursuit of certificates or diplomas undertaken for professional development reasons, but no time is allowed for such activities and staff have found it difficult to relate the business case that is required for each application to their work in the debates office.
- It was noted that a high level of skills is needed to become a reporter, but once hired a kind of reverse career development happens: it's hard to get different training and hard to move to other jobs. Nonetheless, personal development is important as it keeps the mind active.
- Reduced numbers make it difficult for debates office staff to make use of the fee refund offer, because time is at a premium.

Will Holdaway (House of Commons)

- Sometimes management are reluctant to allow staff to be involved in other activities.
- WH is developing a proofreading training course which it is his intention to sell to other offices in the Commons. The skill is required, but external providers are expensive. Although senior managers are keen, local managers are less so.

James Galbraith (House of Lords)

- Working hours can make it very difficult to participate in corporate life. When you're still working at midnight and coming in at 2pm, your hours don't coincide with other people's.
- Corporate induction for staff is difficult for the same reasons.
- That said, Lords staff have been involved in some corporate activities, such as providing services for NATO's parliamentary assembly.
- Language courses are offered on Friday mornings, which is a quieter time.

Anne Maxwell (Houses of the Oireachtas)

- The Oireachtas offers in-house language courses, but they are scheduled to run from 09:15 to 10:15, so reporters participate in their own time.

Ellen Callister (Tynwald, Isle of Man)

- This summer, the Tynwald's library information service is setting up a database of secondary legislation, with which the official report staff will assist.

Adele Dodd (House of Commons)

- Since being moved into a directorate with the clerks, Hansard staff had enjoyed successful moves into clerking and into outreach services, so transfers are possible.
- AD reiterated the difficulties of participating in corporate life posed by unsocial working hours.

Bronwyn Brady

- In relation to professional development, time needs to be ringfenced for quality improvement discussions involving subs and reporters, otherwise there is a danger that they will fall by the wayside if there is a heavy workload.

Suggested action point that arose from the discussion:

David Cullum (Scottish Parliament) asked about the transferable skills that editorial staff have. Language skills are obviously well-developed; what else can people do? Bronwyn Brady (Scottish Parliament) suggested that it is often difficult for editorial staff to articulate what skills they have, but that it was necessary to try to do that, and mentioned grammar and proofreading skills, knowledge of politics, ability to act apolitically and impartially and research skills as examples. Others mentioned during the discussion include a high level of organisational skills, the ability to work under pressure and knowledge of parliamentary procedure. It was also felt that we underrate ourselves in relation to certain skills that are highly developed in reporting, such as decision making skills and analytical skills – these are valuable skills, and we can forget how much we use them. Following the session, it was suggested that perhaps next year's conference could include a session in which a range of competencies could be considered in relation to reporting, describing why a reporter has them.

Exploiting New Media: Hansard on my iPad: This session was chaired by delegates from the House of Commons and examined how new technology is gradually emerging and being used to bring parliamentary debates to the public. There was a lively discussion and a relatively informal look ahead to how technology might develop. The consensus was that technology and the needs and wants of customers are changing rapidly, which in turn means that Hansard organisations must try to keep the product relevant and provide it in an appropriate format.

Conference dinner

As has become traditional, the conference dinner was a relatively informal affair, held in the dining room at Nant Gwrtheyrn.

I Say Tomato — Reporting Styles around the Isles (*Reporting Staff*) OR The Real Heroes (*Administration Staff*)

Delegates divided into prearranged groups to discuss reporting styles around the isles. The groups were prearranged so as to ensure representation from all or most legislatures in all groups. A piece of verbatim transcript had been provided to all delegates beforehand as a basis for discussion. The transcript is available [here](#).

The groups discussed how reporters from the different legislatures would set about editing the piece, explaining why changes would be made. This allowed delegates to share best practice and to examine their own procedures. It became clear that organisations differ in the amount of editing that they do, with some keeping the piece much more verbatim than others.

As a result of doing this exercise, delegates were able to discuss the differing styles of organisations, thereby confirming, in some cases, the rationale for doing things in a certain way and, in others, acting as a stimulus for revisiting current practices.

At the same time, administration staff formed a group to look at administrative processes in different organisations. This again allowed staff to examine why things are done in a certain way and to share best practice. This was a valuable session for all involved.

Conference review and feedback.

Meinir Harris closed the conference and thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions. The feedback received from delegates was positive throughout regarding content, location and the fabulous weather.