**Press Release: Election Fund for Disabled Candidates is opens**

From 15th February 2021 the Access to Elected Office Fund Wales (AEOFW) will be open for candidates standing in the Senedd Cymru Elections in 2021.

The Fund which is delivered by Disability Wales and is financed by the Welsh Government, offers financial assistance to disabled People running as candidates in the 2021 Senedd Cymru Election and will go on to support those seeking to stand in the 2022 Local Government elections.

It pays for practical support to allow for disabled people to fully participate in the political process. This covers reasonable adjustments that level the playing field between disabled and non-disabled candidates, but not general campaign costs.

Rhian Davies, Chief Executive of Disability Wales said:

“Launching the Access to Elected Office Fund Wales marks a significant milestone in advancing disability equality in Wales both by widening rights to democratic participation as well as ensuring those who are elected to represent our communities also reflect the diversity of our communities.

Disability Wales is excited to be working with disabled people standing in the Senedd and local government elections as well as political parties across the spectrum and stakeholders involved in the electoral process in delivering the pilot scheme. The support for candidates available provided through the fund, such as meeting the costs of BSL interpreters, assistance with transport and the provision of equipment will contribute considerablyto creating a level playing field for disabled people seeking elected office whether nationally or locally.”

Senedd candidates interested in applying are asked to register their interest as soon as possible and before the 5th March. This is to ensure that applications can be considered and support put in place in time before the election. Though late declaring candidates will be considered.

Applications will be anonymised before consideration by a panel made up by individuals with lived experience of disability and making reasonable adjustments.

Further information on the Access to Elected Office Fund Wales including details on how to apply are available at v

<http://www.disabilitywales.org/projects/access-to-elected-office-fund-wales/>

Candidates who want to express their interest in the Access to Elected Office Fund Wales should contact Disability Wales at info@disabilitywales.org or phone 029 2088 7325.

The information currently on the website is based on the assumption that polling day will take place on the 6th May. If there is any change in the timing of the election a revised timetable and scheme information will be posted.

Notes for Editors:

For further information and interviews contact:

* Rhian Davies, Chief Executive on 029 2088 7325 / 07775 504 540 rhian.davies@disabilitywales.org
* Miranda Evans, Policy and Programme Manager on 029 2088 7325 / 07739 413826 miranda.evans@disabilitywales.org
* Philip Westcott, Civic Participation Officer on 029 2088 7325 / 07814738397 philip.westcott@disabilitywales.org