

North Yorkshire

Personal Details:

Name: Ms Anne Seex

Email: [REDACTED]

Postcode: [REDACTED]

Organisation Name: Thirsk & Malton Constituency Labour Party (Representative of a local organisation)

Comment text:

Related subject: Thirsk & Malton Constituency

Please see attached response.

Attached Documents:

- tm-response-to-lgbce.pdf



THIRSK & MALTON LABOUR PARTY

Sycamore House,
Carlton Miniott
Thirsk
North Yorkshire

secretary@thirskandmaltonlabour.uk

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
7th Floor
3 Bunhill Row
London
EC1Y 8YZ

Dear Commissioners,

Electoral review of North Yorkshire Council

I write on behalf of the 500 members of Thirsk & Malton Constituency Labour Party in response to the Commission's consultation.

Council size

We are dismayed that the LGBCE decided that there should be only 89 elected representatives on North Yorkshire Council and urge that it should reconsider.

Having too few Councillors is detrimental to democracy - the creation of the Unitary Council has resulted in the elimination of 2 in 3 of the former places for elected representatives.

North Yorkshire Council is the third largest local authority in England by population and the largest in area. The social and economic history of its disparate areas differ hugely as do their current needs, characteristics and prospects. More elected representatives are necessary to cover the wide range of communities as well as the differing natures of town and rural areas.

With only 89 Councillors, the average number of future electors per Division would be some 5,800. This would mean that North Yorkshire residents are considerably under-represented compared to other unitary authorities based on former County Councils - Durham - 1: 4,150; Wiltshire - 1: 4,257; or Buckinghamshire - 1: 4,569.

Its decision on North Yorkshire is in stark contrast to that for Westmorland & Furness where, on average, 2,845 citizens will have a representative. What is the Commission's rationale for deciding that North Yorkshire residents should be only half as well represented?

Consultation questions

At this stage the Commission's publicity asks for public views about: which areas are identified as local communities; where people go to access local facilities; and suggestions about divisional boundaries.

It is generally the case that, in terms of local community identity and use of facilities, there will be a 'hierarchy' of different sized areas - immediate neighbourhood of streets or a hamlet, housing estate or village, nearest small town, nearest sizeable town and so on. It is regrettable that the

Commission's promotional posters omits to mention the important context of its decision that the average electorate should be around 5,800.

In North Yorkshire the massive area, geography and pattern of settlements make it extremely difficult to disaggregate populations in some towns or to aggregate dispersed populations to achieve units of similar population size. We acknowledge that this difficulty will likely persist across a range of unit sizes (unless the number of electors is similar to that determined for Westmorland & Furness). It is inevitable that divisions created by aggregating numerous small settlements will cover large areas with little community coherence and connections.

To avoid artificial contortions, the Commission should recognise the integrity of small towns and apply its duty to have 'as nearly as possible' equal ratios of electors to members to allow variations exceeding 10% when justified by particular circumstances. The small market town of Pickering is a good example of where such circumstances apply.

In the case of Malton and Norton, a single division represented by 2 Councillors may be preferable to an awkward new boundary devised simply to achieve parity in number of electors.

We are aware of North Yorkshire Council's response and its proposed reconfiguration of divisions within this constituency. The result in the western part is to create more divisions that are split between different Parliamentary constituencies. We appreciate that the LGBCE does not deal with Parliamentary boundaries, but trust that Commissioners will regard the value of avoiding unnecessary confusion in the minds of electors as a relevant factor. Electors who share the same MP have no problem understanding that a constituency area divides into smaller areas for the election of Councillors. They are likely to be baffled when a small ward/division is divided between 2 MPs. Unless absolutely unavoidable, North Yorkshire electoral divisions should not be split between different constituencies.

We therefore suggest that the Commission should consider a configuration along the lines set out in the Appendix with all the Hillside & Raskelf polling districts beginning WE to be part of a reconfiguration of divisions in the Wetherby & Easingwold constituency.

Yours sincerely

Anne Seex
Secretary

Appendix - proposed Divisional boundaries

Proposed: Bedale, Aiskew & Leeming Bar

Polling districts TMAA, TMAB, TMAG, TMAH, TMAJ, TMCA, TMCL approx 5,750 electors.

This recognises the commonality of interest created by the now almost continuous residential development between Leeming Bar and Bedale linked by with two road routes.

Proposed: South Swale Villages

Polling districts TMAF, TMAK, TMAD, TMAC, TMAE, TMCT, TMCS, TMCR, TMCQ, TMCP, TMCO, TMCN, TCMC, TMCK, TMCJ, TMCI, TMCH, TMCG, TMCF, TMCE, TMCD, TMCC, TMCB, TMNC, TMND, TMNF, TMNG approx 5,970 electors.

The large area and somewhat awkward shape is almost inevitable when many small settlements are aggregated to create a Division with close to the number of electors preferred by the LGBCE. It is comparable to many existing rural Divisions.

Proposed: Thirsk option 1 (see below for option 2)

Polling districts TMNA, TMNB, TMNE, TMNG, TMNH, TMFE approx 6,080 electors.

Proposed: Sowerby & Sessay

Polling districts TMMA, TMMB, TMMC, TMMD, TMME, TMMF approx 5,800 electors.

Sowerby and Thirsk form a contiguous area with common community links mainly focussed on Thirsk town - library, arts and leisure centres, police station, shops, cinema, GP surgeries or 'cross boundary' - secondary school, sports clubs. Boundary adjustments could easily 'even out' elector numbers.

Proposed: Helmsley & Hillside

Polling districts: TMFA, TMFB, TMFC, TMFD, TMFF, TMFG, TMFH, TMFI, TMFJ, TMFK, TMFL, TMFM, TMFN, TMFO, TMFP, TMFQ, TMFR, TMFS, TMFT, TMFU, TMFW, TMFY, TMFX, TMEA, TMEB, TMEC, TMED, TMEF, TMEG, TMEH, TMBG, TMBH, TMBI, approx 5,835 electors.

Proposed: Kirbymoorside & Dales

Polling districts: all existing TMH apart from TMHB, TMHC, TMEE approx 5,894 electors

Proposed: West Vale of Pickering

Polling districts: TMEJ, TMEK, TMEK, TMEL, TMEM, TMEN, TMEO, TMEP, TMEQ, TMER, TMES, TMBA, TMBB, TMBC, TMBD, TMBE, TMBF, TMBJ, TMBK, TMBL, TMBM, TMBN, TMBO, TMBQ, TMBR, TMBS, approx 5,430 electors

Possible variation - polling districts TMIB (Old Malton) could be added increasing the number of electors to 5,822. This would leave TMIA and TMIC with approx 4,800 electors and, as the built up area is contiguous with Norton, give a combined number for Malton and Norton of approx 11,720 which, with a two-member division or boundary adjustments, would be close to the 'target' figure.

Option 2

Proposed Thirsk to be polling districts TMNA, TMNB, TMNE, TMNG, TMNH, and TMFL approx 5862 electors

Proposed Helmsley & Hillside to include TMFE but not TMED approx 5,860 electors

Proposed Kirbymoorside & Dales to include TMED but not TMHW and TMHV approx 5,740 electors

Proposed West Vale of Pickering to include TMHW and TMHV (but not TMIB) approx 5,770 electors