[IC – Councillor Patrick Brown]

General comments on the Commission's initial proposals

The changes are by and large positive with the exception of the dramatic changes to the South Down constituency which would see it split in two and separated from its traditional geographical focal point of the Mourne mountains. The proposals below will suggest an alternative route to ensuring South Down and all neighbouring/affected constituencies stay within target electorate and that all constituencies are more in keeping with their traditional areas. The most substnaial changes to current proposals are:

- Saintfield would no longer be part of a Belfast constituency, protecting its rural

-Ards Penninsula moves to North down, in keeping with current council boundaries character

-A new Mid-Down constituency would be created from most of the old Strangford constituency, representing a largely rural and congruous geographical area within commuting distance to Belfast

-South Down would remain largely the same losing some electorate to neighbouring areas to remain within target

Comments on the Commission's initial proposal for the constituency of Belfast South and Mid Down

Loses Saintfield (3033) to Mid Down

Gains either Cregagh (3340) or Hillfoot (3602) from East Belfast,

Rationale:

Saintfield stays within the old Strangford constituency area/new Mid-Down area, in keeping with its status as a market town with rural hinterlands and closer ties to the NMD council area than the greater Belfast area. The ward of Cregagh (or Hillfoot) is closely linked with South Belfast and is urban in character, and makes up for Garnerville staying in East Belfast instead of North Down.

Comments on the Commission's initial proposal for the constituency of Lagan Valley

Loses Dromara (2461) to Mid-Down, leaving within target range

Rationale:

Dromara is largely rural in character, and thus in keeping with the new mid-down constituency and helping to bring it within range

Comments on the Commission's initial proposal for the constituency of North Down

Garnerville (3534) should be put back into East Belfast and all Penninsula DEA wards - Carrowdore (3052), Ballywalter (3260), Kircubbin (3113), Portaferry (2545) & Portavogie (2666) - brought in. North down would lose Clandeboye (2894) and Ballygrainey (3582) to new Mid-Down constituency. Suggested new name of North Down & Peninsula.

Losing Garnerville brings ND below range with little area to expand other than Penninsula which is geographically links and needs to be moved together, which puts it substantially over, the loss of Clandeboye and Ballygrainey to Mid Down brings it back in range, and these wards are geographically linked with Ards town as well as North Down. The Penninsula is well linked with ND already through Ards and North Down council and the shared coastal area

Comments on the Commission's initial proposal for the constituency of South Down

Gains Crossgar & Killyleagh (3000), Strangford (3010), Quoile (2824), Lecale (3071), Knocknashinna (3129) & Cathedral (2674) from Strangford and Quoile. Loses Kilmore (2928), Drumaness (3009), Ballynahinch (3008), Ballyward (3219) & Gransha (3476) to Mid-Down.

Rationale:

This proposal largely maintains the existing character of the current South Down constituency, losing several wards to the north and west to bring it within range. In addition it gains the village of Killyleagh from the old strangford constituency to keep this ward consistent (whereas currently the villages of Crossgar and killyleagh are divided between South Down and Strangford respectively)

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

Suggested new name: Mid-Down. All Penninsula wards to go North Down. Gains Clandeboye and Ballygrainey from North Down. Gains Saintfield (3033) from South Belfast. Gains Dromara (2461) from Lagan Valley.

Gains Kilmore (2928), Ballyward (3219), Ballynahinch (3008), Drumaness (3009) & Gransha (3476) from South Down.

Loses Crossgar & Killyleagh (3000), Strangford (3010), Quoile (2824), Lecale (3071),Knocknashinna (3129) & Cathedral (2674) to South Down.

Rationale: This new constituency takes in a large land mass from rural Newtownards to the outskirts on Banbridge, similar to a previous boundary commission proposal for a new Mid Down constituency. This area is linked by its close ‘commuter land’ proximity to Belfast and predominantly rural character with several medium sized towns