

# **Observations to the Local Government Boundary Commission on the New Electoral Arrangements for Lancaster City Council**

## **The proposal**

The proposal seeks to address the inequality of representation in the Ellel Ward. Ellel has a high concentration of students who live in temporary accommodation. Furthermore most of these students have primary addresses outside of the district, many are overseas students and students do not pay Council Tax. This imbalance appears to have led to a district wide review of boundaries.

Changes to the Ellel Ward will inevitably result in a knock-on effect throughout the district, resulting in the breakup of established communities in Morecambe and Heysham.

In Section 4 you state that your objective should be **“to try and reflect the communities in the area”**, thereby providing effective local representation.

## **Observations**

Morecambe and Heysham are distinct communities. They have developed independently of Lancaster and now have a larger population than that of Lancaster.

**The proposal to give more representation to Lancaster University students will result in Morecambe and Heysham losing one councillor to Lancaster.** This is unfair to the council tax payers of Morecambe as it will result in Morecambe and Heysham being under represented on Lancaster City Council.

The boundary line between Lancaster and Morecambe is currently the boundary between Torrisholme and Skerton West. This is also the boundary of the newly established Morecambe Town Council.

The Boundary Commission proposes to move Lancaster's Skerton West boundary into Morecambe. This contradicts your mission in Section 4 which states **“to try and reflect the communities in the area”**.

Residents who have proudly identified themselves for years as Morecambrians will overnight find their community divided. To add insult to injury these residents may then find themselves represented by a councillor who has historically favoured decision making in Lancaster to the detriment of decisions in Morecambe and Heysham.

Our observations on the proposed ward boundary changes in Morecambe and Heysham are that they are unnecessary and confusing. Residents already identify with their ward/community, their councillor and their polling station. To change all three will lead to confusion and low turnout at elections.

**This is of particular concern when May 2015 may be the date of a combined parish, local authority and general election.**

The fundamental reason for the boundary review is the increased student population at Lancaster University which appears to have been bulk registered. The Individual Elector Register [IER] will fundamentally change this as numbers will fall significantly.

In Heysham there appears to be a problem in the figures as it indicates the population as dropping significantly with no explanation as to where this moving to.

### **An alternative**

The current variants within Morecambe, Heysham and the rural areas are more or less acceptable and it is our view that these should remain unchanged. The proposed district wide changes being suggested are mainly to address the imbalance in Ellel.

A possible solution would be to abandon the wholesale boundary changes in Morecambe, Heysham and the rural areas. Instead it may be fairer to concentrate on representation within the community of Lancaster itself.

By calculating the individual populations of the district's three distinct communities, Lancaster, Morecambe & Heysham and the rural areas, the Boundary Commission could then concentrate on reviewing the ward boundaries within Lancaster itself.

This method would be fairer as it would not affect Lancaster's current representation, nor would it have a detrimental impact on the representation of surrounding communities.

### **Morecambe Bay Independents and Lancaster City Council Independent Group**

Geoff Knight (Group Administrator)

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