

MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

REVIEW OF COMMUNITY ARRANGEMENTS

DRAFT PROPOSALS

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1.0 Introduction

Community Reviews are governed by the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. Under this Act, the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (the Commission) has a general duty to monitor arrangements for local government arrangements across Wales. Each principal council is responsible for monitoring the communities within its area and, when necessary, reviewing their electoral arrangements.

Any necessary changes are implemented through community boundary reviews and community electoral reviews. A community boundary review conducted by the principal council under Section 25 of the Act is enacted by an Order from the Commission. A community electoral review conducted under Section 31 of the Act is enacted by an Order from the principal council.

Principal councils have a duty under the terms of the Act to publish a report and submit the report to the Commission on their community arrangements every ten years. Merthyr Tydfil's last review was published in 2014 and implemented for the 2017 local elections.

The statutory process for conducting any community review is largely consistent across both types of review. The primary differences lie in the outcome of the review and its implementation. While the Council is authorised to issue orders to implement changes to electoral arrangements within communities, any changes to community boundaries must be recommended to the Commission, which serves as the implementing authority.

2.0 Background Information

For the purposes of this review, a 'community' is a local government body below county council or county borough level (the 'principal council'). Community areas cover the

whole of Wales. Merthyr Tydfil has only one elected community council serving Bedlinog and Trelewis with two electoral wards, Bedlinog and Trelewis.

There are two different types of community review that may be carried out by principal councils, which are subject to different sections of the Act.

2.1 Review of community boundaries (under section 25 of the Act)

A review of community boundaries should ensure that communities continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. For example, over time communities may expand with new housing developments. This can lead to boundaries becoming anomalous, for example if new housing is built across boundaries resulting in confusion over which community a housing estate falls into. A community review offers an opportunity to the principal council to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries tied to ground features, and to remove any anomalous boundaries that exist. Community boundary changes may involve altering the boundary of an existing community, dissolving an existing community, or creating a new community. The Council's recommendations are submitted to the Commission, which issues the order to implement the changes.

2.2 Review of the electoral arrangements (under section 31 of the Act)

This process involves examining the electoral arrangements within a specific community, which includes evaluating the wards and the number of councillors. During a review, the Council may consider the following aspects:

- The number of council members representing the community.
- The division into wards (if applicable) for the election of councillors.
- The number and boundaries of any wards.
- The number of councillors to be elected for each ward.
- The name of each ward.

To undertake this type of review the Council needs to consider some guiding principles around the size of Community Councils.

Good practice suggests that the minimum number of Councillors for any Town or Community should be no less than 7 and no more than 25 depending on the electorate. When reviewing this, the principal council should have regard to the population, geography and the pattern of communities.

3.0 Considerations of the Review

The review has looked to ensure that effective and convenient local government is best achieved through community arrangements that are internally coherent. This means that communities should have reasonable internal road links and reflect patterns of settlement and communication. The goal is to ensure that all electors can participate in the community's affairs and activities without needing to travel through a neighbouring community.

In doing this, the Act outlines specific matters that must be considered when recommending changes to the electoral arrangements of a community.

3.1 Should the community be divided into Wards?

The review must determine whether the community should be divided into wards for community council elections. In this context, the Commission must assess whether the number or distribution of local government electors makes a single election of community councillors impractical or inconvenient.

- The Community Council has historically been divided into two Wards, reflecting the two distinct villages of Bedlinog and Trelewis.
- Although these villages form a single local authority Ward, they are separated by a stretch of mountain road.

- There are currently no anticipated developments along this stretch of road, which reinforces the clear distinction between the two communities.

IT IS PROPOSED:

- **That the existing Ward structure for the Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council remain unchanged.**

3.2 Determination of the number of community councillors

Considering the relevant factors outlined in the 2013 Act, any proposals will evaluate the current number of local government electors in the area under review, official population estimates for the area, and projections of the electorate. When considering these matters, any discrepancy between the number of registered electors and the population in the community that is eligible to vote must also be considered.

- The Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council has remained uncontested at every scheduled election since the last community review conducted ten years ago.
- Although the Council previously operated at full capacity with sufficient nominations to fill all vacancies, this changed in 2022.
- At the most recent election in 2022, there were insufficient candidates to fill all available seats, resulting in the need to appoint a co-opted member.
- This prompted consideration of whether the current number of elected representatives adequately reflects the needs and expectations of the electorate.
- Further analysis indicated that the number of electors in Bedlinog has declined over the past decade, resulting in a current ratio of approximately 1:270.
- Furthermore, no significant changes, such as large-scale developments, are anticipated within the next five years that would materially affect this figure.

- Best practice recommends that the number of councillors for any town or community should range between seven and twenty-five, depending on the size of the electorate.
- To achieve the greatest possible electoral parity across both wards while maintaining a minimum of seven councillors overall, the ratio set within the Terms of Reference was approximately 1:400.
- Current statistics indicate that reducing the number of community councillors in the Bedlinog Ward would allow parity with the Trelewis Ward with an average ratio of 1:375.
- Reducing the ratio any further would result in less parity in the Wards.

Community Council Cyngor Cymuned	Ward	Etholaeth Bresennol (Medi 2025) Current Electorate (September 2025)	Rhagolwg 5 Mlynedd (2030) 5 Year Forecast (2030)	Nifer Presennol o Seddi Number of Seats	Etholwyr fesul Cynghorydd Electors per Councillor	Nifer Presennol o Seddi Proposed Number of Seats	Etholwyr fesul Cynghorydd Electors per Councillor
Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council	Bedlinog	1081	Minimal Fluctuation	4	270	3	360
	Trelewis	1945	Minimal Fluctuation	5	389	5	389

IT IS PROPOSED:

- That the number of elected representatives for the Bedlinog Community Ward be reduced from four to three.
- That the Trelewis Community Ward continue to have five elected representatives.

3.3 Name of the Community Council

In accordance with Section 76 of the Local Government Act 1972, a community council may make a request to the principal council in which the community is situated to change the name of the community.

- At the Full Council meeting of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council on 17 July 2019, a report was presented regarding a request from Bedlinog Community Council to change its name to Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council.
- The Community Council had received feedback from residents of Trelewis expressing concerns that they felt excluded and unrepresented. Additionally, responses from Bedlinog residents indicated that not all were aware that Trelewis residents were also represented by the Community Council.
- The request was approved to ensure that local people felt included and to encourage greater participation in the Council's activities. The name change was intended to reflect the representation of both communities and strengthen engagement.
- Subsequently, the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil (Electoral Arrangements) Order 2021 also renamed the principal council ward from Bedlinog Ward to Bedlinog and Trelewis Ward, further reinforcing the commitment to inclusive representation.

IT IS PROPOSED:

- **That there is no change to the name of the Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council.**

4.0 Next Stage of the Review Process

The next stage of the review is approval of the proposals by Full Council and further consultation with residents, compulsory consultees, and stakeholders.

Our approved timetable for this is for three weeks between 8 December 2025 to 29 December 2025, with a final report to be presented to Full Council on 14 January 2026.

5.0 Supporting Information

Further information relating to the review, including the Terms of Reference, electorate figures, a map of the existing community boundaries and guidance, are available on the Councils' website.

6.0 Full List of Proposals

IT IS PROPOSED:

- 1. That the existing Ward structure for the Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council remain unchanged.**
- 2. That the number of elected representatives for the Bedlinog Community Ward be reduced from four to three.**
- 3. That the Trelewis Community Ward continue to have five elected representatives.**
- 4. That there be no change to the name of the Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council.**