

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Y Pwyllgor Busnes](#) | [Business Committee](#)

[Galw am dystiolaeth ar argymhellion a wnaed gan y Pwyllgor Diben Arbennig ar Ddiwygio'r Senedd](#) | [Call for evidence on recommendations made by the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform](#)

Tystiolaeth gan yr Athro Laura McAllister, Prifysgol Caerdydd, a Paul Silk, yr Athro Anrhydeddus, Prifysgol Caerdydd | Evidence from Laura McAllister, Professor, and Paul Silk, Honorary Professor, Cardiff University

The Senedd's Business Committee is inviting views to inform its consideration of four recommendations made by the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform:

1. The size of the Welsh Government in a larger Senedd

We were members of the National Assembly Expert Panel on Electoral Reform in 2017 which recommended an enlargement of the Assembly (now Senedd) and a change in its electoral system. In response to this consultation on the recommendations of the special purposes Committee, we would wish to reiterate the principles underpinning our report's recommendation for a larger Senedd, namely to strengthen the capacity to scrutinise more effectively the executive, public money and how it is spent within Welsh governance. It is our view that the powerful and well evidenced case for enlarging the Senedd and making the institution fit for purpose to discharge its parliamentary functions rests squarely on these arguments. We did not consider during our Expert Panel investigations - and are unaware of any new evidence to change our position - that there was a corresponding rationale for increasing the size of the executive arm, namely the Welsh Government. Neither do we believe that additional DPOs or Commissioners are required to fulfil the genuine and evidenced objectives of enlargement. Moreover, to increase the size of the WG or the Commission might be interpreted as nest-feathering and would run counter to the fundamental aim of enhanced numbers - that is, to improve scrutiny. It would also jeopardise public support for the wider enlargement and reform project.

2. The number of Deputy Presiding Officers in a larger Senedd

3. The number of Senedd Commissioners in a larger Senedd

4. The consequences of a Member changing their political party if elected through a closed proportional list system

There are different practices across the world for dealing with elected members who switch parties following an election. Some countries provide that an MP who crosses the floor loses his/her seat, while others nuance this so that an MP who joins another party loses the seat but does not if s/he becomes an independent.

We believe that there should be a clear disincentive built in to standing orders to discourage floor-crossing. A member elected under one party banner - especially in a strong party-based system such as ours - should ideally remain within that party or relinquish her/his seat. Floor crossing (without good reason) further undermines public trust and conviction in elected members.

