

Paper 5 - 10 Questions and Answers

1 Will greater powers for the Assembly mean extra cost for the taxpayer?

No. The money currently spent on the Legislative Competence Order (LCO) process will be spent on passing primary laws (Acts of the Assembly) instead. The All Wales Convention is confident that the greater powers will be cost-neutral.

2 Will the extra powers entail more taxes?

No. The Assembly has no powers to increase or reduce taxes and there is currently no intention to give the Assembly that power. Changing this would entail new legislation at Westminster.

3 Will extra powers for the Assembly mean more Assembly Members?

No. The number of members will remain at 60. The Richard Commission recommended that there should be 80 AMs. However the forthcoming referendum will deal specifically with Part 4 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 which keeps the number of AMs at 60. The Convention is confident that 60 AMs can handle primary law-making powers effectively.

4 If additional powers entails more work for the Assembly does this mean less work for Members of Parliament?

Wales will still need a strong team of Members of Parliament because there are several fields which are relevant to the people of Wales that have not been devolved, e.g taxation, benefits, law and order, foreign and defence policy. The Conservatives have said that they will reduce the number of MPs, but it is not yet clear how many Welsh MPs there will be if a Conservative Government is elected.

5 If the Assembly gets extra powers won't this be a slippery slope to independence?

Definitely not. According to recent opinion polls only about 10% of the Welsh population supports independence. Bringing in Part 4 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 would not be a stage towards some further process, but a valuable change which would make the Assembly much more effective.

6 Will additional powers for the Assembly mean paying higher salaries to Assembly Members?

Assembly Members' salaries are decided by an independent panel. It is impossible to predict what the panel will decide in the future. However there is no reason why AMs

would have to work harder with additional powers – they will be able to use their time far more productively.

7 Will additional powers mean that the Assembly will be like the Scottish Parliament?

Up to a point. Wales will be able to pass laws in 20 fields without having to seek approval from Westminster each time – this is what currently happens in Scotland and Northern Ireland. But the scope of Welsh powers will be less than those of Scotland and Northern Ireland (e.g Scotland has control of Home Affairs). Only in the 20 devolved fields will Wales be able to make laws.

8 What are the devolved fields?

There are 20 fields in all:

- Agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development
- Ancient monuments and historic buildings
- Culture
- Economic Development
- Education and Training
- Environment
- Fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety
- Food
- Health and health services
- Highways and Transport
- Housing
- Local Government
- National Assembly for Wales
- Public Administration
- Social Welfare
- Sport and Leisure
- Tourism
- Town and Country Planning
- Water and flood protection
- The Welsh Language

9 Will a Yes vote in a referendum mean giving more power to the “Cardiff Bay elite”?

A No vote would mean leaving the power in London and the elected representatives in the National Assembly will have to seek the power to pass laws for Wales from Members of Parliament. It may well be that following the next election English MPs will sit on the Welsh Affairs Select Committee so they will have a voice on Welsh affairs even though they will not represent the people of Wales.

10 Will the referendum include a vote on abolishing the Assembly?

No. The only issue that the referendum will decide is whether the Assembly will be able to pass primary laws in the 20 devolved fields.