

North Yorkshire

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Comment text:

Please read the attached response to the North Yorkshire Boundary Review CONSULTATION - Draft Recommendations. I will be grateful if you will kindly acknowledge receipt of the attached document.

Attached Documents:

- rylstonepm_clerk_response_boundary_commission_pdf.pdf

1. I am responding in my role as Clerk to the Rylstone Parish Meeting about the Boundary Commission's proposals affecting our area. From the proposal we understand that it is proposed to move our village of Rylstone, (and also our neighbouring parishes of Hetton and Cracoe) out of our current ward of Wharfedale into the Mid Craven ward. This would result in us being grouped with areas to the south and west of us such as Gargrave, Hellifield and Long Preston and not, as currently, with places to the north of us such as Grassington and Threshfield (your para. 110.)

2. Rylstone residents are overwhelmingly opposed to this proposal. At the Parish meeting held on 22 May 2025 there was a unanimous vote against this proposal.

Residents think the arguments advanced for this change are deeply flawed, and do not consider that the proposed move meets any of the three statutory criteria it is required to meet (your para 44) i.e.

- Equality of representation
- Reflecting community interests and identities
- Providing for effective and convenient local government

Taking the most important criteria first. **Rylstone residents do not consider that removing our parish from the Wharfedale ward and moving it to Mid Craven in any way 'reflects community interests and identities.'** Our relationships are primarily with Grassington and Threshfield and other Dales villages. Rylstone, Hetton-cum-Bordley, and Cracoe are all located on or closely adjacent to the B6265 Grassington Road and have very close links with other Upper Wharfedale and Dales villages.

By contrast, links with the A65 villages and towns of Hellifield, Long Preston and Settle are not strong. Rylstone residents' main focus is on Grassington and Threshfield, approximately four miles north of us. We list at point 9 below the many links and relationships – educational, leisure and social, sporting, religious, health, retail – with services, groups and organisations in those places. These relationships and connections take years to develop, and are extremely important to our residents, many of whom are elderly.

3. Grassington and Threshfield are easily accessible to us; Hellifield and Long Preston are not, and access to Gargrave is problematic. Your reference to '*reasonable road.... links*' ignores the role of public transport which planning strategies are meant to encourage. There is a reasonable bus service between Rylstone, Hetton, and Threshfield / Grassington, which takes 13 minutes. Public transport is important because, as noted above, many of our residents are elderly. There is no direct bus service to Gargrave, the nearest place you mention. Someone would have to take the 72 bus into Skipton (13 mins) and then a different bus (the 580) out to Gargrave which takes between 6-12 minutes (though this ignores the fact that the infrequency of the bus services means that there are long time gaps between different services.) Then if wanting to reach the two other places you mention a passenger would have to stay on the bus for either a further 9 minutes (Hellifield) or 12 minutes (Long Preston.) So a minimum of a 35 minute journey from Hetton to Long Preston, without adding in the wait between the different services which could be more than an hour.

4. For those who drive, the road to Grassington is a good B road, whereas the direct road to Gargrave is a narrow, single-track, winding lane with so many difficult corners that even many experienced local drivers do not use it, especially after dark. The alternative route necessitates a journey of almost 9 miles, involving driving towards Skipton, along the ring road and then out on the A59. Hellifield and Long Preston are respectively 13.7 miles and 15.7 miles away from us by road if using the B6265 route to avoid the unpopular route via the Hetton to Gargrave Road and are not typically on our resident's 'radar' as places to go

for services or amenities. Gargrave itself does not have the range of services and amenities that Grassington does.

5. For these reasons we rebut the statement in the Boundary Commission's report that their proposal '*reflects community identities, noting that the some of the smaller parishes share reasonable road and community links with the more populous settlements along the A65, such as Gargrave, Hellifield and Long Preston.*' No evidence is advanced to demonstrate these supposed links, despite the Commission's report that 'a good pattern of divisions should..... reflect community interests and identities *and include evidence of community links.*' (your point 247, our emphasis.) We, by contrast, provide a lot of evidence of 'community links' with the places and people with whom we currently share a ward, but from whom your proposal would sever us administratively and politically (see point 9.)

6. Whilst we are aware that ceasing to be in the same ward does not prevent people from continuing to use services etc. across a boundary, introducing a boundary is not a minor administrative change. Our residents will not receive information about important changes to services and amenities that they use and care about, and will not have the same entitlement or opportunities to make their views heard and counted through the democratic process. So the proposed change would adversely impact the effectiveness with which our area functions and how well it can be governed, and would lump us in with areas with which we do not have 'community links.'

7. Before describing in point 9 below the very many ways in which Rylstone, Hetton, and Cracoe are linked with areas to our north, especially to Grassington and Threshfield, we want to highlight another important difference between the Wharfedale ward in which we are currently located and the one in which the proposal would re-locate us.

8. The vast majority of the Wharfedale ward lies within the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP), which therefore serves as our planning authority. This involves both building and land development issues, and also strategic planning on vital issues such as employment and economic development, transport, leisure and tourism and environmental protection. This would not be the case for the augmented Mid Craven, as the village areas of Gargrave, Hellifield, and Long Preston are sited outside the YDNP boundaries. Although some parts of Mid-Craven ward are within the National Park boundary, the major part of it, certainly in terms of numbers of residents, is not. Whilst residents and their elected representatives can manage this sort of internal division within a ward, we cannot see how we would not suffer from being moved unnecessarily into a split ward (especially where we are the minority area) through a loss of continuity and lack of full integration in the YDNP planning process. **We therefore assert that the proposal does not meet the statutory criteria of 'Providing for effective and convenient local government.'**

9. The many important links and relationships with places to the north of us in our current ward, especially those with our near neighbours in Threshfield, and Grassington include:

- Cracoe Primary school which local children attend is part of the Upper Wharfedale Federation with three other small rural schools at Grassington, Burnsall and Kettlewell. All are within Wharfedale. Each school has its own identity, but operate together as one organisation, with one Governing Body and Leadership Team. Our local secondary school is Upper Wharfedale in Threshfield.
- Younger children attend pre-school groups in Grassington.
- Many residents use the doctor's surgery and the dentists in Grassington.

- Our parish church - St Peter's at Rylstone, shares ministry with the parishes of Linton and Burnsall. The parishes of Rylstone, Burnsall, and Linton work together to support families, children, and young people in Upper Wharfedale.
- The former Methodist church in Hetton is now linked to and managed by The Gospel in the Dales Trust which is based in Threshfield.
- Rylstone residents participate actively in many community activities based in Grassington, especially The Grassington Players; The Grassington Singers; The Upper Wharfedale Concert Club; Community coffee mornings, and events at the Grassington Devonshire Institute. And we must, of course, mention the Rylstone and District WI (the world-famous WI, due to the group of amazing women known as the Calendar Girls who have raised over £6m for blood cancer research) whose members are residents of Hetton, Rylstone, Cracoe, Grassington, Burnsall, Linton and Appletreewick.
- The well-established parish magazine covers the Thorpe area as well as Hetton, Cracoe and Rylstone, and all church links are within the Dales.
- Rylstone residents use Threshfield, Grassington (and Skipton, also on the B6265) for shopping, the Post Office, pubs, cafes, restaurants and takeaways, not Hellifield or Long Preston or Gargrave.
- Sporting links include the Cricket team, and the local Rounders and Rugby teams all of which participate in Wharfedale and Dales Leagues, and the football teams at Grassington.
- Farming is very important in our area and local youngsters are members of the Upper Wharfedale Young Farmers. Kilnsey and Pateley Shows are the two major agricultural shows with strong support from our farming community, local residents, local businesses, WI groups, as entrants, volunteers, exhibitors, and visitors.
- The Upper Wharfedale Rural Watch is a local volunteer group, set up to reduce rural crime in the Upper Wharfedale area. Some Rylstone residents are volunteer members of the group, additionally, many local residents from the Upper Wharfedale villages support the group by sharing and responding to information. Rylstone Parish Meeting has made financial donations to support the work of the group, as has the local Cracoe, and Rylstone Community Fund.
- The Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue is another local volunteer group, with local residents as volunteers. The group is based in Grassington, and carries out rescues in Wharfedale, Nidderdale, Littondale, and the surrounding areas.

10. We understand that the main aim of the Boundary Commission review is to better balance the number of residents / voters between wards. However, because our three parishes do not contain a lot of people this move doesn't really contribute to the aim of increasing voter numbers in wards that currently have a low population. As our current local councillor, Richard Foster, has observed *'they (i.e. our three parishes) don't contain a huge amount of people that would make either the Council's or the proposed boundaries figures over tolerance levels.'*

So, we contend that the proposed move of Rylstone, Hetton, and Cracoe into Mid Craven does not contribute to achieving the statutory aim of Equality of Representation.

11. If the Boundary Commission is indeed seeking to *reflect community interests and identities* it is important that you recognise the huge unpopularity of your proposal with Rylstone residents. Our recent Parish Meeting with the proposed Electoral Boundary Changes as a main agenda item was very well attended, with all residents strongly opposed to the proposed changes. Many residents expressed their opposition verbally to me at a community event on Saturday. Residents feel it would damage their sense of identity and community.

In summary, the arguments advanced for this highly unpopular change are not soundly based, and residents do not consider that the proposed move would meet any of the three statutory criteria it is required to meet.

Debbie Burton – Clerk to Rylstone Parish Meeting

4 June 2025