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1 Introduction

The Boundary Commission for Wales published its initial proposals for 30 new Westminster parliamentary constituencies on 11 January 2012, as part of the Sixth Periodic Review of constituency boundaries.¹

Generally the number of electors in any new constituency must be within 5% of the UK Electoral Quota of 76,641, based on the electorate at 1 December 2010, under the terms of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. Therefore constituencies must contain no fewer than 72,810 electors and no more than 80,473 electors.² The Boundary Commission for Wales has used electoral divisions as “the basic building block” in constructing its proposals, although in a small number of cases electoral divisions have been divided between proposed seats along the boundaries of communities.³

The Boundary Commission for Wales is required to make its final recommendations to the Government by October 2013 and, subject to Parliamentary approval, the final recommendations will be implemented at the next General Election. Maps of individual proposed constituencies can be downloaded from the Commission’s website.⁴

1.1 Reduction in seats

Currently there are 40 constituencies in Wales, to be reduced to 30 as a result of the boundary review. The percentage reduction in the number of seats in Wales (25%) is at least twice as large as the percentage reduction in seats in Scotland, Northern Ireland and English regions. The review would mean that the average electorate of Welsh constituencies increases from about 57,000 to 76,000.

Table 1: Allocation of seats in boundary review

	Number of existing constituencies	Allocated number of constituencies	Reduction		Mean electorate	
			in seats	%change	Before review	After review
UK	650	600	50	8%	70,530	76,408
England	533	502	31	6%	72,127	76,581
Scotland	59	52	7	12%	66,593	75,557
Wales	40	30	10	25%	57,040	76,053
Northern Ireland	18	16	2	11%	66,146	74,415

1.2 National Assembly for Wales

National Assembly for Wales constituencies and regions are not included in the boundary review and the Boundary Commission for Wales’ proposals will introduce significant disparities between the boundaries of Westminster seats and Assembly constituencies. Currently Assembly constituencies are the same as Westminster parliamentary constituencies, but the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 removed the automatic link between the two sets of boundaries.⁵ The proposals mean that no National Assembly for Wales region would contain a whole number of Westminster seats.

¹ http://www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk/2013_review_e.htm

² The two Scottish island constituencies of Na h-Eileanan an Iar and Orkney and Shetland and two constituencies on the Isle of Wight are exempted from the requirements on electoral size.

³ Boundary Commission for Wales, *2013 Review of Constituency Boundaries: Initial Proposals*, page 8
http://www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk/2013_review/initial_proposals_textonly_e.pdf

⁴ http://www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk/2013_review_maps_e.htm

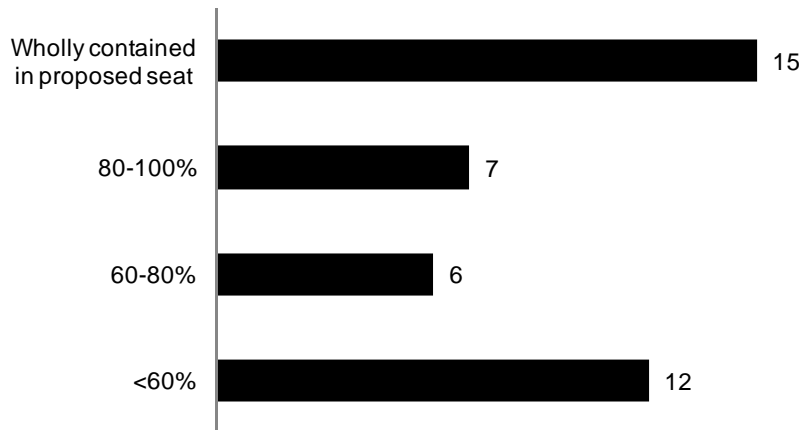
⁵ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/1/pdfs/ukpga_20110001_en.pdf#page=18

2 Extent of change

2.1 Changes to existing constituencies

Existing constituencies may be split up between several proposed seats. No constituency has been left unchanged in the proposals, but 15 out of 40 existing constituencies are wholly contained within proposed seats.

Chart 1: Division of existing seats into proposed seats
Fraction of existing seat contained within a proposed seat



For two existing seats, there is no proposed constituency to which a majority of the existing seat's electors have been transferred:

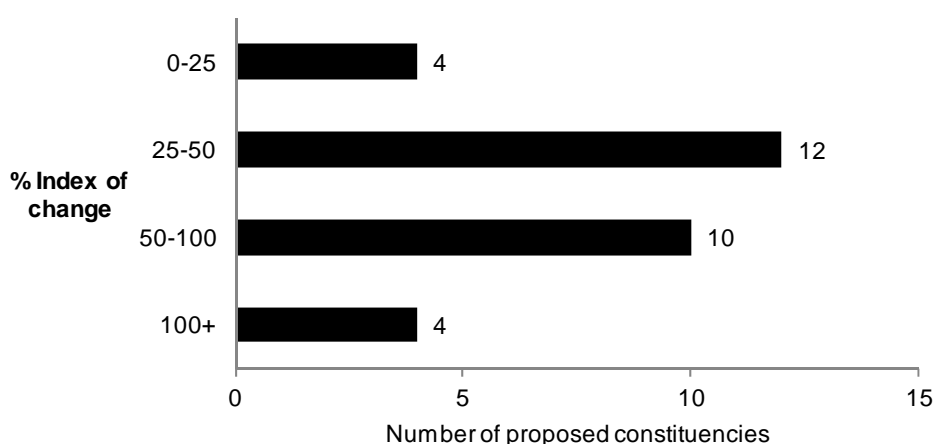
- Cardiff South and Penarth has an electorate of 73,607, making it the only existing constituency in Wales to have an electorate within 5% of the UK Electoral Quota. 49% of its electors would be transferred to the proposed Cardiff Central and Penarth seat, 46% to the proposed Cardiff East seat, and 5% to The Vale of Glamorgan.
- The existing Cynon Valley seat would be divided into three. 39% of its 52,216 electors would be added to the existing Rhondda seat to create a proposed enlarged Rhondda constituency. 37% of its electors would be added to the existing Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney seat to create a new Heads of the Valleys constituency. The remaining 24% would be transferred to the proposed Pontypridd seat.

The existing constituency which contributes most electors to a proposed seat may be considered the 'base' constituency for the proposed seat. Eleven existing constituencies do not form the base for any proposed seat: Aberconwy; Arfon; Caerphilly; Cardiff Central; Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire; Cynon Valley; Delyn; Gower; Montgomeryshire; Newport East; and Ogmore.

2.2 Index of change

The extent to which boundaries are changed can be quantified by calculating an 'index of change'. The index of change for a new constituency is equal to the number of electors being added to or removed from an existing base constituency, as a proportion of the base constituency's total electorate.

**Chart 2: Extent of change in constituency boundaries:
Index of change**



In four proposed constituencies the index of change exceeds 100%, meaning the number of electors leaving or joining the base is greater than the base electorate (in such cases the term 'base' is not very meaningful). These include Cardiff East and Cardiff Central and Penarth. The existing constituency which contributes most electors to both these seats is Cardiff South and Penarth.

These proposals represent a much more extensive revision of constituency boundaries than the boundary changes that came into force at the 2010 General Election. At the previous boundary review (which recommended the constituency boundaries currently in use), 18 out of 40 constituencies were left unchanged and in another 18 recommended seats the index of change was less than 10%, although in the north-west of Wales there was significant redrawing of boundaries.⁶

Index of change – Dee Estuary, example

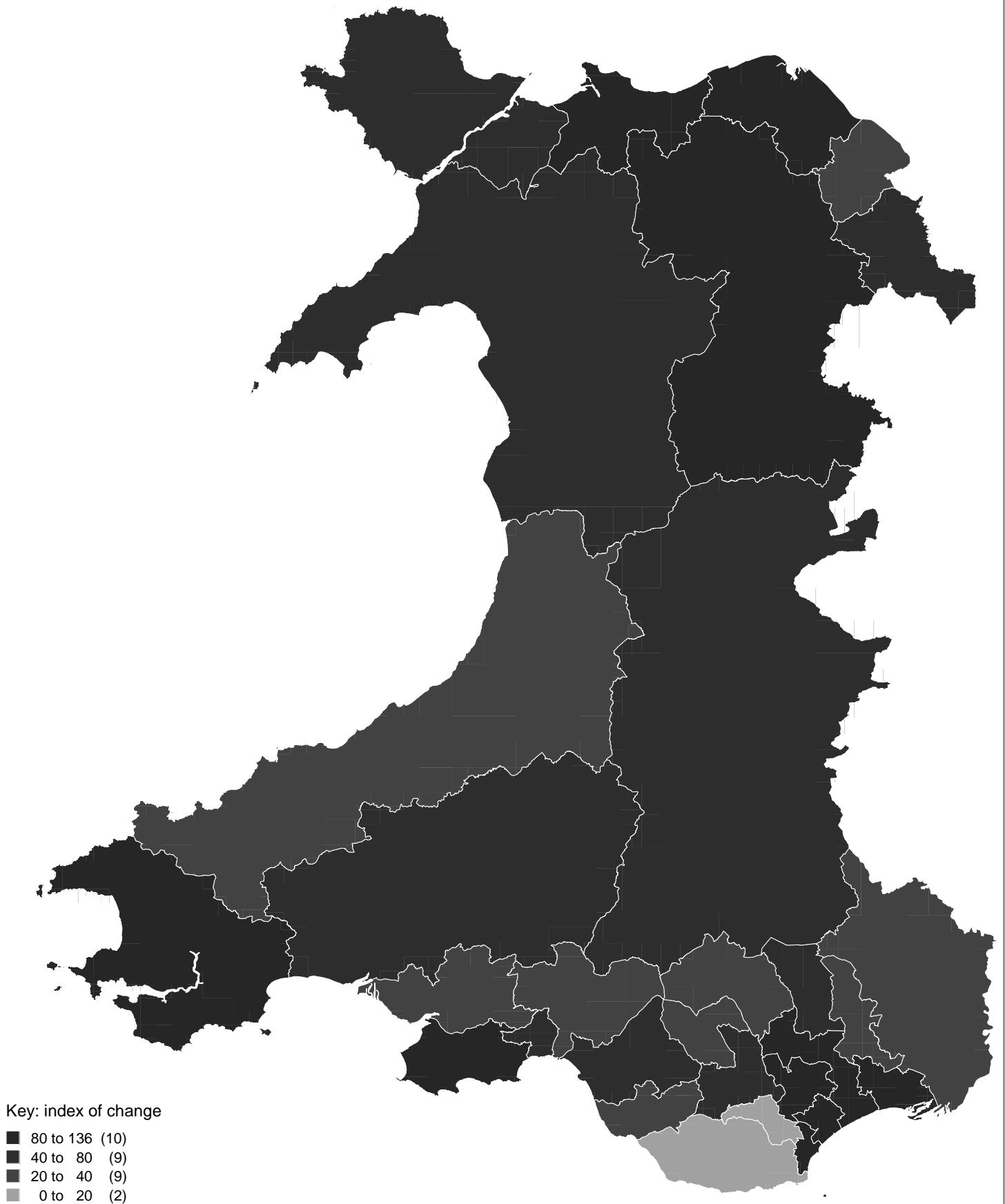
The proposed Dee Estuary constituency has the existing Vale of Clwyd seat as its base. 45,155 of Vale of Clwyd's 56,264 electors are transferred to Dee Estuary, with the remaining 11,109 electors in Vale of Clwyd transferred to another proposed constituency. Dee Estuary takes a further 35,123 electors from the existing Delyn seat.

The index of change for the proposed constituency is 82.2%:

- Electorate of base = 56,264
- Electors removed from base = 11,109
- Electors added to base = 35,123
- Index of change = $(11,109+35,123)/56,264 = 82.2\%$

⁶ Rallings and Thrasher, *Media Guide to the New Parliamentary Constituencies*, 2007

Proposed boundary changes: Index of change, Wales

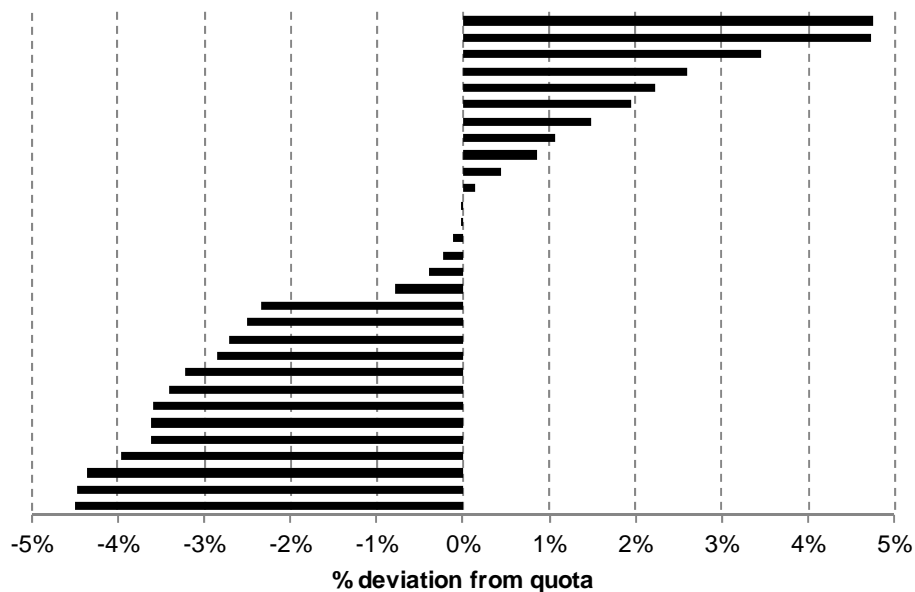


4 Electorate size and deviation from electoral quota

4.1 Deviation from electoral quota

The Boundary Commission for Wales is required to propose constituencies that have an electorate within 5% of the UK Electoral Quota of 76,641. Therefore constituency electorates must be at least 72,810 and at most 80,473. The average electorate of the 30 proposed seats in Wales is 76,053, about 600 electors (0.8%) fewer than the quota. Therefore the electorates of proposed seats are skewed towards the bottom end of the permitted electorate range, as shown in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Deviation of proposed constituency electorates from UK Electoral Quota



4.2 Largest and smallest electorates

The proposed constituency with the largest electorate is Dee Estuary, which contained 80,278 electors at 1 December 2010. It comprises 80% of the existing Vale of Clwyd seat and 65% of the existing Delyn seat.

The only other proposed seat to contain more than 80,000 electors is Alyn and Deeside, which has an electorate of 80,268. It wholly contains the existing constituency of the same name, as well as 35% of the electorate of the existing Delyn seat.

The proposed constituency with the smallest electorate is Rhondda, which has an electorate of 73,194 and wholly contains the existing Rhondda seat.

Currently the largest seat in Wales in electoral terms is Cardiff South and Penarth, which has an electorate of 73,607. The smallest existing seat is Arfon, with an electorate of 40,707.

7 List of proposed constituencies

Proposed constituency	Electorate	Rank	Area (km²)	Rank	Index of change
Aberavon and Ogmore	73,895	24	279.3	15	71.8
Alyn and Deeside	80,268	2	214.0	18	30.5
Blaenau Gwent	77,304	9	157.5	21	44.4
Bridgend	73,596	27	143.3	22	24.9
Caerfyrddin	76,549	14	2,116.4	5	47.3
Caerphilly and Cardiff North	73,873	25	101.5	26	98.1
Cardiff Central and Penarth	76,346	16	30.0	30	105.2
Cardiff East	79,287	3	48.4	29	115.9
Cardiff West	74,844	18	64.8	27	18.1
Ceredigion and North Pembrokeshire	74,173	22	2,460.9	3	32.4
Dee Estuary	80,278	1	392.0	9	82.2
Glyndwr and North Powys	74,554	20	2,199.3	4	135.8
Gower and Swansea West	77,453	8	242.0	17	92.2
Gwynedd	73,297	28	3,160.1	2	63.6
Heads of the Valleys	74,029	23	273.2	16	35.2
Llanelli	76,970	10	326.3	14	31.7
Menai ac Ynys Môn	74,453	21	981.5	7	50.3
Monmouthshire	73,862	26	916.5	8	38.4
Neath	76,747	11	350.8	12	33.2
Newport Central	76,461	15	105.7	25	99.1
Newport West and Sirhowy Valley	73,217	29	171.2	19	121.2
North Wales Coast	78,628	4	360.6	10	89.6
Pontypridd	77,786	7	164.9	20	48.1
Rhondda	73,194	30	137.0	24	38.7
South and West Pembrokeshire	76,039	17	1,041.7	6	88.0
South Powys	78,136	6	3,897.8	1	45.7
Swansea East	76,637	13	62.7	28	42.8
The Vale of Glamorgan	74,728	19	330.1	13	5.0
Torfaen	76,639	12	140.7	23	24.3
Wrexham Maelor	78,353	5	354.5	11	51.6

Source: Boundary Commission for Wales

8 Summary of initial proposals across the UK

The publication of proposals for Wales means that initial proposals for new constituency boundaries have now been published for the whole of the UK. Across the UK the number of constituencies will fall from 650 to 600 as a result of the boundary review. The average constituency electorate (excluding exempted constituencies⁹) will increase by about 6,000.

8.1 Constituencies remaining unchanged

80 constituencies are left intact in the initial proposals, 77 in England and 3 in Scotland. These include the two island constituencies of Na h-Eileanan an Iar and Orkney and Shetland. Additionally Basingstoke constituency would see a slight realignment of its boundaries but its electorate would be unaffected.

8.2 Electorate size

The proposed Hackney North seat in London contains the maximum permitted number of electors (80,473) and so is the largest proposed constituency in electoral terms.

The seats with the smallest electorates are the preserved constituencies of Na h-Eileanan an Iar and Orkney and Shetland, containing 21,837 electors and 33,755 electors respectively. The proposed Isle of Wight South seat has an electorate of 54,671 and would be the smallest seat in England, followed by Isle of Wight North which has an electorate of 56,253. Out of the 596 seats not exempted from requirements on electoral size, the proposed Oldham and Saddleworth constituency has the minimum permitted electorate of 72,810.

8.3 Geographical area

The Boundary Commission for Scotland's proposals include a Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty seat with an area of 12,830 km² and an electorate of 74,290. The largest existing constituency, Ross, Skye and Lochaber, is slightly smaller at 12,779 km² but contains over 20,000 fewer electors.

The six largest proposed constituencies are all in Scotland. South Powys in Wales is the seventh largest with an area of 3,898 km². The proposed Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat (2,940 km²) is the largest in Northern Ireland and the 13th largest of all proposed UK seats. England's largest proposed seat, Hexham (2,604 km²), is the 16th largest overall.

8.4 Extent of change

44 proposed seats have an index of change greater than 100%, so that the number of electors transferred to or from some existing base constituency in order to create the proposed seat is greater than the base constituency's electorate. These include 37 proposed seats in England, 4 in Wales and 3 in Scotland.

Seats proposed by the Boundary Commission for Wales have an average index of change of 60%. This is higher than for any other part of the UK. The average index of change for proposed North East England constituencies and for proposed London seats is 59%.

The region with the lowest average index of change is South East England (27%). There are currently 84 constituencies in the South East and the region would lose one seat in the boundary review. By contrast, Wales contains 40 seats currently and will lose 10.

⁹ Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Orkney and Shetland, and two seats on the Isle of Wight.

