

Submission to the Boundary Commission for England third period of consultation: **West Midlands**

1. The Liberal Democrats are disappointed that the Assistant Commissioners did not support an holistic view of the Region, but chose to retain the non-statutory sub-regions proposed by the Boundary Commission. As a result, many Lib Dem original proposals were invalidated. It is clear that major changes to the Second Draft would not be accepted at this stage, so this submission proposes a number of minor changes, which we believe will deliver significant benefits to those constituencies affected.

2. Working clockwise from Warwickshire on the eastern side of the Region, we welcome the fact that **North Warwickshire CC** [75,395 originally] has regained Coleshill North, Coleshill South and Water Orton [8,194] from the Initial Proposals for Meriden, and returned Weddington [5,889] to Nuneaton. As a result, the electorate of North Warwickshire has increased to 77,700 in the revised version. But we are convinced that Hartshill ward [2,987] should stay with Nuneaton. This would reduce the **North Warwickshire CC** electorate to 74,713 (see below).

3. We support the fact that **Nuneaton CC** [73,782 originally] gets Weddington [5,889] back from North Warwickshire which takes it to 79,671. To compensate, the BCE returned Earl Craven & Wolston, Lawford & King's Newnham, and Ryton-on-Dunsmore [8,860] to Rugby, but then added Avon & Swift [2,194] to bring Nuneaton back into quota with the lowest electorate [73,005] of the whole West Midlands. Avon & Swift has the same claim as Lawford & King's Newnham (para AC219) to having much closer connections with the town of Rugby than with the town of Nuneaton, and it makes no sense to exchange the ward on the NW for the one on the NE. We believe it makes more sense for Nuneaton to retain the Hartshill ward from North Warwickshire (which is currently in the Nuneaton constituency adjacent to Weddington) rather than adding Avon & Swift from the outskirts of Rugby. This also creates a more logical boundary between the two constituencies.

4. In the revisions, **Rugby CC** [73,482 originally] has regained its 3 southern wards from Nuneaton but lost Avon & Swift ward, which was the closest to the town, for a net gain of 6,666 bringing it to 80,148. As a result the BCE have returned 2 Stratford wards, Long Itchington [1,873] going to Warwick, and Harbury [3,675] back to Stratford-upon-Avon. Rugby then has a revised electorate of 74,600. Rugby should retain Avon & Swift (2,194), due to its connections with the town, in exchange for Fenny Compton (1,886) being returned to Stratford in addition to Harbury. This would give the adjusted Rugby constituency an electorate of 74,908.

5. **Stratford-upon-Avon CC** [at 73,016 currently the second lowest in the Region] should also have Fenny Compton [1,886] returned to it with Harbury, providing a nearly horizontal boundary to the north of the constituency, and a more logical solution in relation to the BCE's revisions. This would marginally increase the Stratford-upon-Avon electorate to a reasonable 74,902. If the Avon & Swift ward remains with Rugby (as in the Initial Proposals) it makes that electorate almost the same as Stratford-upon-Avon, and better balanced in terms of geography.

6. The Summary below shows the similarity in electorates between the four constituencies.

North Warwickshire CC **74,713** (not regaining Hartshill ward from Nuneaton)

Nuneaton CC	73,798	(keeping Hartshill ward, losing Avon & Swift)
Rugby CC	74,908	(regaining Avon & Swift, losing Fenny Compton)
Stratford-upon-Avon CC	74,902	(regaining Fenny Compton ward with Harbury)

7. The Liberal Democrats are not happy with splitting the Bromsgrove constituency to make up the numbers in Redditch, nor with adding Droitwich from Wychavon, to make up the numbers in Bromsgrove, but are not recommending any further change here. However, we do support the transfer of Hartlebury, Ombersley, Lovett & North Claines [8,286] – the three wards east of the River Severn – from the Malvern & Ledbury constituency to ‘Evesham’. We believe for the reasons in the guidelines that this constituency should retain the name **Mid Worcestershire CC** as it now extends north to the Wyre Forest constituency.

Although it has lost Droitwich and its Dodderhill link to Bromsgrove, it has regained the large Inkberrow ward from Redditch, and also some of the Wychavon wards that are currently in the West Worcestershire constituency. We recommend the transfer out of Upton & Hanley, to reduce the electorate of this constituency to 74,732; a reasonable total for the size of the constituency, which matches the electorates of neighbouring constituencies in Warwickshire. Collectively, these changes represent an improvement to the revisions in the Second Draft, in terms of geography, community ties and historical links. We hope these will be accepted.

8. In order to balance the addition of the three northern wards, the BCE has accepted part of the counter-proposal from Mr Bailey (AC91) which transfers the wards of Longdon, Morton, Wells and Powick [9,167] to the Malvern & Ledbury constituency, a net gain of 881. But this leaves one ward – Upton & Hanley [3,422] behind, causing a major kink in the boundary. We propose that this ward should be transferred too, bearing in mind its links with its neighbours to the east and south of Great Malvern. This would bring the total electorate for Malvern & Ledbury to 81,280 above quota. But if Backbury is returned to South Herefordshire, this reduces to 78,806. Not only that, but it presents a much improved boundary on the western side and smaller area.

9. We propose that **Hereford & South Herefordshire CC** [73,870] retains the Backbury ward [2,474] which was in this constituency before the last Review, and also in the Initial Proposals. This would increase the electorate to 76,344 as in our original submission, which also included the two Golden Valley wards, which the BCE has now accepted should be transferred back.

10. The **Ludlow & Leominster CC** [79,645] constituency needs reducing in size and electorate, rather than the opposite. Transferring Alveley & Claverley [3,299] to the Bridgnorth area helps, and would have reduced the electorate in the Initial Proposals from 77,911 to 74,612 plus 436 electors from the exchange of Golden Valley North & South [4,763] for Burghill, Holmer & Lyde, and Credenhill wards [5,199]. The new total of 75,048 would have been perfectly adequate bearing in mind the enormous size of the constituency. But no, the BCE accepted Mr Bailey’s counter-proposal (AC72/103) that Sutton Walls [2,440] and Hampton Court [2,157] from Herefordshire be added, because they are close to Leominster. This makes the constituency bigger than before with 79,645 electors.

Although it is accepted that this constituency is well within the maximum permitted by the legislation (AC76) it is nearly three times larger in physical size than the next largest constituency in the West Midlands, and many times larger than the majority of them.

Accessibility is a problem, despite the transfer of the Golden Valley wards (AC78). There is no possibility of transferring wards back to the Malvern & Ledbury constituency, with a revised electorate of 77,858, and with the minor changes we propose would become 78,806, an increase of just under 1,000. So we propose instead that 2 Shropshire divisions, Chirbury & Worthen [2,397] and Bishop's Castle [2,837] are transferred to Shrewsbury. This would bring the Ludlow & Leominster to 74,411, reducing both its physical size and electorate, and increase the Shrewsbury total to 79,212, providing a better balance with this largely urban constituency. Certainly Chirbury & Worthen has much better links with Shrewsbury than with Ludlow, and hope this will be accepted.

11. Bridgnorth, Wellington & The Wrekin CC [77,849] The BCE said it would not accept triple names in constituency titles, but has done so here. Wellington is **IN** The Wrekin constituency now, so doesn't need a double mention. We recommend that the name is changed to **Bridgnorth & The Wrekin CC**, as it is the Bridgnorth area that is being combined with The Wrekin, as a result of keeping Telford as a single constituency. The existing constituency is not 'Wellington and The Wrekin', so it adds unnecessary complexity to the title, as if Wellington were a separate entity.

12. Telford BC [78,142] This change is accepted instead of splitting Shropshire's largest town.

13. The only change to the revised **Newcastle-under-Lyme CC** [79,943] suggested here is that the northern wards of Audley and Bignall End, and Halmerend [7,732] are retained by Newcastle and exchanged for Keele and Seabridge [7,885]. This would reduce the Newcastle electorate by 153 to 79,790 and increase the West Staffordshire constituency from 79,213 to 79,366. There is no link between Audley and Stone, the former looks to Newcastle, and our proposed change would create two reasonably compact constituencies. Seabridge, unlike its neighbours Westlands and Clayton, does not extend as far as the central Town ward, and is on the southern fringe of Newcastle, adjacent to Loggerheads and Whitmore, in the existing Stone constituency, which would become **West Staffordshire CC** under the revised proposals.

In correspondence with the Liberal Democrats at the end of 2011, Dr Nicky Davis – who has kindly allowed us to quote from the correspondence - said: "There would be a lot of community sense in putting Keele in West Staffordshire/Stone, as it very much a village and has a lot of links with Madeley...I see what you mean about taking my version presented at the Stafford hearing and just swapping Keele and Clayton. I had my mind fixed on keeping Clayton and Seabridge together but if we don't do that it works ok. Keele as I've said would actually work very well in 'Stone'. So if it's better to keep Audley and Bignall End and Halmerend in NUL then the only odd bit would be separating Seabridge out from it's neighbours. But as numbers are tight we have to live with some compromises and this might be a better one. So yes, I actually think what you are suggesting is a good solution, I like it well enough!"

14. Burton CC [75,302] In keeping with changing the name of the Stone constituency to 'West Staffordshire', it is proposed that the matching name of 'East Staffordshire' be used for this constituency. The northern town of Uttoxeter and its neighbours complain that Burton is right down at the southern end, and the name does not represent the entirety of the area, which is in the East Staffordshire District.

15. Tamworth CC [75,376] Although the BCE is offering no change from the Initial Proposals, we propose that Whittington ward [2,666] which fits in the 'kink' of the boundary NW of Tamworth, be included instead of Hammerwich [2,832] which is further away and disrupts the

Burntwood area. This would be a more logical and compact solution, and only reduce the electorate by 166 to 75,210. It would also increase the **Lichfield CC** electorate by the same amount to 75,592.

16. We prefer the name **Walsall North CC** instead of the cumbersome Aldridge, Brownhills and Bloxwich CC. It also complements Walsall South as in the Initial Proposals, and there seems to be no good reason to complicate matters with a triple title. There are no similar combinations in the Region, except the Bridgnorth, Wellington and The Wrekin CC, which we have opposed.

17. No other changes are proposed for the remaining constituencies proposed in the Second Draft: 25 remain as per the Initial Proposals, 16 as per the recent BCE revisions, and only 13 subject to the minor modifications as listed in this submission from the Liberal Democrats.