

**P-05-1077 Stop the voting boundary change to Ystrad Mynach south,
Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 04.12.20**

Dear Petition Committee,

Regarding the government response in the document you attached, we feel it doesn't consider some of the following key points:

- Residents knew nothing about these proposals until 10 days after the final proposals were submitted to Welsh Government.
- Residents were not afforded the correct level of engagement during the consultation, therefore did not have the opportunity to respond or petition, something which was afforded to Blackwood residents, their local councillors engaging to help reverse the proposals in their area. Our local councillors didn't engage with us, citing that they expected the boundary commission to be more direct in their communications to affected residents. The Caerphilly County Borough Council boundary working group, led by Council Leader Phillipa Marsden, also didn't consult with those impacted by their inputs into the boundary proposals. Basically, every layer of government involved in the writing and reviewing these proposals failed to successfully engage with those affected.
- As outlined by you, the Senedd Petitions Committee, petitions can be used for a number of reasons, two of the possible reasons you quote are relevant in this case:
 - Raise awareness of an issue
 - *This petition is here to help raise awareness of a boundary issue, within the local community and Welsh Government.*
 - Prompt a Committee or individual Members of the Senedd to take further action themselves, for instance by asking questions.
 - *As the final decision on these matters lies with one Minister, Julie James MS, the petition is an effective way to alert Minister James to the level of opposition from impacted residents and to prompt her to take that into account when making her final decision.*

To summarise, we see no reason why the petition cannot be accepted into the boundary process as a form of representation/input from impacted residents. The residents affected have the exceptional circumstances of not being made aware until after these proposals have reached their final stages, 11 months after the first draft was published. This has taken away our opportunity to represent ourselves adequately at the consultation stage as our Blackwood neighbours did successfully. We do not believe this will set a precedent as we hope this failure to effectively engage with the public, thus creating these exceptional circumstances, will not occur again in future.

Given the short space of time we now have to raise awareness within the community and have everyone's objections registered, it would be too inefficient and time consuming to co-

ordinate 528 letters (528 residents are impacted) into Welsh Government communicating the same message as the petition. Therefore, the petition is our collective feedback into the process, representing the collective views of all residents who have signed it and we look to you, the petition committee, to ensure that it will not be put to one side and ignored as the final decisions are made.

The chair of the Local Democracy and Boundary commission for Wales, Dr Debra Williams' foreword within the boundary proposal document states the need for the process to respect local community ties as much as possible. In the case of Forge Mill, it has completely failed to achieve that, the local community hasn't been heard at all and this petition represents both our first and last opportunity to ensure that our immensely strong local community ties to Ystrad Mynach and complete absence of any community ties to Llanbradach are finally taken into account as part of the final decision making process.

Yours Sincerely,