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Dear members and friends

With the Boundary Commission presently taking submissions on its initial proposals for boundary changes, it is incredibly important that we ensure our voices are heard, and that as many members as possible contact the Commission to express their views.

The Party (both locally and nationally) opposes the present draft proposals for Northumberland, and we have submitted alternative proposals which are more logical, and work within the framework for the new constituency sizes.

What do the Boundary Commission's proposals propose?

The Commission's proposals involve splitting the present Berwick-upon-Tweed constituency, with Rothbury and Longhorsley forming part of a new Hexham and Morpeth seat, and Ashington being included in the Berwick seat.

Why are the Commission's Proposals so bad for Northumberland?

The larger more urban area of Ashington shares little with the rural nature of the rest of the proposed constituency, or the market towns of Alnwick and Berwick. There is no connection between Ashington and Berwick, which are 60 miles apart, share very few services, and would have wildly different needs from their MP.

The towns of Alnwick, Berwick, Morpeth and Hexham provide centres of services for the rural communities that surround them. The Commission's proposals will split those communities from the services they rely on, and mean MPs will represent people whose lives revolve around services in another constituency. In particular, Longhorsley looks to Morpeth for transport, shops, jobs and schools, Rothbury looks east and Morpeth looks to Alnwick rather than Hexham. These rural communities share the same challenges – lack of decent infrastructure, poor access to broadband, small rural schools, difficulty with school transport and access to medical facilities. They have little in common with the more industrial and urban areas of Ashington, and are geographically very far removed from Ashington too. Berwick and Ashington are separated by more than 60 miles, and a 90 minute drive.

The primary arterial road in the county – the A1 – connects the towns of Berwick, Alnwick and Morpeth, forming the backbone of the area and meaning those three towns and the communities around them, feel connected to one another. Conversely, Blyth and Ashington are industrial towns with similar issues, which have little in common with rural areas.

Elsewhere in the region, natural communities, and in one case a housing estate, have been split into different constituencies. Our proposal involves reuniting these communities, creating constituencies of similar areas, all within the electorate range, which do not involve splitting wards or disruption to the other proposed seats in the region.

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What are the Conservatives proposing?

We are proposing to keep Ashington and Blyth together, and to keep Rothbury and Longhorsley in the Berwick seat. The Berwick seat would also include all Morpeth wards as well as Bothal and Choppington wards which look to Morpeth. The services used by residents in these additional wards are the same as the rest of the constituency, they too rely on the A1, and their communities face similar issues.

Under our proposals the Hexham seat takes in Cramlington and reunites Ponteland East which was split by the Commission's proposal.

Our proposals create three, natural constituencies made up of like-minded communities that use the same services, all within the framework for the number of electors in each constituency, as set out in statute.

How can we achieve a change to the proposals?

The best thing to do is for everyone to write to the Commission (details below) explaining why their proposals will not benefit our area, and why our alternative would work much better for Northumberland and the North East region.

If you are able to go along to speak at one of the public hearings, which are taking place in Newcastle on 14th and 15th November, that would be excellent and you can book in to speak here:

<http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/boundary-commission-for-england-10840540288>

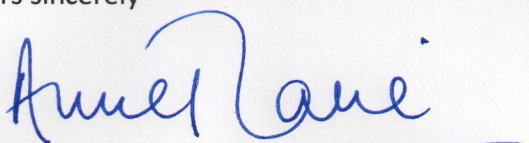
However, most important is that everyone who is able, writes to the Commission, using the arguments above, and your own if that suits, in your own words, letting them know why their proposals won't work for us.

You can comment via their website: <https://www.bce2018.org.uk/node/6486> and click on 'Have Your Say' or you can submit your thoughts in writing: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England, 14th Floor Millbank Tower, London, SW1P 4QP.

If you would find it helpful to view the list of wards for each of our proposed seats for the North East, we would be happy to provide that separately.

Thank you in advance for your input.

Yours sincerely



Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP