



Comisiwn Ffiniau
Llywodraeth Leol
i Gymru



Local Government
Boundary Commission
for Wales

Electoral Reviews: Council Size Policy Consultation Paper

27 March 2013

Consultation closes on 19 June
2013

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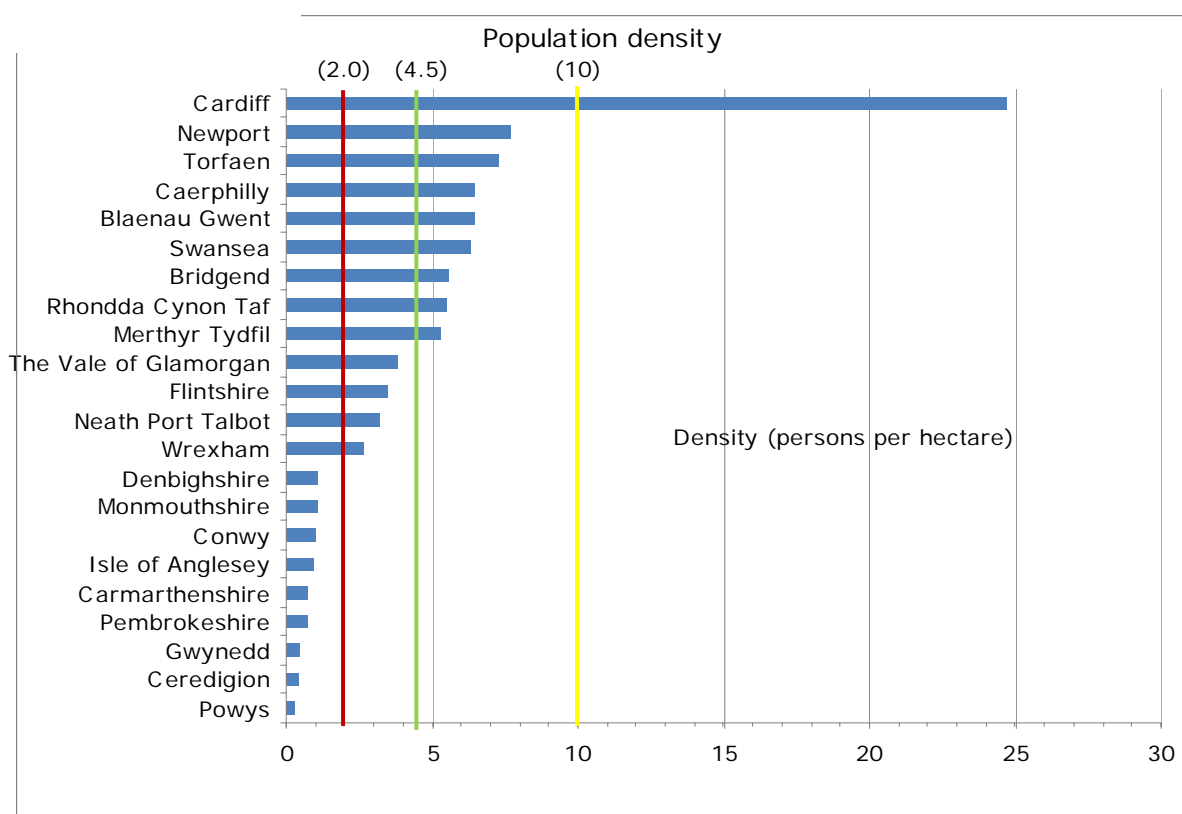
1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales is required to carry out periodic reviews of the electoral arrangements of principal areas in Wales. The way the Commission conducts an electoral review is defined by legislation and by Directions issued by the Welsh Government.
- 1.2 The Commission published its 'Electoral reviews: policy and practice' paper on 12 March 2012. That paper did not include the Commission's approach to council size. Accordingly, in May 2012, we produced a consultation paper setting out a preliminary view of how council size may be determined as a precursor to an electoral review.
- 1.3 At the end of the initial consultation period we had received responses from the majority of principal councils, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), political parties and individuals, including former councillors. The general response was in favour of an approach based on the identification of the number of councillors that would be appropriate to ensure the provision of effective and convenient local government for authorities. The specific methodology proposed by the paper was, however, not generally supported. It was clear that there were some concerns about the suggested banding approach. The view was expressed that the methodology used and justification for establishing council sizes should be based upon wider factors than socio-geographical characteristics alone, and may need to include population density factors. There was also the view that the ratios of elector per councillor adopted in the consultation paper need to be justified.
- 1.4 Representatives of the Commission met with representatives of the WLGA in July 2012 to discuss the outcome of the consultation. At the meeting it was agreed that Commission would work with the Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales to consider further the methodology used for determining council size and to investigate alternative data sets and methodologies. Further meetings were held with the WLGA and the Data Unit and, following detailed analysis work by the Data Unit, the Commission were able to consider alternative methodologies that utilised data that was both current and readily available. We considered methodologies which variously took account of electorate numbers, population size and measures of population density and urbanisation. We have arrived at a preferred methodology that is broadly based on the method currently in place in Scotland.
- 1.5 This consultation paper sets out the Commission's further views and approach to how it believes council size should be determined, based on its experience, expertise and knowledge of local government. The Commission welcomes views from all interested parties, local authorities and individuals on this proposed approach. All views will be taken into account before the Commission comes to its final determination on how council size should be considered as part of an electoral review.
- 1.6 Respondents are welcome to comment on any aspect of this paper. However, it would be particularly useful if the specific questions detailed at Appendix A are addressed. Respondents are requested to send their views to the LGBCW by 19 June 2013. All comments should be emailed to lgbc.wales@wales.gsi.gov.uk or by post to the Commission's new address at;

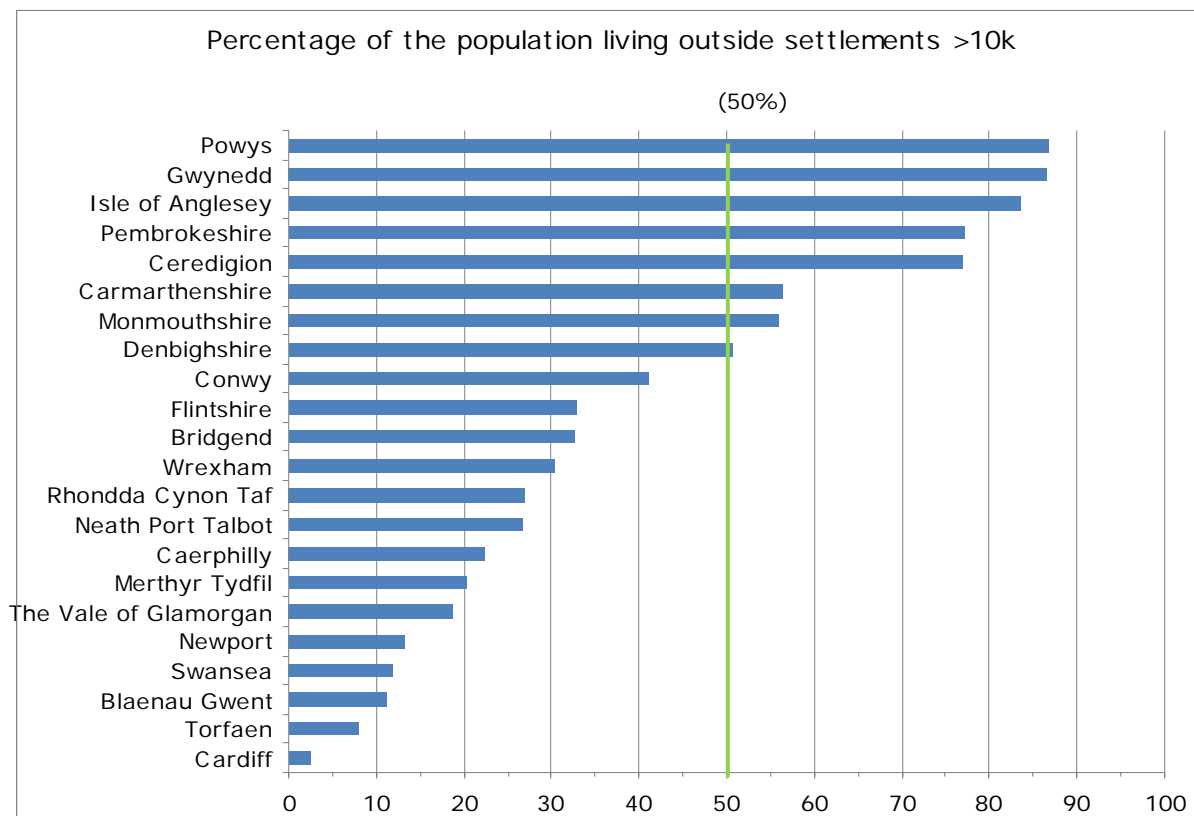
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2. Proposed methodology

- 2.1 In considering a methodology for determining the size of councils the Commission has adopted the principle that any approach to modelling councillor numbers should be objective, transparent and underpinned by a robust methodology. In arriving at a preferred methodology the Commission took account of the method currently in place in Scotland which has been an accepted and tested approach to adjudicating council size on Local Authorities with variations of geography, topography and population distribution. The Commission and the Data Unit have worked with the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland to better understand how their current approach was developed and have benefitted from a comparable model for Wales.
- 2.2 The method proposed in this paper uses information relating to the population distribution within authorities enabling a conclusion to be drawn on the relative urban and or rural nature of their areas, in demographic terms. Using the data to then categorise the authorities provides a transparent and robust approach which will provide a sustainable method for future allocation. It ensures that authorities with similar characteristics are being treated in the same way. The parameters used to determine the categories are urbanisation (percentage of the population living outside of settlements with a population of more than 10,000) and population density (number of persons per hectare). The categories have been determined by a combination of looking at appropriate groupings in the data and as determined by appropriate patterns of population distribution within local authority areas.
- 2.3 The first factor considered is population density. The chart below shows the distribution across Wales of the population density. The data used is the 2011 Mid Year Estimates¹ of population and the associated 2011 population densities. The data suggests there are 4 groups of local authorities in Wales in terms of population density (from top to bottom):
- Those greater than or equal to 10 (Cardiff)
 - Those greater than or equal to 4.5 but less than 10 (Newport to Merthyr Tydfil)
 - Those greater than or equal to 2 but less than 4.5 (The Vale of Glamorgan to Wrexham)
 - Those less than 2 (Denbighshire to Powys)



2.5 The second factor to consider is ‘urbanisation’ or the percentage of population living outside settlements with a population over 10,000. This factor distinguishes those authorities that have a preponderance of population that lives in larger communities, town or urban settlements. The chart below shows the distribution across Wales of the percentage of the population living outside of settlements with a population of more than 10,000. As there is no clear indicative split in the data, the most appropriate demarcation point consistent with transparency is 50%.



2.6 It was considered that the Commission could divide Wales’ Local Authorities by the four categories identified purely on the population density. However, the Commission believes that there is merit in establishing a robust model which reflects both population density and the dispersal of population within a local authority area and can continue and adapt to changes to Wales’ local authorities population in the future. Thus, the model presented includes both sets of factors even though, in this first instance, it does not impact on a number of Local Authorities.

2.7 To take account of the circumstances in Wales and ensuring that only significant changes in population density would change a local authority’s category a set categories of urbanisation and population density are proposed as follows:

- Where 50% or more of the population live outside settlements larger than 10,000 persons ; and,
- Where the population density is greater than or equal to 10 persons per hectare, is greater than or equal to 4.5 persons per hectare but less than 10 persons per hectare, is greater than or equal to 2 persons per hectare but less than 4.5 persons per hectare, is less than 2 persons per hectare.

2.8 Using the values from the charts above gives the categorisation parameters shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Categorisation parameters

Category	Urban nature (% of population living outside of towns with more than 10,000 population)		Population density (persons per hectare)
1	Less than 50%	AND	Greater than or equal to 10
2	Less than 50%	AND	Greater than or equal to 4.5
3	More than 50%	AND/OR	Less than 4.5
4	More than 50%	AND	Less than 2

2.9 Using this methodology the authorities are categorised as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Category allocation

Authority	Category
Blaenau Gwent	2
Bridgend	2
Caerphilly	2
Cardiff	1
Carmarthenshire	4
Ceredigion	4
Conwy	3
Denbighshire	4
Flintshire	3
Gwynedd	4
Isle of Anglesey	4
Merthyr Tydfil	2
Monmouthshire	4
Neath Port Talbot	3
Newport	2
Pembrokeshire	4
Powys	4
Rhondda Cynon Taf	2
Swansea	2
The Vale of Glamorgan	3
Torfaen	2
Wrexham	3

2.10 Once the authorities are allocated to a category then a ratio of councillors to population is applied to each authority within the category. This approach takes account of the size of the overall population, whilst continuing to ensure that authorities with similar characteristics are treated the same.

2.11 The population ratios for the categories are determined as a set and having regard for the categories determined by urbanisation and population density. A two fold change between the top and bottom categories is proposed in Wales to reflect the slightly smaller range in urbanisation and population density. The current average ratio for

category 4 councils is approximately 1:2,000 and so it was considered appropriate to apply this ratio to this category. The change in ratios between categories 4 and 3 and between categories 3 and 2 is small at 500 persons per councillor. This is to reflect the gradual change in the nature of categories and is the same as in the Scottish methodology. There is a greater change of 1,000 between the top two categories reflecting the difference in their nature. The proposed ratios are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Councillor to population ratios

Category	Ratio (1:)
1	4,000
2	3,000
3	2,500
4	2,000

2.12 The councillor to population ratio for each category is used to determine the number of councillors as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Categorisation and councillor allocation

Category	Authority	Population	Number of Councillors
1	Cardiff	345,442	86
2	Blaenau Gwent	69,812	23
	Bridgend	139,410	46
	Caerphilly	78,782	60
	Merthyr Tydfil	58,851	20
	Newport	145,785	49
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	234,373	78
	Swansea	238,691	80
	Torfaen	91,190	30
3	Conwy	115,326	46
	Flintshire	152,666	61
	Neath Port Talbot	139,880	56
	The Vale of Glamorgan	126,679	51
	Wrexham	135,070	54
4	Carmarthenshire	183,961	92
	Ceredigion	75,293	38
	Denbighshire	93,919	47
	Gwynedd	121,523	61
	Isle of Anglesey	69,913	35
	Monmouthshire	91,508	46
	Pembrokeshire	122,613	61
	Powys	133,071	67
	Wales	3,063,758	1,187

3. Constraints

- 3.1 As noted above, when considering a methodology for determining the size of councils the Commission adopted the principle that any approach to modelling councillor numbers should be objective, transparent and underpinned by a robust methodology. It is understood however that any method for determining council size may be constrained by legislation and Ministerial Directions and an awareness of the impact of any proposed change to the existing size of councils.
- 3.2 In respect of council size the Ministerial Directions in respect of electoral reviews have previously stated:
- (a) It is considered that a minimum number of 30 councillors is required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council;
 - (b) It is considered that, in order to minimise the risk of a county council or a county borough council becoming unwieldy and difficult to manage, a maximum number of 75 councillors is ordinarily required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council.

From our earlier consultation there appears to be a general acceptance of these maxima and minima and so we have therefore accepted these as constraints to the methodology.

- 3.3 The impact that a significant change may have on the running of a council if it applied as a result of a single electoral review has also been considered. A constraint has therefore been applied so that, for each review, the number of councillors will not vary by more than 10%. At the request of the principal council concerned the Commission will consider exceeding its 10% variance limit in moving towards the size of council determined by the model.
- 3.5 In order to ensure that the process is clear and fair, the constraints on maximum or minimum councillor numbers or on levels of change have been applied at the end of the process.

4. Applied Model

4.1 The councillor allocation determined by the methodology (at Section 2 above) is then subject to the constraints (at Section 3 above). Table 5 shows the existing number of councillors and gives the allocated number of councillors before and after constraints.

Table 5: Categorisation and councillor allocation before and after constraints

Category	Authority	Number of councillors		
		Existing (2012)	Before constraints	After constraints
1	Cardiff	75	86	75
2	Blaenau Gwent	42	23	38
	Bridgend	54	46	49
	Caerphilly	73	60	66
	Merthyr Tydfil	33	20	30
	Newport	50	49	49
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	75	78	75
	Swansea	72	80	75
	Torfaen	44	30	40
3	Conwy	59	46	53
	Flintshire	70	61	63
	Neath Port Talbot	64	56	58
	The Vale of Glamorgan	47	51	51
	Wrexham	52	54	54
4	Carmarthenshire	74	92	75
	Ceredigion	42	38	38
	Denbighshire	47	47	47
	Gwynedd	75	61	67
	Isle of Anglesey	30	35	33
	Monmouthshire	43	46	46
	Pembrokeshire	60	61	61
	Powys	73	67	67
	Wales	1,254	1,187	1,210

4.2 The proposed methodology gives a transparent, data driven and future proof method for calculating the appropriate number of councillors in each local authority and Wales as a whole. In some authorities, the councillor numbers obtained from the proposed method show significant change from their current numbers. The constraints that are subsequently applied ensure that the transition to this system is smooth and fair.

Endnotes

¹ The Commission has not used the 2011 Census data as the 2011 Mid Year Estimates were released in September 2012 and based on the 2011 Census. They are a consistent series of population statistics that are provided for the 30 June each year. The Census is only conducted once every 10 years and is on a different date.

Consultation Questions

Proposed Methodology

Categorisation Parameters (Table 1)

To take account of the circumstances in Wales and ensuring that only significant changes in population density and urbanisation would change a local authority's category we need to set categories of urbanisation and population density of:

- Where 50% or more of the population that live outside settlements larger than 10,000 persons ; and,
- Where the population density is greater than or equal to 10 persons per hectare, is greater than or equal to 4.5 persons per hectare but less than 10 persons per hectare, is greater than or equal to 2 persons per hectare but less than 4.5 persons per hectare, is less than 2 persons per hectare.

Q 1 Do you believe that the parameter of 50% of the population that live outside settlements larger than 10,000 persons is appropriate for Wales?

Q 2 Do you believe that the parameters of 2, 4.5 and 10 persons per hectare for population density are appropriate for Wales?

Councillor to Population Ratios (Table 3)

The ratios for the categories are determined as a set and having regard for the categories determined by urbanisation and population density. A two fold change between the top and bottom categories is proposed in Wales to reflect the range in urbanisation and population density. The current average ratio for category 4 councils is 1:2,000 and so it was considered appropriate to apply this ratio to this category. The change in ratios between categories 4 and 3 and between categories 3 and 2 is small at 500 persons per councillor. This is to reflect the gradual change in the nature of categories. There is a greater change of 1,000 between the top two categories reflecting the difference in their nature.

Q 3 Do you believe that the councillor to population ratios are appropriate for each category?

Constraints

Maximum and Minimum Council Sizes

In respect of council size the Ministerial Directions in respect of electoral reviews have previously stated:

- (a) It is considered that a minimum number of 30 councillors is required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council;
- (b) It is considered that, in order to minimise the risk of a county council or a county borough council becoming unwieldy and difficult to manage, a maximum number of 75 councillors is ordinarily required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council.

From our earlier consultation there appears to be a general acceptance of these maxima and minima, so we have accepted these constraints to the methodology, however, before this policy is enacted it is important that this again be tested.

- Q 4 Do you consider it appropriate that a minimum number of 30 councillors is required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council?
- Q 5 Do you consider it appropriate that a maximum number of 75 councillors before a county or a county borough council becomes unwieldy and difficult to manage?

Review cap

In order to minimise the impact that a significant change in the number of members may have on the running of a council, the proposed methodology suggests that for each review, the number of councillors will not vary by more than 10%. It is noted that for some authorities it may require more than one review to achieve the appropriate number of members. At the request of the principal council concerned the Commission will consider exceeding its 10% variance limit in moving towards the size of council determined by the model.

- Q 6 Do you consider it appropriate to cap the amount of change of councillor numbers as a result of a review?
- Q 7 What percentage level of change do you think is appropriate to be used as a cap at each review?
- Q 8 Should the Commission be able to not adhere to the review cap if specifically requested to do so by a Local Authority and when such a change does not vary from the model?