

## **P-04-674 Say NO to Dyfed – Petitioner to the Committee. 4.02.16**

Please find attached some of the reasons supporting this petition.

The Council Tax bill could rise by over 20%. For 2015–2016, the average county council element of Band D Council Tax for each county is:

Carmarthenshire £1,076

Ceredigion £1,070

Pembrokeshire £801

So, households in Pembrokeshire pay £801 a year on average. For ‘Dyfed’ as a whole the average is £981. That’s an extra £180 – more than £3 per week. the government says that it will save money, but why should Pembrokeshire pay more to bring back Dyfed? We say no. Let’s keep Pembrokeshire and make savings here.

The Minister has not said how this issue will be dealt with, though he did acknowledge its existence.

Pembrokeshire people would have less say and much less accountability

We’ve already seen the impact on local hospitals of decision making moving out of our County. The same could happen with Council services. The Minister suggests that this is a good reason for the proposal. The Health Board has been a total failure and services have declined while costs have spiralled.

When Dyfed existed last time we had District Councils in place to take some local decisions. The minister seems to suggest that we will have area boards that will do the same role.

The Pembrokeshire brand is valuable.

Pembrokeshire is much better known than Dyfed. The unique Pembrokeshire brand is very important to local tourism and food producing businesses.

Who knows where Dyfed is outside of the three Counties? Why endanger it? Centralisation in Carmarthen is not the answer for Pembrokeshire. Let’s work to improve Pembrokeshire Council rather than scrapping our County all together.

Joint working but retaining local accountability is the answer.

We need to collaborate with our neighbours. Local government across Wales has to change for the better and Pembrokeshire is no exception. We need to reorganise the management of council services to save costs while, at the same time, delivering a high standard of service.

The argument in favour of Dyfed seems to be that centralisation in Carmarthen is the magic formula. However, many people might be surprised to learn that there are already 69 joint working arrangements in place between Pembrokeshire County Council and other Councils.

These range from joint procurement of telephony and computers to sharing duty officer services, where each of the three counties provides cover for the whole area for one week in three. Therefore, it's clear that many cost savings can be achieved while retaining Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire as separate counties.

The same strategy is being followed in other parts of Great Britain. For example, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire have some joint working arrangements in place. Yet, there's no sign of the Westminster Government calling for those two counties to be merged.

Quite rightly, Pembrokeshire Council is working hard to increase the number of joint working projects. What has been achieved so far is just the tip of the iceberg compared to what is needed and, indeed, to what is possible.

Although Pembrokeshire residents pay a very low rate of Council Tax compared to other areas, Pembrokeshire Council has been guilty of wasting money by, for example, paying excess salaries to council officers. This is changing but much more needs to be done.

Thanks

Bob Kilmister