

# Northumberland

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## Comment text:

**Related subject:** Stocksfield, Broomhaugh and Riding and Mickley Division

Please find below my response to the Boundary Commision's draft review for Northumberland 2023.

County Councillor Anne Dale

## Attached Documents:

- Boundary review 2.pdf

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL BOUNDARY REVIEW 2023.**

### **Submission by Independent County Councillor Anne Dale, Stocksfield, Broomhaugh and Riding and Mickley Division.**

I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Boundary Commission's draft review of the County Divisional boundaries for Northumberland County Council.

I have been a District Councillor since 1994 and a County Councillor since 2008 following the Local Government Review in Northumberland. During that time there have been various Boundary reviews.

This response includes:

#### **A. My response to Northumberland County Council's Submission for the Stocksfield, Broomhaugh and Riding and Mickley Division.**

#### **B. My response to the Boundary Commission's draft submission for a new Stocksfield Division.**

#### **C. Alternative considerations.**

The responses A, B and C are based on the Boundary Commission's draft submission Priorities 2023 as stated below.

- 1. Electoral equality**
  - 2. Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links**
  - 3. Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.**
  - 4. Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.**
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#### **A. My response to Northumberland County Council's submission for the Stocksfield, Broomhaugh and Riding and Mickley Division.**

I support this submission, it meets all the 4 Boundary Commission's criteria.

#### **1. Electoral equality**

The present number of electors in this division roughly represents the required number of electors as elsewhere in the Council area.

#### **2. Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.**

All the 3 villages in the Division have strong community links and they are small villages and residents attend activities between the villages. Stocksfield and Mickley share the same post code NE 43 and Riding Mill NE44.

Transport and highways links. The A695 highway and footpaths pass through all the villages and the No 10 bus service provides transport every 30 mins between Hexham and Newcastle with several stops in all the villages. The Newcastle to Carlisle railway services stops at Riding Mill and Stocksfield. Residents from Mickley access the train service link at either Stocksfield or Low Prudhoe. Pedestrians are able to walk between the villages to shop, etc. Residents from Riding Mill use the Station Approach Spa at Stocksfield for shopping and newspapers and of course the Post Office. The parking is easy and they can also walk to it. There are no pedestrian links between Riding Mill and Corbridge.

Community links and interests and identities. The residents identify themselves as belonging to the Tyne Valley with their main shopping towns being Hexham and Prudhoe. Everyday shopping takes place within the independent shops of Mickley and Stocksfield. However Riding Mill has a coffee shop with a few items but nothing further. There are 2 post offices one at each end of the village of Stocksfield (Station Approach and Branch End Spa) which are used by the residents of Mickley and Riding Mill. Their village Post Offices closed some time ago. They are all proud of their own village identities

All villages are very vibrant with an ageing population especially in Riding Mill. Residents transverse the villages attending W.I. meetings, the local pubs, History society, weekly coffee mornings, Friday bridge club, singing groups, sports clubs and much more. Churches Together represents residents from all faiths across the 3 villages and they hold regular services which brings together everyone. Mickley and Stocksfield also share a joint benefice, including Hedley on the Hill.

All three villages have good or outstanding first schools and once again parents use this choice for their children's education. Hence some children migrate between the village schools. The older children travel to 3 middle schools out of the division and then on to Prudhoe Community High School or Hexham Academy. Once again there is movement across attendance at these schools according to choice even if they are out of the catchment area.

The majority of residents from all the villages attend the Branch End Doctors' Surgery at Stocksfield and there is a local Boots next door to the surgery.

During the Covid pandemic all the villages worked together to bring an effective management ethos to help residents in the division during this terrible time.

### **3. Be Based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.**

The villages are easily identifiable as they are situated along the south side of the River Tyne from Mickley in the east to Riding Mill on the west. Similarly A695 runs through the villages. The boundaries are easy to identify as being on the southern side of the Tyne Valley adjacent to the River Tyne. There is a clear boundary between each village.

### **4. Help the Council deliver effective and convenient local government.**

My priority has always been to ensure that I am an effective local government representative for all the residents in my ward and that I am accessible at all times. I also want to make things happen and look after those in need. From experience I know that the Council should be able to deliver an

effective service as the issues are similar in all the villages, if funding is available. The division is compact too.

The issues in the division are similar as they share the same environmental, highways and the villages are all similar in culture and are proud of their communities. We all work together, the Parish Councils, Clerks to the Parish Councils, schools, churches, residents and community groups.

***I strongly support the Northumberland County Council's submission as it strongly relates to the criteria laid down by the Boundary Commission.***

**B. Response to the Boundary Commission's draft proposals for a new Stocksfield Division to include Prudhoe Hall and remove Riding Mill.**

I do understand the difficulties the Boundary Commission will have had to ensure electoral equality throughout Northumberland and would respond accordingly. I do strongly feel that it is more important that any new boundaries reflect the Commission's criteria 2, 3 and 4.

**1. Electoral equality.**

The new changes to the Stocksfield Division do provide equality in numbers but unfortunately the changes fail to meet the other Boundary Commission's criteria.

**2, 3, 4. Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links., be based on strong easily identifiable boundaries, help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.**

Prudhoe Hall is part of the Prudhoe town heritage and is situated at the east end of Prudhoe adjacent to the Gateshead border. Although it would appear to be adjacent to Mickley on the map there are no links at all and therefore their boundaries are not identifiable at all. The area does not identify with Mickley the nearest village in the proposed Stocksfield Division. It identifies strongly with Prudhoe and its community and always has done.

Transport. There are no direct road links between Prudhoe Hall and Mickley Village. There are no footpaths or ROW either. Hence there are no transport facilities. If residents from Prudhoe Hall want to connect with Mickley, they would require to travel from the east of Prudhoe through the two Prudhoe Wards, North and South on the A695 to get to Mickley and then on to Stocksfield. Their nearest bus service for Mickley would be at Prudhoe.

The catchment area for the first school would be Adderlaine Primary School which is in the east end of Prudhoe and their nearest shops and community centres, pubs etc. would be Prudhoe.

**The inclusion of Prudhoe Hall within the proposal Stocksfield Division fails to meet the requirements of 2, 3 and 4 of the Boundary Commission's criteria.**

### C. Alternative considerations.

1.
  - a. Retain the Prudhoe divisions with either 2 or 3 County Councillors and alter their boundaries within the town.
  - b. Include Eltringham in to the Stocksfield, Broomhaugh and Riding and Mickley Division.

### 2. Electoral Equality.

- a. Prudhoe Hall should be removed from the proposed Stocksfield Division and included in the new proposals for Prudhoe.
- b. The west end of Prudhoe, adjacent to Mickley, could be added to the proposed Stocksfield Division. This would include the Bewick Grange Estate, Eltringham and part of the West Road with approx 500 electors

### c. South Tynedale Division.

This division takes in the village of Hedley on the Hill which is adjacent to both Stocksfield and Mickley with a similar NE43 Postal Code. This community already reflects community interests and identities, schooling, local pub, transport, clubs, etc. It is also in the Parochial Church area of Mickley and Stockfield. The South Tynedale Division is over the numbers required and removing the 197 electorate of Hedley on the Hill to Stocksfield would create better electoral equality.

**These considerations would help to address the failures of 2, 3 and 4 of Paragraph B.**

Thank you for taking time to read my submission which I hope that you have found helpful. ***I do believe that the status quo is the best way forward.*** I would like to meet up with you when you visit the area and extend this invitation.

County Councillor Anne Dale,  
Independent,

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