

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
NORTH 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 North 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 North Devon under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in August 1998 and undertook an eleven-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed our draft recommendations for ten wards, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 86-87) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in North Devon.

We recommend that North Devon District Council should be served by 43 councillors representing 27 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 we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the 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 North Devon on 13 January 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 4 August 1998, after which we undertook an eleven-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 North Devon:

- **in 13 of the 30 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and six 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 16 wards, and by more than 20 per cent in six wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraphs 86-87) are that:

- **North Devon District Council should be served by 43 councillors, one less than at present;**
- **there should be 27 wards, three fewer than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, while six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **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 23 of the 27 wards, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average, with no ward varying by more than 20 per cent from the 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 but two wards, with no ward varying by more than 20 per cent.**

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

- **new warding arrangements for the parishes of Barnstaple, Fremington, Ilfracombe, Landkey and Tawstock.**

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	Bickington & Roundswell	2	Fremington ward (part – the proposed Bickington & Roundswell ward of Fremington parish)	Maps 2 and A3
2	Bishop's Nympton	1	Bishop's Nympton ward (part – the parishes of Bishop's Nympton, East Anstey, Knowstone and West Anstey); Chittlehampton ward (part – Mariansleigh parish); South Molton ward (part – the parishes of George Nympton and Queen's Nympton)	Map 2
3	Bratton Fleming	1	Bratton Fleming ward (part – the parishes of Bratton Fleming, Challacombe, Loxhore and Stoke Rivers); Landkey ward (part – Goodleigh parish); Marwood ward (part – Arlington parish)	Map 2
4	Braunton East	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (East parish ward of Braunton parish)	Map 2
5	Braunton West	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (West parish ward of Braunton parish)	Map 2
6	Central Town (Barnstaple)	2	Longbridge ward (part – Longbridge parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); St Mary's ward (part – St Mary's parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); Trinity ward (part – Trinity parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); Yeo ward (part – Yeo parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish)	Map 2 and Large Map
7	Chittlehampton	1	Chittlehampton ward (part – the parishes of Chittlehamholt, Chittlehampton, King's Nympton and Satterleigh & Warkleigh); Swimbridge ward (part – Filleigh parish); Bishop's Tawton ward (part – Atherington parish)	Map 2
8	Chulmleigh	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Burrington, Chulmleigh and East Worlington)	Map 2
9	Combe Martin	2	Combe Martin ward (the parishes of Berryarbor and Combe Martin); Bratton Fleming ward (part – the parishes of Martinhoe, Parracombe and Trentishoe)	Map 2
10	Forches & Whiddon Valley (Barnstaple)	2	Landkey ward (part – the proposed Whiddon parish ward of Landkey parish); Trinity ward (part – Trinity parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish)	Map 2 and Large map

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
11 Fremington	2	Fremington ward (part – the proposed Fremington & Yelland parish ward of Fremington parish)	Maps 2 and A3
12 Georgeham & Mortehoe	2	Georgeham ward (Georgeham parish); Mortehoe ward (part – the parishes of Mortehoe and West Down)	Map 2
13 Heanton Punchardon	1	Heanton Punchardon ward (part – the parishes of Ashford and Heanton Punchardon)	Map 2
14 Ilfracombe Central	2	Ilfracombe Central ward (Ilfracombe Central parish ward of Ilfracombe parish); Ilfracombe East ward (part – Ilfracombe East parish ward (part) of Ilfracombe parish)	Maps 2 and A2
15 Ilfracombe East	1	Ilfracombe East ward (part – Ilfracombe East parish ward (part) of Ilfracombe parish)	Maps 2 and A2
16 Ilfracombe West	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Ilfracombe West parish ward of Ilfracombe parish)	Maps 2 and A2
17 Instow	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Horwood, Lovacott & Newton Tracey, Instow and Westleigh)	Maps 2, A3 and Large map
18 Landkey, Swimbridge & Taw	2	Bishop's Tawton ward (part – Bishop's Tawton parish); Landkey ward (part – the proposed Landkey parish ward of Landkey parish); Swimbridge ward (part – Swimbridge parish); Tawstock ward (part – the proposed Tawstock Rural parish ward of Tawstock parish)	Maps 2, A3, A4, A5 and Large map
19 Longbridge (Barnstaple)	2	Fremington ward (part – the proposed Woodville parish ward of Fremington parish); Longbridge ward (part – Longbridge parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); Tawstock ward (part – the proposed Tawstock Urban parish ward of Tawstock parish)	Maps 2, A5 and Large map
20 Lynton & Lynmouth	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Brendon, Countisbury and Lynton & Lynmouth)	Map 2

continued overleaf

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

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference	
21	Marwood	1	Heanton Punchardon ward (part – West Pilton parish); Marwood ward (part – the parishes of East Down, Kentisbury, Marwood and Shirwell); Morteohoe ward (part – Bittadon parish)	Map 2	
22	Newport (Barnstaple)	2	Newport ward (Newport parish ward of Barnstaple parish); Trinity ward (part – Trinity parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish)	Map 2 and Large map	
23	North Molton	1	Bishop's Nympton ward (part – the parishes of Molland and Twitchen); North Molton ward (the parishes of Brayford and North Molton); Swimbridge ward (part – the parish of East & West Buckland)	Map 2	
24	Pilton (Barnstaple)	2	Pilton ward (Pilton parish ward of Barnstaple parish); Yeo ward (part – Yeo parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish)	Map 2 and Large map	
25	South Molton	2	South Molton ward (part – South Molton parish)	Map 2	
26	Witheridge	1	Chittlehampton ward (part – Romansleigh parish); Witheridge ward (part – Meshaw, Rackenford, Ros Witheridge)	Map 2	
			27 Yeo Valley (Barnstaple)	2	St Mary's ward (part – St ward (part) of Barnstaple p (part – Yeo parish ward (p Barnstaple parish)

Note: The district of North Devon is entirely parished.

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of North Devon. We have now reviewed all the districts in Devon (except 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 North Devon District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. Our letter was copied to Devon County Council, Devon & Cornwall Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Devon Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Member 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 North Devon*, and ended on 19 October 1998. This period included a two-week extension, requested by the District Council to enable it to reconsider its proposals in the light of the Government's White Paper, *Modern Local Government : In Touch With The People*. 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 The district of North Devon covers over 108,000 hectares. It has a population of 84,800, which is growing. It is an attractive, predominantly rural area and includes the North Devon coastline, stretching from the Taw/Torridge estuary in the west to Lynmouth in the east. The coastline comprises extensive sandy beaches, secluded coves and rocky cliffs, and part is designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty. Exmoor National Park covers the north-east of the district.

⁷ The main centre of population and employment is the town of Barnstaple, which accounts for around a quarter of the district's population and is also the administrative centre. It lies in the north-west of the district, and also acts as the natural centre for work, shopping and leisure pursuits. The other main population centres are Ilfracombe, Braunton and South Molton. Inland the district is predominantly rural with rolling farmland. The district is completely parished, comprising 63 parishes, including four town councils and ten parish meetings.

⁸ To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, the following table shows the percentage of the population living in each ward in 2001. The table shows that the population of the district is concentrated in a few wards, with the largest ward, Barnstaple, accounting for 28% of the population. The smallest ward, South Molton, accounts for 1% of the population.

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 Bishop's Nympton	1	1,531	1,531	-1	1,592	1,592	0
2 Bishop's Tawton	1	1,302	1,302	-16	1,304	1,304	-18
3 Bratton Fleming	1	1,452	1,452	-6	1,451	1,451	-9
4 Braunton East	2	3,045	1,523	-1	3,036	1,518	-5
5 Braunton West	2	3,171	1,586	3	3,162	1,581	-1
6 Chittlehampton	1	1,430	1,430	-7	1,459	1,459	-9
7 Chulmleigh	1	1,632	1,632	6	1,665	1,665	4
8 Combe Martin	2	2,649	1,325	-14	2,651	1,326	-17
9 Fremington	3	7,296	2,432	58	8,282	2,761	73
10 Georgeham	1	1,320	1,320	-14	1,365	1,365	-14
11 Heanton Punchardon	1	1,586	1,586	3	1,615	1,615	1
12 Ilfracombe Central	2	2,783	1,392	-10	2,843	1,422	-11
13 Ilfracombe East	2	2,291	1,146	-26	2,330	1,165	-27
14 Ilfracombe West	2	3,118	1,559	1	3,188	1,594	0
15 Instow	1	1,398	1,398	-9	1,391	1,391	-13
16 Landkey	1	2,125	2,125	38	2,510	2,510	57
17 Longbridge (Barnstaple)	1	1,275	1,275	-17	1,299	1,299	-19
18 Lynton & Lynmouth	1	1,499	1,499	-3	1,504	1,504	-6
19 Marwood	1	1,328	1,328	-14	1,402	1,402	-12
20 Morteohoe	1	1,793	1,793	16	1,821	1,821	14
21 Newport (Barnstaple)	2	3,099	1,550	-1	3,149	1,575	-1

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 %
22 North Molton	1	1,138	1,138	-26	1,166	1,166	-27
23 Pilton (Barnstaple)	2	3,177	1,589	3	3,222	1,611	1
24 St Mary's (Barnstaple)	2	2,330	1,165	-24	2,375	1,188	-26
25 South Molton	2	3,375	1,688	9	3,611	1,806	13
26 Swimbridge	1	1,551	1,551	1	1,584	1,584	-1
27 Tawstock	1	1,819	1,819	18	1,815	1,815	14
28 Trinity (Barnstaple)	2	3,316	1,658	8	3,366	1,683	5
29 Witheridge	1	1,567	1,567	2	1,566	1,566	-2
30 Yeo (Barnstaple)	2	2,431	1,216	-21	2,476	1,238	-22
Totals	44	67,827	—	—	70,200	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,542	—	—	1,595	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on North Devon 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 North Molton ward were relatively over-represented by 26 per cent, while electors in Fremington ward were significantly under-represented by 58 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

¹² During Stage One we received representations from North Devon District Council, North Devon Conservative Association, four parish councils and one Barnstaple town 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 North 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 five areas, affecting ten wards. We proposed that:

- (a) North Devon District Council should be served by 43 councillors representing 23 wards;
- (b) the boundaries of 25 of the existing wards should be modified, while five wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (c) there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Barnstaple, Fremington, Ilfracombe, Landkey and Tawstock.

Draft Recommendation

North Devon District Council should comprise 43 councillors, serving 23 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

¹³ Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 22 of the 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

14 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 16 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of North Devon District Council and the Commission.

North Devon District Council

15 The District Council stated that it had taken the opportunity to reconsider the proposals for Barnstaple and Ilfracombe in the light of the electoral proposals contained in the Government White Paper, *Modern Local Government: In Touch With The People*. It said that it had undertaken “an extensive consultation exercise with parish councils” and that it was “strongly in favour of single-member wards in rural areas as it leads to more effective representation of the people”. In the light of this, it revised its Stage One proposition for many areas, particularly the towns of Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. It proposed that Barnstaple be represented by six two-member wards, and that Ilfracombe be represented by two two-member wards and a single-member ward.

16 In addition to its revised proposals for Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, it proposed a reconfiguration of parishes in five rural wards – Bratton Fleming, Chittlehampton, Heanton Punchardon, Marwood and North Molton.

17 It supported nine of the 23 wards proposed in the draft recommendations, and re-submitted its Stage One proposals for the four wards of Bickington & Roundswell, Fremington, Instow and Landkey & Swimbridge.

North Devon Conservative Association

18 The North Devon Conservative Association considered the District Council’s Stage Three proposals to be “a good starting point”. It supported 21 of the 27 wards proposed by the District Council at Stage Three, (including its proposals for Barnstaple and Ilfracombe) and proposed alternative arrangements for the wards of

Bickington & Roundswell, Combe Martin, Fremington, Georgeham & Mortehoe, Lynton & Lynmouth and Marwood. It did not submit electorate figures for 1998.

Devon County Labour Party

19 Devon County Labour Party expressed concern that the pursuit of electoral equality in North Devon would “break up long standing community links” and asked that “greater priority be given to community identity”.

Parish Councils

20 Thirteen parish councils submitted representations during Stage Three.

21 Fremington Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for the area on community identity and geographical grounds, and proposed a modification to the District Council’s Stage Three proposals for the area. It proposed the retention of 44 district councillors (rather than 43), and alternative warding arrangements for the wards of Bickington & Roundswell, Fremington, Instow and Longbridge. It proposed that “the historic community” of Fremington and Bickington should “be preserved” and together form one ward, and that the Roundswell area should form a two-member ward with the Tawstock Rural area and part of Tawstock Urban.

22 Instow Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation for the area and supported a single-member ward. Westleigh Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation for Fremington & Instow ward as “change for change’s sake”. Tawstock Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation that the Tawstock Rural area be included in Fremington & Instow ward, and proposed instead that it should be included in the proposed Landkey & Swimbridge ward on community identity, geographical and historical grounds. Landkey Parish Council proposed two additional parish councillors for the parish, so that the urban Whiddon area would be represented by four, and the rural Landkey area by seven. It agreed that the urban area of the parish forms part of the

Barnstaple urban area, proposed the inclusion of Swimbridge Newland (part of Swimbridge parish) in Landkey parish, and opposed in principle the idea that the parish should be represented by two different district councillors.

23 Romansleigh Parish Council considered the draft recommendation that the parish form part of Witheridge ward to be “probably very sound”, but supported the Conservative Association’s Stage One proposal that the parish be included with Mariansleigh parish in Bishop’s Nympton ward, on community identity, geographical and historical grounds. George Nympton & Queen’s Nympton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation for the area on community identity and geographical grounds, and proposed that the parishes should remain in a ward with South Molton parish. Bishop’s Nympton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation that the parish be included in a ward with the parishes of George Nympton and Queen’s Nympton, but not Molland and Twitchen with which it has “a natural affinity”.

24 Combe Martin Parish Council opposed the District Council’s Stage Three proposals for the wards of Combe Martin and Lynton & Lynmouth. It proposed that Martinhoe parish should be included in Lynton & Lynmouth ward and that Kentisbury parish should be included in Combe Martin ward. Kentisbury & Trentishoe Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for the area and supported retention of the status quo (i.e. that Kentisbury remain in Marwood ward and Trentishoe remain in Bratton Fleming ward).

25 Berrynarbor Parish Council opposed the District Council’s Stage Three proposals for the wards of Combe Martin and Lynton & Lynmouth. It proposed that Martinhoe parish should be included in Lynton & Lynmouth ward and that Kentisbury parish should be included in Combe Martin ward. Braunton Parish Council supported the District Council’s Stage Three proposals. Bishop’s Tawton Parish Council supported the District Council’s Stage Three proposals for Bishop’s Tawton ward, which it considered better reflected community identity.

26 The District Council forwarded a number of submissions which it had received from parish councils as part of its own local consultation exercise. These included Barnstaple Town Council, Ilfracombe Area Committee, and the parish councils of Brayford, Instow, Landkey, West Pilton, Romansleigh and Westleigh.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

27 As indicated previously, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for North Devon 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”.

28 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.

29 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.

30 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

31 At Stage One North Devon District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of over 3 per cent from 67,827 to 70,200 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expected most of the growth to be on the fringe of Barnstaple town, particularly in Fremington and Landkey wards. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

32 At Stage Three both the North Devon Conservative Association and Fremington Parish Council queried the allocation of growth in the Roundswell area. However, we raised these concerns with the District Council, which reaffirmed its forecast, and we remain satisfied that the District Council's figures represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

33 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.

34 North Devon District Council is at present served by 44 councillors. At Stage One the representations received indicated a general consensus for a council size of 43. 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 43 members.

35 At Stage Three, the only alternative to our proposed council size of 43 came from Fremington Parish Council, which requested that the Commission reconsider its Stage One proposal and recommend a scheme based on a council size of 44. However, in view of the general support for a council of 43 members, we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 43 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

36 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and the North Devon Conservative Association. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

37 There was general agreement for retaining broadly the same overall number of members. All representations which made a specific proposal preferred a council size of 43 or 44, and we put forward a proposal for a council of 43 members, which represented the majority view among the representations received.

38 During Stage One, two different approaches to the warding arrangements in Barnstaple were advanced. The District Council concluded that wards should be drawn to reflect the true extent of Barnstaple town, which over the past two decades had spilled over into the surrounding parishes of Fremington, Landkey and Tawstock. The North Devon Conservative Association, on the other hand, proposed wards which were predicated upon a reduction in the size of Barnstaple town, by transferring the areas of Newport and Pilton out of the Barnstaple Town Council area and creating separate parishes for these two communities.

39 Finally, we noted that respondents put forward proposals at Stage One which secured some improvements in electoral equality, while also reflecting the statutory criteria. For example, the number of wards in which the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average would reduce from 13 to two under the District Council's proposals, and to eight under the Conservative Association's scheme.

40 In our draft recommendations we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward

electoral arrangements which would achieve yet further improvements in electoral equality, while also seeking to reflect the statutory criteria. Where appropriate, we sought to reflect the consensus among representations for warding arrangements in particular parts of the district. Inevitably, we could not reflect the preferences of all respondents in our draft recommendations.

41 In response to our draft recommendations report, a number of respondents expressed the view that we had paid too much attention to achieving electoral equality and too little to communities and their interests in certain areas. However, it is our task to balance the sometimes conflicting evidence we receive and match it against the statutory criteria.

42 At Stage Three the District Council requested an extension to the consultation period in order to take account of the White Paper, *Modern Local Government - In Touch With The People*. Having undertaken consultation locally, it proposed modified ward boundaries, particularly in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, where it proposed a pattern of predominantly two-member wards.

43 In view of the improvement to electoral equality, while having regard to the statutory criteria, which would result from the District Council's Stage Three proposals – and the degree of support they received locally – we have based our final recommendations on this scheme. We accept that its proposals for Barnstaple reflect the situation on the ground. The scheme would provide much improved electoral equality than under the current arrangements; it would maintain the present mix of single- and multi-member wards, as preferred by the majority of respondents; and it would provide good boundaries, while having regard to the statutory criteria. However, to improve electoral equality further, we propose departing from the Council's scheme in six wards which lie to the south and east of Barnstaple – Bickington & Roundswell, Bratton Fleming, Chittlehampton, Instow, Landkey & Swimbridge and Marwood, and in the Barnstaple ward of Longbridge. (Although we also propose modifying the District Council's proposed boundary between the wards of Newport and Forches & Whiddon Valley, no electors would be affected).

44 Having 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) Barnstaple town and surrounding area – Longbridge, Newport, Pilton, St Mary’s, Trinity, Yeo and Fremington wards;
- (b) the south-western wards of Bishop’s Tawton, Instow, Landkey, Swimbridge and Tawstock;
- (c) Ilfracombe Central, Ilfracombe East and Ilfracombe West wards;
- (d) the southern and eastern wards of Bishop’s Nympton, Chittlehampton, Chulmleigh, North Molton, South Molton and Witheridge;
- (e) the northern wards of Bratton Fleming, Braunton East, Braunton West, Combe Martin, Georgeham, Heanton Punchardon, Lynton & Lynmouth, Marwood and Morteohoe.

Barnstaple town and surrounding area

45 The central issue in the Barnstaple area is that the historic town (i.e. the parish of Barnstaple) has become less populated and hence *over-represented*, while at the same time considerable urban development has encroached into adjacent parishes which have consequently become *under-represented*.

46 Thus, in the town of Barnstaple, the number of electors per councillor is considerably below the district average in three of the six wards – Longbridge (17 per cent), St Mary’s (24 per cent) and Yeo (21 per cent) – and only slightly above the district average in the other three wards – Newport (1 per cent), Pilton (3 per cent) and Trinity (8 per cent). Overall, the town is entitled to 10 councillors rather than the present 11.

47 Meanwhile, in the adjacent parishes into which development has spread, the number of electors per councillor in Fremington ward (coterminous with Fremington parish to the west of the town) is already 58 per cent above the district average and is expected to increase to 73 per cent by 2003; Tawstock ward (coterminous with Tawstock parish, to the south of the town) has 18 per cent above the average number of electors per councillor (expected to be 14 per cent by 2003); and Landkey ward (coterminous with the parish of Landkey to the east of the town) has 38 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, expected to increase to 57 per cent by 2003.

48 At the initial stage of the review we found general agreement with the principle that district wards should reflect the *de facto* area of Barnstaple, including the spread of development into the adjacent parishes, rather than the historic area. On that basis, we put forward for consultation proposals which built to a substantial degree on the District Council’s Stage One submission.

49 We proposed four three-member wards incorporating Barnstaple and its urban fringe:

- Pilton ward, with new boundaries, would have just 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (becoming equal to the district average by 2003);
- Newport ward, again on new boundaries, would have 5 per cent fewer electors than the district average (becoming 7 per cent by 2003);
- Longbridge ward would include part of Fremington parish (Woodville parish ward) and Tawstock parish (Tawstock Urban parish ward) and would have 10 per cent above the average number of electors per councillor (becoming 7 per cent by 2003);
- Whiddon Valley ward, including part of Landkey parish (Whiddon parish ward) would have 5 per cent fewer than the district average number of electors per councillor (2 per cent by 2003).

50 The remainder of Fremington parish would be divided into two wards:

- The eastern part of the parish would form a new two-member Bickington and Roundswell ward (with the number of electors per councillor being 11 per cent below the district average, 4 per cent by 2003);
- the western part of Fremington parish, combined with the adjacent ward of Instow and the remainder of Tawstock Parish, would form a new three-member Fremington and Instow ward in which the number of electors per councillor would initially be 9 per cent more than the district average (13 per cent by 2003).

51 At Stage Three, following local consultations, the District Council proposed a new pattern of two-member wards in the area, although reiterating its Stage One proposal that Instow should be a separate one-member ward. There was

broad agreement on the Council's proposals from the Conservative Association although it preferred a single-member Roundswell ward (differing with the Council's forecast on electoral growth). Fremington Parish Council proposed that Fremington and Bickington should remain together in a three-member ward; that Roundswell should be combined with part of Tawstock parish to create a new Roundswell & Tawstock ward; that Woodville parish ward should form part of Longbridge ward; and that Instow should form a single-member ward on its own.

52 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received, and in view of the support which the District Council's Stage Three proposals for the six two-member wards of Central Town, Forches & Whiddon Valley, Longbridge, Newport, Pilton and Yeo Valley enjoy from the North Devon Conservative Association and Barnstaple Town Council, and the good level of electoral equality which would result, we propose adopting them as part of our final recommendations, subject to two modifications.

53 We propose confirming our draft recommendation that the boundary between the wards of Newport and Whiddon Valley (which we now propose to call Forches & Whiddon Valley) should follow Eastern Avenue, which would form a clearer boundary. The number of electors per councillor in Central Town, Forches & Whiddon Valley, Newport, Pilton and Yeo Valley wards would be 4 per cent above, 7 per cent below, 2 per cent below, 1 per cent above and 3 per cent above the district average respectively (2 per cent, 2 per cent, 4 per cent, 1 per cent and 1 per cent respectively by 2003).

54 We also propose confirming our draft recommendation for Bickington & Roundswell ward, as we continue to believe that this would reflect developing community links in the area while achieving a good level of electoral equality. We therefore propose that an additional 220 electors be transferred from the District Council's proposed Bickington & Roundswell ward to Longbridge ward. The number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the district average in Longbridge ward (3 per cent in 2003) and 13 per cent below the average in Bickington & Roundswell ward (4 per cent above in 2003).

55 Finally, we propose endorsing the District Council's Stage Three proposal for the Fremington ward, the Council having confirmed its electorate forecasts for the Fremington area, as part of our

final recommendations, as it would achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality and better reflect local communities than our draft recommendation for a three member Fremington & Instow ward. Under our final recommendations the number of electors represented by each of the two councillors for Fremington ward would be 2 per cent above the average (9 per cent in 2003). The ward of Instow is covered further below.

56 The proposed boundaries in the urban area of Barnstaple are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report, and our proposals for Fremington ward are detailed on Map A3 in Appendix A.

The south-western wards of Bishop's Tawton, Instow, Landkey, Swimbridge and Tawstock

57 The five south-western wards of the district, generally to the south of Barnstaple, are each represented by a single councillor: the number of electors per councillor in Bishop's Tawton ward is 16 per cent below the district average; in Landkey 38 per cent above; in Swimbridge 1 per cent above; Tawstock 18 per cent above; and in Instow 9 per cent below.

58 In our draft recommendations, we proposed reconfiguring the parishes in these wards to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. The proposal broadly followed that put forward by the District Council, although with three modifications. We proposed:

- a three-member Fremington & Instow ward (as indicated above), comprising part of Tawstock Parish, Instow ward and the western part of Fremington parish; this would have 9 per cent more than the district average number of electors per councillor (13 per cent by 2003);
- a two-member Landkey & Swimbridge ward comprising the parishes of Bishop's Tawton, Swimbridge and the rural part of Landkey; this would have 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (3 per cent by 2003);
- that the parishes of Atherington and Loxhore should form part of other adjacent district ward, as described below.

59 In response to our draft recommendations, the District Council re-iterated its Stage One

proposals. Bishop’s Tawton Parish Council supported the District Council’s Stage Three proposals that Atherington parish and Bishop’s Tawton parish should both be in the new Landkey & Swimbridge ward, which it considered would better reflect local community identity. Instow Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation for the area, and supported a single-member ward instead. Landkey Parish Council agreed that the urban area of the parish (the proposed Whiddon parish ward) forms part of the Barnstaple urban area, and proposed the inclusion of Swimbridge Newland (part of Swimbridge parish) in Landkey parish. However, it opposed in principle the idea that the parish would be represented by two different district councillors. Tawstock Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation that Tawstock Rural parish ward should be included in Fremington & Instow ward and proposed instead that it should be included in the proposed Landkey & Swimbridge ward on community identity, geographical and historical grounds. Westleigh Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation for its area (the proposed Fremington & Instow ward) as “change for change’s sake”, but did not put forward a specific alternative.

60 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and propose modifying our draft recommendations accordingly. In order to secure a better level of electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria, we propose departing both from our draft recommendations and the District Council’s Stage Three proposals and to propose an alternative configuration of

parishes in the wards of Instow and Landkey & Swimbridge, as set out in Figure 3.

61 In putting forward these proposals we acknowledge that some electoral imbalance would remain in the area. However, we consider that this proposal would better reflect local community identities than our draft recommendations as expressed by respondents during Stage Three. Our draft recommendations for Fremington & Instow ward would have involved the creation of the only three-member ward in the rural area, and would combine the more urban Fremington area with the rural parishes of Horwood, Lovacott & Newton Tracey, Instow, Tawstock and Westleigh. While we, and other respondents have sought alternatives which would provide for a higher degree of electoral equality, while at the same time having regard to community links, the geography of the area has limited the room for manoeuvre in this area, which is bounded to the south and west by the district boundary and to the north by Barnstaple town.

62 Our final recommendations would also reflect the community links between the parishes of Tawstock and Landkey, as outlined by Tawstock Parish Council. They would also achieve an overall improvement in electoral equality in the area and substantively reflect the evidence of local communities we have received, not only from North Devon District Council and the North Devon Conservative Association, but also Instow, Tawstock and Westleigh parish councils. The deterioration in electoral variances compared with our draft recommendations appears to be unavoidable in the circumstances.

Figure 3
The south-western wards of North Devon

Proposed ward	Number of councillors	Constituent wards and parishes	Electoral variance (%)	
			1998	2003
Instow	1	Unchanged (the parishes of Horwood, Lovacott & Newton Tracey, Instow and Westleigh.	-11	-15
Landkey, Swimbridge and Taw	2	Bishop’s Tawton ward (part – Bishop’s Tawton parish); Landkey ward (part – proposed Landkey parish ward of Landkey parish); Swimbridge ward (part – Swimbridge parish); Tawstock ward (part – proposed Tawstock Rural parish ward of Tawstock parish)	11	14

Ilfracombe Central, Ilfracombe East and Ilfracombe West wards

63 The town of Ilfracombe, located on the north coast of the district, is covered by the three two-member wards of Ilfracombe Central, Ilfracombe East and Ilfracombe West. The town is relatively over-represented at present, the number of electors per councillor being 10 per cent below the district average in Ilfracombe Central ward, and 26 per cent below in Ilfracombe East (11 per cent and 27 per cent respectively in 2003). In Ilfracombe West, the number of electors per councillor is 1 per cent above the district average (equal to the average in 2003). The town is in fact entitled to five councillors rather than the present six.

64 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Ilfracombe East and Ilfracombe Central wards should be combined to form a three-member ward, except for an area to the east of Langleigh Road, which it proposed should be transferred to Ilfracombe West ward, which should continue to be represented by two councillors. Under its proposal the number of electors per councillor for Ilfracombe East ward would be 5 per cent above the average (4 per cent in 2003), and 2 per cent above in Ilfracombe West (1 per cent in 2003).

65 The Conservative Association proposed retaining three wards for the town but reducing representation in Ilfracombe East from two councillors to one. Under its proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the average in Ilfracombe Central ward (2 per cent in 2003), 14 per cent above in Ilfracombe East ward (13 per cent in 2003) and 1 per cent below in Ilfracombe West ward (3 per cent in 2003).

66 No other representations were received in relation to this area. We recognised the improved balance of representation that the various proposals for the area would achieve. However, in view of the superior level of electoral equality which would result under the District Council's scheme, we proposed adopting it as part of our draft recommendations.

67 At Stage Three the District Council consulted locally, and produced revised proposals to retain two two-member wards in the town. It proposed no change for Ilfracombe West ward, which would continue to be represented by two councillors, but proposed that electors in the area around Montpellier Road, Castle Hill Avenue and

Highfield Terrace in Ilfracombe East ward (which would become a single-member ward) should be transferred to Ilfracombe Central ward (which should continue to be represented by two members). The number of electors per councillor in these wards would be 7 per cent above the district average in Ilfracombe Central (6 per cent in 2003), 7 per cent above the average in Ilfracombe East ward (6 per cent in 2003) and 1 per cent below the average in Ilfracombe West (2 per cent in 2003).

68 The North Devon Conservative Association and Ilfracombe Area Committee supported the District Council's Stage Three proposals for the three Ilfracombe wards.

69 Having carefully considered the representations received, we note the agreement between the District Council, North Devon Conservative Association and Ilfracombe Area Committee, and the good level of electoral equality which would be achieved under the Council's Stage Three proposals, and therefore propose endorsing them as part of our final recommendations.

The southern and eastern wards of Bishop's Nympton, Chittlehampton, Chulmleigh, North Molton, South Molton and Witheridge

70 These geographically large wards cover the primarily rural south and east of the district. All are single-member wards except South Molton which is represented by two councillors. The number of electors per councillor in these wards is 1 per cent below the district average in Bishop's Nympton, 7 per cent below in Chittlehampton, 6 per cent above in Chulmleigh, 26 per cent below in North Molton, 9 per cent above in South Molton and 2 per cent above in Witheridge. Electoral equality is expected to change little over the next five years.

71 At Stage One both the District Council and the Conservative Association proposed alternative configurations of parishes to form wards which would both improve electoral equality and reflect the statutory criteria. On balance we decided to adopt the District Council's proposals (which achieved superior electoral equality) as our draft recommendations, with the one modification that Atherington parish should be included in Chittlehampton ward and that the Cobbaton area should be included in the new Landkey & Swimbridge ward. In our draft recommendations, the area as a whole would continue to be represented by seven councillors, each ward having

a single member, apart from the two-member South Molton ward. Overall, very satisfactory electoral equality would be achieved:

- Bishop's Nympton ward would continue to comprise the parishes of Bishop's Nympton and Knowstone, along with Mariansleigh (from Chittlehampton ward), and George Nympton and Queen's Nympton (from South Molton ward); the number of electors per councillor would be only 2 per cent above the district average (3 per cent by 2003);
- Chittlehampton ward would continue to comprise the parishes of Chittlehampton, Chittlehamholt, King's Nympton and Satterleigh & Warkleigh, along with Atherington (from Bishop's Tawton ward); the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average (3 per cent by 2003);
- Chumleigh ward would remain unchanged, comprising the parishes of Burrington, Chumleigh and East Worlington;
- North Molton ward would continue to comprise the parish of North Molton along with Twitchen and Molland (from Bishop's Nympton ward) and East & West Buckland and Filleigh (from Swimbridge ward); the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the district average (4 per cent by 2003);
- South Molton ward would solely comprise the parish of that name. The number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the district average (5 per cent by 2003);
- Witheridge ward would continue to comprise the parishes of Meshaw, Rackenford, Rose Ash and Witheridge, along with Romansleigh (from Chittlehampton ward); the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average (1 per cent by 2003).

⁷² At Stage Three, the District Council, along with the Conservative Association, supported our draft recommendations for Bishop's Nympton, Chumleigh and Witheridge wards. However, moving away from its Stage One submission it proposed that:

- Chittlehampton ward should comprise the parishes of Chittlehamholt, Chittlehampton, Filleigh, King's Nympton, Satterleigh & Warkleigh, and the Cobbaton area of

Swimbridge. The number of electors per councillor would be equal to the district average (2 per cent below by 2003);

- North Molton ward should comprise the parishes of Brayford, Molland, North Molton, Twitchen and East & West Buckland, providing a number of electors per councillor of just 4 per cent above the district average (2 per cent by 2003).

⁷³ We received three further representations regarding these wards. Bishop's Nympton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation to combine Bishop's Nympton parish in a ward with the parishes of George Nympton and Queen's Nympton, and not with Molland and Twitchen parishes with which it has "a natural affinity". George Nympton & Queen's Nympton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation that it should form part of Bishop's Nympton ward, on community identity and geographical grounds, and proposed that the parishes should remain linked to South Molton. Romansleigh Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation that Romansleigh parish be included in Witheridge ward, and supported the Conservative Association's Stage One proposal that the parish be included in Bishop's Nympton ward with Mariansleigh parish on community identity, geographical and historical grounds.

⁷⁴ We have given careful consideration to the views expressed to us during the consultation stage, and note the agreement at Stage Three between the District Council and North Devon Conservative Association for the wards of Bishop's Nympton, Chumleigh, North Molton, South Molton and Witheridge. In view of the good level of electoral equality which would be achieved, we propose endorsing them as part of our final recommendations. However, as discussed above, in order to secure good electoral equality in the neighbouring Landkey, Swimbridge & Taw ward, we are unable to endorse the District Council's Stage Three proposal for Chittlehampton ward. As part of our final recommendations we therefore propose that Atherington parish should form part of Chittlehampton ward rather than Landkey, Swimbridge & Taw ward, and that the Cobbaton area should form part of the proposed Landkey, Swimbridge & Taw ward rather than be transferred to Chittlehampton ward in order to reduce electoral variances in neighbouring wards.

75 In summary, we confirm our draft recommendations for Bishop's Nympton, Chulmleigh, South Molton and Witheridge wards; we endorse the District Council's Stage Three submission for the North Molton ward; and we move away from both the District Council's and our draft recommendations in Chittlehampton ward, proposing that it comprise the parishes of Atherington, Chittlehamholt, Chittlehampton, Filleigh, King's Nympton, and Satterleigh & Warleigh; The number of electors per councillor would be 13 per cent above the district average (10 per cent by 2003).

Bratton Fleming, Braunton East, Braunton West, Combe Martin, Georgeham, Heanton Punchardon, Lynton & Lynmouth, Marwood and Morteohoe wards

76 These wards cover the north of the district. The number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent below the average in Bratton Fleming (9 per cent in 2003), 1 per cent below in Braunton East (5 per cent in 2003), 3 per cent above in Braunton West (1 per cent below in 2003), 14 per cent below in Combe Martin (17 per cent in 2003), 14 per cent below in Georgeham (both now and in 2003), 3 per cent above in Heanton Punchardon (1 per cent in 2003), 3 per cent below in Lynton & Lynmouth (6 per cent in 2003), 10 per cent below in Marwood (12 per cent in 2003) and 16 per cent above in Morteohoe ward (14 per cent in 2003).

77 For our draft recommendations we decided on balance to adopt the District Council's proposals, subject to a minor boundary modification between the wards of Bratton Fleming and Marwood in order to improve electoral equality. We proposed that:

- Combe Martin ward should comprise the parishes of Berrynarbor, Combe Martin, Martinhoe, Parracombe and Trentishoe, providing a number of electors per councillor of 4 per cent below the district average (7 per cent in 2003);
- Bratton Fleming ward should comprise the parishes of Bratton Fleming, Brayford, Challacombe, Goodleigh, and Stoke Rivers, providing a number of electors per councillor of 1 per cent above the average (2 per cent below in 2003);
- Marwood ward should comprise the parishes of Arlington, Bittadon, East Down, Kentisbury, Loxhore, Marwood and Shirwell providing a

number of electors per councillor of 2 per cent below the district average (4 per cent in 2003);

- Georgeham & Morteohoe ward should comprise the parishes of Georgeham, Morteohoe and West Down, providing a number of electors per councillor of 2 per cent below the district average (4 per cent in 2003).

78 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations for the wards of Braunton East, Braunton West, Combe Martin, Georgeham, Lynton & Lynmouth and Morteohoe. It proposed an alternative configuration of parishes for the wards of Bratton Fleming, Heanton Punchardon and Marwood, which it considered would better reflect local identities. Following consultation with local parishes, the District Council proposed that Bratton Fleming ward should comprise the parishes of Bratton Fleming, Challacombe, Goodleigh, Loxhore and Stoke Rivers; that Heanton Punchardon ward should comprise the parishes of Ashford and Heanton Punchardon; and that Marwood ward should comprise the parishes of Arlington, Bittadon, East Down, Kentisbury, Marwood, Shirwell and West Pilton. Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent below the average in Bratton Fleming ward (14 per cent in 2003), 7 per cent below in Heanton Punchardon ward (8 per cent in 2003), and 3 per cent below the average in Marwood ward (5 per cent in 2003).

79 North Devon Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations for Braunton East and Braunton West, and supported the District Council's proposals for Bratton Fleming and Heanton Punchardon (although it proposed that ward be renamed 'Ashford & Heanton Punchardon'). Elsewhere the Association proposed that Combe Martin ward should comprise the parishes of Berrynarbor, Combe Martin, Kentisbury, Parracombe and Trentishoe, that Lynton & Lynmouth ward should be renamed Lyn Valley and comprise the parishes of Brendon, Countisbury, Lynton & Lynmouth and Martinhoe, and that Marwood ward should comprise the parishes of Arlington, Bittadon, East Down, Marwood, Shirwell and West Pilton. The Association also proposed that Georgeham parish should continue to form a single-member Georgeham ward and that the parishes of Morteohoe and West Down should form a single-member Morteohoe & Woolacombe ward. Under the Association's proposals the number of electors per councillor in 2003 would be 3 per cent below

the average in Combe Martin ward, 16 per cent below the average in Georgeham ward, 9 per cent above the average in Mortehoe ward, 3 per cent below in Lyn Valley ward, and 18 per cent below the average in Marwood ward.

80 We received four further submissions regarding these wards. Berrynarbor and Combe Martin Parish Councils opposed the District Council's Stage Three proposal for the wards of Combe Martin and Lynton & Lynmouth. They proposed that Martinhoe parish should form part of Lynton & Lynmouth ward and that Kentisbury parish should be included in Combe Martin ward. However, this would produce an unacceptably high level of electoral inequality in Marwood ward.

81 Kentisbury & Trentishoe Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation for the area. It supported retention of the status quo, that Kentisbury remain in Marwood ward and that Trentishoe remain in Bratton Fleming ward and not be transferred to Combe Martin ward. Braunton Parish Council supported the District Council's Stage Three proposals.

82 We were unable to support the Conservative Association's proposal that Kentisbury parish should form part of Combe Martin ward due to the level of electoral inequality which this would produce in Marwood ward, especially in the light of our proposal that Arlington parish should form part of Bratton Fleming ward in order to improve the level of electoral equality there. While we note the support from Berrynarbor and Combe Martin parish councils for the proposal that Martinhoe parish should form part of a modified Lynton & Lynmouth ward (to be renamed Lyn Valley ward), we did not receive any such request from Martinhoe parish itself. If Martinhoe parish were to form part of Lyn Valley ward, the variance in Lyn Valley would be 3 per cent in 2003, and in Combe Martin 10 per cent. While we acknowledge that the level of electoral equality is little different to our proposal, in the absence of support from Martinhoe Parish Council, we do not propose endorsing this proposal as part of our final recommendations. In view of the level of electoral inequality which would result, we do not propose single-member wards for Georgeham and Mortehoe, and propose confirming our draft recommendation (and the District Council's Stage Three proposal) that the parishes of Georgeham, Mortehoe and West Down should form a two-member ward.

83 We have carefully considered local views and note that the District Council's proposals in this

area reflect our draft recommendations for the wards of Braunton East, Braunton West, Combe Martin, Georgeham & Mortehoe and Lynton & Lynmouth. In view of the good electoral equality which would be achieved in these wards under our draft recommendations and the support they have received from the District Council, we propose confirming them as final. We also propose supporting the District Council's Stage Three proposal for Heanton Punchardon ward, but we propose an alternative configuration of parishes for the wards of Bratton Fleming and Marwood, which would depart from both our draft recommendations and the District Council's Stage Three proposals.

84 In order to secure an improved level of electoral equality, we propose that Arlington parish should form part of Bratton Fleming ward rather than Marwood ward. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the average in Bratton Fleming ward (9 per cent in 2003) and 8 per cent below in Marwood ward (10 per cent in 2003).

Electoral Cycle

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

Conclusions

86 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to move away from our draft recommendations in a number of wards. For our final recommendations, we propose confirming as final ten of the wards we proposed as part of our draft recommendations, to support twelve of the District Council's Stage Three proposals, and to propose a new configuration of parishes in five wards. We are proposing the following amendments to our draft recommendations:

- (a) Barnstaple town should be represented by six two-member wards;

- (b) Ilfracombe town should be represented by two two-member wards and a single-member ward;
- (c) Fremington ward should be represented by two councillors and not be combined with Instow;
- (d) the configuration of parishes in the wards of Bratton Fleming, Chittlehampton, Heanton Punchardon, Instow, Landkey & Swimbridge, Marwood and North Molton should be modified.

87 We conclude that, in North Devon:

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 44 to 43;
- (b) there should be 27 wards, three fewer than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) whole-council elections should continue to be held every four years.

88 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

89 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 13 to four, with no ward varying by more than 20 per cent above the district average. This

level of electoral equality would improve by 2003, when only two wards would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

North Devon District Council should comprise 43 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

90 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 the parishes of Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, Fremington, Landkey and Tawstock to reflect the proposed district wards.

*Figure 4:
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	44	43	44	43
Number of wards	30	27	30	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,542	1,579	1,595	1,633
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	13	4	16	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	6	0

91 Barnstaple Town Council currently has 24 councillors serving six wards which are coterminous with the district wards.

92 In response to our consultation report, the District Council proposed that Barnstaple be represented by six two-member wards at district level, and that the proposed parish wards be modified likewise. This proposal was supported by both Barnstaple Town Council and the North Devon Conservative Association.

93 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the good electoral equality which would result and the level of support, we propose adopting the District Council's Stage Three proposals for Barnstaple as part of our final recommendations, and therefore propose modifying parish ward boundaries accordingly.

Final Recommendation

Barnstaple Town Council should comprise 24 councillors, as at present, representing six wards: Central Town, Forches, Longbridge, Newport, Pilton and Yeo Valley, represented by four councillors each. The parish ward boundaries should be modified to reflect the district wards in the area, as illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

94 Ilfracombe Town Council currently has 18 councillors serving three wards which are coterminous with the district wards.

95 At Stage Three the District Council proposed an alternative warding arrangement for Ilfracombe, and was supported by the North Devon Conservative Association and Ilfracombe Area Committee. In view of our proposal to adopt the District Council's revised district warding arrangements as part of our final recommendations, we propose modifying the parish warding arrangements accordingly. The proposed boundary is illustrated in Map A2 in Appendix A.

Final Recommendation

Ilfracombe Town Council should have a total of 18 councillors, serving three parish wards as at present: Ilfracombe Central (represented by seven councillors), Ilfracombe East (four) and Ilfracombe West (seven). The proposed boundaries are illustrated in Map A2 in Appendix A.

96 Fremington Parish Council currently has 14 councillors serving one ward which is coterminous with the district ward.

97 At Stage Three we received alternative district warding proposals from the District Council, North Devon Conservative Association and Fremington Parish Council. However, we do not propose modifying our draft recommendations for parish warding in this area and therefore confirm them as final. The proposed boundary is illustrated in Map A3 in Appendix A.

Final Recommendation

Fremington Parish Council should have a total of 14 councillors, as at present, serving three parish wards: Fremington & Yelland (represented by six councillors), Bickington & Roundswell (five) and Woodville (three). The proposed boundaries are illustrated in Map A3 in Appendix A.

98 Landkey Parish Council currently has nine councillors serving one ward which is coterminous with the district ward.

99 At Stage Three Landkey Parish Council requested that Landkey parish ward be represented by seven councillors, and Whiddon parish ward by four. The Commission is content to agree to this request and includes it as part of its final recommendations. The proposed boundary is illustrated in Map A4 in Appendix A.

Final Recommendation

Landkey Parish Council should have a total of eleven councillors (two more than at present), serving two parish wards: Landkey (represented by seven councillors) and Whiddon (four). The proposed boundaries are illustrated on Map A4 in Appendix A.

100 Tawstock Parish Council currently has eleven councillors serving one ward which is coterminous with the district ward.

101 At Stage Three no comments were received in relation to our draft recommendation and we are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendation as final. The proposed boundary is illustrated in Map A5 in Appendix A.

Final Recommendation

Tawstock Parish Council should have a total of 11 councillors, as at present, serving two parish wards: Tawstock Urban (represented by seven councillors) and Tawstock Rural (four). The proposed boundaries are illustrated in Map A5 in Appendix A.

¹⁰² In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation

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

Figure 5:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for North Devon

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 Bickington & Roundswell	2	2,761	1,381	-13	3,411	1,706	4
2 Bishop's Nympton	1	1,613	1,613	2	1,679	1,679	3
3 Bratton Fleming	1	1,486	1,486	-6	1,483	1,483	-9
4 Braunton East	2	3,045	1,523	-4	3,036	1,518	-7
5 Braunton West	2	3,171	1,586	0	3,162	1,581	-3
6 Central Town (Barnstaple)	2	3,297	1,649	4	3,340	1,670	2
7 Chittlehampton	1	1,776	1,776	13	1,796	1,796	10
8 Chulmleigh	1	1,632	1,632	3	1,665	1,665	2
9 Combe Martin	2	3,023	1,512	-4	3,026	1,513	-7
10 Forches & Whiddon Valley (Barnstaple)	2	2,945	1,473	-7	3,188	1,594	-2
11 Fremington	2	3,226	1,613	2	3,562	1,781	9
12 Georgeham & Morteohoe	2	3,079	1,540	-2	3,150	1,575	-4
13 Heanton Punchardon	1	1,470	1,470	-7	1,499	1,499	-8
14 Ilfracombe Central	2	3,378	1,689	7	3,446	1,723	6
15 Ilfracombe East	1	1,696	1,696	7	1,729	1,729	6
16 Ilfracombe West	2	3,118	1,559	-1	3,186	1,593	-2
17 Instow	1	1,398	1,398	-11	1,391	1,391	-15
18 Landkey, Swimbridge & Taw	2	3,512	1,756	11	3,737	1,869	14

Figure 5 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations for North Devon

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 %
19 Longbridge (Barnstaple)	2	3,305	1,653	5	3,348	1,674	3
20 Lynton & Lynmouth	1	1,499	1,499	-5	1,504	1,504	-8
21 Marwood	1	1,499	1,499	-8	1,471	1,471	-10
22 Newport (Barnstaple)	2	3,099	1,550	-2	3,142	1,571	-4
23 North Molton	1	1,642	1,642	4	1,665	1,665	2
24 Pilton (Barnstaple)	2	3,177	1,589	1	3,220	1,610	-1
25 South Molton	2	3,205	1,603	2	3,441	1,721	5
26 Witheridge	1	1,644	1,644	4	1,648	1,648	1
27 Yeo Valley (Barnstaple)	2	3,239	1,620	3	3,282	1,641	1
Totals	43	67,885	—	—	70,207	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,579	—	—	1,633	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on North Devon 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

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

104 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.

105 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 North Devon: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the North Devon District area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Maps A2 to A5, and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary between Ilfracombe Central ward and Ilfracombe East ward.

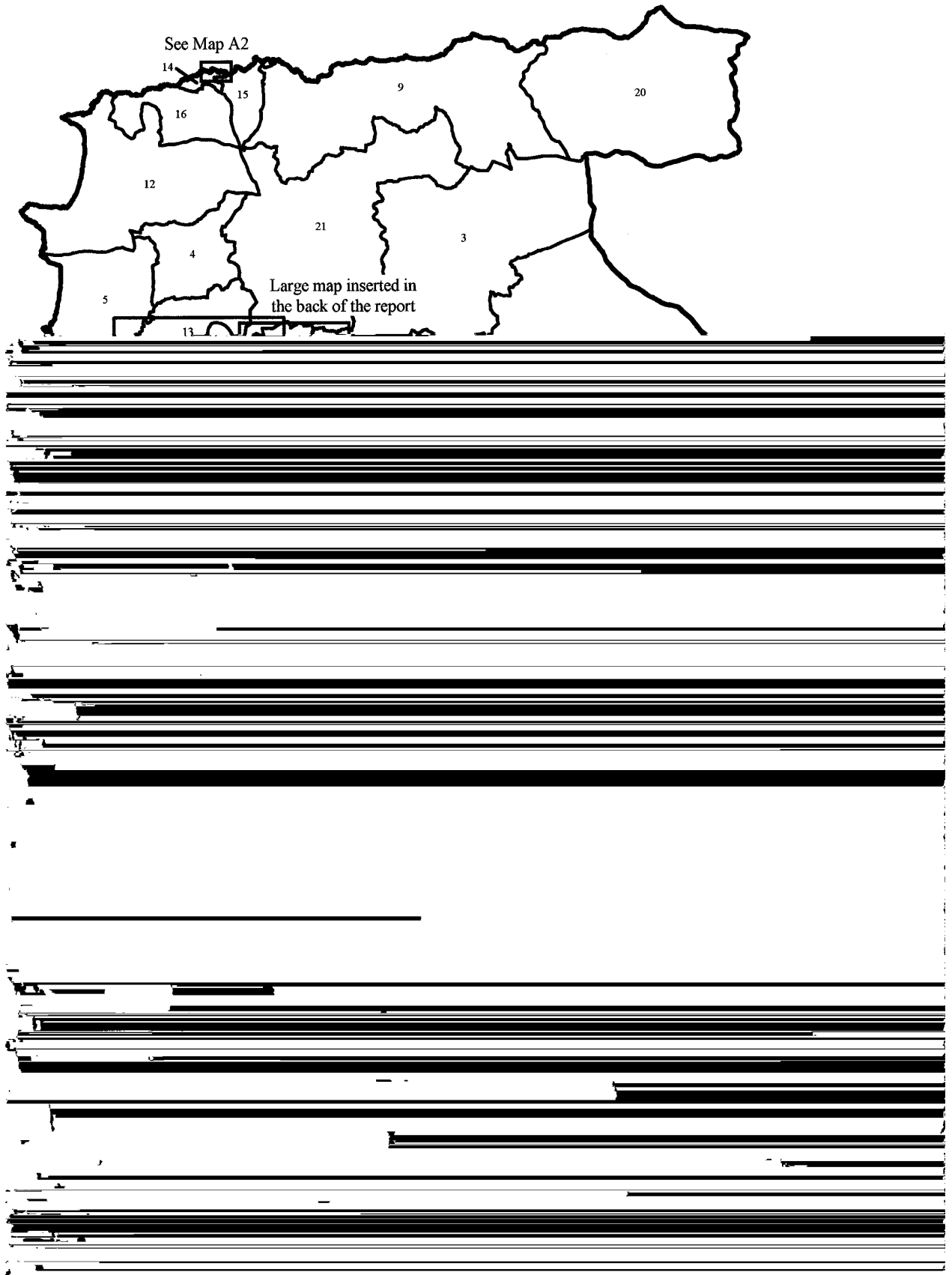
Map A3 illustrates the proposed district and parish wards in the Fremington area.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed district and parish warding arrangements for Landkey.

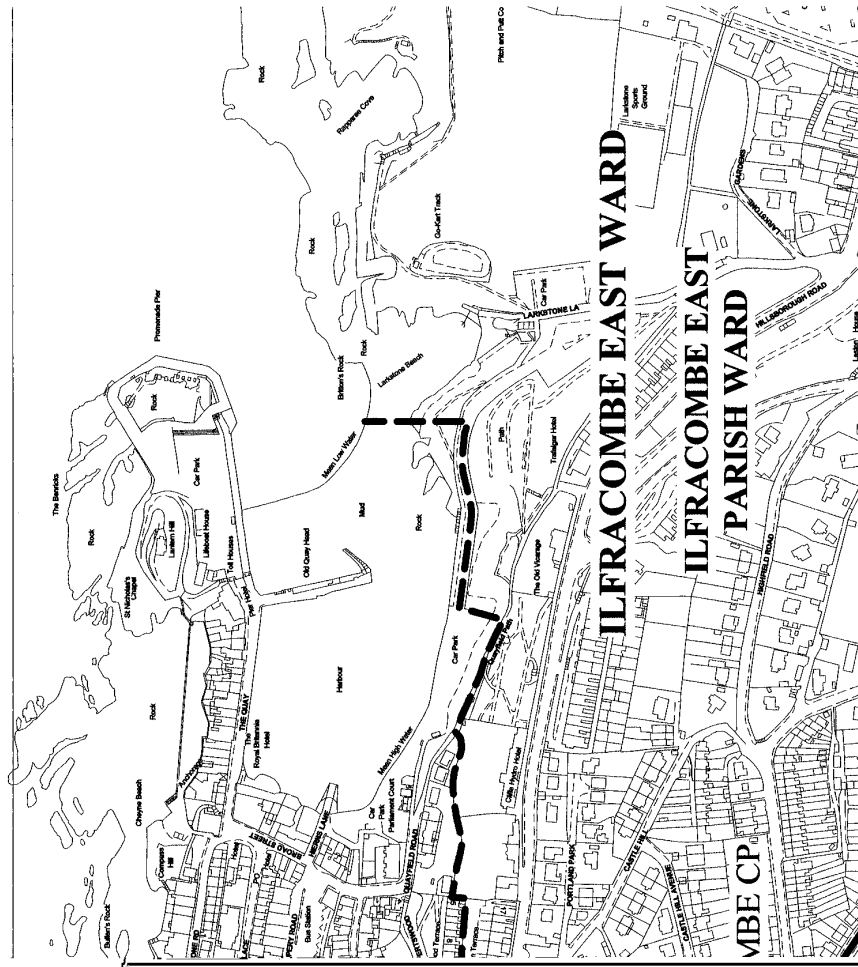
Map A5 illustrates the proposed district and parish warding arrangements for Tawstock.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the Commission's proposed warding arrangements for Barnstaple town.

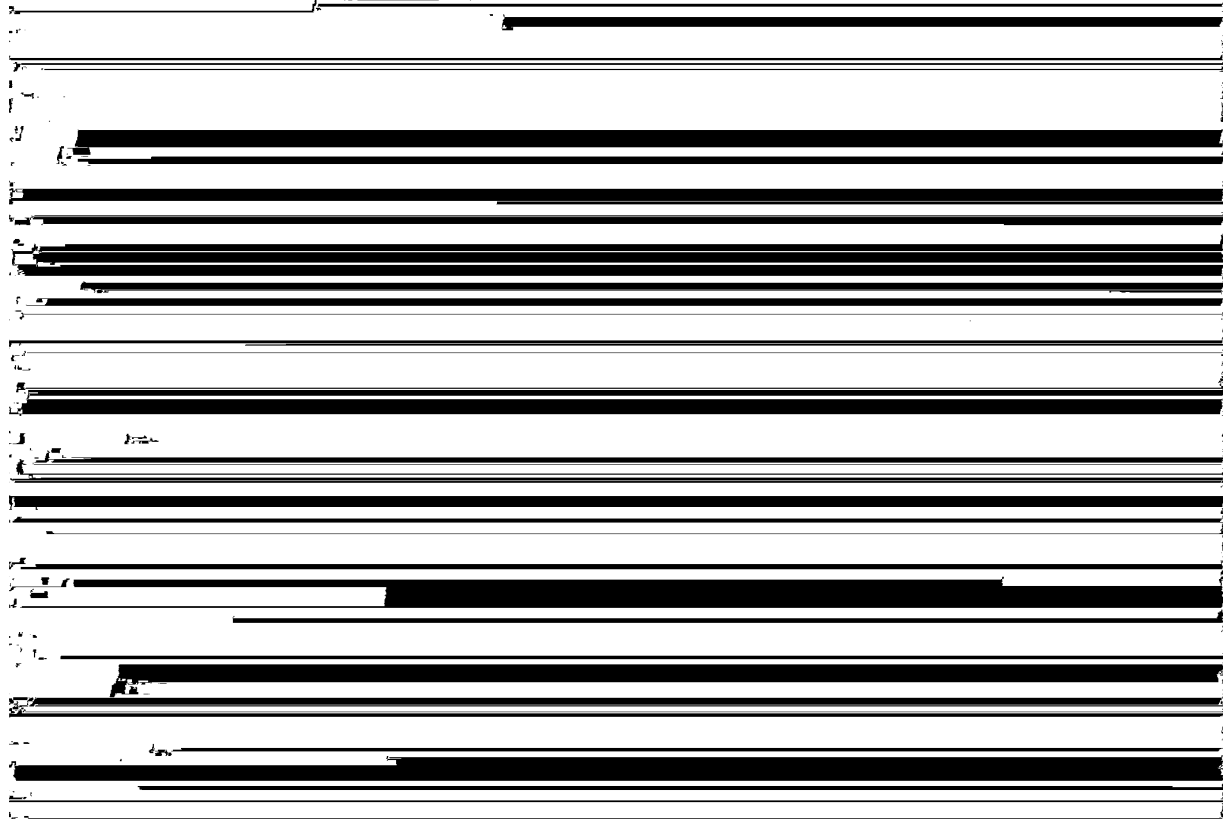
Map A1:
Final Recommendations for North Devon: Key Map



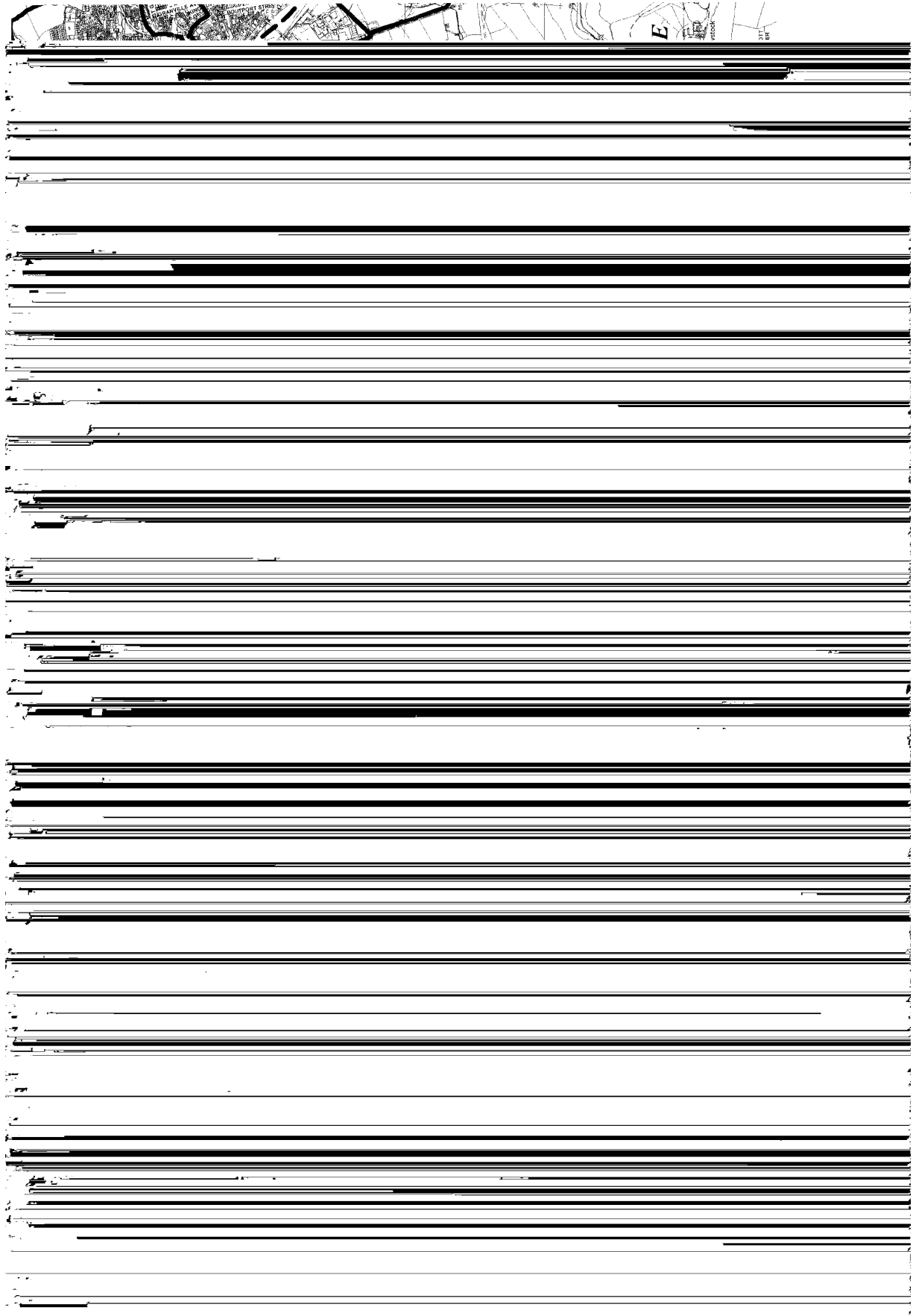
Map A2:
Proposed Boundary between Ilfracombe Central ward and Ilfracombe East ward



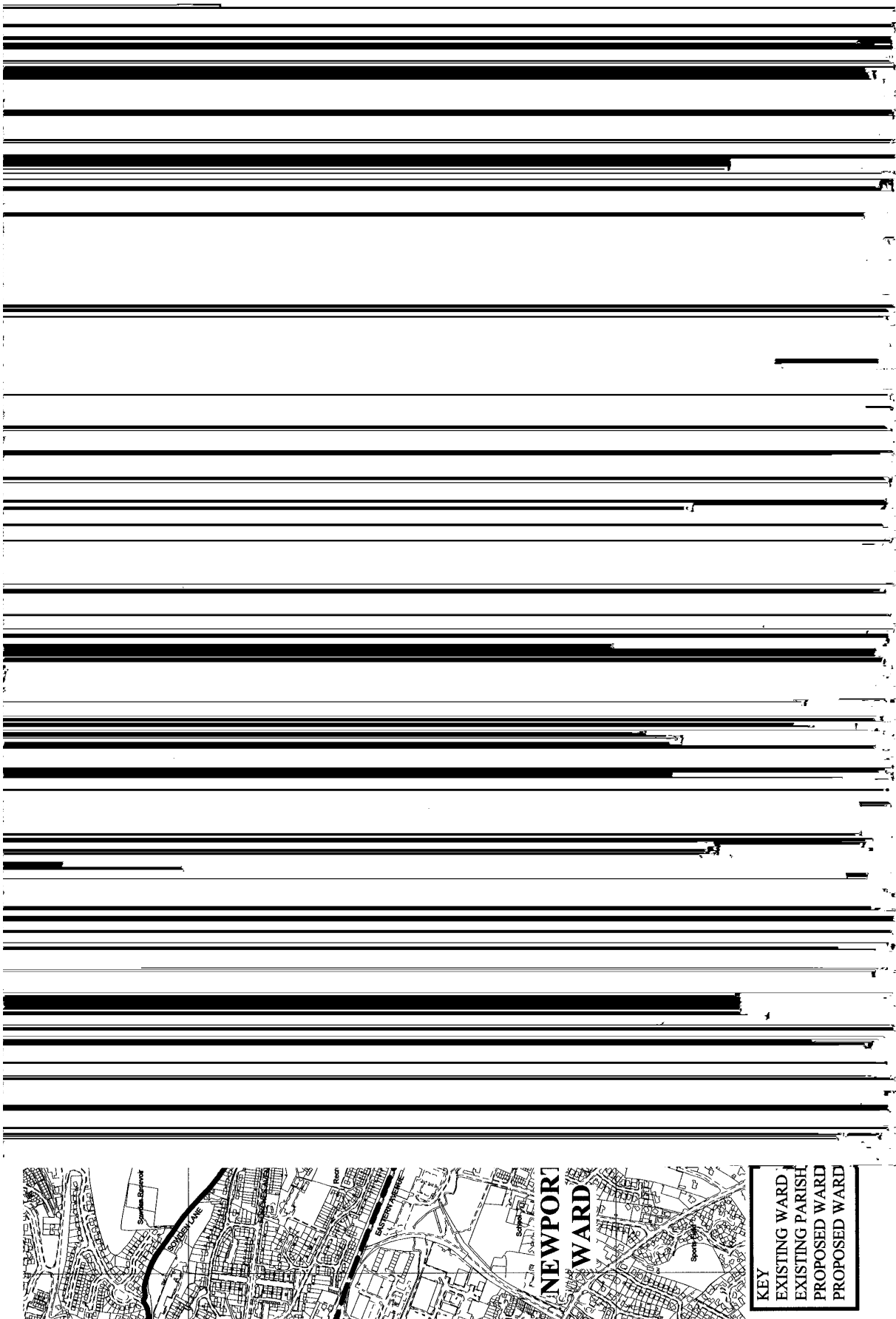
© Crown Copyright 1999



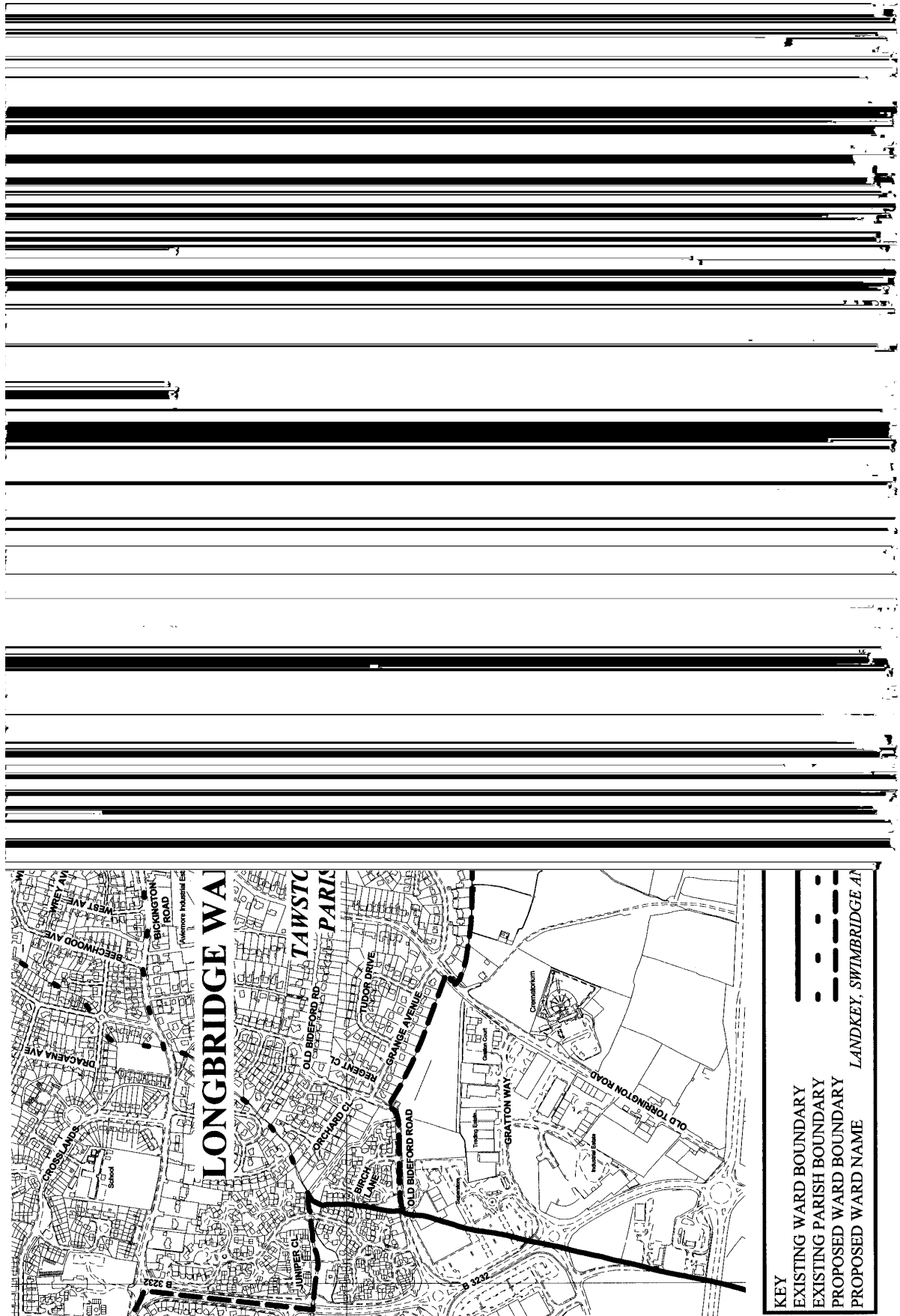
*Map A3:
Proposed District and Parish Wards in the Fremington area*



Map A4:
Proposed District and Parish Warding Arrangements for Landkey



Map A5:
 Proposed District and Parish Warding Arrangements for Tawstock



APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for North Devon

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 4, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of a number of wards. Our draft proposals are set out below.

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
Bickington & Roundswell	2	Fremington ward (part – the proposed Bickington & Roundswell parish ward of Fremington parish)
Bishop's Nympton	1	Bishop's Nympton ward (part – the parishes of Bishop's Nympton and Knowstone); Chittlehampton ward (part – Mariansleigh parish); South Molton ward (part – the parishes of George Nympton and Queen's Nympton)
Bratton Fleming	1	Bratton Fleming ward (part – the parishes of Bratton Fleming, Challacombe and Stoke Rivers); Landkey ward (part – Goodleigh parish); North Molton ward (part – Brayford parish)
Braunton East	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (East parish ward of Braunton parish)
Braunton West	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (West parish ward of Braunton parish)
Chittlehampton	1	Chittlehampton ward (part – the parishes of Chittlehamholt, Chittlehampton, King's Nympton and Satterleigh & Warkleigh); Bishop's Tawton ward (part – Atherington parish)
Chulmleigh	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Burrington, Chulmleigh and East Worrington)
Combe Martin	2	Combe Martin ward (the parishes of Combe Martin and Berrynarbor); Bratton Fleming ward (part – the parishes of Martinhoe, Parracombe and Trentishoe)
Fremington & Instow	3	Fremington ward (part – the proposed Fremington & Yelland parish ward of Fremington parish); Instow ward (the parishes of Horwood, Instow, Lovacott & Newton Tracey and Westleigh); Tawstock ward (part – the proposed Tawstock Rural parish ward of Tawstock parish)

continued overleaf

Figure B1 (continued overleaf):
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
Georgeham & Mortehoe	2	Georgeham ward (Georgeham parish); Mortehoe ward (part – the parishes of Mortehoe & West Down)
Heanton Punchardon	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Ashford, Heanton Punchardon and West Pilton)
Ilfracombe East	3	Ilfracombe East ward (Ilfracombe East parish ward of Ilfracombe parish); Ilfracombe Central ward (part – Ilfracombe Central parish ward (part) of Ilfracombe parish)
Ilfracombe West	2	Ilfracombe West ward (Ilfracombe West parish ward of Ilfracombe parish); Ilfracombe Central ward (part – part of Ilfracombe Central parish ward (part) of Ilfracombe parish)
Landkey & Swimbridge	2	Landkey ward (part – the proposed Landkey parish ward of Landkey parish); Swimbridge ward (part – Swimbridge parish); Bishop's Tawton ward (part – Bishop's Tawton parish)
Longbridge	3	Longbridge ward (part – Longbridge parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); Yeo ward (part – Yeo parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); St Mary's ward (part – St Mary's parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); Tawstock ward (part – the proposed Tawstock Urban parish ward of Tawstock parish); Fremington ward (part - proposed Woodville parish ward of Fremington parish)
Lynton & Lynmouth	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Brendon, Countisbury and Lynton & Lynmouth)
Marwood	1	Marwood ward (the parishes of Arlington, East Down, Kentisbury, Marwood and Shirwell); Mortehoe ward (part – Bittadon parish); Bratton Fleming ward (part – Loxhore parish)
Newport	3	Newport ward (Newport parish ward of Barnstaple parish); Longbridge ward (part – Longbridge parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); Trinity ward (part – Trinity parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish)
North Molton	1	North Molton ward (part – North Molton parish); Bishop's Nympton ward (part – the parishes of Twitchen and Molland); Swimbridge ward (part – the parishes of East & West Buckland and Filleigh)
Pilton	3	Pilton ward (Pilton parish ward of Barnstaple parish); Yeo ward (part – Yeo parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish)
South Molton	2	South Molton ward (part – South Molton parish)

Figure B1 (continued overleaf):

The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
Whiddon Valley	3	Landkey ward (part – the proposed Landkey parish ward of Landkey parish); St Mary's ward (part – St Mary's parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); Trinity ward (part – Trinity parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish); Yeo ward (part – Yeo parish ward (part) of Barnstaple parish)
Witheridge	1	Witheridge ward (the parishes of Meshaw, Rackenford, Rose Ash and Witheridge); Chittlehampton ward (part – Romansleigh parish)

Figure B2:

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

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 %
Bickington & Roundswell	2	2,797	1,399	-11	3,411	1,706	4
Bishop's Nympton	1	1,613	1,613	2	1,679	1,679	3
Bratton Fleming	1	1,588	1,588	1	1,593	1,593	-2
Braunton East	2	3,045	1,523	-4	3,036	1,518	-7
Braunton West	2	3,171	1,586	0	3,162	1,581	-3
Chittlehampton	1	1,563	1,563	-1	1,584	1,584	-3
Chulmleigh	1	1,632	1,632	3	1,665	1,665	2
Combe Martin	2	3,023	1,512	-4	3,026	1,513	-7
Fremington & Instow	3	5,171	1,724	9	5,536	1,845	13
Georgeham & Morteohoe	2	3,079	1,540	-2	3,150	1,575	-4
Heanton Punchardon	1	1,586	1,586	0	1,615	1,615	-1
Ilfracombe East	3	4,979	1,660	5	5,079	1,693	4
Ilfracombe West	2	3,213	1,607	2	3,282	1,641	1
Landkey & Swimbridge	2	2,929	1,465	-7	3,154	1,577	-3
Longbridge (Barnstaple)	3	5,203	1,734	10	5,253	1,751	7
Lyton & Lynmouth	1	1,499	1,499	-5	1,504	1,504	-8
Marwood	1	1,540	1,540	-2	1,562	1,562	-4
Newport (Barnstaple)	3	4,498	1,499	-5	4,548	1,516	-7
North Molton	1	1,546	1,546	-2	1,560	1,560	-4
Pilton (Barnstaple)	3	4,871	1,624	3	4,921	1,640	0

Figure B2 (continued):

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

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 %
South Molton	2	3,205	1,603	2	3,441	1,721	5
Whiddon Valley (Barnstaple)	3	4,487	1,496	-5	4,796	1,599	-2
Witheridge	1	1,644	1,644	4	1,648	1,648	1
Totals	43	67,882	—	—	70,205	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,579	—	—	1,633	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on North Devon District Council's Stage One 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.

