

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Devon County Council

**Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions**

August 2000

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)
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Local Government Commission for England

22 August 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 24 August 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Devon County Council under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in February 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 140-141) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to the electoral arrangements of Devon County Council.

We recommend that Devon County Council should be served by 62 councillors representing 62 divisions, and that changes should be made to division boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

The Local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the County Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

1 SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Devon County Council on 24 August 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 22 February 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

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 inequality 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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 140-141) 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 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 19 of the proposed 62 divisions the number of electors would vary by more than 10 per cent from the county average, with only four divisions varying by more than 20 per cent.**
- **This improved electoral equality is forecast to continue, 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; no division is expected to have an electoral variance of more than 20 per cent.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 3 October 2000:

**The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU**

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Division name (by district council area)	Constituent district wards
EAST DEVON DISTRICT	
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 ward
6 Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury	Exmouth Halsdon ward; Woodbury & Lymphstone 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 Rural	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 (part – Sidbury Parish ward of Sidmouth parish)
11 Sidmouth Sidford	Sidmouth Sidford ward; Sidmouth Rural ward (part – Salcombe Regis parish ward of Sidmouth parish); Sidmouth Town ward
EXETER CITY	
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 & Polsloe	Newtown ward; Polsloe ward
16 Pinhoe & Mincinglake	Mincinglake ward; Pinhoe ward
17 Priory & St Leonard's	Priory ward; St Leonard's ward
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 & Heavitree	Heavitree ward; Whipton Barton ward

Division name (by district council area)	Constituent district wards
MID DEVON DISTRICT	
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 Culm & Canonsleigh	Canonsleigh ward; Lower Culm ward; Upper Culm ward
24 Taw & Raddon	Cadbury ward; Newbrooke ward; Sandford & Creedy ward; Taw ward; Taw Vale ward; Way ward
25 Tiverton East	Cranmore ward; Halberton ward; Lowman ward
26 Tiverton West	Castle ward; Clare & Shuttern ward; Westexe ward
NORTH DEVON DISTRICT	
27 Barnstaple North	Central Town ward; Pilton ward; Yeo Valley ward
28 Barnstaple South	Forches & Whiddon Valley ward; Longbridge ward; Newport 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
SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT	
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 & Stokenham	Kingsbridge East ward; Kingsbridge North ward; Saltstone ward; Skerries ward; Stokenham ward
39 South Brent & Dartington	Dartington ward; East Dart ward; Eastmoor ward; Marldon ward; South Brent ward
40 Thurlestone, Salcombe & Allington	Allington & Loddiswell ward; Salcombe & Malborough ward; Thurlestone ward; Westville & Alvington ward
41 Totnes Rural	Avon & Harbourne ward; Totnes Bridgetown ward; Totnes Town ward

Division name (by district council area)	Constituent district wards
42 Yealmpton	Charterlands ward; Erme Valley ward; Newton & Noss ward; Yealmpton ward
TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT	
43 Ambrook & Ipplepen	Ambrook ward (part – the parishes of Abbotskerswell, Broadhemspton, Torbryan and Woodland); Ipplepen ward; Kerswell-with-Combe ward (part – the parishes of Coffinswell and Kingswerswell)
44 Ashburton & Buckfastleigh	Ambrook ward (part – the parish of Ogwell); Ashburton & Buckfastleigh ward; Haytor ward
45 Bovey Tracey Rural	Bovey ward; Moorland ward
46 Chudleigh Rural	Chudleigh ward; Teignbridge North ward; Teign Valley ward
47 Dawlish	Dawlish Central & North East ward; Dawlish South West ward
48 Exminster & Kenton	Kenn Valley ward; Kenton with Starcross ward
49 Kingsteignton	Kingsteignton East ward; Kingsteignton West ward
50 Newton Abbot North	Bradley ward; Bushell ward
51 Newton Abbot South	Buckland & Milber ward; College ward
52 Teignmouth East	Teignmouth Central ward; Teignmouth East ward
53 Teignmouth West	Bishopsteignton ward; Kerswell-with-Combe ward (part – the parish of Hacombe with Combe); Shaldon & Stokeinteignhead ward; Teignmouth West ward
TORRIDGE DISTRICT	
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

Division name (by district council area)	Constituent district wards
WEST DEVON BOROUGH	
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 East Devon in more detail.

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Devon

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
EAST DEVON DISTRICT					
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	8,369	-4	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 Rural	1	8,758	0	9,244	1
11 Sidmouth Sidford	1	10,489	20	10,787	18
EXETER CITY					
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 & Polsloe	1	8,186	-7	8,114	-11
16 Pinhoe & Mincinglake	1	8,306	-5	8,324	-9
17 Priory & St Leonard's	1	10,116	16	9,908	8
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 & Heavitree	1	10,746	23	10,612	16

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
MID DEVON DISTRICT					
21 Crediton Rural	1	8,778	0	9,205	1
22 Cullompton Rural	1	8,735	0	9,280	1
23 Culm & Canonsleigh	1	9,487	8	9,615	5
24 Taw & Raddon	1	8,648	-1	9,171	0
25 Tiverton East	1	8,661	-1	8,738	-4
26 Tiverton West	1	8,650	-1	8,975	-2
NORTH DEVON DISTRICT					
27 Barnstaple North	1	9,714	11	9,843	8
28 Barnstaple South	1	9,289	6	9,618	5
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
SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT					
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 & Stokenham	1	8,017	-8	8,296	-9
39 South Brent & Dartington	1	8,522	-3	8,726	-5
40 Thurlestone, Salcombe & Allington	1	8,000	-9	8,648	-5
41 Totnes Rural	1	8,209	-6	8,723	-5
42 Yealmpton	1	8,602	-2	9,082	-1

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT					
43 Ambrook & Ipplepen	1	8,658	-1	9,201	1
44 Ashburton & Buckfastleigh	1	9,467	8	10,171	11
45 Bovey Tracey Rural	1	7,740	-12	8,528	-7
46 Chudleigh Rural	1	8,330	-5	9,008	-1
47 Dawlish	1	10,210	17	10,528	15
48 Exminster & Kenton	1	6,761	-23	7,418	-19
49 Kingsteignton	1	8,569	-2	9,300	2
50 Newton Abbot North	1	8,063	-8	8,759	-4
51 Newton Abbot South	1	9,470	8	9,897	8
52 Teignmouth East	1	7,434	-15	7,736	-15
53 Teignmouth West	1	7,985	-9	8,331	-9
TORRIDGE DISTRICT					
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
WEST DEVON BOROUGH					
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
Totals	62	543,018	-	566,871	-
Averages	-	-	8,758	-	9,143

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 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Devon County Council. 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 at the start of the PER programme in 1998/99 (except for South Hams district which we reviewed in 1996/97), in autumn 1999.

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.

4 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999) 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 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 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the county as a whole. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. We will 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 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 we are unlikely to achieve optimum electoral equality and complete coterminosity throughout a county area. Our objective will be to achieve the best balance between the two, taking into account our 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 We are not prescriptive on council size. 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 A further area of difference between county and district reviews is that we recognise it will not always 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 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 were 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 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 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 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, the Devon & Cornwall Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Devon Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the county, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the county 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. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

20 Stage Three began on 22 February 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Devon County Council*, and ended on 17 April 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

21 The county of Devon comprises the eight districts of East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge 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.

22 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'.

23 The electorate of the county is 543,018 (February 1999). The Council presently has 54 members, with one member elected from each division (Figure 3).

24 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.

25 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.

26 As mentioned 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 are based on the new district wards as opposed to those which existed prior to the recent reviews. In view of the effect of the new district wards and changes in the electorate over the past twenty years which have resulted in electoral imbalances across the county, changes to most, if not all, of the existing county electoral divisions are inevitable.

27 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 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
EAST DEVON DISTRICT					
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
EXETER CITY					
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
MID DEVON DISTRICT					
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

NORTH DEVON DISTRICT						
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
SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT						
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
TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT						
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
TORRIDGE DISTRICT						
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

WEST DEVON BOROUGH						
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
Totals		54	543,018	-	566,871	-
Averages		-	-	10,056	-	10,498

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 are over-represented by 28 per cent, while electors in Ivybridge division in South Hams are significantly under-represented by 63 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

28 During Stage One we received 22 representations, from the County Council, Exeter City Council, Mid Devon, South Hams and Teignbridge district councils, Exeter Conservative Association, 14 parish and town councils, a district councillor and a resident of East Devon. In the light of these representations and the evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Devon County Council*.

29 Our draft recommendations were based on the County Council's scheme, which we considered achieved the best possible balance between electoral equality, the statutory criteria and coterminosity. However, we moved away from the scheme in four districts, affecting 20 divisions. We proposed that:

- Devon County Council should be served by 62 councillors;
- there should be 62 electoral divisions, involving changes to the boundaries of all of the existing divisions.

Draft Recommendation

Devon County Council should comprise 62 councillors, serving the same number of divisions.

30 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all but three of the 62 electoral divisions varying by no more than 20 per cent from the county average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no division expected to vary by more than 20 per cent from the county average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

31 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 71 representations, including submissions from the County Council, six district councils, three Labour Groups, one Conservative Group, one Liberal Democrat group, one Liberal Party, 48 parish and town councils, an MP, a community association, four councillors and five residents. All 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

32 Devon County Council “warmly welcomes the Commission’s proposals; for eight additional divisions in Devon”. It also expressed its full support for the draft recommendations for Mid Devon, South Hams, Torridge and West Devon.

33 In East Devon, the County Council supported the majority of our proposals, however, it suggested that Woodbury Salterton parish ward of Woodbury parish be included in a modified Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury division and that part of Sidmouth Rural ward be included in a modified Sidmouth Sidford division, to better reflect community identities.

34 The County Council opposed our draft recommendations for Exeter city, as in its opinion they would not provide total coterminosity between county divisions and city wards or best reflect community identities across the city. It therefore proposed that its Stage One scheme for Exeter be adopted.

35 The County Council supported the majority of our draft recommendations for North Devon district, but opposed the proposals for Barnstaple on the grounds that “the very strong local view is that the existing arrangements reflect the town’s community identities much more faithfully”. It also supported the majority of our proposals for Teignbridge district, but proposed that Holcombe Burnell parish be included in Chudleigh Rural division (as in its Stage One submission) rather than Exminster & Kenton division (as included in the draft recommendations).

District, Borough and City Councils

36 At Stage Three East Devon District Council proposed modifications to Ottery St Mary & Sidmouth and Sidmouth Sidford divisions and that the whole of Woodbury parish be included in a Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury division.

37 Exeter City Council stated that it was “extremely disappointed with the Local Government Commission’s draft recommendations...as far as they affect Exeter”. It expressed particular opposition to the proposed Newtown & St Leonards and Priory & Heavitree divisions (where our recommendations departed from coterminosity). It argued that the proposals would increase election costs, be detrimental to community identities (especially on the Burnthouse Lane housing estate) and result in voter confusion. The Council suggested that its Stage One scheme for the city be adopted.

38 Mid Devon District Council proposed two division name changes. North Devon District Council supported our recommendation to increase the number of councillors representing the district, but made no comment about the proposed division boundaries.

39 Teignbridge District Council expressed opposition to our proposal for an increase in council size and a number of the division boundaries, on the grounds that they would not best reflect community identities. It proposed alternative electoral arrangements for the district and a number of alternative division names.

40 West Devon Borough Council expressed concern that the draft recommendations would not provide for improved levels of electoral equality across the borough and proposed that Tavistock division be modified, to better reflect community identities.

Labour Groups

41 Devon Labour Group, Exeter Labour Party and Exeter Labour Party (Priory & St Leonard's Branch) each opposed our recommendation to include the Burnthouse Lane housing estate in Exeter in two county divisions (Priory & Heavitree and Newtown & St Leonard's). All three respondents argued that such a proposal would damage the community identity of the estate and cause voter confusion; they suggested that the county division boundaries be coterminous with the city wards. Exeter Labour Party (Priory & St Leonard's Branch) attached a petition of 59 signatures in support of its comments.

The Conservatives

42 Exeter Conservative Association expressed opposition to our draft recommendations for Exeter and urged us to adopt the City Council's Stage One scheme as part of our final recommendations. It expressed particular concern about the proposals for Priory ward.

The Liberal Democrats

43 North Devon Liberal Democrats opposed our proposals for Barnstaple in North Devon, arguing that they would not best reflect community identities. They urged us to adopt the County Council's Stage One proposals for the area.

The Liberal Party

44 The Liberal Party opposed our draft recommendations for Exeter city, particularly the proposed Priory & Heavitree and Newtown & St Leonards divisions. It recommended an alternative arrangement for the area, which would continue to breach city ward boundaries but better reflect community identities.

Parish and Town Councils

45 We received representations direct from 47 parish and town councils in Devon. In East Devon, both Aylesbeare and Membury Parish Councils supported the draft recommendations. All Saints Parish Council expressed some concerns about the inclusion of Yarty ward in a division with Honiton; however, such an arrangement did not form part of our draft

recommendations. Honiton Town Council opposed our proposal to include the two Honiton district wards in separate county divisions, stating that “no other town in East Devon has been split in this way” and proposed that the two wards form a single division. Both Ottery St Mary and Sidmouth Town Councils opposed our recommendation to include Sidmouth Rural ward in a division with Ottery St Mary, for reasons of community identity. Colyton Parish Council expressed opposition to the proposed Honiton St Michael’s division, instead suggesting that Colyton parish be included in a division with Axminster or Seaton. Plymtree Parish Council opposed the Honiton St Paul’s division and instead suggested that Plymtree parish be included in a division with Ottery St Mary. Woodbury Parish Council expressed support for the draft recommendations, but it had wrongly assumed that our draft recommendations included the whole of Woodbury parish in a single division.

46 In Mid Devon, the parish councils of Culmstock, Uffculme and Willand proposed that Willand & Uffculme division be renamed Culm & Canonsleigh. Hemyock Parish Council proposed a number of different names for the same division. Newton St Cyres Parish Council proposed that the Newton St Cyres & Sandford division be renamed Creedy, rather than Raddon as suggested by Mid Devon District Council. Stockleigh Pomeroy Parish Council proposed that the same division be renamed Raddon Taw. Silverton Parish Council opposed the recommendation to include it in two divisions (it is divided for district warding purposes) for reasons of community identity.

47 In North Devon, the parish councils of Bishops Tawton and Braunton both supported our draft recommendations. Barnstaple Town Council opposed our recommendations for the town, instead suggesting that we adopt the County Council’s Stage One scheme for the area. South Molton Town Council proposed that South Molton Rural division be modified, to better reflect community identities. Georgeham, Morteheo and West Down Parish Councils opposed the proposed Combe Martin Rural division for reasons of community identity. Arlington and Burrington Parish Councils opposed the proposed Chulmleigh & Swimbridge division on the basis that the geographical area covered would be too large.

48 In South Hams, Ivybridge Town Council supported our draft recommendations. Kingsbridge Town Council expressed support for the increase in council size but opposed the linking of Kingsbridge and Salcombe in a single county division and suggested an alternative arrangement. A representation was made to the Commission on behalf of the parish councillors for Chivelstone parish, four of whom supported the draft recommendations and two of whom opposed them, on the grounds of community identity. South Milton and Stokenham Parish Councils opposed the proposed Thurlestone & Slapton division for reasons of community identity; Stokenham Parish Council proposed an alternative arrangement for the area.

49 In Teignbridge district, Chudleigh, Exminster, Kingsteignton and Ogwell Parish Councils supported our draft recommendations. Buckfastleigh Town Council and the parish councils of Bickington and Ilsington opposed our recommendation to include Ogwell parish in an Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division; each argued that such a proposal would not reflect community identities in the area and would link parishes of a differing nature. Newton Abbot Town Council and Hennock Parish Council both opposed the increase in council size from 54 to 62 and Newton Abbot Town Council suggested an alternative name for the proposed Newton Abbot Town division. Abbotskerwell and Haccombe-with-Combe Parish Councils both objected to the proposed arrangements for Newton Abbot town and the surrounding area, both suggesting that the proposals would not best reflect community identities. Denbury & Torbryan Parish Council

opposed the proposed Newton Abbot West division, for reasons of community identity. Holcombe Burnell Parish Council opposed the recommendation to include it in a modified Exminster & Kenton division, arguing that the proposal would not best reflect community identities.

50 In Torridge district, Hartland and Yarnscombe Parish Councils both supported our draft recommendations. In West Devon, North Tawton Parish Council supported our draft recommendations in its area and Peter Tavy Parish Council opposed the Okehampton Rural division; it proposed an alternative arrangement for the area.

Members of Parliament

51 Ben Bradshaw, Member of Parliament for Exeter, expressed opposition to the draft recommendations for Exeter, in particular for the divisions of Priory & Heavitree and Newtown & St Leonard's.

Other Representations

52 We received a further ten representations, from a community association, four councillors and five residents. Wonford Community Association opposed our recommendation to divide the Burnthouse Lane housing estate in Exeter between two county divisions for community identity reasons. Councillor Morrish, member for Heavitree & Wonford division in Exeter, made two representations during Stage Three. In his first submission the councillor expressed opposition to our proposals for Exeter, in particular the dividing of Priory ward between county divisions. His second submission included an alternative arrangement for the same area. Councillor Greenslade, member for Barnstaple North division and Pilton district ward, opposed our recommendations for Barnstaple town, recommending that we adopt the County Council's Stage One scheme for the same area. Councillor Whittaker, member for Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division in Teignbridge, opposed the proposed Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division on the grounds that it would include urban and rural settlements in the same divisions and not reflect community ties. Councillor Cook, member for Teignbridge South division, opposed our recommendations for Newton Abbot and Teignmouth and the surrounding rural area; he pointed out that the divisions would comprise urban and rural settlements and proposed an alternative arrangement for the area.

53 In East Devon, two residents of Axminster supported the draft recommendations for Axminster and a resident of Sidbury opposed our recommendations for divisions in Sidmouth. A resident of Exeter opposed our recommendation to include the Burnthouse Lane housing estate in two county divisions for reasons of community identity. A resident of Torrington in North Devon raised a number of local issues, none of which we are able to comment on as part of this review. A resident of Kingsbridge in South Hams district supported the increase in council size but opposed the inclusion of Kingsbridge and Salcombe in a single division, and suggested an alternative arrangement for the area.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

54 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 identities and interests 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”.

55 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.

56 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. In addition, our approach is 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.

57 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.

58 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.

59 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. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to the statutory criteria. 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

60 Before Stage One 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. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could be made at the time.

61 We received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

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

63 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.

64 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.

65 During Stage Two we noted 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 slightly 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.

66 As detailed in the draft recommendations, 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 was 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 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 noted that the only scheme submitted to us during Stage One of the review was based on a 62-member council and that it commanded a significant amount of local support. The scheme also achieved significantly improved levels of electoral equality, a very high level of coterminosity between county divisions and district wards and a balanced distribution of councillors among the constituent districts of Devon county. With the exception of Teignbridge District Council, we were not aware of any dissent from the increase in council size.

67 We considered the arguments advanced in favour of a council size of 62 members to be persuasive, but not conclusive. Notwithstanding the apparent support, the issues were finely balanced. Nevertheless, given the particular circumstances of Devon, and the geography and other characteristics of the area, we were prepared to put forward for public consultation draft recommendations based on a council size of 62 members. However, we asked 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.

68 In its Stage Three submission the County Council stated that it “warmly welcomes the Commission’s proposals for eight additional divisions in Devon” and indicated that there “is all-party support for this increase”. North Devon District Council, Devon Labour Group, Exeter Labour Party - Priory & St Leonard’s Branch, Ben Bradshaw MP and a resident of Kingsbridge in South Hams also supported the proposed increase in council size. However, Teignbridge District Council stated that the members were “not happy with the increase in the County Council membership in part because the actual area has been reduced with Plymouth and Torbay achieving unitary status and secondly, there appears to be no justification for it.” West Devon Borough Council expressed concern that under the draft recommendations “the number of County Councillors representing the Borough would remain at four whereas the size of the County Council increases from 54 to 62 members this is a considerable increase and the representation for the people of West Devon will accordingly be diluted”. Hennock Parish Council opposed the increase in council size for economic reasons and Newton Abbot Town Council expressed concern that the number of county councillors would be increased when the representation on Teignbridge District Council has been reduced after the PER.

69 We have carefully considered all the evidence received at Stage Three regarding the proposed council size of 62. We were pleased to note that our recommendations have received support from a number of respondents. However, we have also noted the comments of those opposed to a 62-member council. We are concerned that, as acknowledged by Teignbridge District Council, its opposition to the proposed increase can partly be attributed to the district wards in Teignbridge not fitting “neatly into the Devon County Council enlarged member pattern”. We have not been persuaded that our proposal would be detrimental to the general provision of convenient and effective local government across the county or provide unacceptable levels of non-coterminosity. Additionally, it is important to note that the electorate of West Devon borough only warrants representation by four members on the County Council by 2004, under a council size of 62. The electors are therefore over-represented under the existing arrangements and our recommendations would rectify this by proposing no increase in the representation of West Devon borough. We have also noted Newton Abbot Town Council’s opposition, but do not consider that a reduction in the level of representation for Teignbridge District Council should result in a similar recommendation for Devon County Council.

70 We have not been convinced by the evidence submitted that the proposed increase in council size is unjustified, and continue to believe that the increase would facilitate an improved provision of convenient and effective local government across the county. In the light of this, and the support expressed by some respondents, we propose that the recommendation for a 62-member council be endorsed as part of our final recommendations.

Electoral Arrangements

71 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the county-wide scheme from the County Council. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

72 We were 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.

73 Our draft recommendations were based substantially on the County Council's scheme. However, we considered 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 noted that Devon County Council's proposals for East Devon and North Devon would include the creation of almost detached divisions. The Commission does not consider that detached divisions, where the areas within a division are not contiguous, reflect community identities or are conducive to the provision of effective and convenient local government. In order that any such division be avoided, we 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 provide improved electoral equality.

74 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 in the draft recommendations report, it is important to note that due to the geographic size of counties, especially of 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.

75 The response to our draft recommendations has been generally positive, and we have received a significant amount of support for our proposals in some of the constituent districts. However, a number of issues have been brought to our attention and we have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of the evidence received during Stage Three. We propose endorsing the majority of our draft recommendations, but also propose modifying our scheme in East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, South Hams and Teignbridge, to establish a better balance between electoral equality and the reflection of community identities across the county. The submissions received from parish and town councils and other local interests have been valuable in drawing up our final recommendations. They highlighted specific local issues, particularly in terms of local community identities and interests.

76 For the purposes of county electoral divisions, the eight district areas in Devon 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.

77 Details of our final 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

78 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.

79 At Stage One 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 & Whimble, Exmouth Littleham & Town, Exmouth Littleham & Withycombe and Honiton Rural East. A new Budleigh division would comprise the wards of Budleigh and Newton Poppleford & Harpford, and part of Raleigh and Ottery St Mary Rural wards. The remainder of Ottery St Mary Rural ward 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 would be included in a new Exmouth Halsdon, Woodbury & Lypstone division. A new Honiton Rural West division would comprise 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 only 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.

80 We received five further representations regarding this area at Stage One. 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 proposed that the town be represented by its own county councillor. A resident of the district 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.

81 After careful consideration of the evidence received we proposed adopting the County Council's proposed divisions of Beer & Seaton, Broadclyst & Whimple, Exmouth Littleham & Town and Exmouth Littleham & Withycombe. However, we proposed renaming Exmouth Littleham & Withycombe division to Exmouth Brixington & Withycombe. We noted 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 proposed 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. We proposed 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 Sidmouth Sidford division, comprising Sidmouth Sidford and Sidmouth Town wards; a new Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury division, comprising the wards of Exmouth Halsdon and Woodbury & Lypstone; and a new Budleigh division, comprising the wards of Budleigh, Newton Poppleford & Harpford, Raleigh and Aylesbeare parish (part of Ottery St Mary Rural ward).

82 In addition, we 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 was helpful to note that both these issues would be partially addressed under our draft recommendations. With regard to the concerns expressed by Woodbury Parish Council, we 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 judged 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 the division being 37 per cent over-represented. We were not persuaded by the evidence received at Stage One that such electoral inequality was justified. Sidmouth Town Council proposed that the Sid Valley form one electoral division represented by two county councillors; however, under current legislation, we can only recommend single-member divisions. Our draft recommendations would provide 82 per cent coterminosity with only three divisions having electoral variances of more than 10 per cent by 2004, and would avoid the creation of an almost detached division.

83 At Stage Three the County Council supported the majority of our proposals for East Devon. However, it suggested that Woodbury Salterton parish ward of Woodbury parish be included in a modified Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury division and that Salcombe Regis (part of Sidmouth Rural ward) be included in a modified Sidmouth Sidford division to better reflect community identities. East Devon District Council proposed identical modifications to Budleigh and Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury divisions and similar alterations to Ottery St Mary & Sidmouth and Sidmouth Sidford divisions.

84 We received nine representations from parish and town councils in East Devon. Aylesbeare and Membury Parish Councils supported the draft recommendations. All Saints Parish Council

expressed some concerns about including Yarty district ward in a division with the town of Honiton; however, such an arrangement did not form part of our draft recommendations. Honiton Town Council opposed our proposal to include the two Honiton district wards in separate divisions, stating that “no other town in East Devon has been split in this way” and suggested that the two wards form a single division. Ottery St Mary and Sidmouth Town Councils opposed our recommendation to include Sidmouth Rural ward in a division with Ottery St Mary, on the basis that one is rural and one is coastal in character. Colyton Parish Council opposed the proposed Honiton St Michael’s division and suggested that it (the parish) be included in a division with Axminster or Seaton. Plymtree Parish Council opposed the Honiton St Paul’s division and suggested that Plymtree parish be included in a division with Ottery St Mary, since they are more similar in profile. Woodbury Parish Council supported the draft recommendations; however, it had wrongly assumed that they included the whole of Woodbury parish in a single county division. Two residents of Axminster supported the proposals for the Axminster area and a resident of Sidbury opposed our recommendation to include Sidmouth Rural ward in the Ottery St Mary & Sidmouth division.

85 We have carefully considered all the representations received and are pleased that a number of our recommendations for East Devon have received local support. We have noted the concerns of the County Council, East Devon District Council, Ottery St Mary Town Council and Sidmouth Town Council and the local resident regarding our proposed Ottery St Mary & Sidmouth division. We have considered the statements illustrating the coastal character of Sidmouth Rural ward, and the more agricultural character of Ottery St Mary. The Commission is not prepared to include the whole of Sidmouth Rural ward in a division with Sidmouth town, as it would result in Sidmouth Sidford division being 27 per cent under-represented. We have therefore examined the County Council’s proposal to divide Sidmouth Rural district ward between divisions and consider that, although it would reduce coterminosity and worsen electoral equality, it would significantly improve the reflection of community identities in the area. We therefore recommend that this arrangement form part of our final recommendations (See Map A1 in Appendix A).

86 We have also noted the concerns of the County Council, District Council and Woodbury Parish Council about the proposed Budleigh and Exmouth Halsdon & Woodbury divisions. We have not been convinced, neither now nor during the review of the district’s electoral arrangements, that the community identity of Woodbury parish would be damaged as a result of the draft recommendations being implemented. It is also important to note that to include the whole parish in a single divisions would worsen electoral equality and reduce coterminosity between district wards and county divisions. We consider our draft recommendations strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In the light of opposition to the draft recommendations for Honiton, we have considered alternative electoral arrangements for the town. We considered all the evidence received at Stage Three; however, due to the nature of the district and particularly the geographic situation of Honiton town, it has not been possible to generate an alternative (to include the whole of Honiton in a single division) without creating geographically large divisions: one alternative included 19 parishes in a single division. We do not consider that such a proposal would provide convenient and effective local government for electors in this area. In the light of this we propose endorsing our draft recommendations for the district as final, except for the modifications to the arrangements for Sidmouth and Ottery St Mary (outlined above). Our final recommendations would result in 73 per cent coterminosity and only three divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average by 2004, none of which would vary by more than 20 per cent. Our proposals are outlined on the large map at the back of this report.

Exeter City

87 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 varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in six divisions and by more than 20 per cent from the average in two divisions (Countess Wear & Topsham division 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.

88 At Stage One Devon County Council proposed nine members for Exeter, 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 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, also 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 in 2004.

89 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.

90 We considered carefully all the representations received regarding the proposed county divisions for Exeter city. We proposed modifying the scheme provided by Devon County Council to, in our opinion, better reflect local opinion and improve electoral equality. We also proposed 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 noted the relatively higher electoral variances in these divisions we were 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 proposed adopting Devon County Council's and Exeter City Council's proposed St Loyes & Topsham and Duryard & Pennsylvania divisions, but recommended 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. In the remainder of the city we proposed moving away from coterminosity to provide a higher level of electoral equality. We proposed a Newtown & St Leonard's division, to include the city wards

of the same name and part of the new Priory ward. 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.

91 At Stage Three the County Council opposed our draft recommendations for Exeter city. It expressed particular concern that dividing the Burnthouse Lane housing estate (Priory ward) between divisions would damage community identities. It stated that "it is preferable to adhere resolutely to the principle of coterminosity, whatever the consequent imperfections" and proposed that its Stage One scheme for Exeter be adopted.

92 Exeter City Council stated that it was "extremely disappointed with the Local Government Commission's draft recommendations...as far as they affect Exeter". It expressed particular opposition to the proposed Newtown & St Leonards and Priory & Heavitree divisions, where we departed from coterminosity and divided the Burnthouse Lane housing estate between divisions. It argued that the proposals would increase election costs, damage community identities and cause voter confusion. The Council suggested that its Stage One scheme for the city be adopted.

93 Exeter Conservative Association opposed our draft recommendations for Exeter and urged us to adopt the City Council's Stage One scheme as part of our final recommendations. It expressed particular concern about the proposal to divide the Burnthouse Lane housing estate (Priory & Heavitree and Newtown & St Leonard's divisions). Devon Labour Group, Exeter Labour Party and Exeter Labour Party (Priory & St Leonard's Branch) also opposed our recommendation to divide the Burnthouse Lane housing estate between two county divisions. All three respondents argued that such a proposal would damage the community identity of the estate; they suggested that county division boundaries be coterminous with city wards. The Exeter Labour Party (Priory & St Leonard's Branch) attached a petition of 59 signatures in support of its representation. The Liberal Party also opposed the proposed Priory & Heavitree and Newtown & St Leonards divisions, recommending an alternative arrangement for the area which would continue to breach city ward boundaries but better reflect community identities. Ben Bradshaw, Member of Parliament for Exeter, and Wonford Community Association also opposed our proposed Priory & Heavitree and Newtown & St Leonard's divisions.

94 Councillor Morrish, member for the existing Heavitree & Wonford division made two representations during Stage Three. In his first submission he expressed opposition to our proposals for Exeter, in particular the dividing of Priory ward between divisions. His second submission, identical to that of the Liberal Party, included an alternative arrangement for the same area, to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. A resident of Exeter opposed our recommendation to include the Burnthouse Lane housing estate in two county divisions for reasons of community identity.

95 We have carefully considered all the evidence received at Stage Three regarding our proposals for Exeter. We have noted the significant amount of opposition to our scheme for Exeter, in particular the proposed Priory & Heavitree and Newtown & St Leonard's divisions. We have noted the strong arguments regarding community identities across the city, particularly on the Burnthouse Lane housing estate, and the evidence of cross-party consensus for coterminosity between city wards and county divisions. However, we remain unconvinced that

the schemes submitted by the County Council and the City Council would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria presently available. We have therefore generated an alternative scheme which would provide coterminosity between wards and divisions and, in our view, more acceptable levels of electoral equality in an urban area. We recommend retaining the proposed Exwick & St Thomas, Cowick & Alphington, St Loyes & Topsham, St David's & St James and Duryard & Pennsylvania divisions. However, we also propose Priory & St Leonard's, Newtown & Polsloe, Whipton Barton & Heavitree and Mincinglake & Pinhoe divisions, comprising the wards of the same name. We consider that such an arrangement would improve the balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria achieved under the schemes submitted locally and our draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations four divisions would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the county average by 2004, but none would vary by more than 20 per cent. Our proposals would provide 100 per cent coterminosity between county divisions and city wards and are outlined on the large map at the back of this report.

Mid Devon district

96 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.

97 At Stage One 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. Mid Devon District Council submitted proposals that were almost identical to the County Council's proposals for the same area.

98 In the light of the excellent electoral equality and coterminosity achieved under the County Council's scheme and some evidence of local support, we recommended that the County Council's proposals be adopted without modification as part of our draft recommendations.

99 At Stage Three the County Council fully supported our draft recommendations for Mid Devon. Mid Devon District Council proposed that Newton St Cyres & Sandford division be renamed Culm & Canonsleigh and that Willand & Uffculme be renamed Taw & Raddon. We also received representations direct from six parish councils. Culmstock, Uffculme and Willand Parish Councils proposed that Willand & Uffculme division be renamed Culm & Canonsleigh and Hemyock Parish Council proposed a number of different names for the same division. Newton St Cyres Parish Council proposed that the Newton St Cyres & Sandford division be renamed Creedy, rather than Raddon as suggested by Mid Devon District Council. Stockleigh

Pomeroy Parish Council proposed that Newton St Cyres & Sandford division be renamed Raddon Taw. Silverton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation to include Silverton parish in two county divisions (it is divided for district warding purposes). It argued that such a proposal would result in unnecessary expense.

100 We were pleased to note that the County Council supported our draft recommendations for Mid Devon in full. We have noted the concerns of Silverton Parish Council but do not consider that including the whole of Silverton parish in a single division would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and remain unconvinced that our proposals would be detrimental to community identities in the area. In the light of this and the support expressed, we propose endorsing the division boundaries included in the draft recommendations. However, we have noted the local concerns regarding the naming of the proposed Newton St Cyres & Sandford and Willand & Uffculme divisions. Due to the fact that a number of alternative names were submitted we propose, after considering the local communities and local consensus, that these divisions be renamed Taw & Raddon and Culm & Canonsleigh respectively. Our proposals are outlined on the large map at the back of this report.

North Devon district

101 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.

102 At Stage One 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 Fremington Rural division would comprise Bickington & Roundswell, Fremington and Instow wards and the modified South Molton Rural division would comprise Bishop's Nympton, North Molton, South Molton and Witheridge wards; and a 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.

103 Additionally, South Molton Town Council requested that the parish be represented by its own county councillor and Braunton Parish Council supported the County Council's proposals for no change to county divisions in its area. 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.

104 After considering all the evidence received we noted the good levels of electoral equality and coterminosity achieved under Devon County Council's proposals and the evidence of some local support for them. While we noted that the proposed Combe Martin Rural division would be over-represented by 13 per cent by 2004, after consideration of the evidence submitted we concluded that only arbitrary warding of parishes would improve electoral variances in this area. We did, however, note that the County Council's proposals for Barnstaple would include a virtually detached division, with only a footbridge linking the two halves of Barnstaple South division. The Commission did not consider that this arrangement would reflect community identities or facilitate the provision of effective and convenient local government. We therefore proposed adopting the County Council's proposals for North Devon district, except in Barnstaple where we proposed 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 under the draft recommendations. While we noted 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 was not persuaded by the evidence submitted at Stage One regarding community identities in the area that such electoral inequality was justified.

105 The electoral variances achieved under the draft recommendations were 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.

106 At Stage Three the County Council supported the majority of our draft recommendations in this area, but opposed our recommendations for Barnstaple. It argued that "the very strong local view is that the existing arrangements reflect the town's community identities much more faithfully" and that the River Taw does not provide a significant physical boundary in the town or dictate community identities. North Devon District Council supported our recommendation to increase the number of councillors representing the district, but made no comment about the proposed division boundaries.

107 North Devon Liberal Democrats opposed our proposals for Barnstaple, arguing that they would not best reflect community identities and urged us to adopt the County Council's Stage One proposals for the area. The parish councils of Bishops Tawton and Braunton both supported our draft recommendations. Barnstaple Town Council opposed our draft recommendations for the town, stating that "the problem of detached wards is more perceived than real given that a large proportion of the Longbridge ward is separated from the rest of the town by the presence of the River Taw". It proposed that the existing north/south divide of the town be retained as part of the final recommendations. South Molton Town Council proposed that South Molton Rural division be modified, to better reflect community identities. Georgeham, Morteheo and West Down Parish Councils opposed the proposed Combe Martin Rural division, as it would not best reflect community ties and would result in a geographically large division. Arlington and Burrington Parish Councils both opposed the proposed Chulmleigh & Swimbridge division, also on the basis that the geographical area to be covered would be too large. Councillor Greenslade, member for Barnstaple North division and Pilton district ward, opposed our recommendations

for the town, suggesting that we adopt the County Council's Stage One scheme for Barnstaple. A resident of Torrington raised a number of local issues, none of which we are able to comment on as part of this review.

108 In drawing up our final recommendations we have carefully considered all the Stage Three representations. We have noted the concerns of local groups, including the County Council, Barnstaple Town Council and the North Devon Liberal Democrats stating that our proposals for Barnstaple town would be detrimental to long standing and strong community ties. The County Council stated that the three district wards of Longbridge, Newport and Forches & Whiddon are linked by a well used footbridge at Rock Park. In the light of this argument officers from the Commission visited Barnstaple and were concerned that the footbridge did not visibly link these communities. However, they also noted that the Longbridge community is separated from the rest of Barnstaple because of its location and visited the wards of Pilton, Central Town and Yeo Valley in an attempt to identify their relation to each other. Consequently, we consider that these latter wards form a contiguous community and should form a single division. We therefore propose that the County Council's scheme for Barnstaple form part of our final recommendations, but not for the reason stated by the County Council. We note that this arrangement would continue to provide coterminosity in the town, would have little impact on electoral equality but would significantly improve the reflection of community identities as outlined by respondents.

109 In the light of comments received from Georgeham, Mortehoe and West Down parishes we have reconsidered our proposed Combe Martin Rural division. We have been unable to devise a more suitable scheme, noting that including Mortehoe and West Down parishes in the proposed Braunton Rural division would result in Combe Martin Rural division being 33 per cent over-represented and Braunton Rural division being 18 per cent under-represented; to include Georgeham parish in the proposed Combe Martin Rural division, thereby retaining its community ties with Mortehoe & West Down parishes, would result in Braunton Rural division being 16 per cent over-represented. We have not been convinced by the evidence received regarding community identities in this area that such electoral inequalities are justified, additionally noting that Braunton Parish Council supported our proposals in this area. In the light of concerns expressed by a number of local groups, we have also considered alternative arrangements for the proposed Chulmleigh & Swimbridge and South Molton Rural divisions. We have attempted to create smaller divisions (as proposed locally) that would better reflect the community ties outlined by respondents. However, we have been unable to identify an alternative scheme that would not result in significant electoral imbalances. We therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendations, except for Barnstaple, as final. We consider them to provide the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Under our final recommendations only one division is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the county average by 2004, as at draft recommendations, and 75 per cent of county divisions would be coterminous with district wards. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

South Hams district

110 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, and 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.

111 At Stage One 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 & Malborough 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 Allington & 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.

112 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 that the County Council's proposals would not reflect community identities.

113 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. Ugborough Parish Council 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 nature. 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. 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.

114 Having considered carefully the representations received and the supporting evidence submitted regarding the proposed county divisions in South Hams, we noted 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 response to South Hams District Council and Shaugh Prior Parish Council's comments regarding community identities in the area, we repeat that, 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 was not convinced by the evidence received at Stage One regarding community identities in this area that such electoral inequality was justified.

115 We 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 were unable to find a suitable alternative to the arrangements proposed by respondents. In the absence of any locally generated alternative, we proposed adopting Devon County Council's proposals for South Hams district without modification. Under the draft recommendations the electoral equality and coterminosity were the same as that under the County Council's proposals.

116 At Stage Three the County Council expressed its full support for the draft recommendations for South Hams district. Ivybridge Town Council also supported our draft recommendations. Kingsbridge Town Council expressed support for the increase in council size but opposed the inclusion of Kingsbridge and Salcombe in a single county division. It stated that "these two towns have very little in common...whilst joining the two towns together might be said in one sense to produce a more homogeneous mixture, it would lack any real community spirit". It suggested an alternative arrangement for the area, particularly to include Kingsbridge and Salcombe in separate divisions. A representation was made to the Commission on behalf of the parish councillors of Chivelstone parish, four of whom expressed support for the draft recommendations and two of whom opposed them, as not reflecting community identities. South Milton and Stokenham Parish Councils opposed the proposed Thurlestone & Slapton division on the basis that it would include settlements which are geographically distant from each other and have few community ties. Stokenham Parish Council proposed a new Kingsbridge & Stokenham division to better reflect community identities and provide more convenient and effective local government. A resident of Kingsbridge in South Hams district supported the increase in council size, but opposed the linking of Kingsbridge and Salcombe in a single county division.

117 We were pleased to note that the majority of our proposals for South Hams district have commanded some local support. However, we are concerned that a number of parish and town councils in the south of the district opposed the new Kingsbridge & Salcombe and Thurlestone & Slapton divisions, asserting that the arrangement would not best reflect local community identities. We agree that the proposed Thurlestone & Slapton division would not provide convenient and effective local government for electors in this area or best reflect communities. We have therefore devised an alternative arrangement in this area to accommodate these views, basing the new divisions on information provided locally about community ties, in particular the proposals of Kingsbridge Town Council. We propose that a new Kingsbridge & Stokenham division comprise the wards of Kingsbridge North, Kingsbridge East, Saltstone, Skerries and Stokenham and that a new Thurlestone, Salcombe & Allington division comprise the wards of Allington & Loddiswell, Salcombe & Malborough, Thurlestone and Westville & Alvington. We consider this arrangement to provide a better balance between the provision of convenient and effective local government and the reflection of communities and electoral equality than the draft recommendations. Under these proposals only one division is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2004 (as in the draft recommendations) and county divisions would be wholly coterminous with district wards. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Teignbridge district

118 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.

119 At Stage One 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) and none would be greater than 19 per cent.

120 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 Teignmouth 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.

121 The Commission considered carefully all the representations received at Stage One and noted that although Devon County Council's proposals would achieve 100 per cent coterminosity, the improvements in electoral equality would be minimal. We also noted Teignbridge District Council's concern regarding the dividing of the towns of Teignmouth and Newton Abbot, however, after considering the proposed arrangements in both areas, we were 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 proposed adopting seven of the County Council's divisions as part of our draft recommendations, including those for Teignmouth and Newton Abbot. However, we proposed 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 the draft 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.

122 At Stage Three the County Council supported the majority of our proposals for Teignbridge district; however, it proposed that Holcombe Burnell parish be included in Chudleigh Rural division (as it proposed at Stage One) rather than Exminster & Kenton division (as included in the draft recommendations). It suggested that Cockwood, part of Dawlish town, be included in Exminster & Kenton division to improve the resulting electoral imbalance. Teignbridge District Council opposed the proposed increase in council size and schemes for Teignmouth and Newton Abbot towns and Holcombe Burnell parish, as it would not best reflect community identities. It proposed alternative arrangements for the area and a number of alternative division names.

123 Chudleigh, Exminster, Kingsteignton and Ogwell Parish Councils each expressed support for our draft recommendations. Buckfastleigh Town Council and the parish councils of Bickington and Ilsington opposed our recommendation to include Ogwell parish in Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division, each arguing that the proposal would not reflect community identities and would include parishes of differing natures in a single division. Newton Abbot Town Council and Hennock Parish Council both opposed the increase in council size from 54 to 62. Additionally, Newton Abbot Town Council suggested a number of alternative names for the proposed Newton Abbot Town division, to avoid confusion between town wards and county divisions. The proposed names included Newton Abbot Central, Newton Abbot North and Newton Abbot South West. Abbotskerwell and Haccombe-with-Combe Parish Councils both objected to the proposed arrangements for Newton Abbot town and its surrounding area, both suggesting that our proposals would not best reflect community identities. Denbury & Torbryan Parish Council opposed the proposed Newton Abbot West division, for reasons of community identity. Holcombe Burnell Parish Council opposed the recommendation to include it in a modified Exminster & Kenton division. It argued that the proposal would not provide convenient and effective local government or reflect community identities, and suggested that it should be included in a division with the parishes in the Teign Valley (Chudleigh Rural).

124 Councillor Whittaker, member for Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division, opposed the proposed Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division (to include Ogwell parish) as it would include urban and rural settlements in the same division and would not reflect community ties. Councillor Cook, member for Teignbridge South division, opposed our recommendations for the towns of Newton Abbot and Teignmouth and the surrounding rural area; he argued that the new divisions would incorporate both urban and rural settlements. He proposed alternative arrangements for Kingsteignton, Teignmouth and Dawlish, but did not supply any detailed boundaries.

125 In drawing up our final recommendations we have considered all the representations and issues raised during Stage Three. Having considered the comments received at Stage Three asserting that the proposals for Holcombe Burnell parish would not provide convenient and effective local government for local electors and do not reflect community ties, we are minded to propose that the County Council's Stage One scheme for the area be adopted, as part of our final recommendations. Although we note that this arrangement would worsen electoral equality, we consider it to be justified due to the nature and geography of the area and local community interests.

126 In the light of the opposition to our proposals for Teignmouth and Newton Abbot and the evidence received we have also reconsidered the proposed arrangements for these areas. We have generated an alternative scheme for Newton Abbot that we consider would better reflect community identities, as it would avoid, where possible, the grouping of urban and rural parishes in single divisions and would command some local support. We propose that the wards of College and Buckland & Milber form a Newton Abbot South division, to ensure that the four Newton Abbot town district wards would form two county divisions. Additionally, we recommend that the more rural parishes on the outskirts of Newton Abbot (part of Ambrook and Kerswell-with-Combe wards and the whole of Ipplepen ward) should be grouped together to form a division of a more rural nature, to be named Ambrook & Ipplepen. The remainder of Kerswell-with-Combe ward (Hacombe-with-Combe parish) would form part of a revised Teignmouth West division to better reflect community identities, while improving electoral equality. We propose no further modifications to the divisions covering Teignmouth, as we have been unable to find a more satisfactory alternative to that proposed in the draft recommendations. We have not been persuaded by the evidence received regarding community ties in the proposed Ashburton & Buckfastleigh division to modify our proposed arrangements in the area. We continue to consider that the arrangement provides good electoral equality, while commanding a degree of local support, including from the county council and Ogwell Parish Council. We therefore propose confirming the remainder of our draft recommendations for Teignbridge as final, as they strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have also considered Teignbridge District Council's proposed division name changes; however, we do not consider them to better reflect local communities and are concerned that none of the parishes involved have voiced similar views. However, we do propose, as suggested by Newton Abbot Town Council, that Newton Abbot Town division be renamed Newton Abbot North. Under our final recommendations, which are outlined on the large map at the back of this report, four wards would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average by 2004 (one less than in the draft recommendations) and 73 per cent of divisions would be coterminous with district wards.

Torrige district

127 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.

128 At Stage One 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 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.

129 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 Torridge District Council. However, the political management structure of local authorities is not a matter for consideration by the Commission as part of this review.

130 We considered carefully the representations received at Stage One and noted that the proposals put forward by Devon County Council for Torridge district would provide excellent electoral equality. Due to the current electoral inequalities in Torridge and our aim to achieve 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 proposed the adoption of the County Council's scheme for this area as part of our draft recommendations. The electoral variances under the draft recommendations were the same as those under the County Council's scheme.

131 At Stage Three the County Council expressed its full support for the draft recommendations for Torridge as did the parish councils of Hartland and Yarnscombe. In the light of this support and the absence of any other representations, we remain satisfied that the boundaries included in our draft recommendations for this area would strike the best balance achievable between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and therefore confirm them as final. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

West Devon borough

132 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.

133 At Stage One 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 and 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 to the current arrangements, with no division varying by more than 14 per cent from the average by 2004.

134 Additionally, 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.

135 After careful consideration of the representations received at Stage One we noted 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 noted that improved levels of electoral equality 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 proposed that the County Council's scheme for West Devon be adopted without modification. We concluded that it would strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality, coterminosity and the reflection of community identities. Additionally, we considered the proposals of Tavistock Town Council and, although we attempt to recommend wholly rural or wholly urban divisions where possible, we were concerned that the proposals would result in Yelverton Rural division being 25 per cent under-represented (23 per cent by 2004). Our draft recommendations provided total coterminosity across the borough and the same electoral variances as those under the County Council's scheme.

136 At Stage Three the County Council expressed its full support for the draft recommendations for West Devon. However, West Devon Borough Council stated that "under your proposals, the number of county councillors representing the borough would remain at four whereas the size of the County Council increases from 54 to 62 members ... the representation for the people of West Devon will accordingly be diluted." It also expressed concern that the draft recommendations would not provide for improved levels of electoral equality across the borough. Additionally, the Borough Council proposed that Tamarside borough ward be excluded from the proposed Tavistock division to better reflect community identities.

137 North Tawton Parish Council expressed support for the draft recommendations and Peter Tavy Parish Council opposed the Okehampton Rural division, proposing that Lydford parish be included in the Okehampton Rural division and Peter Tavy parish be included in Yelverton Rural division.

138 We have carefully considered the representations received regarding our proposals for West Devon. We note the Borough Council's concerns regarding the proposed increase in council size from 54 to 62, with no increase in the representation for the borough. It is important to note that under the existing arrangements for Devon County Council, the electors of West Devon borough are significantly over-represented and in forming our recommendations we have rectified this by proposing no change in the level of representation of West Devon borough. We have also attempted to generate an alternative arrangement to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, particularly in the Tavistock area; however we have been unable to do so due to the geography of the borough and distribution of electorate, as outlined above and in the draft recommendations.

139 We have also considered the proposal to include Peter Tavy parish in Yelverton division and Lydford parish in Okehampton Rural division. However, we are concerned that this proposal would worsen electoral equality and coterminosity and do not consider that our draft recommendations would be particularly detrimental to communities in this area. In view of this we propose confirming our draft recommendations for West Devon borough as final. These proposals are outlined on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Conclusions

140 Having considered all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we propose that:

- there should be an increase in council size from 54 to 62, serving 62 divisions;
- changes should be made to the boundaries of all of the existing divisions.

141 We have decided to substantially endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in East Devon district, that Sidmouth Rural ward be divided between Ottery St Mary Rural and Sidmouth Sidford divisions to better reflect community identities;
- in Exeter city, that four divisions be modified and renamed to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the reflection of community identities;
- in Mid Devon district, that two divisions be renamed;
- in North Devon district, that the divisions in Barnstaple be modified to better reflect community identities;
- in South Hams district, that there should be two new divisions of Kingsbridge & Stokenham and Thurlestone, Salcombe & Allington to better reflect community identities, as outlined by respondents;
- in Teignbridge district, that the divisions covering Newton Abbot be modified and that Holcombe Burnell parish be included in a modified Chudleigh Rural division, to better reflect community identities.

142 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final 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	19	27	16
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	4	8	0

143 As shown in Figure 4, our final 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 19. By 2004 no division is forecast to vary by more than 20 per cent from the average. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Final 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 on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

144 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that, if a parish is to be divided between different county divisions, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division of the county. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Sidmouth to reflect the proposed county divisions in those areas.

145 The parish of Sidmouth is currently represented by 19 councillors, representing eight wards: East ward (returning two members), North ward (returning three members), Primley ward (returning two members), Salcombe Regis ward (returning two members), Sidbury ward (returning two members), Sidford ward (returning two members), South ward (returning three members) and West ward (returning three members). Under our final recommendations Sidmouth Rural district ward would be divided between county divisions. We therefore propose no change to the existing East, North, Primley, Sidford, South and West wards, but do propose that the boundary between Sidbury and Salcombe Regis wards be modified to follow the A3052 (See Map A1).

Final Recommendation

Sidmouth Town Council should comprise 19 councillors, representing eight wards, as at present: East ward (returning two members), North ward (returning three members), Primley ward (returning two members), Salcombe Regis ward (returning two members), Sidbury ward (returning two members), Sidford ward (returning two members), South ward (returning three members) and West ward (returning three members). The town ward boundary between Sidbury and Salcombe Regis should reflect the proposed boundary between Ottery St Mary Rural and Sidmouth Sidford divisions (See Map A1).

6 NEXT STEPS

146 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements for Devon County Council and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

147 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

148 All further correspondence concerning our recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to:

The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Devon: Detailed Mapping

The following map illustrates the Commission's proposed division boundaries for Devon.

Map A1 illustrates the proposed boundary between the divisions of Ottery St Mary Rural and Sidmouth Sidford in East Devon.

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 the divisions of Ottery St Mary Rural and Sidmouth Sidford in East
Devon*

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Devon (February 2000)

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of 15 divisions as set out below. The only other changes from draft to final recommendations, which are not included in Figures B1 and B2, are that we propose to rename Newton St Cyres & Sandford and Willand & Uffculme divisions in Mid Devon as Taw & Raddon and Culm & Canonsleigh respectively and Newton Abbot Town division in Teignbridge as Newton Abbot North.

Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Division name (by district council area)	Constituent district wards
EAST DEVON DISTRICT	
1 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
2 Sidmouth Sidford	Sidmouth Sidford ward; Sidmouth Town ward
EXETER CITY	
3 Newtown & St Leonard's	Newtown ward; Priory ward (part); St Leonard's ward
4 Polsloe & Mincinglake	Mincinglake ward; Polsloe ward
5 Priory & Heavitree	Heavitree ward; Priory ward (part)
6 Whipton Barton & Pinhoe	Pinhoe ward; Whipton Barton ward
NORTH DEVON DISTRICT	
7 Barnstaple East	Forches & Whiddon Valley ward; Newport ward; Yeo Valley ward
8 Barnstaple West	Central Town ward; Longbridge ward; Pilton ward
SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT	
9 Kingsbridge & Salcombe	Kingsbridge East ward; Kingsbridge North ward; Salcombe & Malborough ward; Westville & Alvington ward
10 Thurlestone & Slapton	Allington & Loddiswell ward; Saltstone ward; Skerries ward; Stokenham ward; Thurlestone ward
TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT	
11 Chudleigh Rural	Chudleigh ward; Teignbridge North ward (part – the parishes of Tedburn St Mary and Whitestone); Teign Valley ward
12 Exminster & Kenton	Kenn Valley ward; Kenton with Starcross ward; Teignbridge North ward (part – the parish of Holcombe Burnell)

Division name (by district council area)	Constituent district wards
13 Newton Abbot East	Buckland & Milber ward; Kerswell with Combe ward
14 Newton Abbot West	Ambrook ward (part – the parishes of Abbotskerswell, Broadhempston, Denbury & Torbryan and Woodland); College ward; Ipplepen ward
15 Teignmouth West	Bishopsteignton ward; Shaldon & Stokeinteignhead ward; Teignmouth West ward

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

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Devon

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
EAST DEVON DISTRICT					
1 Ottery St Mary & Sidmouth	1	9,701	11	10,196	12
2 Sidmouth Sidford	1	9,546	9	9,835	8
EXETER CITY					
3 Newtown & St Leonard's	1	8,438	-4	8,439	-8
4 Polsloe & Mincinglake	1	8,197	-6	8,249	-10
5 Priory & Heavitree	1	10,109	15	9,937	9
6 Whipton Barton & Pinhoe	1	10,610	21	10,333	13
NORTH DEVON DISTRICT					
7 Barnstaple East	1	9,249	6	9,578	5
8 Barnstaple West	1	9,754	11	9,883	8
SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT					
9 Kingsbridge & Salcombe	1	8,095	-8	8,592	-6
10 Thurlestone & Slapton	1	7,922	-10	8,352	-9
TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT					
11 Chudleigh Rural	1	7,856	-10	8,520	-7
12 Exminster & Kenton	1	7,235	-17	7,906	-14
13 Newton Abbot East	1	9,861	13	10,328	13
14 Newton Abbot West	1	8,400	-4	8,903	-3
15 Teignmouth West	1	7,852	-10	8,198	-10

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.

