



Y Gwir Anrhydeddus Elin Jones AS

Llywydd, Senedd Cymru

Right Honourable Elin Jones MS

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Davis Rees MS

Chair of the Reform Bill Committee

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15 March 2024

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 1 March 2024.

As you noted in your letter, this timetable includes a period of nine sitting weeks for Stage 1 scrutiny, which is a departure from the usual twelve sitting weeks. Attached is a letter dated 7 March 2024 from the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd in response to a request from the Business Committee for further information about the reasons for proposing an expedited timetable.

At its meeting on 12 March 2024 the Business Committee considered the letters and, by majority decision, agreed the Welsh Government's proposed timetable for Senedd consideration of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill. Two Members, including myself, did not agree to the expedited timetable.

I am writing to place on record my reservations, as Llywydd, about the expedited scrutiny timetable for this Bill. I have stated that, in my view, the provisions of this Bill are not within the legislative competence of the Senedd; the Member in charge of the Bill has stated that, in her view, the provisions are within competence. This is the first time that a Bill has been introduced where there are differing views as to its competence.

Scrutiny of the general principles of a Bill at Stage 1 enables committees to interrogate a range of issues, including legislative competence. It is regrettable that your Committee will have less time than is typically the case to consider this novel and complex issue.

In agreeing the timetable the Business Committee noted that should the responsible Committee, in the course of their scrutiny, deem that additional time is essential to their considerations of the general principles of the Bill, then additional time may be sought.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and the Chair of the Finance Committee, given their committees will also undertake Stage 1 scrutiny of Bill.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elin Jones'.

The Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS/AS

Llywydd

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



Elin Jones MS
Chair of the Business Committee

seneddbusiness@senedd.wales

7th March 2024

Dear Elin,

Further to the discussion at the Business Committee meeting on 5 March, I am writing to share additional information regarding the proposed scrutiny timetable for the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill.

The introduction of the Bill delivers on the recommendations of the Senedd's Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform that the Welsh Government brings forward legislation in this area and that Senedd reform is implemented in time for the election in 2026. The Special Purpose Committee's recommendations were endorsed by a majority of Senedd Members.

The timetable proposed by the Welsh Government is fundamental to maintaining a pathway to implementing the measures in time for the 2026 Senedd election. We are working to ensure the measures are in place ahead of that election as this is part of the package of Senedd reform along with the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill. A delay of even a month to the passage of the Bill would have implications for that implementation work.

Electoral administrators and political parties will require time to prepare for the implementation of changes, following the making of relevant legislation. The Gould Convention provides that all relevant legislation to an election, including secondary legislation, should be made at least six months prior to the notice of that election, to ensure there is sufficient time for changes to electoral law to be implemented appropriately. In delivering the electoral reforms proposed for the 2026 Senedd election, the Welsh Government is committed to abiding by the Gould Convention.

The provisions of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill would need to be implemented through secondary legislation. The National Assembly for Wales (Representation of the People) Order 2007, more commonly referred to as “the Conduct Order”, sets out the detailed rules for conducting elections to the Senedd.

Subject to the Senedd approving both Bills, the Government intends to consolidate and restate the law as part of a new Conduct Order. This will be the first time the Conduct Order is revised in full since 2007. Further, the Conduct Order will be made in English and in Welsh for the first time. This is a major undertaking and requires a significant amount of work. In addition, the Government intends to undertake a public consultation on the Conduct Order.

The proposed timetable provides the best opportunity for making the primary and secondary legislation necessary to allow the successful implementation of the Bill’s provisions in time for the 2026 Senedd election in accordance with the recommendations of the Special Purpose Committee.

In his letter, the Chair of the Reform Bill Committee highlighted the anticipated nomination and appointment of a new First Minister shortly after the Bill’s introduction, which may give rise to uncertainty over the Member in charge of the Bill. While that may be the case, I note the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip will be appearing before the Reform Bill Committee on Wednesday, 13 March, as part of its Stage 1 scrutiny, which will enable the Committee to make an immediate start to its scrutiny of the Bill.

I would be grateful if the Business Committee would agree the proposed timetable.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd