



**REVIEW OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES IN
THE PRESERVED COUNTIES OF
MID GLAMORGAN AND GWENT**

**REPORT ON LOCAL INQUIRY
HELD ON 28th JUNE 2004 AT THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRIDGEND
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL AND
ON 30th JUNE 2004 AT THE MUNI
ARTS CENTRE, PONTYPRIDD**

BOUNDARY COMMISSION for WALES

THE GENERAL REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN THE COUNTIES OF GWENT & MID GLAMORGAN

REPORT

**Following a Local Inquiry held at The Council Chamber, Bridgend County Borough
Council on 28th June 2004 and at
The Muni Arts Centre, Pontypridd on 30th June 2004**

INTRODUCTION

1. The Inquiry was held to consider the Boundary Commission for Wales's ("the Commission") Provisional Recommendations for Parliamentary Constituencies in the Counties of Gwent and Mid Glamorgan, and any representations made in respect of them.
2. The Commission is constituted under Schedule 1 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act, 1986. Schedule 2 of the Act provides "Rules for Redistribution of Seats".
3. The Commission is required to keep representation in the House of Commons under review and undertake a general review of Parliamentary Constituencies periodically every eight to twelve years. In December 2002, the Commission announced its fifth general review by giving notice to the Deputy Prime Minister of its intention to consider making a report and such notice was published in the London Gazette on 16 December 2002. The Commission issued a news release publicising the general review in January 2003.
4. The Commission issued its Provisional Recommendations for the whole of Wales in January 2004 following a press release of the 29th December 2003. The Provisional Recommendations for Gwent and Mid Glamorgan were published in local and national newspapers during the week commencing 5th January 2004.

5. In addition, copies of the proposals were made available at key local public places and representations sought in respect of them, within one month of their publication.
6. The Commission received 69 representations in writing within the one month period from individuals and organisations. 41 of the representations contained objections to all or part of the proposals for Gwent and Mid Glamorgan to which the representations related.
7. In view of the objections, the Commission was required to hold a Local Inquiry into their Provisional Recommendations in accordance with section 6(2) of the 1986 Act. Notice of the Local Inquiry was published in local newspapers on 17th May 2004.
8. Copies of all representations, together with a summary, were published as a booklet and widely distributed to interested parties, authorities and organisations and were also placed on deposit, for public access and inspection, at places within each of the proposed constituencies.

THE COMMISSION'S OBJECTIVE

9. The Commission is an independent and impartial body. It has no regard whatever to political considerations, election results or the effect of its recommendations upon future elections. Its objective is to divide areas into constituencies in order to give effect to the Rules for Redistribution of Seats in Schedule 2 to the 1986 Act. In essence these require that the Commission should:
 - a) not substantially increase the total number of seats in Great Britain;
 - b) create constituencies which are wholly contained within preserved county boundaries, although the Commission does have discretion to recommend constituencies that cross those boundaries;
 - c) produce constituencies with electorates as near as reasonably practicable to the electoral quota and to neighbouring constituencies, although the Commission does have discretion to depart from this rule;
 - d) create constituencies of a suitable size, shape and accessibility to take account of any special geographical considerations; and

- e) take account of the inconveniences caused and the local ties broken by alterations to the current constituencies, other than alterations made for the purposes of complying with the requirement in b) above.
10. In addition to these statutory criteria, the Commission takes account of the following:
- a) unitary authority boundaries, where possible;
 - b) local government electoral divisions should not be divided between constituencies;
 - c) constituencies should not have detached parts;
 - d) the Commission should not seek to differentiate between the representation of rural and urban areas, save as necessitated by special geographical considerations; and
 - e) the Commission should not take MPs' constituency workloads into account, except as indicated by the number of electors and any special geographical considerations.
11. The notice to the Deputy Prime Minister of the commencement of the general review fixed that date, 16 December 2002, as the "Enumeration Date" for the purposes of the review. Accordingly, the Commission was required to base its provisional recommendations by reference to the number of electors on the electoral register on that date.
12. Rule 5 requires the Commission (subject only to the impact of the other Rules) to set constituency electorates as near the electoral quota as possible. In Wales as at 16th December 2002, **the electorate was 2,225,599** and divided by the number of seats, 40, gives **a quota of 55,640**.
13. Having regard particularly to the fact that the boundary between the two preserved counties has been changed since last review, by virtue of an Order made by the National Assembly for Wales, effective on 2nd April 2003, and that one constituency is now divided between the two counties, the Commission concluded that the consideration of the two preserved counties of Gwent and Mid Glamorgan together would reduce the problems inevitably arising in separate consideration, particularly those relating to excessive disparities between electorates and the quota, excessive disparities between electorates of neighbouring constituencies, or the substantial redrawing of existing constituencies with the attendant inconveniences and breaking of

local ties that this would entail. The Commission therefore decided, *“that it is appropriate to consider the two counties together for the purpose of formulating their provisional recommendations for constituency boundaries.”*

THE COUNTIES OF GWENT & MID GLAMORGAN

14. The enumeration date electorate of the preserved County of Gwent is 426,826, and of the preserved county of Mid Glamorgan 306,817, which when divided by the electoral quota, 55,640, gives a joint theoretical entitlement for the two counties of 13.19 seats. There are currently 13 constituencies.
15. The electorates of the existing seats show a disparity between the largest, Caerphilly County Constituency (68,678) and the smallest, Cynon Valley County Constituency (44,418), of 24, 260.

THE PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

16. The Commission's provisional recommendations were as follows:
 - (i) to **allocate 13 seats** to Gwent/ Mid Glamorgan and adhere to the basic pattern of the existing 13 constituencies;
 - (ii) to make **no alteration** to the boundaries of six constituencies, namely, **Merthyr Tydfil CC; Monmouth CC; Newport East CC; Newport West CC; Rhondda CC, and Torfaen CC;**
 - (iii) to alter the boundary of the **Blaenau Gwent CC** so as to include the whole of the Sirhowy (14) electoral division which currently straddles that constituency and Merthyr Tydfil and Rumney CC. This geographical change directly affects no electors;
 - (iv) to alter the boundary of the **Bridgend CC** so as to include the whole of the Coychurch Lower (14) electoral division which is currently split between it and the Vale of Glamorgan CC. This geographical change directly affects no electors;
 - (v) So as to ensure that the boundaries of the constituencies are consistent with the local government boundaries in this area, the electoral divisions of St Brides Major (20) and Llandow/ Ewenny (13) be removed from the existing **Bridgend CC** and be included in the Vale of Glamorgan constituency;

- (vi) So as to ensure that electoral divisions are not split between constituencies, the Pentyrch (19) division, in the existing **Pontypridd CC**, is included within the preserved county of South Glamorgan and both this and the whole of Creigiau/St. Fagans (6) electoral divisions are included in the Cardiff West Constituency.
- (vii) For like reasons, the Cowbridge (7) electoral division, currently split between the **Ogmore CC** and Vale of Glamorgan constituencies, is included in the Vale of Glamorgan constituency;
- (viii) In order to reduce the disparity between the electorates of certain constituencies
- **Bridgend CC loses the electoral divisions of Aberkenfig (1) and Cefn Cribwr (10) to Ogmore CC;**
 - **Caerphilly CC loses the electoral divisions of Aberbargoed (1), Bargoed (5) and Gilfach (12) to Islwyn CC;**
 - **Pontypridd CC loses Cilfynydd (9) and Glyncoch (15) to Cynon Valley CC.**

17. The effect of the Commission’s provisional recommendations (with changes highlighted) on the 2003 electorates would be: -

	CURRENT	PROV REC
Blaenau Gwent CC	53,120	53,120
Bridgend CC	62,692	57,046
Caerphilly CC	68,678	59,576
Cynon Valley CC	44,418	48,272
Islwyn CC	51,667	60,769
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney CC	55,476	55,476
Monmouth CC	62,423	62,423
Newport East CC	56,355	56,355
Newport West CC	60,882	60,882
Ogmore CC	51,016	53,842
Pontypridd CC	62,937	54,122
Rhondda CC	50,389	50,389
Torfaen CC	61,371	61,371

Thus, the disparity between the largest and smallest of the thirteen constituencies is reduced to **14,151** from 24,260 and the maximum variation from the all Wales electoral quota reduced from 13,038 above (Caerphilly CC) and 11,222 below (Cynon Valley CC) to **6,783 above the quota (Monmouth CC) and 7,368 below it (Cynon Valley CC).**

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

18. The representations received may be summarised as follows:

- There were no objections but wide support for the Commission’s approach of considering the two preserved counties together;
- In respect of the six “unaltered” constituencies there were no objections but letters supporting the provisional recommendations:

Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney CC

- Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney Constituency Labour Party
- Dai Havard MP
- Huw Lewis AM

Monmouth CC

- Monmouth Constituency Labour Party
- Huw Edwards MP

Newport East CC

- Newport East Constituency Labour Party
- Rt Hon Alan Howarth CBE MP
- John Griffiths AM

Newport West CC

- Newport West Constituency Labour Party

Torfaen CC

- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Blaenavon Labour Party
- Torfaen Constituency Labour Party
- Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP
- Lynne Neagle AM

Blaenau Gwent CC

Rhondda CC

- no representations were received in respect of either constituency.

19. In respect of the remaining constituencies in Gwent /Mid Glamorgan, objections and letters of support were received:

Bridgend CC and Ogmore CC

The following representations were received in response to the Commission's provisional recommendation to reduce the electorate of the Bridgend Constituency by transferring the Cefn Cribwr (10) and Aberkenfig (1) electoral divisions to the Ogmore Constituency:

Objections

- 11 letters were received objecting solely to the recommendation to move the Cefn Cribwr (10) electoral division from the Bridgend Constituency to the Ogmore Constituency:
- Cefn Cribwr Community Council
- Cefn Cribwr Community Council petition of 372 signatures
- Laleston Community Council

- Pyle Community Council
 - Bryntirion Branch Labour Party
 - Plaid Cymru – Cynffig Branch
 - Women’s Institute of Cefn Cribwr
 - K G Burnell
 - Edna David
 - Ceri Griffiths
 - Bridgend County Borough Council
- 5 other representations objected to the recommendations relating to Cefn Cribwr (10) but also expressed concern, or passed comment, on one or more of the neighbouring electoral divisions / areas of Aberkenfig (1), Pen-y-Fai (32), Coychurch Lower (14) and Coity (12).
- Cefn Cribwr Labour Party
 - Win Griffiths MP
 - Carwyn Jones AM
 - Cllr Edith M Hughes
 - Mrs V R Pole

Support

- 8 representations supported the provisional recommendations relating to Cefn Cribwr (10) and Aberkenfig (1):
- The Welsh Conservative Party
 - The Welsh Labour Party
 - The Conservative Party South East Wales Branch
 - Bridgend Conservative Association
 - Paul Flynn MP
 - Leighton Andrews AM
 - Cllr Jeff Jones
 - The Welsh Liberal Democrats

Caerphilly CC and Islwyn CC

20. The following representations were received in response to the Commission’s provisional recommendation to reduce the electorate of the Caerphilly Constituency by transferring the Aberbargoed (1), Bargoed (5) and Gilfach (12) electoral divisions to the Islwyn Constituency:

Objections

- One petition with 160 signatures was received under the names of Councillor H A Andrews (Gilfach Ward) and Councillor D T Davies (Bargoed Ward) objecting to

the transfer of the Bargoed (5) and Gilfach (12) electoral divisions to the Islwyn constituency.

- 5 letters were received which
 - a) object to the transfer of Bargoed (5) and Gilfach (12)
 - b) agree with the recommendations to transfer Aberbargoed (1)
 - c) also suggest the transfer of Maesycwmmmer (15) to Islwyn
 - Islwyn Constituency Labour Party
 - Wayne David MP
 - Don Touhig MP
 - Jeff Cuthbert AM
 - Irene James AM

(See also “**Counter-Proposal**” below)

Support

- 5 letters were received supporting the provisional recommendations:
 - Welsh Conservative Party
 - Welsh Conservative Party in South East Wales
 - Caerphilly Conservative Association
 - Paul Flynn MP
 - Welsh Liberal Democrats
- In addition, by written representation, the Welsh Labour Party recognised that the provisional recommendations may break local ties but made no objection.

Cynon Valley CC and Pontypridd CC

21. The following representations were received in response to the Commission’s provisional recommendation to increase the electorate of the Cynon Valley Constituency by transferring the Cilfynydd (9) and Glyncoch (15) electoral divisions from the Pontypridd Constituency:

Objections

- 10 letters were received **objecting to the transfer of Cilfynydd (9) and Glyncoch (15)**:
 - Pontypridd Town Council
 - Pontypridd Constituency Labour Party
 - Dr. Kim Howells MP
 - Jane Davidson AM

- Rhondda Cynon Taff Labour Group (submitted as part of Jane Davidson's representation)
- Mrs Muriel Gulliford
- Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
- Welsh Liberal Democrats
- Dr Kim Howells MP (enclosing 293 signed letters)
- Graham Davies (including petition of 162 signatures)

- 4 letters were received objecting to the transfer of Cilfynydd (9).
 - Mr and Mrs K Bennett
 - Mr and Mrs Mona Jones
 - Mr L Mainwaring
 - Mrs D Mears

- A Petition under the name of Cllr Steve Belzak with 71 signatures

- 2 letters were received objecting to the transfer of Glyncoch (15).
 - Glyncoch OAP Association together with a Petition with 43 signatures (submitted as part of Jane Davidson's representation)
 - Labour Group of Pontypridd Town Council (submitted as part of Jane Davidson's representation)

 - In addition, a Petition with 499 signatures was submitted as part of Jane Davidson's representation.

Support

- 6 letters were submitted supporting this proposal:
 - Welsh Conservative Party
 - Conservative Party in South East Wales
 - Cynon Valley Constituency Labour Party
 - Paul Flynn MP
 - Christine Chapman AM
 - J.S.Coduri

- In addition, the Welsh Labour Party made no objection to the provisional recommendations but said that they may break local ties.

Creigiau / St. Fagans (6) and Pentyrch (19) electoral division

22. In their provisional recommendations the Commission recommended that the whole of the Creigiau / St Fagans (6) electoral division be included in the Cardiff West constituency. The Pentyrch (19) electoral division is currently within the existing Pontypridd constituency. However, as a result of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 the Pentyrch (19) electoral division was included in the Preserved County of

South Glamorgan. In their provisional recommendations the Commission recommended that the Pentyrch (19) electoral division be transferred to the Cardiff West constituency.

Objections

Representations objecting to these proposals

- The Pontypridd Constituency Labour Party
- Dr Kim Howells MP expressed concern that Creigiau and Pentyrch are being ‘shunted’ into the Cardiff West Constituency

Support

Representations expressing support for these proposals were received from:

- The Welsh Conservative Party
- The Welsh Labour Party
- Cardiff South and Penarth Constituency Labour Party
- Cardiff West Constituency Labour Party
- Lorraine Barrett AM
- Pentyrch Community Council (submitted as part of Jane Davidson’s representation)
- The Welsh Liberal Democrats

St. Brides Major and Llandow / Ewenny electoral divisions

23. In their provisional recommendations the Commission recommended that the St Brides Major (20) and Llandow / Ewenny (13) electoral divisions be included within the Vale of Glamorgan Constituency.

Objections

Representations objecting to all or part of these proposals:

- Ewenny & Vale Branch Labour Party
- Jane Hutt AM
- Dr E A Bowers

Support

Letters expressing support for all or part of these proposals:

- The Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council
- The Welsh Conservative Party
- The Welsh Labour Party
- Bridgend Conservative Association

- Cardiff South and Penarth Constituency Labour Party
- Lorraine Barrett AM
- The Welsh Liberal Democrats

Counter-Proposal: Caerphilly CC & Islwyn CC

24. The representations objecting to the Commission's provisional recommendations included 1 counter-proposal. The Islwyn Constituency Labour Party, Don Touhig MP, Wayne David MP, Irene James AM and Jeff Cuthbert AM submitted the same counter-proposal.
25. They proposed that Bargoed (5) and Gilfach (12) electoral divisions remain as part of the Caerphilly constituency but that the Maesycwmmmer (15) electoral division be transferred from the Caerphilly Constituency into the Islwyn Constituency in addition to Aberbargoed (1). They argued that the Aberbargoed and Maesycwmmmer areas have better local ties with Islwyn than Bargoed and Gilfach and that the River Rhymney provides a natural and practical boundary between Caerphilly and Islwyn.
26. The counter-proposal, if applied to the Commission's provisional recommendations would result in the following dispositions of the electorate:
 - **Caerphilly CC** would have an electorate of **64,120** – an increase of 4,544 over the Commission's proposals for this constituency;
 - **Islwyn CC** would be reduced from 60,769 to **56,225**, taking it very close to the all Wales quota figure;
 - The disparity between the largest and smallest constituencies would be increased from the Commission's proposals, 14,151 to **15,848**;
 - In addition, the maximum variation above the all Wales electoral quota figure would be increased from 6,783 (the Commission's provisional recommendations) to **8,480** – although it should be noted that this figure is itself a substantial reduction on the current position, 13,238, if no change at all were made.
27. Thus it was that the representations raised essentially the issues which were to be central to the evidence given at the local inquiry, namely:

- a) Should the electoral divisions of Aberkenfig (1) and Cefn Cribwr (10) be transferred from the Bridgend constituency to the Ogmore constituency when it was objected to on the grounds that it breaks local ties (**The “Aberkenfig & Cefn Cribwr issue”**)?
- b) Should the electoral divisions of Bargoed (5) and Gilfach (12) be transferred from the Caerphilly constituency to the Islwyn constituency when it is objected to on the grounds that it breaks local ties; further, is the counter-proposal a better way of resolving the problem (**The “Bargoed, Gilfach and Maesycwmmwr issue”**)?
- (c) Should the electoral divisions of Cilfynydd (9) and Glyncoch (15) be transferred from the Pontypridd constituency to the Cynon Valley constituency when it is objected to on the grounds that it breaks local ties (**The “Cilfynydd and Glyncoch issue”**)?

THE LOCAL INQUIRY HEARINGS

28. At the Council Chamber in Bridgend, on 28th June 2004, and at the Muni Arts Centre, Pontypridd on 30th June 2004, evidence was given and/or submissions made as summarised:
29. **Mr Win Griffiths MP for Bridgend** concentrated upon the “Aberkenfig and Cefn Cribwr issue”. The bedrock of his objection to the proposal was that strong local ties would be broken. Cefn Cribwr (10) people looked to Bridgend and not to Ogmore. The focus of public communications for Cefn Cribwr is Bridgend. In answer to a question by Mr Chris Smart (Welsh Conservative Party), Mr Griffiths sought to emphasise this by saying that to get to parts of the Ogmore constituency from Cefn Cribwr would be “*that little bit more inconvenient. So I think it is significant*”.
30. He said that save for the submission of David Unwin, of the local Conservative Party, there was not a single local submission supporting the provisional recommendation. Mr Unwin’s submissions that the changes make “geographical and community sense” were simply untenable. The Liberal Democrat submission that the Commission’s proposal does not break any local ties was “*manifestly absurd*”. The Conservatives, centrally, in Cardiff, supported the proposal, but he understood their approval to be for the principle of “*bringing constituencies mathematically a bit closer together*” rather than having regard to the “local ties” issue. Mr. Win Griffiths said that despite the support of the former

leader of the Bridgend County Borough Council, Mr Jeff Jones, for the Commission's proposals, the Council itself "*is supporting the Cefn Cribwr case*".

31. Mr Win Griffiths made the point that if Cefn Cribwr (10) stayed in Bridgend "*there would still be five constituencies bigger than Bridgend in the Gwent/Mid Glamorgan area, and there would still be two with smaller numbers than the Ogmore constituency*". He suggested that any alteration of the kind proposed could await the next review in ten years time when housing development issues would have been resolved and population movements would be clearer.

32. **Mr Carwyn Jones AM for Bridgend**, who began his evidence in the Welsh language, supported Mr Win Griffith's position. He said that transport links militated towards the maintenance of Cefn Cribwr (10) in the Bridgend constituency and raised three further considerations:

- Firstly, children in Cefn Cribwr go to Cynffig Comprehensive School and it is easier for schools to deal with one MP or AM;
- The common concerns of a community - he cited by way of example, Park Slip open cast mine - could end up being dealt with by two elected representatives, because the community would be on two different sides of a parliamentary boundary;
- Access to elected representatives would be difficult for Cefn Cribwr electors because the transport links run to Bridgend and not in the Ogmore constituency direction. He concluded his evidence by saying: "*I would simply ask the Commission to consider very carefully the position of Cefn Cribwr and in particular whether moving Cefn Cribwr to the Ogmore constituency would make it far more difficult for the people of that community to access the services of their elected representatives in the way they deserve.*"

33. When questioned, Mr Carwyn Jones said that the problem of accessing elected representatives went "*beyond convenience..... We are talking about a village that sees itself very firmly as a satellite village of Bridgend rather than part of a valley community.*"

- 34. Mrs. Alana Davies, Councillor for the Porthcawl East Central Ward,** gave evidence supporting Mr Win Griffiths and Mr Carwyn Jones. She did not believe that Cefn Cribwr (10) should be transferred, as this would break historical links with Porthcawl and its neighbouring communities, which included Cefn Cribwr. Cefn Cribwr children attended Porthcawl Comprehensive School and whilst she was not suggesting that things would alter in this regard were the Commission's proposals to be implemented, she submitted that this demonstrated the local ties which existed between the communities. However, when questioned by Mr Brian Johnston (Chairman, Cefn Cribwr Community Council) she appeared to accept the proposition that there must be some concern that school catchment areas might change, but when questioned by me, she accepted that this was really a matter of speculation.
- 35. Mr Reg Jenkins, Councillor for the Pontycymmer Ward,** supported Mr Win Griffiths and those who followed him on this issue. He said the Cefn Cribwr community had been in the Bridgend constituency for 86 years and it should not be changed. He said that although he lived outside Cefn Cribwr he represented the community view.
- 36. Mr Huw David, Councillor for the Cefn Cribwr Ward,** asked why the Commission had not considered other divisions bordering on the Ogmore constituency, rather than Cefn Cribwr, which did not. He suggested that
- “they have ties with the Ogmore constituency which Cefn Cribwr does not, to be perfectly honest. They might have some ties but certainly not significant ties.”*
- Mr David also referred to the transport difficulties touched upon by others and the difficulties he perceived of electors accessing their representatives if the transfer were made.
- 37. Mr Brian Johnson, Chairman of the Cefn Cribwr Community Council,** reiterated the point that no boundaries were shared by this division with the Ogmore constituency. He could not understand why Cefn Cribwr (10) was being *“pushed out”*, as he saw it, because of new housing estates in Bridgend.
- 38. Mrs Violet Pole,** a former member of the Cefn Cribwr Community Council, reminded the Commission that change was confusing for the electorate and that following a series

of local government changes, another change at Parliamentary level for the division was highly undesirable. She said that geographical considerations made communication with the Ogmore constituency very difficult.

“Although it is less than five miles from Cefn to Maesteg as the crow flies, there is a mountain in between, traversed only by a few narrow country lanes. The only practical way is via Aberkenfig. The distance from Cefn Cribwr to Maesteg by the main road is almost exactly 10 miles. It is less than five miles from Cefn to Bridgend”.

39. **Mr Robert Hughes, on behalf of Bridgend County Borough Council**, supported the Cefn Cribwr objectors and whilst his Council supported the Commission’s proposals generally he wished to echo the objections in this particular. He also indicated that the current Leader of the Council endorsed these same objections.

40. **Mr Don Touhig, MP for Islwyn**, gave evidence on the “Bargoed, Gilfach and Maesycwmmmer issue”. He agreed with the need to move towards parity in the number of electors in the constituencies of Caerphilly and Islwyn, and agreed that this imperative had increased since the 1995 review when no change had been made to the constituency boundaries. However, he strongly submitted that his (and others’) counter-proposal provided a better solution than that proposed by the Commission.

41. He agreed entirely with the proposal to transfer Aberbargoed (1) into the Islwyn constituency but preferred to keep Bargoed (5) and Gilfach (12) in the Caerphilly constituency and transfer Maesycwmmmer (15) into Islwyn. His reasons for so proposing were:
 - that the River Rhymney was a natural boundary and that Gilfach (12) and Bargoed (5) fall to the west of the river and Aberbargoed (1) and Maesycwmmmer (15) to the east. He reminded the Commission of its finding in 1995 that “*geographical factors were a major consideration*” and added that “*If the physical features were relevant ten years ago, they are still relevant at this present time. I know the Commission does take into account these factors when making its final recommendations*”.

- There are strong historical reasons dating back more than a century for keeping Gilfach (12) and Bargoed (5) in Caerphilly and Aberbargoed (1) and Maesycwmmmer (15) in Islwyn.
- Local opinion strongly favoured this approach against that proposed by the Commission.

42. In dealing with the historical reasons, Mr Touhig made these telling comments:

“As I have said, the river is a natural divide between each side of the valley. In an administrative and political sense, the river is also a natural divide. Back in the nineteenth century, the counties of Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire were divided by the Rhymney, and perhaps I can just illustrate that very briefly with a history of what existed in previous times.

Before 1832 the River Rhymney was the western boundary of the county constituency of Monmouthshire. For some 90 years after the Great Reform Act, parliamentary seats were based on the petty sessional divisions, and Aberbargoed formed part of the Western Monmouth division along with the community of Bedwellty.

The parliamentary constituency of Bedwellty was created in 1918 and it included the communities of Maesycwmmmer and Aberbargoed, as we are now suggesting. At that time it was logical to keep the traditional boundary which had formed the parliamentary divide throughout at least the previous century and before, and that boundary was, of course, the River Rhymney”

43. Apart from one local government reorganisation in 1974, when Aberbargoed (1) “crossed the river” into the Rhymney Valley District Council, Mr Touhig pointed out that the river had been respected as the boundary. Further, he said, even in 1974, Aberbargoed remained part of the then Bedwellty County constituency, east of the river. I note that it did not become part of Caerphilly CC until 1983.

44. Mr Touhig said that local people supported the river boundary and that there had been no outcry against the proposals to move Aberbargoed and Maesycwmmmer into Islwyn, which he added, have “*strong geographical, cultural and historical links with the communities that make up the parliamentary constituency of Islwyn*”. I note that there was little if any serious objection to this proposal, which had been widely circulated, raised at the inquiry.

45. In cross examination by Mr Chris Smart, Mr Touhig agreed that the Commission had to act to deal with the disparity between the seats but reiterated that he believed the counterproposal to be the better solution.
46. **Mr Wayne David, MP for Caerphilly**, named a number of residents of Bargoed (5) and Aberbargoed (1) who had made the effort to attend the inquiry, namely Mr Ray Thompson, Secretary of the Bargoed British Legion, Mr Alan Higgs an Aberbargoed Councillor, Mr Ray Smith and Mr Ron Michael, Bargoed residents, Mr Barry Jones a resident of Ystrad Mynach, Mrs Joyce Morgan, a Bargoed Councillor and Mr Bill Coleman a former deputy leader of Mid Glamorgan County Council. He brought apologies from Mr Harry Andrews, leader of Caerphilly County Borough Council who, he said, wanted it placed on record that he supported Mr David's submissions.
47. Mr David said that he recognised that the Caerphilly constituency was too large, relative to its neighbours and having regard to the quota. He acknowledged that there had to be change. He advanced the arguments for the counter –proposal. He affirmed Mr Touhig's arguments about the river boundary suggesting that the river had been a boundary, and the natural boundary, at least since the Acts of Union in 1536. He pointed out that local people view their affinities on a north/south basis and not east/west. He believed that many in Aberbargoed (1) currently believed they were part of the Islwyn constituency.
48. Transport considerations were important and whilst he believed that the Aberbargoed/ Maesycwmmmer communities had a duality of interest, that is north/south and east /west in this regard, with a bias towards Caerphilly, the other two divisions of Gilfach and Bargoed had a clear bias towards Caerphilly rather than Islwyn.
49. Whilst acknowledging that his own and the Commission's proposals required a balance to be drawn which could never accommodate all shades of opinion on the matter and upon which there were "*no absolutes*", Mr David, in answer to Mr Smart's question, said he believed that the counter-proposal was "*far preferable and what is far more reflective of the local concerns*".
50. In response to a question from Councillor Higgs (Aberbargoed), suggesting that the people of Aberbargoed had more affinity with the Caerphilly constituency than with

Islwyn, Mr David said that in an ideal world there would be no change and whilst sympathising with the sentiments expressed in the question, he had to have regard to the numbers – there had to be change. He said that although they were physically very close, geographical considerations meant that they were quite distinct communities. This said Mr David justified splitting them as he was proposing. He gave a similar response to a like question from Mr Smith (Welsh Labour Party).

51. After Mr David's evidence and that of his supporters, I asked the following question:

“Before Mr David leaves, may I ask is there anyone here from Maesycwmmmer who wishes to make representations as to why Maesycwmmmer should not be moved as the counter-proposals suggest? If there were, I would ask that he or she come forward now so that the matter can be dealt with by Mr David, who is making the counter-proposals”

There was no one who so wished to be heard.

52. **Mr Jeffrey Cuthbert, AM for Caerphilly** endorsed the points made by Mr David. He had been a resident of the area, and had worked in Aberbargoed (1) for many years and knew the community well. He had sited his Office in Gilfach (12) and saw a clear link between Gilfach and Bargoed and both had an affinity with Caerphilly. As to Aberbargoed, he spoke of possible physical difficulties in operating as a three way Community, that is Bargoed, Aberbargoed and Gilfach, by reason of the existence of the river as a physical boundary, separating Aberbargoed. He thought that given the need for change, the counterproposal was *“the lesser of two evils”* and would cause the least confusion for the electorate since both areas to be part of Islwyn had originally been part of the Bedwellty constituency.

53. **Mrs Irene James, AM for Islwyn**, supported the counter-proposal. She said that the Commission's goal was right but the *“strong demographic and geographical logic”* lay with the counter-proposal. The river was the obvious boundary and her proposal took account of the strong local ties which existed. When questioned she agreed that moving Aberbargoed (1) probably broke local ties but that that community already had links on the Islwyn side and that any ties could be repaired or at least adequately replaced. She disagreed with Mr Lea's suggestion that modern engineering skills rendered a river no longer a real barrier in so far as it implied that the communities across the river were to be regarded as one.

54. **Mr Lea, Chairman of the Caerphilly Conservative Association**, gave evidence on its behalf. His Association fully supported the Commission’s proposals to move Bargoed (5), Gilfach (12) and Aberbargoed (1) as the best solution to the disparity problem. He did not believe that the counter-proposals would answer it satisfactorily, not least because the three divisions were one homogenous unit.
55. **Julian Henderson, Deputy Chairman of the Caerphilly Conservative Association**, gave evidence on the “Bargoed, Gilfach and Maesycwmmmer issue” and fully supported the Commission’s proposals. He thought the three divisions had cultural and social links justifying their being kept together as well as links with the Islwyn constituency - although when questioned, he was unable to demonstrate them very fully. There existed good transport links. This proposal was the way to meet the parity requirements.
56. **Dr Kim Howells, MP for Pontypridd**, spoke principally to the “Cilfynydd and Glyncoch issue”. He said that these communities were “*part of the organic community of Pontypridd*” and their ties, economic and historic, were with Pontypridd. A local meeting arranged by him had produced a large turnout against the Commission’s proposals. People foresaw possible changes of direction in the provision of health and education and whilst he had tried to forestall such concerns, he was not sure that people believed him.
57. When questioned by Mr Smart, Dr Howells took the opportunity to remind the Commission that people had to have a sense of community to be involved in the political process and “divorcing” communities against their wishes was not the way to involve people.
58. Dr Howells conceded that the proposals affecting Pentyrch (19) and areas to the South of the Pontypridd constituency “*are more difficult to defend.*” In his evidence he offered no specific reasons as why these areas should not transfer as proposed.
59. **Mr Chris Davies**, formerly a Councillor and resident in Cilfynydd, submitted that Glyncoch (15) and Cilfynydd (9) were part of Pontypridd. There was no logic in removing them – why stop at these? The community looked to Pontypridd and to their representative there and transfer would “*remove the commitment of those communities*

to the democratic process“. In answer to Mr Harvey, a resident of Cilfynydd, he said that the two divisions were a part of Pontypridd, which you could not simply split from it.

60. **Steve Belzak, County Borough Councillor and town Councillor for Cilfynydd**, said there was virtually 100% opposition from local people. Further, the Cilfynydd ward was difficult to separate from its neighbours. People would feel unable to identify with the political process and local political information will not percolate through the community.
61. **Gary Owen, Pontypridd Labour Party**, strongly supported the line of Dr Howells and of the written submissions of Jane Davidson AM (whose apologies had been sent to the Inquiry) and for the same reasons. He raised issues of perception of the population as to what changes in education or health provision, for example, might follow a transfer of these divisions, whilst acknowledging that they were fears, which might not in fact materialise. He reiterated that the feelings were strong within the communities.
62. **Mr Chris Smart, Chairman, Ogmore Conservative Constituency Association, representing The Welsh Conservative Party, the South East Wales Conservatives and 13 Conservative Associations**, specifically strongly supported both the proposal to combine the two preserved counties for the purpose of the review and the allocation of 13 constituencies to this area. I noted that there appeared to be total support and no objections raised to this approach.
63. He broadly supported the Commission’s approach to correcting the disparities between constituencies and found the proposals to accord with Rules 5 and 7. Of the seven constituencies which have no changes made to their boundaries directly affecting the existing electorate, he noted that there was not a single objection and considerable support, which his Party strongly endorsed.
64. On the “Aberkenfig & Cefn Cribwr issue”, Mr Smart accepted that some local ties may be broken and had considerable sympathy for the objections particularly from the Cefn Cribwr (10) division. However, he said, “*we do believe this* (that is, the Commission’s)

proposal is justified and it ensures compliance with Rule 5.” He noted that the new boundary would be a strong one, being the M4 motorway.

65. On the “Cilfynydd and Glyncoch issue” again he acknowledged the concerns about local ties but indicated that the disparity had to be addressed. The change proposed would bring about the unification of the community of Glyncoch into one constituency. All in all, the proposal was the best solution for both constituencies involved.

66. On the “Bargoed, Gilfach and Maesycwmmmer issue”, he supported the Commission’s provisional stance. He said that the three divisions of Bargoed (5), Gilfach (12) and Aberbargoed (1) “*go together as a block*” and whilst again acknowledging the local ties which might be broken, his Party believed that the changes were necessary. He indicated that detailed consideration had not been given to the counter-proposal.

67. Mr Smart concluded by saying

“On balance, we would ask you, Mr Assistant Commissioner, to propose to the Commission the adoption of the original proposals as being the best available balance between rules 5 and 7 of the Rules for Redistribution of Seats, Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.”

68. **Mr David Costa, Deputy Secretary of, and representing, the Wales Labour Party,** supported the Commission’s general approach to the two preserved counties **and** specifically supported the stance in relation to the seven constituencies where no change directly affecting the electorate was proposed. His Party believed these proposals “*will receive widespread support and note that there are several representations to this effect*”.

69. Turning to the “Cilfynydd and Glyncoch issue”, Mr Costa said his Party fully accepted that local ties would be broken and would have no objection if the Commission concluded that the breaking of ties occasioned by the change was too disruptive. However, he acknowledged that “*in respect of the Cynon Valley county constituency we accept that the provisional recommendations to transfer the divisions of Cilfynydd and Glyncoch from the Pontypridd county constituency are the only available option for increasing its electorate.... We do though note that, along with the transfer of Pentyrch and part of Creigiau/St Fagans to Cardiff West borough constituency, the proposal reduces the disparity between the Cynon Valley county constituency and the Pontypridd county*

constituency from 18,519 to 5,850, and that the Commission may take the view that the stipulations of Rule 5 of the Schedule should have primacy”.

70. On the “Bargoed, Gilfach and Maesycwmmmer issue”, Mr Costa said that his Party recognised the need to reduce the disparity and that the Commission’s proposals did this, but they would not object either to the counter-proposal or to a maintenance of the status quo if the Commission believed that the local ties argument should prevail. They recognised the cogency of the arguments suggesting that the river form the boundary and pointed to the benefits of so doing.
71. On the “Aberkenfig and Cefn Cribwr issue” Mr Costa said that his Party thought the Rule 5 case was less compelling than elsewhere. If the local ties argument prevailed, *“the disparities which would remain would not be excessive or unacceptable”.*
72. Questioned by Mrs Pole, Mr Costa agreed that the Labour Party *“supports the broad architecture of the proposals On the other hand there are issues, like Cefn Cribwr, where we are far more agnostic on it. We can see that those need not bring into doubt the broad thrust of the Commission’s proposals and we would have no objection if the Commission were to decide that within that broad architecture it could fit in Cefn Cribwr staying where it is.”*
73. **Mr Mansel Lalis, Secretary of the Ewenny & Vale Labour Party**, raised objections to his part of the Bridgend Constituency being transferred into The Vale of Glamorgan. He said the ties of these communities lay with Bridgend and that these considerations should have primacy in the Commission’s considerations. When questioned by Mr Smart, Mr Lalis agreed that in a referendum of the community, a majority had agreed to stay in the Vale of Glamorgan for local authority purposes. Nonetheless he said, he believed that most wanted to stay in the Bridgend constituency.
74. **Mr Smart’s** evidence on this issue was that Rule 4 required the inclusion of these divisions into South Glamorgan and as this produced no excessive disparity, Rule 5 could not be applied to over-ride it. Mr Costa (Wales Labour Party) made a similar point:

“We fully accept the Commission’s proposal to include these electors respectively in the Cardiff West borough constituency and the Vale of Glamorgan county constituency which is required under the terms of Rule 4. We note that there are some objections to this proposal but in the absence of any comprehensive counter proposal we believe that the Commission has no serious alternative.”

75. At the Inquiry, I was invited to go to the areas and boundaries of Bargoed (5), Aberbargoed (1) and Gilfach (12) and also the areas of Cilfynydd (9) and Glyncoch (15), all of which I subsequently visited.
76. Two further written representations (raising objections to the transfer of Cefn Cribwr) were received from Madeleine Moon and Councillor Edith M. Hughes after the local inquiry had been announced. I have had regard to their content. Copies of these and all other representations made following publication of the Commission’s Provisional Recommendations are available from the Commission’s Offices.

CONCLUSIONS

77. Having considered the written representations and all the evidence and submissions made to me at the inquiry, my observations and conclusions are as follows:
 - (1) There is strong general approval of the course taken by the Commission to consider and deal with the two preserved counties as one entity;
 - (2) There is strong general support and no opposition to the proposals for the seven constituencies, which face no change of electorate pursuant to the Provisional Recommendations;
 - (3) There is little opposition and much support for the proposal to transfer St Brides (20), Llandow / Ewenny (13) from the Bridgend constituency to the Vale of Glamorgan constituency and given the requirements in relation to local government boundaries, and the absence of any counter-proposal, the Commission has no alternative but to make the transfer.
 - (4) There was no real or sustainable objection and much support for the transfer of Pentyrch (19), St Fagans and Creigiau (6) to the Cardiff West constituency.

(5) There was no real or sustainable objection and much support for the transfer of the whole of the Cowbridge (7) division into the Vale of Glamorgan constituency.

(6) “Aberkenfig & Cefn Cribwr issue”

There is no doubting the strength of local feeling with regard to this issue. The parties centrally either support or are neutral as to whether the transfer should be made but it is acknowledged on all sides that at least some local ties will be broken. However, I am not persuaded that any such problems raised by transfer would be either insurmountable or, in reality, so substantial that they should displace the objectives of Rule 5.

It is suggested by those objecting that “no change” is an option since Bridgend would still not be the largest seat in the two counties and Ogmore would not be the smallest. However, the requirement to seek for parity with the quota, so far as reasonably possible, must be effected and there was here no counter proposal put forward to achieve it, (although in her written representation of 21st June 2004, Cllr Edith Hughes suggested Coychurch Lower (14) as a substitute for Cefn Cribwr (10), but such proposals were never developed or seriously considered by anyone else).

(7) “Bargoed, Gilfach and Maesycwmmmer issue”

There was some solid support for the Commission’s proposals but a preponderance of the submitted representations and evidence was for the counter-proposal, particularly from local people and organisations. Whilst it is true that the counter-proposal does not rectify the disparities to the same extent as the Commission’s provisional proposals, it does go a very long way towards achieving the same result. Three additional factors, in particular, appear to be important in considering this issue:

- The River Rhymney has been historically the boundary of constituencies (at least until 1983) and could thus properly be regarded as a natural administrative and political boundary;
- Local ties would be broken by the transfer of Bargoed (5) and Gilfach (12) to the Islwyn constituency and, whilst the same could be said for Aberbargoed (1), on the evidence, its affinities were at least in part already with the Islwyn constituency;

- Despite the opportunity, after months of local debate on the issue, no representations on behalf of Maesycwmmmer (15) were made indicating any objection to the counter-proposal.

(8) “Cilfynydd and Glyncoch issue”

Again there appears to be considerable strength of feeling locally about this issue. However, although some local ties will be broken, the evidence was not compelling that there would be significant difficulty or inconvenience.

Indeed, the evidence spoke more of people’s perceptions than of actual inconvenience, although I recognise that perceptions may play some part in the Commission’s considerations.

Given the disparity between the Pontypridd and Cynon Valley constituencies, and the absence of any other proposal to address it, I am not persuaded that any sustainable objection arises which ought to displace Rule 5 or the original reasoning of the Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

78. For the reasons outlined above, I recommend that the Commission reaffirm its provisional recommendations for the two preserved counties in all cases save for that involving the “Bargoed, Gilfach and Maesycwmmmer issue”. Whilst the Commission’s provisional proposals here would achieve the desirable result of reducing the disparities between the Caerphilly and Islwyn constituencies, the counter-proposal, which achieves a similar result (albeit a less numerically satisfactory one), has the following advantages:

- It recognises and uses the River Rhymney as a natural geographical boundary – plainly it has been a long standing historical and administrative boundary. Aberbargoed (1) and Maesycwmmmer (15) divisions, falling to the east of the river boundary, have previously been part of the Bedwellty constituency which was in effect the predecessor of Islwyn;
- It breaks fewer local ties;

- There would appear to be no significant objections to transfer into the Islwyn constituency from the Maesycwmmmer division – certainly none were raised with me or in written representations.

79. Accordingly, I recommend that the Commission’s provisional recommendation in this regard be withdrawn and the proposals set out in the counter-proposal be accepted. Adoption of the counter-proposal would offend no statutory criteria, which the Commission is obliged to observe. Further, the relevant issues having been flagged up at an early date by the written submission and distribution of the counter-proposals, it does not appear to me that any significant further representations in opposition to it would be likely to be forthcoming. It would seem unlikely therefore that the Commission would consider it necessary to hold any further Inquiry into this matter.
80. I have no doubt from the evidence and representations received that the Commission’s proposals as a whole will command widespread support. However, I am satisfied that the counter-proposal for the “Bargoed, Gilfach and Maesycwmmmer issue” will command a greater degree of public support than the Commission’s original provisional recommendation.

Gerard Elias QC

12th August 2004