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REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

REPORT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM DIVISION

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REPORT OF THE UK DIVISION

The year 1996 has witnessed a major re-structuring of local government in England, Wales and Scotland. Northern Ireland remains unaffected. It has six counties and 26 districts.

Local government, in one form or another, has been in existence in England since Saxon times and in Scotland since the 12th century when the first Burghs were established. Yet the term 'local government' has been in use for only about 100 years. In England and Wales Local Government Commissions, one for each of the countries, are charged with reviewing the local government structure at intervals of not less than 10 years and not more than 15 years. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland conducts its reviews at intervals of not less than 8 years nor more than 12 years following the last re-structuring.

The last major re-structuring took place in 1974. It provided a uniform two-tier system of local government throughout the whole of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In Scotland this took the form of nine regions with 53 district councils, elsewhere the two tiers consisted of county and district. Wales had eight counties and 37 districts. England had 38 shire county councils, seven metropolitan counties, the Corporation of London (this is the City of London, a square-mile autonomous area within Greater London). The lower tier of local government comprised 36 metropolitan district councils, 32 London boroughs and 294 shire district councils. From a cartographic point of view, the counties (regions in the case of Scotland) could be shown as the first-order administrative divisions.

In the period between 1960 and 1972 a series of studies was directed at achieving greater efficiency coupled with better democratic representation in local government. Urban areas with their large populations tended to acquire greater power than the rural areas with small populations spread over a wide area. Demands for local government services and the ability to meet them were basically different in urban and rural communities. Services like education, transportation, land use, economic and other planning and development, parks, museums, social services and environmental issues appeared to be better provided at the county level where matters could be viewed from a strategic viewpoint. In practice, most of those issues became the responsibility both of the county and the district, thereby producing a duplication of cost and effort. It was considered that unitary authorities, single authorities combining the functions of county and district councils, could offer a simpler form of local government. By basing the size of the unitary authorities on population, such a structure could bring local government into closer touch with the people, a strong factor among those seeking greater local democracy.

In spite of attempts to establish those unitary authorities, the government of the day decided to set up the general two-tier structure of 1974.

A number of factors since 1974 have combined to make the concept of unitary authorities more feasible. The revolution in information technology offered facilities for distributed data-processing, interactive networks, video telephones, all of which contributed to speeding up changes in the patterns of work, travel and shopping. The potential also existed for citizens to influence matters of local concern and for authorities to think and plan strategically and yet be able to deal with the requirements of small communities.

The advantages of unitary authorities appealed to the main political parties and many local authorities. The Commissions for Scotland and Wales recommended the abandonment of two-tier local government and the creation of unitary authorities. From 1st April, 1996, Scotland's local government was placed in the hands of 36 unitary authorities - 4 city councils, 3 island councils and 29 other unitary councils. Wales adopted 22 unitary authorities consisting of 11 county councils and 11 county borough councils.

With regard to England, the situation became far more complex in the Commission's efforts to reflect the identities and interests of local communities while securing effective and convenient local government. A preliminary review by the Commission was followed by a two-year period spent collecting and assessing details of community identity, social and economic factors, topography, mobility, transportation and demography. This was followed by enquiry among the local population and in the existing local authorities.

In England, there is a great loyalty and sense of attachment to the ancient English counties. There was also found to be a deep attachment to the local community - the town, village or even the neighbourhood. Taking the country as a whole, 79 per cent of people declared more or less strongly their local attachment, whilst 52 per cent expressed a similar allegiance to their county as well.

With effect from 1st April, 1986, the councils of Greater London and the six metropolitan counties, which had been created in 1975, were abolished. Local government was entrusted to 36 metropolitan district councils and the councils of the 32 London boroughs.

On 1st April, 1996 the counties of Avon, Humberside and Cleveland were abolished, not just the councils, but the counties themselves. They had been specially created from the territories of neighbouring counties and those territories have now reverted to the counties from which they had been detached.

For the rest of the country a mixture of unitary authorities and a two-tier structure has been contrived. On the 1st April, 1996, 14 new shire unitary councils came into being. These resulted from the abolition of the three counties.

On the 1st April, 1997 a further 13 unitary councils will be added and sometime after 1st April, 1998 a further 19 more, making a total of 46 shire unitary authorities. One of the 13 unitaries of 1997 will be the County of Rutland which in 1974 had been absorbed by Leicestershire. Among the 19 unitary councils will be Herefordshire which had been combined with Worcestershire to make a single county in 1976. It will now be restored to its former status as a county but it will be a unitary authority, that is to say, it will have no subordinate district councils.

If this situation were not confusing enough to those viewing local government of Great Britain from outside, there are further complications. Although the councils have been abolished in the metropolitan counties and the shire counties which have chosen for themselves unitary councils, the counties themselves still exist in matters not related to local government. Thus Portsmouth and Southampton, which were cities within Hampshire, will become unitary authorities equivalent in status to a county but they will remain part of the County of Hampshire for ceremonial and associated purposes. The whole County of Berkshire will, from 1998, be governed locally by six unitary authorities. There will be no separate county council. Yet the County of Berkshire will continue to exist as a county without a central County Council. The same applies to the metropolitan and other county level councils which have been abolished. The counties themselves continue to exist as non-governing counties.

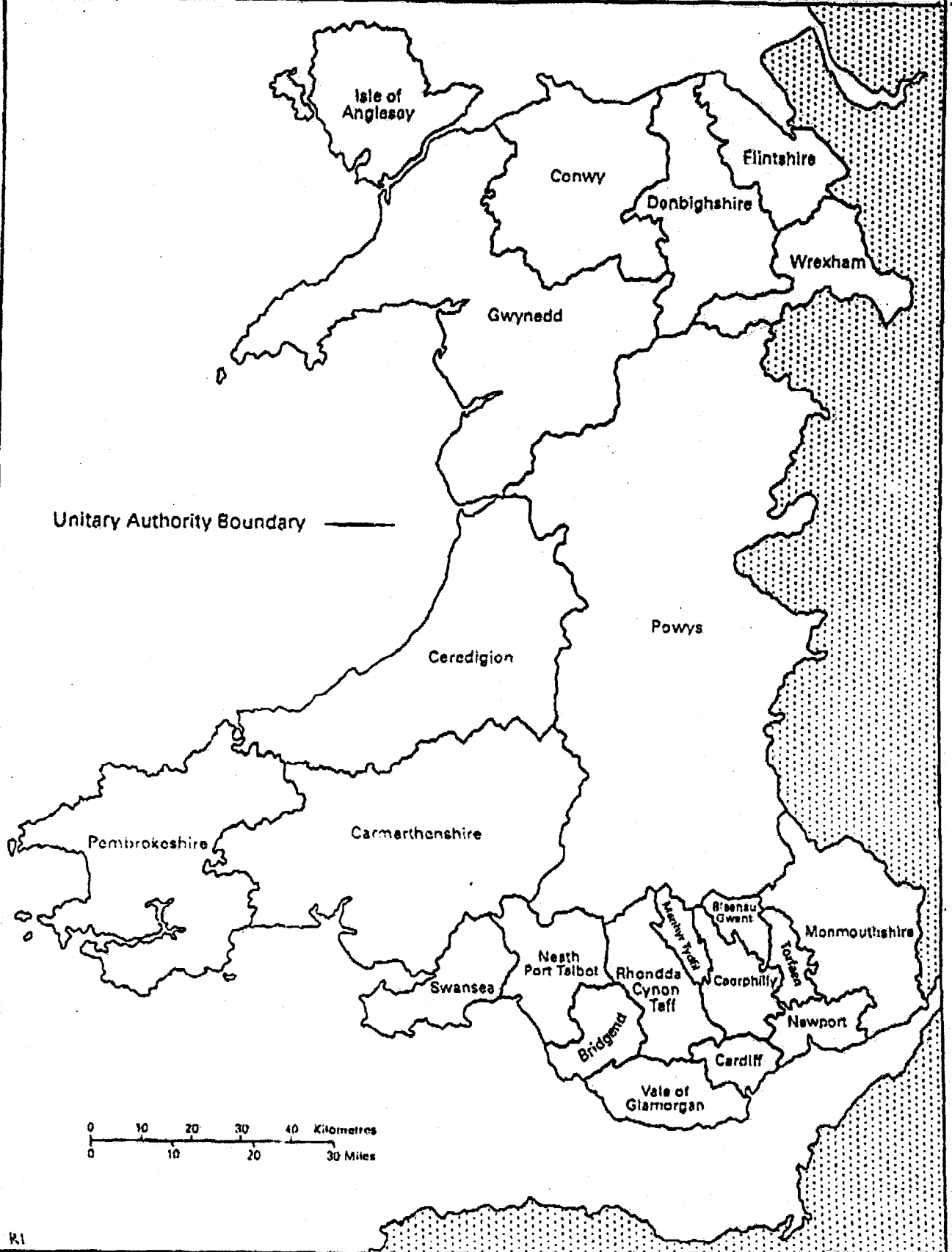
It will be noted also that the names of the unitary councils are not always the names of inhabited places. Halton, for example, is an administrative name. It includes the towns of Runcorn and Widnes. In Wales, the County Council of Cardiganshire adopted the name Ceredigion in English and Sir Ceredigion in Welsh. The name Ceredigion is an old Welsh name for the region.

Cartographers will be wondering how to represent on a small-scale map the many small, new unitary authorities. Although, as stated above, the counties remain in being for ceremonial purposes, it would be wrong to show them on a map as first-order administrative divisions. They have no such function.

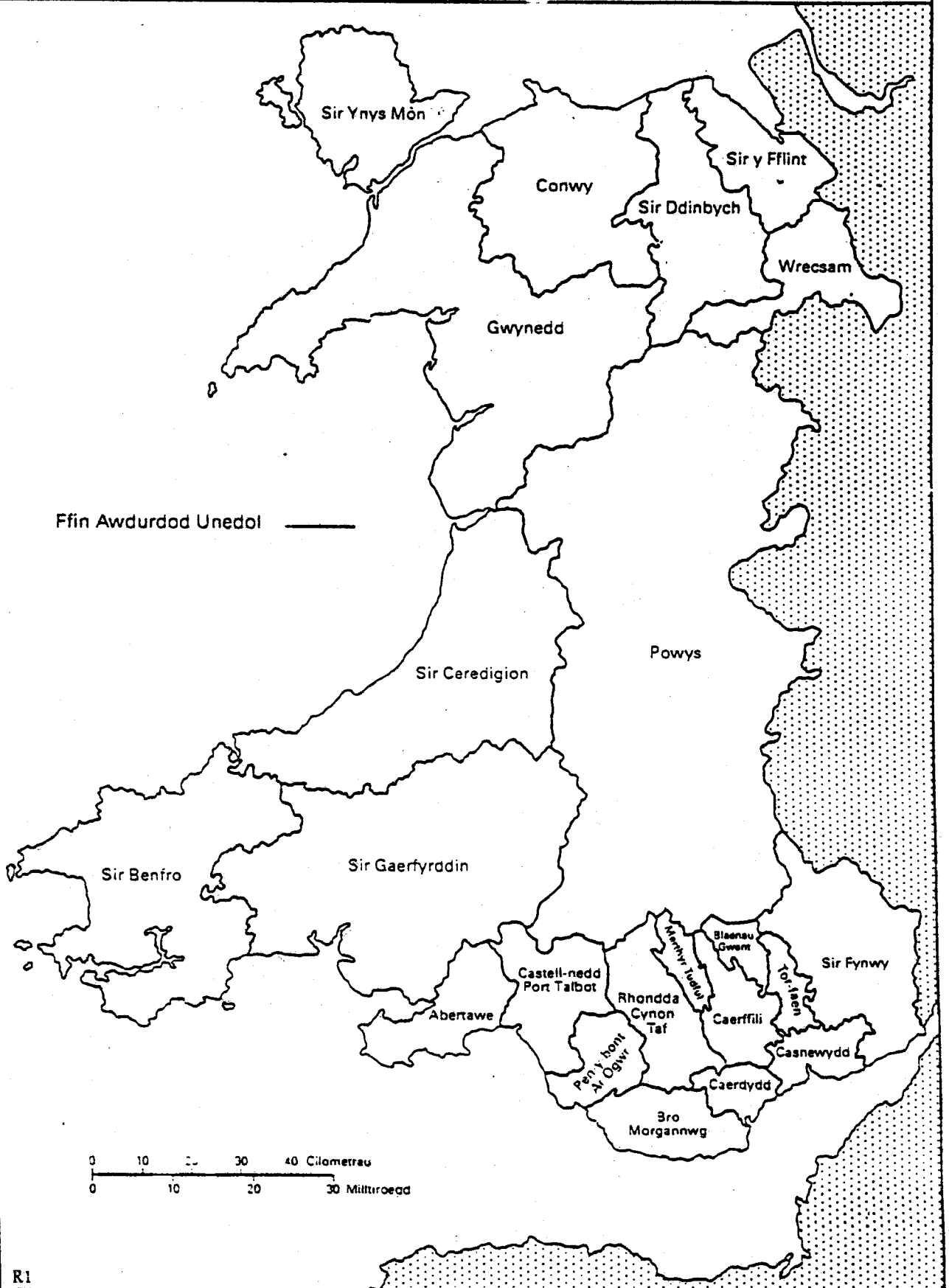
A further report on this subject will be presented at the Seventh Conference on the International Standardization of Geographical Names.

Appendixes of maps are attached.

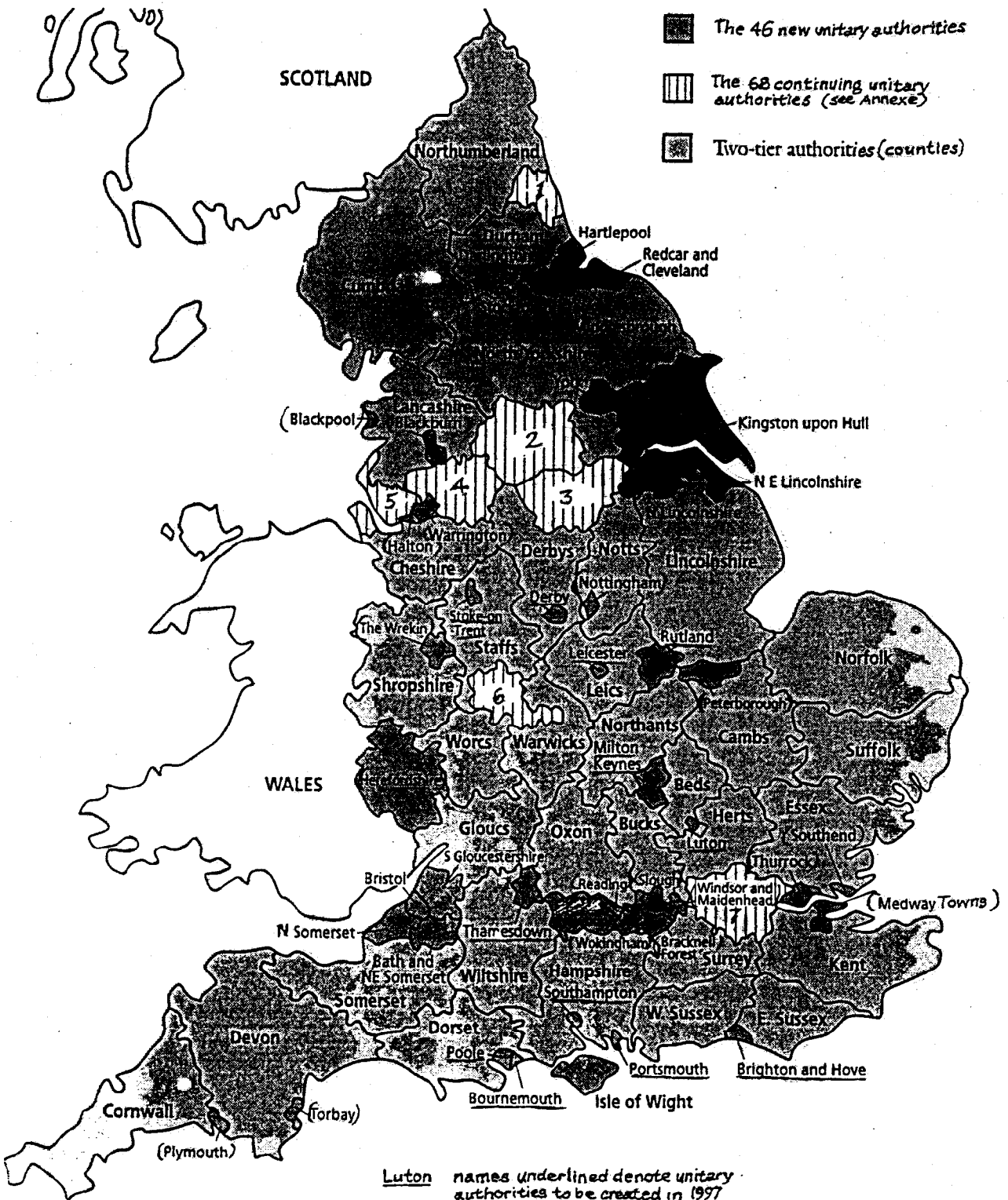
WALES: UNITARY AUTHORITIES



CYMRU: AWDURDODAU UNEDOL



The Outcome of the Structural Reviews



Luton names underlined denote unitary authorities to be created in 1997
 (Torbay) names in brackets denote unitary authorities to be created in 1998

Note: some names are in abbreviated form

CONTINUING UNITARY AUTHORITIES

(pre-1986 Metropolitan Counties are given in brackets)

1 (Tyne and Wear):

Gateshead
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
North Tyneside
South Tyneside
Sunderland

2 (West Yorkshire):

Bradford
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
Wakefield

3 (South Yorkshire):

Barnsley
Doncaster
Rotherham
Sheffield

4 (Greater Manchester):

Bolton
Bury
Manchester
Oldham
Rochdale
Salford
Stockport
Tameside
Trafford
Wigan

5 (Merseyside):

Knowsley
Liverpool
St. Helens
Sefton
Wirral

6 (West Midlands):

Birmingham
Coventry
Dudley
Sandwell
Solihull
Walsall
Wolverhampton

7 (Greater London):

Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
Camden
Croydon
Ealing
Enfield
Greenwich
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston-upon-Thames
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
Newham
Redbridge
Richmond-upon-Thames
Southwark
Sutton
Tower Hamlets
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Westminster, City of