



How to Lobby the National Assembly for Wales:

Introduction

Since the opening of the National Assembly for Wales in 1999 the way in which voluntary organisations in Wales work has undergone great deal of change. Many decision makers are now more accessible to us both geographically and because of new ways of working and there are now more opportunities for organisations to have their views heard. Policies and some legislation on many of the most important issues for organisations in Wales are now made at the Assembly with more chances for individuals and groups to feed into the policy development and scrutiny processes.

That said it's important to remember that not all areas are devolved and Wales has a complex devolution settlement. An important first step in any lobbying activity is working out who makes the decision you want to influence and where to focus your efforts - yours may be a local issue, something devolved to Wales, something reserved to Westminster or even something that relates to Europe.

The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government

One of the most important fundamental principles for any organisation wishing to influence decision makers in Wales to understand is the difference between the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government.

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. It is made up of 60 Assembly Members who each represent a constituency or a region. Its home is the Senedd in Cardiff Bay and its equivalent at a UK level is the UK Parliament.

The **Welsh Government** is the devolved Government for Wales. It is made up of the First Minister (currently Carwyn Jones) plus 7 Ministers and 3 Deputy Ministers and the Counsel General. The Welsh Government is supported by the civil service and is responsible for a range of policy areas that have been devolved to Wales. It is currently a Labour minority government. Its equivalent at a UK level is the UK Government.

Both of these institutions have an interest in hearing from Wales' voluntary sector organisations and mechanisms for the sector to have their views heard. The Welsh Government has a statutory third sector scheme and each Minister meets with representatives of the sector twice a year but you can also make individual approaches to Ministers or Government departments. The National Assembly for Wales has a range of

mechanisms that organisations can use to engage with Assembly Members from petitions through to feeding into the scrutiny of legislation. This guide explores these mechanisms in more detail and will help you to make the most of the opportunities they offer.

How to use this guide

This guide is designed to give smaller voluntary sector organisations, and those new to policy and lobbying in Wales, some information on how to use their resources most effectively in their lobbying work. It provides a foundation upon which they can develop their own campaign planning and highlights the mechanisms available for influencing the National Assembly for Wales.

We are grateful to Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations for their assistance in the production of this guide, some of the information within is taken from their guide - How to lobby the Scottish Parliament.

2 - Getting Started

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is any contact with those in power that is designed to influence their actions in some way. The word 'lobbying' comes from the days of hanging about the lobby at Westminster, hoping to grab the attention of an MP as they went by. It has sometimes been given shady connotations by past scandals concerning people using money to buy influence in government, but in modern politics, lobbying is a positive activity, and politicians are generally keen to hear from community representatives, and people representing specific voluntary sector interests.

Why Lobby?

Those in power need to hear from those representing the people that the policies they make will affect, in order to benefit from their expertise and make better policy. Voluntary organisations can inform the work of politicians in a variety of ways that are explored in this pack, but the aim is the same - to influence the politicians to act in some way for the good of the community or interest represented by the voluntary organisation. It is important to remember that the National Assembly for Wales is accountable to the people of Wales, and so is the Welsh Government, through the National Assembly.

However, even with a modern and participative Assembly, not all of the people are in a position to make their needs and views known to those in power. Voluntary sector organisations are often in a better position than vulnerable individuals to put their case forward, and create a collective voice. Remember, your expertise can be used to help formulate better policies. But even with mechanisms in place for the National Assembly and the Welsh Government to reach out to voluntary groups you will often need to be proactive and initiate contact in order to have the best chance of being heard. With over 30,000 voluntary groups and organisations in Wales AMs will not be able to make contact or keep in touch with all of them. Keeping yourself up to date with policy developments and lobbying for change can be resource intensive and smaller organisations in particular may struggle to find the time to prioritise this work. This information pack aims to introduce the tools that can enable you to be more effective with the time that you do have and increase your impact.

What are you asking for?

One of the first key questions to address before you undertake any lobbying activity is "what do we want to happen?" Planning is the most essential part of undertaking any campaign and you need to ensure that you are approaching decision makers with a clear idea of what you would like them to do for you. This is also where an understanding of devolution and the powers of the National Assembly for Wales is important. You need to ensure that you are asking the right person to take action for you to avoid wasted effort and frustration on your part.

Who are you targeting - a bit about Assembly Members

When considering who to approach it is important to consider the different roles that Assembly Members have and how this can affect what they might be able to do on your behalf. Learning a bit about AMs can be a very useful exercise.

Constituency / Regional - Assembly Members will either represent a Constituency or a Region. They will have a keen interest in ensuring that they are in touch with the needs of people in their constituency or region and will want to hear about the concerns of groups and individuals that they represent. Highlighting how the issue you are campaigning about affects people in an AMs constituency / region is a key way to try to secure their help and support.

Which party? - Think about whether you want to approach an AM from the party / parties that are in Government or whether you want to use the opposition parties to champion your cause and put pressure on the Government to act. Both options have different pros and cons but you will need to be politically aware and frame your messages differently depending on which you choose. Also remember that different political parties have different core values at their heart and this may affect how likely they are to support you.

Government Ministers - The Welsh Government is relatively accessible and you may wish to first try to raise any issues with the relevant Government Minister or officials (civil servants). Sometimes it can be helpful to at least try this first so that you can establish whether the Government are supportive of your cause and if not, why not. If you do not get the response you were hoping for then you may wish to contact opposition Assembly Members to take up your issue for you.

It is also worth remembering that your local (constituency or regional) Assembly Member may well be a member of the Government - if this is the case then what they can and will do for you will obviously differ from what a backbench Assembly Member can do for you.

Committees and Special Interests - Committees are one of the ways in which the National Assembly for Wales scrutinises the work of the Welsh Government. AMs sit on different committees according to their areas of interest and the portfolios they have been given by their parties. For example, the opposition party's spokesperson for the Environment will sit on the committee that scrutinises the work of the Environment Minister and a party spokesperson on Health would sit on the committee that scrutinises the work of the Health Minister. Finding out who the spokespeople are within each party and looking at who sits on each committee is a good way of working out who to approach about your issues. You will also find AM biographies on the National Assembly for Wales website (and on some AMs own websites) and it can be worth looking into what jobs AMs may have had prior to entering the Assembly or what special interest they have to see who may be interested in your issue.

And remember the difference between the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government

The National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) is the *legislative* body for Wales. Its role is to scrutinise the work of the Welsh Government and hold the Government to account.

The Welsh Government is the *executive* body for Wales. It is made up of the First Minister, other Welsh Ministers, Deputy Ministers and the Counsel General.

The distinction between the two bodies is the same as the distinction between the UK Parliament and the UK Government. This may seem obvious but it is fundamental to effective lobbying in Wales. Being clear about the difference between the two can be very beneficial for third sector organisations in order to ensure that you are talking to the right people about the right things and using all available opportunities to influence decision makers and have your say.

What the Charity Commission says about Lobbying and Campaigning

Lobbying is a legitimate activity that voluntary organisations can undertake as part of their work. Information about the Charity Commission guidelines on campaigning and lobbying can be found in their information sheet CC9 available on their website (www.charitycommission.gov.uk/detailed-guidance/managing-your-charity/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities-cc9/).

3 - Who to lobby?

How many representatives do I have?

At any given time, each Welsh citizen will have upwards of 11 democratically elected representatives working in different institutions, from town and community councils (at least one councillor, if there is a town or community council in your area), to local authorities (at least one councillor), the National Assembly for Wales (five Assembly Members - AMs), the UK Parliament (one Member of Parliament - MP), and the European Parliament (four Members of the European Parliament - MEPs).

One of the quickest ways to find out who represents you in your area is to use the following website: www.writetothem.com Using your postcode, it will tell you who your elected representatives are for all institutions except town and community councils.

Town and Community Councillors

There are 735 town and community councils in Wales with about 8000 elected councillors and they are considered to be the grassroots of government in Wales. You may have several town or community councillors representing your area. Conversely, there may not even be a town or community council in your area. They are concerned with very local issues, will often work in partnership with others to progress local projects and commonly provide services such as:

- community taskforces
- community centres, village halls and indoor recreation centres
- war memorials
- public information signs and notice boards
- public seating and bus shelters

The best way to find contact details for your local town and community councillors is through your local authority, which should have the details of all the town and community councils in their area. You can also find out more about Town and Community Councils in Wales through "One Voice Wales" the organisation that represents and supports them (www.onevoicewales.org.uk)

Local Authority Councillors

There are 22 local authority areas in Wales, all of which are Unitary Authorities. This means there is one council providing all local authority services in the area, rather than both a district or borough council and a county council.

There are over 1200 democratically elected councillors serving on the 22 local authorities in Wales and each councillor will represent a specific area known as a ward (or electoral division). You may have more than one councillor representing your ward. Some wards that are more densely populated can be designated as multi-member wards. Your local authority will be able to tell you about your ward councillor(s) or visit www.writetothem.com. The issues that are dealt with at local authority level are:

- the council tax
- tackling disadvantage and rebuilding communities
- local transport issues

- community safety and crime reduction
- social care services
- education and lifelong learning
- housing
- arts, sports and culture
- the environment
- planning applications
- local tourism strategies

Assembly Members (AMs)

The National Assembly for Wales is made up of 60 elected Assembly Members (AMs) and every Welsh citizen will have 5 Assembly Members representing them. How does this work? There are 40 constituency areas in Wales e.g. Wrexham, Cardiff West, Blaenau Gwent and each constituency has its own elected AM. However, there are also five larger electoral regions in Wales (North Wales, Mid and West Wales, South Wales West, South Wales Central and South Wales East) and each of these regions has a further four AMs representing the people in that region.

You can find out who the AMs are for your area by visiting the National Assembly for Wales website at www.assemblywales.org or go to www.writetothem.com

The Assembly has responsibility for and the ability to makes laws on the following issues that have been devolved from the UK Parliament:

- agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development
- ancient monuments and historic buildings
- culture
- economic development
- education and training
- environment
- fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety
- food
- health and health services
- highways and transport
- housing
- local government
- National Assembly for Wales
- public administration
- social welfare
- sport and recreation
- tourism
- town and country planning
- water and flood defence
- Welsh language

For more information on the National Assembly for Wales, how it works and how you can influence it see our other information sheets including “The National Assembly for Wales - basic facts and glossary”; “Assembly business and committees” and “The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government.”

Members of Parliament (MPs)

Even though Wales now has its own National Assembly and can make some of its own laws, its powers are limited and it is important to note that Wales is still part of the UK. This means that Wales still has 40 democratically elected Members of Parliament (MPs) serving in the UK Parliament at Westminster. The MPs are elected in the same 40 constituency areas as the constituency AMs, so there will be one MP representing you in your area.

You can find out who your MP is by visiting the UK Parliament website at www.parliament.uk or go to www.writetothem.com

Given that the National Assembly only has the potential to make laws in certain areas, it follows that the UK Parliament is still the sole legislator in some areas including:

- defence
- foreign affairs
- fiscal, monetary and economic policy
- broadcasting
- social security
- immigration
- employment law
- policing and criminal law

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

Because Wales is part of the UK and the UK is part of the European Union, we elect people to the European Parliament to help make decisions about issues that affect people at a European level. The whole of Wales is one of 12 UK European Parliamentary regions and we have four Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) representing us in Wales.

Fundamental to the European Union (EU) is the idea that many areas of policy can be more effective if established at a European rather than a national level. Between 60 per cent and 80 per cent of new UK laws are estimated to have had their origins in the European Union. The European Parliament's main role is to analyse and amend all EU legislation, firstly through its committees and then in the full session.

The Parliament can also request the European Commission to draft legislation in any areas that it feels require EU action. It is therefore difficult to categorise the issues covered by the European Parliament because it can cover many things, including:

- removing trade barriers to boost growth and jobs
- improving the environment
- human rights issues
- fighting international crime and illegal immigration

Given the wide-ranging brief of MEPs, it is always worth bringing burning issues to their attention.

You can find out who your MEPs are by visiting the website of the UK Office of the European Parliament at www.europarl.org.uk or go to www.writetothem.com

4 - Introduction to Welsh devolution and the Government of Wales Act 2006 - what powers lie in Wales?

History of devolution

Most people view Welsh devolution as a very recent phenomenon. However, administrative devolution began in the early twentieth century with the creation of separate Welsh departments within the existing Ministries for Education, Agriculture, Insurance and Health. A Minister for Welsh Affairs co-ordinated a wide range of functions that were transferred to Cardiff between 1951 and 1964. It was in 1964 that the Welsh Office was established and the first Secretary of State for Wales was appointed. . The first attempt at the creation of a Welsh Assembly was in 1979 when a referendum was held by the UK Government on St. David's Day. The people of Wales voted 4:1 against devolution at this time. During the 1980s the Welsh Office continued to grow and further functions were transferred up to the 1990s when a step-change occurred.

In 1997 the UK Government published a White Paper called 'A Voice for Wales' which proposed a National Assembly for Wales. This was supported by Welsh people in a referendum later that year and resulted in the passing of the Government of Wales Act 1998 and the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in May 1999.

The Assembly was established as a single corporate body with some powers and responsibilities transferred from the Secretary of State for Wales. These limited powers allowed the Assembly to make general rules and regulations (known as subordinate legislation) under existing UK Acts of Parliament and decide on policy priorities in Wales, but it could not make its own laws (known as primary legislation) or raise its own taxes.

However, devolution has been an ongoing process in Wales and in 2002 the independent 'Richard Commission' established by the then First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, to review the scope of the Assembly's powers and other related constitutional issues. Its report in 2004 prompted the next phase of devolution in the form of the UK Labour Government's 'Better Governance for Wales' White Paper which became the 'Government of Wales Bill 2005' and subsequently the 'Government of Wales Act 2006' which came into force in May 2007.

When the Government of Wales Act 2006 came into force in May 2007, the National Assembly was given the potential power to make primary legislation for the first time. These Welsh laws were known as Measures and could only be made if they fell within the 20 devolved fields AND permission was given from Westminster first on a case by case basis. However, contained within the Government of Wales Act 2006 is the provision for Wales to be granted further powers but only if Welsh citizens agree to this through a referendum. This referendum took place and was won on 3rd March 2011.

In the referendum, the people of Wales were asked whether they agree that the National Assembly for Wales should have law making powers in the 20 areas. They voted YES thus ending the system of requesting powers on a case by case basis from the UK Parliament and giving the National Assembly the power to make laws for Wales in the 20 policy areas.

The Government of Wales Act 2006

The current devolution settlement and the powers of the National Assembly for Wales are set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006. This Act came into force in 2007 and marked a significant shift for the National Assembly in terms of both its powers and its processes.

The Act officially split the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government (referred to in the Act as the Welsh Assembly Government) creating a clear distinction between the legislature (the National Assembly, the body that makes laws) and the executive (the Welsh Government, the body that makes decisions and implements policies).

The Act also gave the National Assembly primary law-making powers for the first time. Initially, (between 2007 - 2011) the Assembly had the potential to make legislation in the 20 devolved areas but only if Westminster gave them permission to do so, on a case by case basis. However, the Act also contained provision for a referendum on this issue. The referendum was held and won in March 2011 and the National Assembly now has the power to make Wales - specific primary legislation in the 20 devolved areas.

The devolved policy areas are:

- Agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and rural development
- Ancient monuments and historic buildings
- Culture
- Economic development
- Education and training
- Environment
- Fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety
- Food
- Health and health services
- Highways and transport
- Housing
- Local government
- National Assembly for Wales
- Public administration
- Social welfare
- Sport and recreation
- Tourism
- Town and country planning
- Water and flood defences
- Welsh language

It is useful to stress that whilst this means Wales can make laws in many different areas, it does not mean it can make laws in all areas, and there are still many areas that have not been devolved. This means that the UK Parliament at Westminster is still the sole legislator in areas including defence, foreign affairs, fiscal, monetary and economic policy, broadcasting, social security, immigration, employment law, policing and criminal law.

The third sector and the Government of Wales Act 2006

The Act provides the third sector with significant opportunities to have its voice heard on issues that matter to it and the people it works with and represents. In order to make sound policies and laws, the Assembly needs to hear from its citizens. The third sector is uniquely placed with its front-line experience and expertise to bring forward robust evidence to influence the laws that are made. The legislative processes have created a range of opportunities to influence, for example: liaising with the relevant

Minister, Assembly Member, or Committee; contributing to pre-legislative consultation; inputting to the legislative scrutiny process; and using the public petitions process.

5 - How to prepare and submit a briefing

Why send in a briefing?

Briefings can be useful for a number of different purposes. For example, you may want to brief committee members on a subject that you would like them to hold an inquiry into, or to give your organisation's viewpoint on an issue that is already on their timetable. You might want to brief AMs in advance of a debate to inform speeches and votes, or a briefing can be useful to support an AM in other work for your organisation - eg to make sure they are fully informed on an issue before putting a written or oral question to a Minister. Whatever the particular purpose of your briefing, the following general guidelines can help:

Briefings are *brief*

Preferably keep it to no more than two sides of A4. Refer your audience onto further detail by all means, but in this paper be concise. If you find you have to go beyond 2 sides of A4, include an Executive summary.

Let them know who you are

Start with an introductory paragraph to your organisation and its interest in the issue. End with a contact for further information.

Who/ what is it for?

Are you addressing all AMs? One particular AM? A committee? You may want to introduce your subject differently, according to who is to read it. Are you giving AMs information in advance of a debate? If so, focusing the briefing around the motion, if it has been published in time, helps them to make use of the information.

Be clear what you are asking for in the briefing - e.g. a vote for/ against something, or to have a question asked, or to have an issue aired in a committee meeting. If AMs can see what action is needed they are much more likely to respond than if they receive general information with no directions as to what you want them to do about it.

Be clear

Remember, the AMs probably won't have the same knowledge and expertise on this particular matter as you. Give a short background, and if possible, examples of how people are affected (being careful of confidentiality issues). Keep to plain English. Avoid long rambling sentences, jargon or unexplained acronyms. Break into paragraphs with spaces, titles and bullet points, so that readers can refer back easily to points made. Include details of a contact for further information, making sure that they will be available.

Hard copy or email?

AMs will generally prefer to work with emails, as these can be quickly and easily accessed, stored and incorporated into speeches. All AMs have email addresses and these are available from the Assembly Members section of the National Assembly for Wales website www.assemblywales.org/memhome.htm

If you are emailing, put a clear title in the subject header, eg 'RSPCA briefing for 10th May debate on animal welfare'.

Don't forget the researchers or clerk

Party researchers can flag up the issues for you. Also, the National Assembly for Wales has a Members' Research Service that provides confidential and impartial information and research support to the Assembly's scrutiny and legislation committees, and to all 60 individual Assembly Members and their staff. They need up-to-date information from external organisations and individuals with knowledge and expertise in relevant subject areas. E mail them at MembersLibrary@wales.gov.uk

If you are briefing committee members, don't forget to include the clerk, who can be very helpful in getting an issue onto the committee agenda.

Publicise your briefing

Briefings should be publicised as widely as possible in an attempt to influence opinion and to gain support for your viewpoint. Think about both online and offline methods of dissemination - what websites, media opportunities and mailings can you use? You might also want to consider publishing your briefing alongside a seminar or conference.

6 - How to write a consultation response

You have no doubt seen some of the many consultation documents or calls for evidence issued by the Welsh Government, the National Assembly for Wales, the UK Government, the UK Parliament and other public bodies. We issue a regular consultation bulletin which lists all the open consultations that may be relevant to third sector groups in Wales. You can find them here - www.wcva.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-influence/consultations,-responses-and-briefings.

You want to share your views in order to influence the development of policy and legislation, but how do you go about this? Regardless of the type of consultation you are responding to, the same general guidance applies:

Is the consultation one for you to respond to?

Third sector organisations are sometimes asked to respond to a large number of consultations. The opportunity to share your expertise and to influence policy development is generally one to welcome, but responding to consultations does take time and resources. Before you start, consider whether the consultation concerns an area of priority for your organisation. Consider also whether your umbrella body may be making a response and whether it would be better use of limited resources to feed into their consultation response or write your own. Consider too whether you need to make a full in-depth response, or whether there is only a particular aspect of the consultation that is of interest to your organisation, in which case a brief statement of your main concern may be enough. Talk to other organisations to see what they intend to do as it can be quite powerful to respond on points of common interest as an alliance.

Consult your members and board

Presuming that you have decided it is a consultation your organisation needs to respond to, you will need to be able to back up your views. Consulting your own members in turn will help with the quality of your response. A brief explanation of how your organisation consulted its members/client group on the matter will give the response credibility. If the timescale is too tight for this, and/or you already have the relevant information from previous work and contacts, just be sure to be clear about where you are getting the evidence for your views. You may also need to allow time to let your board see the consultation and contribute to and approve the response.

Follow the instructions

The details of where to send the response will be made clear in the consultation. Usually they can be sent in hard copy or emailed, but a preference for email format may be stated. Sometimes an online tick-box form is used. A closing date will be given. Try to stick to this, but if this is not possible, it can be worth asking whether a late response might be accepted.

Executive summary

If your response is more than two or three sides of A4, an Executive summary of your main points, or a concluding paragraph, will help get the message across.

Introduce yourselves

Give a brief introductory paragraph about your organisation, why it is interested in the consultation, and how you have developed your expertise in this area.

Answer the question(s) clearly and concisely

Consultations often take the form of a series of specific questions. If so, bear in mind that you will need to answer the question/s, and not just put down everything you know about the subject. A general rant might make you feel better, but is difficult for those analysing the response to make use of, and so is much less effective than considered responses to the questions put to you. If the questions do not cover all of the points you would like to make, consider whether the other points are relevant to this particular consultation, or would be better made on another occasion. If they are relevant, do include them, but try to incorporate them into your answers where it makes sense to do so, or else be sure to explain why they are relevant to the consultation. Remember too that you don't have to answer all of the questions - only answer those that are within the remit of your organisation.

To make it clear which question you are answering when, it can help to copy and paste the consultation question, in a different font, above the relevant part of your response. If this is too unwieldy, use the numbers of the questions, or give them a short title, so it is clear which point you are answering where.

Be constructive

Try to be constructive in your comments wherever possible. It is much more positive to try to suggest solutions rather than to simply say that you disagree with something.

Open consultations

If the consultation does not have a list of specific questions to answer, but is more general and open, still try to keep your response clear. Break it into short paragraphs. These can be titled for extra clarity. Remember to include a summary of the main points made if it is a long response.

Mention oral evidence

Many consultations or calls for evidence say that you can also give oral evidence. This basically means talking with a committee to develop further your ideas and arguments. If you are prepared to talk with a committee about your views and evidence you should mention in your written response that you would be prepared to give oral evidence. This does not guarantee an invitation to give oral evidence, but can be helpful for the committee to know which organisations are keen to speak with them. If you are really keen to give oral evidence to a committee you may need to alert them to this before you submit your full written response as they often schedule evidence sessions before the consultation deadline has closed. For more information see the information sheet on working with Committees.

7 - How to work with Plenary Sessions

Introduction

The way in which the National Assembly for Wales conducts its business is set out in the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders are essentially a set of rules providing the framework for how the Assembly should operate. The Business Committee of the National Assembly is responsible for scheduling the Assembly's work and must allow time for plenary meetings, committee meetings and meetings of political parties. An essential part of the Assembly Members' (AMs) role is to scrutinise the work of the Welsh Government and hold it to account. Another key element of their job is to make decisions about policies and priorities. All of this work is done during plenary sessions.

Plenary Sessions

Plenary is a meeting attended by all Assembly Members. It takes place on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons in the Siambr. The Presiding Officer publishes an agenda for each meeting which allocates time to Government, Non-Government and Assembly business. The agenda for plenary is published as part of the Business Notice on the Assembly website. This is normally available approximately two weeks in advance and it is useful to consult the forward timetable as it can give you an opportunity to prepare relevant briefings for AMs if a topic of interest to you is coming up.

For each week that the Assembly meets in plenary, time is allocated to Oral Questions to the First Minister, other Welsh Ministers, the Counsel General and the Assembly Commission. In addition Assembly Members can contribute to statements and debates and vote on tabled motions and amendments. Voting on motions is the way in which the National Assembly makes its decisions. There is also a member-proposed short debate each week at the end of Wednesday's plenary; the Presiding Officer holds a ballot and the successful Member (who can be any Member other than a member of the Government) proposes a topic. The Assembly can also make legislation in the 20 devolved policy areas. Assembly Members consider and amend Bills leading to Acts of the Assembly. Such legislation can only be enacted by resolution of the Assembly in plenary.

Members of the public are able to watch plenary and committee sessions from the public galleries in the Senedd. Plenary and Committee sessions can also be viewed on 'Senedd TV' (via the National Assembly for Wales' website) or the Democracy Live pages of the BBC website. The "Record of Proceedings" which is a verbatim record of Plenary business is published on the National Assembly website within 24 hours of each plenary session.

Using Plenary to raise your issues

There are various ways in which third sector organisations can use plenary proceedings to further their campaigning and influencing work. Some of these are:

- **Questions:** Organisations can ask backbench AMs to ask a question to a Welsh Government Minister during one of the question time slots. The First Minister answers questions on a weekly basis and the other Ministers answer questions on a 4 weekly basis. Questions must be approved by the Presiding Officer and need to be tabled at least 5 days before they need to be answered. This is an opportunity for organisations to elicit a statement from the relevant Minister on their issues or get an update on

the progress of a particular policy. It is also a chance to highlight any reports that you have published or campaigns that you have launched.

- **Short debates:** Organisations may wish to suggest potential topics for short debates to individual AMs or political parties. If an AM supports your suggestion and their name is chosen in the ballot then your issue will be debated in plenary. No decisions are made on the back of these debates but they can be useful opportunities to highlight issues and campaigns. You can also contact the opposition political parties and ask them to consider raising your issue in one of their opposition debate slots.
- **Briefings:** It is always worth looking at the forthcoming business in plenary to see if there are any debates imminent on issues relevant to your organisation. If something is coming up you may wish to write a briefing paper summarising your organisation's perspective on the issues and send it to AMs. (See our specific sheet on how to prepare and submit briefings).

Opportunities outside of Plenary meetings

Outside of plenary there is also the opportunity for Assembly Members to table Statements of Opinion. Statements of Opinion can be tabled by any Assembly Member, other than a Member of the Government, on matters affecting Wales. Statements of Opinion may be supported, opposed or subject to comment. Organisations can lobby Assembly Members to table a Statement of Opinion relating to a specific issue or campaign and it can be an effective way to bring these issues to the attention of other AMs. All statements of opinion are published on the Assembly website.

You may also find it useful to read the information on Cross Party Groups, Committees and How to prepare and submit briefings in conjunction with this information sheet.

8 - How to work with Committees

An Assembly Committee is a group of Assembly Members who meet regularly to scrutinise policy and legislation. Committees are generally “party-balanced” reflecting the number of Assembly Members representing each party within the Assembly. Welsh Government Ministers do not sit on committees but are regularly called to give evidence to the committees that are scrutinising their portfolio areas. Most committees meet in public. Committees in the Assembly carry out many functions: some scrutinise the policies of the Welsh Government and hold Ministers to account; some examine proposed legislation; and others have specific functions allocated to them by the Assembly or its Standing Orders. Details of the remit and responsibilities of each committee along with committee membership and contact details for the committee clerks can be found on the National Assembly for Wales website.

The Assembly’s rule book (Standing Orders) states that the Assembly must establish committees with the power to:

- examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the government and associated public bodies;
- examine legislation;
- undertake other specific functions (more later); and
- consider any matter affecting Wales

Some of the committees have been established to undertake specific functions. They are:

- Business Committee - responsible for the organisation of Assembly Business
- Standards of Conduct Committee
- Public Accounts Committee
- Finance Committee
- Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee
- Petitions Committee
-

The rest undertake scrutiny inquiries into the impact of government policies and activities and scrutinise proposed legislation. They are:

- Children and Young People Committee
- Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
- Enterprise and Business Committee
- Environment and Sustainability Committee
- Health and Social Care Committee

Transcripts are available for all committee meetings. Draft transcripts are published within five working days of the meeting, and final versions within 10 working days, on the appropriate committee's web pages.

Third sector opportunities to influence committees

Third sector organisations can be a very useful resource for committees as they are required to undertake detailed scrutiny of a variety of topics and can benefit from external expert evidence. When committees undertake an inquiry they will publish a call for evidence which third sector organisations may wish to respond to. They will also take oral evidence from external stakeholders and this can be a very good way of raising your issues at Assembly level. It is worth monitoring the committee web pages for announcements of future inquiries but it is also worth contacting the committee clerks of the committees relevant to your work and trying to establish a positive relationship with them. You may wish to give the Clerks a brief outline of your work and your contact details so that when inquiries are announced they will send you the information and may ask you to give oral evidence - the oral evidence sessions often take place while the inquiry evidence gathering is still on going so it is useful for the Clerk to be aware of your organisation from the outset as it may assist your chances of getting an oral evidence slot.

Giving Oral Evidence to committees - some tips

- You are likely to give evidence in one of the Senedd committee rooms, the session will be recorded verbatim (you will get chance to agree the written record) and is likely to be open to the public. You will sit around a table with the AMs on the Committee and the clerking staff, the Chair of the Committee will welcome you and start the questioning and the other AMs will then ask you questions in turn.
- Despite the use of the terms “evidence” and “witnesses” you are not there to defend yourself simply to help them with their scrutiny work and give your expert views on the issue. Committees are generally very friendly to voluntary sector witnesses and will be grateful for your contribution.
- The committee clerk may supply you with a line of questions they expect committee members to pursue in advance to allow you to prepare some responses. Don't expect the committee members to stick too rigidly to it though; it is a suggested line of questioning only. It is also helpful to take a look at the reports of previous evidence sessions, and at papers submitted for the meeting to get a feel for the sorts of questions that may be asked. The reports will also give you an idea of the different agendas or party lines of the different AMs, and the general committee stance on your issue, which can influence how the questioning goes.
- Usually it is the more senior people in an organisation who will give evidence as they need to be able to communicate clearly the aims of the organisation in response to questions. If it is your first time it can be a good idea to have an 'old hand' with you. If only one person has been invited to speak to the committee, you can ask the clerks if another representative could also come in. Some organisations have found it helpful to have a confident member or service user with them, who can give a first hand account of their experience on the sharp end of the policy. In this case you will need to make sure that they too are prepared for the formality of the committee, the use of microphones, and the word for word recording of what they say in the official report. If there is more than one person giving evidence from your own organisation, it can help to agree in advance who will talk about what.
- If you are giving evidence with other organisations, during a 'round-table' style discussion, or as part of a panel, take a look at the papers submitted by the others in

advance of the meeting. You might even be asked for your views on something that another organisation has proposed.

- Remember the different roles of the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government. It is backbench AMs you are talking to on the committee. Don't get angry with them for something that the Government has proposed. It is better to see the AMs as potential allies and to remember that they may be just as critical of the offending proposal as you are. If not, you will need to communicate your concerns persuasively to get them on side.
- Be clear in your presentation and responses to questions - avoid or explain acronyms and jargon and don't assume too much prior knowledge. The AMs may not share your expertise, and even if they do, there will be people reading the official report who don't, and you need to get your message across to all concerned.
- Often an AM will ask several questions at once. It can help to note down some reminders as they fire away, so that you can refer to your notes and answer all the points. (But if you have forgotten a question, be relaxed about asking them to repeat it - this happens a lot.)
- If you are asked a question that you feel unable to answer on the spot don't panic - an offer to send in written information usually goes down well.
- Don't feel obliged to stray outside of your organisation's remit because you are asked. It is quite reasonable to say, where appropriate, that your organisation does not take a view on a particular matter.
- Have a clear idea of what you would like the committee members to do, - action points for them to consider generally go down well.
- If you have offered to come back to committee members with information or further consideration of an issue, be sure to follow through on this, or your lack of communication might be seen as a loss of interest and you might lose ground made during the meeting.

How to get a Committee to look at your issue

The Committees plan their own work and this will be done well in advance of each Assembly term by the Committee and the Clerks. The Committee Chairs can be very influential in terms of deciding what inquiries the committee will hold and what issues they should address. It is worth knowing who Chairs the committee relevant to your area of interest (it may come under the remit of more than one committee) and which AMs are members of the committee. If you feel that an area of interest to you would benefit from scrutiny by an Assembly Committee (perhaps you lobbied for a Strategy that was agreed but has not been implemented or perhaps you have concerns about the effects of a particular WAG policy) contact the Clerks and/or Committee Chairs with your suggestions and reasons. All of this information can be found on the committee web pages.

More information about influencing the Committee stages of Legislation can be found in a separate information sheets.

9 - How to Petition the National Assembly for Wales

Overview

The petitions system provides a useful mechanism for Welsh citizens to let the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) know about issues that are affecting them. The Petitions system and Petitions Committee are developments brought about by the Government of Wales Act 2006. The system is similar to petitions processes in other countries but there are important differences that make the Welsh petitions system a very useful and effective mechanism for engaging with the NAfW. The Welsh public can petition the NAfW on any issue that appears to be within its powers. Petitions that are admissible (meet with the criteria set by the NAfW) are passed to the Petitions Committee who consider each petition and decide what further action, if any, is required.

How do I submit a petition?

Petitions can be submitted in writing or via the NAfW's online e-petition system. The NAfW are keen to encourage people to use the e-petitions system as signatures can then be collected on-line. The e-petition system can also be very useful for organisations as it can make it easier to circulate information to others about how to sign up to the petition. The NAfW staff can assist with the scope and wording of an e-petition before it goes on the website to ensure that it is as effective as possible.

What sort of things can my petition be about?

Your petition must be about a subject that the NAfW has power over. NAfW currently has significant powers in the following 20 areas:

- Agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and rural development
- Ancient monuments and historic buildings
- Culture
- Economic development
- Education and training
- Environment
- Fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety
- Food
- Health and health services
- Highways and transport
- Housing
- Local government
- National Assembly for Wales
- Public administration
- Social welfare
- Sport and recreation
- Tourism
- Town and country planning
- Water and flood defences
- Welsh language

The petitions system can be used to highlight a need for a new law, request that the NAfW ask for the powers to make certain laws if they don't already have them, or change an

existing law laid down by an Act of Parliament. It is not just for legislation though - the system can also be used to ask for policy changes. Looking at petitions that have been submitted so far, before you start to write your own, can be very helpful for ideas about scope and wording. These can be found at: www.assemblywales.org/admissible-pet.htm

What are the criteria for an admissible petition?

In order for a petition to be admissible (and therefore able to be considered by the Petitions Committee) it must meet the following criteria:

- It must contain at least 10 signatures or come from a corporate body.
- It must not contain offensive language.
- It must be within the scope of the NAFW's functions.
- It cannot be the same as/similar to a previous petition from the same person / corporate body submitted within the last year.
- It cannot relate to a subject already considered by the Petitions Committee within the last year.
- It cannot ask the NAFW to intervene in operational decision or actions of local authorities or Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies.
- It cannot relate to matters that are subject to legal proceedings in the courts.
- It cannot involve the adjudication of personal or commercial interests.

If a petition is deemed inadmissible the Petitions Committee clerk will write to the lead petitioner with an explanation as to why. The Committee clerks are able to provide advice and assistance on how to make your petition admissible and as such offer a very useful resource for anyone considering using the petitions process.

There are also some terms and conditions that must be met if you wish to host your petition as an on-line petition and collect signatures in that way. These include things like not including confidential or libelous information; use of appropriate language; endorsement of services or products etc. These are all fairly simple conditions to meet and the committee clerks can help with this if necessary.

What will happen to my petition and what outcomes can I expect?

Once a petition has been deemed admissible it goes through the following process:

Stage 1 - Secretariat Assessment. The petition will be assessed by the committee clerk who may ask the lead petitioner for further information or evidence. The petitions team may also prepare briefing notes for the committee highlighting the policy and legal context. This stage can take a few weeks.

Stage 2 - Committee Consideration. The petitions committee is a committee of Assembly Members (AMs) representing all parties within the Assembly who meet every two weeks when the Assembly is sitting. Their sole purpose is to consider the public petitions that have been submitted. This is a fairly unique arrangement and means that as long as your petition meets the set criteria it will go before the committee - an excellent opportunity to raise your issues in front of a cross-party group of AMs.

The Committee will consider each petition and decide upon what further action needs to be taken. In doing this it can request further information from petitioners, relevant organisations or Assembly Government Ministers either in writing or by asking them to present to the committee in person. Once this information has been received the Committee will then decide a further course of action for the petition. The Committee may also refer the petition on to another Assembly committee e.g. Communities and Culture scrutiny Committee, if it fits within their remit. The committee may also close a petition and take no further action if it chooses to.

Possible outcomes - There are a variety of possible outcomes from submitting a petition and it is important to manage your expectations and consider other lobbying options outside of the petitions process as appropriate. The petitions system is very useful for raising awareness of an issue that AMs may not previously have been aware of or may not have been high on the political agenda. Outcomes from the process can include a NAfW committee holding an inquiry into an issue or an individual AM taking the issue on and asking questions of Ministers or holding a debate on the issue in the Assembly. The committee may also pass the petition to another body e.g. the Environment Agency who can then consider the issue and act where appropriate. Not all petitions will lead to new legislation being created or changes in Government policy but those possibilities do exist and you can attract some very useful publicity and support for your issue in the process. It is an excellent opportunity to ask a committee of the NAfW to scrutinise the issues that are important to the people of Wales.

Committee limitations - the committee cannot overturn decisions of UK Government, the Welsh Assembly Government or local authorities; scrutinise issues that are not devolved to the NAfW or are under the jurisdiction of local authorities; or get involved in legal disputes.

What are the opportunities for the third sector?

The petitions process provides a very accessible route for getting your issues raised at National Assembly level. Provided that your petition meets the required criteria it *will* be considered by the Committee providing an excellent platform for bringing your issue to the attention of AMs. The system can provide a route into other committees and can raise public, political and media awareness of a particular campaign or issue. It is also an opportunity to focus on gathering evidence and support for a particular campaign. Unlike some other lobbying mechanisms this route does not require the backing of an individual AM in order to get the process started. As this is a new system the NAfW are keen to encourage and support organisations to use it and are able to provide support in order to ensure your petition is as effective as possible.

Tips for using the petitions system

- Think about how your request fits with the powers of the NAfW. Consider whether the NAfW has the power to do what you are asking? If not, do you need to alter the wording of your petition so that you are asking the NAfW to request powers or asking them to make a representation to Westminster instead?
- Be very clear about what you want the committee to do. Use the petition to ask for something rather than just raise an issue of concern - offer a solution to the problem you are highlighting. For example, you may wish to highlight the current effects of not having a certain piece of legislation in place, provide evidence for it and ask the NAfW to legislate in that area.

- Take a positive approach. Don't use the system just to criticise a current policy or piece of legislation, be positive and suggest alternative ways of doing things and positive actions.
- When objecting to a Government proposal get your petition in as early as possible.
- Talk to the clerks first. They will provide support for you in drafting your petition to ensure that its scope and wording allow for the best possible outcome and make it admissible to the committee stage.
- Gather signatures from a variety of supportive bodies, it is not always about quantity but more about quality. Any petition with 10 signatures will be accepted (provided it meets the other criteria), this means that in some respects 10 signatures can be as good as 110 but it is helpful to gather signatures from a wide range of people and organisations to show that you have consulted and have broad support for your proposal.

10 - Making Legislation

Introduction

In March 2011 the citizens of Wales voted in a referendum to change the way that legislation is made in Wales.

We used to have a very complicated system which meant that in order to make laws in Wales, the National Assembly first had to obtain permission from the UK Parliament in the form of a Legislative Competence Order (LCO). Once the Assembly had secured legislative competence, it could then go on to make Welsh laws that were known as Measures.

This system has now changed. The Assembly no longer have to go through the LCO process because all the necessary permissions are now in place. But remember, laws can only be made in the 20 devolved areas that the Assembly has jurisdiction over. The Assembly cannot make laws over things such as defence, immigration or taxation that the UK Parliament retains jurisdiction over.

The precise detail of the areas in which the Assembly can now make laws can be found in Schedule 7 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. This explains what is covered in the 20 devolved policy areas and sets out whether there are any exceptions within each area. Schedule 7 is the place to start looking if you are thinking about developing legislative proposals to suggest to the Assembly.

Nor will Welsh laws continue to be called Measures. From now on proposed laws will be called Bills and enacted laws will be called Acts. But any Measures made since 2007 will continue to be called Assembly Measure and will continue to have the same legal effect.

Who can introduce legislation?

The process for making legislation now means that a Bill must first be introduced into the Assembly. A Bill is a draft law and once it has been considered and passed by the Assembly and given Royal Assent by the Monarch, it becomes an Act of the Assembly

A Bill can be introduced by:

- The **Welsh Government** (most Bills will be introduced by Government Ministers)
- **Assembly Committees**
- An Assembly member who wins a **private members ballot** - AMs can put their name forward for the ballot along with an outline proposal of what they would like to introduce.
- The **Assembly Commission** - but only relating to its own functions.

What is the legislative approval process?

The following process is for considering a Government Bill in the Assembly:

Stage 1

This involves the consideration of the general principles of a Bill by a Committee, followed by the agreement of the general principles by the Assembly. The Committee will focus on the main purpose of the Bill, rather than looking at the fine detail as this will happen at a later stage of the process. The Committee may invite representations from interested parties and may open a consultation period to invite oral and written evidence to inform its work.

Once the Committee has reported, the Assembly will be asked to debate and agree the general principles, by a vote in Plenary. If the Assembly does not agree the general principles at Stage 1 and the vote is lost, then the Bill will not progress any further.

Stage 2

Once the Assembly has agreed to the general principles, the Committee will then consider the Bill in detail including voting to accept or reject individual amendments put forward by Assembly Members. Any Assembly Member may table amendments to the Bill and there is no limit to the number of amendments that can be tabled. However, only the Committee Members can vote on the amendments. This stage can only be finished when all amendments have been considered and voted on.

Stage 3

This follows the completion of Stage 2 and involves the detailed consideration of the Bill by the Assembly in Plenary and amendments made by Assembly Members. Any Member may table amendments to the Bill, but this time not all amendments have to be considered. The Presiding Officer decides which amendments are considered at Stage 3 and they are each voted on.

Stage 3a

There is an optional, additional amending stage, called the Report stage, which can take place between stages 3 and 4, if proposed by the Member in Charge and agreed by the Assembly.

Stage 4

This is the final Assembly stage and it entails a final vote in Plenary to pass the final text of the Bill. No amendments are allowed at this stage and if the Assembly does not agree at this stage then the Bill fails

Stage 5

If passed by the Assembly at Stage 4, a Bill must receive Royal Assent from the monarch before formally becoming a piece of law - an Act of the Assembly.

Other Bills

Bills can also be introduced by Assembly Committees, individual Assembly Members of the Assembly Commission and will generally follow a similar procedure to that set out above.

Opportunities to influence legislation

There are opportunities for the sector to influence Assembly Bills both pro-actively and reactively.

The Welsh Government and Assembly Members need to hear from the sector, with its wealth of front-line experience and expertise, on what legislation is needed. The evidence base that the sector can bring forward can be extremely powerful in lobbying for change.

Lobbying the Welsh Government and Assembly Members could influence the legislative programme that the Welsh Government commits to each year, or influence the Bills that could be brought forward by Assembly Committees or Members who win the ballot.

Likewise, using the public Petitions route might be another way of generating interest in legislation around a specific issue that might then be taken forward by a Committee or AM.

The Members' Research Service (MRS), which is a service available to all Assembly Members is also a useful body to be in contact with. They provide background and research reports as requested by AMs and Committees and by providing reports and information to the MRS, the sector can potentially get its messages across.

In terms of influencing Bills, there are opportunities to contribute to pre-legislative consultation and to continue to lobby for amendments in stages 2 and 3 of the process, although stage 3 is more limited because not all tabled amendments are selected for consideration. There is also sometimes a consultation stage even before the Bill is laid before the Assembly for general consideration. The Welsh Government or an Assembly Member may undertake a consultation exercise before starting the official legislation process in order to ensure that any Bill they do propose has already been scrutinised and amended by key stakeholders thus increasing its chances of successful passage through the official process.

Subordinate Legislation

Acts of the Assembly are primary legislation, as are Acts of the UK Parliament. Subordinate legislation is an umbrella term for laws made under the authority of an Act. Subordinate legislation is also known as secondary or delegated legislation or statutory instruments.

In passing an Act, the Assembly approves its principles, general objectives and important points of detail. However, the Act will usually give Welsh Ministers, or some other body, subordinate legislation powers to make detailed rules and regulations or compel action relating to how the main law is implemented.

How is subordinate legislation made?

Although, it can be made by a number of bodies, including local authorities and other statutory bodies, most subordinate legislation of concern to the Assembly will be made by Welsh Ministers.

There are three main categories of subordinate legislation depending on the procedure used for scrutinising and approving it. These are known as:

- No Procedure - usually published, but requiring only approval by Ministers (or their officials).
- Negative Resolution - published, but, within 40 days, the Assembly can agree to annul (cancel) the legislation if a Member tables a motion requesting it.
- Affirmative Resolution - published in draft and requiring the whole Assembly to approve it before it can come into force.

Occasionally, for particularly important or contentious legislation, a so-called super affirmative procedure is used. This is the affirmative procedure but with additional requirements for a period of consultation before legislation can be put before the Assembly for approval.

How is subordinate legislation scrutinised?

The Assembly's Standing Orders ensure that an Assembly Committee is allowed up to 20 days to report to the Assembly on any issues raised by subordinate legislation.

Affirmative resolution subordinate legislation is always debated and must be approved by the whole Assembly before it can come into force. Negative resolution subordinate comes into force automatically unless an Assembly Member requests that it is debated by the Assembly (by tabling a motion asking that the legislation is annulled).

11 - How to work with Cross Party Groups

What are Cross Party Groups?

Cross Party Groups, as their name indicates, include AMs from the different main political parties. They also include non-AM members, such as voluntary organisation representatives and others. Cross-Party Groups (CPGs) may be set up by Members in respect of any subject area relevant to the Assembly. A Group must include Members from three political party groups represented within the Assembly. CPGs are not formal Assembly groupings and are not, therefore, bound by any of the Assembly's Standing Orders and they have no formal role in policy development.

There is relatively little information about Cross Party Groups on the National Assembly website but where groups are officially registered on there (an AM needs to do this) the members, remit of the group and contact details of the secretariat are listed. There are currently 52 CPGs listed on the website. They don't all meet regularly, AMs are often stretched thinly between several cross party groups, so their attendance at any one meeting may be quite low. However they can be useful lobbying tools despite this and they can be an effective way of highlighting research and bringing expertise on your subject matter into the parliament through visiting speakers, meeting papers etc. and of getting your issues raised at the Assembly.

Starting a Cross Party Group

If you would like to start a Cross Party Group, check first that there is not already established along similar lines. If your subject area fits into that of an established group, it may be easier to contact the group to find out whether they might be interested in your suggested topics for future discussion.

If there is no similar group to the one you would like to start, you need then to generate some interest among AMs. If you already have established contact with AMs with an interest in your area, then great, start the ball rolling by discussing a possible group with these contacts. They may know of other likely members. Otherwise you need to do your research and find, using the AM biographies and watching the plenary sessions AMs in different parties who may be interested in the topic. Then you need to contact them and put forward your idea. If you get enough interest (bearing in mind that you will need at least 3 AMs, from different parties) you will then need to identify one AM to formally Chair the group. They can then register it on the Assembly website.

It is important to remember also that although you may get a group started, you will not own the group. However, often the secretariat to a cross party group will be a representative of a voluntary organisation that was involved in the establishment of the group, and this person will play an important role in the running of the group. Providing the secretariat can be rather labour intensive, but you may well find the experience of working with the group alongside interested AMs, and exploring the various issues around your subject matter to be a very worthwhile lobbying activity, good for familiarising yourselves with the AMs and their different policy positions and honing up your arguments, as well as for potentially getting your issue raised in the Assembly.

12 - How to work with Manifestos

What is a manifesto?

A manifesto is a document showing commitment to particular policies. There are two main types of manifesto that can be useful to voluntary organisations: political party manifestos and voluntary organisation manifestos.

Political party manifestos

During the run up to an election these manifestos are made available to the public to indicate the policies and laws that the party would introduce if they were elected to government. Historically the public could hold an elected party to account through the party manifesto. If something was in the manifesto but not introduced, then the voters could quite rightly say that they had been misled. However, it is not quite as straightforward as that in practice these days particularly due to the formation of coalition governments (which are common in Wales) where the parties have to select elements of each of their manifestos to include in the agreed coalition programme and leave other bits out.

When a party takes into account that they may be in government, and very likely in coalition with another party, there can be a tendency to produce a manifesto that is more vague and broad, or that is not radical in its detail. Opposing manifesto commitments among coalition parties can cause big problems. This sometimes makes it a little harder for a voluntary organisation to get a firm commitment on their issue in the manifesto of a main party. Another point to bear in mind is the broader financial context - proposals that are not costly, or that will save public money will be appreciated during a period of recession or reduced public spending. In addition you need to consider that manifestos are aimed at voters, and that parties will probably only include your policy if it is seen to be a vote-winner. But if they do include it, this is very good news, as the manifestos of elected parties form the basis for the coalition agreement talks. Even if a party is unlikely to be a governing party, it can still be very useful to get your issue into their manifesto, as they may well get AMs voted in, who can raise your issue at the Assembly.

When and how to make contact to influence manifestos

It is worth making contact with political parties well ahead of an election (as much as a year in advance), when the manifesto documents are at the early stages of being worked up. A common mistake that organisations can make is to wait until the pre-election campaigning period to start lobbying candidates and asking them to adopt their policies. By this point it is too late for candidates and political parties to take your ideas on board because their manifestos will already have been written. Engaging with Political Parties early is essential.

Contact with the parties can be made through events, such as political party conferences, or by simply ringing up and asking to speak with the researchers and policy people in the party. (Remember, you and your members are voters and the party will want to know what is important to voters.) Offer to send them appropriate research and briefing papers. If you are going to develop your own organisational manifesto setting out who you represent, what you do and what you would like to see from a future Government you need to get this document out and about well in advance of the elections.

The four main political parties in Wales all have different mechanisms for developing their manifestos and agreeing what becomes Party Policy.

Some main things to remember are:

- Get in touch with the parties as far in advance of an election as possible (at least 9 - 12 months), ask them how you can feed your views into them and be prepared with ideas and evidence.
- Bear in mind that some parties will have an open call for evidence whereas others will produce consultation documents for you to comment on.
- Keep submissions relatively brief and easy to understand (avoid jargon etc). Outline your key asks and offer contact details so that they can get in touch if they would like further information.
- Give information about costings where you have it.
- Face to face meetings are really useful and worth trying to secure but bear in mind that the parties themselves may not have a large number of staff and may not be able to meet with everyone.
- Some manifestos will be written by party staff others by party members, in some cases it will be a group of people who work on the manifesto in other cases it will be one individual.
- Remember that political parties have their own internal structures and decision making processes for agreeing party policy so your idea may have to win the support of more than just the individual responsible for pulling the manifesto together.
- Policy development is an on-going process so try to get yourself on the parties' contact lists and involve yourself in any policy activity that they undertake between election periods.

Voluntary organisation manifestos

Voluntary organisations often find producing their own manifesto to be a very helpful lobbying tool. The process of writing the manifesto can also be helpful to the organisation in its work plan, as it has to identify a few priority policy areas for the organisation over the next few years. These key demands will need to be consulted on through the membership and worked up at board level. This means the manifesto document can be a very useful strategic document for the organisation itself. With this in mind it is useful to create a document that has a life beyond the election it has been developed for (avoid printing expensive copies with specific dates etc on) to allow it to be used for other purposes later on.

Secondly, making this manifesto document publicly available can help to build up and retain membership. Accessible from the home page of your website, it can provide a clear guide as to exactly what your organisation is about and what it is campaigning for. As time goes by, you can flag up successes so that potential new membership can see what your organisation has fought for, and where it has been effective.

You can also pass on the document, or the link to it, in all your contact with politicians and policy makers so that they are familiar with your aims. Again, don't forget the party researchers - get it out early enough, and follow up with face-to-face contact, and you may find some of your aims incorporated into political party manifestos.

Format

Keep the information in the manifesto clear and accessible. As always, don't suppose prior knowledge of the issues, illustrate them with real examples, avoid jargon and wordiness,

and be clear about what needs to change. As with a briefing, clearly head up the different parts to your manifesto, so that the main messages can be seen at a glance. It can be useful to send your manifesto out to all the candidates in an election, but remember that they will be receiving heaps of information from other bodies, so you will need to send something clear and bold to get their attention. If your manifesto is large, have a summary version that puts over the main points in a few sentences and refers people onto the main document for more detail.

Timing

You might think of producing a manifesto document in the run up to an election, but by then it will probably be too late to influence any party manifestos. You need to start planning your manifesto in the middle of the period between elections, because for maximum effect you will need time to consult your membership on priority areas, get your priorities agreed by your board, and the document drafted up and published before the political parties have finished drafting their own manifestos. Avoid producing expensive glossy documents that will not have a life beyond the election instead use the manifesto development process to create a flexible document that you can use after an election to raise the profile of your organisation.

Umbrella bodies and alliances

Consulting your members and working up your main policy priorities can be a very worthwhile exercise for the reasons given above, but it can also be very resource intensive. A good manifesto document will not be knocked out in a week. Smaller organisations and organisations focussed on service delivery may have to weigh up whether it is worth their while to put in the time and effort required. Another possibility is to join forces with other organisations in an alliance, so that the work will be shared, and you will have the benefit of a much wider combined membership behind the document (ie more voters behind the calls for action). Or you could contact your umbrella bodies to see whether they will be producing a manifesto document that you can feed your ideas into. That way you can get your concerns taken on board, your logo will appear on the manifesto, you can link to it from your homepage, but you will not have to do all the work involved in producing and distributing your own document.

Devolution issues

As with any lobbying activity, before you start, think carefully about whether your concerns deal with devolved or reserved issues. For example, if most of your demands were around pensions and benefits it would be useful to produce a manifesto for Westminster elections. If most of your concerns were around health issues, it would be useful to write a manifesto for the Welsh Assembly elections. If you want to address devolved and reserved issues in the same manifesto, be very clear and devolution-aware in your wording. Welsh Government Ministers cannot act or make a decision on a non-devolved issue but they can make representations to Westminster and AMs can liaise with, and put pressure on, MPs if they are concerned about a non-devolved issue. So if your manifesto primarily addresses candidates for the Welsh Assembly, but includes one or two non-devolved issues, call for pressure to be put on Westminster to act, rather than calling for devolved administrations to act outside of their remit.