

INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY



AND



HEALTH CONCERN

DR RICHARD TAYLOR, MBE – PRESIDENT



TEL. [REDACTED]

23rd June, 2014

Chairman,

Local Government Boundary Commission

For England,

Layden House,

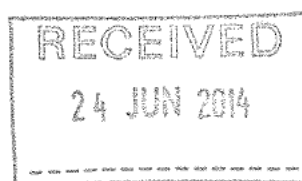
76-86, Turnmill House,

London,

EC1 5LG

Dear Sir,

RE : Wyre Forest District Council , Alteration to Ward Boundaries



Please find enclosed our detailed comments on the most recent recommendations .

of the Boundaries Commission .

We ask you to give urgent consideration to re-consider your proposals so that they reflect the Policy and Guidelines that have been laid down by the Commission.

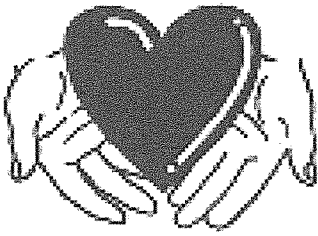
This letter and the accompanying report will be sent electronically but hard copies will be despatched today by recorded delivery.

Yours faithfully,

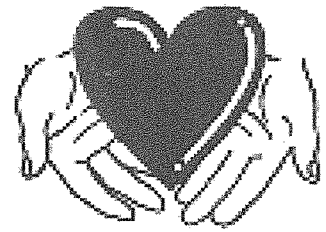
Dr. [REDACTED]

Member of Parliament for Wyre Forest 2001-2014

N. Thomas (Chairman)



**INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY
AND
HEALTH CONCERN**



**RESPONSE TO THE
BOUNDARY COMMISSION
PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS
FOR WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE**



**INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY
AND
HEALTH CONCERN**



**RESPONSE FROM
INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY AND HEALTH CONCERN**

Independent Community and Health Concern is a local political party in and around Wyre Forest, registered with the Electoral Commission, currently holding the following representation:

- 13 Town Council seats in Stourport-on-Severn (13 of 18 seats)**
- 7 Town Council seats in Bewdley (7 of 13 seats)**
- 7 District Council seats at Wyre Forest D.C. (7 of 42 seats)**
- 3 County Council seats at Worcestershire C.C. (3 of 10 WF seats)**

Life President: Dr. Richard Taylor FRCP MBE

Doctor Taylor was the Independent MP for Wyre Forest for two terms between 2001 and 2010.

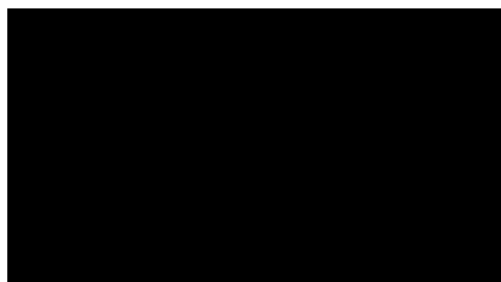
Party Chairman: Nigel Thomas

Secretary &

Election Agent: Peter Young

Treasurer: Keith Robertson

Registered Address: Wyre Forest Constituency Offices:



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Having studied the Boundary Commission report we are dismayed by several aspects of its proposals and believe that, on several issues, it is flawed.

The report does not conform with the Boundary Commission's own policies in that it gives greater weight to numerical balance in wards than to community identity and parish / town boundaries. The Commission's guidelines state that "the importance of parishes should not be underestimated". In some instances these proposals cut across this guideline, dividing neighbours and neighbourhoods. In others, the proposals arbitrarily throw together parishes which are without any historic or social links and which are geographically disparate, resulting in areas devoid of identity. This concept failed in 'Humberside' / South Yorkshire and is hardly likely to succeed here in Wyre Forest—an area with a proven record of resisting government diktat.

The principle of 'Parish building-blocks' has not been adopted in some of the Proposals: nor has the principle of clearly defined boundaries, nor the principle of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties.

Severn Valley ward - Wribbenhall, Bewdley and Stourport are distinct and separate communities where lines of communication (other than the River Severn) tend to flow East / West rather than linking these North / South riverside centres.

The Commission's proposals would appear to fail the test of retaining Community Identity in that they break existing local ties.

It would appear that the Commission's proposals will result in some Wyre Forest residents voting in three different 'wards' for County, for District and for Town Parish elections.

The Commission fails to recognise the historic identity of areas and imposes names which will not be recognised by those living locally: viz. Wribbenhall, a community established before Domesday, and the oldest settlement in Wyre Forest, would be eliminated and replaced with something akin to 'Humberside'. Not acceptable.

Wyre Forest is a FOUR area District (Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley and the rural parishes outside these towns - on either side of the river) - whereas the Commission only recognises and refers to three, omitting any reference to Bewdley (a town with a 2001 census population of 9,178).

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Parts of Burlish Park and Lickhill (Stourport-on-Severn) will be 'detached' from their existing communities and placed together with areas with which they have no existing natural or administrative commonality (in the so-called 'Severn Valley' ward).

Rock and Bewdley are also distinct, separate and individual communities which will derive no benefit by being co-joined.

The same is true of the division of Upper Arley parish—but for the opposite reason. The Commission would appear to be content to shuffle the 'numbers' deck any way it can just so the numbers add up; dividing the happily joined and throwing together the diverse and disparate.

Other areas of anomaly which we would wish the Commission to reconsider, closely, include

- ◇ Offmore & Comberton
 - ◇ Sutton Park
 - ◇ Habberley South
- and, most importantly,
- ◇ the huge Wyre Forest Rural ward*

* This is to be a ward some 30 (thirty) miles across !

We would ask the Commission how they think it will be possible for Councillors to service the voters in this community adequately and with the even-handedness that is a requirement of a true democratic pattern. Any discrepancy in administration or failing on behalf of the elected Councillor(s) involved could well be laid at the door of the Commission for failing to anticipate what others predict could be an obvious outcome.

Geographically Wyre Forest is predominantly rural and, while mathematical 'purity' might be the desired objective of those looking for an easy option, we would ask / beg / require the Commission to consider the alternative of 'One Member' wards where historic, geographic and social consideration ought to be prime, and so retain the 'Parish / Community' criteria of the Commission's own obligations.

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CONCLUSION:

We desire the Commission to acknowledge that_

- ◇ the Proposals are flawed in many areas and objectives
- ◇ the Proposals cannot be reconciled with the Commission's own criteria
- ◇ a reconsideration is necessary so that the points we have raised can be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION:

Independent Community and Health Concern recommend that the Boundary Commission revisit and revise their report and its proposals regarding the allocation and re-alignment of the voting wards within Wyre Forest in order for the changes to conform with the Commission's own 'total policy framework' - retain historic links, retain geographic identity, reinforce social cohesion and obviate confusion for the voters—rather than merely target the numerical priority that it currently attempts to answer.