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Mr Hugo Swire MP  
Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont House  
Stormont Estate  
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Cc: Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

24<sup>th</sup> November 2011

### Re: Parliamentary Boundary Review

Mr Swire,

I write in respect of the current Westminster parliamentary boundary review for Northern Ireland. In considering our response to the initial proposal from the Boundary Review we were struck by the incredibly unfortunate sequencing in terms of this review and the existing proposal for local government boundaries in Northern Ireland.

You will be aware that political agreement on the number of local councils appears to have been reached in the recently published Programme for Government and that existing proposals for boundaries and wards are extant. We might expect finally agreed boundaries and District Electoral Areas for the new district councils by March 2013. The current parliamentary boundary review is due to report by October 2013 and must of course use existing council and ward boundaries in its process; this appears incongruous to say the least.

If the parliamentary review proceeds on the current schedule the end result will be two different sets of electoral wards and ward boundaries effective through to prospective Assembly/Westminster elections in 2020.

Could I emphasise that **Northern Ireland is a special case** because we are the only devolved UK region which has not disconnected our devolved legislature boundaries from the Westminster boundaries and consequently the changes of the current parliamentary review **automatically impact** the Assembly boundaries.

As Northern Ireland struggles to develop a system of new local government and decides on its functions we believe it is critical that there is sympathy between the local government boundaries and Assembly boundaries. Under the current sequencing this will not happen until 2020.

I appreciate the significant legislative constraints but would urge you to consider any mechanism which allows the current parliamentary review to take more consideration of **prospective** local government boundaries by e.g. extending the timescale of the current

parliamentary review for Northern Ireland by six months (say March 2014) and ensuring an expedited process for finalising the local government boundaries by, say December 2012.

I emphasise again the **two significant factors** impacting on Northern Ireland in the context of the current parliamentary review:

- (1) The impending most significant change in Local Government in Northern Ireland since 1972
- (2) The continuing connection between Parliamentary and Assembly boundaries in Northern Ireland.

I am cc'ing the Boundary Commission for their information and as our submission to their initial proposals.

Regards

Mr Conor Quinn

Chair, Green Party in Northern Ireland