



8.05.2024

RE: Consultation – Boundary Commission’s Proposal to abolish the communities of Ysbyty Ystwyth, Ystrad Fflur and Ystrad Meurig and to merge the 3 areas to form a new warded community of Ystrad Fflur

Response from:

Ystrad Fflur Community Council

Members of Ystrad Fflur Community Council express their strong opposition to the Boundary Commission’s Proposal to abolish the communities of Ysbyty Ystwyth, Ystrad Fflur and Ystrad Meurig to form a new warded community of Ystrad Fflur.

Should this Proposal come to pass, it will mean:

1. Ysbyty Ystwyth - reduction in number of Community Cllrs from 8 to 2
2. Ystrad Fflur - reduction in number of Community Cllrs from 10 to 3
3. Ystrad Meurig- reduction in number of Community Cllrs from 8 to 2

A decrease from the 26 present Community Cllrs to 7, with a wide geographical area to represent can only dilute the voice of local people and democracy.

The current community council arrangements in Ystrad Fflur consist of the ward of Caron Uwch Clawdd and Gwnnwys Uchaf and has a total of 606 electorate. It has functioned as one “Ward” for many years. Seats have been filled almost immediately and the Community Council has operated in its full capacity of 10 Cllrs for decades.

Pontrhydfendigaid is a historic village seeped in Welsh culture and Medieval history associated with the 12th Century Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida close to the headwaters of the River Teifi. Ystrad Fflur Community Council endeavours to work with the Abbey Committee to promote the economic, social and cultural life of the area and at the same time to celebrate Strata Florida’s unique landscape and history.

We believe that Ystrad Fflur Community Council can stand-alone as a Community Council delivering real benefits to the electorate of Pontrhydfendigaid and Ffair Rhos. The Village of Bontrhydfendigaid has a successful Primary School and Ysgol Feithrin, a Village Shop, three Village Pubs and holds events such as the Eisteddfod Rhys Thomas James Pantyfedwen, which attracts people from Ceredigion and beyond and regular events at the Pavilion.

Having 10 elected members with diverse skills enables the Community Council to provide a range of services for the electorate. This helps to build community cohesion and combat isolation within a socially deprived area with limited or non-existent public services e.g. public transport.

Ystrad Fflur Community Council is actively involved with the following matters.

1. Maintains the Pantyfedwen Play Area to include all play-equipment. Arranges Inspections.
2. Responsible for grass-cutting within many areas of the Village. Could increase as Ceredigion County Council has made cut backs.
3. Trim/cut trees, hedges on a regular basis.
4. Arrange litter collections at certain intervals of the year.
5. Maintains the War Memorial.
6. Takes responsibility for the Remembrance Sunday Service in November, which attracts over 100 attendees.
7. Arranges Community Events eg Jubilee Party.
8. Sources grants where necessary eg for new bus-shelters and play equipment.
9. Involved in off-shoot committees eg Christmas Tree Committee – arrange the Village's Christmas Tree to include Santa delivering presents to the children of the Village.

Other Committees where representatives of the Community Council are involved- Pantyfedwen Hall Committee, School Governors (awards a Scholarship annually); Churchyard Trust.

A reduction of 70% of the current representation within Ystrad Fflur Community Council will imply that areas of interest/expertise/ workforce/local knowledge will be lost.

It would appear impossible for 3 Community Cllrs to adequately represent the community in its current capacity.

Furthermore, representatives of one Community Council will not possess in-depth knowledge of matters appertaining to another Community Council, which will adversely affect decision making and effective working practices. Meetings will be longer and matters appertaining to one present Community Council could appear irrelevant to the other 2 Community Councils.

Each present Community Council has its own characteristics and identity. Historically these three communities have not worked together, due to long standing social and demographic differences and cannot be envisaged in the future.

As mentioned, recruiting new Community Cllrs has not been challenging in the past but it is likely that the situation will change in the future should this Proposal be realised; undertaking the role of a Community Cllr on a voluntary basis will not deem an attractive proposition especially with the extra workload. Most of the present members have voiced that they will not stand at the next election under these proposed guidelines. Many of these are dedicated Cllrs with years of experience and local knowledge. Fiscal savings are difficult to envisage.

Re the Precept, the money raised by the Community Council via Ceredigion County Council, will it be administered in a fair and transparent manner, under the new arrangement?

Concern is also expressed re the Welsh Language. The Welsh Language Commissioner aims to achieve 1million Welsh Speakers in Wales by 2050. Presently, the Community Council is able to conduct its meetings solely through the medium of Welsh. (minutes available in English and simultaneous translation offered where necessary)

The Welsh Language, possibly, could not be represented at all under the Proposal and, if so, yet another blow to the language and culture.

We believe that the Initial Consultation re this matter had been insufficient and not publicised adequately. Engagement with County and Community Councils was limited.

We also understand that the amalgamation of Community Wards within Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire County Councils is executed on a voluntary basis. Where is the parity when arrangements within Ceredigion County Council dictate otherwise?

This Proposal is a retrograde step in local democracy with huge social, political, and cultural ramifications and a bid to dismantle communities by stealth. Grassroots elected members of Ystrad Fflur Community Council find it difficult to establish the rationale behind such a Proposal and are extremely disappointed.

Yours sincerely

M. Eleri Thomas

Clerk