

Community of Crucorney

Representations received in response to draft proposals

Crucorney Community Council

Review of Communities and Electoral Arrangements

Draft proposals

Representation from Crucorney Community Council

This matter was considered by Crucorney Community Council at its monthly meeting on the 21 January 2014.

Crucorney Community Councillors wish to say:

1. In view of the recent report of the Williams Commission, is not the Review premature?
2. In area, Crucorney is the largest community in Monmouthshire. As well as the villages of Llanvihangel Crucorney and Pandy and the surrounding rural area, it includes two long valleys with scattered farms and settlements. From one end to the other, the Fforest and Ffwdog ward and the Cwmyoy wards measure approximately 10 miles each. (Please refer to enclosed map.)
3. In thinly populated areas such as these, distance and area should be the criteria for determining the number of councillors, not population. Population may be an appropriate criterion in densely populated areas where it is relatively easy for councillors to 'cover the ground' in their wards, and for voters to contact their councillors, but different factors apply in thinly-populated rural areas.
4. Many houses in this community are holiday homes, whose users live elsewhere, so their names do not appear on our Electoral Register. That does not lessen the need, however, for local services to those properties or their liability to Council Tax. To reduce the number of community councillors would contravene the principle of 'no taxation without representation.'
5. For planning purposes, this Community falls under two authorities, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Monmouthshire County Council. This increases the workload of community councillors.
6. Similarly, those two authorities deal with public footpaths in this Community, Monmouthshire County Council having delegated its functions in this respect to the National Park Authority over footpaths in that part of the Community which lies in the national Park. This, again, increases councillors' workload.
7. Community Councillors are not paid for the many hours' work they do each month and do not recover any of the personal expenditure they incur in carrying out their business. Reducing the number of councillors, therefore, has no effect on reducing expenses.
8. If the number of councillors were reduced, those remaining would have to put in more time and effort in order to cover the same amount of work and that workload is likely to increase. (See 10 below.)
9. With regard to Electorate Forecasts (Section 3 of MCC's Community of Crucorney handouts) which states that there are 'no developments proposed within the community', Crucorney Community Council would

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like to point out that there are 31 houses with planning permission granted by BBNP and under construction. Furthermore, the National Park LDP suggests 22 units in Llanvihangel Crucorney and the Monmouthshire LDP are proposing 15 houses in Pandy. These latter proposals will inevitably increase the electoral roll by at least 100 people if not more. Councillors are also aware of a large number of teenagers in the area who will be eligible to be on the next electoral roll.

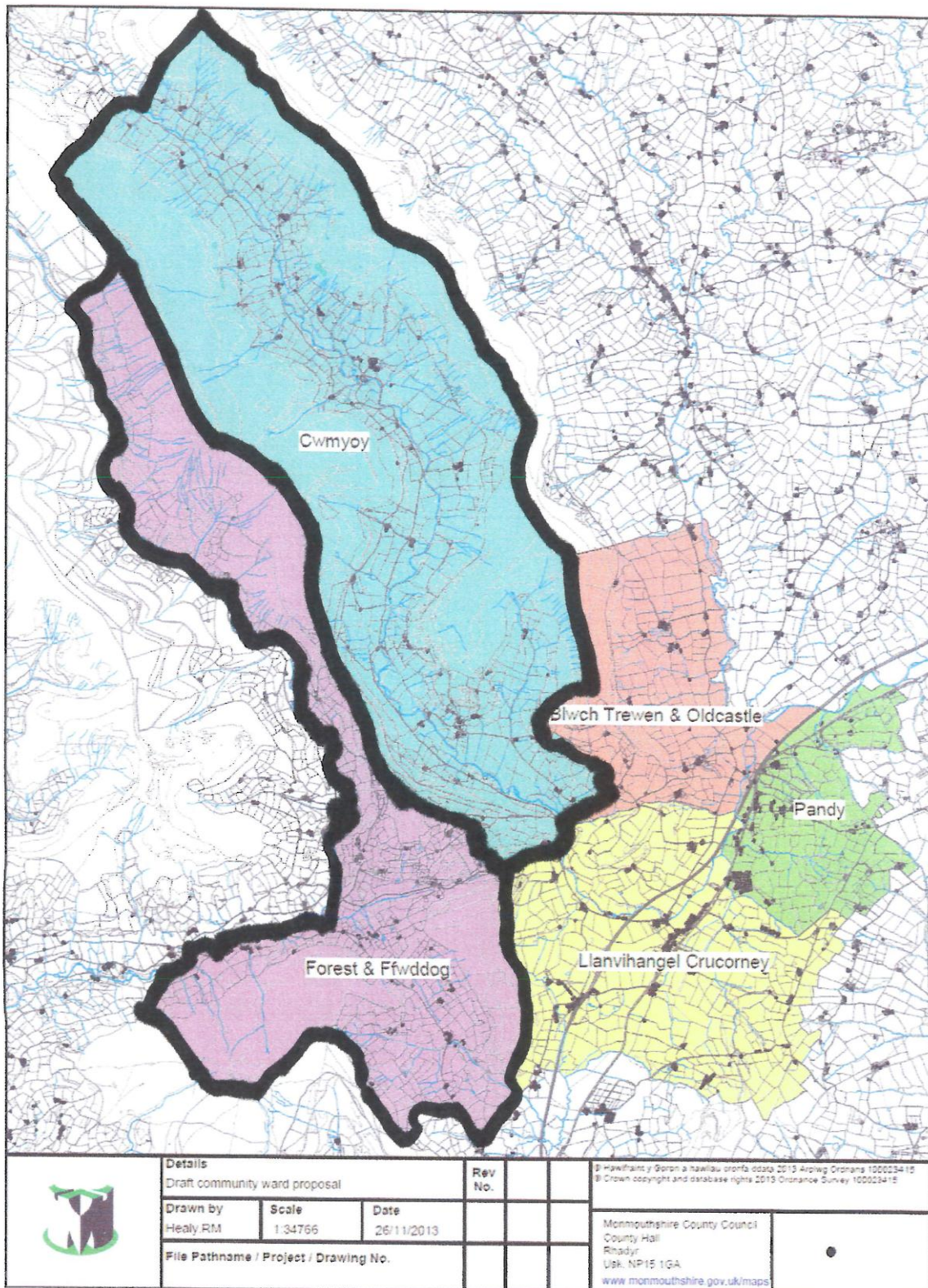
10. As we understand it, anticipated changes to the structure of local government will lead to an increase in the amount of work delegated to community councils. It is unreasonable to expect an increased workload to be undertaken by a reduced number of community councillors
11. To suggest a reduction from 11 to 7 councillors (the minimum) is unreasonable. The work put in by community councillors reflects the volunteer spirit and local democracy at grassroots level. Unlike some communities, there are no vacancies on Crucorney Community Council which shows a healthy community spirit. To reduce the number of councillors would be alien to those principles and damaging to the morale of existing and potential voluntary councillors.
12. The minimal boundary change proposed at Great Park Road effectively means that there is no real boundary change (see proposed changes to community boundaries, Para 7). Why, therefore, is a reduction proposed in the number of community councillors?
13. How is the 'ideal ratio' of 150 electors per councillor arrived at?
14. In a radio programme recently, Mr Jeff Jones, former leader of Bridgend County Borough Council and now a consultant in local authority practice, comments: 'We don't have local government in Wales. We have local administration'. Any reduction in the number of democratically-elected councillors at the grassroots level of community councils would be a further step in the process of centralisation and government by professional bureaucrats rather than representation of the people.

Crucorney Community Councillors: January 2014

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Proposed Boundary Map of Crucorney



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Messrs. P. Hobson and J. Pearson

As a member of Crucorney Community Council I wish to comment on these proposals in so far as they affect our Council. I am concerned not with the tinkering with boundaries but with its result when elector/councillor ratios are applied.

Currently we have 11 councillors; were the proposals to be implemented these would be reduced to 7. Thus Monmouthshire, which presently has at Crucorney 11 people willing to work free of charge for their community, would deem it sensible to make 4 of them redundant. This would appear to be a clear vote of no confidence in the usefulness of Community Councils, and has certainly prompted anger and incredulity here.

I understand that some councils find it difficult to recruit members; we have not had that difficulty here, but far from finding that our work is valued we now encounter plans to dismiss some of our number. This is the net result of the proposed re-structuring, which appears wrong-headed, destructive and totally unnecessary given that cost is not a consideration.

I should welcome your observations on this matter.

Yours,

Anthony L. Morgan

Re. Review of Communities and Electoral Arrangements

The Crucorney County Council Area

The area that I represent is a rural area where, like other areas, villages and parishes are complex interactions that need much understanding. This is not readily or immediately realised as a newly appointed vicar to a country parish once conceded. The area is set in its tradition and its ways. Any change needs to be accommodated and generally this takes time and deserves to be taken slowly.

It is good to carry out a periodic review. It should be remembered that the area is set against the county/country border so there is little scope for change in that direction. It is generally felt that there is little or no need for change in other directions as there has been very little change since the last review so no change is needed in Community Council ward boundaries.

Community Councillors are not readily available when being sought at election time. As they are "in post" why do away with them. They do not cost the county or community anything, they give their services freely and they have a wealth of knowledge and experience. Many are irreplaceable!

The Grosmont Ward

The ward works with a spirit of cohesion and the communities work together, the councillors work together based on a tradition that has built up over many years (the churches of Llanvetherine and Llangattock Lingoed were once in the same group). The traditions are established and community links that are so important exist and work well.

There is little development to justify change. The existing grouping is a more compact cohesive unit than that which is proposed. Llanvetherine and Llangattock Lingoed farms and properties are neighbouring so residents know each other and are used to working together. Llangattock Lingoed residents pass through Llanvetherine on their way to town (Abergavenny) and stop to post letters, call at the garage, go to the church, etc whilst Llanvetherine residents go to the Hunter's Moon Pub at Llangattock Lingoed.

All this poses the question -Why change?

It has proved difficult to get a councillor for Llangattock Lingoed let alone two!

Llangua deserves representation from within, not merely tagged onto Grosmont.

In terms of the proposal of moving Llanvetherine to a ward that includes Cross Ash and Skenfrith it must be stated that there is, understandably, little interaction or things in

common between Llanvetherine and Skenfrith. They are 8-10 miles apart, they are different areas and move in different directions. Llanvetherine residents tend to go to Abergavenny to shop etc as it is closer. Cross Ash and Skenfrith residents tend to go to Monmouth. The B4521 is the only link. Little notice is taken as it is a major road, a route purely to get to a destination.

The Crucorney Ward

The comments that I would make relating to the Crucorney Ward are that the proposal to unite Lower and Upper Cwmyoy should not take place as the area represented is vast and currently the respective councillors do an amazing job in representing their areas.

The proposal to adjust the Park Road boundary makes sense but a physical boundary still makes sense in the general usage.

I would finally make the point that Community Councillors do represent people so elector numbers are important. However they also represent an area with its features- roads, drains, churches, chapels, pubs, clubs and, in fact, any feature or organisation that exists in the ward. So a larger area deserves the representation of a larger number of councillors.