

John Griffiths
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

26 March 2019

Dear Mr Griffiths

Thank you for your letter of 12 March to the Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitution about engagement with victims' groups in the context of prisoner voting. I work in the Elections Team and I have been asked to reply.

Firstly, I would like to apologise that this reply will not reach you in time to contribute to the final evidence session with the Minister for Housing and Local Government on 21 March. However, I hope that it will still be of use in the National Assembly's consideration of this issue.

As you will be aware, the Scottish Government consultation on prisoner voting closed on 8 March. We received around 260 responses, including 33 from organisations. An external analyst is currently producing a report on the responses, which will be published in summer 2019.

In order to gather a wide range of views, the consultation document (and an easy-read version) was published on the Scottish Government's website. Hard copies were sent to prison libraries in liaison with the Scottish Prison Service. We also wrote directly to stakeholder groups to invite them to respond.

In advance of the consultation, victims' rights policy officials within the Scottish Government helped us to establish a list of groups representing victims. We wrote to a number of these groups preceding the consultation launch, and again when it launched. However, we did not receive any responses to the consultation from victims' groups. We did receive a small number of responses from individuals concerned about victims' rights. We intend to publish all the responses on the Scottish Government website which may be of interest to you. They should be available by the end of April.

The preferred option of basing enfranchisement on sentence length was informed by a number of considerations. It is the view of the Scottish Government that it strikes an appropriate balance between promotion of the rule of law and responsible citizenship, as well as the wider objectives of the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in order to reduce reoffending.

I hope that this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Calista Hobart
Elections Team