

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)29 Ymateb gan: | Response from: Welsh Local Government Association



Title: WLGA Response to the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill

Recipients: Senedd Reform Bill Committee

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About Us

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities and the three fire and rescue authorities are associate members.
2. The WLGA is a politically led cross-party organisation, with the leaders from all local authorities determining policy through the Executive Board and the wider WLGA Council. The WLGA also appoints senior members as Spokespersons and Deputy Spokespersons to provide a national lead on policy matters on behalf of local government.
3. The WLGA works closely with and is often advised by professional advisors and professional associations from local government, however, the WLGA is the representative body for local government and provides the collective, political voice of local government in Wales. Our goal is to promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.
4. We achieve our vision by:
 - a. Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
 - b. Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
 - c. making the case for long-term and sustainable funding for councils
 - d. Promoting sector-led improvement
 - e. Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
 - f. Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce

Views of WLGA Executive Board

5. The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Reform Bill Committee on the proposals contained in the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill. It recognises the Bill has been informed by a number of reports focused on exploring the need to reform the Senedd to enable it to discharge its responsibilities effectively; the most recent '*Reforming our*

“Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.”



Senedd: A stronger voice for the People of Wales was published in 2022 and some recommendations have already been addressed, for example, the lowering of the voting age in Senedd elections to 16 years which was enacted by the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020.

6. More detailed and expert technical consideration of the implementation of the proposed reforms are included in submissions provided by returning officers and local authority electoral administrators, including the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) and the Wales Electoral Coordination Board (WECB).
7. The WLGA's Executive Board has considered the key proposals contained in the Bill and acknowledges that there are a range of views amongst the individual political groups. This submission will focus on the areas where Members of the Executive Board specifically expressed the views of their political groups.

Increase the size of the Senedd to 96 Members.

8. There was a broad mix of views amongst Members in this area.
9. There was recognition of the need to have additional Senedd Members to ensure the Senedd can act effectively and in line with good governance principles. Some Members were sympathetic to making the changes to align with the Senedd elections in 2026.
10. However, a minority of Members expressed concern expressed on the increase in the number of Members and a view that Wales is becoming over-governed at a local-level. This was highlighted in the context of the recent establishment of Corporate Joint Committees that sit alongside other partnership machinery, including Regional Partnership Boards, Public Services Boards and Joint Partnership Boards. All of which require structures and resources to maintain the appropriate leadership and governance arrangements.
11. There was concern expressed by a minority of Members in respect of the anticipated costs of the reforms including the cost of additional staffing and on-costs. This is at a time when local authorities are projecting an estimated funding pressure of between £600 to £750m for 2024-25. The timing of the implementation of these reforms was therefore questioned (in readiness for the 2026 Senedd elections) and a view expressed that they should be deferred to the next Senedd term.

Decrease the length of time between Senedd ordinary general elections from five to four years.



12. Members were of the view that the length of time between Senedd elections should remain at five years. This would help avoid Senedd and local council elections falling at the same time and increasing the burden on electoral administration teams. It was also considered that five years allows for stability and effective government and to get a programme of government through.
13. The WLGA agrees with the views expressed in this area by the Wales Electoral Coordination Board in its submission to the Committee, namely that if there are to be combined elections of this type in the future (non-reserved elections), there should be consideration given to the resourcing needs of local authorities and possible further electoral change such as a lengthened elections period/timetable for non-reserved elections. In addition, the differences between the voting systems for local government and Senedd elections would need to be communicated clearly to the Welsh electorate.

Change the Senedd's electoral system so that all Members are elected via closed list proportional representation, with votes translated into seats via the D'Hondt formula.

14. Independent Members expressed severe reservations that the proposed Closed Proportionate List disadvantages independent candidates and potentially weakens voter choice and that the D'Hondt formula favours mainstream political parties and makes it difficult for Independent Members to have impact on the election.
15. There were no objections raised to the following proposals:
 - Increase the maximum number of Deputy Presiding Officers from one to two.
 - Increase the legislative limit on the size of the Welsh Government to 17 (plus the First Minister and Counsel General), with power to further increase the limit to 18 or 19.
 - Require candidates to, 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).
 - Provide a mechanism for the Seventh Senedd's consideration of job-sharing of offices relating to the Senedd (by requiring the Llywydd in the Seventh Senedd to propose the establishment of a Senedd committee to review specified matters).
 - Repurpose and rename the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales; provide the renamed Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) with the functions needed to establish new Senedd constituencies and undertake ongoing reviews of Senedd constituency



boundaries; and provide instructions for the DBCC to follow when undertaking boundary reviews.

16. The Bill does not include two major reforms proposed by the Special Purpose Committee to improve diversity in the Senedd – to introduce gender quotas for candidates and to collect and publish candidate diversity information. The WLGA is committed to diversity in democracy and addressing barriers to inclusion for individuals from under-represented groups in engaging in civic participation. Therefore, the WLGA very much welcomes these proposals being taken forward in a separate Bill expected later this year.