

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
TORRIDGE
IN DEVON

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

January 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Torrington in Devon.

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Local Government Commission for England

12 January 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 13 January 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Torridge under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in August 1998 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed in full our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Torridge.

We recommend that Torridge District Council should be served by 36 councillors representing 23 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 the Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place the Commission is obliged to conduct its 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 District Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Torridge on 13 January 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 4 August 1998, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in 12 of the 27 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2003 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 14 wards, and by more than 20 per cent in six wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraph 74) are that:

- **Torridge District Council should be served by 36 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 23 wards, four less than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections for the whole council should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In all 23 wards, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. By 2003 the number of electors per councillor is forecast to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average in all wards except one, Monkleigh & Littleham, which would vary by 11 per cent.**

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

- **new warding arrangements for Bideford and Northam parishes;**
- **an increase in the number of Bideford town councillors from 15 to 16.**

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 23 February 1999:

**The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment,
Transport and the Regions
Local Government Review
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 Appledore	2	Appledore East ward (Appledore East parish ward of Northam parish); Appledore West ward (Appledore West ward of Northam parish); Northam North ward (part – Northam North parish ward (part) of Northam parish)	Map 2 and large map
2 Bideford East	3	Bideford East ward (Bideford East parish ward of Bideford parish); Rolle ward (part – the parishes of Alverdiscott, Weare Giffard and Huntshaw)	Map 2 and large map
3 Bideford North	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Bideford North parish ward of Bideford parish)	Map 2 and large map
4 Bideford South	3	Bideford South ward (part – Bideford South parish ward (part) of Bideford parish)	Map 2 and large map
5 Broadheath	1	Broadheath ward (part – the parishes of Broadwoodwidge, Luffincott, Northcott, Tetcott and St Giles on the Heath); Forest ward (part – Clawton parish)	Map 2
6 Clinton	1	Heanton ward (part – the parishes of Buckland Filleigh, Little Torrington, Peters Marland and Petrockstow); Stafford ward (part – the parishes of Huish and Merton)	Map 2
7 Clovelly Bay	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Clovelly and Woolfardisworthy and the unparished area of Lundy Island).	Map 2
8 Coham Bridge	1	Coham Bridge ward (part – the parishes of Black Torrington and Sheepwash); Waldon ward (part – the parishes of Bradford, Cookbury and Thornbury)	Map 2
9 Forest	1	Broadheath ward (part – Virginstow parish); Forest ward (part – the parishes of Ashwater and Halwill)	Map 2
10 Hartland & Bradworthy	2	Morice ward (part – Bradworthy parish); Hartland Point ward (the parishes of Hartland and Welcombe)	Map 2
11 Holsworthy	2	Bradworthy ward (part – Sutcombe parish); Holsworthy ward (the parishes of Hollacombe, Holsworthy and Holsworthy Hamlets)	Map 2

Figure 1 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
12 Kenwith	1	Kenwith ward (part – the parishes of Abbotsham and Alwington); Melbury ward (part – Parkham parish)	Map 2
13 Monkleigh & Littleham	1	Bideford South ward (part – Bideford South parish ward (part) of Bideford parish); Kenwith ward (part – the parishes of Monkleigh, Landcross and Littleham); Melbury ward (part – Frithelstock parish)	Map 2 and large map
14 Northam	3	Northam Central ward (Northam Central parish ward of Northam parish); Northam North ward (part – Northam North parish ward (part) of Northam parish); Northam West ward (Northam West parish ward of Northam parish)	Map 2 and large map
15 Orchard Hill	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Orchard Hill parish ward of Northam parish)	Map 2 and large map
16 Shebbear & Langtree	1	Coham Bridge ward (part – Shebbear parish); Heanton ward (part – Langtree parish); Waldon ward (part – Newton St Petrock parish)	Map 2
17 Tamarside	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Bridgerule, Pancrasweek and Pyworthy)	Map 2
18 Three Moors	1	Great Wood ward (part – the parishes of Beaford and Roborough); Stafford ward (part – the parishes of Dolton and Dowland)	Map 2
19 Torrington	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Great Torrington parish)	Map 2
20 Two Rivers	1	Great Wood ward (part – High Bickington parish); Rolle ward (part – the parishes of St Giles in the Wood and Yarnscombe)	Map 2
21 Waldon	1	Melbury ward (part – Buckland Brewer parish); Morice ward (part – the parishes of Bulkworthy, East Putford and West Putford); Waldon ward (part – the parishes of Abbots Bickington and Milton Damarel)	Map 2
22 Westward Ho!	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Westward Ho! parish ward of Northam parish)	Map 2 and large map
23 Winkleigh	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Ashreigney and Winkleigh)	Map 2

Note: The district of Torrridge is entirely parished.

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Torridge in Devon. We have now reviewed all the districts in Devon (except for Plymouth and Torbay) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

3 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996, supplemented in September 1996 and updated in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 13 January 1998, when we wrote to Torridge District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. Our letter was copied to Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Police Authority, the local authority associations, Devon Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the district, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we published notices in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Council to publicise the review more widely. The closing date for receipt of representations was 20 April 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

5 Stage Three began on 4 August 1998 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Torridge in Devon*, and ended on 5 October 1998. 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

6 Torridge is situated in the north-west of Devon and is bounded to the north by sea and to the west by the county of Cornwall. The district is predominantly rural with a population density of only 0.5 persons per hectare. The River Torridge flows south to north through the district, much of which is designated an area of outstanding natural beauty. The main urban areas, situated in the north of the district, are Appledore, Northam, Bideford and the resort of Westward Ho! The main economic activities are agriculture and tourism together with shipbuilding in Appledore. There are 60 parishes covering the whole of the district.

7 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 district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

8 The electorate of the district (February 1998) is 42,802. The Council presently has 36 councillors who are elected from 27 wards, seven of which cover the urban area in the north and 20 covering the rural area (Map 1 and Figure 2). Four of the 27 wards are each represented by three councillors, one elects two councillors, while the remaining 22 are single-member wards. The Council is elected together every four years.

9 Since the last electoral review in 1978, there has been an increase in electorate in Torridge, with around 7 per cent more electors. Clovelly Bay, Northam Central and Northam North wards have experienced the most growth.

10 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,189 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,244 by the year 2003 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 12 of the 27 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average and in three wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Northam West ward where the councillor represents 30 per cent fewer electors than the district average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Torrridge

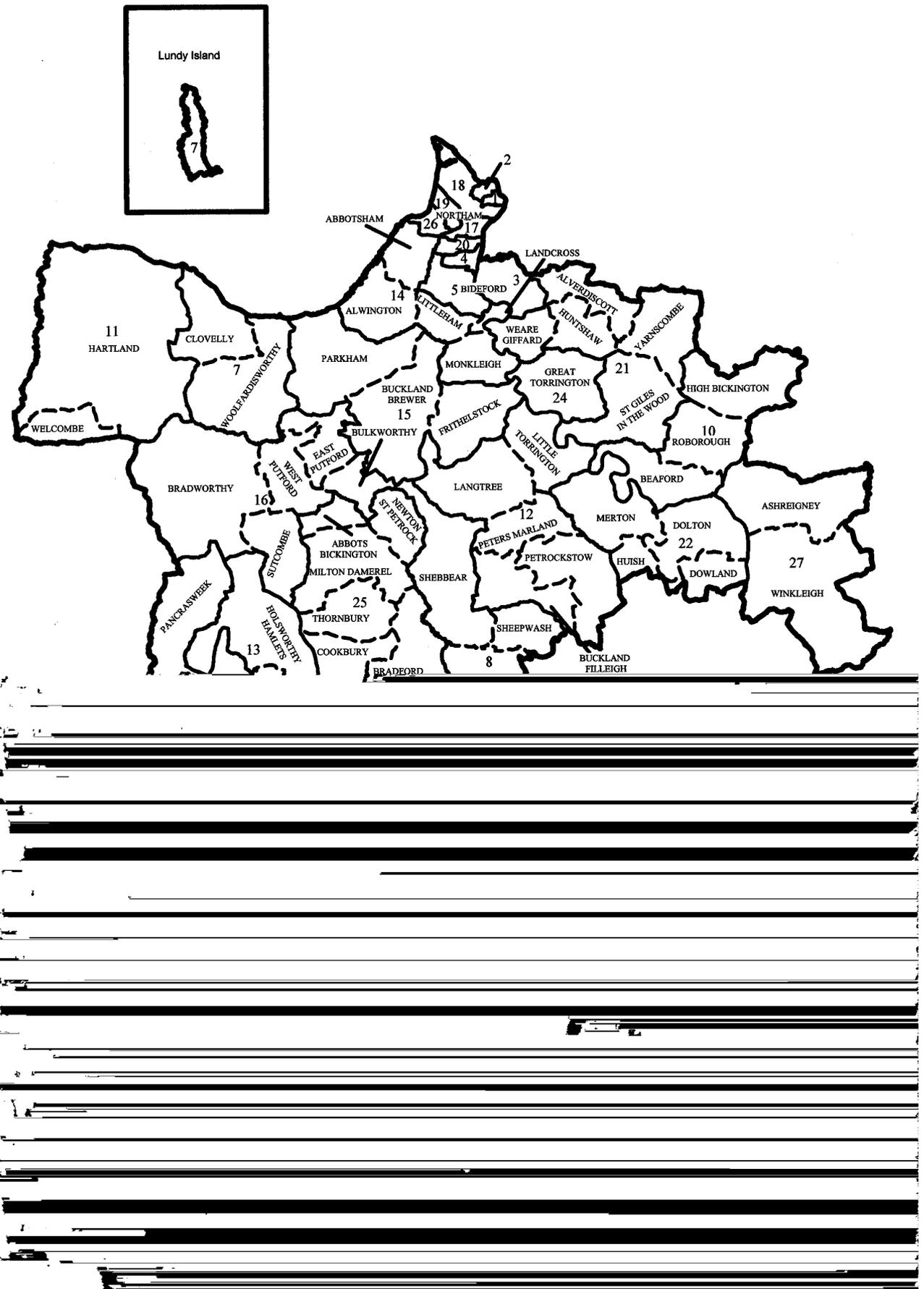


Figure 2:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Appledore East	1	849	849	-29	911	911	-27
2 Appledore West	1	846	846	-29	920	920	-26
3 Bideford East	3	2,836	945	-20	2,990	997	-20
4 Bideford North	3	3,695	1,232	4	3,901	1,300	5
5 Bideford South	3	3,686	1,229	3	3,826	1,275	2
6 Broadheath	1	1,102	1,102	-7	1,090	1,090	-12
7 Clovelly Bay	1	1,174	1,174	-1	1,225	1,225	-2
8 Coham Bridge	1	1,117	1,117	-6	1,138	1,138	-9
9 Forest	1	1,316	1,316	11	1,422	1,422	14
10 Great Wood	1	979	979	-18	1,033	1,033	-17
11 Hartland Point	1	1,412	1,412	19	1,501	1,501	21
12 Heanton	1	1,347	1,347	13	1,405	1,405	13
13 Holsworthy	2	2,307	1,154	-3	2,430	1,215	-2
14 Kenwith	1	1,303	1,303	10	1,305	1,305	5
15 Melbury	1	1,372	1,372	15	1,450	1,450	17
16 Morice	1	1,283	1,283	8	1,385	1,385	11
17 Northam Central	1	1,431	1,431	20	1,508	1,508	21
18 Northam North	1	1,426	1,426	20	1,525	1,525	23
19 Northam West	1	1,546	1,546	30	1,562	1,562	26

continued overleaf

Figure 2 (continued):
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
20 Orchard Hill	1	1,273	1,273	7	1,329	1,329	7
21 Rolle	1	1,262	1,262	6	1,283	1,283	3
22 Stafford	1	955	955	-20	1,019	1,019	-18
23 Tamarside	1	1,107	1,107	-7	1,167	1,167	-6
24 Torrington	3	3,602	1,201	1	3,714	1,238	-1
25 Waldon	1	1,151	1,151	-3	1,158	1,158	-7
26 Westward Ho!	1	1,231	1,231	4	1,302	1,302	5
27 Winkleigh	1	1,194	1,194	0	1,295	1,295	4
Totals	36	42,802	—	—	44,794	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,189	—	—	1,244	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Torrington District Council's submission.

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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in Appledore East ward were relatively over-represented by 29 per cent, while electors in Northam West ward were significantly under-represented by 30 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

¹¹ During Stage One, we received representations from Torrington District Council, Torrington & West Devon Conservative Association, one town council, three parish councils and one district councillor. 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 Torrington in Devon*. Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's scheme, which achieved improved electoral equality, provided good boundaries while having regard to the statutory criteria and maintained the present mix of single- and multi-member wards. However, we moved away from the District Council's scheme in one area, proposing a two-member ward in the Hartland and Bradworthy area, rather than two single-member wards. We proposed that:

- (a) Torrington District Council should be served by 36 councillors representing 23 wards;
- (b) the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (c) there should be new warding arrangements for Bideford and Northam parishes.

Draft Recommendation

Torrington District Council should comprise 36 councillors, serving 23 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

¹² Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all 23 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to continue to 2003.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

13 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 11 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Torrington District Council and the Commission.

Torrington District Council

14 The District Council agreed with our draft recommendations, with the exception of the proposed two-member Hartland and Bradworthy ward, preferring two single-member wards to cover the area. It also supported Bideford Town Council's proposals for an increase in the number of town councillors from 15 to 16.

Parish and Town Councils

15 We received representations from one town council, eight parish councils and one parish meeting. Bideford Town Council considered that there should be an increase in the total number of town councillors from 15 to 16, with the amended Bideford South ward retaining five councillors, rather than four as proposed in our draft recommendations. It stated that this would "retain the number ratio between councillors and electorate within the three main parish wards of Bideford".

16 Alverdiscott & Huntshaw Parish Council objected to our draft recommendation for a three-member ward combining Alverdiscott, Weare Giffard and Huntshaw parishes with the whole of Bideford East on community identity grounds. It reiterated its Stage One proposal for a single-member ward combining the parishes with only the rural part of Bideford East ward. The urban part of Bideford East would form a two-member ward.

17 Hartland Parish Council opposed our draft recommendation for a two-member Hartland & Bradworthy ward, stating that if both councillors were elected from the same area, the remainder of the ward would not be adequately represented.

Bradworthy Parish Council also objected to the proposed ward, stating that it "could lead to the electorate having practical problems and perhaps playing off one member against the other".

18 Buckland Brewer Parish Council objected to our draft recommendation to combine parts of Melbury and Waldon wards on community identity grounds. Broadwoodwidge Parish Council and Virginstow Parish Meeting both objected to our proposed Broadheath and Forest wards, also on community identity grounds.

19 Woolfardisworthy Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for no change to Clovelly Bay ward. Holsworthy Hamlets Parish Council considered that Sutcombe parish might find being part of a two-member ward "somewhat different". Halwill Parish Council considered that there should be no change to the existing arrangements.

20 No other representations were received.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

21 As indicated previously, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Torridge is to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

22 However, our function is not merely arithmetical. First, 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. Second, we must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, we must consider the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

23 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.

24 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, 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. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over

should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Forecasts

25 At Stage One, Torridge District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of 5 per cent from 42,802 to 44,794 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. 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 its submission, the District Council considered that its electorate projection in Bideford South ward might prove to be understated in relation to the development on the Bideford Zoo site which has outline planning consent. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and that, although the development at Bideford Zoo has obtained outline planning, it is uncertain whether the whole project will be completed by 2003. Having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

Council Size

27 Our *Guidance* indicates that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a borough or district council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

28 Torridge District Council is at present served by 36 councillors. At Stage One, the District Council proposed to retain the current council size, as did the Conservative Association. No other representations were received on council size. In our draft recommendations report, we 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 statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 36 members.

29 At Stage Three, we received no objections to our draft recommendation for council size and therefore confirm it as final.

Electoral Arrangements

30 At Stage One, we received a district-wide scheme from the Council, proposing 36 councillors representing 24 wards and involving modifications to the boundaries of 20 existing wards. In its proposals, the Council stated that it had attempted not to divide parishes between different district wards, as this would not reflect community identities.

31 We recognised the difficulties involved in producing a scheme for the whole district which achieves improved levels of electoral equality and reflects community identities, particularly in the rural areas. In view of the good levels of electoral equality achieved by the District Council, with regard to the statutory criteria, and in the absence of any alternative locally generated scheme, we endorsed the majority of the Council's scheme. We moved away from the scheme in one area, combining Hartland, Welcombe and Bradworthy parishes to form a two-member ward to improve electoral equality.

32 At Stage Three, the District Council supported our draft recommendations, with the exception of our proposal for the Hartland area. We also received a number of representations from parish councils opposing several of our proposed wards on community identity grounds. We have carefully considered these representations but have concluded that the evidence put forward for the alternative proposals, particularly the community arguments, is not substantive enough to counter the levels of electoral inequality which would result. We consider that the arguments concerning the difficulty in representing the proposed Hartland & Bradworthy ward are offset by the recommendation that it should be represented by two members, who would be expected to adequately cover the whole ward. We also consider that the settlements contained in the proposed Broadheath and Forest wards have similar community interests, and therefore the configuration of parishes in this area should provide the best electoral equality achievable.

33 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) the urban wards of Appledore East, Appledore West, Northam Central, Northam North, Northam West, Orchard Hill and Westward Ho!;
- (b) the urban wards of Bideford East, Bideford North and Bideford South;
- (c) Great Wood, Rolle, Stafford and Winkleigh wards;
- (d)

36 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the existing Northam wards to form a new three-member ward for the town, less 627 electors transferred to Appledore ward, described above. Under this proposal, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Northam ward would be 6 per cent above the average, both now and in 2003. Northam Town Council supported the District Council's proposals, with a minor boundary amendment. However, this would have a detrimental effect on the level of electoral equality gained through the District Council's proposed boundary. We therefore adopted the District Council's proposal, without modification, for a three-member Northam ward, as part of our draft recommendations.

37 The number of electors per councillor in Orchard Hill and Westward Ho! wards is currently 7 per cent and 4 per cent above the district average respectively. In view of these good levels of electoral equality, we endorsed the District Council's proposals for no change to these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

38 At Stage Three, we received no representations relating to our draft recommendations for Appledore, Northam, Orchard Hill and Westward Ho! wards and therefore confirm them as final.

Bideford East, Bideford North and Bideford South wards

39 In the three-member Bideford East, Bideford North and Bideford South wards, the number of electors per councillor is 20 per cent below, 4 per cent above and 3 per cent above the district average respectively, with little improvement in Bideford East ward forecast by 2003.

40 In its Stage One submission, the District Council proposed that Bideford East ward should include Alverdiscott, Huntshaw and Weare Giffard parishes from Rolle ward, to improve electoral equality. Alverdiscott & Huntshaw Parish Council proposed that there should be two wards covering the area: a two-member Bideford East ward, covering the urban part of the current Bideford East ward only; and a single-member Bideford East Rural ward, covering the rural part of Bideford East, together with Alverdiscott, Huntshaw and Weare Giffard parishes.

41 We, however, concluded that this proposal would have a detrimental effect on electoral equality, which would not be justified on

community identity grounds, and therefore adopted the District Council's proposal for a three-member Bideford East ward as part of our draft recommendations. The number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the average both in 1998 and 2003. In our draft recommendations report, we stated that, while we appreciated the Parish Council's concerns, much of the proposed three-member ward would comprise similar rural areas and result in a significant improvement in electoral equality. We therefore endorsed the District Council's proposal for Bideford East ward as part of our draft recommendations.

42 At Stage Three, the District Council and Bideford Town Council supported our draft recommendations, while Alverdiscott & Huntshaw Parish Council reiterated its Stage One proposal. However, we continue to consider that the two wards proposed by the Parish Council would not provide such good levels of electoral equality and that combining the whole of Bideford East ward, which contains a large rural area, with the neighbouring parishes would meet the statutory criteria. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Bideford East ward as final.

43 At Stage One, the District Council proposed one change to Bideford South ward: transferring 92 electors from the comparatively rural Bideford "Outer Districts" in the south of the ward to a new Monkleigh & Littleham ward comprising the parishes of Frithelstock, Landcross, Littleham and Monkleigh. It stated that this proposed ward would also include the Bideford Zoo site which has outline planning permission for substantial residential development. The District Council considered that the projected electorate would meet, and could exceed, the estimate submitted for 2003. However, although some development is planned, much of the "Outer Districts" would remain rural and, in the light of this similarity with neighbouring parishes, we adopted the District Council's proposal for Bideford South ward as part of our draft recommendations. At Stage Three, we received no objections to our draft recommendation and therefore confirm it as final.

44 In view of the current good levels of electoral equality, we adopted the District Council's proposal for no change to Bideford North ward as part of our draft recommendations. At Stage Three, we received no objections to this proposal and therefore confirm it as final.

The Rural Wards

45 At Stage One, the District Council consulted with parish councils and held meetings with local advisory groups in formulating its proposals for the rural wards. The Council's proposals were based on whole parishes, as it argued that they formed particular areas of community identity. The scheme provided for the continuation of the pattern of single-member wards in the rural area, with the exception of Holsworthy and Torrington wards which would continue to be represented by two and three councillors respectively. We adopted the majority of the District Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations, but put forward alternative proposals in the Hartland area. At Stage Three, we received a number of comments on our draft recommendations for the rural wards, which are outlined below.

Great Wood, Rolle, Stafford and Winkleigh wards

46 Great Wood ward comprises the parishes of Beaford and Roborough and has 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (17 per cent fewer in 2003). Rolle ward comprises the parishes of Alverdiscott, Huntshaw, St Giles in the Wood, Weare Giffard and Yarnscombe and has 6 per cent more electors than the district average (3 per cent in 2003). In Stafford ward, which comprises the parishes of Dolton, Dowland, Huish and Merton, the number of electors per councillor is 20 per cent below the district average, with little improvement by 2003. In Winkleigh ward, which comprises Ashreigney and Winkleigh parishes, the number of electors per councillor is currently equal to the district average worsening slightly to 4 per cent above in 2003.

47 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a reconfiguration of parishes to address the electoral inequality in Great Wood and Stafford wards, combining Beaford and Roborough parishes together with Dolton and Dowland parishes to form a new Three Moors ward. The Council further proposed that the remainder of the current Stafford ward, namely Huish and Merton parishes, should be combined with the parishes of Buckland Filleigh, Little Torrington, Peters Marland and Petrockstow to form a new Clinton ward. The number of electors per councillor in the new Three Moors and Clinton wards would be 1 per cent above and 1 per cent below the district average respectively (2 per cent above and 3 per cent below in 2003).

48 The District Council also proposed a new Two Rivers ward combining St Giles in the Wood, Yarnscombe and High Bickington parishes. The number of electors represented by the councillor in this ward would be 5 per cent below the district average both now and in 2003. The remainder of Rolle ward would be combined with Bideford East ward as described above. In view of the current level of electoral equality in Winkleigh ward, the Council proposed that it should remain unchanged.

49 In our draft recommendations report, we concluded that these proposals significantly improved electoral equality, while having regard to the statutory criteria, and put them forward for consultation. At Stage Three we received no objections to our proposals for these wards and therefore confirm them as final.

Kenwith, Melbury and Torrington wards

50 Kenwith ward comprises the parishes of Abbotsham, Alwington, Landcross, Littleham and Monkleigh and has 10 per cent more electors than the district average (5 per cent in 2003). Melbury ward comprises the parishes of Buckland Brewer, Frithelstock and Parkham and has 15 per cent more electors than the district average (17 per cent in 2003).

51 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a reconfiguration of the constituent parishes in these wards to reduce the current electoral inequality. It proposed a new single-member Monkleigh & Littleham ward, comprising the parishes of Landcross, Littleham, Monkleigh and Frithelstock. The Council also proposed including 92 electors from the Bideford "Outer Districts", currently in Bideford South ward, in the new Monkleigh & Littleham ward, as discussed earlier.

52 In our draft recommendations report, we considered that the District Council's proposal for Monkleigh & Littleham ward provided improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. In particular, its proposal to combine part of Bideford South ward with neighbouring parishes takes into account the comparatively rural nature of the "Outer Districts". We therefore consulted on the District Council's proposals for Monkleigh & Littleham ward. The number of electors represented by the councillor would be 9 per cent below the district average (11 per cent below in 2003). At Stage Three, we

received no further comments on our draft recommendation for Monkleigh & Littleham ward and therefore confirm it as final.

53 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a modified Kenwith ward comprising Abbotsham and Alwington parishes from the existing Kenwith ward, together with Parkham parish from Melbury ward. This ward would have 6 per cent fewer electors than the district average (7 per cent in 2003). In view of this improved level of electoral equality, and having regard to the statutory criteria, we adopted the District Council's proposal for Kenwith ward as part of our draft recommendations.

54 The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Torrington ward, comprising solely Great Torrington parish, is 1 per cent above the district average (1 per cent below in 2003). In view of the current level of electoral equality, we endorsed the District Council's proposal for no change to the ward. At Stage Three, no further comments were received on our draft recommendations for these three wards and we therefore confirm them as final.

Clovelly Bay, Hartland Point and Morice wards

55 These wards are situated in the north-west of the district. Hartland Point ward comprises Hartland and Welcombe parishes and is bounded by the sea on its northern and western sides and Cornwall to the south. The number of electors represented by the councillor is 19 per cent above the average (21 per cent in 2003). Morice ward comprises the parishes of Bradworthy, Bulkworthy, East Putford, West Putford and Sutcombe and has 8 per cent more electors than the district average (11 per cent in 2003).

56 In its Stage One submission, the District Council acknowledged that the current electoral inequality should be reduced but considered that the scope for re-warding the area was limited. Accordingly, it proposed warding Hartland parish and transferring 43 electors from the Meddon area to form a new ward together with Bradworthy and Sutcombe parishes. Hartland Point ward would then comprise the remainder of Hartland parish together with Welcombe parish, with the number of electors represented by the councillor being 15 per cent above the district average (17 per cent in 2003). The new Bradworthy ward would be 12 per cent below the district average (10 per cent in

2003). Welcombe Parish Council supported a proposal where it would remain linked with Hartland parish, for community identity reasons.

57 In our draft recommendations report, we considered that the District Council's proposals would result in electoral imbalances that are not justified by exceptional community identity arguments. We therefore proposed that Welcombe, Hartland and Bradworthy parishes should be combined to form a two-member Hartland & Bradworthy ward, and that Sutcombe parish should be combined with the current Holsworthy ward. Under this proposal, electoral equality would be improved further while the whole of Hartland parish would be retained in one ward. The number of electors per councillor in Hartland & Bradworthy and Holsworthy wards would be 7 per cent below the district average and 5 per cent above respectively (5 per cent below and 6 per cent above in 2003).

58 At Stage Three, the District Council objected to our draft recommendations for Hartland & Bradworthy ward stating that it would be too large geographically and would "be difficult to canvass and represent". It continued "that if two councillors were both from one of the parishes, then the other parish might feel it had no direct representation". Both Hartland and Bradworthy parish councils objected to the draft recommendation on community identity grounds, concurring with the District Council's views regarding effective representation for the area. However, we continue to consider that the improved levels of electoral equality are not outweighed by the community arguments put forward. Furthermore, electoral equality could only be achieved by warding Hartland parish and combining these parish wards with other parishes – the only rural area in the district where this would occur. Finally, in the two-member ward, both members would be expected to provide proper representation for the whole area. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for Hartland & Bradworthy ward as final.

59 Clovelly Bay ward comprises the parishes of Clovelly (bounded by sea to the north) and Woolfardisworthy, together with the unparished area of Lundy Island, comprising eight electors. The ward currently has good electoral equality with the councillor representing 1 per cent fewer electors than the district average (2 per cent fewer in 2003). In view of this good level of electoral equality, we adopted the District Council's proposal for no change to this ward as part of

our draft recommendations. At Stage Three, Woolfardisworthy Parish Council agreed with our draft recommendations and no other comments were received. Accordingly, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Clovelly Bay ward as final.

Coham Bridge, Heanton and Waldon wards

60 In Coham Bridge ward, comprising the parishes of Black Torrington, Shebbear and Sheepwash, the number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent below the district average (9 per cent below in 2003). In Heanton ward, comprising the parishes of Buckland Filleigh, Langtree, Little Torrington, Peters Marland and Petrockstow, the number of electors represented by the councillor is 13 per cent above the district average (both now and in 2003). Waldon ward comprises the parishes of Abbots Bickington, Bradford, Cookbury, Milton Damerel, Newton St Petrock and Thornbury and has 3 per cent fewer electors than the district average (7 per cent fewer in 2003).

61 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Coham Bridge ward should comprise the parishes of Black Torrington, Bradford, Cookbury, Sheepwash and Thornbury and that Waldon ward should comprise the parishes of Abbots Bickington, Buckland Brewer, Bulkworthy, East Putford, Milton Damerel and West Putford. The number of electors per councillor in the modified Coham Bridge and Waldon wards would be 3 per cent below the district average and 4 per cent above respectively (4 per cent below and 3 per cent above in 2003).

62 The Council further proposed a new Shebbear & Langtree ward comprising the parishes of Langtree, Newton St Petrock and Shebbear. The number of electors represented by the councillor would be 2 per cent below the district average (3 per cent below in 2003).

63 In view of the good electoral equality achieved, while having regard to the statutory criteria, we adopted the District Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations. At Stage Three, Buckland Brewer Parish Council opposed our proposed Waldon ward on community identity grounds. No further specific comments on the draft recommendations for these wards were received. We note the Parish Council's views but continue to consider that our proposed configuration of parishes would result in improved

electoral equality, while having regard to the statutory criteria and we therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final.

Broadheath, Forest, Holsworthy and Tamarside wards

64 Broadheath ward comprises the parishes of Broadwoodwidge, Lufincott, Northcott, St Giles on the Heath, Tetcott and Virginstow and has 7 per cent fewer electors than average (12 per cent fewer in 2003). Forest ward comprises the parishes of Ashwater, Clawton and Halwill and has 11 per cent more electors per councillor than average (14 per cent more in 2003).

65 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the parishes of Broadwoodwidge, Clawton, Lufincott, Northcott, St Giles on the Heath and Tetcott should comprise a modified Broadheath ward, and that the parishes of Ashwater, Halwill and Virginstow should comprise a modified Forest ward. Under its proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Broadheath and Forest wards would be 6 per cent above the district average and 3 per cent below respectively (1 per cent above and equal to the district average in 2003).

66 At Stage One, the Torridge & West Devon Conservative Association proposed an alternative reconfiguration in this area, with Broadheath ward comprising the parishes of Broadwoodwidge, Clawton, Northcott, St Giles on the Heath and Virginstow, and Forest ward comprising the parishes of Ashwater, Halwill, Luffincott and Tetcott to reflect community identity. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor in Broadheath and Forest wards would be 2 per cent below the district average and 4 per cent above respectively in 2003. Additionally, Councillor Bury, member for Broadheath ward, considered that Virginstow parish should remain in Broadheath ward, while Halwill Parish Council supported no change to the current arrangements.

67 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that the District Council's scheme provided better electoral equality than the alternative patterns proposed. It would also result in Luffincott and Tetcott parishes being included in the same ward, while Halwill and Ashwater parishes would remain in Forest ward, thus retaining much of the current arrangements in the area, as supported by Halwill Parish Council. Accordingly, we consulted on the District Council's scheme for these wards.

68 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. However, Broadwoodwidge Parish Council and Virginstow Parish Meeting objected to our draft recommendations for community identity reasons, preferring that Virginstow parish should be included in Forest ward. Halwill Parish Council supported the existing arrangements. We, however, continue to consider that our draft recommendations adequately reflect the statutory criteria and would provide better levels of electoral equality than the alternative configuration proposed. Accordingly, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Broadheath and Forest wards as final.

69 The two-member Holsworthy ward comprises the parishes of Hollacombe, Holsworthy and Holsworthy Hamlets and each councillor represents 3 per cent fewer electors than the district average (2 per cent in 2003). Tamarside ward comprises the parishes of Bridgerule, Pancrasweek and Pyworthy and has 7 per cent fewer electors than the district average (6 per cent fewer in 2003).

70 As a consequence of our reconfiguration of the wards in the north-west of the district, we proposed that Sutcombe parish should be included in Holsworthy ward as part of our draft recommendations. The number of electors per councillor in the revised Holsworthy ward would be 5 per cent above the district average (6 per cent in 2003). Holsworthy Hamlets Parish Council considered that Sutcombe parish “may find being in a two-member ward somewhat different”, but did not propose any specific alternative. No other comments were received and we therefore confirm our draft recommendation as final.

71 In view of the current levels of electoral equality, and the fact that the reconfiguration of neighbouring wards leaves Tamarside unaffected, we adopted the Council’s proposals for no change to this ward as part of our draft recommendations. At Stage Three, we received no further comments concerning Tamarside ward and therefore confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Electoral Cycle

72 In the initial stage of the review we did not receive any proposals for change to the District Council’s electoral cycle. In our draft

recommendations report we therefore proposed that the present system of whole-council elections every four years in Torrridge be retained. At Stage Three, no comments were received to the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

73 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations.

74 We conclude that, in Torrridge:

- (a) Torrridge District Council should have 36 councillors, the same as at present;
- (b) there should be 23 wards, four less than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) whole-council elections should continue to be held every four years.

75 Figure 3 (overleaf) shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

76 As Figure 3 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 12 to zero. By 2003, only one ward, Monkleigh & Littleham, is forecast to vary 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

Torrridge District Council should comprise 36 councillors serving 23 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

Figure 3:
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	36	36	36	36
Number of wards	27	23	27	23
Average number of electors per councillor	1,189	1,189	1,244	1,244
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	12	0	14	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	0	6	0

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

77 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Bideford and Northam parishes to reflect the proposed district wards.

78 Bideford Town Council is currently represented by a total of 15 councillors serving three parish wards. As a result of our draft recommendation to include Bideford “Outer Districts” in the new Monkleigh & Littleham ward, we proposed a consequential change to the parish wards of Bideford parish and a change in the distribution of councillors to reflect the relative size of electorate in the modified Bideford South and Bideford Rural wards.

79 At Stage Three, Bideford Town Council, supported by the District Council, considered that there should be an increase in the number of town councillors from 15 to 16, with each of the three

larger parish wards represented by five councillors. We consider that this level of representation is appropriate and therefore propose it as part of our final recommendations.

Final Recommendation

Bideford Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, one more than at present, representing four parish wards: Bideford East (to be represented by five councillors); Bideford North (five councillors); Bideford South (five councillors); and Bideford Outer (one councillor). The parish ward boundaries of Bideford East and Bideford North should remain unchanged. The proposed parish ward boundary between Bideford South and Bideford Outer is illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

80 Northam Town Council is currently represented by a total of 14 councillors serving seven parish wards. At Stage One, Northam Town Council considered that, if the District Council’s proposals for the wards in the town were to be adopted, the town council wards should follow the same pattern, with each area retaining the same representation. Accordingly, as part of our draft recommendations, we adopted its proposals for

Appledore ward to be represented by four town councillors and Northam ward to be represented by six councillors. Orchard Hill and Westward Ho! wards would remain unchanged, represented by two town councillors each.

81 At Stage Three, no comments were received in relation to this proposal and we are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Final Recommendation

Northam Town Council should have a total of 14 councillors, as at present, serving four parish wards: Northam, coterminous with the proposed Northam district ward, represented by six councillors; and Appledore, coterminous with the proposed Appledore district ward, represented by four councillors. There should be no changes to the parish ward boundaries of Orchard Hill and Westward Ho! which would continue to be represented by two councillors each. These wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

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

Final Recommendation

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

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Torrington

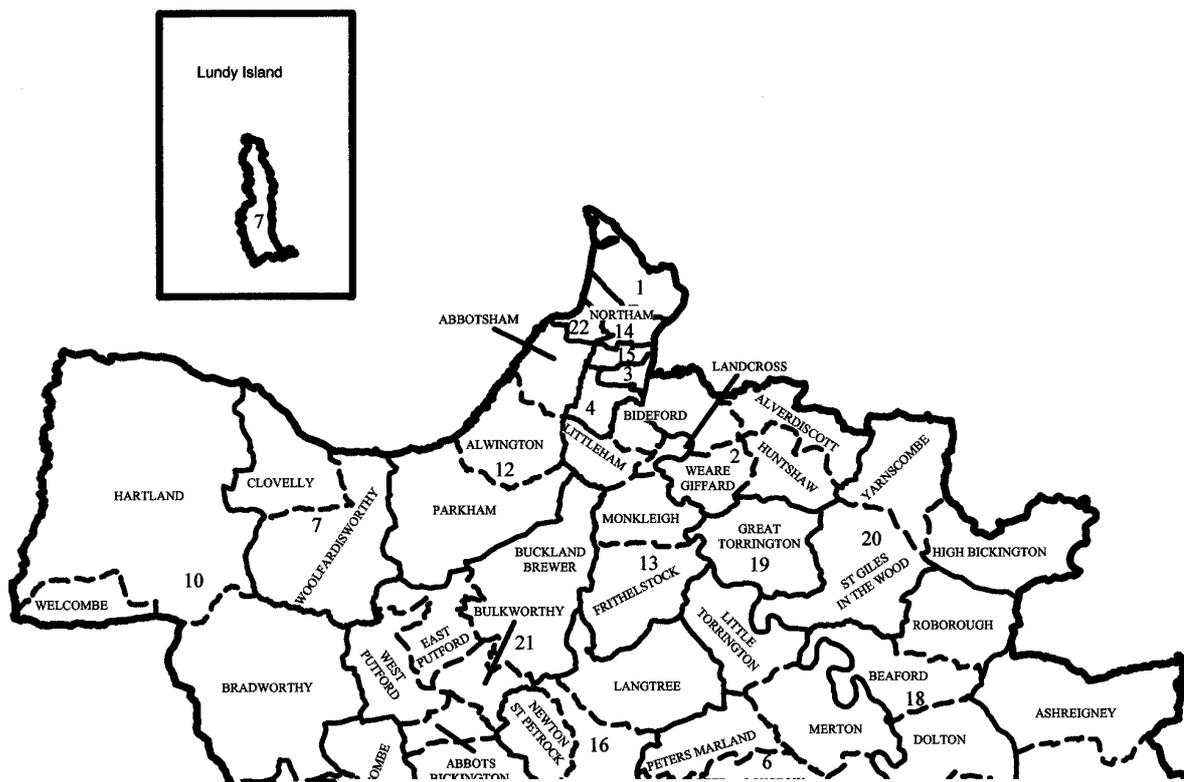


Figure 4:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Torrington

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Appledore	2	2,322	1,161	-2	2,458	1,229	-1
2 Bideford East	3	3,434	1,145	-4	3,594	1,198	-4
3 Bideford North	3	3,695	1,232	4	3,901	1,300	5
4 Bideford South	3	3,594	1,198	1	3,734	1,245	0
5 Broadheath	1	1,263	1,263	6	1,262	1,262	1
6 Clinton	1	1,180	1,180	-1	1,208	1,208	-3
7 Clovelly Bay	1	1,174	1,174	-1	1,225	1,225	-2
8 Coham Bridge	1	1,152	1,152	-3	1,194	1,194	-4
9 Forest	1	1,155	1,155	-3	1,250	1,250	0
10 Hartland & Bradworthy	2	2,223	1,112	-6	2,376	1,188	-5
11 Holsworthy	2	2,495	1,248	5	2,633	1,317	6
12 Kenwith	1	1,112	1,112	-6	1,152	1,152	-7
13 Monkleigh & Littleham	1	1,083	1,083	-9	1,108	1,108	-11
14 Northam	3	3,776	1,259	6	3,968	1,323	6
15 Orchard Hill	1	1,273	1,273	7	1,329	1,329	7
16 Shebbear & Langtree	1	1,164	1,164	-2	1,202	1,202	-3
17 Tamarside	1	1,107	1,107	-7	1,167	1,167	-6
18 Three Moors	1	1,206	1,206	1	1,268	1,268	2
19 Torrington	3	3,602	1,201	1	3,714	1,238	-1

continued overleaf

Figure 4 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Torrington

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
20 Two Rivers	1	1,128	1,128	-5	1,176	1,176	-5
21 Waldon	1	1,239	1,239	4	1,278	1,278	3
22 Westward Ho!	1	1,231	1,231	4	1,302	1,302	5
23 Winkleigh	1	1,194	1,194	0	1,295	1,295	4
Totals	36	42,802	—	—	44,794	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,189	—	—	1,244	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Torrington District Council's submission.

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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

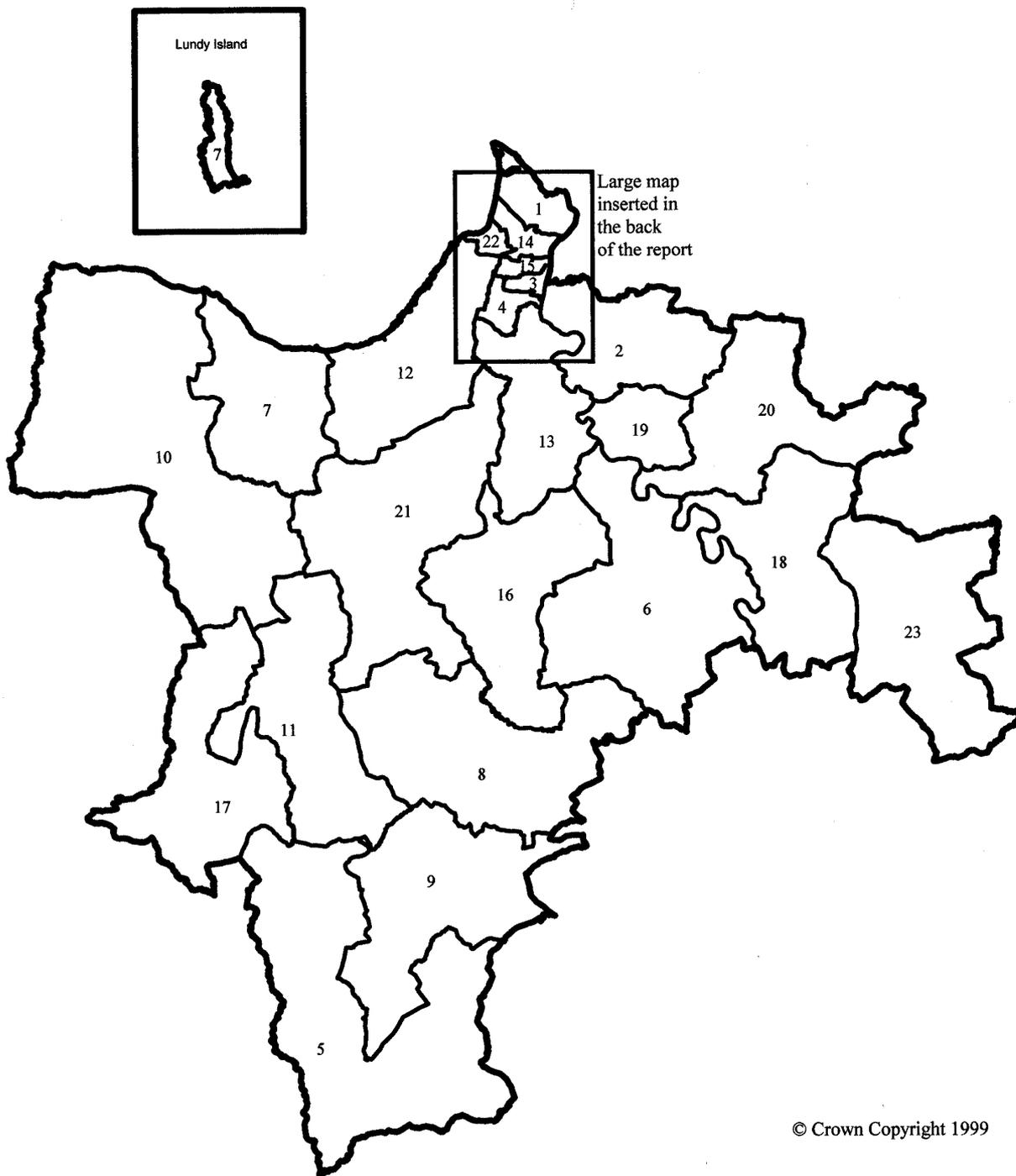
The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment,
Transport and the Regions
Local Government Review
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Torridge: Detailed Mapping

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the Commission's proposed district and parish warding arrangements for Appledore, Bideford and Northam.

Map A1:
Final Recommendations for Torridge: Key Map



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Key to Wards

1	Appledore	9	Forest	17	Tamarside
2	Bideford East	10	Hartland and Bradworthy	18	Three Moors
3	Bideford North	11	Holsworthy	19	Torrington
4	Bideford South	12	Kenwith	20	Two Rivers
5	Broadheath	13	Monkleigh and Littleham	21	Waldon
6	Clinton	14	Northam	22	Westward Ho!
7	Clovelly Bay	15	Orchard Hill	23	Winkleigh
8	Coham Bridge	16	Shebbear and Langtree		