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**From:** Frances Mannsaker [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 31 May 2016 20:15  
**To:** reviews <reviews@lgbce.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Lincolnshire Electoral Review

Please find attached the response from Harmston Parish Council to the further consultation on the current Lincolnshire Electoral Review.

*Dr Frances Mannsaker*  
*Chair, Harmston Parish Council*

[REDACTED]

# Harmston Parish Council

Clerk to the Parish Council Mrs G Dixon,

Website: [www.harmston.info](http://www.harmston.info)

Chair: Cllr. Frances Mannsäker

## **Local Government Boundary Commission Lincolnshire County Council: Further Draft Recommendations, May 2016**

The Parish Council was delighted to hear that the Boundary Commission had decided to look again at its draft proposals for the electoral divisions of Lincolnshire County Council. Although we had approved the overall aims and intentions of the proposals, we had found them very lacking in regard to their reflection of existing communities, at least in our own regard.

It was therefore with considerable disappointment that we discovered that the anomaly of the division in which we had been placed, and had protested against, remained in these further proposals, looking every bit as odd as it did before.

In your covering letter of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016 to Mr McArdle, Lincolnshire County Council CEO, you acknowledge that, as before, you are interested in 'reflecting communities' and 'achieving electoral equality' in your proposed divisions. As far as our little village is concerned, your interest appears to lie solely with the numbers and not at all with the community. We explained, carefully, in our first response, why Harmston and Coleby were not part of the same community as Potterhanworth and Branston (no transport, schooling, health services, good roads or shopping links) but were part of the traditional 'cliff villages' community (transport, schooling, health services, main roads and shopping links as well as a long-shared settlement history). A glance at your own map, delineating two distinct parcels of land linked (and cut) only by a very short stretch along the busy A15, makes the disjunction absolutely clear: please look, and you will see just how odd it is.

Central Lincolnshire is currently in the very final stages of setting out its Local Plan, for the years from 2012 to 2036. The interests of Harmston and its development within the Plan lie firmly with the community of the cliff edge villages, linked by the A607. Our future as well as our past places us here, not across the heath.

We know that in electoral terms, balanced numbers are indeed important, but we would also note that 'electoral equality' is not achieved by numbers alone. The idea of the community itself creates part of that electoral equality. We do not wish 'our' single County Councillor to be torn between the different and potentially contradictory interests of the two parts of the proposed ward: that is fair on no one.

We copy below the response we made to the first proposals, which we hope you will review again.

## **Response Submitted to the first Draft Proposals: February 2016**

The Parish Council considered the draft proposals at its meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016. In general, it supports the proposals for the reduction in the number of the County Councillors and the principle of one member one division as sensible and straightforward. It has real concerns, however, when it comes to the divisional boundaries as proposed.

One of the objects for the proposals is, in the words of the covering letter, that "the pattern of divisions should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities", and again, in the words of the summary proposals, that they should "reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links". These are important aspirations, and necessary to make effective and efficient representation at County level, and have our full support. Regrettably, however, no one making the proposals appears to have looked at a physical map of Lincolnshire and considered how the physical landscape has over the centuries defined the pattern of settlement.

In Lincolnshire, the one really distinctive feature of its inland geography is the great escarpment which stretches down most of its western border and is known locally as the Lincoln Edge. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, currently being finalized, talks of the distinctiveness and importance of the Lincoln Edge as a defining feature of the landscape and its settlements. From its high point in Lincoln, the escarpment runs southwards through the villages collectively known as the "cliff villages" – Waddington, Harmston, Coleby, Boothby Graffoe, Navenby, Wellingore and Welborne. Here there is a long-established farming pattern of Low and High Fields for each village, with the upland Heath stretching eastwards and creating a divide between the cliff and the villages further to the east.

This historic pattern is very much a feature of today's community. These villages are linked by the Lincoln to Grantham main road, the A607, which runs along the escarpment edge and holds the villages together. There is a regular bus service along the road. The local shops are in Waddington and Navenby. Harmston children go to Coleby and Navenby primary schools and fall into the same catchment area as the other cliff villages for senior schools. The Cliff Villages Medical Practice serves the community of the Edge. The villages fall into the North Kesteven District Council Cliff Villages Ward.

Looking at the new proposals, the above considerations suggest that, of the cliff villages, Boothby Graffoe, Navenby and Wellingore are now better placed together with their low fields and the nearby villages of the plain. We recognize also that the growth of Waddington makes it sensible to have its own division, although this leaves its nearest cliff neighbour, Bracebridge Heath, entirely isolated. Harmston and Coleby, however, are cut off from the other cliff villages as an awkward bite is taken out of the straight connecting line of the A607. Both are divided from their natural and established local community, separated from Waddington (1 ½ miles away along the A607) and Navenby (3 miles away along the A607) and instead placed with Potterhanworth and Branston. Both Potterhanworth and Branston are cut off from the Edge by the heath, not to mention the Waddington Air Field and the major road from Lincoln to Sleaford, the A15. There are only minor country roads to connect us and no linking bus service or other public transport. There are no naturally shared local shops, schools, medical practices or other services.

We recognize that the previous pattern was not as sensible as it might have been in reflecting the cliff community, but at least it was not quite as anomalous as the new proposals. The decision to match the County Councillors each to a single division will necessarily exacerbate any artificial boundaries and gives greater importance to the principle of community identity. If the Commission is serious about reflecting local identity, we would suggest that the line is simply re-drawn to the east of the A607, so Harmston and Coleby can be placed with Navenby and Wellingore in a division which reflects both villages' sense of their own neighbourhood. This might unbalance your population numbers a little, but that is, we believe, preferable to isolating us artificially from our historic closest neighbours.