
LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND 5TH REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS – PROPOSALS FOR WARDS

Report by Chief Executive

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

21 May 2015

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for a proposed response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland’s proposals for wards in the Scottish Borders Council area.**
- 1.2 The current proposals by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland for the Scottish Borders Council area present an electoral arrangement for 32 Councillors representing 8 x 3-member wards and 2 x 4-member wards, reducing the number of wards in the area by 1 and reducing Councillor numbers by 2. Appendix 1 details the electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed Wards, and gives details of the Commission’s new Ward proposals, in particular Jedburgh, Denholm & Hermitage and Hawick. The proposals remove the existing Hawick & Denholm and Hawick & Hermitage Wards, placing Newcastleton and Denholm (and surrounding areas) into a new Jedburgh, Denholm & Hermitage Ward. A minor change is also proposed moving around 80 electors from Charlesfield from the Jedburgh Ward into the Selkirkshire Ward, with the detail of this change in boundary given in Appendix 2.
- 1.3 The Commission has made it clear that parity of electors to Councillors is the main determinant for Councillor numbers and ward design. This has been used to develop a response for the Council, proposing a different configuration of Wards, retaining Newcastleton in a Hawick Ward. Details of this are given in Appendix 3. Consideration has been given to including Denholm in the Hawick Ward but this is not being recommended as it would take the total electorate for that Ward 20% above parity.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Council agrees:-**
 - (a) to support the Commission’s proposal to move Charlesfield (approximately 80 electorate) from the Jedburgh & District Ward into the Selkirkshire Ward, with no change proposed for the houses lying within the settlement boundary of St Boswells;**

- (b) not to support the new Jedburgh, Denholm & Hermitage or the Hawick Wards as detailed in the Commission's proposals;**
- (c) to propose to the Commission that the area to the south of Hawick, including Newcastleton, should be included in a new Ward 10 (Hawick & District Ward) with 4 Councillors. The new Ward electorate would be 12,426 (at September 2013 level) which would be 11% above parity, but this would reduce in the forecast electorate in 2019 to 12,122 which is a variation of 8% above parity. This would then reflect the same variation from parity (-8%) of the existing and proposed Tweeddale West Ward. The new Ward would cover an area of 621 km², the same area as the current Mid Berwickshire Ward. Wilton Park and Galalaw Business Park, in Hawick, currently have postcodes which place them out-with the new Hawick Ward and it is recommended that these be included within the new Hawick Ward as they lie within the settlement boundary, albeit containing no houses.**
- (d) to propose to the Commission that the area to the north and east of Hawick, including Denholm, be included in a proposed new Ward 9 (Jedburgh & Denholm Ward) which would also retain the change in boundary between Kelso & District and Jedburgh as proposed by the Commission, and would be served by 3 Councillors. The new Ward electorate would be 8,533 based on 2013 figures (2% above parity) with a minor increase forecast for 2019. The new Jedburgh & Denholm Ward would cover an area of 576 km², as opposed to the Commission's proposal for a Jedburgh Ward covering 868 km².**
- (e) to support a further amendment to move all of the property at New Horndean Farm into the Mid Berwickshire Ward – currently the Farm is split between Mid and East Berwickshire Wards.**
- (f) to also submit as part of its response to the Commission the following supporting information:**
 - (i) in terms of linkages within the new Wards, Newcastleton is a geographically remote village, located just over 21 miles south of Hawick, with a driving time of approximately 56 minutes. There is a direct public transport link between Newcastleton and Hawick. There are existing links between Newcastleton and Hawick in terms of school catchment area, social work services, and health services. Newcastleton is located almost 27 miles from Jedburgh, with a driving time of approximately 1 hour and 8 minutes and no direct public transport link (public transport link is via Hawick). There are no specific links either socially, currently or historically with Jedburgh;**
 - (ii) Denholm is located just under 5 miles from Hawick and just under 6 miles from Jedburgh, almost equidistant, and there is a direct public transport link to both Hawick and Jedburgh. Denholm lies in both the school catchment areas for Jedburgh Grammar School and Hawick High School. While some members of the Denholm community would have a more natural affinity with Hawick, there are**

existing links with Jedburgh. This change in boundaries should have no impact on the social and cultural relationships which currently exist between Denholm, Hawick and Jedburgh; and

- (iii) with regard to Community Council areas, Scottish Borders currently has 69 Community Councils, a number of which are split across existing Wards e.g. Hawick Community Council and Hobkirk Community Council areas are split between the current Hawick & Denholm and Hawick & Hermitage Wards. The proposed new Kelso & District and Jedburgh & Denholm Ward boundary would see Heiton & Roxburgh Community Council split between the 2 Wards, with the majority of the Community Council area in the Kelso & District Ward. Crailing, Eckford & Nisbet Community Council area would also be split between these Wards. Denholm and Southdean Community Council areas would be wholly included in the new Jedburgh & Denholm Ward.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 2 April 2015, Scottish Borders Council noted the details of the proposals by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland ("the Commission") for the new Wards in the Scottish Borders Council area and agreed that the matter be considered in detail at a meeting of the Political Management Arrangements: Members Sounding Board, with recommendations subsequently being made to Council on a proposed response. The meeting of the Members Sounding Board took place on 23 April 2015 and all Members were invited to attend.
- 3.2 The Commission had previously placed each Council area in Scotland – based on deprivation and population distribution – into one of five categories, assigning a ratio of electors to Councillors in each category in order to calculate the appropriate number of Councillors for each Council. Scottish Borders Council was placed in Category 4 (between 30% and 60% of the population living in the most deprived areas), where the optimum ratio of electors to each Councillor was 2,800. This meant that the current number of 34 Councillors would reduce to 32 from the 2017 local government election onwards.
- 3.3 The current proposals by the Commission for the Scottish Borders Council area present an electoral arrangement for 32 Councillors representing 8 x 3-member wards and 2 x 4-member wards, reducing the number of wards in the area by 1 and reducing Councillor numbers by 2. The Commission's proposals are intended to improve the overall forecast parity of electors to Councillors; address forecast disparities in existing Wards 10 and 11; make no changes to Wards 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7; and amend Ward boundaries at Charlesfield, Hawick and Roxburgh. Appendix 1 details the electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed Wards, and gives details of the Commission's new Ward proposals, in particular Jedburgh, Denholm & Hermitage and Hawick. The proposals remove the existing Hawick & Denholm and Hawick & Hermitage Wards, placing Newcastleton and Denholm (and surrounding areas) into a new Jedburgh, Denholm & Hermitage Ward.
- 3.4 The Commission also proposed a minor change to the boundary between the Jedburgh & District Ward and the Selkirkshire Ward, moving around 80 electors from Charlesfield from the Jedburgh Ward into the Selkirkshire Ward. This move does not include any electors from the settlement of St Boswells. The detail of this change in boundary is given in Appendix 2.
- 3.5 The Commission has made clear in its guidance issued with its proposals that population distribution and levels of deprivation had been used to set Councillor numbers, creating categories of Councils to set ratios of Councillors to electors. Population size remains the biggest determinant of Councillor numbers and the design of Wards. Nationally, over 96% of the Commission's proposed wards are forecast to be within 10% of parity for that particular Council area. At present 17% of existing Scottish Council wards are 10% or more from parity, with only 2 out of the proposed new 351 wards in Scotland forecast to be more than 15% from parity. The Commission has sought to construct wards from complete local sub-geographies such as community council areas, and in a few Council areas, the Commission has also adopted ward designs that recognise other locally significant boundaries such as community planning areas, neighbourhoods or natural communities.

4 POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS: MEMBERS SOUNDING BOARD

4.1 As the Commission has made it clear that parity of electors to Councillors is the main determinant for Councillor numbers and ward design, this criteria has been applied to the existing Council wards to establish a starting point. The table below gives details of the existing Wards, the number of Councillors per Ward, optimum parity per Ward (2,800 electors per Councillor) and the actual electorate in each Ward in September 2013. The remainder columns in the table give details of the actual variation from parity, the forecast electorate in 2019, along with forecast variation from parity in 2019. The final column gives details of the current area of each Ward in square kilometres – with Ward 3 (Galashiels & District) the smallest at 216 km², and Ward 1 (Tweeddale West) the largest at 695 km². It is clear from the table that existing Wards 9 (Jedburgh & District), 10 (Hawick & Denholm), and 11 (Hawick & Hermitage), are between 13% and 16% below the Commission’s parity benchmark based on the electorate in September 2013, moving to between 13% and 17% below parity in the forecast electorate in 2019. In comparison, the Commission’s new ward proposals show a maximum of -8% and +10% from parity.

Current Scottish Borders Wards (2007 based - Best fit to provided Electorate Data by Post Code)

Ward No	Ward Name	Cllrs	Parity	Electorate (Sept - 2013)	Actual variation from 2800 parity	Forecast electorate 2019	Forecast variation from 2800 parity	Area KM2
1	Tweeddale West	3	8,400	7,716	-8%	7,730	-8%	695
2	Tweeddale East	3	8,400	8,243	-2%	8,323	-1%	284
3	Galashiels & District	4	11,200	10,868	-3%	10,545	-6%	216
4	Selkirkshire	3	8,400	7,845	-7%	8,170	-3%	671
5	Leaderdale & Melrose	3	8,400	8,425	0%	8,763	4%	353
6	Mid Berwickshire	3	8,400	8,350	-1%	8,692	3%	620
7	East Berwickshire	3	8,400	8,465	1%	9,013	7%	300
8	Kelso & District	3	8,400	8,343	-1%	8,416	0%	347
9	Jedburgh & District	3	8,400	7,208	-14%	7,313	-13%	377
10	Hawick & Denholm	3	8,400	7,319	-13%	7,109	-15%	243
11	Hawick & Hermitage	3	8,400	7,082	-16%	6,994	-17%	631
	Totals	34	95,200	89,864	-6%	91,068	-4%	4737

4.2 To bring forward alternative proposals to put to the Commission, officers looked at data-zones within each Ward and also within the Commission’s proposals, and – based on this data - drew up 2 options for consideration by the Members Sounding Board. The first was a proposal to place

Newcastleton and Hermitage as part of a Hawick and District Ward, with the area north of Hawick moving to a Jedburgh & Denholm Ward, with the boundary between the Kelso & District Ward and the Jedburgh & Denholm Ward remaining as the current one. The second option was the same as the first option with the exception of a proposed move of boundary between Kelso & District and Jedburgh & Denholm Wards, moving the boundary further out from the edge of Kelso.

- 4.3 Members discussed the Commission's proposals and what the Council could make as a counter-proposal. It was the firm view that the Commission's proposal for an enlarged Jedburgh Ward would result in a Ward which was too large and in which Newcastleton had no affinity, with the preference for the latter to remain in a Hawick Ward. This would give a new electorate of 12,426 (11% above parity), changing to an electorate of 12,122 by 2019 (8% above parity). Members also discussed whether the status quo should be put forward to the Commission but the majority view was that this may weaken any subsequent proposal and should not be considered. Cllr Moffat requested officers look at New Horndean Farm which currently had the boundary between Mid and East Berwickshire Wards running down the middle of the Farm, with the preference being the whole Farm be placed in the Mid Berwickshire Ward. Members expressed a preference for the second option to be taken to Council as an alternative to the Commission's proposals and officers would carry out further work to support this alternative. The details of this option are given in Appendix 3.
- 4.4 A request was made at the meeting of the Members Sounding Board that Denholm also be moved into the new Hawick Ward, as well as Newcastleton. Details of this are given in Appendix 4. However, doing this would lead to an electorate of 13,693 (22% above parity), changing to an electorate of 13,386 by 2019 (20% above parity). Whilst recognising the affiliation of Denholm to Hawick, the village sits almost equidistant between Hawick and Jedburgh, with a direct public transport link, and Denholm also sits within the school catchment areas for both Jedburgh Grammar School and Hawick High School. In terms of traditional links between Hawick and Denholm, such as in the Common Riding, changes to the ward boundaries should have no impact on these. Prior to 2007, Denholm was in a separate Ward from those which covered Hawick. There will also be no impact on Hawick Common Good Fund. Finally, as the parity for the inclusion of Denholm as well as Newcastleton in a Hawick Ward is far out-with the 10% variation range, it is not recommended that this option be included in the response to the Commission.

5 PROPOSED RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND

- 5.1 The Commission's proposals for new Wards for the Scottish Borders Council area concentrate on the area which covered – in the majority – that of the previous Roxburgh District Council, with minor changes proposed between Jedburgh & District and Selkirkshire Wards. The proposals included changes to the Kelso & District Ward, the move of Denholm and Newcastleton into a new Jedburgh, Denholm and Hermitage Ward, and the creation of new Hawick Ward with 4 Councillors. The new proposed Jedburgh, Denholm & Hermitage Ward stretches from just outside Earlston in the north to Newcastleton in the south and would cover an area of 868 km². The variation on parity is a maximum of 10% for Wards in the Commission's proposals.

- 5.2 Following discussions at the Political Management Arrangements: Members Sounding Board, officers have carried out further work on the second option considered by the Board, details of which are attached in Appendix 3. It is proposed that a response be sent to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland consultation, including the following details:
- (a) Support is given to the move of Charlesfield (approximately 80 electorate) from the Jedburgh & District Ward into the Selkirkshire Ward, with no change proposed for the houses lying within the settlement boundary of St Boswells.
 - (b) The Council does not support the new Jedburgh, Denholm & Hermitage or the Hawick Wards as detailed in the Commission's proposals.
 - (c) The area to the south of Hawick, including Newcastleton, should be included in a new Ward 10 (Hawick & District Ward) with 4 Councillors. The new Ward electorate would be 12,426 (at September 2013 level) which would be 11% above parity, but this would reduce in the forecast electorate in 2019 to 12,122 which is a variation of 8% above parity. This would then reflect the same variation from parity (-8%) of the existing and proposed Tweeddale West Ward. The new Ward would cover an area of 621 km², the same area as the current Mid Berwickshire Ward. Wilton Park and Galalaw Business Park, in Hawick, currently have postcodes which place them out-with the new Hawick Ward and it is recommended that these be included within the new Hawick Ward as they lie within the settlement boundary, albeit containing no houses.
 - (d) This would mean the area to the north and east of Hawick, including Denholm, would need to be included in a proposed new Ward 9 (Jedburgh & Denholm Ward) which would also retain the change in boundary between Kelso & District and Jedburgh as proposed by the Commission, and would be served by 3 Councillors. The new Ward electorate would be 8,533 based on 2013 figures (2% above parity) with a minor increase forecast for 2019. The new Jedburgh & Denholm Ward would cover an area of 576 km², as opposed to the Commission's proposal for a Jedburgh Ward covering 868 km².
 - (e) In terms of linkages within the new Wards, Newcastleton is a geographically remote village, located just over 21 miles south of Hawick, with a driving time of approximately 56 minutes. There is a direct public transport link between Newcastleton and Hawick. There are existing links between Newcastleton and Hawick in terms of school catchment area, social work services, and health services. Newcastleton is located almost 27 miles from Jedburgh, with a driving time of approximately 1 hour and 8 minutes and no direct public transport link (public transport link is via Hawick). There are no specific links either socially, currently or historically with Jedburgh.
 - (f) Denholm is located just under 5 miles from Hawick and just under 6 miles from Jedburgh, almost equidistant, and there is a direct public transport link to both Hawick and Jedburgh. Denholm lies in both the school catchment areas for Jedburgh Grammar School and Hawick High School. While some members of the Denholm community would have a more natural affinity with Hawick, there are existing links with Jedburgh. This change in boundaries should have no impact on the

social and cultural relationships which currently exist between Denholm, Hawick and Jedburgh.

- (g) With regard to Community Council areas, Scottish Borders currently has 69 Community Councils, a number of which are split across existing Wards e.g. Hawick Community Council and Hobkirk Community Council areas are split between the current Hawick & Denholm and Hawick & Hermitage Wards. The proposed new Kelso & District and Jedburgh & Denholm Ward boundary would see Heiton & Roxburgh Community Council split between the 2 Wards, with the majority of the Community Council area in the Kelso & District Ward. Crailing, Eckford & Nisbet Community Council area would also be split between these Wards. Denholm and Southdean Community Council areas would be wholly included in the new Jedburgh & Denholm Ward.
- (h) A further amendment is requested to move all of the property at New Horndean Farm into the Mid Berwickshire Ward – currently the Farm is split between Mid and East Berwickshire Wards.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

There is a risk that the Commission's proposals and the Council's response could both prove unacceptable to local communities in the new Wards. While the preference for some may be to retain the status quo, the Council in providing a response, must place due cognisance on the criteria used by the Commission - in particular the parity of electors to Councillors - in formulating its proposals for Wards across all local authority areas in Scotland. Officers have taken account of this criteria used by the Commission when drafting a proposed response for the Council, but it is for the Commission to make the ultimate decision on the new Ward boundaries, not this Council. A further consultation by the Commission will take place in summer 2015 with other community groups and members of the public once the Commission has received the Council's response, which will allow further views from communities to be put to the Commission.

6.3 Equalities

Within the Council, no equality impact assessment (EIA) has been carried out as the responsibility for this lies with the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland. The Council's preferred option, should that be approved, mitigates as far as possible within the criteria set by the Commission, the impact on Borders communities, specifically Newcastleton.

6.4 Acting Sustainably

There is no direct economic, social or environmental impact of the potential changes in Ward boundaries. The Commission has a parity of electors per Councillor of 2,800 as the main criteria when devising Councillor numbers and ward boundaries.

6.5 Carbon Management

There is no discernible impact on the Council's carbon emissions resulting from changes to Ward boundaries.

6.6 Rural Proofing

The Council’s proposed preferred option better reflects local rural communities within the southern area of the Council.

6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required at this time to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 *The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Service Director Strategy and Policy, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, and the Chief Officer HR are being consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.*

Approved by

**Tracey Logan
Chief Executive**

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jenny Wilkinson	Clerk to the Council - 01835 825004
Erin Murray	Policy and Research Officer – 01835 82400 ext 5394

Background Papers: Ward Boundary maps; Community Council maps; data-zones information

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council, 2 April 2015

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jenny Wilkinson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Jenny Wilkinson, Democratic Services, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA. Tel: 01835 825004 Email: jjwilkinson@scotborders.gov.uk