

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-2016**

**COUNCIL  
30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2015**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL  
AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**Agenda Item No. 8**

**WELSH GOVERNMENT  
CONSULTATION – DRAFT  
DIRECTIONS TO THE LOCAL  
DEMOCRACY AND  
BOUNDARY COMMISSION  
FOR WALES**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To seek the views of Members to the Welsh Government's Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) which are based on the Minister's merger map published in June of this year by the deadline of the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The views of Members are sought in respect of the attached consultation document in order that the Council's response can be made by the deadline of the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Members views are sought on the attached consultation document which was launched on the 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2015 on the Welsh Government's Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission). The consultation closes at midnight on the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

3.2 Members may be aware the Minister for Public Services proposes to remove the cap on the maximum number of Councillors per authority in recognition of the larger populations and geographical areas which the proposed new Councils will cover. However, the Minister is not proposing to specify a minimum or maximum number of Councillors per local authority. Instead, the Draft Directions specify that the number of Councillors should be no smaller than the number produced by a Councillor to elector ratio of once Councillor to every 4,000 electors, which will mean that there will be at least 616 Councillors in Wales following the mergers (from the current 1248) and Councils ranging from 33 Councillors (in a merged Anglesey/Gwynedd) to 109 Councillors (in the new Gwent).

3.3 The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has undertaken some research into the proposals and early feedback suggests that in addition to the issues of the potential size of some new wards and the number of Councillors in some Councils, there is a particular concern about the implication of the Direction stating that new wards should be based on a grouping of 2 or more existing wards. This presents a number of challenges:

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

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

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

3.5 It is the intention of the Minister for Public Services to issue the Directions to the Commission as soon as possible following Royal Assent of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015, subject to the National Assembly. This will

allow the Commission as much time as possible to complete its reviews and for electoral arrangements to be made for the elections to Shadow Authorities in 2019.





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Welsh Government

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Welsh Government

## Consultation Document

# Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales

Date of issue: 17 August 2015

Action required: Responses by 9 November 2015

## Overview

We are seeking your views on the Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales.

As part of its programme of local government reform, the Welsh Government will require the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales to conduct reviews of electoral arrangements for proposed new local authority areas.

This consultation seeks your views on the detail of the Draft Directions, including thoughts on council size and the ratio of electors for each elected member.

## How to respond

Please respond using the form at the end of the document and either send in hard copy to the address below or by email to: [RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

If you are sending your response by email, please mark the subject of your e-mail: Directions to the LDBCW Consultation

## Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

## Contact details

For further information:

Reforming Local Government Programme  
Welsh Government  
Crown Buildings  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

email: [RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

telephone: 029 2082 6202

## Data protection

### How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document.

We may also publish responses in full.

Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government.

This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances.

If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on the Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (“the Commission”).

The Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015 is currently being considered by the National Assembly for Wales. The provisions of the Bill allow for preparatory work to enable a programme of local government mergers and reform. This includes giving the Welsh Ministers powers to direct the Commission to conduct initial reviews of the electoral arrangements for the proposed new local authority areas.

The map of proposed new local authority areas, including the two options for North Wales, was published by the Minister for Public Services on 17 June and it forms the basis of the Draft Directions to the Commission. We are not, in this consultation, seeking views about the map. That opportunity will arise during a consultation on a Draft Local Government Bill planned for the autumn.

## **Directions to the Commission**

Following this period of consultation and the enactment of the Bill, the Minister for Public Services will issue a further draft of the Directions for a short formal consultation. Once final Directions are issued, the Commission will be able to start work to identify the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the proposed new local authorities in Wales.

As outlined in section 18 of the Bill, the Commission “must seek to ensure effective and convenient local government in Wales”. It must propose wards that are coherent and strike a balance between building an effective and capable body of elected members while maintaining a close connection between local communities and those who represent them.

The Welsh Government recognises the specialised nature of the Commission’s work and its expertise in conducting electoral reviews. The Commission will need to use its own judgement to take account of the particular characteristics of an area and the impact these may have on the elected member for each ward. There is also no intention to specify to the Commission the order in which it should conduct its reviews, although the deadline for making the last report will be 31 July 2018.

## **Powys**

Powys is not included in the programme of electoral reviews because the Welsh Government’s proposals do not envisage it merging with another local authority - it is proposed that it will remain as a “continuing authority”.

The electoral arrangements in Powys were most recently reviewed in 2011; however, the recommendations from that review have not yet been

implemented. The Welsh Government, therefore, intends to implement the recommended arrangements in time for the local elections in 2017.

These Draft Directions allow the Commission to recommend a lesser number of elected members for a new local authority area than there will be in Powys in 2017 following the recommendations of the Commission's review in 2011. Following the programme of local government reform, the Commission will recommence its routine of 10 year cycles of electoral reviews for local authorities and will begin this new round with Powys.

## **Directions**

We would welcome views from a wide range of our stakeholders on the Draft Directions and, in particular, on the following issues.

Note: The General Directions include provisions to which the Commission must have regard. They are not to be interpreted as rules and should be read in conjunction with sections 16 to 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015.

### **Number of elected members per local authority area**

In recognising the increase in size of local authorities when merged together, the Minister for Public Services has announced that the cap of the maximum number of 75 elected members per local authority will be removed. The Directions do not specify a maximum or minimum number of elected members but they specify that the number of councillors for a local authority should be no smaller than the number produced by a councillor to elector ratio of one councillor to every 4,000 electors.

- **Question 1: Do you think the suggested ratio provides for effective and convenient local government?**
- **Question 2: Do you think there is a minimum number of councillors required to ensure the effective and democratic working of a local authority? If so, what is it and why?**
- **Question 3: Do you think a minimum number of elected members per local authority should be specified in the Draft Directions?**
- **Question 4: Do you think that there should be a cap on the maximum number of elected members per local authority? If so, what do you think the maximum number should be and why?**
- **Question 5: Do you agree that each ward within a local authority area should have roughly the same number of electors per elected member?**



### **Particular characteristics of a ward**

The Draft Directions specify that the Commission must consider the particular characteristics of a proposed local authority area when reviewing the warding arrangements. Particular characteristics may include density of population in an area, the mixture of Welsh and English speaking communities and the geography of an area or issues such as poverty.

- **Question 6: What effect should the particular characteristics of an area have on the number of councillors needed to represent the population?**

### **Naming of wards**

The Commission is tasked with proposing names for each ward. It is expected that commonly used and locally accepted Welsh language names will be used. Where there is no commonly used Welsh language name for a ward, the Commission must also propose an English language equivalent.

- **Question 7: Do you agree that commonly used Welsh language names for wards do not also need an English language equivalent? If not, do you think that each ward should have an English and Welsh name?**

## Consultation Response Form

Name:

Email:

Telephone:

Address:

Postcode:

Organisation  
(if applicable)

### Returning this form

The closing date for replies is **9 November 2015**

Please send this completed form to us by email to:

**RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk**

Or by post to:

Reforming Local Government Programme  
Welsh Government  
Crown Buildings  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

If you are sending your response by email, please mark the subject of your e-mail: **Directions to the LDBCW Consultation**

**Question 1. Do you think the suggested ratio provides for effective and convenient local government?**

Yes   
No

**If no, please explain:**

**Question 2. Do you think there is a minimum number of councillors required to ensure the effective and democratic working of a local authority?**

Yes   
No

**If yes, what is it and why?**

**Question 3. Do you think a minimum number of elected members per local authority should be specified in the Draft Directions?**

Yes   
No

**Give reasons for your response:**

**Question 4. Do you think that there should be a cap on the maximum number of elected members per local authority?**

Yes   
No

**If yes, what do you think the maximum number should be and why?**

**Question 5. Do you agree that each ward within a local authority area should have roughly the same number of electors per elected member?**

Yes   
No

**Give reasons for your response:**

**Question 6. What effect should the particular characteristics of an area have on the number of councillors needed to represent the population?**

**Question 7. Do you agree that commonly used Welsh language names for wards do not also need an English language equivalent?**

Yes   
No

**If no, do you think that each ward should have an English and Welsh name?**

Yes   
No

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Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: