PUTTING TORBAY COMMUNITIES FIRST

Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

INTRODUCTION

Torbay Liberal Democrats acknowledge the proposals published on 3rd October 2017 by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for the Torbay Unitary Authority area and welcome the opportunity to make additional representations in response to these detailed proposals.

In keeping with the general layout of the Commission’s own proposals that were published on 3rd October 2017, our further representations relating to the ward boundaries detailed in this submission similarly deal in turn with the four specific clusters alluded to in the report from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England listed under the following headings:

i. “North and North-East” (In effect, the northern parts of Torquay)
ii. “Central Torquay”
iii. “Paignton and Preston”
iv. “The Brixham Peninsula”

The Torbay Unitary Authority area encompasses the three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. A popular tourist destination, Torbay is roughly equidistant from the nearby cities of Exeter and Plymouth. It is primarily a tight conurbation of three contiguous towns that are all located around an east-facing natural harbour (Tor Bay) on the English Channel, together with a primarily rural district to the west of Paignton that includes Collaton St. Mary.
Torbay Liberal Democrats additionally wish to record their wholehearted agreement with the recommendation from the **Local Government Boundary Commission for England** that the Torbay Unitary Authority should continue to be represented by thirty-six councillors.

Torbay Liberal Democrats are, however, also mindful of the parallel review at present being undertaken by the **Boundary Commission for England** in relation to the aspects affecting the Torbay and Totnes parliamentary constituencies. We are therefore very keen to ensure that an outcome arises whereby no ward in the Torbay Unitary Authority area finds itself divided between two different parliamentary constituencies. We strongly believe that ensuring such an outcome is desirable for all those with a legitimate interest – Returning Officers, polling station staff, local government employees, electors themselves, both local and parliamentary representatives, charitable organisations, local and national media organisations, community groups, political parties of varying persuasions, etc.

The area covered by the Torbay Unitary Authority is currently represented nationally in the House of Commons by two Members of Parliament. All of Torquay together with the central and northern parts of Paignton comprise the Torbay parliamentary constituency (first created in 1974); southern and western elements of Paignton, along with Brixham in its entirety, fall within part of the wider Totnes parliamentary constituency.

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**SPECIFIC REPRESENTATIONS**

1. “North & North-East”

- Torbay Liberal Democrats fully endorse the proposals made by the **Local Government Boundary Commission for England** for the creation of a new three-member ward for the closely linked communities of Barton and Watcombe, which would also encompass the small area around Maidencombe. We also wish to register our full support to the notion that this new ward be called Barton-with-Watcombe, thus re-inforcing the Commission’s own findings that Barton and Watcombe form a combined community.

- We also agree that the substantial residential expansion over recent years in the vicinity of Barton New Town has rendered the prevailing electoral base of various adjoining wards in the northern area of Torbay untenable in terms of voter parity and therefore agree with the inclusion of the Maidencombe area in the newly proposed Barton-with-Watcombe ward along the lines suggested by the commission as a means to resolve this. We believe that it is also well worth noting that the **Local Government Boundary Commission for England** also originally proposed a similar inclusion of the Maidencombe area within a “Watcombe-centric” ward when it undertook its previous boundary review in 2001.
- Torbay Liberal Democrats also support the Commission’s proposal to adopt Easterfield Lane (bordering the King George V playing fields and Torquay Golf Club) as the natural topographical boundary between the new Barton-with-Watcombe ward and an amended St. Marychurch ward.

- For the reasons we set out in our previous submission, the Commission’s own proposals (if finally adopted and which we support) will then create a contiguous link between the current Watcombe ward and its spiritual origins (the actual area after which it is named) i.e. the Watcombe Valley that leads down to Watcombe Beach, together with Watcombe Heights and Watcombe Beach Road. The popular and aptly named “Watcombe Scout Camp”, located at the top of Easterfield Lane, will also be then located within the newly proposed Barton-with-Watcombe ward upon the re-alignment of the prevailing boundary.

- Torbay Liberal Democrats also wish to support the proposal by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that no amendments be enacted in relation to the boundaries of the current St. Marychurch ward other than the question of Easterfield Lane alluded to above. In particular, we agree that the status quo should continue for the area of Plainmoor which forms an integral part of the same geographical plateau as the rest of the Babbacombe and St. Marychurch community. We take the view that as the residents and traders of Plainmoor naturally align themselves much more with the communities of Babbacombe and St. Marychurch, the Plainmoor neighbourhood should continue to form part of the St. Marychurch ward.

- Torbay Liberal Democrats additionally endorse the notion from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that the A3022 Riviera Way be cited as a natural ward boundary between the recent, yet extensive, developments in the vicinity known as Barton New Town (The Willows) that is located to the north of this arterial road, and the historical heart of the ancient Manor of Shipway located to its south.
• Having reviewed the map prepared by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in support of its proposals, Torbay Liberal Democrats wish to suggest that for ease of reference, Lichfield Avenue should be included in its entirety within the proposed Barton-with-Watcombe ward rather than divided between two differing wards – the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Commission has seemingly suggested that Lichfield Avenue be partly within the newly proposed Barton-with-Watcombe ward and partly within the proposed Tormohun ward.

• With regard to the Wellswood ward, Torbay Liberal Democrats concur with the findings of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that this should continue to be represented by just two councillors. We also see no good reason for a change of the ward’s name to “Torwood”. We would suggest that such a change of name is only likely to cause unnecessary confusion, especially given the fact that it is also currently proposed that Torwood Street itself in Torquay should form part of a re-aligned Tormohun ward.

• Torbay Liberal Democrats would, however, like to draw the Commission’s attention to the position relating to Museum Road and Marion View (which both share the postcode TQ1 1DW). From the map produced in support of its proposals, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England would appear to have allocated these streets to the Tormohun ward. However, as vehicular access to these streets is only possible from the Babbacombe Road (which in this vicinity falls within the proposed boundaries for the Wellswood ward), we believe that for ease of reference Museum Road and Marion View should both form part of the proposed Wellswood ward rather than be incorporated within the proposed Tormohun ward.
We note the revised boundaries for the Ellacombe area and we comprehensively endorse the suggestion by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that both the history and topography of Ellacombe have given rise to a very individual community in its own right – one very distinct in so many respects from those communities located in adjoining wards, such as Wellwood. Torbay Liberal Democrats do nevertheless accept that it is necessary for some amendments to be made to some of the current Ellacombe ward boundaries to reduce a disparity in the number of voters and we therefore endorse the Commission’s proposals in this respect.

2. “Central Torquay”

Torbay Liberal Democrats, in parallel with several representations made by various other interested parties, welcome the fact that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is seemingly minded to retain the name “Tormohun” for the ward that is focused on Torquay town centre. As well as having an historical context, we believe that the name remains extremely popular with local residents and traders.

We also concur fully with the findings of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that the proposed ward of Tormohun be continued to be represented by three councillors. As we alluded to in our previous representations to the Commission, we are of the opinion that the commercial interests and social problems unique to the town centre necessitate the maximum representation at council level as a means of best serving both the local residents and businesses which comprise the Tormohun community.

With the exception of the position appertaining to Lichfield Avenue in conjunction with the proposed Barton-with-Watcombe ward, and both Museum Road and Marion View in conjunction with the proposed Wellswood ward (see page 5 in this report for both topics), Torbay Liberal Democrats fully support the boundaries for the Tormohun ward that have been recommended by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

We also offer our full support to the suggested boundaries for the proposed wards of both Shiphay and Cockington-with-Chelston, with the one notable exception being the position in relation to Raleigh Avenue (postcode TQ2 6DL and TQ2 6DN). According to the map prepared by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in support of its recommendations, it would appear that this street would be divided between two separate wards. However, for ease of reference and given the close community ties which Raleigh Avenue has with the other nearby “Sea Dog” named streets such as Drake Avenue, Davis Avenue, Grenville Avenue, Frobisher Green, etc., Torbay Liberal Democrats now invite the Commission to re-examine the topic appertaining to Raleigh Avenue so that it might be included in its entirety within the proposed Shiphay ward.
3. “Paignton and Preston”

- Torbay Liberal Democrats comprehensively endorse the recommendation from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to establish a single-member ward to be named “Collaton St. Mary”. We fully agree with the arguments detailed in Paragraphs 60-61 on Page 17 of the Commissioners’ report and we similarly concur that the existing Blatchcombe ward is already too disparate in nature and too large in geographical extent. We also endorse the suggested name “Collaton St. Mary” for the proposed new ward, as we believe that this will help to distinguish it from the Collaton area in Shiphay.

- Looking northwards: the rural nature of Blagdon, near Collaton St. Mary

- Torbay Liberal Democrats additionally support the proposal for a single-member Collaton St. Mary ward on the basis that this is an extremely innovative mechanism by which to acknowledge the somewhat extensive rural nature of the area that the proposed ward would encompass – a scenario that is almost unique in the Torbay Unitary Authority area.

- Neither do we consider that it would be practical to link the proposed Collaton St. Mary ward with the Goodrington-with-Roselands ward or with the Churston-with-Galmpton ward, as the outcome will inevitably produce a district lacking communal affinity and one arguably too geographically extensive for a unitary authority such as Torbay.

- Given our support for the establishment of the Collaton St. Mary ward, it follows that Torbay Liberal Democrats also fully endorse the proposals from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to create a new two-member ward with the name of “Kings Ash” which will conveniently absorb most of the area previously covered by the existing Blatchcombe ward. We believe that the communities living along the Kings Ash Road corridor, as well as those living between Kings Ash Road and Marldon Road, will be best represented as a single two-member entity, and on the basis that they have very few community ties and little affinity with the predominantly rural area proposed for the Collaton St. Mary ward.
- Torbay Liberal Democrats also wish to voice their support for the proposal to transfer the Waterleat area from the current Blatchcombe ward to a redrawn Clifton-with-Maidenway ward. We believe that not only will this assist in making the voter base more equitable, but that the Waterleat area already forms part of the same topographical neighbourhood that comprises the Clifton Road and Primley Park component at the heart of the existing Clifton-with-Maidenway ward.

- With particular regard to Clifton-with-Maidenway, Torbay Liberal Democrats support in principle the amendments to this ward’s boundaries proposed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. However, we also see the review as an opportunity to resolve a few anomalies which are currently in situ, and trust that the Commissioners will agree to examine the position relating to the following:

  a) **“Nos.154 & 156 Marldon Road”**
  Torbay Liberal Democrats suggest that these two properties (postcode TQ3 3ND) be transferred from the Clifton-with-Maidenway ward (currently in the Torbay constituency) to the area covered by the present Blatchcombe ward (currently within the Totnes parliamentary constituency), on the basis that all other Marldon Road voters in that area are currently registered within the latter ward of the two. Whilst it may probably never be known why these two particular properties were not located within the Blatchcombe ward in the first place, we think it may be possible that the aberration may have come about due to a simple oversight when drafting the ward boundary at the point on a map where Maidenway Road and Marldon Road intersect.

  b) **“Winner Hill Road Area”**
  In a similar vein, Torbay Liberal Democrats also propose the transfer of the voters within the Roundham-with-Hyde ward who are resident at “Torbay View” located in Colley End Park, TQ3 3DE (only accessible from Jubilee Terrace – this is itself already entirely located within Clifton-with-Maidenway), along with the residents at Nos. 1a, 3, 22, 22a and 22b Winner Hill Road – a road already overwhelmingly located within the Clifton-with-Maidenway ward. Again, whilst it may probably never be known why these particular properties were not originally assigned to the Clifton-with-Maidenway ward, we think it may simply be that the aberration came about due to an innocent error when drafting the boundary at the point on a map where Winner Street and Winner Hill Road intersect.

  c) **“Dolphin Crescent Nos. 90-94 (even) and 93-95 (odd)”**
  Primarily for ease of reference, etc. Torbay Liberal Democrats suggest that these five properties should all be transferred from the Clifton-with-Maidenway ward to the Preston ward. The rationale for this line of thought is that all other properties in the wider Dolphin Court community (including all other residents in Dolphin Crescent itself) are at present already assigned to the Preston ward.
Torbay Liberal Democrats note the recommendations from the *Local Government Boundary Commission for England* for the Goodrington-with-Roselands ward and would ask that the following factors be borne in mind when drafting its final report:

a) **“Stabb Close and Stabb Drive”**
   As part of the prevailing review into the boundaries for both the Torbay and Totnes parliamentary constituencies, we have already advised the *Boundary Commission for England* that we will be asking the *Local Government Boundary Commission for England* to consider a transfer of these two particular streets (postcodes TQ4 7JA and TQ4 7JB respectively) from the recommended Goodrington-with-Roselands ward to the proposed Churston-with-Galmpton ward. We take the view that such a transfer is desirable for all relevant stakeholders, on the grounds that the only vehicular access to these two roads is from western end Goodrington Road, and this particular element of Goodrington Road currently falls entirely within the Churston-with-Galmpton ward.

b) **“York Road Area”**
   Torbay Liberal Democrats note that they were not alone in drawing the attention of the *Local Government Boundary Commission for England* to the notion that those who live in the York Road neighbourhood (York Road, York Gardens, Sparks Barn Road, Footlands Road, Broadlands Road and Elsdale Road) have little or no affinity with the concept of “Goodrington”, let alone “Roselands”, and have always naturally considered themselves to be part of the St. Michael’s community.

Looking north and downhill towards St. Michael’s Road and Paignton Town Centre: York Road – long-considered an integral component of the St. Michael’s community

It is not only for topographical reasons that the residents of the York Road area look to the St. Michael’s community; they have historically always done so, primarily as the properties here were overwhelmingly built many decades before any residential development in the Penwill Way area was even considered. For instance, it is only in very recent times indeed that Elsdale Road itself ceased to be a cul-de-sac, after it was extensively expanded at its southern end to form a link with Wheatlands Road.
With these factors in mind, we would once again request that the *Local Government Boundary Commission for England* consider the transfer the residents of the York Road area from the proposed Goodrington-with-Roselands ward to the neighbouring Roundham-with-Hyde ward, possibly using the area encompassing the “York Road Allotments” for such a move as a natural “green” boundary between the two wards.

c) “Batson Gardens”
Notwithstanding any outcome relating to the question of the York Road area, Torbay Liberal Democrats wish to resolve the anomaly concerning the nearby cul-de-sac of Batson Gardens (postcode TQ4 5LT). This cul-de-sac is only accessible from the direction of St. Michael’s Road – itself an integral part of the Roundham-with-Hyde ward. Now whereas the majority of the residents in Batson Gardens also come under this very same ward, somewhat bizarrely a small number are currently assigned to the Goodrington-with-Roselands ward. We therefore believe that for the benefit of all concerned, it would make more sense if the entire street were to fall within one single ward, namely Roundham-with-Hyde.

- The *Local Government Boundary Commission for England* will doubtlessly recall that in our previous submission, Torbay Liberal Democrats suggested that residents inhabiting the eastern part of the Preston ward (roughly speaking, those living along the low-lying topographical plain that stretches inland from the seafront area as far as the main arterial A3022 Torquay Road) share various communal concerns and commercial interests which are inherently far more closely aligned with those of Paignton town centre than with the elevated (and almost exclusively residential) communities that are located high up on the hills situated within the eastern part of the Preston ward, such as those in the Shorton and Dolphin Court communities or on the elevated ridge known as Preston Down. Therefore, after taking these factors into due consideration, we wish to ask the Commission to look once more at our suggestion whereby:
  i. The current Preston ward would be reduced in size geographically to form a new two-member ward, serving simply the elevated and overwhelmingly residential communities in the western portion of the current ward;
  ii. The current Roundham-with-Hyde ward would be extended northwards to form a new three-member ward, absorbing the eastern area of the existing Preston ward lying roughly between the A3022 Torquay Road corridor and the seafront.

- Although our proposals in these respects have hitherto not found favour with the *Local Government Boundary Commission for England*, having taken the opportunity for a second time to examine the salient points at issue, Torbay Liberal Democrats remain of the opinion that (just like the nearby towns of Torquay and Brixham) the town centre of Paignton would also be best served by a three-member ward formed primarily from the current Roundham-with-Hyde ward conjoined with the eastern portion of the prevailing Preston ward. We should therefore be very obliged if the *Local Government Boundary Commission for England* could revisit this suggestion and give due consideration to our proposals in this regard.
Looking west, a view of the current Preston Ward, with the low-lying plain in the foreground. Shorton and Dolphin Court (upper left) and Preston Down (upper right) on the high ground.

- Torbay Liberal Democrats take the view that the combination of commercial and retail interests, a vibrant harbour, an increase in the population during the tourist season and a plethora of social problems associated with town centres generally, all point to the need for a three-member ward for the combined Paignton town centre and seafront areas so as to help distribute the resultant workload equitably among as many councillors as possible. We remain of the view that the creation of such a three-member ward for Paignton town centre and its immediate environs will also produce other communal benefits, in that both the prevailing Roundham-with-Hyde ward and the eastern portion of the current Preston ward which we suggest be merged with this, both share a collective interest in the two main commuter routes and arterial roads linking Torquay and Paignton town centres (the A3022 and the B3021). There are also common public transport concerns relating to both ‘bus and rail travel, the latter being particularly important for the tourist sector and for the commercial viability of any future town centre developments, more details of which we alluded to as part of our previous submission.

- If after further consideration the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is indeed now minded to create a new three-member ward (formed for the most part from the bulk of the prevailing Roundham-with-Hyde ward merged with the eastern portion of the current Preston ward), Torbay Liberal Democrats take the view that an amended name will be required for this new entity. In this regard, we should like to propose that in order to reflect the former Preston element and the historical context of Paignton town centre, it should be named “Redcliffe-with-Coverdale” or a name with similar acknowledgments.
• If, however, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is not minded to create a new three-member ward along the lines which we have proposed, Torbay Liberal Democrats would like to draw the Commission’s attention to the anomaly which currently exists in respect of Logan Road (TQ3 2AZ) and Wilbarn Road (TQ3 2BN). These roads are currently part of the existing and proposed Preston ward, whereas vehicular access to them is only feasible from Lower Polsham Road – a street which falls entirely within the existing and proposed Roundham-with-Hyde ward.

4. “The Brixham Peninsula”

• Torbay Liberal Democrats note and acknowledge the various recommendations made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England relating to the “The Brixham Peninsula” area located at the southern end of the Torbay Unitary Authority and, with the exception of the position appertaining to both Stabb Close and Stabb Drive alluded to on Page 9 of this submission, we have no further comments or counter-proposals to advance in relation to either the wider Brixham peninsula area or the wards in question.

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CONCLUSION

As we have indicated throughout this submission, Torbay Liberal Democrats have welcomed the opportunity to propose and counter-propose numerous and varied aspects relating to the review being undertaken at present by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in relation to the wards forming the Torbay Unitary Authority.

We appreciate the efforts undertaken and the submissions made by numerous individuals and organisations, as well as the task facing the Commission itself. So as to avoid any scenario whereby a ward might be divided between two separate parliamentary constituencies, such a task will also unavoidably include close liaison between the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and its colleagues who comprise the Boundary Commission for England who are simultaneously undertaking a parallel review into the boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies relative to the Torbay Unitary Authority area.

Torbay Liberal Democrats believe that we have adopted a pragmatic review of the prevailing circumstances and, in so doing, we have endeavoured to comply fully with both the general guidelines and the parameters proscribed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for the making of such submissions and we therefore now look forward to the Commission’s final recommendations scheduled for publication on 6th February 2018.

TORBAY LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
DECEMBER 2017