



Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/03049/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

14 December 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 27 November seeking my views on ensuring owners of second homes and holiday lets in Wales register to vote only at their primary address, in devolved and local elections.

Electoral law in England and Wales allows a person to be entered onto more than one register if they are resident in different local authority areas. This does mean that if a person has registered in two different local authorities they are able to vote in both authorities on the same election day if they meet the residency criteria on election day. For local government elections, an elector may vote in up to two local government areas if they are registered. For Senedd elections an elector may only vote in one constituency.

Simply owning a second home does not mean a person can vote at elections in that constituency automatically. They must prove that they are resident in the area and residency is prescribed in the Representation of the People Act 1983 and is well established in case law.

My view is that provided the well-established residency criteria are met, second home owners should be allowed to vote in devolved elections in Wales. If they do not meet the residency criteria, they should not be voting in such elections, which is what the law already prescribes. Changing this law would cause disparity between English and Welsh voters and I do not wish to see anyone disenfranchised in Wales.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Whilst, as the Electoral Commission have stated, there are no systematic checks to ensure a person does not vote twice in the same election, there is no evidence to suggest that this routinely occurs, and if it did, action could be taken where an electoral offence had been committed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Julie" and the last name "James" written in a single continuous line.

Julie James AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government