

Northumberland

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Organisation Name: New Hartley Community Association (Representative of a local organisation)

Comment text:

Related subject: Seaton Valley, Northumberland

Please see attached document detailing the concerns of New Hartley Community Association

Attached Documents:

- Community Association EC response.docx

On behalf of New Hartley Community Association I would like to object to the proposed creation of a new Division in Northumberland entitled New Delaval and New Hartley.

This division is being artificially created to achieve electoral equality in the southeastern corner of Northumberland and forces together two communities that have no natural connection or linked identity. It also splits the close integrated community of New Hartley in two.

New Hartley Community Association is a local registered charity whose purpose is to:

- (a) To promote the benefit of the inhabitants of New Hartley (hereinafter called "the area of benefit") without distinction of gender or of political, religious or other opinions by associating the local authorities, voluntary organisations and inhabitants in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.
- (b) To establish or to secure the establishment of a Community Centre (hereinafter called "the Centre") and to maintain and manage, or to co-operate with any local statutory authority in the maintenance and management of such a Centre for activities promoted by the Association and its constituent bodies in furtherance of the above objects.

The Association shall be non-party in politics and non-sectarian in religion.

It cannot do this to half a village or anywhere outside of the defined area of benefit!

This split is contrary the reasons put forward in paragraph 140 of the review which states that

*We adopt the Council's suggestion to add the streets to the south of Amersham Road to Plessey division which we consider **unites a community** currently divided between Plessey and South Blyth divisions. We propose to adopt the Council's suggested South Blyth division, including the revised boundary with Wensleydale, which we also consider **reflects our three statutory criteria**.*

New Hartley is a self-contained and identifiable village that has its own school, parish council, residents' association and community groups and churches, together with local services (pub, shop and post office) that operate across the whole village.

The natural links for New Hartley outside of the village are with Seaton Sluice and Seaton Delaval which currently share administrative boundaries at parish, county, and parliamentary level. Pupils from New Hartley First School progress to the middle school in Seaton Sluice and then to high School in Seaton Delaval. The Church of England Delaval Parish exclusively covers the churches in New Hartley and Seaton Sluice.

Public transport, although limited, links Blyth town centre with Newcastle via Seaton Sluice, New Hartley and Seaton Delaval (not via New Delaval). There is no direct road or paved footpath link between New Delaval and New Hartley. The two centres of population in this proposed division are separated by approximately 2 miles of open fields with only unmade Public Rights of Way between the two. They have no common interests or activities.

Even the opening of the Ashington Blyth and Tyne rail line to passenger transport will not assist any assimilation between the two communities. A station is proposed at Newsham – but not at New

Hartley. The nearest one is proposed in Seaton Delaval – reinforcing the linkages between New Hartley and Seaton Delaval.

None of these groups operate within any part of New Delaval or Newsham which are more closely aligned and identified as areas of Blyth. They have a different educational structure (2 tier as opposed to 3 tier in New Hartley) and different administrative areas.

Whilst the Boundary Review cannot affect external boundaries of the county or take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries, it must surely recognise that alignment of all three boundaries.

The proposed boundary along Bristol Street is not a strong natural or constructed boundary between the two proposed divisions. Instead, it is a divisive artificial intrusion not what is otherwise a clearly defined and close-knit local community.

It is recognised that it is desirable to achieve equalisation of representation across the county but BALANCED with local community identity and efficient administration.

The review states that current Seaton Valley should be represented by 3.5 councillors to meet the equalisation. It either needs to be represented by 3 or 4 councillors to meet the equalisation task of the Commission but without destroying the community identity or administrative efficiency – at all levels of local administration. This can only be achieved by sharing one councillor's responsibility with another parish or division.

We have already highlighted the reasons why the current proposals are not appropriate, but there are alternatives.

- 1) do nothing and accept the representative inequalities but keep the communities integrated and identifiable with consistent local government.

The review report accepts that the current Seaton Valley divisions of Hartley, Holywell and Seghill with Seaton Delaval have a collective variance of +13%. This is only 76 electors above the 10% maximum and has shown to work effectively and efficiently with 3 county councillor and 9 parish councillors across the 3 divisions.

It has implications for New Delaval which loses the 707 electors from New Hartley North (difference between Existing Hartley 4371 and proposed Hartley 3664) and sets this division outside +/- 10% range. New Delaval is then left with 3419 electors and needs a minimum of 3470 electors. A difference of only 51.

New Delaval division boundary could easily be adjusted with the adjacent division of Isabella, Plessey and/or South Blyth to equalise this representation and maintain more identifiable community boundaries.

Whilst the Commission has already rejected this option, we would urge you to reconsider this as the least bad alternative to balancing the three statutory requirements.

- 2) Alternatively, there is an opportunity to rebalance internal divisions within Seaton Valley to re-establish historic communities and include a whole division of East Cramlington.

The electoral population of Seaton Valley in 2028 is projected to be 13,091. To be equally represented by 4 councillors it needs an electoral population of 15,560, and to be within 10% variance it needs between 14,004 and 17,116.

The electoral population of East Cramlington is projected to be 3,244 by 2028. Adding this to Seaton Vally gives a 4 councillor population of 16,335 or +4% variance

Without detailed identification of numbers it is difficult to be precise over where the boundaries would occur, particularly in Seaton Delaval.

It is suggested that:

Hartley ward is reduced to +10% variance by moving the area around Seaton Delaval Hall into Seaton Delaval.

Holywell is reduced to -4% variance by moving the northern boundary with Seaton Delaval southwards

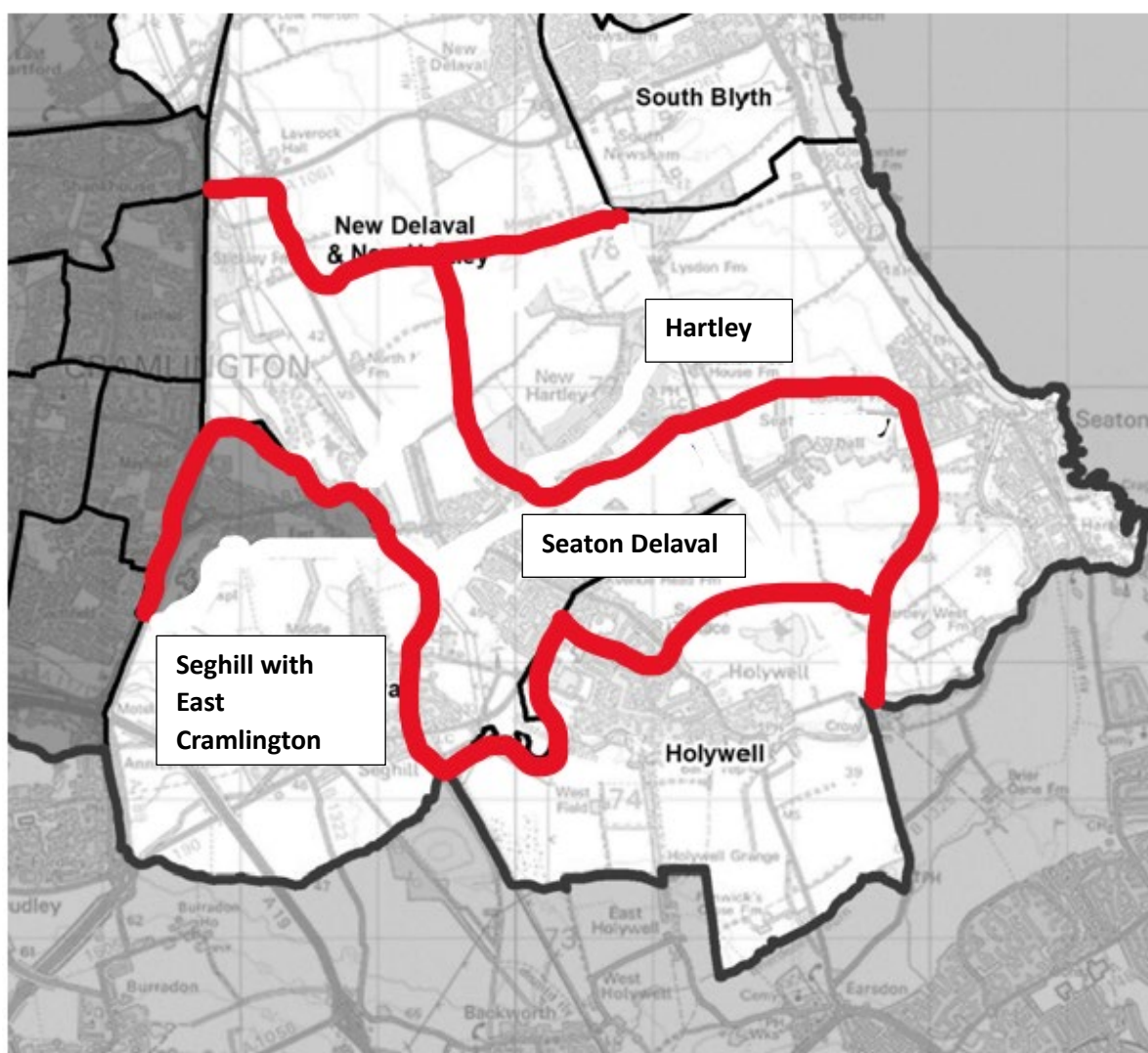
Seghill and Seaton Delaval are separated

Seaton Delaval boundary modified southwards and new boundary with Seghill west of the Blyth/Tyne rail line

Seaton Delaval Population estimated at +9% variance.

Seghill with Cramlington East (or part) +8% variance.

Potential division boundaries shown below (subject to verification of numbers at a street level.



This approach meets the Commissions Statutory criteria of equalising representation, maintains community identity and delivering efficient local administration.

New Hartley Community Association