

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](#).

SCME42 Ymateb gan: | Response from: John Gallanders

Individual Evidence Submission: Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill
John Gallanders. No restriction on use of my name.
14th October 2023

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on the proposals, which I have outlined below.

Consultation Process:

The manner in which this consultation is taking place is not in a format that would make it easy for the general public to contribute. You are seeking free-flow narrative rather than a selection of variable tick-box responses that would be easier for many people to complete. The language being used is not in Plain English and does not meet the needs of a very significant part of the electorate. A layperson's version should be provided in a format and style to enable full participation by the electorate. It appears that you are only seeking the views of those who are already 'in the know.' Presumably, you will be holding more consultations, but these will be against items that have not had the benefit of public participation. The use of a consultation process, rather than engagement and then consultation, is somewhat dated and gives the public the impression that this is a done deal rather than engagement, so they feel a part of the process.

Bill Detail:

Number of Members: While accepting that there is a heavy workload and a balance between constituency work and Senedd work, there is little clarity on what the split will be for their work. Quite clearly, at present, any Member of Senedd (MS) who becomes a Minister or opposition portfolio holder is likely to be undertaking less constituency work. Yet, it is the people in the constituencies who voted them in to represent the views and needs of an area. The current system of governance means that, in most instances, the use of the political whip means that Members could be voting in a particular direction that is at odds with their constituents.



Whip Process:

Irrespective of how this Bill progresses, there is a need to set up a process that means that any activity of Party Whips is fully recorded. Ideally, this process should be abolished altogether, and each Member should have a free vote to represent those who put them in their role.

Numbers:

There needs to be more clarity on what exactly all Members would be doing if the number was increased. Increased numbers will not lead to increased scrutiny if any one political party had a majority of seats, as the whipping process would likely interfere with the process, thus ensuring that every item put forward by the government would be passed. The scrutiny process would become nothing more than a sham tick-box exercise.

Test of Ability for All Members:

The current system of candidate selection does not, in any way, set any form of minimum standard or criteria that they should all adhere to in order to be considered for a ballot paper. The current system of selecting a candidate because they are liked at a local level by a Constituent Party is neither effective nor justified and would never pass any test in the real world of employment. There should be a basic skills assessment that is a criteria for all those who are put onto a ballot paper. This is potentially one of the few ways in which to improve the calibre of the people elected and the only way to check if they are anywhere near fulfilling the role. What other job is there that is effectively determined by the colour of your badge or how popular you are, rather than any skill base?

Costs:

There does not appear to have been any cost-benefit analysis undertaken. With such a huge budget implication, this should be essential. The actual needs and not the political need to get more Members should be paramount.

Democracy:

In a democratic process, there should be total transparency in respect to the process. It appears that the proposed process will see a significant swing to a dominant party, thus reducing the level of non-governmental Members to perform a true scrutinizing role.