

Executive summary

Draft 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 is being undertaken 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% of the borough average. During the previous review, the electorate forecast provided by the Borough Council for the five-year period 1996 and 2001, was not realised, particularly in Barrow Island ward which has resulted in it having a poor variance, with 35% fewer electors than the borough average.

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

Submissions received

We received 11 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the

Borough Council and the Conservative Group both of whose recommendations were based on a council size of 36. The other nine representations opposed the Council's and the Conservative Group's proposal to combine Barrow Island with other parts of the town. Respondents provided evidence of community identity to oppose the Borough Council's and the Conservative Group's proposed Old Barrow ward.

Analysis and draft 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

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

comments in relation to those electorate figures and are satisfied that they are the most accurate that can be provided at this time.

Council size

We received two identical proposals in relation to council size, from the Borough Council and the Conservative Group. During Stage One, we requested further information from the Council regarding its proposed council size and it provided some further evidence. Whilst the evidence was not extensive, we consider it sufficient to justify a decrease of two members.

General analysis

We are proposing 11 three-member wards, one two-member ward and one single-member ward. Our proposed Barrow Island ward would be a single-member ward on the same boundaries as the existing Barrow Island ward, with 22% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009. We acknowledge this poor level of electoral equality but consider the evidence of community identity received in relation to this area justifies retaining the existing Barrow Island ward. In the remaining wards of the borough, we have broadly adopted the proposals of the Council. With the exception of our proposed Barrow Island ward, we are satisfied that our proposed wards will have good levels of electoral equality throughout the borough.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on our draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness contained in the full report. We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.

We believe that the more feedback we receive, based on clear evidence, the better informed we will be in forming our final recommendations. We will take into account all submissions received by **26 February 2007**. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness and welcome comments from interested parties. In particular, we found our decisions regarding Barrow Island to be a difficult judgement between our statutory criteria. We would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

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Further information

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