

Summary

Having attended and contributed to the Boundary Commission hearings in New Lanark and Glasgow, this brief submission summarises what I said in detail at the hearings.

I conducted an e-consultation of local residents on the issue, with the final tally of responses being 173, as some came in after the hearing date. I asked for general comments (the text of the email follows as an appendix) and at the hearing read out some of the remarks made by local people.

The main findings were:

- Just over 10% of people responded with no clear view on the proposals
- Just over 10% were in support of the proposals
- About 75% were against the proposals, with the vast majority citing the splitting of the Bearsden / Milngavie community as the reason
- There was notable support for the reuniting of the Kirkintilloch community in these boundaries

Kirkintilloch's experience of split community

- Kirkintilloch is currently split between two Westminster Parliamentary constituencies, causing confusion and inefficiency in representation – people arriving at the surgery for the wrong elected representative, and smaller parts of a split community inevitably feeling marginalised
- Many people in Kirkintilloch are reluctant to see the problems they currently face simply transferred to those in Bearsden
- Split communities can be avoided here, as alternative proposals suggest. Community ties are more important than ward or even local authority boundaries drawn on a map.

Bearsden & Milngavie

The community of Bearsden & Milngavie has historic, cultural, transport, education, business and voluntary sector links that are simply not shared with West Dunbartonshire.

Historic links

- Bearsden and Milngavie were together in the parish of New Kilpatrick, created in 1649 – over 350 years ago.
- Bearsden and Milngavie District Council existed from 1976 to 1995. It was one of 19 district councils within the wider Strathclyde Region.
- Bearsden and Milngavie share the same 'Bear the Gree' coat of arms www.bearthegree.co.uk/bear-the-gree/, granted in 1976 when the District Council was formed.

Local services

- Catchment areas for schools cross the proposed boundaries. Bearsden Primary would be in East Dunbartonshire & Kilsyth, but still take pupils from Bearsden North in a different constituency. Bearsden Academy would be in West Dunbartonshire & Bearsden, but still take pupils from Bearsden South in the other constituency.
- GPs' surgeries currently take patients from both Bearsden & Milngavie

- Allander Leisure Centre is well used by both communities and sits near the seamless boundary on Milngavie Road between Milngavie and Bearsden – importantly this has recently been the focus of sustained campaigning due to a controversial planning application for 500 houses nearby and the potential demolition & rebuild of the sports centre. People from both Milngavie and Bearsden are heavily involved in this campaign.

Transport links

- Bus and commuting routes run from Milngavie into Glasgow through Bearsden along the A81 transport corridor (Milngavie Road - Maryhill Road)
- Alternative routes are from Baljaffray (in Bearsden North) and western parts of Milngavie through both Bearsden North and Bearsden South towards Glasgow along A809 Drymen Road
- The 118 bus route runs from Baljaffray to Glasgow, and also goes out to West Dunbartonshire, though this particular route has suffered due to lack of demand, especially on the Bearsden – West Dunbartonshire leg. Earlier this year FirstBus reduced the service and SPT agreed to subsidise the service from Bearsden to Glasgow but not the full route out to West Dunbartonshire. This service is again under threat.
- The train lines run from the terminus at Milngavie through stations Hillfoot (Bearsden North), Bearsden (Bearsden South) and Westerton (Bearsden South) before crossing in to north Glasgow stations Anniesland and Hyndland.
- The only direct train route from East Dunbartonshire to West Dunbartonshire is from Westerton station in Bearsden South, though it crosses into Glasgow through Drumchapel station first (in Drumchapel/Anniesland ward of Glasgow City Council) before reaching West Dunbartonshire through the stations of Drumry, Singer and Dalmuir.

Voluntary sector links

- There is a plethora of local organisations serving Milngavie and Bearsden together, including: Bearsden & Milngavie Ramblers, Milngavie & Bearsden Sports Club, Bearsden & Milngavie Talking Newspaper Association, Bearsden & Milngavie Amateur Swimming Club, Bearsden & Milngavie Scouts (183rd Glasgow), Bearsden & Milngavie Youth Orchestra, Bearsden & Milngavie Highland Games, Bearsden & Milngavie Decorative & Fine Arts Society, Milngavie & Bearsden Camera Club
- Association of Bearsden Churches includes congregations in Baljaffray, Bearsden Cross, Castlehill, Killermont, New Kilpatrick, Westerton and others – in Bearsden North and South.

Businesses

- Many businesses operate solely in the Bearsden and Milngavie areas, particularly small businesses such as tradespeople (plumbers/builders/joiners etc), driving instructors, gardeners, medics, hairdressers etc – as evidenced by the local business directories that focus on Milngavie & Bearsden
- Local estate agents focus on Bearsden and Milngavie only
- Hotels/ B&Bs/restaurants are grouped together on websites and directories as being in the same Bearsden/Milngavie area.

Local media

- The Bearsden & Milngavie Herald is well-read across the western side of East Dunbartonshire.
- The Clydebank Post which covers West Dunbartonshire is not well-read in Bearsden & Milngavie, nor is the Bearsden & Milngavie Herald well-read in Clydebank, Hardgate and Duntocher.

Policing

- All of East Dunbartonshire Council area and North Glasgow fall within 'B' division.
- Policing of Bearsden, Milngavie and Bishopbriggs are under the stewardship of the same, familiar Communities Inspector and policing teams.
- Community crime prevention groups focus on Milngavie and Bearsden together.
- Policing issues in Bearsden are very different to those in the proposed area with which Bearsden North would join.
- 'B' division does not include Kilsyth, which is in 'N' division – North Lanarkshire.

Shopping patterns

- Shoppers from Bearsden and Milngavie use both ASDA in Bearsden and Tesco in Milngavie.
- Both communities use Milngavie precinct, Bearsden town centre shops and the numerous cafes and restaurants in both towns.
- For more specific purposes, shoppers will travel from Milngavie and Bearsden to Glasgow – not to West Dunbartonshire.

In conclusion, local people in East Dunbartonshire welcome the reunification of Kirkintilloch, but strongly urge the Boundary Commission to find an alternative to the splitting of the Bearsden & Milngavie community in the proposed new boundaries.

Jo Swinson MP

22 December 2011

Appendix – text of email sent to e-consultation panel

Dear X,

As you may be aware, the House of Commons has passed legislation to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600. As such, the constituency boundaries are being redrawn, and the Boundary Commission for Scotland is currently consulting on its proposed new constituencies in Scotland.

This month therefore, rather than a “yes / no” question, I am seeking your views on the boundary proposals, so the question is:

What do you think of the proposed boundary changes for our area?

I will collate your responses and submit them to the Boundary Commission for Scotland.

Currently, the East Dunbartonshire constituency contains:

- All of Milngavie
- All of Bearsden
- All of Bishopbriggs
- All of Lenzie
- All of Torrance, Baldernock, Balmore & Baldernock
- Part of Kirkintilloch (West Kirkintilloch and the town centre)

Under the proposed boundary changes, those areas would be covered by two constituencies

- Half of Bearsden (the Bearsden North ward) would join with West Dunbartonshire (Clydebank, Dumbarton & Vale of Leven) to become a new West Dunbartonshire & Bearsden constituency
- The rest of the current East Dunbartonshire constituency would join with the parts of East Dunbartonshire Council currently excluded (the rest of Kirkintilloch, Lennoxton, Milton of Campsie and Twechar) and the Kilsyth ward of North Lanarkshire to become a new East Dunbartonshire & Kilsyth constituency

You can see the full proposals for our area here:

<https://consultation.scottishboundaries.gov.uk/node/239/bbox=250190,669235,272288,684093> and for the whole of Scotland here: http://www.bcomm-scotland.gov.uk/6th_westminster/

Please let me know your views on these proposed changes by replying to this email. I will be attending the hearing for the East Dunbartonshire area on **Tuesday 23rd November**, and reading your views will help me to give an informed opinion about what local people think about this.

Of course if you wish you can also make your own submission to the Boundary Commission, by emailing comments@scottishboundaries.gov.uk or writing to Boundary Commission for Scotland, Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HD. The closing date is **Wednesday 4th January**.

Thank you very much as ever for sharing your opinions with me.



Jo Swinson
MP for East Dunbartonshire