

Luke Pollard

Former Labour and Co-operative Parliamentary Candidate for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport



SUBMISSION TO 2016 BOUNDARY REVIEW LUKE POLLARD - FORMER LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE FOR PLYMOUTH SUTTON AND DEVONPORT

4 December 2016

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in relation to your proposed boundary changes for constituencies in Plymouth. I stood as the Labour and Co-operative Parliamentary Candidate for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport at the 2015 General Election and as the Labour Party candidate for South West Devon in 2010.

I have four principal objections to the proposed boundaries for Plymouth:

1. Count people not registered voters.

The proposed boundary changes fail to count tens of thousands of people in Plymouth who have had their right to vote removed by the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). More effort needs to be made by the Electoral Commission to count actual people rather than just those who have successfully navigated the complex registration process.

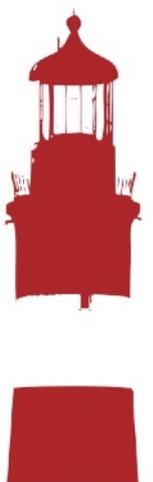
The IER system disproportionately reduces registration of students, young people, BAME communities and those on low incomes. It is also producing reduced registration in areas with high turnover and low security of tenure. The change to Individual Electoral Registration has removed 98% of 16-18 year olds in Plymouth.

Plymouth has approximately 45,000 students. The vast majority of these are not registered to vote. There are also a considerable number of other unregistered voters. As such, Plymouth has been hard hit by the IER changes and the overall number of voters has been considerably reduced.

Plymouth Sutton and Devonport is a constituency with a particularly high level of unregistered voters due in part to the large number of students and high turnover of residents in some wards.

2. Using an electoral register containing the lowest number of voters

It is very disappointing that the Boundary Commission is choosing to use the 2016 Local Election register to base boundary changes on rather than the 2015 General Election or 2016 European Referendum registers. These registers both have higher levels of registered voters in Plymouth than the electoral register your changes are based on. The consequence of using the 2016 Local Election register with fewer registered voters in total is to create inaccurate and unfair boundaries that favour one party - the one in power.



3. Retain the historic constituency names

Plymouth has a proud heritage and history. For over one hundred years the names 'Plymouth Sutton' and 'Plymouth Devonport' have been used in the titles of Plymouth's constituencies which your boundary changes ignore. The city of Plymouth was formed from the three towns of Plymouth (Sutton), East Stonehouse and Devonport and efforts should be made to retain 'Sutton' and 'Devonport' in a constituency title for the city.

Plymouth South and Plymouth North are bland and unimaginative names ignoring the history and connection a constituency title has with its community. I would like to suggest that your Plymouth South constituency should retain the name Plymouth Sutton and Devonport and Plymouth North be kept as Plymouth Moorview.

4. Keep communities together

I object to the proposal to move Peverell ward from Plymouth Sutton and Devonport to the proposed Plymouth North constituency. Peverell fits well with Stoke, Drake and Compton wards that it borders to the east, south and west and demographically has more in common with these wards than those of the north of the city. I believe communities should be kept together and not split for simple arithmetic simplicity.

I oppose the proposals to move the two Plymstock wards into Plymouth Sutton and Devonport. Plymstock Radford and Dunstone fit better with the other parts of SW Devon both demographically, geographically and socially. These wards should remain as part of the SW Devon constituency.

The Boundary Commission is proposing to remove a ward (Peverell) from the Plymouth Sutton and Devonport constituency which is connected to the rest of the constituency by no fewer than 35 roads, two parks and to replace it with two wards (Plymstock Radford and Dunstone) that are only connected by a single road bridge and a cycle path. This is not an integrated single community that should share a single Member of Parliament but rather two distinct communities whose differences and geographies should be respected in the boundary proposals you are making.

In summary, I would urge the Boundary Commission to go back to the drawing board and bring forward new proposals based on a more realistic count of the actual population rather than the gerrymandered numbers after IER. Should the Boundary Commission push on with these changes I would ask that every effort is made to retain the historic constituency names that have a strong association with the city.

Yours faithfully,



Luke Pollard
4 December 2016