



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 22 November 2005, the Secretary of State, the Rt. Hon. Peter Hain MP, announced that a review of local government boundaries would be undertaken as part of the outworking of the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland. In particular, it was decided to reduce the number of district councils in Northern Ireland from twenty-six to seven, based on an amalgamation of the existing councils as follows:-

1. Antrim; Carrickfergus; Lisburn City; and Newtownabbey.
2. Ards; Castlereagh; Down; and North Down.
3. Armagh City and District; Banbridge; Craigavon; and Newry and Mourne.
4. Ballymena; Ballymoney; Coleraine; Larne; and Moyle.
5. Belfast.
6. Cookstown; Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough; Fermanagh; and Omagh.
7. Derry; Limavady; Magherafelt; and Strabane.

1.2 The Minister with responsibility for the Department of the Environment (“the Department”), David Cairns MP appointed me as the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland with effect from 1 June 2006. My task is to make recommendations by 31 May 2007 to the Department with respect to the boundaries and names of seven proposed new local government districts in Northern Ireland; and the number, boundaries and names of the wards into which each district should be divided.

1.3 The start of the review was announced in a Public Notice on 9 June 2006, which explained my role and remit, and advised that in due course I would publish Provisional Recommendations and cause a public hearing to be held in each of the seven proposed new local government districts. The Notice also explained the process of public consultation on the Provisional Recommendations whereby interested parties would have the opportunity to comment on and contribute to the review.

1.4 The terms of the review are set out in the Local Government (Boundaries) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 – “the Order”. A copy of the Order is available on www.lgbc-ni.org/index/legislation.htm or from Her Majesty’s Stationery Office.

1.5 The Order designates a number of assessors to provide me with advice and support.

They are:

- the Registrar General for Northern Ireland;
- the Commissioner of Valuation for Northern Ireland;
- the Chief Executive of Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland; and
- the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland.

The assessors provide key data and professional advice but do not have a decision-making role.

1.6 To assist me, I have the support of a Secretariat seconded from the Northern Ireland Civil Service comprising administrative and mapping and charting staff. The team is led by the Secretary to the Commissioner, Amanda Morrison. The team members are listed in Appendix A.

1.7 The Order provides that I may ask the Department to appoint Assistant Commissioners. At my request, the Department has begun the process of appointing seven Assistant Commissioners whose primary role will be to consider written representations submitted in response to the Provisional Recommendations; to conduct public hearings for the purpose of providing an opportunity for oral representations; and to provide impartial advice to me. The hearings will be conducted in each of the seven proposed local government districts.

1.8 This Report presents my Provisional Recommendations regarding the boundaries and names of the seven proposed new local government districts; and the number, boundaries and names of the wards into which each district is to be divided.