

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](#).

SCME416 Ymateb gan: | Response from: Heather Scammell

I write to express deep concerns about the contents of this bill. Please note that this is an Individual Response.

I am far from persuaded for any need to increase the size of the Senedd and certainly by the massive numbers proposed. In 2021, the population of the UK was 67,736,802 which distributed across the 650 MPs in Westminster means one MP for 104,210 people.

The 2023 population of Wales is 3,105,1000 which means that each of the current 60 Members represents 51,750 people (roughly half that of Westminster) and increasing the numbers to 96 further reduces the number to 32,343. less than 1/3rd of that in Westminster. Given the additional expense of staff and office space in times of severe financial restraint, I really do not see how this can possibly be justified. The argument that it will increase scrutiny might be more effective if there were already effective scrutiny, sadly to an outsider it seems as though there is far too much ratification of a predetermined course of action, often backed by small interest groups, with little consideration of, or even total disdain for dissenting opinions (the 20mph speed restrictions being a case in point.) Sadly, the ill advised determination to move to a closed party list system is likely to make this much worse.

My biggest concern is the intention to move to a closed party list system. It dilutes the relationship between constituents and their representatives - sometimes we lay aside political preference to vote for a good local representative and conversely a poor candidate may encourage a protest vote. When a candidate stands down mid term, the resulting By Election often serves to highlight issues that can be missed in a General Election. I am also concerned that it will discourage Independent candidates,



whom I believe often have an important role in stopping the overly 'cosy' nature of the Senedd. Even (especially?) when you are right, you should be able to address criticism and this looks increasingly like an attempt to suppress dissent. It also serves to ensure that only those who toe the Party Line are elected to the Senedd and I think that this is a grave mistake. Put simply, mavericks are often a force for good providing balance and sometimes stopping a party from going off course; a system that actively works against independence of thought can only increase the "Group Think" mentality that already seems to infect the Senedd.

It really does seem that this Bill places Wales in the unenviable position of becoming a One Party state. Whilst this may appeal to you at the moment, you need to consider how you would feel if a different ideology was in the ascendant and that you were in the minority. Many of us feel politically homeless at the moment and the current proposals do nothing to make us feel that we will have any kind of representation in the Senedd for the foreseeable future, indeed it seems designed to further disenfranchise us. I have responded to numerous 'engagements' since the formation of the Senedd, not once have I seen any of the legitimate concerns raised treated with respect. Sadly this means that your credibility is already damaged and this bill just increases that impression.

When I submitted my earlier response (02/11/2023) I had not fully understood that the proposals involved moving away from local representation to sole dependance on the Regional List. This is extremely problematic because it consolidates the vote in the urban heartlands and disenfranchises those of us in more rural areas. I have already come to realise that my Regional Representatives are far more concerned with the urban heartlands because that is where their support lies; put simply, we can't vote them out because we didn't vote them in and our concerns are dwarfed by the very different needs of larger communities. Taking away our local representation exacerbates this to an intolerable level and I cannot see how this is permissible when it makes a complete mockery of our so-called 'Democracy.' Dyfed failed as an administrative unit because it was a vehicle to transfer service provision to the largest (and under Devolution the most politically influential County.) This trajectory has continued under Hywel Dda as Healthcare is being relocated out of Pembrokeshire to where it is inaccessible in time sensitive cases (of which I have personal

experience.) Now it seems that there is a determination to swamp our political voice by what seems to me to be a blatant rigging of the system. I urge you to reject this.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Scammell