

# Stark contrast in levels of governments' understanding and practical help for islands

**M**AE Ynys Môn yn lle arbennig iawn - ac fel ysoniaid sawl gwaith yn y Tŷ Cyffredin, hon yw'r etholaeth orau yn y DU!

**Y**NYS Môn is a very special place - and as I've said more than once in the House of Commons, it is the best constituency in the UK!

There have been settlements of people living on Ynys Môn for the past 8,000 years. Our island was the last stronghold of the druids, it has been the home of kings and the refuges of saints. For 97% of that time it stood physically disconnected from mainland Britain - Môn Mam Cymru, Anglesey the Mother of Wales - one of the thirteen historic counties of Wales established in the 13th century.

Living on an island is very special. Communities tend to be stronger, there is a sense of being set apart from the rest of the UK, somehow different to the rest. Alongside the huge pleasures and benefits of island life, come needs and challenges that are also different to the rest. It is that unique sense of being that made me so determined to protect Ynys Môn's status as a Parliamentary constituency, and doing so was one of my first achievements after entering Westminster.

During the 2020 Parliamentary review of constituencies - I lobbied to put Ynys Môn on the same footing as other UK islands including the Isle of Wight, Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Orkney and Shetland which already enjoyed protected status.

The 2023 Boundary Review has now confirmed that Ynys Môn, as a protected constituency, can no longer be "joined" with a mainland area to form a new constituency in the UK Parliament.

That means that in the future, as now, your Member of Parliament will always be focused on the unique needs and issues faced by this island community of Ynys Môn.

Sadly the same cannot be said for the Senedd - the Welsh Parliament. The Welsh Government's proposed Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill will see Ynys Môn joined with



● Virginia Crosbie MP with (left) Rt Hon Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up and (right) Mike Gould, General Manager of the Ucheldre Centre.



the mainland to form a larger Senedd constituency. This constituency will be served by six elected Members. Under this proposal it is entirely possible that not one elected Member will be based here on Ynys Môn. The Welsh Government's own report into the proposal notes that: "Some residents of Ynys Môn may consider this as a negative impact given Ynys Môn's distinctive geography as an island."

There is an abject failure in this proposal to recognise that it is not just Ynys Môn's geography that is distinctive. An island's boundaries are not just geographical but are built into the culture and essence of its people and communities. Its needs are different in a way that it is almost impossible to understand unless you are an islander.

Having fought so hard to get protected status for Ynys Môn in the UK Parliament, I am deeply disappointed and frustrated that the Labour Government in Cardiff is throwing this away for the Senedd.

Under their new proposals there will be 96 Senedd Members - 36 more than the current 60 Members - at an estimated additional cost to the taxpayer of over £100 million.

That is one elected Senedd representative for every 32,000 people. The Senedd sits just twice a week.

To put that in context, in the

UK Parliament there is one elected representative for every 103,000 people and we sit four or five days a week.

The Welsh Government claims that it cannot find funding to deliver the basics like healthcare, public transport, housing and social care, and yet it can find the time and resources to spend £100 million putting more part time politicians in Cardiff.

This seems even more ridiculous when you consider that under their proposals the six Members representing Ynys Môn from 2026 may not even live on the island.

Every report I read about the dire state of services in Wales seems to include the Welsh Government pointing the finger at the UK Government for not giving them enough money. Yet for every £1 the UK Government allocates per person in England, it allocates £1.15 in Wales.

The problem in Wales is not a lack of funding - it is the Labour Welsh Government's abject failure to fund the things that matter to us, like bus services, GPs and NHS dentists, whilst wasting millions of taxpayers' money on pet projects like the default 20mph speed limit, extra Senedd Members and depriving Ynys Môn of its historic privilege to be a constituency in its own right.

The UK Government's stance on island communities is far

more empathetic to our needs. As part of its Levelling Up Agenda, the Conservative Government in Westminster established the Islands Forum.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove, said "Island communities contribute richly to the UK and share their own unique set of challenges as well as opportunities."

"The Islands Forum creates a space for islanders to work together and give feedback directly to the Government, ensuring that islands can be even better places for people to work and live."

The UK Government wants to understand and support the distinctive nature of island communities. It also recognises that islands have often been left behind in the past and desperately need additional support to level up.

Through the Islands Forum, islands including Ynys Môn are able to speak together and make the case for additional funding and support where it is most needed. Since the Department for Levelling Up was established these have been chaired by the Secretary of State - underlining just how much importance the UK Government attaches to these meetings.

There have been three Islands Forums to date - in Orkney, the Isle of Lewis and the Isle of Wight. The most recent was attended by one of the two Dep-

uty Leaders of Anglesey Council who I am sure brought back a wealth of contacts and knowledge to share with his colleagues.

This week the Islands Forum has been held on Ynys Môn in Chateau Rhianfa. Hosting the event is yet another example of Ynys Môn's high profile in Westminster - a profile I have worked so hard to develop since you elected me.

It has been a privilege to welcome Michael Gove and his team to our island and I was delighted that he accepted my invitation to visit the Ucheldre Centre whilst he was here.

The Ucheldre Centre is Holyhead's main arts and culture asset and Holyhead's Levelling Up project includes a major expansion of the centre, providing more space for events, classes and workshops for all ages. The Secretary of State has seen the work under way and his name will be on a special plaque recognising the transformational work being carried out there through the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund.

The Levelling Up fund of £17m is just one of many streams of financial support that Ynys Môn has received from the UK Government over the past four years. These include £16m from the Shared Prosperity Fund, £2.7m from the Community Renewal Fund, £26m for Anglesey Freeport,

£20m for Holyhead Breakwater and, of course, £160m for the purchase of the Wylfa site. This is significantly more funding than Ynys Môn received from the EU in the six years before Brexit.

The Levelling Up funds in particular are distributed at a local authority level so that they can be used in ways that best meet local needs. Much of this funding has therefore been streamed to Anglesey Council to allocate to enhance the lives of local people and businesses and make our island a more sustainable and economically successful place.

I hope you are seeing and feeling the benefits of the millions of pounds our Council has received from the UK Government.

I enjoy meeting as many constituents as possible, as well as helping individuals, groups and organisations with problems, projects and ideas. You can contact me at [virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk) or call me on 01407 644645. Diolch yn fawr.

Rwy'n mwynhau cyfarfod â chymaint o etholwyr â phosibl, yn ogystal â helpu unigolion, grwpiau a sefydliadau gyda problemau, prosiectau a syniadau. Yna cysylltwch â ni - byddwn wrth fy modd ynclwyd gennych - gallwch gysylltu â mi ar [virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk) neu ffoniwch fi ar 01407 644645. Diolch yn fawr.