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Please ask for Ms Mayfield
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Date 25 July, 2003

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Mr A Gall
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Dear Mr Gall

PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

I am writing further to the Boundary Committee for England's draft recommendations as to future electoral arrangements for Nottinghamshire County Council.

The recommendations were considered by the County Council at a special meeting held on 17th July 2003. Following full debate, I was authorised to forward to you the attached, which is the Council's formal response to your consultation. During the discussion which took place at the meeting, a number of issues arose, which it is appropriate should be brought to your attention. They are as follows:-

1. There was unanimity amongst the political groups in relation to the response to 29 of the BCE's draft recommendations. The annexe to the response has been appropriately marked to show which of the Council's responses have unanimous support.
2. The Council has taken the opportunity in the document to signal support for those of your recommendations with which it agreed.
3. The County Council as a whole is very concerned about the high incidence of multi-member divisions within the BCE's draft recommendations. This concern arises from the resultant destruction of natural communities which follows the artificial creation of electoral divisions which appear only to have been created as a way of preserving electoral equality.

The Council's view is that the multi-member divisions recommended by the BCE are inconsistent, impractical, less democratic, confusing to the electorate in terms of accountability, will lead to a duplication of workload

and effort and although the Council's own submission included a multi-member proposal for Hucknall, this aspect was proposed with reluctance and to acknowledge Hucknall as a unique case. It has already been demonstrated that this is a single community, largely isolated from the rest of the District by a sparsely-populated rural area. The BCE's report appears to concede that this is not the case in any of the other areas where multi-member divisions have been recommended but takes the specific argument for Hucknall as a 'green light' for other areas of the County rather than recognising this one exceptional case. The Council therefore strongly urges the BCE to reconsider those other divisions, on the grounds that multi-member solutions to numerical problems appear to have been recommended.

4. As you know from the County Council's original submission, this authority was concerned to preserve existing and long-held community identities and linkages. It is therefore with some regret that the Council notes an overwhelming tendency towards numerical compliance with the BCE's Guidance, at the expense of community issues. Members feel that local people and their elected representatives are best-placed to advise the BCE in this respect. The comments included in the attached document reflect the Council's position in these matters.

During its consideration of the response, the Council reflected also on the process followed in relation to the PER. Members are of the view that, where there is two or three tier local governance, it would be more appropriate for the reviews of all boundaries within a County area to take place at the same time. The fact that this did not happen and that in Nottinghamshire the District PER was completed first meant that the 'building blocks' of the District areas had already been established prior to the County PER. This in turn meant that the County Council had to propose its scheme using 'building blocks' it would have changed given the opportunity.

Members were also concerned to learn that the BCE's final recommendations are not now expected until mid-April 2004, when they had been led to believe that they would be available in November 2003.

The County Council believes its proposals represent the best solution in the light of the considerations it had to take into account and hopes that these views can be accepted by BCE.

Yours sincerely,

ROGER LATHAM
Chief Executive



Nottinghamshire

County Council

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND'S (BCE) DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO ITS FUTURE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. COUNCIL SIZE

- 1.1 Nottinghamshire County Council is pleased that the BCE has accepted its submission for a Council size of 67 councillors.
- 1.2 As the County Council indicated in its submission, the current political management arrangements have resulted in substantial increases in workload for individual councillors. The Council's view is that the total workload to be handled by elected members is likely to remain at least at its current level.

2. ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 Multi-Member Divisions

- 2.1.1 Members of the County Council had the opportunity to hear from the BCE at an early stage of the Review. The clear recollection from those present at that time was that multi-member divisions, although possible, were likely to be considered/recommended only in exceptional circumstances. The County Council was, therefore, very surprised to see the high incidence of such divisions in the draft recommendations.
- 2.1.2 The County Council takes the view that multi member divisions are largely impractical, less democratic and confusing to an electorate used to dealing with one, easily identifiable elected member. The Boundary Committee recommendations for Nottinghamshire, where some divisions will return one member, others two and one three, is even more incoherent and confusing.
- 2.1.3 In preparing its original submission, the Council reflected on and concurred with the views expressed by BCE representatives at meetings held in Nottinghamshire, that multi-member divisions should

be considered only where strong community and geographic evidence points to the establishment of such divisions.

- 2.1.4 Yet the Boundary Committee appear to have resorted to multi-member divisions as a convenient way of resolving electoral diversity even where this destroys natural communities.
- 2.1.5 The County Council is concerned that the strong arguments which it made in respect of Hucknall have been translated by the Committee as being applicable to other areas of Nottinghamshire. The County Council support for a multi member option for Hucknall is not an endorsement of multi member divisions in principle, but a reluctant acknowledgement of Hucknall as a unique case. As a traditional working class town with a distinct community, largely isolated from the rest of Ashfield by a sparsely populated rural area, with a total electorate of just 25,000 divided between four district wards, a multi member solution is the only realistic option. This is not the case in any of the other areas, where multi member divisions have been recommended.
- 2.1.6 It is the Council's view that a multi member solution has been recommended on the basis of negligible additional evidence and that, with the exception of Hucknall, all other divisions should have only one councillor.

2.2 Ashfield District

- 2.2.1 As described and evidenced in both the County Council's original submission and in this response, there is support for Hucknall to be treated as a special case. The Council would not wish the arguments it made for a multi-member division for Hucknall, where there are special social, geographic and economic circumstances, to be used elsewhere in the County without the benefit of specific local evidence in support.
- 2.2.2 The County Council **supports** the BCE's draft recommendations for the following electoral divisions:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Hucknall | 1 |
| Kirkby in Ashfield North | 2 |
| Kirkby in Ashfield South | 3 |
| Selston | 4 |
| Sutton in Ashfield Central | 5 |
| Sutton in Ashfield East | 6 |
| Sutton in Ashfield North | 7 |
| Sutton in Ashfield West | 8 |

2.3 Bassetlaw District

2.3.1 The BCE has substantially amended the Council's proposals for the rural part of Bassetlaw. Although there is a desire within the Council to keep together the distinct communities of Carlton, Langold and Harworth, it is conceded that Blyth and Harworth cannot be resolved any other way.

2.3.2 The County Council has examined the draft recommendations for Worksop, which it notes have been made to "improve electoral equality and better reflect community identities and interests". Although there is general reluctance to accept this proposal, it is conceded that it does reflect community identities in Worksop.

2.3.3 In light of the foregoing, the County Council **supports** the following BCE recommendations:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Blyth & Harworth | 9 |
| Misterton | 10 |
| Tuxford | 13 |
| Worksop East | 14 |
| Worksop North | 15 |
| Worksop North East & Carlton | 16 |
| Worksop West | 17 |

2.3.4 As far as the recommendations for Retford are concerned, the County Council notes the BCE's view that the achievement of co-terminosity with the new district wards and improved electoral equality outweigh the advantages resulting from retention of the status quo. This is surprising, as the BCE's own Guidance and Procedural Advice indicates that regard must also be had to the "desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable" and "any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular boundary".

2.3.5 Although the BCE recommendations in Retford are co-terminous with district boundaries, regard for the natural communities in the town have not been observed. The County Council submission argued for the retention of Retford North and South divisions on the basis that they far better reflect community identities, and heed natural boundaries.

2.3.6 The County Council contends that the advantages of its original proposal for retention of the existing Retford North and Retford South Divisions outweigh the BCE's recommendation.

2.3.7 The County Council therefore **opposes** the following recommendations and urges the BCE to retain the existing arrangements for Retford:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Retford East | 11 |
| Retford West | 12 |

2.4. Broxtowe Borough

2.4.1 The County Council is pleased that the BCE has accepted its proposal to create an additional seat in the north of the Borough and that it concurs with the evidence of community identity in respect of Eastwood, even though the new division does not achieve co-terminosity.

2.4.2 The County Council **supports** the following recommendations:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Beauvale | 18 |
| Beeston North | 19 |
| Eastwood | 23 |
| Kimberley & Trowell | 24 |
| Nuthall | 25 |

2.4.3 The County Council has considered carefully the BCE's comments in respect of the remaining parts of Broxtowe.

2.4.4 The Council feels that the multi-member divisions recommended for Broxtowe, stem from a reluctance on the part of the Boundary Committee to accept an over represented Beeston South and an under represented single member seat in Chilwell, even though they better reflect the community links which currently exist. There is concern that these recommendations have been contrived only to achieve numerical equality, ignoring natural communities and leading to a multi member option as the only viable solution in the south of the borough.

2.4.5 As far as the communities of Toton and Attenborough are concerned, the Council is surprised that the BCE has placed strong emphasis on the use of the A6005 road as the boundary, as this argument has been ignored elsewhere in the BCE's report (Arnold South - 27, Ruddington - 51). The BCE's attention is again drawn to the Council's proposals for Toton and Attenborough, which are considered to more appropriately reflect these communities' links. Additionally, the Council is aware that Toton and Attenborough are in the same ecumenical parish, thus further demonstrating the strong community of interest.

2.4.6 The County Council would argue that, in light of preceding paragraphs, the BCE's recommendations for South Broxtowe will be confusing for an electorate whose communities traditionally identify and link themselves in the way described in the Council's original submission.

- 2.4.7 Beeston is a distinct community in terms of its shopping, leisure and education needs. Both the proposed Beeston North and Beeston South divisions are coterminous with district wards. Although Beeston South would be over represented by more than 20%, the BCE are prepared to tolerate similar under representation in Misterton (10).
- 2.4.8 Given that there is no obvious way of significantly increasing numbers in Beeston South without sacrificing natural communities, we urge the Committee to accept the over represented Beeston South as a necessary exception.
- 2.4.9 Nottinghamshire County Council **opposes** the following recommendations and would urge the BCE to consider the Council's original proposals:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Beeston South & Attenborough | 20 |
| Bramcote & Stapleford | 21 |
| Chilwell & Toton | 22 |

2.5 Gedling

- 2.5.1 The County Council **supports** the following:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Newstead | 31 |

- 2.5.2 As for the remainder of Gedling, the County Council acknowledges that its submission leads to greater electoral disparity than the solution recommended by the BCE. However, its view is that the BCE has ignored important historical and community ties through a numerically-calculated multi-member option.
- 2.5.3 The County Council's proposals acknowledge the two distinctive urban communities and the remaining rural areas that make up Gedling, even though this has sometimes meant a greater disparity in the size of electoral divisions. All are co-terminous with the new borough wards and reflect these distinct identities of Arnold and Carlton.
- 2.5.4 The Boundary Committee have resolved this problem of electoral disparity by insisting on an ill thought out multi member solution for parts of the borough.
- 2.5.5 Porchester and Woodthorpe wards have been combined either side of Woodborough Road (effectively combining Arnold and Carlton). This is

to ignore important historical and community ties in these areas and the strong case made to preserve them in the original submission.

2.5.6 In the case of Arnold South, no account has been taken of the effective separation of the communities co-located in this proposed new division which occurs as a result of the B684 Woodborough Road. This is a main commuter route into Nottingham and is therefore very busy.

2.5.7 The BCE have contrived a single member division in Calverton, which has strong links with Woodborough with a main road and regular bus service linking the two communities. The local services and amenities in Calverton are extensively used by the residents of Woodborough and pupils in Woodborough feed into Calverton's Comprehensive. Yet Lambley has no direct road link with Calverton and pupils from Lambley's school do not feed into Calverton.

2.5.8 The BCE having strived to 'distinguish more clearly between the urban and rural areas of the borough,' with a single member division in Calverton, are forced to contradict this aim by contriving a multi member division containing the industrial Netherfield & Colwick, with the more affluent Burton Joyce & Stoke Bardolph and Gedling wards, separated by Shearing Hill, the most congested road in the borough.

2.5.9 In short, the County Council are concerned that the BCE has ignored the distinct and diverse community identities which exist in the borough by insisting on a multi member solution. Indeed the BCE concede that they have overlooked proven community and transport links 'identified by the County Council and the Conservatives' submissions, in an attempt to improve electoral equality.

2.5.10 The County Council would strongly reiterate its original proposals for Gedling and urge the BCE to reconsider its position. The Council therefore **opposes** the following recommendations:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|--------------|-------------|
| Arnold North | 26 |
| Arnold South | 27 |
| Calverton | 28 |
| Carlton East | 29 |
| Carlton West | 30 |

2.6 Mansfield District

2.6.1 The County Council **supports** the following recommendation:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|--------|-------------|
| Warsop | 35 |

2.6.2 The Council notes that the BCE's recommendations are described as giving better electoral balance and 100% coterminosity. However, its view is that the BCE has again ignored important historical and community ties by insisting on an unnecessary multi-member solution for the town. Indeed the BCE recommendations have in effect 'doubled up' the County Council proposals for single member divisions, which while giving a slightly better electoral balance will only cause confusion among an electorate used to dealing with one easily identifiable, elected representative.

2.6.3 We again draw the BCE's attention to the original Council submission, which observes the natural community identities in Berry Hill and Lindhurst wards. Although splitting the ward between the proposed Portland and Berry Hill and Oak Tree & Lindhurst divisions is not strictly coterminous with district wards, this better reflects the community identity of the area particularly as a key road link is to be built, effectively dividing Lindhurst ward and forming a more natural boundary between the two divisions.

2.6.4 The County Council therefore **opposes** the following:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| East Mansfield | 32 |
| North Mansfield | 33 |
| South Mansfield | 34 |
| West Mansfield | 36 |

2.7 Newark and Sherwood District

2.7.1 The County Council **supports** the following:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Balderton | 37 |
| Blidworth | 38 |
| Farndon & Muskham | 40 |
| Farnsfield & Lowdham | 41 |
| Ollerton | 44 |
| Rufford | 45 |
| Southwell & Caunton | 46 |

2.7.2 The County Council would wish to preserve Newark North and Newark South, as the residents of Beacon Ward share a greater affinity with the rural Collingham Division than Bridge Division which has closer ties to

the town. These proposals are co-terminous with the new district wards and better reflect the local community.

2.7.3 The divisions as drawn by the BCE will mean that the large residential Hawtonville Estate, which is a single community would be located across two divisions. The estate is a natural community, has a strong identity with specific needs, and is best served by one easily identifiable elected representative.

2.7.4 The County Council therefore **opposes** the following:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Collingham | 39 |
| Newark East | 42 |
| Newark West | 43 |

2.8 Rushcliffe Borough

2.8.1 The County Council acknowledges that the BCE's draft recommendations for the east of the borough are based on its submission.

2.8.2 In these circumstances, the County Council **supports** the following recommendations:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Bingham | 47 |
| Cotgrave | 48 |
| Radcliffe on Trent | 50 |
| West Bridgford West | 54 |

2.8.3 The County Council notes the inclusion of Tollerton and parts of Wolds, within the recommended Ruddington division, but would draw the BCE's attention to existing community ties for those wards. Those ties are with Keyworth. In the case of Tollerton, the community is located to the east of both the A606 Melton Road and A60 Loughborough Road. The Melton Road in particular forms a recognisable boundary between the communities. Secondary aged children from Tollerton, Normanton on the Wolds and Plumtree attend school in Keyworth, whilst children from Ruddington (where there is no secondary school) travel to West Bridgford or East Leake.

2.8.4 Two divisions, with one single and one multi-member, is an inappropriate solution for West Bridgford and is unacceptable to the County Council. The Council would prefer to see single member divisions for West Bridgford as shown in its original submission.

- 2.8.5 The Council feels that the distinct communities in West Bridgford, which were reflected in its own proposals, have been ignored by the BCE in favour of a slightly more advantageous electoral balance.
- 2.8.6 West Bridgford covers a large geographical area with diverse communities with strong local identities (Lady Bay, Central West Bridgford and Edwalton are clearly defined communities) and the new developments in Compton Acres and Gamston also have clearly defined identities. There is also a danger of the parished area being subsumed and overwhelmed by the rest of West Bridgford.
- 2.8.7 The BCE recommended division of West Bridgford South and Central would be a mix of urban and rural areas, which have little in common. For example the parished area of Gamston with the highly urbanised areas around Trent Bridge.
- 2.8.8 The County Council proposals are far more coherent and consistent, keep change to a minimum, give improved electoral balance, and better reflect the distinct community identities of West Bridgford.
- 2.8.9 The County Council therefore **opposes** the following:-

| Name | BCE Ref No. |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Keyworth | 49 |
| Ruddington | 51 |
| Soar Valley | 52 |
| West Bridgford Central and South | 53 |

ANNEXE

Schedule of Nottinghamshire County Council's Responses to the Boundary Committee for England's Draft Recommendations.

| Recommendation | | Response | |
|----------------|------------------------------|----------|--------|
| No. | Division Name | Support | Oppose |
| 1 | Hucknall | ✓ | |
| 2 * | Kirkby in Ashfield North | ✓ | |
| 3 * | Kirkby in Ashfield South | ✓ | |
| 4 * | Selston | ✓ | |
| 5 * | Sutton in Ashfield Central | ✓ | |
| 6 * | Sutton in Ashfield East | ✓ | |
| 7 * | Sutton in Ashfield North | ✓ | |
| 8 * | Sutton in Ashfield West | ✓ | |
| 9 * | Blyth and Harworth | ✓ | |
| 10 * | Misterton | ✓ | |
| 11 | Retford East | | X |
| 12 | Retford West | | X |
| 13 * | Tuxford | ✓ | |
| 14 * | Worksop East | ✓ | |
| 15 * | Worksop North | ✓ | |
| 16 * | Worksop North East & Carlton | ✓ | |
| 17 * | Worksop West | ✓ | |
| 18 * | Beauvale | ✓ | |
| 19 * | Beeston North | ✓ | |
| 20 | Beeston South & Attenborough | | X |
| 21 | Bramcote & Stapleford | | X |
| 22 | Chilwell & Toton | | X |
| 23 * | Eastwood | ✓ | |
| 24 * | Kimberley & Trowell | ✓ | |
| 25 * | Nuthall | ✓ | |
| 26 | Arnold North | | X |
| 27 | Arnold South | | X |
| 28 | Calverton | | X |
| 29 | Carlton East | | X |
| 30 | Carlton West | | X |
| 31 * | Newstead | ✓ | |
| 32 | East Mansfield | | X |
| 33 | North Mansfield | | X |
| 34 | South Mansfield | | X |
| 35 * | Warsop | ✓ | |
| 36 | West Mansfield | | X |
| 37 * | Balderton | ✓ | |
| 38 * | Blidworth | ✓ | |
| 39 | Collingham | | X |
| 40 | Farndon & Muskham | ✓ | |
| 41 | Farnsfield & Lowdham | ✓ | |
| 42 | Newark East | | X |

| | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 43 | Newark West | | X |
| 44 * | Ollerton | √ | |
| 45 * | Rufford | √ | |
| 46 | Southwell & Caunton | √ | |
| 47 * | Bingham | √ | |
| 48 * | Cotgrave | √ | |
| 49 | Keyworth | | X |
| 50 * | Radcliffe on Trent | √ | |
| 51 | Ruddington | | X |
| 52 | Soar Valley | | X |
| 53 | West Bridgford Central & South | | X |
| 54 * | West Bridgford West | √ | |

NOTE

* - denotes those divisions where there is unanimity within the Council in respect of the response.