

North Yorkshire

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See attached

Attached Documents:

- mwg-response-to-lgbce.docx

Member Working Group Response to LGBCE Boundary Review Consultation

Background

1. In December 2024, North Yorkshire Council submitted a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) outlining proposed boundaries for divisions to be used from 2027 onwards. In April 2025, the LGBCE published its proposed boundaries, after reviewing all submissions.
2. The Cross-Party Member Working Group has reviewed the LGBCE proposals and suggests the response outlined within this report, to improve the proposals and ensure LGBCE is sighted on the implications of their pattern of boundaries.

The Member Working Group

3. The Boundary Review Member Working Group was established to provide cross-party leadership to develop the information and proposals to be submitted to the LGBCE. The group, supported by officers, met regularly to formulate the required responses within the process. The group worked on a consensus basis as far as possible and whilst individual members may have disagreed on some minor elements, the boundary proposals submitted reflected the combined views and compromises of the Conservative, Lib Dem, Labour, Green and Independent groups' representatives.
4. The Working Group notes that in some responses received by the LGBCE during the first consultation, the Working Group and/or its proposals were inaccurately described as being "Conservative". This is a misrepresentation of the approach taken and the efforts of all members of the group to consider the process in a non-partisan way. The Cross-Party Working Group would wish to clarify that the proposal submitted had the support of its members from all the groups listed above.
5. The Working Group further notes that some political submissions to LGBCE used the Working Group's proposal from which to suggest amendments. The Group recognises that it is significantly easier to critique individual elements in isolation than it is to develop a complete proposal. Inevitably there are consequences and knock-on impacts of every change made and the Working Group strived to consider

the combined impact of the proposals, rather than just the impact upon areas in isolation.

6. The Working Group followed the process defined by the LGBCE, using the parameters agreed at the outset. As this was a Single-Member Warding Review, the group felt unable to propose two-member wards. Similarly, the parameters around variation in division size were applied stringently by the Working Group but relaxed within the LGBCE proposals. The Group understands that the LGBCE may seek to balance the statutory criteria in a different way, but the LGBCE appears to have greater freedom in flexing the parameters than the process and guidance allowed the Council.
7. The Working Group has reviewed the LGBCE proposals in detail. Whilst it believes that the model submitted by the Council broadly represented the best achievable balance within the parameters at the time, it is recognised that there are some areas which are improved through the LGBCE proposals and others for which there is a range of options to balance conflicting requirements. For this reason, the Working Group has prioritised its response specifically around the areas where there is concern that the proposals would not reflect community identity or support effective and convenient local government.
8. One key area where the Working Group would suggest some attention is in respect of North Yorkshire's main rivers, including the Derwent, Ouse, Ure, Nidd, Wharfe and Swale. In several cases, the rivers are crossed by proposed divisions despite being significant geographical and physical boundaries. The Working Group would suggest that this is considered to a greater degree in formulating final proposals.
9. The comments below should be read as being representative of the collective view of the Cross-Party Working Group, made up of Conservative, Lib Dem, Labour, Green and Independent Councillors.

Suggested Amendments

Harrogate and Knaresborough

10. The Working Group's original suggestions created an area of urban Harrogate which was co-terminus with the new Town Council. The LGBCE proposals for Harrogate are not co-terminus with the Town Council which is felt to undermine the new democratic arrangements. Having divisions which partially correspond with the Town Council area appears less clear and it would be preferable to maintain the co-terminosity.

11. We would urge the LGBCE to reconsider the proposals submitted by North Yorkshire Council for these urban divisions, which achieved good electoral equality and broadly reflected the community identities of Harrogate without needing to expand into the surrounding area.
12. The Group disagrees with the proposal for Lower Nidderdale, which is not an area which reflects a community identity. The area to the north of Knaresborough is not Nidderdale and should not be aligned with Nidderdale, as this is a distinct and different area. It is recognised that one of the issues being resolved here is that Knaresborough is too big for two divisions, but too small for three. The better resolution to this would be to have two urban Knaresborough divisions, broadly as the LGBCE proposes, along with a Claro and Scotton division taking in HKJC Castle (part), Arkendale, Coneythorpe, Ferrensby, Brearton, Allerton, Goldsbrough, Flaxby, Farnham, Scotton, Occaney, Copgrove, Staveley, Burton Leonard, and Scriven. This would follow the western and northern edge of the NYC-proposed Knaresborough Scriven division. This division would be slightly small and so we would propose that around 800 electors from Scriven Park 1 and 2 are moved across to the Claro and Scotton division. This would be achieved by moving the boundary along the A6055. This would then allow the boundary between Knaresborough East and West to be aligned to the railway line, which would form a clear and logical division. A map can be provided to show this proposal if required.
13. We agree that Calcutt, Forest Moor and Thistle should remain in Knaresborough East, reflecting parish boundaries and the identity of these places as Knaresborough places.
14. Based on the above, the NYC proposal for Lower Nidderdale would work well, without the extension of the LGBCE-proposed Jennyfield division into that area. The Jennyfield division joins together the distinct and different communities of Killinghall Moor and Jennyfield, which does not reflect their identities. As this also makes the boundary non-coterminous with the Town Council, it is not seen as a helpful approach.

Wharfedale and Nidderdale

15. The Working Group also strongly disagrees with the proposals for Wharfedale and Nidderdale. The proposed Wharfedale division is unfeasibly long, with too much distance and too many parish councils for a Councillor to serve in an efficient way. It joins together deeply rural upper Wharfedale with villages served by Skipton and villages looking to Harrogate. There is no shared identity of these places.

16. To illustrate this, Upper Wharfedale and Upper Nidderdale are both upper dale areas with a large tourist trade. Traditional farming, mainly sheep and cattle rearing, dominate the agricultural sector. Lower Wharfedale and Lower Nidderdale, in contrast, include commuter areas for Harrogate, Leeds and Bradford, with more expensive properties. The agricultural sector is dominated by dairy farming and some arable farms.
17. Whilst the group understands the views that Nidderdale should not be split, there is a reality that upper Nidderdale and Wharfedale are far more similar in the nature of their economy, landscape and issues than the areas to the southeast which look towards Harrogate. The group feels that these areas would be best served by Councillors able to focus on the specific nature of these places and would urge the LGBCE to consider the NYC proposal for this area again. It is recognised, however, that the NYC-proposed division of Wharfedale could be better named to reflect the inclusion of upper Nidderdale.
18. At the southern end, there is little connection between Birstwith and Pannal, which are two areas with separate identities. It is not felt that there is a clear justification for grouping them within a single division.

Skipton

19. In respect of Skipton West and West Craven, the group is concerned and surprised by the proposal that Carleton be moved out from Skipton West and West Craven, which is a view shared by Carleton in Craven Parish Council and several residents across the area.
20. Carleton in Craven has much more affinity with Skipton than other villages. Carleton residents send their children to schools in Skipton, whilst Skipton residents send their children to Carleton Primary school. They are separated by less than a mile and two fields from Skipton. Two recent events highlight how Carleton is connected to Skipton in the views of both business and the community. Lidl Stores have a proposal to open an out-of-town store. Skipton was leafletted entirely to encourage residents' views, along with Carleton as the only other local community targeted, as far as the working group is aware. Carleton also had a weekend VE Day party which was well attended by Skipton residents, having heard about it through schools and other media. It is clear in both cases that Carleton and Skipton are viewed as being closely connected.
21. From discussion with Carleton residents and the Parish Council, it appears that they see little affinity with other Aire Valley villages and wish to remain in a Skipton Ward. Carleton is a large village very much on the outskirts of Skipton which is not rural,

and several development sites in the village identified in the local plan will likely bring it even tighter to Skipton.

22. In respect of Skipton North and Embsay, the NYC proposal moved the villages of Thornton in Craven, Elslack, Broughton and Martons Both into Mid-Craven, which was backed by Thornton in Craven Parish Council. This would have added numbers to Mid Craven which had low figures in terms of population. The LGBCE proposal instead aligns them with Skipton North and Embsay which entirely conflicts with the identity of the villages. Thornton has, in many ways, a stronger connection with Lancashire, with the school populated largely by pupils from over the border. Many of the properties in the village have drives, access roads, fields or buildings located in the Lancashire County Council area.

23. The group would urge LGBCE to consider again the NYC submission in relation to Skipton, which it feels is a better solution.

Yorkshire Dales

24. The group firmly agrees that Clapham should remain within the Bentham and Ingleton division. The village has an affinity with Bentham and Ingleton, but less so with Settle, and this appears unnecessary from a numerical perspective.

25. The inclusion of Hetton, Ryleston cum Bordley and Cracoe within Mid Craven does not reflect the identity of these villages. They are part of Wharfedale and look towards Mid Craven. Whilst they should remain together, they look to Wharfedale in terms of education, leisure, socially and culturally and are accessed from Wharfedale.

26. The B6265, a busy route that provides a vital link for Wharfedale, runs through Cracoe and Rylestone but would be on the very periphery of Mid Craven.

Ripon

27. The proposed Dishforth and Dalton does not fit the natural geography of the area well, with no direct access between the two places. You would naturally travel outside of the division, into Sowerby and Topcliffe, to get between the two places, as the River Swale forms the natural boundary. This creates two detached divisions, which does not appear to fit within the parameters of the review. It is recommended that the LGBCE visit this area to note the significant natural divide between the two places. The NYC proposal better reflected the identity of the area.

28. Sessay, in particular, appears to be in the wrong division, with little connection to the villages to the west, separated by the A1, East Coast Mainline and the River Swale.

It is better connected to the areas north of it, in Sowerby and Topcliffe or Hillside and Raskelf as in the NYC proposal.

29. The proposed Ripon Canal and Ure division creates an area which mixes urban areas of Ripon with rural areas to the South. Dividing Ripon along one of the city's oldest streets, it does not reflect any particular identity within the city centre. The name Ripon Canal and Ure neither reflects the urban part of central Ripon, nor the rural areas to the South, with the large rural villages of Burton Leonard and Bishop Monkton having distinct identities separate to Ripon.

Richmond

30. The Group believes that Stapleton and Barton should be in the same division, rather than being separated across North Richmondshire and Brompton and Scorton within the LGBCE proposal. Within the proposal it would not be possible to get to Stapleton without leaving the division (and possibly the Council area). It is suggested that Stapleton and Barton should be moved to North Richmondshire. Whilst this creates a larger division, this would be seen as preferable to dividing Stapleton and Barton.

Stokesley

31. The group disagrees with the proposal to move Bilsdale Midcable to Helmsley & Ampleforth from Great Ayton. Bilsdale is remote from and not normally accessed from the Helmsley and Ampleforth side. Chop Gate represents a substantial hill which can often be unpassable in winter, whereas the access from the North is more reliable. The people in the area are more aligned to Stokesley, with a Teeside postcode. The alignment of Bilsdale with Great Ayton far better reflects the identity of the place.

32. The group agrees, however, that Middleton-on-Leven and Skutterskelfe should remain within Hutton Rudby and Appleton Wiske.

Thirsk and Northallerton

33. In respect of South Swale Villages, the two halves of this proposed division are really two separate areas based on connections North-South rather than East-West. Whilst there are some minor roads connections between the two halves, in general people would use the A1 corridor (A6055) on one side and the B6268 (Bedale to Masham) road primarily. Whilst there are some similarities, it is likely that people would move out of the division to access either side and it, as a whole, does not reflect a single identity. The group believes that the Council's proposal better reflects the identity of the villages to the South of Bedale as "Bedale villages".

34. The group is concerned that this creates two detached divisions, as there is no road access between the two sides of the Swale without going into Skipton on Swale.
35. The Working Group also believes that the concern about the split of Aiskew and Leeming Bar parish is largely unfounded. Whilst Aiskew is now completely connected to Bedale, Leeming Bar is an area dominated by industrial activity and is separated by the A1(M). For this reason, the NYC proposal, uniting the Swale communities to the east of the A1(M) is considered to better reflect the identity of the place.
36. Aiskew has been in different divisions to Leeming Bar for much of its history and has also been within different parliamentary constituencies and different Districts at times. By keeping them separate, it creates the possibility of combining the South Swale Villages with the area to the east of the A1 towards the River Swale, as described above.
37. Within the LGBCE proposals, Catton is moved into Dishforth and Dalton. This separates it from the nearby village of Skipton-on-Swale (in South Swale Villages) as well as Topcliffe (in Sowerby & Topcliffe) which means it is isolated from its closest links. It is suggested that it should align with one of the two.
38. The proposed Thirsk division excludes Carlton Miniott, which is very much a gateway to Thirsk. It is where Thirsk Station is and it should be included within the Thirsk division, rather than with South Swale villages. This could be achieved by moving Sandhutton, Kirby Wiske and Skipton on Swale into Hillside, to the North of Thirsk.

Easingwold

39. The LGBCE proposal for Tollerton & Ouseburn links together Aldwark to the East with Great Ouseburn to the West, spanning the River Ure. The river divides the whole division, north to south, and has only one crossing, which is a privately-owned Grade II wooden toll bridge to the south of Aldwark Golf Club. This is not considered suitable as the only link between the two halves of the proposed division. The bridge owners are currently proposing to increase the toll from 40p to £1. A public inquiry has begun. This is why the River Ure was the western boundary for the Council's proposed Easingwold division.
40. The group is concerned with the division name of Hammerton, as it was felt that residents would not recognise the area as this, despite the inclusion of Green Hammerton and Kirk Hammerton in the division. "Hammerton" on its own is not

commonly used to describe the area. Ouseburn remains a better term with which people identify.

41. As noted above, the Knaresborough villages around Staveley should not be included in Ouseburn/Hammerton but aligned with Knaresborough (Claro and Scotton.)

Malton, Norton and Pickering

42. The group recognises that a two-member division is preferable for Malton and Norton. However, the proposals for Howardian and Sheriff Hutton & Derwent do not appear to reflect the local connections or identity.
43. Howardian is not a term used by people, although the Howardian Hills are clearly a recognised area. However, by moving the Derwent villages of Firby, Crambeck and Bulmer into the area, it removes much of the Derwent identity from Sheriff Hutton & Derwent. This exists currently as a well-sized and recognised division and the effects of the proposed changes make the area less clear. The addition of the villages to the east (Thixendale, Duggleby, West Lutton etc.) have a different identity to the rest of the division and tend to look eastward towards East Riding rather than west.
44. They are better grouped in Thornton Dale and Wolds along with Butterwick and Foxholes.
45. It is still felt by members that Thornton Dale & Wolds should be named Thornton-le-Dale & The Wolds, as the term “Wolds” is not used on its own. People refer to “The Wolds”.
46. The addition of Sherburn is not seen as representative of the identity of Sherburn as it looks east towards Hunmanby and the coast. It is suggested, however, that the parishes of East and West Heslerton are kept together.
47. In respect of Pickering, there is a concern that this is too large and could quickly create electoral inequality. If the Howardian division needed greater numbers of electors, taking some from the south of Pickering would make more sense than subsuming the Derwent villages along the A64.

Scarborough and Filey

48. In respect of Eastfield, the boundary suggested within the Council Submission contained an error. Whilst the justification is correct, the new housing being described is not actually around the Eastway South proposed Parish Ward, but the

Boulevard area within Eastway North. The Working Group Recommends that the boundary is revised to align with the agreed justification. A map can be provided to show this boundary.