

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES



Comisiwn Ffiniau
Llywodraeth Leol
i Gymru



Local Government
Boundary Commission
for Wales

**REVIEW OF COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES IN THE
COUNTY BOROUGH OF BRIDGEND**

REPORT AND PROPOSALS

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REPORT AND PROPOSALS

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Brian Gibbons AM
Minister for Social Justice and Local Government
Welsh Assembly Government

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) have completed the review of community boundaries in the County Borough of Bridgend as directed by you in your Direction to us dated 8 November 2007 (Appendix 1).

2. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 2.1 We propose that:

- ... the boundary between the Communities of Bridgend, Brackla and Coychurch Lower be realigned to follow the boundary shown in green on the map at Appendix 3, and;
- ... the boundary between the Communities of Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr is realigned to follow the boundary shown in green on the map at Appendix 5.

3. SCOPE AND OBJECT OF THE REVIEW

- 3.1 The purpose of the review is to consider whether, in the interests of effective and convenient local government, the Commission should propose changes to the present community boundaries. The review is being conducted under the provisions of Section 56 of the Local Government Act 1972 (the Act).

Procedure

- 3.2 Section 60 of the Act lays down procedural guidelines, which are to be followed in carrying out a review. In line with that guidance we wrote on 14 November 2007 to all of the Town and Community Councils in the County Borough of Bridgend, the Members of Parliament for the local constituencies, the Assembly Member for the area and other interested parties to inform them of our intention to conduct the review and to request their preliminary views. We also publicised our intention to conduct the review in local newspapers circulating in the area and asked the Councils to display public notices. Notification of the start of the review and the closing date for representations to be made (24 January 2008) was given on the Commission's web site.

4. DRAFT PROPOSALS

- 4.1 In response to our initial invitation, we received representations from Bridgend and Porthcawl Town Councils, and Brackla, Coychurch Higher, Garw Valley, Laleston, Llangynwyd, Lower Llangynwyd Middle, Merthyr Mawr, St Brides Minor and

Ynysawdre Community Councils. In our Draft Proposals published on 29 September 2008, we considered the issues raised in the representations.

- 4.2 Suggested changes to community boundaries were made in the following areas: Bridgend, Brackla and Coychurch Lower; and Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr.

Bridgend, Brackla and Coychurch Lower

- 4.3 We considered the suggestion made by Bridgend Town Council for a change to the boundary between Bridgend and Brackla and Bridgend and Coychurch Lower Communities. In the light of our site visit to the area we formed a view that the present boundary was anomalous in that it divided the Dunraven Business Park and Haywain Court. We noted that Brackla Community Council agreed to the suggested re-alignment of the boundary (no representation was received from Coychurch Lower Community Council).
- 4.4 The site visit confirmed that the suggested realignment of the community boundary between Brackla, Coychurch Lower and Bridgend followed clearly defined geographical features.
- 4.5 We were of the view that the suggested change would be desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government and therefore propose the change to the boundary between the Community of Bridgend and the Community of Brackla and a change to the boundary between the Community of Bridgend and the Community of Coychurch Lower as illustrated on the map at Appendix 3.

Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr

- 4.6 We noted Bridgend Town Council's suggestion that the boundary between the Communities of Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr should be realigned so as to include Island Farm Road and Island Farm Close within the boundary of Bridgend Town. We also noted the Council's further suggestion to extend the boundary so as take in an area of open land to the west of Island Farm Road to allow for future expansion of the adjacent Science Park. We noted that Merthyr Mawr Community Council however did not consider that any change to their boundary was needed.
- 4.7 We considered that the current boundary, where it divides the Island Farm estate, to be anomalous and that it would be desirable, in the interests of effective and convenient local government, for the whole of the estate to be in either Bridgend or Merthyr Mawr. We noted that due to its location on the outskirts of Bridgend Town, the Island Farm housing estate appears to have closer links with that community rather than the village and rural areas of Merthyr Mawr. We were however mindful that the transfer of the Island Farm estate from Merthyr Mawr would significantly reduce the electorate of that Community and call into question its continued viability.
- 4.8 In the course of our consideration of Island Farm estate we considered two possible alternatives for the realignment of the boundary between Merthyr Mawr and Bridgend Town. The first option which we considered would be to transfer the

whole of the Island Farm estate from the Community of Merthyr Mawr into the Community of Bridgend Town and to amalgamate the Communities of Merthyr Mawr and Laleston in order to address the implications for the viability of Merthyr Mawr. The second option would be to realign the boundary between the Communities of Bridgend Town and Merthyr Mawr so as to transfer the whole of the Island Farm estate and adjacent land into Merthyr Mawr from Bridgend. We put these two options to Bridgend Town Council.

- 4.9 A response was received from Bridgend Town Council stating that they favoured option 1. However, they wished to put forward a further proposal as their preferred course of action: that the electors identified in Island Farm Estate as Merthyr Mawr electors to be transferred to Bridgend Town, the remaining electors to be re-allocated to the most geographically appropriate Community Council namely Bridgend Town or Laleston Community Councils.
- 4.10 Bridgend Town Council challenged the premise that Merthyr Mawr Community Council can act sufficiently on behalf of their community in its current capacity and that electors would be best served if the proposed alterations were fully considered.
- 4.11 We noted that whilst both Laleston and Merthyr Mawr Community Councils supported the suggestion to transfer the whole of Island Farm estate and adjacent land into Merthyr Mawr, Bridgend Town Council did not support this. Bridgend Town Council presented an alternative proposal but did not present any detailed information in support of their proposal. We noted that the alterations proposed by Bridgend Town Council would lead to the abolition of Merthyr Mawr Council. In the absence of detailed information, we did not feel able to support the proposal from Bridgend Town Council.
- 4.12 Accordingly, we were therefore of the view that option 2 (to transfer the whole of Island Farm Estate and adjacent land into Merthyr Mawr) would be desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government. We were satisfied that the division of the Island Farm Estate by the present boundary was anomalous and that the area should be contained within one community. Option 2 would achieve this and in addition would extend the existing boundary of Merthyr Mawr to include a number of additional properties. The revised boundary will also be co-terminous on the eastern side with the county boundary to provide an improved definition of the community. We therefore proposed the change to the boundary between the Community of Bridgend and the Community of Merthyr Mawr as illustrated on the map at Appendix 4.

Coychurch Higher and St Bride's Minor

- 4.13 We considered the suggestion by Coychurch Higher Community Council to include the areas of Heol Llan and Heol Llaethog within their Community, due to the close proximity of their boundaries and because, according to Coychurch Higher Community Council, residents of this area use their Council as a conduit to complain to Bridgend County Borough Council. We clarified the extent of the area involved but did not consider that the suggested boundary constitutes a clearer demarcation between the two communities than does the existing boundary. At that stage, from the information that had been provided, we were not satisfied that the

change would be desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government.

Laleston

- 4.14 We noted the suggestion from Laleston Community Council that because of inequalities in representation caused by recent housing development, changes should be made to the electoral arrangements of their community. We pointed out that this review is being carried out under Section 56 of the Act which allows us to make proposals for the electoral arrangements of a community that are consequential on a change to the community boundary. At Draft Proposals stage however we made no proposals for a change to the boundary of the Community of Laleston. We were unable therefore to consider changes to the community electoral arrangements at that stage.
- 4.15 We made no proposals for changes to the remaining community areas within the County Borough of Bridgend.

5. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED IN RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The date for representations in response to our Draft Proposals report was initially set as 1 December 2008 but this was extended at the request of Bridgend Town Council to 5 January 2009. In response to our Draft Proposals report we received representations from Bridgend Town Council and Brackla, Laleston and Merthyr Mawr Community Councils. A summary of these representations can be found at Appendix 2.

6. ASSESSMENT

Bridgend, Brackla and Coychurch Lower

- 6.1 In our Draft Proposals report we proposed a change to the boundary between the Community of Bridgend and the Community of Brackla and a change to the boundary between the Community of Bridgend and the Community of Coychurch Lower. In response to our Draft Proposals, Brackla Community Council wrote to say they had no further comments to make. Having received no other comments on these proposals we conclude that all interested parties are in agreement with our Draft Proposals for this area.
- 6.2 We remain of the view therefore that the changes would be desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government and therefore propose the change to the boundary between the Community of Bridgend and the Community of Brackla and a change to the boundary between the Community of Bridgend and the Community of Coychurch Lower as illustrated on the map at Appendix 3.

Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr

- 6.3 In our Draft Proposals report we considered that the division of the Island Farm Estate by the present boundary was not in the interests of effective and convenient local government and the area should be contained within one community. We proposed an option to realign the boundary between the Communities of Bridgend Town and Merthyr Mawr so as to transfer the whole of the Island Farm estate and land to the east into Merthyr Mawr from Bridgend as shown on the map at Appendix 4.
- 6.4 In response to our Draft Proposals, Bridgend Town Council consulted with the residents of that area of the Oldcastle Ward of the Community of Bridgend that had been proposed to be moved to the Community of Merthyr Mawr. The Council consider that the result of this consultation is that a clear majority of residents would prefer to remain within the Oldcastle ward of Bridgend.
- 6.5 We have received a copy of Bridgend's consultation exercise and have taken careful note of it. It would appear that a number of the residents, as represented in the returns to the consultation, are opposed to the proposals that they should be transferred to Merthyr Mawr. We noted however that for Island Farm Close the views of the residents were not so clearly divided with the returns show three residents in favour of remaining in Bridgend and two in favour of transferring to Merthyr Mawr.
- 6.6 The Commission also took note of Bridgend's representations regarding the development prospects for adjoining "open land" to Island Farm Road and Close. This enables the Commission to reconsider matters at some future point when the development may or may not have taken place. The proposals which are contained in the submission from Bridgend Town Council do not contain proposals for housing and as it is entirely one of a commercial nature, the electorate in the area will not change as a result.
- 6.7 The proposal that Merthyr Mawr Community Council should be abolished has not received any support from electors living within that community. As it is by no means the smallest Community Council in Wales, this suggests that the Commission should make no recommendations concerning its abolition but equally not to instigate any recommendation that may undermine this Council in any way.
- 6.8 We still consider that the current boundary, where it divides the Island Farm estate, to be anomalous and that it would be desirable, in the interests of effective and convenient local government, for the whole of the estate to be in either Bridgend or Merthyr Mawr. Whilst there has been a strong response from the residents in this area to the consultation undertaken by Bridgend Town Council, against our original proposal to realign the boundary to follow the A48 it is still necessary to determine an appropriate boundary to remedy the anomaly at Island Farm estate. We have noted that currently the major part of the Island Farm estate is within the Merthyr Mawr Community. Only 11 properties, in the southern part of Island Farm Close, are within the Community of Bridgend. Having considered all the representations and in all the circumstances, we consider that the entire estate should be contained within the Merthyr Mawr Community.

- 6.9 In order to establish a clear boundary we propose a modification of the boundary recommended in our Draft proposals to take only the houses in Island Farm into the Merthyr Mawr Community. This proposal is illustrated on the map at Appendix 5. A site visit was made to the area and we have determined that the suggested boundary change follows clearly defined geographical features.

Coychurch Higher and St Bride's Minor

- 6.10 In our Draft Proposals report we considered the suggestion by Coychurch Higher Community Council to include the areas of Heol Llan and Heol Llaethog within their Community. At that stage however, from the information that had been provided, we were not satisfied that the change would be desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government. Having received no further representations from interested parties we therefore make no proposals for a change to the boundary between Coychurch Higher and St. Bride's Minor.

Laleston

- 6.11 We noted the suggestion from Laleston Community Council that changes should be made to the electoral arrangements of their community. At that stage however we were not proposing any changes to the Laleston Community boundary and therefore were unable to propose consequential changes to the electoral arrangements. In these our Final Proposals we are again not proposing any changes to the boundary of the Community of Laleston so, whilst there appears to us to be merit in reviewing the electoral arrangements of the community, we are unable to do so as part of this review. We therefore referred this matter to Bridgend County Borough Council who may consider undertaking a review under Section 57(4) of the Act.

7. PROPOSALS

- 7.1 Having considered all of the evidence available to us we propose that the boundaries of the Communities of Bridgend and Brackla and the Communities of Bridgend and Coychurch should be realigned in the area under review to follow the boundaries shown in green on the map at Appendix 3. We also propose that the boundaries of the Communities of Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr should be realigned in the area under review to follow the boundaries shown in green on the map at Appendix 5.

- 7.2 Detailed maps to a larger scale showing the proposed new boundaries can be inspected at the offices of the Bridgend County Borough Council and at the office of the Commission in Cardiff.

8. CONSEQUENTIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 8.1 In considering the various changes to the community boundaries it was also necessary for us to take account of the consequential effects on the electoral arrangements for community councils and the principal authority, which would

result from these changes. This section of our report details our proposals for consequential changes to the electoral arrangements. The electoral statistics used in this report were provided by Bridgend County Borough Council.

Community Council Electoral Arrangements

- 8.2 The Community of Brackla, which is not currently warded, has 8,241 electors represented by 11 councillors (749 electors per councillor). Under our proposals the number of electors in the Community of Brackla will reduce by 11 to 8,230 electors. We are of the view that this decrease as a consequence of the boundary change is not so significant as to require a decrease in the number of councillors representing the Community of Brackla.
- 8.3 The Community of Coychurch Lower, which is not currently warded, has 1,034 electors represented by 7 councillors (148 electors per councillor). Under our proposals the number of electors in the Community of Coychurch Lower will remain unchanged and so we make no proposals for a change to the electoral arrangements of the Community of Coychurch Lower as a consequence of the proposed community boundary change.
- 8.4 The Community of Merthyr Mawr, which is not currently warded, has 207 electors represented by 7 councillors (30 electors per councillor). Under our proposals the number of electors in the Community of Merthyr Mawr will increase by 21 to 228 electors. We are of the view that this increase as a consequence of the boundary change is not so significant as to require an increase in the number of councillors representing the Community of Merthyr Mawr.
- 8.5 The Community of Bridgend is currently divided, for Community electoral purposes, into the community wards of Morfa, Newcastle and Oldcastle. The following table shows the number of electors and councillors for each ward.

Community	Ward	Electors	Councillors	E/C*
Bridgend	Morfa	3,266	6	544
	Newcastle	4,233	7	605
	Oldcastle	3,641	6	607
		11,140	19	586

* Electors per councillor

- 8.6 Under the proposals the number of electors in the Oldcastle ward would decrease by 32 to 3,609 (11 transferred from Brackla and 21 transferred to Merthyr Mawr). We consider that no change is necessary in the number of councillors in order to maintain a similar level of representation to that which currently exists within the Community of Bridgend. We do not therefore propose an increase in the number of councillors. The following table shows the effect the proposed boundary changes will have on the electoral arrangements of the Community of Bridgend.

Community	Ward	Electors	Councillors	E/C*
Bridgend	Morfa	3,266	6	544
	Newcastle	4,233	7	605
	Oldcastle	3,609	6	601
		11,108	19	585

County Borough Council Electoral Arrangements

- 8.7 The Brackla Electoral Division consists of the Community of Brackla and currently has 8,241 electors represented by 4 Councillors. The proposed change to the boundary between the Communities of Brackla and Bridgend would mean the number of electors in the Brackla Electoral Division would decrease to 8,230.
- 8.8 The Oldcastle Electoral Division consists of the ward of Oldcastle of the Community of Bridgend and currently has 3,641 electors represented by 2 Councillors. The proposed change to the boundary between the Communities of Brackla and Bridgend and the proposed change to the boundary between Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr would mean the number of electors in the Oldcastle Electoral Division would decrease to 3,609.
- 8.9 The Bryntirion, Laleston and Merthyr Mawr Electoral Division consists of the Community of Merthyr Mawr and the Laleston/Bryntirion ward of the Community of Laleston and currently has 5,753 electors represented by 2 Councillors. The proposed change to the boundary between the Communities of Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr would mean the number of electors in the Bryntirion, Laleston and Merthyr Mawr Electoral Division would increase to 5,774
- 8.10 We are of the view that for all of the above electoral divisions the changes to the number of electors as a consequence of the proposed boundary changes are not as significant as, at this time, to require either an increase or a decrease in the number of councillors representing each electoral division. During the next three years we are due to conduct a review of the electoral arrangements for all principal councils in Wales and we anticipate that we will receive directions from the Welsh Assembly Government to guide us in the conduct of the review. At that time we will look in detail at the electoral arrangements for Bridgend County Borough Council and will take into account any changes that arise from these proposed changes to community boundaries.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 We wish to express our gratitude to Bridgend County Borough Council and the Community Councils for their assistance and to all persons and bodies that made representations to us.

10. THE NEXT STEPS

- 10.1 Having completed our consideration of the review of community boundaries in the County Borough of Bridgend and submitted our recommendations to the Welsh Assembly Government, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Act.
- 10.2 It now falls to the Welsh Assembly Government, if it thinks fit, to accept them or to direct the Commission to conduct a further review.
- 10.3 Any further representations concerning the matters in the report should be addressed to the Welsh Assembly Government. They should be made as soon as possible and in any event not later than six weeks from the date that the Commission's recommendations are submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government. Representations should be addressed to:

Democracy Team
Local Government Policy Division
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

MR P J WOOD (Chairman)

REV. HYWEL MEREDYDD DAVIES BD (Deputy Chairman)

Mr D J BADER (Member)

E H LEWIS BSc. DPM FRSA FCIPD (Secretary)

May 2009

THE WELSH MINISTERS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 PART IV

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES
(REVIEW OF COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES) (COUNTY BOROUGH OF
BRIDGEND) DIRECTION 2007**

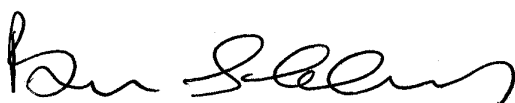
The Welsh Ministers give the following Direction to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales in exercise of the powers conferred upon the Secretary of State by section 56 of the Local Government Act 1972 ⁽¹⁾ which powers are now exercisable by the Welsh Ministers ⁽²⁾:

1. In this Direction:

“the Act” (“y Ddeddf”) means the Local Government Act 1972;

“the Commission” (“y Comisiwn”) means the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales.

2. Pursuant to section 56(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers direct the Commission to conduct a review of the community boundaries in the County Borough of Bridgend for the purpose of considering whether or not to make such proposals in relation to the area reviewed as are authorised by section 54 of the Act and what proposals, if any, to make; and the Commission must, if they think fit, formulate such proposals accordingly.



Dr Brian Gibbons

Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Date: 8 / 11 / 2007

⁽¹⁾ 1972 c.70; section 56 was amended by the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994

⁽²⁾ See the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999 (S.I. 1999/672) which transferred the functions of the Secretary of State to the National Assembly for Wales. The functions of the Assembly were subsequently transferred to the Welsh Ministers by schedule 11 to the Government of Wales Act 2006 (2006 c.38).

Summary of Representations Received in Response to the Draft Proposals

Bridgend Town Council thanked the Commission for allowing additional time for the submission of representations as this had allowed them to carry out a full public consultation exercise to seek the views of residents who would be potentially affected by the change [to the boundary between the Communities of Bridgend and Merthyr Mawr] in the draft proposals. A covering letter and simple questionnaire was sent to 184 households and 76 responses were received (42%). Three options were given on the questionnaire:

- ... I/We wish to stay within the Oldcastle Ward and Bridgend Town Council
- ... I/We wish to transfer to the Bryntirion / Laleston / Merthyr Mawr Ward and Merthyr Mawr Community Council
- ... I/We have no preference either way

The results of the consultation were as follows:

<u>By Road</u>	<u>Favour Bridgend</u> <u>No Change</u>	<u>Favour Merthyr</u> <u>Mawr</u>
Island Farm Close	3	2
Heol-yr-Ynys	6	NIL
Ewenny Road	13	4
Priory Close	5	NIL
Priory Avenue	26	1
The Parc	4	NIL
Heronstone Park	9	NIL
Heronstone Lane	1	2
	67	9
	88%	12%

The Council considered that this result more than speaks for itself.

The Council confirmed that their original proposals were in respect of existing boundary anomalies and not to compromise the continuation of a neighbouring council. They noted that their prediction with regard to the development of adjoining 'open land' to Island Farm Road and Close has now come to pass. A development brief for that specific area had recently been produced and would be the subject of a full planning application in 2009. The Council considered that there is clearly a momentum for some full or partial use of the land in question. The Council are of the view that any such development will carry the name of "Bridgend" and will require a high level of attention which they sincerely believe only their Council can provide.

The Council also commented on the representation made by Merthyr Mawr Community Council which stated that changes are required 'for the Council's continuing viability.' Bridgend Town Council believe that this Council [Merthyr Mawr] has less than £1,000 per annum available to spend on local services over a wide area and so any enhanced precept from a boundary change would be minimal. The Council made the point that in Bridgend, unlike Merthyr Mawr, there have been contested elections at every election and

that their Council is under continual public scrutiny with the press attending all meetings. The Council stated that they originally had no intention of undermining the existence of a neighbouring council but they must defend the right of their current constituents likely to be affected by these proposals to have their views duly considered.

Brackla Community Council wrote to advise that they had no further comments to make on the Draft Proposals at this time.

Laleston Community Council wrote that they accepted the proposals with regard to the realignment of the community boundaries. However, if as a result of the Draft Proposals Bridgend Town Council made a stronger case for the abolition of Merthyr Mawr Community Council, they would hope that the Commission would then take account of their view that the new boundary line to the west of Bridgend would be the River Ogwr.

Merthyr Mawr Community Council wrote to endorse the proposal [made in the Draft Proposals report] with regard to the alteration of the boundary and considered that it was in the interests of effective and convenient local government. They noted that the proposal was endorsed by Laleston Community Council and that they did not feel it appropriate to include Merthyr Mawr within their own boundary. Merthyr Mawr Community Council considered that the proposal would ensure the Council's continuing viability; giving it a larger electorate together with an enhanced precept. The anomaly in the present boundary would be rectified. It would also give a proper voice to a large land area which might not be as strong if absorbed as an adjunct to the town of Bridgend. They considered that the Council has a very good record of seeking partnerships with other councils and has always provided representation on appropriate bodies. They state that the Council has an extensive record of fully participating in consultation exercises carried out by both the Borough Council and by Welsh Assembly Government. The Council has been actively participating in consultation over the current and proposed Science Park, and other businesses, south of the A48, for some years. They consider that the Council has the necessary knowledge and skills, to participate fully in matters concerning new employment and housing facilities, as well as rural matters. Should the council be disbanded and the area absorbed into Bridgend it would be detrimental and may not give sufficient weight to the more rural parts of the County Borough. This change would also mean that Bridgend Town would run to the outskirts of Porthcawl which is a considerable distance away from the town centre.

In a further representation, after being advised of Bridgend Town Council's consultation exercise, **Merthyr Mawr Community Council** wrote to ask the Commission to take account of the format and questions included in the letter to households when coming to a conclusion about the validity of the survey. They consider that it would have been more appropriate if such a survey had been carried out by an independent body after consultation with both Councils. They pointed out that they were in the process of appointing a new Clerk and expressed the view that they have consistently well served the area since inception many years ago and hope to continue to do so in a proper and professional manner in future.