

**P-06-1193 Ask the UK Government for permission to hold a referendum on returning devolved powers, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 20.10.21**

Thank you again for your response and the extension offered. Please find below my response to the First Minister's letter.

With regards to Petition P-06-1193, I will first say that the petition did not preclude other options within the referendum. It was more about the future of Wales and its position in The Union than reversing devolution. The wording was borne of the frustration of the difference in policies between the home nations, when most people live within the UK as a single entity - knowing there is free travel between all the nations, and a central government. Now, later in the situation, I still believe that emergency matters and other policies should be dealt with on a central basis - and as such that some powers should be returned.

As a salient example, I am a small business owner in South Wales, who supplies hospitality businesses across the UK. With the different schemes available in the different nations, I was at times suffering a large downfall in turnover in England when the situation in Wales was politically different - particularly around last Winter.

The First Minister states that the Welsh Populace have expressed their democratic will in favour of devolution on several occasions. However, the 63.49% he cites is a percentage of the 35.63% of the registered voters who actually turned out to the polls in 2011. Almost 65% of the voting population in Wales were too disenfranchised to even bother giving an opinion - leaving the actual percentage in favour as a tiny 22.6% - fewer than a quarter of the registered voters. On the surface it may seem we are having democratic votes, but this simple example shows they are far from such. This year, there was still only a 46.6% turnout at the polls, and Welsh Labour did not win a majority of seats. In 2016 it was 45.3%, and of course the original 1997 referendum was 50.22% - again making the actual eligible percentage voting in favour of devolution in the first place just 25.3%.

I am well aware of Mr Drakeford's statements on the state of the Union, and his belief that Wales needs a strong voice within this. I do not disagree, and I believe the whole system needs to be shaken up with vigour. I have a very clear vision which I would be happy to speak with the proposed independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales or Mr Drakeford himself about. Some of it is not new thinking, but it's something I have not seen talked about in any political corners.

I go back to my earlier comments on the disenfranchisement of the Welsh

people. Even though a majority are not voting, it is clear that there is nothing they feel represents them. A referendum on an important question such as this can contain a number of options, and doesn't need to be binding. It can also feed the work of the Commission which the First Minister has spoken about. In fact, given that Welsh Labour feels so strongly on having a voice in the UK, the "serious national conversation with people throughout Wales" should without doubt include a referendum. Nothing is more serious or more national, or can include the Welsh population as much on such an even level, as a well-advertised referendum.

In closing, I feel that Welsh Labour would in fact stand to gain from a move such as this. They will show their detractors that they *do* listen, and are willing to act on the voice of the people they represent. I am not asking for a result in one way or the other. I am simply asking to let the country I was born in, the country I have grown up and been educated in, the country I run an international business from, to let all of its people have a voice (in the regrettable absence of proper engagement from the Welsh Government in these issues).