

Response to the Report of the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform

1. This document is the Welsh Government's formal written response to the report of the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform, *Reforming our Senedd: A Stronger Voice for the People of Wales*.

Context and roles

2. The Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform, a cross-party committee of Members of the Senedd, was established on 6 October 2021, with a remit to:
 - Consider the conclusions previously reached by the Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform in the Fifth Senedd; and
 - By 31 May 2022, to make recommendations for policy instructions for a Welsh Government Bill on Senedd reform.
3. The Committee's role was to develop the proposals for legislation and what they should achieve.
4. The Welsh Government's role is to now develop and introduce legislation which takes forward the recommendations of the Committee.
5. On 30 May, the Committee published its recommendations. On 8 June, the Senedd voted to:
 - Note the report of the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform, *Reforming our Senedd: A stronger voice for the people of Wales*.
 - Endorse the recommendations for policy instructions for legislation on Senedd Reform in time for the next Senedd elections in 2026.
 - Note that the report also calls on the Senedd to consider a number of matters relating to Senedd reform.
6. 40 Members voted in favour of this motion, equating to a two-thirds majority.

Responding to the recommendations

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. The Welsh Government would like to thank the Chair, Committee members and the Committee's staff for their work in producing this comprehensive report.8. The publication of this report marks an important step in the journey to create a Senedd that reflects the diversity of the people of Wales and which is properly resourced to fully discharge its policy, legislative and financial scrutiny responsibilities.9. Following the Senedd's endorsement of the Committee's recommendations, the Welsh Government will now prepare and introduce legislation to take them forward. |
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10. To this purpose it has assembled policy, legal and legislative drafting capacity, to rapidly and robustly develop the requisite policy and legislative provisions, founded upon the Committee's recommendations for policy instructions. Further policy and legal analysis will also be undertaken where appropriate to determine the detail required to give effect to the recommendations, particularly in relation to the Committee's higher-level recommendations.

Nature of the recommendations

11. The Committee has made 31 recommendations. The nature of the recommendations and their relationship to legislation is summarised in the annex to this response.
12. The vast majority of the recommendations relate directly to the preparation of the legislation. Many also relate to the secondary legislation that will also need to be prepared.
13. The majority of the recommendations are for the Welsh Government to consider as part of the legislative development process. The Welsh Government will use these recommendations as the basis for legislation.
14. In some cases, the Senedd's Business Committee is also asked to consider the recommendations. The Welsh Government will work with the Business Committee on these specific areas.
15. In some cases, recommendations are made for the Senedd to give further consideration to certain matters.

Next steps and timetable

16. The Committee has clearly recommended that Senedd reform is implemented in time for the next scheduled Senedd election in 2026. As a result, some aspects will need to be delivered on an interim basis. The Welsh Government will prepare legislation to this effect. The timetable necessary for such may potentially limit or curtail opportunities for pre-legislative scrutiny.
17. The Welsh Government will work closely with partner organisations such as the Boundary Commission for Wales, the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, the Senedd Commission, the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators and the Wales Electoral Coordination Board, seeking to utilise their knowledge to inform the development of the legislation.
18. The Welsh Government will also liaise closely with the Senedd's Business Committee, recognising in particular that a number of the Committee's recommendations relate both to the development of legislation and the broader organisation of the Senedd.
19. The Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru commits the two partners to working together on Senedd reform. The Co-Operation Agreement includes a commitment to bring forward Senedd Reform

legislation within 12 to 18 months of the final report of the Special Purpose Committee.

20. Ministers will keep the Senedd fully updated on the development of the legislation. A further update will be provided by the end of 2022.

Annex: The nature of the recommendations

Recommendation	Nature of recommendation
<i>“Recommendation 1. We recommend that Senedd reform is implemented in time for the next scheduled Senedd election in 2026. As a result some aspects will need to be delivered on an interim basis”</i>	Recommendation relating to legislation and broader implementation matters
<i>“Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Senedd have 96 Members”</i>	Recommendation relating to legislation and broader implementation matters
<i>“Recommendation 3. We recommend that the new size of the Senedd is specified in primary legislation”</i>	Recommendation relating to legislation
<i>“Recommendation 4. We recommend that the Senedd’s Business Committee and Welsh Government consider how cross-party consideration can be facilitated on the question of whether any increase in the size of the Welsh Government would be appropriate, balanced against the need for enhanced scrutiny. This consideration should then inform the development of legislation to provide for a Senedd of 96 Members”</i>	Recommendation relating to legislation and the broader organisation of Welsh Government. Recommendation for the Business Committee to consider in addition to the Welsh Government
<i>“Recommendation 5. We recommend that consideration is given to the question of whether the Senedd should have flexibility through its Standing Orders to elect more Deputy Presiding Officers should it so wish. This consideration should then inform the development of legislation to provide for a Senedd of 96 Members”</i>	Recommendation relating to legislation and the broader organisation of the Senedd.
<i>“Recommendation 6. We recommend that consideration is given to the question of whether the Senedd should have flexibility through its Standing Orders to elect more than four Members of the Senedd Commission should it so wish. This consideration should then inform the development of legislation to provide for a Senedd of 96 Members”</i>	Recommendation relating to legislation and the broader organisation of the Senedd.
<i>“Recommendation 7. We recommend that the Senedd is elected using closed proportional lists”</i>	Recommendation relating to legislation
<i>“Recommendation 8. We recommend that seats are allocated to parties using the D’Hondt formula”</i>	Recommendation relating to legislation

<p><i>“Recommendation 9. We recommend that vacancies arising between elections under the closed proportional list system are filled through the next candidate on a party’s list”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 10. We recommend that the Senedd’s Business Committee gives consideration to the consequences of a Member changing their political party if elected through a closed proportional list system”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation, but with a specific role in the first instance for the Business Committee to consider</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 11. We recommend that the Senedd should be elected with integrated statutory gender quotas”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 12. We recommend that a legislative requirement is placed upon a devolved Welsh Authority to collect and prominently publish anonymised candidate diversity data”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 13. We recommend that further consideration should be given, on a cross-party basis, to exploring the feasibility and legislative challenges associated with enabling election on the basis of job sharing”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation for further cross-party consideration</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 14. We recommend that the Senedd’s Business Committee considers the practical and procedural issues associated with the two Members job sharing a particular role (such as that of a Committee Chair)”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation for the Business Committee’s consideration</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 15. We recommend that a relevant committee considers how further work can best be undertaken on examining the merits and implications of legislative diversity quotas for characteristics other than gender. We anticipate that this consideration will inform decisions on whether such quotas may, in time, provide effective mechanisms for encouraging the election of a more diverse Senedd, at an appropriate time in the future”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation for further cross-party consideration</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 16. We recommend that Senedd reform legislation includes provisions that encourage each political party standing candidates in a Senedd election to prominently publish a diversity and inclusion strategy, setting out how it has sought to facilitate diversity within its candidates, at least six months prior to the scheduled Senedd election”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>

<p><i>“Recommendation 17. We recommend that the Welsh Government takes appropriate steps to ensure that our recommendations on Senedd reform for 2026 are not put at undue risk of a Supreme Court referral”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation and broader implementation matters</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 18. We recommend that the 2026 election uses the final 32 UK Parliament constituencies proposed by the Boundary Commission for Wales once it has concluded its 2023 Parliamentary Review. These constituencies are to be paired to create 16 new multi-member constituencies”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 19. We recommend that although the Senedd’s constituencies are initially aligned to those of the UK Parliament constituencies for the purpose of the 2026 election, they must not be automatically co-terminous”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 20. We recommend that the power to review Senedd boundaries, including the power to define multi-member constituencies for the 2026 election should be conferred on the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 21. We recommend that the Senedd Reform legislation should take steps to reconstitute and rename the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales to reflect its new functions. This should include any appropriate adjustments to its configuration, governance, staffing and financial resourcing”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 22. We recommend that a full boundary review should be instigated in this Senedd term, with its recommendations to take effect from the 2031 Senedd election”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 23. We recommend that Senedd reform legislation includes a requirement for full boundary reviews to be undertaken on a periodic basis, with limited appropriate provisions for interim reviews if necessary”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 24. We recommend that Senedd reform legislation includes timescales for the processes involved in a full review of the Senedd’s boundaries”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>

<p><i>“Recommendation 25. We recommend that the number of Senedd constituencies is specified as 16 in primary legislation”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 26. We recommend that primary legislation should specify that each constituency should return the same number of Members of the Senedd”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 27. We recommend that Senedd reform legislation should provide that local authority wards are used as the basic building blocks for designing constituencies and that a boundary commission should not normally divide electoral wards between constituencies”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 28. We recommend that primary legislation should specify as parameters for boundary reviews that Senedd constituencies are to contain a broadly equal number of electors, a tolerable variation in the electorate per constituency and other relevant parameters”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 29. We recommend that the boundary commission’s recommendations should be implemented without a requirement for Senedd approval and with government ministers having no power to amend such recommendations, other than if requested by the boundary commission to correct errors</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 30. We recommend that a Welsh Government Bill on Senedd reform requires the Welsh Ministers to make, within a realistic but rapid timescale, subordinate legislation to give effect to boundary commission recommendations”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>
<p><i>“Recommendation 31. We recommend that Senedd reform legislation includes provisions to enable a streamlined boundary review, for the purpose of defining the proposed 16 multimember constituencies. This should be completed in sufficient time to enable the implementation of its recommendations, and for electoral administrators and political parties to make necessary preparations ahead of the 2026 election”</i></p>	<p>Recommendation relating to legislation</p>