

Women in Public Life

Assembly Women in Democracy
Caucus

Report

Menywod
mewn Bywyd Cyhoeddus
Women
in Public Life

Women in Public Life

There are fewer women than men in public life, despite making up more than half of the population – their voices are not being heard, their views are being overlooked. The Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales, Dame Rosemary Butler AM is working to address the need for more women to apply for and take up public roles and appointments. Her Women in Public Life campaign aims to ensure that women are fairly represented at all levels of public life in Wales.



Dame Rosemary Butler AM

Women in Public Life

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Membership



Dame Rosemary Butler AM
(Chair)



Jocelyn Davies AM



Eluned Parrott AM



Antoinette Sandbach AM



Rebecca Evans AM
(January-August 2014)



Joyce Watson AM
(September-December 2014)

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01. Introduction and Background to the Caucus

As part of her Women in Public Life campaign, Dame Rosemary Butler AM, Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales, wrote to the Assembly's four party leaders at the beginning of 2013 to ask them to consider measures that could be put in place in order to realise gender parity at the Assembly after the next Assembly elections in 2016.

Each of the four party leaders at the Assembly replied positively to this challenge. Whilst recognising that candidate selection was a matter for the parties, the Presiding Officer stated her firm commitment to ensuring that Assembly Members are given the opportunity to learn from best practices in gender equality and promotion of opportunities for women in politics.

This aim led to the Presiding Officer establishing the ***Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus***, made up of one representative from each of the Assembly's four political parties so that informed decisions and positive steps could be taken towards a fair representation of women within Welsh democracy.

The principle behind establishing the Caucus was to:

seek and impart best practice, including from other parliaments.

Its detailed objectives included to:

- Learn about measures parliaments and parties have put in place to encourage/ensure female representation at varying political levels;
- Seek to identify whether parliaments with strong female representation create distinct policies and legislation as a result of this positive representation;
- Identify the pastoral needs of women politicians and what the Assembly Commission can learn from this and benchmark accordingly.

The Caucus would also present the opportunity for the representatives from the Assembly's four political parties to advise of any measures and action their respective parties had undertaken.

02. Percentage of Women in Parliaments

The table below shows a list of the countries with the highest percentage of women in the lower or single House. Although in the original list Wales figured as part of the United Kingdom and, as such, ranked number 64, we want to show how it would rank if it was considered individually. The complete table can be found here (<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>)

Rank	Country	Lower or single House			
		Elections	Seats	Women	%W
1	Rwanda	9 2013	80	51	63.8%
2	Andorra	4 2011	28	14	50.0%
3	Cuba	2 2013	612	299	48.9%
4	Seychelles	9 2011	32	14	43.8%
5	Sweden	9 2014	349	152	43.6%
6	Senegal	7 2012	150	65	43.3%
7	Finland	4 2011	200	85	42.5%
8	Nicaragua	11 2011	92	39	42.4%
9	Ecuador	2 2013	137	57	41.6%
9	Wales	5 2011	60	25	41.6%
10	South Africa	5 2014	400	163	40.8%

03.Meetings of the Caucus

The Caucus held five formal meetings: in **February, April, June, October and December 2014**.

Minutes of these meetings can be accessed clicking on the dates below.

- **11 February 2014 – Terms of Reference:** Caucus members agreed the Caucus' terms of reference and working programme.
- **1 April 2014 – Progress in Female Representation:** Dr Ruth Fox, Director of the Hansard Society, gave a presentation on the progress made in improving the levels of female representation in the devolved legislatures over the last ten years, analysing how this happened and what obstacles would threaten progress. Following that, consultant and equality expert Adele Baumgardt, discussed her research on the role of Parliamentarians in respect of equality. Their full presentations can be accessed as part of the minutes.
- **17 June 2014 – The Difference Women Parliamentarians Make:** Dr Paul Chaney from Cardiff School of Social Sciences gave a presentation on the difference made by women parliamentarians to policies and policy-making and, whilst referencing other legislatures, looked in particular at the experience of the National Assembly for Wales's during its first two Assemblies (1999-2007). His full presentation can be accessed as part of the minutes.
- **7 October 2014 – Lessons from Abroad:** Caucus members discussed their recent visit to the Icelandic Parliament (Althingi) and the results of the recently commissioned survey on what was preventing female members of political parties from seeking public office.
- **2 December 2014 – Going Forward:** Caucus members agreed on the format and content of the report and discussed the implementation of the recommendations.

04.Visit to the Icelandic Parliament

According to the European Parliamentary Research Service, Iceland has been ranked as a world leader in gender equality for years. It is frequently cited as a model for political empowerment of women and as a country that values women, giving them support and inspiration to succeed in both their personal and professional lives.

The visit to the Parliament (Althingi) was an opportunity for the Caucus to learn more from the world's oldest parliament as to why Iceland is so successful in achieving gender equality, and what lessons could be taken back to the political parties, and the Assembly.

A full report on the Icelandic visit can be found in the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October, 2014.

05. Women in Democracy Caucus Survey

During June's Caucus meeting, Members requested the commissioning of a survey to identify the factors deterring women who were members of political parties from seeking public office.

A total of 37 responses were received. Key issues identified were:

- the need for training
- lack of confidence
- available time

The complete results from the survey can be seen here.

06. Recommendations

The research and presentations that have informed the caucus have formed a number of recommendations that can be taken forward to continue the drive for more women to enter politics in particular. Members of the Caucus agreed that:

- The Caucus would encourage the Welsh Government not to award major grants or contracts to organisations without women on their board;
By major grants and contracts we intend grants and contracts for over 250K.
- The Presiding Officer would seek a progress update from Assembly Party Leaders on the steps that they have taken to ensure an increased representation of women Members for the Fifth Assembly;
- The Caucus would invite the Remuneration Board to look at the specific pastoral requirements of Assembly Members, particularly those with caring responsibilities;
- That each member of the Caucus would encourage their party groups to adopt a more skill-based approach founded on the general principles of fair recruitment in order to encourage a wider range of women to put themselves forward for elections;
- That the Assembly considers gender specific support and one to one coaching for new and returning female members in the Fifth Assembly;
- That the Caucus works with broadcasters in Wales to ensure that we see more 'expert' women on our television screens and radio programmes;
- That the Caucus would encourage the cross party group on Women in the Economy to include encouraging women to stand for elections as part of its work programme;
- The Caucus Members, with the support of the Caucus' secretariat and the Assembly's wider engagement campaigns, would seek opportunities to proactively inspire public debate and highlight the issue of female representation.

The caucus agreed to meet informally to monitor the progress on implementing these recommendations.

Annex 1

This section contains useful links to organisations and reports.

- **Chwarae Teg**
- **Women Making a Difference**
- **Electoral Reform Society**
- **Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales**
- **'Who runs Wales' Report**
- **Women's Equality Network Wales (WEN)**
- **Women in Construction (WiC Wales)**
- **Women in Public Life Portal**
- **Hansard Society**
- **Women Count**
- **Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU)**

February 2015

