

County Council

26 October 2011



Electoral Boundary Review – Initial proposals for new Parliamentary Constituencies in Durham

Report of Don McLure Corporate Director of Resources

Councillor Simon Henig – Leader

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present for consideration the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.

Background

- 2 The Boundary Commission for England is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England. The Commission is currently conducting a review on the basis of new rules laid down in Parliament, which must be adhered to when considering boundary reviews. These rules involve a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England (from 533 to 502), and requires that every constituency (apart from two specified exceptions) must have an electorate that is between 72,810 and 80,473 in size– that is 5% either side of the electoral quota of 76, 641.’ Legislation also states that when deciding on boundaries, the Commission may take into account:
 - a) ‘Special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - b) Local government boundaries as they existed on 6 May 2010;
 - c) Boundaries of existing constituencies; and
 - d) Any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.’
- 3 The first stage of the review has now been completed and the Commissions initial proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in Durham have been published and will be outlined in this report.

Initial proposals for Durham

- 4 The Boundary Commissions initial proposal for the County of Durham will see the number of constituencies to be administered by the county, reduced from six to five. Four constituencies will be solely contained within the county and one constituency will include two wards from the County of Northumberland.
- 5 The proposed Sedgefield & Yarm Constituency, incorporating the three Aycliffe wards, Sedgefield ward and Shildon East ward, will include wards from the Boroughs of Darlington and Stockton-on-Tees.

- 6 The proposed Consett and Barnard Castle constituency will cross the county boundary between Northumberland and County Durham by including the wards of Haltwhistle and South Tynedale within the boundary, as well as a number of wards from the existing North West Durham and Bishop Auckland constituencies. The Commission comments that although the constituency is very rural in nature, there are a number of roads across the county boundary that links the north and south of the constituency. The table below shows the wards and the number of electors to be included in the proposed Consett and Barnard Castle constituency:

Ward	Districts/boroughs/city/county	Electorate
Barnard Castle East	Durham	6,929
Barnard Castle West	Durham	6,553
Benfieldside	Durham	5,203
Consett North	Durham	6,787
Delves Lane and Consett South	Durham	8,788
Esh	Durham	5,186
Evenwood	Durham	6,623
Lanchester	Durham	6,154
Leadgate & Medomsley	Durham	7,694
Weardale	Durham	6,842
Haltwhistle	Northumberland	3,868
South Tynedale	Northumberland	3,956
		74,583

- 7 The proposed Bishop Auckland constituency has been significantly altered and will now include the towns of Crook and Bishop Auckland. The Commission also stipulates that the proposed boundary no longer extends westwards to the boundary with Cumbria. The table below shows the wards and the number of electors to be included in the proposed Bishop Auckland constituency:

Ward	Districts/boroughs/city/county	Electorate
Bishop Auckland Town	Durham	6,230
Chilton	Durham	7,105
Coundon	Durham	5,342
Crook North and Tow Law	Durham	5,922
Crook South	Durham	6,666
Deerness Valley	Durham	7,494
Sildon West	Durham	5,615
Spennymoor and Middlestone	Durham	7,631
Tudhoe	Durham	7,224
West Auckland	Durham	6,498
Willington	Durham	7,140
Woodhouse Close	Durham	6,296

- 8 The proposed Chester-le-Street constituency will be very similar to the existing North Durham constituency as it will include all the same wards plus the Burnopfield and Dipton ward from the existing North West Durham constituency. The Commission proposes to change the name of this constituency as it more suitably reflects the community in this part of County Durham. The table below shows the wards and the number of electors to be included in the proposed Chester-le-Street constituency:

Ward	Districts/boroughs/city/county	Electorate
Annfield Plain	Durham	6,102
Burnopfield and Dipton	Durham	6,378
Chester-le-Street North and East	Durham	6,747
Chester-le-Street South	Durham	6,683
Chester-le-Street West Central	Durham	6,066
Craghead and South Moor	Durham	5,790
Lumley	Durham	5,961
Ouston and Urpeth	Durham	6,190
Pelton	Durham	6,616
Sacrison	Durham	5,329
Stanley	Durham	6,646
Tanfield	Durham	6,829
		75,337

- 9 The proposed Durham constituency will now include the Ferryhill and Trimdon wards but does not extend beyond the west of Brandon, as the existing constituency does. The table below shows the wards and the number of electors to be included in the proposed Durham constituency:

Ward	Districts/boroughs/city/county	Electorate
Belmont	Durham	5,074
Brandon	Durham	7,453
Coxhoe	Durham	5,444
Durham South	Durham	5,183
Elvet	Durham	7,685
Ferryhill	Durham	7,424
Framwellgate Moor	Durham	7,860
Gilesgate	Durham	5,964
Neville's Cross	Durham	7,035
Newton Hall	Durham	6,175
Sherburn	Durham	7,292
Trimdon	Durham	5,960
		78,549

- 10 The proposed Easington constituency remains largely unchanged, but will include the Thornley and Wingate wards from the existing Sedgefield constituency, to increase its electorate. The table below shows the wards and the number of electors to be included in the proposed Easington constituency:

Ward	Districts/boroughs/city/county	Electorate
Blackhalls	Durham	6,203
Dawdon	Durham	5,340
Deneside	Durham	5,553
Easington	Durham	6,150
Hordon	Durham	6,478
Murton	Durham	6,087
Peterlee East	Durham	5,897
Peterlee West	Durham	5,669
Seaham	Durham	6,949
Shotton	Durham	7,172
Thornley	Durham	5,740
Wingate	Durham	8,361
		75,599

- 11 The proposed Sedgefield and Yarm constituency will cross the county boundaries between the County of Durham and the Borough of Darlington, and the County of Durham and the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. The new proposed constituency will include the Middleton St George and Sadberge and Whessoe wards of the Borough of Darlington. The wards of Heighington and Coniscliffe, and Hurworth, which are currently in the Sedgefield constituency, will be transferred to the proposed Darlington constituency. To compensate for this, the boundaries of the proposed Sedgefield and Yarm constituency will be extended to include wards to the west and south of the town of Stockton-on-Tees, including the towns of Yarm and Ingleby Barwick from the existing Stockton South constituency. The Commission feels these changes are justified as the proposed constituency will be served by major roads that will link the parts of the two boroughs and county. The table below shows the wards and the number of electors to be included in the proposed Sedgefield and Yarm constituency:

Ward	Districts/boroughs/city/county	Electorate
Middleton St George	Darlington	3,514
Sadberge and Whessoe	Darlington	1,625
Aycliffe East	Durham	5,042
Aycliffe North	Durham	6,338
Aycliffe West	Durham	5,666
Sedgefield	Durham	5,644
Shildon East	Durham	6,799
Eaglescliffe	Stockton-on-Tees	8,288
Ingleby Barwick East	Stockton-on-Tees	7,498

Ingleby Barwick West	Stockton-on-Tees	7,457
Parkfield and Oxbridge	Stockton-on-Tees	4,953
Western Parishes	Stockton-on-Tees	2,630
Yarm	Stockton-on-Tees	7,756
		73,210

Consultation period

- 12 The Boundary Commission has begun a 12 week consultation period on the initial proposals from 13 September 2011 to 5 December 2011. Any views or comments on the proposals can be made in writing to the Commission direct, by sending an email or by using the online form on the Commission's consultation website. Alternatively a number of public hearings will also be held across all of the English regions, with two to be held in the North East during the consultation period. The first will be at the Civic Centre in Newcastle on Monday 14 November until Tuesday 15 November 2011, and the second will be held at the St George Hotel in Darlington from Thursday 17 November until Friday 18 November 2011.
- 13 Following the 12 week consultation period, the Commission will publish all of the representations they receive for each region (including the transcripts of the public hearings) on their website. A hard copy will also be placed on display in at least one location within each of the proposed constituencies. The Commission will publish these representations for a further statutory period of four weeks, during which time comments can be made to the Commission in relation to these representations. There will be no public hearings at this stage.
- 14 The Assistant Commissioners will then consider all the written and oral representations made during the initial consultation and the four-week secondary consultation period. They will then produce a report summarising and considering the representations, before recommending whether the initial proposals for a particular region should be revised and how this could be done. The Commission will then consider the report and decide whether any changes should be made to their initial proposals.
- 15 The Commission will then publish notices in each region stating whether or not changes have been made to the initial proposals for that area, and also any comments received during the four-week secondary consultation period. If any proposals are to be revised, a further eight week consultation period will take place and any further comments should be made to the Commission. Again, there will be no public hearings at this stage.
- 16 At the final stage, the Commission will take into consideration any written representations received during the eight-week consultation period for the revised proposals and will decide whether any final modifications are needed in the light of those representations. Once the Commission has decided on the final recommendations for the whole of England, they will submit a formal report to the Government detailing their final recommendations, which will conclude the review process.

- 17 The Commission have stipulated that they are looking for views and comments around the following questions:
- a) Do you agree in full in part or not at all with our initial proposals for the North East region?
 - b) What are your alternatives for areas you disagree with that meet the statutory rules as set in paragraph 2 above?
- 18 The Electoral Review Working Group considered a report on this matter on the 11 October 2011 and resolved to recommend to Council that a response be prepared by the Head of Legal and Democratic in consultation with the Electoral Review Group, to be submitted by the deadline of the 5th December. (The next full council being due 2 days after the deadline expires)

Recommendations

- 19 That Council delegate to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the preparation of and submission of a response in consultation with the Electoral Review Working Group.

Background papers

The Boundary Commission for England – North East Initial proposals for Parliamentary boundaries.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

None

Staffing

None

Risk

See report

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken once the review is complete

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Human Rights

None

Consultation

See report

Procurement

None

Disability Issues

Covered in Equalities and Diversity

Legal Implications

Need to comply with any legal requirements

Rules for redistribution of seats (Schedule 2 to the Act)

Number of constituencies

- 1 The number of constituencies in the United Kingdom shall be 600.

Electorate per constituency

- 2 (1) The electorate of any constituency shall be—
- (a) no less than 95% of the United Kingdom electoral quota, and
 - (b) no more than 105% of that quota.
- (2) This rule is subject to rules 4(2), 6(3) and 7.
- (3) In this Schedule the “United Kingdom electoral quota” means—

$$\frac{U}{596}$$

where U is the electorate of the United Kingdom minus the electorate of the constituencies mentioned in rule 6.

Allocation of constituencies to parts of the United Kingdom

- 3 (1) Each constituency shall be wholly in one of the four parts of the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).
- (2) The number of constituencies in each part of the United Kingdom shall be determined in accordance with the allocation method set out in rule 8.

Area of constituencies

- 4 (1) A constituency shall not have an area of more than 13,000 square kilometres.
- (2) A constituency does not have to comply with rule 2(1)(a) if—
- (a) it has an area of more than 12,000 square kilometres, and
 - (b) the Boundary Commission concerned are satisfied that it is not reasonably possible for the constituency to comply with that rule.

Factors

- 5 (1) A Boundary Commission may take into account, if and to such extent as they think fit—

- (a) special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
- (b) local government boundaries as they exist on the most recent ordinary council-election day before the review date;
- (c) boundaries of existing constituencies;
- (d) any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies;
- (e) the inconveniences attendant on such changes.^[12]

(2) The Boundary Commission for England may take into account, if and to such extent as they think fit, boundaries of the electoral regions specified in Schedule 1 to the European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002 (ignoring paragraph 2(2) of that Schedule and the references to Gibraltar) as it has effect on the most recent ordinary council-election day before the review date.

(3) This rule has effect subject to rules 2 and 4.

Protected constituencies

- 6
- (1) There shall be two constituencies in the Isle of Wight.
 - (2) There shall continue to be—
 - (a) a constituency named Orkney and Shetland, comprising the areas of the Orkney Islands Council and the Shetland Islands Council;
 - (b) a constituency named Na h-Eileanan an Iar, comprising the area of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.
 - (3) Rule 2 does not apply to these constituencies.

Northern Ireland

- 7
- (1) In relation to Northern Ireland, sub-paragraph (2) below applies in place of rule 2 where—
 - (a) the difference between—
 - (i) the electorate of Northern Ireland, and
 - (ii) the United Kingdom electoral quota multiplied by the number of seats in Northern Ireland (determined under rule 8), exceeds one third of the United Kingdom electoral quota, and
 - (b) the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland consider that having to apply rule 2 would unreasonably impair—
 - (i) their ability to take into account the factors set out in rule 5(1), or
 - (ii) their ability to comply with section 3(2) of this Act.
 - (2) The electorate of any constituency shall be—
 - (a) no less than whichever is the lesser of—

$N-A$

and 95% of the United Kingdom electoral quota, and

(b) no more than whichever is the greater of—

$N+A$

and 105% of the United Kingdom electoral quota,

where—

N is the electorate of Northern Ireland divided by the number of seats in Northern Ireland (determined under rule 8), and

A is 5% of the United Kingdom electoral quota.

The allocation method

- 8 (1) The allocation method referred to in rule 3(2) is as follows.
- (2) The first constituency shall be allocated to the part of the United Kingdom with the greatest electorate.
- (3) The second and subsequent constituencies shall be allocated in the same way, except that the electorate of a part of the United Kingdom to which one or more constituencies have already been allocated is to be divided by—

$2C + 1$

where C is the number of constituencies already allocated to that part.

(4) Where the figure given by sub-paragraph (3) above is the same for two or more parts of the United Kingdom, the part to which a constituency is to be allocated shall be the one with the smaller or smallest actual electorate.

(5) This rule does not apply to the constituencies mentioned in rule 6, and accordingly—

(a) the electorate of England shall be treated for the purpose of this rule as reduced by the electorate of the constituencies mentioned in rule 6(1);

(b) the electorate of Scotland shall be treated for the purposes of this rule as reduced by the electorate of the constituencies mentioned in rule 6(2).

Interpretation

- 9 (1) This rule has effect for the purposes of this Schedule.
- (2) The “electorate” of the United Kingdom, or of a part of the United Kingdom or a constituency, is the total number of persons whose names appear on the relevant

version of a register of parliamentary electors in respect of addresses in the United Kingdom, or in that part or that constituency. For this purpose the relevant version of a register is the version that is required by virtue of subsection (1) of section 13 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 to be published no later than the review date, or would be so required but for—

(a) any power under that section to prescribe a later date, or

(b) subsection (1A) of that section.

(3) “Local government boundaries” are—

(a) in England, the boundaries of counties and their electoral divisions, districts and their wards, London boroughs and their wards and the City of London,

(b) in Wales, the boundaries of counties, county boroughs, electoral divisions, communities and community wards,

(c) in Scotland, the boundaries of local government areas and the electoral wards into which they are divided under section 1 of the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004, and

(d) in Northern Ireland, the boundaries of wards.

(4) “Ordinary council-election day” is—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, the ordinary day of election of councillors for local government areas;

(b) in relation to Scotland, the day on which the poll is held at ordinary elections of councillors for local government areas;

(c) in relation to Northern Ireland, the day of an election for any district council (other than an election to fill a casual vacancy).

(5) The “review date”, in relation to a report under section 3(1) of this Act that a Boundary Commission is required (by section 3(2)) to submit before a particular date, is two years and ten months before that date.

(6) “The United Kingdom electoral quota” has the meaning given by rule 2(3).

(7) A reference in rule 6 to an area is to the area as it existed on the coming into force of Part 2 of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.