

Community of Llanbadoc

Llanbadoc Community Council

Response to the Review of Communities and Electoral Arrangements

Description of Community Area

We represent a large rural area which comprises the three ward communities of Llanbadoc, Glascoed and Monkswood. There are no densely populated areas and none of the three wards has the central focus of shops, pubs or village halls which adds to the challenge of effective consultation and keeping in touch. The area contains many farms.

Special features

- There are four large employers within our boundaries: BAE Systems at Glascoed; Coleg Gwent, Monmouthshire CC's new headquarters and Prescoed Open Prison in Llanbadoc. There is also the industrial estate at Woodside with several local companies. This means there is a regular and significant influx of visitors to the area with resulting implications for our road systems. We also have regular liaison with Prescoed Prison to keep the community informed of prisoner absconds and policy matters.
- We own several areas of common land in Glascoed - much of which is woodland. This presents issues of maintenance, access and the rights of commoners. In the last few years there has also been the problem of motor cycle scrambling in the woodland which is on-going. We are currently engaged in resolving a legal issue concerning the erection/removal of gates to protect the woodland and curtail the nuisance for local residents.
- We have developed a rolling programme of footpath maintenance following a sharp deterioration in their condition over a number of years.
- A large section of the Llandegfedd reservoir comes within our area. We have successfully worked with Welsh Water and MCC to develop plans for a trail around the reservoir. Once this is completed (together with a new visitors centre and watersports facility) this will increase the number of visitors to the area.
- In the last few years we have developed our website to improve communications with residents (www.llanbadoc.org) and we have a working group which meets periodically to ensure that this is kept relevant and current. We also hand deliver a newsletter annually.

Why have we not had contested elections?

Any vacancies have been easily filled by co-option and at election time applicants have come forward to fill vacancies or we have used co-option shortly after the date of the election. We ensure that vacancies are given publicity to avoid limiting the pool to 'who we know'.

Are there any anomalies which need to be looked at?

- We request that the properties of Honeywell Cottage and Oak Ridge be moved into Llanbadoc ward from Glascoed ward so that they are in the same ward as other properties in the lane (R102). The reason for their current designation is historical – they were built on land from an old farm, the farm house of which was situated in Glascoed.
- Penpedairheol Farm at the crossroads of Rumble Street and Cefn Mawr Lane is the only property in Rumble Street not included in the Monkswood ward, being attached to Goetre Fawr. We ask that it be moved into the Monkswood ward.

Our submissions on preferred criteria

Our current electorate numbers 671 and our councillor/elector ratio is 1/67. We therefore fall below the preferred criteria of 1000 electors and our ratio is at the low end of the scale for the county and at variance with the suggested ratio of 1/150 for rural areas. However in our view the current community area with the representation of ten councillors should remain in place for the following reasons:

- The size and rural nature of our community area – three sparsely populated wards with housing dispersed throughout the area. The lack of a 'nucleus' for each community makes effective representation more challenging and time consuming. If the community area were to be extended to raise the number of electors this would make effective representation very difficult indeed because the bordering communities (with the exception of Usk) are also sparsely populated.
- The special features set out above contribute to a more complex and demanding workload for the council and the current number of councillors is needed to meet these demands.
- The council works efficiently and proactively. We are in the process of streamlining our procedures for meetings and extending our use of working groups to increase our effectiveness – in particular there is a need for a group to manage projects affecting the common land and other environmental issues. To make this group system work properly we need to maintain the present representation

There are minimal cost implications regarding the number of councillors. We give our time freely and rarely claim for any expenses.