

PRESS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES COMMISSIONER

17 SEPTEMBER 2008

PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW COUNCIL BOUNDARIES UNVEILED

Provisional Recommendations for the boundaries and names of the eleven new local government districts in Northern Ireland and their constituent wards were announced today by the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, Dick Mackenzie CB.

These initial recommendations are the outcome of work over the last few months by the Commissioner and his staff following the enactment of the Local Government (Boundaries) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 which makes provision for the reduction in the number of councils from 26 to 11.

Speaking earlier, Mr Mackenzie said:

“The publication of my Report today is the first stage of a process which is designed to establish the district and ward boundaries for a completely new configuration of local government in Northern Ireland. The proposed boundaries of the districts are based on the amalgamation of the existing councils, with the exception of Belfast for which I am recommending a revised boundary to reflect the expansion of the city over the years. I am also recommending that the whole of Slieve Croob in County Down should be included in one district council

area. My proposals for the ward boundaries are designed to achieve, as far as possible, electoral equality within each of the proposed districts.”

The Commissioner has recommended that the boundary of the Belfast Local Government District should reflect its natural setting as encompassed by the surrounding hills, a number of landscape features and some major roads. He has, therefore, proposed that the localities of Gilnahirk, Tullycarnet, Braniel, Castlereagh, Merok, Cregagh, Wynchurch, Glencregagh and Belvoir, which are part of the existing Castlereagh Borough Council area, should be incorporated in the Belfast District; and that the localities of Collin Glen, Poleglass, Lagmore, Twinbrook, Kilwee and Dunmurry, which are part of the existing Lisburn City area, should also be incorporated in the Belfast District. The Commissioner has also recommended that a small area of housing at Knocknagoney should transfer from North Down to Belfast.

The only other proposed district boundary change relates to the area of Slieve Croob in County Down. The Commissioner is recommending that all of this area, which is part of the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and which presently lies between Down and Banbridge districts, should be included in the proposed Newry City and Down District.

Otherwise, the Commissioner has proposed that the new council boundaries should follow the perimeters of the existing district council boundaries as grouped together in the legislation.

Overall, in the provisional recommendations, the number of wards reduces from 582 to 460. The proposed number of wards for each district is 40, except for Belfast where the proposed number is 60.

The Commissioner indicated that, as regards the names of the new councils, he was recommending that the city status of five towns in Northern Ireland should be recognised along with existing council names where the new configuration comprised 2 existing councils. Where there were more than 2

councils in the new configurations, a name has been proposed which has a resonance with the locality.

The proposed names of the new local government districts are as follows:-

- Belfast City Council
- Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Armagh City and Bann District Council
- Lisburn City and Castlereagh District Council
- Newry City and Down District Council
- Antrim and Newtownabbey District Council
- Ards and North Down District Council
- Causeway Coast District Council
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
- Mid Antrim District Council
- Mid Ulster District Council

Today begins the period for submission of written comments, which will run for eight weeks until 12th November 2008. This will be followed by a programme of eleven public hearings, one in each of the new local government districts, which will be held from 20th November 2008 until 28th November 2008. The details of the public hearings will be published in the local press. These will be held before Assistant Commissioners. Each hearing is scheduled to last for up to two days, during which all interested parties are invited to make oral representations on the Commissioner's provisional recommendations.

Encouraging the public to respond the Commissioner said:

“These proposals will impact on councils, elected representatives, major public sector providers, the voluntary and community sectors, the private sector, as well as the general public. I hope that as many people and organisations as possible will take the opportunity to respond to the

provisional recommendations and contribute to the shaping of local government.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Local Government (Boundaries) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 provided for the establishment of eleven new district councils in Northern Ireland based on the amalgamation of existing councils incorporating the whole or a major part of the following districts:-

1. Antrim; Newtownabbey.
2. Ards; North Down.
3. Armagh City and District; Banbridge; Craigavon.
4. Ballymena; Carrickfergus; Larne.
5. Ballymoney; Coleraine; Limavady; Moyle.
6. Belfast.
7. Castlereagh; Lisburn City.
8. Cookstown; Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough; Magherafelt.
9. Derry; Strabane.
10. Down; Newry and Mourne.
11. Fermanagh; Omagh.

2. Views are sought on all aspects of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations, including the boundaries and names of the eleven new local government districts and the number, boundaries and names of the wards into which each district is to be divided.

3. The closing date for receipt of submissions on the provisional recommendations is 12th November 2008.

4. Written submissions should be sent to the Secretary, Office of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, Forestview, Purdy's Lane, Belfast BT8 7AR; by email to webmail@lgbc-ni.org ; by fax to 028 9049 4889; or by typetalk to 18001 (028) 9049 4870.

5. Copies of the Provisional Recommendations Report are available at a number of display venues throughout Northern Ireland including council offices, public libraries, Area Electoral offices, offices of the Electoral Commission and the Office of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner. The Report is also available at www.lgbc-ni.org .

6. For media enquiries directed to Dick Mackenzie, contact Morrow Communications, 028 9039 3837.