



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Third 21-day review of preparations for holding the Senedd general election on 6 May**

DATE **9 April 2021**

BY **Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government**

I am making this statement under section 15(4) of the Welsh Elections (Coronavirus) Act 2021 ("the Act").

On 1 April, the Welsh Ministers completed the third review of the preparations for the holding of the 2021 poll for the Senedd ordinary general election. We can confirm that for the purposes of this review the criteria we published on 5 March under section 12 of the Act (for determining whether it is necessary or appropriate to postpone the poll for the 2021 Senedd ordinary general election for a reason relating to coronavirus) have not been met.

This Written Statement provides further information on the status of the indicators under the published criteria at the time of the review.

Criterion 1: Public Health situation (data correct as of 26 March)

Key Indicators:

Confirmed case rates.

The rate for Wales was 37.8 cases per 100k based on Public Health Wales data.

Hospital capacity.

As of 26 March the number of people with confirmed COVID-19 in hospital has decreased, with a weekly average of over 168 beds occupied, a 31% reduction from the previous period. COVID-19 ICU occupancy is decreasing, with a weekly average of 23 beds occupied, a 21% reduction from the previous period. The number of people currently recovering from COVID-19 continues to decrease and is at 469 as at 26 March, a 15% drop from the previous 7 day period.

Feedback from local health professionals (including incident management teams or outbreak control teams).

There was no feedback which would suggest holding the election is an unacceptable risk.

Feedback from local authority leaders and other local partners.

There was no feedback which would suggest holding the election is an unacceptable risk.

Rates of change in the Alert Level Indicators.

The Alert Level indicators were stable.

The progress of the vaccination programme.

The vaccination programme was progressing well. 1,427,183 individuals had received a first dose of the COVID 19 vaccine, while 437,937 individuals had received the two dose course of the COVID 19 vaccine.

Incidence of variants of concern.

Variants of concern were not considered to pose an unacceptable risk in the context of holding the election.

Criterion 2: Status of Preparations for the Election

Key Indicators:

Advice from the Welsh Government's Chief Medical Officer regarding the impact of the current spread of the virus on the safe running of the poll.

For the third review, the Chief Medical Officer was invited to report by exception by raising any changes to the advice provided for the second review of preparations.

The previous advice noted that the impact of transmission is likely to have the lowest impact if prevalence of COVID-19 is lowest. On this basis, the modelled estimates therefore recommended that the preferred election date should be on 6 May, rather than, illustratively, 8 July. This is because it is closest to periods of restrictions which are currently reducing the spread of the virus.

There has been no feedback to suggest that there have been any developments which would require changes to the previous advice.

The timing of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

The Police and Crime Commissioner elections are still scheduled for 6 May.

Feedback from Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission and other stakeholders, for example relating to the availability of staff and venues or capacity to process absent votes.

In the third review, we have asked the electoral community to report to us by exception, if for example there are material new or different issues or conclusions in relation to holding the election in a safe way on 6 May which should be brought to the attention of Welsh Ministers.

Feedback from Regional Returning Officers indicated there were no new issues to raise or report though they noted that there were still a number of logistical operational risks and challenges which remain relevant.

There has been no feedback from other stakeholders to suggest that there have been any developments which would impact upon the safe running of the poll.

As the criteria for postponement have not been met, full preparations for the election on 6 May will continue.

We are continuing to support Returning Officers and electoral administrators as they continue with preparations to reduce the risks associated with running an election during a pandemic, such as implementing social distancing and hygiene measures at polling stations and count venues.

In this review, we have given further consideration to our [elections guidance](#) including the specific [guidance on election campaigning](#). Canvassing will be allowed from 12 April, subject to restrictions, and the regulations and guidance have been updated accordingly.

The fourth and final review of election preparations will be completed by 23 April. In extremis, the Senedd could make a decision, subject to the agreement of 40 out of 60 Members, to postpone the poll at any time up to dissolution on 29 April. However, as outlined in this Written Statement, based on the information available the Welsh Government's firm intention at this point remains for the election to be held on 6 May as planned.