

Summary

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Barrow-in-Furness was conducted to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the borough. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each borough councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee for England to undertake this review on 12 May 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, six wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the borough average, with one ward varying by more than 30% from the borough average. During the previous review of Barrow-in-Furness the electorate forecast for the five-year period between 1996 and 2001 was not realised. This was particularly the case in Barrow Island ward, which has resulted in it having a poor variance, with 35% fewer electors than the borough average.

This review was conducted in four stages, as shown in the table below.

Draft recommendations

We proposed 11 three-member wards, one two-member ward and one single-member ward.

The scheme was broadly based on the warding pattern consulted on by the Borough Council. The most notable variation to this was in Barrow Island where the Borough Council had proposed a three-member ward comprising Barrow Island and areas of the mainland. We received strong evidence of community identity to support retaining the existing Barrow Island ward as a single-member ward with 22% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009. We considered this level of electoral equality to be justified given the evidence. In the remaining parts of the borough, we were satisfied with the good levels of electoral equality achieved.

Responses to consultation

We received 19 submissions during Stage Three. The majority of submissions wholly endorsed

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	6 September 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	13 December 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 November 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	27 February 2007	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

our proposed Barrow Island ward. We did not receive alternative proposals for council size, nor did we receive specific alternative warding arrangements. Three respondents opposed our draft recommendations for Central ward but did not provide strong evidence that alternative arrangements would provide a better reflection of community identity.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2009, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 49,787 to 50,087 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. We did not receive any comments in relation to the electorate figures at any stage of the review and are satisfied that they are the most accurate that can be provided at this time.

Council size

We did not receive any further submissions in relation to council size during Stage Three and are therefore confirming as final our draft recommendations to reduce the number of councillors from 38 to 36.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during Stage Three, we are confirming our draft recommendations as

final, in full. We note the strong support for the retention of Barrow Island ward and are content to retain it, with one member. We note the opposition to our proposed Central ward. However, we have not received specific alternatives or evidence to support an alternative warding pattern in this area.

A number of respondents expressed concern that this review may be affected by unitary restructuring in Cumbria. However, this review relates only to the electoral arrangements of Barrow-in-Furness. Decisions on whether Cumbria should become a unitary authority are a matter for the Secretary of State and, ultimately, Parliament.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before 28 September 2007. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

Fax: 020 7271 0667
Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

These contact details should only be used for implementation purposes.

Further information

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk