



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1309  
Ein cyf/Our ref FM -/00600/22

Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair  
Petitions committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
[Petitions@Senedd.Wales](mailto:Petitions@Senedd.Wales)

29 November 2022

Dear Jack,

I am writing in response to your letter of 25 October regarding a petition calling on the Welsh Government to hold a referendum before expanding the size of the Senedd.

The Wales Act 2017 provided power to the Senedd to change its size, without a referendum. There are many precedents for changes to the number of elected members being made without referenda, including the boundary review changes for the UK Parliament, which will reduce the number of MPs that Wales returns to Westminster from 40 to 32.

A commitment to Senedd reform was an explicit part of the manifestos of both Labour and Plaid Cymru in last year's election. On this basis and given the many precedents for introducing electoral changes without referenda, there are no plans to hold a referendum on any element of Senedd reform.

As you are aware, the Senedd has voted in favour of taking forward the recommendations of the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform report [Reforming our Senedd: A stronger voice for the people of Wales](#).

This report includes a recommendation that the Senedd should have 96 Members to reflect the way the role and responsibilities of the Senedd has grown since it was first established in 1999. The Richard Commission (2004); the McAllister report (2017) and subsequently the Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform (2020), have all concluded that there is clear and compelling evidence that the Senedd must increase in size to fulfil its responsibilities effectively and in the best interests of the people of Wales.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Senedd is currently the smallest of all the devolved legislatures in the UK and has remained the same size since the establishment of the National Assembly in 1999, despite assuming extra law-making and tax-raising powers. The proposed increase in the number of Senedd Members reflects the changes in the political landscape of Wales including, when the UK left the EU, Wales losing its MEPs and the current proposals to reduce the number of MPs from 40 to 32.

The scrutiny role of the legislature is vital for a healthy democracy. It is essential that the Senedd has appropriate capacity to carry out its role in holding the government to account.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**MARK DRAKEFORD**