

# Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

## Monitoring Report

January 2026

### Key points

#### **UK-EU**

Negotiations between the UK and EU on further areas of cooperation are continuing with the UK announcing that it has reached an agreement on joining the Erasmus+ scheme in 2027.

The UK Government and the European Commission hope to conclude agreements on a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) area, a youth exchange scheme and linkage of their respective Emission Trading Systems (ETS) by the next UK-EU summit, later in 2026.

The UK Government published its response to the review of the Windsor Framework carried out by Lord Murphy accepting all of the reviews' recommendations.

The Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights under the Withdrawal Agreement met in December. The need for further action by both sides to ensure the rights of EU and UK citizens was identified.

#### **Senedd elections**

The Electoral Commission has published its evaluation report of the Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) pilots that took place in Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd,



Newport and Powys. It concluded that the pilots suggest AVR “could have a positive impact on the completeness of the electoral registers”.

The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru published directions to Electoral Registration Officers for the May 2026 Senedd election.

## **Justice**

The Ministry of Justice released assorted statistics relating to justice in Wales. This was the first set of Wales-only data released by the Ministry of Justice. Data will be published on the UK Government website on an annual basis.

The UK Government announced that Police and Crime Commissioners will be abolished at the end of the next electoral cycle in 2028. The roles will be absorbed “wherever possible” by regional mayors in England. It is not yet clear who will exercise powers in Wales.

The UK Government announced the introduction of judge-only courts, which will see cases with a likely sentence of three years or less heard by a judge alone.

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# 1. Introduction

The Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee has a broad remit covering a wide range of areas. This monitoring report is intended to provide Members of the Committee with an update on key policy developments related to the Committee's remit. The report covers the period from **17 September 2025** to **21 January 2026**.

The Committee will consider these issues and any actions that it wishes to take in response. This report is being published to inform stakeholders of some of the issues currently under consideration by the Committee.

A glossary of key terms is included as an Annex.

## 2. UK-EU relations

### 2.1. UK-EU reset

**In November, the Council of the European Union authorised the European Commission to open negotiations with the UK on an agreement for a common sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) area and to link Emissions Trading Systems (ETS).**

Negotiations began on 19 November and during a debate in the European Parliament, Maroš Šefčovič, the European Commissioner for Trade, described the negotiations as going “quite well” and that they “would continue at the high pace”.

**In December, it was agreed the UK will join the EU’s Erasmus+ scheme in 2027.**

A statement by the UK Government said the UK contribution will be approximately £570m, covering the 2027/28 academic year. Any further participation will need to be agreed in future. The announcement was welcomed by Universities Wales.

**Commissioner Šefčovič and the UK Minister for European Relations Nick Thomas-Symonds issued a joint statement on 17 December on progress made since the UK-EU summit in May 2025 and the Common Understanding agreement.**

In addition to progress on Erasmus+, the statement said that exploratory talks on the UK’s participation in the EU’s single electricity market had concluded. Further detail on the outcomes of the talks were published on 22 December. In addition, the statement said that the UK and EU are committed to concluded talks on a Youth Experience Scheme, ETS linkage and an SPS area prior to the next EU-UK summit in 2026.

**In November, the House of Lords’ European Affairs Committee published its report on the UK-EU reset.**

The report welcomed Common Understanding’s security and defence partnership, alongside progress against other reset objectives such as an SPS agreement and ETS linkage. The Committee stated “little, if any, progress” had been made around further law enforcement cooperation, touring artist support, and mutual recognition of professional qualifications. The Committee said that

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UK dynamic alignment with the EU in areas such as SPS and ETS will have significant implications for parliament and it has asked the UK Government to set out how it envisaged that a scrutiny system for dynamic alignment would work. On the role of devolved legislatures, the Committee noted “the devolved parliaments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have a legitimate interest in treaty scrutiny and the [UK] Government should consider how their concerns can be incorporated into the scrutiny process”.

In early January it was widely reported that the UK Government will introduce primary legislation to provide ministers with powers to align the UK with EU law in areas covered by current negotiations. The timeline for the introduction of any Bill will depend on progress in the negotiations.

**The Prime Minister, Keir Starmer MP, reiterated the UK Government’s position not to join the customs union in December.**

This follows comments made by Deputy Prime Minister, David Lammy MP, who noted the benefits of the EU-Turkey customs union, saying Turkey was “seemingly benefiting and seeing growth in their economy”.

Responding to a question in Plenary on 21 January, about the benefits to Wales of the UK joining customs union, the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Rebecca Evans MS said the Welsh Government’s “current priority is to ensure that Welsh interests are fully reflected in the UK Government’s negotiations with the EU on enhanced co-operation under the common understanding”.

**In November, it was reported that UK-EU talks had “broken down” over greater UK access to the EU’s defence loans scheme, Security Action for Europe (SAFE).**

Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations, Nick Thomas Symonds MP, described the situation as “disappointing”, with the European Commission suggesting talks could resume at a later date.

## **2.2. Trade and Cooperation Agreement**

**In September, the UK Government published the conclusions from the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) Civil Society Forum, which was held in June.**

The Forum discussed trade in services, trade in goods, energy and climate, the level playing field, sustainability and regulatory cooperation. Participants at the meeting welcomed plans for an SPS agreement but noted that other “barriers to

trade still remained absent an agreement". There were calls to consider Mutual Recognition Agreements and UK accession to the Pan-Euro Mediterranean Convention. It was also noted that monitoring EU and UK regulatory divergences remains a priority.

**The sixth EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly was held on 17-18 November.**

The items discussed included the state of UK-EU relations after the first summit in May, security and foreign policy cooperation, cultural exchanges and AI. The Senedd was represented by Delyth Jewell MS and Hannah Blythyn MS.

**A number of the TCA's committees and working groups have met since September, including, the Trade Partnership Committee, the Trade Specialised Committees on Goods, the Level Playing Field, Regulatory Cooperation, Participation in Union Programmes and SPS Measures.**

Issues of interest to Wales that were due to be discussed include EU steel trade measures, the UK Planning and Infrastructure Bill, automotive strategies, nationalisation of UK industries, state aid and subsidy control, the UK's association to Horizon and Copernicus and ETS linkage.

## **2.3. Withdrawal Agreement**

**In November, the Windsor Framework Independent Monitoring Panel published its first report, covering January to June 2025.**

The Panel was established following a commitment made in Safeguarding the Union, and reports on the guarantee that more than 80% of all freight movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will take place under the UK internal market system. In this reporting period, the panel found that 96% of freight had moved within the internal market system, meeting the guarantee.

**On 16 December, the UK Government issued its response to the Independent Review of the Windsor Framework conducted by Lord Murphy of Torfaen.**

The UK Government accepted all the recommendations of the Review including providing additional scrutiny time for the Northern Ireland Assembly's Democratic Scrutiny Committee to consider if it wishes to hold an inquiry into an EU Act and to better coordinate advice from the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to the Assembly.

**The Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee published its final report on the EU Settlement Scheme on 25 November.**

The report sets out the Committee's key findings from five years of monitoring the operation of the EUSS in Wales and makes five recommendations for future work including that a future Senedd Committee should continue its work and keep EUSS on the agenda in the Seventh Senedd.

**The Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights met on 18 December. Civil society organisations representing EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in the EU attended the meeting.**

The UK raised concerns about the ability of UK nationals to acquire permanent residence documents before their pre-permanent residence documents expire and questioned the quality of data provided in the Commission's annual report. The EU also expressed concern that significant numbers of EU citizens have yet to obtain settled status. The co-chairs agreed to meet again in spring 2026.

## **2.4. UK-EU divergence**

**The latest UK in a Changing Europe's regulatory divergence tracker was published in October, and covers the period July-October 2025.**

It found the trend towards greater UK alignment with EU rules has continued, identifying seven cases. The areas of alignment were around the regulation of manufactured goods and digital regulation. Financial services continues to be the main area of UK-EU divergence. The report does not include reference to divergence and alignment at a Wales level during this period.

## **2.5. Other**

**The European Commission published its work programme for 2026 in October.**

The programme includes 38 new policy objectives, with a focus on simplification initiatives. Areas covered by the programme include sustainable prosperity and competitiveness, defence and security, quality of life, nature and global engagement.

**The seventh meeting of the European Political Community took place in October. The UK Government published a joint statement with European leaders on illegal migration.**

Senedd Research has published a number of articles on issues related to developments included in this monitoring report including:

- [Wales and Safeguarding the Union](#)
- [To align or not to align? Wales' EU question](#)
- [What could the latest UK-EU agreement mean for Wales?](#)
- [Reviewing the Brexit deal: Wales' first four years of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#)

### 3. Intergovernmental and interparliamentary relations

#### **The independent intergovernmental relations secretariat published annual reports on relations for 2022/23 and 2023/24.**

The reports cover the period from January 2022 to March 2024, and contain factual information on meetings held under the intergovernmental structures agreed in the 2022 review.

The most recent report notes that, over the reporting period, “progress was made in further embedding and developing the structures and processes recommended by the Review”.

#### **The UK Government published transparency data for intergovernmental relations from July 2024 to March 2025.**

The data relates to meetings held within and outside the 2022 structures. It notes that:

*The vast majority of meetings (338), including bilaterals and ministerial visits, took place outside the formal IGR structures.*

#### **Senedd Research published an article on oversight of intergovernmental relations.**

The article includes discussion of the LJC Committee’s oversight of IGR, including information from its latest annual report.

#### **The Scottish Parliament’s Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee continued with its inquiry into transparency of intergovernmental activity and its implications for parliamentary scrutiny.**

The Committee held evidence sessions with academics in October and November 2025, and the Scottish Government in December 2025.

In the UK Government’s response to the Committee’s consultation (November 2025), it provided an update on common frameworks, which noted that 24 frameworks have been scrutinised by all legislatures. It also noted that a reporting mechanism for all legislatures is being developed.

## 4. Legislation

### 4.1. Senedd

**There are currently nine bills progressing through the Senedd. At time of writing:**

Seven are at stage two:

- [Prohibition of Greyhound Racing \(Wales\) Bill](#);
- [Senedd Cymru \(Member Accountability and Elections\) Bill](#);
- [Planning \(Consequential Provisions\) \(Wales\) Bill](#) and [Planning \(Wales\) Bill](#) (both at 'detailed committee consideration' stage);
- [British Sign Language \(Wales\) Bill](#);
- [Development of Tourism and Regulation of Visitor Accommodation \(Wales\) Bill](#); and
- [Building Safety \(Wales\) Bill](#).

Two are at stage three:

- [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation \(Wales\) Bill](#); and
- [Environment \(Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets\) \(Wales\) Bill](#).

One is post stage 4:

- [Bus Services \(Wales\) Bill](#).

**On 14 January 2026, the Senedd voted to pass the [Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales \(Membership\) Bill](#).**

The Welsh Government introduced the Bill on 13 January 2026 and the Senedd agreed to treat it as an emergency Bill.

The Bill changes the criterion for medical membership of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales. It provides that medical members of that tribunal must be registered medical practitioners but do not require a licence to practise.

**The [Senedd Cymru \(Member Accountability and Elections\) Bill](#) aims to introduce a recall mechanism for elected Members, strengthen the Senedd**

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**standards processes, and place a duty on Welsh Ministers to make provision prohibiting the making or publishing of false statements of fact during an election period.**

The [LJC Committee's report on the Bill](#) made 18 recommendations, while the [Member Accountability Bill Committee's report](#) made 11. The Senedd agreed the general principles of the Bill on 13 January 2026.

For more information on the Bill, see [Senedd Research's resources page](#).

**[In November 2025, the Welsh Government launched a public consultation on legislative proposals to amend the Welsh Tax Acts.](#)**

The Welsh Government is [proposing technical changes](#) to “clarify, enhance and future-proof our devolved tax legislation and to support wider public service delivery in Wales”. The Welsh Government considers that proposals could comprise what would become Wales’s first tax maintenance bill. The consultation closes on 26 January 2026.

**[The Counsel General and Minister for Delivery, Julie James MS, wrote to the Llywydd to inform her of the Welsh Government's intended new design of Welsh Statutory Instruments.](#)**

Welsh Statutory Instruments will now be printed in a single document with both languages printed sequentially. A bilingual front cover will precede the Welsh language text of the legislation, which will be printed in its entirety in full page format and will come first. The English language text of the legislation will follow after the Welsh language text, also printed in its entirety in full page format.

The Welsh Government [has also published](#) a determination on the numbering and classifying of subordinate legislation not made by Welsh statutory instrument. This was made in accordance with section 37Z of the *Legislation (Wales) Act 2019*.

The Welsh Government [also confirmed](#) the new typeface for Welsh statutory instruments (Arimo).

**[The Welsh Government made the Legislation \(Procedure, Publication and Repeals\) \(Wales\) Act 2025 \(Commencement and Transitional and Saving Provisions\) Order 2025.](#)**

The Order brings the remaining provisions of the 2025 Act into force on 1 January 2026.

**As part of its Draft Budget 2026/27, the Welsh Government published information on the implementation costs of legislation.**

The document includes information on the cost of measures introduced by the *Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024*, such as the assistance schemes for disabled candidates.

## 4.2. UK

**The House of Commons Library produced a briefing on the progress of legislation included in the UK Government's 2024 King's Speech.**

Senedd Research published an article shortly after the speech, summarising measures relating to Wales.

**The *Absent Voting (Elections in Scotland and Wales) Act 2025* received Royal Assent in October 2025.**

The Act allows Scottish and Welsh Ministers (or UK Ministers) to make regulations providing for “the alignment of rules on absent voting arrangements between reserved and devolved elections”. Regulations affecting the May 2026 Senedd election have not yet been made. The Welsh Government previously indicated that regulations would be made by December 2025.

**The *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill* is currently at committee stage in the House of Lords.**

The House of Commons Library has produced a briefing on progress of the Bill.

**The *Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill* is currently at committee stage in the House of Lords.**

A large number of amendments to the Bill have been tabled in the Lords.

**The *Public Office (Accountability) Bill* is currently at committee stage in the House of Commons. The remaining stages in the Commons have been delayed twice following disagreement over its provisions.**

The Bill seeks to ensure public authorities have legal responsibilities to act with candour, and would make seriously improper conduct in public office a criminal offence. The offence would apply to Senedd Members as well as Welsh Ministers.

Senedd Research has published an article on the Bill as introduced and its implications for Wales.

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## 5. Legislative Consent

**Since the UK Government came into office in July 2024, 70 Legislative Consent Memoranda (LCMs) and Supplementary LCMs (SLCMs) have been laid relating to 26 Bills, bringing the total to 189 LCMs and SLCMs relating to 73 Bills in the Sixth Senedd.**

Bills for which the Welsh Government has recently laid LCMs include:

- The Public Office (Accountability) Bill. The Welsh Government laid an LCM on 2 October 2025, within which it states that it needs further information on the operation of the Bill before it can recommend that the Senedd grant consent. The Committee published its report on the LCM in December 2025. The Welsh Government laid an SLCM in December 2025.
- The Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill. The Welsh Government laid an LCM on 25 November 2025, within which it recommends that the Senedd grant consent.
- The Finance (No.2) Bill. The Welsh Government laid an LCM on 16 December 2025, within which it recommends that the Senedd grant consent.
- The Railways Bill. The Welsh Government laid an LCM on 21 January 2026, within which it states that further engagement is required before it can recommend that the Senedd grant consent.

## 6. Constitution

**The Innovating Democracy Advisory Group, established in response to the recommendations of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales, published its work programme.**

The programme focuses on three core ambitions:

1. Empowering Citizens through Democratic Education and Information.
2. Strengthening Political Culture for Participation and Deliberation.
3. Laying Foundations for Constitutional Principles.

**On 30 September 2025, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs gave an oral statement on the future of the Crown Estate in Wales.**

Within the statement, the Deputy First Minister announced the creation of a Welsh group on the Crown Estate, as recommended by the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales. The group will “bring together experts to consider how best to devolve the Crown Estate to Wales”.

In December 2025, the Welsh Government confirmed membership of the group, and that it had held its first meeting, agreed its workplan and a terms of reference.

**On 20 January 2026, the Crown Estate (Wales) Bill had its third reading in the House of Lords.**

The Private Members' Bill, which started in the Lords, would transfer responsibility for the Crown Estate in Wales to the Welsh Government.

**The Welsh Government made amendments to the Devolved Welsh Authorities listed in Schedule 9A to the Government of Wales Act 2006.**

The Government of Wales Act 2006 (Devolved Welsh Authorities) (Amendment) Order 2025 removes reference to “The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales” and replaces “The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales” with “The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru”.

**The Welsh Government announced that researchers at the Fraser of Allander Institute and Bangor University have been commissioned to**

**provide research into future options for further income tax devolution in Wales.**

The aim is for the research by Dr João Sousa, Dr Edward Thomas Jones, Dr Rhys ap Iwilym and Ciara Crummey to be published by mid-January 2026.

**The Welsh Government appointed Karen Jones as the new Chair of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru, taking over from Bev Smith.**

Karen Jones has been the Chief Executive and Returning Officer of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, and the chair of the Electoral Management Board for Wales. Her term will run from 1 December 2025 to 30 November 2029.

**The Welsh Government announced the renewal of the Panel of Counsel.**

The Panel is appointed to provide specialist legal advocacy and advisory work for the Welsh Government. It comprises 36 Counsel in total.

**The House of Lords Constitution Committee published its report following its inquiry into the rule of law.**

The Committee held 14 evidence sessions and received 115 written submissions.

## 7. Senedd Election

### **On 21 October 2025, the Senedd agreed the draft Senedd Cymru (Disqualification) Order 2025.**

The Order sets out which offices disqualify a person/persons from being a Member of the Senedd. The [2025 Order](#) revokes and replaces the Senedd Cymru (Disqualification) Order 2020.

A number of offices were added to the 2025 Order, including:

- the Armed Forces Commissioner,
- clerks of community and town councils,
- the Independent Football Regulator,
- the Veterans' Commissioner for Wales, and
- members of the Electoral Management Board.

### **The Welsh Government laid the following codes of practice relating to election campaign expenditure:**

- [Political Parties Campaign Expenditure \(Senedd Elections\) Code of Practice 2025](#).
- [Individual Candidate Election Expenses \(Senedd Elections\) Code of Practice 2025](#).
- [The Non-Party Campaigner Campaign Expenditure \(Senedd Elections\) Code of Practice 2025](#).

The codes were produced by the Electoral Commission. Previous versions of the codes were withdrawn following scrutiny from the LJC Committee.

### **The Electoral Commission has published guidance ahead of the May 2026 Senedd election, including:**

- [Guidance for candidates and agents](#). This provides practical advice for political parties, party list candidates and individual candidates who want to stand at Senedd elections, as well as anyone who wants to be an election agent.

- [Guidance for returning officers](#) on assistance with voting for disabled voters.

**The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru [published directions to Electoral Registration Officers for the May 2026 Senedd election](#).**

The directions include confirmation that the count for the election will begin between 9am and 11am on 8 May 2026, the day following the election.

**The Welsh Government [laid the Welsh Elections Information Platform \(Amendments\) Regulations 2026](#).**

The regulations make technical amendments to previous regulations that established the Welsh Elections Information Platform, largely to reflect the making of the Senedd Cymru (Representation of the People) Order 2025.

**The Welsh Government [has published guidance for its staff ahead of the May 2026 Senedd election](#).**

The guidance explains how civil servants must remain impartial in the pre-election period.

## 8. Elections and participation

### **The Electoral Commission has published its evaluation report of the Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) pilots that took place in Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Newport and Powys.**

The Electoral Commission concluded that the pilots suggest AVR “could have a positive impact on the completeness of the electoral registers”. The Commission added that before implementing AVR, the Welsh Government should:

- Consider final data from the annual canvass to assess the matching accuracy
- Consider the resources needed to ensure EROs and their teams can deliver a new automatic registration system
- Make an assessment of the overall cost of implementation alongside the likely benefits

A written statement from the Welsh Government notes that just over 14,500 new electors were registered, and 1,500 14-15 year olds who will be registered once they turn 16 were identified. The Welsh Government confirms in the statement that its intention is to implement AVR in time for the 2027 local government elections.

### **The Welsh Government launched a consultation on updates to local election rules.**

The proposed changes aim to ensure that local government elections in Wales remain consistent with recent updates to Senedd election procedures, including relating to security expenses.

The Welsh Government intends to bring forward statutory instruments to make the changes. The consultation closed on 12 January 2026.

### **The Welsh Government launched a pilot of its new Candidate Diversity Grant scheme, which aims to support people from underrepresented backgrounds to stand for elected office in devolved elections.**

£400,000 will be available over a 2-year period to fund organisations giving practical support to potential candidates, such as mentoring, training, information, coaching, equipment, and assistance with tasks.

**The Welsh Government published research into socio-economic influences on democratic participation in Wales.**

Key barriers identified in the report include lack of early education in politics, complex electoral regulations and discrimination and hostility towards candidates, particularly those from minority backgrounds or with protected characteristics.

**The UK Government has announced an independent review into foreign financial interference in UK politics.**

The review, launched in response to the conviction of Nathan Gill, will be led by former Permanent Secretary Philip Rycroft.

**The UK Government has authorised flexible voting pilot schemes to take place at local elections in England in May 2026.**

The UK Government has invited local authorities to apply to take part in the pilots, which will cover four core methods:

- Voting at any polling station;
- Voting hubs;
- Mobile polling stations; and
- Early in-person voting.

**Disability Wales published the Access to Politics Charter, which aims to support the meaningful participation, representation and influence of disabled people in political life across Wales.**

Disability Wales co-produced the Charter with members of the Access to Politics Grassroots Network.

## 9. UK Internal Market Act

**The Counsel General and Minister for Delivery wrote to the LJC Committee to provide further information following the UK Government's review of the UK Internal Market Act 2020.**

In the letter, the Counsel General provides information on the approach to take forward the UK Government's commitments in response to the review, detail about the action the Welsh Government is taking in relation to the financial assistance powers in the Act and further clarification on the Welsh Government's position on the impact of the Act on Welsh legislation.

The Counsel General enclosed a copy of the Welsh Government's submission to the review as an annex to the letter.

**On 27 November 2025, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies MS, provided an update on the Welsh Government's deposit return scheme.**

The Deputy First Minister announced that the application process for the appointment of a Deposit Management Organisation to run the Welsh Government's scheme opened on 28 November 2025, with the deadline for applications being Friday 23 January 2026.

This is being done in parallel with work to bring forward the regulations, which will be laid before the Senedd in February 2026.

**The Welsh Government has given consent to the UK Government making the *United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 (Exclusions from Market Access Principles Glue Traps) Regulations 2025.***

The regulations will exclude the sale of glue traps from the market access principles within the Internal Market Act

**The Office for the Internal Market published a report following its review into the potential effects on the UK internal market of regulatory differences arising from proposed legislation relating to bovine electronic identification.**

The report makes two recommendations relating to intergovernmental working on the issue.

## 10. Justice

### 10.1. Wales

#### **The Welsh Government published proposals for its component of funding for Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales for 2026-27.**

It proposes to set the Welsh Government's contribution to police funding for 2026-27 at £113.47 million.

The UK Home Office has issued a written statement containing information on the total amount of funding for police forces.

#### **The Ministry of Justice released assorted statistics relating to justice in Wales.**

This was the first set of Wales-only data released by the Ministry of Justice. Data will be published on the UK Government website on an annual basis.

#### **The Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee is continuing with its work into the criminal justice system in Wales.**

The Committee recently heard from Dr Robert Jones from Cardiff University's Wales Governance Centre. Dr Jones has recently published a report on the expansion of HMP Parc and Wales' growing imprisonment rate.

#### **The Welsh Affairs Committee is continuing with its inquiry into prisons, probation and rehabilitation in Wales.**

The Committee most recently heard from the UK Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, Lord Timpson, and Executive Director for HM Prison and Probation Service Wales, Ian Barrow.

#### **Following HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection of Wales' probation service, HM Prison and Probation Service published action plans and response letters.**

Actions plans and response letters are broken down by Welsh region.

#### **An adjournment debate on the criminal justice system in Wales was held in the House of Commons on 16 December 2025.**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Alex Davies-Jones MP, said that the UK Government's priority is to "ensure that the system is stabilised

before we undertake any further review of the governance arrangements, but we will do so”.

In relation to probation, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary confirmed that work was underway to develop a memorandum of understanding between the Welsh and UK governments on co-commissioning and local working partnerships. This would be similar to arrangements in Greater Manchester, but that it would be “bespoke work for Wales that is Wales-specific”.

## 10.2. UK

### **The UK Government announced changes to the criminal court system.**

Judge-only courts will be introduced, which will see cases with a likely sentence of three years or less heard by a judge alone. Jury trials will be held for “the most serious and almost all indictable offences”.

The Counsel General and Minister for Delivery, Julie James MS, said that the right to trial by jury is a “hugely important protection for defendants”. She said that she was “disappointed that there wasn't a degree of consultation before the announcements”, and that she would raise her concerns in the December meeting of the Interministerial Group on Justice.

### **In October 2025, the Interministerial Group for Justice published updated terms of reference.**

The terms of reference state that the Group should meet three times a year, with extraordinary meetings as necessary.

The most recent meeting was held on 11 December 2025.

### **The UK Government announced that Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) will be abolished at the end of the next electoral cycle in 2028.**

The roles will be absorbed “wherever possible” by regional mayors in England. It is not yet clear who will exercise powers in Wales.

Following the announcement, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt MS, said that the Welsh Government is discussing with the UK Government how PCC functions will continue to be exercised in Wales following the abolition.

### **The House of Commons Justice Committee published its report following its inquiry into tackling drugs in prisons.**

The report states that the “trade and use of illicit drugs in our prisons has reached endemic levels”.

**The UK Government responded to the Justice and Home Affairs Committee’s report on Better Prisons: Less Crime.**














In its response, the UK Government states that a lack of investment, amongst other issues, means that the current prison system “is not fully meeting the needs and expectations of the public, prisoners, or staff”.

**The UK Ministry of Justice published its Welsh Language Scheme Annual Monitoring Report 2024 to 2025.**

The report is a self-assessment of how MOJ has delivered its commitments under its Welsh Language Scheme between April 2024 and March 2025.

## 11. Annex: Glossary

### Post-Brexit framework: key terms

International obligations		International duties and commitments of the UK
Trade agreements		Establish new trading arrangements between the UK and other countries
International agreements		Agreements between the UK and other countries or organisations
UK-EU Trade & Cooperation Agreement		Establishes the new UK-EU relationship
UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement		Sets the terms of the UK's exit from the EU
Protocol on Ireland-Northern Ireland		Part of the Withdrawal Agreement to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland
EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018		Converted EU law to domestic law, stops new EU laws having automatic effect in the UK and gives Ministers powers to correct the statute book after leaving the EU
EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020		Implements the Withdrawal Agreement
EU (Future Relationship) Act 2020		Implements the Trade & Cooperation Agreement
Internal Market Act 2020		Establishes rules for the regulation of goods, services and qualifications across the UK
Common Frameworks		Set up UK-wide frameworks for some areas previously governed by the EU
Implementing regulations		Regulations passed in the Senedd or UK Parliament to implement the new arrangements
Correcting regulations		Regulations passed in the Senedd or UK Parliament to make EU laws retained after leaving the EU workable in a domestic context

