

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BOUNDARY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND
REPORT No.12

LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE 1974

© *Crown copyright 1974*

ISBN 0 11 700698 X

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

CHAIRMAN

Sir Edmund Compton, GCB, KBE

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Mr J M Rankin, QC

MEMBERS

The Countess of Albemarle, DBE

Mr T C Benfield

Professor Michael Chisholm

Sir Andrew Wheatley, CBE

Mr F B Young, CBE

To: The Rt Hon Anthony Crosland, MP
Secretary of State for the Environment

REVIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE COUNTIES OF AVON AND SOMERSET IN THE VICINITY OF THE MENDIP HILLS

1. We, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, having carried out our review of the boundary between the counties of Avon and Somerset in the vicinity of the Mendip Hills, now submit our report.

2. This review is one of the three cases identified in paragraph 36 of our Report No 6, where Parliament, in effect, recognised the need to give further consideration to the boundaries created by the Local Government Act 1972, but could not find time to do so during the passage of the Bill.

3. In accordance with the procedure laid down in section 60(1) and (2) of the 1972 Act, notice was given on 12 December 1973 that we were to undertake this review. This was incorporated in a consultation letter addressed to all local authorities in the counties of Avon and Somerset. Copies were also sent to the editors of local newspapers circulating in the areas; to the local government press; to the Regional Health Authority, Regional Water Authority, Regional Offices of Government Departments, and to the headquarters of the main political parties. Notices inserted in the local press announced the start of the review and invited comments from members of the public and from any interested bodies.

4. Representations were received from two local authorities proposing that there should be no change in the county boundary as defined in the 1972 Act; from seven local authorities, of which six were Parish Councils directly affected by the review, suggesting that the county boundary should run to the north of the areas of the six parishes so that those areas would be located in Somerset, and further suggesting that the parts of the former areas of those parishes which are now part of the parish of Priddy in Somerset, should be restored to their respective former parish areas; from one local authority proposing that four of these parishes should be re-united with their former areas and located in Avon; and, finally, from one further local authority suggesting a minor adjustment to simplify highway administration. Support for the proposal that the whole of the former areas of the six parishes which were divided by the 1972 Act should be located in Somerset came from two local organisations and a number of private individuals.

5. We considered all the representations and, in view of the divergence of opinion concerning the issue, we decided that, before formulating draft proposals, we should visit the area. Accordingly we made a private visit on 10 July 1974.

6. We then considered these representations in the light of our visit to the area. Our starting point was the terms of reference which required us to review this length of the boundary between the counties of Avon and Somerset. There could be no question of our considering, at this stage, the pattern of county government in the area; the County of Avon was in being and would remain so. As we saw it, our task was to consider where the boundary between the two counties should be in the vicinity of the Mendip Hills.

7. We, therefore, looked at the existing boundary in order to judge whether it broadly distinguished between those areas which might be considered part of Avon, and where the main links were with that county, and those which appeared to be part of Somerset and to have their main links with towns in that county. Before reaching a decision, we also considered whether there were any strong arguments for regarding the Mendip Hills as an indivisible area which should be wholly contained within one county and whether the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was a significant factor.

8. We found that the sparsely populated area on the top of the Mendip Hills formed a watershed between the more densely populated areas to the north and the areas more rural in character to the south. This watershed recognised the difference between these two areas. As there did not seem to be any over-riding arguments for having the whole of the Mendip Hills in one county, we concluded that the county boundary should continue to run along the top of the hills.

9. We then considered the existing boundary line in detail to see whether we should recommend its retention or whether another line would be more in the interests of effective and convenient local government. Our visit to the area had shown the present line to be a well defined boundary which satisfied the general conclusions which we had reached in paragraph 8 above and we came to an interim decision not to make proposals for any change to the boundary.

10. Our announcement to this effect was issued on 31 July and notification of it was sent to all who had received our initial consultation letter or had made representations to us. Representations on our interim decision were invited from those to whom we sent notification and, by public notices, from other members of the public and interested bodies.

11. We received representations from four local authorities and from one private individual reiterating views expressed to us earlier. Since there were no new arguments to convince us that a change to the boundary was desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government, we have confirmed our interim decision and make no proposal for changing this section of boundary.

PUBLICATION

12. In accordance with Section 60(5)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 a copy of this report is being sent to those who received the consultation letter and to those who made representations.

Signed:

LS

EDMUND COMPTON (CHAIRMAN)

DIANA ALBEMARLE

T C BENFIELD

MICHAEL CHISHOLM

ANDREW WHEATLEY

F B YOUNG

DAVID R SMITH (Secretary)

7 November 1974

