



## **APPENDIX 1 – GWYNEDD COUNCIL RESPONSE**

### **BACKGROUND.**

1. Gwynedd Council is pleased to be able to respond to the draft proposal report of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, dated January 2018.
2. The Council submitted draft proposals to the Boundary Commission in June 2017, and we are pleased that the Commission has incorporated 43 of them in their draft proposals, with an agreement in terms of the boundary in a further two proposals, but disagreement in terms of the number of members for these wards.
3. We continue to stand by the original proposals given by the Council, which were based on meeting the average need per member, and also on a strong awareness of the local area and the best solution for local people. A copy of the original report and the logic for the proposals is included in Appendix A.
4. Before elaborating on each ward and specific proposals, there are some basic principles we wish to emphasise.
5. Whilst accepting that the Commission has to aim towards the electoral member:elector ratio of approximately 1:1200, or as close as possible to this, Gwynedd Council emphasises the rural nature of the County and what is sensible in terms of natural community links in order to ensure an effective representation for the people of Gwynedd. This could mean deviating from the visual appearance on a map that would lead to the best ratio, to a slightly less balanced ratio but a much more sensible democratic representation for the community.
6. As a basic principle, we have already noted that we are against electoral wards with two or more members as it is not consistent with the Commission's basic principle of ensuring that each Councillor has an equal electoral ratio, nor the objective of ensuring an effective and convenient local government, as is required for them to address.
7. We note that you stated in your 2016 policy and practice document that it is required to endeavour to ensure an equal ratio of local government electors to the number of Council members to be elected in each electoral ward.
8. We presume that the purpose of this requirement is to ensure a somewhat equal workload and representation across the area of the Council.

9. The Council is of a strong opinion that if you were to create constituencies with more than one member, this would be contrary to this principle.
10. As members cannot arrange at the time of an election for one member to represent half of the constituency and another member to represent the other half, what is created when creating a two member constituency, for instance, is a constituency where two members have to represent double the number of electors.
11. In areas where there is a significant political difference, it can also lead to votes from individuals meaning less as they are not reflected in the Council's member constitution.
12. For example, if we take two constituencies with 1,000 electors each: Constituency A has 800 electors for Party X and 200 members for Party Z; and Constituency B has 400 electors for Party X and 600 electors for Party Z - by keeping them separate, Party X would gain one member and Party Z would gain one member. However, by creating a two member constituency, Party X would gain two members and Party Z would not be represented at all.
13. In addition, we continue to reinforce the opinion noted originally that the Boundary Commission should focus on the requirements of effective local representation and the impact of the population rather than on the electoral register, at a specific point in time, in forming its proposals. Specifically, the demands and workload which arise as a result of the presence of students, tourists, second home owners and others who are not on the local electoral register mean that this must be addressed when determining the size of constituencies.
14. When considering names for the wards, we support the Boundary Commission's principle to reconcile names in English and Welsh. See specific observations about ward names from point 30 onwards.
15. The Council acknowledges and appreciates that the Boundary Commission has taken the local voice into consideration and has accepted the Council's proposals in a large number of wards. However, we continue to stand by our original proposals unless noted otherwise below.

#### **OBSERVATIONS ON SPECIFIC PROPOSALS**

##### **GERLAN AND OGWEN**

16. Gerlan ward currently has 1615 electors (projection of 1637), which is 34% above average. Ogwen ward currently has 1609 electors (projection of 1523) which is 33% above average.
17. The Boundary Commission has proposed to combine both wards and create a multi-member ward with three members and 3,224 (projection of 3160) electors, which is 11% above average.

18. The Council does not agree with the Commission's proposal to create a multi-member ward for the reasons noted above in 4, which are to ensure accountability and a clear democratic representation for the electors. The Council believes that there is an alternative solution to the situation in the Bethesda area which a) avoids a multi-member ward b) continues to respond to the requirements of the Boundary Commission with regards to an elector:member representation ratio. As there is a total of 3,224 electors (projection of 3160) in the area, the Council suggests forming three new individual wards, namely Rachub, Gerlan and Bethesda wards (see the map in Appendix B).
19. The recommendation is based on a strong awareness of the local community. Historically, the three defined areas/wards were three small villages. As the years went by, the villages have grown and their outskirts have become very close to each other; however, there are differences between the areas. Rachub and Gerlan are more rural areas compared to the Ogwen area which makes up the urban area of Bethesda.
20. It is recommended to change the boundaries so that the new boundary is divided between Ogwen and Rachub wards down Lôn Newydd Coetmor, joining Bangor Road and re-joining the old boundary there. Forming the new boundary down Lôn Coetmor and down the road known locally as Allt Bethania will ensure that the electors in the rural area of the "Bethesda Area" are in the Rachub ward, whilst keeping the most populated and urban area from Bangor Road in the more urban ward of Ogwen. This would lead to creating a new Rachub ward with 970 electors, which is 19% below average. It should be considered that there are two planning permissions for this ward, which will add an additional number of electors in time.
21. In addition, it is recommended to adapt the boundaries to the north of Ogwen ward, changing the boundary for the Gerlan ward so that it follows the Coetmor ditch (as it is currently) to Carneddi Road, and turning right and following the footpath behind the Old Coal Yard and surrounding the Pant Dreiniog industrial estate, and connecting back with Cefnfaes Street, and then joining Ffrydlas Road, and continuing then up Ffordd Newydd Gerlan until reaching the original boundaries. We believe that this is logical as it keeps the area known as "Carneddi" completely within the Gerlan ward. This would lead to creating a new Gerlan ward with 1,115 electors (914 from the original Gerlan, and 201 transferred from Ogwen), which is 7.1% below average.
22. The side-effect of this then is to create a new urban ward from the old Ogwen ward, which would have 1,139 electors (1609 from the original ward, 269 to Rachub and 201 to Gerlan), which is 5% below average. It is believed that creating the new boundaries to the old Ogwen ward would keep the valley's "grass-roots" in a logical neat cluster, very close to the area known traditionally as 'Bethesda'. To avoid confusion with the wider area of Dyffryn Ogwen, we recommend that the Ogwen ward name should be changed to "Ward Bethesda" or "Ward Canol Bethesda".
23. The Council believes that the above solution meets the Commission's requirements in terms of the numbers ratio, along with ensuring a sensible local solution.

**PEN LLŶN AREA - ABERDARON, BOTWNNOG, LLANENGAN, ABERSOCH AND LLANBEDROG WARDS.**

24. The Council acknowledges that a change must be made in the area to keep within the Boundary's guidelines. The Council is still of the opinion that the proposals originally submitted by the Council brings the best solution for the area. Whilst acknowledging that the Commission's solution means that the variation in figures is lower than the variation in the Council's solution, the Council's solution is still within the +/- 25% variation used by the Commission in other wards. However, the recommendations also ensure that natural community links are respected.
25. We still recommend combining the two wards of Aberdaron and Botwnnog to create one electoral ward of 1,457 electors - 733 Aberdaron and 724 Botwnnog (projection of 1,406), which is 21.4% above average. This still builds on the natural community links in the area, and would lead to a more sensible solution than dividing the Botwnnog community. By combining the two wards, the local elected Members suggest giving the ward a new name, namely the "Pen draw Llŷn" to reflect the new ward and its unique situation. (See point 30 onwards for observations on ward names).
26. The Council also proposed another new ward by combining the Abersoch coastal ward (523 electors) with the Llanengan Community Council ward (333 electors) and the Llangian Community Council ward up to a new natural boundary created by the Coed y Fron cross-road (that would include approximately 53 electors). This new ward leads to creating a ward consisting of 909 electors, which is 24% below average. This new ward of 909 electors once again strengthens and responds to community links. The Abersoch and Llanengan areas are seaside areas where there is much tourism, second homes and collaboration within the communities. There are other natural links also, such as the Llenengan and Llangian Church Community, and the Post Office. If the Boundary Commission accepts the above recommendation, then the members would wish to choose a new name for the ward. (see point 30 onwards for observations on ward names).
27. By accepting the recommendation in 21 above, the third ward then combines the Mynthro area (namely the remainder of the Llanengan electoral ward) from the Coed y Fron cross-road (approximately 450 electors) to join the Llanbedrog electoral ward (768 electors). In turn, this would lead to creating the Llanbedrog and Mynthro new electoral ward which would have 1,218 electors, which is 1.5% above average. Once again, the above builds on natural links within the community, with similar traditions between Mynthro and Llanbedrog, such as agriculture, the chapels and the Welsh culture.

## **DOLGELLAU AREA**

28. Another area the Boundary Commission has suggested to change to become a multi-member ward is the Dolgellau Area. The current situation in Dolgellau means that there are two wards, Dolgellau North with 900 electors (projection of 871) which is 25% below average, and Dolgellau South with 1,044 electors (projection of 970) which is 14% below average. We had recommended to keep to the existing arrangements as they are within the +/- 25% boundary average. The Boundary Commission recommends combining the wards to create one electoral ward of 1,944 electors (projection of 841) represented by two members, which is 20% below average.
29. In accordance with the Council's basic principle, we object to multi-member wards for the reasons already noted. In light of the fact that the current comparison is not much different to the variation the Commission itself is prepared to accept in other areas, we do not see the need to change here, and the Commission is recommending change for the sake of change. We will continue to stress keeping things as they are. However, if the Commission insists on the need for change, the Council has developed an alternative solution for the area in order to make the numbers more balanced. It is recommended to adapt the boundary of the Dolgellau South ward (see the map in Appendix C for the detailed boundary) and continuing to follow Ffordd y Gadair and not turn up Maes Caled Road by Penbryn. This would lead to approximately 85 additional electors in the Dolgellau North ward and consistency for the electors to the north of Ffordd y Gadair being represented in the more rural ward of Dolgellau North. This would lead to 985 electors in the Dolgellau North ward, which is 17.9% below average, and 959 electors in the Dolgellau South ward, which is 20.1% below average. See Appendix Ch for a map of the new recommended wards.

## **BETHEL AND FELINHELI AREA**

30. The Bethel and Felinheli area is two separate wards within an adjacent area. There are 1,007 electors (projection of 995) in the Bethel ward, which is 17% below the current average. The Felinheli ward has 1,694 electors (projection of 1,736), which is 40% above average. The Boundary Commission has recommended combining both wards to create one new electoral ward named Bethel and Felinheli, which would consist of 2,701 electors (projection of 2,731) which is 12% above average, which would be represented by two members.
31. In accordance with the previous observations, we object to multi-member wards for the reasons already noted. We continue to stand by our original proposal, namely to keep both wards separate, as they currently are. There are no community links that bring both areas together, albeit the proximity of the two areas on a map.
32. Though comparatively small according to the Commission's guidelines, the Bethel ward is a village which has its own identity as a unit and is a natural community which grows and develops and it makes cultural and community sense. There are community links with the Llanddeiniolen and Llanrug area. On the other hand, the Felinheli ward has its own identity as a unit - it is a self-sufficient community, both on a cultural and community level.

33. Accepting that the Felinheli constituency is 40% above average, everything cannot be boiled down to a mathematical measure and, in this case, we are of a strong opinion that we must accept one larger than normal constituency as the option recommended by the Commission makes no sense on a community level.
34. Furthermore, in accordance with our arguments for multi-member constituencies, we would not be creating a representative balance, but a situation where both members would have to represent a constituency that is 123% above average.

#### **HARLECH AND LLANBEDR AREA**

35. Another area the Boundary Commission has suggested to become a multi-member ward is the Harlech and Llanbedr area. We note that there is a local feeling of agreeing to the Boundary Commission's ideas for the area but, as we have already noted, we do not agree with multi-member wards.

#### **BANGOR AREA**

36. The Council is pleased that the Boundary Commission has considered and accepted the Council's observations regarding changing boundaries within the Bangor area, with the impact on the existing areas of Deiniol, Hirael, Hendre, Garth and Menai. However, whilst the boundaries have changed, the Council is still of the opinion that the unique circumstances of these wards as a result of the substantial influx of students in the Garth and Menai wards, and the deprived nature of the Marchog ward, means that there is an additional burden on Councillors who represent them. In accordance with what was noted in the Council's original proposals, we believe that two members are required to represent these wards.

#### **OTHER AREAS**

37. In addition, the areas noted below are areas where the Boundary Commission has stated different proposals to the original proposals that the Council made. As already noted, we are still of the opinion that the proposals we originally submitted are more sensible for the areas. The justification can be seen in the original report, which is available in Appendix A.
  - Arllechwedd and Pentir Area
  - Bontnewydd, Waunfawr, Llanwnda and Talysarn Area
  - Porthmadog-Tremadog, Penrhyneddraeth Area
  - Diffwys, Maenofferen and Teigl Area
  - Tywyn Area

## **WARD NAMES**

38. As noted above in 14, we support the Boundary Commission's principle to reconcile names in English and Welsh.
39. The Boundary Commission has suggested specific changes to the names of some wards. The names of the new wards we support are listed below:
- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ○ Llanaelhaearn              | Yr Eifl                 |
| ○ Bryn-crug/Llanfihangel and | Bro Dysynni             |
| Llangelynnig                 | Arthog and Llangelynnin |
40. There are two other wards where the Commission is suggesting a change, with which the Council does not agree.
- In the Bangor area, the Commission's recommendation is to create one new ward called Bethesda. The Council has recommended an alternative solution, creating three new wards called Gerlan, Rachub and Bethesda or Central Bethesda.
  - In the Pen Llŷn area, the Commission is recommending combining the Aberdaron ward with a section of Botwnnog and calling it 'Aberdaron', but the Council is recommending that both wards should be combined and that the new ward should be called the 'Pen draw Llŷn' ward. If the Council's observations are not accepted, we believe that calling the ward combining Aberdaron and a section of Botwnnog "Aberdaron", and calling the other new ward the Commission is favouring by combining the remainder of Botwnnog with Llanengan "Botwnnog and Llanengan" would be very misleading and confusing for local people.
41. There is a strong opinion with regards to objecting to changing the name of the Abermaw ward to Abermo, as it could lead to some confusion. Abermaw is used locally in Gwynedd because it is the estuary (*aber*) of the Mawddach river. We encourage keeping to the Abermaw name or, if there will be any change, to use Abermawddach, but not Abermo.
42. In addition, there are a few principles that the Commission should consider when coming up with ward names. It is noted that there is a possibility of creating confusion when having the same name on two wards in different areas, e.g. Hendre in Caernarfon and Bangor. In addition, it is noted that the Commission's recommendation for the spelling of the names of some wards vary from the local understanding of the spellings, e.g. Aber-erch rather than Abererch. It is recommended to keep to the local spelling.