

REPORT TO CABINET
22 November 2016

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dyfed Edwards, Leader

Subject: Parliamentary Constituencies

Contact officer: Dilwyn Williams, Chief Executive

The decision sought:

- a) To accept the Commission's proposals in respect of the proposed Isle of Anglesey and Arfon parliamentary constituency.
 - b) Disagree with the proposals set out by the Commission for South Clwyd and Gwynedd constituency and to present alternative proposals that would keep the County's boundaries intact but by also including similar areas in relation to culture and language to obtain the necessary electorate within the constituency as noted in the report.
 - c) To press upon the Commission to adopt Welsh names for constituencies in Wales.
 - d) To present suggestions for appropriate names for the Gwynedd constituencies.
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Introduction

- 1. The Boundary Commission for Wales has published proposals to review parliamentary constituencies in Wales. The full report can be seen at www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk
- 2. Anyone wishing to comment on the proposals is invited to do so by the 5th December.
- 3. The Commission suggests establishing 29 parliamentary constituencies in Wales to replace the current 40.
- 4. There are two reasons for the reduction namely the goal of reducing the electorate from 650 to 600 across Britain and the provision under the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies 2011 Act that has a statutory range of between 71,031 and 78,507 electors for every constituency.

5. The latter requirement leads to having to create unnatural boundaries, but the proposal document makes it clear that you cannot transgress the statutory number that each constituency must contain and therefore any comment on the proposals must contain alternative proposals that would keep within this number.
6. On condition that this requirement is met, the Commission can also pay attention to the following:-
 - Special geographical considerations, including size, shape and the accessibility of the constituency
 - Local government boundaries
 - Existing constituency boundaries; and
 - Any local connections that would be broken by changes in the constituencies.
7. Gwynedd currently has two parliamentary constituencies, namely Arfon (which has 37,739 electors) and Dwyfor Meirionnydd (which has 42,353 electors). You can see therefore that the whole of Gwynedd is only marginally over the highest boundary for a parliamentary constituency by 1,500 electors.
8. However, as the present Isle of Anglesey constituency only has 49,287 electors, and as Gwynedd is the only county bordering the island, it is unavoidable that part of the Arfon constituency will have to be included with Anglesey to create an electorate of at least 71,031.

The Commission's proposals relevant to Gwynedd

9. The Commission suggests creating one constituency for the Isle of Anglesey and Arfon (77,425 electors) which would include all Arfon electoral wards except Bontnewydd, Groeslon, Llanberis, Llanllyfni, Llanwnda, Penygroes, Talysarn and Waunfawr.
10. They then suggests creating the North Clwyd and Gwynedd constituency which would include –
 - The remaining Arfon wards mentioned above;
 - Electoral wards currently in the Dwyfor and Meirionnydd Parliamentary Constituency (**apart** from Llandderfel, Llanuwchllyn, and Bala);
 - Electoral wards of Betws y Coed, Caerhun, Crwst, Eglwysbach, Gower, Trefriw, Uwch Conwy, Betws yn Rhos, Llangernyw and Llansannan in the County Borough of Conwy.

- Electoral wards Bodelwyddan, Denbigh Central, Denbigh Lower, Denbigh Upper Henllan, St. Asaph East, St. Asaph West, , Trefnant and Tremeirchion in the County of Denbighshire. This constituency would have 76,147 electors.
11. The electoral wards of Llandderfel, Llanuwchllyn and Bala are included in a proposed Parliamentary Constituency of South Clwyd and North Montgomeryshire, which also includes the following:-
- Electoral wards of Corwen, Llandrillo and Llangollen in the County of Denbighshire and currently part of the South Clwyd Parliamentary Constituency.
 - A number of electoral wards from the west of the County Borough of Wrexham which is also currently part of the parliamentary constituency of South Clwyd.
 - The Uwchaled ward of the County Borough of Conwy which is part of the parliamentary constituency of West Clwyd;
 - A number of electoral wards from Ruthin down to the south which are also part West Clwyd parliamentary constituency of
 - The Llandyrnog electoral ward (which is currently part of the parliamentary constituency of the Vale of Clwyd);
 - A number of electoral wards from the northern Montgomeryshire parliamentary constituency.
12. The proposed parliamentary constituency boundaries are illustrated on the enclosed maps.
13. Gwynedd would then have three Members of Parliament representing parts of the county – one jointly with Anglesey, another representing an area extending from Tywyn down in the South, Aberdaron to the West and as far as Tremeirchion in the East. The third would represent three electoral wards in the Penllyn area as part of a vast area in the east.
14. The Council does of course have an interest to ensure appropriate representation for the area and that those arrangements make sense.

Council's Response

15. We must accept of course that any constituency proposed must have a minimum of 71,031 electors.
16. As part of Gwynedd has to be in the same constituency as Anglesey (as we are the only county bordering the island), it is likely that we will have to accept this proposal as there are no other options.

17. However, the North Clwyd and Gwynedd constituency seems unrealistic and raises the question to what extent a Member of Parliament could represent the area effectively.
18. It also goes across three counties (and any member would therefore need to be alive to what is happening in the three counties). It also seems to go against the considerations noted in clause 6 above.
19. Removing the Penllyn area out of Gwynedd (which would result in another Member of Parliament representing a small part of the county) also seems to go against the considerations noted in paragraph 6 above.
20. There is, in my opinion, a better option for the second constituency in Gwynedd and that is to keep the present county boundary and including the Aberconwy areas to the west of the River Conwy.
21. This, to a degree would build on historical boundaries and would reflect the linguistic culture of these areas.
22. This differs from the Commission's proposals by not including any area from the County of Denbighshire or any part of the proposed Clwyd West constituency but would include the electoral wards of Bryn, Pandy, Pant yr Afon /Penmaenan, Capel Ulo, and Conwy to the areas of Aberconwy in the Commission's original proposal. This would create a parliamentary electorate of 69,719 which, of course, is too low.
23. However, because of the rural nature, perhaps there is an argument for keeping the wards of Llangernyw in the parliamentary constituency as suggested originally and include Uwchaled from the County Borough of Conwy (Clwyd West parliamentary constituency) which would bring the total to 71,190 which is within the Commission's guidelines.
24. This figure is at the bottom of the range of course but obviously you would expect rural areas to be at the bottom due to the work of representing residents in a sparsely populated area.
25. Of course, this would then have an effect on some of the other proposals by the Commission and although any subsequent effects for other constituencies is not a matter for us, if we are to offer this proposal as one which is more acceptable locally, we need to ensure that there are practical options for the other constituencies that would allow the Commission to consider our proposal seriously.

26. Firstly, we would have removed 9,307 electors from the proposed parliamentary constituency for Colwyn and Conwy.
27. This could be compensated by including the areas of Betws yn Rhos, Bodelwyddan, St Aspah, Trefnant and Tremeirchion that would have been removed from the proposal for Gwynedd, giving back 8,658 electors thereby keeping the electorate within the Commission's range. I would argue that these areas have more in common with the coastal communities than they have with Gwynedd.
28. Including the areas of Denbigh and Llansannan and Landyrnog and Ruthin (already in the proposal for South Clwyd and North Montgomeryshire Constituency) would increase this constituency by 4,806 (after considering the fact that we would have removed the Penllyn area and Uwchaled). This would still keep the constituency within the range guideline.
29. It is **recommended** that the Council submit proposals to the Commission and recommends the changes noted for North Clwyd and Gwynedd, with the possible changes to deal with the side effects (whilst acknowledging that there are other answers perhaps more relevant to those residing within those areas).
30. The Commission is also asking for observations on constituency names and noting that it is the Commission's policy that the name of new constituencies should reflect the principal council or councils in the constituency. However, if an alternative name receives more support locally, they would be prepared to consider that proposal.
31. From a language perspective, they note that they consider it appropriate for every constituency in Wales to have another name in Welsh or English so that both are treated equally. Where the constituency name is bilingual, there would not be another name. The example given is Blaenau Gwent.
32. For those relevant to Gwynedd the proposed names are Ynys Môn ac Arfon (Isle of Anglesey and Arfon) and Gogledd Clwyd a Gwynedd (North Clwyd and Gwynedd). In view of the fact that we are suggesting not to include the Denbighshire element within the constituency, De Clwyd/South Clwyd is not relevant (although we need to ask why suggest the term Clwyd at all considering 30 above - as Clwyd is no longer a name of a principal council nor is Arfon).
33. However, we must consider that our proposal contains a large part of rural Aberconwy. One suggestion would be to suggest the old historical name of Gwynedd Uwch Conwy?

34. It is unlikely that they will accept this suggestion and therefore as a second choice, another suggestion would be Gwynedd and Rural Aberconwy.

35. A wider point is that in view of the present direction in Wales to strengthen the Welsh language, should we press on the Commission to adopt appropriate Welsh names only for the constituencies. As they are appropriate names is there a need for an English translation?

Views of Statutory Officers

The Chief Executive

Author

Monitoring Officer:

In responding to this consultation the Cabinet should consider the matter from the perspective of the Council as a public authority and its assessment of the possible effects the proposals would have on the Council in carrying out its role within the county. On the other hand, the statutory framework criteria for the review is quite strict and it is inevitable to have cross boundary implications to any alternative recommendations. However this is a response to the initial recommendations with further public consultation processes to follow before publishing the final proposal.

Head of Finance:

Nothing to add from a financial propriety perspective.

Appendices:

Maps from the proposals by the Boundary Commission for Wales.

Background Documents:

The Boundary Commission for Wales' initial proposals report on the 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies.