

The Boundary Committee for England

Part of The Electoral Commission

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27 November 2003

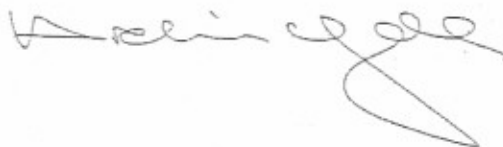
Dear Mr Stybelski

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF TWO-TIER AREAS IN THE NORTH EAST, NORTH WEST AND YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

I enclose advance copies of our draft recommendations reports for unitary local government in the two-tier areas in the North West, North East and Yorkshire & the Humber regions prior to publication on 1 December 2003, together with our press release for your area and a copy of the *Overview report*. The latter report explains the Committee's approach to the issues raised by the review.

I hope that this early sight of the reports will help you to brief your members in advance of formal publication and to enable you to handle press enquiries. However, you will appreciate that these reports are confidential until the publication date. The press releases and reports which will be sent to the media have been placed under embargo until 9.00 am on 1 December.

Yours sincerely



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News Release

The
Boundary
Committee
for England

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1 DECEMBER 00:01
27 November 2003

Boundary Committee put draft options for local government on the table

Six months after the start of the review, The Boundary Committee for England has today published its draft recommendations for new structures of unitary local government in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber regions.

The exercise, which began on 17 June and will take nearly a year to complete, involves the Committee reviewing those areas in the selected regions where there are two tiers of local government, both district and county councils. The six counties in the north of England which are being reviewed are: Cheshire, Cumbria, Co Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, and North Yorkshire. Directed by the Government, the Committee must provide at least two options in each county for a single tier of local government, known as unitary authorities.

The Committee must submit their final recommendations to Government by 25 May 2004. At a later date, people will then be asked to decide in a referendum if they want an elected regional assembly. Those living in the two tier areas will be asked to make a further decision on which option for unitary local government they would prefer if a regional assembly is established.

Since the first public consultation period, which ended on 8 September, the Committee has received over a thousand submissions from local authorities, stakeholders and individuals. They have been carefully considering all the evidence and argumentation and ensuring that it meets the criteria provided by Government for successful unitary authorities.

As well as looking at the submissions provided by local authorities, there are a number of other sources of information they have been considering, to provide a sound context on which to base their recommendations. The ability for a new unitary authority to serve the needs of their local communities is essential and evidence of existing local authorities working together has been useful. A key objective in the Committee's proposals is to lay the foundations for authorities with strong capacity at both strategic and local level and the potential to deliver high performance across all local government services.

Recently commissioned public opinion research conducted by MORI supports the view that residents primary concern is the quality of local government services. The research has proved valuable as one of a number of factors taken into consideration when the Committee were developing workable draft options for consultation. Nearly 14,000 people were asked their views about how they identify with their community and local government, and the provision of good quality services came top in their list of priorities.

MORI will shortly be conducting follow-up public opinion research. This time people will be asked questions specifically relating to the draft options. The findings of this second stage of research are due to be published in April 2004.

Comprehensive Performance Assessments* (CPAs) are another external source of information that the Committee have been considering. However, not all local authorities' reports will be published by the time the review is completed so other performance data has been assessed. It should be noted that the reports assess how a council is currently performing and are therefore not necessarily indicative of how a new unitary authority might operate.

As well as meeting with all local authorities in the two-tier areas during the first consultation period, the Committee recently conducted a tour of the northern regions. Although the tour was brief, due to the tight timetable of the review, the Committee found it valuable and it enabled them able to gain a good geographical and topographical overview of how communities and areas fit with each other.

The Committee will consult on the draft options for a period of 12 weeks from today. All views received by 23 February will be taken into account when the Committee reach conclusions on their final recommendations to the Government.

The Boundary Committee Chair, Pamela Gordon said, 'The draft recommendations that we are putting forward today are there for consultation; we have highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of different options and we are looking for more evidence to enable us to develop our final recommendations.

'We can be sure that the local authorities will give us their views but we will particularly welcome responses from other interests and local residents in the areas concerned.'

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Notes to editors:

1. The Boundary Committee is a statutory committee of The Electoral Commission.
2. The Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Act 2003, paving the way for referendums on elected regional assemblies, was introduced to Parliament in November 2002 and received Royal Assent in May 2003.
3. The Boundary Committee's local government reviews are expected to take up to a year to be completed. In the event of a 'no' vote in a referendum on an elected regional assembly, the Government has said there will be no local government restructuring.

4. A summary of the submissions received from local authorities during Stage One of the review can be viewed on The Boundary Committee website www.boundarycommittee.org.uk, as can all the MORI public opinion research and the Committee's draft recommendations for all three regions. All submissions received by the Committee can be viewed by appointment, by contacting the Press Office on: 020 7271 0700.
5. The draft recommendations for unitary structures in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber regions will be published on 1 December at 0900 and can be viewed on The Boundary Committee website. This will commence the second period of public consultation, which will last 12 weeks, ending on 23 February 2004.
6. Copies in other languages and audio versions of the draft recommendations can be obtained from the Press Office on request.
7. *Comprehensive Performance Assessments are conducted by The Audit Commission.

Draft recommendations, December 2003

Local government review overview report



Contents

	Page
Chair's introduction	3
Summary	5
1 The review process	7
2 The Committee's approach	9
3 Context and general considerations	11
4 Specific considerations	13
a. Geographical size, population and capacity	14
b. Community identity	17
c. Community leadership and engagement	18
d. Partnerships	19
e. High performing local authorities	20
f. Financial costs	21
5 Other matters	25
6 What happens next?	27
Appendices	
A Map 1 – current local government structure in the review areas	29
B Summary of options	31

Chair's introduction

In considering the options for unitary local authorities in the three regions where referendums on the creation of regional assemblies are to be held, The Boundary Committee for England has been conscious of the changing context in which local government operates and the range of challenges councils face.

Throughout the three northern regions there are concentrations of urban areas (often with characteristics of deprivation), large tracts of industrial clearance (with some active redevelopment), market towns with varying degrees of prosperity, scattered villages (some in effect attractive commuter villages, some badly hit by the problems of the rural economy). In many counties there are vast swathes of agricultural land, sparsely populated and with fairly isolated communities. Levels of unemployment vary, with some notable 'hotspots' and several major initiatives to replace declining or lost manufacturing industries with new employment opportunities. Several local authority transportation projects have been established to improve access to potential development sites.

A more general issue is dependence on a low-income economy. This has intensified the pressure on local authorities to work in partnership and use their leverage to facilitate economic development, especially for the creation of high value, new technology employment. Economic development, whether of urban or rural areas, has become a significant objective of many of the local authorities in the three regions. This links with the efforts of the local education authorities and Learning and Skills Councils to increase educational attainment especially by achieving higher staying on rates after the basic school leaving age.

Changes affecting social services and the creation of integrated children's services bring major new challenges for county councils.

Housing policy issues remain a significant concern for many district councils in the northern regions, in areas where there is a large amount of sub-standard accommodation. Again, these authorities are in many cases working with housing associations and developers to bring about more general regeneration, within which improved housing is a key objective. In other, especially rural, areas there is a significant shortage of affordable housing, for local people.

Throughout the three regions there is impressive evidence of other initiatives driven by local authorities but requiring effective partnership working to deliver schemes on the ground. These partnerships cover a range of issues concerned with social well-being, health and community development. Partners are similarly varied, including many other statutory bodies, and close working between the county council and the districts is often essential. In a number of cases there are cross-boundary projects involving joint initiatives by adjoining districts. At a more local level there are some positive examples of close working with some parish and town councils.

In the context of our guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which indicated the importance of recognising the changing role of local authorities and the environment in which they operate in the options we have put forward, we have sought to reflect these major challenges and demands, which any new unitary authorities must seek to meet. At the same time, as our public opinion research shows, local people are primarily concerned with the delivery of quality services and the responsiveness of councils to local communities. To this extent it may be significant that there is evidence from this research that people may make a

sophisticated distinction between the county or district, to which they may feel affinity, and the county or district council towards which they may have more ambivalence.

Local people's immediate concerns are not in fact unconnected with the more strategic approaches outlined above – both depend, for example, on good leadership, openness to innovation and excellent communications. The expectation placed on unitary authorities is that they will effect the appropriate balance between the strategic and the local. For this they will require adequate capacity, in terms of resources and skills, to enable flexible responses to a variety of needs and opportunities. They will also need the sensitivity to engage effectively with a range of local interests and communities.

Ultimately local people will decide whether they want an elected regional assembly, and if they vote 'yes' which option for unitary local government they prefer. Our draft recommendations are an important stage in moving towards the formulation of those options. To a large extent they are based on submissions we have received, which we have assessed against the guidance we were given and in the light of the tasks confronting modern local authorities, as briefly indicated above. Our consultation on the options will enable us to gauge public opinion, particularly on specific issues we are highlighting. In the light of the responses we receive, we also intend to refine and probably to narrow the range of options in respect of individual counties, which will be the basis of our final recommendations. We will welcome and hope for the widest possible response to our draft proposals, from existing local authorities, other partners and stakeholders and, especially, from local people.

Pamela Gordon
Chair, The Boundary Committee for England

Summary

On 16 June 2003 The Boundary Committee for England received a direction from the Deputy Prime Minister to undertake local government reviews in the two-tier areas of three English regions: North West, North East and Yorkshire & the Humber.

We began the review of local government structures on 17 June 2003.

This report explains our approach to the formulation of the options on which we are now consulting, in the context of the guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), our own guidance, the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and the findings of our own research.

Our task is to propose at least two options for wholly unitary local government structures likely to provide the best overall delivery of local services in the existing two-tier county areas covered by the review.

Our draft options are intended to strike a balance between the various criteria we have taken into consideration. No single criterion is an overriding factor in determining our recommendations.

In particular, our recommendations aim to provide for local authorities of sufficient size and capacity to deliver services effectively, while at the same time enabling community interests and identities to be adequately reflected within the new arrangements.

While there can be no certainty that our draft recommendations would create 'high performing' local authorities, since this would depend in large part on the leadership of the new authorities, it is our view that they would not place the new councils at a disadvantage in resource or capacity terms.

This report recognises that the context of our work is one of significant and continuing change in local government.

Our draft recommendations for patterns of wholly unitary local government are summarised in appendix B. These are explained more fully in five separate reports covering each of the six county areas under review.

We would very much welcome local views about our draft recommendations. You should express your views by using an online form, which can be found at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk, or by writing directly to us at the address below by 23 February 2004.

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1 The review process

1.1 We have been directed to undertake an independent review of the structure of local government in the six county areas of the North East, North West and Yorkshire & Humber regions (illustrated in Map 1 in appendix A). We are required to report to the Deputy Prime Minister by 25 May 2004 with at least two options for wholly unitary patterns of local government in those areas. The reviews are a precursor to a referendum on an elected regional assembly in each of the three regions concerned. Subject to Ministers' decisions on our final recommendations, electors in the two-tier areas will have the opportunity to vote for their preferred structural option at the same time as the referendum on elected regional assemblies.

1.2 This overview report sets out the background to our draft recommendations. The draft recommendations are set out in detail in the five separate reports which have been published with this overview report, but are summarised in appendix B.

1.3 Our task is to recommend at least two options for structural change for each two-tier county under review. However, we are also able to review and make recommendations for changes to the boundaries of existing single-tier authorities adjoining two-tier areas, but only with a view to part of an existing two-tier authority area being absorbed into a single-tier area. We may not make recommendations for other boundary changes to adjoining single-tier authorities, nor can we review the boundaries of regions as part of these local government reviews.

1.4 The review is in four stages (see Table 1).

Table 1: the stages of the review

Stage	Dates	Description
One	17 June 2003 – 8 September 2003	Commencement of review and submission of proposals for wholly unitary patterns of local authorities.
Two	9 September 2003 – 30 November 2003	The Committee considers proposals, determines draft recommendations and prepares draft recommendations report.
Three	1 December 2003 – 23 February 2004	The Committee publishes draft recommendations report and invites representations.
Four	24 February 2004 – no later than 25 May 2004	The Committee considers representations, reaches conclusions on final recommendations and submits a final report to the Deputy Prime Minister.

1.5 Stage One began on 17 June 2003, when we wrote to the district and county councils in review areas, and adjoining metropolitan and unitary councils in the relevant regions, inviting proposals for unitary patterns of local government. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 8 September 2003.

1.6 Details of the legislation under which we work are set out in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) guidance to the Committee, which is available on the ODPM's website (www.odpm.gov.uk). Our own guidance document, *Guidance*

and procedural advice for the local government reviews, is available from our website (www.boundarycommittee.org.uk).

1.7 We also commissioned public opinion research, carried out by MORI, in each district council area within the three regions. This comprised around 300 face-to-face interviews and one focus group in each of the 44 district council areas. The results of this research were published on 17 October 2003 and are available from our website, and from MORI's website at www.mori.com. This opinion research has not been a key determinant of our conclusions and draft recommendations, it is one of a number of sets of data we have taken into account.

1.8 We had regard to the 'Financial Model' provided to us by ODPM. The model seeks to identify the 'costs of being in business' by asking all councils subject to review to supply financial information to our consultants, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), who have assisted with financial analysis. The Audit Commission verified the information we received from each council. The reports provided by PwC and the Audit Commission are available on our website (www.boundarycommittee.org.uk).

1.9 The review timetable is extremely challenging, both for the Committee and for those who have so far participated in the review. To date, these have primarily been the 44 district and six county councils for the areas being reviewed. We owe them all a debt of gratitude for the positive and constructive approach they have taken to our work, and for the assistance they have provided to us during these initial stages of the review.

2 The Committee's approach

2.1 During Stage One of the review, the Committee received representations from a wide range of stakeholders. All these submissions were considered in the formulation of our draft recommendations for at least two options for wholly unitary local government in each two-tier county area.

2.2 In most cases our draft recommendations are contained within existing county areas. However, we have proposed some cross-county options, including between two-tier and single-tier areas. In considering such changes, we have held firmly to the view that they need to be in the interests of securing the best patterns of unitary local government for the residents of the two-tier areas under review and provide for long term, sustainable local authorities.

2.3 Our draft recommendations are essentially options for consultation. In developing these options we have excluded some proposals put to us, which we consider would not accord with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's guidance to the Committee. Particularly this has been the case where they would result in unitary authorities lacking in capacity adequately to meet the potential demands upon them in the areas concerned.

2.4 The options we are putting forward now are open to change in the light of Stage Three consultations. Indeed, we hope to refine them as a result of this process. In several cases we are specifically seeking views on particular issues or alternative formulations. In all cases we set out, in each of the five separate reports, what we see as the strengths and weaknesses of each option, and views are invited on these matters.

2.5 Accordingly we now invite comment on our proposals. Details of how to respond are included in chapter 6 of this report and in each of the five separate reports, available on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk, that discuss the options in detail.

3 Context and general considerations

3.1 The context of the current review of local government structure is very different from that of the reviews carried out by the Local Government Commission for England. Under the Regional Assemblies (Preparations Act) 2003 (the 2003 Act) we are required to assume the existence of elected regional assemblies and that the functions of local authorities will continue unchanged. There can be no 'status quo' option that would leave the present two-tier structure in place, and we must recommend at least two options for wholly unitary patterns of local government. Although we are guided by the same legislation as during the 1990s – the Local Government Act 1992 – the guidance provided by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) reflects the major changes in the role of local government over the last decade.

3.2 The role and mode of operation of local authorities has changed markedly in recent years. While the range of services provided by local authorities remain broadly the same as at the time of the 1990s reviews, there has been a recognition that councils need to change many aspects of the way they work in order to achieve real improvements for their communities. The new 'well-being' power in the Local Government Act 2000 (the 2000 Act) and the growing importance of the community leadership role are intended to support this process.

3.3 The 'committee system', adopted over a 100 years ago, has been largely swept away by the 2000 Act and new political decision-making arrangements introduced. This is intended to bring about greater transparency and accountability and a more explicit role for councillors in leading the community. Performance and quality of service is increasingly important, backed up by a range of performance reporting and service inspection and, most recently, the comprehensive performance assessments (CPA) related to the whole council. There are 'shared priorities' between local and central government, and an incentive in the form of the local Public Service Agreements to exceed national priority targets. All these have contributed to the development of significant organisational and service change, including partnership working by local authorities and a more strategic focus. In considering the options for unitary local government in the regions under review, we have been conscious of these continuing changes and the importance of presenting options that will provide the setting for authorities capable of responding effectively to the range of demands upon them.

3.4 Councils have new cross-cutting priorities, many set within a national framework, and new powers such as the power of well-being under the 2000 Act which recognises that new and innovative ways may be essential to provide solutions that enhance quality of life, boost local economies, or improve the local environment of local communities. The community leadership role that local authorities and their partners bring to tackling these priorities creates a much more explicit link between councils and the needs of their communities that may increasingly be influenced by wider sub-regional and regional factors. It is therefore important that we seek to balance these wider economic community issues against the more local community interests often expressed to us.

3.5 The size of an authority in both a geographical and population sense, and the capacity to deliver the 'modernisation agenda' are issues that feature throughout the guidance to us from the ODPM. This alone means that our draft proposals are likely to differ significantly from those of the 1990s reviews. We are asked to put forward proposals that do not involve the creation of further joint arrangements between authorities. In addition our reviews relate to mixed urban and rural communities

rather than the more homogeneous urban areas which, in the main, gained unitary status following the 1990s reviews. Some submissions made to us have advocated unitary authorities principally covering rural areas, while others have pointed out the need to reflect a mix of urban and rural communities in which neither predominates. Some of the responses in our qualitative research also drew this latter conclusion. Irrespective of the mix of communities, we would have concerns about creating very small rural unitary authorities, given the far-reaching change agenda to which they would be expected to respond with limited scope for flexibility in the deployment of resources. Our proposals have tended to be for larger authorities with adequate potential resource bases and capacity to meet varying demands and the durability to respond flexibly and effectively as circumstances and priorities change over time.

3.6 We are also asked in the ODPM guidance to give greater weight to wider patterns of community within an area and to the economic links between communities. Our MORI research has provided some evidence on the extent of these wider communities within an area, whether in terms of travel to work, shopping or leisure patterns. This tends to be reflected in our recommendations for larger rather than smaller new unitary authorities.

3.7 Performance and the delivery of high quality services to local people is an issue very much in our minds as it will be in those of local authorities with the recent or impending experience of CPA inspections. We recognise that current performance is a 'snapshot in time', influenced by many factors, and may not be a good guide to the likely performance of new unitary authorities, even where they were to be based on 'continuing' authorities. They do, however, give pointers to be considered. In this context our judgement has been directed towards creating the conditions in which 'high-performing' new unitary authorities may best develop.

3.8 These issues are expanded upon in the following chapter.

4 Specific considerations

4.1 Our guidance emphasises that we will give weight to well-evidenced, consensus-based submissions from interested parties, particularly the relevant two-tier authorities in the areas being reviewed. We are pleased that a fair degree of consensus was achieved in some county areas during Stage One, although in all cases preferred options from stakeholders tended to polarise around on the one hand a unitary county-based solution or, on the other, a sub-county authority or a combined district solution. We received very few proposals for the creation of unitary authorities based on the boundaries of a single district council. Nor did we receive many proposals which did not build upon existing local authority boundaries.

4.2 The submissions we received provided us with a helpful source of information and evidence. Where we felt there to be evidence gaps in the proposals submitted, further details have been sought. In large part the county councils and district councils have experienced different challenges in the development of their proposals to us. The challenge for county councils was how, as county unitary authorities, they would engage with and adequately represent the interests of residents at a local level. That for district councils was how their proposed unitary structures would deliver large-scale services such as education and personal social services without recourse to increased numbers of joint arrangements.

4.3 Legislation limits the considerations we can take into account in this review. We are required by the 2003 Act to come forward with at least two options for wholly unitary patterns of local government in the six county areas concerned. Retaining the existing two-tier structure is not an option we can recommend. Nor can we recommend against the establishment of elected regional assemblies. We received representations in relation to both these matters.

4.4 The number and diversity, in terms of their geography and population, of the areas under review raise particular challenges for us (Table 2). Our objective in this document is to set out the coherence of our approach, albeit resulting in different conclusions in different settings. The latter is inevitable given the nature of the county areas being reviewed – what may be an appropriate size or pattern of unitary authorities in Northumberland may not be appropriate in the context of Lancashire.

4.5 Accordingly, there is no single test that can be applied to determine whether or not a particular pattern of unitary local government is the right one for a given area. Instead we need to look at a fairly complex array of considerations and to exercise our judgement.

4.6 We have noted that, irrespective of the current review, there seems to be some support for the move to unitary structures of local government, and that the resulting unitary authorities need to have the capacity to 'punch their weight' within the regional dimension. This may, in part, be a consequence of the challenges arising from the Government's agenda for modernising local government and in particular the developing community leadership role of local authorities which we refer to in more detail later in this chapter.

4.7 In addition to the introduction of new political management structures, local authorities under the new 'power of well-being' are required to develop their community leadership and engagement role including an assessment of community needs and aspirations which can be reflected in a 'Community Strategy' and its achievement monitored through a 'Local Strategic Partnership' that includes key stakeholders and interests.

4.8 There is also an increasing emphasis on authorities' ability to make best use of resources and deliver high performing and improving services. During the last year this included a CPA of all single-tier and county councils undertaken by the Audit Commission. Results were published in December 2002 and the programme has now been extended to district councils.

4.9 The ODPM guidance to us refers to these and a range of other factors we are required to take into account in considering which wholly unitary patterns of local government are likely to provide for high performing unitary authorities. We recognise however, that a current high-performing authority will not necessarily lead to a high-performing successor.

Geographical size, population and capacity

4.10 In its guidance to us the ODPM makes a number of points about the size of an authority and its impact upon capacity. Before we comment on our consideration it is relevant to explain our understanding of 'capacity'. Recent research commissioned by ODPM defines capacity as 'the right organisation, systems, partnerships, people and processes to deliver against a particular agenda or plan'.

4.11 A number of factors are involved:

- Finance – having the funding available now and in the future to achieve the improvements required.
- Systems and processes – that make best use of individual capability to facilitate continuous improvement.
- People – sufficient staff to deliver or the ability to 'call-in' additional resources when required.
- Skills – appropriate technical ability among existing staff and partners.
- Knowledge – sufficient understanding of how to manage change and improve services.
- Behaviour – a style of working that facilitates and enables improvement.

Source: Capacity building in local government – research on capacity building needs (ODPM June 2003).

4.12 Overall capacity appears to be more than the sum of its parts and studies on improvement in local government have recognised that successful councils have strong corporate capacity. However, there is no conclusive evidence of a simple and overriding relationship between size, whether expressed in a geographical sense or in terms of overall population, and capacity.

4.13 The ODPM guidance makes no comment about the geographical size of unitary structures to recommend, although we are asked to give greater weight to the wider patterns of community within an area and the economic links between communities so that the 'geographical reach' of the new authorities can allow communities of place and interest effective involvement. Geography and population density also seem to us to be a factor in some of the areas under review as local government has often expressed a concern about the added cost of delivering services in rural and sparsely populated areas.

4.14 We also took account, where appropriate, of any geographical features that define the natural boundaries of communities.

Table 2: existing authorities – population, area and population density

Local authority (by region and county)	Population	Area (hectares)	Population per hectare
North East			
Durham CC	493,470	222,609	2.2
1 Chester-le-Street DC	53,692	6,758	7.9
2 Derwentside DC	85,074	27,079	3.1
3 Durham City	87,709	18,668	4.7
4 Easington DC	93,993	14,456	6.5
5 Sedgefield BC	87,206	21,737	4.0
6 Teesdale DC	24,457	83,616	0.3
7 Wear Valley DC	61,339	50,295	1.2
Northumberland			
8 Alnwick DC	31,029	107,951	0.3
9 Berwick upon Tweed BC	25,949	97,181	0.3
10 Blyth Valley BC	81,265	7,036	11.5
11 Castle Morpeth BC	49,001	61,823	0.8
12 Tynedale DC	58,808	220,639	0.3
13 Wansbeck DC	61,138	6,676	9.2
North West			
14 Cheshire CC	673,788	208,301	3.2
15 Chester City	118,210	44,804	2.6
16 Congleton BC	90,655	21,099	4.3
17 Crewe & Nantwich BC	111,007	43,041	2.6
18 Ellesmere Port & Neston BC	81,672	8,841	9.2
19 Macclesfield BC	150,155	52,497	2.9
Vale Royal BC	122,089	38,019	3.2

North West (continued)

	Cumbria CC	487,607	676,780	0.7
20	Allerdale BC	93,492	124,166	0.8
21	Barrow-in-Furness BC	71,980	7,796	9.2
22	Carlisle City	100,739	103,997	1.0
23	Copeland BC	69,318	73,176	1.0
24	Eden DC	49,777	214,241	0.2
25	South Lakeland DC	102,301	153,404	0.7
	Lancashire CC	1,134,974	290,305	3.9
26	Burnley BC	89,542	11,070	8.0
27	Chorley BC	100,449	20,280	5.0
28	Fylde BC	73,217	16,553	4.4
29	Hyndburn BC	81,496	7,299	11.1
30	Lancaster City	133,914	57,586	2.3
31	Pendle BC	89,248	16,936	5.3
32	Preston City	129,633	14,229	9.1
33	Ribble Valley BC	53,960	58,316	0.9
34	Rosendale BC	65,652	13,805	4.8
35	South Ribble BC	103,867	11,296	9.2
36	West Lancashire DC	108,378	34,679	3.1
37	Wyre BC	105,618	28,256	3.7
Yorkshire & Humber				
	North Yorkshire CC	569,660	804,011	0.7
38	Craven DC	53,620	117,739	0.5
39	Hambleton DC	84,111	131,117	0.6
40	Harrogate BC	151,336	130,794	1.2
41	Richmondshire DC	47,010	131,867	0.4
42	Ryedale DC	50,872	150,659	0.3
43	Scarborough BC	106,243	81,654	1.3
44	Selby DC	76,468	59,926	1.3

Source: Office for National Statistics (2001 census).

Note: CC = county council, DC = district council, BC = borough council.

4.15 The ODPM guidance asks us to consider the extent to which the structure, geography and size of an authority might influence its ability to exercise community leadership, engage with the local community and work effectively with partner organisations. We received many examples of partnership arrangements but, again, we found there is no simple formula for success.

4.16 Our proposals are intended to strike a balance between, on the one hand, unitary authorities of an appropriate size and capacity to deliver services effectively and, on the other, recommending unitary solutions that to some extent reflect geography and the socio-economic links between communities in an area. In this context the strengths and weaknesses of different options vary and we seek to set out these considerations for the purposes of consultation.

4.17 As with geographic size there is no specific population recommended by ODPM for new unitary structures, although this was an issue frequently raised with us by authorities during Stage One of the review. Lack of guidance is unsurprising in this case as population numbers are only a numeric reflection of communities. We have looked at the evidence available on population size and effectiveness of service delivery and conclude that it is mixed. There are smaller authorities working effectively, as evidenced by inspection and CPA results, and larger ones working less well, and vice versa. We looked for evidence as to whether there was any relationship between authorities of smaller size and the increasing use of joint arrangements. Such evidence as we identified was inconclusive, although the submissions we received for smaller unitary options appeared to incorporate a greater range of inter-authority working. However, as many of the review areas are predominantly rural we have looked for evidence that related specifically to authorities with smaller population sizes covering large geographic areas but found no definitive evidence.

Community identity

4.18 Within any area there will be many different and overlapping communities. There are 'affective' communities or communities of 'place' and there are 'effective' communities or communities of 'interest'. The former relate to affinity to a particular town, village or area; the latter to shared identities and activities such as work, or shopping or parents for local schooling for their children.

4.19 The ODPM guidance stresses the link between community leadership and the ability of councils to ensure the identities and interests of local communities are properly reflected in the decisions authorities make about service provision.

4.20 The evidence from the MORI research carried out on our behalf in each of the review areas tends to bear out the ODPM assertion that people most frequently identify with their immediate locality, village or town. Given the emphasis of the guidance to us, this is clearly not a basis upon which to build new local government structures.

4.21 The opinion research also identifies a slightly stronger identity with the district in most areas of each county although this tended to be less marked within the districts in which the county council sited its main administrative offices. However, the differences were not great. We noted some attachment to traditional county areas, although not necessarily to the county council, and attachment to coming from that county area or region. In some areas there was also a desire, often among the older

age groups interviewed, for a return to a former historic county area where boundaries may have altered in the past.

4.22 The pattern of evidence relating to effective communities is more mixed reflecting the different economic and social factors that apply in each county area. Neighbouring metropolitan areas such as Manchester and Newcastle can exert a significant pull in terms of employment, leisure and shopping and in some cases this influence spreads to counties in neighbouring regions. On the other hand there are geographical barriers within the review areas that also exert a considerable influence.

4.23 In general terms the patterns of unitary local government on which we are consulting recognise current community identities. We acknowledge, however, that not all levels of community identity can be reflected in all our recommendations given the balance we need to strike between reflecting community identities and providing options for effective unitary authorities.

4.24 So far as possible we have sought to apply the ODPM guidance by proposing names for new authorities that reflect local people's feelings about historic and county connections. We would particularly welcome views on names for new unitary authorities in the next stage of consultation.

Community leadership and engagement

4.25 The ODPM guidance makes a number of references to the key role councils play in leading their communities and the factors that we may wish to consider when proposing new unitary structures. Indeed, this is an area where councils have begun to develop many new initiatives in response to the 2000 Act. Central to the Government's agenda is the need for strong and accountable local democratic leadership leading and empowering local communities.

4.26 Community leadership in the sense that it represents the needs and aspirations of communities can operate at more than one level. It can be concerned with the local (district) level, sub-regional (county) level, regional, national and European levels. It is linked to community identity and the confidence that citizens have that their democratic representatives understand the needs of communities. Our opinion research has suggested that for citizens there is a preference for decision-making at its most local level. However, this tends to be based on a preference for local government units that in many cases are smaller than existing districts.

4.27 The ODPM guidance, while acknowledging that smaller units may have advantages in terms of responsiveness and public confidence, states that this underestimates the potential for larger authorities to deliver effective democratic scrutiny through devolved arrangements, effective working with parish and town councils and improved democratic representation. The development of community strategies is seen as the primary way in which community views can be represented in the decision making process and issues of competing priorities resolved.

4.28 Consequently, we have invited evidence of ways in which councils had responded to the 2000 Act and developed effective arrangements for community leadership through new decision-making arrangements including effective scrutiny, and the production of community strategies through a process involving communities. We also asked for evidence of local decision-making arrangements and how these might be enhanced under larger unitary options so that effective local community involvement could be maintained.

4.29 Where proposals were for larger units, the submissions to us appear to address the issues concerned with maintaining community involvement at the local level. In many cases county council submissions have proposed the establishment of new or extended Area Committees, Boards, or in one case Cabinets based on local communities and linked to Local Strategic Partnerships. Councils have proposed that these would operate with a range of delegations to enhance local decision-making, and include a broad spectrum of local interests. A number of submissions also aimed to complete local representation in their area by encouraging the establishment of new parish or town councils in currently un-parished areas. We would welcome further evidence from county councils as to how the area arrangements they propose would actually work in practice and achieve local community engagement.

4.30 While the majority of proposals acknowledged that a reduced number of local elected representatives was likely, many also stressed the future role of parish and town councils in representing their local communities within devolved arrangements and encouraging 'high performing' parish councils through support for achievement of 'Quality Parish' status. We endorse this ultimate objective as properly complementary to the creation of larger unitary local authorities. In particular we would see a place for the creation of town councils in market towns and other appropriate urban areas where they do not currently exist, provided, of course, they have local support. However, we are cautious about entertaining too great an expectation as to how much or how quickly reliance can be placed on the widespread achievement of Quality Parish status. Many parish councils will not wish to develop the service provider role envisaged under the Quality Parish initiative, at least in the short term, and may indeed prefer to maintain their existing limited remit. Consequently, while the approaches favoured by principal authorities have considerable potential, they are more likely to have an impact in the medium to long term. This is an issue on which we would particularly welcome the views of parish and town councils.

Partnerships

4.31 Partnerships are a significant aspect of community leadership as they can be an effective way to deliver community objectives. Effective partnership working to deliver key objectives was also felt to be a success factor in the recent CPAs of single-tier authorities and county councils.

4.32 We are mindful of factors relating to partnership working referred to in the guidance. In particular, the point that while partnerships can be an effective way of delivering priorities where more than one organisation has a role to play in achievement, there is a risk that a multiplicity of partnerships can impose additional costs and take a disproportionate amount of senior management and councillor time. We are concerned to ensure that our recommendations for patterns of unitary authorities will allow the new councils to work effectively with partner organisations.

4.33 The submissions from authorities identify the extent to which they have already established partnerships, both between individual authorities and with external partners, in areas such as health, education and crime reduction. In addition, a number of partnerships exist with strategic planning and delivery bodies, and the business, voluntary and community sectors. Some are statutory, others operate on a voluntary basis, and not all partnerships have coterminous boundaries.

4.34 Most authorities said that they either have in place a community strategy and a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to monitor its delivery or are in the process of doing so. LSPs are non-statutory and non-executive bodies but are seen by

Government as a way of involving a wide range of partners in the achievement of agreed community objectives at the same time rationalising existing partnerships and answering the ODPM comment concerning 'partnership fatigue'.

4.35 There is evidence of partnership working at both county and district levels within review areas. Many submissions from authorities commented on how they would restructure their current partnership arrangements to reflect their preferred option for unitary local government. Our proposals seek to strike a balance between arrangements that can build upon the developing LSPs while at the same time reflecting the needs of the key strategic partnerships that may operate over a significant geographical area. Where possible our proposals for new unitary authorities have attempted to bring about a level of coterminosity with the boundaries of key strategic partners. While this may not always be the case it is in part a reflection of the multiplicity of these partnerships within the region and the areas under review. However, the establishment of new unitary authorities may in itself have a beneficial effect in bringing about the rationalisation of existing partnerships. We would very much welcome views on our proposals from voluntary, community and other organisations, and the business sector, that may already participate in partnerships with local authorities in the review areas.

High performing local authorities

4.36 The ODPM guidance mentions a number of factors that high performing councils appear to have in common. These include high quality political leadership, good managerial skills, adequate corporate capacity, a willingness to innovate and good relationships with external organisations. While not directly affecting the ability to be high performing, size and geography may have an impact upon the ability of a council to recruit and retain specialist staff, develop the 'corporate centre' or have the capacity to develop specialist services or community leadership and partnership working.

4.37 Councils have introduced new arrangements for democratic decision-making and we received evidence of these, which in the main, were forms of the 'Leader and Cabinet' model although some smaller councils in review areas operate a modified committee system incorporating scrutiny arrangements. We are aware that in all cases these arrangements are a recent introduction and there is limited evidence for single-tier and county councils only from the 2002 CPA results as to how well they appear to operate. Nevertheless, we are aware that effective political and managerial leadership seem to have been a factor behind the success of councils judged 'excellent' in the first round of CPA results in December 2002.

4.38 It is apparent to us that many factors affect the performance of local authorities and it would be difficult to isolate these and even more so to recreate them with certainty in any new structures. Nevertheless, we are aware from submissions, published independent inspection results and most recently the CPAs, of single-tier and county councils of the current range of performance across the review areas. At present there are few published CPA results for district councils in the review areas although, as and when they are, we will take them into account. We are also aware that current performance is not necessarily any guide to future performance. Even the CPA results, which are probably the most thorough review yet of local authority performance, are only a 'snapshot in time' and one that reflects a combination of current circumstances that would necessarily be difficult to capture and reproduce in new structures with certainty.

Top four by county – North East and North Yorkshire

Durham	Northumberland	North Yorkshire
Responding to local people's wishes (25%)	Quality of service (28%)	Quality of service (24%)
Quality of service (23%)	Responding to local people's wishes (20%)	Responding to local people's wishes (23%)
Being accountable to local people (16%)	Cost of service (16%)	Cost of service (15%)
Cost of service (14%)	Being accountable to local people (14%)	Being accountable to local people (15%)

Source: MORI October 2003

4.47 Nevertheless, we have received evidence, in particular from county councils, but not exclusively so, on the possible transitional costs based on an alternative model for a variety of unitary solutions for county areas. We have noted this evidence but it has not been audited by the Audit Commission or considered by our financial consultants.

5 Other matters

5.1 In a late amendment to the 2003 Act in its passage through Parliament, provision was made to allow us to make recommendations for changes to the boundaries of existing unitary authorities that adjoin two-tier areas, but only to expand the areas of the unitary authorities.

5.2 In addition to enabling us to look across the boundaries of shire unitary authorities, we may also look across the boundaries of Metropolitan districts. This may have an unintended effect. From our understanding of section 14(7)(b) of the 1992 Act, any expansion of a Metropolitan district resulting from the transfer to it of any part of a two-tier area has the effect of making that district non-metropolitan. That is to say, it will no longer form part of a Metropolitan county area.



6 What happens next?

6.1 Everyone is invited to comment on our proposals for unitary local government. We will take fully into account all comments received by 23 February 2004. All responses may be inspected at our offices, and a list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

6.2 We will be setting out the options for new unitary authorities in a leaflet that will be delivered to each household in the two-tier areas at the start of Stage Three. You may express your views by using the online form on our website (www.boundarycommittee.org.uk), or by writing directly to us:

Local Government Review Team
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 2HW

The Committee regrets that it is unable to acknowledge representations.

6.3 In the light of the responses received, we will review and refine our draft recommendations. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Deputy Prime Minister.

6.4 It is open to the Deputy Prime Minister to accept our final recommendations, or he may request further information and may reject one or more of our recommendations, in which case we may be directed to carry out a further review. A referendum on elected regional assemblies for the three regions is likely to be held in late 2004. Our recommendations will inform electors about the possible local government structures that would be implemented in the event of a 'yes' vote.

Appendix A:

Map 1 – current local government structure in the review areas



Appendix B: Summary of options

The draft recommendations are summarised in the following tables by region and county area.

North East

County Durham

Option One: one unitary authority

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
County Durham (Durham County Council)	493,500



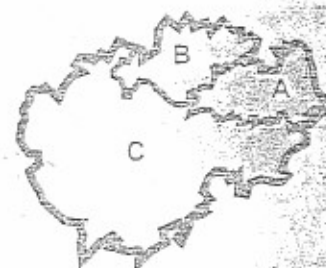
Option Two: two unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A North & East Durham (Chester-le-Street, Derwentside, Durham City and Easington)	320,500
B South Durham (Sedgefield, Teesdale and Wear Valley)	173,000



Option Three: three unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A East Durham (Durham City and Easington)	181,700
B North Durham (Chester-le-Street and Derwentside)	138,800
C South Durham (Sedgefield, Teesdale and Wear Valley)	173,000



Northumberland

Option One: one unitary authority

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
Northumberland (Northumberland County Council)	307,200



Option Two: two unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A North & West Northumberland (Alnwick, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Castle Morpeth and Tynedale)	164,800
B South East Northumberland (Blyth Valley and Wansbeck)	142,400



North West

Cheshire

Option One: one unitary authority

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
Cheshire (Cheshire County Council)	673,800



Option Two: two unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (Approx.)
A East Cheshire (Congleton, Macclesfield, eastern parts of Crewe & Nantwich and part of Vale Royal)	318,800
B West Cheshire (Chester City, Ellesmere Port & Neston and western parts of Crewe & Nantwich and part of Vale Royal)	355,000



Option Three: three unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A East Cheshire (Congleton and Macclesfield)	240,800
B Mid Cheshire (Vale Royal and Crewe & Nantwich)	233,000
C Chester & West Cheshire (Ellesmere Port & Neston and Chester City)	199,900



Option Two: two unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A North & West Northumberland (Alnwick, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Castle Morpeth and Tynedale)	164,800
B South East Northumberland (Blyth Valley and Wansbeck)	142,400



North West

Cheshire

Option One: one unitary authority

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
Cheshire (Cheshire County Council)	673,800



Option Two: two unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (Approx.)
A East Cheshire (Congleton, Macclesfield, eastern parts of Crewe & Nantwich and part of Vale Royal)	318,800
B West Cheshire (Chester City, Ellesmere Port & Neston and western parts of Crewe & Nantwich and part of Vale Royal)	355,000



Option Three: three unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A East Cheshire (Congleton and Macclesfield)	240,800
B Mid Cheshire (Vale Royal and Crewe & Nantwich)	233,000
C Chester & West Cheshire (Ellesmere Port & Neston and Chester City)	199,900



Cumbria

Option One: one unitary authority

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
Cumbria (Cumbria county)	487,600



Option Two: two unitary authorities

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A North Cumbria (Allerdale, Copeland, Carlisle and Eden)	313,300
B South Cumbria & Lancaster (Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland and Lancaster)	308,200



Lancashire

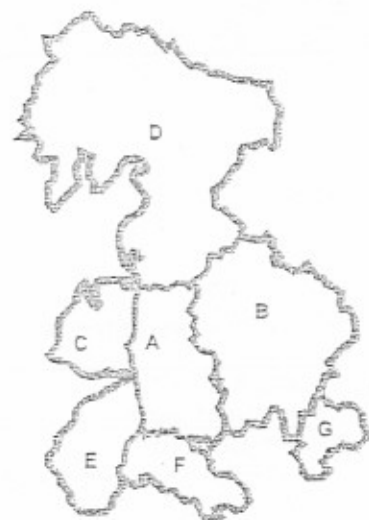
Option One

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A Lancashire (Lancaster, Ribble Valley, Pendle, Burnley, Hyndburn, Preston, Fylde, South Ribble, Chorley, West Lancashire, part of Wyre and part of Rossendale)	1,051,400
B Rochdale (Rochdale and part of Rossendale)	212,600
C Blackpool (Blackpool and part of Wyre)	218,500



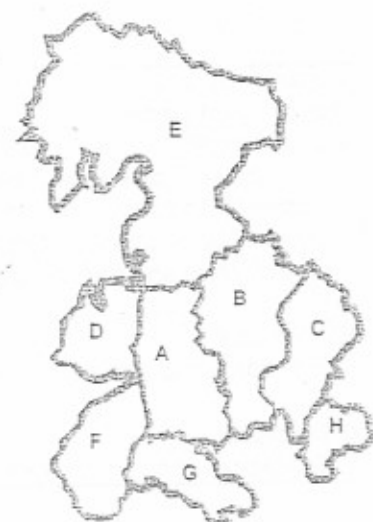
Option Two

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A Central Lancashire (Preston, South Ribble, Chorley, part of Wyre and part of Fylde)	384,400
B East Lancashire (Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Pendle, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley and part of Rossendale)	510,100
C Fylde Coast (Blackpool, part of Wyre and part of Fylde)	270,600
D South Cumbria & Lancaster (Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland and Lancaster)	308,200
E Sefton & West Lancashire (Sefton and part of West Lancashire)	338,900
F Wigan (Wigan and part of West Lancashire)	353,900
G Rochdale (Rochdale and part of Rossendale)	212,600



Option Three

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A Central Lancashire (Preston, South Ribble, Chorley, part of Wyre and part of Fylde)	384,400
B Blackburn & Ribble (Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley)	272,900
C South East Lancashire (Burnley, Pendle and part of Rossendale)	237,200
D Fylde Coast (Blackpool, parts of Wyre and part of Fylde)	270,600
E South Cumbria & Lancaster (Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland and Lancaster)	308,200
F Sefton & West Lancashire (Sefton and part of West Lancashire)	338,900
G Wigan (Wigan and part of West Lancashire)	353,900
H Rochdale (Rochdale and part of Rossendale)	212,600



Yorkshire & Humber

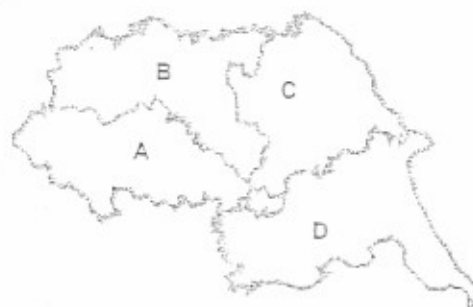
Option One

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
North Yorkshire (Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby)	569,700



Option Two

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A Craven & Harrogate (Craven and Harrogate)	205,000
B Hambleton & Richmondshire (Hambleton and Richmondshire)	131,100
C Ryedale & Scarborough (Ryedale and Scarborough)	157,100
D East Riding of Yorkshire (East Riding of Yorkshire and Selby)	390,600



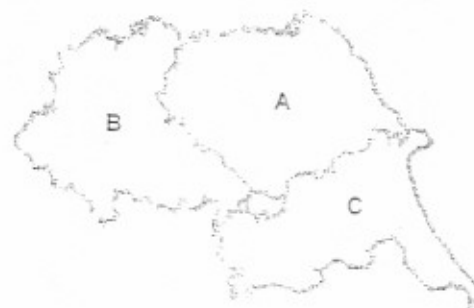
Option Three

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A Craven & Harrogate (Craven and Harrogate)	205,000
B North Riding of Yorkshire (Hambleton, Richmondshire, Ryedale and Scarborough)	288,200
C East Riding of Yorkshire (East Riding of Yorkshire and Selby)	390,600



Option Four

Unitary authority (constituent parts)	Population (2001)
A North York Moors (Hambleton, Ryedale and Scarborough)	241,200
B Yorkshire Dales (Craven, Harrogate, and Richmondshire)	252,000
C East Riding of Yorkshire (East Riding of Yorkshire and Selby)	390,600



Note: All population figures rounded to nearest 100

Recommendations for unitary local government in and



Recommendations for unitary local government in Cumbria and Lancashire

December 2003

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Contents

	Page
What is The Boundary Committee for England?	5
Summary	7
1 Introduction	9
2 The Committee's approach	17
3 Submissions received	19
Cumbria	19
Lancashire	22
4 Analysis of proposals	29
Cumbria	29
One unitary authority	29
Three unitary authorities	31
Two unitary authorities	33
Other proposals	35
Lancashire	36
One unitary authority	36
North Lancashire	38
Fylde and Wyre	38
Central Lancashire	41
South West Lancashire	43
East Lancashire	44
Other proposals	50
5 Draft recommendations	53
Cumbria	53
Option One	53
Option Two	53
Lancashire	55
Option One	55
Option Two	55
Option Three	60
Financial model	62
6 Other matters	65
Ceremonial arrangements	65
Public protection	66
Strategic planning	69
Other services	71
7 What happens next?	73
Appendices	
A Maps of draft options for Cumbria and Lancashire	75
B Code of practice on written consultation	81

1948

What is The Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

Members of the Committee:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Robin Gray
Joan Jones CBE
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

The Boundary Committee for England's main area of work to date has been periodic electoral reviews (PERs). We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. The aim of PERs is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances.

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Summary

On 16 June 2003 The Boundary Committee for England received a direction from the Deputy Prime Minister to undertake local government reviews in the two-tier local government areas of three English regions: North East, North West and Yorkshire & the Humber.

We began the review of local government structures in Cumbria and Lancashire on 17 June 2003.

This report sets out draft recommendations on which comments are invited. It summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes proposals for two options for patterns of unitary authorities in Cumbria and three in Lancashire.

Our proposals for patterns of wholly unitary authorities are set out in chapter 5 of this report and are illustrated on the maps in Appendix A. They are:

In Cumbria:

- one unitary authority comprising the whole of the Cumbria county area; and
- two unitary authorities based on the northern and southern areas in Cumbria, also incorporating Lancaster city from Lancashire.

In Lancashire:

- one unitary authority based on the majority of the Lancashire county area;
- two new unitary authorities for central and northern Lancashire (incorporating Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland districts in Cumbria) and the expansion of the existing Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Rochdale, Sefton and Wigan unitary authorities into the remaining areas of Lancashire; and
- three new unitary authorities for central, eastern and northern Lancashire (incorporating Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland districts in Cumbria) and the expansion of the existing Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Rochdale, Sefton and Wigan unitary authorities into the remaining areas of Lancashire.

This report should be read in conjunction with our *Local government review overview report* (henceforth *Overview report*), which sets out more fully our approach to formulating our draft recommendations. The *Overview report* is published separately and copies can be obtained by downloading from our website or by contacting us at the address below.

We will consult on these proposals for 12 weeks from 1 December 2003. We take this consultation very seriously.

We may refine or vary the proposals and the number of options we put forward as part of our final recommendations in the light of comments received during this consultation period. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence.

After considering local views we will decide which proposals to submit to the Deputy Prime Minister; he will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. Local people will then be asked to vote on the options (with or without modifications) in a referendum at a later date.

You should express your views by writing to us using an online form, which can be found at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk, or by writing directly to us at the address below by 23 February 2004.

Local Government Review Team
Cumbria and Lancashire county review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

1 Introduction

1 The Boundary Committee for England has been directed by the Deputy Prime Minister to carry out an independent review of local government structure, as a precursor to a referendum on elected regional assemblies, in the two-tier local government areas of the North East, North West and Yorkshire & the Humber regions. Electors in the two-tier areas will also be asked to vote on which pattern of unitary local government they would prefer.

2 This report contains our draft recommendations for proposals for wholly unitary patterns of local government in Cumbria and Lancashire. Our recommendations will inform electors about the structure of local government that would be implemented in the event of a 'yes' vote in the referendum.

3 In carrying out these reviews, we must have regard to:

- Section 14(8) of the Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Act 2003, i.e. to:
 - assume that there is an elected assembly for the region;
 - recommend structural change for so much of the area of the region as is comprised of the areas of all of the relevant (i.e. two-tier) local authorities in the region;
 - have regard to the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - have regard to the need to secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - have regard to guidance issued by the Deputy Prime Minister.
 - Section 14 of the Local Government Act 1992, which defines structural change as the replacement, in any non-metropolitan area (i.e. outside Greater London and the six metropolitan county areas), of the two principal tiers of local government with a single tier. The two principal tiers of local government are district and county councils. Such replacement may take one of two forms, either:
 - the transfer to a county council of the functions of district councils in that area; or
 - the transfer to a district council of the functions of the county council for that area.
 - The general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1996 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promote equality of opportunity; and
 - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.
- 4 As part of a local government review we may make recommendations for:
- the abolition of a local authority whose functions had been transferred to another authority;
 - the creation of new local government areas (i.e. a district or a county);
 - alterations to local government areas;
 - any joint arrangements which may be required for the exercise of strategic and other functions, particularly in circumstances where it is proposed to transfer county council functions to districts, whether on existing or altered boundaries.

5 Details of the legislation under which we work are set out in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's guidance to the Committee, which is available on the ODPM's website (www.odpm.gov.uk). Our own guidance document, *Guidance and procedural advice for the local government reviews*, sets out our approach to the reviews. Copies of the guidance are available to anyone through our website (www.boundarycommittee.org.uk) or by contacting us at the address at the back of this report.

6 Our task is to recommend at least two options for structural change for each two-tier county under review. We are able to review and make recommendations for changes to the boundaries of existing single-tier authorities adjoining two-tier areas, but only with a view to part of an existing two-tier authority area being absorbed into a single tier area. We cannot review the boundaries of regions as part of these local government reviews. Nor can we recommend retaining the existing two-tier local government structures.

7 The review is in four stages (see Table 1).

Table 1: The stages of the review

Stage	Dates	Description
Stage One	17 June 2003 – 8 September 2003	Commencement of review and submission of proposals for wholly unitary patterns of local authorities.
Stage Two	9 September 2003 – 30 November 2003	The Committee considers proposals, determines draft recommendations and prepares draft recommendations report.
Stage Three	1 December 2003 – 23 February 2004	The Committee publishes draft recommendations report and invites representations.
Stage Four	24 February 2004 – no later than 25 May 2004	The Committee considers representations, reaches conclusions on final recommendations and submits a final report to the Deputy Prime Minister.

8 Stage One began on 17 June 2003, when we wrote to the district and county councils in Cumbria and Lancashire inviting proposals for unitary patterns of local government. We also notified adjoining unitary and metropolitan authorities and other key stakeholders in Cumbria and Lancashire, including police authorities, fire and rescue services, parish and town councils and Members of Parliament with constituencies in both counties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and asked the local authorities to distribute posters on our behalf. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 8 September 2003. Each two-tier local authority was also requested to provide us with financial information about their authority.

9 We also commissioned public opinion research, carried out by MORI, in each of the districts in Cumbria and Lancashire. This comprised of around 300 face-to-face interviews and one focus group per district. The results of this research were published on 17 October 2003 and are available from our website, as well as MORI's website at www.mori.com.

10 At Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One, along with the public opinion research and financial information, and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 1 December 2003 and will end on 23 February 2004, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. In addition, we are sending a leaflet to every household in the two-tier areas under review during Stage Three, inviting comments on our recommendations, and will be undertaking public opinion research on the options. We take this consultation very seriously. We are consulting on two options for Cumbria and three options for Lancashire which we may refine or vary at final recommendations stage, so it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence.

12 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to refine or vary the options put forward and submit final recommendations to the Deputy Prime Minister. He will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. Subject to the Deputy Prime Minister's decision, the Committee's final recommendations will appear on the ballot paper for the second referendum question for electors in the two-tier areas at a later date.

Cumbria

13 Cumbria was established as a county council following the local government reorganisation in 1974. It comprises the historic counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, a small part of the former West Riding of Yorkshire and that part of what was formerly Lancashire which lies 'north of the sands'.

14 It covers approximately 676,800 hectares. The county boundary is defined by the Irish Sea to the west, from the Solway Firth to Morecambe Bay, by the Scottish border to the north and by the Pennine hills to the east. The physical geography of Cumbria is dominated by a central 'dome' of high relief, which forms the basis of the Lake District National Park. The major settlements in terms of population and industry are Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle, Kendal, Penrith, Whitehaven and Workington. In addition to the main population centres, Cumbria has several smaller towns, which provide shopping and service facilities. However, only around 20 settlements have a population of more than 2,500.

15 A structural review of Cumbria was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Commission for England, in 1994. It determined that the existing two-tier structure of local government should continue.

16 Cumbria comprises the County Council and the six districts of Allerdale, Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland. Map 1 shows the existing local authority boundaries in Cumbria, the main population centres, important geographical features and communication and transport links within Cumbria.

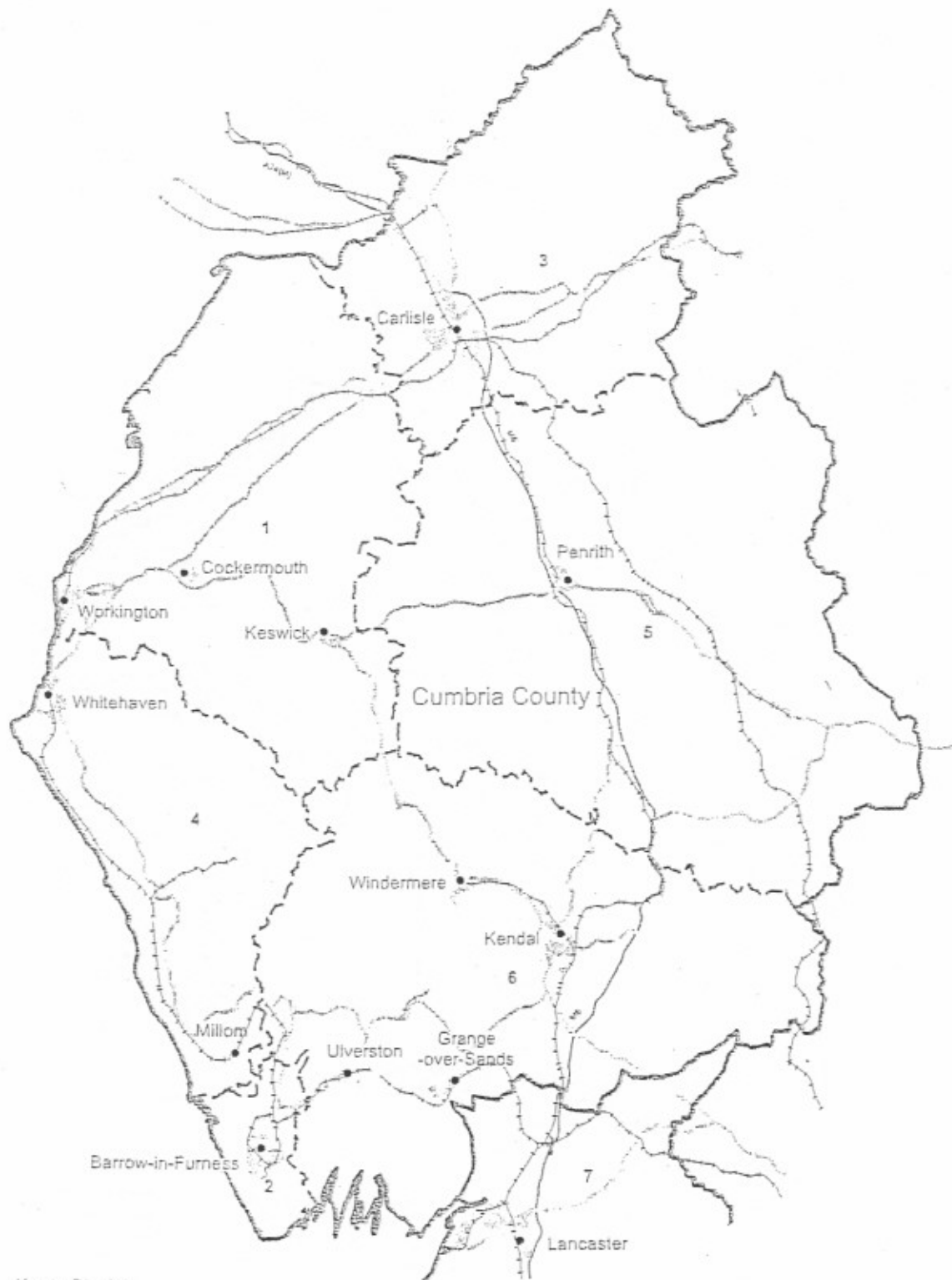
17 Table 2 shows the 2001 population figures, area in hectares and population density in each district and in Cumbria as a whole.

Table 2: Current local authority structures in Cumbria

Authority	Population (2001)	Area (hectares)	Population density (pop/ha)
Cumbria County	487,607	676,780	0.7
Allerdale	93,492	124,166	0.8
Barrow-in-Furness	71,980	7,796	9.2
Carlisle	100,739	103,997	1.0
Copeland	69,318	73,176	1.0
Eden	49,777	214,241	0.2
South Lakeland	102,301	153,404	0.7

Source: Office for National Statistics 2001

Map 1: Existing arrangements in Cumbria


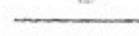

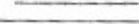


Key to Districts

- 1 Allerdale
- 2 Barrow-in-Furness
- 3 Carlisle
- 4 Copeland
- 5 Eden
- 6 South Lakeland
- 7 Lancaster

Key

- Existing County Boundary —————
- Existing District Boundary - - - - -

- Population Areas 
- Motorways 
- Other Main Roads 
- Railways 

Map 2: Existing arrangements in Lancashire



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Key to Districts

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Burnley | 9 Rossendale | 17 Bury |
| 2 Chorley | 10 South Ribble | 18 Knowsley |
| 3 Fylde | 11 West Lancashire | 19 Liverpool |
| 4 Hyndburn | 12 Wyre | 20 Rochdale |
| 5 Lancaster | 13 Barrow-in-Furness | 21 St Helens |
| 6 Pendle | 14 Blackpool | 22 Sefton |
| 7 Preston | 15 Blackburn with Darwen | 23 South Lakeland |
| 8 Ribble Valley | 16 Bolton | 24 Wigan |

Key	
Existing County Boundary	—————
Existing District Boundary	- - - - -
Existing UA boundary	—————

Population Areas	
Motorways	—————
Other Main Roads	—————
Railways	—————

Lancashire

18 Lancashire is bounded by Greater Manchester and Merseyside to the south, Cumbria to the north, the Irish Sea to the west and the Pennine uplands to the east. It has a population of approximately 1.1 million and covers 290,305 hectares.

19 The administrative county of Lancashire was officially created in 1889, though the historic county predates the 12th century. The county underwent administrative boundary changes during the local government reorganisation of 1974 when the metropolitan counties were established. The structure remained the same, other than minor boundary changes, until the 1990s.

20 A structural review of Lancashire was carried out in 1994 by our predecessor, the Local Government Commission for England. It determined that the existing two-tier structure of local government should continue. However, following a review in 1995, it recommended that Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool should become unitary authorities, and they gained unitary authority status in 1998.

21 Currently, Lancashire contains the County Council and the 12 districts of Burnley, Chorley, Fylde, Hyndburn, Lancaster, Pendle, Preston, Ribble Valley, Rossendale, South Ribble, West Lancashire and Wyre. Map 2 shows the existing local authority boundaries in Lancashire, the main population centres, important geographical features and communication and transport links within the county.

22 The county contains a number of closely spaced and functionally-interlinked medium-sized towns and small cities, including Lancaster, Burnley and Preston. It also includes a number of small market towns, including Ormskirk, Clitheroe and Rawtenstall. Several seaside resorts, such as Lytham St Anne's and Morecambe as well as ports, commuter settlements and large areas of countryside and moorland, also form part of the county.

23 Table 3 shows the 2001 population figures, area in hectares and population density in each district and in Lancashire as a whole.

Table 3: Current local authority structures in Lancashire

Authority	Population (2001)	Area (hectares)	Population density (pop/ha)
Lancashire County	1,134,974	289,971	3.9
Burnley	89,542	11,073	8.1
Chorley	100,449	20,435	5.0
Fylde	73,217	16,501	4.4
Hyndburn	81,496	7,315	11.2
Lancaster	133,914	57,671	2.3
Pendle	89,248	16,952	5.3
Preston	129,633	14,239	9.1
Ribble Valley	53,960	58,444	0.9
Rossendale	65,652	13,811	4.8
South Ribble	103,867	11,296	9.2
West Lancashire	108,378	34,688	3.1
Wyre	105,618	28,332	3.7

Source: Office for National Statistics 2001

24 Table 4 indicates the current functions of county and district councils. Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool borough councils (formally part of the two-tier area in

Lancashire), following their achievement of unitary authority status in 1998, carry out all of these functions.

Table 4: Current functions of county and district councils

Function	District councils	County councils
Education		•
Housing	•	
Planning applications	•	
Strategic planning		•
Transport planning		•
Passenger transport		•
Highways		•
Fire		•
Social services		•
Libraries		•
Leisure and recreation	•	
Waste collection	•	
Waste disposal		•
Environmental health	•	
Revenue collection	•	

Source: Local Government Association

2 The Committee's approach

25 The Committee's approach to formulating its draft recommendations is set out more fully in a separate *Overview report*. This report should be read in conjunction with the *Overview report*.

26 The *Overview report* explains the background to our work and how it differs significantly from the 1990s reviews carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE). The 2003 Act requires us to assume the existence of elected regional assemblies and that the functions of local authorities will remain unchanged except where the Government has subsequently announced changes. Unlike the earlier review, we are required to propose at least two options for patterns of wholly unitary local government in each two-tier county area – the 'status quo' is not an option. Our work is guided by the 1992 Act, as was that of the LGCE; however, we must have regard to guidance issued by the ODPM, which raises issues relating to performance, capacity, community leadership and representation, among others, that we need to address in formulating our recommendations. The *Overview report* explains our approach to these issues in further detail.

27 We received representations during Stage One from a wide range of stakeholders and other interests. These were considered in the development of our draft recommendations. For the most part, our proposals are contained within existing county areas. However, in some regions, as in this case, we have proposed some options that cross county boundaries, including between two-tier and single-tier areas. In considering such changes, we have held firmly to the view that they need to be in the interests of securing the best patterns of unitary local government for the residents of the two-tier areas under review and provide long term, sustainable local authorities. In some cases, we have considered it appropriate to put forward our own proposals which build on the views expressed to us during Stage One. Our detailed draft recommendations for Cumbria and Lancashire appear in chapter 5 of this report.

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3 Submissions received

Cumbria

28 We received 130 submissions in relation to Cumbria during Stage One of the review. These included the County Council and either individual or joint submissions from each two-tier authority under review.

29 Table 5 summarises the preferred options of the existing local authorities in Cumbria. In many cases they provided us with one preferred option, while some also indicated a second preference.

Table 5: Summary of representations by two-tier authorities in Cumbria

Authority	First choice	Second choice
Cumbria County Council	One unitary authority, based on existing county boundaries.	-
Carlisle City Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council	Three unitary authorities based on pairs of existing districts; West Cumbria (Allerdale & Copeland); East Cumbria (Carlisle & Eden); and South Cumbria (Barrow-in-Furness & South Lakeland).	-
Allerdale and Copeland borough councils	Three unitary authorities based on pairs of existing districts; West Cumbria (Allerdale & Copeland); East Cumbria (Carlisle & Eden); and South Cumbria (Barrow-in-Furness & South Lakeland).	Two unitary authorities: Allerdale, Carlisle & Copeland; Barrow-in-Furness, Eden & South Lakeland.
Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council	Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland & Lancaster.	East/West split of the county (details unspecified).

30 The County Council's proposal was supported by 18 respondents as either their first or second preference. These included the national Conservative Party, three parish or town councils and the Conservative Group on Copeland Borough Council. However, it was opposed by five respondents, including three parish or town councils.

31 The five district councils' proposal (or elements of it) was supported by 37 respondents as one of their preferences. However, it should be noted that the majority of these submissions referred specifically to their local pairing of districts without expressing preferences for the other district pairings within the county. Respondents expressing a preference for the three unitary authority option as a whole included one Member of Parliament, Cumbria Police Authority, four parish or town councils and the West Cumbria Partnership, Eden Valley NHS Trust and the national Conservative Party. Those expressing a specific preference for the West Cumbria option included the Conservative Group on Copeland Borough Council,

Home Housing Association and two parish or town councils. The East Cumbria option was specifically supported by five parish or town councils. Those expressing a specific preference for the South Cumbria option included four parish or town councils.

32 Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council's proposal for what it called a Morecambe Bay unitary authority, bringing together Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland and Lancaster (made as part of a joint submission with Lancaster City Council) was supported by 25 respondents as either their first or second preference. These included the Morecambe Bay Primary Care Trust (PCT), the Central & West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, a political group and two town councils. Three respondents specifically objected to this proposal. Four other respondents supported a North Cumbria unitary authority, comprising the four remaining Cumbria districts (or slight variations on them). A further 12 respondents specifically proposed that Cumbria should be divided into two unitary authorities, as either their first or second preference. These included four Members of Parliament.

33 In addition, we received a number of other proposals for patterns of unitary authorities in Cumbria. These are summarised in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Other proposals for unitary structures

Proposed unitary authority	Proposed/supported by
Cumberland/Westmorland/Furness peninsula unitary authorities	One parish council and three individuals
Barrow-in-Furness and part of South Lakeland	One individual
Allerdale & Copeland, and three other unitary authorities (unspecified)	One individual
Two unitary authorities based on Allerdale, Copeland and Barrow-in-Furness; and Carlisle, Eden and South Lakeland	One parish council
Unitary authority based on the combined Carlisle and Penrith & The Borders Parliamentary constituency	One parish council and one individual
Carlisle unitary authority	One voluntary organisation
Lake District	One town council
South Lakeland unitary authority	One parish council
South Lakeland & Eden	Three parish or town councils
Allerdale, Copeland and Carlisle	One town council and one individual
Allerdale, Carlisle & Eden; Copeland, Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland	National Conservative Party and one individual
Unitary authority based on the Penrith & The Borders Parliamentary constituency	One individual
Unitary authorities based on existing districts	One individual
Eden unitary authority	One individual

34 In addition to the specific proposals listed in the table above, seven respondents objected to the proposals for elected regional assemblies, while seven respondents proposed the retention of the current two-tier system. It should be noted, however, that a large number of those respondents who objected to the local government reorganisation made proposals for change, in the event of a positive outcome in the referendum. Two respondents, while not making specific proposals, wrote in support of unitary authorities.

35 We received a number of general comments from 16 respondents relating to names of authorities, the importance of tradition and the role of parish and town councils. The Home Housing Association, while not making a specific proposal, urged that Allerdale and Copeland should be kept together in the same unitary authority. One respondent suggested that unitary authorities should have a population of around 150,000 to 200,000, without giving specific details. We received responses from 13 respondents, mainly from regional and national organisations, stressing the importance of service provision by the new unitary authorities.

Lancashire

36 We received 230 submissions in relation to Lancashire during Stage One of the review. These included submissions from the County Council and each two-tier authority under review. We also received submissions from six adjoining unitary authorities proposing changes to their boundaries.

37 Table 7 summarises the preferred options of the existing local authorities in Lancashire. In many cases they have provided us with one preferred option, while some have also indicated a second preference.

Table 7: Summary of representations by two-tier authorities in Lancashire

Authority	First choice	Second choice
Lancashire County Council	One unitary authority, based on existing county boundaries	-
Burnley Borough Council	Unitary authority based on Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale districts and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Chorley Borough Council	Unitary authority based on existing boundaries	-
Fylde and Wyre borough councils	Fylde & Wyre unitary authority	As per first choice, including three wards from Lancaster and Preston if a larger population required.
Hyndburn Borough Council	Hyndburn & Ribble Valley unitary authority	-
Lancaster City Council	Unitary authority based on Barrow-in-Furness, Lancaster and South Lakeland districts	Unitary authority based on existing boundaries
Pendle Borough Council	Unitary authority based on Pendle and Ribble Valley and the town of Padiham from Burnley	Unitary authority based on Hyndburn, Pendle and Ribble Valley and the town of Padiham from Burnley.
Preston City Council	Central Lancashire unitary authority based on Chorley, Preston and South Ribble	City of Preston unitary authority based on Preston and South Ribble
Ribble Valley Borough Council	Enlarged Ribble Valley unitary authority (including parts of Hyndburn, Pendle, Preston, South Ribble and Wyre) or Hyndburn & Ribble Valley unitary authority	-
Rossendale Borough Council	Unitary authority based on Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	Unitary authority based on Hyndburn and Rossendale, and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
South Ribble Borough Council	Central Lancashire unitary authority based on Chorley, Preston and South Ribble or City of Preston unitary authority based on Preston and South Ribble	-
West Lancashire District Council	Unitary authority based on existing boundaries	-

- 38 It should be noted that we received few submissions that made proposals relating to the whole county. This is possibly due, in part, to the large number of districts within Lancashire, and the lack of consensus regarding the best patterns of wholly unitary authorities across the county.
- 39 Seven respondents supported Lancashire County Council's proposal, either as a first or second preference. These included the Lancashire Association of Parish & Town Councils, Wyre Labour Group, one parish council and one district councillor.
- 40 Burnley Borough Council and Rossendale Borough Council's preferred option (or a slight variation on this proposal) was supported by seven respondents as either a first or second preference. They included two Members of Parliament, two political groups, one PCT and two parish councils. The second preference of Burnley Borough Council (or a slight variation on this proposal) was supported by six respondents, as either a first or second preference. Rossendale Borough Council's second preference was supported by one respondent as his second option.
- 41 Chorley Borough Council's proposal was supported by two respondents, including one parish council, as either a first or second preference.
- 42 The joint first preference of Fylde and Wyre borough councils was supported by six respondents as either a first or second preference. The respondents included one Member of Parliament, Labour North West and one parish council.
- 43 Hyndburn and Ribble Valley's joint proposal was supported by four respondents as one of their preferred options. They were the Hyndburn & Ribble Valley PCT, Hyndburn First (the Local Strategic Partnership for Hyndburn) and two parish councils. The proposal for an enlarged Ribble Valley unitary authority was supported by six respondents, including four parish councils, as one of their preferences.
- 44 Lancaster City Council's preferred option was supported by 25 respondents as either their first or second preference. They included three Members of Parliament, two parish or town councils, one political group, a PCT and the Central & West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce. It was opposed by one respondent. One parish council proposed a return to the old Westmorland boundaries, which would involve adding part of Eden district to the City Council's proposal for a Morecambe Bay authority, while two political groups proposed a variation on the Council's first preference, comprising a merger between Lancaster and South Lakeland only. Lancaster City Council's second preference was supported by three respondents as either their first or second preference.
- 45 Pendle Borough Council's preferred option (or a slight variation on it) was supported by six respondents, including three parish or town councils, as either their first or second preference.
- 46 Preston City Council's preferred option, which was also a joint first preference of South Ribble Borough Council, was supported by three respondents, including one Member of Parliament. Its second preference, which was the other joint preference of South Ribble Borough Council, was supported by three respondents, including three parish councils, as either their first or second preference.
- 47 West Lancashire District Council's proposal for unitary status on existing boundaries was supported by one parish council.

48 We also received submissions from seven adjoining unitary or metropolitan authorities, including detailed proposals from three authorities as detailed in the table below.

Table 8: Summary of options proposed by adjoining unitary authorities in Lancashire

Authority	First choice	Second choice
Blackpool Borough Council	Enlarged Blackpool to incorporate coastal strip from Wyre and a small part of Fylde	Blackpool with minor boundary amendments from both Wyre and Fylde
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	Enlarged Blackburn with Darwen to incorporate Hyndburn, most of Ribble Valley, and a small part from each of South Ribble and Chorley	Enlarged Blackburn with Darwen to incorporate Hyndburn, most of Rossendale, five wards in Ribble Valley and a small part from each of South Ribble and Chorley
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	Enlarged Bury to incorporate Rossendale	

49 Blackpool Borough Council's first preference was supported by four respondents, including the Labour Group on Wyre Borough Council and Blackpool PCT. Variations on this option, such as other parts of Wyre, Fylde or the two districts in their entirety being incorporated into Blackpool unitary authority, were supported by 11 respondents, including the Central & West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and two parish councils.

50 We received no representations in support of either of Blackburn with Darwen's proposals. However, variations on its proposals, including an expansion to incorporate either the existing Hyndburn district, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley districts or Hyndburn and Rossendale districts, were supported by 10 respondents as either their first or second preference. These included Labour North West, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley PCT and two parish councils. The Central & West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce proposed no change to Blackburn with Darwen's boundaries.

51 A variation on Bury Metropolitan Borough Council's proposal to take in the existing Rossendale district was supported by one Member of Parliament.

52 In addition, we received a number of other proposals for patterns of unitary authorities in Lancashire. These are summarised in Table 9 below:

Table 9: Other proposals for new unitary structures

Proposed unitary authority	Proposed/supported by
Expanded Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council (three wards from Chorley)	Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
Expanded Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, including Whitworth Parish from Rossendale	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council Whitworth Town Council and one other respondent
Expanded Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council (to incorporate the Appley Bridge and Tontine areas in West Lancashire)	Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
Ribble Valley, Lancaster City and Wyre	Ribble Valley Branch of the Lancashire Association of Parish & Town Councils, nine parish councils and 26 individuals
South Ribble, West Lancashire and Chorley	One Member of Parliament, one political group and one borough councillor
East Lancashire unitary authority (Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley)	Hyndburn First, Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale PCT, Central & West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and one individual
Preston, South Ribble, Chorley and West Lancashire	One member of Parliament, Labour North West, Central & West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and one individual
Unitary Ribble Valley	Two parish or town councils and one individual
West Lancashire and Chorley	Two parish councils and one individual
South Ribble and Chorley	Chorley Liberal Democrat Executive Committee and one individual
Craven and Ribble Valley	Two parish councils and one individual
Lancaster City and all or part of Wyre	Two individuals
Ribble Valley and Lancaster City	Two individuals
Two unitary authorities (no details given)	Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils
Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale and Hyndburn	Labour Group on Pendle Borough Council
Burnley, Pendle and Hyndburn	Labour Group on Pendle Borough Council
Lancaster City, Wyre and Fylde	One parish council
Wyre, Fylde and Ribble Valley with parts of Lancaster and Preston	One parish council

Fylde and Preston	One parish council
West Lancashire and Sefton	One district councillor
Lancaster City, Wyre, Fylde, Blackpool and Preston	One borough councillor
Hyndburn, Ribble Valley and Pendle	One individual
Ribble Valley, Pendle and Burnley	One individual
Three unitary authorities (no details given)	One individual

53 As indicated in the table above, a significant number of respondents proposed a unitary authority based on the existing Ribble Valley, Lancaster and Wyre districts. These stemmed, in large part, from the fact that many respondents were opposed to any option that would link Ribble Valley with urban areas such as Blackburn with Darwen or Burnley, or any proposal that would split the district. Six respondents specifically opposed linking Ribble Valley with Blackburn with Darwen, while one other respondent argued that Ribble Valley should be kept rural.

54 Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council did not proactively seek to expand its boundaries but stated that it would take three wards from Chorley if that facilitated options for unitary authorities in Lancashire.

55 In addition to the specific proposals indicated in the table above, we received submissions from a number of respondents making general comments about proposals or the review itself. The largest number of submissions (54) came from respondents who opposed elected regional assemblies, argued for the retention of the existing two-tier system, or both. It should be noted that a large number of those respondents who objected to the local government reorganisation made proposals for change, in the event of a positive outcome in the referendum.

56 Four respondents did not make specific proposals, but argued that any new unitary authorities should be small. A further 17 respondents, mainly national or local service providers, raised concerns over the provision of certain services by any new unitary authorities. In addition, we received comments regarding the establishment of parish and town councils, where the naming of new unitary authorities and the financial implications of the review.

Public opinion research

57 We commissioned MORI to carry out public opinion research on our behalf. This research consisted of around 300 face-to-face, structured interviews within each district, which sought to examine affective community identity (i.e. people's feelings about their neighbourhood, their sense of belonging) and effective community identity (i.e. patterns identified that reflect residents travel to work, shopping and leisure activities).

58 Along with the interviews, one focus group was held in each district. The purpose of the focus groups was to explore more deeply people's sense of affinity for their local areas and community. Taken together, these two pieces of research provide a useful snapshot of public opinion within each area under review. This research on

community identities is one of the many factors we have taken into account in formulating our draft recommendations.

59 The MORI opinion research for Cumbria and Lancashire was published on 17 October 2003 and can be downloaded from our website (www.boundarycommittee.org.uk) and from MORI's website (www.mori.com).

4 Analysis of proposals

60 This chapter analyses the various proposals put to us during Stage One for Cumbria and Lancashire. For each proposal under consideration, we set out the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed pattern of unitary authorities, based on the information and evidence available to us during the first stage of the review.

61 As stated previously, we may consider proposals that cross county boundaries, including the expansion of existing unitary authorities into two-tier areas. We received a number of such proposals for Cumbria and Lancashire during Stage One of the review. Several others also proposed amending the boundaries between unitary and metropolitan authorities and the neighbouring two-tier areas of Lancashire County. These issues are addressed in further detail below.

62 We are grateful for the cooperation received from local authorities and other key stakeholders throughout the review so far. We acknowledge the time and effort that has been put into preparing the submissions, during an already busy period of time for many councils. We look forward to continuing this cooperation during the next stage of the review.

63 The analysis below informs our draft recommendations for Cumbria and Lancashire, which are set out in chapter 5. As we received proposals that crossed the county boundaries, these will be examined in each section. Because we received few proposals for Lancashire that addressed the whole county, we propose discussing the main options for Lancashire on a geographic basis (e.g. north Lancashire, east Lancashire etc.).

Cumbria

One unitary authority

Table 10: One unitary authority

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Cumbria County Council	Cumbria County Council	487,600

64 Cumbria County Council proposed a new county-wide unitary authority based upon its present boundaries. The proposal was supported by 18 respondents as either their first or second preference. Five respondents were opposed to the proposal.

65 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received concerning this proposal and have identified a number of advantages. We consider that this option could provide for a local authority with sufficient capacity to provide major services across the whole of the county area. We note that the County Council already provides many major services and, although we can use it as only a broad indicator of the likely future performance of a unitary authority, scored a 'fair' rating (two out of four) from the Audit Commission in its 2002 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). In addition, its provision of education services was assessed as 'good' in the CPA.

66 We consider that a county-wide unitary authority in Cumbria would be well placed to provide economies of scale and to effectively deliver the larger services and

specialist functions. Furthermore, it could be argued that the transfer of existing district council services to such an authority may extend the potential for the development of economies of scale in these service areas.

67 A county-wide unitary authority in Cumbria could have the capacity to act strategically across the broader regional and national context, by building on the County Council's history and experience in the area. For example, Cumbria County Council was commended by the Audit Commission for the positive role that it has taken in tackling regeneration and, more specifically, for the role that it undertook during the 2001 foot and mouth crisis.

68 We note the argument put to us that there could be benefits in terms of the recruitment and retention of high calibre and specialist staff if a county-wide unitary authority was created. We are aware that rural local authorities currently suffer from recruitment problems at both district and county level, so the creation of one unitary authority in the area might serve to alleviate these difficulties.

69 We consider that one unitary authority would be well placed to participate in the network of county-wide and sub-county partnerships with the private and public sector that currently operate within Cumbria. Many of these partnerships are already coterminous with the county council area, while those which currently operate on a sub-county basis would not necessarily need to reconfigure their boundaries.

70 We consider that, as the County Council is already responsible for the provision of the majority of larger scale services, this option for change is comparatively 'low risk' as the services presently provided by the County Council would be retained by a continuing authority.

71 However, we have also identified a number of potential drawbacks with this option. While we take no particular view on the optimum size of the new unitary authorities, we note that one unitary authority with a population of approximately 488,000 may be considered by some to be too large to reflect community identities and interests adequately and to be able to engage effectively with local issues and residents. We also note that the MORI public opinion research indicated that residents of the county do not generally feel a strong affinity with the county area. While not the lowest percentage in the North West, identification with the County Council area stands at 37%, according to the research carried out by MORI.

72 The research seems to indicate that within the county area there are a number of distinct communities with some differing and separate concerns particularly between the northern and southern areas. For example, residents in Barrow-in-Furness appear in general to feel comparatively remote from the county area, possibly for geographic and historic reasons. The research also suggests that only a very small minority of residents in Copeland travel to Barrow-in-Furness for shopping, leisure activities or employment despite being in comparatively close proximity to the area. In addition, the research suggests that the residents of South Lakeland associate most with areas within that district and have little affinity with the adjoining district council areas.

73 We note that, while being only a broad indicator of possible future performance, the Audit Commission identified some key challenges for Cumbria County Council in its CPA. In particular, it raised issues relating to the Council's lack of focus, and prioritisation and performance management were deemed poor. This raises some concerns as to whether a county-wide unitary authority would be a high performing

authority, capable of providing strategic services efficiently and effectively to local communities.

74 We consider that, due to the large geographic area involved, a county-wide unitary authority may have difficulties in effectively representing its diverse population, particularly given the fact that this authority would have a population of almost half a million. Furthermore, the geography and topography of Cumbria, including as it does the Cumbrian Mountains running through the centre of the county, provides additional challenges.

75 Cumbria County Council proposed improving the engagement infrastructure in Cumbria by supporting the acceleration of the Quality Parish programme. However we note that a large proportion of parishes in Cumbria are small in terms of population and very rural, and, as many people in Cumbria live in currently unparished areas, we have some concerns over whether this proposed strategy would be practicable in the short term. Furthermore, we consider there is a need to be realistic regarding the ability of parish and town councils to provide additional representation in such large unitary authorities. However, the County Council's community leadership, which was drawn on significantly during the foot and mouth crisis, has been praised by the Audit Commission, and initiatives that arose from the crisis are still in place today. Such experience would mean that a unitary authority based on the County Council's boundaries may have ways of combating the distance between itself and its various communities.

Three unitary authorities

Table 11: Three unitary authorities

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
West Cumbria	Allerdale and Copeland	162,800
East Cumbria	Carlisle and Eden	150,500
South Cumbria	Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland	174,300

76 Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland district councils jointly proposed three unitary authorities for Cumbria.

77 This proposal received some degree of local support, particularly from parish and town councils. Of the 13 parish and town councils that wrote in support of the proposal, 11 expressed a preference for their local pairing of districts without commenting on the other areas. The Cumbria Police Authority, Eden Valley PCT, one Member of Parliament and the national Conservative Party also supported the proposal. We also note that a significant degree of consensus among the district councils for this proposal, notwithstanding Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council's alternative preference.

78 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received and have identified a number of advantages with this proposal. Allerdale and Copeland, situated to the west of the Cumbria Mountains, are linked by, and share concerns about, the A595. Carlisle and Eden are linked via the M6. Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland are linked by the A590 and appear to share a common 'South Cumbria' identity that distinguishes them from other areas in the county. Both districts also share similar interests in the Morecambe Bay area, particularly regarding environmental issues.

79 The geography of the county to a large extent dictates the transport and communication links. In the context of Cumbria each proposed pair of districts are reasonably well linked, although it should be noted that road links in Cumbria in general are quite poor on the minor roads. Carlisle and Eden are linked by the M6 Motorway and also by the Settle-Carlisle railway and the West Coast Main Line. The A590, A5902 and the A595 roads link Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland. They are also linked by rail. Allerdale and Copeland are linked by the A595 road and by rail.

80 We note that there is already a history of joint district working between Allerdale and Copeland, and between Carlisle and Eden, although Barrow and South Lakeland appear to have limited partnerships in comparison with the other two pairs of districts.

81 We have also considered the common industrial heritage that is shared by Allerdale and Copeland. Several submissions noted that they both have an extensive shared industrial history founded on coal extraction, iron and steel engineering and the nuclear industry, with manufacturing being a main employer in these areas, including the British Nuclear Fuels Plc (BNFL) centre in Sellafield. The close connection between the two districts is reinforced by the travel-to-work patterns in Allerdale and Copeland, which indicates significant commuting between the districts.

82 We note that the MORI public opinion research also offers some support to the contention that these three proposed unitary authorities would generally reflect local community identities and interests. For example, it found that in Eden, Carlisle is a focal point for services and shopping in particular. South Lakeland was found to have affinity with south Cumbria. In west Cumbria, some residents in Copeland look to Workington (in Allerdale) as well as Whitehaven in Copeland borough for services such as shopping.

83 However, we have a number of concerns about this proposal. In our guidance we stressed the point that proposals, particularly those for smaller authorities, should address the issue of how it is envisaged that services that are currently being carried out by the County Council would be delivered, particularly in relation to larger services such as education and social services.

84 We have some concerns about the ability of these proposed unitary authorities to deliver services effectively and efficiently to their local communities. In particular we are concerned about the ability of the proposed West Cumbria unitary authority to effectively perform all local government functions, without resorting to large numbers of joint arrangements. Based on the evidence received we consider that such an authority would face major obstacles in seeking to become high performing, particularly given the challenging socio-economic conditions of the area, with a heavy reliance on what may be a declining nuclear industry. The resource base capacity available to this authority in confronting significant economic restructuring requirements would be severely tested.

85 We note that the proposed South Cumbria unitary authority would not reflect existing partnerships in the area. If established, new partnership arrangements would need to be established for the south Cumbria area. Furthermore, the MORI research indicates few links between the residents of the two districts, although it should be noted that a general affinity for 'south Cumbria' is felt, particularly in the southern Lakes area. Some Barrow-in-Furness residents who were interviewed stated that their affinity stretched further afield, towards Lancaster, and felt a notable affinity with Lancashire, probably stemming from the fact that Barrow-in-Furness was formerly

part of that county. Residents in South Lakeland tended to associate most with the areas within the district. There are also socio-economic differences between the two districts, with the economy of Barrow-in-Furness being dominated by industry, and South Lakeland a more varied economy including agriculture and tourism. While the diversity of the economies is not seen as a major obstacle in combining these two districts within the same authority, it may be that an alternative configuration for the districts in southern Cumbria could provide more effective synergies for local government services to be delivered.

Two unitary authorities

Table 12: Two unitary authorities

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
North Cumbria	Allerdale, Copeland, Carlisle and Eden	313,300
South Cumbria & Lancaster	Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland and Lancaster	308,200

86 Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council's first preference was made as part of a joint proposal with Lancaster City Council. For the purposes of this report, we have referred to the proposed new authority as South Cumbria & Lancaster. Twenty-five respondents specifically supported a South Cumbria & Lancaster option, while four supported the North Cumbria element. In addition, a further 16 respondents supported this proposal in its entirety.

87 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received and have identified a number of strengths to this proposal. We consider that this option would generally reflect the main broad communities of identity in Cumbria. We note that the MORI public opinion research identified a perceived divide between the north and the south of the county. The research suggests that residents of Allerdale, Copeland and Eden tend overall to have few links with the south of the county and generally look northwards towards Carlisle. A small number of Carlisle residents did look southwards but generally only as far as the north Lakes.

88 While we take no particular view on the optimum size of new authorities, we note that this option lies between the county-wide unitary authority option, as discussed earlier, and proposals for smaller unitary authorities in Cumbria. We consider that, with respective populations of over 300,000, both North Cumbria and South Cumbria & Lancaster unitary authorities should have adequate capacity and a sufficiently large resource base to deliver all local government services in their local authority areas. However, they would also be somewhat smaller than the proposed county-wide unitary authority and therefore arguably better placed to engage with and represent the community.

89 On the issue of capacity, we note that the CRED research referred to earlier in this report concluded that a North Cumbria authority, as described above, would be more likely to achieve overall economies of scale than the pairings of Allerdale with Copeland and Eden with Carlisle. In addition, in confronting the socio-economic issues in the west of the county, a North Cumbria authority would be able to call upon a wider resource base, balanced to some extent by the relative prosperity of the east. In the south of the county, the relatively deprived area of Barrow-in-Furness may benefit from forming part of a larger authority with the higher capacity that could be provided by the South Cumbria & Lancaster unitary authority.

90 We consider that the creation of a South Cumbria & Lancaster unitary authority could assist in addressing concerns relating to the Morecambe Bay area. There is a partnership which reflects local environmental concerns at work in the area which, to some extent, reflects a shared community interest. In addition, we note that Barrow-in-Furness and Lancaster have a shared community interest and strong historical links. There are also transport links with the A6 and A590 linking Lancaster, South Lakeland and Barrow-in-Furness. The MORI opinion research suggests that the residents of Barrow-in-Furness have an association with north Lancashire. The travel-to-work evidence also suggests that there are strong links between the three areas.

91 We also consider that a South Cumbria & Lancaster unitary authority could provide a more 'balanced' authority than just Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland, given the differences between the two districts. A South Cumbria & Lancaster authority could balance the two urban centres of Barrow-in-Furness and Lancaster with the rural nature of South Lakeland.

92 We note that this option achieves, in a broad sense, coterminosity with local PCT boundaries. A South Cumbria & Lancaster authority would follow the boundaries of the existing Morecambe Bay PCT, while the Eden Valley, Carlisle & District and West Cumbria PCTs would in their entirety be wholly contained within the boundaries of the North Cumbria unitary authority. This could provide organisational benefits to health and social services delivery.

93 We also note that there are limited viable options regarding Lancaster City, given the recognition that residents of the city tend to look northwards rather than southwards towards the rest of Lancashire. The inclusion of Lancaster in the proposed South Cumbria & Lancaster unitary authority would therefore facilitate a pattern of sub-county unitary authorities across both counties.

94 However, we have identified some drawbacks to this proposal. There is currently a lack of partnership working between the districts of South Lakeland, Barrow and Lancaster. Each of these present authorities has its own Local Strategic Plan and they lack shared partnerships in any field other than the environment.

95 We have some concerns about how a North Cumbria authority would be able to effectively undertake its representative functions due to the relatively large geographic area that such an authority would cover, and the relatively poor communication links between the east and the west of the county. However, we consider that the close links between 'pairs' of districts in the east and the west of the proposed authority, as indicated in the proposal for three unitary authorities, could be built upon by such a new authority. Additionally, we are aware that Carlisle is the focal point for many communities across north Cumbria. Furthermore, we note that this option would have an advantage over the county-wide unitary authority option which would cover an even larger land mass and would face similar problems in relation to the relatively poor links between the east and west of the county, and between the south-west of the county and further north. Given that Cumbria County Council already operates across this large area, we do not consider that such circumstances would necessarily be a barrier to convenient and effective local government.

96 We recognise that any proposal that crosses the county boundary between Cumbria and Lancashire will not be supported by certain stakeholders. However, we are of the view that these concerns should not be a barrier against an option that might otherwise facilitate convenient and effective local government in the area.

97 We are aware, however, that a South Cumbria & Lancaster unitary authority may face particular transitional challenges in delivering the key services which may currently be carried out differently by Lancashire and Cumbria County Councils.

Other proposals

98 During the first stage of consultation, limited support was expressed for the division of Cumbria County Council area into two unitary authorities along the lines of an east and west split. However, some proposals favoured a Carlisle, Allerdale and Copeland and Eden, South Lakeland and Barrow-in-Furness split, while others supported a configuration of an Allerdale, Copeland and Barrow-in-Furness unitary authority and a Carlisle, Eden and South Lakeland unitary authority. As indicated earlier, the MORI research suggested that residents of South Lakeland and Barrow-in-Furness generally have few ties with the north of the county, while residents of Allerdale, Copeland, Carlisle and Eden generally displayed more affinity with the north of the county than the south. We consider that an alternative two-way division of the county would create somewhat artificial entities, by combining areas with limited communities of interest.

99 We have received limited support for the creation of unitary authorities which involve the limited extension of the boundaries of present districts or pairs of districts. For example, a unitary authority comprising the present Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council area, Millom, Broughton and Ulverston. We consider that these proposals lack regard for the consequential effects that they would have and would not facilitate options for new unitary authorities elsewhere in the county.

100 We note there was some support for the revival of the historic county areas of Westmorland and Cumberland as unitary authorities. The proposed North Cumbria and South Cumbria and Lancaster unitary authorities are variations on such proposals, and are arguably a better reflection of present-day communities, links and partnerships. We have received little persuasive evidence that existing districts in Cumbria should be split in order to facilitate recreating historic patterns of local government.

101 We received a submission supporting the creation of two unitary authorities; 'North Cumbria', comprising Allerdale, Eden and Carlisle and 'South Cumbria' containing South Lakeland, Barrow-in-Furness and Copeland. We consider that the close links in evidence between Allerdale and Copeland should not be severed by placing them in two different authorities.

102 Limited support was received for the creation of unitary authorities along the lines of current district council boundaries. We are of the view that such authorities would lack the capacity and the resources to provide the full range of local government services and would be forced to rely upon a multiplicity of joint arrangements. We are advised against recommending unitary authorities that would require a significant increase in the number of joint arrangements by the ODPM's guidance.

103 There is some support for aligning unitary authority boundaries with those of the local Parliamentary constituencies. We do not consider that Parliamentary constituencies provide a sufficiently robust template for the creation of unitary authorities as they are subject to change, and indeed do so following local authority electoral reviews by the Committee.

Lancashire

One unitary authority

Table 13: One unitary authority

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Lancashire County Council	Lancashire county	1,135,000

104 Lancashire County Council proposed a new unitary authority based upon its existing boundaries, with a proposed council size of 168 members. The County Council's proposal was supported by seven respondents and opposed by three respondents.

105 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received concerning this proposal and have identified a number of advantages. The authority would preserve Lancashire as a single entity. The MORI opinion research found a relatively high level of affinity with the county council area, especially compared to other counties in the North West (although there are significant variations between districts and affinity is lower than with the districts).

106 The County Council put forward a case for a 'New Council for Lancashire' and provided details of how it would address such issues as community identity, service delivery and leadership. We acknowledge that the County Council's present performance and capacity to deliver effective services can only provide a broad indicator of the future performance of a county-wide unitary authority. However, we note that it already carries out the large-scale local authority services in Lancashire, and received a 'good' rating (three out of four) from the Audit Commission in its CPA. In addition, the Council has been praised for its strong political and corporate leadership. Based on current performance, the proposal would provide the setting for a high-performing unitary authority.

107 The authority would have sufficient capacity to provide a full range of local government services, including existing district council functions. Furthermore, we also consider a Lancashire unitary authority would provide economies of scale. The transfer of the existing functions of the 12 districts to a county level would also extend these economies of scale. The County Council's proposals for devolved budgets and service delivery go some way to addressing how local services could be delivered in such a large authority.

108 One of the main challenges faced in the review by county councils seeking unitary status is how they would engage with, and provide leadership to, local communities. This is particularly relevant in the case of Lancashire County Council. The County Council addresses the issue of reflecting local community identity in such a large authority by proposing the establishment of 12 'Local Cabinets' to represent local community identity, based on existing districts. The Council states that these Local Cabinets would be responsible for local service delivery and would consist of local representatives. This suggests that the existing district areas would be able to retain their local community identities and interests within the proposed structure. In addition, a county unitary authority would embrace a substantially stronger role for parish and town councils, which would include devolving services to those that achieved Quality Parish status. The County Council also proposed that the existing 12 district Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) be retained as a network of district partnerships under a Lancashire LSP. In addition, it suggests strengthening the role

of parish and town councils to help them improve their capacity to engage with local communities and to take on delegated services. We note that many partners are already coterminous with the county council area. Existing sub-county partner organisations, which are often coterminous with a district or pair of districts could continue to operate under a proposal for a county-wide unitary authority.

109 One of our main concerns regarding this proposal is the scale of one unitary authority in Lancashire. We note that the proposed Lancashire unitary authority would be the largest in England (the population of the current largest authority is approximately 977,000), and in addition to its population size, it would cover a large geographical area (290,300 hectares) and have a significant rural hinterland. We have significant concerns about whether one authority, of this population and geographical nature, with no intermediate tier of government, other than parish and town councils, could adequately represent the diverse communities that exist within the county. Unlike other unitary authorities with large populations, it would represent a vast range of rural and urban areas that differ considerably in socio-economic, political and cultural make-up.

110 We note the proposal for a council of 168 members and that this would be some 40% larger than the biggest existing council in England. We also have concerns about the County Council's proposed Local Cabinet structure based, as suggested, on the current 12 district council areas. It might be argued that this would be an attempt to recreate the existing two-tier structure rather than responding more directly to the diversity of local communities. This may indicate that such a large authority could face difficulties in operating effectively as a unitary authority.

111 One of the most important challenges facing the proposed authority would therefore be to demonstrate that it would not be too large to engage with and be responsive to local communities. Although we consider that the suggestions outlined by the County Council could possibly address this concern, we have reservations over how effectively such an authority would, in practice, represent local community identities and interests. We also have concerns over the capacity or, indeed the desire of parish and town to take on additional responsibilities.

112 We note that some submissions expressed concern that a large unitary authority would fail to adequately represent all interests. We note that the MORI opinion research shows that residents in all of the 12 districts associated more strongly with communities within their district rather than the county. This suggests that a Lancashire unitary authority might not be the best possible reflection of local community identities and interests.

North Lancashire

Table 14

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
South Cumbria & Lancaster	Existing districts of South Lakeland, Barrow-in-Furness and Lancaster	308,200

113 As detailed earlier, Lancaster City Council proposed a new unitary authority which would combine the existing districts of Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland in Cumbria and Lancaster City, proposing a council size ranging from 60 to 70 councillors. This was proposed as part of a joint submission with Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council. The proposal was supported by 25 respondents as either their first or second preference.

114 Our views on the merits and drawbacks of this option have been outlined in the Cumbria section of this report.

115 We note that Lancaster City Council's second preference was for a unitary authority based on the existing City Council boundaries. We have given careful consideration to this option. We are aware that there are strong feelings of community identity within Lancaster as suggested by the MORI research. However, we have significant concerns about the ability of a Lancaster unitary authority to be a high-performing council. Although we consider that a Lancaster unitary authority might have a sufficient resource base, we note that Lancaster is not a compact urban area, but has a large rural hinterland, which could impact upon its capacity to deliver large-scale services without the use of joint arrangements.

Fylde and Wyre

Table 15

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Wyre & Fylde	Wyre and Fylde districts	178,800

116 Wyre and Fylde borough councils proposed a new unitary authority based upon the existing boundaries of Wyre and Fylde, with an expected range of 50 to 60 councillors. This proposal was supported by six respondents.

117 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received and can recognise the rationale for such a proposal. We note that the two areas are similar in economic composition and, other than their coastal zones, both are largely rural in character. Indeed, there are few areas with significant population centres away from the coastline and the land is largely agricultural in these areas. There is evidence of shared community identities and some common interests between the two boroughs. Both councils provided research that suggested local support for a Wyre & Fylde unitary authority.

118 We note also a history of joint working between the two authorities. Both councils currently have a number of partnership schemes, such as sheltered housing, environmental and public health, health promotion/protection and improvement, economic regeneration initiatives and community development. External bodies such as the PCTs covering the boroughs also work closely and

share services and staff. Consequently, a Wyre and Fylde unitary authority would be coterminous with many existing stakeholders and partners, such as PCTs, and a number of service delivery agencies.

119 However, we have significant concerns about the proposal for a Wyre & Fylde unitary authority. While such an authority might have a sufficiently large resource base to enable it to deliver key services, we consider that it would face considerable obstacles in seeking to become high performing. While acknowledging that present performance can only be a broad indicator of future performance by a new authority, we note that Fylde Borough Council's latest Audit Commission inspection reports generally show fair and poor ratings with uncertain prospects of improvement in most cases, and Wyre Borough Council's latest inspection reports are fair to good with varying prospects of improvement. We consider that, given the geographical and socio-economic nature of this area, a combined Wyre & Fylde authority could face significant obstacles in the delivery of large scale services such as education and social services, and would be likely to require joint arrangements to ensure that local communities' needs are met effectively and efficiently.

120 In looking at the areas covered by the two authorities, we note that the Fleetwood and Thornton Cleveleys area of Wyre are geographically separated from other communities in the district and have a greater affinity with Blackpool. They are closely linked with Blackpool by mixed development along the coastal strip which has traditionally been dominated by the tourist and service industries. There are areas of deprivation and unemployment and a need for regeneration following the decline of the seaside holiday industry and the changes affecting fishing and port activity in Fleetwood. In addition they face similar problems to Blackpool such as deprivation and unemployment. We consider that such common concerns with Blackpool would suggest that a more suitable alternative for these two areas could be found by looking outside Wyre and Fylde's existing boundaries. We also note that Blackpool exerts a considerable pull in terms of the economy, employment and leisure in these areas.

121 The MORI research was not sufficiently detailed at very local levels to allow detailed analysis of areas within a district but it may be reasonable to assume that communities in the coastal areas may relate more closely to Blackpool.

122 In considering this proposal, we note that Wyre and Fylde boroughs stated they would not object to the addition of two wards from Preston and one from Lancaster to the proposed Wyre & Fylde unitary authority. This would increase the population of the proposed authority to 195,600, thereby giving it a potentially greater resource base, and possibly enhancing its capacity to function more effectively. However, we consider that such a proposal would split adjoining areas somewhat arbitrarily, adding more rural areas to an already largely rural authority solely in order to boost the population. More importantly, such a proposal would have detrimental implications for alternative options in other areas of Lancashire.

Table 16

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Enlarged Blackpool	Blackpool, Fleetwood, Thornton-Cleveleys and two small areas from Fylde	203,000

123 An alternative approach for the area was put forward by Blackpool Borough Council, which proposed a new unitary authority based upon an enlarged Blackpool that would incorporate, Fleetwood, Thornton-Cleveleys (from Wyre Borough Council) and two small areas from Fylde. This proposal was supported by 11 respondents.

124 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received concerning this proposal. As stated above we recognise that the two areas are similar in socio-economic make up and share a number of challenges. Also there are strong transport links between them. Given these facts, along with the clear economic influence of the coastal area, we recognise that there is a potential case for creating a unitary authority based on an enlarged Blackpool. Such an authority would have a shared interest in regeneration and a common identity with the Fleetwood and Thornton-Cleveleys area in Wyre in particular and to a lesser degree in Fylde.

125 Blackpool Borough Council was categorised as a 'fair' authority in its CPA. However it was acknowledged in the CPA that Blackpool Borough Council is an ambitious authority that is currently seeking to improve the quality of services. The latest inspection reports support this, with Blackpool Borough Council receiving good ratings with excellent and promising prospects for improvement. There is a prospect, therefore, that an enlarged Blackpool should be able to provide high quality services to its residents.

126 Support for looking westwards towards Blackpool for these areas is also given some credence by the results of our opinion research. The MORI opinion research has found that Fylde residents use Blackpool for shopping and leisure needs, but it was not sufficiently detailed at a very local level to allow detailed analysis as regards the small area of Fylde affected by this option. We also note that the research showed that a comparatively low number of residents in Fylde felt that they belonged to a local community within Fylde Council area. This could be in part because of the 'pull' of Blackpool as a retail and entertainment centre.

127 However, in isolation, we have also identified a number of serious issues with this proposal. Firstly this proposal would reduce the population of the proposed Wyre and Fylde unitary authority considerably. We consider that this could make a Wyre and Fylde unitary authority based predominately on rural areas too weak in terms of resource base capacity to be able to carry out the full range of functions effectively or without significant numbers of joint arrangements. The addition of rural wards of Preston and Lancaster as suggested by Blackpool, would not significantly increase the capacity.

128 This has led us to consider an alternative approach to Wyre and Fylde, which could reflect the pull, identified in the MORI research, which Blackpool and Preston exert on residents in the areas. This is discussed in the chapter 5.

Central Lancashire

Table 17

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Central Lancashire	Existing Preston, South Ribble and Chorley districts	333,900

129 Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council proposed a new unitary authority based upon the existing Preston, South Ribble and Chorley districts, with a proposed council size of 75. This option was the first choice of the Preston City Council and the joint first preference of South Ribble Borough Council. It was supported, either as a first or second preference, by three respondents.

130 We have given careful consideration to this proposal and the submissions received relating to this area. We feel that there are strong links between the three districts. Travel-to-work evidence suggests that there is strong movement between Preston, South Ribble and Chorley, particularly from South Ribble to Preston and from Chorley to South Ribble. The MORI research shows Preston is a focal point for Chorley residents, especially for shopping, and that many South Ribble residents travel to work, shop and use the leisure facilities in Preston. The MORI research shows that nine out of ten residents of Preston City Council mostly identify with the city of Preston itself. This is high in comparison with other district or borough council areas in Lancashire. The research also showed that a large number of residents in South Ribble, living in areas immediately adjoining the Preston City Council area identified themselves with Preston. There are also strong transport links and public transport networks between the three districts. We are aware that there are major regeneration projects in progress which cross the boundaries between Preston and South Ribble, and South Ribble and Chorley and already involve the districts in joint partnership working.

131 Both Preston and South Ribble councils recognised in their submission that as the new authority would cover a wide area, arrangements would need to be made to ensure effective community engagement. Both councils currently operate a system of area forums/committees and the submission discussed the need to ensure that some form of community engagement was 'rolled out' across the new council area. The submission also suggested that parish and town councils could have a greater role to play in the community.

132 A Central Lancashire unitary authority would be of a sufficient size to have the capacity to provide services effectively without requiring joint arrangements. In terms of existing performance, Preston City Council has received good and fair ratings in the latest inspection reports by the Audit Commission with varying prospects of improvement, ranging from uncertain to excellent. South Ribble Borough Council received fair and good ratings in the latest inspection reports, with promising prospects for improvement. Chorley Borough Council received good ratings, all with promising prospects for improvement. Although we acknowledge that the present performance of an existing borough council can provide only a broad indicator on the future performance of a unitary authority, this indicates that a Central Lancashire unitary authority would be starting from a strong base in order to deliver major services currently being undertaken by the County Council. We also consider that a combined authority may result in synergies that currently do not exist in terms of local government functions in this area. We consider that there is significant economic logic and strength to this potential authority.

133 We note that one drawback to this proposal could be that Preston, which achieved city status in 2002, might be seen to dominate the other two districts. Such an authority would need to address the needs of all its constituent communities.

Table 18

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
City of Preston	Existing Preston and South Ribble districts	233,500
Chorley	Existing Chorley district	100,500

134 Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council also proposed an alternative unitary authority for their areas, based upon the existing Preston and South Ribble districts, proposing a council size of 50. This was the second preference of Preston City Council, and the joint first preference of South Ribble Borough Council. This proposal was supported by three respondents as either their first or second preference.

135 Chorley Borough Council proposed a new unitary authority based upon the existing Chorley district, proposing to retain the existing 47 councillors. This option was supported by two respondents as either their first or second preference, as detailed in chapter 3.

136 Many of the advantages of the City of Preston proposal would be the same as for the Central Lancashire option, although losing some of the resource capacity which the larger authority would provide. We have given careful consideration to the submissions received concerning the proposal for a Chorley unitary authority. We note that the MORI research suggests that there is a strong community identity within Chorley. Seven in ten residents associate strongly with communities within Chorley. This is fairly high in comparison with other district or borough council areas in Lancashire County Council area. However, as noted in the ODPM guidance, community identity tends to favour smaller units of local government that are not necessarily a sound basis upon which to develop new unitary authorities. We also note that Chorley borough is based around a market town and it could therefore be argued that it has significantly different characteristics to Preston, which has recently gained city status. We also note that Chorley Borough Council has received good ratings in the latest inspection reports by the Audit Commission with promising prospects for improvement.

137 However, we feel that with a population of only 100,500 it is unlikely that this proposed unitary authority would have the critical mass necessary to be capable of effectively delivering services, such education, and in particular more specialist services, without the need for joint arrangements. We were not satisfied that Chorley Borough Council's submission addressed the issue of capacity and limited evidence has been received to support this option. Furthermore, there appears to be a shared community of interest that links the three districts in central Lancashire, especially between South Ribble and Chorley which are both partly rural in nature and share similar socio-economic characteristics. The three councils also work collaboratively with each other in order to provide effective services to the community, for example building control in response to the needs of builders and developers that work across the boundaries of the three authorities. We also note that one of the PCTs in the area covers Chorley and South Ribble. There are also strong communication links

between the three boroughs via the motorway network. We therefore feel that a Chorley unitary authority would not, in our opinion, gain the advantages or synergies that might otherwise be achieved.

South West Lancashire

Table 19

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
West Lancashire	West Lancashire	108,400

138 West Lancashire District Council proposed a unitary authority based on the existing district and proposed retaining the existing 54 councillors. This proposal was supported by one parish council as its second preference.

139 We have given careful consideration to this proposal. We note that West Lancashire is a predominately rural area with a number of disparate communities and market towns. The MORI opinion research showed that nearly seven in ten West Lancashire residents associate themselves with a local area or community within this council area rather than other areas of Lancashire. The northern part of West Lancashire is a mainly rural area which runs naturally towards the coast in Sefton, whereas there is greater population density in the south of the district. We note that there are limited transport links northwards, making West Lancashire somewhat isolated from the rest of Lancashire and there are arguably more links with the surrounding metropolitan areas. The MORI opinion research shows that a significant minority of residents most associate themselves with Wigan or Southport and many more residents regularly visit Wigan and Southport, especially for shopping and work. The MORI research was not sufficiently detailed at very local levels to allow detailed analysis of areas within a district but it may be reasonable to assume that in the main residents in the areas to the north of the district were those relating to Southport and those to the south relate to Wigan. We note that West Lancashire has strong communication links with Merseyside and Greater Manchester. It has good transport links and the evidence suggests that residents in West Lancashire travel to work and shop in these areas to a greater extent than with the rest of Lancashire. In addition, we note that Southport and Ormskirk share an NHS Trust, with hospitals on both sites, further emphasising these links.

140 The latest inspection reports by the Audit Commission have given West Lancashire District Council ratings of good and fair with promising and uncertain prospects for improvement. West Lancashire District Council said it would seek to be an innovative unitary authority, building on its history of good community engagement and that it would engage with local communities in several ways, including the establishment of town councils in both Ormskirk and Skelmersdale.

141 We have significant concerns about this proposal. With a population of 108,400 we consider it is unlikely that such a unitary authority would be high performing, capable of effectively delivering major county council services without the use of joint arrangements. Indeed, West Lancashire District Council has acknowledged that it would consider entering into a range of partnerships with nearby unitary and metropolitan authorities to enhance service provision in areas such as education and social services. We note that the ODPM's guidance states that joint arrangements dilute the lines of accountability, and that we should seek to avoid making recommendations for unitary authorities that would increase the need for these.

142 We note that West Lancashire District Council also suggested the possible transfer of several rural wards from South Ribble and Chorley that immediately adjoin the district. This would increase the population to approximately 119,000. However, we are not persuaded that these boundary changes would necessarily result in a unitary authority capable of delivering larger services effectively to local people. In addition, given the emphasis that the District Council placed on West Lancashire's remoteness from the rest of the county it would, in our view, create a somewhat artificial authority for the purpose of increasing the population.

East Lancashire

143 We received several options for local government structures in East Lancashire and these are discussed in turn below.

Table 20

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale districts	244,400

144 Burnley Borough Council and Rossendale Borough Council both proposed a unitary authority based on the existing Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale districts. This proposal was supported by nine respondents as either their first or second preference.

145 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received concerning this proposal and note that it would have a number of strengths. With a population of 244,400 a Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale unitary authority should be large enough to effectively deliver a wide range of services. In its submission Burnley Borough Council outlined a number of initiatives that the authority would adopt to ensure effective delivery of key services such as education, social services, youth and community services and highways. We consider that, in the light of the evidence received, the proposed unitary authority could have the capacity to deliver these key services without requiring a large number of joint arrangements. We note that the three authorities share similar socio-economic issues and consider that a combined authority may result in synergies that could lead to higher quality services for communities.

146 We note that the authority would be coterminous with many existing partnerships in Lancashire such as Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale PCT, which supports the proposal, voluntary services and many wider East Lancashire bodies. Furthermore, there is already a history of joint working between Burnley and Pendle authorities in both transport and benchmarking. The three authorities are also accustomed to joint working through wider East Lancashire partnerships, such as the East Lancashire Partnership, the East Lancashire e-government project and East Lancashire Together.

147 We note that the MORI opinion research shows that while residents in Burnley and Pendle boroughs tend to focus on the towns of Burnley and Nelson and Colne respectively, a minority of residents in Pendle associate themselves with Burnley. The research also shows that Burnley provides a focal point for clothes and household goods shopping for Pendle residents.

148 In terms of local representation and community engagement, we note that Burnley Borough Council proposes to develop 'Area Structures', building upon Pendle's Area Committees and Burnley's proposed Shared Contact Centre. We consider that these proposed structures could be one useful method of helping the proposed authority to engage with local communities and provide services that are more suitable for local people.

149 However, we have identified some drawbacks to a Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale unitary authority. Although we consider that it would potentially have the capacity to deliver key services we have reservations over the current performance of the constituent districts and their ability, when combined, to provide for a high performing unitary authority, especially in view of the socio-economic challenges facing this area. We acknowledge that the present performance of an existing authority can provide only a broad indicator on the future performance of a unitary authority. However, Rossendale in particular was rated as one of the worst performing district councils in the country in the Audit Commission's Corporate Governance Inspectorate in 2002. The recent Inspection reports conducted by the Audit Commission for both Burnley and Pendle have yielded a mixture of both fair and good results.

150 Although the MORI opinion research shows strong links between Burnley and Pendle we note that there is little conclusive evidence of a strong community of interest between Rossendale and the boroughs of Burnley and Pendle. As in the Burnley and Pendle research, Rossendale residents most associate themselves with areas within their own borough. The research in Rossendale shows that residents are more likely to travel to neighbouring Bury, rather than neighbouring Burnley, for clothes and household goods, although this may be due to the 'pull' of a larger metropolitan area.

Table 21

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Hyndburn & Ribble Valley	Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	135,500

151 Hyndburn Borough Council and Ribble Valley Borough Council proposed a Hyndburn and Ribble Valley unitary authority. The proposal had the support of four respondents as either their first or second preference. We also received a large number of submissions from parish and town councils and residents in Ribble Valley objecting to any proposal that would link Ribble Valley with Blackburn with Darwen.

152 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received concerning this proposal. We note that a Hyndburn & Ribble Valley unitary authority would have a population of 135,500 covering a combination of both rural and urban areas. We consider that a Hyndburn and Ribble Valley unitary authority could have a sufficiently large resource base to function as a unitary authority, although it may face challenges in delivering large-scale services. Hyndburn Borough Council outlined a number of initiatives that the authority would adopt to ensure effective delivery of key services such as education and social services. In addition, the latest Inspection reports, produced by the Audit Commission, for both Hyndburn and Ribble Valley borough councils have generally yielded 'fair' to 'good' results with 'prospects for improvement'.

153 We note that the proposed unitary authority would be coterminous with Hyndburn & Ribble Valley PCT, which supports the proposal. The two authorities are accustomed to working together as part of wider East Lancashire partnerships such as the East Lancashire Partnership, the East Lancashire e-government project and East Lancashire Together.

154 We consider that a Hyndburn and Ribble Valley unitary authority would reflect local community identities and interests in the area to an extent. The southern areas of Ribble Valley have close links with the adjoining areas of Hyndburn both of which contain both rural and urban areas.

155 We note that the geographical and socio-economic make up of Ribble Valley makes it distinct from many of the other districts in Lancashire. Geographically, it is the largest district in the county and is the smallest in terms of population. It is also one of the more affluent districts and is predominately rural in nature. As such, any proposal to unite Ribble Valley with adjoining areas in Lancashire will result in a diverse authority.

156 We note that Hyndburn is very similar to Blackburn with Darwen in socio-economic terms, and that Blackburn and the towns in Hyndburn are effectively continuous settlements. This view was supported by the MORI opinion research, which found that significant minorities of residents in both Hyndburn and Ribble Valley visit Blackburn with Darwen for clothes and household goods shopping. These strong links would not be recognised under this proposal. Although we consider that a Hyndburn & Ribble Valley unitary authority could have the capacity to function as a unitary authority, we consider that alternative options for this area may be more likely to provide the setting for high performing unitary authorities in East Lancashire.

157 We received four submissions proposing to link the three areas of Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley together in one unitary authority, which would result in a population of 273,000. We consider that the authority may have merit as it would build upon the clear links between the areas, and would provide the conditions for a high-performing authority. We note the current 'excellent' performance of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, while acknowledging that current performance can only provide a broad indicator of the future performance of an enlarged unitary authority.

158 We received a number of representations objecting to any link between Ribble Valley and Blackburn with Darwen. In particular, concerns were raised that rural issues might be overlooked in a more urban authority. However, we note that parts of the existing Blackburn with Darwen and Hyndburn borough councils are relatively rural. This would indicate that these constituent authorities are already accustomed to providing services to a mix of urban and rural communities. In any authority with a diversity of communities it is incumbent upon the council to adopt an inclusive approach, recognising and balancing the needs of all the areas and groups they represent.

Table 22

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Blackburn with Darwen	Enlarged Blackburn with Darwen incorporating Hyndburn district, most of Ribble Valley and a small part from each of South Ribble and Chorley	261,700

159 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council proposed an enlarged Blackburn with Darwen unitary authority, incorporating the whole of Hyndburn borough, most of Ribble Valley borough and a small part from each of South Ribble and Chorley boroughs. It also proposed a variation of this option, which would add most of the existing Rossendale borough to the new authority, resulting in a population of 290,000. While no other respondents supported either proposal in full, a number of variations on them were submitted to us.

160 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received concerning this proposal. We consider that an enlarged Blackburn with Darwen unitary authority would have the capacity to carry out key services over a larger area particularly given Blackburn with Darwen's current experience of carrying out all local government services, including education and social services.

161 We note that the opinion research conducted by MORI shows that some residents in both Hyndburn and Ribble Valley associate themselves with Blackburn with Darwen, with many regularly visiting Blackburn with Darwen, especially for clothes and household goods shopping. We also note that Blackburn with Darwen and Hyndburn have a similar topography and demography and the communication links between them and the southern areas of Ribble Valley are strong. We cannot ascertain from the opinion research whether any residents from the selected areas of Chorley have strong community ties with other parts of the proposed unitary authority.

162 However, we have a number of concerns about the proposal. We note that it would have consequential effects on the options for adjoining areas in Lancashire, given the proposal to split three districts. It would also require significant boundary changes to adjoining districts, without any identifiable benefit to the county as a whole. In the light of these drawbacks, we consider that alternative options relating to the expansion of Blackburn with Darwen would be more appropriate, and could be more likely to result in high-performing unitary authorities for the whole of the county.

163 We also received a proposal to expand Blackburn with Darwen's boundaries to cover the existing Hyndburn and Rossendale districts, which would result in a population of 284,600. This was put to us as an alternative option from Rossendale Borough Council, and supported by one other respondent. We consider that Rossendale's proposal would offer similar benefits to others linking Hyndburn and Blackburn, as previously discussed. It may also offer benefits to communities in the Rossendale area, whose local government services could benefit from the experience and expertise of Blackburn with Darwen. However, we note that there are fewer links between Rossendale and areas to the west. We also note that this option would limit the possibilities for recommending suitable unitary authorities in other parts of Lancashire.

Table 23

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Bury	Bury and Rossendale	246,300

164 We also received another proposal regarding Rossendale from Bury Metropolitan Borough Council, which proposed to expand its boundaries to take in the whole of the existing Rossendale Borough Council area. A variation on this proposal was supported by one respondent. The proposal was opposed by Rossendale Borough Council.

165 We note that the MORI research shows that some residents in Rossendale associate themselves with Bury and that many residents visit Bury for clothes and household goods shopping. We also note that there are good communication links between the two boroughs, which are connected via the M66. We are aware that there are some similarities between the two boroughs in terms of social, demographic and economic make up.

166 However, we have some concerns. We acknowledge that the present performance of an existing authority can only provide a broad indicator on the future performance of an authority. However, as noted earlier, Rossendale was rated as a poor performing authority by the Audit Commission in a Corporate Governance Inspection Report in 2002. In addition, Bury Metropolitan Council was categorised as a 'weak' authority by the Audit Commission in the CPA assessments of 2002. We, therefore, consider that a Bury and Rossendale unitary authority may not be the best possible solution for Rossendale as it would face major obstacles in seeking to become a high performing authority; it would be a high risk option. It may also be doubted whether such an expansion could impact positively on the provision of services for the residents of the existing Bury Metropolitan Borough Council.

Table 24

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Pendle, Ribble Valley and Padiham	Pendle, Ribble Valley and the town of Padiham from Burnley	150,000 (approx.)

167 Pendle Borough Council proposed a Pendle, Ribble Valley and Padiham unitary authority. The proposal was supported by four respondents as either their first or second preference. Pendle Borough Council also proposed a variation on this option to also include Hyndburn, which would increase the population to around 235,000.

168 We have given careful consideration to these proposals. Pendle Borough Council provided us with some evidence and argumentation on how the proposed unitary authorities would deliver key services such as education and social services. We are aware of the latest inspection reports by the Audit Commission for Pendle, Ribble Valley and Hyndburn borough councils have yielded mostly 'fair' and some 'good' results. Furthermore, there is some evidence of partnership working between Pendle, Ribble Valley and Hyndburn as part of a wider East Lancashire grouping. They are all members of the East Lancashire Partnership, the East Lancashire e-government project and East Lancashire Together. Hyndburn and Ribble Valley also share the same Primary Care Trust.

169 The MORI opinion research indicates that there are some communication links between these areas, with the town of Burnley being a focal point for some residents, especially for clothes and household goods shopping. There are also some historical links between Pendle and Ribble Valley boroughs, via the 'Witches Trail' and Pendle Hill. We also note that there are some good communication links between Ribble Valley and Hyndburn.

170 However, we have identified a number of drawbacks with the unitary authorities proposed by Pendle Borough Council. The MORI opinion research shows that there are community links between Pendle borough and the town of Burnley. Residents in Pendle frequently visit Burnley borough for shopping and the town of Burnley serves as a focal point. This suggests that Pendle residents have a strong links with the whole of the Burnley area, rather than just the small area of Padiham. The MORI research also suggests that residents in Ribble Valley and Hyndburn boroughs look towards Blackburn with Darwen and Preston rather than Pendle. We are concerned that there are no direct road links between the main population centres of Ribble Valley and Pendle and the area is geographically separated by the Forest of Pendle and the Pendle Hills. This could be a significant obstacle to effective and convenient local government in the area.

171 Nor have we received any evidence of any existing joint working between Pendle and Ribble Valley and between Pendle and Hyndburn other than as part of a wider east Lancashire grouping. In contrast, we are aware of smaller 'group' working in the context of other east Lancashire districts. We consider that the authorities have little community of interest and could face significant obstacles in becoming a high performing unitary authority, and that either of the two proposed unitary authorities would be a high risk option.

172 We received a further proposal from Ribble Valley Borough Council. It proposed an enlarged Ribble Valley unitary authority which would include parts from the boroughs of Hyndburn, Pendle, Preston, South Ribble and Wyre. We acknowledged that the proposed unitary authority would reflect local community identities and interests in the area. However, we note that the proposed unitary authority would be largely rural in nature and have a population of just over 100,000. We consider that, on the basis of the evidence and argumentation received, without requiring a large number of joint arrangements, it is likely to be too small to function effectively as a unitary authority within this large rural area. In addition, we note that the proposed authority would limit the amount of viable options available elsewhere in the county.

Table 25

Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
East Lancashire	Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale, and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	517,400

173 We received a second option from Burnley Borough Council for an East Lancashire unitary authority which would include the five east Lancashire districts of Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale with the adjoining unitary authority of Blackburn with Darwen.

174 The proposed East Lancashire unitary authority would be relatively large, ranking alongside the larger metropolitan authorities in population size, and would

have the capacity to deliver local government services to local people without the need for joint arrangements. The East Lancashire unitary authority would be aided by the experience and expertise of Blackburn with Darwen which was rated as an 'excellent' performing authority by the Audit Commission in the 2002 CPA assessment. Furthermore, there is evidence that an East Lancashire unitary authority would reflect local community identities and interests. The majority of them are characteristic of the 'old mill' towns of Lancashire and are similar in social, economic and cultural make-up. In addition, the east Lancashire districts already form part of a well-established east Lancashire entity and the synergy between the districts is illustrated in the numerous east Lancashire partnerships such as East Lancashire Together, East Lancashire e-government project and the East Lancashire Project.

175 The MORI opinion research shows that residents in Pendle visit neighbouring Burnley, especially for clothes and household goods shopping. Similarly, some residents in Ribble Valley and Hyndburn visit Blackburn with Darwen, mostly for clothes and household goods shopping. There are also good communication links north to south between Ribble Valley, Hyndburn and Blackburn with Darwen and between Pendle, Burnley and Rossendale, and a linear pattern of major roads can be traced from Blackburn in the south to Colne in the north, including the Mellor/Clitheroe/Simonstone triangle to the north and Haslingden and Rawtenstall to the south.

176 However, we have some concerns over whether an East Lancashire unitary authority, with a population of over half a million, could represent and engage local communities particularly given that there would be a large rural element within an otherwise urban unitary authority.

Other proposals

177 As shown in chapter 3 we received a number of other proposals for different patterns of unitary local government in Lancashire. We received several variations on an authority incorporating Ribble Valley and surrounding areas. Several submissions proposed a Ribble Valley, Lancaster City and Wyre unitary authority. While this option would create an authority that may reflect the needs of its rural residents we note that it has a number of disadvantages. Ribble Valley is a predominately rural area and is geographically separated from Lancaster City by the Forest of Bowland and a series of Fells with few transport links between the three districts. We also note that the population of Ribble Valley is concentrated in the south of the district, resulting in fewer links between the three districts. The MORI opinion research showed that Ribble Valley residents have stronger links to Blackburn and Preston. In contrast, Lancaster City has stronger transport, community and historical links north towards Cumbria than south into Ribble Valley and Wyre.

178 We received a proposal from Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council to incorporate the Whitworth parish area of Rossendale. This was supported by Whitworth Town Council. While Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council only proposed taking in this area if the remainder of Rossendale was transferred to Bury, we consider this proposal has some merit. The Rochdale submission noted that Whitworth is joined to the north of the metropolitan area by continuous urban development, many of its residents use Rochdale schools and there are business links between the two areas. There is Green Belt land between Whitworth and its nearest neighbour in Rossendale, the town of Bacup, which has a different socio-economic profile.

179 We also received a representation from Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council which, while not proactively seeking an expansion, stated that the Council could incorporate three wards from Chorley if that would facilitate a pattern of unitary authorities across the remainder of the county. However, we do not consider that such a transfer would be appropriate, and received little evidence to suggest that such a proposal would better represent community identities and interests in this area of Chorley.

180 We also received a submission from Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, requesting a minor boundary amendment relating to the Appley Bridge and Tontine areas of West Lancashire. Similarly, we also received a request from Blackpool Borough Council for minor boundary amendments relating to small parts of Fylde and Wyre as its second preference. However, the purpose of this review is not simply to address minor boundary changes, and these would have to be addressed in isolation to this review.

181 We received a proposal to combine West Lancashire and Chorley. We did not consider these viable options as there are no strong transport links between these two districts and the MORI research showed no evidence of community feeling or identity between the two districts. We also received proposals to combine South Ribble and Chorley. However, we are of the view that the strengths of a Central Lancashire proposal are such that any proposal that breaks this link weakens the options for that area.

182 We received a number of proposals based on variants of the East Lancashire unitary authority proposed by Burnley Borough Council as its second preference. Some of these contained Blackburn with Darwen, while others were based on the existing two-tier districts in east Lancashire. While some of these configurations were based on districts that we consider to have common links (such as Burnley and Pendle) we considered that others (such as Pendle and Ribble Valley) had fewer links and communities of interests when not part of a wider East Lancashire unitary authority. Furthermore, a number of these proposals would limit options for the remainder of east Lancashire.

183 We also received proposals for various other combinations of districts, as shown in Table 9. While the strength of support and evidence for these varied, we consider that the fact that they could weaken other proposals across the county is a disadvantage.

184 We also received several proposals that would involve crossing regional boundaries, which we are unable to recommend as a part of this review.



5 Draft recommendations

185 This chapter contains our draft recommendations for Cumbria and Lancashire.

186 In formulating our draft recommendations, we have had to ensure that our proposals facilitate a pattern of unitary authorities for the whole of the Cumbria and Lancashire. We could not look at one local authority area in isolation, but rather have needed to consider the consequential effects of any proposed options across the whole of both counties. Our proposals are those that we consider are most likely to provide the setting for high-performing and robust unitary authorities.

187 We wish to emphasise that we have not finalised our recommendations for patterns of unitary authorities in Cumbria and Lancashire and would welcome views during Stage Three from all interested parties, including local residents, before we submit our final recommendations to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Cumbria

Option One

188 We consider that a county-wide unitary authority, as proposed by Cumbria County Council, would be likely to have sufficient capacity to provide the full range of local government services and be able to act strategically in a relatively large, sparsely populated area. We consider that such an authority would have an adequate resource base to effectively deliver the full range of local government services to the entire county and in particular to the rural areas. This proposal would provide for continuity of service provision and partnership arrangements, and have the potential to alleviate the current recruitment and retention problems in Cumbria. Our concerns about how such an authority would fulfil its community leadership role over such a wide and, for the most part sparsely populated area, are somewhat alleviated by the positive assessment by the Audit Commission regarding the response to the foot and mouth crisis of 2001 and the longevity of these initiatives. However, we have a number of reservations over how a county-wide unitary authority would undertake its representational role. In our view, the expectation that parish and town councils, where they exist, could fill the representational gap may be unrealistic. Nevertheless, we propose to put forward this option as part of our draft recommendations. However, we would welcome more information on how the proposed authority might address its representational role during Stage Three.

Option Two

189 We consider that the two unitary authority option, for 'North Cumbria' and 'South Cumbria & Lancaster' would be well placed to reflect the generally perceived differences in terms of local affinities between the north and the south of the county, and have decided to consult on it. In terms of population size, both authorities would be likely to have the potential to generate sufficient capacity to provide all of the major services and address socio-economic issues which are faced by a number of communities within the area. In this respect, the two unitary authority option offers a balance between the larger capacity of one unitary authority and the reflection of community identity and interests of the three unitary authority option. As detailed earlier, we consider that the South Cumbria & Lancaster option allows Lancaster city to provide a balance between the very different areas of Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland. However, given the lack of consensus over this option, we are keen

to receive, during Stage Three, information on how these authorities might organise themselves in terms of providing key services and fulfilling their representational role.

190 We propose naming these unitary authorities 'North Cumbria' and 'South Cumbria & Lancaster' for the purposes of consultation. We note that most respondents have referred to the option that would combine Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland and Lancaster as 'Morecambe Bay', relating to the coastline that the three authorities share. However, we consider that 'South Cumbria & Lancaster' could better reflect the constituent parts of this authority, although we would welcome comments on the proposed names. Comments are similarly invited on the name 'North Cumbria'.

191 We have decided against consulting on the proposals for three unitary authorities. We note that, while immediate, local identities could be well represented under this proposal, the wider patterns of community within Cumbria would not be addressed. While accepting that there are a large number of partnerships in operation between the pairs of districts, we have significant concerns over the capacity of three unitary authorities to deliver large scale services effectively and efficiently, especially in West Cumbria and South Cumbria, where socio-economic issues are of particular concern and the impact of declining industries is most felt. We also have concerns about whether these authorities would have sufficiently robust resource bases to meet the needs of local communities. In our view, alternative options offer far less high-risk alternatives to meeting the needs of communities in these areas.

192 As part of our draft recommendations for new structures of unitary local government, we are required to suggest names for new authorities. The table below details the names we are proposing for unitary authorities under each of the options we are putting forward as part of our draft recommendations. Some of the names were proposed to us in submissions but in some cases we have proposed names ourselves. We wish to emphasise that the names put forward are draft proposals at this stage. We would welcome views from all interested parties on the appropriateness or otherwise of the names put forward for proposed unitary authorities, and would welcome any alternative suggestions. We will revisit our proposals for names of new unitary authorities when we make our final recommendations to the Deputy Prime Minister.

193 We are proposing that two options for patterns of unitary government in Cumbria be put forward for consultation as set out in the table below:

Table 26: Draft recommendations

	Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Option One: One unitary authority	Cumbria County Council	Cumbria County	487,600
Option two: Two unitary authorities	North Cumbria	Allerdale, Copeland, Carlisle and Eden	313,300
	South Cumbria & Lancaster	Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland and Lancaster	308,200

194 We wish to emphasise that we are not dismissing outright those proposals on which we are not consulting. Rather, we are recommending options that we consider

based upon the evidence received so far to be most likely to meet the objectives of the review. We welcome further views on our two options or any other aspect of the review at Stage Three.

195 An illustrative map of each option is contained in Appendix A.

Lancashire

196 We have carefully considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review for Lancashire. As described earlier, we received few proposals that addressed options for the county as a whole. This, and the large number of districts within the county, has meant that making proposals for unitary authorities across Lancashire has been particularly complex and complicated. Accordingly, we have had to consider the submissions received with a view to developing a number of schemes that would facilitate options across the whole of the two-tier areas. While we acknowledge the merits of the various proposals put to us, we also have a number of reservations regarding the strength of the evidence and information in support of those proposals. We have noted that, as most submissions only formulated unitary patterns for one part of the county, a number of issues were left unexplored or undeveloped. In the light of these concerns, we have sought to build upon the submissions received in order to develop options that will, in our view, provide the setting for high performing unitary authorities in Lancashire.

Option One

197 We consider the proposal for one unitary authority for Lancashire has merit and have decided to consult upon it as Option One of our draft recommendations. We have noted the evidence put to us regarding the ability of such an authority to provide a full range of local government services across the whole county area, by building on the existing County Council's current performance and history of strong political leadership.

198 However, a county-wide unitary authority would cover a large and diverse geographical area, containing a large population spread across numerous villages, towns and cities. We are concerned about the ability of such an authority to effectively represent and engage with diverse local communities over such a large population and large geographical area. We have noted the County Council's proposal for 12 Local Cabinets, but are concerned that this might be seen to recreate the existing two-tier structure rather than responding more directly to the diversity of local communities. We have some concerns that this might not facilitate the operation of a new unitary authority for the whole county. We would welcome further views on this issue at Stage Three.

199 We propose two amendments to the boundaries of the proposed unitary authority, to better reflect community identities and interests. We propose including the Whitworth parish area of Rossendale in an expanded Rochdale authority, as proposed by both Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council. We are aware that there is a strong community of interest between Whitworth and the adjoining area of Rochdale, and that people in this area may relate more strongly to Rochdale than other areas in Rossendale.

200 We also propose including the Fleetwood and Thornton-Cleveleys areas of the existing Wyre Borough in an expanded Blackpool authority, broadly as proposed by Blackpool Borough Council and supported by Wyre Labour Group. We note that the

Fleetwood and Thornton-Cleveleys areas are geographically separated from the rest of Wyre by an estuary, and that they are closely linked to communities in Blackpool, sharing a similar socio-economic basis. This proposal would reduce the population of a Lancashire unitary authority by around 76,000. The wards that would be transferred from Wyre to Blackpool are listed in the table below.

Table 27: Wards to be transferred from Wyre to Blackpool as part of Option One

Bourne	Norcross
Breck	Park
Carleton	Pharos
Cleveleys Park	Rossall
Hardhorn	Staina
High Cross	Tithebarn
Jubilee	Victoria
Mount	Warren

201 We consider that these two boundary amendments would better reflect community identities in the areas concerned than the existing arrangements, and would contribute to more effective and convenient local government for local communities. At this stage, we consider that Lancaster should form part of a Lancashire unitary authority. However, we would welcome views on this given that, under other options for the county, we have proposed that Lancaster should form part of a South Cumbria & Lancaster authority.

Option Two

202 In formulating a sub-county option for patterns of unitary authorities in Lancashire we have divided the county into discrete geographical areas as did many respondents in their submissions to us. On the basis of the evidence and information received, we have formulated for consultation a second option, based on seven unitary authorities which includes changes to the boundaries of several existing unitary and metropolitan authorities.

North Lancashire

203 In the north of Lancashire, we propose combining Lancaster city with Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland districts, as proposed under Option Two for Cumbria.

204 We have not been persuaded to put forward a unitary authority for Lancaster city as part of our draft recommendations. As explained above, we have serious concerns about the viability of such an authority. Based on the evidence received during Stage One we do not consider that it would have the capacity to be a high performing authority. We have considered alternative options for Lancaster, including merging it with other districts in Lancashire. However, as detailed in the Cumbria section of the report, we note that residents in Lancaster tend to look northwards to Cumbria, rather than southwards to the rest of Lancashire.

Fylde and Wyre

205 Having carefully considered proposals for the Fylde and Wyre area of Lancashire, we propose a unitary authority combining the existing Blackpool Borough Council with the western parts of Fylde and Wyre.

206 We considered the proposals for a combined Wyre & Fylde unitary authority, but are of the view that they would not facilitate the best possible pattern of unitary local government for the area. We consider the arguments for including the Fleetwood and Thornton-Cleveleys areas in an expanded Blackpool unitary authority to be particularly strong. However, the removal of those areas from a Fylde and Wyre unitary authority, with or without the transfer of parished areas from Preston and Lancaster, raises serious questions over the capacity and viability of the residual authority. In particular, we would have major concerns over the capacity of such an authority to deliver strategic and specialist services effectively without recourse to extensive joint arrangements.

207 We have therefore had to consider alternative options for Fylde and Wyre. Our proposed unitary authority would build on the options put to us, by combining the western parts of Wyre and Fylde in an authority with Blackpool. It recognises the distinction within the existing Wyre and Fylde authorities between their more urban western parts and more rural eastern areas with sound communication links to the east and south. In addition, we note that the Local Government Commission, during its review of Blackpool, stated that it 'accepts that the existing boundary is not ideal', and that 'Blackpool's tightly drawn boundary is a cause for hesitation'. The wards that we propose transferring to this authority are listed in the table below. Our proposal also seeks to reflect communities of interest between Fylde, Wyre and Blackpool. The draft proposal would create a unitary authority with a population of around 270,600 (nearly twice as large as the existing unitary authority of Blackpool). We propose that it be named Fylde Coast unitary authority, for the purposes of consultation.

Table 28: Wards to be transferred from Fylde to our proposed Fylde Coast unitary authority under Option Two

Ansdell	Park
Ashton	Singleton & Greenhalgh
Central	Staining & Weeton
Clifton	St John's
Fairhaven	St Leonard's
Heyhouses	Warton & Westby (part) – the parish of Westby-with-Plumpton
Kilnhouse	

Table 29: Wards to be transferred from Wyre to our proposed Fylde Coast unitary authority under Option Two

Bourne	Norcross
Breck	Park
Carleton	Pharos
Cleveleys Park	Pilling
Great Eccleston (part) – the parish of Out Rawcliffe	Preesall
Hambleton & Stalmine with Staynall	Rossall
Hardhorn	Staina
High Cross	Tithebarn
Jubilee	Victoria
Mount	Warren

208 We propose that the remaining areas of Wyre and Fylde form part of a Central Lancashire authority, as discussed in further detail below.

Central Lancashire

209 In the central area of the Lancashire, we propose creating a Central Lancashire unitary authority, comprising the existing districts of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble, as well as the eastern parts of Wyre and Fylde districts. This option would build on proposals put forward by Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council. We consider that a Central Lancashire authority, with a population of 384,400, could have the capacity to provide high quality services that would meet the needs of local communities in its constituent areas. We are aware that Preston is a focal point for work, shopping and leisure needs for communities in and around the M6 corridor. In particular, we consider that the M6/M55 network provides a strong link between the eastern parts of both Wyre and Fylde and the rest of the proposed authority, and that these would be more suitably included in a Central Lancashire authority than in a Blackpool unitary authority. We consider that the proposal for a Central Lancashire unitary authority is a strong one, and can be built upon in order to facilitate patterns of unitary authorities across the county. Under this proposal, the wards named in the table below would be included in our proposed unitary authority.

Table 30: Wards to be transferred from Fylde to our proposed Central Lancashire unitary authority under Option Two

Elswick & Little Eccleston	Medlar-with-Wesham
Freckleton East	Newton & Treales
Freckleton West	Ribby-with-Wrea
Kirkham North	Warton & Westby (part) – the parish of Bryning-with-Warton
Kirkham South	

Table 31: Wards to be transferred from Wyre to our proposed Central Lancashire unitary authority under Option Two

Brock	Garstang
Cabus	Great Eccleston (part) – the parishes of Great Eccleston, Inskip-with-Sowerby
Calder	and Upper Rawcliffe-with-Tarnacre
Catterall	Wyresdale

210 We have considered the proposal for a Chorley unitary authority, on its existing boundaries. However, we have concerns about the viability of such an authority. We also consider that alternative options in this area are more likely to provide the setting for high performing unitary authorities.

East Lancashire

211 We consider that an East Lancashire authority comprising Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley, part of Rossendale and Blackburn with Darwen would reflect the broad community interests of this part of Lancashire, uniting areas that have a broadly similar demographic and socio-economic basis. We consider that such an authority would benefit from the inclusion of Blackburn with Darwen, which has experience in delivering the full range of strategic services and has been rated as an 'excellent' performing authority by the Audit Commission. This option would build on the existing joint-working and partnership framework already established in East Lancashire. We consider it could result in synergies that would facilitate the establishment of a 'single voice' to represent the needs of local communities in this part of the county.

212 We acknowledge, however, that we have received limited information and evidence about how such an authority would function, particularly in respect of community engagement and local representation. We would therefore particularly welcome local views at Stage Three on this aspect.

213 As discussed in relation to Option One we propose transferring the Whitworth parish area of Rossendale to an expanded Rochdale authority. We consider this would better reflect community identities and interests in this area, and could lead to more convenient and effective local government for the Whitworth community.

214 We examined the other proposals received for East Lancashire, but considered that a number of them would not provide the setting for high-performing unitary authorities, given the evidence received. We do, however, propose an alternative solution for the East Lancashire area, which is outlined in Option Three.

West Lancashire

215 In West Lancashire, we propose that the existing district be divided between the adjoining areas of Sefton and Wigan. We noted West Lancashire District Council's submission for a West Lancashire unitary authority based on existing boundaries. However, we have significant reservations about the capacity of a West Lancashire unitary authority, with a population of around 108,400, to deliver major local government services without resorting to a wide range of joint arrangements. We considered including the whole of West Lancashire district in a Central Lancashire unitary authority. However, there are few links between West Lancashire and the other Lancashire districts, and that its inclusion could dilute the anticipated effectiveness of a Central Lancashire unitary authority.

216 Other solutions for this area include the transfer of West Lancashire to the adjoining metropolitan authority of Sefton. We note that there are reasonably good communication links between Sefton, Ormskirk and the western part of West Lancashire. In addition, we are aware that significant minorities of West Lancashire residents associate themselves with the Southport area of Sefton, and that it provides a focal point for clothes and household goods shopping for some residents.

217 Conversely, we note that Skelmersdale and the eastern area of West Lancashire have more links with Wigan and that there are good transport links between these areas. Travel to work patterns show West Lancashire's linkages with the metropolitan areas to the south and we consider that the south-eastern parts of the district may have communities of interest with Wigan rather than with Sefton. Our proposals seek to reflect these linkages.

218 Sefton and Wigan, as existing single-tier authorities, already have experience of providing the full range of local government services. We note that they were categorised as 'fair' and 'excellent' performing councils respectively by the Audit Commission in the CPA 2002. We recognise that the existing performance of a council can only provide a broad indicator on the future performance of a new or expanded unitary authority. However, we consider that the proposed authorities could provide effective and convenient local government in the areas concerned.

219 Under our proposals, the areas broadly in the east of the district, including Skelmersdale, would be included in an enlarged Wigan authority. We propose that the remaining part of West Lancashire, including Ormskirk, be combined with Sefton, and that the unitary authority be named Sefton & West Lancashire for the purposes of consultation. We note that this option would, in part, reflect Wigan Metropolitan

Borough Council's proposal to expand its boundaries to include the Appley Bridge and Tontine areas of West Lancashire. The tables below indicate the wards to be transferred to both Sefton and Wigan.

Table 32: Wards to be transferred from West Lancashire to Sefton under Option Two

Aughton Park	Knowsley
Aughton & Downholland	North Meols
Burscough East	Rufford
Burscough West	Scarisbrick
Derby	Scott
Halsall	Tarleton
Hesketh-with-Becconsall	

Table 33: Wards to be transferred from West Lancashire to Wigan under Option Two

Ashurst	Parbold
Bickerstaffe	Skelmersdale North
Birch Green	Skelmersdale South
Digmoor	Tanhouse
Moorside	Upholland
Newburgh	Wrightington

Option Three

220 Option Three is similar to Option Two, the only difference being an alternative proposal for east Lancashire.

221 Under this option, we propose two unitary authorities in east Lancashire; Blackburn & Ribble, which would comprise Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley, and South East Lancashire, which would comprise Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale, less the parish of Whitworth (which once again we propose should be transferred to Rochdale).

222 We consider that this proposal would offer an alternative solution for east Lancashire, and could counter concerns over the size of a single East Lancashire unitary authority. We consider that these two unitary authorities, with populations of over 200,000, could still provide the setting for high-performing unitary authorities by combining areas that share similar characteristics, building upon existing synergies and partnerships. In our view, this proposal would reflect communities in this area, and would deliver services effectively to meet local needs.

223 As part of our draft recommendations for new structures of unitary local government, we are required to suggest names for new authorities. The table below details the names we are proposing for unitary authorities under each of the options we are putting forward as part of our draft recommendations. Some of the names were proposed to us in submissions but in some cases we have proposed names ourselves. We wish to emphasise strongly that the names put forward are draft proposals at this stage. We would welcome views from all interested parties on the appropriateness or otherwise of the names put forward for proposed unitary authorities, and would welcome any alternative suggestions. We will revisit our proposals for names of new unitary authorities when we make our final recommendations to the Deputy Prime Minister.

224 We are proposing that three options for patterns of unitary government in Lancashire be put forward for consultation as set out in the table below:

Table 34: Draft recommendations

Option	Unitary authority	Constituent parts	Population (2001)
Option One	Lancashire County Council	Most of Lancashire County	1,051,400
	Blackpool	Blackpool and part of Wyre	218,500
	Rochdale	Rochdale and part of Rossendale	212,600
Option Two	Central Lancashire	Chorley, Preston, South Ribble, part of Fylde and part of Wyre	384,400
	East Lancashire	Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and part of Rossendale	510,100
	Fylde Coast	Blackpool, part of Fylde and part of Wyre	270,600
	Rochdale	Rochdale and part of Rossendale	212,600
	Sefton & West Lancashire	Sefton and part of West Lancashire	338,900
	South Cumbria & Lancaster	Barrow-in-Furness, Lancaster and South Lakeland	308,200
	Wigan	Wigan and part of West Lancashire	353,900
Option Three	Blackburn & Ribble	Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	272,900
	Central Lancashire	Chorley, Preston, South Ribble, part of Fylde and part of Wyre	384,400
	Fylde Coast	Blackpool, part of Fylde and part of Wyre	270,600
	Rochdale	Rochdale and part of Rossendale	212,600
	Sefton & West Lancashire	Sefton and part of West Lancashire	338,900
	South Cumbria & Lancaster	Barrow-in-Furness, Lancaster and South Lakeland	308,200
	South East Lancashire	Burnley, Pendle and part of Rossendale	237,200
	Wigan	Wigan and part of West Lancashire	353,900

225 We wish to emphasise that we are not dismissing outright those proposals on which we are not consulting. Rather, we are recommending options that we consider, based upon the evidence received so far, to be most likely to meet the objectives of the review. We welcome further views on our three options or any other aspect of the review at Stage Three.

226 In the light of further evidence received, we may decide that our draft recommendations should be refined or otherwise varied, and we may change the number of options put forward in our final recommendations to the Deputy Prime Minister.

227 An illustrative map of each option is contained in Appendix A.

Financial model

228 The ODPM's guidance provides a financial model for use by The Boundary Committee for England. This model only addresses the costs of 'being in business' and does not consider the total transitional or ongoing costs of change. As such, it differs from financial models used during previous local government reviews. Research on modelling the costs of local government reorganisation is available on the ODPM website: www.odpm.gov.uk.

229 We consider that the model provided by the ODPM provides a useful starting point for comparing different options based on a limited range of well-defined costs. However, we have taken the view that cost estimates cannot be a determining factor in deciding which patterns of wholly unitary structures are appropriate. This is discussed in further detail in the *Overview report*.

230 At the beginning of the review we requested that all local authorities in the two-tier areas under review complete a financial return. The Audit Commission has assisted us in the process by assessing whether the information provided by local authorities had been prepared in accordance with the Committee's requirements and is consistent with relevant supporting records held by the authority. We also appointed PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as our financial consultants for the purposes of this review and to assist us in collecting and analysing the financial data using the financial model.

231 The Audit Commission has found that the returns for Cumbria and Lancashire were prepared in accordance with our requirements, and that the financial and related information contained in the returns is relevant to assessing the costs of being in business and is consistent with the records held by each of the local authorities under review.

232 The table below shows the current costs of 'being in business' of the existing local government structure of Cumbria and for each of the options we wish to consult upon, based on the audited returns and the model. Further information is available on our website.

Table 35: Financial model – costs of 'being in business' – Cumbria

	Costs
Existing two-tier structure	17.6
Option One	9.1
Option Two	13.9

233 Option Two includes a unitary authority of South Cumbria & Lancaster, comprising Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland (in Cumbria) and Lancaster (in Lancashire). Accordingly, the 'costs of being in business' associated with Option Two cannot be directly compared with the costs associated with Option One or with current costs.

234 The table below shows the current costs of 'being in business' of the existing local government structure of Lancashire and for each of the options we wish to consult upon, based on the audited returns and the model.

Table 36: Financial model – costs of 'being in business' – Lancashire

	Costs
Existing two-tier structure	38.7
Option One	12.9
Option Two	23.1
Option Three	25.9

235 Options Two and Three both include a unitary authority of South Cumbria & Lancaster, comprising Barrow-in-Furness, South Lakeland (in Cumbria) and Lancaster (in Lancashire). Accordingly, the 'costs of being in business' associated with Options Two and Three, although comparable with each other, cannot directly be compared with the costs associated with Option One or with current costs.

236 Cumbria County Council also supplied us with its own evaluation in relation to the cost of its own proposal, and for those proposed by the district councils in Cumbria. In using a model developed by the County Councils' Network, Cumbria County Council estimated that one unitary authority for Cumbria would have a three-year payback period, as compared with 39 years for a two unitary option (including Lancaster) or a three-unitary option, which would never pay for itself. The figures provided by the Council have not been verified as part of our process.

6 Other matters

237 In addition to consulting on options for future local government structures in Cumbria and Lancashire, we have also considered the treatment of ceremonial arrangements and the provision of certain services.

238 In a late amendment to the 2003 Act in its passage through Parliament, provision was made to allow us to make recommendations for changes to the boundaries of existing unitary authorities that adjoin the two-tier areas, but only to expand the areas of the unitary authorities.

239 In addition to enabling us to look across the boundaries of shire unitary authorities, we may also look across the boundaries of metropolitan districts. This has an unintended effect. From our understanding of section 14(7)(b) of the 1992 Act, any expansion of a metropolitan district resulting from the transfer to it of any part of a two-tier area has the effect of making that district non-metropolitan. That is to say, it will no longer form part of a metropolitan county area.

240 Given the constraints of the review timetable we have been unable to consider in detail the full implications for each of the metropolitan district councils affected by our options for structural change in Lancashire. Further work on these will be undertaken during Stage Three. In the meantime, however, we have sought in the following draft recommendations to address the more obvious effects.

Ceremonial arrangements

241 In strict legal terms, each unitary authority is a county in its own right. That is because Schedule 1 to the Local Government Act 1972 defines local government areas in England and Wales by reference to county areas, not district areas; unitary districts are created by 'deeming' the unitary authorities as districts for certain statutory functions. The 'deeming' is achieved in the structural change order.

242 Under the Reserve Forces Act 1980 every county is entitled to a Lord Lieutenant. While this is entirely appropriate for unitary county councils, in practical terms there is no need for most unitary district councils to have their own Lord Lieutenant and other ceremonial arrangements. We have considered the particular circumstances relating to our proposals for a South Cumbria & Lancaster unitary authority, which crosses the existing Cumbria and Lancashire boundary. For the purposes of consultation, we are proposing that the new authority be linked with Lancashire for ceremonial purposes.

Cumbria Option Two

Draft recommendation

The county of Cumbria should be retained for ceremonial and related purposes, and the unitary authority of North Cumbria should be associated with the county for such purposes. The unitary authority of South Cumbria & Lancaster should be associated with the county of Lancashire for ceremonial and related purposes.

Lancashire Option One

Draft recommendation

The unitary authority of Rochdale should continue to be associated with the county of Greater Manchester for ceremonial and related purposes.

Lancashire Option Two

Draft recommendation

The county of Lancashire should be retained for ceremonial and related purposes, and the unitary authorities of Central Lancashire, East Lancashire, Fylde Coast and South Cumbria & Lancaster should be associated with the county for such purposes.

The authorities of Rochdale and Wigan should continue to be associated with the county of Greater Manchester for ceremonial and related purposes. Sefton & West Lancashire should be associated with the county of Merseyside for ceremonial and related matters.

Lancashire Option Three

Draft recommendation

The county of Lancashire should be retained for ceremonial and related purposes, and the unitary authorities of Blackburn & Ribble, Central Lancashire, Fylde Coast, South Cumbria & Lancaster and South East Lancashire should be associated with the county for such purposes.

The authorities of Rochdale and Wigan should continue to be associated with the county of Greater Manchester for ceremonial and related purposes. Sefton & West Lancashire should be associated with the county of Merseyside for ceremonial and related matters.

Public protection

243 Section 14(5)(e) of the Local Government Act 1992 invites us to consider whether, in connection with any recommended structural or boundary change, there should be any change in police areas, including whether there should be an increase or reduction in the number of police areas. Section 17(3)(g) and (h) of the 1992 Act (implementation of recommendations) enables the Secretary of State to make provision in respect of the constitution, election and membership of public bodies in any area affected by the structural change order, including their abolition or establishment.

244 Under section 17(6) of the 1992 Act, the Secretary of State is required to ensure that no unitary county or a district (unitary or two-tier) is divided between two or more police areas.

245 With the creation of police authorities under the Police and Magistrates Courts Act 1994, the police service is no longer a county function. However, the membership of each police authority is appointed by a committee that draws a high proportion of its membership from local government. In two-tier counties, the local authority element is from the county council. Accordingly, for options that include sub-county patterns of unitary authorities, we must make recommendations in respect of the

area and the membership of the committee that appoints members of police authorities. Our recommendations take no account at this stage of proposals for changes to police authority membership on which the Government is currently consulting.

246 The options for the establishment of a new South Cumbria & Lancaster authority, which would cross the existing Cumbria and Lancashire boundary, raise particular issues. We need to consider whether the new authority should be linked with either the Cumbria or the Lancashire Police Authority area.

247 We received no proposals in relation to this matter during Stage One of the review. Arguably, a South Cumbria & Lancaster authority should be brought within the Lancashire Police Authority area, given its location and focus. However, that raises questions over the future viability of the Cumbria Police Authority and the Cumbria Constabulary. The Police Authority's resource base would be small, and could result in the effectiveness of the Constabulary being called into question. These are important issues on which we seek further evidence and views during Stage Three. For the purposes of consultation, however, we are proposing that for all options involving a South Cumbria & Lancaster unitary authority, a single Cumbria & Lancashire Police Authority should serve both counties.

248 In relation to the metropolitan districts affected by our options for Lancashire, we see no reason to disturb the existing fire and police authority coverage.

249 While we are aware that the Government has published proposals on the future of the fire service, it is currently a strategic county function for which formal joint arrangements need to be made. It would not be practical for individual unitary districts to run their own service. Nor would it be appropriate for us, given the importance of the function, to rely on the authorities concerned establishing informal partnership arrangements.

250 There are, of course, a number of other public protection agencies in each area under review, such as the magistrates' courts service, the probation service, Local Criminal Justice Boards, Drug Action Teams and Crime and Disorder Partnerships. Certain of these agencies are based on local authority areas, and the creation of unitary authorities will have an impact on them. However, they are not strategic local authority services and, at present, we see no reason to make recommendations in respect of them. Our understanding is that any necessary alterations to their areas or membership will flow automatically from the patterns of any unitary authorities that may be established.

Cumbria Option Two

Draft recommendation

There should be a combined authority established in the county areas of Cumbria and Lancashire for the fire service, on which representatives of the new unitary authorities should serve. A new police authority should be established in place of the Cumbria and Lancashire Police authorities. Representatives of the unitary authorities in the counties should serve on a joint committee to select the local authority membership of the new police authority. No changes are proposed to the areas covered by other public protection agencies in the existing administrative counties of Cumbria and Lancashire.

Lancashire Option One

Draft recommendation

The area covered by Lancashire Police Authority should be altered to reflect the proposed transfer of part of Rossendale to Rochdale. No changes are proposed to the areas of other public protection agencies in the existing administrative county of Lancashire.

The Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence and Police authorities should continue to cover the area of an expanded Rochdale authority. There should be no change to the membership of Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence Authority. Representatives of Rochdale should continue to sit on the committee which selects the local authority membership of the Greater Manchester Police Authority.

Lancashire Option Two

Draft recommendation

There should be a combined authority established in the county areas of Cumbria and Lancashire for the fire service, on which representatives of the unitary authorities in the counties should serve. A new police authority should be established in place of the Cumbria and Lancashire Police authorities, the area of which should reflect the proposed transfer of parts of Rossendale and West Lancashire to adjoining districts. Representatives of the unitary authorities in the counties should serve on a joint committee to select the local authority membership of the new police authority. No changes are proposed to the areas covered by other public protection agencies in the existing administrative counties of Cumbria and Lancashire.

The Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence and Police authorities should continue to cover the areas of expanded Rochdale and Wigan authorities. The Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence and Police authorities should cover the area of Sefton & West Lancashire.

There should be no change to the membership of the Fire and Civil Defence authorities in Greater Manchester or Merseyside.

Representatives of Rochdale, Wigan and Sefton & West Lancashire should continue to serve on the relevant committees which select the local authority membership of the police authorities for Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

Lancashire Option Three

Draft recommendation

There should be a combined authority established in the county areas of Cumbria and Lancashire for the fire service, on which representatives of the unitary authorities in the counties should serve. A new police authority should be established in place of the Cumbria and Lancashire Police authorities, the area of which should reflect the proposed transfer of parts of Rossendale and West Lancashire to adjoining districts. Representatives of the unitary authorities in the counties should serve on a joint committee to select the local authority membership of the new police authority. No changes are proposed to the areas covered by other public protection agencies in the existing administrative counties of Cumbria and Lancashire.

The Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence and Police authorities should continue to cover the areas of expanded Rochdale and Wigan authorities. The Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence and Police authorities should cover the area of Sefton & West Lancashire.

There should be no change to the membership of the Fire and Civil Defence authorities in Greater Manchester or Merseyside.

Representatives of Rochdale, Wigan and Sefton & West Lancashire should continue to serve on the relevant committees which select the local authority membership of the police authorities for Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

Strategic planning

251 Section 14(5)(d) of the 1992 Act invites us, in connection with any structural change, to make recommendations in relation to strategic planning. In particular, we are asked to consider whether new unitary authorities should be structure or Unitary Development Planning (UDP) authorities, and whether they should be waste and mineral planning authorities. We can recommend joint arrangements for the exercise of these functions.

252 Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill makes provision for the introduction of regional spatial strategies (RSS) in each region, which will replace the structure plan and UDP process. In the meantime, however, we are required to make recommendations in respect of strategic planning.

253 Given the nature of the areas under review, we see no case at this stage for recommending that any new unitary authority become a UDP authority. Accordingly, we are proposing a continuation of the structure planning process, to be undertaken jointly across each county area.

254 Yet again, however, our proposal for a cross-county South Cumbria & Lancaster authority raises particular issues given that Cumbria and Lancashire have different structure plans. A South Cumbria & Lancaster authority would have two structure plans in place, one for the Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland areas, and one for the Lancaster area. This points to the need for a significant level of cooperation between all Cumbrian and Lancashire unitary authorities in fulfilling their strategic planning obligations.

Cumbria Option One

Draft recommendation

For strategic planning, the unitary county council should have responsibility for structure planning for its area. It should have the responsibility for formulating detailed minerals and waste policies for its area in general conformity with the policy framework established by the structure plan, and should be authorised to include such policies in its local plans.

Responsibility for local plans will rest with the unitary county council. It will exercise development control functions for its area for all purposes.

Cumbria Option Two

Draft recommendation

For strategic planning, the unitary authorities of North Cumbria and South Cumbria & Lancaster should be structure planning authorities for their areas, with a view to that function being exercised jointly with the unitary authorities in the county of Lancashire. The unitary authorities should each have responsibility for minerals and waste planning policies. They should discharge these responsibilities jointly but should also be authorised, if it would secure greater efficiency without prejudicing the county-wide strategic policy, to include such detailed policies in their local plans.

Responsibility for local plans will rest with the new unitary authorities. They will exercise development control functions for their areas for all purposes.

Lancashire Option One

Draft recommendation

For strategic planning, the unitary county council should have responsibility for structure planning for its area, with a view to that function being exercised jointly with Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool so as to maintain a single structure plan across the whole of the combined area. It should have the responsibility for formulating detailed minerals and waste policies for its area in general conformity with the policy framework established by the structure plan, and should be authorised to include such policies in its local plans.

Responsibility for local plans will rest with the unitary county council. It will exercise development control functions for its area for all purposes.

Lancashire Option Two

Draft recommendation

For strategic planning, the unitary authorities of Central Lancashire, East Lancashire, Fylde Coast and South Cumbria & Lancaster should be structure planning authorities for their areas, with a view to that function being exercised jointly with North Cumbria. The unitary authorities should each have responsibility for minerals and waste planning policies. They should discharge these responsibilities jointly but should also be authorised, if it would secure greater efficiency without prejudicing the county-wide strategic policies, to include such detailed policies in their local plans.

Responsibility for local plans will rest with the unitary authorities. They will exercise development control functions for their areas for all purposes.

Lancashire Option Three

Draft recommendation

For strategic planning, the unitary authorities of Blackburn & Ribble, Central Lancashire, Fylde Coast, South Cumbria & Lancaster and South East Lancashire should be structure planning authorities for their areas, with a view to that function being exercised jointly with North Cumbria. The unitary authorities should each have responsibility for minerals and waste planning policies. They should discharge these responsibilities jointly but should also be authorised, if it would secure greater efficiency without prejudicing the county-wide strategic policies, to include such detailed policies in their local plans.

Responsibility for local plans will rest with the unitary authorities. They will exercise development control functions for their areas for all purposes.

Other services

255 We believe that the unitary authorities set out in our options will each have the capacity to carry out the other main local government functions, whether this be directly or in partnership with other public or private sector bodies. However, we expect the authorities, particularly those included within the sub-county options, to work together closely to ensure that specialist expertise is not unnecessarily broken up and that existing levels of efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of relatively small-scale but important functions such as trading standards, archive provision and emergency planning are maintained.

7 What happens next?

256 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations for unitary authorities in Cumbria and Lancashire contained in this report. Our draft proposals will now be given wide circulation throughout the areas under review and we hope they will stimulate comment and debate – the deadline for responses is 23 February 2004. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 23 February 2004. Any received *after* this date cannot be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices, and a list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

257 Express your views by using the online form on our website (www.boundarycommittee.org.uk), or by writing directly to us:

Local Government Review Team
Cumbria and Lancashire review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

258 The Committee regrets that we are unable to acknowledge any submissions.

259 In the light of responses received, we will review and refine our draft recommendations. Based on the information and evidence received, we may vary our recommendations from those in the draft recommendations report. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence by 23 February 2004. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Deputy Prime Minister. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Appendix A

Maps of draft options for Cumbria and Lancashire

The following maps illustrate our draft options for wholly unitary patterns of local government in Cumbria and Lancashire:

Map A1 illustrates Option One for Cumbria

Map A2 illustrates Option Two for Cumbria

Map A3 illustrates Option One Lancashire

Map A4 illustrates Option Two for Lancashire

Map A5 illustrates Option Three for Lancashire

Map A1: Option One for Cumbria



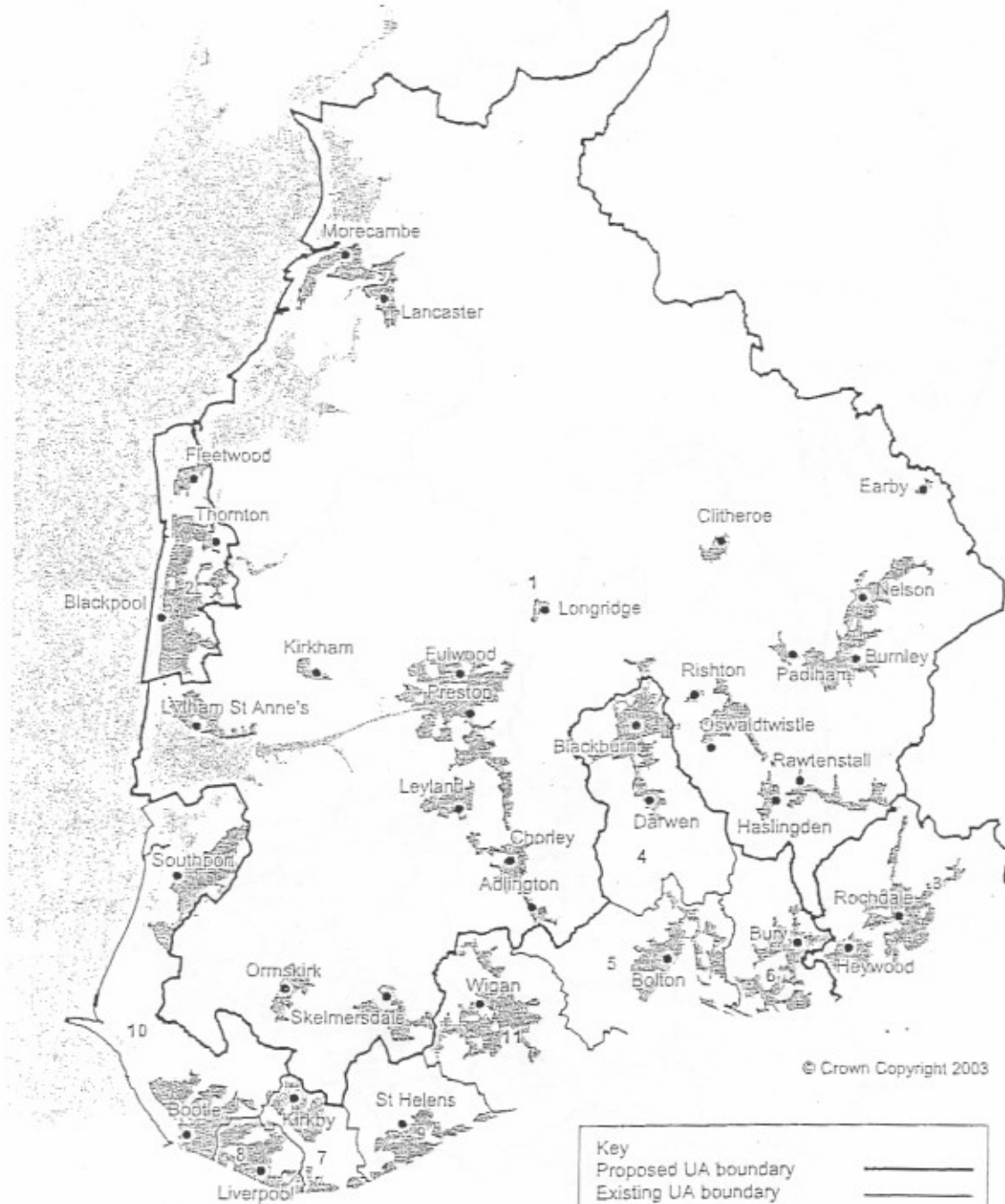
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Map A2: Option Two for Cumbria





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Map A3: Option One for Lancashire



Key to UAs

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1 Lancashire | 6 Bury |
| 2 Blackpool | 7 Knowsley |
| 3 Rochdale | 8 Liverpool |
| 4 Blackburn with Darwen | 9 St Helens |
| 5 Bolton | 10 Sefton |
| | 11 Wigan |

Key	
Proposed UA boundary	
Existing UA boundary	

Population Areas	
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Map A4: Option Two for Lancashire



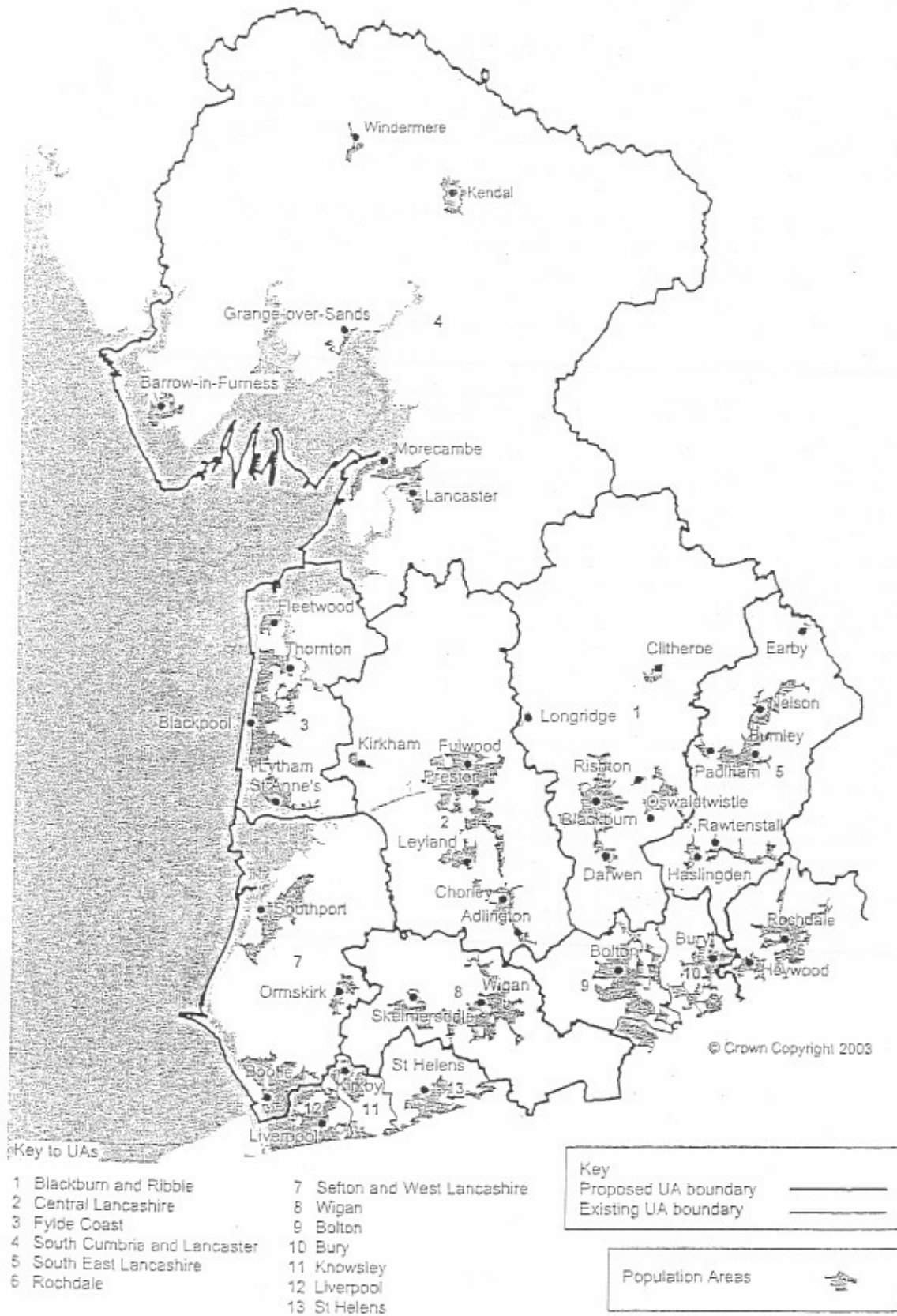
Key to UAs

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 Central Lancashire | 7 Wigan |
| 2 East Lancashire | 8 Bolton |
| 3 Fylde Coast | 9 Bury |
| 4 South Cumbria and Lancaster | 10 Knowsley |
| 5 Rochdale | 11 Liverpool |
| 6 Sefton and West Lancashire | 12 St Helens |

Key	
Proposed UA boundary	———
Existing UA boundary	———

Population Areas	
------------------	--

Map A5: Option Three for Lancashire



Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

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

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

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

REVISED PROPOSED COMMITTEE TIMETABLE

Action	Date
Boundary Committee announce options	Indicative - 2 December '03
Options reported to the Executive for information and commencement of consultation	18 December '03
<p>Formal consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O & S Communities • O & S Corporate Resources • O & S Infrastructure • NNDR Group • City Vision Group • Parish Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 January '04 • 12 January '04 • Special 15 Jan '04 • 14 January '04 • 13 Jan '04 • Propose 11 Dec '03 for response to City Council Jan '04'
Note: Normal Council	13 Jan '04
Results of Consultation reported to Executive	19 Jan '04
Preparation of a report in the light of consultation received	
Formal response report with options to Executive	5 February '04
<p>Formal consultation with O & S Committees – Special Meetings to be arranged</p> <p>Note next normal meetings: Community – 12 Feb '04 Corporate Resources – 19 Feb '04 Infrastructure – 4 March '04</p>	Between 9, 10 & 11 Feb '04 (Special meetings if required)
Special Executive to receive results of second consultation and propose Council Resolution	13 February '04
Special Council (will be an urgent item subject to the agreement of the Mayor)	20 February '04
Response to Boundary Committee	23 February '04

