

### Summary:

The draft directions suggest that no council should have an overall ratio of less than 1 councillor per 4,000 electors, which will mean that there will be at least 616 councillors in Wales following the mergers (from the current 1248) and councils ranging from 33 councillors (in a merged Anglesey/Gwynedd) to 109 councillors (in the new Gwent). The attached table shows the potential council sizes following mergers.

### Initial Concerns:

Early feedback suggests that in addition to the issues of the potential size of some new wards and the number of councillors in some councils, there is a particular concern about the implication of the Direction stating that new wards should be based on a grouping of 2 or more existing wards. This presents a number of challenges:

- some existing wards may already have the appropriate 1:4,000 ratio, but the direction appears to preclude them from continuing in their current form;
- merging 2 or more existing wards will mean it will be difficult for the Commission to achieve its main statutory aim (as per the current Local Government Bill) of achieving consistency/parity of councillor: elector ratios across a new principal council area; and
- merging 2 or more existing wards in an arbitrary approach may run counter to the main direction that the Commission should follow which is to take into account the 'particular characteristics of an area' when creating new wards.

### Timetable

The timescale for the mergers and initial reviews remain challenging and, whilst the Commission remains confident that they can be achieved by the proposed deadlines, leave little room for delays. Below is a broad timetable (dates in italics are based on the latest available information):

- 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015 – Consultation closes on draft Directions to Boundary Commission regarding Initial Reviews
- *November 2015* – Local Government (Wales) Bill receives Royal Assent
- *November 2015* – Further brief consultation on final draft Directions to Boundary Commission regarding Initial Reviews
- *January/February 2016* – Directions to the Boundary Commission are formally 'made'
- *March/April 2016* (within 2 months of the Directions being made) – Boundary Commission publishes a timetable for the programme of initial reviews
- *Spring 2016* – Boundary Commission develops and consults on its 'Policy and Practice' (as per S19(2) of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015)
- *Early Summer 2016* – Boundary Commission publishes its final 'Policy and Practice' and begins initial reviews, probably on a phased approach (with North Wales likely to be later in the timetable until WG confirms whether there will be 2 or 3 councils in North Wales)
- By 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018 – Boundary Commission submits reports to Ministers on initial reviews

## Option 1 - 3 Local Authorities in North Wales

Merging Authorities	Total electors (2015 local government electorate figures)	Total Electors for Proposed new Council	Minimum Number of Councillors for Proposed new Council (based on ration of 1:4,000)	Current Councillor Numbers
Gwynedd	81,672			
Isle of Anglesey	50,352	132,024	<b>33</b>	105
Conwy	93,051			
Denbighshire	76,087	169,138	<b>42</b>	106
Flintshire	118,439			
Wrexham	103,408	221,847	<b>55</b>	122
Ceredigion	54,773			
Carmarthenshire	141,025			
Pembrokeshire	92,189	287,987	<b>72</b>	176
Blaenau Gwent	51,987			
Caerphilly	132,157			
Torfaen	70,073			
Newport	107,135			
Monmouthshire	73,180	434,532	<b>109</b>	250
Swansea	181,167			
Neath Port Talbot	106,621	287,788	<b>72</b>	132
Bridgend	104,300			
Merthyr Tydfil	43,968			
Rhondda, Cynon, Taf	175,682	323,950	<b>81</b>	162
Cardiff	253,607			
The Vale of Glamorgan	96,756	350,363	<b>88</b>	122
<i>Powys*</i>	<i>103,822</i>	<i>103,822</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>73</i>
<b>Wales</b>	<b>2,254,219</b>		<b>616</b>	<b>1248</b>
<b>Average Size Council</b>			<b>68</b>	

## Option 2 – 2 Local Authorities in North Wal

Merging Authorities	Total electors (2015 local government electorate figures)	Total Electors for Proposed new Council	Minimum Number of Councillors for Proposed new Council (based on ration of 1:4,000)	Current Councillor Numbers
Gwynedd	81,672			
Isle of Anglesey	50,352			
Conwy	93,051	225,075	<b>56</b>	164
Denbighshire	76,087			
Flintshire	118,439			
Wrexham	103,408	297,934	<b>74</b>	169
Ceredigion	54,773			
Carmarthenshire	141,025			
Pembrokeshire	92,189	287,987	<b>72</b>	176
Blaenau Gwent	51,987			
Caerphilly	132,157			
Torfaen	70,073			
Newport	107,135			
Monmouthshire	73,180	434,532	<b>109</b>	250
Swansea	181,167			
Neath Port Talbot	106,621	287,788	<b>72</b>	132
Bridgend	104,300			
Merthyr Tydfil	43,968			
Rhondda, Cynon, Taf	175,682	323,950	<b>81</b>	162
Cardiff	253,607			
The Vale of Glamorgan	96,756	350,363	<b>88</b>	122
<i>Powys*</i>	<i>103,822</i>	<i>103,822</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>73</i>
<b>Wales</b>	<b>2,311,451</b>		<b>616</b>	<b>1248</b>
<b>Average Size Council</b>			<b>77</b>	

*\*Powys, as a 'continuing authority' is not included in the Direction for 'Initial Reviews' and the consultation paper states that the 2011 Electoral Review will be implemented ahead of the 2017 elections, providing Powys with 64 members. Powys will however be the first council to be reviewed under the Commission's 10 year cycle following mergers; the criteria for this review may be subject to a further Ministerial Direction, however, if the same 1:4000 ratio was applied, Powys would have 26 councillors.*