

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL
MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 04 APRIL 2025 AT CP2 AND MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present: Karen Jones (Chair); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Eifion Evans (Member); Neal Cockerton (Member); Andy Wilkins (On behalf of Paul Orders)

DBCC Officers attending: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Roger Ashton-Winter (Senior Democratic Health Policy Manager); Rhydian Fitter (Communications and Engagement Manager); Caitlin Lowry (Democratic Health Policy Officer); Ellie Chapman (Team Support)

Invitees: Sarah Ling (Consultant); Rhydian Thomas (Electoral Commission); Cath Uphill (Electoral Commission); Elan Stephens (Electoral Commission); Clare Sim (AEA); Huw Elfed Roberts (AEA); Rhys George (AEA); Mathew Xerri (Welsh Government); William Whiteley (Welsh Government); Zachary Brooks (Welsh Government); Paul Docker (UK Government); Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council)

Apologies: Paul Orders (Member); Beverly Owen (Member); Mark Shephard (Member); Paula Walters (WLGA); Becci Light (Cardiff Council); Becca Crosier (UK Government); Michael Kay (Welsh Government)

Time Started: 10:11

Time Finished: 11:49

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1. No Declarations of Interest were made.

2. Welcome and introductions

2.1. The Chair outlined the agenda for the meeting, which included updates on electoral reform legislation, noting the work of the former Wales Electoral Coordination Board, and discussing the governance documents and forward work program for the new board.

2.2. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

2.3. Board members and attendees introduced themselves.

3. Overview from WG

3.1. Item 3 was delivered verbally.

- 3.2. Mathew Xerri gave an overview of the current status of electoral reform legislation, including the draft Senedd Cymru (Representation of the People) Order, regulations for the elections information platform, and online absent voting.
- 3.3. Mathew Xerri explained that the primary legislation, including the Elections and Elected Bodies Wales Act and the Senedd Cymru Members and Elections Act, is in place. The key piece of legislation currently being worked on is the Senedd Cymru Representation of People Order, with the consultation having closed in February and the intention to lay the order in May. It was **noted** that Welsh Government (WG) are currently working through the consultation responses and making changes to the order, engaging closely with stakeholders like the AEA and the Electoral Commission on key detailed comments.
- 3.4. Mathew Xerri briefed that there is a private members bill in the House of Commons to enable voters in Wales and Scotland to apply for postal votes using the UK's online service, with ongoing work between Welsh Government, UK Government, and other stakeholders.
- 3.5. It was **noted** that the Order for the 2026 Senedd Boundaries is in hand, with the deadline for this being the 17th June 2025.
- 3.6. The representative from the Electoral Commission (EC) briefed on their upcoming public education work to ensure the public are well-informed on the upcoming changes to the electoral process for Senedd elections.
- 3.7. Discussion was held on the Senedd candidates disqualification order and its circulation date.

4. Information Platform Position Statement

- 4.1. Item 4 was delivered verbally.
- 4.2. Shereen Williams and Sarah Ling updated the board on the development of the Welsh elections information platform (WEIP), highlighting the tight timelines and the need for automation to minimize the workload for electoral administrators.
- 4.3. It was **noted** that a working group has been set up, initially coordinated by WG, to start working on the specifications and development of the WEIP. It was **noted** that the group has met 3 times, most recently yesterday, having had a productive workshop on the platform's requirements and potential names.

- 4.4. Consideration was given to the tight timelines for delivering the platform, aiming for a minimum viable product by the 2026 elections. It was **noted** that the downside of the minimum viable product will be a higher amount of work on the back end of the WEIP.
- 4.5. It was **noted** that a procurement expert has been identified to work on the platform and will commence next week. It was **noted** that both consultants working on the WEIP will be meeting next week to discuss next steps.
- 4.6. Sarah briefed on the need to make the WEIP as automated as possible for electoral administrators, particularly during nominations and other critical periods, to reduce their workload. It was **noted** that API specifications are being developed for electoral management software systems to facilitate this automation, however the timescales may make it difficult to implement a fully automated system in the first phase. The Board will be provided with more detail on the options under consideration at the next meeting.
- 4.7. It was **noted** that the project plan will be shared with the EMB in due course for approval.
- 4.8. Neil Cockerton asked if there was a risk register for the WEIP and it was confirmed that this will be available at the next meeting, alongside the proposed project plan and project governance.

5. Cross-boundary issues Position Statement

- 5.1. Mathew Xerri gave the cross-boundary issues Position Statement. Mathew briefed on the challenges of cross-boundary working for the Senedd election, emphasising the need for consistency and flexibility in the approach.
- 5.2. Mathew shared insights from a workshop held on March 6th with administrators and stakeholders to discuss cross-boundary working issues. The workshop aimed to establish common understanding and planning assumptions for the Senedd election.
- 5.3. It was **noted** that most of the new Senedd constituencies include more than one local authority, and some local authorities are split across multiple constituencies, presenting challenges for implementing the election. The need for consistency and flexibility in the approach was emphasized.
- 5.4. It was **noted** a subcommittee is proposed to be established to address these issues, using the findings from the workshop as an input for the subcommittee's work.

- 5.5. It was **noted** that more detailed discussion is required for determining what work is required at the local level.
6. Discussion was held on the urgency to identify the Constituency Returning Officers (CROs) for the Senedd Constituencies. Eifion Evans emphasised this point explaining this was crucial to enable the detailed planning to get underway. WG confirmed work to agree the CROs is underway and receiving priority attention.

7. Automatic registration pilots Position Statement

- 7.1. Item 6 was delivered verbally.
- 7.2. Mathew Xerri provided an update on the automatic registration pilots being conducted in Gwynedd, Newport, Powys, and Carmarthenshire, highlighting the different types of pilots and the timeline for evaluation and potential rollout.
- 7.3. Mathew explained that the pilots aim to assess the feasibility of automatic registration, with different types of pilots being conducted in Gwynedd, Newport, Powys, and Carmarthenshire. The pilots involve using local data to identify potential electors and adding them to the register unless they opt out within 60 days.
- 7.4. Mathew mentioned that the Behavioural Insights team is developing two different notices of registration to be tested with stakeholders, aiming to identify the most effective communication method for the public. It was **noted** that this work is the most effective way to reach hard to reach electors.
- 7.5. The pilots are to be completed by the end of September, with the Electoral Commission evaluating the results by the end of December. The Welsh Government will then consider the evaluation report and decide on the potential rollout of automatic registration across Wales.
- 7.6. Discussion was held regarding the scope for elector confusion regarding Invitations To Register (ITRs) with this reform. It was **noted** that it will be important that potential voter confusion doesn't cancel out the benefit of any changes.
- 7.7. It was **noted** that electoral figures will be considered for the next Senedd Review which will start after the next Senedd Review.

- 7.8. **Action:** Outcomes of the pilots to be brought back to EMB at key milestone points.

8. WECB Draft Forward Work Plan for 2024/25

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the WECB Draft Forward Work Plan for 2024/25 which was handed over to the EMB and it was **noted**. The work programme will be referred to when firming up on the Forward Work Programme of the EMB to ensure important work is not lost as part of the transition from the WECB to the EMB.

9. Welsh language Position Statement

- 9.1. Item 8 was delivered verbally.
- 9.2. Eifion Evans gave the Welsh language Position Statement, discussing the work of the Welsh Language Group.
- 9.3. Eifion highlighted the group's achievements in ensuring consistency in bilingual documentation and addressing practical challenges in delivering bilingual elections, such as finding bilingual staff for polling stations.
- 9.4. It was **noted** that the group should focus on creating a Welsh language support network to facilitate bilingual delivery of elections and proposed conducting a survey to identify new demands and support needs.
- 9.5. It was **noted** that the AEA is exploring the potential for providing bilingual polling station staff training for the 2026 election, which could help address some of the challenges identified by the Welsh Language Group. It was **noted** that Gwynedd and Ceredigion have already expressed interest in this.
- 9.6. Eifion highlighted the importance of not relying on computer systems for translation and the need to have bilingual Welsh speakers.
- 9.7. Rhydian from the EC **noted** that the bilingual glossary of terms for electoral administrators has been helpful in the past.
- 9.8. It was **noted** that Local Authorities should identify the support that is required in order to support the delivery of bilingual elections. It was **noted** and **agreed** to run a survey to re-assess the need of bilingual training.
10. **Action:** Lowri Edwards to convene a discussion between AEA (Clare Sim), Electoral Commission colleagues and the two Commissioner EMB members with a view to agreeing the areas to cover in the proposed survey. The group to also

discuss engagement with the Welsh Language Commissioner and how best to move that forward.

11. Communications sub-group Position Statement

11.1. Item 9 was delivered verbally

11.2. Lowri Edwards gave the Communications sub-group Position Statement.

11.3. It was **noted** that the Communications sub-group was established in 2021 to ensure consistent messaging and collaboration among local authorities, the EC, and other stakeholders. The group has focused on sharing good practices and identifying gaps in resources.

11.4. Lowri emphasized the importance of promoting the elections information platform and explaining the changes to boundaries and the voting system to the public. The group will continue to work on ensuring consistent messaging and collaboration.

11.5. It was **noted** that WECB was keen to continue the Communications sub-group.

11.6. It was **noted** that the EC is working with the Senedd Commission, WG and other stakeholders to co-ordinate national-level communications and ensure that local authorities can effectively use the campaign materials developed.

12. It was **agreed** that given the range of communications activity already taking place to support the work of the SERDB and the DBCC that it would be important to scope what is already happening to establish where the EMB should focus its own communications activities. The Chair of the EMB will arrange for a 'mapping and gapping' exercise to be undertaken to inform future discussion at the EMB.

13. Receive and review the Guide to the role of the Board and Rules of Procedure

13.1. Consideration was given to the Guide to the role of the Board and the Rules of Procedure.

13.2. The Chair outlined the relationship between the DBCC and the EMB and then went on to review the EMB's functions as set out in the draft governing documents.

13.3. The Chair explained the board's proposed membership, which must include two DBCC Commissioners (one of whom must be appointed by DBCC to chair the meetings) and representatives who are returning officers, electoral registration officers or who have formally held these roles. In the first instance it had been decided to invite the current five regional returning officers to take up the membership seats but this would be reviewed following the Senedd elections in 2026 when the regional roles will fall away. The deputy chair of the Board is to be drawn from the non-DBCC members. ,It was **noted** that

Eifion Evans has been nominated as the Deputy Chair by the other EMB members and this will be formalised at the June meeting when the final governing documents are brought back for approval. The Chair also highlighted the proposed meeting procedures, including the quorum, the proposed programme of Board meetings and the ability to call additional meetings if necessary.

- 13.4. Shereen Williams noted** that the board would operate within the Commission's existing governance framework, including data protection policies, and that the Democratic Health team would act as the secretariat, supporting the board's work. It was **noted** that there is a budget allocated for legal advice to the EMB. It was also **noted** that the EMB is a standing item on the DBCC board meeting papers.
- 13.5.** It was **noted** that it is proposed that the EMB meetings will be held bi-monthly, with a quorum of 4. It was **noted** that only members of the board have a vote, with each vote carrying equal weight. It was **noted** that the Chair will have the deciding vote in the case of a tie. In the event members are unable to attend, deputies put forward would need to satisfy the criteria in the legislation – ie they must be EROs, ROs or have formally held one of these roles.
- 13.6.** The Guide to the role of the Board and the Rules of Procedure were received. Members were asked to review the governing documents and provide any comments in order that final versions of the documents can be considered and approved at the next meeting of the Board.

14. Receive and review the outline Forward Work Programme

- 14.1.** Consideration was given to the outline Forward Work Programme.
- 14.2.** Consideration was given to potential topics and priorities for the board's work, including security risks, Royal Mail, and political party engagement.
- 14.3.** It was **noted** that the EMB will need an early view from Royal Mail on capacity and capability and from the Police and Security Service regarding security risks.
- 14.4.** The Joint Election Security Programme (JESP) was discussed and **noted**.
- 14.5. Action:** Invite a representative from the Joint Election Security Programme (JESP) to provide an update on election security, including cybersecurity and intimidation of candidates.
- 14.6. Action:** Invite Royal Mail to discuss the processes around candidate statements and broader postal delivery issues.
- 14.7.** In relation to the above two actions, Paul Docker offered to help facilitate the contact with the Board and the relevant agencies.

15. Receive and agree the proposed schedule of forward meeting dates

- 15.1.** The proposed schedule of forward meeting dates will be brought to the next meeting of the EMB on the 6 June 2025 for agreement.

16. Agency Updates – UK Government

- 16.1.** Item 13 was delivered verbally.
- 16.2.** Paul Docker provided an update on various UK Government initiatives, including the review of electoral law, postal voting, and the potential introduction of an elections bill. Electoral administrator input to the work related to universal mail services was requested and the AEA representatives present agreed to consult colleagues to gauge interest. It was also noted that there was an important consultation taking place on the future of mail services given the impending change of ownership of Royal Mail. All board members were invited to read the consultation document and the AEA response to the consultation was flagged for Board members' attention.

17. Agency Updates – Electoral Commission

- 17.1.** Item 14 was delivered verbally.
- 17.2.** Rhydian and Cath provided updates on the Electoral Commission's work, including planning for the Senedd elections, engagement with electoral registration officers, and the upcoming publication of the Commission's UK corporate plan. Following the Senedd election in 2026, the Commission will publish a new corporate plan for Wales.

18. Agency Updates – Association of Electoral Administrators

- 18.1.** Item 15 was delivered verbally.
- 18.2.** Clare provided an update on the AEA's support for Wales, including plans for training courses for returning officers to support them with the recent legislative reforms, bilingual training for polling station staff. The AEA are in dialogue with Welsh Government regarding the options for delivering this training and feedback from local authorities showed there is a demand for this. Clare confirmed that they were updating the Wales Foundation course to reflect legislative changes.
- 18.3. Action:** Clare to send information about the training courses for returning officers and administrators, including the Wales Foundation course and bilingual polling station staff training.

19. Any Other Relevant Business

- 19.1.** It was **noted** that any stakeholders interested in receiving the regular elections engagement letter should contact etholiadau.elections@gov.wales .

19.2. It was **noted** that if anyone has anything that they want to add to the agenda that they should let Mark know.

Date of Next Meeting: 6 June 2025

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL
MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 06 JUNE 2025 AT CP2 AND MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present: Karen Jones (Chair); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Eifion Evans (Member); Neal Cockerton (Member); Beverley Owen (Member); Paul Orders (Member)

DBCC Officers attending: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Caitlin Lowry (Democratic Health Policy Officer)

Invitees: Cath Uphill (Electoral Commission); Elan Stephens (Electoral Commission); Clare Sim (AEA); Huw Elfed Roberts (AEA); Rhys George (AEA); Michael Kay (Welsh Government); Mathew Xerri (Welsh Government); Zachary Brooks (Welsh Government); Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council); Tom Davies (Electoral Commission), Greg Brownlow (MHCLG), Becca Crosier (MHCLG); William Whiteley (Welsh Government)

Apologies: Sarah Ling (Consultant); Paul Docker (MHCLG); Rhydian Thomas (Electoral Commission); Mark Shephard (Member)

Time Started: 10:04

Time Finished: 11:54

1. Chair's Announcements

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed attendees.
- 1.2. The Chair outlined the agenda for the meeting and noted that the agenda should become lighter once the EMB is established.
- 1.3. The Chair explained that she had paid respects on behalf of the Board to Rhydian Thomas from the Electoral Commission who recently lost his partner. A moment of silence was held to mark the funeral, which was scheduled to happen on the same day as the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1. There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2025 as a correct record of the matters considered.

4. **Receive and approve the EMB governance documents**

4.1. Consideration was given to item 4.

4.2. Discussion was held on the EMB governance documents. It was **noted** that attendees should be familiar with these and that some small amendments had been made to them since the last EMB meeting.

4.3. It was **noted** that on pages 1-2 there had been some changes to chair / vice-chair criteria and the quorate.

4.4. It was **noted** that EMB meeting minutes will be published on the DBCC website.

4.5. Discussion was held on the guidance of publication of minutes. It was **noted** that the DBCC publishes its minutes in line with the WG principles for the publication of Welsh public sector board and audit committee meetings. It was **noted** that, in line with these principles, officers below a certain grade are recorded on minutes by title only. It was **noted** that minutes which include as yet unpublished decisions will remain unpublished until decisions have been made public.

4.6. It was **noted** that these governance documents can be revisited as necessary.

4.7. The recommendation to approve these documents was **noted** and the documents were **agreed** by the board.

5. **Overview of the resources available for 2025/26**

5.1. Consideration was given to item 5.

5.2. Shereen Williams gave an overview of item 5. It was **noted** that additional resource has been allocated within the DBCC to facilitate the work of the EMB.

5.3. The flexibility of the budget and the possibility of having conversations on additional budget were **noted**.

5.4. It was **noted** that the budget for the Welsh Elections Information Platform (WEIP) itself is separate to that of the budget for the EMB and DBCC. It was **noted** that there is an allocated budget which will be available for the WEIP, and some flexibility will exist for this.

5.5. It was **noted** that the DBCC has powers to recharge bodies for services provided in line with the practice of making purchases centrally and recouping costs from Local Authorities.

5.6. Item 5 was **noted**, with the expectation that the Board will develop a costed forward work programme so it can take further assurance that resources are adequate to support the discharge of the Board's functions.

6. **Agree deputy chair of the EMB**

6.1. Consideration was given to the appointment of Eifion Evans, Chief Executive of Ceredigion County Council as the deputy chair of the EMB.

6.2. It was **agreed** that Eifion Evans be appointed as the deputy chair.

7. **Receive and agree the programme of meetings**

7.1. Consideration was given to item 7

7.2. Discussion was held on the programme of meetings, notably a bi-monthly programme with an additional meeting to be held on Friday 6 March 2026 in the lead up to the May 2026 Senedd Election.

7.3. Item 7 was **agreed**.

7.4. **Action:** Calendar invites for meetings moving forward.

8. **Update from WG on the appointment of CROs, the conduct order and elections expenses**

8.1. Consideration was given to item 8.

8.2. An update was given by MK from WG, with various details from the paper outlined. It was **noted** that the word 'chairman' has been replaced with 'chairperson'.

8.3. It was **noted** that the Order will be debated in the Senedd on 8th July.

8.4. It was **noted** that the costs order for the Senedd election is currently being drafted. It was **noted** that there is a need for a good understanding that charges will be recouped post-election.

- 8.5. It was **noted** that electronic registers aid with the smooth running of an election but the funding available from the Welsh Government is limited to the elections that it is responsible for. It was noted that the costs associated with the forthcoming Senedd election would be eligible for reimbursement and agreed that clarity on this point would be reached as soon as possible to assist CROs/ROs in determining how they wishes to move forward, noting that UKG have an interest as far as reserved elections are concerned and local government is responsible for the costs associated with their own elections.
- 8.6. The need for consistency between the UK and Welsh Governments in this area was **noted** and it was **noted** that there is the possibility of issues arising during reserved polls such as the 2028 PCC elections should there be inconsistency with the use of electronic registers.
- 8.7. Discussion was held on the appointment of Constituency Returning Officers (CROs). It was **noted** that informal notification has already happened and that the Cabinet Secretary will be writing to appointees soon. It was **noted** that official appointment and legal designation will happen after the conduct order goes out in July.
- 8.8. Discussion was held on the importance of identifying CROs so that the detailed planning for the election can get underway |
- 8.9. It was **noted** that the relevant team in the UK Government is already covering this with the Welsh Government, and it is an area which they are keen to look at. The benefits of technology as well as ministerial and financial uncertainty were **noted**.
- 8.10. **Action:** Include digital registers as an item for further discussion in next meeting.

9. Update on plans to communicate electoral reforms

- 9.1. Item 9 was delivered verbally.
- 9.2. Elan Stephens from the Electoral Commission (EC) delivered an update. It was **noted** that the EC will be meeting with the Llywydd Committee at the beginning of July to discuss the dissemination of information about electoral changes. Discussion was held on the use of media and social media.
- 9.3. It was **noted** that the Llywydd Committee will have the first look at the EC's budget for this work which is currently an estimate.
- 9.4. It was **noted** that there will be a follow up after the meeting with a more detailed insight into budget.

- 9.5. Consideration was given to the motion for Bethan Williams-Price to join the Senedd Elections 2026 Communications Group and it was **agreed**. Going forward, there will be a clear link between the EMB and the Group.
- 9.6. **Action:** Discuss the priority that should be given to consistency in statutory notices in the Elections Planning Group and provide advice back to the EMB at next meeting.
- 9.7. **Action:** Communications arrangements to be brought as a regular paper to meetings.

10. Update on plans to provide training for ROs and elections teams

- 10.1. Item 10 was delivered verbally.
- 10.2. It was **noted** that bilingual training for polling station staff can be provided by the AEA and that 17 of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales have already committed to the training. It was further **noted** that one constituency made up of two Local Authorities has confirmed that they will not be completing the training.
- 10.3. In addition to the training for polling staff, AEA confirmed that they had updated their training for ROs and this was being offered in September. Additionally, the Foundation Course had been updated to incorporate the changes introduced as part of the electoral reforms and this was also going to be available in the autumn – this would be suitable for electoral administrators.
- 10.4. In addition to the training for polling staff, AEA confirmed that they had updated their training for ROs and this was being offered in September. Additionally, the Foundation Course had been updated to incorporate the changes introduced as part of the electoral reforms and this was also going to be available in the autumn – this would be suitable for electoral administrators.
- 10.5. **Action:** Engage Constituency Returning Officers to discuss the available training, with an emphasis on consistency, including the need to address the Welsh language.

11. Receive and agree the Project Initiation Document (PID), governance arrangements and project plan for the Wales Electoral Information Platform

- 11.1. Consideration was given to the PID, governance arrangements and project plan. It was **noted** that the Board was asked to approve the item.
- 11.2. Consideration was given to section 3 – Governance structure. It was **noted** that the legal responsibility for the platform sits with the DBCC but that the EMB holds decision making powers.

- 11.3. Consideration was given to the membership of the WEIP Steering Group, and it was **noted** that Karen Jones would Chair the group and that Neal Cockerton had been invited as a second member of the EMB to sit on the Group. It was **recommended** that the Board approve the two EMB members of the Group.
- 11.4. It was **noted** that, for timing reasons, some decisions will also be made by the EMB over email.
- 11.5. The PID was **agreed**.
- 11.6. The governance arrangements were **agreed**.
- 11.7. The Steering Group membership was **agreed**.
- 11.8. It was **noted** that the specifications of the WEIP will be reviewed by the Steering Group next week and, if considered fit for purpose, EMB members would be asked to approve the specification over email next week.
- 11.9. Thanks to Ceri Davies from WG for providing support in a critical friend capacity to the Steering Group were **noted**.

12. Receive and note the procurement plan

- 12.1. Consideration was given to the procurement plan and it was **noted**.

13. Receive and approve the terms of reference and risk register for the Election Planning Group

- 13.1. Consideration was given to item 13.
- 13.2. It was **noted** that the aim of the elections planning sub-group is to support the work of the EMB. The opportunity to provide early clarity to interested parties was **noted**.
- 13.3. Consideration was given to the risk register and the need for inherent risk scores and residual risk scores were **noted**.
- 13.4. Consideration was given to the count timeline and the letter received from the BBC on the next-day count.
- 13.5. Discussion was held on the option for a next-day count. It was **noted** that a next-day count should be prioritised, particularly in light of significant legislative changes. Consideration was given to the larger constituencies and the logistical challenges of returning ballot boxes to the count centres. Consideration was also given to the more effective utilisation of polling station staff in the event of a next-day count.

- 13.6. Consideration was given to the operational perspective of election day from an electoral administrator's point of view. The significant geographical footprint of the new constituencies was **noted**.
- 13.7. It was **agreed** to develop draft directions on the assumption of a next-day verification and count of ballot papers
- 13.8. It was **noted** that it is political parties themselves who push back on next-day counts. It was **noted** that mitigations for push back can include early notification to ensure political parties are not expecting something that is not going to happen.
- 13.9. It was **noted** that early and clarity and consistency of verification and count arrangements would benefit all stakeholders.
- 13.10. Consideration was given to how many count centres might operate across Wales. Once the CRO appointments were confirmed, it was noted that count arrangements, alongside other early considerations would be discussed with CROS. It was **noted** that these considerations can be brought to the August meeting.
- 13.11. It was **noted** that a one-size-fits-all approach might not be the most effective approach.
- 13.12. Discussion was held on risk to candidates and risk to community cohesion. It was **agreed** to revise the risk register to ensure community cohesion risks were clearly identified. There will be discussions with police and security service points of contact over the coming months. Election security, integrity and community cohesion will be an item in the August meeting.
- 13.13. Consideration was given to the possibility of workshops for ROs in early autumn, with one being held in the South and one in the North. It was **agreed** to run these workshops, with WG agreeing to fund them.
- 13.14. It was **noted** that Solace might be interested in providing mentoring support across Wales.
- 13.15. **Action:** Clarification on count arrangements and draft directions to be brought as an item to August meeting.
- 13.16. **Action:** Election security and integrity and risk of community cohesion to be included as agenda item at the August meeting.
- 13.17. **Action:** EMB to run two workshops for ROs in early autumn.
14. **Note the letter to the Chair from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government regarding Accessible Voting Trials**

- 14.1. Consideration was given to item 14 and it was **noted**.
- 14.2. It was **noted** that engagement will be happening with the RNIB and members are invited to take part in this.
- 14.3. Consideration was given to the question of whether the EC will be providing any additional guidance on accessibility.
- 14.4. It was **noted** that the AEA polling station staff training already has sections on accessibility and that next year's training is already being developed.
- 14.5. It was **noted** that work is already happening around the accessibility of communications leading up to election day and not just the communications for election day itself.
- 14.6. It was **noted** that the EC is currently ensuring that guidance is fit for purpose.
- 14.7. The importance of emphasis on the practicality of accessibility provisions was **noted**. **There is an opportunity to identify an disseminate good practice across Wales and to share the outcome of the work done by Cardiff and Wrexham as part of the research commissioned by WG**. It was **agreed** that WG colleagues would make an introduction between the EMB and RNIB.

15. Welsh language update

- 15.1. It was **noted** that there used to be a Welsh Language sub-group to support the Welsh Elections Coordination Board. It was **noted** that work has happened previously to ensure the uniformity and quality of Welsh language communications and translations.
- 15.2. It was **noted** that previously, all issues relating to Welsh language work were covered by the sub-group. The importance of the EMB taking ownership of Welsh language work was **noted**.
- 15.3. Consideration was given to previous meetings between Eifion Evans, Rhydian Thomas from the Electoral Commission and the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC). Consideration was given to previous challenges to meet WLC standards to provide bilingual staff in polling stations, particularly on the east border of Wales.
- 15.4. The importance of focusing on the quality of bilingual administration was **noted**.
- 15.5. It was **noted** that the majority of complaints submitted to the WLC are about the quality of bilingual election announcements made by Returning Officers. It was **noted** that Coleg Cymraeg has previously offered to provide training to Returning Officers on bilingual election announcements.

- 15.6. Discussion was held on the proposal for Welsh language work to be part of the core work of the EMB and not a sub-group. The proposal was supported by Huw Elfed Roberts, with the offer of support for any workshops held.
- 15.7. Discussion was held on the importance of Welsh language visibility, for example Welsh language lanyards for bilingual polling station staff.
- 15.8. It was **agreed** to bring the detail of how to move forward with Welsh language work to the August meeting.
- 15.9. **Action:** Bring detail of Welsh language work as an item to the August meeting.

16. Agency Updates – UK Government

- 16.1. Item 16 was delivered verbally and an overview of recent updates was provided. Consideration was given to a 6-month project which ran from October 2024 to March 2025. Consideration was given to the main issues of election delivery.
- 16.2. Further detail on the 6-month plan was provided, which involved engaging with working groups including electoral stakeholders and which focused on improving delivery processes. It was **noted** that a number of recommendations have since been made based on the findings from this work, which include recommendations in regard to absent voting and refinement in policy of overseas electors. It was **noted** that all recommendations will be published in a policy strategy document in the near future, hopefully before the summer recess.
- 16.3. Consideration was given to the focus on elections as a no-fail service and the aim to take out the main risks of delivery.
- 16.4. Consideration was given to voter ID reform, which is not currently working as it should.
- 16.5. Discussion was held on ongoing work regarding the harassment and intimidation of candidates.
- 16.6. Discussion was held on the Absent Voting (Elections in Scotland and Wales) Private Members' Bill and it was **noted** that there are currently no updates on timing for the Bill. It was **noted** that the Bill is still in Parliament and is currently behind the Assisted Dying Bill, but that work is ongoing to support the Bill. It was **noted** that the Committee Stage of Bill will begin on the 11th June.
- 16.7. The importance of keeping stakeholders updated on this was **noted**.

17. Agency Updates – Electoral Commission

- 17.1. Item 17 was delivered verbally.

17.2. It was **noted** that Senedd election guidance for CROs has been drafted and the EC is in a position to share the initial draft. It was **noted** that the EC would like to seek the views of the EMB on this. The tight timeline for this work was **noted**.

17.3. It was **noted** that there will be prioritisation of certain key resources.

17.4. It was **noted** that majority of resources will be published in February as is common practice.

17.5. Action: HoDH to discuss this draft guidance within the Election Planning Group in order to provide further feedback to the EC.

18. Agency Updates – Association of Electoral Administrators

18.1. Item 18 was delivered verbally.

18.2. It was **noted** that the dates for the AEA Wales Foundation Course have been released, with training happening in September and October.

18.3. It was **noted** that work is currently ongoing to summarise what has changed for CROs and Electoral Services teams ahead of the Senedd elections.

19. AOB

19.1. There was no additional relevant business.

19.2. The Chair thanked attendees for their attendance and contributions.

Date of Next Meeting: 8 August 2025

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL
MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 08 AUGUST 2025 AT CP2 AND MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present: Karen Jones (Chair); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Neal Cockerton (Member); Beverly Owen (Member); Paul Orders (Member)

DBCC Officers attending: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Rhydian Fitter (Communications and Engagement Manager)

Invitees: Cath Uphill (EC); Elan Stephens (EC), Rob Coombs (EC); Michael Kay (WG), Robert Joyce (WG); Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council); Paul Docker (MHCLG), Ashley Griffiths (MHCLG), Ann Koletth (MHCLG); William Whiteley (WG); Tyrone Peach (SW Police); Paula Walters (WLGA); Sarah Ling (Consultant)

Apologies: Martin Nicholls (Member); Eifion Evans (Member); Rhydian Thomas (EC); Clare Sim (AEA); Becca Crosier (MHCLG)

Time Started: 10:01

Time Finished: 12:00

1. Declarations of interest

1.1. None

2. Minutes of previous meeting

2.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2025 subject to some amendments

2.2. The Chair summarised the matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting, including digital registers, statutory notices, and RNIB contact.

3. Update from the police on preparations for 2026

3.1. Consideration was given to item 3.

3.2. Discussion was held on the preparations for policing the 2026 Senedd election.

3.3. It was **noted** that public confidence is paramount, and that prevention of issues is preferred to prosecution. There are several laws which support the policing of elections, including the Representation of the People Act, and the Electoral Act among others.

3.4. It was **noted** that policing issues include harassment, public order offences, and traditional policing. Candidates face a significant impact from abuse and

intimidation. There has been an increase in harassment and intimidation of candidates as well as general behaviour which doesn't necessarily fit the Representation of the People Act, such as rudeness, the removal of election placards, etc. These create additional demand for officers.

3.5. It was **noted** that all police forces in Wales are preparing to coordinate their messaging in cooperation with the EMB, and the Electoral Commission. This messaging will not be political, but will be about general behaviour that would be expected around elections.

3.6. It was **noted** that returning officers are in agreement about the issues and the need for consistent messaging. Pre-election seminars for ROs may be useful to discuss these issues and possible solutions. These discussions will take place at the EMB workshops in the autumn.

Action: Work in cooperation with Welsh police forces and the Electoral Commission on the coordination of messaging on policing the 2026 Senedd election.

4. Overview of the resources available for 2025/26

4.1. Item 4 was delivered verbally.

4.2. Ann Koleth from MHCLG gave an overview on security arrangements for 2026.

4.3. Discussion was held on item 4.

4.4. It was **noted** that there has been an increase in harassment, intimidation, and a generally difficult campaigning environment in recent years.

4.5. It was **noted** that the security minister has met with his Welsh Government counterpart. The interministerial group on elections and registration has been looking at this issue, and the Joint Election Security and Preparedness Unit (JESP) is working with Welsh Government ahead of the 2026 election.

4.6. It was **noted** that booking count and polling venues can now begin and will help with security planning. Matters such as layout design can alleviate security risks. Police colleagues can also advise on this as part of pre-poll planning.

4.7. It was **noted** that MHCLG is working with the EC to help political parties understand the standards of behaviour expected and what support they can give their candidates and agents.

4.8. It was **noted** that where the Senedd election is dependent on UK Government digital services, e.g. the register to vote website, that the usual heightened monitoring arrangements will be in place, and that updated security guidance will be shared soon.

5. Letter from Chair of EMB to the four Chief Constables – for noting

5.1. Consideration was given to item 5.

5.2. It was **noted** that a letter has been sent from the EMB to the four Chief Constables in Wales.

6. Platform project update

6.1. Consideration was given to item 6

6.2. Discussion was held on the Welsh Elections Information Platform.

6.3. Consideration was given to the project status report.

6.4. It was **noted** that engagement beyond the core group, with key stakeholders, has begun, including accessibility charities and political parties. Engagement has also started with the AEA, with a discussion at their Wales branch meeting.

6.5. It was **noted** that the procurement process has led to a chosen supplier, and that following Board approval, the standstill period has now ended and the first meeting with the supplier has taken place. The contract is expected to be signed by early next week. A meeting next week will kick-off the project with a discussion on the timeline of the project.

6.6. It was **noted** that a meeting has been arranged with NCSC to begin conversations with them about the platform and to discuss the cybersecurity advice and support they can offer for the platform.

6.7. Consideration was given to the risk register.

6.8. It was **noted** that risk 2, relating to changes to the draft conduct order for the Senedd election has been closed.

6.9. It was **noted** that risk 13, relating to EMS suppliers, has been closed.

6.10. Consideration was given to the Welsh Elections Information Platform – Project Assurance document.

6.11. It was **noted** that a company called MIAA, an external audit company, have been secured to provide project assurance. A meeting has taken place to agree the scope of work, which will include 4 checkpoints throughout the project.

- 6.12. Discussion was held on the platform name.
- 6.13. It was **noted** that discussions on the platform name have largely happened with the reference group. The name was considered to be needed to be short and snappy, to tell voters clearly what it is, and to work in both Welsh and English.
- 6.14. It was **noted** that discussions have been held with the Welsh Language Commissioner and that the two names are not direct translations of each other.
- 6.15. It was **noted** that the recommended name is bwrwpleidlais.cymru and myvote.wales.
- 6.16. It was decided to proceed with the names as recommended, subject to a further discussion with the WLC about the ease of finding the Welsh name through online searches.

7. **Contract award update**

- 7.1. Item 7 was delivered verbally.
- 7.2. Discussion was held on the awarding of the contract to Storm ID, expected to take place in the next week.

8. **Elections Planning Group (EPG) – directions process and draft directions for returning officers and electoral registration officers**

- 8.1. Consideration was given to item 8.
- 8.2. Discussion was held on the directions process report
- 8.3. It was **noted** that 6 draft directions have been prepared, with the aim of all directions being arranged by consensus. Legal advice has been given on the directions. The EMB is required to consult with the EC on all directions and it is proposed that that now take place.
- 8.4. **Action:** For draft directions to go to consultation with the CROs initially, to be followed by the statutory consultation with the EC, with the expectation that a final decision is made at the October meeting.

9. **EPG draft assurance framework**

- 9.1. Consideration was given to item 9.
- 9.2. It was **noted** that early assurances from CROs on planning and coordination will be sought, through an online form.

9.3. The Board **agreed** on the questions, subject to an additional on question insurance being added, with these being sent to CROs.

9.4. **Action:** Approved questions to be sent to CROs

10. Senedd elections 2026 risk register – for noting

10.1. Consideration was given to item 10.

10.2. Discussion was held on the risk register.

10.3. It was **noted** that scores have been added to the risk ratings, and that there are clear risk holders.

10.4. The risk register was **noted**.

10.5. **Action:** Risk register to be updated and brought to future meetings.

11. Feedback from regional meetings with Returning Officers

11.1. Consideration was given to item 11.

11.2. Discussion was held on the regional meetings with Returning Officers.

11.3. It was **noted** that ROs are seeking clarity on financial allocations from Welsh Government, and that training opportunities are to be offered by the AEA.

11.4. Discussion was held on the use of IT in polling stations, with further discussion to take place in the future.

11.5. **Action:** Chair to bring a paper to future meeting about professional development for CROs and related roles.

12. Draft programme for October workshops

12.1. Consideration was given to item 12

12.2. It was **noted** that the agenda is in draft form, with feedback sought for agenda items. Dates are booked for a north Wales and south Wales event, with an identical agenda for both.

12.3. The draft agenda for the autumn workshops was **approved**.

12.4. **Action:** Discussion to be held with EC, with some additional topics to be included by them.

13. Communications update

13.1. Item 13 was delivered verbally.

- 13.2. It was **noted** that Bethan Price has joined the Senedd 2026 communications group. The Senedd Commission has confirmed that they have a budget of £150,000 to promote the Senedd election. The EC is producing educational resources for young people on the Senedd election and reforms.
- 13.3. It was **noted** that some LAs are producing leaflets on the election to be distributed during the annual canvass. Senedd Commission has also produced a leaflet which can be adapted for this purpose.
- 13.4. **Action:** Leaflets to be discussed with AEA to ensure they can be distributed to CROs.
- 13.5. **Action:** A detailed discussion to be held at the October meeting on communications work which the EMB may need to take on directly.

14. Welsh language update

- 14.1. Consideration was given to item 14
- 14.2. It was **noted** that it would be helpful to CROs to identify what information is currently available in Welsh, and to identify gaps in the provision.
- 14.3. It was **noted** that a discussion has been held on the glossary of terms, with the need to update it identified due to reforms. EC translators are currently working on ensuring accurate translation of the glossary of terms.
- 14.4. **Action:** Glossary of terms to be examined and updated.
- 14.5. **Action:** EMB to identify resources which are currently not available in Welsh and to ensure translation.

15. Agency Updates – Welsh Government

- 15.1. Consideration was given to item 15.
- 15.2. Discussion was held on item 15.
- 15.3. It was **noted** that the conduct order has been approved, as well as the order giving effect to the new constituencies.
- 15.4. It was **noted** that the disqualification order has been consulted on, with 19 responses received. It is expected to be laid in September. The charges order will go to consultation in the autumn.
- 15.5. It was **noted** that the elections planning group are asked to respond to WG on possible recall legislation.

15.6. Action: For the elections planning group to respond to WG about recall by the end of August.

16. Agency Updates – UK Government

16.1. Item 16 was delivered verbally.

16.2. It was **noted** that there is likely to be a new responsible minister in the near future.

16.3. It was **noted** that UKG has published its strategy on elections, with the aim of making elections more resilient. The strategy includes matters such as timetable dates on postal vote applications, nominations etc. Depending on time allocation in parliament, a bill may be brought to give effect to the strategy.

16.4. Action: To bring the UKG strategy to the autumn meeting for discussion.

17. Agency Updates – Electoral Commission

17.1. Item 17 was delivered verbally.

17.2. It was **noted** that the candidate and agent guidance has been finalised, is being translated, and will be published in September.

17.3. It was **noted** that CRO guidance is to be published in November

17.4. It was **noted** that the EC has launched its statutory consultation on updated guidance for ROs on assistance with voting for disabled voters.

17.5. It was **noted** that the EC is developing new education resources for schools, with the aim of having them ready by the end of September.

17.6. It was **noted** that the EC has also created care home resources, to assist people resident in care homes to vote, and support care home staff in assisting with voting.

17.7. Action: The EMB to respond to the consultation before 26 October.

17.8. Action: EMB to assist EC in ensuring education resources reach schools.

18. Agency Updates – Association of Electoral Administrators

18.1. There was nobody from the AEA available to give the update.

18.2. Action: EMB to contact AEA for a written update

19. Strategic risk register and forward work plan.

19.1. Consideration was given to item 19.

19.2. It was **noted** that the risk register will be discussed in October.

19.3. The strategic risk register and forward work plan was **noted**.

20. AOB

20.1. No additional business was raised.

20.2. The Chair thanked attendees for their attendance and contributions.

Date of Next Meeting: 3 October 2025

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL
MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 03 OCTOBER 2025 AT CP2 AND MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present: Karen Jones (Chair); Eifion Evans (Deputy Chair); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Beverly Owen (Member); Paul Orders (Member); Martin Nicholls (Member)

DBCC Officers attending: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Rhydian Fitter (Communications and Engagement Manager); Ellie Chapman (Democratic Health Policy Officer)

Invitees: Cath Uphill (EC); Ella Griffiths-Downing (EC); Michael Kay (WG), Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council); Paul Docker (MHCLG), William Whiteley (WG); Sarah Ling (Consultant); Simon Belcher (SW Police); Elan Closs Stephens (EC); Rhys George (AEA); Becca Crosier (MHCLG); Richard Harris (AEA)

Apologies: Neal Cockerton (Member); Clare Sims (AEA), Anna Daniel (Senedd Commission)

Time Started: 10:01

Time Finished: 12:08

1. Introduction from South Wales Police

1.1. Before the formal agenda began the Board received a presentation from the Assistant Chief Constable on how South Wales Police are ensuring electoral integrity. It was noted that more information would be provided at the workshops taking place in October.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1. None.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8th August.

4. Action Log

4.1. Consideration was given to item 3, **noting** that most actions had been completed, that some actions were to be finalised at this meeting, with others included on the forward work plan.

5. Strategic Risk Register

- 5.1. Consideration was given to item 4.
- 5.2. It was **noted** that Risk 6 for the platform is red due to work needing to be done with the EMS suppliers, on which the aspects of the project are reliant.
- 5.3. The strategic risk register was agreed, and it will be brought back on a quarterly basis to keep the Board updated.

6. Electoral Commission update on plans for the election

- 6.1. Item 5 was delivered verbally by the Electoral Commission.
- 6.2. It was **noted** that work is being done for regulated bodies, electoral administration work and engagement work.
- 6.3. It was **noted** that updated guidance has been published for candidates and agents. Animated guides are being completed to support the completion of nomination papers.
- 6.4. It was **noted** that material is being provided for police forces to share on social media with regards to candidate harassment. A fact sheet outlining safety measures for candidates and campaigners will also be circulated.
- 6.5. It was **noted** that the Senedd Parties Panel will be used to share information with larger parties.
- 6.6. It was **noted** that guidance for ROs is almost finalised and will be published mid-November. Template scripts for Senedd count announcements will be provided and updated in line with the new voting system. Polling station handbooks will be provided and there will be a link in Dec for ESM's to order them.
- 6.7. It was **noted** that RO guidance now covers the electronic submission of nominations along with other changes and makes reference to the EMB and WEIP throughout.
- 6.8. It was **noted** that accessibility guidance for ROs is being updated. There is an ongoing consultation seeking views running until 26th October and the guidance will be published at the end of 2025.

- 6.9. It was **noted** that the EC will be in touch with ROs in Dec and Jan to collect management information to build clear picture of arrangements in place for the delivery of polls across Wales.
- 6.10. It was **noted** that a standard voter registration campaign is running ahead of election from March until registration deadline.
- 6.11. It was **noted** that a household info booklet containing voter information is being drafted and should be shared in next couple of weeks to the Board for feedback. It is scheduled to go out the week commencing the 23rd March.
- 6.12. It was **noted** that work is being done with the Senedd and Children's commissioner to create new education resources and is due to be published next week.
- 6.13. It was **noted** that a wider comms session will be delivered at the EMB workshops with the Senedd Commission.
- 6.14. It was **noted** that a training programme for independent candidates will be available.
- 6.15. It was **noted** that there is an offer to CROs for EC to be involved in localised briefings, to be flagged up in the communications from the Board.

7. Elections Planning Group (EPG) – update and matters for consideration

- 7.1. Consideration was given to item 6.
- 7.2. It was **noted** that there is some concern by the AEA regarding ballot paper spacing and potential accessibility issues, the conduct order requires that ballot papers are printed with a minimum 'drop' of 2.5cm.
- 7.3. It was **noted** that the EPG have considered the merits of both a 2.5cm and 3.5cm drop, noting that the latter would produce excessively large ballot papers depending on the number of parties/candidates standing and could lead to larger printing costs.
- 7.4. It was **noted** that discussions will be needed with TVD suppliers to ensure they are available for different sizes, depending on what decisions are made.
- 7.5. It was **noted** that the max number of candidates to fit on a standard ballot paper with a 35mm drop is 11, with a 25mm it is 16.
- 7.6. It was **noted** that the AEA held an RNIB webinar where there was a strong push to encourage use of McGonagall readers in polling stations.

- 7.7. It was noted that the Board would not be giving a direction on this but instead to highlight this as something to give early consideration to locally and signpost ROs at the forthcoming workshop, with RNIB Cymru to be in attendance. It was **agreed** to do this.
- 7.8. It was **noted** that costs are being considered by WG for a postal vote sweep of Royal Mail centres and that this may involve multiple mail centres given the size of some constituencies. A discussion was held on either enabling this to be agreed locally and reclaim the costs or to have a more centralised arrangement between WG and RM.
- 7.9. It was **noted** that concerns have expressed where CROs may be holding local counts, that they may be put under pressure to provide localised totals. It was agreed that if they do local counts that should be after they declare the overall result. It was **noted** that the Board is seeking information from CROs on count arrangements.
- 7.10. It was **noted** that convergence of postal votes will not be implemented before the Senedd election in 2026.

8. Senedd Elections 2026 Risk Register

- 8.1. Consideration was given to item 7.
- 8.2. It was **noted** that risk 2 has been updated on accessibility to reflect the discussions around ballot paper spacing and accessibility. Risk 1 will be closed off once the directions have been agreed and the risk register will be given further consideration by the Elections Planning Group at its next meeting, after the workshops have been held.

9. Direction to CROs and EROs

- 9.1. Consideration was given to item 8.
- 9.2. It was **noted** that the main issue for the Board's consideration is around the timing and verification of the count.
- 9.3. It was **noted** that the Electoral Commission had no comments to make in its response to the statutory consultation on the directions.
- 9.4. It was **noted** that there has been feedback from two CROs and their teams who wish to conduct the verification overnight for the count to go ahead on the morning.
- 9.5. A discussion was held on the flexibility within the directions to allow this. There is a concern that this adds an area of confusion amongst constituencies and it would be better to have consistency across Wales.
- 9.6. It was **noted** that due to the geography of some of these larger constituencies and there being cross boundaries it may be more effective for

staff to verify boxes overnight in some constituencies. It was **agreed** to amend the direction to allow for flexibility.

9.7. Action: Amend the directions as agreed and issue to Returning Officers.

10. Feedback from regional meeting with returning officers in North Wales

- 10.1. Consideration was given to item 9.
- 10.2. It was **noted** that there was support for the CPD framework.
- 10.3. It was **noted** that the main issue that came up was about a consistent approach to the campaigning issues that are likely to come up across Wales.

11. Platform Project Update

- 11.1. Consideration was given to item 10.
- 11.2. It was **noted** that the project is progressing well, it has been onboarding with Storm ID and is currently in the discovery phase. Interviews have been conducted with electoral administrators, both English and Welsh-speaking voters and also DBCC staff.
- 11.3. It was **noted** that Democracy Club is working with the platform to help provide the polling station finder.
- 11.4. It was **noted** that the previously agreed English language website domain name was no longer available and the Welsh domain name has been secured. The alternative English domain name 'vote.wales' has been **agreed**.
- 11.5. It was **noted** that the first checkpoint for the external audit has been completed which looked into governance and technical specification of the project.
- 11.6. It was **noted** that directions for ROs are needed to support the implementation of the WEIP. It was proposed that the draft directions for the platform will first go to an informal consultation with ROs and then to the Electoral Commission for the statutory consultation. As the directions are to do with data sharing, the Information Commissioner's Office will also be consulted.
- 11.7. A discussion was held on Direction 3 and the consent of candidates and parties to provide personal information. As public task and statutory obligation are being used as the legal basis, consent isn't needed. There is a concern around the risk being put on ROs as they are the ones sharing that data. It was **noted** that the data being used is already published and within the public domain.

- 11.8. It was **agreed** for these directions to go to consultation.
- 11.9. It was **noted** that EMS providers are the highest risk and an option to reduce the risk is by working with Welsh Government to finalise the procurement on the main changes to the EMSs for the voting system, which must be completed prior to the export design.

12. User Research

- 12.1. Consideration was given to item 11.
- 12.2. It was **noted** that this is to be included in the wider research plan relating to the EMB and the platform.
- 12.3. It was **noted** that this work will form part of the report submitted to the Senedd on the effectiveness of the platform and the work of the EMB in the future.
- 12.4. It was **noted** that it will cost approximately £10,000.
- 12.5. It was **agreed** to undertake this work.

13. Communications update

- 13.1. Item 12 was delivered verbally.
- 13.2. It was **noted** that the Senedd Comms group meets bimonthly to ensure there is no duplication of work and to find any gaps in the communication plans. It was **noted** that there will be a communications presentation at the forthcoming workshops and that further updates can be provided at the next EMB meeting.

14. Welsh Language

- 14.1. Item 13 was delivered verbally.
- 14.2. It was **noted** that a presentation on Welsh Language is being prepared for the workshop in October and that there will be further discussion with CROs.
- 14.3. It was **noted** that the Electoral Commission put together an electoral glossary which will be signposted to in the slides.
- 14.4. It was **noted** that due to running the election as a bilingual process, it is suggested to phase the declaration intermittently between English and Welsh to ensure clarity and encourage CRO's to have a fluent Welsh speaker oversee the Welsh pronunciations.
- 14.5. It was **noted** that badges for polling stations are being suggested for Welsh speakers so that voters are being signposted to the correct people.

15. CPD Framework

15.1. Item 14 was deferred to the next meeting.

16. Agency Updates – Welsh Government

16.1. Item 15 was delivered verbally.

16.2. It was **noted** that WG are looking to consult on the Charges order for the next month.

17. Agency Updates – UK Government

17.1. Item 16 will be delivered via email due to lack of time.

18. Agency Updates – Association of Electoral Administrators

18.1. Item 17 will be delivered via email due to lack of time.

19. AOB

19.1. No additional business was raised.

Date of Next Meeting: 5 December 2025

DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 5TH DECEMBER 2025 ON MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present: Karen Jones (Chair); Eifion Evans (Deputy Chair); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Beverly Owen (Member); Neal Cockerton (Member); Andrew Wilkins (Deputising for Paul Orders);

DBCC Officers attending: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Jo Nelson (Senior Elections Manager); Rhydian Fitter (Communications and Engagement Manager); Ellie Chapman (Democratic Health Policy Officer)

Invitees: Cath Uphill (EC); Elan Carter (EC); Michael Kay (WG); Mathew Xerri (WG); Katie Welch (WG); Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council); Paul Docker (MHCLG), William Whiteley (WG); Sarah Ling (Consultant); Rhys George (AEA); Becca Crosier (MHCLG); Richard Harris (AEA); Anna Daniel (Senedd Commission); Dave Beecham (CCBC); Ed Edmunds (CCBC); Clare Sim (AEA); Elan Closs Stephens (EC)

Apologies: Paula Walters (WLGA); Paul Orders (Member); Rhydian Thomas (EC)

Time Started: 10:02

Time Finished: 12:09

1. Declarations of interest

1.1. None.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

2.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October.

2.2. **ACTION:** To change an incorrect date on previous minutes.

3. Action Log

3.1. Consideration was given to item 3. It was **noted** that those actions incomplete (in white) are included in the forward work programme.

4. Caerphilly by election debrief

- 4.1. Consideration was given to item 4.
- 4.2. A verbal update was provided by the Chief Executive and the Electoral Services Manager from Caerphilly Council regarding the by election in October.
- 4.3. It was **noted** that a key difficulty was the short time period
- 4.4. It was **noted** that there was a decision to suspend public meetings of the Council during this time period due to the particular circumstances
- 4.5. It was **noted** that candidates and agents briefings were tailored towards explaining the role of polling agents due to there being an increase.
- 4.6. It was **noted** there was a positive operational support from the police and they had more officers at their disposal on the evening of the count.
- 4.7. It was **noted** there were only a small number of complaints. On the whole the Returning Officer and his team had received positive feedback about the way the poll had been conducted.
- 4.8. It was **noted** that political aspects of the campaign led to difficulties such as senior party members visiting polling stations without authorisation. This was highlighted to think about for future elections.
- 4.9. It was **noted** that there was an area of confusion amongst voters around boundaries and who was allowed to vote in the by election, not helped by candidates leafleting outside the constituency.
- 4.10. It was **noted** that there was confusion amongst some voters over voter ID and whether it was required for the by-election.
- 4.11. It was **noted** that there was confusion amongst electors who had a reserved postal vote but not a devolved postal vote.
- 4.12. It was **noted** that there were 83 media companies at the count.
- 4.13. It was **noted** that DRO's had ensured consistency on doubtful ballots.
- 4.14. It was **noted** there is another by election next week and the lessons will be taken forward.

4.15. A discussion was held around harassment towards other candidates or electors and it was **noted** this didn't occur at the level that was expected.

4.16. A discussion was held around the use of social media during the campaign.

ACTION – note to be produced on the issues at the by-election for circulation to ROs

5. Elections Planning Group (EPG) – update and matters for consideration

5.1. Consideration was given to the report dated November 2025.

5.2. It was **noted** that the EPG met on the 6th November.

5.3. It was **noted** that there was a discussion around the October workshops which included positive feedback especially on the RNIB presentation. There was a discussion on holding the workshops again in the future.

5.4. It was **noted** that the group discussed the proposed assurance framework including the draft questionnaire produced by the EMB. It was **noted** that the EC will carry out their RO survey in January and it will ensure there is no overlap. It was **noted** that the assurance framework will be brought back to the February board meeting and the questionnaire will be circulated afterwards.

5.5. It was **noted** that the AEA has circulated a D'Hondt spreadsheet following the Count Training that took place yesterday.

5.6. It was **noted** that discussions were also held on a bilingual delivery of the election and tactile voting devices or similar approaches to supporting blind and partially sighted voters.

5.7. A discussion was held on the timings of the guidance and when it will be produced.

6. October workshop evaluation and actions

6.1. Consideration was given to item 6.

6.2. It was **noted** that police and the EC have agreed to attend candidate and agents briefings which ROs can pick up.

6.3. It was **agreed** for these actions to be taken forward.

7. Assurance on early planning

- 7.1. Consideration was given to item 7.
- 7.2. It was **noted** that a questionnaire was sent out to Constituency Returning Officers and their teams alongside an excel spreadsheet.
- 7.3. It was **noted** that a majority of constituencies have filled it in with 3 constituencies outstanding.
- 7.4. It was **noted** that responses show a strong overall preparedness by CROs.
- 7.5. It was **noted** that most constituencies are having a centralised count, with a few undecided. It was **noted** that Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire are having separate count centres for the constituency of Ceredigion Penfro.
- 7.6. It was **noted** an appointment of DROs has happened in 5 constituencies.
- 7.7. It was **noted** that there will be a hybrid approach in 3 constituencies where some areas will use electronic registers and other areas will use paper registers.

ACTION – contact the authorities that did not respond

8. Senedd elections 2026 risk register

- 8.1. Consideration was given to item 8.
- 8.2. It was **noted** that risk 1 has been closed off after publishing directions on the timing of the count.
- 8.3. It was **noted** that additional mitigating actions from the workshops have been picked up.
- 8.4. It was **noted** that on risk 3, a representative from Royal Mail will attend the February meeting and there is an open invitation for people to get in touch.
- 8.5. It was **noted** that one new risk has been added around Bridges and stakeholders will be brought together to discuss the legislative position and roles and responsibilities.
- 8.6. A discussion was held on postal vote convergence and needing to add this as a risk considering the issues experienced at the Caerphilly by election.
- 8.7. **ACTION:** MP to add risk to risk register.

9. CPD Framework

- 9.1. Consideration was given to item 9.

9.2. It was **noted** this will be brought back next summer so as not to disrupt anyone during the busy election period.

9.3. The scope of work for the research project was **agreed**.

10. Platform Project Update

10.1. Consideration was given to item 10.

10.2. It was **noted** that the discovery phase has been completed and is now in a combined alpha/beta stage.

10.3. It was **noted** that the first show and tell with the supplier was yesterday which showed the back-end of the platform.

10.4. It was **noted** that tree-testing has been completed with voters and a second round of testing will take place next week.

10.5. It was **noted** that the initial test plan with Storm has been agreed, including candidate journeys, voter journeys and electoral administrator journeys.

10.6. It was **noted** that procurement is taking place for an independent government approved supplier for security tests.

10.7. It was **noted** that guidance has been drafted for electoral administrators and candidate and agents.

10.8. It was **noted** that there are two engagement events scheduled this month, one for political parties and the other for EA's.

10.9. It was **noted** that consultation on the draft directions have concluded. It was **noted** that an ICO consultation had also taken place alongside the RO and Electoral Commission consultations.

10.10. It was **noted** that a legal review was conducted on the directions.

10.11. The draft directions were **agreed**.

10.12. It was **noted** that there are two high level risks around the platform with risk two being the dependency on EMS suppliers to supply data for the platform.

10.13. A discussion was held on the contingency options in the event one or more of the suppliers do not deliver within the timescales. It was **noted** that these allow for the legal requirements to be met.

10.14. It was **noted** that there is a priority order to the contingency plans with candidates and parties being least affected by these mitigations, then electoral administrators and then DBCC staff.

- 10.15. It was **noted** that one of the suppliers has finished the work and has sent through a test export.
- 10.16. It was **noted** that meetings will be set up in January to talk through the contingency options with electoral administrators.
- 10.17. The Board agreed that if all three EMS providers were in contract and proceeding well, the overall risk for the project can be reduced to Amber

11. Comms and marketing update

- 11.1. Consideration was given to item 11.
- 11.2. It was **noted** that since the draft was created, there is now a cheaper option for advertising with ITV. This means both Sky and ITV can be used.
- 11.3. It was **noted** that a new addition to the draft includes pitch side advertising at the Principality Stadium.
- 11.4. It was **noted** that additional research is being done to find out which demographics need extra targeting.
- 11.5. The plan was **agreed**.
- 11.6. A discussion was held on the equalities impact assessment (EIA) and preparing a report on the data involved. It was **noted** that with paid advertising there will be data on who has used the advert to access the platform.
- 11.7. It was **noted** that Board members will be copied into press statements being sent out.
- 11.8. Consideration was given to the branding and logo for the Platform.
- 11.9. It was **noted** that Welsh is to be treated no less favourably to English.
- 11.10. It was **noted** that the aim of the wordmark logo is to gain name recognition for the Platform as quickly as possible.
- 11.11. It was **noted** that the colours chosen are to avoid greyscale and avoid colours used by political parties.
- 11.12. The logo was **agreed** by the Board.

12. Communications update

- 12.1. Consideration was given to item 12
- 12.2. It was **noted** that the Senedd Communications group met in November.
- 12.3. It was **noted** that a document has been drafted so that the Senedd Commission, Electoral Commission and DBCC plans can be put together in one place to ensure there aren't any conflicts or gaps. This will be updated on a weekly basis.
- 12.4. It was noted that a webinar for council communications officers and the ESMs will be held in the near future. The emerging comms plan will be shared at that event.

13. Welsh Language update

- 13.1. Item 13 was delivered verbally.
- 13.2. It was **noted** that a Welsh Language glossary has been put together to go out soon.
- 13.3. It was **noted** that positive feedback from the workshops included the commitment to bilingual declarations and ensuring it is achieved. A note will be prepared for all constituency returning officers to reflect the consensus reached in the Board and at the workshops

14. Electoral Commission

- 14.1. Item 14 was delivered verbally.
- 14.2. It was **noted** that returning officer guidance has now been published in HTML format and has been updated for the new legislative provisions. It is available in English and Welsh.
- 14.3. It was **noted** that the role of returning officer has been clarified and includes references to cross boundary responsibilities. The new voting system is mentioned and there are various changes to election agent responsibilities.
- 14.4. It was **noted** that accessibility guidance was published this week and had been consulted on by a wide range of groups. It was **noted** that additional resources will be published in December.
- 14.5. It was **noted** that next week the order form for the polling station handbook will be in the EA bulletin.
- 14.6. It was **noted** that the EC has written recently to all returning officers regarding monitoring returning officer performance. It was **noted** that this and the EC survey will provide assurance on arrangements in place for the polls.

- 14.7. It was **noted** that support is available from the Commission office via email, phone and an out of hours line active from March.
- 14.8. A discussion was held on the accessibility guidance and there not being a one size fits all approach.
- 14.9. A discussion was held on the work behind the scenes by electoral administrators on accessibility kits for polling stations.

15. Welsh Government

- 15.1. Item 15 was delivered verbally.
- 15.2. It was **noted** that the elections newsletter sent out had updates on the Candidate Diversity Grant Scheme, the Access to Elected Office Fund and the Democratic Engagement grant.
- 15.3. It was **noted** that the consultation on local election rules changes is still live and closes on the 12th of January. It was **noted** that the proposed changes are to align with the Senedd Conduct Order.
- 15.4. It was **noted** that the disqualification order came into force last month.
- 15.5. It was **noted** that the draft regulations for Online Absent Voting Applications (OAVA) went out to consultation with the Electoral Commission yesterday.
- 15.6. It was **noted** that options for funding for household notification letters (HNL) are being developed and there was a discussion on whether it will be focused on postal voters or whether it will include all of the electorate.
- 15.7. A discussion was held on concerns around timetabling and capacity around HNLs, **noting** that the full reserved postal vote exercise has to be concluded by the 31st January. The risks and issues will be developed in more detail by the EPG, added to the EMB risk register and brought back to the Board with advice on actions to be taken. WG were asked to reflect on the points made at the Board meeting as they further develop their proposals.
- 15.8. It was **noted** that a consultation will take place next week on the charges order and accounts order. It was **noted** there are changes due to inflation, new constituencies, no COVID costs will be applicable for this election and that the election will be stand-alone rather than combined (as was the case in 2021). The Board was pleased to note that the advice was to issue the following week and asked that there be no further delay.
- 15.9. It was **noted** that oral evidence has been taken by the committees for the Member Accountability Bill and that a report is expecting to be delivered before Christmas with a debate following in January. The EMB has submitted a letter at the request of the letter confirming that it believes the recall polls should be brought within its ambit in terms of existing EMB functions with accountability for delivering the polls remaining with returning officers.

16. Agency Updates – UK Government

- 16.1.** Item 16 was delivered verbally.
- 16.2.** It was **noted** that the strategy document will be provided in writing and is moving ahead with being translated into legislation.
- 16.3.** It was **noted** that the proposed Bill will cover manifesto commitments on voting at 16 and extending the franchise to the remaining polls across the UK to improve voter registration.
- 16.4.** It was **noted** that there are improvements to the political finance framework and minor reforms to voter ID, including adding bank cards to the list of accepted ID.
- 16.5.** It was **noted** that harassment and intimidation of candidates, campaigners and electoral staff are also being looked at.
- 16.6.** It was **noted** that there is work towards piloting some flexible voting interventions by May, which will be England only, and will look at similar things that Welsh Government are already investigating such as early voting and voting hubs.
- 16.7.** It was **noted** that the Police and Crime Commissioner role is to be discontinued.
- 16.8.** It was **noted** that PD's tenure will end in February next year. The Chair thanked PD for his many years of service and his contribution to the work of the electoral community which is much valued. The Chair also thanked PD for his support in her term of office which is also much appreciated.

17. Agency Updates – Association of Electoral Administrators

- 17.1.** Item 17 was delivered verbally.
- 17.2.** It was **noted** that a document summarising the key changes to the Senedd election has been circulated.
- 17.3.** It was **noted** that the first count training and verification session was delivered yesterday with a second one happening next Tuesday. It was **noted** that the D'Hondt spreadsheet was circulated after the session.
- 17.4.** It was **noted** that the polling station staff training is almost finalised and will go to Welsh translation to be circulated in February.

- 17.5.** It was **noted** that the AEA branch meeting took place earlier this week which raised feedback on automatic voter registration, absent vote convergence legislation and household notification letters.
- 17.6.** It was **noted** that between these issues, together with running the Senedd election and the annual canvass, the AEA are concerned about the timing of implementation given that it's going to be a very heavy year for activity.
- 17.7.** It was **noted** that the AEA are concerned as to whether the implantation of automatic voter registration and absent vote convergence legislation and implementation properly adhere to the Gould principle.

18. AOB

- 18.1.** No additional business was raised.

Date of Next Meeting: 6th February 2026

DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 6th FEBRUARY 2026 AT CP2 AND MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present: Eifion Evans (Chair); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Beverly Owen (Member); Martin Nicholls (Member); Neal Cockerton (Member); Andrew Wilkins (representing Paul Orders)

DBCC Officers attending: Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Jo Nelson (Senior Elections Manager); Rhydian Fitter (Communications and Engagement Manager); Ellie Chapman (Democratic Health Policy Officer)

Invitees: Cath Uphill (EC); Rhydian Thomas (EC); Elan Closs Stephens (EC); Clare Sim (AEA); Arwyn Jones (Senedd Commission); Michael Kay (WG); Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council); Mark O'Shea (SWP); Paula Walters (WLGA); Rhys George (AEA); Richard Harris (AEA); Ruth Law (MHCLG); Samantha Parsons (Royal Mail); Sarah Ling (Consultant); William Whiteley (WG); Mathew Xerri (WG); Ywain W (NCSC); Freddy Raistrick (Storm and Shelter); Mac Nixon (Storm and Shelter)

Apologies: Karen Jones (Chair); Paul Orders (Member); Shereen Williams (DBCC); Becca Crosier (MHCLG), Paul Docker (MHCLG)

Time Started: 10:01

Time Finished: 12:10

1. Declarations of interest

1.1. None.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

2.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December

3. Action Log

3.1. Consideration was given to item 3.

4. Royal Mail update

4.1. It was **noted** that Doxford is still the first point of contact for election queries.

- 4.2. It was **noted** that Royal Mail has been working with Ofcom on ensuring the Universal Service Obligation is more financially sustainable.
- 4.3. It was **noted** that letter volumes are declining, from 20 million in the 24/25 year down to 6.3 million.
- 4.4. It was **noted** that there are changes to delivery days, with second class deliveries being carried out 6 days a week.
- 4.5. It was **noted** that Royal Mail are proposing to move delivery of candidate mail to a four day window, providing them with two opportunities to do an alternate day delivery model and is currently being tested at 35 pilot sites. This allows for every household to have two delivery attempts of poll cards.
- 4.6. A discussion was held on poll card mailings not being on the 4 day delivery Mon-Fri yet due to it still being in the pilot phase.
- 4.7. It was **noted** that there are 2-3 pilot sites in Wales and the other sites will be operating on the normal 3 day period. It was **noted** that the pilot sites are Blackwood, Usk and Pontypool.
- 4.8. A discussion was held on there being an area by area approach rather than one that spans all of Wales.
- 4.9. A discussion was held on knowing the exact geographical areas that are affected.
- 4.10. **ACTION:** EMB to write to RM requesting that there are no more rollouts of delivery changes until after the May election.

5. Elections Planning Group (EPG) – update

- 5.1. Consideration was given to the report dated January 2026.
- 5.2. It was **noted** that MP and JN met with the Scottish EMB to discuss provisions for partially sighted and blind voters and the possibility of procuring these centrally.
- 5.3. It was **noted** that the Scottish ballot papers are completely uniform which enables them to provide a single size cardboard overlay for use across the whole country.

5.4. It was **noted** that whilst this would be difficult to introduce in Wales under the current circumstances, it could be looked at for future elections.

5.5. It was **noted** that mock ballot papers will be shared as part of a practice note.

6. **EMB Assurance framework**

6.1. Consideration was given to item 6.

6.2. It was **noted** that an initial piece of assurance work was carried out last September and discussions were had on carrying out further work in the new year.

6.3. The assurance questionnaires were **approved** by the Board.

6.4. It was **noted** that four practice notes have been drafted, including support for blind and partially sighted people; ballot paper design; communicating local totals at the count and use of the Welsh language in the electoral process.

6.5. It was **noted** that they will be issued on Monday.

7. **Senedd elections 2026 risk register**

7.1. Consideration was given to item 7.

7.2. It was **noted** that since the last Board meeting, a few extra risks have been added around postal vote convergence and Bridges.

7.3. It was **noted** that the marketing plan for the Welsh Elections Information Platform has been agreed.

7.4. A discussion was held on the consistency of Welsh Language with translation of documents. It was **noted** that there is inconsistency on how Election Address is being translated on bwrwpleidlais.cymru versus other documents.

8. **Election 26 Cyber Threat**

8.1. A presentation was provided by NCSC on the cyber security threat to the 2026 elections.

8.2. **ACTION:** To circulate questions provided by the NCSC around engaging with EMS suppliers in terms of security.

9. **Bridges**

9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated January 2026.

- 9.2. It was **noted** that at the last meeting, a risk on Bridges was added.
- 9.3. It was **noted** that conversations were had with WG, EPG and the EC around what would happen should this incident occur.
- 9.4. It was **noted** that the legislation provides for a pause in the elections timetable.
- 9.5. It was **noted** that the mitigation includes that in the event this happens, guidance from the EC would be circulated to the Board.
- 9.6. The Board **agreed** this mitigation.
- 9.7. A discussion was held on the period of mourning held in 2022 – when this happened there were meetings every day with SWP, WG and UK Government.

10. Platform Project Update

- 10.1. Consideration was given to item 9.
- 10.2. The EMB **approved** the Notice of Submission, **noting** the risks.
- 10.3. It was **noted** that the guidance for RO's, candidates and agents had gone out for comments at the beginning of January.
- 10.4. It was **noted** that no political parties commented on the candidates and agents guidance.
- 10.5. It was **noted** that the guidance for RO's has now been published on the DBCC website, with the candidates and agents guidance being published next week.
- 10.6. It was **noted** that the independent IT health check is taking place this week, next week there will be end to end user testing undertaken by DBCC staff and certain EA's. It was **noted** that the following week is the external audit looking at technical and operational readiness.
- 10.7. It was **noted** that the next steering group meeting is on the 25th February, after this EMB members will be sent an email with the recommendation that the launch goes ahead as planned.
- 10.8. It was **noted** that if there are any major issues which invokes contingencies then recommendations will be put to the members but they will need to approve this level of contingency.
- 10.9. It was **noted** that NCSC has offered advice and support on the testing for the platform.

11. Comms and marketing update

- 11.1. Item 10 was delivered verbally.
- 11.2. It was **noted** that the assets provided by Storm and Shelter for the advertising of the platform were approved by the Steering Group last week.
- 11.3. A discussion was held on the phrase 'Senedd Cymru' not being used on the Welsh radio version. It was **agreed** to add this in to avoid confusion on what election this refers to.
- 11.4. It was **noted** that the EC will pass these visuals on to the rest of their team, with any comments needed for the beginning of next week.
- 11.5. It was **noted** that assets were published on the DBCC website this morning for councils to use when promoting the platform.
- 11.6. A discussion was held on the assets. It was **noted** that the Welsh TV adverts will be on S4C and the English adverts on ITV and Sky.
- 11.7. The assets were **approved**, subject to minor amendments.

12. Communications update

- 12.1. Item 11 was delivered verbally.
- 12.2. It was **noted** that the Senedd elections comms group have been meeting bi-monthly but have now moved to monthly.
- 12.3. It was **noted** that the DBCC, EC and Senedd Commission have their own media plans which have all been compiled into one spreadsheet to avoid duplication.
- 12.4. It was **noted** that regular communications are issued to electoral officers.
- 12.5. It was **noted** that a briefing is arranged next week with local authority comms leads.
- 12.6. It was **noted** that media briefings have been happening and there are others planned around the launch date of the platform.

13. Electoral Commission

- 13.1. Item 12 was delivered verbally.

- 13.2. It was **noted** that the EC is on track for their campaign which kicks off on the 23rd Feb until April.
- 13.3. It was noted that the 'Welcome to Your Vote' week is happening next month.
- 13.4. It was noted that the household booklet will go out as planned on the 23rd March.
- 13.5. It was noted that the EC is meeting with the Gold Command on Tuesday around support locally within certain police forces. There will also be a national SPOC seminar which will bring together all of the force leads on the 16th February.
- 13.6. It was noted that the pre-election political parties panel is on Tuesday which brings together the Chief Execs, directors and general secretaries of the political parties in Wales.
- 13.7. A discussion was held on having representation from the political parties panel at a future EMB meeting to put forward any questions or concerns with election managers in Wales.
- 13.8. It was noted that the EC has met with 19 out of the 22 RO's across Wales in the last month.
- 13.9. It was noted that the EC has received responses from 22 authorities to their pre poll survey which will be shared with the EMB.
- 13.10. It was noted that the bilingual declaration script was published yesterday.
- 13.11. It was noted that there is a new template for collecting candidate contact details which have been circulated.

14. Welsh Government

- 14.1. Item 13 was delivered verbally.
- 14.2. It was noted that draft figures for the maximum coverable amounts has been circulated, with some issues with the data having been corrected.
- 14.3. It was noted that WG has written to political parties about diversity support grants. Elect Her and Race Equality First are able to provide support for Senedd and local elections.
- 14.4. It was noted that a workshop took place around automatic voter registration which included an evaluation of the pilots.
- 14.5. It was noted that the Member Accountability and Elections Bill is in front of the Senedd with the committee amending stage taking place on Thursday

12th.

- 14.6. It was noted that an amendment includes extending the EMB remit to cover the proposed recall polls.

15. UK Government

- 15.1. Item 14 was delivered verbally.
- 15.2. It was noted that the introduction of the Elections bill will be implemented soon. Once this is in parliament, communications will be sent around and a briefing on what the bill means for Wales will be provided.
- 15.3. It was noted that there has been a green light on flexible voting pilots at local elections in England this May.
- 15.4. It was noted that UK Gov will be trialling a voting hub on polling day and early voting in the days leading up to the polling day on the 7th May.
- 15.5. It was noted that Paul Docker, who is retiring at the end of this month, has offered for people to get in touch with him for further information on Royal Mail.

16. Association of Electoral Administrators

- 16.1. Item 15 was delivered verbally.
- 16.2. It was noted that the AEA conference took place on the 25th-27th January which generated a lot of positive feedback.
- 16.3. It was noted that nomination training is taking place and a Q&A session will occur at the Wales branch meeting on the 3rd March.
- 16.4. It was noted that regular weekly drop ins will continue during the election period via Teams and will commence on the 24th March.
- 16.5. It was noted that the majority of polling staff are receiving training across constituencies. The English and Welsh language versions are being finalised.

17. AOB

- 17.1. A discussion was held on the March meeting and it being in the beginning of the election period. It was agreed to have a condensed agenda.

Date of Next Meeting: 6th March 2026

DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 6th MARCH 2026 AT CP2 AND MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present: Karen Jones (Chair); Eifion Evans (Deputy Chair); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Beverly Owen (Member); Martin Nicholls (Member); Neal Cockerton (Member); Paul Orders (Member);

DBCC Officers attending: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Jo Nelson (Senior Elections Manager); Rhydian Fitter (Communications and Engagement Manager); Ellie Chapman (Democratic Health Policy Officer)

Invitees: Cath Uphill (EC); Rhydian Thomas (EC); Michael Kay (WG); Mathew Xerri (WG); Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council); William Whiteley (WG); Elan Closs Stephens (EC); Rhys George (AEA); Becca Crosier (MHCLG); Clare Sim (AEA); Ywain W (NCSC); Simon Belcher (SWP); Arwyn Jones (Senedd Commission)

Apologies:

Time Started: 10:01

Time Finished: 11:46

1. Declarations of interest

1.1. None.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

2.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6th February subject to minor amendments.

3. Action Log

3.1. Consideration was given to item 3.

3.2. It was **noted** that as a result of issuing the practice notes, a few actions have been closed off.

3.3. It was **noted** that a letter to Royal Mail has gone out as agreed at the February meeting, signed by Shereen Williams on behalf of the Board.

- 3.4. It was **noted** that a re-recording for the radio and TV ads for the Platform has been completed as agreed at the February Board meeting.
- 3.5. It was **noted** that the first assurance questionnaire has been sent out and the second will go out next week.

4. Elections Planning Group (EPG) – update and issues arising

- 4.1. Consideration was given to the report dated February 2026.
- 4.2. It was **noted** that concerns were expressed about the lack of guidance on election funding, an update was given by WG at the AEA Branch meeting this week to say it will be on its way soon. It was **noted** that, pending confirmation from Ministers, the guidance should go out on Monday.
- 4.3. It was **noted** that there were concerns expressed around the timings of the AVR rollout and the capacity of elections teams to deliver it.
- 4.4. **ACTION:** To start a risk register for local elections and bring this back to the Board when the agenda is less busy.
- 4.5. It was **noted** that the second half of the EPG meeting included a webinar on accessibility particularly around blind and partially sighted voters. It was highlighted that template letters have been sent to some councils requesting reasonable adjustments specifically requesting the RNIB accord device.
- 4.6. **ACTION:** To remind CROs that this is a live issue.
- 4.7. A discussion was held on the expectations of the RNIB and what they might do after the election where authorities have not had an Accord device.
- 4.8. It was **noted** that there is pressure from the BBC around the inclusion of vote totals in the result declarations, which is not required by legislation. There is an optional section on this included in the EC count template script. ESM's have been contacted to try and gauge how many intend to do this and it is **noted** that NPT has been considering an ordering of the declaration, to include vote totals.
- 4.9. **ACTION:** It was **agreed** that the EMB would provide informal guidance so there is consistency across Wales.
- 4.10. It was **noted** that at a recent by-election, polling staff were telling people to remember to bring their ID for the May election despite it not being needed.

5. **EMB Assurance update**

- 5.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 27 February 2026.
- 5.2. It was **noted** that responses were broadly positive and authorities were advanced in their plans for the election.
- 5.3. It was **noted** that data was shared by the EC on poll cards and postal vote dispatch dates.
- 5.4. It was **noted** that there is some variation across constituencies on the dispatch dates of postal votes and poll cards. There will be some instances where people in part of a constituency will get their poll card 10 days before others in the rest of the constituency.
- 5.5. It was **noted** that people were asked if they would like any additional support from the Board, nothing was raised.

6. **Senedd elections 2026 risk register**

- 6.1. Consideration was given to item 6.
- 6.2. It was **noted** that a lot of the actions are now closed with mitigating actions having been taken, those outstanding being risks for monitoring throughout the election period.
- 6.3. It was **noted** that the indemnity assurance and funding arrangements will be covered in the WG guidance next week. The RM sweeps will be covered as part of a WG contract with Royal Mail.
- 6.4. **ACTION:** To add this to the risk register and bring this back for the April meeting.

7. **Platform project update**

- 7.1. Item 7 was delivered verbally.
- 7.2. It was **noted** that the platform was successfully launched on 2 March.
- 7.3. It was **noted** that the advertising campaign is running.
- 7.4. It was **noted** that where there have been some minor technical issues, Storm have provided swift fixes.
- 7.5. It was **noted** that the next phase will ensure all the constituency pages are published as soon as there is information to go on them, setting up for the

election notices and promoting the polling station accessibility information.

- 7.6. It was **noted** that the freepost election leaflets will be promoted once they're available.
- 7.7. It was **noted** that officials will have access to the analytics from later today.
- 7.8. It was **noted** that WG is appreciative of the platform, with Ministers being positive.

8. Communications update

- 8.1. Item 8 was delivered verbally.
- 8.2. It was **noted** that the Comms group met last week.
- 8.3. It was **noted** that a briefing for local authority comms teams took place last month with the Senedd Commission, EC and DBCC.
- 8.4. It was **noted** that there are two more meetings before the Senedd election and thought is being given to how this will run leading up to the local elections in 2027.
- 8.5. It was **noted** that one of the key issues discussed at the group was misinformation and online abuse, including how to manage this.

9. Electoral Commission

- 9.1. Item 9 was delivered verbally.
- 9.2. It was **noted** that the EC registration campaign has launched.
- 9.3. It was **noted** that Welcome to your Vote week begins next week, only 14% of young people were aware of the upcoming election.
- 9.4. It was **noted** that the EC's household booklet is due to go out at the end of the month.
- 9.5. It was **noted** that the RO survey was issued in January to gather information on preparations ahead of the election and was completed by ESMs.
- 9.6. It was **noted** that the EC has met with all CROs to discuss their plans for May.
- 9.7. It was **noted** that the survey shows administrators don't see any major new risks and the challenges broadly mirror past polls. A stable capacity for electoral teams was reported and there were points raised about late surges in postal vote applications which remains an operational risk.

- 9.8. It was **noted** that coordination varies widely across cross boundaries, with some operating with formal protocols and SLAs and others using more informal meetings.
- 9.9. It was **noted** that the responses showed a slight divide between the CRO and RO responsibilities for the election with some ROs deferring on certain issues to the CRO.
- 9.10. It was **noted** that most councils have planned candidate and agent briefings.
- 9.11. It was **noted** that eight councils rely solely on virtual proof checking for the poll cards and ballot papers and there is a slight increase in risk with this approach compared to visiting the printers.
- 9.12. It was **noted** that 12 councils said they would be using electronic registers which is a significantly higher proportion than other UK nations. All 12 have contingency plans in place for printed backups of the register.
- 9.13. It was **noted** that at the time of the survey, the majority of RO's had identified their venues for the count and verification. Staff training was in place for CROs.
- 9.14. It was **noted** that authorities have been working with the Senedd Commission to encourage strong youth engagement across Wales.
- 9.15. It was **noted** that the survey indicated weak engagement with qualifying foreign nationals. A third of councils don't have plans to work with civil society groups and were citing resource constraints as a reason for this.
- 9.16. It was **noted** that all but one council expect to meet the accessibility requirement as there are a number of stations that are not fully accessible with no alternatives.
- 9.17. It was **noted** that only two councils are offering support in other languages to electors with limited English and Welsh, which is significantly lower than other nations.
- 9.18. It was **noted** that there was some uncertainty amongst some authorities as to who their SPOC was.
- 9.19. It was **noted** that the majority of respondents recorded a neutral or satisfied response to questions around support from the EMB, with some criticism around late information.

10. Policing Update

- 10.1. It was **noted** that governance and command structures have been set up early across Wales, making sure to ensure consistency of service across

Wales.

- 10.2. It was **noted** that regular catch ups take place, emphasising the collation of intelligence.
- 10.3. It was **noted** that there were 37 incidents last year involving Senedd members that were mainly malicious communications.
- 10.4. It was **noted** that one of the biggest threats is online and misinformation via social media and email.
- 10.5. It was **noted** that significant training and awareness efforts have been undertaken, highlighting concerns around AI generated misinformation.
- 10.6. A discussion was held on the role of the SPOC being limited to electoral fraud issues and the best way to ensure resources for other election issues. It was highlighted that SB will meet with other chief officers to ensure full governance on harassment and public order.
- 10.7. It was **noted** that the EC met with all police SPOCs last month to discuss these points and will publish an informal crib sheet to highlight responsibilities from a SPOC level to clarify what the expectations are.
- 10.8. A discussion was held on the recent Gorton and Denton by-election, highlighting the pushback from one party that the election had been stolen by the Greens through malpractice.
- 10.9. A discussion was held by the NCSC who has offered to provide assets in terms of cyber security to help the ongoing security briefings. They encouraged reporting any threats around the election so they can look for trends.
- 10.10. A discussion was held on the candidate and agents briefings and if there is a consistent take up between parties. It was **noted** that there is not the same engagement.
- 10.11. The EC suggested bringing representatives from the Senedd Parties Panel to this group to discuss engagement issues at the candidate and agents briefings.
- 10.12. A discussion was held on the nomination forms potentially being inaccurate or incomplete and this taking up a lot of time and effort repeating what was mentioned in these briefings.
- 10.13. A discussion was held on documenting what actions are being taken to engage all political parties.

Welsh Government

- 10.14. Item 10 was delivered verbally.
- 10.15. It was **noted** that the charges order guidance will come out next week.
- 10.16. It was **noted** that WG has been working with colleagues in UK Government around security scenarios if an incident were to occur, involving other agencies such as the police and EC.
- 10.17. It was **noted** that the remit of the EMB has been extended to cover recall polls in line with evidence provided, this is now part of the Member Accountability Bill and there is a further amending stage on the 17 March.
- 10.18. It was **noted** that WG is required to table an updated regulatory impact assessment next week and are updating some of the estimated costs of running a recall poll that will be in line with the charges order.
- 10.19. A discussion was held around security and whether there have been questions from the public or media about the gap between the close of the poll and the start of the verification and count. This has been picked up by the EC in conversations with CROs.

11. UK Government

- 11.1. Item 11 was delivered verbally.
- 11.2. It was **noted** that UK Govt has been working with WG and other partners on election security.
- 11.3. It was **noted** that candidate guidance was issued by JESP earlier in the year.
- 11.4. It was **noted** that they are working with Home Office colleagues to be clear on who is doing what in the policing space.
- 11.5. It was **noted** that the Representation of the People Bill is now in Parliament. This covers franchise conduct, registration and political finance plus harassment and intimidation issues.
- 11.6. It was **noted** that the Bill goes into committee on the 18 March with the AEA, EC and EMB being invited to give evidence.
- 11.7. It was **noted** that at the end of March there will be a Report from Philip Rycroft on foreign interference in elections and democratic processes, with a particular emphasis on finance.
- 11.8. A discussion was held on the new Senedd being in place in May and not being able to predict what the appetite for convergence will be post-May 2026.

- 11.9. A discussion was held on auto registration and the timeline for Westminster being for implementation by 2030 but with WG pushing for this to be implemented in Wales earlier.

12. Association of Electoral Administrators

- 12.1. Item 12 was delivered verbally.
- 12.2. It was **noted** that there is a nomination drop-in for members on the 23 March.
- 12.3. It was **noted** that there is an election drop-in held weekly from the 24 March.
- 12.4. It was **noted** that a webinar was held on 3 February with the people who ran the Runcorn and Helsby by-election.
- 12.5. It was **noted** that a check in and connect forum for ESM's is being set up to discuss issues around flags and other queries.

13. AOB

- 13.1. It was **noted** that the EC is getting intelligence from political parties over concerns around Royal Mail's capacity to deliver.
- 13.2. It was **noted** that the EC and AEA have been having regular meetings with RM at a UK level and that they will be increased to twice a week in April.
- 13.3. It was **noted** that a meeting was also convened by WG colleagues with various suppliers including RM, who were keen to stress they have no significant concerns at this stage.
- 13.4. It was **noted** that in previous elections the WECB issued guidelines around proofing the ballot paper. A discussion was held on the EMB issuing similar guidelines and it was noted that slides had been shared by the EMB in Scotland on this topic.
- 13.5. **ACTION:** EMB to circulate slides shared by the Scottish EMB on proofing.
- 13.6. It was **noted** that the EC out of hours advice line starts from the 23 March and will be picking up calls until 9pm Mon-Fri and on weekends and bank holidays until the election.
- 13.7. It was **noted** that the Scottish EMB ran training this week in relation to the nomination process.

Date of Next Meeting: 10 April 2026