

Boundary Review in relation to the present divisions of Barnard Castle East and Barnard Castle West.

These two electoral divisions comprise the area known as Teesdale, which is a predominantly rural area moving from arable and stock farming in the east to upland grazing in the west. The area is bounded at its east end by Darlington Borough, to the south by North Yorkshire and to the west by Cumbria. Transport routes within the area are purely road, and these run mainly east-west. Bus services are limited.

The market town of Barnard Castle has by far the largest population in the dale and is about 11 miles from the Darlington boundary and some 25 miles from that with Cumbria, which is 600m above sea-level where the B6277 road to Alston reaches the county boundary.

Having accepted that the number of electors in each seat must increase, it is clear that the area will be represented by 3 councillors. Given the varied nature of our communities it seems sensible to view this as three separate seats. The current arrangement where Barnard Castle is divided between two different divisions means that civic leaders in the town have to liaise with four County Councillors.

We propose that Teesdale be represented by three separate one-member divisions, and further suggest they be called Barnard Castle, Upper Teesdale, and Lower Teesdale. These names are used here for convenience.

The proposed Barnard Castle division covers the core of the town, including the entirety of the Town Council area, and is, thus, a compact urban area.

The other two divisions would be very similar to the existing two divisions but excluding the core of Barnard Castle itself.

Size

Using the figures from the 2021 electoral register and assuming that the new DCC would be represented by 98 seats, we have calculated the average number of electors to be 4150 per seat. We estimate the number of electors in these proposed seats to be :

Lower Teesdale	Upper Teesdale	Barnard Castle
4779	4401	4257
115%	106%	103%

These proposed divisions are within 10% of the target, apart from Lower Teesdale where it is 15%. The only area where it is practicable to reduce the number of electors is along the boundary with the existing Evenwood division, as that with Weardale division is at an altitude of 550 to 700 m altitude and is a geographical barrier. There are five polling districts along the easternmost boundary with Evenwood which total 262 electors. These all have road connection with the Evenwood division and most are closer to the shops of Butterknowle, Cockfield and Evenwood than they are to those in Barnard Castle.

If these five polling districts (Bolam, Hilton, Wackerfield, Raby & Keverstone, and Langleydale & Shotton) are transferred to join those in the Evenwood division, Lower Teesdale is reduced to 4517 electors or 109% of the ideal.

Conclusion

We believe, compared with the existing situation where Barnard Castle is divided between two divisions, these arrangements work better for community groups and organisations. There is little change for most electors except in Barnard Castle where they are greatly improved.

Submitted by [REDACTED], resident of current Barnard Castle East ward.