



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1411  
Ein cyf/Our ref CG/05004/24

Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

30 April 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 19 March regarding Petition P-06-1411 "I oppose the Welsh Government "Senedd Reform Bill", published 18 September 2023, becoming law."

A clear and compelling case for Senedd reform has been repeatedly made through a series of expert panel and commission reports. In 2004 the Richards Commission ([Report of the Commission on the Powers and Electoral Arrangements of the National Assembly for Wales](#)) concluded that maintaining the status quo was not an option and recommended a change in membership and electoral system.

In 2017, the [Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform](#) (the McAllister Report) made recommendations about the size of the Senedd and how Members should be elected. Its recommendations were subsequently considered by the [Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform](#), which reported in September 2020, and concluded that there was clear and compelling evidence that the Senedd is too small. The Committee outlined that the majority of the evidence it had heard "expressed concern over whether a 60 Member Senedd has sufficient capacity to fulfil its responsibilities effectively".

A commitment to Senedd reform was an explicit part of the manifestos of Welsh Labour, Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Liberal Democrats in the 2021 Senedd elections. The Senedd voted in favour of taking forward the recommendations of the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform's report [Reforming our Senedd: A stronger voice for the people of Wales](#) published on 30 May 2022. Among its 31 recommendations, the report included a recommendation that the Senedd should have 96 Members.

The Special Purpose Committee acknowledged that the proposal for 96 members went beyond the range originally recommended by the Expert Panel. In their report they set out their rationale for believing this to be a proportionate adjustment, reflecting the wide array of changes in the political landscape of Wales since the Expert Panel's report. These included:

- increased responsibilities for the Welsh Government and the Senedd, primarily arising from the UK's withdrawal from the EU;

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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.

- increased public awareness of the role of the Senedd in holding the Welsh Government to account, primarily as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- changes in ways of working, prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which could potentially reduce some of the financial costs associated with increasing the number of Members of the Senedd; and
- confirmation that the number of Welsh MPs will be reduced from 40 to 32.

The Senedd is the smallest of all the devolved legislatures in the UK and has remained the same size since the establishment of the National Assembly in 1999. The National Assembly at that time had no primary law-making powers and was not formally separated from the Welsh Government. The roles and responsibilities of the Senedd have grown considerably. The Senedd now makes laws, sets taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account in some of the areas which have the greatest impact on people's lives. It makes decisions which affect the lives of every single person in Wales. It is essential that it is appropriately sized to be able to effectively carry out its scrutiny functions and hold the Government to account.

In any parliament, if a Member sits on multiple Committees, they must divide up their time in preparing to deliver scrutiny. Their individual capacity is further affected by any additional responsibilities they may have (such as being a Party Leader, Business Manager, etc.). These conflicting demands and responsibilities impact on their ability to specialise in an area of policy and legislative scrutiny, to build up greater expertise and knowledge in holding the executive to account. While Members in other parliaments will rarely sit on multiple Committees, this is currently common practice in the Senedd.

Investing in our democracy has a cost attached to it. The Welsh Government has worked with partners (including Senedd Commission, Welsh Local Government Association, Electoral Commission and Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales) to develop detailed cost estimates that set out the projected financial implications of this legislation over an 8-year period, from the anticipated passing of this Bill.

The current financial climate demands that we maximise best value for public money. Wales has an annual budget of over £24 billion (the Welsh Consolidated Fund). An improvement in value of less than 0.1% of this budget, as a result of Senedd committees being equipped with the capacity to deliver their responsibilities more effectively, will offset the costs of this investment.

Yours sincerely,



**Mick Antoniw AS/MS**  
Y Cwnsler Cyffredinol  
Counsel General