

Y Comisiwn Etholiadol The Electoral Commission

Evidence to the Finance Committee: Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill

1. The Finance Committee has requested written evidence from the Commission on the financial impact of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill on the Commission's work and any additional costs that might be incurred.
2. We are only able to comment on those elements that relate directly to the Commission's work.

Figures included in the Regulatory Impact Assessment

3. The Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) only includes the estimated costs that will be incurred by the Electoral Commission in relation to awareness raising activities to accommodate the changes to the franchise (£112,000) and the re-design of forms (£75,000). These figures are reasonable and in line with information that we have previously supplied to Welsh Government.

Awareness raising

4. In addition to our usual spending in this area we are planning on spending £100,000 - £150,000 on our voter registration campaigns in 2021 and 2022, specifically for franchise change communications.
5. Communications activities will include:
 - Promotion of new educational resources
 - Press releases
 - Targeted paid digital and social media advertising
 - Targeted paid TV and radio advertising
 - Display and billboards
 - Public engagement activities

Re-design of forms

6. The Electoral Commission is currently creating new canvass forms and materials in time for use at the 2020 canvass. These will reflect the franchise changes contained in the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act for Senedd elections.
7. The Electoral Commission would use these forms as a basis for any required redesign based on the changes in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill.

Figures not included in the Regulatory Impact Assessment

There are some potential areas of the Commission's work that have not been considered in the Regulatory Impact Assessment. These refer to possible activities for local government elections after 2022.

Changes to the voting system

8. The Regulatory Impact Assessment does not include figures relating to any potential aspect of the Commission's work relevant to sections 5-10 of the Bill.
9. If local elections in Wales operated two separate electoral systems we would potentially need to produce additional guidance and public awareness material.
10. We have not yet estimated the cost of this work to the Commission as this provision will not come into force for the 2022 elections.

Pilot Schemes

11. Similarly, the RIA does not include any detail relating to the Commission within section 26 of the Bill - *Welsh Ministers' discretion to introduce pilot schemes*.
12. We welcome the initiative being taken by the Welsh Government to provide for election pilot schemes that would test options for changing local government electoral processes in Wales. We think that the Bill should include a duty for the Electoral Commission to evaluate any pilot scheme run at a local government election in Wales, in line with the equivalent duty for pilot schemes at local elections in England or Scotland. This will enable an independent and evidence based assessment of the success or otherwise of the scheme in facilitating and encouraging voting.
13. Again, we have not yet estimated the cost of this work to the Commission as this provision will not come into force for the 2022 elections.

January 2020