

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from Cymdeithas Cymru

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i [ymgyngoriad y Pwyllgor Biliau Diwygio](#) ar [Fil Senedd Cymru \(Aelodau ac Etholiadau\)](#).

This response was submitted to the [Reform Bill Committee consultation](#) on the [Senedd Cymru \(Members and Elections\) Bill](#).

SCME(P)26 Ymateb gan: | Response from: Cymdeithas Cymru





Response of Cymdeithas yr Iaith to the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill consultation

Who we are

Cymdeithas yr Iaith is an organisation that campaigns in a non-violent way for the Welsh language and all communities in Wales.

Initial comments

Although there are no references in the Bill itself to making Welsh the language proper of the Senedd, increasing the use of Welsh nor moving the Senedd – as our leading democratic body – towards becoming an organisation that operates through the medium of Welsh, we see this consultation as an opportunity to offer our views on how to strengthen the Welsh language within the Senedd, how to make it a Welsh language institution and how to expand the use and prominence of the language in Welsh democratic life.

The Senedd's Official Languages Act is now over 10 years old but no significant changes have been made over the years. We believe that Senedd reform offers a timely opportunity to update the Act.

An Official Languages Scheme is produced for each Senedd in accordance with the Official Languages Act, but the Scheme is produced and monitored by the Senedd itself, through the Senedd Commission. Such an arrangement is uncommon in the public sector.

We believe that the Senedd should declare in law that Welsh is the language proper of the Senedd, which should be reflected through the Official Languages Scheme.

The Bill's content

SCHEDULE 1 (introduced by section 17) SENEDD CONSTITUENCIES FOR FIRST GENERAL ELECTION AFTER 6 APRIL 2026

In keeping with our belief in Welsh as the language proper of Wales, we support the need to give constituencies monolingual Welsh names and want this to be the default approach when naming constituencies, with Welsh names always regarded as the norm.

We support the intention to require the Boundary Commission to consult with the Welsh Language Commissioner when naming constituencies.

SCHEDULE 2 (introduced by section 18) NEW PART 3A OF THE 2013 ACT, PART 3A SENEDD CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARY REVIEWS

In keeping with our belief that Welsh is the language proper of Wales, we support the need to give constituencies monolingual Welsh names and want this to be the default approach when naming constituencies, with Welsh names always regarded as the norm.

We support the intention to require the Boundary Commission to consult with the Welsh Language Commissioner when naming constituencies.

Increasing the size of the Senedd to 96 Members

We support increasing the size of the Senedd to 96 Members as this would strengthen democracy in Wales.

Require candidates and Members of the Senedd to be resident in Wales (by disqualifying candidates and Members who are not registered to vote in a Senedd constituency).

We support the intention for candidates and Members of the Senedd to be resident in Wales. It is our view that someone who is not resident in Wales should not be elected to the Senedd and that this is contrary to democratic principles.

Name of the Senedd

The idea of having a monolingual Welsh name was rejected when the Assembly became the Senedd, and it was insisted that there should also be an English name.

In keeping with our belief that Welsh is the language proper of Wales, we believe that this Bill, since it derives from the first reform Bill that led to the creation of a Senedd, should establish that the name of the organisation is Senedd Cymru, with no translation or English version.

The Welsh name is now widely used by Members of all parties in the Senedd Chamber and in committee, and it is widely used in political circles. Not only is an English name unnecessary, but a monolingual Welsh name would also send a clear message, to the few organisations that still insist on having an English name and more generally, that the Senedd is a truly Welsh institution.

Welsh Language Impact Assessment

The Welsh language impact assessment that was carried out only considered constituency names.

Monolingual Welsh names enhance the status of Welsh in general and make the language accessible. However, the Senedd needs to go further by declaring that Welsh is the organisation's primary language.

The 'Official Languages Scheme: Annual Report 2022-23', which was presented to the Senedd during Plenary on 20 September 2023, shows that the level of contributions made in Welsh by Members of the Senedd remains low at 30% in Plenary and only 8% in committee. The Senedd Commissioner responsible for the Welsh language confirmed that there was also a decline in the use of written Welsh. Fewer written questions were submitted, although the Commission omitted this information from the annual report.

It is, therefore, clear that the Senedd's Official Languages Scheme is not ambitious enough. There is no target for the Commission to increase the use of Welsh in the Senedd Chamber or in committee, let alone for Welsh to be used as its administrative language. Making Welsh the language proper of the Senedd would increase Members' confidence to use Welsh.

It would also make clear that there is an expectation to develop a Welsh language administration, with the organisation becoming one that works through the medium of Welsh and, therefore, a truly Welsh organisation.

Not all posts at the Senedd currently include an expectation to be able to work through the medium of Welsh. The fact that only basic skills are required means that staff at that level cannot work through the medium of Welsh.

We believe that there is an opportunity to set higher expectations for language skills, which will be even more important as the number of Members increases, with the additional human resources that this will entail.

In doing so, it will be necessary to ensure that new and existing staff are appropriately supported so that they can use the Welsh language with confidence.

Although the Senedd is currently able to set higher expectations for in terms of language requirements for certain posts, this is not happening and there is no indication of an intention to increase the use of Welsh internally. We believe that this will be addressed if Welsh becomes the language proper of the Senedd.

Welsh Language Rights Group, Cymdeithas yr Iaith
Gymraeg, November 2023.