

Chris Reading
Independent Review on AMs pay & Allowances
National Assembly
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear Chris

29th January 2009

Independent Review on AMs Pay & Allowances

I enclose the Parliament for Wales Campaign submission to for consideration by the Panel. The Campaign would like add that it believes that the overwhelming number of Assembly Members are conscientous , hard working people trying to do their best for all of their constituents.

However ,the Campaign is aware that the activities of a few AMs has called in question the present rules for allowances. It reflects well on the National Assembly that this Review has been established is such a short time.

I am also emi-mailing a copy of our submission.

Yours sincerely



Alan Jobbins
General Secretary.
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Independent Review on Ams Pay & Allowances

Parliament for Wales Campaign Submission for Consideration by the Panel

Parliament for Wales Campaign members believe that the overwhelming majority of AMs of all parties observe both the letter and the spirit of the rules governing their employment.

Further to this Campaign members also have every reason to believe yet again that the overwhelming majority of AMs work hard of all of their constituents.

The Campaign asks the Panel to look again at the argument for increasing the number of AMs and the number of support staff available for research work. These two issues have a strong bearing on the quality of scrutiny by AMs.

The current concern by the public about AMs allowances, salaries, staff support and constituency offices does warrant a review by the Panel

1. Overnight allowances

In the view of the Campaign members is abused and is also unfair to many constituents whose journey from home to their place of work is more 22 miles..

There are instances of AMs whose family home and /or constituency office are barely within 22 miles of the Bay. A review is needed of the present rule that an AM living 22 miles or more from the Assembly can claim £12,500.00 a year for second homes .

Members have noted with dismay a rule change by the Assembly to enable an AM to keep claiming a second home allowance even though electoral boundary changes meant his first or family home was now in a constituency which is within the area where claims for second homes were not normally permitted .

An Overnight allowance should be payable to AMs whose constituency office is more 50 miles from the Senedd on the days when they are attending Assembly meetings in Cardiff.

This allowance made be used for hotel bills or towards renting a property. The property must be rented from a person or persons who are not the members parents, partner, or siblings. The rent must be not be paid to a company in which the directors or shareholders are the members parents, partner, or siblings.

The overnight allowance should not be used to buy property.

2. Subsistence Allowances

At present the system allows over £4,500,00 to be spent on meals over a period of five months, £2000.00 on a sofa, £299.00 on Ipods; £119,99 trouser press, These payments suggests to the Campaign members and the general public a system out of control. More so in an era of 'Credit Crunch' and rising unemployment.

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2. Subsistence Allowances [contd.]

The Assembly should list items that can be paid for the overnight allowance in the case of AMs renting a home or an apartment in Cardiff. The allowance should only list what are considered essential items. All subsistence allowances should also be regulated as to what is allowed to an AM.

3. Salaries

In its evidence to the Richards Commission the the Parliament for Wales Campaign argued that the number of AMs needed to be increased to 80. There would need to be a corresponding increase in AMs salary as there is an increase in the powers of the National Assembly.

Eighty members would ensure a more thorough scrutiny of legislation and the Welsh Assembly Government while also allowing the small number of back bench AMs to have time to research topics and persuade WAG and the public of the need for new initiatives and possibly legislation.

The Richards Commission accepted these points. The Government of Wales Act 2006 has increased the time the Assembly needs to spend on legislation but has not increased the number of AMs.

While there has been an increase in the salaries of AMs there has not been sufficient increase in their hours at the Assembly to warrant the increase in salaries.

In order to increase the time spent by AMs on activities at Ty Hywel & the Senedd while keeping to 'family friendly hours' the Campaign recommends the days for 'Recesses' should be the same as the days for school holidays in Wales.

The AMs recesses running concurrently with school holidays would give the increased time for their scrutiny, research and legislation work while observing the desire to work 'family friendly hours at the Bay.

The Campaign believes that there would not be, at least for present present public & media support for additional expenditure of another twenty Assembly Members. The argument for additional AMs has been greatly damaged by the current row over their expenses.

The present system of linking AMs salary according to their responsibilities in relation to those of MPs is not a satisfactory system. The National Assembly aided a Panel such as yours should set the salaries of AMs and the allowances for staff, constituency offices and, allowances for AMs their support staff.

The Panel should compare the powers of MPs in relation to those of AMs. At present there are inconsistencies.

One is that while MPs can make unsolicited contact with constituents for example to find out their views on a planning matter AMs not allowed to take this action.

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4. Constituency Accommodation.

Any constituency accommodation paid for by an Assembly allowance should satisfy the Assembly's rules for physical access for all. Offices should also be easily reached by public transport

5. Support Staff

a) Two important elements of an AM's work is scrutinising LCOs, Assembly Measures and the Welsh Assembly Government. Another element is proposing legislation and supporting public petitions.

These two elements require good research facilities and researches. The Campaign asks the Panel to see if AMs are sufficiently staffed with research staff. Also would the Panel see whether the National Assembly Library has the human and accommodation facilities sufficient to adequately support AMs in the work described in the above paragraph.

b) The members of the PFW Campaign have noted that a number of AMs employ relatives. This is not a problem in itself but there is a belief amongst the public that not all relatives would have been appointed in open competition.

All support staff posts within based at Ty Hywel or in the AMs constituency should be advertised in their weekly local paper or evening paper, Western Mail and / or the Daily Post plus job centres. In order to see that the drawing up of a short list of candidates for interview and indeed the interview is conducted to Civil Service standards the Assembly should detail an employee with the appropriate qualifications and experience to organise the whole process of appointing support staff. This would include attendance at any meetings relevant to the appointment.

5. Introduction of new conditions

Any changes recommended by the Panel and approved by the National Assembly should be brought in to force before the next Assembly elections in 2001.

Alan Jobbins, General Secretary , PFW Campaign
25th January 2009