

Easy Read

Creating a Parliament for Wales

We want to know what you think

Please tell us by 6 April 2018



This is an easy read version of 'Creating a Parliament for Wales' consultation. February 2018



How to use this document

This is an easy read version. The words and their meaning are easy to read and understand.



You may need help and support to read and understand this document. Ask someone you know to help you.

Some words may be difficult to understand. These are in **bold blue writing** and have been explained in a box beneath the word.

If any of the words are used later in the booklet they are shown in **normal blue writing**. If you see words in **normal blue writing**, you can look up what they mean in **Hard words** on page 36.



Where the document says 'we', this means **National Assembly for Wales**.

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This document was made into easy read by Easy Read Wales using Photosymbols.

Contents

	Page
How to use this document	2
About the National Assembly for Wales	4
About this document	6
How to tell us what you think	8
Changes we could make to the National Assembly	9
The number of Assembly Members	9
How Assembly Members are elected	12
Having a diverse Assembly	24
Who should be allowed to vote in Assembly elections?	26
Who should be able to be an Assembly Member?	32
Running elections	33
Making changes to how the National Assembly is run	35
Hard words	36

About the National Assembly for Wales



The National Assembly for Wales started in 1999.



We were not allowed to make laws then. We can now.



Over the years we have been doing more things, so our role is now similar to other parliaments.

We now do 4 things:



1. Speak up for the people of Wales. We do this through our 60 **Assembly Members**.

Assembly Members are the people who are elected to the National Assembly.



2. Make laws.



3. Decide how much some taxes will be in Wales.



4. Try to make sure the Welsh Government is doing a good job.

About this document



In April 2018 a new law called the **Wales Act 2017** will start.

The Wales Act 2017 will give the National Assembly more power. We will have the power to:



- decide the best way to elect people to the National Assembly



- decide the best way to organise and run the National Assembly.

We think this is a chance to think about if changes are needed to:



- make sure the National Assembly is able to do its job as well as possible



- get more people involved in our work – including young people



- make sure we are organised and run in the best way.



We are going to change the name of the National Assembly to **Welsh Parliament**. We have already asked people about this.



We have done a lot of work looking in to the changes we could make.



We now want to know what you think about our ideas for other changes.

How to tell us what you think



Please read the information in this document. Then answer the questions in the response form.



You do not have to answer all the questions if you do not want to.

When you have filled in the response form you can send it to us by:



- emailing it to:

assemblycommission.consultations@assembly.wales



- posting it to:

Freepost,
National Assembly for Wales

Changes we could make to the National Assembly

The number of Assembly Members



Assembly Members try to make sure the Welsh Government is doing a good job. They check policies and new laws. And they check how money is spent. This is important work.



We are very small compared to other parliaments in the UK and around the world.



At the moment the National Assembly is made up of 60 **Assembly Members**. A report in 2003 said this was too small.



The report said if the Assembly got more powers it would need 80 **Assembly Members**. We have a lot more powers now, but we still do not have more **Assembly Members**.



We have done a lot of work to look into how many **Assembly Members** we need.



We asked some experts if they thought there were enough **Assembly Members**.



The experts found that 60 **Assembly Members** is not enough. **Assembly Members** have difficult jobs. They have a lot to do and not enough time to do it.

Ideas for changing the number of **Assembly Members**



The experts said the Assembly should have somewhere between 80 and 90 **Assembly Members**. They think this number of **Assembly Members** would be able to represent people in Wales better.



The experts said this number of **Assembly Members** would be better able to check on policy, law and spending. The experts said that this is very important for the people of Wales.



And **Assembly Members** would be able to focus on a smaller number of things. The experts said this means they could make more of a difference.

How much would it cost?



If we had 80 **Assembly Members** we would need 20 extra **Assembly Members**. 20 extra **Assembly Members** would cost around £6.6 million a year.



If we had 90 **Assembly Members** we would need 30 extra **Assembly Members**. 30 extra **Assembly Members** would cost around £9.6 million a year.



There would be some extra costs as well. For example, new offices and changes to our meeting room. We would only have to pay once for these extra costs.



We think the extra costs for 20 extra **Assembly Members** would be around £2.4 million.



We think the extra costs for 30 extra **Assembly Members** would be around £3.3 million.

£15 billion
per year



It sounds like a lot. But this would be only a small amount of the money Wales has to spend each year – Wales has around £15 billion to spend each year.

How Assembly Members are elected

The voting system



When you vote in an election you get to decide who you want to represent you in parliament.



At the moment our 60 **Assembly Members** are elected using a system called the **Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system**.

The **Mixed Member Proportional system** is a way of organising how a parliament is made up of elected members. It is easier to call it the **MMP system**.



In the **MMP system** you have 2 votes. Your 1st vote is for the person you want to represent your **constituency**.

Your **constituency** is your local area. There are 40 **constituencies** in Wales. For example, Caerphilly is a **constituency** in south Wales and Wrexham is a **constituency** in north Wales.



The person with the most votes wins. 40 Assembly Members are elected this way.



The 2nd vote you get is for a **political party** to represent your **region**.



A **political party** is a group who agree how to make life better for people. They come together and have a candidate for an election. In Wales political parties include:

- Plaid Cymru
- UK Independence Party (UKIP)
- Welsh Conservatives
- Welsh Labour
- Welsh Liberal Democrats

There are 5 **regions** in Wales:

- North Wales
- Mid and West Wales
- South Wales West
- South Wales Central
- South Wales East.



In this vote the **political parties** win seats in the Assembly. They choose which people from their **party** get the seats.



20 **Assembly Members** are elected this way - 4 from each **region**.



The **MMP system** gives us 60 **Assembly Members**. Each **constituency** in Wales chooses 1 person. And each **region** in Wales chooses 4 people.



But if we want more **Assembly Members** we need to change this system. This is because the system we have at the moment has been set up to elect 60 **Assembly Members**.

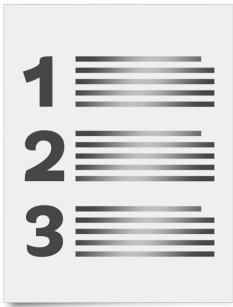
Ideas for changing the voting system



We asked some experts about different voting systems.

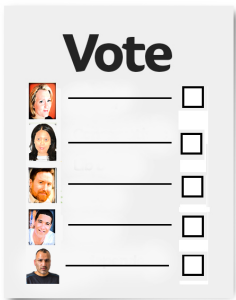


There are good points and bad points for all the different voting systems.



The experts think there are 3 options that could work. The 3 options are:

1. We could use **Single Transferable Vote (STV)**.



Single Transferable Vote (STV).

In this system voters rank the candidates in the order they like them best. For example, number 1 would be their favourite candidate. Number 2 would be their 2nd favourite.

Each **constituency** would choose more than 1 person to represent them.

Good points



- We could elect 80 – 90 **Assembly Members**



- Voters would have the most choice.



- The Welsh Government wants to use this system in **local elections**. If this happens both elections will have the same system. This will help to make voting easier to understand.

Local elections are where you vote for who you want to run your local council.

Equality



- All **Assembly Members** would have equal power.



- The balance of **political parties** in the Assembly would more closely match the **political parties** that people have voted for.



- There are some things we could do to make sure the **Assembly Members** were **diverse**.

Diverse means having people from different groups. For example, men and women; young and old people; people from different backgrounds.

Bad points



- In this system **Assembly Members** can choose to spend more time helping the people in their area. But this could mean that they may not have as much time to make sure the Welsh Government is doing a good job or make laws for Wales.



- We would need to change the **constituencies** we have in Wales.



- This system will be unfamiliar to people who are used to voting in Assembly elections. This may make it harder to understand.

2. We could use **Flexible List Proportional Representation**.



Flexible List Proportional Representation.

In this system voters choose from a list of **political parties** and candidates.

Parties choose what order their candidates are listed. Voters can choose to vote for the **party's** order. Or voters can vote for their favourite candidate.

If enough voters choose the same candidate, that candidate goes to the top of the list.

If not enough voters choose the same candidate, then candidates stay in the order chosen by the **party**.

This is used to choose which candidates get the seats.

Good points



- We could elect 80 – 90 **Assembly Members**.



- **Political parties** and voters would both have a say on who was elected.



- The balance of **political parties** in the Assembly would more closely match the **political parties** that people have voted for.

Equality



- All **Assembly Members** would have equal power.



- We could do things to make sure the Assembly was **diverse**.



- This system is similar to the one used in elections to vote for your **MEP – Member of the European Parliament**.

Bad Points



- We would need to change the constituencies.



- This system will be unfamiliar to people who are used to voting in Assembly elections. This may make it harder to understand.

3. We could keep the **MMP system**



We could keep this voting system. We would change the number of **Assembly Members** elected by each **region**.



Each **region** would elect 8 candidates instead of 4.

That would mean 40 candidates would be elected in the **region** vote.

Good points



- This would need the least amount of change.



- People have some amount of choice and control over who gets in to the Assembly.



- The **regional** vote is counted in a special way. This helps to make sure the National Assembly has the same balance of **political parties** that people have voted for.



- **Political parties** are in charge of who gets the **regional** seats. This could make it easier for them to be **diverse**.

Bad points

- We could not elect more than 80 **Assembly Members** with this system.



- **Political parties** are in charge of who gets the **regional** seats. This takes the choice away from voters.

Equality



- Some **Assembly Members** represent a **constituency**. And some **Assembly Members** represent a **region**. Because of this some people may not think they are equal.

Changing the constituencies



If we change the voting system we may need to change the **constituencies**. There are 2 options for this.

Option 1



We could have 20 **constituencies**. We would base them on the 40 **constituencies** we already have.



We could have 90 **Assembly Members** if we did this.

Each **constituency** would have a similar number of **Assembly Members** to represent them.



Every now and then we would need to look at where the new **constituencies** would start and end. This would take some time and money.

Option 2



We could have 17 **constituencies**. We would base this on the 22 Local Authority areas we have in Wales.



We would not need to look at where the new **constituencies** would start and end. Because this already happens every now and then for local authority areas.



But it would mean that some **constituencies** have more **Assembly Members** to represent them. Because more people live in some **constituencies** than in other **constituencies**.

Having a diverse Assembly



The experts who looked at how many **Assembly Members** there should be also said that it would be best to have a **diverse** Assembly.



They said that **political parties** should think about how **diverse** their candidates are.



They think that **political parties** should have the same number of men and women standing for election. They want them to think about other things too like age and disability.

Job sharing



The job of an **Assembly Member** takes a lot of time. This may stop some people standing for election.



Job sharing could help more people stand for election like:

- disabled people
- carers



Job sharing is where 2 people share the work of 1 job role.



Candidates who want to **job share** would have to explain to voters how they would organise it. It will be up to voters whether they are elected or not.



Job sharers would be treated like 1 person. So it will not cost any more money for 2 people to job share than for 1 person to be an **Assembly Member**.

Who should be allowed to vote in Assembly elections?



At the moment the same people who vote in [local government elections](#) can vote in the National Assembly elections. We want to know if this should stay the same.



This is easier for voters. And it is easier to organise.

Voting age



At the moment you must be 18 or over to vote in Wales.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The Welsh Government is thinking about changing the age people can vote in [local government elections](#) to 16.



We asked 16 and 17 years olds if the age people can vote in Assembly elections should be lowered to 16. Just over half of the people we asked said yes. Just over a quarter said no. The rest were not sure.



We asked experts how old you should have to be to vote in Assembly elections. They said lowering the voting age to 16 would be a good idea. They think it will help get young people interested in politics.



They said that if people vote when they are young they are more likely to vote as adults.



They also said that 16 and 17 year olds understand politics as well as people aged 18 to 21.



There is not much support to lower the voting age in the UK. But organisations that work with young people have said that young people do support it.



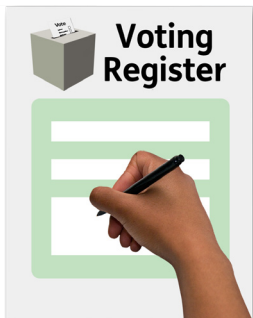
If we change the voting age we need to think about:



- Cost



- Making sure people know that the voting age has changed



- Changes to the voting register. The voting register is a list of people who can vote



- How we organise how people vote.

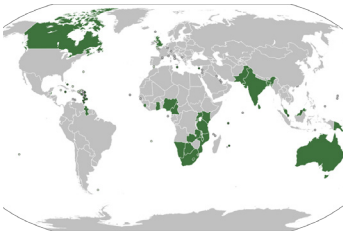
Non UK people



People who live in Wales are allowed to vote in local and Assembly elections if they:



- were born in the UK



- are from the **Commonwealth**

The **Commonwealth** is a group of countries that the UK used to rule. Such as Jamaica and India.



- are from the **European Union**

The **European Union** is a group of countries whose governments work together. It is often called the **EU**. In 2016 the people of the UK voted to leave the **EU**.



In 2017 Welsh Government asked who should be able to vote in **local elections** in Wales.



They asked if people from the **EU** should still be allowed to vote after we have left the **EU**.



And they asked if everyone who lives in Wales legally, wherever they were born should be able to vote.



The Welsh Government has now said that it is going to change the law so that everyone who lives in Wales legally should be able to vote in **local elections**. It will not matter where they were born – as long as they live in Wales legally.



We would like to know if you think we should do the same for Assembly elections.

Prisoners



Most prisoners are not allowed to vote in any election.

The UK Government is thinking about changing this to let prisoners vote who:



- have been allowed to leave prison for a certain amount of time



- live at home under strict rules. For example they must be home by 7pm. They are checked using a tag on their ankle.



They are also looking into letting prisoners vote who will be in jail for less than 12 months.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government has also been looking into this. They said prisoners who lived in Wales and who will be released before the next election after the one they are voting in could be allowed to vote in **local elections**.



We would like to know if you think we should do the same for Assembly elections.

Who should be able to be an Assembly Member?

Not everyone can be an **Assembly Member**. Certain people are not allowed because of their jobs. For example:



- MPs
- Judges



If these people want to be an **Assembly Member** they must quit their job before they stand for election.



This is because their job may affect the choices they make as an **Assembly Member**.



A group of **Assembly Members** have said it would be better if people only had to quit their job if they won the election. This will help more people stand for election.



But there are still some jobs that people would need to quit before they stand for election. This is because their job role may give them an unfair advantage in the election.



The law could be made clearer to make it easier for people.

Running elections

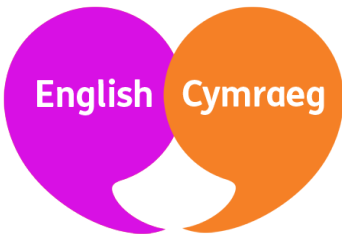
Spending money



The **political parties** must follow rules about how much money they can spend at elections.



The **Electoral Commission** is the organisation that checks that **political parties** follow these rules. They check that elections are run properly.



The **Electoral Commission** thinks the money it costs to translate things between Welsh and English should not be included in this. This could help people use the Welsh language during elections.



The **Electoral Commission** thinks that money spent because a person has a disability should not be included in this. This could help more disabled people to stand for elections, or take part in campaigns for a **political party**.

The law



In 2016 the **Law Commission** said all laws about elections should be brought together.



The **Law Commission** looks at the law and suggests changes to make it better. They are an independent organisation.



This would make the law more clear and easy to understand.



The UK Government has not said what they will do about this yet.



If we changed the law about elections it could help to make sure we can make the changes suggested by the **Law Commission** in the future.

Making changes to how the National Assembly is run



The **Wales Act 2017** will give us the power to change some of the law that says how we must work.



We are thinking about whether making changes could help the Assembly run in the best way.



Possible changes could include changing the number of people in certain job roles.



We would like to change how long we get after an election to hold our 1st meeting.



We would also like more time after elections for talking and making choices about which people have particular jobs.

Hard words

Assembly Member

Assembly Members are the people who are elected to the National Assembly.

Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a group of countries that the UK used to rule. Such as Jamaica and India

Constituency

Your constituency is your local area. There are 40 constituencies in Wales. For example, Caerphilly is a constituency in south Wales and Wrexham is a constituency in north Wales

Diverse

Diverse means having people from different groups. For example, men and women or old and young.

Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is the organisation that checks that political parties follow the rules. They check that elections are run properly.

European Union

The European Union is a group of countries whose governments work together. It is often called the EU. In 2016 the people of the UK voted to leave the EU.

Flexible List Proportional Representation

In this system voters choose from a list of political parties and candidates.

Parties choose what order their candidates are listed. Voters can choose to vote for the party's order. Or voters can vote for their favourite candidate.

If enough voters choose the same candidate, that candidate goes to the top of the list.

If not enough voters choose the same candidate, then candidates stay in the order chosen by the party.

This is used to choose which candidates get the seats.

Job sharing

Job sharing is where 2 people share the work of 1 job role.

Law Commission

The Law Commission looks at the law and suggests changes to make it better. They are an independent organisation.

Local elections

Local elections are where you vote for who you want to run your local council.

Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system

The Mixed Member Proportional system is a way of organising how a parliament is made up of elected members. It is easier to call it the MMP system.

In the MMP system you have 2 votes. Your 1st vote is for the person you want to represent your constituency.

The 2nd vote you get is for a political party to represent your region.

Political party

A political party is a group who agree how to make life better for people. They come together and have a candidate for an election. In Wales political parties include:

- Plaid Cymru
- UK Independence Party (UKIP)
- Welsh Conservatives
- Welsh Labour
- Welsh Liberal Democrats

Regions

There are 5 regions in Wales:

- North Wales
- Mid and West Wales
- South Wales West
- South Wales Central
- South Wales East.

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

In this system voters rank the candidates in the order they like them best. For example, number 1 would be their favourite candidate. Number 2 would be their 2nd favourite.

Each constituency would choose more than 1 person to represent them.