



2018 REVIEW – SECONDARY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

JACKSON MINFORD

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Submitted to **2018 Review: Secondary Consultation**

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Organisation - please enter 'None' if this does not apply:

None

Comments on Ulster Unionist Party submission:

Dear Sir

I am writing regarding the ongoing consultation regarding the Boundary Commission's proposals for new Parliamentary boundaries for the current North Antrim constituency.

I have lived and worked in Ballymena or over 40 years, a town that lies in the heart of the North Antrim area. The actual definition of Ballymena is "the middle townland" These proposed boundary changes will have a significant impact on Ballymena by placing it to the extreme north of the new West Antrim constituency with the villages of Kells and Connor adopting the new central position.

The name West Antrim is a new geographical description of an area that for generations has been contained within the North and South Antrim areas. The name West Antrim will not only be confusing but does not reflect the actual area as shown in the proposed plan. Most of the new constituency will be to the north and east, and not to the west.

Any constituency should have at least one main town or city as a focal point. Ideally it should be centred in the constituency with the hinterland radiating outward from it. As I indicated earlier, these proposals place Ballymena to the extreme north with a sizeable area of Newtownabbey to the east/south east. In essence both main areas of population at the outer limits of the proposed boundary.

In 2013/14, eleven new super councils were legislated for to replace the then twenty six local councils. Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne councils merged into one council, renamed as

Mid and East Antrim Council with its HQ located in Ballymena. The proposed East Antrim constituency which will still include Larne and Carrickfergus will very much reflect the present East Antrim constituency, however the change to North Antrim will now place parts of the Mid and East Antrim council into three constituencies, East Antrim, West Antrim and Dalriada. I am not convinced of the logic in this with differing boundaries. I am aware from working in the public sector, DFI Roads, that divisional boundaries were changed to somewhat mirror the new council boundaries. These proposals are at variance with these divisional changes and will no doubt, if introduced, require further and unnecessary changes to government departmental divisional boundaries.

The proposals effectively sever the new Mid and East Antrim Council area with a significant part being moved into the new Dalriada constituency. The villages of Cullybackey and Clough, along with a number of smaller settlements and hamlets such as Glarryford, well recognised as being part of North Antrim and linked to Ballymena, will be affected. The proposals will effectively divide well established local communities, which for many years have worked closely together for the benefit of the North Antrim area.

Ballymena is the heartland of an area known locally as Mid Antrim which includes several villages and hamlets. As well as a geographical area, Mid Antrim has become an important and well recognised brand name with many businesses and events successfully established with that name in their titles. Area names are important in Northern Ireland with people feeling a sense of ownership to that area. In my opinion these proposals will sever local communities and be detrimental to local businesses.

Before moving to live in Ballymena, I was brought up in the town of Antrim, the main town within the South Antrim constituency. The proposals for South Antrim place the town of Antrim and the city of Lisburn to the extreme north and south of the proposed constituency with the isolated rural area of Nutts Corner being at the centre. Again, as with the proposals for West Antrim, the new constituency loses the impact of a major settlement at its heart. Also as with West Antrim, the new South Antrim constituency does not mirror the new council boundaries and I think this is something that the Commission has failed to take on board. Dalriada also has a rather curious appearance with Coleraine in the top corner and cut off from much of its natural hinterland to the west breaching community ties in the process.

In summary, I firmly believe that the Commission's proposals would breach long well established community ties by cutting Ballymena off from its northern hinterland and the wards of Portglenone, Cullybackey and the wards of Kirkinriola and Glenravel, splitting Bannside DEA in the process. These all fit comfortably with Ballymena in terms of shopping patterns, school ties, travel to work areas and I believe the Commission's proposals to be badly flawed.

I know that a number of political parties, including the Ulster Unionists, have submitted proposals that would retain a modified North Antrim constituency with Ballymena at its core and which would ensure that the long standing links between Ballymena and its northern hinterland were restored. There also appears to be a strong degree of consensus that the northern most part of County Antrim should join with Coleraine and Limavady to form a constituency that largely follows the boundaries of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area, negating the proposals for a Dalriada constituency.

In light of the above I urge the Commission to amend its own proposals and ensure that a North Antrim constituency is retained with Ballymena as its focal point, as proposed by the Ulster Unionist Party.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make comments on the Commission's proposed boundary changes and I hope my comments will be given serious consideration.

Yours faithfully

Jackson Minford

Ahoghill

Ballymena

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1 October 2017

File upload:

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