**From:** Redacted
**Sent:** 11 February 2022 15:38
**To:** Consultation <consultation@lgbc-ni.org.uk>
**Subject:** Northern Ireland Local government boundaries: 2022 consultation

**Northern Ireland Local government boundaries: 2022 consultation**

I do not detect any great desire for change in the internal ward boundaries for Newry Mourne and Down.  However there is an obvious groundswell of opinion in the east Down area that it is inappropriately linked with Newry in a local government district which stretches from Saintfield to Cullaville, beyond Crossmaglen on the border with County Monaghan.  There is no hope of creating commonality of interest in an area which is so geographically and socially incoherent.  This incoherence is so marked that it suggests some unacknowledged factor was at play when the Newry Mourne and Down District Council area was created.

The Downpatrick, Rowallane, and Slieve Croob electoral areas, and Newcastle with the northern part of the Mournes electoral area, were formerly part of the Down District Council area centred on the former county town of Downpatrick.  This reflected the social, economic, educational, historical and transport realities of the various communities which have little or no day-to-day relationship with Newry.  This reality is also recognised in health provision, with Downpatrick and its hinterland being in the South-Eastern Health and Social Care Board area, while Newry is within the remit of the Southern Board.

Some change is bound to be necessary over time.  But while there are obvious challenges in ensuring fairness in electoral representation I suggest that clear social factors are as important as electoral head-counting in achieving the kind of cohesion required for successful local government.  In that regard it is suggested that much happier and more effective local government would be achieved by linking together the east Down electoral areas of Downpatrick, Rowallane, Slieve Croob, and the Newcastle side of the Mournes with the Comber, Newtownards and Ards Peninsula wards of the present North Down and Ards Council.  This would create an East Down Council area which is historically and socially coherent and where a community of interest could be fostered around Strangford Lough.  This could never happen in the present Newry Mourne and Down Council area.

This proposal would require adjustments of Council boundaries in adjoining areas but this could be done without violating their natural catchment areas and communities in the way which now afflicts Newry Mourne and Down.