



**REVIEW OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES IN
THE PRESERVED COUNTY OF
WEST GLAMORGAN**

**REPORT ON LOCAL INQUIRY
HELD ON 23th JULY 2004 AT THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, SWANSEA**

The Boundary Commission for Wales
Caradog House
1-6 St Andrews Place
Cardiff CF10 3BE

Commissioners

1. On 13th July 2004 at the Council Chamber, Swansea County Council, Oystermouth Road, Swansea, I conducted a local inquiry under section 6(2) of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (the 1986 Act) in respect of the Commission's provisional recommendation for the preserved county of West Glamorgan. I now submit this report which contains my recommendations.

Background

2. The 1986 Act as amended requires a general review of all the constituencies in Wales every eight to twelve years. The last review was completed in 1995.
3. Notice of the present review was published on 16 December 2002. That is the enumeration date for the purposes of rule 8 of the rules for redistribution of seats (the rules) set out in schedule 2 of the 1986 Act. Rule 8(a) provides that the expression "electoral quota" means a number obtained by dividing the electorate for that part of the United Kingdom by the number of constituencies in it existing on that date. "Electorate" is in turn defined; in rule 8(b)(i) in relation to a constituency as the number of persons whose names appear on the register of parliamentary electors in force on that date, and in rule 8(b)(ii) in relation to the part of the United Kingdom, as the aggregate electorate as so defined of all the constituencies in that part.
4. Applying those expressions, the electoral quota is 55,640. The electorate for the five constituencies in West Glamorgan is as follows: Aberavon 50,422; Gower 60,524; Neath 56,993; Swansea East 57,226; Swansea West 58,336; making a total of 283,501. The disparity between the highest and lowest number of electors is thus 10,102.

The provisional recommendation

5. The provisional recommendation issued on 5th January 2004 was to leave three constituencies unchanged, but to make a minor adjustment to the re-alignment of the boundary between the Gower and Neath constituencies, so as to include the whole of the Clydach electoral division (4). This involves a transfer of 11 electors from the latter to the former, producing revised figures of: Gower 60,535; Neath 56,982; and a disparity of 10,113.
6. 23 written representations were made upon the provisional recommendations by 6th February 2004, the end of the representation period. Welsh Labour (WLP), Welsh Liberal Democrats, Gower Constituency Labour Party, Pontybrenin Ward Labour Party, Ms Edwina Hart AM, Ms Val Lloyd AM and Mr D Fox supported the provisional recommendations. They were supported in respect of Gower by the City & County of Swansea Council and Councillor Gethin Evans, in respect of Neath by the Right Honourable Peter Hain MP, in respect of Swansea East and West by the respective Constituency Labour Parties and in respect of Swansea East by Mr M J Hedges.
7. The Welsh Conservative Party (WCP) and Mr Alan Cairns AM objected to the provisional recommendations and proposed the transfer of Mayals Community (20) to Gower, Clydach (4) and Mawr (19) wards to Neath, and Blaengwrach (5) Glynneath (21) Penlanna (31) and Resolven (34) wards to the Aberavon Constituency (the main counter-proposal). Gower Conservative Association supports these proposals in respect of Gower and Neath, and the transfer of Mayals is supported by Mr T Donoghue, Mr E J Furneant, Miss P F Griffiths and M J Edwards, Mr J G Gwillam, Mr and Mrs John and Carol Powell, and Mr M N Rees.
8. Mr Peter Black AM asked that consideration be given to amending two anomalies, namely that the polling district of Llangyfelach and Glais are each split between Swansea East and Gower constituencies.

9. I indicated at the opening of the inquiry that I was reasonably familiar with the communities in issue but that I would consider any request that I should visit one or more of them. WCP invited me to visit Clydach, Trebanos, Heol y Ffin, and Pontrhydyfen. WLP invited me to travel down the Neath Valley. Immediately after the close of the inquiry I travelled unaccompanied by car along the B4603 through Clydach and Trebanos and onto Ystalyfera. I then travelled over Mynydd y Drum to join the A465 at Glynneath and travelled down the Neath Valley and into Neath. I then took the B4287 through Cimla to Pontrhydyfen before joining the M4 via Port Talbot. I stopped at various places along the way, including Heol y Ffin.

The rules

10. The starting point for my consideration of the issues, are the rules, already mentioned. No issues arise as to rules 1 to 3. Rule 4 states that the preserved county boundary is to be followed as far as is practicable. Rule 5 states that the electorates of constituencies are to be as near as the electoral quota as is practicable having regard to rules 1 to 4.
11. Rule 6 allows the Commission to depart from rules 4 and 5 if special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape, and accessibility of a constituency, appear to render a departure desirable. Rule 7 provides that it shall not be the duty of the Commission to aim at giving full effect in all circumstances to the above rules, but account shall be taken so far as they reasonably can (a) of the inconveniences attendant on alteration of constituencies and (b) of any local ties which would be broken by such alteration.

The main counter-proposal

12. WCP point to the fact that since the last review, the disparity has grown from 8,060, and say that the time has now come to address the increasing electorate in Gower and the low electorate in Aberavon. The effect of the main counter proposal would be as follows: Aberavon 58,191; Gower 55,729; Neath

56,477; Swansea East 57,226 and Swansea west 55,878. This produces a disparity of 2,462. Mr Cook for WLP observed at the inquiry that larger disparities than the present one in West Glamorgan have been provisionally recommended by the Commission in two cases and indeed counter-proposed by WCP in one case. WCP's response is that each case must be looked at on its merits, and in my judgment that must be right.

13. I accept that the main counter-proposal is a serious attempt to address a widening disparity in West Glamorgan, and that it merits serious consideration. The main thrust of the arguments against it advanced at the inquiry related to issues such as convenience and community ties arising under rule 7, rather than practicability arising under rule 5. However, as transportation is an issue relevant under both rules, I consider this issue first.

Practicability

14. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) produced a very helpful plan showing the transport infrastructure in its area. Mr Thorn gave evidence on behalf of NPTCBC, who accept the provisional recommendations so far as they relate to Neath and Aberavon. He said that Blaengwrach, Glynneath and Resolven wards, although adjacent to the Aberavon constituency, are separated from it by a mountain range, across which there are only forestry tracks. From Glyncoed Community Centre in the Afan Valley to the roundabout at the junction of Glynneath and Blaengwrach is some 21 miles and takes about 40 minutes to travel. There is no direct bus route, although an hourly service currently runs from Cymmer to Neath town centre via Pontrhydyfen which takes 30 minutes. It would then be necessary to change buses and travel for a further 30 minutes before reaching Glynneath. There is a direct service which runs from the Afan Valley to Neath. Other services necessitate changing at Port Talbot and Neath. Accessibility between Pelenna and the Afan Valley is easier.

15. This evidence was not challenged and I accept it. It was supported by Mr Hain, who pointed out that if the main counter-proposal were adopted,

constituents from the Upper Neath Valley would have to pass his constituency office in Neath to get to the one in Port Talbot. He made it clear that he was not thinking of inconvenience to himself, as his job would be to represent his constituents wherever they fell.

16. Mr Conde read out statements from Dr Brian Gibbons and Dr Hywel Francis, Members of the Assembly and Parliament respectively for Aberavon. They spoke of the “severe logistical problems” that the counter-proposals would create. When questioned, Mr Conde clarified that both the Members are happy to go round their constituencies and hold surgeries, but beyond that there is also a need for constituents to get to their representatives. He accepted that the journey times under consideration might be normal in rural constituencies, but pointed out that it would be putting extra hardship on the electors of the Upper Neath Valley.
17. In respect of Mawr Mr Smith, who represented the Gower Constituency Labour Party, gave evidence of the long journey from some of the villages in the Mawr ward such as Garnswllt and Felindre to Neath. This would involve a journey through Gower, Swansea East and Aberavon constituencies. Councillor Hood-Williams, who gave evidence on behalf of WCP, accepted that it would be a major problem to get from Garnswllt to Neath by public transport.
18. Mr Caton, who travels through the two Swansea constituencies in order to go from one end of his Gower constituency to the other, accepted that that caused him no particular difficulty.
19. I accept that extra hardship would be caused in transport terms by the counter-proposal, in particular to the electors of the Upper Neath Valley and the western part of Mawr Ward. However, in my judgment, that hardship is not of such a kind or magnitude as to render the main counter-proposal impracticable. It was in respect of the Upper Neath Valley that logistical problems were most strongly evident. It follows, therefore, that my

conclusion applies to all of the counter-proposals. In my judgment they are feasible and justified by rule 5.

Special considerations

20. For the same reasons, I do not regard the shape or accessibility of the constituencies which would be formed by the counter-proposal as amounting to special geographical considerations within the meaning of rule 6, so as to justify a departure from rules 4 or 5.

Inconvenience and local ties

21. It was the issues of inconvenience and local ties which dominated the evidence at the inquiry, and it is to those issues which I now turn. I deal firstly with the counter-proposal in respect of the Neath/Aberavon Constituency boundary.

The Upper Neath Valley

22. Councillor Hood-Williams gave evidence for WCP. He said that the four electoral divisions which WCP propose to transfer would sit easily with similar divisions in the Aberavon constituency. The neighbouring divisions of Bryn and Cwmavon (8), Cymmer (18), Glyncoed (20) and Gwynfi (24) have similar outlook and concerns, similar topography, and support the same industries such as tourism and forestry. He pointed to what he said was a precedent set in the Coedfranc wards (13-15) which include Skewen and which lie in the Aberavon constituency. This, he claimed, was an obvious precedent for minimising local ties in order to reduce disparity. He also referred to the village of Pontrhydyfen, currently split between these two constituencies.
23. Mr Cairns supported this evidence, adding that sports and cycling form a major common interest between these communities, and that tourism strategies of the Assembly, the Wales Tourist Board, and local authorities are based on close co-operation between these communities. His evidence is that the links

between these communities were as equally as strong as those between the four Neath Valley wards and Neath itself.

24. Many people who work in Corus Steel Works at Port Talbot live in the four wards in the Neath Valley which are referred to in the counter-proposal. Tonmawr and other rugby clubs from those wards choose to play in the Aberavon league. His evidence was that Pontrhydyfen has closer links with Port Talbot than with Neath, and he cited Richard Burton's association with the former town as an example
25. Mr Hain pointed to the geographical and historical ties between the Neath Valley and the town itself. Welsh is spoken regularly in the Neath Valley, unlike its Afan counterpart. There are Welsh medium primary schools in Glynneath, in Neath centre and to the east of the town. There is one in Port Talbot and none in the Afan Valley. The Urdd Eisteddfodau are rationalised in the Neath Valley in a way in which they are not in Afan. A comparison of the churches and chapels of the Valleys respectively shows the greater significance which the medium of Welsh has in the Neath Valley.
26. The sporting ties of the Neath Valley also tend to be with the town. There is strong support in the Valley for the Ospreys and the Neath Rugby Club. There is strong rivalry between the respective rugby teams of the two Valleys, and this is reflected in soccer, cricket and bowls.
27. Because of the transport situation described in 14 above, the shopping and work patterns of the Neath Valley relate to Neath town rather than to Afan.
28. Mr Hain accepted that Pelenna is located separately, but pointed out that this ward is close to the village of Cimla which overlooks Neath and the Neath Valley, and there is a direct bus service to the town. Pupils attend Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School which is located on Cimla Hill.
29. Mr Hain's evidence, which was supported by NPTCBC, Ms Gwenda Thomas AM, Dr Gibbons AM, and Dr Francis MP, was substantially unchallenged.

When questioned, Mr Hain accepted that the village of Tonmawr, situated in Pelenna Ward, has some links with Aberavon in that its rugby team plays in the Aberavon league. He also accepted that the community of Pontrhydyfen is split between the Neath and Aberavon constituencies, but said that the viaduct divides the village into two and that those on the Neath side identify more strongly with Neath.

30. He accepted also that Skewen is part of the suburban hinterland of Neath town with direct transport links, and yet belongs to the Aberavon Constituency, but did not accept that this was a justification for severing the ties between the Neath Valley and the town. Finally, he accepted that there are some common links between the respective Valleys, in that they are both former coal mining valleys, and both now rely heavily on forestry and tourism.
31. Increased problems of accessibility which the counter-proposals would no doubt bring, amount in my view to inconveniences attendant on the alteration of constituencies within the meaning of rule 7(a). That is a factor which can and should reasonably be taken into account when considering the counter-proposals. In my judgment this is a factor of moderate weight, but not sufficient of itself to prevent rule 5 from being given full effect.
32. In my judgment there are some common links between the respective Valleys, such as forestry, tourism and some sporting links. However, there are stronger local identities in terms of geography, history, culture, transport, shopping and work, between the wards of Blaengwrach, Glynneath, Resolven (and to a lesser extent Pelanna), respectively, and Neath town. Although in one sense these identities are likely to continue even if this counter-proposal were adopted, such adoption would break the local ties between these identities and Parliamentary and Assembly representation.
33. In my judgment, this is a weighty factor which can and should reasonably be taken into account. It is probably of sufficient weight in itself to justify a decision not to give full effect to rule 5 in this regard. However, when taken together with the inconveniences mentioned in paragraph 14 above, in my

view it becomes clear that rule 5 does not justify the alteration of the constituency boundary between Neath and Aberavon.

Clydach and Mawr

34. I turn now to the counter-proposal to incorporate the Clydach and Mawr wards in the Neath constituency. Councillor Hood-Williams gave evidence that Clydach and Mawr have little in common with the Gower Peninsular but have links with Pontardawe and Neath. He referred to the need to travel by public transport from Clydach to the Gower through the Swansea constituencies. The alternative route through the constituency, though attractive, is circuitous and long.
35. Mrs Birch gave evidence that she attended Pontardawe Grammar School and several of her friends and classmates came from Clydach. They went shopping in the evening to Neath. She joined Pontardawe Air Cadets, and several members were also from Clydach. She later lived in Skewen which is treated as part of Neath. She now lives in Three Crosses on the edge of the Gower Peninsula, which she feels has no links with Clydach. None of this evidence was challenged, and I accept it.
36. Mr Cairns was born and brought up in Clydach ward and was partly educated in the Pontardawe ward. His evidence was that Mawr is a largely rural area which uses Clydach as its commercial, retail, employment and leisure centre. Most voluntary organisations are based on a Clydach and Mawr area. He spoke of the disquiet of local residents of Clydach and Pontardawe when those two wards were separated when the unitary authorities of Swansea and Neath were created.
37. He accepted that South Wales Police have a Neath Port Talbot division and a Swansea division, which basically cover the unitary authority areas, but said that some of the officers at Pontardawe do have a responsibility towards Clydach, where the police station is rarely manned. He also accepted that officers at Morriston to the south would also have a similar responsibility.

38. When further questioned, he clarified that the ties between the communities in Mawr and Clydach, were focused on the largest community in Mawr, namely Craig-Cefn-Parc which is some two miles from the centre of Clydach. He accepted, for example, that the natural shopping centres for Garnswllt in the west of the ward are Ammanford, Pontarddulais and Swansea.
39. Mr Jones, a resident of Clydach and a member of the local Labour Party, gave evidence that the residents of Clydach associate themselves with Swansea rather than with Neath, and later expanded this to say that the people of Clydach, Craig-Cefn-Parc and Mawr associate themselves with Swansea and the Gower. He cited the particular example of the St John's Ambulance. He accepted that to get from Clydach to Mumbles would involve a journey through both Swansea constituencies and that there was no direct bus route. He was not aware of the hourly 122 bus service between Clydach and Neath. He said that there is a sizeable Welsh speaking population in Clydach with an increasing number of people sending their children to Welsh primary school or learning the language.
40. Mr Smith in his evidence said that he believed that it was in 1886 that Clydach and Mawr became part of the Gower constituencies. WCP were not able to confirm or deny that but were prepared to accept that there was a strong historical tie. Mr Smith further pointed out that the current Gower/Neath constituency boundary was contiguous with the local authority boundary, and with the newly revised health authority boundary. Finally, he referred to the fact that the Welsh speaking areas such as Clydach, Pontarddulais and Gorseinon are all in the Gower constituency.
41. When questioned, Mr Smith accepted that from the late 1940s to 1983, Pontardawe and Trebanos were in the same constituency as Clydach and Mawr, and that there was in effect one continuous built up area as one drives up from the M4 and Ynys Morgan roundabout. He also accepted, as did Ms Gwenda Thomas, that pupils from Clydach and Mawr do go to school in Pontardawe, but pointed out that the catchment area school is West Cross.

Some choose to go to Cwmtawe, but that school has about 18 feeder schools out of catchment.

42. Mr Caton gave evidence that the counter-proposal in relation to Clydach and Mawr would create unnecessary problems. He pointed to the strong similarity of history, interest and concerns between the communities of Clydach, Gorseinon and Pontarddulais. The vast majority of the people of Clydach look to Swansea for employment, shopping or leisure activities rather than to Neath or the Upper Swansea Valley. Felindre looks to Llangyfelach and Morriston; Garnswllt looks to Pontarddulais, Ammanford and Swansea, and Craig-Cefn-Parc looks to Swansea. He has never been asked to campaign for a better bus service between these communities respectively and Neath, but is frequently asked to help make the case for improved services to Swansea.
43. For him the most important factor was that the current boundary is contiguous with that of the local authorities and local health boards. He gave a practical example of the Cwmni Clydach Development Trust, of which he is President, working in close liaison with the local authority to bring new retail, training and leisure opportunities into the village. He is not sure that the level of involvement achieved there would have been possible if the MP and AM had to relate to another local authority area.
44. He accepted that Clydach has some ties with Pontardawe and Trebanos, but those were not as strong as with Swansea. Swansea was the focal point for a group of settlements in the Gower constituency, which thus enjoy a community of concerns and interests. Although this is true of Pontardawe also to some extent, the connection between that community and Swansea is less strong. Mr Caton gave as an example the fact that leisure facilities have been built in Pontardawe in recognition of the distance to those in Swansea. The resource centre which is being built in Clydach has some sports facilities that are not available elsewhere in the neighbourhood, but it is not similar to the leisure centre in Pontardawe in that it does not have a swimming pool. The reason is that there is such a pool in nearby Morriston.

45. In my judgment, transport difficulties arising out of transfer of Clydach and Mawr to the Neath constituency would arise in the small settlements to the west of Mawr Ward. That is a modest inconvenience which ought to be taken into account. The inconvenience of transferring these wards into a constituency which at present is contiguous with local authority and health board areas is of greater concern, and in my view attracts a moderate degree of weight.

46. I accept that Clydach and Mawr have some local ties with Pontarddulais in the ways indicated by Councillor Hood-Williams and Mr Cairns, but in my view the preponderance of these are focused in Clydach and Craig-Cefn-Parc. Moreover Pontarddulais itself has some connection with Swansea. In my view the stronger historical, cultural, shopping, employment and leisure ties of these two wards are to Swansea and/or other reaches of the Gower constituency in the ways identified by Messers Caton, Jones and Smith. I accept that the fact that the towns and villages of the Gower constituency look to Swansea as their focal point gives them a community of interest.

47. Again, it was not suggested that the counter-proposal would significantly affect those interests other than the tie between those interests and Parliamentary and Assembly representation would be broken. This is a weighty factor which should be taken into account. When combined with the factors set out in paragraphs 42 and 43 above, in my judgment they are of sufficient weight as to require that full effect is not given to rule 5.

48. Indeed, the inconvenience and the break in local ties which would flow from the alteration of the Gower/Neath constituency boundary in the way proposed in the counter-proposal are, in my judgment such that this alteration should not be made.

Mayals

49. The case put forward by WCP in respect of Mayals, was somewhat different. Councillor Hood-Williams said that the advantage of this aspect of the

counter-proposal was that it would unite Mayals Community Council in one Parliamentary constituency, as opposed to being split between two constituencies as at present. He knew of no other community council in Gower or Swansea which is in that situation. The boundary at present passes through a continuous residential area, and could more easily be defined by the Clyne River, which constitutes the boundary between these two constituencies in other wards such as Killay (12 and 13) and Fairwood (8).

50. He accepted that this would increase the disparity in respect of the Gower, but said that that is why the other proposals were looked at to try to minimise the disparity. When questioned he accepted that Mayals had ties with Swansea, in the sense of working or shopping in a major city, but said that it had no ties with parts of Swansea outside the city centre such as Sketty (32).
51. Mr Colburn has lived in Swansea for 66 years and is a community councillor in Mumbles, but was not speaking on behalf of that community council. The boundary of that council area is on the boundary of the Clyne River, and includes Black Pill, Mayals, Oystermouth (24), Newton (23) and West Cross (36). He said that Mayals and Black Pill have always been considered part of Mumbles, and that it would be sensible to have the constituency boundary along the Clyne River.
52. In giving the above evidence, Mr Colburn encapsulated the points made in the written representation from several local residents, who referred to such an alteration as being more logical, fitting or natural.
53. When he was questioned, he did not point to specific inconveniences arising out of the present arrangement, but said that it would be better if the whole of what everybody in Mumbles considered to be part of Mumbles should be part of the Gower constituency. He accepted that there are some associations, such as the Black Pill Mayals and Derwen Fawr Residents Association which cross the boundary between Mayals and Sketty. He said however that there were many more ties between Mayals and Mumbles. Children from Mayals attend Bishopstone Comprehensive School and Mayals Primary School in the

Mumbles. The people of Mayals attend churches, rugby clubs, golf clubs, and numerous other organisations based in Mumbles.

54. Mr Donoghue, the author of one of the written representations (number 18), gave evidence to much the same effect. He represented Mayals on the Mumbles Community Council for 3 years. He said that there are people living in the same street who are voting in different places. The people of Black Pill regard themselves as the gateway to the Gower. The sign which welcomes travellers from the west to the City of Swansea is at the bottom of Mayals Road, but only because there was no space to do so on the bridge over the Clyne River. That is a natural boundary which cannot be altered by development.
55. When asked to point to a specific inconvenience of the present arrangement, he replied that people in one street go different ways to vote, and friends like to vote together.
56. The evidence set out in paragraphs 49 to 55 above was not substantially controverted, and I accept it.
57. Mrs Collins said that Mayals had been in Swansea West constituency since before 1979, when she moved there, and was pretty sure that that was the case well before that. Mr Smith thought that it was before 1948. Mrs Collins said they chose to live in Mayals not because of any tie with Mumbles, but for the reason many others chose to live there, because it is an easy commute to Swansea. Virtually everyone she sees turning at the junction with the dual carriageway turns left into Swansea. Her local relationship is with Swansea, and she has no relation to vast parts of the Gower constituency such as Gorseinon and Gowerton. She does not see the Clyne River as a natural boundary and hardly notices it. The Community Hall in Black Pill and the Vivian Hall serve residents on both sides of the river. The ties to Swansea are at least as strong and important as the links between Mayals and Mumbles.

58. Mrs Collins accepted that residents of West Cross might similarly say that they had links with Swansea, and that there is more or less one conurbation, but said that that was more or less true all the way to Swansea, taking the hospital and university buildings into account. She also accepted that when she first came to live in Mayals in 1979, the wards now represented by Newton, Oystermouth, West Cross and Mayals were together in Swansea West until that changed in 1983.
59. She agreed with Mr Donoghue and Mr Cairns that the Residents Association was established to campaign in respect of planning and flooding issues, but denied a suggestion that the motivation was simply to object to any development along Mumbles Road so as to avoid urban sprawl. She said, that the aim was to oppose inappropriate development wherever it may be proposed in the area covered by the Association, although she could not recall many applications which the Association had supported.
60. She further agreed that the people of Mayals were also concerned with the redevelopment of Oystermouth Square. Her evidence was, again which I accept, that this was a concern of many people in the greater Swansea area because they liked to visit Mumbles during evenings or weekends.
61. Mr Caton read a statement by Mr Alan Williams MP which pointed to the fact that at present all three Swansea constituencies, namely Gower (58,935) Swansea West (57,074) and Swansea East (57,273), are within a range of less than 1,900. If Mayals were moved to Gower the range would more than double to become 4,400. Most of the electors have a long standing link with Swansea West and the only pressure for change comes from the Conservative Party. The community council is a discrete entity, and the issue of which constituency it is in is not a critical matter.
62. Mr Caton agreed with those observations, saying that the electors of Mayals are clear which constituency they live in. He has lived in West Cross since 1984, since when he has served on Mumbles Community Council, the old Swansea City Council and then the City and County of Swansea. In that time

he has observed no problem in the functioning of any of those councils or the Parliamentary or Assembly representation of the people of Mumbles caused by the present boundary.

63. In my judgment, the evidence of Messers Hood-Williams, Colburn and Donoghue on the one hand, and that of Mrs Collins and Mr Caton (and the statements which he read) on the other, when properly analysed, is not substantially inconsistent, and I accept the main thrust of all of this evidence. There are local ties between Mayals and Mumbles in respect of schools, churches and chapels, tourism, and sport. There are ties between Mayals and Swansea in respect of working, shopping, and other issues such as development.

64. I accept that the counter-proposal in respect of Mayals would have the effect of strengthening its ties with Mumbles, and of increasing the convenience with which the community council represents its area. However I accept also that this alteration would break the ties with Parliamentary and Assembly representation which has now existed for 30 years or more and in respect of which there is currently little, if any, confusion. It is unnecessary for me to make a qualitative comparison between the convenience and local ties promoted by the alteration on the one hand, and that harmed by the alteration on the other. In some respects it is not possible to make a meaningful comparison. It suffices to say that in my view the inconveniences and break in local ties which such an alteration would bring about is modest, and weighs in the balance against the main counter-proposal.

Conclusion on the main counter-proposal

65. My conclusion on the main counter-proposal is that the resulting improvement in disparity is offset by the resulting inconvenience and break in local ties.

Alternatives

66. Mr Pratt on behalf of WCP in his closing submission put forward alternatives. It is fair to say that in so doing, he was, to some extent at least, spurred on by questions from me. The first was to move Penlenna ward to Aberavon constituency and Mayals to Gower constituency. That would produce a large Gower constituency at 62,993, but as Mr Pratt pointed out, 3 of the constituencies would then be closer to the electoral quota, namely Swansea West (55,878), Neath (56,028) and Aberavon (51,376). For the reasons given above, the attendant inconvenience and break in local ties would be modest in my view, so this alternative has some attraction. However, this would increase the overall disparity to 11,617, and in my judgment this alternative fails on this ground.
67. The next variation was as in paragraph 66 above, but additionally moving the Clydach (not Mawr) ward as proposed. That would result in the following electorates; Gower (57,222), Swansea West (55,878), Aberavon (51,376), and Neath (61,799). As Mr Pratt pointed out, this would result in the 3 former constituencies being closer to the electoral quota, and although Neath would have a high electorate, it is also a stable electorate. However, the overall disparity would, at 10,423, remain similar to that provisionally recommended. In view of this disparity and of the moderate inconvenience, identified in paragraph 45 above, attendant to moving Clydach ward, in my judgment this variation should not be made.
68. A further variation to the above would be to move Resolven as well. Gower and Swansea West constituencies would be as in paragraph 66 above, but Neath would have 59,350 electors and Aberavon would have 53,825. Mr Pratt pointed out that 3 constituencies would thus be closer to the electoral quota, and the overall disparity would be 5,525. That latter fact, together with the finding that the inconvenience and break in local ties attendant upon this variation is far less than that attendant upon the main counter-proposal, makes this option, in my view, the most attractive of those advanced as counter-proposals.

69. The wards suffering the most inconvenience and breaking of local ties by the main counter-proposal; namely Mawr, Blaengwrach and Glynneath would remain in their current constituencies. However Resolven and Clydach wards, and to a lesser extent Penlenna and Mayals wards, would suffer as a result of this variation in the ways identified above. Ultimately I am persuaded to the view that such inconvenience and break in local ties is sufficient to justify the rejection of this further variation.

70. Finally, in respect of Mr Black's suggestions, there was no further evidence given at the inquiry as to what, if any, inconvenience or break in local ties, for example, these alterations may cause. I feel unable therefore to make any recommendation in respect of them.

Recommendations:

71. My recommendations are:

- a. The provisional recommendation should be made final;
- b. The main counter-proposal should not be adopted;
- c. The most attractive of the variations thereto, namely that set out in paragraph 68 deserves particular consideration, but should not be adopted;

72. I make no recommendation in respect of Mr Black's suggestion

Milwyn Jarman QC
9 Park Place, Cardiff

23 August 2004