

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](#).

SCME440 Ymateb gan: | Response from: Tessa Cook

Sirs,

I am writing to express my anger about the proposed reform of the Senate to bring in another 36 new Members, which I believe is a huge waste of money that could be better spent elsewhere.

Wales is a democracy, but it feels less and less like it. The planned new way of voting for a party not a constituent distances the people from the politicians even more than they already are, and it's just undemocratic and plain wrong. I am 19 and I voted in the last election, and I voted specifically for the person I thought best mirrored my views. I did not vote on a party basis, because I didn't know enough about the parties concerned, but I read about the individuals standing in my constituency and used that as a basis for my vote. I have always been taught that the politician we vote for is our voice in government, and that is what the people want: a voice in government. I don't want to be distanced from the process, and have no say at all in who represents me.

I am outraged at the proposal to allow transwomen to stand as women. I believe it is vital to have more women in government, and the equality lists are a way to achieve this. But opening the women's lists to men who say they are going to change their gender at some point in the future makes a nonsense of this. As does the notion of not allowing the returning officers to question statements made by candidates – they can't even comment if a man claims to be standing as a woman. So much for sex equality. It's disgraceful.

And as for the cost of the Senedd expansion – at a time when Wales is already on its knees, the economy reeling from the effects of Covid, the recession, and now the forced imposition of 20mph zones and the intended tourist tax – you want to spend



millions on expanding an institution that is already unfit for purpose – and for what? It certainly isn't for the benefit of the people of Wales. Look at the NHS – the appalling wait for an ambulance to turn up at all, and then the sickening waits outside hospitals to be seen by a doctor. Everybody knows the Welsh NHS is falling to pieces – THAT is where the money should go, not on this farcical power grab by the Labour party. Once the party is in power, it seems to me, then they become untouchable. If a Member misbehaves, the electorate can do nothing because he wasn't directly elected. If you want to disengage people from politics, this is the way to go – if we feel our vote makes no difference, then we won't bother at all. But I guess that's exactly what Drakeford wants, because power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. There are headlines in all kinds of newspapers telling us how dangerous this is – I just hope that the Senedd Reform Committee listens to the voices of the people about this. If you don't, this is the death of democracy in Wales.

Expanding the Senedd now is inappropriate, undemocratic and unjustifiable. The money wasted on this would be better spent on the NHS, on struggling communities, and on turning round the desperate state of the Welsh economy. I am currently at university in Swansea; with the way things are going in Wales at the moment, I very much doubt I will stay here when I graduate. And a lot of my friends feel the same. We will move to where there are better jobs, in thriving communities, where politicians actually care about their constituents. Wales will lose the brightest and best of its young people because the current government is not listening to us and we feel alienated, but then again, maybe that's the point.

Tessa Cook (aged 19)