



Huw Irranca-Davies
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
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03 May 22

Dear Huw,

Thank you for your letter about the electoral pilots taking place during the local government elections in May 2022. I am responding as Minister for the Constitution and I am happy to provide the additional information requested by the Committee.

What support will be provided to the relevant local authorities to enable the pilots to be successful?

The pilots were developed by the four pilot authorities in collaboration with the Welsh Government, and with input from the Electoral Commission and the wider electoral community. Welsh Government coordinated the preparation of the necessary legislative and software changes, additional training, guidance and checklists to enable the Elections Teams deliver the pilots successfully. The pilots were funded by Welsh Government – the estimated costs are £1,451,322 which includes funding for staffing, venue hire and investment in Electoral Management Systems.

How they will be implemented in practice?

Local Authorities are delivering the pilots alongside the main election. All four include an advance voting centre (AVC), which are polling stations for the purposes of advance voting and operate in a very similar way. Bridgend also have advance voting in wards with low turn-out, in a familiar polling station model. The key difference is in the use of electronic devices in AVCs and some polling stations to facilitate administration. The electronic device links to the electronic register where the voter is identified, allocated the correct ballot papers, marked off the register, assigned a number on the corresponding number list and directed to a booth to cast their vote as normal. Administrators have been given additional training on the new software and processes.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

How they will be monitored?

A governance structure was put in place at the start of the Programme to monitor delivery. A Programme Board of Welsh Government officials and the senior sponsor from the pilot authorities was responsible for strategic monitoring. A Stakeholder Reference Group with representatives from key stakeholders including the Electoral Commission, Welsh Electoral Coordination Board, the Association of Electoral Administrators, One Voice Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association provided expertise and support during the design phase. Regular meetings with electoral administrators and software providers took place to monitor progress and mitigate risks in relation to technical and operational delivery.

How they will be evaluated following the elections?

The Electoral Commission is required by law to evaluate every electoral pilot scheme undertaken in England and Wales. The Commission are carrying out online surveys and interviews with voters and electoral administrators as part of the evaluation of the pilots in Wales. They will aim to publish their report within three months of the election and we will take account of their findings in determining the next steps in delivering our Programme for Government commitment to reform local government elections to reduce the democratic deficit.

An overview of the pilots are included in Annex A for information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mick Antoniw". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a short horizontal blue line.

Mick Antoniw AS/MS
Y Cwnsler Cyffredinol a Gweinidog y Cyfansoddiad
Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution

1. Electoral Pilots are taking place in four local authorities across Wales during the local government elections in May 2022. The pilots programme is looking to do new things, in new ways. The purpose of the schemes is to see if we can make it easier for people to vote by offering flexibility on when and where you can vote. The scheme will bring the ballot box closer to people's day to day lives.
2. The local authorities are:
 - **Blaenau Gwent** – the centrally-located Ebbw Vale Learning Zone will be used as an advance polling station for all residents of the county, including students of the college. Advance voting will be available **on Tuesday 3 and Wednesday 4 May 22, opening between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.**
 - **Bridgend** - polling stations in certain low turnout wards will be open for advance voting on **Tuesday 3 and Wednesday 4 May 22, opening between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m.** These wards are:
 - Brackla East and Coychurch Lower,
 - Brackla East Central,
 - Brackla West,
 - Brackla West Central,
 - Cornelly,
 - Pyle, Kenfig Hill and Cefn Cribwr, and
 - St Bride's Minor and Ynysawdre.A new polling station is also being created at Cynffig Comprehensive School for registered students. This will be open between **8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday 3 May 2022**
 - **Caerphilly** – the council offices at Ystrad Mynach will be used as an advance polling station for all residents of the county. Advance voting will be available on **Saturday 30 April and Sunday 1 May opening between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.**
 - **Torfaen** – the council offices at Pontypool will be used as an advance polling station for all residents of the county Advance voting will be available on **Saturday 30 April and Sunday 1 May opening between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.**
3. The advance voting centres (AVC) are polling stations like any other and all the same rules that apply to a polling station on normal Election Day will apply. Everything is the same unless something has been explicitly changed in the Orders that underpin the pilots. This includes rules around canvassing, the tellers outside of the polling station and how polling agents can interact with voters. This will be enforced as normal by the polling clerks within the AVC.
4. There are however a few things that may be different in an AVC. In the centrally located AVC, there may be multiple polling areas to funnel voters to their specific ward.
5. The use of electronic devices in AVCs and polling stations is new, they will speed up the administrative process, for voters and officials alike, whilst ensuring the security of the voting process is maintained. It is likely that there will be a QR code on the polling card that the voter could present to the polling clerk on entering the AVC (voters can still attend a polling station or an AVC without their polling card). This will be scanned and will link to the electronic register where the voter will be identified and then given the correct ballot papers. They will be marked off the register, assigned a number on the

corresponding number list and they will be asked to make their way to a booth to cast their vote as normal.

6. As the register and the corresponding number list (CNL) will be kept electronically, there may be a difference in the process for sealing documents. At the close of advance voting day one (AV1), these documents will not be sealed as they will be used on advance voting day two (AV2). At the close of AV2 the documents will be printed and sealed. This may take place at the AVC, or at another location that the Presiding Officer considers appropriate. The PO must give polling agents advance notice of the intention to seal the CNL at another location and give them the opportunity to be present.
7. The ballot boxes in the AVC may be used over the two days that the AVC will be open. As a result, the process for sealing the ballot box at the close of AV1 may be different to normal. It is expected that the letterbox opening at the top of the ballot box will be sealed (with security tags and any seal of agents present) and the boxes kept securely overnight in their civic centres. The numbers will be recorded on a ballot box record sheet. The ballot boxes would then be brought back to the AVC for AV2 and the seals at the letterbox opening (and any seals of agents) removed and the ballot box would be open for the whole of AV2. Again, at the close of AV2 the letterbox opening would be sealed using the security tags (and any agent's seals) and again the numbers recorded as such.