

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Materion Allanol a Deddfwriaeth Ychwanegol / The External
Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee
Bil y Diddymu Mawr / The Great Repeal Bill
EAAL(5) GRB 08
Ymateb gan Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru / Evidence from the Wales
Council for Voluntary Action

1. WCVA is the national membership organisation for the third sector in Wales. Our vision is for a future where the third sector and volunteering thrive across Wales, improving wellbeing for all. Our mission is to be a catalyst for positive change by connecting, enabling and influencing.
2. WCVA works with a range of national specialist agencies, county voluntary councils and other development agencies, to provide a support structure for the third sector in Wales. We have over 3,000 members, and are in touch with many more organisations through a wide range of national and local networks.
3. The UK's decision to exit the European Union and the way in which this is done will have significant impact on the third sector in Wales. WCVA has been working with its members and partners to identify key issues for the sector. We have identified key issues of concern for the sector through two surveys and a facilitated discussion with leading third sector networks and the Welsh Government. WCVA has developed 'Brexit watch' to keep members and partners up to speed on developments and discussions, accessible [here](#).
4. WCVA is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the External Affairs and Legislation Committee's inquiry into the Great Repeal Bill and thank the Wales Open Government Pioneer Project for their input into our response. The Project is a initiative is led by WCVA, SCVO, the Northern Ireland Environment Link and Involve UK, and aims to build up civil society networks in the home nations so they are better able to use open government approaches to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
5. WCVA is concerned the Great Repeal Bill will considerably weaken human rights protections in Wales. Whilst the Bill will incorporate the majority of EU Law into UK Law, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union will not be converted. The Charter has afforded citizens with many additional entitlements, supplementary to other human rights protections, such as the right for the elderly 'to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life' and those with disabilities 'to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community'. Furthermore, the Charter can be used to strike down primary legislation and therefore presents as a balanced step

for access to justice for individuals. These rights, in addition to others, will be removed should the Great Repeal Bill be passed unamended.

6. We feel that question 4.1 is of the most importance to the third sector in Wales and have chosen to focus our response on that.

Q4.1: How can the Assembly ensure that the Welsh people, stakeholders and organisations have sufficient opportunity to contribute to the legislative processes established by the Great Repeal Bill?

7. The Assembly should demand a commitment of a comment period for all statutory implements, allowing time for scrutiny and review of technical amendments to transpose EU legislation into UK law. Select Committees should be engaging the public in understanding, scrutinising and shaping decisions around Brexit.
8. WCVA's members and partner organisations are specialists across multiple fields, such as employment, equalities, the environment and agriculture. Therefore the conversion of EU law into domestic law and the subsequent 'correction' process could have a profound effect on the third sector in Wales. The sector should be fully engaged in debate about the Bill, particularly in relation to the proposed alteration or withdrawal of any objectives post Brexit.
9. WCVA believes that the [Open Government principles](#) are important to empower citizens to participate in government activities. These principles are just as important to empower citizens to participate in our democracy and we encourage the National Assembly to make a clear commitment to do this, including in discussions on Brexit.
10. Failing to engage the public on Brexit would be a huge missed opportunity. It is the role of the Assembly in our democracy to represent the people and hold government to account on their behalf. Engaging citizens and civil society should be a central part of this. Public engagement by committees has the potential to rebuild trust and increase engagement between the public and the Assembly.
11. When engaging the public it is important to choose the right engagement method to deliver the impact and information a committee needs in order to make the method a success from the perspective of everyone involved, including both the committee and participants.
12. The results of this engagement process must be open and accessible to the public, and debated thoroughly within the Assembly.
13. The [National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales](#) aim to offer a consistent approach and good standard to public engagement across Wales. They are invaluable for work such as this.

Discussion

14. We will be pleased to discuss these or any other points relating to this consultation response with officials, Cabinet Secretaries or Ministers if requested.