

North Yorkshire

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Comment text:

Related subject: Nidderdale, Washburn Valley, Lower Wharfedale and Pannal

I am extremely concerned about the The Boundary Commission's current proposals to change the Electoral Division's within Nidderdale, Lower Wharfedale, the Washburn Valley and Pannal.

The current proposals show a lack of understanding of local geography and the needs of the local communities in this area.

My observations in respect of the Current Draft Boundary Change Proposals are as follows: -

1. Birstwith & Pannal

The Proposed Division is at best confusing but is, in reality, nonsensical.

- I do not understand why this area falls within Harrogate & Knaresborough given that the vast majority of this Proposed Division, both in terms of geography and population, is not actually located with the Harrogate & Knaresborough Area/Constituency but is in fact located within the Skipton & Ripon Area/Constituency (I would hazard a guess that 1/3 live in Pannal (and therefore the Harrogate & Knaresborough Area/Constituency), and that 2/3 live in the Skipton & Ripon Area/Constituency).
- The assertion made in the Draft Boundary Change Proposals that the Proposed Division would link villages to the West of Harrogate with Nidderdale shows a complete misunderstanding of local communities and a lack of local knowledge. These are very different communities.

- Pannal is a separate community from the remainder of the Proposed Division with very different needs and concerns. Essentially, Pannal is a commuter village for people who work in Leeds but who want to be part of the Harrogate Cosmopolitan Set. It is populated by town/city folk who have no real link or ties to Pannal and who are often transient and move around a lot due to changes in employment and a desire to continually move to bigger and better housing.
- The larger parts of the Proposed Division that are not in Pannal are made up of rural hamlets and rural villages located in the Nidderdale National Landscape and the Washburn Valley. These people tend to have lived in the area for generation upon generation and they are “tied” to the land where they have lived, and often farmed, for hundreds of years. As such, their needs and concerns are very different to those of the people who live in Pannal. For example, people in Pannal will be concerned by things such as the 36 Commuter Bus Service and the Train Service to Leeds, York and London and the like, whereas people in the larger part/rest of the Proposed Division will be concerned about maintaining rural services, small village primary schools, school to home transport, village shops, GP surgeries, provision of services such as rural broadband, maintaining the countryside and rural bus services etc.
- The Proposed Division will be unworkable/too onerous for the County Councillor as they will be responsible for a Division that incorporates 2 separate Area Constituency Meetings and 2 separate Planning Committees, placing a burden on the Councillor that other Councillors on NYC will not face as they will only have to attend 1 Area Constituency Meeting and 1 Planning Committee. Furthermore, given that Councillors only having Voting Rights on 1 particular Area Constituency Committee, they will not be able to properly represent their Constituents as their voice will only count at either the Harrogate & Knaresborough Area Constituency Meeting or the Skipton & Ripon Area Constituency Meeting, but not at both.

2. Wharfedale

The Proposed Division is unworkable.

- (a) The Proposed Division is almost 50 miles from top to bottom and would take 1 ½ - 2 hours to drive across.
- (b) How could the County Councillor possibly cover that much terrain?
- (c) What would happen if there were 2 or 3 Parish Council Meetings taking place on the same evening? At best, the County Councillor would only be able to attend 1 of them.
- (d) The County Councillor would find themselves over-stretched, and therefore ineffective, in terms of being co-opted on to outside bodies. The southern part would necessitate being co-opted onto the Knabbs Ridge Board, the Nidderdale Joint Advisory Committee, the Menwith Hill Community Team and the Prince Henry's School Otley PTA. I am sure that the Northern Part, with which I am not particularly familiar, would also have a lot of outside bodies to liaise with including things to do with the National Park etc.
- (e) The only shared commonality between the whole of the Division is that the River Wharfe runs through it. However, that is no basis for forming an Electoral Division. The River Thames runs for 215 miles but you would not use the course of that River as a basis for forming an Electoral Division or Constituency.
- (f) Those communities that live at the top of the Proposed Division are rural/farming communities and bear no correlation to those people who live at the bottom part of the Proposed Division, who live 50 miles away in parts of Otley and Ilkley.

(c) Pateley Bridge & Nidderdale

- The Proposed Division makes an assumption that there is some symmetry between the communities of Upper Nidderdale and Lower Nidderdale. There is little to no symmetry between the two.
- I live in the Shaw Mills/Burnt Yates/Clint cum Hamlets/Bishop Thornton area and absolutely nobody in the area where I live has any affiliation with Upper Nidderdale/Pateley Bridge and rarely, if ever, goes there.
- People in Pateley Bridge/Upper Nidderdale access and use different services (schools, leisure centres, GP surgeries shops etc) to those living in Lower Nidderdale. They simply don't overlap.
- As with the Proposed Wharfedale Division, the only thing that they really share is a River.

Suggested solution.

1. Create a Pannal and Lower Wharfedale/Washburn Division that incorporates Pannal and the villages that run south of the A59 and include Washburn and Lower Wharfedale. Those villages share common facilities and serve commuter communities that work in West Yorkshire.
2. Create a mid-Nidderdale Division to incorporate the Nidderdale Villages that are located north of the A59 including Birstwith, Felliscliffe, Burnt Yates, Shaw Mills, Bishop Thornton, Summerbridge, Lofthouse, Dacre, Darley and Menwith Hill. All of the communities have similar concerns, share the same facilities, transport routes (including the 24 Bus), the same schools, pubs, churches, clubs, schools, doctor's surgeries and so much more. They are all rural farming communities located within the Nidderdale National Landscape (formerly the AONB) and have a shared history.
3. Create a Pateley Bridge and Grassington Division. These are both Dales Communities of a similar size with similar concerns. They are easily linked by the B6265 road and are only about 10 minutes drive from each other.

Please consider these proposals. They will work much better for the local communities and reflect not only the geography but also the needs and commonality of the various people they will serve.

Attached Documents:

None attached