

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Materion Cyfansoddiadol a
Deddfwriaethol
Bil Senedd ac Etholiadau (Cymru)

National Assembly for Wales
Constitutional and Legislative Affairs
Committee
Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill

CLA(5) SE11
Ymateb gan Comisiynydd y Gymraeg

Evidence from the Welsh Language
Commissioner

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1. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the committee's scrutiny of the Bill. The comments provided here build upon those made within the consultations on Creating a Parliament for Wales in 2018 and changing the name of the Assembly in 2017.
 2. **The name for the National Assembly for Wales**
 - 2.1 Part 2, 2(1) of the Bill states that the Welsh Assembly is to be known as the "Senedd" but may also be known as the "Welsh Parliament".
 - 2.2 The Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill (115) explains that using "Welsh Parliament" alongside the name "Senedd" will assist those unfamiliar with the Welsh word to understand the meaning of the name. It is noted (121) that the Assembly's branding guidance and material associated with the name change will reflect the primacy given to the name "Senedd", with "Welsh Parliament" used to describe what the term means in English. At the same time, it is noted that the term "Senedd" is currently widely used and already has resonance in Wales (903).
 - 2.3 In the Commissioner's response to the consultation on changing the name of the National Assembly for Wales on 1 March 2017 it was argued that creating an English form of the word was unnecessary. It was stated that the practice of using Welsh only names in some aspects of Welsh political life was already well established. The advantages of using a singular Welsh form as the Assembly's name was also referred to, including that doing so would raise the status of the Welsh language. These points are recognised in the Bill's Explanatory Memorandum (904, 906, 909 and 288).
 - 2.4 It is noted in sections 3-8 of Part 2 of the Bill that only the word "Senedd" rather than "Parliament" will be used in a number of new titles that will come into existence as part of changing the Assembly's name, including "Acts of the Senedd" and "Members of the Senedd". As it is taken that these titles will be understood by the public when the changes come into force, and that they will therefore be familiar with the term "Senedd", I would imagine that the same would be therefore true of the name of the establishment itself. I do not therefore accept that the title "Senedd" cannot be used on its own. The proposed public information campaigns that are

referred to in the Explanatory Memorandum (123) will further such understanding.

2.5 I therefore encourage you to use the Bill to prescribe the Welsh only name “Senedd” and dispense with the proposal of also using the alternative name “Welsh Parliament”.

3. **Elections**

3.1 In the context of the electoral changes discussed in the Bill, I wish to draw your attention to concerns raised in the Commissioner’s response to the Assembly’s consultation on Creating a Parliament for Wales on 4 March 2018. Concerns were raised with respect to reports that noted that Welsh speaker’s experience of the elections in 2015 and 2016 were not equal to those of non-Welsh speakers.¹ Recommendations were made to the Electoral Commission emphasising the need to ensure that the Welsh language should not be treated less favourably than the English language. Recommendations were also made to Electoral Registration Officers, Registration Officers, and the Electoral Commission in relation to the guidance that is provided to Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers. They are not subject to statutory duties in relation to the Welsh language.

3.2 When responding on 2 October 2017 to the Welsh Government’s consultation on Electoral Reform in Local Government in Wales, the Commissioner explained that local authorities are now under a statutory obligation to provide services to the public in Welsh, in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. If the responsibilities of the returning officers were transferred to the statutory chief executives, as proposed in the consultation, it is presumed that these electoral functions would fall under the scope of the Welsh language standards. As outlined in our response to the consultation, we would welcome such a development. The consultation was specifically in relation to the administration of Local Government elections. If the Welsh Government were to decide that the role of the statutory chief executive should include the role of the returning officers in Local Government elections, we would strongly recommend that such arrangements are also made in relation to other elections in Wales, including Assembly elections. We would urge you to include such a provision in this Bill also.

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<http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.cymru/English/Organisations/Compliance/The%20Welsh%20Language%20Commissioner%e2%80%99s%20Elections%20Reports/Pages/The-Welsh-LanguageCommissioner%e2%80%99s-Elections-Reports.aspx>

3.3 I understand that some of the comments above go beyond the scope of your inquiry. Nonetheless, I urge the Committee to keep in mind when discussing elections the importance of ensuring that Welsh speakers' experience of elections in Wales are as equal as possible to those of non-Welsh speakers.