

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Wyre in Lancashire

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

September 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Wyre in Lancashire.

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CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>9</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>11</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>33</i>
APPENDICES	
A Final Recommendations for Wyre: Detailed Mapping	<i>35</i>
B Draft Recommendations for Wyre (April 2000)	<i>41</i>

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Fleetwood and Thornton Cleveleys is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

5 September 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 7 September 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Wyre under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in April 2000 and undertook a nine-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 paragraph 125) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Wyre.

We recommend that Wyre Borough Council should be served by 55 councillors representing 26 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that elections for the Council should continue to take place every four years.

The Local Government Act 2000 contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as orders are made implementing those arrangements 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 Borough 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Wyre on 7 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 4 April 2000, after which we undertook a nine-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 Wyre:

- **in 15 of the 27 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and four wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 17 wards and by more than 20 per cent in five wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 125–126) are that:

- **Wyre Borough Council should have 55 councillors, one fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 26 wards, instead of 27 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 21 of the proposed 26 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish council electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **an increase in the number of councillors representing Catterall Parish Council.**

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 17 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

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Bourne (in Thornton Cleveleys)	3	Bourne ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
2	Breck (in Poulton-le-Fylde)	2	Breck ward (part)	Maps 2 and A2
3	Brock	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Brock ward)	Map 2
4	Calder	1	Calder ward (part – the parish of Barnacre-with-Bonds)	Map 2
5	Carleton (in Poulton-le-Fylde)	2	Carleton ward (part)	Maps 2 and A3 and large map
6	Catterall	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Catterall ward)	Map 2
7	Cleveleys Park (in Thornton Cleveleys)	3	Bourne ward (part); Cleveleys Park ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
8	Cabus	1	Duchy ward (part – the parish of Cabus)	Map 2
9	Garstang	3	Garstang ward; Pilling ward (part – the parish of Nateby)	Map 2
10	Great Eccleston	2	Great Eccleston ward; Hambleton ward (part – the parish of Out Rawcliffe)	Map 2
11	Hambleton & Stalmine-with-Staynall	2	Hambleton ward (part – the parishes of Hambleton and Stalmine-with-Staynall)	Map 2
12	Hardhorn (in Poulton-le-Fylde)	2	Breck ward (part); Hardhorn ward (part)	Maps 2 and A2
13	High Cross (in Poulton-le-Fylde)	2	High Cross ward; Tithebarn ward (part)	Maps 2 and A4
14	Jubilee (in Thornton Cleveleys)	2	Jubilee ward; Rossall ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
15	Mount (in Fleetwood)	2	Bailey ward (part); Mount ward (part); Park ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
16	Norcross (in Thornton Cleveleys)	2	Norcross ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
17	Park (in Fleetwood)	2	Cleveleys Park ward (part); Mount ward (part); Park ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
18	Pharos (in Fleetwood)	3	Mount ward (part); Pharos ward	Map 2 and large map
19	Pilling	1	Duchy ward (part – the parish of Winmarleigh); Pilling ward (part – the parish of Pilling)	Map 2
20	Preesall	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Preesall ward)	Map 2
21	Rossall (in Fleetwood)	3	Bailey ward (part); Rossall ward (part); Warren ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
22	Staina (in Thornton Cleveleys)	3	Bourne ward (part); Staina ward	Map 2 and large map
23	Tithebarn (in Poulton-le-Fylde)	2	Carleton ward (part); Tithebarn ward (part)	Maps 2, A3 and A4
24	Victoria (in Thornton Cleveleys)	3	Norcross ward (part); Victoria ward	Map 2 and large map
25	Warren (in Fleetwood)	3	Bailey ward (part); Warren ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
26	Wyresdale	1	Calder ward (part – the parish of Bleasdale); Wyresdale ward	Map 2

Notes: 1 Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde are unparished and comprise the 16 wards indicated above.

2 Map 2, Appendix A and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Wyre

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bourne	3	4,754	1,585	4	4,925	1,642	2
2 Breck	2	2,547	1,274	-16	3,079	1,540	-5
3 Brock	1	1,556	1,556	2	1,650	1,650	2
4 Calder	1	1,355	1,355	-11	1,680	1,680	4
5 Carleton	2	3,203	1,602	5	3,430	1,715	6
6 Catterall	1	1,685	1,685	11	1,770	1,770	10
7 Cleveleys Park	3	4,815	1,605	6	4,968	1,656	3
8 Cabus	1	1,384	1,384	-9	1,460	1,460	-9
9 Garstang	3	3,085	1,268	-17	4,450	1,483	-8
10 Great Eccleston	2	2,839	1,420	-7	2,890	1,445	-10
11 Hambleton & Stalmine-with-Staynall	2	3,450	1,725	13	3,500	1,750	9
12 Hardhorn	2	2,890	1,445	-5	3,021	1,511	-6
13 High Cross	2	3,208	1,604	5	3,255	1,628	1
14 Jubilee	2	3,320	1,660	9	3,480	1,740	8
15 Mount	2	3,030	1,515	0	3,394	1,697	5
16 Norcross	2	3,001	1,501	-1	3,270	1,635	1
17 Park	2	3,311	1,656	9	3,366	1,683	4
18 Pharos	3	4,441	1,480	-3	4,624	1,541	-4
19 Pilling	1	1,583	1,583	4	1,600	1,600	-1
20 Preesall	3	4,365	1,455	-4	4,660	1,553	-4
21 Rossall	3	4,984	1,661	9	5,093	1,698	5
22 Staina	3	4,140	1,380	-9	4,720	1,573	-2
23 Tithebarn	2	3,110	1,555	2	3,355	1,678	4
24 Victoria	3	4,620	1,540	1	4,740	1,580	-2
25 Warren	3	4,648	1,549	2	4,680	1,560	-3

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
26 Wyresdale	1	1,577	1,577	4	1,630	1,630	1
Totals	55	83,621	–	–	88,690	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,520	–	–	1,613	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wyre Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. 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 the borough of Wyre in Lancashire. We have now reviewed the 12 districts in Lancashire (excluding Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool) as 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. We expect to undertake a PER of Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool unitary authorities in 2001.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Wyre. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1975 (Report No. 88). The electoral arrangements of Lancashire County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 399). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained 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* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the borough.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that 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 ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward.

Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 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 district 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 district's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Lancashire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole council elections in two-tier district areas, and our present *Guidance*.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 7 September 1999, when we wrote to Wyre Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough and the Members of the European Parliament for the North-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 Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 15 December 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 4 April 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wyre in Lancashire*, and ended on 5 June 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

13 The borough of Wyre is bounded by the Irish Sea along parts of its western and northern boundaries, by the City of Lancaster to the north, the districts of Ribble Valley, Preston and Fylde to the east and south respectively, and by Blackpool along the remainder of its western boundary. Wyre is quite diverse in character, extending from the Forest of Bowland (an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) in the east, across the agricultural mosslands of North Lancashire to the coastal plain in the north and west.

14 With a population of approximately 104,900, covering some 28,332 hectares, Wyre has a population density of just under four people per hectare. Almost three-quarters of the borough's population is resident in the three principal settlements of Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde. The main rural settlements are Knott End and Garstang, with the remainder of Wyre's population dispersed amongst numerous smaller settlements. Wyre's major transport links are situated mainly in the east of the borough, and include the A6, the M6 motorway, the Lancaster Canal and the west coast main line railway.

15 The borough contains 21 parishes, although the towns of Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde are unparished and comprise respectively 24 per cent, 30 per cent and 18 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

16 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

17 The electorate of the borough is 83,621 (February 1999). The Council presently has 56 members who are elected from 27 wards, 16 of which are relatively urban in the unparished towns of Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde and the remainder being predominantly rural. Nine of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 11 are each represented by two councillors and seven are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

18 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Wyre borough, with around 10 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Great Eccleston, Garstang, Hambleton, Carleton and Bourne wards.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,493 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,584 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 per councillor in 15 of the 27 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, four wards by more than 20 per cent and three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Great Eccleston ward, where the councillor represents 59 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bailey	3	3,804	1,268	-15	3,840	1,280	-19
2	Bourne	3	5,549	1,850	24	5,720	1,907	20
3	Breck	2	2,908	1,454	-3	3,440	1,720	9
4	Brock	1	1,556	1,556	4	1,650	1,650	4
5	Calder	1	1,473	1,473	-1	1,800	1,800	14
6	Carleton	2	3,963	1,982	33	4,190	2,095	32
7	Catterall	1	1,685	1,685	13	1,770	1,770	12
8	Cleveleys Park	3	4,047	1,349	-10	4,200	1,400	-12
9	Duchy	1	1,584	1,584	6	1,660	1,660	5
10	Garstang	2	3,442	1,721	15	4,060	2,030	28
11	Great Eccleston	1	2,378	2,378	59	2,410	2,410	52
12	Hambleton	2	3,911	1,956	31	3,980	1,990	26
13	Hardhorn	2	2,529	1,265	-15	2,660	1,330	-16
14	High Cross	2	2,623	1,312	-12	2,670	1,335	-16
15	Jubilee	2	3,320	1,660	11	3,480	1,740	10
16	Mount	2	2,815	1,408	-6	3,270	1,635	3
17	Norcross	2	3,291	1,646	10	3,560	1,780	12
18	Park	3	3,915	1,305	-13	3,970	1,323	-16
19	Pharos	2	2,517	1,259	-16	2,600	1,300	-18
20	Pilling	1	1,746	1,746	17	1,790	1,790	13
21	Preesall	3	4,365	1,455	-3	4,660	1,553	-2
22	Rossall	3	3,748	1,249	-16	3,840	1,280	-19
23	Staina	3	4,120	1,373	-8	4,700	1,567	-1
24	Tithebarn	2	2,935	1,468	-2	3,180	1,590	0
25	Victoria	3	4,330	1,443	-3	4,450	1,483	-6
26	Warren	3	3,608	1,203	-19	3,630	1,210	-24

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
27 Wyresdale	1	1,459	1,459	-2	1,510	1,510	-5
Totals	56	83,621	–	–	88,690	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,493	–	–	1,584	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wyre Borough Council

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Warren ward were relatively over-represented by 19 per cent, while electors in Great Eccleston ward were relatively under-represented by 59 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Wyre

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

20 During Stage One we received seven representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Wyre Borough Council, and representations from Wyre Borough Council Labour Group, North West Conservatives and four parish councils. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wyre in Lancashire*.

21 In view of the broad degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, which provided for a mixture of single and multi-member wards, we concluded that we should generally base our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements. However, in order to secure slightly more identifiable boundaries, therefore providing for more effective and convenient local government, and a better reflection of the identities and interests of local communities, while securing good electoral equality, we moved away from the Borough Council's proposals in three areas, affecting 11 wards, using proposals put forward by the Labour Group, the North West Conservatives and some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Wyre Borough Council should be served by 55 councillors, compared with the current 56, representing 26 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be an increase in the number of councillors representing Catterall Parish Council.

Draft Recommendation

Wyre Borough Council should comprise 55 councillors, serving 26 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

22 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 22 of the 26 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

23 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 15 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Wyre Borough Council and the Commission.

Wyre Borough Council

24 The Borough Council supported our draft recommendations with the exception of our proposals relating to Brock, Great Eccleston and Hambleton wards. It did not agree that there are no direct road links between the existing Brock and Great Eccleston wards, proposing that its original proposals for the area should be adopted. It also proposed minor modifications to the boundary between Rossall ward and Jubilee ward, and to the boundary between Park ward and Cleveleys Park ward, in order to address two slight boundary anomalies, which would better reflect community identity while having a negligible affect on electoral equality.

Blackpool North & Fleetwood Conservative Association Fleetwood Branch

25 Blackpool North & Fleetwood Conservative Association Fleetwood Branch submitted alternative proposals for Fleetwood based on seven two-member wards. It contended that its proposals would involve minimal change to the existing wards and follow natural boundaries as closely as possible.

Parish Councils

26 The parish councils of Bilsborrow, Myerscough, Stalmine-with-Staynall and Upper Rawcliffe-with-Tarnacre supported our draft recommendations for the southern and western parts of the rural area.

27 Out Rawcliffe Parish Council opposed our proposals, stating that it supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposal for a three-member Hambleton ward, as Out Rawcliffe parish has natural ties with Hambleton. It argued that the parish should not be joined with Great Eccleston, as it is in a different county council division and parliamentary constituency.

28 Kirkland Parish Council opposed our proposal to transfer the parish from Catterall ward into the proposed Garstang ward. It stated that it has well-established links with Catterall parish and has shared interests in local amenities including the Kirkland & Catterall Memorial Hall and Kirkland & Catterall St Helen's CE Primary School. It stated that both Catterall and Kirkland parish councils "agree on the fact that strong links exist between the two parishes and that the public in both areas form a cohesive and unified community in many aspects of day to day life", requesting that we retain the existing Catterall ward unchanged.

29 Catterall Parish Council also opposed our proposal to transfer Kirkland parish into the proposed Garstang ward, arguing that there are a number of historical community links between the two parishes.

Other Representations

30 A further six representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from borough councillors and local organisations. Councillor Leadbetter opposed our draft recommendations for the Fleetwood area. He disagreed that Fleetwood is currently over-represented, contending that many people are not currently registered to vote. He opposed our proposed Park ward, contending that its north-eastern boundary would split an established community, suggesting that if the ward were extended northwards it could remain a three-member ward.

31 Councillors Ghandi and Hargreaves (representing the existing Carleton ward) submitted a joint representation objecting to our proposed boundary between Carleton and Tithebarn wards, which included a petition signed by 13 local business people opposing our proposal. They argued that our proposed boundary would “totally disrupt our community in Carleton” and put forward an alternative which would use Arundel Drive as the boundary. Councillor Harrison (representing Brock ward), supported our proposal to retain the existing single-member Brock ward unchanged.

32 The Fleetwood Civic Society opposed our proposal to transfer the southern part of Mount ward into a revised Bourne ward. It argued that the area in question identifies with Fleetwood rather than Thornton Cleveleys, and that the Broad Water Holiday Centre should be included in a Fleetwood ward, as it shares a number of community links with the Broadwater area to the north-west of it. It also proposed that the enlarged Jubilee ward should be named Jubilee & Rossall Beach ward.

33 The Trustees of Kirkland & Catterall Memorial Hall also opposed our proposal to include Kirkland parish in Garstang ward, contending that the two parishes share common interests. They stated that the Kirkland & Catterall Memorial Hall was first leased “to be used as a public or village hall for the people of Kirkland and Catterall” and that the Trustees comprise an equal number of representatives from both parishes.

34 The Chair of Governors of Kirkland & Catterall St Helen’s CE Primary School objected to the proposal to include Kirkland parish in Garstang ward. He stated that eight of the school’s 15 governors live in Catterall “thus giving far greater links between Catterall and Kirkland, than any links [the Borough Council] might think Kirkland has with Garstang”.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

35 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Wyre is, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and to reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

36 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

37 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. 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.

38 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

39 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 6 per cent from 83,621 to 88,690 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Calder and Garstang wards, although a significant amount is also expected in the more urban wards of Mount, Breck and Staina. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and 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 the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

40 We received one comment on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three. Councillor Leadbetter did not agree that Fleetwood was currently over-represented on the council, also contending that “consideration should also be given to the fact that there is likely to be further house building taking place in Fleetwood within the next two to three years.”

41 We have considered the comments put forward at Stage Three, and the electorate projections submitted by the Council at Stage One, and remain satisfied that the proposed housing development in the Fleetwood area has been taken into account and that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

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

43 Wyre Borough Council presently has 56 members. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a council of 55 members in order to provide for greater equality of representation among Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys, Poulton-le-Fylde and the remaining rural area. It proposed that Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde should maintain their existing levels of representation, that Fleetwood should be represented by three fewer councillors and that the rural area should receive two additional councillors. The North West Conservatives supported a 55-member council and the Labour Group also proposed that Fleetwood should be represented by 13 councillors overall.

44 In our draft recommendations report we stated that, given the general consensus regarding the number of councillors that should represent Wyre, and in view of the improvement to the balance of representation overall, together with the fact that under a 55-member council each area in the borough would be represented by the appropriate number of councillors, we agreed with the Council's proposals in respect of council size. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 55 members.

45 During Stage Three the Council supported our proposals for a council size of 55 members and no other representations were received relating to council size. Therefore, we remain of the view that, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 55 members.

Electoral Arrangements

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

47 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals we concluded that we should generally base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements.

48 However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to secure slightly more identifiable boundaries, therefore providing for more effective and convenient local government, and a better reflection of the identities and interests of local communities, while securing good electoral equality. We moved away from the Borough Council's proposals in three areas, affecting 11 wards, using proposals put forward by the Labour Group and the North West Conservatives, together with some of our own proposals.

49 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations with the exception of our proposals relating to the southern and western parts of the rural area, reiterating its support for its own Stage One proposals for this area. However, a number of other respondents supported our draft recommendations for this part of the borough. In addition, a number of respondents opposed our proposal to include the parish of Kirkland in a revised Garstang ward, expressing the view that it should be retained in Catterall ward with which it shares closer community ties.

50 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three, and judge that minor modifications should be made to some of our proposed ward boundaries in the southern part of Fleetwood, and that one modification should be made to our proposals in the rural area. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Fleetwood (six wards)
- (b) Thornton Cleveleys (six wards)
- (c) Poulton-le-Fylde (five wards)
- (d) The rural area
 - Brock, Great Eccleston and Hambleton wards
 - Calder, Wyresdale and Duchy wards
 - Garstang and Catterall wards
 - Pilling and Preesall wards

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

Fleetwood (six wards)

52 Fleetwood is situated in the north-west of the borough and currently comprises two two-member wards and four three-member wards. The two-member wards of Pharos and Mount cover the eastern part of Fleetwood, bordering the Wyre estuary, and are both over-represented, by 16 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. By 2004, the number of electors per councillor in Pharos ward is forecast to be 18 per cent below the borough average, while in Mount ward the number of electors per councillors is forecast to be 3 per cent above the average, as a result of housing development.

53 The three-member wards of Warren, Bailey, Rossall and Park cover the western and central parts of Fleetwood. Warren ward is currently the most over-represented ward in the borough with an electoral variance of 19 per cent (24 per cent by 2004). The current Bailey, Rossall and Park wards are also over-represented by 15 per cent, 16 per cent and 13 per cent respectively (19 per cent, 19 per cent and 16 per cent by 2004).

54 During Stage One the Council proposed reducing the number of councillors representing Fleetwood by three, from 16 to 13, in order to reduce the over-representation that currently exists in the town and to secure an improved balance of representation across the borough as a whole. In the western area of the town it proposed that the north-eastern corner of the current three-member Rossall ward be transferred into a revised Bailey ward, and that the modified Rossall ward be represented by two councillors. The Council also put forward a revised Bailey ward, comprising the north-eastern part of Rossall ward and the western half of the existing Bailey ward, proposing that the revised ward be represented by two councillors. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised Rossall and Bailey wards would be equal to and 12 per cent above the borough average initially (3 per cent below and 6 per cent above by 2004).

55 In the northern part of Fleetwood, the Council proposed an enlarged three-member Warren ward, comprising all of the existing ward together with the north-eastern part of Bailey ward and a section of the north-western part of Mount ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised Warren ward would be 6 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent above by 2004). The Council also proposed including part of the north-western part of Mount ward in a revised two-member Pharos ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised Pharos ward would be 3 per cent above the borough average initially (equal to the average by 2004).

56 In the southern and eastern parts of the town, the Council proposed a revised two-member Mount ward, comprising the remainder of the existing Mount ward, the south-eastern part of Bailey ward and the north-eastern part of Park ward. It also proposed that the remainder of the current Park ward should form a revised two-member Park ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed wards of Mount and Park would be 7 per cent below and 3 per cent above the borough average initially (2 per cent above and 1 per cent below by 2004).

57 The Labour Group also proposed that Fleetwood should be represented by 13 councillors overall, putting forward proposals for four three-member wards and one single-member ward. The Labour Group proposed a revised three-member Rossall ward, comprising all of the current ward, part of Bailey ward (the area to the south of Grange Road) and part of the southern part of the golf course from Warren ward (containing no electors). It also proposed a revised three-member Warren ward, comprising almost all of the existing ward and part of Bailey ward (the area to the north of Grange Road and to the west of Beach Road). The Labour Group further proposed that the remainder of Bailey ward (polling district WAB) should form a revised single-member Bailey ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Labour Group's proposed wards of Rossall, Warren and Bailey would be 9 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 13 per cent above the borough average initially (5 per cent above, 8 per cent below and 7 per cent above by 2004).

58 The Labour Group further proposed an enlarged three-member Pharos ward, comprising the current ward and the north-western part of Mount ward (to the north of Warrenhurst Road). It also proposed that the remaining part of Mount ward be combined with the current Park ward to create a revised three-member Park ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Labour Group's proposed Pharos and Park wards would be 4 per cent below and 6 per cent above the borough average initially (6 per cent below and 8 per cent above the average by 2004).

59 We carefully considered both the schemes submitted for this area during Stage One and acknowledged the fact that both proposals agreed that Fleetwood should be represented by 13 councillors overall. Given that under a 55-member council size Fleetwood would be entitled to 13 councillors, we concurred with the Council's and Labour Group's proposals that the town be represented by 13 councillors overall.

60 We noted that the Council's scheme for Fleetwood was based on a mixture of two- and three-member wards, as is the case under the existing arrangements, and that its proposals would secure good levels of electoral equality. However, the Labour Group's scheme would secure more identifiable boundaries (particularly in the northern and north-eastern parts of the town), therefore providing for more effective and convenient local government, and a slightly better reflection of local community identities, while also securing reasonable electoral equality. Having considered both schemes, we based our draft recommendations in Fleetwood on a combination of the Labour Group's and the Borough Council's proposals, with some slight modifications of our own, in order to secure an appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

61 Given the more identifiable boundaries and reasonable electoral equality that would be secured under the Labour Group's proposed Rossall ward, we adopted it as part of our draft recommendations. We also put forward the Labour Group's proposed Warren ward, although we modified the proposed ward's southern boundary to follow the centre of the northern section of the Broadway rather than Beach Road, in order to improve electoral equality by 2004. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Warren ward would be 2 per cent above the borough average initially (3 per cent below by 2004).

62 In our draft recommendations report we noted that, as the current Pharos ward covers the north-eastern peninsula of Fleetwood, there are limited options as to how the existing over-representation in the ward could be addressed. Given the slightly better boundaries proposed under the Labour Group's scheme resulting, in our view, in a slightly better reflection of the interests and identities of local communities, we adopted it as part of our draft recommendations. However, in order to improve electoral equality slightly, we proposed that the ward's southern boundary should follow the centre of Belmont Road. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Pharos ward would be 3 per cent below the borough average initially (4 per cent below by 2004).

63 As a consequence of our modification to the Labour Group's proposed Warren ward, we put forward our own proposals for two two-member wards in the remaining south-eastern part of Fleetwood, which were broadly based on the Borough Council's proposals. We put forward the Council's revised two-member Park ward as part of our draft recommendations, although we modified the north-eastern boundary of the Council's proposed Park ward to include all of Lingfield Road, Hazeldene Road and Wingrove Road in the revised ward, in order to secure reasonable electoral equality overall in this south-eastern area. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Park ward would be 9 per cent above the borough average initially (4 per cent above by 2004).

64 We also proposed a revised two-member Mount ward, comprising the eastern half of the current Bailey ward, the north-eastern part of Park ward and the majority of the southern part of

Mount ward. We transferred the most southerly part of Mount ward into a revised Bourne ward, as we were of the view that the electors in Springfield Terrace and the Holiday Parks on Fleetwood Road shared closer links to that area. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Mount ward would be 2 per cent below the borough average initially (4 per cent above by 2004).

65 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations, but noted two slight boundary anomalies in the southern part of Fleetwood. It suggested two minor modifications to the boundaries between the proposed Park and Cleveleys Park wards, and the proposed Rossall and Jubilee wards, in order to better reflect local communities and secure more logical boundaries. It proposed that the southern boundary of the proposed Rossall ward be modified so that The Cop is included in Jubilee ward. It also proposed that the southern boundary of the proposed Park ward be moved southwards so that Fleetwood Farm and the properties on the southern side of Rossall Lane be included in Park ward. These modifications would affect only seven electors and have a negligible effect on electoral equality.

66 The Fleetwood Civic Society opposed our proposal to transfer the southern part of Mount ward into a revised Bourne ward. It argued that the area in question identifies with Fleetwood rather than Thornton Cleveleys, and that the Broad Water Holiday Centre should be included in a Fleetwood ward as it shares a number of community links with the Broadwater area to the north-west of it. It also proposed that the enlarged Jubilee ward should be named Jubilee & Rossall Beach ward.

67 The Blackpool North & Fleetwood Conservative Association Fleetwood Branch submitted alternative proposals for Fleetwood based on seven two-member wards. It contended that its proposals would involve minimal change to the existing wards and would follow natural boundaries as closely as possible.

68 Councillor Leadbetter opposed our draft recommendations for the Fleetwood area, disagreeing that Fleetwood is currently over-represented. He argued that the north-eastern boundary of our proposed Park ward would split an established community, suggesting that if the ward were extended northwards it could remain a three-member ward.

69 We have carefully considered the representations received and we have noted the Council's support for our proposals in the Fleetwood area. We considered the alternative warding pattern put forward by the Blackpool North & Fleetwood Conservative Association Fleetwood Branch. However, as it proposed that the town be represented by 14 councillors overall, all of its proposed wards would be over-represented: two wards by more than 10 per cent and one ward by 24 per cent by 2004. In view of this over-representation, and given that under a 55-member council Fleetwood is only entitled to 13 councillors overall, we do not propose adopting this alternative scheme.

70 We have considered the minor boundary amendments put forward by the Council and the Fleetwood Civic Society. We agree that the Council's proposed modifications to the southern boundary of Rossall ward and the southern boundary of Park ward would provide for a better reflection of local communities and secure more logical boundaries in this area, therefore providing for more effective and convenient local government. These modifications would only

affect seven electors and would have a negligible effect on electoral equality in the revised Rossall and Park wards in Fleetwood, and consequently the revised Jubilee and Cleveleys Park wards in Thornton Cleveleys, and we are therefore content to endorse these modified wards as final, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

71 We also propose adopting the boundary modification put forward by the Fleetwood Civic Society to include Springfield Terrace and the caravan parks in the proposed Mount ward, as this would provide for a slightly better reflection of community interests and identities, given that these areas are considered to be part of the Fleetwood community. As a consequence of this modification, electoral equality would worsen slightly in the revised Mount ward although it would improve in the revised Bourne ward (in Thornton Cleveleys), with the number of electors in the revised wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, being equal to and 4 per cent above the borough average respectively (5 per cent above and 2 per cent above by 2004).

72 In view of the broad support for our draft recommendations elsewhere in Fleetwood, we are not proposing any further modifications and are confirming our proposed Pharos and Warren wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final.

Thornton Cleveleys (six wards)

73 Thornton Cleveleys is situated in the west of the borough, to the south of Fleetwood, and currently comprises four three-member wards and two two-member wards. The two-member Jubilee ward, in the north-western part of the town, is currently under-represented by 11 per cent (10 per cent by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member wards of Cleveleys Park and Bourne, in the northern and north-eastern parts of the town, is 10 per cent below and 24 per cent above the borough average respectively (12 per cent below and 20 per cent above by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Victoria ward, in the south-western part of the town, is 3 per cent below the borough average (6 per cent below by 2004). In the southern part of the town, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Norcross ward and the three-member Staina ward is 10 per cent above and 8 per cent below the borough average respectively (12 per cent above and 1 per cent below by 2004).

74 At Stage One the Council proposed that the town should continue to be represented by 16 councillors and that a pattern of two and three-member wards in the town should be retained. The Council proposed retaining unchanged the existing two-member Jubilee ward. Under a 55-member council the number of electors per councillor in an unchanged Jubilee ward would be 9 per cent above the borough average initially (8 per cent above by 2004). The Council also proposed a revised three-member Cleveleys Park ward, comprising the existing ward and the north-western part of Bourne ward (an area to the west of Fleetwood Road North and to the north of Bourne Way), and a revised three-member Bourne ward, comprising the majority of the remainder of the existing ward, less those properties in and around Hulme Avenue which share closer links with properties situated to the east of the railway line. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Cleveleys Park and Bourne wards would be 6 per cent above and 4 per cent above the borough average initially (3 per cent above and 2 per cent above by 2004).

75 The Council further proposed a revised three-member Victoria ward, comprising all of the existing ward, the eastern side of Meadows Avenue from the north-western part of Norcross ward and an area to the west of Amounderness Way and to the south of Anchorsholme Lane, from the south-western part of Norcross ward. As a consequence of these proposals the Council put forward a revised two-member Norcross ward, comprising the remaining area of the current ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised Victoria and Norcross wards would be 1 per cent above and 1 per cent below the borough average initially (2 per cent below and 1 per cent above by 2004). The Council also proposed a revised three-member Staina ward, comprising the current ward and the area around Hulme Avenue from Bourne ward (as outlined above). The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised Staina ward would be 9 per cent below the borough average initially (2 per cent below by 2004).

76 Given that under a 55-member council size Thornton Cleveleys would be entitled to 16 councillors, we agreed with the Council's proposal that the town should retain its existing level of representation. In view of the constraints of the borough boundary to the west of the town and the River Wyre to the east, and given the good level of electoral equality that would be secured in almost all of the proposed wards, we adopted the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, albeit with one modification to the northern boundary of the proposed Bourne ward. As detailed earlier, we transferred the most southerly part of Mount ward into Bourne ward, as we were of the view that Springfield Terrace and the surrounding area have closer links with Bourne ward. As a consequence, the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Bourne ward would be 5 per cent above the borough average (3 per cent above by 2004).

77 In our draft recommendations report we also acknowledged that our proposed Jubilee ward would be slightly under-represented by 9 per cent initially (8 per cent by 2004). However, we were of the view that this level of electoral imbalance was unavoidable, given the constraints of the borough boundary to the south of the ward and the sea to the west, and in view of the fact that the Rossall Road and the tramway would provide for an identifiable eastern boundary.

78 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for Thornton Cleveleys, although it proposed two minor modifications to the northern boundaries of the proposed Cleveleys Park and Jubilee wards. The Fleetwood Civic Society proposed modifying the northern boundary of Bourne ward. No other representations were received.

79 As outlined above, having considered the representations received during Stage Three, we are proposing to adopt the three minor modifications to the northern boundaries of the proposed Jubilee, Cleveleys Park and Bourne wards. As detailed in paragraphs 65-66 and 70-71 above, the modifications to the Jubilee and Cleveleys Park wards would have a negligible affect on electoral equality in those wards, but the number of electors in the revised Bourne ward would be 4 per cent above the average for the borough initially (2 per cent above by 2004).

80 In view of the support for our proposals elsewhere in Thornton Cleveleys, we are confirming the remainder of our draft recommendations in this area, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final.

Poulton-le-Fylde (five wards)

81 Poulton-le-Fylde is situated in the south-western corner of the borough and currently comprises five two-member wards. In the eastern part of the town, the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Breck and Hardhorn is 3 per cent below and 15 per cent below the borough average. As a result of housing development the number of electors per councillor in Breck ward is expected to be 9 per cent above the average by 2004, although the number of electors per councillor in Hardhorn ward would be 16 per cent below the average by that time. Carleton ward, in the north-west of the town, is currently under-represented by 33 per cent (32 per cent by 2004). In the western part of the town, the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Tithebarn and High Cross is 2 per cent below and 12 per cent below the borough average (almost equal to and 16 per cent below by 2004).

82 During Stage One the Council proposed retaining a pattern of five two-member wards in Poulton-le-Fylde, but put forward modifications to some of the existing ward boundaries in order to address the under-representation in the current Carleton ward. In the eastern part of the town, the Council proposed modifying the southern boundary of the current Breck ward, transferring an area to the west of the railway line and to the south of Wembley Avenue and Princess Avenue into Hardhorn ward, and transferring an area to the east of the railway line and to the south of Garstang Road East into Breck ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised wards of Breck and Hardhorn would be 20 per cent below and 1 per cent below the borough average initially (8 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2004).

83 In the western part of the town the Council proposed modifying the southern boundary of Carleton ward in order to reduce the under-representation in the ward. It proposed transferring the western end of Blackpool Road, the area to the south of Blackpool Road / Poulton Road and the area around The Avenue (to the east of Poulton Road) in a revised Tithebarn ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised Carleton ward would be 5 per cent above the borough average initially (6 per cent above by 2004).

84 As a consequence of its proposed Carleton ward, the Council also proposed modifying the boundary between Tithebarn and High Cross wards, proposing to include the southern part of Tithebarn ward in a revised High Cross ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Tithebarn and High Cross wards would be 2 per cent above and 5 per cent above the borough average initially (4 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2004).

85 Given that under a 55-member council size Poulton-le-Fylde would be entitled to 10 councillors, we agreed with the Council's proposal that the town should continue to be represented by 10 councillors. In view of the constraints of the borough boundary to the west, south and east of the town, and given the reasonable level of electoral equality that would be secured, we based our draft recommendations for this area on the Council's proposals.

86 In the west of the town, we adopted the Council's proposed Carleton, Tithebarn and High Cross wards in their entirety as part of our draft recommendations. However, we noted that the Council's proposed Breck ward would initially be over-represented by 20 per cent, although this level of electoral imbalance would improve by 2004 as a result of housing development, when the proposed ward would be over-represented by 8 per cent. Therefore, in order to secure a

slightly better level of electoral equality in the proposed Breck ward, we retained the southern side of Princess Avenue and all of Queen's Close and King's Close in Breck ward. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Breck and Hardhorn wards would be 16 per cent below and 5 per cent below the borough average initially (5 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2004).

87 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for this area. Councillors Ghandi and Hargreaves (representing the existing Carleton ward) objected to our proposed boundary between Carleton and Tithebarn ward, submitting a petition signed by 13 local business people and residents opposing our proposal. They argued that our proposal would “totally disrupt our community in Carleton” and put forward an alternative which would use Arundel Drive as the boundary.

88 We have carefully considered the alternative ward boundary between Carleton and Tithebarn wards put forward at Stage Three. However, we have not been persuaded that Arundel Drive would provide for a more identifiable boundary, or that the alternative proposal would secure a significantly better reflection of local community identities than our draft recommendations. Therefore, given the Council's support for our proposals in this area, we are confirming as final our draft recommendations for Poulton-le-Fylde, as shown on Maps A2, A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

The rural area

Brock, Great Eccleston and Hambleton wards

89 These three wards cover the southern part of the rural area in the east of the borough. The single-member Great Eccleston ward (comprising the parishes of Great Eccleston, Inskip-with-Sowerby and Upper Rawcliffe-with-Tarnacre) is the most under-represented ward in the borough with an electoral variance of 59 per cent (52 per cent by 2004). The two-member Hambleton ward (comprising the parishes of Hambleton, Stalmine-with-Staynall and Out Rawcliffe) is also under-represented, with an electoral variance of 31 per cent (26 per cent by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in the single-member Brock ward (comprising the parishes of Claughton-on-Brock, Bilsborrow and Myerscough) is 4 per cent above the borough average (4 per cent above by 2004).

90 At Stage One, in order to address the current under-representation that exists, the Council proposed allocating an additional councillor to this area. It proposed creating a new two-member Great Eccleston with Brock ward, comprising the parishes of Great Eccleston and Inskip-with-Sowerby from the existing Great Eccleston ward and all of the existing Brock ward. It argued that “it is impossible to combine any two of the three parishes [within the existing Great Eccleston ward] into a viable single-member ward” and that “[Great Eccleston] ward is bounded by the borough boundary [to the south and west] and is extremely difficult to add to another parish to make a viable two-member ward.” However, as part of its Stage One submission the Council also forwarded a representation received from Bilsborrow Parish Council, which stated that it considered “the present representation arrangement within Brock ward to be completely satisfactory” and that it “object[ed] to the proposed amalgamation with Great Eccleston ward”.

91 As a consequence of its proposed Great Ecclestone with Brock ward, the Council proposed transferring the parish of Upper Rawcliffe-with-Tarnacre into Hambleton ward, which would be represented by three councillors rather than the current two. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Great Ecclestone with Brock and Hambleton wards would be 13 per cent above and 3 per cent below the borough average initially (10 per cent above and 7 per cent below by 2004).

92 The North West Conservatives stated that they supported a 55-member council for the borough, but opposed the Borough Council's proposals for wards in the rural area. They put forward a revised single-member Great Ecclestone ward, comprising the parishes of Great Ecclestone and Inskip-with-Sowerby, and proposed retaining the single-member Brock ward unchanged. The number of electors per councillor in their proposed Brock and Great Ecclestone wards would be 2 per cent above and 24 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent above and 18 per cent above by 2004).

93 In its submission, Stalmine-with-Staynall Parish Council discussed alternative combinations of parishes in which the parish could be included to form a revised ward, concluding, however, that it would prefer that Stalmine-with-Staynall parish form a single-member ward in its own right. As a consequence of this proposal it suggested that the remainder of Hambleton ward (less Stalmine-with-Staynall parish) should continue to be represented by two councillors. It also contended that there is only a limited affinity between the village of Hambleton and the larger area covered by the existing ward of the same name.

94 We considered all the proposals for warding arrangements in this area and we agreed with the Council that this area should be allocated an additional councillor in order to address the under-representation that currently exists. However, while we acknowledged that the Council's proposals would secure reasonable electoral equality, we were of the view that they would not provide the most appropriate reflection of local communities. With regard to the Council's proposed Great Ecclestone with Brock ward, we noted that there are no direct road links between the parishes of Myerscough and Inskip-with-Sowerby and, officers from the Commission having visited the area, we were of the view that the village of Great Ecclestone shares greater links with the village of St Michael's on Wyre in the parish of Upper Rawcliffe-with-Tarnacre. Having considered the comments put forward by the North West Conservatives and Bilsborrow Parish Council we agreed that the single-member Brock ward should be retained on its existing boundaries, giving an electoral variance of 2 per cent both initially and by 2004.

95 As outlined above, under a 55-member council, this area as a whole would be entitled to five councillors. As a consequence of our proposal to retain unchanged the single-member Brock ward, it was necessary to consider alternative configurations of parishes to create wards in the remainder of this area (to be represented by four councillors overall). We considered the North West Conservatives' proposed single-member Great Ecclestone ward but noted that it would be under-represented by 24 per cent (18 per cent by 2004). Similarly, if Stalmine-with-Staynall parish were to form a single-member ward it would be over-represented by 23 per cent initially (26 per cent by 2004), and if the remainder of the existing Hambleton ward continued to be represented by two councillors it would be over-represented by 10 per cent initially (14 per cent by 2004).

96 Given that these proposals would secure unacceptable levels of electoral inequality we considered further configurations of parishes to form wards which would secure the appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We noted the Council's comments regarding the constraints of the borough boundary and agreed that it limits any options for alternative wards in this area. However, we proposed a revised two-member Great Eccleston ward (comprising the current Great Eccleston ward and the parish of Out Rawcliffe from Hambleton ward) and a new two-member Hambleton & Stalmine-with-Staynall ward (comprising the parishes of Hambleton and Stalmine-with-Staynall from Hambleton ward), in order to secure the best balance possible between electoral equality, reflecting the identities and interests of local communities and securing identifiable boundaries, and in order to facilitate a good electoral scheme elsewhere in the rural area.

97 The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Great Eccleston and Hambleton & Stalmine-with-Staynall wards would be 7 per cent below and 13 per cent above the borough average initially (10 per cent below and 9 per cent above by 2004). Given that our revised Hambleton ward would comprise the parishes of Hambleton and Stalmine-with-Staynall we propose that it should be called Hambleton & Stalmine-with-Staynall ward, to reflect the communities that it represents.

98 At Stage Three the Council opposed our proposed Brock, Great Eccleston and Hambleton wards. It did not agree that there were no direct road links between the existing Brock and Great Eccleston wards and reiterated its support for its own Stage One proposals for wards in this area. Out Rawcliffe Parish Council opposed our proposals, stating that it supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposal for a three-member Hambleton ward, as the parish has natural ties with Hambleton. It argued that the parish should not be joined with Great Eccleston as it is in a different county council division and parliamentary constituency.

99 Councillor Harrison (representing Brock ward), and the parish councils of Bilsborrow, Myerscough, Stalmine-with-Staynall and Upper Rawcliffe-with-Tarnacre all supported our proposals for the southern and western parts of the rural area.

100 We have considered the Council's proposal for a two-member Great Eccleston with Brock ward and three-member Hambleton ward, as initially put forward at Stage One. However, on the limited evidence submitted by the Council, we have not been persuaded that these proposals would provide for a better reflection of local communities than our draft recommendations. We are of the view that the Council's proposed Great Eccleston with Brock ward would not provide for effective and convenient local government as there are no direct road links between the parishes of Myerscough and Inskip-with-Sowerby; in order to travel from one to the other it would be necessary to pass through the south-easterly corner of Upper Rawcliffe-with-Tarnacre parish, which the Council proposed including in a revised Hambleton ward.

101 We have also noted the comments put forward by Out Rawcliffe Parish Council regarding the existing county council and parliamentary constituency boundaries in the southern part of the rural area. However, as outlined in our *Guidance*, we acknowledge that in devising electoral schemes it may be necessary to recommend ward boundaries which do not coincide with existing county division or parliamentary constituency boundaries, but we are of the view that this is not a sufficient reason to justify modifying our proposals in this area. The new district wards created

by the periodic electoral review will form the “building blocks” for future reviews of county divisions and parliamentary constituencies.

102 Having considered all of the representations received we remain of the view that our draft recommendations provide for the best balance currently available between the statutory criteria and electoral equality and we are therefore confirming as final our proposed Great Ecclestone, Hambleton & Stalmine-with-Staynall and Brock wards, as shown on Map 2.

Calder, Wyresdale and Duchy wards

103 These three single-member wards cover the north-eastern part of the rural area. The number of electors per councillor in Calder ward, which comprises the parishes of Barnacre-with-Bonds and Bleasdale, is currently 1 per cent below the borough average. However, as a result of housing development, the number of electors per councillor is forecast to be 14 per cent above the average by 2004. The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Wyresdale (comprising the parishes of Nether Wyresdale and Forton) and Duchy (comprising the parishes of Cabus and Winmarleigh) is 2 per cent below and 6 per cent above the borough average (5 per cent below and 5 per cent above by 2004).

104 At Stage One, in order to accommodate the forecast increase in electorate in Calder ward, the Council proposed transferring the parish of Bleasdale into a revised Wyresdale ward, and as a consequence it proposed that the parish of Barnacre-with-Bonds should form a revised Calder ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council’s revised single-member wards of Calder and Wyresdale would be 11 per cent below and 4 per cent above the borough average initially (4 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2004). In order to achieve improved electoral equality in the central and western parts of the rural area the Council proposed transferring Winmarleigh parish into a revised Pilling ward (detailed below), suggesting that the parish of Cabus should form a single-member ward of the same name. The number of electors per councillor in the new Cabus ward would be 9 per cent below the borough average both initially and by 2004.

105 Pilling Parish Council suggested that if Cabus parish were combined with Garstang ward, Winmarleigh parish could be transferred into a revised Pilling ward. It stated that, as it believed that “each councillor should represent up to 1,500 electors, the above ward will qualify for two borough councillors.”

106 We considered Pilling Parish Council’s proposal to combine the parishes of Cabus and Garstang in a revised ward, but noted that this would not secure good electoral equality. Under a 55-member council, if such a ward were represented by two councillors (as proposed by Pilling Parish Council) it would be under-represented by 59 per cent initially (71 per cent by 2004), and even if it were to be represented by three councillors it would be under-represented by 6 per cent initially (14 per cent by 2004).

107 While the Council’s proposed Wyresdale ward would cover a fairly large geographical area, we noted that it would secure a very good level of electoral equality while, in our opinion, reflecting local community identities. Furthermore, the Council’s proposed Calder and Cabus wards would secure better electoral equality than Pilling Parish Council’s proposals. We were

also of the view that, because the Council's proposed wards would comprise whole parishes, they would reflect local communities and secure identifiable boundaries, therefore providing for more effective and convenient local government. We therefore put forward the Council's proposed Calder, Wyresdale and Cabus wards as part of our draft recommendations.

108 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for these three wards and no other representations were received. In view of this support for our draft recommendations we are confirming our proposed Calder, Wyresdale and Cabus wards, as shown on Map 2, as final.

Garstang and Catterall wards

109 The single-member Catterall ward (comprising the parishes of Catterall and Kirkland) and the two-member Garstang ward (comprising the parish of Garstang) are situated in the central part of the rural area. Both wards are under-represented: Catterall ward by 13 per cent and Garstang ward by 15 per cent (12 per cent and 28 per cent respectively by 2004).

110 During Stage One the Council put forward a revised single-member Catterall ward (comprising solely the parish of the same name) and a revised Garstang ward (comprising the current Garstang ward, the parish of Kirkland from Catterall ward and the parish of Nateby from Pilling ward), proposing that the revised Garstang ward should be represented by three councillors rather than the present two. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised wards of Catterall and Garstang would be 5 per cent below and 11 per cent below the borough average initially (6 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2004). However, as part of its Stage One submission the Council also forwarded a representation received from Kirkland Parish Council, stating that it "share[s] many community interests with Catterall" and that it has "a very longstanding connection with the councillor for Catterall ward which we would be very reluctant to sever".

111 The North West Conservatives proposed the retention of the existing Catterall, Garstang and Pilling wards unchanged, contending that "this arrangement commands strong local support."

112 We carefully considered all the proposals put forward for this area during Stage One. We noted that the North West Conservatives proposed retaining the existing Catterall and Garstang wards unchanged. However, under a 55-member council, if the existing Garstang ward were retained unchanged it would be under-represented by 13 per cent initially, deteriorating to 26 per cent by 2004 as a result of housing development. We were of the view that this level of electoral imbalance is unacceptable, and that it would therefore be necessary to modify the existing arrangements in order to secure better electoral equality.

113 We noted the views put forward by Kirkland Parish Council. However, although we agreed that it shares close links with the parish of Catterall, we were of the view that it also has ties with the neighbouring parish of Garstang, with the two parishes being linked by the A6 main road. Given the better level of electoral equality that would be secured under the Council's proposals, we adopted its modified Garstang and Catterall wards as part of our draft recommendations.

114 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for this area. Kirkland Parish Council opposed our proposal to transfer the parish from Catterall ward into the proposed

Garstang ward. It stated that it has well-established links with Catterall parish and has shared interests in local amenities including the Kirkland & Catterall Memorial Hall and Kirkland & Catterall St Helen's CE Primary School. It stated that both Catterall and Kirkland parish councils "agree on the fact that strong links exist between the two parishes and that the public in both areas form a cohesive and unified community in many aspects of day to day life", requesting that we retain the existing Catterall ward unchanged. Catterall Parish Council also opposed our proposal to transfer Kirkland parish into the proposed Garstang ward, arguing that there are a number of historical community links between the two parishes.

115 The Trustees of Kirkland & Catterall Memorial Hall also opposed our proposal to include Kirkland parish in Garstang ward, contending that Kirkland and Catterall parishes share common interests. They stated that the Kirkland & Catterall Memorial Hall was first leased "to be used as a public or village hall for the people of Kirkland and Catterall" and that the Trustees comprise an equal number of representatives from both parishes. The Chair of Governors of Kirkland & Catterall St Helen's CE Primary School objected to the proposal to include Kirkland parish in Garstang ward. He stated that eight of the school's 15 governors live in Catterall, "thus giving far greater links between Catterall and Kirkland, than any links [the Borough Council] might think Kirkland has with Garstang".

116 We have considered carefully the representations received and have noted the strength of opposition to our proposal to include Kirkland parish in a revised Garstang ward, and the local support in favour of retaining the parish in Catterall ward. In the light of this local support, we have been persuaded that the retention of Kirkland parish in Catterall ward would better reflect the identities and interests of local communities and propose modifying our draft recommendations accordingly. Electoral equality in the revised wards, as shown on Map 2, would be slightly worse than under our draft recommendations, with the number of electors per councillor in the revised Garstang and Catterall wards being 17 per cent below and 11 per cent above initially (8 per cent below and 10 per cent above by 2004). However, we are of the view that this is acceptable given the better reflection of local community identities that would be secured.

Pilling and Preesall wards

117 These two wards are situated in the north-western part of the rural area. The single-member Pilling ward (comprising the parishes of Pilling and Nateby) is currently under-represented by 17 per cent (13 per cent by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Preesall ward (comprising the parish of Preesall) is 3 per cent below the borough average (2 per cent below by 2004).

118 At Stage One the Council proposed retaining the three-member Preesall ward unchanged. It also proposed a revised Pilling ward, comprising the parish of Pilling from the current Pilling ward, and the parish of Winmarleigh from Duchy ward. The number of electors in the Council's revised Preesall and Pilling wards would be 4 per cent below and 4 per cent above the borough average initially (4 per cent below and 1 per cent below by 2004).

119 As outlined earlier, Pilling Parish Council proposed that Winmarleigh parish should be included in a revised Pilling ward. The North West Conservatives proposed the retention of the existing Pilling ward unchanged.

120 Having considered all the representations put forward during Stage One, we noted that if the existing Pilling ward were retained on its present boundaries, as put forward by the North West Conservatives, under a 55-member council it would be under-represented by 15 per cent initially (11 per cent by 2004). Similarly, if the parish of Winmarleigh were included in an enlarged Pilling ward, as proposed by Pilling Parish Council, the modified single-member ward would be under-represented by 28 per cent initially (23 per cent by 2004). If such a modified Pilling ward were represented by two councillors it would be over-represented by 36 per cent initially (38 per cent by 2004).

121 In view of the better electoral equality that would be secured, and in order to facilitate a good electoral scheme elsewhere in the rural area, we adopted the Council's revised single-member Pilling ward as part of our draft recommendations. Similarly, given the good level of electoral equality that would be secured in an unchanged Preesall ward under a 55-member council, we agreed with the Council and proposed the retention of the existing three-member Preesall ward unchanged.

122 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for these two wards and no other representations were received. In view of this support for our draft recommendations we are confirming our proposed Pilling and Preesall wards, as shown on Map 2, as final.

Electoral Cycle

123 At Stage One we received one representation regarding the electoral cycle of the borough. The Borough Council stated that "the Council has always favoured whole council elections" and that its proposals would "not change the current local circumstances". Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole council elections every four years.

124 At Stage Three no further comments were received to the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

125 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in Fleetwood, we are proposing minor modifications to the southern boundaries of the proposed Park and Rossall wards, as put forward by the Borough Council, and a modification to the southern boundary of Mount ward, as put forward by the Fleetwood Civic Society;
- in the rural area, we propose that Kirkland parish should be retained in Catterall ward.

126 We conclude that, in Wyre:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 56 to 55;
- there should be 26 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all but three of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

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

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	56	55	56	55
Number of wards	27	26	27	26
Average number of electors per councillor	1,493	1,520	1,584	1,613
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	15	5	17	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	0	5	0

128 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 15 to 5 with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. This improved level of electoral equality would improve further in 2004, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Wyre Borough Council should comprise 55 councillors serving 26 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

129 The parish of Catterall is currently served by nine councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, at the request of the Parish Council, the Borough Council proposed that Catterall parish should be served by one additional councillor, thereby increasing the total number of councillors on the Parish Council from nine to 10.

130 We noted that our proposed borough warding arrangements would not result in change to this area and put forward the Council's proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

131 In response to our consultation report, the Borough Council supported our draft recommendation and no further comments were received. We are therefore content to confirm it as final.

Final Recommendation

Catterall Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, instead of the current nine.

132 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough, and are confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation

For parish councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the Borough Council.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Wyre

6 NEXT STEPS

133 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Wyre and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

134 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 before 17 October 2000.

135 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 Wyre: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2, A3 and A4 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary between Breck and Hardhorn wards.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundary between Carleton and Tithebarn wards.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed boundary between Tithebarn and High Cross wards.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Fleetwood and Thornton Cleveleys.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Wyre: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Boundary between Breck and Hardhorn wards

Map A3: Proposed Boundary between Carleton and Tithebarn wards

Map A4: Proposed Boundary between Tithebarn and High Cross wards

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Wyre (April 2000)

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of eight wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Bourne (in Thornton Cleveleys)	Bourne ward (part); Mount ward (part)
Catterall	Catterall ward (part – the parish of Catterall)
Cleveleys Park (in Thornton Cleveleys)	Bourne ward (part); Cleveleys Park ward
Garstang	Catterall ward (part – the parish of Kirkland); Garstang ward; Pilling ward (part – the parish of Nateby)
Jubilee (in Thornton Cleveleys)	<i>Unchanged</i> (Jubilee ward)
Mount (in Fleetwood)	Bailey ward (part); Mount ward (part); Park ward (part)
Park (in Fleetwood)	Mount ward (part); Park ward (part)
Rossall (in Fleetwood)	Bailey ward (part); Rossall ward; Warren ward (part)

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Bourne	3	4,794	1,598	5	4,965	1,655	3
Catterall	1	1,439	1,439	-5	1,520	1,520	-6
Cleveleys Park	3	4,822	1,607	6	4,975	1,658	3
Garstang	3	4,051	1,350	-11	4,700	1,567	-3
Jubilee	2	3,320	1,660	9	3,480	1,740	8
Mount	2	2,990	1,495	-2	3,354	1,677	4
Park	2	3,304	1,652	9	3,359	1,680	4
Rossall	3	4,984	1,661	9	5,093	1,698	5

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wyre Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.