



From the office of the Executive Leader / Oddi wrth Swyddfa'r Arweinydd Gweithredol

Powys County Council
Powys County Hall
LLANDRINDOD WELLS
Powys
LD1 5LG

20th May 2013

Lesley Griffiths AM
Minister for Local Government and Government Business
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Minister

The Council understands that an amendment which we requested in discussions with your officers, to the provisions of the Local Government Measure 2011 relating to remote attendance currently being debated by the Communities. Equality and Local Government Committee in their deliberations on the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill have been lost at a recent meeting of the committee.

The amendment which we requested relates to the requirement for the majority of Members attending a remote meeting to be at the main location which this Council has argued will make the provisions for remote attendance unworkable in Powys. This loss of the amendment is therefore of concern to this Council.

The reason for the Council's argument in relation to the current requirement, is that with the geographical spread of Members (34 in Montgomeryshire, 15 in Radnorshire and 24 in Brecknockshire) and using a meeting of the full Council as an example, we will never be able to achieve a majority being in a central location irrespective of the main location of the meeting as those in the "remote" locations will always outnumber those in the central location.

In addition the provisions for remote attendance was welcomed in Powys as it can reap benefits for the Council in saving travelling costs by Members whilst providing accessibility to meetings. In fact as you are aware Minister, the Council has recently approved a capital allocation of £800,000 towards updating equipment at various Council locations to take account of the need to replace the current congress systems, but also to provide for increased webcasting and including the need to implement remote attendance.

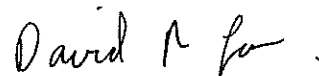
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Finally, taking a longer term view of local government as a whole, if in the future a decision is taken to restructure local government, the new areas likely to be created will be geographically large, and will face difficulties similar to those faced by Powys currently due to its size. The drive for greater joint working and potentially regional working will in addition make the ability to attend meetings remotely more important.

As Minister for Local Government, can I ask for your support in pursuing the approval of this amendment. I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, Christine Chapman A.M., in the hope that the committee will take account of this Council's views in their future deliberations on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David R Jones".

**County Councillor David R Jones
Executive Leader, Powys County Council**

cc Christine Chapman A.M., Chair – Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee