



Comisiwn Ffiniau
i Gymru

Boundary Commission
for Wales

Boundary Commission
for Wales

Public Hearings: Wrexham

Transcript of the Public Hearing

Wrexham

Key

SP:	Steven Phillips (Chair & Assistant Commissioner)
SW:	Shereen Williams (Chief Executive of Boundary Commission for Wales/Secretary)
SB:	Simon Baynes (MP)
DO:	Dewi Owens
AC:	Andrew Clemes (Chair & Assistant Commissioner)
JD:	James Davies (MP)
PR:	Paul Rogers (Councillor)
GD:	Gwenllian Lansdown Davies (Assistant Commissioner)
AM:	Arun Midha (Assistant Commissioner)
DJ:	David Jones (MP)
CH:	Chris Hall
IH:	Ian Harrison
RH:	Robert Harvey
GD:	Glyn Davies (Welsh Conservative Party Chairman)
SA:	Sarah Atherton (MP)
MD:	Meurig Lloyd Davies
P1:	Participant 1
P2:	Participant 2
P3:	Participant 3
P4:	Participant 4

[Transcript starts at 00:00:00]

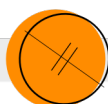
SP: Together as Assistant Commissioners we're responsible for analysing all the representations that have been received concerning the initial proposals, and presenting the Commissioners with a report in due course on whether those initial proposals should be revised.

We are independent, we played no part in the formulation of the initial proposals and essentially we're not here to support or oppose those proposals, we're here to, to listen, to gather evidence and to make our recommendations.

So a secondary consultation period commenced last week, on 17th February, and will run until 30th March, to coincide with five public hearings across Wales, of which this is the second. We will be treating all representations received orally or in writing equally, regardless of whether they're in the Welsh language or English.

Speakers today, and in the other hearings, have the opportunity to make supplementary representa-, written representations within the deadline that I have outlined, but it would be helpful to us if those representations could include the person's name, area of residence and any affiliation that they maybe have, that they may have, or whether they're speaking on their own behalf. And it is important that those representations are received by 30th March as we will not be able to consider contributions made after that date.

[00:01:41]



Similarly we will not be able to address issues that have already been determined by Parliament, I won't go into the, the, the exhaustive detail of all that just now. Details are to be, to be found in the initial proposals. But the purpose of this hearing, these hearings really is to provide an opportunity for people to make representations about where we are in the process in the context of the initial proposals, and there's a number of different ways in which those representations can be made through the Commission's consultation, also in writing, email, etcetera.

So the transcripts of these hearings will be made available, so we can take account of what's been said in the hearings and there's a degree of confidentiality here, in the sense that the, the address of the individual contributor will not be published.

I'm going to conduct this, the proceedings today as informally as possible. We have a list of speakers, we'll be hearing from the first one in a moment, but it is important that we try to stick to the timescale. So if you could come to the lectern to make your contribution, state your name, area of residence, affiliation, if any, and note that the, all the representations will be recorded for the transcription that I mentioned earlier.

I don't propose to allow cross-examination, this isn't an inquisitorial occasion, but I may permit questions, I or my colleagues may have questions, members of the audience may have questions through myself as Chair, and any questioner will be asked to provide the same details that I've outlined in relation to the main speakers. Please keep to your allotted timescale, or you risk being interrupted. A colleague will be given a two minute warning, so to speak, or an eight minute warning I should say.

And please address the hearing in Welsh or English, as you see fit, but it will be helpful again, we have translation services here, if you could indicate which language you're using at the outset.

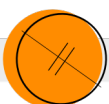
I'm gonna ask Shereen to, to outline a few housekeeping matters shortly and we look forward to hearing your contributions through the course of the day. Shereen.

SW: Bora da. That's alright, I'll be a bit closer. Bora da. Just to cover a couple of, a couple of housekeeping issues. There's no fire alarm test planned for today, so if it sounds, it's the real thing and we'll need to make our way to the fire exits and meet in the main car park. Leaflets, the booklets and initial proposals can be found in the front desk, if you want to take some away with you.

As Steve mentioned, there is a translation service available. If you'd like to make your contribution in Welsh, please feel free to do so. Today's proceedings are currently being live streamed and recording is in place for transcription purposes. So please do not use your personal devices to take pictures or recordings of the proceedings. However, if you are intending to Tweet please tag us at [inaudible 00:05:05] Wales. And lastly, we would be grateful if mobile phones could be placed on silent in order not to disrupt proceedings.

[00:05:10]

Today the hearing, the panel will sit until 8 pm. We've got a list of speakers booked in throughout the day to make contributions. We, we do have a planned lunchbreak



between 12 and 1 and we will, we may have short breaks at other points during the day at the discretion of the Chair.

So I'm going to use my time today to talk through the process [inaudible 00:05:31] as well as the Commission's actual proposals. In developing the proposals the Commission want to take account of the statutory factors set out in the legislation. So things like special geographical considerations, local government boundaries and local ties, and the boundaries of existing constituencies. As you are aware, each constituency in the UK shall not, shall have not more than 105% and not less than 95% of the UK electoral quota, and that is 73,393 electors. This means the number of constituencies in Wales will be reduced from 40 to 32, and each constituency, with the exception of Ynys Mon must have between 69,724 electors and 77,062 electors.

As Wales is wholly divided into communities and the communities and their wards are used to build electoral wards in Wales, the Commission has used electoral wards as the primary building blocks for the Parliamentary constituencies. We've sought to avoid dividing electoral wards between constituencies as they are well defined, well understood units, which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest.

When the Commission launched its proposals in September it was the start of the process, not the end. Publication of the initial proposals initiated the Commission's first consultation period, which ran from 8th September last year, till 3rd November. We received 1,211 representations and these were published on 17th December.

We're encouraging people to consider the detailed proposals and the representations that have been published and let us know what they think, and, importantly, where they have counter-proposals which would meet the requirements of the legislation. This public hearing and the other public hearings that we're holding across Wales, are fundamental to this process.

The Assistant Commissioners will consider all responses received during the hearings on the consultation portal and in writing and will consider all the representations in developing the recommendations report for the Commission.

As I mentioned earlier, we received a large number of representations in the initial consultation period. A small number of these were representations that covered all of Wales and these were primarily from the political parties and some individuals. The majority of representations received were focused on specific areas and here are some of the highlights.

The proposed Caerfyrddin constituency was broadly supported by the representations received, however there were objections relating to the transfer of the community of Llangunnor into the proposed Llanelli constituency. Many of the respondents argued that the community of Llangunnor should be included in the Caerfyrddin constituency.

[00:08:10]

The proposed Cardiff West constituency received a number of representations in opposition, primarily due to the inclusion of Pontyclun from Rhondda Cynon Taf. Respondents argued that Pontyclun should remain wholly within a Pontypridd



Rhondda Cynon Taf constituency. There were a number of representations that opposed the proposed Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare and Pontypridd constituencies, due to division of the Cynon Valley. It was argued that the identity of the Cynon Valley should be preserved and the area retained within a single constituency.

A number of representations opposed a proposed Cardiff South and Penarth proposal, due to the inclusion of Dinas Powys from the Vale of Glamorgan and wanted Dinas Powys to remain in the Vale of Glamorgan constituency. Objections to the proposed Swansea East and Neath constituency was mainly focused on the combination of parts of Swansea with parts of Neath Port Talbot.

A number of representations also argued that the Pontardawe, upper Swansea Valley area should be included in the Swansea constituency and not in the proposed Brecon and Radnorshire constituency.

Several representations opposed the proposed Bridgend constituency, as it splits the Bridgend local authority area between two constituencies. Some argued that Porthcawl should not be joined with Aberavon and Port Talbot and others support the division of the areas outside Bridgend town centre.

A significant number of representations opposed a proposal for Aberconwy and Dwyfor Meirionydd. The representations argued that Bangor, proposed to be Aberconwy, should be wholly included within an Arfon constituency.

The main objections to the proposed Wrexham constituency was due to the inclusion of Brymbo and Minera in the neighbouring constituency of Alyn and Deeside. Respondents argued that these communities should remain in Wrexham.

There was support for the proposed Ceredigion and Preseli constituency, though some representations received stated that they would prefer a constituency that was wholly formed of the Pembrokeshire local authority.

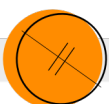
The proposed Newport West and Caerphilly constituency received strong opposition due to the combination of two separate local authority areas. Respondents argued that the Sirhowy Valley, currently in the Islwyn constituency, would be a better fit with Newport rather than Caerphilly proper.

Newport East was opposed by a small number of representations who requested Caldicot remain in Newport East, although there was broad support for the proposed Monmouthshire constituency.

A small number of representations opposed combining Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney into a single constituency, due to the issues of deprivations. No alternative proposals was provided.

[00:10:30]

The main objections related to Delyn was due to its name. There was a preference for Clwyd East to be used instead. Several representations disagreed with the proposed Clwyd constituency, arguments were varied including Llandrillo-yn-Rhos should be included in Clwyd instead of Llandrillo and Corwen within Prestatyn and Dyserth.



Arguments against a proposed Alyn and Deeside and Delyn constituencies were mainly focused on the inclusion of Flint and Bagillt within Delyn, as it was felt that this should be in the proposed Alyn and Deeside constituency.

Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr received broad support, with a small number opposing the name.

Diolch for listening and giving, and giving us your time today. I'll hand over the session back to the chair so he can begin inviting the speakers.

SP: Thank you, Shereen. Without further ado we'll move to our first speaker, who is Simon Baynes, MP. The floor is yours, sir.

SB: Bora da. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a representation to the Commission. And just for the record, my name is Simon Baynes, I'm the Member of Parliament for Clwyd South I live just outside Chirk constituency.

And as the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Clwyd South, I am of course disappointed that under the boundary Commissions initial proposals, my constituency has been broken up between three constituencies. But, of course, I understand that the reduction of eight seats in Wales necessitates considerable change and therefore, effectively, the disappearance of the Clwyd South seat. But I felt it was important, as the current Member of Parliament for Clwyd South, to come here to the Commission, to their representations, and talk a bit about aspects of the reallocation of the wards between other constituencies, which I feel needs further consideration.

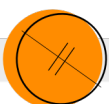
So I'm very glad to be able to share my thoughts, and those of my constituents, on how you have allocated the electoral wards in Clwyd South.

Firstly, you have suggested that the County Borough of Wrexham wards of Brymbo and Minera, as has been mentioned earlier on, are attached to the county of Flintshire wards, within a proposed Alyn and Deeside constituency. Currently none of the wards in my constituency are in the county of Flintshire and therefore I disagree with the proposal to separate those two wards from other wards in the County Borough of Wrexham.

If that was the case, this would mean that the County Borough of Wrexham would have to deal with three MP's rather than two, and Alyn and Deeside would consist of two local authorities, rather than one. A number of constituents in Brymbo and Minera have expressed their disappointment at this proposal and would much prefer to be linked to other Wrexham wards.

[00:13:46]

These two wards of Brymbo and Minera have close ties to their neighbouring wards, such as Coedpoeth and Bryn Cefn and I would therefore suggest that these two wards be included in the new Wrexham constituency. And when I say that they have close ties, this is these communities are very much interconnected and their ties in terms of people's relationships, their friendships, their families, but also in terms of the use of local facilities, use of local schools, libraries, pharmacies and so on.



And my alternative proposal to counteract that removes the Wrexham wards from this proposed seat so that Alyn and Deeside constituency contains only Flintshire wards. This therefore complies better with the Commission's rule on links with local authorities.

And just to look a bit at what some of the representations have been with regard to Brymbo and Minera. For example, representation BCW-8862 said, and I quote, "I am disappointed to see that my postcode will be in Alyn and Deeside, as I live closer to the town of Wrexham, pay taxes to Wrexham Council, and use facilities in Wrexham. Alyn and Deeside has no relevance at all to mine or my family's life."

Representation BCW-8870 said, "The exclusion of Brymbo and Minera, Tanyfron and Bwlchgwyn from the proposed Wrexham constituency (instead of being included in Alyn and Deeside) makes very little sense and breaks up communities for no apparent reason."

And representation BCW-8994 said, and I quote, "There are no public transport links with any of the other constituencies within the proposed Alyn and Deeside constituency, certainly no public transport, there are only eight roads to get to that area."

So those are some of the first-hand representations that have come through, which chime very much with what people have said to me and my knowledge of those two communities as well.

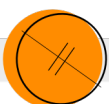
If accepted, a counter proposal would enable Pant, Johnstown and the part of the Ponciau ward, within the Rhosllanerchrugog community, to be reunited with Ruabon in the new Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr seat, where they have strong local ties. They are very closely linked and access many of the services in Ruabon.

So I think this again is similar, in terms of its import, to what we've been saying about Brymbo and Minera, i.e. that these communities, Rhos, Ponciau, Pant, Johnstown, they're all very closely connected and they have very strong ties, as I've said earlier on, in terms of families, friendships, in terms of the use of local services, schools, and other facilities. And I think that they would coexist very effectively and more appropriately together within that Parliamentary constituency.

[00:17:16]

And one of the constituents in Pant who send in a representation, BCW-9202, also believe that these electoral wards should remain together. They said, "I live in Ponciau near Wrexham and it is very much the case that the communities of Johnstown, Ponciau, Rhos and Penycae, function as a single community. They share so many of the local facilities, such as, a secondary school, doctors, taxi company, and the main retail high street in Rhos, to name but a few." And I think that's a very good and prescient representation of what people think within that wider community.

The other area that I wanted to comment on is in the County Borough of Denbighshire. So the Llangollen community is partly in the County Borough of Wrexham in... and then it's also in the County Borough of Denbighshire and therefore



it makes sense to unite it in the proposed Montgomeryshire seat. However the county of Denbighshire wards of Corwen and Llandrillo are more separate and could be linked to other Denbighshire wards to the North.

And I, I grew up just south of the Llandrillo ward in, in the very, very North of Powys, so it's a part of the constituency I know particularly well and I think the character and the topography, the nature of the, the highly agricultural element in it, in terms of the businesses and so on, and the people and the relationships, the communities, they all would, I think, reside very sensibly with the wards to the north in Denbighshire.

So my final point is regarding the name of Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr. I, I don't think that Glyndŵr accurately describes the wards that are added to the Montgomeryshire constituency. All the wards are from my constituency and I believe that a better description would be Clwyd South, which would ensure that the name of the existing constituency was preserved, so it would become Montgomeryshire and Clwyd South.

Glyndŵr is obviously an, an incredibly important name within Welsh history, but I don't honestly think that it is particularly applicable and it's not a name that is particularly used and considered within that area. If anything, it's further south in Montgomeryshire itself, or elsewhere. So I feel that from a sort of cultural aspect the, the name of Glyndŵr doesn't resonate in the way that it does in other areas when it comes to my parts of Clwyd South that would go into Montgomeryshire.

So I will draw my remarks to a close. I'm very grateful for you, for allowing me to give this verbal representation and would like to take this opportunity to thank you all and everybody else involved in the Commission, for the, the hard work and the, the trouble that you're going to, to actually bring in the views of people in what is a, a necessary, but also a very complex and far reaching change to the electoral boundaries across Wales. So thank you very much.

SP: Thank you very much indeed. Are there any questions from the floor? I have one point of clarification, if I may. I think you mentioned the community of Penycae.

SB: Yeah.

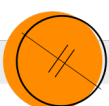
SP: That community, or at least part of it, a substantial part of it, is, is within the boundaries of Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr under the initial proposals.

[00:21:14]

SB: Yeah.

SP: And it's closely linked to areas such as Ruabon and Chirk. So can I be absolutely clear as to what your proposal would be. Are you proposing that Ruabon, Chirk, Penycae, all of that area, should be brought within Wrexham?

SB: No, I'm not. I'm, I'm just referring to bringing the, the part of the, of, of, of the Ponciau area, Johnstown, Ponciau, Rhos, into the Montgomeryshire and what we would call Clwyd South seat.



- SP: Okay.
- SB: And the, the rep..., the mention of Ponciau came actually through the representation BCW-9202.
- SP: Many thanks, that's helpful. Okay, if there's no further questions or comments, thank you very much.
- SB: Okay, diolch yn fawr.
- SP: Diolch.
- SW: David Jones is here.
- SP: Our next speaker is Mr Dewi Owens.
- DO: Thank you very much indeed. How do you, how do you follow a professional at this? I, I, I apologise that my, my presentation will be very amateurish compared with that. It's a few years since I've had to do any presentations.
- SP: Don't worry.
- DO: And I've had very, very difficulty in finding ways and means of looking at paper until I spoke to Rhydian, is it, the other day and he pointed me in the right direction with respect to a, a programme for doing the programme. Thank you very much.

May I thank the Commissioners for allowing me to speak as an ordinary citizen of St Asaph.

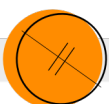
I'd like to thank the Commission for allowing me the honour of speaking as a citizen of St Asaph. Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the county, to the people from South Wales who have come to North Wales. The Welsh language is important to me because it defines us as a nation, and historically and culturally, and this is why I am commenting on the proposals.

Good morning everybody, and especially warm welcome to you from South Wales to North Wales. The Welsh language is very important to us as a nation, and indeed for all nations. It, it defines us, not only for what we are, but also historically, culturally and is immensely important that the constituency boundaries are drawn up in such a way that we give the language the best chance of surviving forever.

The chances that... the changes I've drawn up are based on these principles and on my life's experience of having lived and observing the changes that have been taking place over my lifetime.

[00:24:50]

One asked... one has to ask oneself, [inaudible 00:24:57] just hang on... my apologies again... one has to ask oneself, what is life about? Do we live to work, or do we work to live? Life is too short and it is up to us all to make sure that whatever we do, we ensure a better future for generations that follow. We've chosen to live here in Wales,



therefore we are custodians for the future generations. It's a matter of fact that as one travels from West to East the more Anglicised the Welsh language has become and it is precisely why it is important that we plan for the future in all aspects of life, to take this foremost in our minds.

The world is changing fast in many ways that we cannot influence, so it is important that we as a nation, do set out the right basics to survive as a nation, as well as an important part of the United Kingdom. Unfortunately my mastery of computer technology is very limited and so my presentation has undoubtedly an amateurish look about it... I've already said that [laughter]... for this, I apologise, but hope that you, as the Commissioners, can change, can change, can change... you, as Commissioners for change are able to professionalise what I am trying to achieve for the best interests of the whole of Wales as a nation, and to enable it to play its part as a kingdom... as a country within the United Kingdom.

I have lived in North Wales all my 85 years of life and I have a degree in agriculture, which enabled me to travel extensively in Europe, and to a far lesser extent, to other parts of the world. I have been fortunate enough to produce a daughter, who is an accountant in Chamonix in France, and a son, who is a lawyer in Oxford. You may wonder why I'm asking this, but it's all background to Welsh life. I say this because both received education through the medium of Welsh, which enabled them to become bilingual from an early age, and which undoubtedly has been a great benefit in the development of the mind.

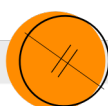
When they went to school they wouldn't speak to me in Welsh. "Dad, your Welsh is too colloquial" and that it's always been. I've been Welsh... I went to school to learn Welsh at an age of five or six, or whatever it was in those days, and I do speak Welsh, but my language, my holding of the Welsh as a, as a, how can I say, a learned person is not the same.

What I want to try to say is, yes, the financial prosperity of Wales is, of course, very important, but also one must appreciate that the cultural side of life is of equal importance and as I am trying to put forward a solution which looks at the global picture.

Having said all that, I would like now to concentrate on the counties of North Wales, of which I am best qualified to speak about. It is very gratifying to see that the Commission decided on Anglesey being treated as a county within its own right and I'm very pleased about that, because there is a culture in Anglesey of a more community Anglesey and it's very important that it stays like that. And I know it breaks the rules in respect of the number of population, but at least it has a chance to be a place of its own.

[00:29:09]

I can't go into a great amount of details of various counties, but they are all here, but... and I will pass you the presentation afterwards for one] to look at. Although I realise my proposals for new counties may need some slight adjustments, I do feel that the divisions on these lines are the best interest for the whole of the residents of North Wales.



In coming to these conclusions, I have in all cases taken into account the criteria laid by the Commission with regards to population of each constituency having a population of at least 68,000 and a maximum of 77,000. In addition to this I've taken into account geological considerations, boundaries that existed 2015 and boundaries existing... and boundaries of existing constituencies of particular importance to local ties between count-, communities.

I will start from the West to the East. I certainly won't go into details here of the various [inaudible 00:30:20], but they are here as one could... you may not be able to see it from there, but the picture I have here is of the various counties and I have also done the, them in different colours so that you can look at them at, at your leisure later.

Gwynedd is coloured orange, as the map shows, covers the Llŷn Peninsula, the university city of Bangor, and South to include Blaenau and Ffestiniog.

Oh, have I finished? Oh, oh right.

Aberconwy is coloured yellow on the map. This constituency takes in most of Snowdon range of mountains and follows the Conwy Valley from Llandudno in the North and takes in Bala in the South, and then follows the Dee Valley to Llangollen and that's marked in yellow.

Clwyd West is coloured blue on the map, this... I have named these, sorry, as what I feel that may well be appropriate... these, this constituency covers the North coast of Abergele and Colwyn Bay, down the Hinterland covering the Denbigh moors and the Southern part of the Vale of Clwyd, taking in the towns of Ruthin and to the East, Mold. A mainly rural constituency, which has most of its population on the coast and the two towns mentioned above.

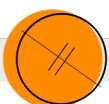
Clwyd North, coloured red on the map... and the only one I've been able to do like that [laughter]... covers the towns of Rhyl and Prestatyn on the coast, and takes to the Northern end of the Vale of Clwyd, together with the town of Holywell to the East. This retains the northern portion of the county of Denbighshire, together with the northern constituencies of Delyn county.

Alyn and Deeside is coloured in like mauve on the map. This constituency is probably the highest industrialised in North Wales and a high proportion of its employees come from Wales. In size it is the smallest of the constituencies, but it also accounts for it being a very close commun-, knit community.

Wrexham, coloured pink on the map, also highly industrialised and is the largest town in North Wales. Again, a very compact constituency, with only the old Maelor part being more rural.

[00:32:58]

That's as much as I have done and thank you once again, for allowing me... I feel I've tried to put an aspect on it that our MP's and people wouldn't put on. But thank you again.



SP: Thank you very much. Do we have any questions from the floor?

DO: Thank goodness for that [laughter].

SW: Sorry, can I confirm that you're going to submit that as a written representation as well, so we can have a, we can record it as a written submission? Can I confirm that you'll be submitting your papers as a written submission as well, so we have a record...

DO: Yes.

SW: Yeah, okay. Diolch.

DO: Do I give it to you?

SW: Do you want to give it to one of my colleagues and they...

DO: Right, thank you.

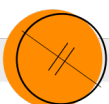
SW: ... they can make sure we keep a proper record of it.

DO: Well thank you very much, and thank you for listening to me.

SP: Thank you very much for your contribution. We have no more speakers in the immediate future, so I'm going to recess for a short period. It is possible that others may turn up to make their contributions and we have a number of speakers this afternoon. So can I thank the speakers that have contributed so far and we will adjourn. Thank you.

GD: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Boundary Commission public hearing in Wrexham. My name is Dr Gwenllian Lansdown Davies and I'm one of the Assistant Commissioners. To my right is Andrew Clemes, who is also an Assistant Commissioner, and to my left, Shereen Williams, Chief Executive and Secretary of the Boundary Commission for Wales. We're not here this afternoon to justify the proposals that have been put forward, rather, we're here to listen. To listen to the views of the public and to see whether members of the public agree or disagree with the original proposals and whether they have alternative proposals to submit to us. Each speaker has ten minutes, and my colleague will indicate when you have two minutes of presentation time left. So if you can stick to that, please. When I invite you to come and speak, please introduce yourself, tell us what area you come from and whether you're here as an individual, or on behalf of an organisation. After you have presented your views, I shall ask the audience and my friends on the panel if they have any questions or wish to seek further clarification on what you've said. So I'll invite Councillor Davies to the stage, and let's hear from you. Thank you very much.

MD: Good afternoon and thank you very much for your time. Councillor Meurig Lloyd Davies, from Cefn Meiriadog, not far from St Asaph, but the address is in Abergele. I'm a Councillor for Cefn Meiriadog Community Council, and a County Councillor for Denbighshire. I'm here as an individual, to highlight this once again, I've stopped counting how many times I've been before the panel. Not you, but before the panel over the years, after you'd changed the counties and all sorts of other things, but there are two things, I feel... Your proposals are wrong, you're going by the numbers



of electors and not by common sense. As you know, in Wales, there are more sheep than there are people, and trying, well, it's difficult enough to propose a county, or a ward, that relates to me, in the countryside. It takes me two weeks to visit everyone to see them and talk to them, and this is coming up in May, of course. So a Member of Parliament has no hope of seeing anyone, other than people in towns. In the countryside, it takes hours. Up a lonely farm lane, and by the time you get there, the afternoon has gone. If you're in Manchester, this is what they like telling us, or in Birmingham, you can walk up 10 or 20 streets in the time it takes to visit one person in the countryside. You need to bear that in mind, I'm afraid. Many members in England are in towns, and they don't see that at all. They may not understand it in big cities in Wales either, Cardiff and so on. But I understand it. Also, a major complaint I've had before with the Commission concerned the English names they wanted to give to counties or district councils or county councils, as they later became. In this context, you've acted very wisely, if I understand it correctly, if I've read this substantial booklet correctly, Denbighshire will become Clwyd, according to this. And that's a name we used to have in the old days when we had district councils and county councils. So that's the statement, really. I haven't had an opportunity to go through it, I couldn't find it on the internet, you know? I'm not an internet person, I'm a book person, and maybe after reading this, I'll be sending you another letter, right? Thank you very much for your time, and best wishes.

GD: Thank you very much. Does anyone have questions for you, either from the audience or from the panel? Would anyone like further clarification about anything? No, I don't think so. Thank you very much, Councillor Davies.

MD: OK, fine. (laughter)

GD: I'd just like to remind you that you can submit any further letters by the closing date, 30th of March.

MD: Of March, thank you very much.

GD: Thank you very much.

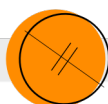
SW: No, the next speaker is five o'clock, so we can recess, recess till then.

GD: The next speaker is due to come before us at five o'clock, so I'll adjourn the session until then, feel free to come back here to reconvene at five o'clock to hear the next speaker. Thank you very much to you all.

AC: My name is Andrew Cledes and I'm Assistant Commissioner for the Boundary Commission for Wales. I'll be chairing today's, this part of today's hearing. The panel is made up of my fellow Assistant Commissioner, Dr Gwenllian Lansdown Davies, as well as Shereen Williams, Secretary to the Commission.

[00:40:40]

The Commission is hearing from people to... who make representations about any of the Commission's initial proposals relating to Parliamentary seats in Wales, including the name of any constituency and to present any counter-proposals. Please bear in mind that any new proposals or suggested revisions or alterations to the initial



scheme must comply with those same requirements laid down for the Commissioners as set out in the legislation.

This hearing is one of five being held in Wales throughout the period of consultation, with flexible hours to enable all those who wish to make representations, to do so. The transcript of these representations made at these hearings, together with any received in the secondary consultation period, will be published on the BCW website.

I'm going to ask our next speaker to come to the lectern to make representations. I would ask him to make, make clear his name, address, name, sorry, area of residence, not, not the address, and affiliation, if any, any. Your representation will be recorded for transcription purposes, please speak slowly and clearly so your, your submission can be well understood and recorded. There'll be no cross-examination of you, but some questions may be asked for clarification through myself, as Chair.

Thank you.

JD: Thank you very much, and I do have some slides which I hope may be available. But very grateful for you holding this public hearing today.

AC: I should have said, Mr Davies, sorry, that there's a 10 minute...

JD: Yes.

AC: ... limit and you'll be warned when you get to eight minutes.

JD: Okay.

AC: Thank you.

SW: Have you got his slides? Are the slides on and viewable?

P1: I haven't got any slides.

SW: You've not been...

P1: [inaudible 00:42:30 – 00:42:35].

SW: It might be when we were travelling. Can we pause this, the live stream? We'll get it set up and then...

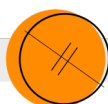
P1: Yeah, that'll [inaudible 00:42:39].

AC: Thank you.

[00:42:40]

[break in recording 00:42:43 – 00:42:53]

AC: Now you have the benefit of the slides, perhaps you could introduce yourself again for the record?



JD: Of course.

AC: We've got paper copies of the slides.

JD: Good, thank you. So I'm James Davies, Conservative MP for the Vale of Clwyd between 2015 and 2017, and then from 2019 until, until now. Prior to that I was a local authority member for Denbighshire and Prestatyn town council for 11 years.

So I would like to thank the Boundary Commission for Wales for holding this public hearing today. Clearly you have a difficult job to do and I appreciate that. A bit of a thankless task probably, but I do support the, the general drive to update the boundaries to take account of demographic change and to make constituencies of an equal size population wise.

So the existing Vale of Clwyd seat, which everyone knows well, in the middle there. And I would say it's a coherent makeup, it has a 25 year history, of course, all of it falls within the county of Denbighshire. It was successful in keeping together two of the important former local authority areas, which have often been together in the past. And, of course, being part of the same county in terms of public services, it works quite effectively with the A525 running north to south. And bearing in mind that and, and the fact that no representative would wish to see their seat cut into two, as is proposed, if I were to propose an alternative, without regard to the impact on the rest of North Wales, I would look potentially to consider a whole county seat of Denbighshire, which would be the right size.

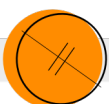
Or alternatively to, to look to extend it east, eastwards into parts of Flintshire in, in a similar fashion to the conservative proposal in 2016. And you're able to do that by adding in rural and semi-rural wards from Flintshire, creating quite a, a balanced seat.

So, of course, the proposals as they currently stand do split the Vale of Clwyd down the middle vertically, creating Clwyd and Delyn, with some areas of the current Clwyd West attached to the bottom of Delyn. And I would like to just refer to some of the, the positives of this. So it is true to say that Rhyl has connections with coastal towns to the west and they would be brought together. It does also bring together Bodellwyddan and Abergele, Denbigh and Llansannan, which is worthy of mention. Likewise, in Delyn it would bring Prestatyn together with many of the communities around it that have always looked to Prestatyn for their public services and, and shopping, they share the same telephone area code, postcode and so forth. And the roads are useful in that respect in connecting those communities. And even further east villages around Holywell also look to Prestatyn often.

[00:46:13]

Further south it's also true to say that some of Denbighshire, Tremeirchion, Cwm, Waen for instance, does have links with Mold and Llandyrnog certainly does with Ruthin.

Negatives, of course, as I've already indicated it does break down the existing links between the parts of Denbighshire that exist, the existing Vale of Clwyd constituency. And the other point, I think, in particular, is that you'd have seaside resorts, rural areas



and quite industrial areas brought together in a fashion that many people have commented on negatively.

And so I would ask the Commission just to consider whether there's merit in reintroducing the green field boundary which existed in the past between West Flint and East Flint, I understand between 1950 and 1983. And by that, by reintroducing that boundary you do then separate the, the rural and coastal areas from the more industrial areas.

So, so that is a key point and you will have seen the Conservative party's counter-proposals which take that into account. And so by reintroducing that boundary it then makes the Alyn and Deeside seat somewhat ex-, well extend further, further north and west. To compensate for that you would add in the wards of New Brighton, Argoed and Leeswood, which are in the present Delyn and are suggested to go into Alyn and Deeside. And you could also add some areas of South Denbighshire which have strong links with the Ruthin area.

In terms of naming, I would just point out that Delyn was a name, I think, that arose in the 1970's. It doesn't have any particular historical connections. And actually, if you look at Prestatyn, yes, it was in Delyn for a while, in fact the constituency, but it was never in Delyn Borough Council area and certainly neither was Ruthin. So I think Delyn for the area proposed wouldn't be the best of names and therefore Clwyd East would perhaps be better. To compensate, of course, you would then need to change the name of Clwyd to Clwyd West.

I would suggest there's been quite a lot of support for these proposals, that's been submitted through your consultation process. I've also noted opposition from the Ruthin area to, to being put into the proposed new Delyn from the town council there and from other sources. And, and actual, in actual fact, of course, if you were to add more areas of rural South Denbighshire to the, the Delyn seat, then that would compensate, I think that would, that would place Ruthin in a happier context in terms of its surroundings. That's something that actually Labour have commented on.

The green field boundary issue has been raised by the Green Party in Plaid Cymru in, in essence, the, the merits of, of looking at that. And even the Lib Dems also suggested adding some areas of South Denbighshire to the new Delyn.

So I hope that's helpful as a brief summary of, of my thoughts on, on what's been put forward and I'd like to thank you again for your time and efforts in the process.

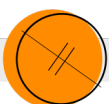
AC: Thank you very much. I just need to ask, are there any questions for clarification?

SW: I have one.

JD: Okay.

[00:49:58]

SW: Can I just ask, in the event the Commissioners don't make the changes in terms of the, you know, transferring of wards etcetera, what is your position on the name? Is it



still... assuming everything stays the same, is your position that we should also change... we should at least just change the name?

JD: I, I think so, because Prestatyn, Dyserth, Ruthin, have never been in Delyn Borough Council area. And as I said, Delyn is a, a relatively modern construct that doesn't mean an awful lot to, to many people.

SW: Just to clarify, I have no involvement in the decision making process, it's the Commissioners who do it, but I just want to make sure that we had it quite clear that the name is also an issue, regardless of what happens with the combination.

JD: I believe so, but even more so if you were to adopt the, the changes that I've outlined.

SW: Diolch.

AC: Thank you very much.

JD: Thank you.

SW: Our next speaker won't be here till six o'clock. Is it six?

?: 10 past.

SW: 10 past six. So we could recess till then.

AC: The next speaker is due at 10 past six, so I propose that we go into recess until that point.

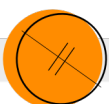
[Recess - 00:51:12 – 00:53:49]

AC: ... speak slowly and clearly so we, we can understand, record your submission. And the purpose of the hearing is to hear representations about the initial proposals which were published last year for the reform of the Parliamentary boundaries in, in Wales. And just to make it clear, we are not the authors of this document, we are taking views as to whether there should be any changes to those proposals.

Thank you. Do you want to come forward then please.

PR: Okay. Firstly, thank you for this opportunity to address you today. In particular there's a couple of issues in relation to the proposals for the Brymbo and Minera divisions to be placed into the Alyn and Deeside constituency. It is strongly felt within the Brymbo area in particular, that they have a greater affinity to the coun-, the current county of Wrexham and the town of Wrexham, due to its long historic in-, industrial ties with that area. So I think there's a really strong view locally that if Brymbo and Minera was to be placed into the Flintshire, or Alyn and Deeside constituency, that it would not be as beneficial to those communities because they would feel quite remote from the rest of the constituency.

[00:55:15]



I think there's a strong argument that the communities, the community of Brymbo has very strong geographical infrastructure and transport ties with the neighbouring wards of Bryn Cefn and... Bryn Cefn, Gwenfro and New Broughton, as, as does with Coedpoeth.

You'd have a situation where you would basically have the current county of Wrexham being represented by three MP's very disproportionately. And as a county councillor I believe that it would be quite challenging to ensure that three elected Members of Parliament would be able to be fully kept in the loop when it comes to issues, issues from the county borough side. So I think it would create practical challenges along, along that side of things.

I believe Sarah Atherton MP has made representations today and as I believe she, she said today that, that basically if Brymbo and Minera were to stay in the Wrexham constituency, then basically something else would have to give in order for those electoral figures to be reduced. Because obviously it would mean that Brymbo and Minera would take it quite significantly over the benchmark.

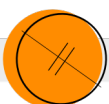
I think bas-, basically it would, it would make sense, the proposals she's made with the, with the wards mentioned, I think it was Johnstown and Ponciau, that those, those electoral divisions are very much more strongly linked to those in the south, such as you've got your Ruabon, you've got your Llwynmawr areas, Plas Madoc, Acrefair, those communities very well linked, so I think that would make sense.

Also one of the issues we've got in, in the Brymbo area itself is, currently the, the ward is going through a substantial regeneration following the closure of a steelwork site 30 years ago. And what, what you'll have is a situation if Brymbo does go into the Alyn and Deeside constituency, you would not know where the Broughton boundaries ended and the Brymbo ones did, because they've sort of merged into, amalgamated into one over time. And I think it would be very confusing for the members of the public to know who their elected representative is, cos obviously the Brymbo ward has the village of Tanyfron, Minera and there's Bwlchgwyn as well. So all, all those four I think, I think there would be an element of confusion as to who, who their MP is. And I think it would make sense from, as I say from the electorate point of view to have a clear, clearly defined Member of Parliament and, and they know where boundaries are.

Also, the Alyn and Deeside, current Alyn and Deeside constituency, where, where the boundary meets Brymbo it is very much rural. You go from a very urban area to a rural one. Public transport stops at the border of Brymbo and doesn't run into the, in the other constituency. So there would be possible issues around, you know, to travel from one part of a constituency, for argument's sake for a Member of Parliament's surgery, they would probably have to do multiple bus journeys on public transport to access that. There's no direct rail links or anything like that which run through the areas which, where there'd be a, a common connection.

[00:59:00]

So I think as a... I think geographically, overall I think, you know, there are some challeng-, challenges if that, if Brymbo was to go in there.



With regards to Minera, Minera is currently... Minera county ward is currently split between the Minera and Bwlchgwyn divisions. They, they actually come under two separate community councils, so Bwlchgwyn does come under Brymbo. Minera, on the other hand, has a very, very strong connection with the Coedpoeth community. Again, similarly, you don't know where one, one starts and one ends. So I think there would be obviously some benefits to, to Minera as well as Brymbo, staying in that.

I think the reality, reality is, I think, from the members of the community, I think they were quite shocked by this proposal because... I appreciate some of these new constituencies are very large, but there is certainly, even, even though the industry is similar, there are very few ties between the sort of, the Shotton Deeside area and the how should I put it, the industries which were of, of coal mining and steel in the Brymbo and Wrexham area. So I think that, that does make sense.

Similarly, I think any... so there's been some suggestions made around the Gwersyllt and Llay wards. I do not believe that, that they would lead to cohesive communities being represented by two Members, you know, different Members of Parliament if they were to be divided up. And keeping that geographical identity of Wrexham, I think, is very important. I appreciate obviously we're, we're currently shared between two Members of Parliament. If we were shared by any more than that I think it would cause some issues.

So, to conclude, there are real concerns by including Brymbo and Minera in the new Alyn and Deeside constituency and I would ask the Boundary Commission to look at the county proposals which have been put forward to date and, in particular, retaining Brymbo and Minera in, in the Wrexham constituency.

AC: Thank you. Just clarify, you are the county councillor for the Brymbo ward as, as on the list.

PR: Yeah, yeah. County Councillor for Brymbo and chair of the Community Council.

AC: Thank you, and are you speaking in a personal capacity or as a Councillor?

PR: As, as a Councillor.

AC: A Councillor, thank you. Are there any points of clarification from Councillor Rogers' address?

SW: Councillor, I just want to clarify, the counter-proposal from Sarah Atherton, MP, was to transfer Pant, Johnstown and the Ponciau South ward into Montgomeryshire?

[01:01:46]

PR: Yes.

SW: So I just want to, just for clarity, one of the things the Commission tries to avoid is splitting of communities. So Ponciau it would be, if we, if we did put Ponciau South into Montgomeryshire we would split the community of Ponciau. Based on your experience as a Councillor is there an issue if Ponciau got split, or would it be



acceptable or are there enough links with Ponciau North to move alongside the South into Montgomeryshire, should the Commissioners decide to do that?

PR: I believe, I'm not entirely accurate on it, but I... well all those wards come under the Welsh Community Council, so they are very much strongly linked. So Johnstown, Pant ward, Ponciau, very much they have stronger links there. I believe there some rural communities to the north which come under [inaudible 01:02:38] Community Council, I believe. But they're very much, you know, separate identities as it is currently.

SW: Thank you.

AC: Thank you very much Councillor Rogers.

PR: Alright.

SW: Travelling somewhere? [laughter]

PR: Just went through that [inaudible 01:03:02] station.

SW: Thank you.

PR: Thanks very much.

AC: Thank you very much.

SW: Bye, thank you. Bless. I feel better now, we've [inaudible 01:03:10] coming back from Spain, but somebody coming from the station. I think we have no more speakers left.

AC: No.

SW: So we'll, we'll just... is it, we'll be waiting, we'll go in recess and wait for anyone else.

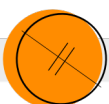
AC: There are no further scheduled speakers for the day. The Boundary Commission will stay open until eight o'clock in case there are any speakers that turn up. But subject to that, we'll not stay in this room, we will just be available in the hotel in case there are any speakers that appear before the closing, closing time. Thank you.

[Recess 01:03:49 – 01:13:18]

SP: Good afternoon. Prynawn da. My name is Steven Phillips, I'm one of the four Assistant Commissioners working on the 2023 review. I'll introduce my colleagues in a moment.

[01:13:33]

Firstly, to my immediate left is Shereen Williams, the Chief Executive of the Boundary Commission for Wales and the Secretary to the review. And my three assistant Commissioner colleagues are, to my right, Gwenllian Lansdown Davies and Andrew Cledes, and on the left Arun Midha.



What we... by way of a brief introduction, what we're here to do is to gather evidence based on the written representations we've received so far from... in response to the initial proposals. We're, we're in listening mode to gather that evidence, because in due course we have to kind of report to the Commissioners, advising them whether... recommending changes, if appropriate, to those initial proposals. What we're not here to do is to debate the merits, or otherwise, of the initial proposals. So we have no input ourselves, the four of us, into those initial proposals, so we're independent in that regard. That is our role in the process.

The... this is the second of five public hearings across Wales. There is a secondary consultation period that is now open, it opened on 17th of this month and will close on 30th March to coincide with the final hearing in Aberystwyth and speakers this afternoon are free to make supplementary written representations as they see fit. All representations will be treated equally in English or Welsh.

We have a lectern, as you can see, over there. A number of speakers this afternoon, so I would ask you to approach the lectern, state your name, the area that you are from and whether you're speaking in a personal capacity or representing an organisation. Please stick to the 10 minutes allotted, because we have a number of speakers on our list this afternoon. You will get a two minute warning from my colleague over there on my left.

But without further ado, I propose to turn to the, the speakers list and invite David Jones MP to take the floor.

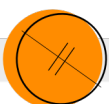
DJ: Thank you, sir, and thank you for giving me the opportunity of addressing you today. My name is David Jones, I'm the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Clwyd West and have represented that constituency since May 2005. I am making these submissions in a personal capacity, but also with the full support of the Clwyd West Conservative Association.

I do wish to object to the Commission's initial proposals in respect of the proposed new Parliamentary constituencies of Clwyd and Aberconwy. I would request the Commission take into account my representations, which are founded on my long and detailed personal knowledge of the area that constitutes my current constituency and I hope the Commission will revise its proposals accordingly.

My principle, indeed my sole objection is in respect of the proposal to include the county council ward of Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, which I'll refer to as Rhos for the rest of this meeting, in the new Aberconwy constituency, rather than in the new constituency of Clwyd.

[01:17:23]

Rhos ward is an integral part of the town of Colwyn Bay, the remainder of which is proposed to be included in the new Clwyd constituency. The Rhos ward returns eight councillors to the Bay of Colwyn town council, which comprises 24 councillors in all. The county council ward is, for town council purposes, divided into two wards, one of which somewhat confusingly is also called Rhos and returns five seats, and the other Dinas, which returns three seats.



If the initial proposals were adopted the consequence would be that the Bay of Colwyn town council's representation at Westminster would be divided, with the majority of the council area comprised in the Clwyd constituency, but Rhos, which comprises a third of the town council membership, forming part of Aberconwy. And I would respectfully submit that that would be an undesirable, unacceptable and illogical state of affairs. And indeed I am aware that the Bay of Colwyn town council will be making its own objection to the proposal, which will be founded essentially on the same grounds as mine.

I've noted that the Commission, when deciding upon the composition of new constituencies may take into account any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies. And importantly, I also see from the notes to the initial proposals that the Commission considers that existing community boundaries are likely to have been created in recognition of such local ties and are therefore likely to reflect them. Both of these points are of importance in the case of the Bay of Colwyn town council.

If Rhos were not comprised in the new Clwyd constituency the local ties between that ward and the other wards of the town council would be broken, and the integrity of the town council area would be destroyed. And I believe that that would be unacceptable to the people of the whole of Colwyn Bay, including, of course, Rhos itself.

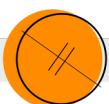
The area of the Bay of Colwyn town council reflects a single continuous conurbation that extends from Penmaen Rhos in the east to Rhos in the West. The Afon Ganol stream is the western boundary of that conurbation, including the ward of Rhos, and, if you're familiar with the area that is the stream that runs through Rhos-on-Sea golf course.

The Afon Ganol is also the boundary of the historical counties of Denbighshire and Carmarthenshire and the present ceremonial counties of Clwyd and Gwynedd. Rhos is in Clwyd. That historical significance should not, I believe, be ignored since it reflects and highlights the long established local ties and sense of community that prevail in the area. Rhos is an integral part of the Colwyn Bay conurbation geographically, politically, socially and culturally, and I submit that it should be represented at Parliament in a way that reflects that status.

Rhos is separated from Penrhyn Bay, which is, I believe, correctly proposed to be, to form part of the new Aberconwy constituency by the Afon Ganol, by the open, undeveloped green wedge of Dinerth farm fields and by part of the golf course. There is therefore a clear, visible and tangible demarcation between the Colwyn Bay conurbation and what might be described as the Llandudno conurbation, of which Penrhyn Bay clearly forms part.

[01:21:15]

There are no internal demarcations within the boundaries of the town of Colwyn Bay itself. Rhos and the adjacent ward of Rhiw merge seamlessly into a single, continuous built up area. Indeed the long established built up streets of Frances Avenue, Kenelm Road and Cayley Promenade are partly in Rhos ward and partly in Rhiw, and they're all part of the town of Colwyn Bay. I would submit that it would be unacceptable for the integrity of the town to be destroyed in the manner proposed.



Local cultural ties and the fact that Rhos is indeed an integral part of the town of Colwyn Bay are further demonstrated by the several Colwyn Bay institutions that are located in Rhos ward. These include, among others, Colwyn Bay Cricket Club, Colwyn Bay Rugby Club, and Colwyn Bay Sailing Club. And furthermore, Colwyn Bay Rotary Club holds its meetings at the Rhos Fynach in Rhos, while the Colwyn Bay Hospital League of Friends meets at the Parkway Community Centre in Rhos. The Colwyn Bay branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution meets at the Colwyn Bay Rugby Club, which, as I've said, is in Rhos, or at the Colwyn Bay Cricket Club, also in Rhos.

Many children of primary school age who live in Rhos attend Pen Y Bryn school in Rhiw ward. Secondary school aged children from Rhos almost all attend either Eirias or Bryn Eilian schools, both of which are located in Colwyn Bay.

There are no GP surgeries in Rhos, most local residents attend surgeries in other wards of Colwyn Bay, with Rhoslan and Rysseldene in Rhiw ward being among the most popular.

And there are many other similar examples that clearly demonstrate that Rhos is a fully integral part of the town of Colwyn Bay, with which it has, I would submit, the strongest possible local ties. I believe that it would be perverse to break those ties, by thrusting Rhos into the area of the new Aberconwy constituency, with which it has fewer and much weaker ties, whether political, social or cultural. Rhos essentially looks eastward to the centre of Colwyn Bay and not westward to Llandudno.

And I submit that the contemplated impact on the integrity of Colwyn Bay and the area of the Colwyn Bay town council would be unacceptable, and I urge the Commission to revise its initial proposals, so as to ensure that that integrity is not compromised.

I have put forward for consideration some alternative proposals, which are with a proof of evidence that I have submitted to your clerk. I, I won't propose to go into them in any detail. If you have any queries, sir, I'll be very happy to try to answer them.

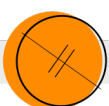
SP: Yes, thank you very much. I should have said at the outset that the floor is open, both to ourselves to ask for points of clarification and, and any members of the audience. I'll go to the audience first, I have one, is there anybody who wishes to intervene? No, I don't see anyone.

[01:24:26]

Can I ask one question? I think you were very clear in terms of the division between Rhos and Penrhyn, can I ask about other adjacent wards, specifically Mochdre, do you see that as a legitimate part of the proposed Aberconwy constituency?

DJ: Mochdre is physically separated from the conurbation that I mentioned and I think that this is the important, the key factor in fact, in, in my submission. I don't know whether you know the area, sir, but...

SP: Not well.



DJ: Well if you go there, I don't know whether you will be going there, but you will actually see that Rhos is an extension of Colwyn Bay. It's part of the same built up area and, as I mentioned, the three streets in, in Rhos-on-Sea, which are actually divided between Rhiw ward and Rhos ward. In other words, you don't know when you're in Rhiw or you don't know... or in Rhos. And I think that's the difference. Mochdre is, is separate, it's not part of the same conurbation.

SP: Helpful. Do any of my colleagues have... if not, can I thank you.

DJ: Thank you, sir.

SP: Yes, sir.

CH: Sorry, just one question, if I may.

SP: Yeah, sure. Can you state who you are and who you're representing?

CH: Okay. Chris Hall, I've actually come here sort of from the Labour party, but also of my own will, and I just wondered what is the sort of population number that you're thinking about that is going to be impacted? So Llandudno and Rhos, I just wondered what is the population and how significant that is in terms of, of a constituency?

DJ: It has, it has a population according... it had a population of the 2011 census, I haven't got the 2021 census figures yet, but at the 2011 census it had a population of just over 7,500. That's out of a population of, I think, about 34,500 for the whole of the, the town of Colwyn Bay. In other words, it's about just over 22% of the population of Colwyn Bay.

CH: Thank you.

SP: And I believe there are 6,110 electors within the Rhos ward.

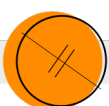
CH: You're ahead of me with that.

SP: My colleague is ahead of me as well [laughter]. Thank you very much. I think Mr Ian Harrison is our next speaker.

[01:27:11]

IH: Thank you, sir. Commissioners, my name is Ian Harrison, I'm Community Council Chairman of a small village to the north of Montgomeryshire named Guilsfield. I'm here as a resident and I address you in my... on a personal capacity. I'm not here representing my Community Council.

I can't believe that it has been more than five years since I last stood before you, with my colleagues from Montgomeryshire, to argue against the destruction of our historically important constituency of Montgomeryshire. At that hearing in November 2016 I presented an alternative solution to your boundaries proposals that retained our current boundary. How pleased I was, therefore, to read your current proposal which retains the current Montgomeryshire boundary and augment it with



communities along the Vales of Llangollen and Ceiriog. I fully endorse your boundary proposal, as contained within your recommendation. I would, however, beg that you reconsider the name of this enlarged constituency. Rather than naming it as Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr I would ask that you consider Montgomeryshire and The Vales, which I suggest better reflects the locations and cultures of the Berwyn communities affected by the change.

Thank you, sir.

SP: Thank you very much. Any questions from the floor? Or from my colleagues? No.

SW: Can you repeat the name? Can you just repeat the name again?

IH: Which name?

SW: Montgomeryshire and The Vales.

IH: And The Vales, yes.

SP: If not, thank you very much.

IH: Thank you.

SW: Robert Harvey, sir.

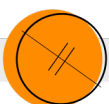
SP: Right. The next speaker is Mr Robert Harvey.

RH: Thank you very much. I was, my qualification is that I was MP for South West Clwyd a very long time ago, but I know the area quite well and I've been active in politics in Montgomeryshire, so I know also that area, in fact the whole area covered by this proposal.

[01:30:03]

I'd just say that it's rather welcome to realise that officialdom has listened. When we, when we last considered these things there were proposals which I thought were unacceptable and a number of us put forward our objections. And, in fact, Ian Harrison who has just spoken, put forward a very detailed plan which I, I think was taken into account. And so we're delighted that you have listened. I would congratulate the Commissioners on that and I would commend these proposals very much. It seems to me that we're, that, just to summarise very quickly, we've got natural boundaries for the new seat. We've got in, in the east we've got the English boundary, in the south are the southern uplands of Brecon in the, in the far west, there are the Cambrian mountains, and in the north, which is the principal change, are the Berwyn mountains and the great Vale of Llangollen and Corwen and Bala, as well as Ceiriog, as the Ceiriog Valley, all of which were in my constituency and which are extremely beautiful and historic places.

And I think the new, the new structure takes into account the immense history of the area at the heart of the constituency, Mathrafal, which was the home of the... or the, the summer palace for the Princess of Powys and where King John defeated, or was



besieged anyway by Llewellyn but ultimately escaped. There's a historic massacre at Glyn Ceiriog, and then we all know about Owain Glyndŵr and the Valley that, that extends along Corwen and Llan-, Llangollen.

In addition to that, the new, the new proposal follows the natural river valleys of the, of the Mighty Severn in the Fyrnwy Valley and that seems to be entirely sensible compared to what had previously been proposed.

Now the communications across the Berwyns are difficult, and I know them very well because I sometimes drive over these. They are very difficult cos they're over mountain passes, but as we all know, if you come down the A5 you have very quick access from the other part of the constituency which would be the Severn Valley in Montgomeryshire to Glyn Ceiriog and to, to the Llangollen Valley.

So that is not an enormous difficulty and I would endorse Ian's point about it'd be nice to call it Montgomeryshire in the Vales, because of these two historic vales, which are Glyn Ceiriog and, and the, Llango-, the Vale of Llangollen. So I, I think it'd be nice in a way to, to slightly adapt the name.

It'll be a very large constituency, I'm, I'm used to, I'm used to that in the past. But it'll be very beautiful, it'll be very historic and I would underline that Montgomeryshire is the longest, as far as we know, the longest surviving constituency based on, on a county in all of Britain. So it's very historic that you've chosen to, to try and keep that and so I have absolutely no hesitation in recommending the, the solution proposed by the Boundary Commission.

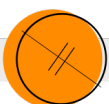
Thank you.

SP: Thank you. I have one point of clarification, but I'll go to the audience first and my colleagues. No? I think it's, it's fair, we've had over 1,200 responses to the initial proposals. I think it's fair to say that in the north of the proposed constituency there are communities that don't share your enthusiasm for these boundaries. I'm talking about areas such as Corwen, Llangollen, Ruabon, Chirk, etcetera, who would, I think... I'm generalising a little, but they would prefer to be associated with Wrexham or the Clwyd area. What... in terms of the historic county, and I see the argument, but could you perhaps elaborate a little on how you see those communities fitting into the, the proposed constituency?

[01:35:11]

RH: Well I mean I, as we all know the problem of... the problem facing the Commissioners is that arbitrarily some communities will have to be lumped together, not because of a, you know, history, but, but because, just to get the numbers up to the right, to the right levels.

Now I, I, I did represent most of those communities and I certainly recognise that they would look to Wrexham as their, as their centre really. Although I think Llangollen and Corwen have a much more sort of internally Welsh identity. But I mean Rhos is very Welsh, but it's, it, it does look to Wrexham, whereas, whereas I think Llangollen and Corwen look a little bit to the west.



I, I mean I, I understand the feel-, those feelings, I just don't see any way that, that the Commissions could chop the thing up in such a way as to create a big enough entity, as between Montgomeryshire and the northern sections, any other way. And, you know, I know this has been very extensively discussed and I, I actually sympathise with, with the Commissioners having to, having to deal with that.

SP: Thank you very much for that. No other questions or comments? No. Okay, thank you very much, Mr Harvey.

RH: Thank you very much, thank you.

SW: [inaudible 01:36:51].

SP: I'm shuffling the order around a bit this afternoon cos some speakers are coming later. I think the next speaker on the list is Mr Glyn Davies.

GD: That came as something of a surprise to me, because I was just coming in and I was gonna run through what I was going to say, [laughter], before, before speaking to you. And I had made one or two notes, which I haven't gone through, so excuse me if I'm, if I'm a little bit haphazard, but I... the message I want to make is actually very clear.

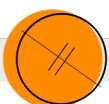
And I'd, I'd like to begin by just thanking you for the opportunity to come to speak with you about an issue that is hugely important to me personally, and from my position as Chairman of the Welsh Conservative Party. And both of those positions are hugely important to me, and the personal part probably is the more important.

I want to speak from those two distinct perspectives and the chairman of the Conserv-, first of all chairman of the Welsh Conservative Party. I mean we spent a long time deciding on our response to your initial proposals and after a lot of consideration, acknowledging that there were... there was a... particularly in North West Wales I think there was a controversy that we, we weren't happy with. I don't think many people would be happy with that, but our conclusion was that the Commissioners will have had really no alternative and our view was that they made the best possible choice they could in very difficult circumstances.

[01:38:43]

And the response that we made, as the voluntary party, was that we were supporting the Commission's proposals, and that's right across Wales. I mean that's the basic position that we've taken.

Now the second position I want to speak from, and probably more the reason why I wanted to come to speak with you to-, today, is from the personal perspective. And that matters to, to me personally a lot. I was born in Montgomeryshire and it really is, Montgomeryshire has always been my focus. I was born there, I haven't got a single ancestor who was born anywhere else. I have represented it in various institutions, I was Chairman of the local council and then I represented the constituency of Montgomeryshire as a Member of Parliament for two sessions, until I retired in 2019. I was a member of the National Assembly for Wales, or the, or the Welsh Assembly as it then was, for two sessions, you know, I'm...



But I specifically remember my time as Chairman of the Montgomeryshire Council and speaking with other authorities throughout Wales, what a unified and solid constituency it was in the centre of Wales. It was... and the fact that it has to change is something I was not happy... but I absolutely recognise that the Commissioners have no choice, because of the legislation. Particularly the, the 5% variation restriction, I think that makes a huge difference to what the Commissioners can recommend. And, of course, the reduction from 40 to 20, to 32 constituencies in Wales, which again I think one can't argue with the fairness of that.

So in a sense, you're confronted by one or two things that you don't like, but having said that, my own view is that the Commissioners have taken the best choice they could. But what it... but the part where the, where you have to make some consideration is Montgomeryshire is probably about roughly 20,000 people short of being a, a constituency you could completely argue for.

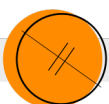
So the, the, the recom-, the choices for me, and indeed for those others here from... who might be taking the same view of recognising Montgomeryshire as being a hugely important constituency in itself, is that we have to consider an extension. It has to either go north or south or be split or something has to happen. And I fully accept... I mean I, I've actually voted for the legislation when I was a Member of Parliament, so I, I can see the... even though I tried to persuade Members of Parliament to go for a sort of 7% variation, they didn't. They passed the law that it should be a 5% variation and, bearing in mind that restriction, it, it leads me into saying, now which is the best option we've got?

And there are two... actually there are more than two really, but there are two fairly obvious options. One is that we could take the constit-, divide the constituency, moving, moving some of it south. Now I must say I think that would be the worst of all worlds. The majority of the constituency that I know, the, the 50,000 people roughly in, who live in Montgomeryshire now, the bulk of them live in the Severn Valley, which would be Llanidloes. Newtown's the biggest town, Welshpool's the next biggest town. And increasingly the villages on the border with England, I think, now are a big population centre. It's that Severn Valley, to divide that would, I think, be absolute sacrilege. It's got absolutely nothing going for that at, at all.

[01:42:34]

So the alternative then is that one has to look to go north. Now if you were going south you have a, a mountain range, the Dolfa Hills, and it's why it makes it difficult for public services to be delivered across Powys. Well I, I just don't think we need to replicate that, in terms of the constit-, the future constituency boundaries. I, I, I think it's far better if we go north, I, I perfectly accept that part of the boundary north is, you have the Berwyn, the Berwyn mountains as well, the Berwyn range, that's undoubtedly a, you know, a consideration. But, but the movement north it really... up, up the A483. Oswestry is, it's in England, but I must say I think of Oswestry as being a Welsh town. I think of Oswestry as being really a Montgomeryshire town. I suppose that my own background as a, as a farmer, every Wednesday it was in Oswestry, the dominant language in Oswestry on a Wednesday is, is Welsh.

And so I just think of that as being... and that road north, the A483 to Chester, as being a very natural extension. And I think many of us see Llangollen and see the part of the



north, of Clwyd South come into the constit-, into the proposed constituency, I think as being a natural progression. I think that would work pretty well. It would work in terms of tradition, people would feel that they were essentially a part of it. And I think that matters in terms of government, how you feel about your constituency. I think looking, looking south, I just think in the end it would, it would divorce the people from their politics, from their, their representative and I, I... that would be a tragedy.

Now you can te-, again what I'm doing is coming to speak to you and saying to you that I think the Commission has got it right. I think the proposals are the right ones and I think it... and I just felt it was important, because there's always a temptation to want to go to disagree with a proposal. I think if I disagreed with it I'd come, come to speak with you with much more vehemence and be, be rounding up hordes of people to come and say the same thing. But I don't, I think in very difficult circumstances the Commissioners have come with the, the best solution. I think, from my perspective as Chair of the Welsh Conservative Party, the best solution for Wales and I think for mid-Wales as it impacts on Montgomeryshire, the constituency of Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr is the best solution you could have come up for, for mid-Wales as well.

So I mean my message to you is a wholly positive one. I very much hope that we stick with the proposals as they are and that they become the final conclusions.

Thank you very much.

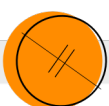
SP: Thank you. Any questions from the floor? Or points of clarification, I should say? Colleagues? I have one. You mentioned the north south equation, if I can put it that way.

GD: Yeah.

[01:45:56]

SP: Whilst your reaction to the initial proposals is positive and I can understand the affinity with the existing county of... and constituency of Montgomeryshire. We are facing significant opposition to the consequences of the initial proposals in other parts of Wales, essentially because the population sparsity of Brecon and Radnor is the same issue as Montgomeryshire. And I wondered whether any of the organisations you've represented have given any thought to that? So, for example, the Swansea Valley is to be incorporated under the initial proposals into the Brecon and Radnor constituency and that is causing some significant opposition.

GD: I can understand that, I can understand that there are negativities about some of the recommendations. It's inevitable, but you've always got, I think, to consider the alternatives. I mean what you're looking at sometimes is, which is the best alternative of, not unsatisfactory solutions, but satisfac-, solutions within the legislation? And I mean I've spent a lot of time, I know that from a Welsh perspective and this was featured, North West Wales was a big issue in our discussions at a Welsh perspective, but also the future of the Brecon and Radnor constituency which is a very large and important constituency to me, I know it very, very well. But we've spent a long time considering that, but in the end you were saying, well there's a problem with one solution, but the alternatives are worse.



So you might finish up, certainly as a Welsh level, notwithstanding there would be disagreements within my own party in North West Wales, I mean that was undoubtedly an issue that was quite contentious. We didn't find within our party any disagreement, I don't think, with the, with the division, if you like, of, of Montgomeryshire and Brecon and Radnor into separate seats as they are now. I think the antipathy, the objection, would be huge if we were to take half of the Severn Valley one way and half of the other. That would be pretty disastrous. And then I think if you were holding a meeting to consider that afterwards, I think you'd have a lot more people coming to talk to you. I mean I could guarantee you that. I'd only have to bring my own family along, which I promise I will.

SP: I'm sure that would be the case. Thank you very much.

GD: Okay, it's been a real pleasure. Thank you.

SP: Thank you.

SW: Not here yet. Is it?

SP: Not here.

SW: Not here, not here yet. You can take a break.

SP: We're still waiting for a couple of speakers, so I'm proposing to adjourn for... until two, two pm where we'll make a further announcement as to whether we've rescheduled these speakers or not. So there's tea and coffee available for those who want it and we'll see you at two o'clock. Thank you.

[Recess 01:49:13 – 02:12:27]

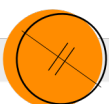
SP: Around two, two o'clock. For the benefit of those that have just joined us I won't repeat all the introductions that we've already done today, but my name's Steven Phillips, I'm one of the four Assistant Commissioners chairing the session this afternoon.

[02:12:40]

Our next speaker is Sarah Atherton, MP. For the benefit of those that have just joined us, there's 10 minute speaking slots, you get a, a two minute warning from my colleague over there after eight minutes. There will be the opportunity for points of clarification from myself and my colleagues, members of the audience. But we're not here to debate the proposals as such. As independent members we played no role in the formulation of the initial proposals, we're here to gather evidence.

But the floor is yours. At the lectern please and if you could state your name, the area you're from, whether you're speaking in a personal capacity or representing an organisation, that would be very helpful.

SA: Okay. I'm Sarah Atherton, Member of Parliament for Wrexham. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for having me here today, and I'd like to thank the Boundary Commission for organising this public hearing.



Now firstly, I appreciate the need to review the Parliamentary boundaries, given the demographic changes that have taken place over the last decade. And whilst some in Wales are unhappy with the reduction of the number of Welsh seats, this is only being done to ensure parity with the rest of the United Kingdom. At the last election the average Welsh constituency had fewer constituents than those in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and as such it is right that the Boundary Commission for Wales seeks to resolve this.

Now today, I'd like to cover three topics. My thoughts on the Boundary Commission's initial proposal for Wrexham and the surrounding areas, my suggestions on how these could be improved, and lastly, my counter-proposal, which has... sorry, I brought forward in my initial consultation response, BCW-9731.

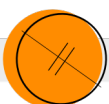
Now overall, the initial proposals made by the Boundary Commission for Wrexham, which would see the current Wrexham constituency made larger to incorporate wards from the Clwyd South constituency, represents a good balance between increasing the size of the seats to fit the range of electors needed, whilst maintaining community and cultural links.

The additional wards have longstanding historical links to Wrexham. The town has long been a local economic and social centre, and all the wards added under the proposal as part of the... are already part of the Wrexham County Borough Council area. However, as stated in my submission, the initial proposal could be improved. I would suggest that the new Wrexham constituency should include the wards of Brymbo and Minera, which under the initial proposal would move from Clwyd South to Alyn and Deeside.

[02:15:44]

There are several concerns with this suggestion of moving them to Alyn and Deeside. Firstly, this would create the unsatisfactory situation whereby Alyn and Deeside constituency would straddle two council areas, Wrexham and Flintshire. Whilst this situation has precedent and would not create any fundamental problems, it would go against the Boundary Commission's aim to pay due regard to local government boundaries. Importantly, Brymbo and Minera wards have much stronger social, economic and cultural ties to Wrexham than they do with Alyn and Deeside. They identify with Wrexham with a strong mining heritage, which they share with the wider Wrexham community.

Brymbo and Minera are only four miles from Wrexham and the local infrastructure, roads and transport links converge on the town of Wrexham, rather than settlements in Alyn and Deeside like Connah's Quay, Buckley and Broughton. On a community level Brymbo and Minera also have close ties with neighbouring areas of Coedpoeth, Bryn Cefn and Gwenfro. Under the Boundary Commission's proposals these wards will be part of the new Wrexham seat and the Commission's initial proposal have therefore split interlinked settlements across the two constituencies. As such, adding the wards of Brymbo and Minera into the Wrexham constituency would support the Boundary Commission's endeavours to preserve community links and ties.



Importantly, I know that local representatives for Brymbo and Minera wards are supportive of this suggestion also. Councillor Paul Rogers, the Councillor for Brymbo, said in his submission to the initial proposals that there is a significant body of opinion objecting to the proposals that Brymbo ward be included in Alyn and Deeside.

My final point in relation to this is that other submissions from members of the public have reiterated the view that Brymbo and Minera should not be part of the new Alyn and Deeside constituency. These response-, these responses illustrate the strength of feeling on the matter from those that we should be listening to, the local people.

With this in mind and to ensure the new Wrexham constituency stays within the required number of electors, I propose the wards of Pant, Johnstown and Ponciau South should be added to the proposed Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr constituency. Although this would split Ponciau across two constituencies, the ward is already made up of two communities which are separate from each other. Ponciau, the urban area in the south of the ward forms one clear community, alongside the wards of Pant and Johnstown. Whereas the northern part of the ward is more rural, made up of smaller and more dispersed villages of Pentrebychan and Aberoer.

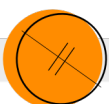
The Ponciau ward itself is therefore neatly divided already, with a shaft of greenbelt, greenbelt and land giving a clear separation between the various settlements within the ward. Reflecting these geographical and social differences, the Ponciau ward is also already served by two community councils, Esclusham and Rhos. Therefore splitting the Ponciau ward between two constituencies would be a continuation of the existing local division. Importantly, this proposal would also reflect the existing community, social and economic links between Ponciau, Johnstown, Pant, with Ruabon and Penycae.

Overall the addition of Minera and Brymbo, with the loss of Pant, Johnstown and Penycae... Ponciau South, would make the new Wrexham constituency one of 73,636 electors, satisfying the Boundary Commission's requirement.

[02:20:05]

On my last point relating to counter-proposals, I appreciate that submissions to the consultation have outlined alternative propositions to those supported by myself and others. However, I would like to highlight why these alternatives would not be acceptable, given the Commission's stated aims. Firstly, submission 9766 suggests a Wrexham constituency based on the Wrexham Council area, including Wrexham town, the Ruabon area, and the Ceiriog Valley, but not including areas north of Wrexham town, Gresford, Llay, Marford, Rossett and Gwersyllt. Instead the latter would be part of the new Mold and Alyn constituency. This would not be an acceptable solution as it would isolate the Council's northern wards, which geographically butt onto Wrexham town, instead choosing to include ribbons of rural areas which have weaker links with the town centre itself.

Submission 9822 is unacceptable for the same reason. It would isolate the northern wards of the current Wrexham constituency, splitting communities that are historically and culturally interlinked.



Similarly submission 10070 suggests that a proposed East Flintshire constituency would gain the three Gwersyllt seats, wards and Llay from Wrexham. This proposal would create difficulties, given the realities of the area. The community of Llay is closely linked with those of Gresford, Marford and Rossett by education, health care provision, for example, Alyn Family Practice, All Saints and Darland School.

Finally, in a more egregious example of dividing communities, submission 9924 proposes that Wrexham be divided into two constituencies, Wrexham North and Mold, and the Welsh Marches on Wrexham South. This proposal would shatter Wrexham's identity.

To conclude, I welcome that the initial proposals maintain the current Wrexham constituency, adding wards that already have strong cultural, historic and economic ties with the town. All the wards added under the initial proposal are part of Wrexham Council area, so the proposals represent a natural progression. However, many are concerned about the suggestion to include Brymbo and Minera into Alyn and Deeside. The Boundary Commission should therefore look at my counter-proposal, which has been welcomed locally, that would see these wards added to the Wrexham constituency. The addition of these wards would have implications for the size of the constituency and would require Pant, Ponciau South and Johnstown, become part of the new Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr constituency. This would provide a better solution than currently suggested.

Thank you. Diolch yn fawr.

SP: Thank you very much. Any questions or points of clarification from the floor? No, I don't see any. My colleagues? I have one, it's more, more a... I think I know the answer to this but it's a point of confirmation. We've heard from, well support this afternoon for the Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr constituency as configured in the initial proposals, particularly in relation to areas such as Ruabon, Chirk, Penycae and so forth. And I think I'm hearing the same thing from yourself, you're, you're comfortable with those, those areas being in that constituency, as opposed to Wrexham.

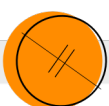
[02:23:41]

But we have had significant representations asking for those areas to be included within the Wrexham constituency. Can I just clarify that my understanding is correct?

SA: Yes. I think to align with your requirements for the constituency numbers, it is a stronger argument to keep Minera and Brymbo in Wrexham. There is a natural division in Ponciau anyway and the south certainly align themselves more to Ruabon. So that would be a natural division to keep those within Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr.

SP: Okay, thank you very much. Last chance for any observations. No? Thank you very much.

We're waiting for one speaker in particular who has been delayed apparently. But I understand there may be an observer who wanted to make an ob-, an observation, if I can put it that way. No?



SW: No.

SP: In that case then I think we will adjourn and, and see if this speaker is able to join us today or not. So I won't put a timescale on it, because I don't know where she is frankly. So we will adjourn for probably at least half an hour, but we'll, we'll post a development on the door if, if she arrives. Thank you very much.

P2: Can I just ask one question in that case?

SP: Sure.

P2: Most people can be in touch by phones and other such... most people can be in touch by phones and other such methods. Surely someone who knows what time they should be here would say, I'm struggling and I'll be here in 30 minutes?

P3: So is that Ruth?

SW: Yeah.

P3: So I've been trying to contact... I mean the signal strength is very poor. I have tried to contact her, to no avail, so she may well be travelling at the moment.

SP: Well I, I think...

P3: I've left a message for her and I've told her that we are [inaudible 02:25:45].

[02:25:48]

SP: Yeah. I mean I, I understand she's been delayed by flooding somewhere, which is perfectly understandable given the awful weather we've had in the last few days. So I think, you know, I'm prepared to be flexible basically. But she's not here at the moment so we, we, we will have to adjourn and, as I say, we will find some way of letting you know how the, how much progress she's making. But we'll adjourn for at least half an hour and we'll try and find out what the score is. Thank you very much.

P4: Sorry, who is the person we're adjourning for?

SP: Sorry.

P4: Who is the person we're adjourning for?

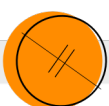
SP: Well the lady's name is Ruth Canning.

P4: Thank you.

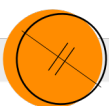
P4: She can turn up any time up until eight o'clock anyway.

SW: Yeah.

[Recess 02:26:39 – 02:50:39]



[End of Transcription 02:50:39]





**Comisiwn Ffyniau
i Gymru**

**Boundary Commission
for Wales**

The Commission welcomes correspondence, e-mails and telephone calls either in English or Welsh.
To contact the Commission, please write to:

Boundary Commission for Wales
Ground Floor, Hastings House, Fitzalan Court
Cardiff, CF24 0BL

Telephone: +44 (0)29 20464819
Telephone: +44 (0)29 21055521
E-mail: bcw@boundaries.wales