# DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

**HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 12th JUNE 2026 AT CP2 AND MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**Present:** Ian Bancroft (Chair); Eifion Evans (Deputy Chair); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Beverly Owen (Member); Neal Cockerton (Member); Paul Orders (Member);

**DBCC Officers attending:** Shereen Williams(Chief Exec); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Jo Nelson (Senior Elections Manager); Ellie Chapman (Democratic Health Policy Officer)

**Invitees:** Cath Uphill (EC); Rhydian Thomas (EC); Mathew Xerri (WG); Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council); William Whiteley (WG); Elan Closs Stephens (EC); Rhys George (AEA); Becca Crosier (MHCLG); Clare Sim(AEA); Simon Belcher (SWP); Rob Thomas (Solace); Ella Griffiths-Downing (EC)

**Apologies:** Sarah Ling (Consultant); Rhydian Fitter (DBCC); Martin Nicholls (Member); Michael Kay (WG); Anna Daniel (Senedd Commission); Ywain W (NCSC)

**Time Started: 10:30**
**Time Finished: 11:58**

## 1. Declarations of interest

**1.1.** None.

## 2. Minutes of previous meeting

**2.1.** It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10th April 2026.

## 3. Action Log

**3.1.** Consideration was given to the Action Log.

**3.2.** It was **noted** that there are four outstanding actions.

**3.3.** It was **noted** that the Member Accountability Act gained Royal Assent in April after the last meeting and this action can now be closed off.

**3.4.** It was **noted** that one outstanding action involves the CPD work which is ongoing in the background.

**3.5.** It was **noted** that work has begun on the stakeholder mapping exercise.

**3.6.** It was **noted** that an update is needed from UK colleagues on proposed reforms.

**3.7.** It was **agreed** to clean the Action log and start afresh for the new year, leaving one action outstanding.

## 4. Annual meeting

**4.1.** It was **noted** that the Chair wrote out to existing statutory members of the Board and 4 Members have confirmed continuing their membership.

**4.2.** It was **noted** that the Board is looking for an additional Member for someone who is earlier in their term as a RO for retention.

**4.3.** It was **noted** that these appointments will need to go to the DBCC Board for approval.

**4.4.** The Board gave thanks to Paul Orders for his contributions to the Board and wished him luck in his new adventures.

**4.5.** The Board gave thanks to Eifion Evans for his contributions as Deputy Chair and in his work for WECB.

**4.6.** It was **agreed** that Neal will assume the Deputy Chair role.

**4.7.** It was noted that the Chair is meeting with key stakeholders and all 22 ROs on a regional basis in the coming weeks.

**4.8.** It was **noted** that the Board will work with chairs of working groups to formulate agendas in a more collaborative way.

**4.9.** A discussion was held on disseminating information from the Board to ensure information is going to returning officers and electoral service managers effectively.

## 5. Reporting of minutes

**5.1.** It was **noted** that the minutes from the past year will be translated and published on the DBCC website.

**5.2.** It was **noted** that this will be done on a more regular basis, once the minutes have been signed off to ensure they are available in a more timely manner.

## 6. Senedd elections 2026 – Review of election

**6.1.** A discussion was held on postal votes and Cardiff's supplementary run of around 13,000 postal packs. It was **noted** that they were given assurances by Civica that the run had been printed and dispatched.

**6.2.** It was **noted** that Cardiff's mitigating actions included a reprint and hand delivery of postal packs, with turnout for those hand delivered packs being 64%.

**6.3.** It was **noted** that Cardiff issued a dispute notice to Civica, who will put an additional set of measures in place to prevent the reoccurrence of the issue.

**6.4.** It was **noted** that all the statutory processes on Cardiff's side were completed correctly with applications processed on time and data exported and sent to Civica.

**6.5.** It was **noted** that the review is still ongoing and could have run the risk of destabilising the election in Cardiff along with the media around it.

**6.6.** It was **noted** that lessons learnt will be brought back to the Board.

**6.7.** A discussion was held on the support provided by the AEA, EC, EMB, WG and police.

**6.8.** A discussion was held on the tightening of legislation around the cross-border element, particularly around funding which would help defend some of the challenges around how to manage financial claims.

**6.9.** A discussion was held on the cross-boundary working between Bridgend, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan going well.

**6.10.** A discussion was held on the count going well, highlighting the work of the election teams.

**6.11.** A discussion was held on the intensity of the media involvement at the Casnewydd Islwyn count and the increased requests from agents.

**6.12.** A discussion was held on strengthening the support of the EMB and the EC for candidate and agents briefings which were poorly attended and would have alleviated some of the questions from candidates and agents during the count in particular.

**6.13.** It was **noted** that the AEA has written to Ministers at UK government, Scottish government and Welsh government highlighting that elections are becoming more challenging. It has highlighted key areas such as the lack of attendance at candidate and agents briefings, the emergence of new political parties and having the infrastructure in place to support their candidates.

**6.14.** A discussion was held on the number of by-elections that have occurred since the 7th May, where candidates have been disqualified or have already resigned.

**6.15.** A discussion was held around capacity of suppliers and issues with printers.

**6.16.** A discussion was held on the Senedd Political Parties Panel yesterday where it was **noted** that the democratic mechanisms held up and the focus was on the result.

**6.17.** A discussion was held on the pressure electoral administrators are under, with the cross boundary arrangements requiring goodwill to ensure everything ran well.

**6.18.** A discussion was held on elections becoming more complex and harder to administer to the standard expected as there is additional complexity, divergence, duplication of work and increased operational risk.

**6.19.** It was **noted** that the EC will be publishing a report on the election in September and they will gather feedback ahead of that.

**6.20.** A further discussion was held by the EC on the candidates and agents briefings being poorly attended. They **noted** that this is similar across England and Scotland this year.

**6.21.** It was **noted** that in the Senedd Political Parties Panel meeting yesterday, political parties also recognised the low turnout at candidate briefings and highlighted they were clear to candidates that the briefing is important.

**6.22.** It was **noted** that the EC will work with the political parties and reps from this group to think of innovative ways to ensure candidates are involved in briefing sessions.

**6.23.** Thanks was given to the police, highlighting their planning for this election.

**6.24.** It was **noted** that a lot of work took place early to develop cross-boundary relationships.

**6.25.** It was **noted** that issues arose around budget management, DRO responsibilities and differences between the varying demands on local authorities. It was **noted** that legislation could have addressed this.

**6.26.** It was **noted** that the Platform processes went well but placed additional demands on election teams, highlighting a concern for next May.

**6.27.** It was **noted** that nominations went smoothly with a lot of nomination packs being submitted electronically however there was a lot of contact with inexperienced candidates.

**6.28.** A discussion was held on the choreography of the count varying across constituencies.

**6.29.** It was **noted** that there were high levels of voter registration throughout the duration of the EC campaign.

**6.30.** It was **noted** that the household booklet sent out by the EC had produced increasing levels of awareness about registering to vote and changes at the election.

**6.31.** A discussion was held on local elections next year and ensuring the communications activity of stakeholders doesn't overlap and is good value for money.

**6.32.** A discussion was held on the complexity of different electoral reforms for Wales and the UK which has a knock on effect on communications and voter understanding.

**6.33.** It was **noted** that WG is planning a lessons learnt exercise and is looking at legislation around areas such as election costs and ballot paper ordering.

**6.34.** A discussion was held by SWP on the significant planning that went into the election. It was **noted** that there are still increasing issues of AI and deepfakes.

**6.35.** It was **agreed** to bring reflective comments to the September Board meeting around the role of the EMB.

**6.36.** It was **noted** that within the Members and Elections Act, there is a provision for a post legislative review conducted by a committee of the Senedd. It was agreed earlier this week that the Constitution, Justice and External Affairs Committee will pick up the review.

## 7. Local Elections 2027 – Elections Planning Group update and issues arising

**7.1.** Consideration was given to the Report dated 5 June 2026.

**7.2.** It was **noted** that the EPG will continue to meet every other month, in between meetings of the full Board with additional business being conducted by email where necessary.

**7.3.** It was **noted** that the group discussed a number of key issues that impacted the running of elections in May. This included the ordering of political parties on the ballot paper and the requirements for the declaration of results.

**7.4.** It was **agreed** to write to WG highlighting concerns and pressures relating the Canvass, OAVA and AVR.

**7.5.** A discussion was held on the directions issued for the Senedd election not being appropriate for local elections such as ballot paper colour.

**7.6.** A discussion was held on two sets of directions being issued last year, the EC would like this to be one set instead.

**7.7.** A discussion was held on the verification and count and whether this should be next day. It was **noted** that some EA's prefer a next day count and would like a recommendation from the EMB to arrange for this.

**7.8.** A discussion was held on the letter to WG and clarity on what it would contain in relation to the letter the AEA has written on the 6th May. It was **noted** that there is still a lack of clarity around convergence and the effect it would have on the May polls.

**7.9.** A discussion was held on an overnight count improving democracy as it generates excitement.

**7.10.** A discussion was held on caution with directions for local elections and framing the next day count as a recommendation rather than a Direction.

**7.11.** A discussion was held on statistics from broadcasters showing that more people tune in for the next day count rather than overnight.

**7.12.** It was **noted** that the media had asked for a next day count as that is their preferred option.

**7.13.** It was **noted** that there is a meeting later this month with the media for a debrief and discussions on the 27 election.

**7.14.** It was **noted** that due to current financial restraints on broadcasters, they would not be able to broadcast from 10pm at night through till 6pm the following day.

**7.15.** A discussion was held on the EMB putting out a set of directions to engage with ROs for consultation, which could be amended based on their feedback if needed.

**7.16.** It was **agreed** to draft a letter to WG and circulate it next week for feedback.

## 8. Electoral Commission update

**8.1.** A verbal update was provided.

**8.2.** It was **noted** that there are key risks around OAVA and AVR and a timeline is needed as soon as possible to help with issuing guidance.

**8.3.** It was **noted** that work will be done next year on public awareness of the elections.

**8.4.** It was **noted** that the EC will share a first draft of guidance next week for comments.

**8.5.** It was **noted** that the candidate and agents guidance is due to be published in September with RO guidance following in November.

## 9. Communications update

**9.1.** Item 9 was delivered verbally.

**9.2.** It was **noted** that evaluations are being completed by Senedd Commission, Electoral Commission and DBCC regarding comms.

**9.3.** It was **noted** that a survey has gone out to local authorities asking them for feedback on the central comms that was prepared and any lessons learnt.

**9.4.** It was **noted** that the Senedd Commission is leading on the evaluation of the Senedd election comms group that has been running for the last 2 years and will produce a draft report before the next meeting in September.

**9.5.** It was **noted** that a comms group will be set up for the 2027 elections and will be worked on over the Summer.

## 10. Local election risk register & programme plan

**10.1.** Consideration was given to the Report dated June 2026.

**10.2.** It was **noted** that this is similar to the register used for the Senedd election with a couple of additional local government specific items and items around OAVA and AVR.

**10.3.** It was **noted** that initial quotes from EMS providers have been received.

**10.4.** It was **noted** that there is an ongoing evaluation in relation to an API that would enable an automatic upload from EA's onto the platform during the nomination process.

**10.5.** It was **noted** that value for money will need to be considered whilst also recognising the pressure on EA's.

## 11. Elections Information Platform – review of work so far

**11.1.** Consideration was given to the Report dated June 2026.

**11.2.** It was **noted** that the Platform met it's legal regulatory requirements.

**11.3.** It was **noted** that there were no issues with the website going down at any point.

**11.4.** It was **noted** that there was good public engagement but it did not reach the expected levels.

**11.5.** It was **noted** that everything was published in a timely manner, highlighting some back and forth issues with election teams.

**11.6.** It was **noted** that there was reasonable engagement with political parties and individual candidates, with there being a good amount of election addresses published.

**11.7.** It was **noted** that feedback on the website was mixed, with people's expectations being a driver for this. An example is people asking where candidate information was in advance of the nominations process.

**11.8.** A discussion was held on actual figures for both English and Welsh usage to track over the years being included in the final report.

## 12. Key next steps & risks

**12.1.** It was **noted** that there is an ongoing tender for an API which would create an automatic upload for EA's onto the Platform, **noting** that it would need to combine alleviating pressure in the system with good value for money.

**12.2.** It was **agreed** that the decision relating to the option following the tender for the API would be done given timescales via writing out to Board members following the steering group who will make recommendations. This is because the DBCC meeting in July will need to take a final decision in relation to resourcing. This process is consistent with how decisions were taken last year in relation to the platform when timescales did not align with meetings.

**12.3.** It was **noted** that development for the count results is ongoing.

## 13. Welsh Government

**13.1.** Item 13 was delivered verbally.

**13.2.** It was **noted** that new Ministers have been briefed on key issues and WG is awaiting a steer and direction on various aspects such as AVR.

**13.3.** It was **noted** that the Member Accountability Act has received Royal Assent.

**13.4.** It was **noted** that the recall system for members is not in place yet, with regulations akin to the Conduct Order needing to be developed.

**13.5.** It was **noted** that committees have been established in the Senedd earlier this week, one of those being the Standards of Conduct Committee who will be undertaking work in relation to guidance for recommending a member be subject to recall.

## 14. UK Government

**14.1.** Item 14 was delivered verbally.

**14.2.** It was **noted** that the Representation of the People Bill has been reintroduced into UK parliament, with a report stage hopefully taking place before Summer recess.

**14.3.** It was **noted** that Ministers are looking to hold introductory meetings with the new WG.

**14.4.** It was **noted** that the flexible voting pilots ran in England at local polls and there will be a full evaluation report, comparing notes with Wales.

**14.5.** It was **noted** that a further round of pilots is being considered for 2027.

**Date of Next Meeting:** 04 September 2026