

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES
COMMISSIONER FOR THE DISTRICT OF
ARDS AND NORTH DOWN COUNCIL**

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Section One: **Background and Statutory Framework**

Background

- 1.1 The commencement of the current Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland was announced in a Public Notice on 03 February 2021 which explained the role and remit of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and advised that in due course the Commissioner would publish Provisional Recommendations and may cause a public hearing to be held in each of the eleven current Local Government Districts. The Notice and a subsequent information video placed on the Commissioner's website (<https://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/>) explained the process and the opportunities for participation in the consultation on the Provisional Recommendations.
- 1.2 The terms of the Review are set out in Article 50 and Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972 as amended. Copies of the legislative framework are available on the Commissioner's website
- 1.3 The Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations with proposed boundaries and names of 11 Districts and their 462 constituent wards were published on the Commissioner's website on 27 July 2021 and announced by way of Public Notice, inviting comments on the proposals made. The consultation was launched on Citizen Space to enable ease of public inspection and maximum public participation. Accessibility points for online access to the Proposals and the consultation portal was facilitated at public facilities including Council premises and public libraries by the Commissioner's team in partnership with local councils and with Libraries Northern Ireland. Hard copies of any part of the Proposals or the associated maps as required by any person were made available on request. Other accessibility requirements were promoted on the Commissioners website including language translation, braille and sign language.
- 1.4 The consultation portal was open for 8 weeks and closed on 21 September. Details of the programme of public hearings was notified by press release, social media channels and on the Commissioner's website in September 2021.
- 1.5 The Commissioner received 2 written representations in respect of the proposals District of Ards and North Down Borough Council.
- 1.6 All representations received were acknowledged and have been made available for inspection on the Commissioner's website.
- 1.7 I was appointed as an Assistant Commissioner by The Department of Communities with effect from 1 August 2021. My task is to gather, assess and report on the representations made in relation to this proposed District of Ards and North Down Borough Council and to submit a report to the Commissioner including my conclusions and recommendations, within four weeks of the end

of the relevant public hearing. I conducted a public hearing in this proposed District at Strangford Arms Hotel, Newtownards on 28th September 2021

- 1.8 The Public Hearing was staged under the requirements of government guidance and observance of public health recommendations in respect of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Numbers in the room at any one time was limited to 20 persons with alternative participation facilitated by a simultaneous online interactive platform.

Written Representations

- 1.9 Written representations of relevance to this District are listed in Section Seven of this report. All written representations were considered by me in advance of the public hearing and in anticipation of the preparation of this Report.

Public Hearing

- 1.10 The Public Hearing on the Provisional Proposals saw no persons attend. The hearing was facilitated in an informal and accessible manner.

My Report

- 1.11 This report presents and addresses the written views of interested parties in respect of the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations for the District of Ards and North Down Borough Council. In particular it addresses the relevant local information and opinion about the boundaries and names of the District and its Wards. I have set out details of support of the Commissioner's proposals and objections and/or counter-proposals. I have also set out my conclusions on the issues raised which are permissible matters consideration under the legislative framework of this Review. Any matters submitted that are not relevant or permissible considerations under the legislative parameters of the Review have been outlined in this report as having been submitted, but those issues will not have formed part of my deliberations.
- 1.12 As part of my research for this report I have studied and tested any areas of the District where alternative boundaries have been proposed by use of GIS mapping systems of the Land and Property Services of Northern Ireland. This has been facilitated by the staff of Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland and I am indebted to their technical assistance.

Section Two: **District Boundaries**

- 2.1 The Commissioner's approach to the District boundary line is one of minimum intervention unless there is a compelling reason to do so. There have been no objections to this approach in this District and so I recommend that the Commissioner's proposal for the District line is not disputed.
- 2.2 I note that there was a single suggestion (Citizens Space response No 200) that 'Moneyreagh' should be included in the Ards and North Down District Council Area. The inclusion of the Moneyreagh Ward would be a significant change to both the boundaries of Ards and North Down and those of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council areas. Given that Moneyreagh also borders Belfast City Council its simple inclusion in Ards and North Down would isolate five (Ballyhanwood, Carrowreagh, Dundonald, Enler and Galwally) other wards from the remainder of the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council district. This would represent a significant change and potentially involve changes in the boundaries of at least two and potentially three District Council areas. I further note that there are no other representations on this point and believe that it is contrary to the principles set out by the Commissioner in relation to minimum intervention. I am therefore simply acknowledging that the suggestion has been made but do not endorse same.

Section Three: **Ward Boundaries**

3.1 One written submission was received on 27th July 2021 which proposed two sets of changes to Wards within Ards and North Down Borough Council.

These are as follows:

1. "Move the boundary between Harbour and Broadway so it follows Hamilton Road. This would provide a more natural boundary along a main road".
2. "Move the boundary between Harbour and Bryansburn so it follows Princetown Road. This would provide a more natural boundary along a main road".

3.2 I shall deal with the potential implications of each of these proposals in the following order:

- Proposal 1;
- Proposal 2; and
- Proposals 1+2 together

3.3 The Commissioners Provisional Proposals as published provide elector numbers as follows for the three Wards mentioned above. The following table combines these provisional proposals with those of the written representation;

Ward Name	As Proposed	Submission 1	Submission 2	Submission 1+2
Broadway	3,081	2,750	3,081	2,750
Harbour	3,076	3,407	2,899	3,230
Bryansburn	2,834	2,834	3,011	3,011
Totals	8,991	8,991	8,991	8,991

3.4 The average number of electors per Ward in Ards and North Down is 2,963.58.

The following table gives the variance in percentage terms between the Proposed and submitted electoral numbers against the average.

Ward Name	As Proposed	Submission 1	Submission 2	Submission 1+2
Broadway	-3.96%	7.21%	-3.96%	7.21%
Harbour	-3.79%	-14.96%	2.18%	-8.99%
Bryansburn	4.37%	4.37%	-1.60%	-1.60%

Proposal 1

3.5 This proposal would increase the percentage of electors in the Harbour Ward above the 10% variance from the average number of voters per Ward and

therefore on an elector basis does not support a feasible boundary change between the Harbour and Broadway Wards.

Proposal 2

- 3.6 This proposal would maintain the elector variance percentages at less than 10% for both Wards and marginally reduces the level of variance for both Wards when compared to the Commissioners provisional proposals from -3.79% to 2.18% for Harbour and from 4.37% to -1.6%. After analysing the merits of the counter proposal under the requirements of the legislation, I conclude that the counter proposal has merit as a 'readily identifiable boundary' and it is achievable under the required balancing of electors within each Ward as being 'substantially the same'. I recommend that the Commissioner should reconsider the line situated at Princetown Road, Bangor.

Proposals 1 + 2 Combined

- 3.7 Combining the effects of both Proposals 1 and 2 does maintain the elector variance percentages at less than 10% but for two of the three Wards (Broadway and Harbour) the variances are however greater than those proposed in the Commissioners provisional findings and all three are greater or equal to the variances as calculated for Proposal 2. In essence therefore applying the two Proposals in aggregate is clearly less acceptable than either the Commissioners Proposals or by applying Proposal 2 alone.

Conclusion

- 3.8 After analysing the merits of the counter proposal under the requirements of the legislation, I conclude that the Proposal 2 line is preferred and recommend that it should be affirmed.

Section Four: **Names of District and Wards**

- 4.1 I am aware that there has been a wider representation across the whole Review in terms of the adoption of a bilingual or trilingual naming policy for the whole map of the Local Government Districts and Wards in Northern Ireland. This is a matter for wider consideration by the Commissioner rather than a local or District-specific issue.

Ward Names

- 4.2 In the written representation received on 27th July 2021 in addition to the proposed boundary changes as detailed above a request was received to change the name of the Harbour Ward to Bangor Central;

3. "Consequently rename Harbour as Bangor Central

- 4.3 In considering this request I have researched the names of the District Electoral Areas (DEA) within Ards and North Down and note that one is named "Bangor Central".
- 4.4 As a consequence and specifically in order to maintain clarity and individuality between Ward and DEA names I will not be recommending that the name of the Harbour Ward be changed.

District Name

- 4.5 In correspondence received on 15 April 2021 a written submission, the issue of the name of the District Council (Ards and North Down as opposed to North Down and Ards was raised). A number of other written submissions referred to this matter. All were in a similar vein and covered by the correspondence of 15 April 2021. In a single Citizens Space response (No 229) it was suggested that the name of the District include the term "Peninsula". I am not aware of any other request in relations to the inclusion of the term "Peninsula" in the District Council name and am therefore of the opinion that this is a personal opinion held by a single consultee.
- 4.6 The Commissioner, in her written correspondence of 31 August 2021, and in response to the correspondence of 15 April 2021 has clarified this matter of the District Council name with reference to the Change of District Name (North Down and Ards) Order (NI) 2016.
- 4.7 I am therefore firmly of the view that this matter is resolved and therefore I will make no Recommendations or Conclusion with regards to same as it is now a matter which has been legislated for by the "Change of District Name (North Down and Ards) Order (NI) 2016".

Section Five: **Other Issues**

5.1 There were no “Other Issues” raised in relation to this District.

Section Six: **Summary of Conclusions**

- 6.1 I recommend that the Commissioner review the Boundary between the Harbour and Bryansburn Wards and that it be altered to follow the line of Princetown Road, Bangor as this provides a better balance of electors in these two Wards and that this proposed change is a readily identifiable boundary.

Section Seven: **References and List of Submissions**

Part One: **List of Written Submissions and Correspondence:**

1. 15/4/21 Chief Executive Ards & North Down Council;
2. 27/7/21 Individual;
3. 31/8/21 Local Government Boundaries Commissioner to Chief Executive;
4. 5/9/21 Individual and former Councillor;
5. 6/9/21 Individual; and
6. 6/9/21 Chief Executive Ards & North Down Borough Council.
7. Citizens Space response 200 and 229.

Part Two: **Oral Submissions at Public Hearing**

There were no Oral Submissions at the Hearing.

Section Eight: **Appendices**

There are no Appendices.