[TC-Lagan Valley TUV]

Submission from Lagan Valley TUV to the Revised Proposals for the 2023 Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Review

We write to express our strong opposition to the proposal that the northern part of Gransha Ward be transferred from Lagan Valley to South Down. We believe that the proposal is illogical and at variance with the principles which informed the decisions of the Commission and as detailed in their November report.

We would draw particular attention to Rule 5 and specifically the follow aspects of the rule:

• boundaries of existing constituencies;

• any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies; and

• the inconveniences attendant on such changes.

Gransha Ward has been part of Lagan Valley since 1997. This change would break a link which has existed for a considerable period in terms of existing constituencies.

Secondly, Gransha Ward has strong, natural ties to both Dromore and Dromara which would be broken by this change.

Thirdly, given the strong ties to Dromore and Dromara locals would be left making representations to an MP and MLA who they do not elect by their vote about issues which impact their day to day lives.

Moving on, we note that the existing boundaries of Lagan Valley as noted in point 12 of the Commission’s report mean that we are already within the Rule 2 statutory range (ie the existing figure of 75,884 is within the 69,724 - 77,062 margin required by legislation). We therefore strongly believe that Lagan Valley should be left as it exists at the moment.

We note that when it comes to the Commission’s statutory duty to take account of “special geographical considerations”, as referred to at Schedule 2 to the Act, which continues “including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency” your report says:

“19.The Commission’s understanding is that special geographical considerations will include physical features such as mountains, lakes, coastlines, major roads, major rivers and built- up areas, and it will be mindful of dividing constituencies across those features. The Commission also understands that consideration of ‘the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency’ will include consideration of matters such as the geographical compactness of a proposed constituency (i.e. consisting of parts that are positioned together neatly); the extent to which a proposed constituency is made up of wards that are adjacent to each other, or contains detached parts; and the availability of direct transport access from a ward to the rest of its proposed constituency.”

In the case of the northern part of Gransha Ward it is clearly the case that it goes “together neatly” with the two villages in which most people living there shop, receive the services of their GP and many are educated - Dromore and Dromara.

Finally; we note that there is a considerable groundswell of opposition to the proposed change. While not blaming the Commission, we believe that prior to your last report the changes being proposed went under the radar of most people. Now that the public have become aware of the issue, many people in the northern part of Gransha Ward are deeply concerned about your proposals. We believe that this will be reflected in responses to this consultation. We urge you to take these responses into consideration when it comes to your final proposals. All too often there is a belief that consultations are run only for the sake of it and not with a serious desire to establish the views of the public so they can inform policy. We trust that the Commission will help both its own reputation and that of public bodies generally by reversing this modest and unnecessary change which has left many people feeling that they face losing connections which they believe are important.