

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria

Further electoral review

August 2007

Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Boundary Committee for England:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@boundarycommittee.org.uk

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Electoral Commission with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Licence Number: GD 03114G

Contents

What is the Boundary Committee for England?	5
Summary	7
1 Introduction	11
2 Current electoral arrangements	15
3 Draft recommendations	19
4 Responses to consultation	21
5 Analysis and final recommendations	23
Electorate figures	23
Council size	24
Electoral equality	24
General analysis	26
Warding arrangements	26
Walney North, Walney South, Dalton North and Dalton South wards	27
Ormsgill, Hawcoat, Parkside, Newbarns, Risedale, Roosecote and Hindpool wards	27
Central and Barrow Island wards	28
Conclusions	31
Parish electoral arrangements	32
6 What happens next?	33
7 Mapping	35
Appendices	
A Glossary and abbreviations	37
B Code of practice on written consultation	41

What is the Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair, until 30 June 2007)

Robin Gray

Joan Jones CBE

Ann M. Kelly

Professor Colin Mellors

Director:

Archie Gall

When conducting reviews our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish councils.

Summary

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Barrow-in-Furness is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the borough. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each borough councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee for England to undertake this review on 12 May 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, six wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the borough average, with one ward varying by more than 30% from the borough average. During the previous review of Barrow-in-Furness the electorate forecast for the five-year period between 1996 and 2001 was not realised. This was particularly the case in Barrow Island ward, which has resulted in it having a poor variance, with 35% fewer electors than the borough average.

This review was conducted in four stages:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	6 September 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	13 December 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 November 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	27 February 2007	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We proposed 11 three-member wards, one two-member ward and one single-member ward. The scheme was broadly based on the warding pattern consulted on by the Borough Council. The most notable variation to this was in Barrow Island where the Borough Council had proposed a three-member ward comprising Barrow Island and areas of the mainland. We received strong evidence of community identity to support retaining the existing Barrow Island ward as a single-member ward with 22% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009. We considered this level of electoral equality to be justified given the evidence. In the remaining parts of the borough, we were satisfied with the good levels of electoral equality achieved.

Responses to consultation

We received 19 submissions during Stage Three. The majority of submissions wholly endorsed our proposed Barrow Island ward. We did not receive alternative proposals for council size, nor did we receive specific alternative warding arrangements. Three respondents opposed our draft recommendations for Central ward but did not provide strong evidence that alternative arrangements would provide a better reflection of community identity.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2009, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 49,787 to 50,087 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. We did not receive any comments in relation to the electorate figures at any stage of the review and are satisfied that they are the most accurate that can be provided at this time.

Council size

We did not receive any further submissions in relation to council size during Stage Three and are therefore confirming as final our draft recommendations to reduce the number of councillors from 38 to 36.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during Stage Three, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final, in full. We note the strong support for the retention of Barrow Island ward and are content to retain it, with one member. We note the opposition to our proposed Central ward. However, we have not received specific alternatives or evidence to support an alternative warding pattern in this area.

A number of respondents expressed concern that this review may be affected by unitary restructuring in Cumbria. However, this review relates only to the electoral arrangements of Barrow-in-Furness. Decisions on whether Cumbria should become a unitary authority are a matter for the Secretary of State and, ultimately, Parliament.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before 28 September 2007. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.
The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Final recommendations for Barrow-in-Furness borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Barrow Island	1	1,700	1,700	23	1,700	1,700	22
2	Central	2	2,540	1,270	-8	2,602	1,301	-6
3	Dalton North	3	4,642	1,547	12	4,616	1,539	11
4	Dalton South	3	4,524	1,508	9	4,573	1,524	10
5	Hawcoat	3	4,239	1,413	2	4,199	1,400	1
6	Hindpool	3	4,009	1,336	-3	4,207	1,402	1
7	Newbarns	3	3,839	1,280	-7	4,013	1,338	-4
8	Ormsgill	3	4,003	1,334	-4	3,962	1,321	-5
9	Parkside	3	4,007	1,336	-3	3,968	1,323	-5
10	Risedale	3	4,317	1,439	4	4,277	1,426	2
11	Roosecote	3	3,694	1,231	-11	3,778	1,259	-9

Table 1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Barrow-in-Furness borough

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Walney North	3	4,133	1,378	0	4,092	1,364	-2
13 Walney South	3	4,140	1,380	0	4,100	1,367	-2
Totals	36	49,787	-	-	50,087	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,383	-	-	1,391	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each ward 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 for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Barrow-in-Furness.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 the Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make ongoing assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a periodic electoral review (PER) has elapsed. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be closer scrutiny where either:

- 30% of wards in an authority had electoral variances of over 10% from the average, or
- any single ward had a variance of more than 30% from the average

3 The intention of such scrutiny was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1997. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 16 October 1998 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 1999.

5 In carrying out our work, the Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework.¹ This refers to the need to:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure effective and convenient local government
- achieve equality of representation

In addition we are required to work within Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of Barrow-in-Furness is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by the Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review and will be helpful both in understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

7 Our task is to make recommendations to the Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for any parish councils in the borough. We cannot consider changes to the external boundaries of either the borough or parish areas as part of this review.

¹ As set out in Section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962).

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole, i.e. to ensure that all councillors in the local authority represent similar numbers of electors. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a 'vote of equal weight' when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as nearly as possible, the same across a district. In practice, each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors given geographic and other constraints, including the make-up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. Indeed, consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews, and whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure.

11 As indicated in its *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission requires that the decision on council size be based on an overall view about what is right for the particular authority, and it should not just address any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider ways of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be that the recommended council size reflects the authority's optimum political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government, and that there is evidence for this.

12 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from that of another. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size recognises all the factors and achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

13 Where multi-member wards are proposed, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

14 The review is in four stages (see Table 2, below).

Table 2: Stages of the review

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	6 September 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	13 December 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 November 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	27 February 2007	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 Stage One began on 6 September 2005, when we wrote to Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Cumbria Police Authority, Cumbria Local Councils' Association, parish councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, 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 Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 12 December 2005.

16 During Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

17 Stage Three began on 21 November 2006 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria*, and ended on 26 February 2007.

18 During Stage Four we reconsidered the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decided whether to modify them, and now submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. It is now for the Commission to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an electoral change Order. The Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to the general duty set out in Section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by Section 97 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The borough of Barrow-in-Furness comprises the parishes of Askam & Ireleth, Lindal & Marton and Dalton with Newton Town. The rest of the borough is unparished. The electorate of the borough is geographically separated between the rural settlements of Dalton, Walney, and Barrow town, which includes Barrow Island.

22 The electorate of the borough is 49,787 (December 2004). The Council presently has 38 members who are elected from 13 wards. There are currently 12 three-member wards and one two-member ward. The borough average number of electors per councillor is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present, each councillor represents a borough average of 1,310 electors (49,787 divided by 38), which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,318 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained (50,087, the 2009 forecast electorate, divided by 38).

23 During the last review of Barrow-in-Furness the Borough Council forecast that there would be an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% between 1996 and 2001. However, population changes since that time have resulted in a significant amount of electoral inequality between wards, with an overall decrease in the electorate across the borough. To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the borough average in percentage terms.

24 Data from the December 2004 electoral register showed that, under these arrangements, electoral equality across the borough met the criteria that the Electoral Commission agreed would warrant further investigation. The number of electors per councillor in six of the 13 wards (46%) varies by more than 10% from the borough average, with one ward varying by more than 30% from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Barrow Island ward, where the two councillors represent 35% fewer electors than the borough average. Having noted that this level of electoral inequality is unlikely to improve, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council on 12 May 2005.

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Barrow Island	2	1,700	850	-35	1,700	850	-36
2	Central	3	3,242	1,081	-18	3,304	1,101	-16
3	Dalton North	3	4,748	1,583	21	4,722	1,574	19
4	Dalton South	3	4,418	1,473	12	4,467	1,489	13
5	Hawcoat	3	4,239	1,413	8	4,199	1,400	6
6	Hindpool	3	3,307	1,102	-16	3,505	1,168	-11
7	Newbarns	3	4,156	1,385	6	4,311	1,437	9
8	Ormsgill	3	3,866	1,289	-2	3,827	1,276	-3
9	Parkside	3	3,869	1,290	-2	3,831	1,277	-3
10	Risedale	3	3,601	1,200	-8	3,565	1,188	-10
11	Roosecote	3	4,368	1,456	11	4,464	1,488	13

Table 3 (cont.): Existing electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness borough

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Walney North	3	4,133	1,378	5	4,092	1,364	3
13 Walney South	3	4,140	1,380	5	4,100	1,367	4
Totals	38	49,787	-	-	50,087	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,310	-	-	1,318	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each ward 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.

3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One, 11 submissions were received, including borough-wide schemes from the Council and the Conservative Group. We also received a joint representation from Councillors Tongue and Wood (Barrow Island). The further eight representations were from local residents and community groups. All respondents bar the Council and the Conservative Group proposed the retention of Barrow Island ward without including any areas from the mainland of Barrow-in-Furness. Many respondents proposed that Barrow Island become a single-member ward to help address the poor electoral equality in the existing ward. In 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 Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria*.

26 Our draft recommendations were broadly based on the proposals of the Borough Council which had been locally consulted on and achieved some improvement in electoral equality. However, our most notable departure from the Council's proposals was the retention of Barrow Island ward. Our draft recommendations proposed that Barrow Island ward should not include any area from the mainland, as proposed by the Council and the Conservative Group. We proposed that it become a single-member ward which would have 22% more electors than the borough average by 2009. While we acknowledged this was a poor variance, we considered we had received sufficient evidence of community identity to support this locally generated proposal. We proposed that:

- Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council should be served by 36 councillors, two fewer than at present, representing 13 wards, the same as at present.
- The boundaries of nine of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries.²
- There should be new warding arrangements for Dalton Town with Newton parish. This was to reflect our proposed modification to the boundary between Dalton North and Dalton South wards. Under our proposals, this boundary would be coterminous with the parish ward boundaries of Dowdales and Becksides parish wards of Dalton Town with Newton parish.

27 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in only three of the 13 wards initially varying by more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only two wards varying by more than 10% from the average by 2009.

² We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors. Where additional changes have not been made to these boundaries as part of our final recommendations, these minor boundary amendments are not considered as modifications.

4 Responses to consultation

28 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 19 representations were received, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Borough Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council

29 The Borough Council wholly supported our proposals, although it did not provide any further information.

Members of Parliament

30 Mr John Hutton MP supported our proposals for Barrow Island ward but expressed a preference for Central ward remaining a three-member ward.

Other representations

31 A further 17 representations were received from local residents and other interested parties. Fourteen respondents wholly endorsed our draft recommendations for Barrow Island, with some respondents providing additional evidence of community identity in relation to the island. In addition to Mr Hutton, two respondents opposed our proposals for Central ward. Cumbria County Council Local Committee for Barrow indicated a preference for the proposed boundaries to be aligned with the present county division boundaries.

32 A number of respondents expressed concern that this review might be affected by unitary restructuring in Cumbria. However, this review relates only to the electoral arrangements of Barrow-in-Furness. Decisions on whether Cumbria should become a unitary authority are a matter for the Secretary of State and, ultimately, Parliament.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

33 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness.

34 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Barrow-in-Furness is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to Section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended), with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure the matters in respect of equality of representation referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972

35 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'. In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

36 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral equality is unlikely to be attainable. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is to keep variances to a minimum.

37 If electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate should also be taken into account, and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

38 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, or local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries. We are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Electorate figures

39 As part of the previous review of Barrow-in-Furness borough, the Borough Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 1% between 1996 and 2001. Between the last electoral review of Barrow-in-Furness in 1997 and the start of this review, the electorate has actually decreased by 9%. The Borough Council stated that this is due to a cleansing of its electoral register. As part of this review the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2009, projecting an

increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 49,787 to 50,087 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009.

40 We recognise that forecasting electorate figures is difficult and, having considered the Borough Council's figures during Stage Two, accepted that they were the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time. We were satisfied that the Council had considered all planning applications in the borough and were satisfied that the electorate figures it provided would reflect the growth anticipated.

41 We did not receive any representations in relation to the electorate figures that the Borough Council provided during Stage One or Stage Three from any other respondents.

42 We therefore remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

43 Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council presently has 38 members. At Stage One, the Borough Council and the Conservative Group proposed a council size of 36 members. The Borough Council's proposal was made in the context of its internal political management structure. It stated that the proposed reduction was 'made against the requirements of the political management arrangements currently in place'. The Council went on to comment that these requirements included 'the division of membership between the Executive and Planning Committees, i.e. no member of the Executive Committee may be a Member of the Planning Committee and vice versa'.

44 Following a request for further information, the Council provided further details as to why a council size of 36 was justified. The Council said that due to a reduced frequency of meetings and overall workload, a council size of 38 was no longer necessary and therefore justified a reduction. We received no other submissions in relation to council size during Stage One.

45 While the Borough Council did not provide extensive evidence in support of its proposed council size of 36, we considered that it had provided enough information as to demonstrate a clear reduction in councillor workload and to justify a decrease of two members. We therefore proposed a reduction of the existing council size from 38 to 36.

46 During Stage Three we did not receive any proposals in relation to council size. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for a proposed council size of 36 as final.

Electoral equality

47 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. Therefore, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where inadequate justification is

provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality, seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as is possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

48 The borough average number of electors per councillor is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough (49,787 in 2004 and 50,087 in 2009) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 36 under our draft proposals. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 1,383 in 2004 and 1,391 in 2009.

49 Our draft recommendations would have provided good levels of electoral equality for Barrow-in-Furness. However, Barrow Island, Dalton North and Roosecote wards, would initially have variances of greater than 10%. This would improve by 2009 in two wards, Roosecote and Dalton North. In the case of Barrow Island ward, we were confident that we had received sufficient evidence concerning community identity to justify a single-member ward which would have 22% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009. While the Boundary Committee would not normally be inclined to put forward warding arrangements with such high variances, we considered that the strength and quality of the community identity evidence received in relation to this area justified this level of electoral inequality.

50 In the case of Dalton, we were confident that our warding arrangements in the Dalton area were the best that could reasonably be achieved. Dalton is a rural settlement in the north-east of the borough, which is geographically separate from the town of Barrow-in-Furness. In considering our warding arrangements in Dalton, we therefore sought to reflect this and to avoid combining Dalton with other areas of the borough. We subsequently proposed a boundary between Dalton North and Dalton South wards that would divide the area of Dalton and achieve the best possible electoral equality in the area without combining parts of Dalton with other areas of the borough.

51 During Stage Three, respondents who made submissions in relation to Barrow Island ward wholly supported our draft recommendations in this area. Strong evidence of community identity was again provided by respondents, and we are confident that the evidence received during both Stages One and Three supports a single-member Barrow Island ward with such a high variance.

52 We did not receive any submissions in relation to our draft recommendations for the Dalton area or Roosecote ward and we maintain our rationale behind the draft recommendations for these areas which led to slightly higher variances than would normally be accepted by the Boundary Committee.

General analysis

53 Our draft recommendations were broadly based on the proposals of the Borough Council and the Conservative Group, with a number of modifications to reflect community identity or to create a stronger boundary.

54 We proposed a council size of 36 comprising a combination of 11 three-member wards, a two-member ward and a single-member ward. With the exception of Barrow Island ward, our draft recommendations would provide reasonable electoral equality by 2009. However, in light of the evidence of community identity received in relation to Barrow Island during Stage One, we proposed retaining the boundaries of the existing Barrow Island ward but reducing its representation from two councillors to one. This ward is forecast to have 22% more electors than the borough average by 2009.

55 During Stage Three, we received 19 submissions. Two submissions made borough-wide comments. Fourteen submissions were received specifically in relation to Barrow Island ward and three submissions in relation to Central ward. Our draft recommendations for Barrow Island ward were wholly supported by respondents who made submissions in relation to this area. In Central ward, our draft recommendations were opposed. However, this opposition was not supported by evidence and was instead largely concerned with the consequences of our proposals and with issues not within the remit of the Boundary Committee.

56 Given the support for our draft recommendations in Barrow Island, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations as final in this area. In Central ward, we note the opposition to our draft recommendations, but no specific alternatives were provided and the knock-on effect would be significant were we to alter these boundaries. In addition, the opposition was not supported by evidence, and we are therefore not inclined to deviate from our draft recommendations for Central ward.

57 We received three submissions that questioned the validity of the electoral review given Cumbria County Council's bid to the Government for unitary status. It should be noted that the Boundary Committee is unable to take the County Council's bid for unitary status into consideration. This is entirely a matter for the Secretary of State and, ultimately, Parliament.

58 We did not receive any proposals or comments in relation to the rest of Barrow-in-Furness borough. With the exception of Barrow Island, in the absence of community identity evidence, we consider our proposals to achieve reasonable electoral equality throughout the borough and provide strong boundaries for our proposed wards. We are therefore satisfied to confirm our draft recommendations for Barrow-in-Furness as final in their entirety.

Warding arrangements

59 For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- Walney North, Walney South, Dalton North and Dalton South wards (page 27)
- Ormsgill, Hawcoat, Parkside, Newbarns, Risedale, Roosecote and Hindpool wards (page 27)
- Central and Barrow Island wards (page 28)

60 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Table 1 (page 9), and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Walney North, Walney South, Dalton North and Dalton South wards

61 Under the existing arrangements Walney North and Walney South wards are unparished. The existing Dalton North ward comprises Askam & Ireleth parish, Lindal & Marton parish and Dowdales parish ward of Dalton Town with Newton parish. The existing Dalton South ward comprises Beckside and Anty Cross & Newton parish wards of Dalton Town with Newton parish. Table 3 (page 16) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

62 During Stage One we received proposals only from the Borough Council and the Conservative Group in relation to these wards.

63 Both the Borough Council and the Conservative Group proposed retaining the existing arrangements in Walney North and Walney South wards. However, they proposed a slight modification to the boundary between Dalton North and Dalton South wards to improve the existing level of electoral equality. The modifications proposed by the Borough Council and the Conservative Group were identical.

64 We adopted the Council's and the Conservative Group's proposals for Walney North, Walney South, Dalton North and Dalton South wards. Each ward would be a three-member ward and would have 2% fewer, 2% fewer, 11% more and 10% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2009. Our draft recommendations in the rural settlements of Walney and Dalton reflected the geographic separateness of the areas from the rest of the borough and achieved the best possible variances in the area without including other distinct areas of the borough.

65 During Stage Three we did not receive any submissions in relation to the settlements of Walney and Dalton. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations in these areas as final.

66 Table 1 (page 9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Walney North, Walney South, Dalton North and Dalton South wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Maps 1, 2 and 4 accompanying this report.

Ormsgill, Hawcoat, Parkside, Newbarns, Risedale, Roosecote and Hindpool wards

67 Under the existing arrangements Ormsgill, Hawcoat, Parkside, Newbarns, Risedale, Roosecote and Hindpool wards are currently unparished. Table 3 (on page 16) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

68 During Stage One we received proposals from the Borough Council and the Conservative Group in relation to these wards. We did not receive representations in relation to these areas from any other respondents.

69 The Borough Council and the Conservative Group proposed slight modifications to the existing ward boundaries which would improve the overall electoral equality in the area.

70 The Borough Council proposed modifications to each of the existing wards with the exception of the existing Hawcoat ward, which it proposed to retain. The Borough Council's proposals would provide the wards in these areas with good levels of electoral equality.

71 The Conservative Group's proposals in these areas differed slightly from those of the Borough Council, with the exception of Hindpool ward where the proposals were identical. The Conservative Group's proposals would also provide good levels of electoral equality.

72 The Borough Council and the Conservative Group provided little or no evidence in support of their proposals in these areas. However, both achieved good levels of electoral equality. On balance, in Ormsgill, Parkside, Hawcoat and Newbarns wards we considered the Council's proposals to provide stronger boundaries than those of the Conservative Group. We therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council's scheme in these wards as part of our draft recommendations. These wards would have 5% fewer, 5% fewer, 1% more and 4% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2009. We also adopted the Hindpool ward as proposed by the Borough Council and the Conservative Group. This ward would have 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009.

73 In Roosecote and Risedale wards, our draft recommendations were based on both the Council's and the Conservative Group's proposals, with modifications. These wards would have 9% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2009.

74 During Stage Three we did not receive any submissions in relation to these wards. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations in these areas as final.

75 Table 1 (page 9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Ormsgill, Hawcoat, Parkside, Newbarns, Risedale, Roosecote and Hindpool wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Maps 1 and 3 accompanying this report.

Central and Barrow Island wards

76 Under the existing arrangements Central and Barrow Island wards are currently unparished. Table 3 (page 16) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

77 During Stage One we received 11 representations in relation to Barrow Island. The Borough Council and the Conservative Group proposed identical warding arrangements in this area. They proposed that part of the existing Hindpool and Central wards be incorporated with Barrow Island in an Old Barrow ward. This ward would achieve good electoral equality, with 3% more electors per councillor than the

borough average by 2009. However, the Council and the Conservative Group did not provide any evidence of community identity in support of their proposals.

78 Eight respondents opposed the proposals submitted by the Council and the Conservative Group in relation to Barrow Island. We received strong evidence of community identity to support the retention of the boundaries of Barrow Island ward. Given the strength of the evidence received, we were prompted to propose a single-member Barrow Island ward. This ward would have 22% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009. However, we were satisfied that the evidence received justified adopting a ward with a poorer level of electoral equality than the Boundary Committee would normally be inclined to adopt.

79 Subsequently, we proposed to create a two-member Central ward comprising the remaining non-island constituent parts of the Borough Council's proposal and the Conservative Group's proposed Old Barrow ward. This ward would have 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009.

80 During Stage Three we received 11 submissions in relation to Barrow Island ward and three submissions in relation to Central ward, largely from local residents and community groups.

81 All the submissions received in relation to Barrow Island wholly supported our proposals for that ward. A local resident, Mr Samms, cited examples of local amenities within Barrow Island, and used by Barrow Islanders, which manifest the community identity within the ward. Mr Samms cited the church, the primary school and the community centre, all within Barrow Island, and argued that there are no shared interests with the other wards throughout the borough. Mrs Fryer, Headteacher of Barrow Island Primary School, Mr Brook, Cumbria County Council Community Development Officer, Mr Taylor of Community Press and local residents Mr Green and Ms Carruthers all supported the draft recommendations and noted the geographic position of the island in their support of the proposal for Barrow Island. The Barrow Island (South) Community Allotment Association and seven local residents also indicated their support for the proposals.

82 Mr Bromley and the Central Community Partnership both opposed our draft recommendations for Central ward but did not propose any alternative warding proposals or submit evidence of community identity in support of their opposition.

83 Mr Bromley stated that the MAST Community Safety Group would no longer be in Central ward under our draft recommendations and would instead be included in our proposed Hindpool ward. Mr Bromley expressed concerns that this would require the Group to establish new relationships with local stakeholders in Hindpool ward.

84 Mr Bromley added that the proposed boundary between Central and Hindpool wards would be 'more confusing for all concerned' as it would no longer follow Cavendish Street as the northern boundary of Central ward and instead follow a number of streets.

85 Mr John Hutton MP expressed a preference for retaining a three-member Central ward 'given the number of issues required to be considered in this area that exceed those requiring to be considered in other wards'. However, Mr Hutton acknowledged our rationale that under a council size of 36 Central ward is entitled to two

councillors, which would provide good electoral equality for the proposed ward. Mr Hutton did not provide evidence of the 'issues' he referred to and instead cited 'the proximity of the residences [in Central ward] to the commercial centre' from which such issues could arise. A three-member Central ward would also have a knock-on effect throughout the rest of the borough given our proposed council size of 36.

86 While we acknowledge Mr Bromley's concerns, he did not provide any evidence of how the MAST Community Safety Group is an example of community identity specific to Central ward. We are therefore unable to consider this in producing our final recommendations for Central ward.

87 We note Mr Bromley's comments regarding the boundary between Central and Hindpool wards. However, he did not provide specific alternative boundaries and we are satisfied that the proposed boundary is strong and should form part of the final recommendations.

88 The Central Community Partnership referred to the impact our draft recommendations for Central ward might have on deprivation funding in the area of the existing Central ward. The effect of ward changes on eligibility for such funding is not a matter we can reasonably take into account. We therefore do not propose to move away from our draft recommendations on the basis of this argument.

89 The Central Community Partnership also questioned 'which councillor would lose their seat' under our draft recommendations for Central ward which include the reduction of members from a three-member ward to a two-member ward. It should be noted that our final recommendations are submitted to the Electoral Commission, and if accepted, will be implemented for elections in 2009. The warding arrangements would be reflected in the number of seats being contested, and no councillor would lose their seat per se as a consequence of revised warding arrangements.

90 We are satisfied that our proposals in this area achieve a good level of electoral equality with strong, identifiable boundaries. Given the lack of evidence received in relation to the opposition to our draft recommendations for Central ward, we are not inclined to amend our draft recommendations. We also note that changes from our draft recommendations to Central ward would affect our proposed Barrow Island ward. In light of the strong community identity evidence received during Stage One and Stage Three in relation to Barrow Island and in the absence of such evidence in relation to Central ward, we are not persuaded to depart from our draft recommendations. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final for both Central and Barrow Island wards.

91 Table 1 (page 9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Central and Barrow Island wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

92 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2004 and 2009 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Final recommendations	
	2004	2009	2004	2009
Number of councillors	38	38	36	36
Number of wards	13	13	13	13
Average number of electors per councillor	1,310	1,318	1,383	1,391
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	6	6	3	2
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	2	1	1	1

93 As shown in Table 4, our final recommendations for Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from six to three. By 2009 only two wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to decrease council size and are recommending a council size of 36 members. We acknowledge that our proposed Barrow Island ward will have a poorer level of electoral equality than we would normally recommend. However, we consider this is justified in light of the evidence of community identity we received during consultation.

Final recommendation

Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council should comprise 36 councillors serving 13 wards, as detailed in Table 1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

94 As part of a further electoral review (FER) the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the borough council's electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish and councils for changes to parish electoral arrangements in FERs. However, the Boundary Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the borough council and the parish council concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish electoral arrangements are required. The Boundary Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an FER.

95 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Boundary Committee, lies with borough councils.³ If a borough council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements Order made by either the Secretary of State or the Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

96 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, our draft recommendations proposed consequential warding arrangements for the parish of Dalton Town with Newton to reflect the proposed borough wards of Dalton North and Dalton South.

97 During Stage Three we did not receive any submissions in relation to our proposals for Dalton North and Dalton South wards, nor did we receive any submissions concerning our proposed consequential warding arrangements for Dalton Town with Newton parish. We are therefore satisfied to confirm our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements in Dalton Town with Newton parish as final.

98 The parish of Dalton Town with Newton is currently served by 10 councillors representing three wards: Dowdales parish ward, Becksides parish ward and Anty Cross & Newton parish ward.

Final recommendation

Dalton Town with Newton Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Dowdales parish ward (returning three councillors), Becksides parish ward (returning three councillors) and Anty Cross & Newton parish ward (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps 1 and 3.

³ Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with Section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

6 What happens next?

99 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Barrow-in-Furness borough and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.⁴

100 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 18 September 2007, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date.

101 Any further correspondence should be related to the proposals laid out in these final recommendations for Barrow-in-Furness. We are unable to take account any consideration of unitary restructuring.

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

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

⁴ Under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 2001/3962).

7 Mapping

Final recommendations for Barrow-in-Furness

103 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Barrow-in-Furness borough:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Barrow-in-Furness borough, including constituent parishes.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed wards in Walney and Dalton.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards in Barrow.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed wards in Walney South and Roosecote.
- **Sheet 5** contains **Insets 1, 2, 3** and **4**.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth

Electoral imbalance	Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the borough
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections
FER (or further electoral review)	A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last periodic electoral review conducted between 1996 and 2004
Multi-member ward	A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	<p>The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>‘An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation’s benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved; – access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided; – wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected; – established farming use is effectively maintained’
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors

Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single borough enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries
Parish electoral arrangements	The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England

Political management arrangements	The Local Government Act 2000 enabled local authorities to modernise their decision-making process. Councils could choose from three broad categories: a directly elected mayor and cabinet, a cabinet with a leader, or a directly elected mayor and council manager. Whichever of the categories it adopted became the new political management structure for the council
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being under-represented
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward varies in percentage terms from the borough average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the borough council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of practice on written consultation* (available at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm), requires all Government departments and agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We comply with this requirement.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.