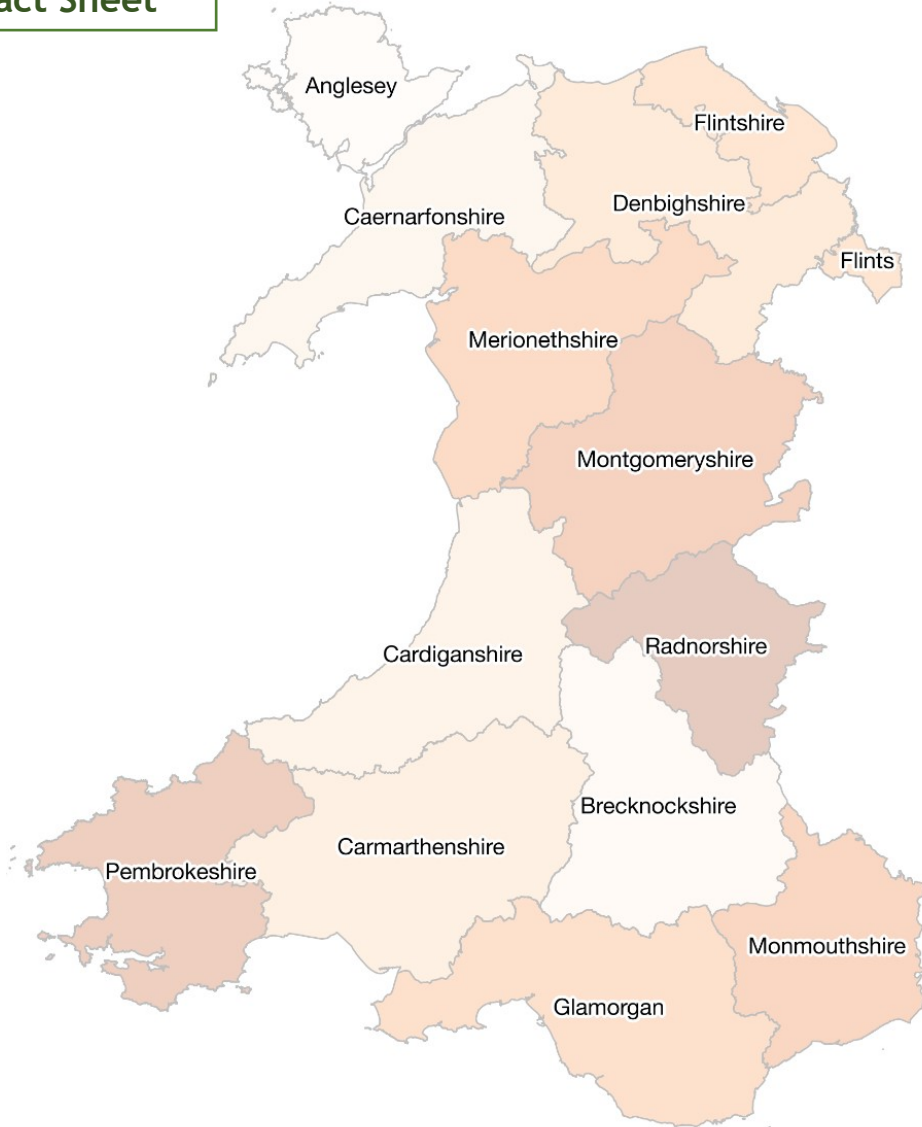


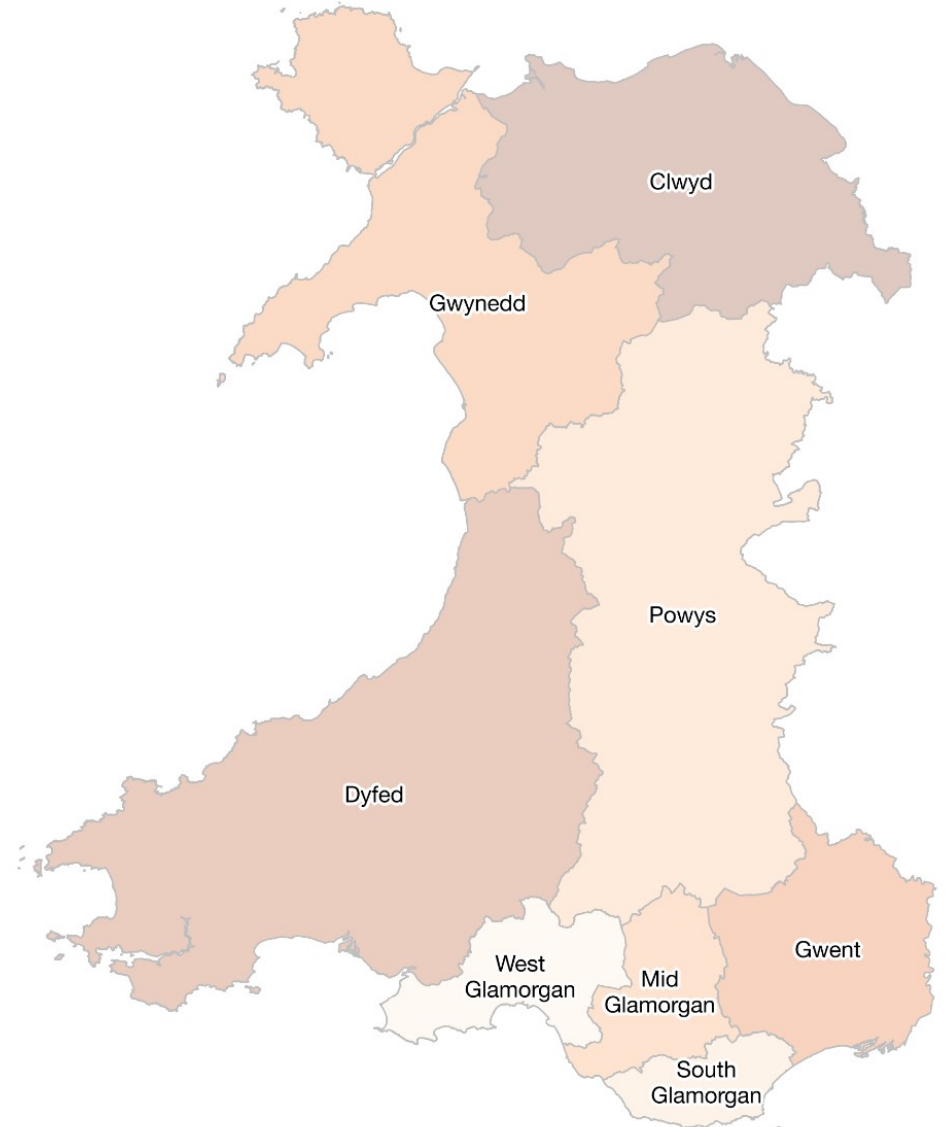


Fact Sheet

The lieutenancies of Wales and their relationship to the historic counties



Historic counties of Wales



Lieutenancy areas of Wales

1. Introduction

This document clarifies what the lieutenancies of Wales are and their relationship to the historic counties. Whilst the office of lord-lieutenant is often thought of as having a close association with the historic counties, the lieutenancies of Wales currently bear little resemblance to the historic counties.

The cover page presents a map of the lieutenancy areas of Wales compared to the historic counties. There are few similarities between the two. Whereas the lieutenancies were once based on the historic counties, since 1974 they have been based on the 8 local government “counties” then created. Despite local government in Wales now being provided by 22 unitary authorities, the lieutenancies are still based on the 8 former local government “counties” - now re-labelled “preserved counties”.

To continue to appoint lord-lieutenants to unloved, long-defunct local government areas is to confound history, geography and cultural identity. There are no practical problems to a return to basing the lieutenancies on the historic counties:

- Many of the lieutenancies of Scotland are closely aligned with an historic county and not aligned with a current local government area. This presents no problem to their operation.
- The post is voluntary and most lord-lieutenants claim only small expenses. Having 13 lord-lieutenants would not mean an increase in the number of engagements across Wales.
- The wide range in populations between the historic counties can be dealt with via the option of appointing a vice-lieutenant and deputy-lieutenants as required.

A return to basing lieutenancies on the historic counties should be viewed as the appointment of a dignitary to each historic county in recognition of their importance to our history, heritage and culture. The office of lord-lieutenant has never defined the counties, most of which pre-date its creation by many centuries, and should never be seen as such.

To properly align the lieutenancies with the historic counties, the lieutenancy areas of the *Lieutenancies Act 1997*^[2] should be defined in terms of the *Historic Counties Standard*^[1], widely recognised (e.g. by the Office for National Statistics^[7]) as the standard definition for the names and areas of the historic counties.

The *Lieutenancies Act 1997*^[2] refers to lieutenancies in England and Wales as “counties” and those in Scotland as “areas”. Referring to the lieutenancies as “areas” throughout Great Britain would clarify the administrative nature of these areas and the nature of their relationship to the historic counties.

Similar changes could also return the office of sheriff to the historic counties.

Section 2 describes the history and purpose of the office of lord-lieutenant. Section 3 describes the current legislation which governs them. Section 4 compares the current lieutenancy areas to the historic counties. Section 5 discusses an approach to basing the lieutenancy areas directly on the historic counties. Section 6 presents some concluding remarks.

2. The office of lord-lieutenant

A lord-lieutenant is appointed by The Queen and is Her Majesty's representative in their lieutenancy area. The role is voluntary and apolitical. The office was created in the 1540s for the purpose of organising a county's militia.

Prior to 1889, lord-lieutenants were appointed to serve within each historic county. From 1889, lord-lieutenants were appointed to the combined areas of the new *administrative counties* and associated *county boroughs* created by the *Local Government Act 1888*^[3]. The lieutenancies of Wales remained identical in name and close in area to the historic counties until the enactment of the *Local Government Act 1972*^[4].

The 1972 Act created 8 new local government "counties" and tied the lieutenancies to these. The *Local Government (Wales) Act 1994*^[5] abolished the 8 "counties" of the 1972 Act and created a new set of 22 local government "principal areas". The 1994 Act also created the concept of "preserved counties", defined these to be almost identical to the 8 pre-1996 local government "counties" and made them the basis of the lieutenancies. The *Preserved Counties (Amendment to Boundaries) (Wales) Order 2003*^[6] made several adjustments to the preserved county boundaries such that each preserved county now covers the combined area of several local government principal areas.

The duties of lord-lieutenants are broadly to:

- Arrange visits by members of the Royal family and to escort Royal visitors;
- Present medals, awards and certain honours on behalf of Her Majesty;
- Encourage and assess nominations for personal honour;
- Promote and support the Queens Award for Enterprise;
- Support and liaise with local units of the armed forces and their reserve and cadet forces;
- Promote and support all forms of useful community and voluntary roles and groups.

A lord-lieutenant appoints a Clerk of the Lieutenancy to be responsible for the administration of the lieutenancy. Whilst this work is often undertaken by staff located within council offices, it is not a local government post and can be held by any person of standing and integrity. In some lieutenancies in Scotland the role of clerk is undertaken by a local solicitor.



The Lord Lieutenants of Mid Glamorgan (left) and Gwynedd (right) undertaking their duties

3. Legislation governing the lieutenancies of Wales

The Lieutenancies Act 1997^[2] governs the organisation of the lieutenancies of Great Britain. According to Section 1 of the Act:

“(1) A Lord-Lieutenant shall be appointed by Her Majesty for each county in England, each county in Wales and each area in Scotland (other than the cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow).”

(2) The Lord Provost of each of the cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow is, by virtue of his office, Lord-Lieutenant for that city.

(3) Her Majesty may appoint lieutenants (in addition to the Lord-Lieutenant) for any county or area.

(4) Schedule 1 to this Act (which identifies the areas which are counties in England and Wales and areas in Scotland for the purposes of the lieutenancies) shall have effect; and in this Act “county” and “area” shall be construed accordingly.”

It should be noted that the areas to which lord-lieutenants are appointed in England and Wales are referred to as “counties” whereas those of Scotland are referred to as “areas”. Section 6 of Schedule 1 lays out the lieutenancy areas for Wales.

“The counties in Wales for the purposes of this Act are the preserved counties, that is to say, the counties in Wales as they stood immediately before the passing of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 (but subject to any redrawing of their boundaries by or under that Act or the Local Government Act 1972).”

Section 64 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994^[5] defines “preserved county”:

“preserved county” means any county created by the 1972 Act as a county in Wales, as that county stood immediately before the passing of this Act but subject to any provision of this Act, or made under the 1972 Act, redrawing its boundaries.”

The preserved counties were subsequently amended by the Preserved Counties (Amendment to Boundaries) (Wales) Order 2003^[6] which defined them entirely in terms of the current local government areas. The Appendix presents the preserved counties as defined by the Preserved Counties (Amendment to Boundaries) (Wales) Order 2003^[6], relating them to the local government principal areas and to the historic counties.

4. Comparison of the lieutenancy areas to the historic counties

There is very little relationship between the 8 preserved counties of Wales and 13 the historic counties.

The only historic county name used by the preserved counties is that of Glamorgan. The preserved county of West Glamorgan does cover a large area in the west of Glamorgan. The preserved county of 'Mid Glamorgan' does cover a large area in the central part of Glamorgan, along with a sizeable area in the south of Brecknockshire. The preserved county of 'South Glamorgan' covers a large area in the south-east of Glamorgan (including Cardiff, Penarth and Barry) though also includes an area in the south-west of Monmouthshire (including some of Cardiff's eastern suburbs).

Gwent was a medieval Welsh kingdom, lying between the Rivers Wye and Usk. The name has sometimes been used historically to be synonymous with Monmouthshire (created in 1535) despite their radically different areas. The preserved county of Gwent covers most of Monmouthshire but also a large area in the east of Glamorgan (including Caerphilly) and also a populous area of Brecknockshire (along the Heads of the Valleys).

The preserved county of Dyfed almost exactly covers the combined area of the historic counties of West Wales: Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. The name was first applied to the 1974 local government "county" which preceded the preserved county. It relates to an ancient kingdom name though the preserved county's area is radically different to the area of that kingdom.

The preserved county of Powys very roughly covers the three historic counties of Mid Wales. It covers most of Brecknockshire, all of Radnorshire, all of Montgomeryshire, but also small areas of Glamorgan and Denbighshire. The name was first applied to the 1974 local government "county" which preceded the preserved county. It relates to an ancient kingdom name though the preserved county's area is radically different to the area of that kingdom.

The preserved county of Clwyd cuts completely across historic county boundaries. It covers all of Flintshire, most of Denbighshire, and sizeable areas of Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire. The name is derived from the principal river through the east of the area.

The preserved county of Gwynedd cuts completely across historic county boundaries. It covers all of Anglesey, and sizeable areas of Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire. The name was first applied to the 1974 local government "county" which preceded the preserved county. It relates to an ancient kingdom name though the preserved county's area is radically different to the area of that kingdom.

5. Basing lieutenancy areas on the historic counties

There is no reason why the lieutenancies of Wales could not be based directly on the historic counties rather than on the preserved counties. Such a return would promote the identities of the historic counties and their role in our history, heritage and culture.

There are no practical problems with basing the lieutenancies on the historic counties:

- The lieutenancies of Scotland, though not based entirely on the historic counties, are not generally aligned with current local government areas but this has no adverse impact on their operation. Though most lieutenancy offices are based in council offices, they are not local government posts. Some lieutenancies are based within a local solicitor's office;
- The post of lord-lieutenant is voluntary though expenses can be claimed for travel and administration. Many make only minimal expenses claims. Hence, a move to having 13 lord-lieutenants should not entail an increase in public expense;
- Whilst the historic counties of Wales have a wide range in populations and areas, this presents no problem given the options to appoint a vice-lieutenant and any number of deputy-lieutenants.

Any move to base the lieutenancies on the historic counties should be done in a way which makes it clear that the office of lord-lieutenant does not define the historic counties. A lord-lieutenant should be seen as being appointed to serve within each historic county.

The lieutenancies could be aligned with the historic counties by basing the definition of the lieutenancy areas in the Lieutenancies Act 1997^[2] on the Historic Counties Standard^[1]. This is the standard definition for the names and areas of the historic counties and is widely used in many reference works (e.g. by the Office for National Statistics in its *Index of Place Names in Great Britain*^[7]). Pragmatically the lieutenancies should be defined in terms of Definition A of the Historic Counties Standard^[1], whereby detached parts of counties are not separately identified, but are associated with their host county.

The Lieutenancies Act 1997^[2] currently refers to the lieutenancies in England and Wales as "counties" and those in Scotland as "areas". A move to refer to the lieutenancies areas as "areas" throughout Great Britain would not just make the legislation more consistent but would make clearer the administrative nature of these areas and that fact they do not define the historic counties. This could be achieved by amending Section 1 of the Act to:

"(1) A Lord-Lieutenant shall be appointed by Her Majesty for each area in England, each area in Wales and each area in Scotland (other than the cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow).

(2) The Lord Provost of each of the cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow is, by virtue of his office, Lord-Lieutenant for that city.

(3) Her Majesty may appoint lieutenants (in addition to the Lord-Lieutenant) for any area.

(4) Schedule 1 to this Act (which identifies the areas which are areas in England, Wales and Scotland for the purposes of the lieutenancies) shall have effect; and in this Act "area" shall be construed accordingly."

There are several other places in the Act where "county or area" would need to be replaced by "area".

The title and first section of Schedule 1 would need amending to:

“AREAS FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE LIEUTENANCIES IN GREAT BRITAIN

Preliminary

1 The provisions of this Schedule identify the areas which constitute areas for the purposes of the lieutenancies in Great Britain.”

The actual basing of the lieutenancies of Wales on the historic counties could be achieved by replacing Schedule 1, Section 6 of the Lieutenancies Act 1997^[2] with:

“Areas in Wales

(6) The areas in Wales for the purposes of this Act are the historic counties of Wales as defined by Definition A of the Historic Counties Standard published by the Historic Counties Trust in 2022.”

This approach could also be taken with the lieutenancies of England and Scotland.

A similar approach could also be taken with the office of sheriff in Wales. Whilst the lord-lieutenant is the sovereign’s personal and military representative, the sheriff is theoretically the sovereign’s judicial representative. The office is now an unpaid position with entirely ceremonial duties. Section 4(3) of the Sheriffs’ Act 1887^[8] says:

“In this Act “county”, in relation to Wales, means a preserved county (as defined by Section 64 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994).”

This could be amended to:

“In this Act “county”, in relation to Wales, means an historic county as defined by Definition A of the Historic Counties Standard published by the Historic Counties Trust in 2022.”

This approach could also be taken with the sheriffs of England.

Aside from the lieutenancy and shrievalty, the preserved counties are still relevant in a few legislative contexts. It would be preferable if this phrase was amended in law to “preserved area” or similar.

6. Concluding Remarks

A return to appointing lord-lieutenants and sheriffs to the historic counties would provide Government recognition of the importance of both the historic counties and these offices. Prior to 1889 these officers were appointed directly to the historic counties. Their areas remained very close to the historic counties until 1974. There is no practical obstacle to a return to this approach. Continuing to appoint them to long-defunct local government areas confounds history, geography and cultural identity.

References

- [1] Historic Counties Trust, 2022, [The Historic Counties Standard](#)
- [2] [Lieutenancies Act 1997](#)
- [3] Local Government Act 1888
- [4] [Local Government Act 1972](#)
- [5] [Local Government \(Wales\) Act 1994](#)
- [6] [Preserved Counties \(Amendment to Boundaries\) \(Wales\) Order 2003](#)
- [7] Office for National Statistics, 2021, [Index of Place Names in Great Britain](#)
- [8] [Sheriffs Act 1887](#)

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The Association of British Counties is the national body representing the 92 historic counties of the United Kingdom. ABC believes that the link that the historic counties provide between our present and our distant past adds great value to the life of the nation and should be cherished by us all. We promote the identities of the historic counties and the important part they play in our culture, heritage and geography.



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Appendix: The preserved counties (lieutenancy areas) of Wales as defined by the Preserved Counties (Amendment to Boundaries) (Wales) Order 2003^[6], related to the historic counties. Comparison to the historic counties is based on Definition A of the Historic Counties Standard^[1]

Preserved county	Local Government principal areas	Relation to historic county
Clwyd	Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham	Covers all of Flintshire, most of Denbighshire, and sizeable areas of Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire.
Dyfed	Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire	Very close in area to the combined area of Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen	Covers almost all of Monmouthshire, a large area in the east of Glamorgan and a small area in the south of Brecknockshire.
Gwynedd	Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey	Covers all of Anglesey, and sizeable areas of Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire.
Mid-Glamorgan	Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff	Covers a large area in the centre of Glamorgan and a sizeable area in the south of Brecknockshire.
Powys	Powys	Covers most of Brecknockshire, all of Radnorshire, all of Montgomeryshire, and small areas of Glamorgan and Denbighshire.
South Glamorgan	Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan	Covers a large area in the south-east of Glamorgan and a small area of the south-west of Monmouthshire.
West Glamorgan	Swansea, Neath Port Talbot	Covers a large area in the west of Glamorgan.