

Vote

Your guide to voting in 2011

Large print version

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

01 During 2011, the people of Wales will have three opportunities to vote.

01_The National Assembly election

On 05 May 2011, you will have the opportunity to vote on who you would like to represent you as your Assembly Members, when the National Assembly for Wales holds an election.

02_The referendum on the National Assembly's law-making powers

On 03 March 2011 you will also have an opportunity to vote on whether you think Westminster should grant the Assembly the authority to pass laws on all subjects in the devolved areas without needing the agreement of the UK Parliament first.

03_The referendum on changing the UK's voting system

In addition, you will be asked to vote in another referendum in 2011. The UK Government proposes to hold a referendum on 05 May 2011 on introducing the alternative vote (AV) system for Westminster elections. If people vote for a new system, it will be used to elect Members of Parliament to the House of Commons at the next UK general election.

02 **Voting in the National Assembly election**

National Assembly elections are held every four years, usually on the first Thursday in May. The 2011 election gives you the opportunity to vote for who you would like to represent you in the Assembly.

The National Assembly for Wales is made up of 60 Assembly Members. Forty of them are Constituency Assembly Members, representing the same local constituencies as Westminster MPs; the other 20 are Regional Assembly Members, who represent one of the five regions of Wales.

Everyone in Wales is represented by one Constituency Member and four Regional Members.

03 This means that you will have two votes in the 2011 Assembly election; one for your Constituency Member and one for your Regional Member.

You can find out your constituency and region, and who represents you at the moment, by visiting our website, www.assemblywales.org, or calling our information line on 0845 010 5500.

Dissolution

The 2011 election will be the first time the Assembly is dissolved in the run up to the election. This means that the Assembly will stop working for approximately four weeks before the election and Members will cease to be Assembly Members for that period. This is to ensure that existing Assembly Members standing for re-election don't have an advantage over other candidates.

04 Voting in the referendum

In the spring of 2011, a referendum will be held on how the Assembly makes laws for Wales.

At present, the National Assembly has powers to make laws for Wales on some subjects within the 20 devolved areas.

The Assembly can gain further powers to make laws in those areas with the agreement of the UK Parliament on a subject by subject basis.

If most people vote 'yes' in this referendum, the Assembly will gain powers to pass laws on all subjects in the devolved areas without first needing the agreement of the UK Parliament.

If most people vote 'no', then the present arrangements will continue.

www.assemblywales.org/vote2011



06 The referendum

At the moment, the National Assembly has powers to make laws for Wales within the 20 devolved areas shown on the following page of this booklet. These areas are known as 'fields'.

These fields are broad in scope and are broken down into more detailed areas (known as 'matters') which define the precise areas in which the Assembly can make law.

So, for example, the Assembly is currently looking at changing the law to reduce the amount of waste and litter in Wales. This falls within the 'environment' field.

In June 2007, the Welsh Government asked Parliament to transfer to Wales the power to make laws on the specific issue of preventing and reducing waste and litter. After discussing the proposal in the National Assembly and in Parliament, and following a period of negotiation between the UK and Welsh Governments, Parliament agreed to that request in February 2010. This meant the Assembly could then start to make the necessary legislation.

07 The referendum will ask the people of Wales whether they think Westminster should grant the Assembly the authority to make laws in all the detailed matters within these 20 policy areas, instead of having to request them one at a time as the Assembly carries out its work of making laws for Wales.

So in the example of the waste and litter law mentioned above, under the new system, the Assembly would have been able to make law in all matters within the 'environment' field, without having to ask Westminster first.

If people vote 'no' in the referendum, then the current system will remain – in other words, the Assembly's law-making powers will be transferred bit by bit, with the agreement of Parliament each time.

Whatever the result, the Assembly will still only be able to make laws in the 20 subject areas listed over the page. Issues that have not been devolved to Wales, like taxes and defence, will stay with the UK Government.

08 **Devolved fields**

The National Assembly can make laws for Wales in the following areas affecting your life:

- 01 Agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development
- 02 Ancient monuments and historic buildings
- 03 Culture
- 04 Economic development
- 05 Education and training
- 06 Environment
- 07 Fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety
- 08 Food
- 09 Health and health services
- 10 Highways and transport
- 11 Housing
- 12 Local government
- 13 National Assembly for Wales
- 14 Public administration
- 15 Social welfare
- 16 Sport and recreation
- 17 Tourism
- 18 Town and country planning
- 19 Water and flood defence
- 20 Welsh language

09 So what would a 'yes' vote mean?

A 'yes' vote in the referendum would remove the need for negotiation between the governments of the UK and Wales over what elements of law-making powers should be transferred to the National Assembly. It would also remove the involvement of Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords in scrutinising proposals to give the Assembly the power to make laws. Instead, the responsibility would rest on the Welsh Government and the Members of the National Assembly to decide how to use the Assembly's law-making powers.

So the choice to be made in the referendum is whether the Assembly should:

- stay as it is now** – able to gain powers to change the law, but piece by piece if the UK Parliament agrees; or
- move** instead to a position where it can make laws without first having to get the approval of the UK Parliament for the power to do so.

10 It's really important that you use your votes in 2011. That way, you will decide who represents you and how laws for Wales are made. Keep an eye on our website, www.assemblywales.org, for Vote 2011 news and dates for your diary.

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www.vote2011.org

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