

13 January 2025

Cymdeithas yr Iaith's response to the Democracy and Boundary Commission's Consultation on the Revised Proposals for the 2026 Review of Senedd constituencies

Introduction

Cymdeithas yr Iaith is a movement that has campaigned non-violently for the Welsh language and all Welsh communities, as part of the international revolution for freedom and justice for over 60 years.

We support the Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' proposal, in its final proposals for new Senedd constituencies in 2026, to give a monolingual Welsh name to the majority of proposed constituencies. However, we believe that the four constituencies with proposed bilingual names also need to have a Welsh-only name.

Welsh is the proper language of Wales and belongs to all of us as citizens of Wales and to all parts of the country, so it is entirely appropriate and reasonable that the names proposed reflect and build on the current practice of using monolingual names in practice.

Our politicians are very keen to remind us constantly that the Welsh language belongs to everyone, and the Government has set a target of reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050. Giving a monolingual Welsh name to proposed constituencies would be a way of ensuring that seeing, hearing and using Welsh names becomes the norm in Welsh democratic and national life, consistent with the official status of the Welsh language.

Therefore, as we see an expansion of democracy in Wales by increasing the size of our national Senedd (parliament) and reforming an outdated electoral system, it would be very appropriate for monolingual Welsh names to reflect our confidence as a country and our pride in the Welsh language.

Naming Procedure

In general, we welcome the new naming procedure, particularly the principle of determining the most suitable name for the constituency in Welsh in the first place; and that consideration is given to names or words that are commonly used and therefore familiar in both Welsh and English.

However, to facilitate the giving of Welsh-only names, it is necessary to go a step further than that and add an intended aim of determining Welsh names that will work in both languages from the beginning, in the process of determining that Welsh name. For example, names containing compass point references should be avoided, such as north-west.

The procedure as it is notes in clause 7 that the Commission shall seek to avoid adopting names that cause mutation. We suggest amending this to a more general aim of trying to avoid adopting names that would be difficult to understand for non-Welsh speaking constituents. This would support the presumption in the Act in favour of a single monolingual name, suitable in both Welsh and English.

It is also necessary to include, for the sake of completeness, recognition of the new statutory function of the Welsh Language Commissioner advising on the standard forms of name orthography, and as a statutory consultee in the open stages of public consultation on the choice of names.

No rowing back

The Commission has suggested in statements since the publication of this final consultation that the door is open to rowing back on the reasonable step of putting monolingual Welsh names on constituencies and surrendering to reactionary forces and views such as those of the former Leader of the Welsh Conservatives.

To do so would be contrary to the will of a super-majority in the Senedd who agreed with the passing of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) (Wales) Act 2024 to direct the Commission to give constituencies a monolingual name, unless that would be unacceptable. There is absolutely no reason why it would not be possible to put one monolingual Welsh name, accessible and convenient to all, on every constituency in Wales. We therefore call on the Commission to remain steadfast and to support the Welsh language and honour the broad support of the majority of the people of the whole of Wales for our language.

Constituency Names – comments on the substance of the latest proposals

As mentioned, we're pleased that most constituencies have Welsh names in these latest proposals. However, it is disappointing that the Commission is proposing to deprive two significant areas of Wales, including our capital, from having a single Welsh name that is accessible to all.

We therefore call on the Commission to remove these unfortunate exceptions and to think creatively for suitable names for the communities in the four constituencies with English as well as Welsh names. There is no reason to justify treating these communities differently, and we call on the Commission to complete the picture in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Act.

If two names are put on a constituency, one will be favoured in practice. Other cases have shown that since English is the majority language, an English name is preferred. While there may be no intention to treat Welsh less favourably here, it is likely that will be the case if this intention is allowed to go ahead.

There are four constituencies with English names as well as Welsh names. We would like to propose alternative names:

1. Gorllewin Abertawe Gŵyr (Swansea West Gower)

We propose the name **Abertawe** as a monolingual name for this constituency, as it is the constituency that comprises the bulk of Swansea including the city centre. As we know from other examples, a constituency does not need to cover an entire area to use the area name on the constituency.

Another possible option could be **Gŵyr Abertawe**. Gŵyr is a familiar enough name and similar enough to Gower to be used in Welsh only.

2. De Powys Tawe Nedd (South Powys Tawe Neath)

We propose the name **Powys Nedd** as a monolingual Welsh name. The majority of Powys is in this constituency (indeed, all of it except for Montgomery). As we note above, a constituency does not need to cover an entire area to use the area name on the constituency. Alternatives would be **Powys Tawe Nedd** or **Powys Tawe**.

3. De-ddwyrain Caerdydd Penarth (Cardiff South-east Penarth)

We propose **Caerdydd Penarth** as a monolingual name for this constituency.

4. Gogledd-orllewin Caerdydd (Cardiff North-west)

We propose **Caerdydd Cwm Taf** as a monolingual name for this constituency.

We do not believe that constituency names require compass points, or that they contribute to most of the population's understanding of constituency names. We think it will be clear that there are two Cardiff constituencies, one called Caerdydd Penarth and one called Caerdydd Cwm Taf, and it will be obvious enough to all who live there which one they live in. There is plenty of precedent in the names of existing Westminster Parliament constituencies for this kind of thing, for example in the Birmingham area there are the Birmingham Ladywood, Birmingham Perry Barr, Birmingham Selly Oak and Birmingham Yardley constituencies, amongst others.

Although we offer the above suggestions, the Commission may identify alternative suggestions from consulting academics specialising in place names. It is the central aim

of ensuring that all constituencies have one Welsh name that is first and foremost for us, and it is as a suggestion that we offer the specific suggestions above. However, we would also be more than happy to have a formal or informal conversation if we can be of any assistance.

Cymdeithas yr Iaith

13 January 2025