

## Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru

### Publication and redaction of representations during electoral and boundary reviews

#### July 2024

1. This document sets out the Commission's policy regarding the publication of responses (known as "representations") which it receives when carrying out reviews of local government boundaries and electoral arrangements, and reviews of Senedd constituency boundaries, under Parts 3 and 3A of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru etc. Act 2013 ("**the 2013 Act**").
2. During reviews under the 2013 Act the Commission engages in consultation with the public, inviting and considering representations from interested parties in relation to the issues for consideration in the review.
3. The Commission believes that it may assist individuals and interested parties to participate in reviews under the 2013 Act, and to understand the reasons for the Commission's decisions, if representations which the Commission receives during the consultation periods in its reviews are published.
4. The Commission's general policy is therefore that when it publishes its draft proposals in a review, it will publish at the same time any representations which it received during its initial consultations. Similarly, when the Commission publishes its final recommendations in a review, the Commission will also publish any representations which it received during the consultation period in relation to its draft proposals.
5. However, when the Commission publishes representations, it will remove (or "redact") certain information as described below.

#### Redaction of personal information

6. To protect the privacy of individuals participating in a review, the Commission will take the following approach to redacting personal information contained in representations which the Commission publishes.
7. When the Commission publishes representations from public figures and officials (such as councillors, Members of Parliament or Members of the Senedd) which were submitted to the Commission in an official capacity:
  - the Commission will publish the name of any public figure or official writing in an official capacity;
  - however all postal and email addresses, telephone numbers and signatures will be redacted.
8. When the Commission publishes representations from members of the public, and from public figures or officials writing in a personal capacity:

- the Commission will redact the name and postal address of individuals submitting representations, but will publish the approximate location of the individual's postal address – that is, by reference to the village, town or city stated; and
  - all email addresses, telephone numbers and signatures will be redacted.
9. The Commission's 'Data protection and privacy policy' provides further information about the Commission's processing of personal data. This can be accessed at: [Data Protection and Privacy Policy | DBCC \(gov.wales\)](#)

### Other redactions

10. The Commission recognises that, in some situations, representations which it receives may be controversial – for example where they address local political issues.
11. The Commission takes into account all representations which it receives during the consultation periods in its reviews under the 2013 Act. However this does not mean that the Commission necessarily accepts or acts on every argument made in every representation. The Commission is under legal obligations relating to its functions, and adopts its own policies in relation to the exercise of its functions, as the Commission makes clear in the documents which it publishes at the start of each review.
12. The Commission encourages members of the public to participate in its reviews and in particular to respond when the Commission consults the public in relation to its draft proposals in a review. Members of the public also have an opportunity at this stage of a review to respond to any representations which the Commission has received and published, if there are points of dispute contained in those representations.
13. When it publishes representations, the Commission will redact any arguments which are plainly irrelevant to the issues under consideration in its review. However as a general rule the Commission will not redact arguments made in representations which could reasonably be understood to address relevant issues, even if their accuracy could be disputed.
14. On occasion the Commission may agree to make additional redactions if it receives a challenge to a published representation and is satisfied that the challenge is justified. More information about challenging the Commission's publication of representations is provided below.

### Challenging the publication of representations

15. On occasion, individuals may consider that representations which the Commission has published involve personal attacks, disclose personal information or may be damaging to their or others' reputations. Anyone in this situation may challenge the publication of a representation by notifying the Commission. The fastest way of notifying the Commission of a challenge to a published representation will be by sending an email to [enquiries@dbcc.gov.wales](mailto:enquiries@dbcc.gov.wales)

16. In these situations, the Commission may agree to make further redactions to published representations – particularly where the Commission agrees that a representation exceeds the bounds of fair and relevant comment or could reasonably be understood to reveal personal information about an individual or to be damaging to an individual's reputation.
17. Anyone notifying the Commission of a challenge to a published representation is encouraged to identify the relevant representation and explain the grounds for challenge. The Commission will consider this information and will provide reasons for its decision as to whether to make further redactions.