

Carnforth Town Council



Response to LGBCE Review of Lancaster District

Carnforth Town Council welcomes this review and expresses the hope that the final proposals will take note of the community needs across the whole of a very diverse district.

Context of the Review

We note the review is based on providing an improvement in the levels of electoral representation in the city, which have become imbalanced since the last review. Based on 2011 figures, the number of electors represented by the councillors in Ellel ward varies by more than 30% from the average for the City.

It is obvious that demographics are constantly changing under normal circumstances and that in factoring in the likely expansion of the University together with increasing conversion of properties and new builds to provide Student accommodation there will be a constant imbalance and your overall aim will never be successful.

In a similar way, Lancaster District Council is about to publish its new Local Plan which may have huge implications for the number of electors across the District and unbalance the wards again.

On that basis, we strongly urge the Commission to take a more important account of local communities and local representation and we assert that this has a bigger impact on actual representation by district councillors than small variations in the size of their electorates.

This submission will seek to show that the arrangements for Carnforth are fundamentally undemocratic and will offer some alternatives.

Ward Size / Number of Electors per Councillor

We note that the the LGBCE goal is to produce wards which have an average electoral size of 1,816 on current figures and 1,827 on the 2018 projection for each Councillor per ward.

We can understand that a serious imbalance between ward sizes could lead to lack of representation for some residents but we contend that the breaking up of communities has a much larger impact than you have allowed for. Clearly you have to draw the line somewhere but we believe that our proposals offer a balance between community cohesion and representation which will produce a more democratic district council.

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Community Identity

Until the industrial revolution, Carnforth was a small village of about 200 souls but the junction of the main railway line to Scotland and the Furness Railway to Barrow brought growth and a complete change of character to the town.

Several Railway cottages were provided for the men working on the railways and the building of the Carnforth Ironworks brought further changes in the Townscape and more prosperity to the area.

Although the Ironworks have now gone, Carnforth remains a distinct geographical, social and economic community in its own right. Crucially, **Carnforth is entirely separated from neighbouring parishes by green space on all sides and it is fully serviced with its own shops, supermarkets, High School and its own police station.**

Further, the Town Council is proud of the role it has played in keeping the community together as the town has grown and changed. The Town Council organises the second largest Remembrance Service in the District, its own Civic Parade and this year it supported a huge community-based Jubilee Day.

The Town of Carnforth is therefore a separate and distinct community and to have lost part of its residents to another Ward has led to problems of representation which have undermined the democratic aims of Local Government in the area.

In short, any proposal where the parish (Town) boundary of Carnforth is not coterminous with the ward boundaries is wrong. We imagine that other, equally well established local councils will fell the same.

Alternative Proposals

We have stressed the importance that should be placed in the Review on Community Cohesion. We believe that the review should start from the point of ‘how do we best represent communities on the district council’ and then proceed to allocate wards to the best fit.

Working from our starting point of keeping Carnforth as one ward, how best can its electors be represented?

If the sundered part of Crag Bank were returned to Carnforth, and if the same were done to Slyne with Hest, the following situation would occur, where ‘EPC’ stands for Electors per Councillor:

Ward	2012 EPC	2018EPC
Bolton (1)	1,701 (-06%)	1,501 (-18%)
Carnforth (3)	1,487 (-18%)	1,499 (-18%)
Slyne w Hest (2)	2,179 (+20%)	2,106 (+15%)

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However, this assumes that the projected figures are correct. Carnforth Town Council disputes this. Your figures were supplied by Lancaster City Council and we do not believe that they have taken future planning developments into account.

Planning permission exists for a hybrid development on the disused Lundsfield quarry site in the Town and which includes in excess of 200 residential properties. A Section 106 Agreement is awaiting signature by the developer and it is expected that development will take place shortly.

Using a multiplier of 2.2 per property, which we understand is the norm, the figure should be at least an increase of 440 and may require to be increased to take into account younger occupants who will be eligible to vote in the intervening years. If these additional electors were taken into account, the result of the projections for 2018 would alter significantly.

Using the previous distribution of wards, we would now have:

Ward	2012 EPC	2018 EPC
Bolton (1)	1,701 (-06%)	1,501 (-18%)
Carnforth (3)	1,487 (-18%)	1,646 (-10%)
Slyne w Hest (2)	2,179 (+20%)	2,106 (+15%)

Conclusion

We accept that this Review will have to have compromise in it. You cannot produce a plan which has *exactly* the same number of Electors Per Councillor – it wouldn't make sense and in six years' time, it would be wrong anyway.

So, what is the compromise figure? 10%? 15%? 20%?

What about the number of *actual* electors? If you worked to get a broad figure of 10% difference, that would give a 2018 target of between **1,650** and **2,010** electors per councillor.

Is the difference in Bolton-le-Sands and Slyne with Hest *so* big? Is it more important than breaking up communities?

At the district Council elections in 2011, there were also elections for the Town Council. This led to the farcical situation in Crag Bank Community Centre where some voters were given ballot papers for Carnforth Town Council and Carnforth Ward, and other electors were given ballot papers for Bolton-le-Sands Ward and told that, because Carnforth is a Warded parish, the four candidates there were elected unopposed. The line drawn through Crag Bank is arbitrary and divides the community. Carnforth Town Council believes that this is wrong and we respectfully suggest that you take our proposals on board as part of your review.

Adrian Attwood, Town Clerk, October 2012

On behalf of Carnforth Town Council, as agreed by resolution at the Full Council meeting on 17th October 2012.

Clerk to the Council: clerk@carnforthtowncouncil.org.uk 