



# **President of Welsh Tribunals Sixth Annual Report 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025**

August 2025



**Tribiwnlysoedd Cymru  
Welsh Tribunals**

Llywydd / President

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The President of Welsh Tribunals is established under section 60 of the Wales Act 2017 which imposes on the office holder an express obligation to represent the views of members of the Welsh Tribunals to the Welsh Ministers and to the Senedd. This is done in part by the production of an Annual Report presented to the First Minister and Presiding Officer of the Senedd. This is the Report for the financial year April 2024 to March 2025. It is the Sixth Annual Report produced by the President of Welsh Tribunals.
- 1.2 The relevant Welsh Tribunals operate in devolved areas in Wales and are set out in section 59 of the 2017 Act as amended. They are (with the acronyms I shall use in this Report):
  - (a) Tribiwnlys Tir Amaethyddol Cymru/the Agricultural Land Tribunal for Wales (“ALTW”);
  - (b) Tribiwnlys Adolygu Iechyd Meddwl Cymru/the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales (“MHRTW”);
  - (c) Tribiwnlys Eiddo Preswyl Cymru/the Residential Property Tribunal Wales (comprising three constituent tribunals: rent assessment committees constituted in accordance with Schedule 10 to the Rent Act 1977, a leasehold valuation tribunal and a residential property tribunal) (“RPTW”);
  - (d) Tribiwnlys Addysg Cymru/the Education Tribunal for Wales (which also manages the jurisdictions of tribunals relating to the registration of school inspectors and nursery education inspectors) (“ETW”);
  - (e) Panel Dyfarnu Cymru/the Adjudication Panel for Wales (“APW”); and
  - (f) Tribiwnlys y Gymraeg/the Welsh Language Tribunal (“WLT”).
- 1.3 As explained in my last (the Fifth) Annual Report, the following tribunals operate in Wales but are not included in section 59, and do not fall under my remit.
  - (a) Non-devolved tribunals which form part of the system of tribunals which operate across England & Wales reformed by the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, such as those which adjudicate upon social security benefits and child support, immigration and asylum, and employment. These are administered by His Majesty’s Court and Tribunal Service (“HMCTS”), and their judiciary is headed by the Senior President of Tribunals. In this Report, I shall refer to them as “the HMCTS tribunals”.
  - (b) Tribunals which operate in devolved areas in Wales, but not under the President of Welsh Tribunals. For example, the Valuation Tribunal for Wales which has its own legal, judicial and administrative structures; and tribunals which determine school admission and exclusion appeals which are administered by local education authorities without any overarching structures.
- 1.4 The Welsh Tribunals are supported by the Welsh Tribunals Unit (“the WTU”), part of the Welsh Government public service, but operating as independently as it can practicably be, independence which is encouraged and supported by the Welsh Government. The WTU is made up of about 35 members of staff who are located across Wales.

## 2 The Office of President of Welsh Tribunals

- 2.1 In my last Report, I set out the nature and role of the President of Welsh Tribunals, which is worth repeating here.
- 2.2 As I have indicated, the office of President of Welsh Tribunals was created by the Wales Act 2017, a UK statute. Although the role is restricted to devolved tribunals dealing with devolved subject matter, the post is expressly not a devolved Welsh authority for the purposes of the Government of Wales Act 2006.
- 2.3 The 2017 Act does not comprehensively define the powers and duties of the President; but it is implicit in section 60 that the President is the most senior judge within the Welsh Tribunals and, in addition to the duties expressly referred to in the Act, he or she exercises a supervisory role over each of those tribunals. In addition to tribunal-specific meetings, I meet the Judicial Leads of the Welsh Tribunals and the senior members of the WTU every quarter to discuss issues that cut across tribunal boundaries.
- 2.4 The express duties of the President prescribed by section 60 are limited to representing the views of members of the Welsh Tribunals to the Welsh Ministers and to other members of the Senedd as described above; and to maintaining appropriate arrangements for the training, guidance and welfare of members of the Welsh Tribunals within the resources made available by the Welsh Ministers. In pursuance of these powers, the President can (for example) issue Guidance Notes to tribunal members. For example, I recently issued an Interim Grievance Policy and Guidance on Conflicts of Interest.
- 2.5 In exercising these wider supervisory powers, the President is also required by section 60(4) to have regard to the need for proceedings before Welsh Tribunals to be fair and handled quickly and efficiently; for members to be appropriately expert in the subject matter or law applied in their tribunals; and for the need “to develop innovative methods of resolving disputes that are of a type that may be brought before those tribunals”.
- 2.6 I also regard the role of the President in construing and thereby developing the law in the devolved areas to be important. The President does not have any express statutory power to sit – and, to date, has not sat – in any Welsh Tribunal; but I have been appointed a Judge of the Administrative Appeals Chamber of the Upper Tribunal (an HMCTS tribunal, and so part of the reserved tribunal system) to hear appeals from the Welsh Tribunals. I have consequently, for example, heard appeals in Wales from the ETW on the interpretation of the new Additional Learning Needs regime introduced by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. Where appeals proceed further, if I have not sat on the first appeal, I am also able to sit in the Court of Appeal (Civil Division).

- 2.7 As President of Welsh Tribunals, I sit on a number of bodies which concern the wider justice system in Wales (such as the Judges' Council Committee on Wales chaired by the Lady Chief Justice, the Executive Board of the Law Council for Wales, the Welsh Advisory Committee of the Law Commission, and the Lord Chancellor's Standing Committee on the Welsh Language) and the tribunals systems across the UK (such as the Tribunal Judiciary Executive Board, the Administrative Justice Council and the Transparency and Open Justice Board). These bodies meet regularly and enable me as President of Welsh Tribunals to keep up to date with developments in the wider justice system in Wales and the tribunals systems in all four home jurisdictions, and to influence those developments.
- 2.8 As in the previous year, I identified several areas that I considered warranted prioritisation in the year 2024-25 namely tribunal reform, judicial training, inclusion and diversity and the Welsh language. I attach the document I published at the beginning of the year in which I set out these priorities and the steps I proposed to take in pursuit of them (Appendix). I review these priority areas below (paragraphs 5-8).

### 3 Workload

- 3.1 The number of applications received by Welsh Tribunals in the financial year 2024-25 are set out below, with figures for 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 for comparison purposes.

**Table 1: Number of applications per tribunal**

<b>Tribunal</b>	<b>Financial Year 2020-21</b>	<b>Financial Year 2021-22</b>	<b>Financial Year 2022-23</b>	<b>Financial Year 2023-24</b>	<b>Financial Year 2024-25</b>
ALTW	13	20	28	17	13
MHRTW	1790	1840	1747	1798	1825
RPTW	106	113	182	184	118
ETW*	116	151	90	108	134
APW	4	10	3	6	6
WLT	13	3	1	2	3

\* Formerly the Special Education Needs Tribunal Wales, renamed from 1 September 2021 by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

- 3.2 Further information about the nature of the work undertaken and the membership of each tribunal is set out in their respective annual reports, which are published on the website of each tribunal.

## 4 Financial Overview

### **Budget Allocations and Expenditure Financial Year 2024-25**

- 4.1 The budget allocated to the Welsh Tribunals covers both judicial and administrative running costs. The allocation for financial year 2024-25 was £4,302,000. Actual expenditure, however, exceeded these allocations, with total spending amounting to £6,093,455 exceeding the budget by £1,791,455. However, for the reasons set out immediately below, these figures do not present a true picture of financial performance.

### **Budget Recalibration**

- 4.2 In recent years, the amount allocated to Welsh Tribunals in the budget has not reflected the actual or reasonable operating costs of the tribunals. In financial year 2024-25, a full recalibration of the Welsh Tribunals' budget was undertaken by the Welsh Government with support from the Welsh Tribunals. This strategic exercise, which I welcomed, was necessary and designed to ensure that financial allocations more accurately reflected the reasonably estimated operational demands and evolving caseloads across the tribunals. The recalibration process involved a detailed analysis of historical expenditure, projected activity levels and resource requirements, with the object of establishing a more realistic, sustainable and responsive budget. The budget allocation for financial year 2025-26 has consequently been set at £6,048,000. Whilst that is slightly less than the total spend by Welsh Tribunals in 2024-25, I consider it to be a fair and realistic budget against which the financial performance of the tribunals can appropriately be measured.

### **The Need for IT Investment**

- 4.3 There is a critical and urgent need for dedicated financial support to develop and implement a modern IT system for the Welsh Tribunals. The current infrastructure is increasingly outdated, and it lacks the functionality required to support efficient case management, digital hearings and data reporting. Indeed, it falls a long way short. Some tribunals continue to operate without any effective computer system at all, but on a paper-based system of spreadsheets etc. Investment in a fit-for-purpose IT platform is essential to ensure that our tribunals can operate effectively, securely and in line with contemporary standards of digital justice delivery.
- 4.4 I am pleased to report that the Welsh Government has recently accepted this need, and approved our bid for the necessary capital expenditure on a new case management system for all our tribunals. I am grateful to the Welsh Government for finding the funds for this essential and urgent capital expenditure and look forward to appropriate support in the form of sufficient funds to ensure that the new system is rolled out and operational quickly, and serviced properly and effectively.

## **Pay Rates**

- 4.5 As described in paragraphs 4.6-4.8 of last year's Report, due to differential pay awards, from 1 April 2023, judicial officer holders ("JOHs") in HMCTS tribunals were paid 2% more than those in the Welsh Tribunals; although the First Minister had assured me that the Welsh Government was committed to returning to pay rate parity as soon as the budgetary position in Wales allowed. The disparity had an adverse effect on the Welsh Tribunals, particularly resulting in a reluctance in JOHs to sit in our tribunals in circumstances in which they also had appointments in the HMCTS tribunals and could do (often identical) work there for more money.
- 4.6 I am pleased to report that, from 1 April 2024, pay rate parity returned as the result of a pay award for Welsh Tribunal JOHs which was 2% higher than that awarded to HMCTS tribunals. This return to parity reflects the professionalism, expertise and commitment of the judiciary in Wales; as well as supporting the recruitment and retention of Welsh Tribunal JOHs. It was greatly appreciated and, to an extent, assisted in encouraging JOHs to sit in our tribunals and, thus, the listing of cases.
- 4.7 In addition, the Welsh Government has confirmed that the Welsh Tribunals will be included in the forthcoming major review of public service, which includes all JOHs, by the Senior Salaries Review Body ("the SSRB"). This is a welcome and important development, offering an opportunity to consider judicial remuneration and conditions of service in a more comprehensive and evidence-based manner. The Welsh Tribunals have been invited to engage with the review process by representation on the SSRB Advisory and Evidence Group, and I intend to engage fully with the process to ensure that relevant evidence in respect of Welsh Tribunals JOHs is submitted to the SSRB.

## **Continuing Disparities in Terms and Conditions**

- 4.8 Despite the progress made in achieving pay rate parity with HMCTS tribunals, material disparities remain in the broader terms and conditions of service which result in (amongst other things) differentials in pay, e.g. in payment for preparation and writing up time. These disparities arise between the Welsh Tribunals and the HMCTS tribunals, but also to an extent between Welsh Tribunals inter se.
- 4.9 These inconsistencies continue to give rise to concerns regarding equity and fairness, and are liable to have an adverse impact on morale and long-term workforce planning. Addressing these disparities remains a priority; and work on identifying disparities, and discussions on whether and how such disparities should be addressed, are ongoing. The Ministry of Justice is in the process of conducting an exercise on such disparities between HMCTS tribunal JOHs inter se, in a long-running and sophisticated exercise, which we continue to view with interest.

## **Closing Observation**

- 4.10 The Welsh Tribunals continue to exercise prudent financial management and remain committed to transparency and accountability. The recalibration of the budget, and closer working with the Welsh Government administration on matters of budget, are welcome developments.



## 5 Tribunal Reform

- 5.1 In my last Report, I described the Welsh Government's proposals for reform of devolved tribunals in Wales, which build on work and recommendations of both the Commission on Justice in Wales and the Law Commission.
- 5.2 In paragraphs 8.2 and 8.3 of that Report, I summarised the purposes and proposed main planks of the reforms proposed in Welsh Government's White Paper, "A New Tribunal System for Wales: A modern system for Wales's devolved tribunals", published in January 2024.
- 5.3 The express purposes of the proposed measures are as follows:
- (a) to put in place a clearer, simpler, more effective and coherent tribunal system that is focused on access to justice and the needs of tribunal users;
  - (b) to lay a solid foundation for future changes to the justice system of Wales; and
  - (c) to protect judicial independence, including by giving greater structural independence to the administration of justice.
- 5.4 In line with those aims, the main planks of the suggested reforms are as follows.
- (a) The creation of a unified tribunals system for devolved tribunals in Wales, comprising a first-tier tribunal (of which the current tribunals would form distinct chambers) and an Appeal Tribunal for Wales which would hear appeals from the first-tier tribunal. It is proposed to bring into that system both the Valuation Tribunal for Wales and both school admission and exclusion appeals, although not necessarily immediately. The challenge is to create a unified, flexible and robust tribunal structure capable of absorbing both the jurisdictions of existing devolved tribunals and appeal processes arising from future legislation and/or further devolution of the justice system.
  - (b) A statutory duty to uphold judicial independence applying to those with responsibility for the administration of justice as that applies to the reformed tribunal system in Wales, i.e. the relevant Ministers and, possibly, also the members of the Senedd.
  - (c) The enhancement and clarification of office and role of President of Welsh Tribunals by reference to specific statutory powers and duties such as that of presiding in the Appeal Tribunal for Wales hearings, overseeing complaints against tribunal members and determining complaints against senior tribunal judiciary, and chairing the proposed Tribunal Procedure Committee for Wales (which would be responsible for the rules of all tribunals within the proposed reformed system).
  - (d) Members will continue to be selected by way of a Judicial Appointment Commission exercise; but the formality of appointments will be simplified. The Lord Chancellor will have no role. Members will generally be formally appointed by the President of Welsh Tribunals, although senior judges will be appointed by the Welsh Ministers. The President of Welsh Tribunals will become a devolved appointment.
  - (e) The structural separation of the operational and administrative functions of the new tribunal system from executive functions of the Welsh Government, by the creation of a Welsh Government Sponsored Body or a Non-Ministerial Department into which the functions of the WTU would be placed, with the Chair being either a Welsh Government appointment or the President of Welsh Tribunals ex officio.

- 5.5 My views on the desirability, the benefits and, indeed, the necessity of tribunal reform in Wales remain unchanged; and I remain a strong supporter of the reforms that were set out in the White Paper. In my view, such reforms are vital to the progress of an efficient and effective justice system in Wales.
- 5.6 As indicated above, the reform programme requires primary legislation, and, at the time of my last Report, although the precise timing of that legislation had not been confirmed, it was hoped that it would be introduced in the current Senedd, at some point in 2025, coming into effect in 2026. Whilst always making it clear that any Tribunals Bill (like any legislation) would be subject to available Senedd time, successive Welsh First Ministers and Counsels General have made clear to me their commitment and the commitment of their Government to tribunal reform and their understanding of its benefits for the justice system and people of Wales.
- 5.7 Therefore, even when the Welsh Government's legislative programme for the fourth year of the current Senedd was announced in July 2024 without reference to a Tribunals Bill, I remained optimistic that a Bill would be introduced during the Senedd's final year.
- 5.8 However, on 29 April 2025, the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery set out the Welsh Government's legislative programme for the remainder of the current Senedd and a Tribunals Bill was not included in it. As a result, we now know that a Tribunals Bill will not be introduced before the 2026 Senedd elections.
- 5.9 Like most of those involved in tribunals in Wales, I am disappointed. However, that disappointment is mitigated to an extent in several ways.
- 5.10 First, the Counsel General has confirmed the Welsh Government's continuing commitment to the reform programme; and, as confirmed in my regular meetings with the Counsel General and with Welsh Government's Justice Policy Team, I am pleased that, even in the absence of an agreed Bill timetable, preparatory work for a Bill has continued with the intention of having the Bill ready for introduction by the next Government after the 2026 elections.
- 5.11 Second, although legislation is critical to the tribunal reform programme, also vital to the success of that programme will be its implementation – the transition of the functions and administration of the devolved tribunals (including any new jurisdictions that may come into the reformed system as part of the tribunal reform programme) whilst ensuring that ongoing tribunal business proceeds as usual particularly if, as is likely, the reform programme coincides with a period of increased demand for hearings and appeals. I am pleased to say that the WTU, the Valuation Tribunal Wales and Welsh Government officials are continuing to work together to map out provisional implementation work.
- 5.12 Third, as indicated above (paragraph 4.4), our bid for the necessary capital expenditure on a new case management system for all our tribunals has been approved, so that work on ensuring that an operational system is commissioned and made available to our tribunals can begin promptly.

- 5.13 Fourth, we have been proceeding on the basis that reconsideration of some aspects of our tribunals that require review would take place as part of the tribunal reform programme. Now that implementation of any tribunal reform programme has been delayed to 2027 (and, probably, 2028) at the earliest, I am reviewing that list to identify matters that should be progressed sooner than the implementation of any general tribunal reform programme. One example are members' terms and conditions referred to above which, it is arguable, are not fair as between members in our different Welsh Tribunals or when compared with those of the HMCTS tribunals. These are matters which I am now taking up with the Welsh Government.
- 5.14 I will continue to encourage and support preparatory work for the tribunal programme, so that, whatever the composition of the Senedd after the 2026 election, the Bill will be ready for consideration by the new Government, and we will be ready to implement the Bill when passed.

## 6 Judicial Training

- 6.1 As indicated above, I have an express statutory obligation to maintain appropriate arrangements for the training of Welsh Tribunal members within the resources made available by the Welsh Government.
- 6.2 Judicial training is a particular challenge for us because (i) compared with the HMCTS tribunals, our tribunals are small and do not have the same capacity for achieving discounts per member as a result of size, and (ii) the Judicial College has no remit in respect of training the members of devolved tribunals, and therefore we do not have the same access to its facilities as do the HMCTS tribunals and their members. Indeed, in terms of attendance at Judicial College conferences, we generally have access only in the rare circumstances of HMCTS tribunals not filling all the conference places.
- 6.3 The training provided by each Welsh Tribunal has traditionally comprised annual training of usually one or two consecutive days, with additional training on (e.g.) any new statutory provisions that change the tribunal's work and require specific training prior to implementation. The MHRTW additionally has four annual workshops of which members are expected to attend one, namely two face-to-face in South Wales, one in North Wales and a mop-up remote workshop for those who cannot attend any of those that are face-to-face. For most of the tribunals, the annual conference is face-to-face, and a rare and valuable opportunity for the members to meet and discuss issues informally as well as in a formal training context. In my first year as President, I attended the annual training conference of each Welsh Tribunal.
- 6.4 I have taken steps to address these training issues.
  - 6.4.1 I have appointed a Training Lead Judge to consider different modes of training, including how we might best deliver some training remotely and in other novel ways, with a view to increasing the training we are able to give to members within the training budget.
  - 6.4.2 As presaged in my last report, we have established a common feedback system from training sessions, and have analysed the information produced which has assisted with identifying training needs. This has informed the content of tribunal training sessions.
  - 6.4.3 In respect of savings available because of size, we have looked at putting on our jurisdictional conferences at the same venue on the same day with some success: last year, the ETW and the APW held their conferences on the same day at the same venue and shared some of the sessions that had mutually relevant content. Generally, integration of training is difficult because of the differences in the work with which each of our tribunals deals; but we are looking at having shared sessions on subjects which are cross-jurisdictional (such as "judge craft", and taking evidence from vulnerable witnesses).

6.4.4 In respect of the Judicial College, I have met the Director; and the College is willing to assist us as much as it can, given the restrictions on its statutory role/remit. It has agreed that, even where there are no places on a course for our members, it may be possible for senior members of our tribunals to attend a conference as an observer and thereby gain knowledge (and materials) that will assist with our own training. Our two salaried tribunal judges in MHRTW have consequently attended a Judicial College mental health law course on that basis and been able to feed some of the learning into the MHRTW training sessions.

6.5 These are useful beginnings. However, there is much further work to be done, e.g. regarding the form of training we provide. This will be pursued in the forthcoming year.

## 7 Inclusion and Diversity

- 7.1 In my list of Priorities for 2024-25, I said I would “establish, on an anonymised basis, data on the composition of the Welsh Tribunals JOHs in terms of relevant characteristics (e.g. gender, racial background, professional expertise/experience and social background)”; and then “identify any concerns about that composition including its effect on the ability to have diverse panels and steps taken to address those concerns”.
- 7.2 Putting together an appropriate questionnaire for Welsh Tribunals JOHs to complete has been challenging, but we have now completed that substantive exercise. We are in the process of digitalising the questionnaire and circulating it to all JOHs for completion.
- 7.3 It is hoped that we will be able to analyse the data resulting from this exercise later this year.

## 8 The Welsh Language

- 8.1 I set out our legal obligations in respect of use of the Welsh language in our tribunals in my last Report. These remain unchanged.
- 8.2 The ALTW, ETW, MHRTW and RPTW are all listed in Schedule 6 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and so are subject to the duties and standards set out in the Welsh Language Standards (No 4) Regulations 2016. The APW was included within Schedule 6 of the Measure by the Welsh Language Standards (No 1, No 2, No 4, No 6 and No 7) Regulations (Amendment) Regulations 2025, which came into force on 28 March 2025, but is not yet subject to a Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice.
- 8.3 The tribunals which fall within the Measure are only required to comply with the Service Delivery Standards set out in Schedule 1 to the Regulations, the Policy Making Standards set out in Schedule 2 (the requirement to consider the impact of new policies on the Welsh Language), and the Record Keeping Standards set out in Schedule 4 (in the case of the Welsh Tribunals, the keeping of records of complaints relating to the Welsh Language). None is subject to the standards set out in the other Schedules, namely the Promotion Standards or the Operational Standards. Whilst the WLT, the APW and the President of Welsh Tribunals are not formally governed by the Measure or Regulations, acknowledging the spirit of the scheme, they each voluntarily comply with the same standards.
- 8.4 Over the past year, I have prioritised promoting the use of the Welsh language. As part of this effort, we have reviewed our forms and conducted a survey to assess the Welsh language skills within the tribunal JOHs. This year, we aim to build on this progress, further embedding Welsh language use into our everyday operations and making it a standard practice.
- 8.5 Whilst each tribunal can provide both administrative services and hearings in the Welsh language, the use of the language in our tribunals is very small as can be seen from the table below.

**Table 2: Hearings held in the Welsh language**

Tribunal	Financial Year 2020-21	Financial Year 2021-22	Financial Year 2022-23	Financial Year 2023-24	Financial Year 2024-25
ALTW	0	0	0	0	0
MHRTW	5	3	3	9	8
RPTW	0	0	0	0	0
ETW*	1	0	3	1	6
APW	0	0	0	0	0
WLT	1	0	2	2	1

\* Formerly the Special Education Needs Tribunal Wales, renamed from 1 September 2021 by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

- 8.6 As can be seen from Table 2 above, I am pleased to report an increase in the use of the Welsh Language in the ETW. This appears to have been a positive result of changes to the application forms.
- 8.7 Over the past year, we have conducted a data-gathering exercise with a view to identifying any barriers to Welsh speakers using the Welsh language in tribunal hearings. The data collected have been very few, i.e. very few applicants have responded to the question. However, the answers provided appear to highlight a preference within this group to communicate in English, citing various reasons for this choice, including better fluency, confidence and comprehension in that language. Some are fluent Welsh speakers but find professional terminology easier in English. Others have partners who propose attending the hearing, but who are not proficient in Welsh. Several respondents say that they have recently moved from England or have only a basic understanding of Welsh, making English their preferred language for communication. The common theme appears to be that applicants are more “comfortable” using the English language both in their dealings with the tribunal (in applications, correspondence etc) and in hearings. No specific barrier to the use of the Welsh language appears from the returns.
- 8.8 We will continue to collect and analyse the data obtained from this exercise. We will also continue to make clear that the option is not binary as between the English and Welsh languages; and that we are both ready and able to constitute a truly bilingual panel for any case, in which any participant may use the English or the Welsh language interchangeably at any point in the hearing. This, we hope, will encourage those who are not confident or highly proficient in the Welsh language, or whose vocabulary does not extend to technical terms, to choose to use the language insofar as they are capable and comfortable in doing so.



## 9 Retirements and Appointments

- 9.1 Several Judicial Leads have left their posts this year, either to move to other judicial posts or to retirement: Claire Sharp (APW), Carolyn Kirby OBE (MHRTW), Richard Payne (RPTW) and Iwan Jenkins (WLT). We are grateful for their very considerable contribution and commitment, both to their own tribunals and to the Welsh Tribunals and the justice system in Wales more generally. Each served several years; but I would like particularly to mention Carolyn Kirby who, on 4 April 2025, retired as President of the MHRTW after over 25 years in that post. I extend our heartfelt thanks for her substantial – indeed, unprecedented – contribution.
- 9.2 We welcomed their successors, each selected following an open Judicial Appointments Commission (“JAC”) process: Meleri Tudur (APW) appointed 1 April 2024, Trefor Lloyd (RPTW) appointed 15 October 2024, and Betsan Criddle (WLT) appointed 24 October 2024. Each has already made their mark, and I look forward to working with them in the future. The post of President of MHRTW is currently the subject of a JAC competition, and we hope that an appointment will be made before the Summer.
- 9.3 In addition, the following JOH appointments were made in the year:
- ALTW:** Three Lay Members were appointed 6 June 2024; and two Deputy Chairs were appointed 4 March 2025 following JAC exercises.
- APW:** Edell Fitzpatrick was appointed Deputy President on 1 April 2024.
- MHRTW:** Two Salaried Judges were appointed on 1 May 2024, Richard Payne (formerly President of RPTW) and Christine Butcher, following a JAC exercise. A Medical Deputy, Gaynor Jones, was appointed in January 2024, and three Medical Members were appointed on 26 March 2025, following Expressions of Interest exercises.
- RPTW:** Three Professional Members were appointed on 2 April 2024, following a JAC exercise; and five Legal Members were appointed on 12 June 2024 following a cross-ticketing exercise with the First-tier Tribunal (an HMCTS tribunal). The post of Deputy is currently the subject of a JAC competition with an expected outcome in the Summer.
- WLT:** There is an ongoing JAC exercise for Lay Members, with an expected outcome in the Summer.

# 10 Concluding Observations

- 10.1 Over and above dealing with applications that have come before our tribunals, efficiently and effectively, this year has been dominated by preparation for the tribunal reform programme; and putting the accountability of the Welsh Tribunals on a firmer foundation. Despite the disappointment in respect of the former, we have continued to build sound foundations for our tribunals which will hold us in good stead in the future especially when, as I hope and expect, a Tribunal Reform Bill will be brought forward. We will continue to prepare for that.
- 10.2 I would like to thank the Welsh Ministers, and particularly Counsels General Mick Antoniw MS and Julie James MS and the First Minister the Rt Hon Eluned Morgan, Baroness Morgan of Ely MS, for their continued support for the Welsh Tribunals. We continue to have active, regular and positive engagement with both the Welsh Government Ministers and officials, which is of considerable benefit to the Welsh Tribunal system and those we serve. I greatly appreciate that support and look forward to working with them over the next twelve months.
- 10.3 I must also thank the tribunal JOHs, particularly the Judicial Leads who have day-to-day judicial management over their respective jurisdictions – and to all the staff in the WTU who continue to work under challenging conditions. All are committed to improving the systems under which we work, and to serving the individual applicants who have recourse to our tribunals. We owe them all a debt of gratitude.
- 10.4 I look forward to the year ahead, in the hope and expectation that it will be another year of progress and improvement in our service to the devolved justice system in Wales.



**The Rt Hon Sir Gary Hickinbottom**

President of Welsh Tribunals

July 2025

# Appendix: Priorities 2024-2025

Ref	Activity	PWT/JL/ TL/WTU
<b>Priority A – Tribunal Reform</b>		
A1	Full engagement with and support of the Tribunal Reform Policy Team at each step of the tribunal reform programme including implementation.	PWT
A2	Engagement with the Judicial Leads (JLs) at key stages within the tribunal reform process, including ensuring updates on tribunal reform are communicated by the Tribunal Reform Policy Team at JL meetings.	PWT
A3	Communicate with all tribunal members/users on the progress of the Bill at key stages.	PW /JL/ WTU
A4	Identify differences in current working practices and T&Cs between Welsh Tribunals Judicial Office Holders (JOHs) judges/members, and between HMCTS/Welsh Tribunals JOHs, with a view to ensuring such differences can be addressed as part of the Tribunal Reform Programme.	PWT/WTU
A5	Engage with other parts of the judicial and justice system in Wales to ensure that the Welsh Tribunals' JOHs are appropriately recognised within those systems.	PWT
A7	Liaising with Tribunal Reform Policy Team, and preparing for the coordination and eventual consolidation of the Welsh Tribunals as part of the implementation phase on the reform programme.	PWT/JL/ WTU
<b>Priority B – Judicial Training</b>		
B1	Following review of feedback from the training sessions 2023-24 by the Training Lead (TL), identify judicial training needs for each tribunal, and how training to meet those needs will be delivered (e.g. (i) face-to-face, (ii) on line and (iii) written or recorded form) with a view to ensuring that JOHs are appropriately trained for their posts and the training given is best value for money.	PWT/TL/JL
B2	Publish the yearly costs of judicial training for each tribunal in the Annual Reports.	JL/WTU
<b>Priority C – Inclusion, Diversity, and the Welsh Language</b>		
C1	Establish, on an anonymised basis, data on the composition of the Welsh Tribunals JOHs in terms of relevant characteristics (e.g. gender, racial background, professional expertise/experience, and social background).	PWT/JL/ WTU
C2	Identify any concerns about that composition including its effect on the ability to have diverse tribunal panels, and steps that may be taken to address those concerns.	PWT/WTU
C3	Monitor data obtained from claimants as to language preferences (and why Welsh-speaking claimants choose to use the English language in conducting proceedings before Welsh Tribunals); and, on the basis of those data, identify improvements that can be made to promote the use of the Welsh language in our tribunals.	PWT/WTU

**PWT – President of Welsh Tribunals**

**JL – Judicial Leads**

**WTU – Welsh Tribunals Unit**