

## **Colwinston Community Council Views**

**on**

### **Recommendations of the Review of Senedd Constituencies**

The following are the views of the members of Colwinston Community Council on the recommendations of the Review of Senedd Constituencies:

The choice of name is perhaps inappropriate, since the residents of the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend are predominantly English speaking and the name of the proposed constituency should reflect this. Whilst the proposed names of some constituencies are easily recognisable to non Welsh speakers the name proposed for the Vale/Bridgend area most certainly fails in this respect. It must also be remembered that there is a wider audience for this not just for residents of the Vale and Bridgend.

The Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend areas are vastly different, one being heavily rural the other being urban/valley communities. There exists the belief in the rural Vale that the Vale of Glamorgan Council gives inadequate support to the rural Vale. This will not change by being amalgamated with Bridgend and could become worse. The cross over between local authority boundaries will add to the confusion for people, and will jeopardise effective and efficient communication; Senedd Members will need to communicate with more than one local authority and its residents (and vice versa).

We must make the point that at a time of financial pressure for the country, with our public services providing worsening services to the people of Wales it is highly inappropriate for there to be an increase in Senedd members in any event. We do not accept the argument that an increased number of Senedd members is necessary to handle the current and expected increase of Senedd business. Continuing to make such significant changes (even if deemed to be beneficial) without calculating costs to determine if it is affordable is very concerning, especially in the current economic situation. Funds should be better spent on more needy priorities like the care system and NHS. Also, more consideration needs to be given to not only the costs of the initial change but also the ongoing costs to sustain these changes.

Wales has more county councillors for a three million population than Scotland with a population of 5 million. The Williams Commission set up by Carwyn Jones

recommended a significant reduction in county councils in Wales and this has been shelved. It is understood that some political parties rely on their elected members to make financial contribution to Party Funds which is possibly the reason why the Senedd has done nothing. The Barnett Formula which was established in 1978 is the mechanism that provides funding to Wales. It is unlikely that this formula will be changed. At present the income from this Formula is top sliced by the Senedd to fund its own services and projects and an allocation is made to each principal authority in Wales. We think increasing the number of Senedd members is unwise and costly. Having more members does not mean they will have more impact. More members may not reduce workload due to the need to communicate with more people in the Senedd and beyond. Before taking any action, the Senedd needs an assessment of the impact of each member and their effectiveness is needed to determine how they could work smarter i.e. a better system of accountability and professional development. I think football managers have a far tougher time these days! Perhaps a smaller increase in members should be tried first e.g. 4 members per constituency rather than 6.

Expanding the size of the Senedd will further reduce the money allocated to local authorities and at present all of the principal authorities are stating that they have insufficient money to clear snow and ice or indeed to maintain the highways. The proposed budget allocated for the Senedd expansion will further reduce the resources available for the people in Wales. Rather than increasing the size of the Senedd monies should be directed to the improvement to our woefully underperforming public services. Extra talking heads will not improve local services to the population of Wales.

To conclude, these changes seem geared towards creating a less democratic system benefiting some parties more than others. The Senedd will be making a serious mistake implementing these proposals.

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