

3 March Referendum

on the law-making powers of
the National Assembly for Wales



This booklet has been produced by the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the UK's democratic process. We are responsible for the conduct and regulation of referendums held under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (2000).

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About this booklet

On 3 March 2011 a referendum will be held in Wales about the law-making powers of the National Assembly for Wales.

This booklet explains:

- what a referendum is
- the law-making powers of the National Assembly for Wales
- what the referendum will ask
- who can vote and how to vote

What is a referendum?

A referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a proposal.

What are the law-making powers of the National Assembly for Wales?

The National Assembly for Wales, which is an elected body that represents the people of Wales, takes decisions and makes laws that affect you.

The Assembly has powers to make laws on 20 subject areas:

- agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development
- ancient monuments and historic buildings
- culture
- economic development
- education and training
- the environment
- fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety
- food
- health and health services
- highways and transport
- housing
- local government
- the National Assembly for Wales
- public administration

- social welfare
- sport and recreation
- tourism
- town and country planning
- water and flood defence
- the Welsh language

In each subject area, the Assembly can make laws on **some** matters, but not others. To make laws on any of these other matters, the Assembly must ask the UK Parliament for its agreement. The UK Parliament then decides each time whether or not the Assembly can make these laws.

What will the referendum ask?

The referendum will ask you whether the Assembly should now be able to make laws on **all** matters in the 20 subject areas listed on pages 2 and 3.

The Assembly cannot make laws on subject areas such as defence, tax or welfare benefits, whatever the result of this vote. The UK Parliament will continue to make laws in these subject areas and others that will affect the people of Wales.

You will be asked:

Do you want the Assembly now to be able to make laws on **all** matters in the 20 subject areas it has powers for?

If most voters vote ‘yes’

The Assembly will be able to make laws on **all** matters in the 20 subject areas it has powers for, without needing the UK Parliament’s agreement.

If most voters vote ‘no’

What happens at the moment will continue.

How do I vote?

You show your choice by putting a cross (X) in the 'Yes' or 'No' box on your ballot paper.

Put a cross (X) in only **one** box or your vote will not be counted.

What are the arguments?

Campaigners in the referendum will explain why they think you should vote 'yes' or 'no'. They will communicate through TV, the radio, newspapers and websites.

Can I vote?

You can vote in the referendum if you are registered to vote in Wales, are 18 or over on 3 March 2011, and are:

- a British citizen, or
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen,* or
- a citizen of the Irish Republic, or
- an EU citizen.

You have to be registered to vote by **16 February** to vote in the referendum. There is more information on registering to vote on page 8.

* Qualifying Commonwealth citizens are those who have leave (permission) to enter or remain in the UK, do not need to have such leave or are treated as having such leave.

Ways of voting

There are three ways of voting:

In person on 3 March: Most people vote in person at their polling station. It is straightforward and a member of staff will always help if you are not sure what to do. You will receive a poll card telling you where your polling station is. It is often a nearby school or community centre.

Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm. If you have not been issued with a ballot paper by 10pm you won't be able to vote, so make sure you arrive in plenty of time.

By post: You can apply to vote by post. You will need to fill in an application form and send it to arrive at your local council by 5pm on **16 February**. You can get an application form at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

Your local council can send a postal ballot paper to your home address or any other address you give. Postal ballot papers can be sent overseas but you need to think whether you will have time to receive and return your vote by 3 March.

You should receive your postal ballot paper about a week before the referendum. If it doesn't arrive, you can get a replacement from your local council up to 5pm on 3 March. You can find their contact details on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

By proxy: If you can't go to the polling station and don't wish to vote by post, you may be able to vote by proxy. This means allowing somebody you trust to vote on your behalf. You will need to fill in an application form and send it to your local council to arrive by 5pm on **23 February**. You can get an application form at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

When you apply for a proxy vote you have to state why you cannot vote in person or by post. Anyone can be your proxy as long as they are eligible to vote in the referendum, have not been appointed as a proxy for more than one other person outside their immediate family and are willing to vote on your behalf. You will have to tell them how you want to vote.

Am I registered to vote?

If you're not registered, you won't be able to vote. Most people register to vote using the form that local councils send to each household each year.

If you are not on the electoral register, you will need to complete a voter registration form and send it to your local council to arrive by **16 February** to vote in this referendum. For a voter registration form, go to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

If you aren't sure whether you are registered or not, your local council can tell you. You can find their contact details on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

How to find out more

If you have any questions, please go to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk or call our helpline on 0800 3 280 280.

You can download further copies of this booklet from www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.