

LGD: East
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Organisation: Green Party
Ref to: District, Boundary

GREEN PARTY

Response to review of Northern Ireland Local Government Boundaries Report

Introduction

We welcome this opportunity to give our views on these proposals. However we are concerned at the inadequate time given to study such wide ranging, detailed and complex recommendations. It is particularly difficult to obtain feedback from the various constituency branches over the holiday period. The response below is therefore not complete and will be expanded at the public consultations.

We believe that these proposals will effectively destroy local democracy, increase sectarianism and take the local out of local government. Can anyone seriously call it local government when the "local" town hall may be 60 miles away? The proposed new councils are designed to provide the optimum populations as determined by the bureaucrats. They are the result of a number crunching exercise –to achieve equal sized wards- and take no account of local identity, traditional boundaries or long established communities.

This is supported by a recent press release (7th November) by the company which carried out the review (Laser-Scan) which claims credit for completing the review within two months rather than the twelve months taken by previous reviews. The release refers to sophisticated technology in terms of mapping, spatial technologies and ortho photography but does not mention identity, traditional boundaries or local communities.

The review is largely successful in designating wards of similar electorate size but on all other criteria it has seriously failed. For example under Article three of the Order it was required to produce ward boundaries which are readily identified and ensure that the town lands should not be split between wards. These objectives would appear to be totally ignored.

In our initial submission to the RPA we expressed concern that the reduction of the number of councils to single figures would inevitably lead to a loss of identity. These proposals confirm our worst fears. There is clearly no local identity with the seven proposed districts as the Commissioner clearly recognised when he gave them totally meaningless names such as East or Inner East. Can you really see someone saying I am from Inner East? I do not see how it is possible to establish common identities for example between the residents of the Mourne and those of Holywood. Their experience, attitudes, traditions and priorities are totally different.

East District

Even if we accept the proposal for seven councils a number of concerns arise relating to the district designated East.

- 1) It is proposed to split the Mourne area between the East and South district. We support the designation of the Mournes as a National Park and believe it should not be split between two Council areas. It would probably be more appropriate if the Donard and Newcastle Wards were transferred to the South District.
- 2) Some Castlereagh wards such as Newtonbreda and Four Winds are clearly suburbs of Belfast and should be incorporated in the Belfast District.
- 3) Some of the ward names are totally inappropriate and reflect a lack of knowledge of the local area.
- 4) The proposed ward boundaries particularly in the North Down area take no account of long established, local communities, patterns of movement within the area and physical features such as the railway and the major roads.

Specific Wards

- a) Carnalea Ward. This ward is inappropriately named as all of Carnalea is included in the Crawfordsburn Ward. This would be better named Rathmore, Bangor West or Springhill.
- b) Kilcooley Ward. This ward is split by the A2 dual carriageway. It includes a small section of the Rathmore Estate which is physically cut off from Kilcooley by one of the busiest roads in Northern Ireland and there is no significant movement of population across the carriageway. This area identifies with Springhill / Bangor West and should be incorporated in this ward. To compensate the Meadowvale area should be included in the Kilcooley Ward as at present.
- c) Rathgael Ward. This ward is inappropriately named as it does not include the Rathgael area in particular the Rathgael Road. This ward should be extended outwards to include the Rathgael Road (especially Lord Wardens and the new housing at the Juvenile Justice Centre.) The main Newtownards Road should be retained as the dividing line and the Whitehill area should be added to the Castle Park ward.
- d) Bryansburn Ward. This is again split by the main Belfast road. This does not reflect the character or the movement within the area. The Silverstream area relates not to Bryansburn but to the Clandeboye Road area (Rathgael Ward) The remainder of the Bryansburn ward has a strong identity and cultural links with the old Princetown Ward (now proposed for Bangor Marina). The proposed Bryansburn Ward less the proportion across the A2 when added to the old Princetown ward would create a homogeneous ward within the size required.
- e) Crawfordsburn Ward. A small portion of Helen's Bay is included in the Craigavad ward. This should be transferred to the Crawfordsburn Ward so that the village would not be split between two wards.
- f) Clandeboye Ward. This proposed ward is unacceptable and is a classic example of drawing together a number of disparate settlement just to

make up the numbers. It contains settlements on the outskirts of both Hollywood and Bangor. The boundaries of Hollywood Priory and Craigavad should be redrawn to include the Craigtlet area and other areas within the present Hollywood DEA. The remainder of the Clandeboye ward could be extended towards Newtonards on the West side of the main Bangor to Newtownards Road to obtain the required numbers.

I hope to develop and expand these and other points at the public consultations when I receive more information from local representatives