

Monday, October 05, 2015

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of the Fa'side Area Partnership to express our concerns about the proposals made in the most recent Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's Review of Local Government Electoral Arrangements.

We feel that the proposal to significantly alter the ward boundaries affecting our community will have a disruptive and ultimately negative impact on the work being done by the Fa'side Area Partnership to bring decision making about the future of our communities closer to the people it will impact upon.

As more and more council and other public sector services are being planned and delivered on a locality basis, the Fa'side Area Partnership is playing an important function in involving local people in these decisions – and can do so in part because we are representing a natural community with logical geographic boundaries. The Commission's own Guidance Booklet states that when designing wards that 'in particular we aim to avoid breaking local ties... [which] could be defined by the location of public facilities such as doctors' surgeries, hospitals, residents' associations, libraries or schools.' Our current ward boundary not only reflects the historical and cultural ties that exist between Tranent and the surrounding villages – including Ormiston and Pencaitland - but also the catchment for a range of key local services including schools, health services and sports, leisure and learning facilities.

We also strongly feel that the proposals to change the western boundary of the ward to bring in Wallyford and Whitecraig are particularly shortsighted. The villages of Wallyford and Whitecraig already have strong community, transport and service use ties to Musselburgh (much more so than they ever would to Tranent) and approved housing developments in the area already indicate even further physical coalescence between these communities.

Further, all indications in the preparation of the Local Development Plan for East Lothian suggest there will be a significant concentration of new housing land allocated in the western end of this county – particularly between the Fa'side, Musselburgh and Preston Seton Gosford wards. As these settlements mature they will necessarily generate a need for significant boundary reviews and service restructuring, and this is something we are all prepared for. The changes proposed at present however do not appear to take this into account and therefore seem to create a particularly shortsighted and disruptive challenge to effective local governance, that will most likely have to be reviewed, if not virtually overturned in the foreseeable future.

It is on this basis that we firmly object to the boundary changes proposed for the Fa'side ward.

Submitted by Bill Laird, Chairperson of the Fa'side Area Partnership

Membership of the Fa'side Area Partnership:

- Tranent and Elphinstone Community Council
- Ormiston Community Council
- Pencaitland Community Council
- Macmerry and Gladsmuir Community Council
- Ross High Parent Council
- Support from the Start, Tranent
- Elphinstone Community Association
- Tranent West Tenants and Residents Association
- Ormiston West Tenants and Residents Association
- Tranent and District Community Sports Club
- Fa'side Elected Members