



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1334  
Ein cyf/Our ref FM -/00219/23

Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair  
Petitions committee  
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19 June 2023

Hello Jack,

I am writing in response to your letter of 18 May regarding Petition P-06-1334: Make the Senedd More Representative of the Welsh Population.

Several committees and panels over recent years have concluded that gender quotas integrated within the electoral system could make a real difference in terms of women's representation in the Senedd. The Welsh Government's [Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru](#) includes gender quotas in relation to Senedd reform.

The [Expert Panel](#) which reported in 2017 concluded that improved representation in the Senedd across a much wider range of protected characteristics would enhance the operation of the then Assembly, and the way it represents and serves the people of Wales. The [Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform](#) came to a similar conclusion in 2020, outlining the benefits of a diverse Senedd, which properly reflects the population of Wales.

The Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform report [Reforming our Senedd: A stronger voice for the people of Wales](#), which was published in May 2022, made several recommendations to increase the diversity of the Senedd through legislative gender quotas and other measures relating to the publication of diversity data on Senedd candidates and diversity and inclusion strategies. These were endorsed by the Senedd on 8 June 2022. The committee did not recommend diversity quotas, saying further work was required "to inform decisions on whether such quotas would be appropriate mechanisms to encourage the election of a more diverse Senedd".

The Welsh Government is making good progress in translating the Special Purpose Committee recommendations into legislation. I have made two Written Statements to provide updates about the progress of Senedd reform: in [December 2022](#) and in [April 2023](#).

We are engaging with key stakeholders and delivery partners to understand the practical implications of implementing integrated gender quotas in our electoral system. In developing

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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.

legislative proposals, we are also carefully considering any new duties that may need to be introduced, where they are best placed and what their impact might be.

An increasing number of countries around the world are introducing various types of gender quotas for elections to their parliaments. Diversity can lead to better decision-making as a result of a greater variety of views and experiences, as well as better outcomes due to the improved scrutiny of policy, spending and legislation.

A Senedd which is fully representative of modern Wales will be a Senedd able to view the country through the lens of all its people, making decisions for the benefit of everyone. The more diverse elected members are, the more confidence and trust there will be in the Senedd as a legislature which genuinely represents the people and the communities it serves; equitably and fairly.

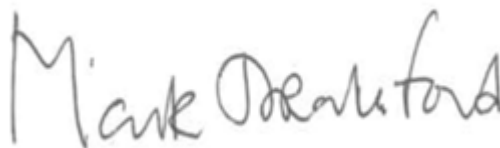
Although political parties are in a strong position to positively influence the diversity of the field of Senedd candidates, we must recognise that there are important contributions to be made by the Senedd Commission and by government in making it feasible for individuals who face certain barriers to remain in elected office. Important steps have already been taken, for example for Members with childcare or other caring responsibilities and those on parental leave, as well as the advantages in moving to hybrid working.

A pilot of the Access to Elected Office Fund was also established, to assist disabled people to stand for elected office with the additional impairment related costs that were a barrier to their participation in politics. Managed by Disability Wales, it was put in place to support candidates at the May 2021 Senedd elections and in the May 2022 local government elections. Arrangements for a future fund applying to both sets of elections are being considered.

A number of policy proposals aimed at increasing diversity in democracy were included in the consultation on the [electoral administration and reform white paper](#), which closed in January 2023.

The Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales have been awarded £82,000 over two years towards its Equal Power Equal Voice project, which will deliver a mentoring programme for people with protected characteristics across Wales. It will recruit and mentor diverse women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, disabled people and LGBTQ+ people to be involved in public life – whether standing for political office, serving on public boards, charity boards, or as school governors. It is a collaboration between WEN Wales, EYST, Stonewall Cymru and Disability Wales.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the petition.

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

**MARK DRAKEFORD**

