



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE	Electoral Commission's Evaluation Report of Welsh Electoral Pilots
DATE	02 August 2022
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I am pleased to be able to provide an update on progress on the Electoral Pilots that were delivered in Wales as part of the Local Government Elections in May 2022.

The pilots aimed to bring the ballot box closer to people's day-to-day lives. They were a step to ensuring that elections in Wales are as accessible as possible and that everyone who wants to vote can vote. They were designed within the framework that I set out in a written statement in July 2021 <https://gov.wales/written-statement-framework-electoral-reform>

These pilots were developed in close collaboration between the local authorities and the Welsh Government, with invaluable input from the Electoral Commission and the wider electoral community. I want to thank everyone involved for all their hard work, in particular the four local authorities that designed and hosted the pilots:

Blaenau Gwent – the centrally-located Ebbw Vale Learning Zone was used as an advance polling station for all residents of the county, including students of the college who were eligible to vote at the elections. Advance voting was available on the Tuesday and Wednesday before election day;

Bridgend - polling stations in certain low turnout wards were open for advance voting on the Tuesday and Wednesday before election day. A new advance polling station was also created in a school on the Tuesday before election day for use by students registered at that school who were eligible to vote in those wards;

Caerphilly – the council's headquarters at Ystrad Mynach was used as an advance polling station for all residents of the county on the weekend before election day;

Torfaen – the council offices at Pontypool was used as an advance polling station for all residents of the county on the weekend before election day.

The Electoral Commission is required by law to evaluate electoral pilot schemes, in particular whether the pilot scheme has:

- helped to make voting or counting the votes easier;
- helped to improve turnout;
- helped to facilitate voting;
- led to a reduction or increase in electoral fraud; and
- led to a reduction or increase in the cost of the election.

As such, they have evaluated the pilots undertaken in May 2022 and have today published their report which can be accessed here:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/advance-voting-pilots-evaluation>

The Electoral Commission's evaluation reflects that the pilots were well run and that no issue arose because of undertaking these innovative pilots. The electronic registers that were trialled worked well and enabled administrators to deliver multiple venue polling stations simultaneously. As expected, the pilots did not increase turnout dramatically but demonstrated that flexible and more convenient ways of voting can be provided securely and with voters' confidence.

The learning from the pilots and the evaluation will be used to inform longer term improvements to the way people vote and to help reduce the democratic deficit. I look forward to consulting on our proposals in the coming months.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.