

Wayne David's Submission to the Parliamentary Boundary Commission

I cannot emphasise enough the disbelief and angst which has been expressed by many of my constituents at the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission.

Undoubtedly, many of my constituents feel aggrieved at the Commission's initial proposal to divide the current Caerphilly constituency between four new constituencies. But most reaction, and it has to be said hostility, is focused on the suggestion that the lower part of the present Caerphilly constituency be linked to the Western part of the current Newport West constituency to create the new constituency of Newport West and Caerphilly.

The main arguments against these initial proposals can be summarised as follows:

1. Geography, history, transport and local ties.

Between the communities of Machen (on the Eastern extremity of the Caerphilly constituency) and the village of Rhiwderin (on the Western extremity of Newport West) there is a large area of open countryside with few residents. The distance of 5.3 kilometres (3.3 miles) between Machen and Rhiwderin provides a natural divide between the two areas and helps to determine the identity of both the Newport area and the Caerphilly constituency from Machen westwards.

This natural divide reflects the fact that the town of Caerphilly developed firstly as a market town and then later the whole of the Rhymney valley, including Caerphilly, was dominated by the coal industry. Newport, on the other hand, grew as a port and is today developing as a modern city.

The geographic and historic orientation of the Caerphilly basin (and linked to it the communities of Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen (BTM), and the Aber Valley) is towards the lower part of the Rhymney Valley from, and including, Llanbradach northwards. Yet the initial proposals separate Caerphilly from its natural hinterland and creates a totally artificial divide between the village of Llanbradach and the town of Caerphilly. The natural 'community of interest' between Caerphilly, BTM and the Aber Valley is with the lower part of the Rhymney Valley and most definitely not with the City of Newport.

Today, the travel to work patterns are very much North-South rather than East-West. People from the Rhymney Valley, including Caerphilly, travel to and from Cardiff and not Newport. Similarly, when people socialise and 'shop', they travel from the Rhymney Valley, including Caerphilly, to Cardiff and not to Newport. These obvious travel patterns are made relatively easy by the transport infrastructure – the A469 services the middle and lower part of the Rhymney Valley (connecting Caerphilly town to its hinterland) and this is augmented by the Rhymney Valley railway line which connects the whole of the Rhymney Valley, including Caerphilly, to Cardiff. Soon, the Rhymney Valley line will be part of the wider 'Metro' system.

It can be seen therefore that the communications are excellent between Caerphilly and its hinterland and are in sharp contrast to the modest links between the Caerphilly constituency and Newport West. While there is a good road link between Machen and Rhiwderin, use of this road is modest, and there is no rail link between Caerphilly and Newport.

2. The counter-proposal.

The alternative, counter-proposal, which I submit is indicated on the attached map. This would create a constituency of Caerphilly, and a constituency of Newport West and Newbridge. Central to the counter-proposal is the acknowledgement that the obvious and natural link is between Caerphilly and its hinterland, rather than to Newport West.

I am proposing therefore that Caerphilly, BTM and the Aber Valley be linked to the communities further up the Rhymney Valley, and that the Western part of Newport West be linked to the Eastern parts of the existing Islwyn constituency. In more detail, I set out below why this proposal is more logical and is very likely to have more public support than the Commission's initial proposal.

I would like to emphasise that both the constituencies in this counter-proposal are within the electoral quota.

i) As I have set out above, it is far more appropriate for the Caerphilly basin, BTM and the Aber Valley, to be linked to the lower and middle parts of the Rhymney Valley. To repeat, this is Caerphilly town's natural hinterland.

ii) My counter-proposal for the new 'Caerphilly' constituency also includes communities which are currently within the Islwyn Parliamentary constituency, such as Pontllanfraith and Blackwood. It is important to note that in this part of South Wales, the all-important valleys are less pronounced, and communications between Blackwood, Pontllanfraith and Ystrad Mynach (including the Ysbyt Ystrad Fawr hospital) are excellent, with the A472 being an arterial route connecting these mid-valley areas. What is also the case is that the communities in and around the Caerphilly basin have much more in common with Pontllanfraith and Blackwood than they do with the City of Newport. In fact, the socio-economic relationship between the communities in this central valleys area is very strong, with many constituents in Hengoed and Ystrad Mynach working in Blackwood. Moreover, the ward of Maesycwmmwr was part of the Caerphilly Parliamentary constituency until very recently.

iii) Similarly, the communities in Eastern Islwyn, such as Newbridge and Crumlin have as great an affinity with Newport as they do with communities further West such as Ystrad Mynach and Llanbradach. Furthermore, Risca is umbilically linked with the Western part of Newport by the A467. This road provides an excellent, and well-used, access to the villages

north of Newport, in the Ebbw valley, as well as to the town of Risca. In fact, the socio-economic orientation of these Eastern Gwent valley communities is to Newport.

It is important to realise that both the Sirhowy and Ebbw Rivers flow to Newport and the communities along the length of those two rivers are also orientated towards that city.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that my counter-proposal is far more logical. It acknowledges geographic, transport and socio-economic realities to a far greater extent than the initial proposal from the Boundary Commission. Crucially, I firmly believe that my counter-proposal is far more likely to receive public acceptance and support than the initial proposal from the Boundary Commission.

For clarity, I set out the wards which would constitute the new Caerphilly constituency and then the constituency of Newport West and Newbridge.

Counter-proposal - 'Caerphilly' constituency

- St James (4,267)
- Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen (7,902)
- Morgan Jones (5,636)
- St. Martins (6,582)
- Penyrheol (9,021)
- Aber Valley (4,655)
- Llanbradach (3,239)
- Ystrad Mynach (4,067)
- Maesycwmmmer (1,811)
- Hengoed (4,055)
- St Cattwg (5,579)
- Pengam (2,760)
- Cefn Fforest (2,845)
- Blackwood (6,330)
- Pontllanfraith (6,343)

Total: 75,092

Counter-proposal 'Newport West & Newbridge' constituency

- Marshfield (4,897)
- Tredegar Park (3,329)
- Gaer (6,543)
- Graig (5,053)
- Allt-yr-Yn (7,088)
- Rogerstone (9,421)
- Risca East (4,611)
- Risca West (3,973)
- Crosskeys (2,527)
- Ynysddu (2,978)
- Abercarn (4,139)
- Newbridge (4,892)
- Crumlin (4,332)
- Penmaen (4,219)
- Argoed (2,035)

Total: 70,037

Please see the next page to see a map of what the new 'Caerphilly' and 'Newport West and Newbridge' constituencies could look like.

All wards are accounted for without any needing to be transferred to other constituencies, and as stated previously, both constituencies in the counter-proposal are within the electoral quota.

'Newport West
and Newbridge'



'Caerphilly'

