

Leanne Wood AM, Leader of Plaid Cymru: I am writing to you to object in the strongest terms to the change you propose to 'residential accommodation expenditure.' Extending the boundaries so that Assembly Members can make such a claim if they live in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland would be, in my view, a retrograde step for this institution. It would send out the wrong message about what the institution expects of its elected representatives and the commitment to this country that is expected of them. It is not too much to ask of elected representatives to the National Assembly that they live in the country they have been elected to serve. People will not welcome this proposed change. Most people I speak to would, I would contend, expect their Assembly Members to live within the communities they serve, and with good reason. You cannot relate to constituents if you are remote from the communities in which they live. When trust in politicians and politics in general is low – particularly over the issue of expenses – this move risks weakening the institution in the eyes of people.

When justifying the proposed change, you have previously said: "No member should be impeded from undertaking the role they have been elected to do." To that I would say that all Assembly candidates standing for election in May knew of the rules when they stood. If they had a problem with not being to claim residential accommodation expenditure for living outside of Wales then perhaps they shouldn't have stood. The Scottish Parliament does not grant accommodation expenditure for MSPs that live outside of Scotland. We should not be any different.

This is a matter that transcends party politics, it is a matter of principle. I implore you not to change the rules on residential accommodation.

Yours sincerely, Leanne Wood AM