

East Lothian Council Area

Introduction

1. East Lothian Council area is currently covered by 2 constituencies. East Lothian county constituency lies wholly within the Council area and comprises the majority of the Council area, except for the town of Musselburgh which forms part of the existing Edinburgh East and Musselburgh burgh constituency and accounts for approximately 20 per cent of the electorate of that constituency. The electorates of the 2 constituencies at the start and finish of the previous and current reviews are provided at Appendix C.

Initial Considerations

2. In forming our provisional proposals for East Lothian Council area, we had in mind the following considerations:

2.1 At the enumeration date of June 2001, East Lothian Council area contained 71,288 parliamentary electors, giving the Council area a theoretical entitlement of 1.02 seats.

2.2 The City of Edinburgh Council area contained 364,542 parliamentary electors, giving the Council area a theoretical entitlement of 5.2 seats.

3. Bearing in mind the theoretical entitlements of seats and the requirement that we should have regard to Council boundaries, we considered that there was no good reason why part of East Lothian Council area should continue to be combined with part of the City of Edinburgh Council area for the purposes of representation at Westminster.

Provisional Proposals

4. On 7 February 2002 we published our provisional proposals for one county constituency comprising the whole of East Lothian Council area as follows:

Constituency	Comprising	Electorate (June 2001)
East Lothian CC	All electoral wards in East Lothian Council area	71,288

Representations on Provisional Proposals

5. During the statutory consultation period, we received 7 representations regarding our provisional proposals for East Lothian Council area. Those objecting to our proposals considered that the East Lothian Council area wards which include the town of Musselburgh should continue to be included in an Edinburgh East and Musselburgh constituency.

Local Inquiry

6. As a consequence of the objection to our proposals from the City of Edinburgh Council as well as the number of electors objecting to aspects of our provisional proposals for constituencies within the City of Edinburgh Council area, we recognised that we had a statutory duty to hold a local inquiry which would involve constituencies in both Council areas. At our request, you agreed to appoint the then Sheriff Principal C G B Nicholson QC, Sheriff Principal of Lothian and Borders, as Assistant Commissioner at the inquiry. The inquiry was held in the City Chambers, Edinburgh on 18, 19 and 20 November 2002. We deal in this Section of our Report with issues raised at the inquiry only in so far as they concern our proposals for East Lothian Council area.

7. In the period up to the start of the local inquiry, 3 further representations concerning our proposals for East Lothian Council were received. All of the representations were seen by the Assistant Commissioner and copies were made available at the inquiry.

8. Following the inquiry, a verbatim transcript of the proceedings and the Assistant Commissioner's Report were made available on our web site.

Assistant Commissioner's Report and Recommendations

9. In his Report to us, the Assistant Commissioner was not persuaded by the arguments for including Musselburgh in a constituency that embraced part of the City of Edinburgh Council area. He considered that the proponents of an Edinburgh East and Musselburgh constituency had not fully addressed the consequences of reducing the electorate of the proposed East Lothian constituency by 15,594. He noted that the Rt Hon Gavin Strang MP had recognised the issue but had not developed alternative proposals in any detail. The Assistant Commissioner stated that our provisional proposals produced an electorate well within acceptable limits of the electoral quota, respected council boundaries and had gained almost complete support. The Assistant Commissioner was in no doubt that our proposals for an East Lothian constituency, which would comprise the whole of the Council area, should be confirmed and he so recommended.

Consideration of the Assistant Commissioner's Report and Recommendations

10. We noted the Assistant Commissioner's recommendation that we should confirm our provisional proposals for East Lothian constituency. Accordingly, we decided not to amend our proposals in respect of East Lothian Council area.

Confirmation of Provisional Proposals

11. On 27 February 2003 we published a notice stating that, having considered the Assistant Commissioner's Report, we had accepted his recommendation to confirm our provisional proposals for an East Lothian constituency comprising the whole of East Lothian Council area.

Further Representations

12. In the month following the publication of our notice, we received 4 representations which expressed general disappointment that we had decided to confirm our provisional proposals but did not raise any further substantial issues.

Final Recommendations

13. On 31 July 2003 we announced that we were making no further changes to our proposals for one county constituency and that these were our final recommendations.

14. We accordingly recommend the adoption of our proposals for one county constituency comprising the whole of East Lothian Council area, as set out in paragraph 4 above.

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