

Electoral Reform NEWSLETTER



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Democratic Renewal Campaign

Wales, put your views to good use! Views, we've all got them. But are we all having our voices heard?

We want democracy in Wales to work for everyone, we need more people to engage in the process. To put their views to good use by voting, contacting a representative, or starting or signing a petition.

To encourage more people to get involved in democracy in Wales, Welsh Government has launched an integrated communications campaign. The campaign is targeting young people aged 16-17 and citizens from other countries living in Wales, who will be able to vote in the Senedd elections for the first time this year, as well as a wider group of people across Wales who don't usually get involved or may not know how they can take positive action to make a difference to the things they care about.

We will be directing people to a designated campaign landing page housed on the Welsh Government website gov.wales/use-your-views where we will encourage visitors to find out more about the different ways in which they can get involved in democracy.

We need your help to raise awareness of the campaign across your channels and networks, reaching out to people who are disengaged with democracy and don't know how they can take positive action and have their voices heard.

We have developed a set of resources (including some website copy, a template e-bulletin, poster, social media posts and social media videos x2) which can easily be added to your website, included in a regular newsletter and used on your social media channels. We will send you a link to these materials next week.

Tagging on social media

We've provided suggested social media copy in both Welsh and English to support the digital assets that have been created if you are happy to post directly from your channels. We would also advise using [#useyourviews](#) / [#dweuddyddweud](#) where possible.

All paid content will be promoted from the Welsh Government social media channels so we would ask you to tag [@WelshGovernment](#) in any online posts.

Household Notification Letters

Grant letters offering additional funding for production the production of HNL letters have issued to ROs and electoral administrators, payments will be made in March.

Preparation for Senedd Elections

Electoral Administrators will be contacted by email in early March and asked to confirm bank details for payment of advances for the election.

Postponed by-elections

As of 1st March by-elections postponed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic can resume. We would be very grateful if Returning Officers and electoral administrators could let us know what plans are in place by contacting the elections mailbox.

The Latest on Legislation

The Representation of the People (Amendment) (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2021

Extends the provisions for emergency proxy's for reasons of COVID to ordinary (not previously postponed) by elections that take place between 25 February 2021 and 4 November 2021.

Senedd Cymru Returning Officers' Charges Order 2021

The consultation on funding for the Senedd election on issued on 16th February with responses required by 1st March.

Electoral Management Systems

In order to plan for the changes to the franchise for the Senedd election in May and for the equivalent change to the franchise for local elections from May 2022 onwards, changes were made to Electoral Management Systems which were all operational by 1 June 2020.

EMS providers have asked us to remind you to review their guidance, help documentation, notes and circulars provided by them when building your elections and to attend the various workshops and planning sessions they are offering in advance of the upcoming postponed by-elections and combined elections in May.

Each EMS will have in place particular processes you will need to follow to ensure the franchise is built correctly for the election in question.

Their guidance sets this out in detail and they are available to help answer any questions and offer suggestions on how to build in checks to ensure the newly enfranchised are represented appropriately.

As May is the first time the new franchise will be operating, you will also want to follow your EMS providers suggestions on checking polling station registers to ensure that the newly enfranchise groups (16/17 year olds and qualifying foreign citizens) have been included on those registers.

Your Questions Answered

Does the new franchise apply to local by-elections taking place on 6 May as well as the Senedd Elections? Local Government by-elections taking place in 2021 will do so under the existing franchise. That is to say, those newly enfranchised voters (16/17 year olds and qualifying foreign citizens) **will not** be eligible to vote. The right to vote in local government elections will be extended to these groups in May 2022 when the next ordinary local government elections take place.

When will Returning Officers' Charges guidance be published, and when will payments be made? We have issued letters to all ROs setting out both the standard Maximum Recoverable Amount (MRA) and the additional Covid -19 funding for 2021, the consultation period for this ended on the 1st of March. We will be issuing guidance around the 22nd of March along with the RO indemnity and claims forms. We will be making the advanced payment of 75% of costs at the beginning of the financial year, around the 6th of April 2021.

Candidate spending limits for local elections in England are to be increased. Would similar measures be introduced in Wales? We will not be making any changes for the local government by-elections in 2021, however we will be reviewing the candidate spending limits as part of our work in preparations for the ordinary elections in May 2022.



Exceptional Expenditure at the Senedd Election

The Elections Team are happy to discuss any exceptional costs that you may be facing outside of the usual circumstances in preparation for the Senedd election. Some ROs have been in touch already in response to a letter from us, and the issue has been raised at the recent Wales Electoral Co-ordination Board. If you have encountered any exceptional costs in your preparations that you wouldn't usually expect to have to accommodate, please get in touch with us as early as possible to discuss your funding needs and provide us with some details of these costs.

Etholiadau.elections@gov.wales