

National Assembly for Wales
Welsh Baccalaureate

Guide to the National Assembly for Wales
Module: Wales, Europe and the World



The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

What is devolution?

Devolution is the transfer of powers from a central government to local units.

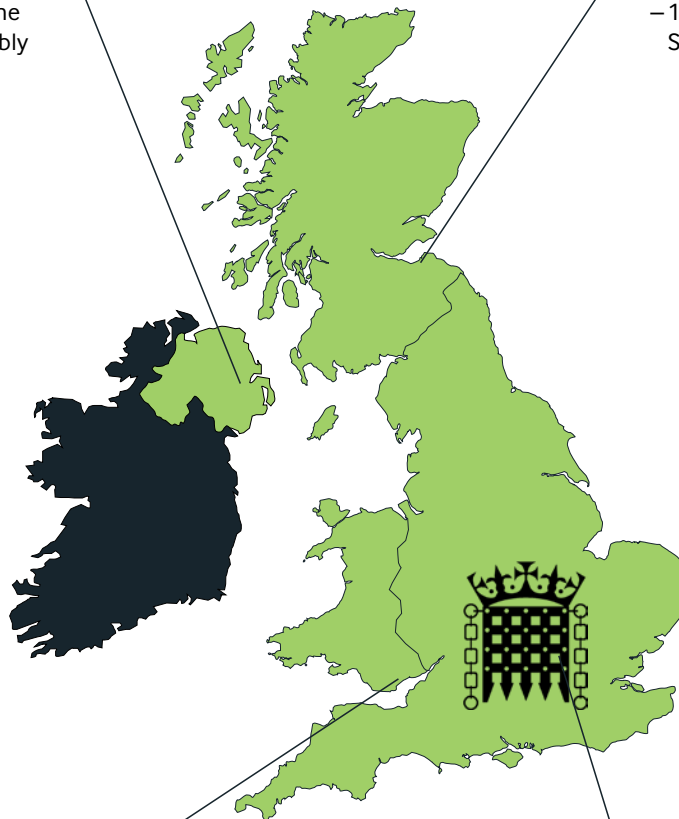
Years ago, all decisions affecting the UK were made in London by MPs in the United Kingdom Parliament. But in the late 1990s everything changed as new political institutions were set up in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and, in the year 2000, Greater London.



– **Belfast**
– 108 Members of the
Legislative Assembly



– **Edinburgh**
– 129 Members of
Scottish Parliament



– **Cardiff**
– 60 Assembly Members

LONDON ASSEMBLY



– **London**
– 25 Assembly Members

Remember – the UK Parliament retains absolute power, including that of taking back the privileges of devolution!

Devolution in Wales

1979

The first referendum was held in **1979**, but the people of Wales rejected plans for devolution in Wales by four to one.

ONLY 58.8% OF THE ELECTORATE USED THEIR VOTE!

1997

The second Referendum was held in September 1997:

ONLY 50.1% OF THE ELECTORATE USED THEIR VOTE!

YES 50.3% (a 6712 vote majority)
NO 49.7%

Carmarthenshire was the last unitary authority to declare its votes which tipped the balance in favour for the establishment of a new democratically elected body for Wales. This required an Act of Parliament.

1998 Government of Wales Act

- * created the National Assembly for Wales
- * made provisions for elections the following year
- * transferred most of the powers from the Secretary of State for Wales

4th May 1999

First Assembly elections

12th May 1999

First meeting of the Assembly.

Suggested Activities

01. Use the internet to find out how different parts of Wales voted in both 1979 and 1997. Display your findings in graphical form and comment on any patterns / similarities / differences that you find interesting.

02. Voter apathy is still a problem, especially amongst 18-25 year olds. As a group, design and distribute a survey to find out why young people don't use their votes, and what could be done to improve this. Your findings can either be presented on paper, through tables and graphs, or as a multimedia presentation to the rest of your group.

The National Assembly for Wales



-
- makes laws for Wales on devolved matters
 - votes on the budget
 - holds the Welsh Government to account
-

Devolved Powers

The National Assembly for Wales can make decisions and legislate on the following fields:

Field 01: Agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development

Field 02: Ancient monuments and historical buildings

Field 03: Culture

Field 04: Economic development

Field 05: Education and training

Field 06: Environment

Field 07: Fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety

Field 08: Food

Field 09: Health and health services

Field 10: Highways and transport

Field 11: Housing

Field 12: Local government

Field 13: National Assembly for Wales

Field 14: Public administration

Field 15: Social welfare

Field 16: Sport and recreation

Field 17: Tourism

Field 18: Town and country planning

Field 19: Water and flood defences

Field 20: Welsh Language



Suggested Activities

01. Create your own manifesto, making election promises on all or some of the twenty devolved fields. You can present your manifesto as an eye-catching poster or pamphlet, or deliver it in a speech to the rest of the class. This could be followed by a class election, where everyone has the chance to vote for their favourite manifesto.

02. Use the internet to research and compare the policies of the four main parties in the National Assembly for Wales on some of the devolved fields. Display your findings as a table. Which of the political parties appeals to you the most?

Reserved Powers

The UK Parliament retains control of:

- UK constitutional matters
- Defence
- Foreign policy
- Economic, fiscal and monetary policy
- Corporate law and regulation
- Employment and equality legislation
- Social security
- Transport safety and regulation
- Nuclear safety
- Film, video and broadcasting
- The Ordnance Survey
- Assisted area designation
- The National Lottery
- Abortion, human fertilisation and embryology
- Control and safety of medicines
- Vivisection



What's the difference between the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales?

The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government formally separated on the 3rd May 2007 as a result of the Government of Wales Act 2006.



The Welsh Government suggests the majority of new legislation and is responsible for government departments and spending. It is made up of the First Minister, the Welsh Ministers, the Counsel General (the chief legal advisor of the Welsh Government, who oversees the approval and creation of laws) and the Deputy Welsh Ministers. The maximum size of the Welsh Government is 14, including the First Minister and Counsel General.



The National Assembly for Wales

is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account. It is made up of 60 Assembly Members.



Government of Wales Act 2006

As well as formally separating the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales, the Government of Wales Act 2006 provided a mechanism for the Assembly to acquire, on a case-by-case basis, more powers to make its own laws.

How New Legislation is Passed

Suggestions for new legislation are known as **Assembly Measures**. Since the Government of Wales Act 2006 the Assembly has been able to pass Measures on any matter in which it has **Legislative Competence**.

All the matters in which the Assembly has Legislative Competence are listed under Section 5 of the 2006 Government of Wales Act.

FIELD = Broad subject area (Highways and Transport, Housing etc.)

MATTER = Specifically defined policy area within a field.

If the Assembly wishes to legislate on a new matter, a Legislative Competence Order (LCO) must first be passed. An LCO is a type of subordinate legislation that transfers the relevant powers from Parliament to the Assembly. It must be approved by the Assembly, the Secretary of State for Wales, both Houses of Parliament and the Queen.



≡ Legislative Competence

Both LCOs and Assembly Measures can be proposed by either the Welsh Government, Assembly committees, or an individual Assembly Member (if their name is drawn from a ballot). The Commission may introduce a proposed Measure relating to the Commission's functions. It is also the job of Assembly Members to scrutinise and vote on proposed legislation.

The first law to be passed in Wales since the days of Hywel Dda was the NHS Redress Measure on the 6th May 2008. Its purpose is to make it easier for patients to receive compensation or treatment and support if things go wrong with their NHS care.



A new Royal Seal of Wales was approved in May 2008. It is based on the arms borne by Llywelyn the Great, the famous thirteenth-century Welsh prince. The new seal appears on the cover of Assembly Measures passed by the National Assembly for Wales.

Suggested Activities

01. Go to the Business section of www.assemblywales.org and go into Business Notice, where details of forthcoming Plenary and Committee meetings are recorded. Use this, along with the information contained in this handout, to write the Diary of an AM. It might be necessary to research topics that are due to be discussed, so that you are able to give an opinion about them in your diary.

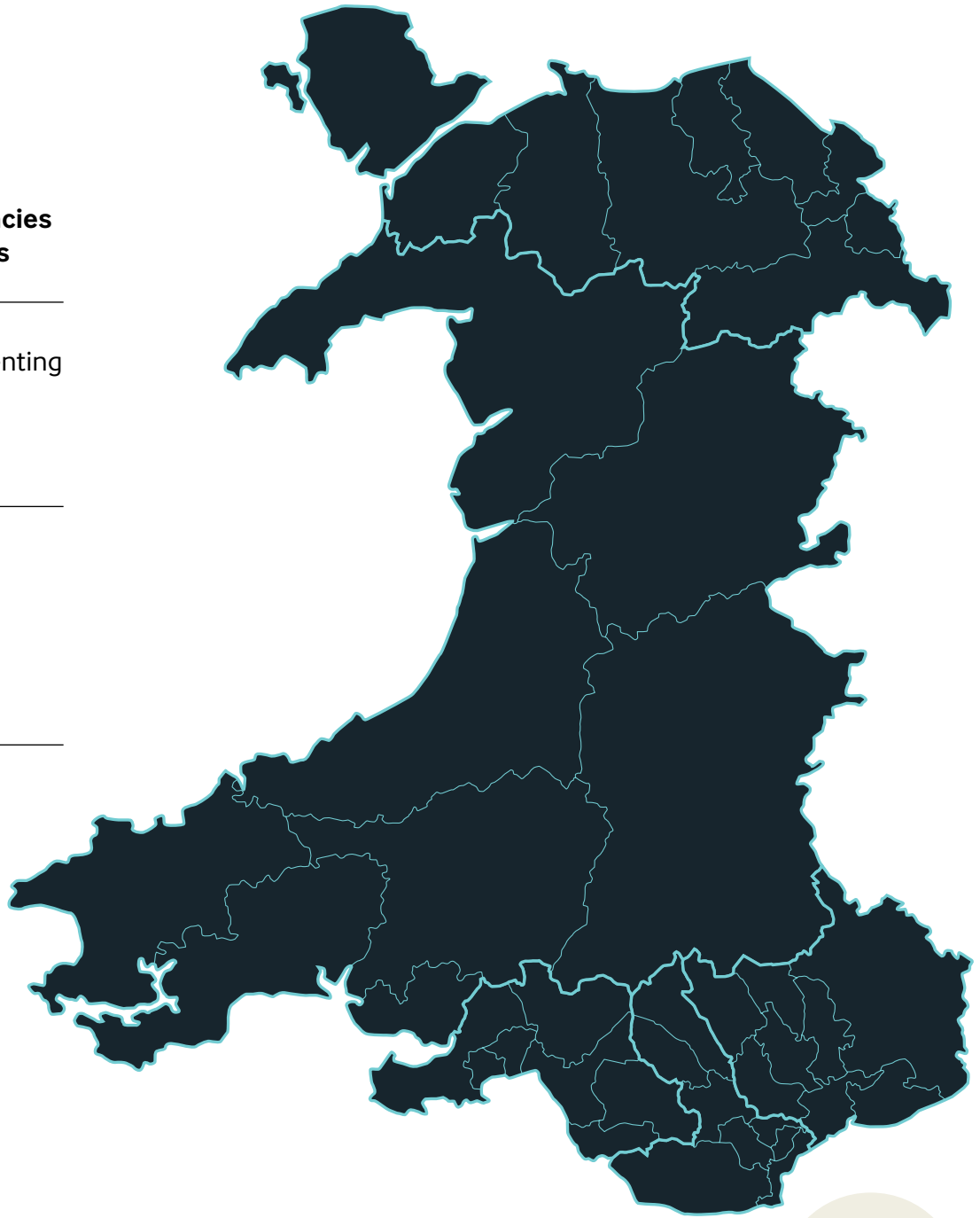
02. Compile an information sheet on the Children and Young People's Committee. Who are its members? What is its purpose? What has this committee been discussing recently? What are the things YOU think it should focus on?

Composition of the Assembly

Assembly Constituencies and Electoral Regions

There are 60 Assembly Members in all, representing 40 constituencies and 5 regions.

In 2003 the National Assembly for Wales had the ideal gender balance of 30 male and 30 female AMs - a world first!



Assembly elections are held every four years.

Regional Members are elected via the Additional Member System, where the total votes won by the party in the regional vote (V) is divided by the number of seats (s) that party already holds, plus one.




The d'Hondt Formula (shown right) is a form of proportional representation used in many other countries, including Austria, Israel, Italy, Japan, Scotland and Spain.

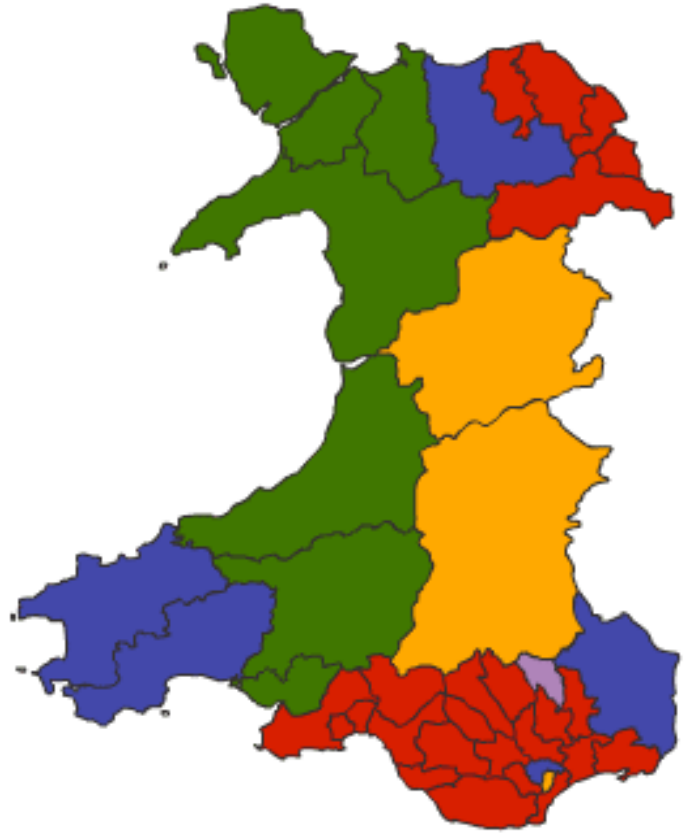
$$\frac{v}{s+1}$$

Constituency Members are elected on a first past the post basis.



Constituency Map 2007

-  Labour (26)
-  Plaid Cymru (14)
-  Welsh Conservatives (13)
-  Welsh Liberal Democrats (6)
-  Independent (1)



Cabinet Members and Their Responsibilities

Use www.assemblywales.org to help you complete the following information:



First Minister

Carwyn Jones AM



Deputy First Minister

Minister for _____
and _____
Ieuan Wyn Jones AM



Minister for Environment,
Sustainability and Housing



Minister for Business and

Jane Hutt AM



Minister for Social Justice
and Local Government



Minister for _____

Edwina Hart MBE AM



Minister for Culture and



Minister for
Children, Education,
Lifelong Learning



Counsel General and

John Griffiths AM



Minister for Rural Affairs

Suggested Activities

01. Draw a pie chart showing the current composition of the National Assembly for Wales. Choose one or more political parties and compare their most recent results with those of previous elections. Has there been any shift in popularity? Has this been reflected in council, parliamentary or European elections? Give your opinion on why this might be.

02. Go to www.wales.gov.uk to research the One Wales Agreement (click "About" then look under "Strategy"). Write a magazine article for young people, explaining:

- What it is
- How and why it came into being
- A brief summary of its terms
- Your opinion on how successful it's been and its impact so far upon life in Wales.

Include pictures and diagrams to illustrate your points.

What Does an Assembly Member Do?

- Represent their party
 - Represent the entire community
 - Hold surgeries and meet constituents
 - Write letters, emails etc.
 - Consider local and national matters
 - Take part in debates in Plenary sessions
 - Weigh up advantages and disadvantages
 - Suggest Measures
 - Vote on Measures
 - Work in committees
 - Scrutinise
-

Plenary

Plenary sessions take place every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon in the Siambr. These meetings give AMs a chance to question the First Minister and other Assembly Ministers on the work that they've been doing.

Presiding Officer

Meetings are chaired by the Presiding Officer, Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas AM, who has held the post since the start of the National Assembly for Wales in 1999.

His role is similar to that of Speaker in the House of Commons. As well as making sure that order is kept during Plenary and protecting the rights of AMs, he also represents the Assembly at many events and hosts visits to the Senedd, including Royal visitors, elected representatives from other parliaments and foreign dignitaries.

AMs have the power to propose a motion for a short debate at the very end of a session, or propose that the Assembly immediately consider a matter of urgent public importance.

Committees

A committee is made up of a small group of AMs from different parties who look at particular issues in more detail. They often seek input from external expert advisors and members of the community before making decisions.

A list of all committees along with information on membership, news, meeting dates, agendas, transcripts and reports can be found on:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees.htm>



Keeping up with Developments

Members of the public are welcome to sit in the Public Gallery during both Plenary and Committee meetings.

35 hours of Committee and Plenary footage are made available each week on www.senedd.tv



Transcripts of Plenary meetings are published within 24 hours of the end of each meeting. A summary of business conducted at each meeting can be found in the Votes and Proceedings section of the National Assembly's website, which is published within 30 minutes of the end of each meeting.

Suggested Activities

01. Take a look at current news headlines and issues of concern in Wales, then write a list of questions that you'd like to ask the First Minister and his Cabinet if you were an AM.
02. Choose one of the committees and use the Assembly's website to help you design a movie-style poster, showing its members, what was discussed in the last meeting, and what's on the agenda for the next.
03. Watch www.senedd.tv then write a short newspaper report, covering what was discussed and decided during that particular meeting, and any consequences it might have for Wales.
04. Compose a report on some of the problems of your local area. Use photographs, PowerPoint presentations, or results of your own surveys to strengthen your case. Invite an AM or another local representative to your school and present your report to them.

What has the Assembly done for Wales?

Devolution has meant that Ministers in Wales have been able to make policies and initiatives which are unique to Wales, as well as being able to take quick and decisive action at times of crisis.

Over 10 years the Welsh Government has introduced 'Made in Wales' initiatives which help to make a real difference to people's everyday lives. These include:

- Free prescriptions
- Primary school breakfasts
- Free swimming
- Free Bus Travel for people with disabilities and those aged 60+
- Foundation Phase 'learn through play' curriculum for our 3-7 year olds.

In addition, Wales was the first country in the UK to appoint a Children's Commissioner, and the first to appoint a Commissioner for Older People.

In 2006 the Government of Wales Act opened up even more opportunities for Wales. Within two years, Wales has already drawn down new powers covering special needs education, vulnerable children and the well-being of carers.

Suggested Activities

01. Research the findings and recommendations made by the Richard Commission over the years. How many of these have become a reality already? Are there any obstacles in the path of those remaining? How will Wales be governed in the future, and what kind of policies will be promoted? Design a visitors' guide, describing Wales in the year 2020. Base your predictions on the policies that have already come into play, and those that are recommended for the future.

Getting Involved

Contact Your AM!

Visit **www.assemblywales.org** to type in your postcode and see a list of your Assembly Members and their contact details.

Submit a Petition

A petition is a way of asking the National Assembly to consider any issue, problem or proposal that it has the power to do something about. Any petition that the Presiding Officer decides is admissible must be considered by the Assembly.

The Petitions Committee exists to consider petitions and to decide what action should be taken.

Petitions can either be submitted via the online forms found at **<http://www.assemblywales.org/gethome/e-petitions.htm>**

or posted to:

**National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA**

If you use your own petition template, rather than the ones available for download, it's important that you submit the petition before collecting signatures. This allows for the validity of the wording to be checked for you - it's very difficult to change this once you've started collecting signatures!

