

North Yorkshire

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Organisation Name: North Yorkshire Green Councillors Group (Political group)

Comment text:

Related subject: Skipton area and Ouseburn/Hammerton/Tockwith/Tollerton area

Please see attachment

Attached Documents:

- north-yorkshire-green-councillors-group-submission-on-lgbce-revised-draft-proposals.docx

North Yorkshire Council Boundary Review
by the Local Government Boundary
Commission England (LGBCE)

Submission by the North Yorkshire Green
Councillors on the
LGBCE Revised Draft Proposals

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North Yorkshire Green Councillor's approach to this consultation

This is a joint submission made on behalf of the four Green Party councillors who are elected members of North Yorkshire Council (Cllr Andy Brown, Cllr Kevin Foster, Cllr David Noland, and Cllr Arnold Warneken). This group made a submission at the draft proposals consultation stage, but not at any of the earlier stages as it had contributed its initial views through the North Yorkshire Council's cross party working group.

Our opinion is that these revised proposals generally represent an improvement on the original proposals put forward by the LGBCE and most of our concerns have been addressed. However, we believe they can be improved further with some minor refinements. As in our previous submission we are confining our comments to the areas where we have local knowledge, which in this consultation means the Skipton area and the proposed rural divisions east of Harrogate.

The other two areas (Stokesley and Richmond) on which we had previously commented fall outside the scope of this consultation. For completeness we confirm that we support the proposed arrangements for those areas.

LGBCE Proposals for the Skipton Area Divisions.

In the previous consultation, we raised three main concerns (copied below):

- The community of Carleton is much more strongly connected with Skipton town than with villages in the Aire valley. It is less than 1 mile by road from the western edge of Skipton. Parents from the town send their children to the village primary school while village children attend school in the town. This close affinity is not reflected in the LGBCE proposal to place Carleton in their Aire Valley division.
- The communities to the north west of Skipton (Broughton, Elslack and Thornton in Craven) have little in common with those to the north east (Embsay with Eastby). Thornton in Craven in particular does not have a strong connection to Skipton. These small communities near the Lancashire border more in common with other rural communities in mid-Craven along the Lancashire border.
- Rectifying the concerns listed above requires a different arrangement for the Skipton divisions than the one proposed by the LGBCE. Our opinion is that the NYC submission to the previous consultation stage is a much better fit to the structure of community identities and physical geography of the Skipton Area. We support their proposals for the Skipton area and propose that they should be adopted with consequential changes made where necessary to the Dales divisions.

Aire Valley Division

We are pleased to note that the LGBCE adopted our proposal to move Carleton from the Aire Valley division to Skipton West.

We support the LGBCE revised arrangement for Aire Valley

Skipton West

As noted above, the revision to Skipton West division is in line with our proposal to reflect the close proximity of Carleton village to Skipton and the strong community ties between Carleton and Skipton in the divisional arrangements.

We support the LGBCE revised proposal for Skipton West.

Skipton East

We support the LGBCE revised proposal for Skipton East.

Skipton North & Embsay with Eastby

We are pleased that the LGBCE has adopted our recommendation to place the communities of Thornton in Craven, Elslack and Broughton in the mid-Craven division rather than in Skipton North & Embsay with Eastby. This is a significant improvement from a community identity perspective. However, we propose two refinements to the revised proposal:

1. Firstly, we propose that Appletreewick (175 electors in 2030) and Barden (59 electors) parishes are both placed in the same division (this is also a recommendation made by North Yorkshire Council). There are strong community ties between these two parishes and one of the options under consideration in a Community Governance review is to merge the parishes and create a single parish council. Placing these parishes in different divisions would unreasonably restrict the options available for the community governance review. We further recommend that they are placed in Upper Wharfedale and Upper Nidderdale division as their character is similar to parishes in the upper dales. This amendment would give Skipton North and Embsay with Eastby 5,435 electors in 2030 (-6.5%) and Upper Wharfedale and Upper Nidderdale 6,424 (+10.5%). In our opinion community identity and effective arrangements for local government considerations outweigh the (marginal) adverse impact on electoral equality.
2. Our second recommendation is that the LGBCE adopts the River Wharfe (a distinctive geographical feature) for the eastern boundary of Skipton North and Embsay with Eastby. This would be in line with the practice adopted by the LGBCE in many other divisions of using major rivers as boundary features. It would only involve moving the two small rural parishes of Beamsley (104 electors) and Hazelwood with Storiths (70 electors) to the proposed Pannal and Washburn division (which is predominately made up from small rural parishes). In combination with our first recommendation, this would take Skipton North and Embsay with Eastby to 5,261 electors in 2030 (-9.5%), while Pannal and Washburn would have 5,588 electors (-3.9%), both satisfy the electoral equality criteria. Our opinion is that this performs better on the community identity criteria than the LGBCE proposal.

Skipton Town Council Warding Arrangements

In accordance with the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act), parishes too large to be in a single division must be divided into wards each of which lies wholly within a single division.

The need to redefine Skipton town ward boundaries, therefore, is a direct consequence of the proposed principal authority divisional arrangements. LGBCE propose to allocate the 16 town council seats in proportion to the electorate of each ward, giving a 4 / 4 / 2 / 6 arrangement.

The existing arrangement for the town council is that each ward is represented by four councillors (regardless of variations in electorate). We propose that this principle of equal number of councillors per ward is retained, because all other matters such as the total number of councillors or equalising the number of electors per town councillor are more appropriately addressed through a community governance review.

Rural Divisions East of Harrogate

We had significant concerns with the LGBCE previous proposal for three rural divisions (Spofforth & Tockwith, Hammerton, and Tollerton & Ouseburn) covering the area in the middle of the ring of market towns. We proposed a significant reworking to address what we saw as shortcomings with regard to the community identity and convenient local government criteria.

While the LGBCE did not adopt our proposal, their revised proposal provides a reasonably satisfactory resolution to most of our underlying concerns. In particular, the Ouse is recognised as a major boundary feature separating the distinct communities on its north and south banks. However, the revised proposal does still involve some grouped parishes being split across two divisions. We strongly recommend that this is resolved by making minor amendments.

Spofforth & Tockwith

We support the LGBCE proposal to move Long Marston into Spofforth and Tockwith. However, Wilstrop (40 electors) is part of the Tockwith Grouped Parish so should also be placed in this division on community identity and convenient local government grounds. Subject to this amendment, we would be able to support the revised Spofforth and Tockwith division.

Ouseburn & Hammerton and Huby & Tollerton

These revised proposals perform much better from a community identity perspective than the previous proposal because the boundary between these divisions is aligned with the Ouse. In this area there is very little interaction between communities on opposite sides of the river because of the lack of crossing points. Marton cum Grafton and the Ouseburn parishes are now linked with other parishes to the south of the Ouse. Similarly, Linton on Ouse is linked with other parishes to the north of the Ouse. As noted above Wilstrop should be moved to Spofforth and Tockwith division.

The use of the Ouse as the boundary also addresses the legacy issues (local plans etc) point we raised in our previous submission.

Subject only to the minor change regarding Wilstrop, we would be able to support the LGBCE proposal for these divisions.