

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Our ref: RB/IW/PO185

2 February 2012

Dear William

Petition: Cymru not Wales

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the feasibility of implementing an informal name change for the National Assembly for Wales.

The petition received raises interesting questions. As you correctly point out, the Government of Wales Act 2006 states that “there is to be an Assembly for Wales to be known as the National Assembly for Wales or Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru.” Effecting a formal change to our name, therefore, would require an amendment to the Government of Wales Act 2006 that would not be within our current legislative competence.

Even an ‘informal’ change of name offers up some ambitious challenges. Were we to embark on such a project, should we then encourage the whole of the English-speaking world to follow our example and to cease referring, in English, to “Wales”? Similarly, would we then need to encourage French-speaking nations to stop referring to our country as Pays de Galles, or Spanish-speaking nations from referring to us as Gales?

Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd
CF99 1NA

Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Ffôn/Tel: 029 2089 8911
Epost/Email: private.office@wales.gov.uk



However, even if we leave aside these wider considerations, the advice I have received from the Assembly's Chief Legal Adviser is that legal constraints would make it impossible to achieve the petitioner's aim even on an informal basis. For the Assembly to be able to discharge its functions effectively, the identity of the body must be clear to all those who are affected by those functions. To apply to the Assembly a "brand" different from the "official" one of "National Assembly for Wales", e.g. by adopting, unofficially, a name such as "National Assembly for Cymru" would only sow confusion and create uncertainty. The Chief Legal Adviser is satisfied that such a move would therefore not be within the legal powers of the Assembly or the Assembly Commission.

I stress that this is not a comment on the merits of the petitioner's proposal but merely on the means by which it could be achieved. I would be interested in the Committee's views, and look forward to following the petition's progress.

Yours

Rosemary

Rosemary Butler AC, Llywydd
Rosemary Butler AM, Presiding Officer