

P-06-1411 I oppose the Welsh Government Senedd Reform Bill becoming law - Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 10 May 2024

Dear Mr Sargeant,

As you are aware, I submitted the above petition on the 18th September 2023. I am astonished to see the Senedd has completed its four stages of deciding on the Reform Bill, yet my petition is not being presented before the committee until the 20th May.

I have read through Mick Antoniw AS/MS, Counsell General letter of the 30th April addressed to you and the various reports/documents published. I understand the process and rationale for increasing Senedd members, however I am frustrated to see that the Welsh Government has chosen to proceed on a small sample of respondents of 1,830* taken in 2018 in contrast to the 21,037 petitioners that signed my petition objecting to the increase in Senedd members between September 2023 and March 2024.

It seems that as with many other governments, “token” canvassing of a small selection of respondents appears to be a simple “tick box exercise,” to achieve a result your government desired.

Sadly, I feel completely deflated and ask myself whether any form of “majority government” listens to its electorate.

I do, at least expect an explanation from you as to how Petitions are ignored prior to debate and, in this instance, Royal Assent approval. We saw this with the controversial 20-mph petition, the outcome of which is that some of the 20-mph restrictions are likely to be relaxed.

In my opinion, the increase of Senedd members, just seems the current Welsh government has seen this as a “done deal,” providing Plaid Cymru supported them and went through the legislative motions to achieve its aim, despite in one of the reports they say *“While we cannot afford to lose another five years before the capacity of the Senedd is addressed, we continue to believe that the development of legislative proposals, and the Senedd’s decisions on them, would usefully be informed by deliberative engagement with the public on the detail of the reform proposals.”*

Unless I am mistaken, the opposition canvassed for a public referendum to vote on the changes proposed which was ignored, despite Mick Antoniw AS/MS, Counsell General being aware of my petition.

You will see from the nature of my comments, it is one of “observation” rather than justification of my petition, as I now see it as a pointless exercise.

Although I am against an increase in Senedd members due to the lack of funding for NHS, Schools, and roads, I hope beyond 2026 there may be a fairer division of politicians, within the Senedd, as for far too long there are too many representatives, failing to listen to the electorate or compromise with the opposition members.

Yours faithfully

Rees James

10th May 2024

*The following is the reference to 1,830 respondents noted above

Reference Senedd Reform: “the next steps 20 September 2020” Page 23 section 18

18. The Senedd Commission consulted on the number of Members the Senedd should have in its 2018 Creating a Parliament for Wales consultation, which found that: “Of the 1,830 responses to questions on the number of Members the Assembly needs, 56 per cent (1,030) of responses were in favour of more Assembly Members, 39 per cent (710) were opposed and five per cent (90) were unsure or did not express a preference”. Members of the Senedd subsequently debated the capacity of the Senedd in Plenary on 10 July 2019, and resolved that an increase in the number of Members was needed.