

Westmorland and Furness

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Comment text:

Related subject: Low Furness

Hello - this is v2 of my submission, following further consideration and discussion with local residents.

Following extensive consultation with local residents and Parish Councils across the current Low Furness ward, it is clear that local people believe Low Furness should be kept (in some form) as a single-member, rural-facing Council ward, covering the villages and communities that sit in-between Barrow, Dalton, Ulverston, and the Coast.

Single-member wards give a direct line of responsibility and accountability for residents and parish councils to engage with their local member, to ask questions of them, and to receive updates from Council. That accountability is too often lost or diluted in larger multi-member wards.

The current Low Furness ward covers the Aldingham Parish, and the Urswick, Bardsea, and Stainton Parish, as well as the Swarthmoor ward of Pennington Parish. Using the 2031 electorate projections, this existing ward will have too many electors for a single-member, due to expected growth in the next decade, with the planned developments around Ulverston and Swarthmoor. As such, the current ward boundaries will need to change.

The villages, hamlets, and farms of Low Furness have always been treated in separate warding arrangements from the nearby towns of Barrow, Dalton, and Ulverston for good reason. Our villages and communities have deep links between and within them. Larger villages such as Great Urswick and Bardsea act as service hubs for our other smaller villages and hamlets, with their pubs and restaurants, and with the local primary

school situated in Urswick. It is quite clear from talking to local residents, that they see themselves as part of a rural community surrounded by farms, open countryside, country lanes, and the coast, sharing similar issues and challenges, and separate from the nearby towns. A larger proportion of the population across Low Furness is older, many families work in local agriculture and fishing, and local children attend the local Low Furness primary school in Urswick. These factors all contribute to a clear sense of a rural community, with intense community, family and historical ties, which define Low Furness as distinctly separate from its neighbouring towns.

Aldingham & Urswick parishes should be kept in the same Westmorland & Furness Council ward, separate from the nearby towns, and grouped with the neighbouring rural parishes of Lindal & Marton and/or Pennington Parish (excluding Swarthmoor) in order to maintain a rural-facing ward, knitting together local villages and communities with shared issues and characteristics. I have canvassed opinion on this suggestion with local Parish Councils and residents who are also supportive of keeping rural parishes together, distinct from nearby towns. There is a real fear that our villages and hamlets would very much be drowned out in a massive 3-member town-focussed ward.

Please see detailed proposals attached.

Thank you.

Attached Documents:

- ward-boundary-proposals---low-furness-v2.docx