[IC – 008]

General comments on the Commission's initial proposals

While I welcome the overall aims of the Boundary Review in order to achieve greater parity of the electorate across Westminster constituencies, I would have reservations regarding the extent to which many constituencies are being effectively carved up, many areas have long standing links to their constituencies and surrounding towns and villages and this would create substantial upheaval to the traditional links between areas.

Comments on the Commission's initial proposal for the constituency of Strangford and Quoile

I would have deep concerns regarding the proposed changes to the existing Strangford constituency. Firstly, the change in the boundaries itself will remove towns and villages such as Moneyreagh, Ballynahinch and Saintfield, which have strong links to nearby towns such as Comber and Newtownards, from the same electoral constituency as these neighbouring towns. Secondly, there are already irregularities in administrative boundaries in this constituency which are at times particularly confusing for constituents to understand. For example, residents of Killyleagh and Saintfield in the south of the constituency are part of Newry, Mourne and Down Council(which largely encompasses South Down Westminster constituency) and yet their local representatives at both Assembly and Westminster level represent the more traditional and widely understood jurisdiction of Strangford. Merging these peripheral towns and villages with South Belfast and Mid Down and South Down constituencies will only serve to add to the confusion that constituents have regarding existing administrative boundaries as Saintfield residents for example will be in a Westminster constituency that is served by Belfast City Council, Ballynahinch residents in an area that is served by Armagh, Craigavon and Banbridge Council, etcetera. As I am sure you can see this creates a logistical nightmare both for residents and for local decision makers to navigate. A much more streamlined and simplified adjustment of the boundaries rather than wholesale transfers of towns and villages between constituencies could circumvent this issue. Finally, I would object to the new name of the constituency- Strangford and Quoile. In my view, this new name is entirely redundant and unnecessary as the entire constituency is based around Strangford Lough and it creates the impression of two rather different areas at the North and the South of the constituency with different needs and a different group of representatives suited to serving these areas. The current name Strangford in my opinion is sufficient to encompass the entire breadth of the constituency as all settlements in the area are based around the central feature of Strangford Lough.