



25th June 2023

Dear Sirs,

Response to Local Boundary Commission proposed changes

My wife and I are writing to register our strong objection to the proposed local boundary changes and to support the alternative proposal detailed below.

In setting new boundaries there should be a close awareness of the current diversity of communities both rural and township, each with their particular problems requiring addressing by the local Council. It should be a primary objective to retain this diversity through groupings of similar communities so as to ensure fair representation giving rural communities an equal voice when it comes to focussing Local Council time and money

During a recent villages meeting on the 25th May 2023, the proposed boundary changes were discussed at length. Below are some of the points we would like to bring to your attention.

The existing Leadgate and Medomsley Division (including all the 6/7 separate villages) is predominantly a rural based Division and this has been proposed to be amalgamated into larger ever-expanding Urban Conurbation of Consett Town.

Why we are against this proposal.

- The existing Leadgate/Medomsley Division is predominantly a rural based Division, with extremely limited transport links particularly for the rural villages. It has no direct correlation with the ever-expanding urban conurbation of Consett Town.
- We want to maintain the rural relationships and not be considered co-joined to the Consett township.
- We fear Hamsterley Mill will not get appropriate levels of financial support via councillors, especially when in a small hamlet associated with a larger township.
- It is felt Medomsley is in the proposed boundary to make up the numbers required for a larger township. The Dene will be split from Medomsley and become part of Burnopfield/Dipton/Ebchester Division.
- Para 43 in the Local Boundary Commission's report refers to Ebchester, Hamsterley, Hamsterley Mill all being linked along the A694 in the Derwent Valley "with Leadgate and Medomsley somewhat separated from these

communities by significant elevations". There is no reference in the report that both Burnopfield/Dipton (in a completely different valley to the A694 villages) are further separated from the communities on the A694 by even more significant elevations.

- Para 47 states that the Consett North Division would be split by the Villa Real Road yet the Boundary Commission has used the entirety of Front Street and Genesis Way (Para 48) as "clear and identifiable boundaries" between the divisions of Consett North and South, indicating a lack of continuity or double standards in the Boundary Commission decision-making progress.
- Para 42 refers to the introduction of Greencroft Parish with Consett Town Centre (an unparished area) yet the Boundary Commission declined the Joint Administration (Durham Council) proposal for the amalgamation of the Dipton Division (unparished) with Tanfield Division (parished), another example of a lack of continuity being exercised by the Boundary Commission decision makers.
- High Westwood and The Dene (which is closer to the Medomsley village than Medomsley Edge) are being included in the proposed Burnopfield/Dipton/Ebchester division whilst Medomsley village and Medomsley Edge are included in the proposed Consett North Division.
- There is a cluster of communities across the existing Leadgate/Medomsley Division eg. CofE church communities across Hamsterley, Ebchester, Leadgate, Medomsley and Medomsley Community Action Group which encourage real partnership linked to community-based groupings across villages. Splitting this area into different divisions would cause significant disruption to groups working together for the benefit of the whole community.
- There has been no consultation from the Boundary Commission with the local representatives or local councillors.

We support the alternative proposal.

- The current division of Leadgate/Medomsley (6850) is amalgamated with the current Burnopfield/Dipton division ((6212) to create a 3 Councillor Division entirely rural based with a cumulative total electorate of circa 13000.
- The Electors/Councillors would be circa 13000/3 Councillors, giving 4335/Councillor which is +4.4% within the accepted +/-10% Elector/Cllr threshold.
- This new amalgamated division would be called The Derwent and Pont Valley Division, therefore no one village has predominance over the other villages across the new division and reflects the complete rurality of the whole area.
- Consett North becomes a one Member division based solely on the Town Centre Conurbation with an expected electorate of circa 4255 with a +2.7% within the +/- 10% elector threshold.
- Maiden Law (240 Electors) within the Greencroft Parish is proposed to be assigned to the Annfield Plain/Tanfield Division (Stanley Town Council ward) to balance and improve elector equality across the North Durham area ensuring parish boundaries are not compromised.

