

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](#).

SCME411 Ymateb gan: | Response from: Paul Davies

Dear Sir / Madam,

Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill: consultation

At the current time and in the present financial climate, the following issues to me appear to have far more priority for investment than spending money on the proposals in the above titled Bill.

For example, -

Health

The health minister has asked for a further £64m in savings which will result in fewer hospital beds and put more pressure on staff. Meanwhile waiting lists continue to rise and have recently hit a new high in Wales. This is ignoring the recent suggestion that the methodology used to calculate waiting list times may be flawed and that the true figures could be even worse.

There are still major issues within the North Wales health board, with some of our services being placed under targeted intervention arrangements.

Ambulance responses to life-threatening calls appear to consistently fail to meet targets.

Local Authority Budgets

North Wales consistently receives the raw end of the deal when funding is distributed from Welsh Government. This impacts severely on the local council's ability to provide many of the services we rely on daily, e.g., education, providing care services and the host of other services the councils are tasked with delivering. I pay more Council Tax living in Flintshire than my friends pay in an equivalent graded house within commuting distance of London. Local Authorities around Wales face more austerity savings from budgets that have already been top sliced over recent years and some claim bankruptcy or mergers are a possibility to make ends meet. A recent article in Nation Cymru suggests authorities in Wales face a funding gap of £744m by 2027.



Policing

According to UNISON an analysis of police financial forecasts has revealed forces **in England and Wales** could face a combined budget shortfall of almost £721m by 2026, potentially putting public safety at risk. The data, based on medium-term financial plans submitted by individual police forces to their local police and crime panels, reveals drastic cuts to the spending planned.

Fire Service

Current proposals to reduce cover in Northeast Wales where the demand and potential for major incidents far exceeds that of the rest of North Wales appear finance driven. E.g., Northeast Wales houses two of the biggest Industrial Estates in Europe, where industries vital to the economy of the region operate 24x7x365. Northeast Wales is the Petro-chemical entrance from the Northwest of England, the strategic Euro route to the Free port at Holyhead i.e., the second busiest U.K port to Dover passes through Flintshire. Heavy Goods traffic and all the hazards that accompany such activity are a constant threat 24 hours per day. Reliance on neighbouring English counties for Firefighting support is not an acceptable solution.

The cancellation by Lee Waters of the Red Route Road project at Deeside leaves the occupiers of 5,000 homes, a community hospital and three schools all within 200 metres of the existing route, blighted for many more years to come by some of the heaviest traffic on Welsh roads. The health and safety of residents remains at risk now for the foreseeable future, congestion and additional fuel consumption leads to more pollution not less.

Transport for Wales

Rail services and public transport road services are woefully unreliable in North Wales, made even worse since the introduction of debilitatingly low speed limits on many bus routes. Rolling stock on the vital rail link between North Wales and Merseyside consists of refurbished units formerly used on London Underground. These have not been without operational problems. I and others wonder how their traction / adhesion to outdoor railway lines, especially on gradients in winter months will pan out. Autumn leaves or snowy conditions could prove a challenge to such stock previously used underground protected from weather conditions.

Vanity projects

The controversial multi-million-pound bail out and eventual purchase of the loss-making Cardiff Airport, the purchase of Gilestone Farm in Usk South Wales for the Green Man Festival and the disastrous and statistically unproved need for a blanket 20mph scheme costing millions, all cause Welsh constituents to shake their head in wonderment at how Welsh Taxpayers money is spent.

Summary of proposals if passed.

Decreasing the length of time between general elections Personally, I fail to see what benefits this has to offer, it would again lead to unnecessary spending.

Doubling the number of Deputy Presiding Officers – more unnecessary expense.

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.

I see no argument in favour of this proposal.

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).

This seems a very parochial approach and could mean that Wales loses out on highly qualified candidates with greater strategic experience than 'home grown' politicians.

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).

This is not well explained and doesn't make any sense to me. The costs and benefits are not made out.

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.

The proposed closed list system which would see the electorate voting for parties rather than individual candidates in my view is a flawed idea. It takes away the powers of electors to appoint the person of their choice and would enable parties to 'parachute in' politicians not of the electorates' choice. How can this be democratic? The proposal to introduce gender self-identification for Senedd candidates is seen as an insult to women by the 'Women's Rights in Wales' organisation.

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.

I presume this is to enable Constituency boundaries to be tailored to the needs and advantage of the ruling party. Irrespective of who the future ruling party might be, I oppose it.

Conclusion

I therefore consider that during this climate when the Wales Government itself claims to be short funded, cuts are being made to public services and the country is trying to get back on its feet after the effects of the major pandemic, any proposal to finance an increase in the number of Senedd Members smacks of empire building and is not good use of Welsh taxpayers' contributions.

Any decision by Ministers themselves to increase their numbers within the Senedd appears to be undemocratic. It should be put to the electorate to decide.

Yours sincerely,
Paul Davies