

A FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Resident,

I am writing to you as the Chairman of the Local Government Commission for England. This was set up in July of this year to conduct reviews of the structure, boundaries and electoral arrangements of all local authorities in the English shire counties and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment. The first of these reviews is now in progress on the Isle of Wight.

Local government exists to serve local people. So, in carrying out our duties, we need to understand your views on what system of local government you want to see for the Island. We are looking for locally produced and locally supported proposals for change that will correct any mistakes made in the last reorganisation in 1974, reflect your current priorities and concerns, and position local government on the Isle of Wight to cope with the challenges that the future will bring.

Last October, in their report, *"One Island, One Council"*, the three existing principal authorities on the Isle of Wight presented joint proposals for a single unitary authority to replace the two-tier system of one County and two District Councils.

Over the past two months, the Commission has analysed the Councils' proposals and listened to the views of the people and organisations who have taken up our invitation to let us have their opinions. Now we are putting forward our conclusions in this report which is available at all council offices, public libraries and other local authority establishments on the Island. If you want your own copy, please write to us at the address below.

In summary, we have concluded that:

1. the existing County Council and two District Councils should be replaced by a single authority to be called "The Isle of Wight Council",
2. there should be no change in the present arrangements under which the Isle of Wight is included in the Hampshire Police Authority, but has its own Magistrates' Court Committee,
3. the new authority should comprise forty-eight single member wards, based on a mixture of existing county electoral divisions and borough wards, adjusted to follow parish boundaries, and all councillors should retire together every four years,

4. an early task of the new authority should be to determine local views on the role of town and parish councils, and whether these should be created where they do not exist presently,
5. the new authority should come into being on 1st April 1994, with appropriate "shadow" arrangements made to enable the transfer of services, staff and other assets to be carried out efficiently and effectively.

Now we need to know whether the people of the Isle of Wight agree with us. You can let us have your views directly, by completing the questionnaire at the end of a leaflet which is available separately. You can, of course, write to the Commissioner who has led our review of the Isle of Wight, David Thomas, at Dolphyn Court, 10/11 Great Turnstile, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC1V 7JU. You can attend the public meetings we will be arranging throughout the Island during February 1993. In addition we hope to arrange a number of opportunities for responses to our conclusions to be given via the local press, radio and television.

We will need to have your views by 21 February 1993, at the latest. We can then take these into account in forming our final proposals for the Secretary of State.

We very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Sir John Banham

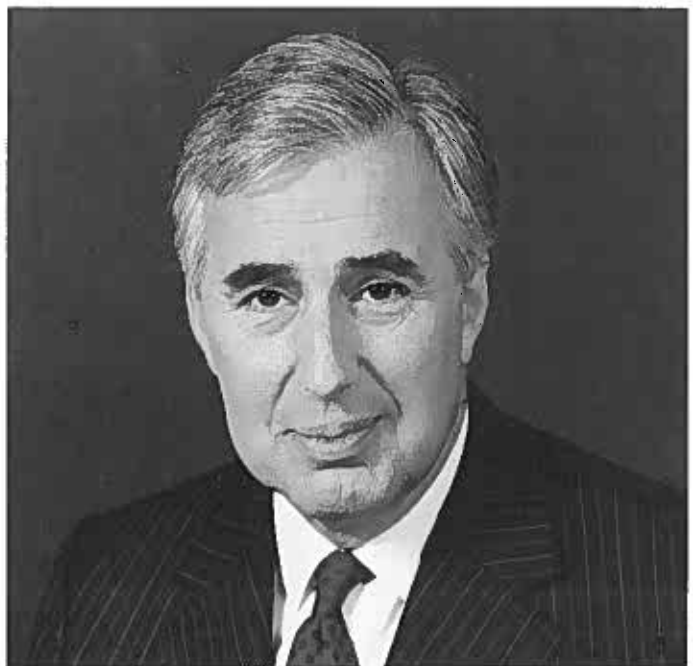




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1. THE BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

The Local Government Commission for England was established by the Local Government Act of 1992. Its main task is to conduct reviews of the structure, boundaries and electoral arrangements of all local authorities in the English shire counties and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State.

The Government has stated that it expects to see a substantial increase in the number of unitary authorities as a result of the Commission's reviews. A "unitary authority" is a single authority with responsibility for the functions presently carried out under the two-tier arrangement of county and district councils. The Government believes that these unitary authorities tend to reduce administration costs, give clearer accountability and, as a result, improve co-ordination and the quality of services. In conducting its reviews the Commission is required to have regard to the identities and interests of local communities, and the need to secure effective and convenient local government.

It is not the role of the Commission to make assumptions about the level or quality of the local authority services that will be provided. These decisions will be made by Parliament and the newly-elected councillors of the authorities.

The review of local government on the Island has four stages as follows:

The Island is relatively small and compact measuring just 23 miles east to west and 13 miles from north to south with an area of less than 150 square miles. It has a population of just under 130,000 and is thus by far the smallest of the English shire counties in both area and population. The largest shire counties have over 1.5 million people and the next smallest to the Isle of Wight is Northumberland with more than 300,000 population scattered over a much bigger area. The Island has a relatively large number of older people in its population and many people have moved there to spend their retirement years.

Despite its small size the Island has many separate and distinct communities which are well recognised by local people. These include the larger towns such as Newport, Ryde, Sandown, Shanklin and Ventnor each with its distinctive character, as well as Cowes, world famous for its yachting associations. But there are many other smaller yet still distinct communities, to which local people have a fierce loyalty and pride such as Lake, Fishbourne, Yarmouth and Freshwater. And, of course, there are still more, even smaller communities. The parishes on the island (where they exist) reflect these local loyalties. There is no such community loyalty in respect of the two district council areas. But nearly all islanders identify with the Island as a whole.

ISLE OF WIGHT REVIEW — KEY DATES

STAGE	ACTIVITY	DATES
1	Announcement of the review	03/08/92 — 18/10/92
2	Drafting of recommendations	19/10/92 — 20/12/92
3	Consultations on draft recommendations	21/12/92 — 21/02/93
4	Preparation of final report	22/02/93 — 25/04/93

The Commission has encouraged all interested parties and individuals to let it know their views. The "lead" Commissioner, David Thomas, has spent much time on the Island and is grateful for the help he has received. At the start of Stage 1, notices announcing the review were published in the Island's newspapers. The public were invited to write to the Commission to express their views on the future of their local government, and meetings have been held on the Island during September and October for individuals and groups wishing to speak directly with the Commissioner. These discussions provided important background to the Commission's work.

The Island's communities and economy

The particular characteristics and needs of the Isle of Wight have an important bearing on the Commission's work and on its recommendations for the new local government structure.

There are over 3000 employers on the Island and a working population of over 50,000. The Island's economy is widely recognised to be weak and heavily dependent upon domestic tourism. Two large companies, Siemens Plessey Radar and Westland Aerospace, dominate the manufacturing sector. However, the great majority of Island businesses have fewer than 25 employees and there is a high proportion of self-employment (much of it in the service sector).

Public sector employment is very significant and accounts for around one in five of all jobs on the Island. Over 1000 people work in the Prison Service and over 2000 work either full or part-time in the National Health Service. More than 6,200 people work full or part-time in the local authorities who are the subject of this review, 5,500 in the County Council and 315 and 400 in Medina and South Wight Councils respectively.



Unemployment is high and persistent. Despite the very attractive scenery of the Island and its traditions as a holiday centre the tourist trade has suffered the decline which has been general to most British resorts in recent years. In summer the population swells to around 200,000 but an overall decline in the numbers of tourists has hit the Island harshly. There is a lack of wet weather facilities and little modern accommodation.

The relative difficulty of access to the Island also tends to hinder development. Recent commendable efforts to attract inward business investment have met with relatively little success.

A recent survey of the Island's 24 leading businesses concluded that in respect of local government:

"the central issue is the need for strong leadership to tackle the contentious issues so that the Island's delicately balanced economy is not allowed to slide over the cliff edge whilst the political infighting continues unchecked."

("An Economy on a knife edge")
Vail-Williams Research

The history of local government on the Island

The County Council was created in April 1890, at which time the district council functions were the responsibility of nine authorities represented by a mixture of urban district councils, a rural district council and a municipal borough.

In 1933, this number was reduced to six district councils. In 1972 the Government decided to retain a two-tier system of county and district councils. Because of the size of its population the Government first proposed that the Isle of Wight should be incorporated into the County of Hampshire. This met with strong local resistance which secured continued county status for the Island. However, as a "county", the Island had to conform to the rest of England and a two-tier system of local government was established in 1974 with two district councils — Medina and South Wight. These various changes are illustrated in Figure 1. A map of the principal existing local authority boundaries is on page 18.

Over the last one hundred years, a number of other proposals have been made to link the Island to the mainland for local government purposes. They have all met with strong resistance from the Island and it should be stressed that **this is not an option for the Commission in its present review because the area it has been directed to review consists only of the Island.**

The present structure

The present structure dates from 1974 and comprises the County Council and the two District or Borough Councils of Medina and South Wight. The divisions of services between the County Council and the Boroughs follows that found in the other shire counties of England. Thus, the County Council is responsible for schools and other parts of the education service, social services, libraries, main highways and so on. The Boroughs collect refuse, provide housing and determine most planning applications as well as other matters. The two Boroughs have populations of 72,000 (Medina) and 55,000 (South Wight) although the latter covers a significantly larger area of the Island.

Island people are represented by 24 councillors on South Wight Borough Council, 36 on Medina Borough Council and by 43 county councillors. There are also nearly 250 members of town and parish councils, leading to the view of some that the Island is "over-governed". Certainly the ratio of councillors to electors is one of the highest in the country.

Parish councils are important in some areas, although large areas of the population (approximately 75%) are unrepresented at either town or parish council level, most notably in Newport and in Ryde.

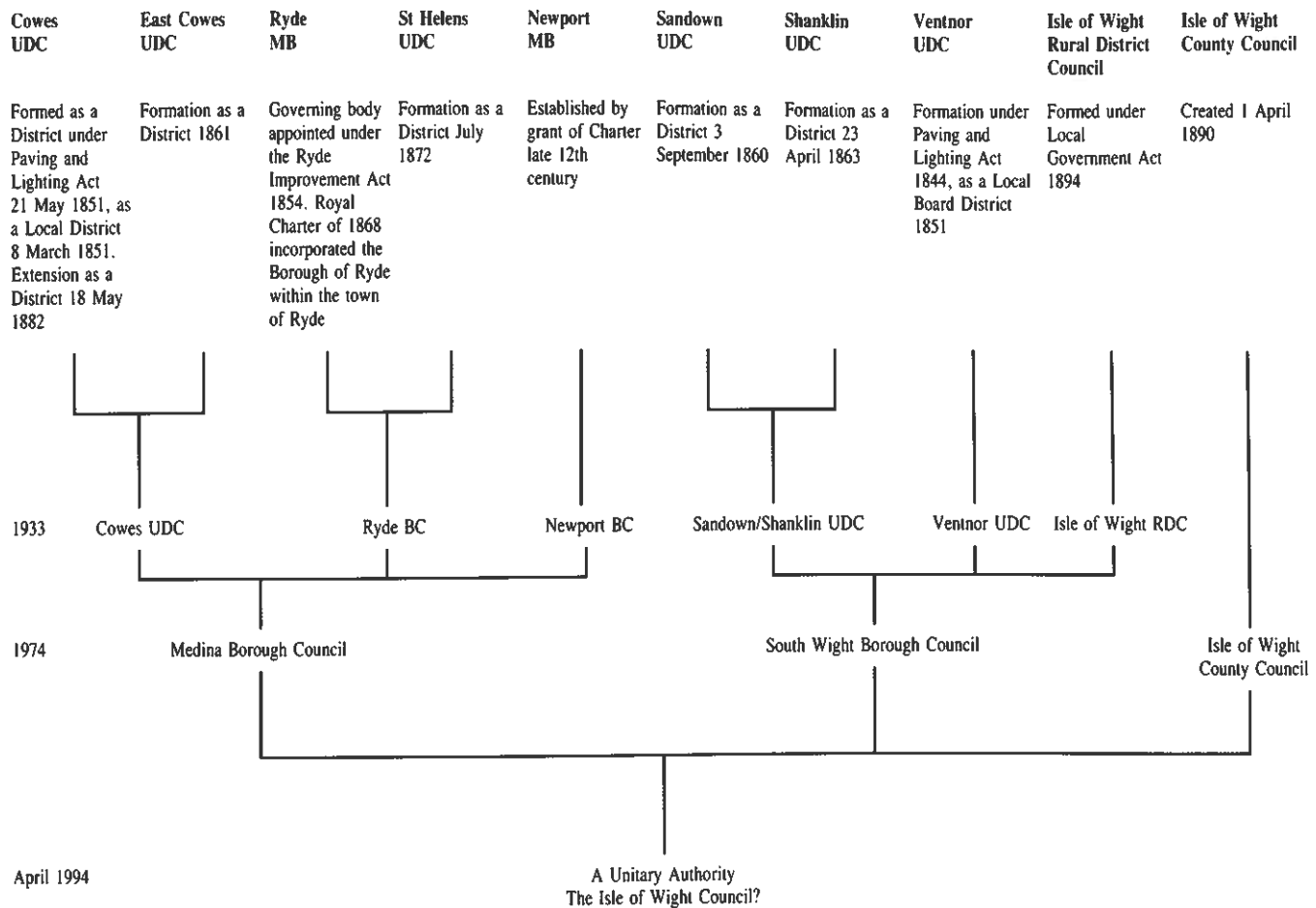
The three principal Councils plan to spend nearly £100 million on services in the current year, around £1,800 per year (or £35 a week) for every household on the Island. This spending is financed by central taxation (40%) the Business Rate (35%) and the present Community Charge (25%).

In addition to examining the published accounts of the three existing authorities, the Commission has examined expenditure profiles prepared annually by the Audit Commission (the body responsible for auditing local government expenditure). These are prepared for every authority in England and Wales, covering the main services provided and are based on each authority's revenue estimates for the year. These indicate that the expenditure plans of the three authorities are either at, or significantly below, the Government's own estimate of the amount of money they need to spend to provide a "standard" level of service — the so-called Standard Spending Assessment (SSA).



THE STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT 1890 - 1992

FIGURE 1:



2. THE ISLAND'S PROPOSALS

At present, services are provided by the three different Councils and this can create duplication in the use of resources. It can also lead to confusion regarding political and administrative responsibility. This point is acknowledged by the three Councils themselves:

"There is general confusion about the respective roles of the County and District Councils with uncertainty about which to hold accountable or which to go to for help."

In the post war years the County Council has made various proposals for the creation of a unitary authority for the Island. Invariably, these have been frustrated by legislation drafted for the needs of the mainland and not for the unique needs of the Isle of Wight.

Most recently the County Council asked the Local Government Boundary Commission in 1985 to consider the creation of a single all-purpose Island Authority. In September 1986 the Commission concluded as follows:

"...that as a County the Island was unique, that the planning and provision of many services required to be considered over the Island as a whole, and that in view of the Island's nature, size and population a unitary authority was therefore the right form of local government, even though it could not be achieved without legislation."

This view was endorsed by the Secretary of State for the Environment in July 1990.

The joint proposals of the present Councils

The joint proposals are based on the assumption that there will be no change to existing service levels, standards, policies or priorities. The unitary authority will be inheriting all the functions and responsibilities of the three present councils.

The Island Councils identify six key points in their report *"One Island - One Council"* which support the case for a unitary authority:

- **Island-wide services** - *"The majority of existing public services, including those delivered by Local Authorities are already provided on an all-Island basis: for example, Education, Social Services, Library and Museum and Highways services and the existence of one Fire Authority and one College of Further Education."*
- **Existing arrangements** - *"The Island is a self contained area and a number of practical all-Island arrangements have been adopted over the years, of which the most notable is the Island Planning Unit."*

- **Duplication** - *"Three organisations require three sets of organisational overheads. This is not cost effective and increases the cost of local government on the Island."*
- **The wishes of the local inhabitants** - A "MORI" poll in 1985 tested two options - an initial amalgamation of the two Borough Councils leading eventually to one unitary authority. The poll found a majority of two to one favoured a merger into a unitary authority. Other informal surveys at the time also showed support for the change to a unitary authority (Figure 3).
- **The cost of democracy** - The Councils have put forward several costings based upon differing assumptions about the number of councillors for the new authority. The savings derive from reductions in members' allowances, support staffing and election costs. The Councils also indicate the potential for improved efficiency in the decision making process where there are fewer members to consult.
- **Unity of purpose** - *"There is no single authority planning for all local government services in the area and no one voice for Island local government at Whitehall or in Europe."*

In undertaking its review, the Commission must consider the impact that any structural changes may have on the boundaries of local government areas. In the case of the Isle of Wight there are no boundary issues in the usual sense since the structural changes proposed do not alter present borders. However the three Councils have asked the Commission to examine the boundaries of the Isle of Wight within the Solent below the low water mark of median tides. In particular the area of the Western Solent as it is considered that some control by a public body is needed to protect the public interest.

The Commission must be satisfied that any new structure enables functions to be performed in a way which is responsive to local needs. Against a set of community index criteria the Councils argue that unitary status would improve responsiveness. For example:

"There are obvious links between some service areas such as housing clients (currently the responsibility of the Borough Councils) and social service clients (currently the responsibility of the County Council) which will mean that delivery by one provider could improve responsiveness."

The Commission must consider the role that parish and town councils could play in an area and how they would fit into the structure it recommends. At present approximately 75 per cent of the Island's population are not represented at town or parish council level.



FIGURE 3: "THE WISHES OF LOCAL INHABITANTS"

This figure shows the results of various opinion surveys carried out in 1985 as set out in the proposals of the three Isle of Wight Councils:

"The most direct material is a MORI poll undertaken in early 1985 together with an informal survey undertaken through the Isle of Wight County Press newspaper at the same time. The options tested by MORI were an initial amalgamation of the two Borough Councils, leading eventually to one unitary Authority. The broad conclusions were:

- *A majority of two to one favoured a merger into a unitary Authority and this was at a time when unanimity amongst the Island's local authorities was not present;*
- *the summary of the survey returns indicated that the vast majority of Islanders were well aware of which Borough Council area they lived in, although virtually none used the Borough name to describe the area in which they lived;*
- *dealing specifically with the provision of local government services on the Island, the survey showed that the majority wanted services to be operated on an Island-wide basis;*
- *When asked how they would like to see services provided, 45 per cent opted for one unitary Authority;*
- *With regard to the then proposed merger, 54 per cent were in favour as they felt it would increase efficiency and make things easier for residents;*
- *The final conclusion of the survey was that there was support for an Island-wide Authority.*

The findings were based on "sampling" a representative cross-section of more than 1,000 Islanders.

The County Press noted from its informal survey that "in the main, Islanders tended to favour a change to a unitary Authority."

In the same year nearly 300 people completed a "cut out" coupon in a County Council newsletter to express views to the Boundary Commission. Of those that were written "openly" and could be analysed, 134 favoured unitary government and 48 did not."

The view of Medina and South Wight Borough Councils is that additional town and parish councils should only be created where there is significant demand by the inhabitants concerned. This is also the Government's view. However, the County Council believes that the new authority should examine the early completion of the emparishment of the Isle of Wight. This is also the view of the Isle of Wight Association of Parish and Town Councils.

The three Island Councils propose new arrangements in the future between the new authority and town and parish councils, including an expanded consultative role and the delegation to them of control of additional services including routine road maintenance, grass

cutting and the provision of street furniture. The Councils propose that the new authority could establish better access points for customers, known as "One-Stop Shops" where information and help on all local government services would be available. They have suggested that eight of these offices around the Island would provide an adequate network.

The Commission is required to evaluate the costs of any proposed structural change — not least because there is considerable current concern about the scale of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.



The financial analysis produced by the three Councils shows an annual continuing net saving of approximately £1.7 million after three years. This represents some 18 per cent of the three Councils' estimated administrative expenditure as derived from their proposals; and based upon the Councils' 1992-93 budgets, it is the equivalent of the cost of running the Island's Library Service or half the cost of the Fire Service. Put another way, it represents around £32 a year for every household on the Island (although, of course, not all of this would be reflected through savings in the present Community Charge or future Council Tax because a large proportion of local government expenditure comes from national taxation). The breakdown is shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4: THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE ISLAND COUNCILS' PROPOSALS (£000s at 1992 prices)

The Introduction of a Single Island Council in April 1994	Year Ending March 31			
	1995	1996	1997	1998
CONTINUING SAVINGS				
Staff	736	1472	1472	1472
Information Technology	—	—	150	300
Members' allowances/election costs	174	229	174	174
ON GOING COSTS				
Employers' Superannuation Contribution	—	—	145	145
NET IMPACT	910	1701	1651	1801

Set against the net savings of some £1.8 million a year by the end of the century, there will be some transitional costs, estimated at just over £1.6 million over the first four years of which around £1.2 million will be spent in the first year. These costs are made up as shown in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5: THE TRANSITIONAL COSTS OF THE ISLAND COUNCILS' PROPOSALS (£000s at 1992 prices)

COSTS	£000s
Redundancy and early retirement	1115
Relocation and removals	134
Alterations to premises etc.	300
Other	55
TOTAL	1604

Since the investment in the transition will pay for itself within two years, the proposed changes are justifiable in narrow economic terms on the Councils' estimates.

The methodology used to identify savings was based on existing service levels and methods of service delivery. The savings produced derive principally from the eradication of duplication in existing management and operational structures (including a reduction of some 62 staff posts) and not from any radical review of how services might be delivered in the future.

Islanders' views

The Commission received 82 separate written representations (in addition to that from the three Councils) during Stage 1 of the review and an analysis of views is shown in Figure 6. A list of those who either submitted written evidence or gave oral views to the Commissioner is shown in Figure 7.



FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

	The general public	Interest groups/voluntary bodies etc.	The business community	Parish & Town Councils	TOTAL	%
Support for the "status quo"	2	–	–	–	2	2½
Support for a single unitary authority	16	18	6	16	56	68
Support for two unitary authorities	1	1	–	–	2	2½
General comments/ observations etc.	5	9	–	1	15	18
General interest in the work of the commission	5	1	1	–	7	9
Total correspondence received	29	29	7	17	82	100

FIGURE 7: INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS PROVIDING WRITTEN AND/OR ORAL EVIDENCE TO THE COMMISSION INCLUDED:

The Lord Mottistone, CBE,
His Excellency the Governor and Lord Lieutenant
Mr David Guy, MBE, JP, DL,
The High Sheriff
Mr Barry Field, MP

Chairman of the Magistrates' Bench
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Countryside Commission
Cowes and District Trades' Council
English Heritage
English Nature
Gregory Avenue/Pondwell Residents' Associations
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology
Hampshire County Council
Hampshire Opposition to Gerrymandered Shire Boundaries
Hampshire Police Authority
Island Watch
Isle of Wight Archaeological Committee
Isle of Wight Bus Users' Group
Isle of Wight Conservative Association
Isle of Wight Council for the Arts
Isle of Wight County Association of Trades' Councils

Isle of Wight County Conservative Councillors' Group
Isle of Wight Development Board
Isle of Wight Health Authority
Isle of Wight Labour Party
Isle of Wight Places of Interest Association
Isle of Wight Rural Community Council
Isle of Wight Sports and Recreation Council
Isle of Wight Tourism
Joint Trade Union Co-ordinating Council
Lake Ratepayers' and Residents' Association
Medina Borough Council Conservative and Independent Group
National Council on Archives
Newport Citizens' Advice Bureau
Quay Arts' Centre
Rural Development Commission
Society of Local Council Clerks
Southern Arts
Southern Tourist Board
Sports Council
plus
29 Members of the public
17 Town and parish councils (including the Isle of Wight Association of Parish and Town Councils)



If these representations are a fair reflection of opinion on the Island, a point to which this Report will return, there is strong support for the creation of a unitary authority; and this support is fairly evenly balanced across the different groups and individuals. Examples of the range of comments made to the Commission are shown below.

"A unitary authority is a logical step forward — it means that I only have to go to one councillor and one council for any enquiry . . ."

"I wholeheartedly welcome a unitary authority. The present system appears to have created an absurd situation whereby a great deal of expense and energy is directed towards defensive policies and internal wrangling."

"A unitary council is a good idea to clear out the "buck passing" between the County and Borough Councils."

"The Isle of Wight Health Commission on behalf of the Health Authority and of the Family Health Services Authority supports the concept of a single unitary authority for the Isle of Wight . . . It will allow the single authority to embrace more easily its role as a 'Health Authority' and place health firmly on the agenda of all departments."

"For the good of sport and recreation on the Island, it is essential that the current local government system becomes primarily a single tier authority."

"We consider that a single Island Council would be most likely to provide the cohesion and resources to further the conservation of nature and natural resources on the Island."

"Those of us who operate within the Island's tourism industry are enthusiastic about the possibilities which a unitary council might offer because we believe that such a body will provide more efficient management and development of the Island's tourism infrastructure."

"The present system creates some confusion in the minds of the electorate which will be eliminated by the creation of a new one tier authority replacing the existing County Council and two Borough Councils."

Strong support for a unitary authority has been expressed by individuals and groups in meetings with the Commissioner. Many re-iterate the Councils' arguments, particularly the need for the Island to speak with one voice. While much of this evidence is anecdotal, the Commission has received little evidence to contradict what has been said.

A particular area of concern to which many respondents have drawn attention is the relative weakness of the Island's economy. Unemployment has been consistently above the national average and there is a perception generally that the Island may be in long term economic decline. Representatives of the Island's business community have drawn attention to various recent studies which clearly show the economic problems of the Island. It is argued generally that one council would be more effective in developing coherent Island-wide strategies to encourage inward business investment and boost tourism.



3. THE COMMISSION'S CONCLUSIONS

The Commission has considered all the views submitted to it. The evidence has been weighed against the requirements of the Local Government Act 1992 and the Government's guidance to the Commission. The Commission concludes that there should be one unitary council for the Isle of Wight. As all the authorities favour a "fresh start" the name of the new authority will be important.

Recommendation No. 1

The existing County Council and two District Councils should be replaced by a single unitary authority which should be called "The Isle of Wight Council."

No one has proposed any changes to the present arrangements for law and order services (under which the Isle of Wight is included in the Hampshire Police Authority and the Island has its own Magistrates' Courts Committee). This is the view also of the Hampshire Police Authority.

Recommendation No. 2

There should be no change in the present arrangements under which the Isle of Wight is included in the Hampshire Police Authority but has its own Magistrates' Courts Committee.

The Commission recognises the strong views of the Island Councils (shared by the Hampshire County Council) on the need to examine the boundaries of the Isle of Wight within the Solent, especially the Western Solent. However, the Commission considers that the issues relating to the Solent, which require wide consultation, are such that they should be considered in a separate later review, and the Commission would return to this matter if so directed by the Secretary of State.

At present, the Island has a total of 103 councillors at county and borough level. The County Council has 43 councillors each representing a single electoral division. In contrast, the two Boroughs have a total of 60 councillors representing 33 electoral divisions in one, two and three member wards. This is a very high number of councillors for the size of the population when compared with the rest of England. The creation of a new unitary authority would provide the opportunity therefore to review the number of councillors. The various options for this are discussed below.

The boundaries of the new unitary authority will coincide with those of the present County Council (ie the Island). The Government's guidance to the Commission indicates that:

"Where a new authority has exactly the boundaries of an existing county or district council, there should normally be no need for a change in the number of councillors or to the number of boundaries of its divisions or wards before the structural change is made."

On this basis the new authority would assume the same number of councillors as the present county (43).

There are, however, a number of serious disadvantages to this. It has little support on the Island. (Even the County Council puts it forward as only one of three possible options which they ask the Commission to consider.) It also splits several parish boundaries, and thus does not reflect local communities. It means that a quarter of all wards would have an electorate which varies from the average by at least 25 per cent. Last, it might be perceived to perpetuate the county position when what most people on the Island want is a new pattern which will reflect the future needs of their various local communities.

The Borough Councils are of the opinion that the new authority should be made up of 60 members (i.e. the present total of the two Borough Councils). However, while the present borough wards follow the parish boundaries the arrangement favours Medina (with an average of 1580 electors per councillor) at the expense of South Wight (with 1858). So the ward boundaries would have to be significantly reviewed. Compared with the rest of the country adoption of the borough pattern would also give a high number of councillors.



The Commission believes that because of these disadvantages the Councils' options are unsuitable. Instead, it proposes that the new authority should comprise 48 single member wards based on a mixture of existing county electoral divisions and borough wards adjusted to follow parish boundaries and to allow extra councillors in areas currently under-represented. The proposed new wards are set out in detail in the Appendix. Of the 48 wards, 22 would be the same as the existing county electoral divisions, 15 would be the same as existing county and borough wards (but with six of them split into two), while 11 would be the same as existing borough wards (with ten split).

Existing polling districts have been used as building blocks with some of them transferred between electoral divisions to give a fairer arrangement. The Commission sees very real benefits in such a solution which would:

- emphasise the 'fresh start' favoured by those on the Island
- accept the expressed wish for the number of county councillors to be increased (whilst stopping short of 60 which the Commission regards as unnecessarily high)
- have the advantage of following parish boundaries
- reduce from 26% to 21% the number of wards where the electorate varies from the average by at least 25%
- balance representation between Medina (average of 2108 electors per ward) and South Wight (2123)
- be easy to implement because in all but one case the proposed wards are made up of existing polling districts.

The Commission also believes that all councillors should be elected together, at one time every four years, as is the wish of the existing authorities. There has been virtually no support for elections by "thirds".

Recommendation No. 3

The new authority should comprise 48 single member wards based on a mixture of existing county electoral divisions and borough wards adjusted to follow parish boundaries. This is to respond to the desire on the Island for an increase in the number of county members, and to ensure fair representation between the Medina and South Wight areas. All councillors should retire together every four years.

The establishment of a single, unitary council for the Island requires further consideration to be given to the involvement of the local communities, which are so much in evidence on the Island, to ensure that they are given the opportunity to be consulted on neighbourhood services and, within the constraints of the current law, able to provide directly small-scale local services if they wish. The Commission wishes to see the development of ready access centres of information and advice at local level — the so-called "One-Stop Shops". The Commission also supports the development of the role of town and parish councils where there is significant demand for them on the Island. These will provide increased opportunities for local communities to influence the new Council, and help to ensure that it does not become too remote from those it exists to serve.

Recommendation No.4

The Commission considers that an early task of the new authority should be to determine the views of the Island's population regarding the role of town and parish councils and whether they should be created where they do not exist presently.



It is for the Secretary of State to determine when elections for the new authority should first be held and when it should take over responsibility for services. Since the existing authorities have strong views about this, the Commission has considered the matter with particular care.

All three authorities argue that the circumstances of the review on the Island mean that fresh elections should be held for the new unitary authority and that "shadow" arrangements are necessary to enable the new authority to work alongside the present ones to plan the orderly transfer of services, staff and other assets. The Commission supports these arguments.

However, the three authorities would have preferred the election for the existing County Council (scheduled for 6 May 1993) to have been cancelled with the life of the existing Council extended until 31 March 1994. This would have enabled a single election for a "shadow" new unitary authority to be held during 1993. In the event, however, the Commission understands that it is not legally possible for the Government to cancel the May 1993 election without legislation for which no time can be found. The Island's existing local authorities are opposed to the election for the new shadow authority being held in 1993 because, they say, to hold two elections in the same year would confuse the electorate, cause difficulties for the candidates, and incur additional costs of around £60,000 in that year that could be better spent elsewhere on the Island's services.

They have therefore argued strongly for the election of a shadow authority to be deferred until May 1994 with the new authority taking over services on 1 April 1995.

Whilst the Commission sympathises with these problems it believes there are strong arguments against delay. There appears to be overwhelming support on the Island for the establishment of a unitary authority and a strong expectation that one will be introduced. To their credit the existing authorities have already given a lot of thought to the new authority. In these circumstances the Commission favours the new authority taking over full responsibility for services on 1 April 1994, for these reasons:

- it would ensure there was less delay in the development of Island-wide strategies needed to address the Island's economic problems
- it would remove uncertainty from the public, councillors and staff
- the financial savings arising from reorganisation would be achieved sooner rather than later
- it would avoid any difficulties that might be caused by the existing authorities having to produce separate budgets and policies for 1994-95
- given the good working relationships that exist between the three Councils the Commission considers that "shadow" arrangements — whilst necessary — need not last for a full year.

On the basis of the representations it has received; the Commission also considers that a wide range of interests outside the three authorities would support the view that the new authority should be established as soon as possible.

Recommendation No. 5

The new authority should come into being on 1 April 1994, with appropriate "shadow" arrangements made to enable the transfer of services, staff and other assets to be carried out efficiently and effectively.





4. NEXT STEPS

The Commission has put forward here five recommendations for the future structure of local government on the Isle of Wight, and for new electoral arrangements.

Now it is up to you, the people of the Isle of Wight.

The Commission is required to take into account local views on its recommendations and you have until 21 February 1993 to make these known to the Commission. You may let the Commission know individually, or through local voluntary organisations and associations. There are several ways you can do this:

- complete the questionnaire which is part of the separate leaflet that has been prepared and which is widely available locally and send it to the Commission postage free.
- write directly to the Commissioner responsible for this review:
David Thomas
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
Lincoln's Inn Fields
LONDON WC1V 7JU
- attend one of the four public meetings arranged throughout the Island during the first week of February 1993 where you will have the opportunity to let the Commission have your views directly.

Further information will also be available in the local media in January and February.

The Commission will consider your reactions and will review its five recommendations to see if they should be altered or new ones added, before it reports finally to the Secretary of State for the Environment at the end of April. The Secretary of State will then decide whether to support our recommendations, and to lay the necessary regulations before Parliament.



APPENDIX: PROPOSED 48 SINGLE MEMBER WARDS FOR NEW UNITARY AUTHORITY

	Medina Wards	Registration Units	Electorate	Description of Area
1	Ashey	MMC(1), MMC(2), MMD	2,191	The present county electoral division
2	Binstead	MMA,MMB	2,458	The present county electoral division
3	Carisbrooke East	MFA	1,609	The present county electoral division
4	Carisbrooke West	MFB(1), MFB(2), MJA(2)	2,468	The present county electoral division
5	Cowes Castle – 1	MAA	1,461	Part of the present county electoral division & borough ward
6	Cowes Castle – 2	MAB	1,717	Part of the present county electoral division & borough ward
7	Cowes Central	MBA	1,905	The present county electoral division & borough ward
8	Cowes Medina	MCA, MCC	2,043	The present county electoral division
9	East Cowes – 1	MEA	1,693	Part of the present county electoral division & borough ward
10	East Cowes – 2	MEB	1,356	Part of the present county electoral division & borough ward
11	Fairlee	MKA, MKB(1)	2,139	The present county electoral division
12	Gurnard	MDA(1)	1,517	The present county electoral division
13	Mount Joy	MHA, MHB	2,550	The present county electoral division and borough ward
14	Nettlestone	MOA(1), MOA(2), MOB	2,779	Part of the present borough ward
15	Newport Central	MGA, MIA	2,639	The present county electoral division
16	Northwood	MDA(2), MDB, MCD	2,069	The present county electoral division
17	Osborne	MLA, MLB	2,401	The present county electoral division and borough ward
18	Pan	MIB, MIC	2,280	The present county electoral division
19	Parkhurst	MJA(1), MJB	2,631	The present county electoral division
20	Ryde North East	MNA, MNB	2,610	The present county electoral division
21	Ryde North West	MQA, MQB	2,164	The present county electoral division
22	Ryde South East	MNC, MND	1,968	The present county electoral division
23	Ryde South West	MQC, MQD	2,362	The present county electoral division
24	St Helens	MOC	1,029	Part of the present borough ward
25	St Johns – 1	MPA	1,845	Part of the present borough ward
26	St Johns – 2	MPB, MPC	2,194	Part of the present borough ward
27	Wootton	MKB(2), MKC, MKD	2,831	The present county electoral division
	TOTAL		56,909	
			2,108	



PROPOSED 48 SINGLE MEMBER WARDS FOR NEW UNITARY AUTHORITY (CONTINUED)

	South Wight Wards	Registration Units	Electorate	Description of Area
28	Arreton & Newchurch	SAA, SAB, SAC, SAD	2,802	The present county electoral division and borough ward
29	Bembridge – 1	SBA	1,814	Part of the present county electoral division & borough ward
30	Bembridge – 2	SBB	1,416	Part of the present county electoral division & borough ward
31	Brading	SCA	1,662	The present county electoral division & borough ward
32	Brightstone & Shorwell	SDA, SDB, SDC, SDD, SDE	2,042	The present county electoral division & borough ward
33	Calbourne, Shalfleet, Yarmouth	SEA, SEB, SEC, SED, SEE, SEF, SEG, SPA, SPB	2,742	The present county electoral division
34	Chale, Niton, Whitwell	SFA, SFB, SFC	2,361	The present county electoral division & borough ward
35	Freshwater Afton	SGA	2,320	The present county electoral division
36	Freshwater Norton	SGB, SGC, SGD	2,323	The present county electoral division
37	Gatcombe, Godshill, Rookley	SHA, SHB, SHC	2,053	The present county electoral division & borough ward
38	Lake – 1	SIA, SIB (to be divided)	3,756	Part of present borough ward-boundary with No 39 to be decided
39	Lake – 2			Part of present borough ward-boundary with No 38 to be decided
40	Sandown – 1	SJA, SJD	2,314	Part of the present borough ward
41	Sandown – 2	SJB, SJC	1,914	Part of the present borough ward
42	Shanklin Central	SKB, SLA	2,543	The present county electoral division
43	Shanklin North	SKA	1,813	The present county electoral division
44	Shanklin South	SLB	2,300	The present county electoral division
45	Totland	SMA	2,177	The present county electoral division & borough ward
46	Ventnor – 1	SNA, SNB, SNC	2,428	Part of the present borough ward
47	Ventnor – 2	SND, SNE, SNF	2,513	Part of the present borough ward
48	Wroxall	SOA	1,296	The present borough ward
	TOTAL		44,589	
		Average electors per ward	2,123	



FIGURE 2: THE ISLE OF WIGHT – PRINCIPAL EXISTING LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARIES

