

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Devon County Council

*February 2000*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)  
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)  
Peter Brokenshire  
Kru Desai  
Pamela Gordon  
Robin Gray  
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to division boundaries, and the number of councillors and division names.

This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Devon County Council.

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A large map illustrating the proposed division boundaries for Devon is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Devon County Council on 24 August 1999.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Devon:

- **in 26 of the 54 divisions, each of which are represented by a single councillor, the number of electors varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the county and six divisions vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is expected to worsen, with the number of electors forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 27 divisions and by more than 20 per cent in eight divisions.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 104-105) are that:

- **Devon County Council should have 62 councillors, eight more than at present, representing 62 divisions;**
- **as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the recent district reviews, the boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change.**

These draft recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each county councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In 42 of the proposed 62 divisions the number of electors would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the county average, with three varying by more than 20 per cent from the average.**
- **This improved electoral equality is forecast improve further, with the number of electors in 15 divisions expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the county in 2004, with none varying by more than 20 per cent from the average.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited. Our proposals are set out in Figures 1 and 2 following this summary, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover and in Appendix A.

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 22 February 2000. We have not yet decided on our final recommendations and wish to use this period to seek further evidence. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses if, in our judgement, the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would be better served. It is important, therefore, that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 17 April 2000:

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Devon Review  
Local Government Commission for England  
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E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)**

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

| <b>Division name<br/>(by district council area)</b> | <b>Constituent district wards</b>  |
|---|--|
| <b>EAST DEVON DISTRICT</b>                          |  |
| 1 Axminster   | Axminster Rural ward; Axminster Town ward; Newbridges ward; Yarty ward   |
| 2 Beer & Seaton                                     | Beer & Branscombe ward; Seaton ward; Trinity ward  |
| 3 Broadclyst & Whimble                              | Broadclyst ward; Clyst Valley ward; Exe Valley ward; Whimble ward  |
| 4 Budleigh  | Budleigh ward; Newton Poppleford & Harpford ward; Ottery St Mary Rural ward (part – the parish of Aylesbeare); Raleigh ward  |
| 5 Exmouth Brixington & Withycombe                   | Exmouth Brixington ward; Exmouth Withycombe Raleigh ward   |
| 6 Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury                        | Exmouth Halsdon ward; Woodbury & Lympstone ward  |
| 7 Exmouth Littleham & Town                          | Exmouth Littleham ward; Exmouth Town ward  |
| 8 Honiton St Michael's                              | Coly Valley ward; Honiton St Michael's ward  |
| 9 Honiton St Paul's                                 | Dunkeswell ward; Honiton St Paul's ward; Otterhead ward; Tale Vale ward  |
| 10 Ottery St Mary & Sidmouth                        | Fenton & Buckerell ward; Ottery St Mary Rural ward (part – North, Tipton St John and West Hill parish wards of Ottery St Mary parish); Ottery St Mary Town ward; Sidmouth Rural ward |
| 11 Sidmouth Sidford                                 | Sidmouth Sidford ward; Sidmouth Town ward  |
| <b>EXETER CITY</b>                                  |  |
| 12 Alphington & Cowick                              | Alphington ward; Cowick ward   |
| 13 Duryard & Pennsylvania                           | Duryard ward; Pennsylvania ward  |
| 14 Exwick & St Thomas                               | Exwick ward; St Thomas ward  |
| 15 Newtown & St Leonard's                           | Newtown ward; Priory ward (part); St Leonard's ward  |
| 16 Polsloe & Mincinglake                            | Mincinglake ward; Polsloe ward   |
| 17 Priory & Heavitree                               | Heavitree ward; Priory ward (part)   |
| 18 St David's & St James                            | St David's ward; St James ward   |
| 19 St Loyes & Topsham                               | St Loyes ward; Topsham ward  |
| 20 Whipton Barton & Pinhoe                          | Pinhoe ward; Whipton Barton ward   |

| <b>Division name<br/>(by district council area)</b> | <b>Constituent district wards</b>  |
|---|--|
| <b>MID DEVON DISTRICT</b>                           |  |
| 21 Crediton Rural                                   | Boniface ward; Lawrence ward; Upper Yeo ward; Yeo ward   |
| 22 Cullompton Rural                                 | Bradninch ward; Cullompton North ward; Cullompton Outer ward; Cullompton South ward; Silverton ward                                |
| 23 Newton St Cyres and Sandford                     | Cadbury ward; Newbrooke ward; Sandford & Creedy ward; Taw ward; Taw Vale ward; Way ward  |
| 24 Tiverton East                                    | Cranmore ward; Halberton ward; Lowman ward   |
| 25 Tiverton West                                    | Castle ward; Clare & Shuttern ward; Westexe ward   |
| 26 Willand & Uffculme                               | Canonsleigh ward; Lower Culm ward; Upper Culm ward   |
| <b>NORTH DEVON DISTRICT</b>                         |  |
| 27 Barnstaple East                                  | Forches & Whiddon Valley ward; Newport ward; Yeo Valley ward   |
| 28 Barnstaple West                                  | Central Town ward; Longbridge ward; Pilton ward  |
| 29 Braunton Rural                                   | Braunton East ward; Braunton West ward; Georgeham & Morthoe ward (part – the parish of Georgeham); Heanton Punchardon ward         |
| 30 Chulmleigh & Swimbridge                          | Bratton Fleming ward; Chittlehampton ward; Chulmleigh ward; Landkey, Swimbridge & Taw ward   |
| 31 Combe Martin Rural                               | Combe Martin ward; Lynton & Lynmouth ward; Marwood ward; Georgeham & Morteheo ward (part – the parishes of Morteheo and West Down) |
| 32 Fremington Rural                                 | Bickington & Roundswell ward; Fremington ward; Instow ward   |
| 33 Ilfracombe                                       | Ilfracombe Central ward; Ilfracombe East ward; Ilfracombe West ward  |
| 34 South Molton Rural                               | Bishop's Nympton ward; North Molton ward; South Molton ward; Witheridge ward   |
| <b>SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT</b>                          |  |
| 35 Bickleigh & Wembury                              | Bickleigh & Shaugh ward; Cornwood & Sparkwell ward; Wembury & Brixton ward   |
| 36 Dartmouth & Kingswear                            | Dartmouth & Kingswear ward; Dartmouth Townstal ward; West Dart ward  |
| 37 Ivybridge  | Ivybridge Central ward; Ivybridge Filham ward; Ivybridge Woodlands ward  |
| 38 Kingsbridge & Salcombe                           | Kingsbridge East ward; Kingsbridge North ward; Salcombe & Marlborough ward; Westville & Alvington ward                             |
| 39 South Brent & Dartington                         | Dartington ward; East Dart ward; Eastmoor ward; Marldon ward; South Brent ward   |
| 40 Thurlestone & Slapton                            | Allington & Loddiswell ward; Saltstone ward; Skerries ward; Stokenham ward; Thurlestone ward                                       |

| <b>Division name<br/>(by district council area)</b> | <b>Constituent district wards</b>  |
|---|--|
| 41 Totnes Rural                                     | Avon & Harbourne ward; Totnes Bridgetown ward; Totnes Town ward  |
| 42 Yealmpton  | Charterlands ward; Erme Valley ward; Newton & Noss ward; Yealmpton ward  |
| <b>TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT</b>                         |  |
| 43 Ashburton & Buckfastleigh                        | Ambrook ward (part – the parish of Ogwell); Ashburton & Buckfastleigh ward; Haytor ward  |
| 44 Bovey Tracey Rural                               | Bovey ward; Moorland ward  |
| 45 Chudleigh Rural                                  | Chudleigh ward; Teignbridge North ward (part – the parishes of Tedburn St Mary and Whitestone); Teign Valley ward  |
| 46 Dawlish  | Dawlish Central & North East ward; Dawlish South West ward   |
| 47 Exminster & Kenton                               | Kenn Valley ward; Kenton with Starcross ward; Teignbridge North ward (part – the parish of Holcombe Burnell)   |
| 48 Kingsteignton                                    | Kingsteignton East ward; Kingsteignton West ward   |
| 49 Newton Abbot East                                | Buckland & Milber ward; Kerswell with Combe ward   |
| 50 Newton Abbot Town                                | Bradley ward; Bushell ward   |
| 51 Newton Abbot West                                | Ambrook ward (part – the parishes of Broadhempston, Denbury & Torbryan and Woodland); College ward; Ipplepen ward  |
| 52 Teignmouth East                                  | Teignmouth Central ward; Teignmouth East ward  |
| 53 Teignmouth West                                  | Bishopsteignton ward; Shaldon & Stokeinteignhead ward; Teignmouth West ward  |
| <b>TORRIDGE DISTRICT</b>                            |  |
| 54 Bideford East                                    | Bideford East ward; Bideford North ward; Monkleigh & Littleham ward  |
| 55 Bideford South & Hartland                        | Bideford South ward; Clovelly Bay ward; Hartland & Bradworthy ward (part – the parishes of Hartland and Welcombe); Kenwith ward; Waldon ward   |
| 56 Holsworthy Rural                                 | Broadheath ward; Coham Bridge ward; Forest ward; Hartland & Bradworthy ward (part – the parish of Bradworthy); Holsworthy ward; Shebbear & Langtree ward (part – the parishes of Newton St Petrock and Shebbear); Tamarside ward |
| 57 Northam  | Appledore ward; Northam ward; Orchard Hill ward; Westward Ho! ward   |
| 58 Torrington Rural                                 | Clinton ward; Shebbear & Langtree ward (part – the parish of Langtree); Three Moors ward; Torrington ward; Two Rivers ward; Winkleigh ward   |

| <b>Division name<br/>(by district council area)</b> | <b>Constituent district wards</b>   |
|---|---|
| <b>WEST DEVON DISTRICT</b>                          |   |
| 59 Hatherleigh & Chagford                           | Chagford ward; Drewsteignton ward; Exbourne ward; Hatherleigh ward; Lew Valley ward; North Tawton ward; South Tawton ward |
| 60 Okehampton Rural                                 | Bridestowe ward; Mary Tavy ward; Milton Ford ward; Okehampton East ward; Okehampton West ward; Thrushel ward              |
| 61 Tavistock  | Tamarside ward; Tavistock North ward; Tavistock South ward; Tavistock South West ward                                     |
| 62 Yelverton Rural                                  | Bere Ferrers ward; Buckland Monachorum ward; Burrator ward; Lydford ward; Walkham ward                                    |

*Notes: 1 The constituent district wards are those resulting from the electoral reviews of the eight Devon districts which were completed in 1999 (except South Hams district which was completed in 1997). Where whole district wards do not form the building blocks, constituent parishes and parish wards are listed.*

*2 The large map inserted at the back of the report illustrates the proposed divisions outlined above and the map in Appendix A illustrates one of the proposed boundaries in Exeter in more detail.*

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Devon

| Division name<br>(by district council area) | Number<br>of<br>councillors | Electorate<br>(1999) | Variance<br>from average<br>% | Electorate<br>(2004) | Variance<br>from average<br>% |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>EAST DEVON BOROUGH</b>                   |                             |                      |                               |                      |                               |
| 1 Axminster                                 | 1                           | 8,770                | 0                             | 9,165                | 0                             |
| 2 Beer & Seaton                             | 1                           | 8,874                | 1                             | 9,199                | 1                             |
| 3 Broadclyst & Whimble                      | 1                           | 8,444                | -4                            | 9,012                | -1                            |
| 4 Budleigh                                  | 1                           | 8,305                | -5                            | 8,524                | -7                            |
| 5 Exmouth Brixington & Withycombe           | 1                           | 9,733                | 11                            | 10,257               | 12                            |
| 6 Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury                | 1                           | 8,324                | -5                            | 8,548                | -7                            |
| 7 Exmouth Littleham & Town                  | 1                           | 10,051               | 15                            | 10,492               | 15                            |
| 8 Honiton St Michael's                      | 1                           | 8,411                | -4                            | 9,209                | 1                             |
| 9 Honiton St Paul's                         | 1                           | 8,305                | -5                            | 8,660                | -5                            |
| 10 Ottery St Mary & Sidmouth                | 1                           | 9,701                | 11                            | 10,196               | 12                            |
| 11 Sidmouth Sidford                         | 1                           | 8,546                | 9                             | 9,835                | 8                             |
| <b>EXETER CITY</b>                          |                             |                      |                               |                      |                               |
| 12 Alphington & Cowick                      | 1                           | 10,648               | 22                            | 10,798               | 18                            |
| 13 Duryard & Pennsylvania                   | 1                           | 8,999                | 3                             | 8,789                | -4                            |
| 14 Exwick & St Thomas                       | 1                           | 10,828               | 24                            | 10,638               | 16                            |
| 15 Newtown & St Leonard's                   | 1                           | 8,438                | -4                            | 8,439                | -8                            |
| 16 Polsloe & Mincinglake                    | 1                           | 8,197                | -6                            | 8,249                | -10                           |
| 17 Priory & Heavitree                       | 1                           | 10,109               | 15                            | 9,937                | 9                             |
| 18 St David's & St James                    | 1                           | 7,665                | -12                           | 8,512                | -7                            |
| 19 St Loyes & Topsham                       | 1                           | 7,652                | -13                           | 8,489                | -7                            |
| 20 Whipton Barton & Pinhoe                  | 1                           | 10,610               | 21                            | 10,333               | 13                            |

| <b>Division name<br/>(by district council area)</b> | <b>Number<br/>of<br/>councillors</b> | <b>Electorate<br/>(1999)</b> | <b>Variance<br/>from average<br/>%</b> | <b>Electorate<br/>(2004)</b> | <b>Variance<br/>from average<br/>%</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|
| <b>MID DEVON DISTRICT</b>                           |                                      |                              |  |                              |  |
| 21 Crediton Rural                                   | 1                                    | 8,778                        | 0                                      | 9,205                        | 1                                      |
| 22 Cullompton Rural                                 | 1                                    | 8,735                        | 0                                      | 9,280                        | 1                                      |
| 23 Newton St Cyres and Sandford                     | 1                                    | 8,648                        | -1                                     | 9,171                        | 0                                      |
| 24 Tiverton East                                    | 1                                    | 8,661                        | -1                                     | 8,738                        | -4                                     |
| 25 Tiverton West                                    | 1                                    | 8,650                        | -1                                     | 8,975                        | -2                                     |
| 26 Willand & Uffculme                               | 1                                    | 9,487                        | 8                                      | 9,615                        | 5                                      |
| <b>NORTH DEVON DISTRICT</b>                         |                                      |                              |  |                              |  |
| 27 Barnstaple East                                  | 1                                    | 9,249                        | 6                                      | 9,578                        | 5                                      |
| 28 Barnstaple West                                  | 1                                    | 9,754                        | 11                                     | 9,883                        | 8                                      |
| 29 Braunton Rural                                   | 1                                    | 8,920                        | 2                                      | 8,961                        | -2                                     |
| 30 Chulmleigh & Swimbridge                          | 1                                    | 8,526                        | -3                                     | 8,801                        | -4                                     |
| 31 Combe Martin Rural                               | 1                                    | 7,833                        | -11                                    | 7,971                        | -13                                    |
| 32 Fremington Rural                                 | 1                                    | 7,483                        | -15                                    | 8,462                        | -7                                     |
| 33 Ilfracombe                                       | 1                                    | 8,247                        | -6                                     | 8,416                        | -8                                     |
| 34 South Molton Rural                               | 1                                    | 8,058                        | -8                                     | 8,387                        | -8                                     |
| <b>SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT</b>                          |                                      |                              |  |                              |  |
| 35 Bickleigh & Wembury                              | 1                                    | 8,956                        | 2                                      | 9,195                        | 1                                      |
| 36 Dartmouth & Kingswear                            | 1                                    | 7,348                        | -16                                    | 7,699                        | -16                                    |
| 37 Ivybridge  | 1                                    | 8,682                        | -1                                     | 9,721                        | 6                                      |
| 38 Kingsbridge & Salcombe                           | 1                                    | 8,095                        | -8                                     | 8,592                        | -6                                     |
| 39 South Brent & Dartington                         | 1                                    | 8,522                        | -3                                     | 8,726                        | -5                                     |
| 40 Thurlestone & Slapton                            | 1                                    | 7,922                        | -10                                    | 8,352                        | -9                                     |
| 41 Totnes Rural                                     | 1                                    | 8,209                        | -6                                     | 8,723                        | -5                                     |
| 42 Yealmpton  | 1                                    | 8,602                        | -2                                     | 9,082                        | -1                                     |

| Division name<br>(by district council area) | Number<br>of<br>councillors | Electorate<br>(1999) | Variance<br>from average<br>% | Electorate<br>(2004) | Variance<br>from average<br>% |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT</b>                 |                             |                      |                               |                      |                               |
| 43 Ashburton & Buckfastleigh                | 1                           | 9,467                | 8                             | 10,171               | 11                            |
| 44 Bovey Tracey Rural                       | 1                           | 7,740                | -12                           | 8,528                | -7                            |
| 45 Chudleigh Rural                          | 1                           | 7,856                | -10                           | 8,520                | -7                            |
| 46 Dawlish                                  | 1                           | 10,210               | 17                            | 10,528               | 15                            |
| 47 Exminster & Kenton                       | 1                           | 7,235                | -17                           | 7,906                | -14                           |
| 48 Kingsteignton                            | 1                           | 8,569                | -2                            | 9,300                | 2                             |
| 49 Newton Abbot East                        | 1                           | 9,861                | 13                            | 10,328               | 13                            |
| 50 Newton Abbot Town                        | 1                           | 8,063                | -8                            | 8,759                | -4                            |
| 51 Newton Abbot West                        | 1                           | 8,400                | -4                            | 8,903                | -3                            |
| 52 Teignmouth East                          | 1                           | 7,434                | -15                           | 7,736                | -15                           |
| 53 Teignmouth West                          | 1                           | 7,852                | -10                           | 8,198                | -10                           |
| <b>TORRIDGE DISTRICT</b>                    |                             |                      |                               |                      |                               |
| 54 Bideford East                            | 1                           | 8,321                | -5                            | 8,712                | -5                            |
| 55 Bideford South & Hartland                | 1                           | 8,616                | -2                            | 8,983                | -2                            |
| 56 Holsworthy Rural                         | 1                           | 8,689                | -1                            | 9,103                | 0                             |
| 57 Northam                                  | 1                           | 8,925                | 2                             | 9,380                | 3                             |
| 58 Torrington Rural                         | 1                           | 8,944                | 2                             | 9,309                | 2                             |
| <b>WEST DEVON BOROUGH</b>                   |                             |                      |                               |                      |                               |
| 59 Hatherleigh & Chagford                   | 1                           | 8,709                | -1                            | 9,080                | -1                            |
| 60 Okehampton Rural                         | 1                           | 9,525                | 9                             | 10,149               | 11                            |
| 61 Tavistock                                | 1                           | 9,753                | 11                            | 10,382               | 14                            |
| 62 Yelverton Rural                          | 1                           | 9,810                | 12                            | 10,082               | 10                            |
| <b>Totals</b>                               | <b>62</b>                   | <b>543,018</b>       | <b>-</b>                      | <b>566,871</b>       | <b>-</b>                      |
| <b>Averages</b>                             | <b>-</b>                    | <b>-</b>             | <b>8,758</b>                  | <b>-</b>             | <b>9,143</b>                  |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Devon County Council.

Note: The electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor as each division is represented by a single councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 We are currently undertaking a review of the electoral arrangements for Devon County Council. This report contains our draft recommendations on which we are now consulting. Our review of the county is part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 In each two-tier county, our approach is first to complete the PERs of all the constituent districts and, when Orders for the resulting changes in those areas have been made by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, then to commence a PER of the county council's electoral arrangements. The Secretary of State made Orders for new electoral arrangements in the districts in Devon, which we reviewed in 1998/99 (except South Hams district which we reviewed in 1996/97), in October 1999 and we are now embarking on our county review in this area.

## **Our Approach to County Reviews**

3 In undertaking all our PERs we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie the need to:
  - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
  - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Appendix C).

4 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties*, which we supplemented in October 1998 on our approach to county reviews.

5 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the County Council, and the number, boundaries and names of electoral divisions. Current legislation requires that county council electoral divisions should each return one councillor. In addition, the statutory Rules set out in the 1972 Act provide that each division should be wholly contained within a single district and that division boundaries should not split unwarded parishes or parish wards.

6 In considering the approach we should take to county reviews we valued the responses to the consultation we undertook in 1995 prior to the start of our PER programme, and the more recent discussions we have had with county council officers and the Local Government Association. We have also welcomed the opportunity to brief chief officers and, on an all-party basis, members of individual county councils, about our policies and procedures.

7 In October 1998 we wrote to all county councils setting out further advice on our approach to county reviews which supplemented our *Guidance*. First, as with all our reviews, we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and configuration is most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

8 Second, the broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the county as a whole. For example, we will continue to require justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any division. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in exceptional circumstances, and will require strong justification.

9 Similarly, we will seek to ensure that the number of county councillors representing each district area within the county is commensurate with the district's proportion of the county's electorate.

10 Third, the Rules provide that, in considering county council electoral arrangements, we should have regard to the boundaries of district wards. We attach considerable importance to achieving coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections, lead to increased election costs and, in our view, may not be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

11 We recognise, however, that it is unlikely that optimum electoral equality and greatest coterminosity will be simultaneously achievable. In this respect, county reviews are different to those of districts. The Commission will seek to achieve the best available balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, taking into account the statutory criteria. While the proportion of electoral divisions that will be coterminous with the boundaries of district wards is likely to vary between counties, we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions.

12 Where coterminosity is not possible in parished areas, and a district ward is to be split between electoral divisions, we would normally expect this to be achieved without dividing (or further dividing) a parish between divisions. There are likely to be exceptions to this, however, particularly where larger parishes are involved.

13 Fourth, we are not prescriptive on council size but, as indicated in our *Guidance*, we start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that county but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a county's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a county council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other counties.

14 Fifth, a further area of difference between county and district reviews is that we recognise it will not be possible to avoid the creation of some county divisions which contain diverse communities, for example, combining urban and rural areas. We have generally sought to avoid this in district reviews, in order to reflect the identities and interests of local communities. Some of the existing county council electoral divisions comprise a number of distinct communities, which is inevitable given the larger number of electors represented by each councillor, and we would expect that similar situations will continue under our recommendations in seeking the best balance between electoral equality, coterminosity and the statutory criteria.

15 Finally, before we started our county reviews, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, in July 1998, setting out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. The Government's proposals provided for elections by halves in alternate years for all two-tier authorities. This would mean that district and county councils would each move to a cycle of elections by halves, with elections for district councils and county councils taking place in alternate years. The White Paper also refers to local accountability being maximised where the whole electorate in a council's area is involved in elections each time they take place, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member divisions in county councils to reflect a system of elections by halves. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill published in December 1999 and are currently being considered by Parliament.

16 In October 1998, we wrote to all local authorities, setting out our understanding of the White Paper proposals, following discussions that we had had with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, the Local Government Association and the Association of London Government. In brief, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, and our present *Guidance*, until such time as the legislation changes. We have power only to recommend single-member divisions in county council areas.

17 As part of this review we may also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the county. However, we made some recommendations for new parish electoral arrangements as part of our district reviews. Furthermore, this is now a power that is open to district and unitary councils. We therefore only expect to put forward such recommendations during county reviews on an exceptional basis. In any event, we are *not* able to review the administrative boundaries *between* local authorities or parishes, or consider the establishment of new parish areas as part of this review.

## **The Review of Devon**

18 We completed the reviews of the eight district council areas in Devon in January 1999 (except South Hams district which we completed in January 1997), and the Secretary of State has since made the Orders for the new electoral arrangements. This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Devon County Council. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in December 1980 (Report No. 410).

19 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Stages of the Review*

| <b>Stage</b> | <b>Description</b>  |
|--------------|---|
| One          | Submission of proposals to the Commission                     |
| Two          | The Commission's analysis and deliberation                    |
| Three        | Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them |
| Four         | Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State       |

20 Stage One of this review began on 24 August 1999, when we wrote to Devon County Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the eight district councils in the county, Devon Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Devon Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the county, the Members of Parliament and the Members of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the South-west region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the County Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 13 December 1999.

21 At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

22 Stage Three began on 22 February 2000 with the publication of this draft recommendations report, and public consultation on them will end on 17 April 2000.

23 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

24 The county of Devon comprises the eight districts of East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge, Torrington and West Devon. With a population of approximately 686,100 (1999), covering 656,385 hectares, the county has a population density of 1.05 persons per hectare. The county borders Cornwall to the south, and Dorset and Somerset to the east. The county town of Exeter is situated in the south-east of the county. The county contains 398 parishes.

25 To compare levels of electoral inequality between divisions, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors represented by the councillor for each division varies from the county average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

26 The electorate of the county is 543,018 (February 1999). The Council presently has 54 members, with one member elected from each division (Figure 4).

27 Since the last review of the County Council's electoral arrangements there has been an increase in the electorate in Devon, with around 23 per cent more electors than two decades ago, despite the loss of Plymouth and Torbay during reorganisation in 1998. The most significant growth in the county has occurred in South Hams and Teignbridge, which have nearly 31 per cent and 27 per cent more electors respectively. Exeter City and Mid Devon district have also experienced a notable increase in electorate.

28 At present, each councillor represents an average of 10,056 electors, which the County Council forecasts will increase to 10,498 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors in 26 of the 54 divisions varies by more than 10 per cent from the county average and in six divisions by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Ivybridge division, in South Hams district, where the councillor represents 63 per cent more electors than the county average.

29 As detailed previously, in considering the County Council's electoral arrangements, we must have regard to the boundaries of district wards. Following the completion of the reviews of district warding arrangements in Devon, we are therefore faced with a new "starting point" for considering electoral divisions. Our proposals for county divisions will be based on the new district wards as opposed to those which existed prior to the recent reviews. In view of the effect of these new district wards and changes in the electorate over the past 20 years which have resulted in electoral imbalances across the county, changes to most, if not all, of the existing county electoral divisions are inevitable.

30 In considering county council electoral arrangements, we have regard to the boundaries of district wards. The term 'coterminosity' is used throughout the report and refers to situations where the boundaries of county electoral divisions and district wards are the same, that is to say where county divisions comprise either one or more whole district wards.

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

| Division name<br>(by district council area) | Number<br>of<br>councillors | Electorate<br>(1999) | Variance<br>from<br>average<br>% | Electorate<br>(2004) | Variance<br>from<br>average<br>% |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>EAST DEVON DISTRICT</b>                  |                             |                      |                                  |                      |                                  |
| 1 Axminster Rural                           | 1                           | 11,128               | 11                               | 11,613               | 11                               |
| 2 Budleigh & Sidmouth                       | 1                           | 10,480               | 4                                | 10,674               | 2                                |
| 3 Clyst Vale                                | 1                           | 9,560                | -5                               | 10,207               | -3                               |
| 4 Exmouth Littleham                         | 1                           | 7,194                | -28                              | 7,528                | -28                              |
| 5 Exmouth Lympstone                         | 1                           | 8,707                | -13                              | 9,113                | -13                              |
| 6 Exmouth Withycombe                        | 1                           | 10,707               | 6                                | 11,206               | 7                                |
| 7 Honiton Rural                             | 1                           | 12,550               | 25                               | 13,311               | 27                               |
| 8 Ottery St Mary Rural                      | 1                           | 8,944                | -11                              | 9,485                | -10                              |
| 9 Seaton Rural                              | 1                           | 10,751               | 7                                | 11,219               | 7                                |
| 10 Sidmouth Rural                           | 1                           | 8,511                | -15                              | 8,745                | -17                              |
| <b>EXETER CITY</b>                          |                             |                      |                                  |                      |                                  |
| 11 Alphington & St Thomas                   | 1                           | 10,675               | 6                                | 10,808               | 3                                |
| 12 Barton & St Loyes                        | 1                           | 8,301                | -17                              | 8,406                | -20                              |
| 13 Countess Wear & Topsham                  | 1                           | 7,433                | -26                              | 7,526                | -28                              |
| 14 Exwick & Cowick                          | 1                           | 10,599               | 5                                | 10,732               | 2                                |
| 15 Heavitree & Wonford                      | 1                           | 7,922                | -21                              | 8,021                | -24                              |
| 16 Pinhoe & Whipton                         | 1                           | 8,097                | -19                              | 8,200                | -22                              |
| 17 Rougemont & St Leonard's                 | 1                           | 9,696                | -4                               | 9,818                | -6                               |
| 18 St David's & Pennsylvania                | 1                           | 12,017               | 20                               | 12,168               | 16                               |
| 19 Stoke Hill & Polsloe                     | 1                           | 8,403                | -16                              | 8,508                | -19                              |
| <b>MID DEVON DISTRICT</b>                   |                             |                      |                                  |                      |                                  |
| 20 Bradninch & Creedy                       | 1                           | 8,984                | -11                              | 9,083                | -13                              |
| 21 Crediton Rural                           | 1                           | 11,339               | 13                               | 11,919               | 14                               |
| 22 Cullompton Rural                         | 1                           | 12,020               | 20                               | 12,791               | 22                               |
| 23 Tiverton East                            | 1                           | 10,378               | 3                                | 10,795               | 3                                |
| 24 Tiverton West                            | 1                           | 10,234               | 2                                | 10,388               | -1                               |

| <b>NORTH DEVON DISTRICT</b> |                           |   |        |     |        |     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|--------|-----|--------|-----|
| 25                          | Barnstaple North          | 1 | 9,722  | -3  | 9,815  | -7  |
| 26                          | Barnstaple South          | 1 | 9,152  | -9  | 9,441  | -10 |
| 27                          | Braunton Rural            | 1 | 9,358  | -7  | 9,372  | -11 |
| 28                          | Combe Martin Rural        | 1 | 10,563 | 5   | 10,713 | 2   |
| 29                          | Fremington Rural          | 1 | 10,208 | 2   | 11,506 | 10  |
| 30                          | Ilfracombe                | 1 | 8,376  | -17 | 8,515  | -19 |
| 31                          | South Molton Rural        | 1 | 10,694 | 6   | 11,095 | 6   |
| <b>SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT</b>  |                           |   |        |     |        |     |
| 32                          | Dartmouth Rural           | 1 | 8,261  | -18 | 8,559  | -18 |
| 33                          | Ivybridge                 | 1 | 16,426 | 63  | 18,190 | 73  |
| 34                          | Kingsbridge Rural         | 1 | 11,793 | 17  | 12,369 | 18  |
| 35                          | Modbury & Salcombe        | 1 | 9,058  | -10 | 9,439  | -10 |
| 36                          | Totnes Rural              | 1 | 11,714 | 16  | 12,310 | 17  |
| 37                          | Wembury & Erme            | 1 | 9,083  | -10 | 9,223  | -12 |
| <b>TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT</b> |                           |   |        |     |        |     |
| 38                          | Ashburton & Buckfastleigh | 1 | 8,927  | -11 | 9,651  | -8  |
| 39                          | Belvedere                 | 1 | 10,732 | 7   | 11,657 | 11  |
| 40                          | Bovey                     | 1 | 10,355 | 3   | 11,465 | 9   |
| 41                          | Dawlish                   | 1 | 10,179 | 1   | 10,545 | 0   |
| 42                          | Kingsteignton             | 1 | 10,531 | 5   | 11,480 | 9   |
| 43                          | Newton Abbot East         | 1 | 8,542  | -15 | 8,986  | -14 |
| 44                          | Newton Abbot West         | 1 | 9,480  | -6  | 10,106 | -4  |
| 45                          | Teignbridge South         | 1 | 12,618 | 25  | 13,172 | 25  |
| 46                          | Teignmouth                | 1 | 11,325 | 13  | 11,822 | 13  |
| <b>TORRIDGE DISTRICT</b>    |                           |   |        |     |        |     |
| 47                          | Bideford                  | 1 | 10,489 | 4   | 10,971 | 5   |
| 48                          | Holsworthy Rural          | 1 | 11,043 | 10  | 11,562 | 10  |
| 49                          | Northam Rural             | 1 | 11,283 | 12  | 11,847 | 13  |
| 50                          | Torrington Rural          | 1 | 10,678 | 6   | 11,105 | 6   |

| <b>WEST DEVON BOROUGH</b> |                        |           |                |               |                |               |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 51                        | Hatherleigh & Chagford | 1         | 8,844          | -12           | 9,221          | -12           |
| 52                        | Okehampton Rural       | 1         | 9,336          | -7            | 9,949          | -5            |
| 53                        | Tavistock              | 1         | 9,682          | -4            | 10,307         | -2            |
| 54                        | Yelverton Rural        | 1         | 9,936          | -1            | 10,214         | -3            |
| <b>Totals</b>             |                        | <b>54</b> | <b>543,018</b> | <b>-</b>      | <b>566,871</b> | <b>-</b>      |
| <b>Averages</b>           |                        | <b>-</b>  | <b>-</b>       | <b>10,056</b> | <b>-</b>       | <b>10,498</b> |

*Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Devon County Council.*

*Note: Each division is represented by a single councillor, hence the electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Exmouth Littleham division in East Devon were over-represented by 28 per cent, while electors in Ivybridge division in South Hams were significantly under-represented by 63 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

31 At the start of the review, we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Devon County Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

32 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the County Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 21 representations during Stage One, including a county-wide scheme from the County Council, proposals from Exeter City Council, Mid Devon, South Hams and Teignbridge district councils and Exeter Conservative Association, and comments from 14 parish and town councils, a district councillor and a resident of East Devon. All the representations may be inspected at the offices of the County Council and the Commission by appointment. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission.

#### **Devon County Council**

33 Devon County Council stated that it had undertaken “wide consultation” during Stage One of the review and that the “final scheme reflects several of the suggestions ... most particularly from district councils”.

34 The County Council proposed a council of 62 members, eight more than at present, serving 62 divisions. It argued that after reorganisation in 1998 and the subsequent loss of 31 councillors, Devon County Council has experienced problems in appointing representatives to internal committees and external bodies from the remaining core of councillors. It added that the current councillor:elector ratio of approximately 1:10,000, is not conducive to the provision of effective and convenient local government in a sparsely populated area such as Devon.

35 Devon County Council proposed that South Hams and Teignbridge districts each be represented by two additional councillors, that East Devon, Mid Devon, North Devon and Torridge districts each be represented by one more councillor and that Exeter city and West Devon borough retain the same level of representation.

36 Under the County Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the county average in 22 divisions, and by more than 20 per cent from the average in four divisions. By 2004, the number of electors in 19 divisions would vary by more than 10 per cent from the county average, but none by more than 20 per cent. Coterminosity would be achieved in 84 per cent of the proposed divisions.

#### **District Councils**

37 Exeter City Council supported the County Council’s proposal for nine divisions in Exeter, but proposed a slightly different configuration of city wards to that proposed by the County Council. The scheme would facilitate total coterminosity across the city and utilise the River Exe as a boundary. The proposals would provide for improved electoral equality across the city, with no ward having an electoral variance of more than 18 per cent by 2004.

38 Mid Devon District Council expressed support for the County Council's proposals for Mid Devon, on the basis that they would provide 100 per cent coterminosity across the district, with no division having an electoral variance of more than 5 per cent by 2004.

39 South Hams District Council welcomed the review but expressed concern that the recommendations would not be implemented until 2005, and therefore that the five-year forecasts (2004) would be of limited relevance. It also expressed concern that the County Council's proposed divisions of South Brent & Dartington, Bickleigh & Wembury and Dartmouth & Kingswear would not reflect community identities. However, it did not propose alternative division boundaries in these areas.

40 Teignbridge District Council expressed concern about the proposed increase in council size from 54 to 62 and "the splitting of Teignmouth and Newton Abbot where presently clear and identifiable boundaries exist". It added that rural and urban parishes should not be combined in single divisions, as under the County Council's proposals. However, it supported the concept of coterminosity across the district and proposed a number of alternative division names.

### **Exeter Conservative Association**

41 Exeter Conservative Association expressed support for Exeter City Council's Stage One submission in full, including the recommendation for nine county councillors in Exeter.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

42 We received a total of 14 representations from parish and town councils in Devon. In East Devon district, Axminster Town Council proposed that the existing Axminster division be reduced in size to provide improved electoral equality. Seaton Town Council proposed that the town be represented by its own county councillor and Sidmouth Town Council proposed that the Sid Valley form a single division, served by two county councillors. Woodbury Parish Council opposed splitting the parish between county divisions, as it is for district warding purposes.

43 In North Devon district, South Molton Town Council requested that the parish be represented by its own county councillor. Braunton Parish Council and East Worlington Parish Council supported the County Council's proposals in their areas.

44 In South Hams district, Ivybridge Town Council expressed concern that the county councillor for Ivybridge represents 17,000 electors (63 per cent more than the average for the county), and suggested that Ivybridge be represented by one or two councillors of its own. Ugborough Parish Council expressed support for the review, in order to rectify the current electoral inequalities in the existing Ivybridge division. Shaugh Prior Parish Council proposed that county divisions be either of an urban or rural profile. Stokenham Parish Council proposed a district-wide configuration of county divisions, based on whole parishes and the district wards that existed before the Commission's recent review of electoral arrangements in South Hams district.

45 In Torridge district, Great Torrington Town Council and Sheepwash Parish Council proposed that the existing arrangements be retained. In addition, Sheepwash Parish Council commented on the internal political management structure of Torridge district.

46 In West Devon borough, Tavistock Town Council opposed linking Tamarside ward with Tavistock for county divisions purposes (as proposed by the County Council), on the basis that it would not provide good electoral equality (13 per cent initially) and that urban and rural wards should not be merged in a single county division.

### **Other Representations**

47 We received a further two representations from a district councillor and resident. Councillor Ley, member for Bishops Nympton ward in North Devon, proposed that the parishes of Molland and Bishops Nympton (separated for district warding purposes) be included in a single county division for reasons of community identity. A resident of East Devon district proposed modifying a parish boundary and that Seaton town should be represented by its own county councillor.



## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

48 As with our reviews of districts, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Devon County Council is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every division of the county”.

49 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. We must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken, and to the boundaries of district wards.

50 We have discussed in Chapter One the additional parameters which apply to reviews of county council electoral arrangements and the need to have regard to the boundaries of district wards and coterminosity. We will also seek to ensure that the number of county councillors representing each district council area within the county is commensurate with the district’s proportion of the county’s electorate.

51 It is impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for exactly the same number of electors in every division of a county. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

52 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, especially when also seeking to achieve coterminosity in order to facilitate convenient and effective local government. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review.

53 We therefore recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as the boundaries of district wards and community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any division. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in exceptional circumstances and will require strong justification.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

54 The County Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting a marginal increase in the electorate of 4 per cent from 543,018 to 566,871 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in the districts of South Hams and Teignbridge, which will have approximately 6 per cent and 7 per cent more electors respectively. The County

Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

55 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science. We have examined the methodology and assumptions used by the County Council and are content that their figures represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We welcome further views on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

## **Council Size**

56 As explained earlier in this report, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

57 Devon County Council presently has 54 members. The County Council proposed a council size of 62, eight members more than at present. It argued that “the loss of 31 councillors as a result of the reorganisation in 1998 has imposed a further strain on the remaining 54 Devon members since appointments must still be made to the same committees and outside bodies”, but from a smaller number of councillors.

58 The Council recognised that there is no provision in legislation for the application of a rural weighting, and that we cannot provide for rural sparsity in our recommendations. However, the County Council underlined the fact that recent reviews we had undertaken in similarly rural areas, had resulted in councillor:elector ratios of 1:4,639 in Cumbria and 1:6,970 in Somerset, and that on the basis of its five-year forecast of electorate, the retention of the current council size of 54 members would result in a councillor:elector ratio of some 1:10,500 by 2004 in Devon. Taken with the geographical spread of the population in Devon, the Council expressed the view that 54 members would not facilitate the provision of effective and convenient local government in the county. It also felt that an increase in council size would improve the quality of contact between councillors and electors in the sparsely populated areas, enhancing the representative role of councillors.

59 We note the reduction in council size in 1998, resulting from local government reorganisation in the county. While the reduction in the number of councillors has been coupled with a reduction in the number of electors served, we recognise that the Council has continued to provide the same range of services, to an area which has only minimally reduced in size, and has had to maintain levels of representation on external bodies, utilising the remaining core of councillors. The Council further stated that, although the number of external bodies to which it appoints councillors as representatives has itself fallen since 1998, this reduction has not been in proportion to the reduction in the number of councillors; immediately prior to reorganisation in 1998 the Council appointed 556 representatives to 262 outside bodies; it currently appoints 490 representatives to 220 bodies.

60 It is not our policy to draw comparisons between the councillor:elector ratios in different authorities. However, having considered Devon County Council's comparisons of councillor:elector ratios in similarly rural areas, it is interesting to note that the councillor:elector ratio in Devon is more comparable to the relatively densely populated south-eastern counties of

Essex (1:10,153), Kent (1:10,138) and Surrey (1:10,651). We have also noted the County Council's concerns that this high ratio, in a sparsely populated area, does not always facilitate effective contact between representatives and the electorate, and would not provide electoral divisions of a manageable geographic size. We also note that the only scheme submitted to us during Stage One of the review is based on a 62-member council and that it commands a significant amount of local support. The scheme also achieves significantly improved levels of electoral equality, a very high level of coterminosity between county divisions and district wards and a balanced distribution of councillors amongst the constituent districts of Devon county. With the exception of Teignbridge District Council, we are not aware of any dissent from the increase in council size.

61 We consider the arguments advanced in favour of a council size of 62 members to be persuasive, but not conclusive. Notwithstanding the apparent support, the issues are finely balanced. Nevertheless, given the particular circumstances of Devon, and the geography and other characteristics of the area, we are prepared to put forward for public consultation draft recommendations which are based on a council size of 62 members. However, during the consultation period on our draft recommendations we look to the County Council and other interested parties to provide further evidence demonstrating the extent to which such a council size would meet our statutory criteria of reflecting community identity and interests, and securing effective and convenient local government.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

62 We have considered carefully all the representations received, including the county-wide proposal from the County Council. As detailed above, we concluded that a council size of 62 would provide a fair level of representation across the county and facilitate a good electoral scheme.

63 We are grateful for the positive approach taken by the County Council in putting forward proposals for new electoral arrangements. Under its proposals substantial improvements to electoral equality would be secured across the county and 84 per cent coterminosity between county divisions and district wards would be achieved.

64 The draft recommendations are therefore based substantially on the County Council's scheme. However, we consider that further improvements to electoral equality could be made in East Devon, Exeter and Teignbridge, with only a minimal reduction in coterminosity overall. We also note that Devon County Council's proposals for East Devon and North Devon would include the creation of detached divisions. The Commission does not consider that detached divisions usually reflect community identities or are conducive to the provision of effective and convenient local government. In order that any such division be avoided, we have proposed our own scheme for East Devon based on the County Council's proposals and a small modification to divisions in North Devon. The new scheme would maintain a high level of coterminosity and improved electoral equality.

65 In considering the representations received at Stage One we noted a number of concerns regarding the combination of urban and rural settlements in single divisions. As stated earlier, it is important to note that due to the geographic size of counties, especially sparsely populated

areas such as Devon, the proposed divisions themselves can often be of a significant geographical size, incorporating a number of district wards and in some cases more than a dozen parishes. It is therefore very difficult to keep urban and rural settlements separate in every instance, as such schemes do not always facilitate either electoral equality or the provision of effective and convenient local government.

66 For the purposes of county divisions, the eight district areas in the county are considered in turn, as follows:

- (a) East Devon district;
- (b) Exeter city;
- (c) Mid Devon district;
- (d) North Devon district;
- (e) South Hams district;
- (f) Teignbridge district;
- (g) Torridge district;
- (h) West Devon borough.

67 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of this report.

### **East Devon district**

68 Under the current arrangements, the district of East Devon is represented by 10 county councillors, serving 10 county divisions; Axminster Rural, Budleigh & Sidmouth, Clyst Vale, Exmouth Littleham, Exmouth Lypstone, Exmouth Withycombe, Honiton Rural, Ottery St Mary Rural, Seaton Rural and Sidmouth Rural. There is a relatively high degree of electoral imbalance in the district at present, with the number of electors varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in six divisions. This level of electoral inequality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

69 Devon County Council proposed that East Devon be represented by 11 county councillors, serving 11 divisions, one more than at present, six of which would be coterminous with district wards; Axminster Rural, Beer & Seaton, Broadclyst & Whimple, Exmouth Littleham & Town, Exmouth Littleham & Withycombe and Honiton Rural East. A new Budleigh division would be created, comprising the wards of Budleigh and Newton Poppleford & Harpford, and the parishes of Bicton, Colaton Raleigh and Otterton (part of the existing Raleigh ward) and Aylesbeare parish (part of the existing Ottery St Mary Rural ward). The remainder of Ottery St Mary Rural ward (North, Tipton St John and West Hill parish wards of Ottery St Mary parish) would be included in a new Ottery St Mary division with the wards of Feniton & Buckerell and Ottery St Mary Town. The remainder of Raleigh ward (Woodbury Salterton parish ward of Woodbury parish) would be included in a new Exmouth Halsdon, Woodbury & Lypstone division with Exmouth Halsdon and Woodbury & Lypstone wards. A new Honiton Rural West division would be created, comprising the wards of Honiton St Michael's and Tale Vale and parts of Sidmouth Rural and Sidmouth Sidford wards. The new Sidmouth Town & Sidford division would include the remainder of Sidmouth Rural and Sidmouth Sidford wards and the whole of Sidmouth Town ward. The proposals would provide 55 per cent coterminosity between county divisions and

district wards and by 2004 four divisions would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the county average, the worst being Axminster Rural division at 19 per cent.

70 We received five further representations regarding this area. Axminster Town Council asserted that the existing Axminster division is geographically too large, and proposed that it be reduced in size to provide improved representation. Sidmouth Town Council proposed that the Sid Valley area form a single division, served by two county councillors. Woodbury Parish Council requested that the whole parish be included in one county division to provide convenient and effective local government and reflect community identities (it is currently divided for district warding purposes). Seaton Town Council noted the “considerable construction of new dwellings” in Seaton and estimated that the town merits its own county councillor. A resident of the district also commented on the electorate growth in Seaton since the last county review and proposed that the existing Seaton Rural division be divided into two divisions. The resident also proposed modifying the boundary between Seaton and Axmouth parishes. As part of a periodic electoral review the Commission is unable to review the external boundaries of parishes.

71 After careful consideration of the evidence received at Stage One we propose adopting the County Council’s proposed divisions of Beer & Seaton, Broadclyst & Whimble, Exmouth Littleham & Town and Exmouth Littleham & Withycombe. However, we propose renaming Exmouth Littleham & Withycombe division, Exmouth Brixington & Withycombe. We note that elsewhere in the district, the County Council’s proposals would include five non-coterminous divisions, a division with a variance of 19 per cent and an almost detached division (to include Honiton St Michael’s and Tale Vale wards in a division with parts of Sidmouth Rural and Sidmouth Sidford wards). We therefore propose modifying the County Council’s proposals to provide a more coherent pattern of divisions, improved levels of electoral equality and a higher proportion of coterminous divisions. As part of our draft recommendations we propose a new Axminster division, comprising the wards of Axminster Rural, Axminster Town, Newbridges and Yarty; a new Honiton St Michael’s division, comprising the wards of Honiton St Michael’s and Coly Valley; a new Honiton St Paul’s division, comprising the wards of Dunkeswell, Honiton St Paul’s, Otterhead and Tale Vale; a new Ottery St Mary & Sidmouth division comprising the wards of Feniton & Buckerell, Ottery St Mary Town, Ottery St Mary Rural (excluding Aylesbeare parish) and Sidmouth Rural; a new Sidford Sidmouth division, comprising Sidmouth Sidford and Sidmouth Town wards; a new Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury division, comprising the wards of Exmouth Halsdon and Woodbury & Lympstone; and a new Budleigh division, comprising the wards of Budleigh, Newton Poppleford & Harpford, Raleigh and Aylesbeare parish (part of Ottery St Mary Rural ward).

72 We have noted Axminster Town Council’s proposal that the existing Axminster division be reduced in size and the local resident’s proposal that Seaton Rural division be reconfigured. It is helpful to note that both these issues would be partially addressed under the draft recommendations. With regard to the concerns expressed by Woodbury Parish Council, we have noted that under the draft recommendations Woodbury parish would be divided between two divisions, which would not occur under the Council’s scheme. However, we judge that our scheme would strike a better balance between electoral equality and the need to meet the statutory criteria, than that provided by Devon County Council. Seaton Town Council proposed that it be represented by a single county councillor, however, this would result in it being 37 per cent over represented. We have not been persuaded by the evidence received at Stage One that such

electoral inequality is justified. Sidmouth Town Council proposed that the Sid Valley form one electoral division, represented by two county councillors, however, until the introduction of any future legislation, we can currently only recommend single-member divisions. Our draft recommendations would command some local support, provide 82 per cent coterminosity with only three divisions having electoral variances of more than 10 per cent by 2004, and would not result in an almost detached division. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Exeter city**

73 Under the current arrangements, Exeter city is represented by nine county councillors serving nine divisions; Alphington & St Thomas, Barton & St Loyes, Countess Wear & Topsham, Exwick & Cowick, Heavitree & Wonford, Pinhoe & Whipton, Rougemont & St Leonard's, St David's & Pennsylvania and Stoke Hill & Polsloe. There is a high degree of electoral inequality in these divisions, with the number of electors represented by each councillor in six divisions varying by more than 10 per cent from the average and by more than 20 per cent from the average in two divisions (Countess West & Topsham divisions would be 28 per cent over-represented by 2004). This level of electoral inequality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

74 In Exeter, Devon County Council proposed nine members, as at present, with all nine divisions coterminous with city wards. To the west of the River Exe, it proposed creating an Alphington & St Thomas division and a Cowick & Exwick division, comprising the city wards of those names (with electoral variances of 20 per cent and 14 per cent by 2004 respectively). It also proposed the new divisions of Duryard & Pennsylvania, Newtown & St James, Pinhoe & Mincinglake, Priory & Heavitree, St Leonard's & St David's, St Loyes & Topsham and Whipton Barton & Polsloe, comprising the city wards of those names. These proposals would result in 100 per cent coterminosity and some improvements to electoral equality in Exeter, with six divisions having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average, but none by more than 20 per cent by 2004.

75 During Stage One we also received submissions from Exeter City Council and Exeter Conservative Association. Exeter City Council supported the County Council's proposal for nine divisions in Exeter and its commitment to the achievement of coterminosity between city wards and county divisions. However, its city-wide scheme provided an alternative configuration of wards to that put forward by the County Council in two divisions. It would also provide total coterminosity and improved electoral equality across the city, and would not include any division which straddled the River Exe. The City Council acknowledged that the electorate to the west of the river "does not neatly divide", but considered that the achievement of coterminosity and the use of strong boundaries outweighed the higher electoral variances on this side of the river (18 per cent and 16 per cent by 2004). By 2004 no ward in Exeter would vary by more than 18 per cent from the average. Exeter Conservative Association supported Exeter City Council's proposals in full.

76 We have considered carefully all the representations received regarding the proposed county divisions for Exeter city. We propose modifying the scheme provided by Devon County Council to, in our opinion, better reflect local opinion and improve electoral equality. We propose that

Exeter City Council's proposal for the two divisions to the west of the River Exe be adopted, on the basis that it would provide moderately better levels of electoral equality than the County Council's scheme in the same area by 2004. Although we note the higher electoral variances in these divisions we have been convinced by the evidence received at Stage One that the River Exe is a significant physical and community boundary in Exeter. In the remainder of the city we propose adopting Devon County Council's and Exeter City Council's proposed St Loyes & Topsham and Duryard & Pennsylvania divisions, but recommend the creation of St David's & St James, Polsloe & Mincinglake and Pinhoe & Whipton Barton divisions, comprising city wards of the same name and providing improved levels of electoral equality across the city. In the remainder of the city we propose moving away from coterminosity to provide a higher level of electoral equality. We propose a Newtown & St Leonard's division, to include the city wards of the same name and part of the new Priory ward (see Map A1). The remainder of Priory ward would form part of a new Priory & Heavitree division with Heavitree ward. In moving away from total coterminosity, our proposed Priory & Heavitree ward would have an electoral variance of 9 per cent by 2004, rather than 16 per cent as under the County Council's and City Council's schemes. Under our proposals only three wards would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent by 2004 (with none more than 18 per cent), with 78 per cent coterminosity between city wards and county divisions. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Mid Devon district**

77 At present, the district of Mid Devon is represented by five county councillors, serving the five divisions of Bradninch & Creedy, Crediton Rural, Cullompton Rural, Tiverton East and Tiverton West. There is a degree of electoral imbalance within the district, with the number of electors in three of the five divisions varying by more than 10 per cent from the average for the county by 2004, of which one varies by 20 per cent from the average. This level of electoral inequality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

78 The County Council proposed that Mid Devon be represented by six councillors, one more than at present, with all divisions being coterminous with district wards. Tiverton would be represented by two divisions; a revised Tiverton East division, comprising Cranmore, Halberton and Lowman wards and a revised Tiverton West division, comprising Castle, Clare & Shuttern and Westexe wards. It also proposed a revised Crediton Rural division, comprising Boniface, Lawrence, Upper Yeo and Yeo wards; a revised Cullompton Rural division, comprising Bradninch, Cullompton North, Cullompton Outer, Cullompton South and Silverton wards; a new Willand & Uffculme division, comprising Canonsleigh, Lower Culm and Upper Culm wards; and a new Newton St Cyres & Sandford division comprising Cadbury, Newbrooke, Sandford & Creedy, Way, Taw and Taw Vale wards. Under the County Council's scheme no division would have an electoral variance of more than 5 per cent from the county average by 2004, with 100 per cent coterminosity.

79 Mid Devon District Council submitted identical proposals to the County Council for Mid Devon.

80 In the light of the excellent electoral equality and coterminosity achieved under the County Council's scheme and some evidence of local support, we are recommending that the County

Council's proposals be adopted without modification as part of our draft recommendations. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **North Devon district**

81 Under the current arrangements, North Devon district is represented by seven county councillors, serving seven divisions; Barnstaple North, Barnstaple South, Braunton Rural, Combe Martin Rural, Fremington Rural, Ilfracombe and South Molton Rural. There is currently a reasonable level of electoral equality in the district, with the number of electors in all but one division varying by less than 10 per cent from the county average. This level of electoral inequality is projected to worsen over the next five years, with four divisions varying by 10 per cent or more by 2004.

82 In North Devon district Devon County Council proposed eight divisions, one more than at present, served by eight councillors. Six of the eight divisions would be coterminous with district wards. The three district wards of Ilfracombe would be included in a single Ilfracombe division. The town of Barnstaple would be covered by two divisions, as at present; a revised Barnstaple North division, comprising the wards of Central Town, Pilton and Yeo Valley and a revised Barnstaple South division, comprising Forches & Whiddon Valley, Longbridge and Newport wards. The modified divisions of Fremington Rural and South Molton Rural and the new Chulmleigh & Swimbridge division would comprise whole district wards. Fremington Rural division would comprise Bickington & Roundswell, Fremington and Instow wards; South Molton Rural division would comprise Bishop's Nympton, North Molton, South Molton and Witheridge wards; and Chulmleigh & Swimbridge division would comprise Bratton Fleming, Chittlehampton, Chulmleigh and Landkey, Swimbridge & Taw wards. A revised Braunton Rural division would include Braunton East, Braunton West and Heanton Punchardon wards and Georgeham parish (part of Georgeham & Morteheo ward). The remainder of Georgeham & Morteheo ward (Morteheo and West Down parishes) would be included in a revised Combe Martin Rural division with the wards of Combe Martin, Lynton & Lynmouth and Marwood. Under the County Council's proposals only three of the eight divisions would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent, reducing to one division by 2004 (Combe Martin Rural at 13 per cent), and 75 per cent coterminosity between county divisions and district wards would be achieved.

83 Additionally, we received submissions from three parish councils and one district councillor in this area. South Molton Town Council requested that the parish be represented by its own county councillor, "despite any numeric considerations, due to the large rural area it serves". Braunton Parish Council supported the County Council's proposals for no change to county divisions in its area and East Worlington Parish Council supported the County Council's proposal for eight councillors in North Devon, with the parish being included in a revised South Molton Rural division. Councillor Ley, member for Bishop's Nympton ward, proposed that the parishes of Molland and Bishops Nympton be included in a single division, they are separated for district warding purposes.

84 After considering all the evidence received at Stage One we note the high levels of electoral equality and coterminosity achieved under Devon County Council's proposals and the evidence

of some local support for them. While we note that the proposed Combe Martin Rural division would be over-represented by 13 per cent by 2004, after consideration of the evidence submitted we have concluded that only arbitrary warding of parishes would improve electoral variances in this area. We have however, noted that the County Council's proposals for Barnstaple would include a detached division. The Commission does not consider that detached wards usually reflect community identities or facilitate the provision of effective and convenient local government. We therefore propose adopting the County Council's proposals for North Devon district, except in Barnstaple where we propose a new Barnstaple East division, comprising the wards of Forches & Whiddon Valley, Newport and Yeo Valley and a new Barnstaple West division, comprising Central Town, Longbridge and Pilton wards. Councillor Ley's proposal to include the parishes of Bishop's Nympton and Molland in a single division would be met by the County Council's scheme. While we note the comments made by South Molton Town Council that it form a county division on its own, such a proposal would result in the division being over-represented by 61 per cent. The Commission has not been persuaded by the evidence submitted at Stage One regarding community identities in the area that such electoral inequality is justified.

85 The electoral variances achieved under our draft recommendations would be the same as those achieved under the County Council's proposals in six of the eight divisions. Both the proposed divisions in Barnstaple would have electoral variances of under 10 per cent by 2004. Under our draft recommendations 75 per cent of divisions would be coterminous and only one division would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent by 2004. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **South Hams district**

86 Under the current arrangements, South Hams district comprises six county divisions; Dartmouth Rural, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge Rural, Modbury & Salcombe, Totnes Rural and Wembury & Erme. There is a high degree of electoral imbalance in this area, with the number of electors represented by each councillor in all of the six divisions varying by 10 per cent or more from the average, with a variance in Ivybridge division of more than 60 per cent from the average. This level of electoral inequality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

87 In South Hams district the County Council proposed eight divisions, two more than at present, with all eight divisions being coterminous with district wards. A new Bickleigh & Wembury division would comprise Bickleigh & Shaugh, Cornwood & Sparkwell and Wembury & Brixton wards; a new Dartmouth & Kingswear division would comprise Dartmouth & Kingswear, Dartmouth Townstal and West Dart wards; and a revised Ivybridge division would comprise the three Ivybridge district wards. The Council also proposed a new Kingsbridge & Salcombe division, comprising the wards of Kingsbridge East, Kingsbridge North, Salcombe & Marlborough and Westville & Alvington; and a new South Brent & Dartington division, comprising the wards of Dartington, East Dart, Eastmoor, Marldon and South Brent. In the east of the district a new Thurlestone & Slapton division would comprise Allinton & Loddiswell, Saltstone, Skerries, Stokenham and Thurlestone wards; and a revised Totnes Rural division would comprise Avon & Harbourne, Totnes Bridgetown and Totnes Town wards. A new Yealmpton division would comprise Charterlands, Erme Valley, Newton & Noss and Yealmpton wards.

Under these proposals only one division would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the county average by 2004, Dartmouth & Kingswear division at 16 per cent. The proposals would also provide 100 per cent coterminosity across the district.

88 Additionally, we received representations from South Hams District Council and four parish and town councils in the area. The District Council welcomed the review but questioned the relevance of using five-year forecasts (which would only include proposed growth up to 2004) as it stated that significant growth was planned for completion after this date. It also expressed concern that the Commission's recommendations would not be implemented until 2005 and stated that four of the eight divisions proposed by the County Council would not reflect community identities (South Brent & Dartington, Bickleigh & Wembury, Dartmouth & Kingswear and Thurlestone & Slapton divisions). However, it did not supply alternative proposals for division boundaries in these areas.

89 Ivybridge Town Council proposed that Ivybridge town be represented by "one if not two" county councillors, to improve electoral equality and provide more effective representation and Ugborough Parish Council also expressed support for a review to rectify the current electoral inequalities in the existing Ivybridge division. Shaugh Prior Parish Council proposed that county divisions be of either an urban or rural profile and that the parish be included in a division with similarly rural parishes. Stokenham Parish Council objected to the County Council's proposed Thurlestone & Slapton division considering that Thurlestone "is remote in its location" from the remainder of the division and that no town would be included in the division. It proposed an alternative arrangement based on the district wards that existed before the Commission's recent review of electoral arrangements in South Hams district (completed January 1997). Stokenham Parish Council also expressed concern that the five-year forecast electorate would not take into account proposed developments after 2004.

90 Having considered carefully the representations received and the supporting evidence submitted regarding the proposed county divisions in South Hams, we note that the County Council's proposals would provide a generally good level of electoral equality and complete coterminosity throughout the district. With reference to the comments received from Ivybridge Town Council and Ugborough Parish Council regarding existing electoral inequalities in Ivybridge, it is important to note that the County Council's scheme would address these imbalances in its proposals. In response to South Hams District Council and Shaugh Prior Parish Council's comments regarding community identities in the area, as is discussed at the beginning of the chapter, in reviews of district warding the Commission attempts to keep urban and rural settlements separate however, in sparsely populated areas and in county reviews, this is not always possible. It is also important to note that Stokenham Parish Council's proposals for Kingsbridge and Thurlestone would result in a division being 24 per cent over-represented. The Commission has not been convinced by the evidence received at Stage One regarding community identities in this area that such electoral inequality is justified.

91 We have attempted to find an alternative arrangement to that provided by Devon County Council for a Dartmouth & Kingswear division in order to further improve electoral equality and to better reflect community identities across the district. However, we have been unable to find a suitable alternative to the arrangements proposed by respondents. In the absence of any locally-generated alternative, we propose adopting Devon County Council's proposals for South Hams

district without modification as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the electoral equality and coterminosity would be the same as that under the County Council's proposals. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Teignbridge district**

92 At present Teignbridge district is represented by nine county councillors, serving the nine divisions of Ashburton & Buckfastleigh, Belvedere, Bovey, Dawlish, Kingsteignton, Newton Abbot East, Newton Abbot West, Teignbridge South and Teignmouth. There is a degree of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors represented by each councillor in four divisions varying by more than 10 per cent from the average for the county, of which one varies by 25 per cent (Teignbridge South). This level of electoral inequality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

93 Devon County Council proposed that Teignbridge district be represented by 11 county councillors, two more than at present, with all divisions being coterminous with district wards. The proposals included two new divisions covering the town of Teignmouth; Teignmouth East, comprising the wards of Teignmouth Central and Teignmouth East; and Teignmouth West comprising Bishopsteignton, Shaldon & Stokeinteignhead and Teignmouth West wards. Three divisions would cover Newton Abbot; Newton Abbot East comprising Buckland & Milber and Kerswell with Combe wards, Newton Abbot Town comprising Bushell and Bradley wards and Newton Abbot West comprising Ambrook, College and Ipplepen wards. A revised Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division would comprise Ashburton & Buckfastleigh and Haytor wards; a revised Dawlish division would comprise Dawlish Central & North East and Dawlish South West wards; and a revised Kingsteignton division would comprise the two district wards of Kingsteignton (East and West). A new Bovey Tracey Rural division would be created, comprising the wards of Bovey and Moorland; and a new Chudleigh Rural division would be created, comprising the wards of Chudleigh, Teignbridge North and Teign Valley. These proposals would provide 100 per cent coterminosity and similar levels of electoral equality to the existing arrangements. By 2004 five divisions would have an electoral variance of over 10 per cent (two more than at present), none would be greater than 19 per cent.

94 Teignbridge District Council supported the County Council's principle of achieving coterminosity across the district, but expressed concern about the proposed increase in council size from 54 to 62. The District Council also objected to a number of the County Council's proposed divisions in the Teignbridge area, expressing concern about "the splitting of Teignmouth and Newton Abbot where presently clear and identifiable boundaries exist". It also proposed a number of alternative division names. Additionally, the District Council objected to the County Council's proposal to create divisions combining rural parishes and urban areas.

95 The Commission has considered carefully all the representations received at Stage One. We note that although Devon County Council's proposals would achieve 100 per cent coterminosity, the improvements in electoral equality would be minimal. We also note Teignbridge District Council's concern regarding the dividing of the towns of Teignmouth and Newton Abbot, however, having considered the proposed arrangements in both areas, we have been unable to identify an electoral scheme which would wholly retain community ties within Teignmouth and

Newton Abbot, while providing acceptable levels of electoral equality and coterminosity across the district. We therefore propose adopting seven of the County Council's divisions as part of our draft recommendations including those for Teignmouth and Newton Abbot. However, we propose transferring Ogwell parish from the County Council's proposed Newton Abbot West division to its Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division and Holcombe Burnell parish from the County Council's proposed Chudleigh Rural division to its Exminster & Kenton division. These modifications would provide significantly improved levels of electoral equality across the district, despite reducing coterminosity. Under our recommendations five divisions would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent by 2004, however, no division would vary by more than 15 per cent from the average for the county by 2004. Our recommendations would achieve 64 per cent coterminosity between county divisions and district wards. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Torrige district**

96 Under the current arrangements Torrige district is represented by four county councillors serving four county divisions; Bideford, Holsworthy Rural, Northam Rural and Torrington Rural. Currently only one of the four divisions has an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent. This level of electoral inequality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

97 Devon County Council proposed that Torrige district be represented by five county councillors, one more than at present. Of the five proposed divisions only two would be coterminous with district wards; a new Bideford East division, comprising Bideford East, Bideford North and Monkleigh & Littleham wards; and a new Northam division, comprising Appledore, Northam, Orchard Hill and Westward Ho! wards. In the remaining three divisions the County Council has utilised whole district wards and whole parishes as building blocks. A new Bideford South & Hartland division would comprise the wards of Bideford South, Clovelly Bay, Kenwith and Waldon and the parishes of Hartland and Welcombe (part of Hartland & Bradworthy ward). The remainder of Hartland and Bradworthy ward (Bradworthy parish) would be included in a revised Holsworthy Rural division with the wards of Broadheath, Coham Bridge, Forest, Holsworthy and Tamarside and the parishes of Shebbear and Newton St Petrock (part of Shebbear & Langtree ward). Langtree parish (that part of Shebbear & Langtree ward not included in Holsworthy Rural division) would be included in a revised Torrington Rural division with the district wards of Clinton, Three Moors, Torrington, Two Rivers and Winkleigh. Forty per cent coterminosity would be achieved under this scheme, with no ward having an electoral variance of more than 5 per cent from the average initially or by 2004.

98 During Stage One Great Torrington Town Council proposed that the existing arrangements be retained as did Sheepwash Parish Council, which also commented on the internal political management structure of Torrige district. The political management structure of local authorities is not a matter for consideration by the Commission as part of this review.

99 We have considered carefully the representations received at Stage One and note that the proposals put forward by Devon County Council for Torrige district would provide excellent electoral equality. Due to the current electoral inequalities in Torrige and that we are attempting to provide for some degree of coterminosity between the proposed county divisions and the new district wards recommended as part of the Commission's recent PERs of the Devon districts (due

to be implemented in 2003), the retention of the existing electoral arrangements, as proposed by Great Torrington Town Council and Sheepwash Parish Council, would not meet the objectives of the review. In the light of this and in the absence of an alternative scheme providing higher levels of coterminosity, we are adopting the County Council's scheme for this area as part of our draft recommendations. The electoral variances under our draft recommendations would be the same as those under the County Council's scheme. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **West Devon borough**

100 At present, West Devon borough is represented by four county councillors, serving four divisions; Hatherleigh & Chagford, Okehampton Rural, Tavistock and Yelverton Rural. Currently there is a relatively good level of electoral equality throughout the borough, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in only one division. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

101 Devon County Council proposed that West Devon be represented by four county councillors, as at present, with all divisions coterminous with borough wards. It proposed that the three borough wards covering Tavistock be included in a Tavistock division with Tamarside ward and that Chagford, Drewsteignton, Exbourne, Hatherleigh, Lew Valley wards and the two Tawton wards form a modified Hatherleigh & Chagford division. In the west of the borough, it proposed that Bridestowe, Mary Tavy, Milton Ford and Thrushel wards and the two Okehampton wards form a modified Okehampton Rural division. In the south of the borough the County Council proposed that Bere Ferrers, Buckland Monachorum, Burrator, Lydford and Walkham wards form a modified Yelverton Rural division. These proposals would provide 100 per cent coterminosity and similar levels of electoral equality, with no division varying by more than 14 per cent from the average by 2004.

102 Tavistock Town Council commented on the County Council's proposals for the Tavistock area. It proposed that Tamarside ward be removed from Devon County Council's proposed Tavistock division and suggested that it be placed in Yelverton division for reasons of community identity. The Town Council expected that any initial electoral imbalances in the amended Tavistock division would be reduced as a result of future housing development.

103 After careful consideration of the representations received at Stage One we note that Devon County Council's proposals for West Devon would result in two wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2004. However, after further consideration of the evidence we note that improved levels of electoral inequality would only be achieved if geographically large divisions were created. One particular alternative, to include Lydford ward in Hatherleigh & Chagford division, would create a division that would cover over half of the borough. We therefore propose that the County Council's proposals be adopted without modification. We have concluded that they strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality, coterminosity and the reflection of community identities. In addition, we have considered the proposals of Tavistock Town Council and although we attempt to recommend divisions of wholly rural or urban profiles where possible, we are concerned that the proposals would result in Yelverton Rural division being 25 per cent under-represented (23 per cent by 2004). Our draft recommendations would provide total coterminosity across the borough and the same electoral

variances as those under the County Council's scheme. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## **Conclusions**

104 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- (a) there should be an increase in council size from 54 to 62, serving 62 divisions;
- (b) the boundaries of all divisions be subject to change, as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the recent district reviews.

105 Our draft recommendations are based on the County Council's proposals which we judged would provide the best electoral scheme, having regard to the statutory criteria. However, we propose modifications to the Council's proposals in four districts, in our view, to improve the scheme further, which are set out below:

- (a) In East Devon, there should be 11 divisions, four of which would be adopted from the County Council's proposals. In the remainder of the district, we propose our own scheme to provide improved electoral equality and coterminosity and a more logical configuration of district wards within divisions.
- (b) In Exeter, there should be nine divisions, two of which are adopted from the County Council's scheme and two from Exeter City Council's scheme. In the remaining five divisions we propose our own scheme to provide an improved level of electoral equality.
- (c) In North Devon, we propose adopting six of the County Council's eight proposed divisions. However, in Barnstaple town we propose our own configuration of district wards to avoid a detached division.
- (d) In Teignbridge, we propose adopting seven of the 11 divisions proposed by the County Council but propose modifying four divisions to provide better electoral equality.

106 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

*Figure 5:  
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

|  | 1999 electorate      |                       | 2004 forecast electorate |                       |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Current arrangements | Draft recommendations | Current arrangements     | Draft recommendations |
| Number of councillors / divisions  | 54                   | 62                    | 54                       | 62                    |
| Average number of electors per councillor                                  | 10,056               | 8,758                 | 10,498                   | 9,143                 |
| Number of divisions with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average | 26                   | 20                    | 27                       | 15                    |
| Number of divisions with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average | 6                    | 3                     | 8                        | 0                     |

107 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Devon County Council would result in a reduction in the number of divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the county average from 26 to 20. By 2004 only 15 divisions are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average. Our draft recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated in Appendix A to this report.

**Draft Recommendation**

Devon County Council should comprise 62 councillors serving the same number of divisions, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated in Appendix A and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

**108 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Devon County Council and welcome comments from the County Council and others relating to the proposed division boundaries, number of councillors and division names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.**



## 5 NEXT STEPS

109 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Devon County Council. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 17 April 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the County Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission at the end of the consultation period.

110 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager  
Devon Review  
Local Government Commission for England  
Dolphyn Court  
10/11 Great Turnstile  
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)

111 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations. We will make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.



# APPENDIX A

## **Draft Recommendations for Devon: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for Devon.

**Map A1** illustrates the proposed boundary between the divisions of Newtown & St Leonard's and Priory & Heavitree in Exeter.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates, in outline form, the Commission's proposed divisions for Devon, including constituent district wards and parishes.

*Map A1:  
Proposed boundary between Newtown & St Leonard's and Priory & Heavitree divisions*

## APPENDIX B

### Devon County Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those put forward by the County Council only in the following divisions, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

*Figure B1:  
Number of Councillors and Electors by Division*

| Division name                        | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Variance from average % |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>EAST DEVON DISTRICT</b>           |                       |                   |                         |                   |                         |
| Axminster Rural                      | 1                     | 10,388            | 19                      | 10,838            | 19                      |
| Budleigh                             | 1                     | 7,913             | -10                     | 8,059             | -12                     |
| Exmouth Halsdon, Woodbury & Lypstone | 1                     | 8,780             | 0                       | 9,013             | -1                      |
| Honiton Rural East                   | 1                     | 8,350             | -5                      | 8,664             | -5                      |
| Honiton Rural West                   | 1                     | 8,868             | 1                       | 9,711             | 6                       |
| Ottery St Mary                       | 1                     | 7,937             | -9                      | 8,415             | -8                      |
| Sidmouth Town & Sidford              | 1                     | 9,190             | 5                       | 9,437             | 3                       |
| <b>EXETER CITY</b>                   |                       |                   |                         |                   |                         |
| Alphington & St Thomas               | 1                     | 10,811            | 23                      | 11,002            | 20                      |
| Cowick & Exwick                      | 1                     | 10,665            | 22                      | 10,434            | 14                      |
| Newton & St James                    | 1                     | 7,880             | -10                     | 8,090             | -12                     |
| Pinhoe & Mincinglake                 | 1                     | 8,306             | -5                      | 8,324             | -9                      |
| Priory & Heavitree                   | 1                     | 10,812            | -23                     | 10,640            | 16                      |
| St Leonard's & St David's            | 1                     | 7,520             | -14                     | 8,158             | -11                     |
| Whipton Barton & Polsloe             | 1                     | 10,501            | -20                     | 10,258            | 12                      |
| <b>NORTH DEVON</b>                   |                       |                   |                         |                   |                         |
| Barnstaple North                     | 1                     | 9,714             | 11                      | 9,843             | 8                       |
| Barnstaple South                     | 1                     | 9,289             | 6                       | 9,618             | 5                       |

| <b>Division name</b>      | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Electorate (1999)</b> | <b>Variance from average %</b> | <b>Electorate (2004)</b> | <b>Variance from average %</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>TEIGNBRIDGE</b>        |                              |                          |                                |                          |                                |
| Ashburton & Buckfastleigh | 1                            | 7,820                    | -11                            | 8,416                    | -8                             |
| Chudleigh Rural           | 1                            | 8,330                    | -5                             | 9,008                    | -1                             |
| Exminster & Kenton        | 1                            | 6,761                    | -23                            | 7,418                    | -19                            |
| Newton Abbot West         | 1                            | 10,047                   | 15                             | 10,658                   | 17                             |

*Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Devon County Council.*

*Note: Each division is represented by a single councillor, hence the electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

Figure B2:  
Devon County Council's Proposals: Constituent District Wards

| <b>Division name</b>                  | <b>Constituent district wards</b>   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>EAST DEVON DISTRICT</b>            |   |
| Axminster Rural                       | Axminster Rural ward; Axminster Town ward; Coly Valley ward; Newbridges ward  |
| Budleigh                              | Budleigh ward; Newton Poppleford & Harpford ward; Raleigh ward (part – the parishes of Bicton, Colaton Raleigh and Otterton); Ottery St Mary Rural ward (part – Aylesbeare parish)            |
| Exmouth Halsdon, Woodbury & Lympstone | Exmouth Halsdon ward; Woodbury & Lympstone ward; Raleigh ward (part – Woodbury Salterton parish ward of Woodbury parish)  |
| Honiton Rural East                    | Dunkeswell ward; Honiton St Paul's ward; Otterhead ward; Yarty ward   |
| Honiton Rural West                    | Honiton St Michael's ward; Sidmouth Rural ward (part – Sidbury parish ward of Sidmouth parish); Sidmouth Sidford ward (part – Sidford Village parish ward of Sidmouth parish); Tale Vale ward |
| Ottery St Mary                        | Feniton & Buckerell ward; Ottery St Mary Rural ward (part – North, Tipton St John and West Hill parish wards of Ottery St Mary parish); Ottery St Mary Town ward                              |
| Sidmouth Town & Sidford               | Sidmouth Rural ward (part – Salcombe Regis parish ward of Sidmouth parish); Sidmouth Sidford ward (part – North and Primey parish wards of Sidmouth parish); Sidmouth Town ward               |
| <b>EXETER CITY</b>                    |   |
| Alphington & St Thomas                | Alphington ward; St Thomas ward   |
| Cowick & Exwick                       | Cowick ward; Exwick ward  |
| Newton & St James                     | Newton ward; St James ward  |
| Pinhoe & Mincinglake                  | Pinhoe ward; Mincinglake ward   |
| Priory & Heavitree                    | Priory ward; Heavitree ward   |
| St Leonard's & St David's             | St Leonard's ward; St David's ward  |
| Whipton Barton & Polsloe              | Whipton Barton ward; Polsloe ward   |
| <b>NORTH DEVON DISTRICT</b>           |   |
| Barnstaple North                      | Central Town ward; Pilton ward; Yeo Valley ward   |
| Barnstaple South                      | Forches & Whiddon Valley ward; Longbridge ward; Newport ward  |

| <b>Division name</b>        | <b>Constituent district wards</b>                         |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT</b> |   |
| Ashburton & Buckfastleigh   | Ashburton & Buckfastleigh ward; Haytor ward               |
| Chudleigh Rural             | Chudleigh ward; Teignbridge North ward; Teign Valley ward |
| Exminster & Kenton          | Kenn Valley ward; Kenton with Starcross ward              |
| Newton Abbot West           | Ambrook ward; College ward; Ipplepen ward                 |

*Note: The constituent areas reflect the new district wards resulting from electoral reviews of the eight Devon districts which were completed in 1999. Where whole district wards do not form the building blocks, constituent parishes and parish wards are listed.*

# APPENDIX C

## The Statutory Provisions

### Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear<sup>1</sup>. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- (a) the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- (b) the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- (c) the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- (d) the name of any electoral area.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in

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<sup>1</sup> The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

### **Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements**

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to counties:

Having regard to any change in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the county likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the number of local government electors shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every electoral division of the county;
- (b) every electoral division shall lie wholly within a single district;
- (c) every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single electoral division; and
- (d) every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single electoral division.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a) – (d) above, regard should be had to:

- (e) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable;
- (f) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular boundary; and
- (g) the boundaries of the wards of the districts in the county.