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**Response from Glossopdale Labour Party  
to  
Boundary Commission Recommendations for the County of  
Derbyshire**

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We have chosen to make a submission on only one element of the new electoral proposals for Derbyshire County Council published by the Commission on 2 April 2012.

Our contribution refers to the proposal to recommend a two seat ward in Glossop, which we think is misguided.

We have not commented upon the Commission's recommendations for the remaining 6 seats of High Peak.

The Commission's recommendation on Glossop is "*on the basis of evidence received to date*" (paragraph 120). This comment has caused us to reflect on our failure to make detailed representations earlier and acknowledge that this was a shortcoming on our part. We have taken the opportunity to rectify that situation and welcome the Commission's indication that it would "particularly welcome comments" on this recommendation during the next consultative stage.

In principal we are not opposed to the establishment of two member wards if they can be demonstrated to either enhance electoral equality, or more closely reflect community identity, or provide for more effective local government.

In our view, the proposed two seat ward does not achieve any of these objectives more effectively than the initial local proposal.

In the interest of consistency we will refer to the initial submission by Derbyshire County Council and the Derbyshire County Labour group as the "*Local proposal*" and the subsequent recommendation as "*the Commission's recommendation.*"

There was a slight difference between the two local proposals, but in relation to the submission from the County Council, that 118 electors from one polling district (descriptor SJ5) in the St. Johns parish ward, part of the Charlesworth parish in the district ward of St. Johns, move into the Etherow electoral division from Glossop North and Rural, we are supportive inasmuch it marginally improves electoral equalisation.

We will also adopt the Commission's reference to "*Glossop*" in most parts of the submission. However, the area identified as Glossop by the Commission has increasingly been referred to as Glossopdale in the locality. The secondary school created in the 1990's is known as Glossopdale Community College. The name was chosen to reflect both the coming together of two separate schools, yet also to recognise the concern of those from those communities outside the town centre who wanted to identify with the area, but not necessarily with just the town itself.

The Commission helpfully focuses us on the three major considerations which it must balance to develop its recommendations:

- equalising the number of electors each councillor represents
- reflecting community identity
- providing for convenient and effective local government.

Our response will focus primarily on the first of these two pillars. We have taken the reference to effective and convenient local government to apply principally to the number and size of seats in the County.

In summary, in relation to the proposal to establish a two member ward in High Peak named "Glossop and Charlesworth" we submit that

- The proposal from the Commission does not improve the "electoral equality" beyond the submissions previously made from the locality.
- The Commission may not have received evidence of the strength of local community identities within Glossopdale. We see the Commission's invitation to comment on this particular proposal as an opportunity to rectify that omission on our part.
- We cannot see evidence from the Commission that its proposal for a Glossop and Charlesworth two member division would provide more effective and convenient local government than would the initial submissions made from the locality. Indeed, we suggest that the Commission's recommendation would have a detrimental effect.

In Appendix 1 we detail three important additional matters which we need to bring to the Commission's attention. They relate to the advisability or otherwise of "doughnut" shaped areas of governance and to two factual errors which have to a limited extent made us question the foundations on which the Commission bases its recommendation

**(1) Equalising the number of electors each Councillor represents**

We have sought to illustrate in the table below, that there is no improvement in the equalisation of electors each Councillor represents between the local proposal and the Commission's recommendation.

<b>Name of Division</b>	<b>Local Submission</b>	<b>Commission Recommendation</b>
Etherow	-10%	-10%
Glossop South	-8%	
Glossop North and Rural	-8%	
Glossop and Charlesworth		-8%

Table 1 - PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE IN ELECTORAL EQUALITY 2017

Significant improvement in equalising the number of electors each councillor represents in 2017 might of itself justify the establishment of a two member ward. That the Commission's recommendation does not achieve this objective is effectively acknowledged in paragraphs 114 and 118. The table is merely inserted to reconfirm this assertion.

## **(2) Community Identity**

Local proposals to the Commission reflect, with marginal differences, the status quo which has been in place since the 2005 County Council elections.

We are aware that it is not within the Commission's brief to consider the status quo, except inasmuch as the previous review body considered communities of interest in reaching its conclusions. It is our submission that those communities of interest remain and that change for its own sake in electoral boundaries is at worst detrimental and at best confusing.

We believe that the choice of name of the new two seat division gives some insight into the thinking of the Commission. Our starting point is that the St John's ward, together with Padfield ward is smaller in population terms than are the other wards included in the local proposal to establish a Glossop North and Rural division.

The proposal to move 118 electors from St Johns to Etherow makes Charlesworth still smaller in population terms. The parish of Chisworth is part of St Johns, but not part of Charlesworth. Similarly, the part of Gamesley that is located in St Johns ward is not part of Charlesworth parish. Yet the Commission's recommendation (paragraph 118) is that the proposed two member division be described as Glossop and Charlesworth "*to reflect the main areas it comprises*".

It is our submission that the proposed name of the 2 member division reflects the Commission's seemingly inexplicable aversion to a "*doughnut*" shaped division.

St Johns is a doughnut shaped Borough Council ward which surrounds Glossop. It reflects the shape of the parish of Charlesworth. It is one of the building blocks that have to be used to construct new County divisions. We would suggest that the Commission's recommendation reflects an undue emphasis on that one small parish, and that the name chosen for the division confirms our conclusion. It is a case of the curled rural tail of an ancient parish of less than 1,000 people wagging the dog of 16,000 people. The shape of Charlesworth Parish is given disproportionate importance in the Commission's narrative and has had an equally disproportionate impact on the Commission's recommendation.

In addition, we challenge the assertion made by the Commission in paragraph 115, that "*the area of Glossop town included in the proposed Glossop North and Rural division would have no communication links to the East of the division*".

This is not the case. A somewhat tortuous route, but one not unusual in rural communities, joins the East and West of the proposed Glossop North and Rural Division. From the East the link is from Charlesworth Village in a South Easterly

direction along Monks Road, in a Northerly direction on the A624, then in an Easterly direction past Moorfield and across the Derbyshire Level.

The Commission further suggests that creating the division of Glossop and Charlesworth, *“would not arbitrarily split the Glossop Community and would have Glossop Town as the division’s natural focus”*.

The Commission suggests these are virtues. We would suggest that such a focus would be undesirable as it would weaken the capacity of the different communities within Glossopdale to argue their corner and their Councillors to make a case for a more equitable distribution of resources across different communities within Glossopdale.

In terms of the local proposal, the areas of Padfield, St Johns, Dinting and Old Glossop can have their different and specific interests represented as can the areas of Howard Town, Whitfield and Simmondley. People who live in these areas see them as needing community representation. To subsume those interests into a Glossop-wide monolith would effectively deprive communities within Glossopdale of their opportunity to be directly represented in pursuing their distinctive interests.

Whilst different local communities may have a traditional and historic base, nowadays their community of interests focuses primarily around their schools which are an important element of local community belonging; indeed in areas which are increasingly populated by commuters, the schools are often the only form of community engagement for many people.

In spite of there being a greater emphasis on school “choice” in the last twenty years, the high quality of local schools means that in the main parents send their children to their local school and many of their community networks are based on this social contact.

**(a) Patterns in Glossop South.**

In terms of Glossop South division Roman Catholic parents from Whitfield and Howard Town tend to send their children to St. Mary’s Catholic Primary School in Whitfield. Those residents of Howard Town to the north side of the A57 may increasingly send their children to the Duke of Norfolk’s C of E Primary School since it was recently located on a single site in the Centre of Glossop, whereas previously it was a split site school located partly in the town centre and partly in Old Glossop. Parents resident in Whitfield and Howard Town send their children to St James C of E school which is located in Howard Town. Simmondley parents send their children to Simmondley Primary school.

**(b) Patterns in Glossop North and Rural**

In relation to the Glossop North and Rural Division, Roman Catholic children predominantly attend All Saints R C Church School in Old Glossop, with some parents of Padfield Roman Catholic children choosing St. Charles Catholic

Primary School in Hadfield. Children from Dinting predominantly attend St Luke's C of E Primary School, and those from Shirebrook Park and Old Glossop represent by far the greatest number of attendees at Duke of Norfolk's C of E Primary School. Padfield residents tend to send children to Padfield primary school.

Dinting School which is located on the A57, close to Dinting Railway Arches attracts a small number of children from Simmondley, Dinting, Hadfield and Gamesley but has suffered a fall in numbers in recent years.

In general, postal addresses in the Valley to the East of the Dinting Viaduct refer to the locality and people identify themselves as being from Simmondley, Whitfield, Shirebrook Park, Old Glossop and Dinting.

The local proposal recognises this identification with locality as a virtue. The areas within the town core and surrounding it need advocacy for their local interests from their local council member; their interests are not always coterminous with those of the town centre, although they use its facilities and are interested in its appearance, viability and the opportunity it offers for social interaction. The people are better served by vibrant inter-reaction than by a single monolithic structure.

### **(3) Convenient and effective Local Government**

We are not persuaded that a ward of approximately 17,000 people, covering an area significantly larger than all but one other in High Peak and being one of the five largest wards by area in Derbyshire will lead of itself to more convenient and effective Local Government.

If the first two criteria of equalisation and identity are improved as a consequence of a two member ward proposal, then the case for considering larger divisions may well be justified.

Even at present, where single member boundaries are in place, there is a temptation for members of the public to contact more than one Councillor and it is not unusual to have approaches made to councillors outside their division. Generally, because there are clearly defined boundaries, it is possible to manage this situation and establish a general understanding and protocol between members.

However, if there are two councillors in a single division of 17,000 people, each councillor's responsibility is to all those electors. An understanding to share responsibility for different halves of the division might be agreed between those elected and may work in practice. However, this cannot be assumed to happen, and even if a local arrangement were agreed it would not absolve each local member of responsibility across the whole division.

If County Councillors are to each have to cover a ward twice the size in population (as under the Commission's recommendation) and geographically huge, then the quality of service offered is likely to be more difficult to sustain, the probability of

duplication is likely to increase and the effectiveness of governance is likely to diminish. Liaising with twice as many borough councillors might also be problematic.

## **Conclusion**

For the reasons set out above, we conclude that on balance the Commission's recommendation for a two member ward named Glossop and Charlesworth is not advantageous to effective representation of the communities and electors within Glossopdale.

We are grateful for the invitation to comment on the proposal and are appreciative of the efforts the Commission has made to deal with the geographical building blocks of district wards and parishes.

Regrettably, we consider that our failure to make an earlier submission on the different communities of interest in the valley may have contributed to the Commission's decision to recommend a fundamentally different division from those made in the locality.

We hope that the comments we have made will assist the Commission in making its final decision.

# Appendix 1

In this Appendix 1 we detail three important matters which we need to bring to the Commission's attention.

We add a fourth point concerning the size of wards in Glossop North and Rural division in acknowledgement that the County Council submission was inaccurate apropos its reference to the parished and unparished part of the division.

## (1) The Doughnut

Our first concern relates to the "doughnut", which is referred to three times on page 18 of the Commission's comments on Glossop. It is not clear whether the problem is with the inside of the doughnut or the outside.

It is however worth pointing out that the City of Derby is surrounded by the doughnut of the County of Derbyshire. Indeed, in the now defunct East Midlands Region of England all three unitary cities are completely surrounded by their respective Counties. Neither cities, nor counties seem troubled by this and to the best of our knowledge no evidence has been produced to show that doughnuts are more or less effective in governance terms than half moons, squares, triangles, L-shapes or circles.

In Derbyshire itself, North East Derbyshire surrounds Chesterfield, from which there is no access to the rest of Derbyshire without passing through either the North East District or parts of Yorkshire.

We do not understand why the Commission should have an aversion to doughnut or semi doughnut shapes. Nor do we consider the fact that transport routes radiate from the centre of a township is of itself a reason for presuming a single community of interest.

## (2) Renaming of division

The second concern is that it is suggested (paragraph 114) that the Commission received a request under the Labour Group's proposal to re-name the Glossop North and Rural Division "Glossop West".

In fact, the submission read

### ***"Etherow division***

*Whilst we would support the county council's proposed boundaries for this division we would propose a renaming of this division to Glossop West on the grounds that this best reflects the identity of the division and has greater meaning to the community. "*

This is a regrettable error.

The proposal from Derbyshire Labour Group was to change the name of the Etherow Division to "*Glossop West*", in recognition that the fiercely independent settlements of Gamesley, Hadfield and Tintwistle nevertheless feel themselves to be part of Glossopdale, but separate from Glossop.

There was no proposal made from the locality to change the name of the Glossop North and Rural Division.

### **(3) Misunderstanding of Local submission**

Less importantly, but nevertheless unfortunately, the content of paragraph 114 is also inaccurate on a second count; specifically it is suggested of the local proposal (i.e. 3 separate divisions) that "*Under this proposed division pattern, each division would comprise an area of Glossop town*".

Regrettably, this assertion cannot be applied to the proposed Etherow division, which comprises Tintwistle, most of Gamesley and most of Hadfield. No segment of Glossop is contained within Etherow's boundaries.