

Final recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Torrington District Council

Electoral review

January 2017

Translations and other formats

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Summary

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament. We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

2 Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

Electoral review

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed
- How many wards or electoral divisions should there be, where are their boundaries and what should they be called
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division

Why Torridge?

4 We are conducting a review of Torridge District Council as the value of each vote in district council elections varies depending on where you live in Torridge. Some councillors currently represent many more or fewer voters than others. This is 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where votes are as equal as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

Our proposals for Torridge

- Torridge District Council should be represented by 36 councillors, the same number as there are now.
- Torridge should have 16 wards, seven fewer than now.
- The boundaries of all but two wards should change.

5 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements in Torridge.

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

6 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹

7 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors (Chair)
 - Peter Knight CBE, DL
 - Alison Lowton
 - Peter Maddison QPM
 - Sir Tony Redmond
-
- Chief Executive: Jolyon Jackson CBE

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

1 Introduction

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in Torridge are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively
- The number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the district

What is an electoral review?

9 Our three main considerations are to:

- Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents
- Reflect community identity
- Provide for effective and convenient local government

10 Our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Consultation

11 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Torridge. We then held two periods of consultation on warding patterns for the district. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft and final recommendations.

12 This review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
19 April 2016	Number of councillors decided
26 April 2016	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
4 July 2016	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
6 December 2016	Publication of draft recommendations, start of second consultation
31 October 2016	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
24 January 2017	Publication of final recommendations

How will the recommendations affect you?

13 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in and which other communities are in that ward. Your ward name may also change.

2 Analysis and final recommendations

14 Legislation² states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors³ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

15 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

16 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2015	2022
Electorate of Torridge	51,608	58,757
Number of councillors	36	36
Average number of electors per councillor	1,434	1,632

17 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Torridge will have electoral equality by 2022.

18 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the district or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Submissions received

19 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed at our offices by appointment, or on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

20 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2022, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2017. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 14% by 2022. This growth will largely be driven by the substantial new developments planned in Bideford.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

³ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

21 We considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

Number of councillors

22 Torridge District Council currently has 36 councillors. We looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that keeping this number the same will make sure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

23 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 36 councillors – for example, 36 one-councillor wards, 12 three-councillor wards, or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor wards.

24 We did not receive any submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. We have therefore maintained 36 councillors for our final recommendations.

Ward boundaries consultation

25 We received five submissions to our consultation on ward boundaries. These did not include any detailed district-wide proposals; the Council did not submit a full scheme but instead made comments in the second round of consultation. The submissions provided localised comments on warding arrangements.

26 Our draft recommendations were based on the electoral data provided by the local authority and, as far as possible, community links as suggested by the existing warding patterns and the parishes in the district. We also visited the area in order to look at the various different options for wards on the ground. This tour of Torridge helped us to decide between the different boundary options that were available to us.

27 Our draft recommendations were for one one-councillor, 10 two-councillor and five three-councillor wards. We considered that our draft recommendations provided for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests.

Draft recommendations consultation

28 We received 19 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included a full alternative scheme put forward by Torridge District Council. Five of the 19 submissions received were in support of our draft recommendations. The majority of the other submissions focussed on supporting the Council's alternative scheme.

29 The submission made by Torridge District Council contained proposals for two four-councillor wards. We do not consider wards of more than three councillors can provide for effective and convenient local government. The proposal also included a ward with 19% fewer electors than the district average for 2022, and there was also no substantive evidence provided to justify any alterations to the draft

recommendations. As the proposed scheme did not fulfil the statutory criteria, we are unable to recommend any alterations based on this scheme.

30 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations.

Final recommendations

31 Pages 8–13 detail our final recommendations for each area of Torridge. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁴ criteria of:

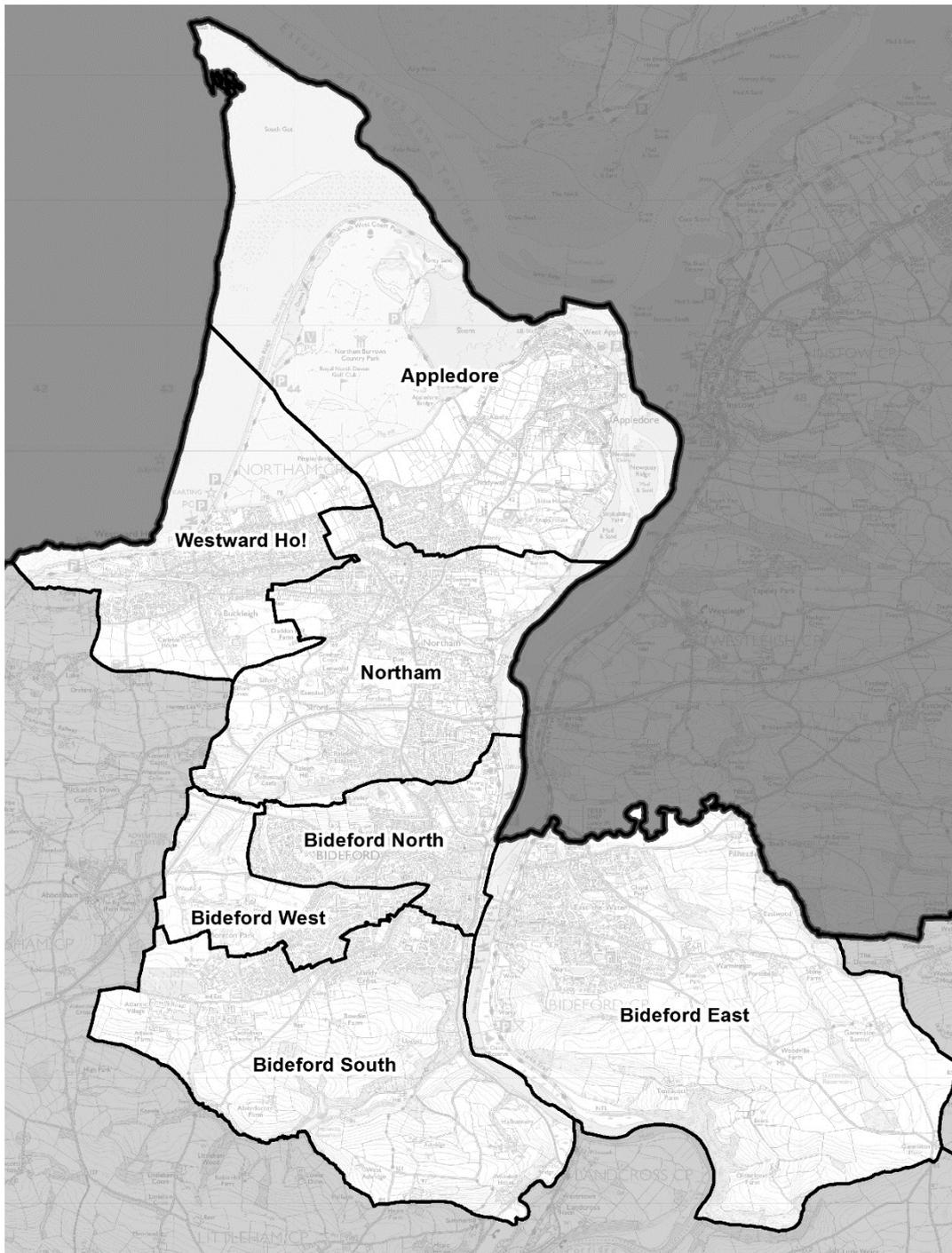
- Equality of representation
- Reflecting community interests and identities
- Providing for effective and convenient local government

32 Our final recommendations are for five three-councillor wards, 10 two-councillor wards and one one-councillor ward. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during consultation.

33 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table on page 17–18 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁴ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Bideford and Westward Ho!



Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2022
Appledore	2	-1%
Bideford East	3	8%
Bideford North	3	-6%
Bideford South	2	2%
Bideford West	2	-6%
Northam	3	-9%
Westward Ho!	2	2%

Appledore, Northam and Westward Ho!

34 We received two submissions relating to the wards in this area, in addition to the full scheme received by the Council. One submission, from a resident, requested that the Morwenna Park Road area of our proposed Appledore ward be moved to Northam. However, to do this would require a significant alteration to the boundary, and the resulting Appledore ward would have a high level of electoral inequality. Sufficient evidence was not provided to justify this alteration.

35 A submission was received from Northam Town Council that supported Torridge District Council's alternative proposal for the area. However, the Council's proposal, whilst providing electoral equality for Northam, left their proposed Appledore ward with a high level of electoral inequality. There was also no evidence provided to justify the alteration to the boundary. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

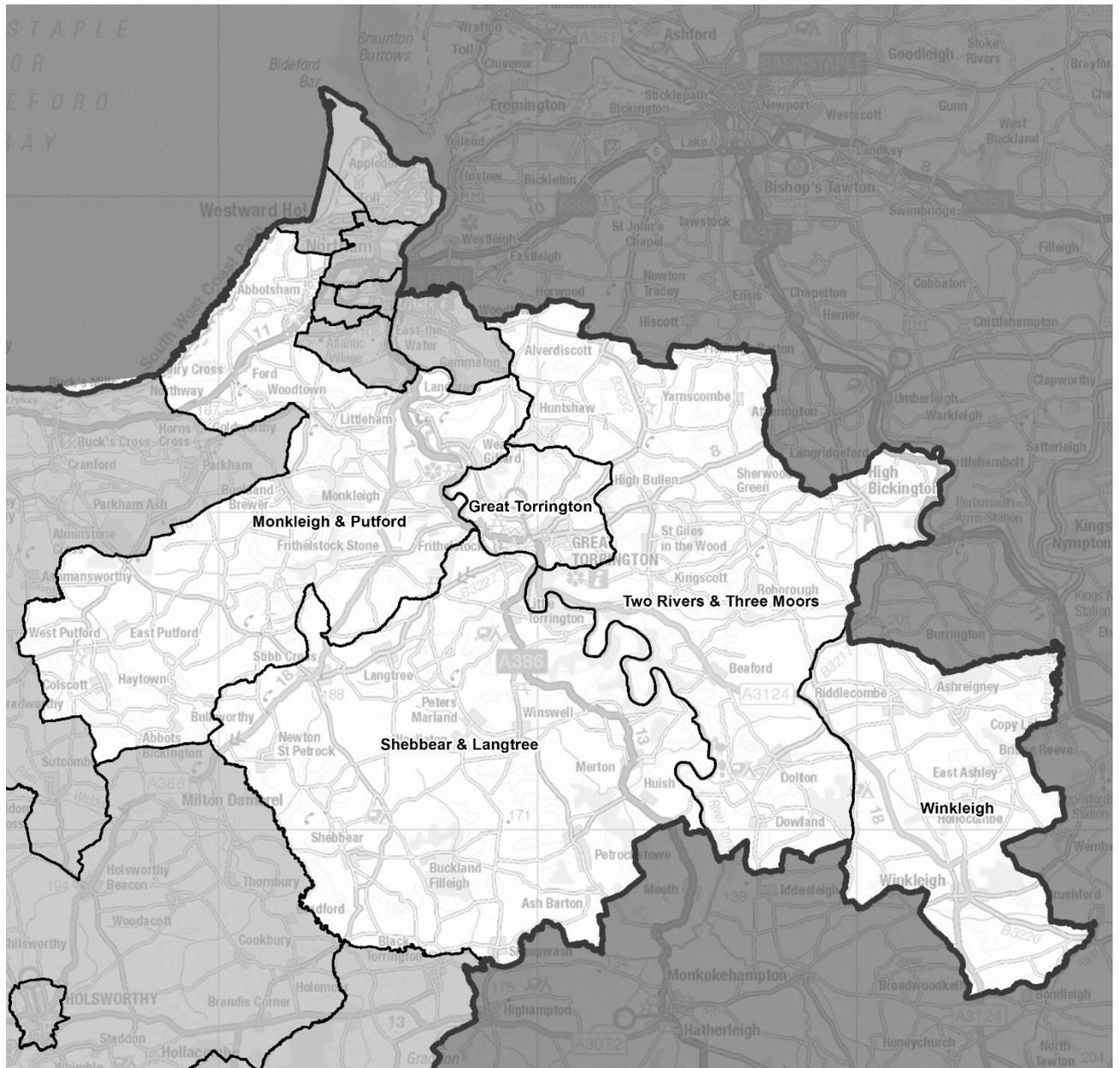
Bideford

36 In addition to the Council's alternative scheme, we received one submission for Bideford, in support of the Council's proposals.

37 In Bideford, the District Council proposed an altered scheme made up of three wards – Bideford North, Bideford East and Bideford South. Two of these wards, Bideford East and Bideford South, would be represented by four councillors each under the Council's proposals. As stated in our guidance, 'How to propose a new pattern of wards', we do not accept proposals for more than three councillors to represent a ward, except in exceptional circumstances. As no evidence was provided to justify four-councillor wards in Bideford, we have therefore not accepted the Council's alternative warding pattern here.

38 The Council's proposed Bideford East ward also included a number of rural parishes to the east of the urban area. We received a submission from Yarnscombe Parish Council putting forward evidence that the rural Two Rivers & Three Moors ward, proposed as part of our draft recommendations, was more suitable than the Council's proposed extended four-councillor Bideford East ward. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations in Bideford as final.

East Torrington



Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2022
Great Torrington	3	3%
Monkleigh & Putford	2	3%
Shebbear & Langtree	2	-1%
Two Rivers & Three Moors	2	8%
Winkleigh	1	8%

Great Torrington, Two Rivers & Three Moors and Winkleigh

39 We received two submissions from High Bickington Parish Council in the proposed Two Rivers & Three Moors ward supporting the Council's alternative proposals, which would have put them in a single-member ward, on the basis that multi-councillor wards were too complicated. However, the Council's proposal for the district included two large four-member wards, which do not meet the statutory criteria (see paragraph 37). We are therefore not adopting the Council's proposal in this area. We received a submission from a parish council putting forward evidence that the rural Two Rivers & Three Moors ward, proposed as part of our draft recommendations, was more suitable than the Council's proposed extended four-councillor Bideford East ward. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations in Two Rivers & Three Moors as final.

40 We did not receive any submissions regarding the proposed Great Torrington and Winkleigh wards. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

Monkleigh & Putford and Shebbear & Langtree

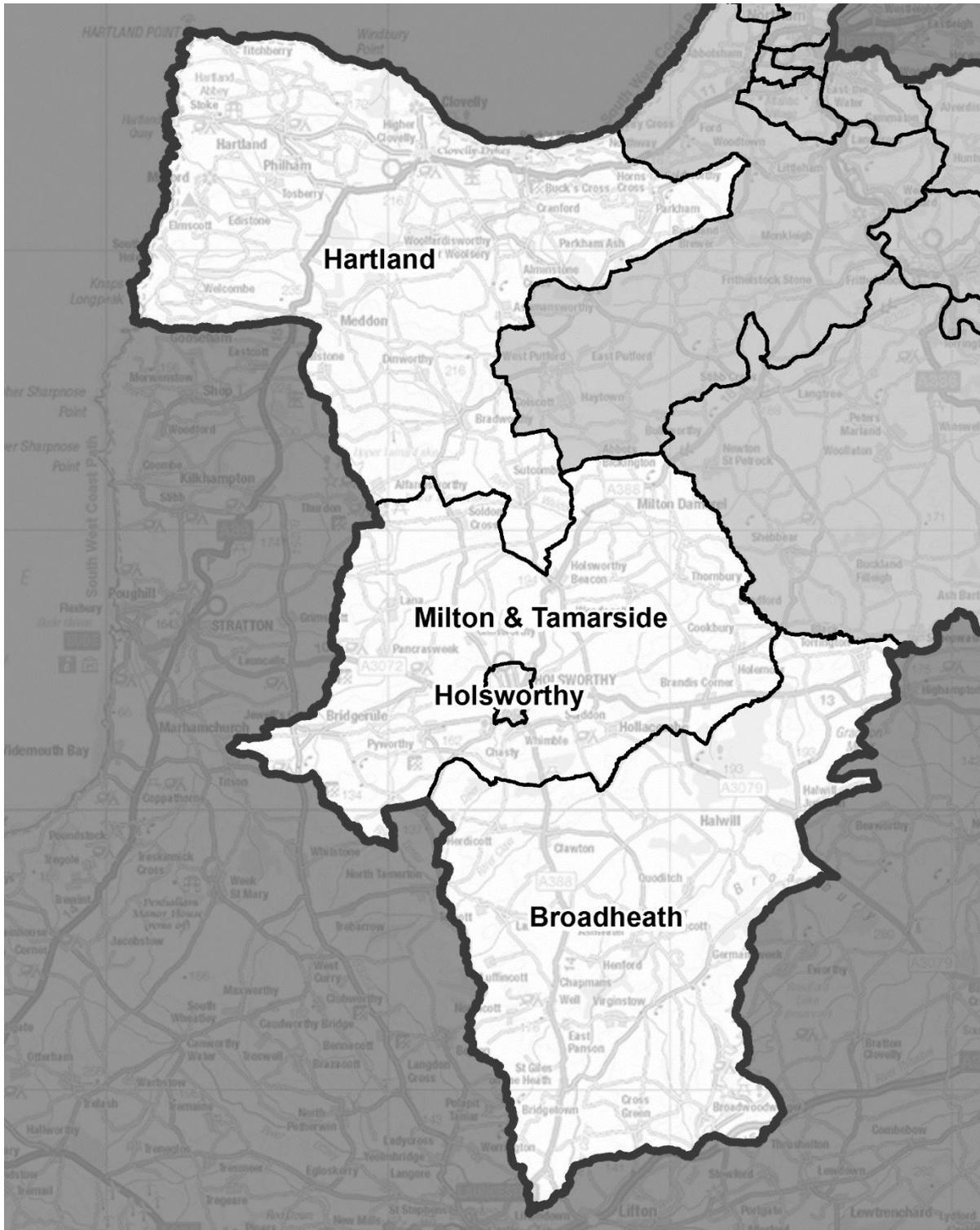
41 We received six submissions regarding these wards, in addition to the Council's proposals. One submission, from a parish council, was supportive of the proposed wards. Another parish council supported the Council's alternative scheme. One submission, from a local organisation, requested that the parish of Abbotsham should be moved out of the proposed Monkleigh & Putford ward. However, the submission did not provide an alternative warding pattern here – to move it to Westward Ho!, for example, would result in high levels of electoral inequality for both Westward Ho! and Monkleigh & Putford. We are therefore not making an alteration here.

42 We received a submission from a local resident suggesting an alternative warding pattern for the area. However, these proposals would result in a variance of -11% for the proposed Monkleigh ward, and we do not consider that appropriate evidence was provided to justify this electoral inequality.

43 We received one submission from Peters Marland Parish Council suggesting a name change for Shebbear & Langtree, altering the name to Tarka. However, no evidence was provided to justify a change and as such we are confirming the draft recommendations as final.

44 We also received a submission from a parish council requesting that the parish of Alwington be moved into the proposed Hartland ward; however, this would result in significantly worsened electoral equality for both Monkleigh & Putford and Hartland. It would also create a detached ward, with Abbotsham parish split off from the rest of Monkleigh & Putford. We do not recommend detached wards, except in exceptional circumstances. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

West Torridge



Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2022
Broadheath	2	0%
Hartland	3	0%
Holsworthy	2	-4%
Milton & Tamarside	2	1%

Hartland

45 We received a submission from a parish council requesting that the parish of Alwington be moved into the proposed Hartland ward; however, this would result in significantly worsened electoral equality for both Monkleigh & Putford and Hartland, and would also create a detached ward, with Abbotsham parish split off from the rest of Monkleigh & Putford. Another parish council objected to the proposals on the basis that the ward combined urban and rural parishes; however, we are of the view that it is more beneficial to combine two different communities than to split one in half. Alongside this, no evidence was provided for an alternative pattern of wards. We also received two submissions from a parish council supporting our proposals for this ward. We are confirming the draft Hartland ward as part of our final recommendations.

Broadheath

46 We received no submissions that related directly to Broadheath, and we propose that the draft recommendations are considered as final.

Milton & Tamarside and Holsworthy

47 We received two submissions relating to the proposed wards in this area, both from parish councils. One of the submissions questioned whether a two-councillor ward was appropriate, and suggested a 'north-south' split. However, it would not be possible to divide the proposed Milton & Tamarside ward into two single-member wards with acceptable electoral variances without creating a ward in the west with no access from the north to the south; we considered this option at the previous stage of consultation as well, and did not consider the evidence strong enough to make this change.

48 The other submission received was in relation to the parish of Holsworthy Hamlets, and stated that the parish should be in the same ward as the parish of Holsworthy. It is not possible to simply move the parish of Holsworthy Hamlets into Holsworthy ward, as it would result in a variance of 20%, and would require the remainder of Milton & Tamarside to be split into two single-councillor wards, with variances of 10% and -57%, significantly outside acceptable levels of electoral inequality. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations in this area as final.

Conclusions

49 The table below shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2015 and 2022 electorate figures.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2015	2022
Number of councillors	36	36
Number of electoral wards	16	16
Average number of electors per councillor	1,434	1,632
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	0

Final recommendation

Torrige District Council should be made up of 36 councillors serving 16 wards representing one single-councillor ward, 10 two-councillor wards and five three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for Torrige District Council.

You can also view our final recommendations for Torrige District Council on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

Parish electoral arrangements

50 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

51 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Torrington District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

52 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bideford and Northam parishes.

53 As result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bideford parish.

Final recommendation	
Bideford Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards:	
Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Bideford East	Five
Bideford North	Four
Bideford South	Three
Bideford West	Three

54 As result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Northam parish.

Final recommendation	
Northam Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:	
Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Appledore	Four
Northam Orchard Hill	Six
Westward Ho!	Four

3 What happens next?

55 We have now completed our review of Torridge District Council. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2019.

Equalities

56 This report has been screened for impact on equalities, with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

Appendix A

Final recommendations for Torrridge District Council

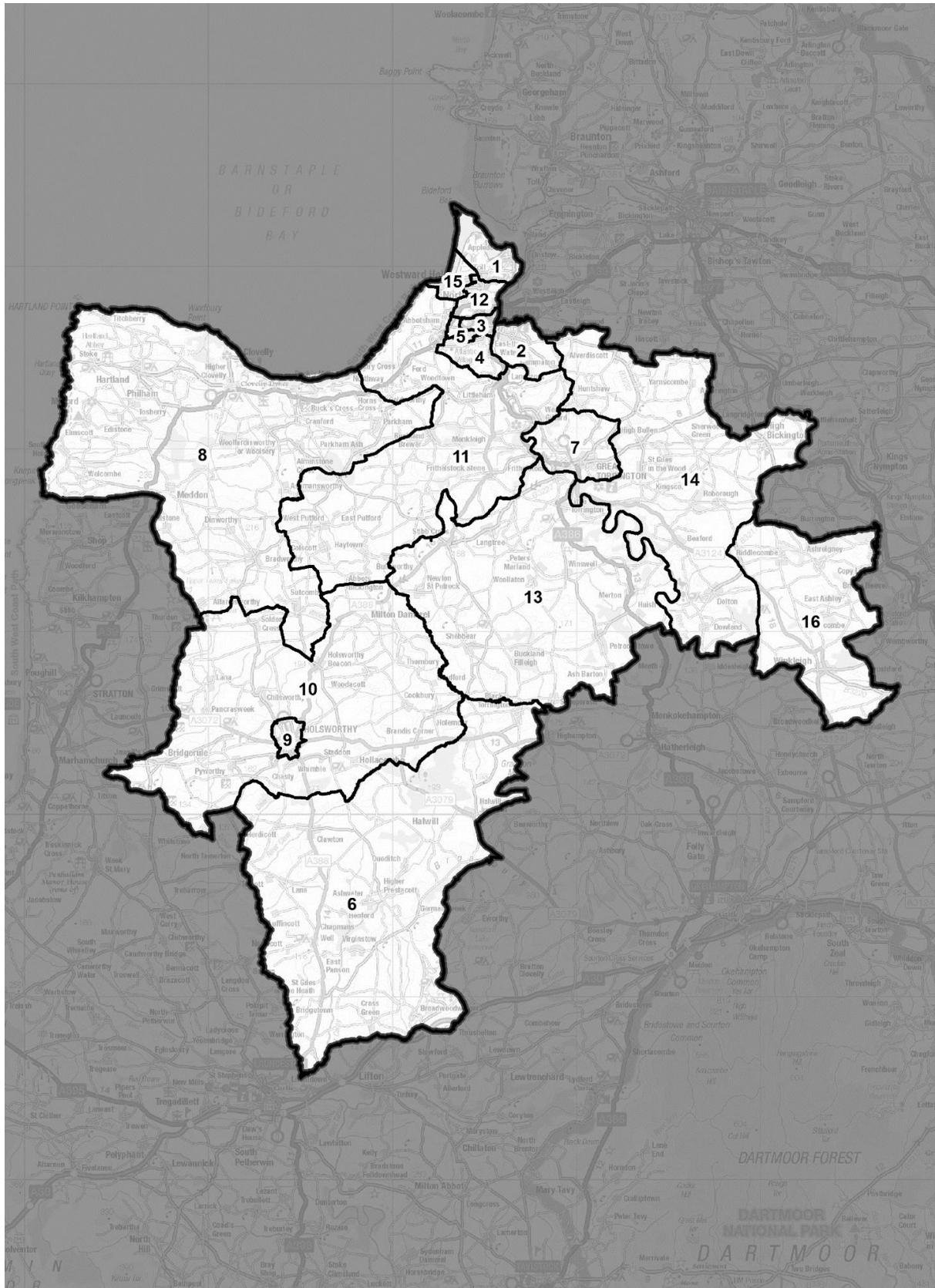
Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2015)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Appledore	2	2,960	1,480	3%	3,219	1,609	-1%
2 Bideford East	3	4,218	1,406	-2%	5,267	1,756	8%
3 Bideford North	3	4,404	1,468	2%	4,607	1,536	-6%
4 Bideford South	2	2,551	1,276	-11%	3,320	1,660	2%
5 Bideford West	2	1,891	946	-34%	3,059	1,530	-6%
6 Broadheath	2	3,223	1,612	12%	3,270	1,635	0%
7 Great Torrington	3	4,271	1,424	-1%	5,033	1,678	3%
8 Hartland	3	4,581	1,527	7%	4,880	1,627	0%
9 Holsworthy	2	2,277	1,139	-21%	3,145	1,573	-4%
10 Milton & Tamarside	2	3,299	1,650	15%	3,289	1,644	1%
11 Monkleigh & Putford	2	3,024	1,512	5%	3,364	1,682	3%
12 Northam	3	4,112	1,371	-4%	4,469	1,490	-9%

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2015)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13 Shebbear & Langtree	2	3,027	1,514	6%	3,233	1,617	-1%
14 Two Rivers & Three Moors	2	3,212	1,606	12%	3,517	1,758	8%
15 Westward Ho!	2	2,849	1,425	-1%	3,314	1,657	2%
16 Winkleigh	1	1,709	1,709	19%	1,771	1,771	8%
Totals	36	51,608	-	-	58,757	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,434	-	-	1,632	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Torridge District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B Outline map



Key

1. Appledore
2. Bideford East
3. Bideford North
4. Bideford South
5. Bideford West
6. Broadheath
7. Great Torrington
8. Hartland
9. Holsworthy
10. Milton & Tamarside
11. Monkleigh & Putford
12. Northam
13. Shebbear & Langtree
14. Two Rivers & Three Moors
15. Westward Ho!
16. Winkleigh

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-west/devon/torridge>

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-west/devon/torridge>

Local Authority

- Torridge District Council

Local Organisations

- Kenwith Castle Gardens Residents' Association

Parish and Town Council

- Alwington Parish Council
- Bideford Town Council
- Bradford & Cookbury Parish Council
- High Bickington Parish Council (two submissions)
- Holsworthy Hamlets Parish Council
- Littleham & Landcross Parish Council
- Northam Town Council
- Parkham Parish Council (two submissions)
- Peters Marland Parish Council
- West & East Putford Parish Council
- Wooltery Parish Council
- Yarnscombe Parish Council

Local Residents

- Three local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average

Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average

Ward

A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council