

Third Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements

Dumfries and Galloway Council Area

Report to the Secretary of State for Scotland

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Report Number E98014
September 1998

Third Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements Dumfries and Galloway Council Area

Introduction

1. The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 determined that on and after 1 April 1996, Scotland should be divided into local government areas as named and described in Schedule 1 to the Act and that, for each area, there should be a council consisting of a convener and councillors. It further determined that each council should have all the functions exercised immediately before 1 April in relation to their area by any existing regional, islands or district council.

2. On 1 April 1996 all local government areas existing immediately before that date which were regions and districts and all regional and district councils ceased to exist.

3. Schedule 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 also established that every local government area (other than areas of the old islands councils) should be divided into such electoral wards as may be specified in a direction made by the Secretary of State after carrying out such consultations as he considered appropriate. Those wards were to apply for the purpose of any election of councillors held before 'the relevant year of election' (defined as meaning the first year of ordinary election of councillors for the area in question occurring after the making of an order constituting the new electoral wards of that local government area in consequence of the review currently being undertaken by the Commission). In accordance with procedures that applied prior to the reorganisation in 1975, the views of councils were invited. Thereafter, the Secretary of State determined that, for the purpose of any election of councillors before the relevant year of election, 70 electoral wards were appropriate for the Dumfries and Galloway local government area. Additionally, the proposed wards should be as described in the report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland to the Secretary of State for Scotland on its second statutory review of electoral arrangements for:

- Stewartry District - dated 24 May 1993 (12 wards);
- Wigtown District - dated 2 August 1993 (14 wards);
- Annandale and Eskdale District - dated 3 June 1994 (18 wards); and
- Nithsdale District dated 15 November 1993 (26 wards).

Origin and Commencement of the Review

4. The Commission has a statutory duty under section 14 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to undertake periodic reviews of local authority electoral arrangements. The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 amended section 20 and schedule 5 of the 1973 Act, directing that:

as soon as practicable after 1 April 1996, the Boundary Commission shall-

review the electoral arrangements for all local government areas for the purpose of considering the future electoral arrangements for those areas; and

formulate proposals for those arrangements.

5. This, therefore, is one of the statutory reviews required in terms of section 16(2) and Schedule 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended.

6. On 22 March 1996, the Scottish Office Development Department gave local authorities advance notice of the intention of the Commission to carry out a third statutory review of electoral arrangements. On 29 March 1996, we wrote to all councils to announce the commencement of the third statutory review of electoral arrangements and to explain the procedures to be followed. We also gave notice of the commencement of the review to all Community Councils, Electoral Registration Officers, Members of Parliament with a constituency interest and the Scottish headquarters of the political parties. In addition, public notice of the commencement of the review, which included an invitation to interested parties to apply to us for a copy of our consultation letter to councils, was given in newspapers.

Background

7. During the passage through Parliament of the 1994 Act, there was cross-Party understanding that we would review the number of councillors and boundaries of electoral wards for each council in time for changes to be implemented for the 1999 local elections. This was seen to be important because at the time of reorganisation, as mentioned above, the Secretary of State defined the electoral wards for the new councils and to a great extent based these on existing district wards. It was, however, recognised that using the existing district wards led to some councils being significantly over-represented in relation to other areas. Further, it also led to councillors within the same local authority areas representing wards with significantly different numbers of electors. Accordingly, our review was seen as important to ensure equity in representation across and within all local authorities. Further, the new authorities were now responsible for the provision of the full range of all services and, accordingly, consideration had

to be given to determining an appropriate number of councillors for service provision to be effectively managed.

8. This review is, therefore, the first conducted by us which sets out to determine the appropriate number of councillors required for councils to operate efficiently and to establish the boundaries of electoral wards. To achieve both objectives our review was conducted in 2 main stages:

identification of a suitable methodology for determining numbers of councillors which, applied across all local authority areas, would be seen to be equitable and consistent; and

the division of each local authority area into the appropriate number of electoral wards in accordance with the statutory rules.

9. A copy of the statutory rules to be employed by us and the Secretary of State in considering proposals for electoral arrangements is provided at Appendix A.

Number of Councillors

10. In formulating proposals for the number of councillors we have been guided by two main principles:

effective management of councils; and

equity amongst electors.

11. We recognised that the number of councilors is crucial because there is, undoubtedly, some number below which it would be impossible for a council to discharge its duty to deliver services to its population and, conversely, there is also some number above which a council becomes unwieldy and cumbersome. We were influenced in this respect by the prior considerations of two other bodies.

12. The Royal Commission on Local Government In Scotland 1966-69, under the Chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. Lord Wheatley, provided a basis by which the number of regional councilors and the size of constituency to be represented might be determined by taking into account the fact that population density varies widely in Scotland as a whole and within regions. The then accepted view was that council size should not generally exceed 75 members. In England and Wales the Redcliffe-Maude Commission, which reported to Parliament in 1969, also drew attention to the management problems of large councils and endorsed the recommendation of The Committee on the Management of Local Government that a maximum number of 75 councillors should be set.

13. After careful consideration we concluded that, in the Scottish context and to provide additional flexibility, an upper limit of 80 councillors should be set. We also concluded that a minimum number of councillors should be set, recognising that even the smallest local government areas are now responsible for a wide range of functions. Accordingly, we decided that the minimum number of councillors should be 18. Further, these limits should apply to all councils.

14. Regarding equity as between voters, we considered that ideally each elector's vote should possess the same weight and significance in local government elections throughout the country; furthermore, ideally, there should be similar mutual accessibility between electors and councillors. However, since Scotland is a country of great diversity, both geographically, and demographically, a fact reflected in the areas for which councils created by the Act of 1994 are responsible, and since we are satisfied that, in the interests of good local government, the number of councillors in any council must fall within certain limits, we concluded that these ideals are unattainable in practice. In this situation, recognising that a fair degree of homogeneity exists within certain groups of councils, which exhibit broadly similar geographic and demographic characteristics, we resolved to strive for equity in the senses mentioned within these groups, so far as that is possible within the constraints of the legislation under which we operate.

15. We, therefore, proposed a methodology which initially categorised council areas by density and distribution of population using data available from the 1991 Census of Population. Having classified council areas according to these criteria and adjusted the ratio of electors to each councillor to take account of similar characteristics, we have been able to achieve a broad equity of electorate across and within all council areas.

16. In our letter of 29 March 1996, all councils were informed of the proposed methodology and future pattern of representation for their council area. Councils were requested to make any representations they wished on numbers of councillors by 29 April 1996 so that a meeting could be arranged with the Deputy Chairman and Secretary to discuss the pattern of representation and any matters regarding our review that the Council wished to raise. Following visits to all councils by the Deputy Chairman and Secretary to discuss the proposed methodology and to consider alternatives which could be applied across Scotland, no alternative methodologies were offered but a number of councils suggested that the underlying classification should be amended to include an additional category.

17. At our meeting of 17 June 1996, we re-examined the criteria to be used to categorise mainland councils with similar characteristics in light of the representations made by a number of councils. We concluded that there should be 6 rather than 5 categories. The final categorisation of similar mainland councils was then agreed as follows:

- Category 1 Large Cities Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- Category 2 Cities Aberdeen and Dundee.

- Category 3 Authorities with less than 60% of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 or more persons **AND** an overall population density of one person or more per hectare.
- Category 4 Authorities with **EITHER** 60% or more of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 or more persons **OR** an overall population density of less than one person per hectare.
- Category 5 Authorities with 60% or more of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 or more persons **AND** an overall population density of less than one person per hectare.
- Category 6 Authorities with 60% or more of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 or more persons **AND** an overall population density of less than 0.2 persons per hectare.

18. In addition to the 6 categories we then determined the ratio of councillors to electorate for mainland councils that would allow for efficient management and appropriate representation, as set out in paragraphs 11 - 14 above, and considered that the following would be appropriate:

- | | |
|--------------|---------|
| • Category 1 | 1:6,000 |
| • Category 2 | 1:4,000 |
| • Category 3 | 1:3,500 |
| • Category 4 | 1:3,000 |
| • Category 5 | 1:2,500 |
| • Category 6 | 1:2,000 |

19. On 20 June 1996 we wrote to all mainland councils informing them of the revised criteria for determining councillor numbers and inviting them to prepare a draft scheme of electoral arrangements for their Council area. Following upon that, Aberdeen City Council brought a petition for Judicial Review of the decision taken by us at our meeting of 17 June, 1996 in the Court of Session. In it they sought a decree of declarator that that decision in relation to them was unlawful, ultra vires and null and void; they also sought a decree of reduction of the decision in relation to them and certain ancillary remedies. We resisted this petition, which was dismissed by the Court on 20 December 1996 after a hearing.

20. We considered the ratio of councillors to electors for the 3 islands councils at our meeting of 26 August 1996 and concluded that the appropriate ratio would be 1:750. On 28 August 1996 we wrote to these councils informing them of our decision.

21. Dumfries and Galloway Council wrote to us on 25 July 1996 to say that our proposal that the Council should comprise 47 members was considered by its Executive Committee on 16 July 1996. The Committee agreed that the Council area should comprise 70 electoral wards and that the Council would not participate in the review unless the costs were met by the Commission.

22. We wrote to the Council on 27 August, stating that the question of the appropriate level of representation for the Council area had been carefully considered and that comments and representations made during the initial consultation period, including those received from the Council, had been taken into account. With regard to the Commission's meeting the costs of preparing a draft scheme, we informed the Council that this was not possible. We re-stated our view that the Council was best placed to undertake the important task of developing an initial draft scheme but concluded that, should the Council feel unable to accept the invitation to do so, we would direct our officers to undertake the necessary work independently.

23. On 23 October 1996, the Council informed us that it had now agreed to prepare a draft scheme of electoral representation for 47 wards.

24. Our staff maintained regular contact with Council officials concerning the preparation of a draft scheme and, on 2 April 1997, we were informed that a draft had been circulated to the Area Management Committees. It was expected that substantial revision would be necessary and this would not be possible until July at the earliest. It would thus be unlikely that any proposals would be submitted for our consideration until mid-August. We agreed that our Deputy Chairman and Secretary should meet with the Chief Executive to discuss progress and, if necessary, offer resources to assist in completing a scheme of electoral arrangements. At their meeting with the Chief Executive, our Deputy Chairman and Secretary agreed that, if there were difficulties in agreeing a draft scheme, the Commission would accept, as it had done elsewhere, options which had been discussed by the Council and which could, if necessary, be further developed by Commission staff as our provisional proposals.

Dumfries and Galloway Council's Proposals

25. On 5 June 1997, the Council forwarded a copy of a Report dated 22 May 1997 which had been agreed for submission to us. The Report provided details of five options for electoral arrangements, of which two covered 47 wards. It was noted that submission of the Report did not bind the Council to any of the schemes detailed and it reserved the right to decide which option, or combination of options, it might finally favour. We understand that the draft schemes were advertised by the Council on 11 June 1997.

26. On 26 June 1997 the Council forwarded details of three further submissions which brought the total options offered for our consideration to eight. Only one of the additional options was for 47 wards.

27. Fourteen representations were received.

28. Councillors N Heskith and J Mitchell wrote to say that they commended the scheme submitted by the Liberal Democrats Group which incorporated Option 2 proposed by Councillor J Mitchell. They agreed that the criteria defined in Option 2, specifically school catchment areas,

provided a useful guide to community identity. With regard to Ward 10 in Option 1, they considered that it was a totally unworkable solution.

29. Councillor L McCaig considered that a parity figure of 2,500 ($\pm 10\%$) was too constrained given the geography and associated population spread and that there should be some relaxation in the variance if the proposals were to have widespread public acceptance. He considered that, for a sizeable proportion of the electorate, school catchment areas provided a sense of natural community base and that communities within these areas had developed affinities with each other. Councillor McCaig suggested that, as far as possible within any one ward, the electorate should be drawn from a single secondary school catchment area and that communities of electors should not be grouped in such a way that they looked to two or more secondary schools. It was understood that the Liberal Democrat Councillors in Dumfries and Galloway had proposed a ward structure for Wards 1 - 17 based on the catchment area principle and, although there were one or two errors in the assignment of groups of electors, the principle was sound and the strategy could be accommodated by a relaxation of the statutory rule regarding parity.

30. Councillor T Holmes wrote expressing the concerns of the people to be represented regarding the proposals which, under the option drawn up by Council officials, would see a vast area disappear into another ward. Many people felt that, if the proposal went ahead, the identity of the Cresswell Community would be lost forever. It was suggested that we give special consideration to the centre of Dumfries which deserved the joint responsibility of two councillors.

31. Dalry Community Council wrote to support Option 4 submitted by Councillor John Maxwell. Alternatively, support was offered to Option 2 submitted by Councillor J Mitchell.

32. Whithorn and District Community Council considered that most of the options showed scant regard for the community feelings of the electorate of south Machars and caused the attitude of constituents to be one of ridicule. Only Option 2, which, the Community Council believed, deviated only slightly from electoral parity, made sense.

33. Kirkmabreck Community Council agreed that Option 2 was the most suitable for its area because, historically, Gatehouse of Fleet had no links with Creetown and the OP Practice, mobile library, refuse collection, shopping, schooling, day centre and other activities had always been linked to Newton Stewart.

34. Councillor A Campbell referred to the fact that the Council had submitted a number of options. He also totally disagreed with the constraints placed upon the Commission in respect of electoral parity because it failed to take account of both geographical and social factors. He favoured Option 1, although he recognised that the ward he currently represented would be absorbed into at least two new wards. He also suggested that Option 4, Wards 13 and 14, could be readily incorporated into Option 1 to offer a more favourable solution.

35. Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Labour Party submitted alternative proposals for the Galloway and Upper Nithsdale area, which used, as far as possible, existing electoral divisions

and polling districts as building blocks, but recognised that it was a well-nigh impossible task to create electoral divisions which would satisfy everybody, given the settlement pattern and geography of the area.

36. Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Conservative and Unionist Association submitted alternative proposals for 46 wards in the Dumfries and Galloway Council area. It was suggested that, for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, the extensive, sparsely populated areas made it impossible to meet the requirements of parity without either combining Kelloholm and Sanquhar or transferring electors in Kirkconnel into South Ayrshire. The Kirkconnel electorate had expressed a wish for such a transfer and the Association recommended that we consent to the adjustment in boundaries which would fulfil our criteria of appropriate representation throughout Dumfries and Galloway as 46 elected members.

37. Auchencairn Community Council was concerned that it would be very difficult for a councillor to represent both rural and town communities as they have very different needs and the sheer weight of numbers seemed to be a recipe for disaster because the town would be able to push forward leaving the rural areas in a backwater situation. It suggested that Auchencairn be included in Kirkcudbright East.

38. Kirtle and Eaglesfield Community Council drew our attention to the fact that there was a great deal of dissatisfaction with the arrangements proposed in its local area. It requested that we make no decisions until a number of meetings had been held to discuss the proposals. The Community Council subsequently copied a letter it had sent to the Secretary of State and also asked for an explanation of why the figure of 47 councillors had been selected when it was apparent that this was not the optimum number.

39. Dumfries and Galloway Council wrote to request that we meet with the concerned Community Councils of Annandale and Eskdale before any decisions were taken on boundary changes.

40. Two letters were received which expressed concerns about the proposed boundary changes in the Dumfries Constituency where proposals would result in places like Duncrow and Ae being subsumed by the urban area of Lochar. It was felt that rural areas should be represented by rural councillors and, therefore, they should be in rural wards.

41. Officers of the Commission carried out a detailed analysis of the various options submitted by the Council, political groups and others. Additional electorate data were obtained which allowed work to be undertaken on assessing whether or not it would be practical to consider a composite scheme based on wards outlined in the various options with or without further minor amendments. The potential for incorporating proposals submitted by other bodies and individuals was also considered.

42. In comparing the options submitted by the Council, and bearing in mind alternatives submitted by political groups and other area-specific representations, we agreed that Option 1, which had been prepared by Council officials, appeared, subject to some modification, to provide

the best basis on which our provisional proposals could be developed. We also agreed that, overall, the significant divergences from electoral parity apparent in the other options for the Council area or parts of the Council area submitted by the Council and others were, in the main, unsatisfactory because they could not reasonably satisfy the primary rule concerning electoral parity. Further, many of the representations made by other bodies and individuals could not be considered in isolation and regard had to be had to the wider Council area. We, therefore, asked the Council for further electorate data which would allow us to assess the potential of making adjustments to Option 1 with a view to determining our own provisional proposals.

Publication of Commissions s Provisional Proposals

43. Public notice was given of the publication of our provisional proposals on 27 February 1998. Dumfries and Galloway Council was asked to make available for inspection at its offices copies of the electoral ward boundary descriptions, electoral statistics and illustrative maps. Additionally, copies of our proposals were sent to all who had received our consultation letter or had expressed an interest. We asked that any comments should be made to us by 2 April 1998.

Consideration of Representations

44. Twenty two representations were received:

- **The Council's Executive Committee** agreed to make no representations in respect of our provisional proposals.
- **Canonbie and District Community Council** was firmly opposed to our proposals and wished to remain in the same ward as Langholm.

We noted the Community Council's views. We examined the possibility of adopting the proposal but it was clear that it would result in a significantly adverse impact on electoral parity in the wards in question. Further, the distribution of settlements and electorate in the wider area made it impossible to consider compensating amendments to restore the balance of parity. We concluded, therefore, that it was not possible, within the constraints of the statutory rules, to amend the ward boundaries in order to associate the area with Langholm.

- **Cree Valley Community Council** was most disappointed at our provisional proposals for the mid-Galloway area. It suggested that, once again, we had taken no notice whatsoever of local representation during the initial consultation. The Community Council understood that the statutory rules allowed for the recognition of local communities but claimed that we had persisted in operating on a purely numerical basis which had resulted in ridiculous boundaries and lumped together areas with no community interest. It considered that the number

of wards for Dumfries and Galloway made no allowance for the huge geographical areas involved and represented a serious reduction in democratic representation. Our proposal to continue to split Newton Stewart was unacceptable and should be rectified at this opportunity. Creetown had always looked to Minigaff and Newton Stewart rather than communities in the east and our proposals created a wholly artificial situation. Proposals by other groupings on the Council were nearly all better than our proposals. We were asked to reconsider our proposals in order to recognise communities and make allowances for the rural nature of the area.

We noted that we had considered all of the representations and comments made during the early stages of our review, within the terms of the statutory rules, especially the primary rule regarding electoral parity. We reconsidered the alternative proposals for east Wigtownshire but concluded that, because of their adverse impact on electoral parity, we were not prepared to amend our provisional proposals in this area.

- **Crossmichael and District Community Council** wished to register its objections to the proposed boundaries which linked its area with Castle Douglas West as this would considerably dilute the rural vote. It also seemed ludicrous to save cash by reducing the number of councillors for an area the size of Dumfries and Galloway. Associating Laurieston, Crossmichael and Parton North and Parton West would give rural communities a better voice and produce numbers near parity.

We carefully examined the proposal submitted by the Community Council to link rural communities but it was clear that there was no scope for adjusting the boundaries in the manner suggested without, as a consequence, making major changes to other wards across the wider area which would be likely to generate further controversy. Accordingly, we were not prepared to adopt the changes proposed.

- **Dalbeattie Community Council** offered three minor comments on ward boundary descriptions which we noted.
- **Gretna and Rigg Community Council** wrote to express, in the strongest terms, its dismay and utter abhorrence at our decision to reduce the size of the existing ward boundaries. Whilst the Community Council's Secretary resided within the new ward boundary, another Community Councillor was quite put out because she would now reside four miles away in the Eastriggs Ward which hosts the Gretna Club, football team and dog track. The Community Council requested a review of the situation. A further letter suggested that the ward name should be 'Solway Border'.

We were not prepared to revise the boundaries as suggested in the Gretna area because of the adverse impact on electoral parity. There were, in our view, no

special geographical considerations which would justify such a change. We noted that the Council agreed that the ward should be named 'Solway Border'.

- **Kirkmabreck. Community Council** expressed dissatisfaction that its objections and wishes had been ignored in our provisional proposals. Such a large area as Machars could not possibly be satisfactorily represented by one councillor, nor could one councillor possibly have a sound knowledge or understanding of the problems affecting the ward. We were asked to look again and reconsider the alternative proposals for east Wigtownshire.

We reconsidered the alternative proposals for east Wigtownshire but concluded that, in the interests of securing electoral parity, we were not prepared to amend our provisional proposals in this area.

- **The Royal Burgh of Whithorn and District Community Council** was extremely disappointed that local opinion had been completely ignored in our provisional proposals. Members had given much time and thought and made what they considered a valid and reasoned response to our initial consultation document and other Community Councils shared these views. The whole consultation process was suspect and the result showed a total disregard for local opinion. This flew in the face of the stated government policy to listen to the views of communities, especially in rural areas. The consultation period had been a charade but the Community Council still hoped that our community-splitting boundaries could be amended.

We noted that all of the representations and comments made during the early stages of our review had been considered within the terms of the statutory rules concerning the revision of electoral arrangements which we are obliged to observe. We reconsidered the alternative proposals for the area but concluded that, because of their adverse impact on electoral parity, we were not prepared to amend our provisional proposals in this area.

- **Springfield and Gretna Green Community Council** felt that it was totally inappropriate that the number of electors was a factor in deciding where boundaries should be drawn and would prefer to remain with a landward area. It strongly opposed the fact that the township of Gretna had been split, objected to the removal of the rural environment and requested a return to the old rural ward.

We were not prepared to revise the boundaries in the Gretna area because we considered that there were no special geographical considerations which could justify a large departure from electoral parity.

- **Torthorwarld Community Council** asked that we consider a small amendment to our boundaries in order to include an area centred on NG Reference NY 053 770. This would result in 3 dwellings being transferred to Ward 32 to which they

had access by minor roads. Were they to remain in the adjoining ward, the only communications link was a pedestrian track.

We accepted the proposed change which offered a more practical solution with little impact on electoral parity.

- **Troqueer Landward Community Council** expressed disappointment on behalf of the residents of Cargenbridge which had changed from being a rural village to an urban area. Reverting back to a rural village could leave these residents disadvantaged. Only recently speed limit signs been erected to make the village part of the Dumfries town. The Commissions proposals changed that situation. The Community Council was also concerned about losing its local councillor and hoped that we would take notice of its fears and concerns. The Community Council later indicated that a ballot of a cross-section of the community indicated that, of the 120 ballot papers sent out, 86 were returned and all were against the proposed boundary changes.

We noted that we had considered all of the representations and comments made during the early stages of our review within the terms of the statutory rules especially the primary rule regarding electoral parity. We reconsidered the alternative proposals for east Wigtownshire but concluded that, because of their adverse impact on electoral parity, we were not prepared to amend our provisional proposals in this area.

- **Wigtown and District Community Council** felt that all Community Councils represented at a recent meeting were of the view that we had not listened to the views of local communities as none of their recommendations were included in our provisional proposals.

We noted the views expressed. All representations made in the early stages of our review had been considered within the constraints of the statutory rules.

- **Councillor Conaghan** asked if we would look again at our proposals for Ward 41. The ward was an amalgamation of (3)retna Green, Springfield and, Gretna which, while they look close together on the map, are entirely different communities. Springfield and Gretna Green were historically wedding centres before Gretna was built. They are rapidly losing their identities as rural villages and are being swallowed up by the greater urban area of Gretna. It was considered that the ward name should be 'Border'. We were asked not to split the town of Gretna and that the boundary between Wards 40 and 41 should be the river, not Dominion Road, Gretna - only 116 electors would be involved.

We were not prepared to revise the boundaries in the Gretna area because of the adverse impact on electoral parity in an area where we considered there were no special geographical considerations which would justify such a change.

- **Councillor McKay** suggested alterations to the boundaries of Wards 19, 22, 30 and 46 which he considered would help people identify with their own communities.

We accepted the changes proposed which offered a more practical solution with little impact on electoral parity.

- **A representative of Councillor McQueen** wrote to say that the Councillor was abroad but had no strong objections to our proposals for Ward 45 other than to suggest that the name be 'Lockerbie and Upper Annandale'.

We noted that the Council agreed with the proposed ward name.

- **Councillor Millar** stated that he was disappointed that our proposals for Ward 47 divided Moffat Water into two. The Councillor proposed a revised boundary with Ward 44 which would contain the whole of Moffat Water valley in Ward 47.

We considered Councillor Millar's proposal but agreed that adopting the boundary set out by Dumfries Constituency Conservative Association (see below) would meet his request to retain Moffat Water in one ward.

- **Moffat Water Hall Committee** wrote to say that it was working very hard to establish a community spirit. Our proposals for the Moffat Valley were considered to be detrimental. It wished that the existing boundary remain.

We concluded that the amendment submitted by Dumfries Constituency Conservative Association would meet the Committee's request.

- **Dumfries Constituency Conservative Association** wrote on behalf of the Moffat Branch to request alterations to EWs 44 and 47 because the polling places would be 13 miles distant, there was a local affinity between Moffat Water and Moffat, the number of electors involved was small and the area of Ward 44 would be reduced.

We accepted the change proposed which offered a practical solution with little impact on electoral parity and a better-defined boundary than alternatives proposed by others.

- **Dumfries Constituency Conservative Association** wrote to suggest that the boundary between Wards 37 and 38 could be amended to provide a better balance of electorate between the two wards.

We considered the proposals and adopted the amendment because the revision produced a stronger boundary.

- **Machars Action** wrote to say that many Community Councils in east Wigtownshire were deeply concerned about our proposals which cut across established community groupings and common bonds of geographical and social unity - facts that Community Councils had pointed out at the first stage of our review. There was no indication about the way counter-proposals put forward by various communities had been considered or even that they were treated as a basis for further discussion. If community opinion counted for nothing, then it would have been better to have been honest rather than proceed through a spurious consultation process. If community opinion was to be disregarded, this was at odds with the policies outlined by the

Government which believed that rural development should be driven by the priorities of local people. Further, the whole topic of local government was to be given special scrutiny by the Commission on Local Government. Views on having local government boundaries imposed in an unsympathetic and administratively illogical fashion were points that would be raised with the Scottish Office when commenting on the Government Discussion Paper. We were asked to take into consideration the fact that rural communities relate to each other and to their centres of local government in complex and significant ways which cannot be measured by pure mathematical criteria and to reconsider our proposals.

We noted that all of the representations and comments made during the early stages of our review had been considered within the terms of the statutory rules concerning the revision of electoral arrangements which we are obliged to observe. We reconsidered the alternative proposals for east Wigtownshire but concluded that, because of their adverse impact on electoral parity, we were not prepared to accept them.

- A letter was received which complained that the correspondent could not understand how boundary changes could be made without the public being told. It asked how it was that the Commission could remove from so many people the right to vote for a councillor to represent them in the area they lived in, not one that covered the next town. If people on the south side of Gretna had wanted to be included in Eastriggs, they would have decided to live there rather than in Gretna. It reserved the right to have a Gretna Councillor.

We were unable to revise the boundaries in the Gretna area because of the adverse impact on electoral parity in an area where we considered there were no special geographical considerations which would justify such a change.

- A letter was received which objected strongly to our proposals for the Gretna area because it would result in Gretna people voting for an Eastriggs councillor about whom they would probably know nothing about. The travelling distance for voting would probably put people off and people had always been able to vote for

a Gretna Councillor, as Gretna had never before been broken up. It further considered that we had not given sufficient time for the consultation process.

We were unable to revise the boundaries in the Gretna area because of the adverse impact on electoral parity in an area where we considered there were no special geographical considerations which would justify such a change.

Final Recommendation

45. Having conducted the third statutory review of electoral arrangements for the Dumfries and Galloway Council area in accordance with the procedures described above, we **recommend** that future electoral arrangements should provide for a Council of 47 members.

46. The designation of the electoral wards that we recommend for the Dumfries and Galloway Council, together with information which we have received from the Council as to the 1996 electorate and forecast 2001 electorate of the proposed wards are set out at Appendix B to this report.

47. The boundaries of the proposed electoral wards are described in Appendix C and the following illustrative maps accompany this report:

Map	Area	Scale
1(A)	Dumfries and Galloway Council Area	1:50,000
1(B)	Dumfries and Galloway Council Area	1:50,000
1(C)	Dumfries and Galloway Council Area	1:50,000
1(D)	Dumfries and Galloway Council Area	1:50,000
1(E)	Dumfries and Galloway Council Area	1:50,000
2	Dumfries	1:10,000
3	Castle Douglas/Dalbeattie	1:10,000
4	Stranraer	1:10,000
5	Lockerbie	1:10,000
6	Annan	1:10,000
7	Gretna	1:10,000
8	Newton Stewart	1:10,000
9	Kirkcudbright	1:10,000

Appendix B

Dumfries and Galloway Council Area Proposed Electoral Wards

Number	Name	Electorate	
		1996 (Actual)	2001 (Estimated)
a	b	c	d
1	Rhins South	2,472	2,632
2	Rhins North	2,658	2,637
3	Stranraer North	2,717	2,567
4	Stranraer South	1,951	2,354
5	Stranraer East	2,667	2,442
6	Luce	2,599	2,392
7	Whithorn	2,512	2,373
8	Wigtown	2,472	2,481
9	Cree	2,657	2,581
10	Stewartry West	2,333	2,311
11	Kirkcudbright - Tarff	2,424	2,476
12	Kirkcudbright - Bengairn	2,490	2,467
13	Stewartry North	2,536	2,453
14	Castle Douglas - Dee	2,460	2,535
15	Castle Douglas - Urr	2,467	2,491
16	Dalbeattie - Craignair	2,494	2,537
17	Dalbeattie-Milton	2,704	2,558
13	Criffel	2,467	2,733
19	Cairn Valley	2,564	2,499
20	Sanquhar and District	2,409	2,352
21	Kirkconnel	1,893	1,908
22	Mid Nithsdale	2,697	2,673
23	Lincluden	2,614	2,472
24	Lochside	2,637	2,533
25	Palmerston	2,292	2,439
26	Maxwelltown	2,484	2,483
27	Troqueer	2,532	2,529
28	Loreburn	2,397	2,430
29	Marchmount	2,665	2,591
30	Lochar	2,665	2,652
31	Heathhall	2,448	2,667
32	Nithsdale East	2,309	2,349
33	Georgetown	2,463	2,370

34	Lochvale	2,540	2,568
35	Caerlaverock	2,379	2,544
36	Hoddum and Kinmount	2,341	2,406
37	Annan West	2,657	2,641
38	Annan Central	2,387	2,345
39	Annan East	2,274	2,387
40	Chapelcross	2,540	2,544
41	Solway Border	2,509	2,602
42	Langholm and Upper Eskdale	2,566	2,529
43	Canonbie and Kirtle	2,728	2,668
44	Dryfe and Lockerbie East	2,435	2,422
45	Lockerbie and Upper Annandale	2,274	2,372
46	Lochmaben	2,414	2,675
47	Moffat	2,560	2,734
	Total	116,815	117,504