

National Assembly for Wales
The year in review

Summary of the annual report
2009 – 2010



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

The National Assembly for Wales – the year in figures

- 122,910** The number of visitors to the Senedd during the year.
- 17** The average number of applications for every job advertised by the Assembly.
- 5** The Green Dragon Level retained by the Assembly as a result of an ongoing improvement programme. The Assembly is one of only 11 organisations in Wales to hold this accreditation.
- 18,865** The number of telephone enquiries received by the Assembly.
- 64** The number of Plenary sessions held during the year.
- 18** The per cent reduction in the Assembly's travel emissions as a result of significant reductions in air travel, the introduction of a low-emission pool car and a new low-carbon car hire contract.
- 11,653** The number of people who visited the Arts and Crafts exhibition held in the Senedd during the Urdd Eisteddfod.
- 303** The number of Assembly committee meetings streamed live on Senedd.tv.
- 248** The number of events held on the Assembly estate.
- 4,222** The number of oral questions tabled.
- 1,000** The number of responses the Children and Young People Committee received as part of its inquiry into safe places to play and hang out.
- 885** The number of questions tabled to the First Minister.
- 528** The number of schools from across Wales who visited the Assembly.
- 1,744** The number of followers the Assembly has on Twitter.

Major milestones in the tenth year of devolution

May 2009

The Assembly's multimedia outreach bus is launched.

June 2009

The Sustainability Committee undertakes an inquiry into flooding in Wales. The Committee uses the Assembly bus and holds a series of public meetings around Wales to hear directly from those areas that had been flooded. The Committee produces a short video from the recorded 'voxpops' and the report, published in February 2010, is well received by the Welsh Government.

June 2009

A public, online log of Assembly Members' expenses claims is launched on the National Assembly website. Over 2,000 people view the pages within 24 hours of their going live.

July 2009

The Getting it Right for Wales report is published following a comprehensive and far-reaching independent review of Assembly Members' pay and allowances. The Assembly Commission accepts all 108 recommendations.

July 2009

The National Assembly, in conjunction with the Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Government, launch Step Up Cymru, a scheme to encourage under-represented groups to engage in the democratic process.

October 2009

The Senedd becomes one of the UK's most energy efficient public buildings when its Display Energy Certificate rating is upgraded.

October 2009

Assembly Members back a new law that will strengthen the role of the Assembly's Commissioner for Standards.

November 2009

The Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee reports on its inquiry into the use and regulation of sunbeds.

December 2009

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Wales Branch officially marks and celebrates the 60th anniversary of the modern Commonwealth, an event which is attended by over 130 invited guests from over 30 Commonwealth countries.

December 2009

An independent panel begins reviewing the provision of bilingual services by the National Assembly for Wales, as part of the Assembly's strategic goal of being a "truly bilingual institution".

January 2010

The National Assembly for Wales is ranked 47th in the top 100 gay-friendly places to work in the UK.

February 2010

Members of the National Assembly for Wales vote in favour of a referendum to enhance the legislative powers of the Assembly.

March 2010

Following months of extensive refurbishment, the landmark redbrick Pierhead building on the National Assembly's Cardiff Bay estate reopens its doors to take on its new role as a unique events and visitor attraction.

March 2010

The Assembly's European and External Affairs Committee holds a formal meeting in Brussels – the first time the Committee has met formally with all four Welsh MEPs to discuss European matters of importance to Wales.

The past year saw the National Assembly for Wales mark ten years of devolution in Wales. To mark the occasion, we look back on a decade that saw the Assembly develop into a robust and mature legislature for Wales.

How the National Assembly for Wales was created

In 1997, the Secretary of State for Wales published a White Paper, *A Voice for Wales*, which set out proposals for a devolved assembly in Wales.

A referendum was held in September 1997 and the people of Wales voted in favour of an assembly for Wales.

When the Assembly was first established in May 1999, it did not have the power to make laws but it could make subordinate legislation in certain areas such as agriculture, health and education. This legislation was usually concerned with detailed changes to the law made under powers from an existing Act of Parliament.

In July 2000, the First Minister announced that a group of Assembly Members representing all political parties would be set up to review the Assembly's procedures. The group's report recommended that there should be a separation between the legislature and the executive.

In 2002, the Richard Commission was set up to consider the Assembly's powers. The Commission, chaired by Lord Richard, recommended that the legislature and the executive be separated and that the legislature should be given primary law-making powers.

In June 2005, the *Better Governance for Wales* White Paper was published by the Secretary of State for Wales. It included proposals for enhanced powers as well as a proposed transfer of primary legislative powers over all devolved issues at an unspecified point in the future.

The Assembly today

The Government of Wales Act 2006 came into effect in May 2007 and marked a significant milestone in the Assembly's history, changing the legislative landscape of Wales. It created a new Assembly; a fully-fledged legislature with the power to make laws for Wales (known as Assembly Measures) in certain areas, and provided a means for the Assembly to gain further powers from the UK Government in devolved areas of legislative responsibility.



Deng mlynedd
o ddatganoli

—
Ten years
of devolution

A referendum on the Assembly's powers

In October 2007, the All Wales Convention was set up by the Welsh Government to establish what the public thought about more law-making powers for the Assembly.

Its report concluded that a move to full law-making powers for the Assembly in all devolved areas offers substantial advantage over the current arrangements. Following this, on 9 February 2010, the Assembly agreed a formal proposal for a referendum, which involves recommending to the Queen that the necessary legislation is made to allow a referendum to be held.

Since then, the First Minister has advised the Secretary of State for Wales of the Assembly's proposal. It is now for the Secretary of State either to lay draft legislation containing an Order before both Houses of Parliament, or to write and notify the First Minister of her refusal to do this, giving her reasons.

Subject to the approval of the Order by the Assembly and both Houses of Parliament, and the making of the Order by the Queen, a referendum will be held.

At present, the National Assembly has powers to make laws for Wales on some subjects within the 20 devolved areas. The Assembly can gain further powers to make laws in those areas with the agreement of the UK Parliament on a subject by subject basis.

If most people vote yes in this referendum, the Assembly will gain powers to pass laws on all subjects in the devolved areas without first needing the agreement of the UK Parliament. If most people vote no, then the present arrangements will continue.

It is likely that this referendum will be held in 2011.

Devolved fields

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

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



Pleidleisiwch

—
Vote

The Pierhead helped Wales forge its identity 'through water and fire' in the late nineteenth century; today its aim is to inform, involve and inspire a new generation to forge a Wales for the future.



Pierhead



The Pierhead – helping inform, involve and inspire

On 1 March 2010, following months of extensive refurbishment, the landmark redbrick Pierhead building on the National Assembly's Cardiff Bay estate re-opened to take on its new role as a unique events and visitor attraction.

The Pierhead was redeveloped with the aim of satisfying the huge public interest in the building's history, while simultaneously enabling it to function as a venue for public debate and Assembly-sponsored events.

The former home of the Cardiff Rail Company now includes – among other features – a permanent exhibition telling the story of the Pierhead and Cardiff docks; an interactive dining table with some of Wales's most iconic figures and artefacts from Captain Scott's ship, the Terra Nova, which set sail for the Antarctic from Cardiff in 1910.

Within a month of its opening, almost 10,000 visitors passed through the doors of the Pierhead, establishing it as one of the capital's top attractions.

Events that have already been held at the Pierhead include an exhibition showcasing the work of Welsh photojournalist, Philip Jones Griffiths, and the inaugural Pierhead Sessions. The Sessions were a series of talks and discussions on various political and cultural issues and brought together the sharpest minds to focus on issues that affect Wales and the world.

Cardiff Bay has been at the forefront of Welsh economic and civil identity for the best part of 200 years, from its role as one of the biggest ports in the world during the age of King Coal to its current role at the centre of governance in a devolved Wales.

The Pierhead has been a central part of this landscape since it was built, and its refurbishment was an exciting project in the Assembly's 10-year calendar.



A more transparent Assembly

In 2008, an independent review panel was established to carry out a review of Assembly Members' pay and allowances for travel, accommodation, funding for constituency and regional offices and support staff.

The panel, chaired by Sir Roger Jones, took evidence from members of the public, former and current Assembly Members and members of private and public sector bodies. They also looked at how other parliamentary bodies, including those in Queensland and New Zealand, offer remuneration and financial support to their members.

The panel's recommendations were published in July 2009 in the report, *Getting it Right for Wales*.

Sir Roger Jones, chair of the panel, said that the commissioning of this review in spring 2008 was a testament to the Assembly's long-standing commitment to accountability and transparency, and that the Assembly's wholesale acceptance of the recommendations contained in the panel's report allowed the National Assembly for Wales and Assembly Members to re-establish the necessary confidence and trust of the people of Wales in the devolved democratic process.

By the end of the financial year, 47 of the 108 recommendations had been implemented, with the remainder scheduled to be implemented by May 2011.

As a result of the panel's recommendations, the number of Members entitled to claim for a second home was reduced from 51 to 25. In addition, a public online log of Assembly Members' expenses claims was launched on the National Assembly website in June, allowing everyone to see, at the click of a mouse, what expenses their Assembly Members had claimed.



www.assemblywales.org
assembly.info@wales.gsi.gov.uk
assembly.bookings@wales.gsi.gov.uk
T 0845 010 5500

Engage with the Assembly on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Flickr.

© National Assembly for Wales Commission Copyright 2010

The text of this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading or derogatory context. The material must be acknowledged as copyright of the National Assembly for Wales Commission and the title of the document specified.