Electoral review of   
Westmorland & Furness council

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| **Response to LGBCE consultation  on Draft Recommendations** |

# Introduction

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) are currently undertaking a review of electoral arrangements for the authority. This is the first formal review of electoral arrangements for the authority since it was formed, and is necessary due to electoral inequality (where some Councillors represent more electors than others) that is outside of the permitted tolerance.

On 4 March 2025, the LGBCE published their Draft Recommendations for Westmorland & Furness. These are now open to public consultation, which runs until 12 May 2025. Their Draft Recommendations report sets out the background, legislative requirements, and the factors they consider in making proposals. In developing warding arrangements, the LGBCE have regard to three statutory criteria; as a result the proposals produced by this Council must also take these into account:

(1) the need to secure equality of representation (taking future growth into account);

(2) the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and

(3) the need to secure effective and convenient local government.

**This submission represents the formal response of Westmorland & Furness Council to the LGBCE consultation regarding their Draft Recommendations.** It has been developed through the cross-party Member Working Group, in consultation with Councillors from all groups, and discussed and agreed at Full Council.

# Consultation response

## General introduction

Westmorland & Furness note that the majority of the wards set out in the LGBCE Draft Recommendations are based largely on the submission made by this authority in the first round of consultation and, as such, agree that these reflect the interests and identities of local communities. The Council is therefore pleased to support these Draft Recommendations in general terms, with specific points raised below.

## Barrow-in-Furness Page 9 of LGBCE report

We note that the proposed wards in Barrow-in-Furness reflect those in the Council’s first submission, with one small change regarding Elkstone Avenue. We fully support the Draft Recommendations for this area, noting the move of Elkstone Avenue is a sensible and pragmatic approach and ensures the affected residents are not isolated from their neighbouring community. The Draft Recommendations for the wards of **Hawcoat & Newbarns**; **Old Barrow** **& Hindpool**; **Ormsgill & Parkside**; **Risedale & Roosecote**; and **Walney Island** are supported.

## Furness Peninsula Page 11 of LGBCE report

Three of the wards in the Draft Recommendations match those in the Council’s previous submission (**Askam & Ireleth**; **Broughton & Coniston**; and **Hawkshead & Greenodd**) and we are pleased to support these.

In our previous discussions, a range of views were expressed. In our original submission the Member Working Group broadly agreed that the parish of Dalton-with-Newton should not be split, in line with other proposals across the local authority area. However, the Council notes that splitting Newton from the larger Dalton reflect local identities and interests more accurately – creating a two-member more urban **Dalton**, and the more rural single-member **Low Furness ward**. We concur with the LGBCE view that splitting Dalton-with-Newton is not ideal, but agree it may give a better representation of the local communities.

One local Member summarised this proposal thus:

*“The villages, hamlets, and farms of Low Furness have always been treated in separate warding arrangements from the nearby towns of Barrow, Dalton, and Ulverston for good reason. The villages and communities have deep links between and within them. Larger villages such as Great Urswick and Bardsea act as service hubs for other smaller villages and hamlets, with their pubs and restaurants, and with the local primary school situated in Urswick. Local residents see themselves as part of a rural community surrounded by farms, open countryside, country lanes, and the coast, sharing similar issues and challenges, and separate from the nearby towns. A larger proportion of the population across Low Furness is older than average, many families work in local agriculture and fishing, and local children attend the local Low Furness primary school in Urswick. These factors all contribute to a clear sense of a rural community, with intense community, family and historical ties, which define Low Furness as distinctly separate from its neighbouring towns.*

*The LGBCE draft warding proposals groups the Aldingham & Urswick parishes in the existing Low Furness ward, with the neighbouring parish of Lindal & Marton, and with the neighbouring village of Newton. This is a sensible proposal, reflecting the feedback from those Parish Councils and from Dalton-with-Newton Town Council, which maintains a rural-facing ward, knitting together local villages and communities with shared issues and characteristics, separate from the nearby towns. Dalton-with-Newton Town Council specifically proposed in their submission, the principle of splitting Newton Village away from Dalton Town, and including the village within a revised Low Furness ward.”*

However, local Members felt that a slight adjustment to the boundary between Newton and Dalton may be prudent, to better reflect the differing identities between the two communities. We would like to propose that Newton village is bounded using Long Lane in the north, & Newton Road in the west (north of the junction with Parkhouse Road) as the boundary between Low Furness and Dalton. Consequently, that would also become the proposed “Newton Village” ward within Dalton-with-Newton Town Council. Billincoat Farm, Abbots Way and the properties around Billings Road and Mill Brow would then remain within the proposed 2-member Dalton ward. These properties and residents are very close to Dalton itself and have a direct line of sight onto the town. The residents who live south of Long Lane and east of Newton Road, are not close to the town itself and due to the topography of the land have no direct line of sight from their properties into the town itself.

The Council support the proposals for **Ulverston North** and **Ulverston South & Pennington**, including the use of Dragley Beck as the boundary between the wards, noting it is a recognisable geographical feature.

## Southern Westmorland & Furness Page 16 of LGBCE report

Three of the wards in the Draft Recommendations match those in the Council’s previous submission (**Bowness & Lyth**; **Grange & Cartmel**; and **Kirkby Lonsdale**) and we are pleased to support these. However, following further discussion with local representatives, we propose that the Grange & Cartmel ward be named *Grange & Cartmel Peninsula* as this is more inclusive of the other villages and settlements in that ward and is therefore a better representation of local communities.

The Council originally proposed two 2-Member wards to represent Arnside, Beetham & Burton; and Milnthorpe & Levens. The LGBCE Draft Recommendation is for a three-Member ward (**Arnside, Milnthorpe & Burton**) and a single-Member ward for **Levens**. Whilst the Council understands the rationale of the proposals, the proposed Levens ward excludes Hincaster parish, resulting in an unusual shape and whilst it would remain possible to travel between all parishes in the ward, it would not be possible without leaving the ward or travelling on narrow roads (rather than the major A590 and A591 which link all the parishes when Hincaster is included. In addition, the parishes of Preston Patrick and Preston Richard work closely together and act as a single community; the LGBCE proposal splits these. However, the Council recognises there are benefits and drawbacks of both options. Therefore, the Council view is neutral on this – either option could work. The Council recognises the importance of hearing from local people and ensuring warding arrangements reflect the identities and interests of people within these communities and, as such, the Council would support their voices in these warding arrangements and defer to their local knowledge and experiences in determining which of these warding options would most appropriately serve their communities. If the proposed Levens ward remains unchanged, the Council proposes the name *Levens & Crooklands*, which better represents the extent and geography of the ward.

## Kendal Page 19 of LGBCE report

The warding arrangements for Kendal are based upon the Council’s previous submission with some noticeable changes. For some of these, the Council are broadly content that the LGBCE Draft Recommendations are appropriate and have no concerns. As such, the Council support the proposed wards of **Kendal Highgate**; **Kendal South & Oxenholme**; and **Kendal Strickland & Fell**.

However, the Council strongly disagrees with the proposed boundary between **Kendal Castle** and **Kendal Nether** wards. The LGBCE Draft Recommendation splits the Sandylands estate (surrounding the Castle Park School). This is a distinct and cohesive community, with a clear sense of identity. During Storm Desmond (an extratropical cyclone that struck the UK in December 2015; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storm_Desmond>) large parts of this area were flooded, and a strong sense of community identity was apparent as the communities came together to support each other. As a result, the Council does not support splitting this distinct community, and prefers that the boundary between these two wards be adjusted as follows:

* Ullswater Road, Grasmere Crescent, Coniston Drive, Thirlmere Road and Castle Park School to be included in Kendal Nether.
* The remaining roads to the south to be included in Kendal Castle.
* The boundary runs between Grasmere Crescent and Bowland Drive, and to the north of Whitbarrow Close (with the whole of Ullswater included in Nether). The boundary continues along the southern and eastern edge of the Castle Park School site.
* While the school has no electors, it is a core part of the Sandylands community, so having it in Nether would mean that the Councillor there is the first point of contact, which is considered desirable.
* This gives a good representation of the communities, and gives good electoral equality (+2% in Castle, and +6% in Nether).

We support the other ward boundaries proposed by the LGBCE.

## Central Rural Westmorland & Furness Page 22 of LGBCE report

Two of the wards in the Draft Recommendations match those in the Council’s previous submission (**Upper Kent**; and **Windermere, Ambleside & Grasmere**) and we are pleased to support these.

There are differing views about which ward Ormside would be best aligned with. However, overall the Council supports the LGBCE Draft Recommendation for **Appleby & Bongate** and **Kirkby Stephen & Brough**. The Council has no view on whether Hoff should also be moved, and feels this would be a view best represented by the local communities alone.

The Council supports the proposals for **Sedbergh & Tebay** and **Eamont & Shap**, and is pleased that Orton and Tebay would be together in the same ward. The Council feels that Sebergh & Tebay should remain a two Member ward; the alternative would result in one geographically large spawling single member ward and one much more compact ward. Having a two Member ward allows two Councillors to share the workload and travelling more evenly, supporting more effective and convenient local government, and improving their ability to support and serve local people.

The Council would support local views on the name of the two Member ward, but feels that given the boundaries and extent have changed, the name should also change from Eamont & Shap. One option would be Shap & Clifton, naming it after the two largest communities, although local representatives may have a more appropriate name taking local identities, landmarks and history into account.

## Northern Westmorland & Furness Page 26 of LGBCE report

Four of the wards in the Draft Recommendations match those in the Council’s previous submission (**Alston Moor & Fellside**; **Hesket & Lazonby**; **Long Marton & Kirkby Thore**; and **Ullswater & Dacre**) and we are pleased to support these. However, there are differing views on the most appropriate name for the *Long Marton & Kirkby Thore* ward, and this may not be the name that best reflects the local communities; we therefore suggest that the views and representation from local communities are used to determine the name for this ward.

The Council notes that the LGBCE Draft Recommendations for **Penrith North** and **Penrith South** differ from those of our previous submission. We strongly oppose the LGBCE proposals for Penrith, and favour those we previously submitted which were based on long-standing and well-recognised historic boundaries. In addition, the arrangement we previously submitted ensures Councillors for both Penrith North and Penrith South have residents they represent within the town centre itself; as such, any issues affecting the town centre would draw interest and engagement from all Councillors, giving a stronger voice and both a wider representation and greater diversity of views and experiences. The LGBCE Draft Recommendations would result in the town centre being represented by fewer Councillors overall, to the detriment of local communities. In addition, the Council’s submission gives better electoral equality in the short and longer term than the Draft Recommendations.