

Northumberland

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Organisation Name: Seaton Valley Community Council (Representative of parish/town council)

Comment text:

Related subject: Seaton Valley

It is our belief that the proposals for Seaton Valley contradict the LGBCE's own criteria for delivering a good pattern of division. Our concerns are summarised as follows:

Electoral Equality

Whilst the changes do support the criteria for balancing elector numbers and the number of councillors at county level, this comes at the expense of the criteria for community identity and effective and convenient local government.

Community Identity

New Hartley is an easily identifiable community with a natural boundary and common interests including schools, community association and organisations, shops, churches, transport, services, and administration.

The village of New Hartley has good transport links with the surrounding areas within Seaton Valley, particularly Seaton Sluice, with which it shares historical links, school catchment areas and a church of England parish. The new proposals seek to 'draw a line' through the middle of New Hartley, putting the sense of community at risk and dividing these common interests and history as well as some services and infrastructure.

The new divisions also propose to link the existing Newsham division in a new division of New Delaval and New Hartley. There are two large fields between these areas, which have no transport links or public pathways, share no services, or common infrastructure with New Hartley.

Effective and Convenient Local Government

Splitting New Hartley, further dividing Seaton Delaval, and proposing a new division to include Newsham, which is currently part of Blyth, does not simplify administration or support effective and convenient local government.

Seaton Valley Council's nine councillors currently provide balanced representation of three councillors per ward. The new divisions will result in less balanced representation across the Seaton Valley area, more complexity at county/MP level, and potentially more confusion for electors in determining who is responsible for what, particularly because Blyth and Seaton Valley Councils have different systems and processes in place.

Conclusion

Whilst the existing boundaries and three wards within Seaton Valley may not achieve the ideal balance of electorate numbers, the existing arrangements protect the community identity and provide effective and convenient local government for our residents.

Attached Documents:

None attached