

From: Friends of Brighton and Hove Citizens Action Group

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To: reviews

Subject: Local Government Boundary review

Categories: Submissions, [REDACTED]

Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission's Draft Report on new Boundaries for Brighton & Hove City Council.

The Friends of Brighton & Hove Citizens Action Group are an independent action group concerned with council affairs in the Brighton and Hove City Council unitary authority area.

We came together as a group in 2019 through connections on Facebook of residents concerned with the City's direction and who want to apply scrutiny and shine a light on the issues of the day. Since then our members have taken an active role in asking questions of Councillors at meetings of Full Council and at Committee meetings.

Our work to date has involved:

1. Successfully pushing for an Independent Review of Members Expenses, following irregularities in claims.
2. Highlighting concerns about the state of Brighton & Hove's Regency quarter, including the state of the City's Regency public gardens, heritage, monuments and seafront areas.
3. Successfully pushing for full publication on controversial active travel measures introduced under experimental orders.
4. Bringing attention to the negative financial, equalities and transport impacts of changes to Madeira Drive.

The success of our Group's members in asking questions and getting results is shown in the number of mentions the Friends of Brighton and Hove Citizens Action Group and its members have been achieving across the local media, including The Argus and Brighton and Hove News.

Given our recent work we would like to make the following submission to your report:

Regency

The Friends of Brighton and Hove Citizens Action Group strongly feel that The Regency area of Brighton & Hove needs to be brought together in a single ward. It is currently split across too many wards and as a result means it is difficult from an administrative perspective to have issues fixed. As you will see from reports in the Argus, our members have spent countless hours and many messages trying to bring attention to a number of issues in Regency area. This has centred around council issues such as graffiti, vandalism, tents, damage to public gardens caused by events; broken heritage monuments and broken street lights. There was even an instance where the city's historic seafront lanterns were found up for sale on facebook, causing extensive coverage by the Argus.

From our experience, highlighting these issues has been a challenge due to the split responsibility. Attempting to have them addressed has involved residents having to send emails to all councillors as Regency it is split between so many wards, with an outcome that no one takes responsibility. This is not convenient and effective local government, which is a criteria of the Boundary Commission.

We support the inclusion of similar areas in single wards to avoid this. Therefore we support the Boundary Commission's proposal for a three-member Regency Ward which we think will be a strong antidote to this problem and establish more responsibility.

Queen's Park and Kemptown & Marina

Residents have been outspoken and determined in highlighting the damaging effects of experimental measures along Madeira Drive. This included the closure of Madeira Drive during the pandemic which lost parking revenue and caused major problems for people with a disability and the implementation of a new cycle lane with green paint that has meant the historic Brighton Speed Trials can no longer take place.

Our action involved petitioning the council and raising questions, however again, there was not convenient and effective government because the Madeira Drive area was split between 3 different wards with 9 councillors.

Some of the biggest projects and most controversial issues in the city are located along Madeira Drive, including the stalled Madeira Terraces Restoration, which local residents are struggling to get answers on.

We do not support the proposal for a Queen's Park and Kemptown & Marina Ward.

We suggest that the Boundary Commission ensures that Madeira Drive is included within one single ward, potentially with two or three members depending on electoral equality considerations.

Conclusion

By establishing a Regency ward and a ward that encompasses the whole of Madeira Drive, the Boundary Commission would establish more effective and convenient local government for residents in the City.