

Raglan Community Council

Objection

to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru 2026 Review of Senedd Constituencies.

The purpose of this response is to object to the proposals of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) Consultation relating to the 2026 Review of Senedd Constituencies (Revised proposals dated December 2024).

Within the Revised Proposal, dated December 2024, chapter 7 requests that all written representations make clear which area or areas of Wales they relate to; this response relates to Monmouthshire. The Commission also recommends that individuals, groups or organisations submit written representations objecting to the Commission's proposals, and those representations should include counter-proposals. Raglan Community Council has stated its objections and counter-proposals to be considered.

Raglan Community Council's objection to the proposal is based on many reasons linked to statutory factors, austerity, and the financial implications of the implementation of the changes.

1. Local Ties:

The DBCC considers that existing boundaries have been created with the acknowledgement of local ties. However, Raglan Community Council do not believe the proposed changes are likely to reflect local ties, which will be made more clearly below.

1.1. Road and Transport links:

Objection

In the consultation report, the DBCC has stated that it considers the pairing of Monmouthshire and Torfaen "*appropriate due to the good transport and communication links within the proposed constituency. The Commission is therefore of the view that the proposed combination creates a cohesive constituency*". While there are good road links across Monmouthshire and Torfaen, this is often due to the roads being main arterial roads connecting many constituencies across South Wales; simply, these are not unique to these two constituencies.

Furthermore, it's not clear how 'good' has been defined by the Commission, but the public transport timetables should be considered as the public transport and communication links are not as good as the DBCC have indicated. For example, linking Abergavenny (Monmouthshire's largest town) and Cwmbran (Torfaen's largest town) by bus is not currently

possible via a direct route. A journey that takes an estimated 32 mins in the car takes approximately 1 hour via bus, changing at Pontypool. Additionally, it would be virtually impossible for residents wishing to travel by public transport for work purposes between Monmouth and Cwmbran. Public transport is only available every three hours, with the earliest departure at 08:04 in the morning, and the last departure from Monmouth at 20:33 and taking an average of 2h 6m per journey. Finally, a resident travelling from Caldicot to Pontypool will see them change multiple times, accumulating in a journey taking over 2h. From these few examples, it's clear there are not good transport links between the two current constituencies.

1.2. Road and transport links:

Counter-Proposal

Should the new constituency be formed, the Commission should work with relevant authorities including (Welsh Government/Senedd) to ensure there are good transport and communication links across the constituency, ensuring constituents can travel efficiently and economically across the area.

2. Boundary Naming:

The Commission received 29 representations on the initial proposal to pair Monmouthshire and Torfaen; 16 were in support and 13 were in opposition. Among the opposing representations, 11 proposed alternative arrangements including pairing Monmouthshire with Brecon, Radnor and Cwm-Tawe and pairing Torfaen with Blaenau Gwent.

2.1. Boundary naming and the use of bilingualism:

Objection

Within this, there were 14 representations regarding the initial proposal to name this constituency Monmouthshire and Torfaen. From the 14 representations, 12 were in opposition. All alternative names suggested, including Mynwy Torfaen, will result in Monmouthshire losing its identity within the English language.

It would appear the Commission have changed the "Act" for how constituencies will be named between the September and December reviews. In September, it was noted each constituency must have a single monolingual name (Point 10 of the Review). The December 2024 review now has Chapter 3 dedicated to naming and designating constituencies. However, what is not clear in the Revised Proposals is why this change has been implemented. By changing the proposed constituency name to *Mynwy Torfean*, from *Monmouthshire and Torfean/ Sir Fynwy a Thorfaen*, means Monmouthshire loses its identity in its entirety. By new constituencies such as Monmouthshire and Torfaen becoming a hybrid of Welsh and English languages, completely

new identities are being created, and in this example, Monmouthshire is losing its historic individuality and identity.

The Welsh Language Commissioner agreed with the orthography of the proposed name *Monmouthshire and Torfean/ Sir Fynwy a Thorfaen*. It's difficult to see why the DBCC has now proposed *Mynwy Torfaen*, which is a mixture of both Welsh and English, and not one of the alternative names proposed during the first consultation. To name the new constituency area *Mynwy Torfaen*, will lead to confusion especially as Mynwy translates to Monmouth not Monmouthshire. *Sir Fynwy* translates to Monmouthshire, which would be a more appropriate representation of the constituency.

To highlight how inappropriate naming the constituency *Mynwy Torfaen*, the geographical composition of the area can be considered further. Monmouth is not the largest town in the area, it is Abergavenny; Monmouth is the third-largest town within Monmouthshire (not including Torfaen).

Additionally, Monmouthshire's first language is English, with less than 10% of residents in Monmouthshire being Welsh speakers. While in recent years Monmouthshire has hosted Eisteddfod(s), and incorporated strategic plans to sustain the Welsh language in schools etc, there is still a need for the people of Monmouthshire to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage, and be respected in their linguistic preferences. This includes ensuring that the English language identity of Monmouthshire is maintained and respected, while also supporting the growth and sustainability of the Welsh language. Balancing these needs is crucial to fostering a community that honours its historical roots and embraces its bilingual future.

2.2. The Historical ties of Monmouthshire:

Objection

In addition to the above, there is an historical nature towards the name *Monmouthshire*. From the 1543 Act of Union, Monmouthshire has been named in the history books, Acts of Parliament, and it was named after the town, *Monmouth*, standing at the confluence of the rivers Monnow and Wye. The status of Monmouthshire has been contested over the centuries, with it being considered part of England for some of the time. It was clarified in the Local government Act 1972 as a county within Wales, on the boundary of England.

To this day, commuters, visitors and tourists travel to South and West Wales via the major road links (e.g. M4, M50 and A40) enter to Wales via Monmouthshire, often travelling through the town of Monmouth located on the A40. To terminate the name Monmouthshire for Mynwy Torfaen would drastically change the historical and cultural identity of Monmouthshire, risking disruption for the community and links to history. There are also practical considerations

required; if visitors and tourists see a sign labelling the border as Mynwy Torfaen, there may be language complications, and geographical confusion caused. Torfaen is more a recognisable word for English speakers, and thus, may cause confusion when consulting a map and noting Torfaen is not on the border of England.

2.3. Linking the proposed changes to the constituency in parallel to the UK Parliamentary Constituencies:

Objection

Raglan Community Council understands that the 2026 Review will consider the UK Parliamentary Constituencies only, which are the constituencies that came into effect at the 2024 General Election.

During the 2023 Review of the UK Parliamentary Constituencies, the constituency of Monmouth changed to Monmouthshire, incorporating 11% of Torfaen. The boundary of *Monmouthshire [English]/ Sir Fynwy [Welsh]* as a UK Parliamentary Constituency maps to the same outline as what the DBCC are proposing. During the 2023 Review of the UK Parliamentary Constituencies, the constituency of Monmouth changed to Monmouthshire, moving 11% of the residential dwellings from the Monmouth constituency into Torfaen (89% of the Monmouth constituency formed the Monmouthshire constituency). The boundary of Monmouthshire [English]/ Sir Fynwy [Welsh] as a UK Parliamentary Constituency maps to the same outline as what the DBCC are proposing, with the addition of Torfaen added. Should the Revised Proposal be accepted, and the new constituency formed, there is limited rationale and logic for why the two constituencies may be merged to create a new constituency, when during the UK Parliamentary review, there is a clear distinction made between the two areas. This merge could lead to confusion among constituents and potentially dilute the representation of distinct communities. It is crucial to maintain clear and logical boundaries to ensure effective governance and representation

1.1. Boundary naming:

Counter-proposal

Raglan Community Council proposes, inline with the UK Parliamentary Constituency, that the new constituency under the DBCC review is named *Monmouthshire / Sir Fynwy*. Should Torfaen need to be included, a rational would be required, and the name should be *Monmouthshire / Thorfaen / Sir Fynwy / Torfaen*

2. Additional:

Objection

Further to the above and alongside the statutory factors, Raglan Community Council's objects to the Revised Proposals for additional reasons including austerity and the financial implications of the changes.

3.1. Austerity:

Objections

The DBCC reported that it received 3,741 representations during the initial proposal's consultation period. Of those 886 were generally supportive of the proposals and 2,835 were generally opposed to the proposals. Therefore, it's clear that the unelected body is not listening to the views of all constituents and consultees. Given the consultation must be implemented as set out in the Commission's final report, elected members of Raglan Community Council **object** to the final recommendations being made by an unelected body (the DBCC).

Over the last several years, it's been reported by several WG Administrations that Wales doesn't have the required amount of public expenditure resources calculated by the Barnett formula. Spending millions on the proposed increase of the number of elected Senedd Members cannot be justified spending from the Barnett formula, when there are higher priorities for spending which will improve the lives and wellbeing of constituents/residents in Monmouthshire and Wales.

3.2. Funding the review and implementation:

The changes to the Senedd constituencies are an unwarranted cost to the public purse, when the offices of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Office of the First Minister, have stated that the country has a blackhole of more than £22m. Given the lack of evidence-based reasoning for these changes, it is argued that any money spent on reviewing the constituencies could be better spent within Monmouthshire and Wales. For example, on our NHS service as there is alarming data available on where different health services are struggling;

- Welsh Government has reported that there were just over 801,300 patient pathways waiting for treatment in November 2024 (according to the latest figures from Digital Health and Care Wales).
- More than 23% of patients are waiting more than a year for hospital treatment after a referral, compared with 3% of patients in England.

- When major A&E units are compared with England, Wales is performing comparatively worse for the eighth month in a row (as of December 2024).
- There were 10,159 patients waiting more than 12 hours in A&E.

While there's been some funding released to address some of the above, it's been noted by governing bodies that this isn't adequate. If the Senedd don't believe in spending public money on the public, it needs to consider spending any relevant funding on improving existing infrastructure; it is estimated that it will cost £29.1m to repair roads in Wales (estimated from reports issued in 2021/22).

3.3. Funding over a period of time:

Contained in the "Financial Implications of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill" the Minister said the Bill is "an investment ... in democracy". He added:

"I think it's value for money not only because, overall, it will deliver better governance, better scrutiny, better legislation, better use of all the public resources that the Senedd has and the role of the Welsh Government, but, in the short to medium term, it also becomes something that actually pays for itself. This is legislation that is essentially self-funding and, in actual fact, should result in net benefit over a period of time."

It's difficult to see **"it's value for money"** when this administration and former administrations have said for decades that the Welsh Government/Senedd are underfunded from block grants, central budget from the Barnett formula. Increasing the Senedd Members by 30, would result in an increase of more than £10 million a year in total, including support costs. This cost rises to £119.6m over the appraisal period. When there's a need for constituents' money to be supported in education, health, wellbeing, infrastructure and new homes for young families, Raglan Community Council elected members cannot see how the Welsh Assembly/Senedd and constituencies justify this expense. While there's limited justification to go ahead with these changes, which explicitly positively impact on the constituents/voters, Raglan Community Council's objection stands.

To conclude, Raglan Community Council strongly objects to the proposed changes to the constituency boundaries, and specifically to the name change, should the boundary changes be implemented. Monmouthshire cannot lose its identity which has been in existence for hundreds of years. Raglan Community Council also strongly objects these proposed changes as they are deemed unnecessary when the money could be put to better use, for the wellbeing of constituents across all areas of Wales. Embedded within this objection are counter-proposals, where appropriate.

Author:
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Date of response; Januaery 2025

CONSULTEES:

Elected members of Raglan Community Council.
[Response by 13 January 2025](#)

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Documents considered when compiling this response were:

[Senedd Cymru \(Members and Elections\) Bill](#)
<https://senedd.wales/media/iaifuxyj/pri-ld16037-e.pdf>
[Senedd Cymru \(Members and Elections\) Act 2024](#)
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2024/4>
[Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru 2026 Review of Senedd constituencies Sept 2024 Provisional Recommendations](#)
[Revised Proposals, Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru 2026 Review of Senedd constituencies Dec 2024 Policy decisions](#)
[Consultation Portal 2026 Review: Initial Proposals | DBCC](#)
[The Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023 The Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023](#)
[Boundary review 2023: Which seats will change in the UK? Boundary review 2023: Which seats will change in the UK?](#)