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To: [BCE Information](#)
Subject: FW: Conservative Party response - second stage - North East
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Attachments: [Conservative Party - cover letter - North East.pdf](#)
[Conservative Party - second stage response - North East.pdf](#)

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From: Aston, Craig
Sent: 03 April 2012 11:19
To: 'NorthEast@bcommengland.X.GSI.GOV.UK'
Cc: Pratt, Roger
Subject: Conservative Party response - second stage - North East

To whom it may concern,

Please find attached the Conservative Party's response to the second consultation stage for the North East, sent on behalf of Roger Pratt CBE, the Party's Boundary Review Manager.

Yours sincerely,
Craig Aston

Craig Aston
Boundary Review Assistant
Conservative Campaign Headquarters, 30 Millbank, London SW1P 4DP

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Conservative Campaign Headquarters
30 Millbank
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3rd April 2012

Boundary Commission for England
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ

Dear Sirs,

Second consultation period – North East Region

We have much pleasure in enclosing our response to the representations received during the first consultation period on the initial proposals for the North East Region.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Pratt CBE
Boundary Review Manager

NORTH EAST REGION

Submission of the Conservative Party regarding the responses to the initial proposals for the North East region

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 We note the large number of responses to the initial proposals for the North East Region. We note that in proportion the number of responses is the second highest of the nine Regions in England.
- 1.2 We note that many of the responses relate to the unpopularity of the proposal to include two Northumberland wards with other wards in Durham stretching across the three major rivers in the Region.
- 1.3 We note that there is a great deal of consensus on the solution to address the problems of a proposed cross-county constituency between Northumberland and Durham and the consequent changes that are required.
- 1.4 We will use as our guiding principles when looking at other submissions the factors outlined in Rule 5 of the Rules for Redistribution of Seats – Schedule 2 to the Act.
- 1.5 In particular we will look at:
 - a) Geographical factors;
 - b) Local Government boundaries;
 - c) Existing constituencies;
 - d) Local ties that are broken from existing constituencies.
- 1.6 We will now comment in detail on the various areas and our views on any alternative proposals that have been suggested.

2. NORTHUMBERLAND

a) Berwick and Morpeth

- 2.1 We note there is a great deal of support for the principle of a constituency containing Berwick and Morpeth.
- 2.2 We note that there is widespread opposition to the exclusion of the Rothbury ward from this constituency.
- 2.3 We note the opposition includes the Liberal Democrat MP for Berwick, Sir Alan Beith MP (Representation 020072), and five Parish Councils within the ward (Representations 007703, 019109, 020646, 023889 and 024895).
- 2.4 We also note that Morpeth Town Council (Representation 008314) whilst supporting the principle that Morpeth should be in a constituency including Berwick points out the strong ties between Rothbury and Morpeth.
- 2.5 We believe an overwhelming case has been made for Rothbury to be included with a Berwick and Morpeth constituency and we urge the Commission to propose this change which is more compliant with Rule 5 (1) c and d.
- 2.6 We also note the strong support, including from Sir Alan Beith MP, that the constituency should be named Berwick, Alnwick and Morpeth to reflect the three main towns in the constituency and we trust the Commission will include Alnwick in the name.
- 2.7 We note that the Liberal Democrats have suggesting swapping the two wards of Bothal and Choppington for the Newbiggin Central and East and Seaton with Newbiggin West wards.

- 2.8 We appreciate that there is concern in Ashington in particular about the Bothal ward and its ties with Ashington.
- 2.9 However, on balance we think the original proposal is better than the counter-proposal in this regard.
- 2.10 We note that the two Newbiggin wards also have ties with Ashington and in particular the wards of Seaton with Newbiggin West and College have close ties with continuous development and a very indistinct boundary.
- 2.11 We note some representations from Newbiggin pointing out the ties to Ashington and in particular a Newbiggin community group (Representation 013750).
- 2.12 We also believe this counter-proposal would mean awkwardly-shaped constituencies for both Berwick and Morpeth and Blyth and Ashington.
- 2.13 We also note that ties have been evidenced between Lynemouth and Newbiggin along the coast which we would address by including Lynemouth with Blyth and Ashington.
- 2.14 We therefore continue to support a Berwick, Alnwick and Morpeth constituency including Rothbury but not including Lynemouth and Ponteland East (which we will address below in Hexham).
- 2.15 Our position is well summed up in the submission of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservative Association from John Rae, the Chairman (Representation 020828).
- b) Blyth and Ashington
- 2.16 We note the concern over the issues relating to Ashington detailed above.
- 2.17 We note there is a counter-proposal making less change to the existing Blyth Valley constituency and we will deal with this at a later stage, see points 3.2 to 3.4.

2.18 We would continue to include Lynemouth and exclude the Hartley ward which we would include with Holywell ward so that there are two Northumberland wards together with Whitley Bay.

c) Hexham

2.19 We note that by far the largest number of representations express concern about the initial proposals for the Hexham constituency; indeed half of all the responses in the region come from the existing Hexham constituency.

2.20 We note the widespread and almost universal opposition to the proposed inclusion of the Haltwhistle and South Tynedale wards in Consett and Barnard Castle.

2.21 Similarly we note the widespread opposition to the inclusion of the Gateshead ward of Chopwell and Rowlands Gill in Hexham.

2.22 We note the opposition comes from Northumberland, Durham and Gateshead.

2.23 We note the very large number of representations from the Haltwhistle and South Tynedale wards asking for them to remain in the Hexham constituency.

2.24 We note this includes a large number of Town and Parish Councils (See Representations 005180, 006031, 008936, 008937, 010154, 014535, 016685, 016984, 020233, 020353, 020710, 020778, 024916, and 025024).

2.25 We note that all three major political parties support the retention of the Haltwhistle and South Tynedale wards in the Hexham constituency.

2.26 We think there is an overwhelming case for Haltwhistle and South Tynedale being included in the Hexham constituency. It is better under all four of the factors that can be taken account of in Rule 5. We urge the Commission to revise their proposals to include these two wards.

- 2.27 We note the widespread opposition to the exclusion of Ponteland East from this constituency.
- 2.28 We note this includes many representations including from the County Councillor for Ponteland East (Representation 020202) and the Ponteland Town Council (Representation 011452).
- 2.29 We note that the Liberal Democrats also support the inclusion of Ponteland East in Hexham and that in effect there is a swap of the wards of Rothbury and Ponteland East returning both wards to their existing constituencies.
- 2.30 We believe there is an overwhelming case for the inclusion of Ponteland East in this constituency which better respects Rule 5 (1) c and d.
- 2.31 We therefore support a constituency of Hexham as proposed but including the wards of Haltwhistle, South Tynedale and Ponteland East and excluding the wards of Chopwell and Rowlands Gill and Rothbury.
- 2.32 This is exactly the proposal of both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties.
- 2.33 Our views on the constituency are well summed up in the submission of the Hexham Conservative Association (Representation 021633) and in the evidence given by Guy Opperman MP at the Newcastle hearing (Day Two, 9.19am, Pages 6-12).

3. TYNE AND WEAR – north of the Tyne

a) North Tyneside Constituencies

- 3.1 We note that the electorate of the two North Tyneside constituencies (North Tyneside and Tynemouth) is such that they could have been left untouched.
- 3.2 We note that there is a counter-proposal that this happens (See Representations 015291 and 025646).
- 3.3 The consequence of this proposal is the recreation of a Tyne Bridge constituency which was unpopular in the past and which the Commission rightly in our view has sought to avoid on this occasion. We note that the national Labour Party submission makes this point about the previous Tyne Bridge constituency (see paragraph 4 on page 43 of the Labour Party Final Submission, where they say there was widespread approval when the former Tyne Bridge constituency was abolished in 2010).
- 3.4 It also creates a massive Berwick and Hexham constituency which we think would be very unwieldy and would be contrary to the many representations relating to the two proposed constituencies covering Berwick and Hexham. We would be strongly opposed to this change.
- 3.5 We do however believe the Commission has been too disruptive in this area and note the many representations expressing concern regarding these two constituencies.
- 3.6 We note that there are three representations that deal with the separation of Tynemouth and Whitley Bay and the disruption to this constituency and propose an alternative.

- 3.7 One representation is from the Rt. Hon. Nick Brown MP which we have some sympathy for in that it does put more of Tynemouth together.
- 3.8 We note that the Liberal Democrats make no change to Tynemouth and have a Newcastle East and Wallsend seat. Although we have sympathy for the proposal we note that one ward of Wallsend (Northumberland) is not included in the constituency of that name.
- 3.9 However we believe our counter proposal which unites the wards of Collingwood, Cullercoats, Preston and Tynemouth in one constituency with Whitley Bay as requested in many of the representations is preferable because of the impact of the two proposals on Wallsend.
- 3.10 There are five wards that make up the community of Wallsend: Battle Hill, Howdon, Northumberland, Riverside and Wallsend. There are a number of representations that request those five wards are kept together.
- 3.11 We note that two speakers from the Labour Party at the Newcastle public hearing spoke in favour of keeping Wallsend together (Mr. Darke, an elected member of North Tyneside Council for twenty-four years and Secretary of the North Tyneside Constituency Labour Party (Day One, 4.31pm, pages 55-58) and Mr. Stephenson (Day Two, 9.02am, pages 2-6).
- 3.12 We further note that Mary Glindon, the Labour MP for North Tyneside, requests the five wards are kept together (Representation 018490).
- 3.13 The Commission and the proposal of the Rt. Hon. Nick Brown divide these five Wallsend wards between three constituencies.

- 3.14 We believe the representation of the elected Mayor of North Tyneside, Linda Arkley, (Representation 24908) and the evidence of Sir Neville Trotter, former MP for Tynemouth, at the Newcastle hearing are very persuasive arguments in favour of our proposals.
- 3.15 We therefore believe on balance our proposals for Tynemouth and Whitley Bay and Newcastle East and Wallsend constituencies to be the ones that break the fewest ties and keep constituencies together and are therefore most compliant with Rule 5 (1) c and d.
- b) Newcastle upon Tyne constituencies
- 3.16 In respect of the other three proposed Newcastle constituencies we note there are relatively few representations and general support for linking the town of Cramlington with North Tyneside and Newcastle.
- 3.17 We note that the Liberal Democrats and the Rt. Hon. Nick Brown and ourselves make changes to Newcastle which are consequential on other changes.
- 3.18 Our changes are nearest to the Commission's original proposals which have met with relatively little objection.
- 3.19 If our counter proposal for this area was rejected then we would prefer firstly the Liberal Democrats and secondly the Rt. Hon. Nick Brown's proposals as they respectively make no change and relatively minor change to the Tynemouth constituency.

4. TYNE AND WEAR – south of the Tyne
- 4.1 We note that in respect of these constituencies, with the exception of the existing Blaydon seat, there have been relatively few representations from the Metropolitan Borough of Gateshead.
- 4.2 We understand the concerns in Blaydon but believe on balance the proposals of the Commission to be the least worst option.
- 4.3 We note the counter proposals from Gateshead Council but believe that although it addresses the concerns in Gateshead and Blaydon it has considerable knock on effects elsewhere.
- 4.4 We would commend our minor change proposal in respect of these seats including Sunderland electors.
- 4.5 This has the advantage of keeping Sunderland Central unchanged and respects the River Wear as a constituency boundary.
- 4.6 We also note that our proposal to name one of the constituencies Houghton and Sunderland South has some support.

5. COUNTY DURHAM

- 5.1 As a result of the evidence given at the lead hearing we changed our position on Durham between the two hearings so as to ensure there was a consensus between the three main political parties.
- 5.2 The proposed constituencies of Bishop Auckland, Durham, Easington and North West Durham have all been proposed with exactly the same compositions by all three major parties.
- 5.3 This follows concerns that the Deerness Valley ward should be included in its current constituency of Durham and the widespread concerns that Chopwell and Rowlands Gill does not fit with Hexham and is more suited to a seat including Consett.
- 5.4 We think therefore there is an overwhelming case for the changes proposed to these four constituencies and we urge the Commission to adopt them.
- 5.5 There is little concern about the composition of the Chester-le-Street constituency but we would have no objection to reverting to the existing name of North Durham as has been requested.

6. DARLINGTON

- 6.1 We note that all three major political parties support the Commission proposal for the Darlington constituency.
- 6.2 We note there are some representations suggesting that the unitary authority should comprise of one constituency.
- 6.3 We have much sympathy for this view and have indeed advocated it previously. However on balance we believe it is difficult to achieve coherent constituencies elsewhere without including two Darlington wards with a Stockton South constituency.

7. HARTLEPOOL

- 7.1 We note that all the three major political parties agree that the Blackhalls ward of County Durham should be included with the Borough of Hartlepool rather than the Billingham North ward of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.
- 7.2 Although we note that there is some concern about this from Blackhalls we believe it is a better option than splitting the town of Billingham.
- 7.3 We believe there is a widespread case for the proposed changes to the Hartlepool constituency.

8. MIDDLESBROUGH AND REDCAR AND CLEVELAND

- 8.1 We note there is widespread support for the inclusion of the three Thornaby wards in a Middlesbrough seat. We note the suggestion that this might be called Middlesbrough and Thornaby and we would have no objection to this name which has some merit.
- 8.2 In respect of Middlesbrough South and Guisborough and Redcar we note there are various alterations suggested.
- 8.3 We believe one of the strengths of the proposal for Redcar is that the five wards in Middlesbrough (North Ormesby and Brambles Farm, Pallister, Thorntree, Beckfield and Park End) are united in one seat. These five wards are an area with strong ties with a good boundary between the five wards and the remainder of Middlesbrough, but very indistinct boundaries between the five wards.
- 8.4 For example there is continuous residential development between Thorntree and Beckfield, Beckfield and Park End, Park End and Pallister, and Pallister and Thorntree and North Ormesby and Brambles Farm.
- 8.5 We believe these five wards should be kept together and therefore reject the proposal of the Liberal Democrats which would divide them between three constituencies and the Redcar and Cleveland Council suggestion which would detach the Park End ward.
- 8.6 We do agree with the Council and Liberal Democrats that the Longbeck ward should be united with the St. Germans ward so that Marske-by-the-Sea should be in one constituency. We note the concerns locally about this; for just some examples see Representations 013108, 013148, 014351.

- 8.7 However we believe the best solution is to include it with other coastal communities in Middlesbrough South and Guisborough. We note there are a number of representations in favour of this solution (For example Representation 000869).
- 8.8 Although we accept that there are links between Saltburn and St. Germain's we also note the strong ties between Saltburn and Skelton and Brotton which would be broken by the Liberal Democrat alternative.
- 8.9 We also believe there are ties between the Normanby and the Teesville and Eston wards that would be broken under the alternative proposals and restored under our proposals.
- 8.10 We believe on balance our proposals provide the best alternative in terms of Rule 5 (1) d as we restore ties in Marske-by-the-Sea and between Eston, Teesville and Normanby.
- 8.11 We therefore urge the Commission to adopt our alternative swap of the Longbeck and Normanby wards. If this is unacceptable we would prefer the Commission's proposals supported by the Labour Party.
- 8.12 We would have no objection to retaining the name of Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland for this constituency.

9. STOCKTON-ON-TEES

- 9.1 We note the widespread objection to the splitting of the town of Billingham and that all three major parties support the uniting of Billingham in one constituency.
- 9.2 We also note that all three major parties would link Billingham with Newton Aycliffe and Sedgfield and note this approach has widespread support.
- 9.3 We also note that all three major parties would link Ingleby Barwick with other Stockton wards rather than with Newton Aycliffe and Sedgfield.
- 9.4 We also note the widespread objection that the Parkfield and Oxbridge ward is one isolated Stockton town ward in the proposed Sedgfield and Yarm constituency.
- 9.5 The Labour alternative is to link the Stockton wards less Billingham and Northern Parishes from the Stockton and Billingham proposed constituency with Ingleby Barwick and Parkfield and Oxbridge.
- 9.6 This means that the Stockton wards of Eaglescliffe and Yarm are kept in a constituency with Newton Aycliffe and Sedgfield but also in a constituency containing Billingham.
- 9.7 We think this is a serious flaw in the Labour Party proposals and we believe it would be widely unpopular in the area.
- 9.8 We would particularly draw the attention of the Commission to the representations from Yarm Town Council (Representation 005187) which makes it clear their decision was unanimous including Independent members, Egglecliffe and Eaglescliffe Parish Council (Representation 003393) who make it clear that their members are elected under no party political banner, Preston-on-Tees Parish

Council within the Eggescliffe ward (Representation 021015) and Kirklevington and Leavington Parish Council within the Yarm ward (Representation 023688).

- 9.9 All these representations show the lack of links with Sedgfield and Newton Aycliffe and the preference for being with other Stockton wards with Eggescliffe and Eaglescliffe referring specifically to the wards of Fairfield, Hartburn and Grangefield.
- 9.10 We appreciate that Yarm Town Council would rather be with North Yorkshire but their representation clearly states that otherwise their preference is to be in a Stockton South constituency including Middleton St. George and Sadberge and Whessoe. Kirklevington and Leavington make similar points and suggest they are kept together with Middle [*sic*] St. George and Western Parishes amongst other areas.
- 9.11 We would also draw the attention of the Commission to the representation from the County Councillor for Sedgfield (Representation 024854) and that of the Great Aycliffe Town Council (Representation 025266) who both believe Yarm should not be included in a constituency with Newton Aycliffe.
- 9.12 We appreciate the Liberal Democrat proposals include Eaglescliffe and Yarm with Stockton but they exclude Western Parishes and the two Darlington wards of Middleton St. George and Sadberge and Whessoe.
- 9.13 We believe these three wards should be in a Stockton based seat rather than one with Newton Aycliffe and Billingham.

- 9.14 All the links of the wards are East-West rather than North-South with strong road and rail communications along the A66, A67 and the Stockton-Darlington railway line from these wards into Eaglescliffe, Western Parishes and southern Stockton.
- 9.15 We also refer to the strong evidence about the Tees Valley Airport links between the Middleton St. George ward and the Eaglescliffe ward.
- 9.16 We note the evidence of Cllr. Jones, Chairman of Middleton St. George Parish Council (Day Two, Darlington hearing, 9.03am, pages 2-3) which showed the wishes of residents to be linked with Stockton South. We note the number of representations from Western Parishes saying they should be with Stockton South, particularly noting the links with Hartburn ward (see for example Representations 014251, 019098 and 020801).
- 9.17 We believe our proposals for a North-South divide provide for the best shaped and balanced constituencies. Whilst we have suggested names of Stockton South and Sedgfield and Billingham we would not be averse to alternatives if this found greater favour, e.g. Stockton North and Newton Aycliffe for the northern seat.
- 9.18 In respect of existing constituencies our proposals are the least disruptive of the four options. As shown in the Labour Party submission their proposal is the most disruptive and more disruptive than the Commission proposals.
- 9.19 We retain 112,440 electors within their existing constituency within Stockton. The Liberal Democrats retain 105,072, the Commission retain 93,331 and Labour retain 75,149. Our proposals are therefore most compliant with Rule 5 (1) c.
- 9.20 In respect of Local Authorities where you are considering four unitary authorities. The Commission, Labour and Liberal Democrat proposals all have one

constituency consisting of part of one local authority and one constituency consisting of part of three local authorities.

- 9.21 We have two constituencies both comprising of parts of two local authorities and therefore neither comprising of part of three unitary authorities.
- 9.22 Whilst currently in the North East there are no constituencies comprising parts of three unitary authorities there are a number comprising of parts of two unitary authorities.
- 9.23 We note a number of representations complain of a three unitary authority solution and that this would make it more difficult for a Member of Parliament to best serve their constituents.
- 9.24 We note the second largest number of representations from an existing constituency come from Stockton South and the vast majority of these favour our alternative solution.
- 9.25 Our overall case is best made in the evidence of James Wharton MP both at the Darlington hearing (Day Two, 12.53pm, pages 18-25) and in written evidence (Representations 003684 and 008221).
- 9.26 He has suggested an alternative if the Commission were not minded to make the major changes suggested by the three parties in terms of Billingham and Newton Aycliffe.
- 9.27 If the Commission are minded to make only minor changes to their original proposal and retain a Sedgefield and Yarm and Stockton and Billingham seat then we would strongly recommend this alternative from James Wharton which we think is preferable to any other alternative except our alternative suggestion which James

Wharton supports and has many elements of the Labour and Liberal Democrats proposals but we believe with better community links and better shaped seats.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 We believe there is a lot of consensus amongst the three major political parties which is reflected in the many representations received.
- 10.2 This is particularly true in terms of the widely unpopular proposed constituency of Consett and Barnard Castle and the consequent changes to the Hexham and County Durham constituencies.
- 10.3 We also note the widespread agreement on some of the changes to the Berwick successor constituency and the need to address the Tynemouth successor constituency.
- 10.4 We believe there are also concerns regarding some of the issues relating to the linking between Durham and Stockton but there are different solutions regarding Stockton South. We urge you to adopt our solution here as it is the least disruptive option available.
- 10.5 We urge the Commission to adopt our proposals as outlined in our final submission (Representation 025285) which are less disruptive than the Commission proposals and retain one constituency unchanged.
- 10.6 We believe our proposals best meet the requirements of Rule 5 (1) a, b, c and d of the Rules for Redistribution of Seats – Schedule 2 of the Act.