[TC – Jim Allister MLA on behalf of Traditional Unionist Voice]



Emailed to: review@boundarycommission.org.uk

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Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

Level 7 Erskine House

20-32 Chichester Street

Belfast

BT1 4GF

24th November 2022

Dear Commissioners,

**Revised Proposals for the 2023 Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Review**

On my own behalf as a North Antrim MLA and on behalf of my party, TUV, I write to object to your plan to extract the wards of Glenwhirry, Slemish and Glenravel from North Antrim and insert them into East Antrim.

These three contiguous wards are in every way affiliated with and a natural and integral part of North Antrim, both as a parliamentary constituency and as a coherent community.

When it comes to considering the established essence of North Antrim, it is synonymous with Ballymena and East Antrim (at least in its northern part) is synonymous with Larne. Like their postal addresses, these wards are wholly Ballymena orientated.

Take Glenwhirry, no one there aligns with Larne. Ballymena is their town. Look at two crucial community forming institutions, Moorfields School and Glenwherry Church. The former is part of the Ballymena schools association and the latter is part of Ballymena Presbytery. This Ballymena orientation and alignment runs through the whole community and has done so for generations.

Likewise with Slemish, it aligns with Ballymena/Broughshane. Indeed, here we come to one of the most incongruous and absurd aspects of extracting Slemish ward from North Antrim. The ward takes its name from the iconic Slemish mountain, with its historical connections to St Patrick. It presents an iconic image which people far and wide identify strongly with Ballymena/Broughshane - not Larne!

So to remove it from its natural affinity and hinterland is to do huge damage to the established imagine and reality of North Antrim. It would be like placing the Mourne Mountains in a constituency other than South Down. Such boundary ‘sacrilege’ would not be contemplated there, so why here?

It is surely important that constituencies hang together as identifiable and natural compilations. Glenwhirry, Slemish and Glenravel in East Antrim is a forced and incongruous contrivance which tramples underfoot generations of affinity and natural identity.

Of course, the constituencies must meet the numerical target ranges. But, there is a far more logical and natural way to do this. Retain Glenwhirry, Slemish and Glenravel in North Antrim and, instead, move Torrhead & Rathlin and Ballycastle to East Antrim.

Ballycastle has a natural affinity and attachment to ‘The Glens’ and, therefore, placing it in the same constituency makes sense - far more sense, with respect, than the current proposal. Even in its geography and shape it continues to present East Antrim as the elongated coastal constituency it is and preserves the community affinity of North Antrim.

Moreover, pursuant to Rule 7, the numerical guidance is met.

Accordingly, though it is late in the process, I urge serious consideration of this proposal, believing it respects the local integrated essence of these two constituencies.

Yours sincerely



Jim Allister MLA