

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru Y Pwyllgor Deisebau	National Assembly for Wales Petitions Committee
Adolygiad o'r System ddeisebau Cymru y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol	Review of the National Assembly for Wales Petitions System
Ymateb gan: Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru	Response from: Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Review of the National Assembly for Wales' Petitions System



A response from WCVA

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) is a registered charity and umbrella body working to support, develop and represent Wales' third sector at UK and national level. We have over 3,350 organisations in direct membership, and are in touch with many more organisations through a wide range of national and local networks. WCVA's mission is to provide excellent support, leadership and an influential voice for the third sector and volunteering in Wales.

WCVA is committed to a strong and active third sector building resilient, cohesive and inclusive communities, giving people a stake in their future through their own actions and services, creating a strong, healthy and fair society and demonstrating the value of volunteering and community engagement.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Petitions Committee's review of the National Assembly for Wales' Petitions System.

WCVA consulted our membership and we received very little input, leading us to believe that organisations either had not petitioned the National Assembly, or that they had not encountered problems with the current system. For this reason we do not feel sufficiently informed to provide advice that is representative of the third sector or to give evidence at a Committee meeting.

WCVA would however like to offer thoughts in response to the Committee's review.

The petitions system provides a useful mechanism for individuals and organisations to let the National Assembly know about issues affecting them, and represents an important democratic principle: a means of engaging with the Assembly and demonstrating strength of support, without the backing of an individual AM in order to get the process started. We are therefore very supportive of the petitions systems.

Questions 1 & 2

Having reviewed the structures and processes we believe that the current arrangements for raising petitions are adequate to ensure that issues can be raised with little impediment.

Question 3

We are supportive of the low threshold (10 signatures) for admissible petitions, and we appreciate the provision for accepting petitions from organisations with a single signature. Regarding defining 'organisation', there are a number of different forms and statuses in the groups that form the third sector in Wales. While clarity in definition is often useful, we would see a potential danger in establishing too rigorous a definition that might inadvertently exclude some organisations from the receiving equal treatment. We would be happy to work with the Committee on this matter.

Questions 4, 5 & 6

We view the current provisions as appropriate. Local Authorities in Wales are inherently different bodies, being democratically accountable to their local electorate. Local Health Boards and Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies do not have this separate accountability.

Question 8

We would view the continued publication of inadmissible petitions as a useful indication of eligibility for those considering submitting petitions.

Question 9

We are very supportive of the provision to notify petitioners of the actions on a petition. It is one of the principles of the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales that people are told the impact of their contribution.

Question 11

We would view the ability to refer petitions to the Public Services Ombudsman and Commissioners as a useful addition to the process. In particular, we can envisage issues which would be appropriately referred to the forthcoming Future Generations Commissioner.