

Dame Dawn Primarolo,
Chair
Remuneration Board,
National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff,
CF99 1NA

REF: Residential Accommodation Expenditure: Proposed Changes

Dear Chair,

I am writing to register my objection to the proposals outlined by the Board that would allow Assembly Members whose main home is outside Wales to claim residential accommodation expenses for a second home in Wales.

My objection is not based on the individual or a particular political party but because I do not believe the Remuneration Board should be considering changing the rules in relation to accommodation claims criteria just because a member chooses to continue living outside Wales after election.

This is not acceptable to me as a member of the public and would severely damage the image of the National Assembly, which is already held in low esteem by some members of the Welsh public.

It cannot be asking too much for a politician elected to the Assembly to have a permanent base in the country where the Assembly is based. I would assume that any politician standing for election might have some understanding of the rules related to appropriate expense claims before putting forward their name for election.

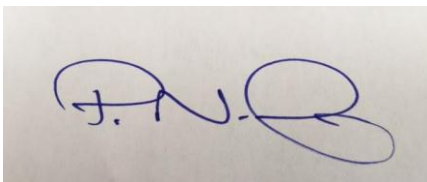
Under the board's proposals a member of the Assembly would be able to claim these expenses whether they lived in Wiltshire, Wick or Warrenpoint which, I would suggest would be viewed by most people as wrong.

There may be nothing in the Government of Wales Act 2006, or, indeed, any other legislation, stating that Assembly Members must reside in any particular location either when they are elected or subsequently. However, I would suggest that legislators would have been very unlikely to have considered that issue because they might understandably have expected a member of the National Assembly for Wales to be committed to the establishment and have his main home in Wales.

I would point out that the rules of the Scottish Parliament rules do not allow such proposed claims to be made if members choose to live outside Scotland and I don't believe the Remuneration Board should change the rules. A change in my view would lead to a use of public money that will be seen as unacceptable.

I also think as well damaging the Assembly the proposed change – if implemented – would undermine the credibility of the Remuneration Board among members of the public. I urge you not to proceed with this change.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Nifield', is centered on a light-colored rectangular background.

Phillip Nifield