



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE Voluntary Mergers: Update on Expressions of Interest Received
DATE 27 January 2015
BY Leighton Andrews AM, Minister for Public Services

My written statement on 11 December 2014 explained that I would delay announcing my decision on each of the Expressions of Interest submitted by Local Authorities wishing to develop a proposal for Voluntary Merger. I am announcing those decisions today.

I welcome the leadership shown by the political Leaders of each of the authorities concerned and their willingness to help shape their futures. I understand that securing agreement from their prospective partner councils took a good deal of work and personal commitment.

I received three formal Expressions of Interest submitted in accordance with the timetable set out in a Prospectus which I issued in September 2014¹. These were from the following authorities:

- Torfaen County Borough Council & Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council;
- Bridgend County Borough Council & Vale of Glamorgan Council; and
- Conwy County Borough Council & Denbighshire County Council.

¹ *Invitation to Principal Local Authorities in Wales to submit proposals for voluntary merger, Welsh Government, 18 September 2014*

I have considered each Expression of Interest carefully against the criteria set out in the Prospectus. I am disappointed to report that on the basis of this assessment I am not persuaded that any one of these Expressions of Interest sufficiently meets the criteria for moving ahead to prepare a full Voluntary Merger Proposal.

While there were some positive aspects to each Expression of Interest, the Prospectus was clear on what would be required. This included the need for both applicant authorities to set out a compelling vision for the new authority and to provide assurance that post merger arrangements would reduce complexity and increase coherence and coterminosity of public services. Where proposals diverged from our full preferred map (Williams Option 1), authorities were expected to provide evidence of exceptional circumstances as to why they should be approved. We also needed to have confidence that authorities would be able to develop comprehensive merger proposals by 30 June 2015.

Earlier, I spoke with the Leaders of all the authorities involved to advise them of my decision and will be writing to each one of them shortly setting out my reasons for each decision in more detail.

As Members will be aware the Local Government (Wales) Bill was published yesterday. It includes provisions to enable Voluntary Mergers to take place which would need to be agreed by 30 November 2015. I will give further consideration to these provisions as the Bill proceeds.

Note

The Expressions of Interest have been published by the councils involved and can be found at:

Bridgend County Borough Council and the Vale of Glamorgan :
http://www.google.co.uk/url?url=http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/web/groups/public/documents/agenda_moderngov/115948.pdf&rct=j&frm=1&q=&esrc=s&sa=U&ei=EnjGVJLRNLNCv7Ab40oHABQ&ved=OCBQQFjAA&usq=AFQjCNHq6MXAIHZ8DITshyG92L4dKUBkbw

Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=5052&LLL=0>

Torfaen County Borough Council and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (*draft version*):

<http://moderngov.torfaen.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=1165&Ver=4&LLL=0>