

# **Alliance Party of Northern Ireland**

## **Response to: Review of Northern Ireland Local Government Boundaries Provisional Recommendations Report**

To:  
Amanda Morrison  
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### **Introduction**

The Alliance Party welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Alliance continues to oppose the seven-Council model for Local Government. Its response to this consultation on boundaries is made without prejudice to that view. The inability of the Commissioner to propose names which are in any way meaningful and represent the whole of the proposed Council (except Belfast) shows that these proposed bodies are not in any sense communities.

It is clear that the provisional recommendations were produced under considerable time pressure, and the Commissioner did not have adequate time to carry out his task thoroughly. The fact that all seven Councils have exactly 60 wards in the provisional recommendations is a clear indication that time was inadequate to ascertain whether a variation in this number would have enabled the drawing of more logical ward boundaries.

### **General Principles**

- Wards do not in themselves have huge political significance, but they are the building blocks for District Electoral Areas (DEAs); the latter are entities around which political representation is organised. Therefore, where ward boundaries are flawed, the potential exists for natural communities to be split between different DEAs.
- Wards are, however, key units for census and other statistical purposes. It is important that they should represent natural communities wherever possible.
- The process should avoid splitting townlands in rural areas and avoid splitting villages (where population is less than the average quota for a ward). It is a matter of concern that the provisional recommendations ignore the specific legislative requirement to not split townlands (Sch 1, 15 of the Order).
- The process should avoid running boundaries down residential streets, or through clearly defined residential developments.
- In urban areas, the commissioner should try to use rivers, railways, arterial roads or other natural barriers as ward boundaries.

- The process should avoid creating large wards, in particular with a sparsely populated centre and population concentrations on the edges – this will significantly restrict the scope for creating viable/coherent DEAs.
- There are also dangers in running ward boundaries along current development lines; if these are subsequently breached, then ward boundaries (and potentially DEA boundaries) may not best reflect natural communities.

## **Boundaries of the Councils**

### **Between Belfast & East Council**

It is not clear why some of the most westerly wards from the current Castlereagh BC are to be retained in East while other wards are to be transferred into Belfast. There may be inefficiencies in trying to service these wards from anywhere other than a Belfast-based Council. There is a case for transferring the proposed Beechill, Four Winds and Newtownbreda wards into Belfast. Four Winds ward would also need to be extended as part of this process to take in the current development line. This would allow the boundary between Newtownbreda and Four Winds to be readjusted to better reflect natural boundaries rather than splitting a housing development.

### **Between East & South Council**

There is a case for transferring the proposed Donard, Newcastle, Murlough and Castlewellan wards into 'South' Council. If the Mourne are to be promoted as a tourist destination, it makes sense for only one council to have jurisdiction over it. Newcastle and the Mourne are fundamentally linked. The Magilligan/Causeway Coast/Glans tourist area will inevitably have to extend across two Councils. However, there is no need to divide the Mourne area, and there is an opportunity to unite it within the South Council.

### **Between North West and North East**

Mussden Temple is closely associated with Castlerock and the wider Coleraine area. The proposed boundary should be extended a little further to return this historic monument into the Council containing Castlerock and Coleraine.

In presenting the provisional recommendations, the Commissioner highlighted two instances (other than the Belfast suburbs) where the proposals departed from the current Council boundaries: the unification of Magilligan strand within North West and the unification of Whitehead Golf Course within Inner East. However, there are numerous other changes, inelegantly described as 'adjustments to correct defacements'. The vast majority of these are completely pointless, simply moving existing and established boundaries up to a few hundred metres. In most instances, the boundaries exist on the ground and have not been 'defaced'. Such changes breach townland boundaries for no good reason and should be reversed.

### **Internal Ward Boundaries**

Most of the following changes will have knock-on effects with the electoral quotas of other wards. Some changes may be more readily accommodated than others. There is nonetheless, substantial scope for revising other ward boundaries to accommodate the changes below where necessary.

## **Belfast Council**

There is a row of house in the far eastern corner of the proposed Balmoral ward separated from other housing in the ward which should be transferred to Malone.

The northern end of the proposed Finaghy ward should be transferred to Balmoral ward, making the railway line the boundary, otherwise one pocket would be cut off from the rest of the ward, and potentially placed in a different DEA.

The boundary between Woodstock and Beersbridge wards should be straightened at Redcar Street.

The triangle of land at the north of Orangefield ward should be transferred either to Beersbridge or Sandown wards.

There is a row of houses at the top of Oldpark ward which should be placed within Cavehill ward, as one half of a street is arbitrarily cut off.

The boundary between Bellevue, Innisfayle and Cavehill wards could also be better laid out. The southern part of the proposed Bellevue ward could be divided between the other two proposed wards.

Bellevue and Innisfayle should go down to M2, rather than odd houses along Shore Road being in Harbour ward.

It may be worthwhile to redraw the boundaries of the proposed Crumlin ward to take in the former Crumlin Road prison, and possibly all of the Crumlin Road to Carlisle Circus.

The boundary between Cregagh ward and Newtownbreda ward (currently proposed for East) should be readjusted to move a small row of houses into Cregagh ward.

The Knock-Sandown boundary could be moved from the Kings Road to the former railway line.

The proposed Ormeau ward crosses the Lagan, the key local boundary. It should be realigned, with the western portion added to University, with possible knock-on effects improving Stranmillis.

With respect to Stranmillis and Upper Malone wards, the boundary should be realigned between Newforge Lane and Piney Hills, rather than down the main drive of Piney Hills.

The Shankill Crumlin ward boundary skips through residential streets. It would be better aligned along Crumlin Road, Tennent Street and Shankill Road.

## **Inner East**

Randalstown

The western boundary is drawn very tightly to the current development limit of the town. It would be preferable if this boundary was moved westwards, and the area to the north of the ward was transferred to Toome in compensation. There is no logic in Randalstown extending east of the river Maine unless it takes in rather more population than proposed.

#### Shane's Castle

This is anomalous, taking in the fringes of both Randalstown and Antrim, but this may be unavoidable, as there is insufficient population in the western part of Tardree to compensate for the urban population in the east of this ward. However, there is no logic in this ward including part of the Ballymena Road area and part of Springfarm, as well as dividing Oriel Road. A better boundary would be the railway line, leaving all of Springfarm in the Steeple ward.

#### Rathenraw

It is illogical to create a ward consisting of Rathenraw and Stiles estates, part of Parkhall and most of the Greystone Road private housing (dividing Brantwood Gardens). The Birchill area should transfer to Steeple ward, and all of Brantwood Gardens should be included. As Rathenraw is the smallest of the three housing areas included, it is an inappropriate name.

#### Tardree

This is an example of an extended rural ward which is part of at least three identifiable communities. It also has an entirely inappropriate boundary in the M2 east of Rathbeg. By shedding some electors in the Randalstown area, losing the area south of the Sixmilewater around Ballymartin and taking in the area north of the Sixmilewater near Dunadry it would be considerably more coherent.

#### Templepatrick and Aldergrove

As well as adjusting Templepatrick's northern boundary with Tardree, the southern boundary should be removed from the Seven Mile Straight, which is a line of contact, not a dividing line. The Umgall/Craigarogan area could also be added to Templepatrick from Mallusk. If electors are required for the Antrim town wards from either Aldergrove or Templepatrick, the balance can be obtained by returning the Aldergrove/Crumlin boundary to the river, not the roads north of the village. Templepatrick should also take the Carnanee area from Mallusk, to remove this anomaly.

#### Ballyclare area

The creation of two tight urban wards has resulted in the Ballycorr area east of the town being in Doagh ward and urban housing on the Mill Road being in Ballyrobert. Since Ballyclare South meanders across the river anyway, it might be preferable to split the town and hinterland three (or even four) ways on a sectoral basis.

#### Knockagh

There is no coherence in a ward combining the Knockagh itself with upper Woodburn, upper Greenisland, an almost detached part of Monkstown and a totally detached part of Jordanstown. As a minimum, the area between the two railway lines should be transferred to Jordanstown and an area on the Upper Greenisland Road should transfer to Knockagh. However, a ward based on the western fringes of

Carrickfergus and the Knockagh, with another based on Greenisland, would be superior. This would also deal with the very tightly drawn boundaries of the five Carrickfergus town wards.

#### Glengormley/Carnmoney

Most boundaries are broadly satisfactory, though there are some opportunities for minor improvements. However there are two entirely unsatisfactory wards which impact throughout this area.

#### Carnmoney Hill

The population is scattered entirely around the edge of this ward. It is not at all coherent. Ballyduff, Carnmoney and Glengormley wards should each absorb their own side of the hill, leaving the ward centred on Rathfern and Fernagh.

#### O'Neill

The combination of the Elmfield area of Glengormley with the Derrycoole areas of Rathcoole has no logic on the ground or socially. The area of the cemetery, Valley Park and Church Road factories is a significant barrier. The only logical response is to see what can be done on either side of this divide, which might require the creation of an additional ward in total. This might also assist in addressing the Knockagh/Jordanstown problem highlighted earlier.

#### Merville/Rathcoole/Whiteabbey

This area will be affected by any changes arising from the O'Neill problem.

There are some similar problems in the Lisburn area.

### **East Council**

Helen's Bay village should be contained within one ward. At present, it is split between two wards and as a result two different DEAs. It is proposed that c90% of the village would be in the Crawfordsburn ward. All of the village could be easily accommodated. This would avoid the potential for the village to be split between two different DEAs.

The proposed Clondeboye Ward makes no sense. It takes in much of rural North Down and the fringes of Bangor, e.g. Lord Wardens, Conlig and the Balloo Ind. Est. This ward would either become part of a Bangor based DEA or a Holywood based DEA, with the result that the fringe of either town would become part of a very unwieldy DEA.

There are similar problems with the proposed Orlock ward where it takes in both the fringes of Donaghadee and the edge of Bangor. Indeed, it is proposed to run as far as the Ring Road. Potentially a Newtownards based ward would take in a small bite of Bangor, or vice versa. One possible solution would be to run an Orlock ward along the coast from Groomsport to Donaghadee, and to place the housing on the Bangor fringe of the currently proposed Groomsport and Orlock wards into a new Bangor ward.

There is a small kink on the Ballymenoch Road, close to the junction with Browns Brae, which means that two houses in the middle of the street are placed in the proposed Priory ward, while the rest of the street is in Craigavad.

A better name for the proposed Hollywood ward should be found as it only covers part of the town.

A more suitable name should be found for 'Bangor Marina', in particular if the ward or Enumeration Areas within it remain TSN area. The current Harbour ward is a TSN area. 'Bangor Bay' may be a better substitute.

There is an argument for running Crawfordsburn ward along the north of the Crawfordsburn Road as far as Stricklands Glen. This would allow the Wandsworth area and also some pockets around the Old Belfast Road to be consolidated within what is now the Carnalea ward. With these amendments, it would make sense to rename this proposed ward as 'Rathmore'.

The Meadowvale area could easily be transferred from the proposed Clondeboy ward into the Kilcooley ward.

There is a very unnatural boundary between the proposed Bangor Marina ward and the proposed Bryansburn Road running down Osborne Drive. It may make more sense to run the Boundary down the Bryansburn Road (an arterial route), and then down the centre of Osborne Drive.

The boundary between the proposed Bryansburn ward and Castle Park ward is messy. One small tidy-up would be to run the boundary along the laneway between Oakwood. This would allow all of Church Street to be in the same ward.

The proposed Castle Park ward and Rathgael ward boundary is an even bigger mess. The Clondeboy Road open space should be one boundary, rather than running it down the middle of Chester Park. Also, there is no need to divide Church Avenue. All of the Church area could go into Castle Park, with the Cemetery providing the boundary.

Similarly, the boundary should run down the back of Abbeyhill Drive, rather than down the centre of the street.

A simpler boundary between Bangor Marina and Ballyholme wards would be to run the boundary down Ward Avenue, running North from Ballyhome Road. This would be better than snaking it down College Avenue, Shandon Drive, and then splitting Seacliff road.

The name of 'Bloomfield' ward is awkward as it takes in only a very small portion of the Bloomfield Road South, and doesn't include the Shopping Centre. 'Gransha' may be a better name.

The Ardvanagh development is split between Clondeboy and Primacy wards. Potentially, this development could be split between DEAs. It would be better to run the Primacy ward as far as the Newtownards Road dual carriageway.

Given the potential for housing growth in the area, there is an argument for only running the Primacy ward as far as the Gransha Road.

The proposed Moneyreagh ward stretches from the fringe of Carryduff to the fringe of Comber. The housing at the western end should be placed in either Carryduff or Purdysburn wards and the housing at the eastern end should be placed in Comber West. Otherwise, the scope for compiling DEAs is going to be severely restricted.

The small area of housing within Crossgar that is placed in the proposed Killyleagh ward should be included within Crossgar ward.

There is no sense in splitting the small village of Whiterock between the proposed Lisbane and Ringhaddy wards.

There is a very small portion of Balloo village which should be included in the proposed Ringhaddy ward along with the rest of the village.

### **West**

The boundaries between the proposed Portora and Rossorry wards could be rearranged to make the housing more contiguous.

### **North East**

The proposed Dunluce ward runs from the edge of Portrush and the edge of Bushmills, this will restrict the creation of DEAs. The ward should start in either town/village and take in the rural hinterland.

The same problem will exist with the proposed Moss side ward which touches the fringe of both Bushmills and Ballycastle.

Regarding the proposed Riverside ward, there is no need for a ward crossing the river Bann within Coleraine. There is a very small proportion of Coleraine placed in the propose Macosquin ward which would be better placed within the Riverside ward.

The split of the small community of Bushmills/Portballintrae between three wards is unnecessary and inappropriate. Moss side and Causeway Coast should be realigned east-west, rather than north-south, removing the boundary along the Straid Road.

### **Names**

There are real difficulties in coming up with sensible names for the Councils that can reflect the areas served. Many of the possible geographic names only really apply to a proportion of the

### **Belfast**

The name 'Belfast' should be retained for the Belfast based Council.

### **East.**

Some suggestions from Alliance members include renaming 'East' Council as 'East Down'. It is important that a reference is kept to a Co. Down identity.

**North-West**

Notwithstanding the difficulties in finding an agreed name for the City, Alliance believes that the name for this Council should reflect the centrality of the city. This is important in overall economic development terms for the sub-region. Development can often be based around a city identity.