

Cat Smith MP
Chair, Procedure Committee
House of Commons

6 March 2025

Dear Cat,

Laying of bilingual statutory instruments

I am writing further to a [letter of 17 January 2024](#) which your predecessor wrote to the then Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee in relation to the laying of bilingual instruments in the UK Parliament. This is a salient issue to the Committee given its impact on some types of statutory instruments¹ also laid in Senedd Cymru, and the resulting impact on the accessibility of Welsh law in both the Welsh and English languages.

The Committee has recently given further consideration to this matter following receipt of [correspondence](#) from the Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP. Within her letter, the Secretary of State referred to the views expressed by your predecessor, who stated that there is no procedural or other bar to a statutory instrument that contains text in Welsh, including bilingual instruments, being laid before the House of Commons "if the relevant Act requires it to be".

Similarly to the Secretary of State, we are not aware of any statutory requirements that prescribe the language in which a statutory instrument is to be made; be that in English, or in any other language. The Secretary of State's assessment is that, in the absence of any requirement, the "default position" is that statutory instruments are to be laid in English only.

However, we do not agree with the Secretary of State's assessment, and have written to her to express this view. We believe that provision in section 156 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*,

¹ Orders in Council, and instruments which are made jointly or compositely by both a Minister of the Crown and a Welsh Minister.



which extends to the whole of the United Kingdom and is not limited in application to subordinate legislation made by the Welsh Ministers and laid before the Senedd, enables the making of bilingual statutory instruments by ensuring that the Welsh- and English-language texts of such instruments will have equal status. As such, we would not think it necessary for the enabling Act to *require* an instrument to be bilingual in order for that instrument to be laid before the UK Parliament in both Welsh and English. We note in this regard that instruments containing Welsh language text are frequently laid in the UK Parliament, despite there being no requirement in the relevant enabling Acts to include Welsh language text.

In order for the Committee to gain a fuller understanding of any barriers which exist in the UK Parliament, I would be grateful if you could provide further clarity as to why your predecessor took the view that bilingual statutory instruments may only be laid in the House of Commons if the relevant Act requires it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Hedges". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Mike Hedges
Chair