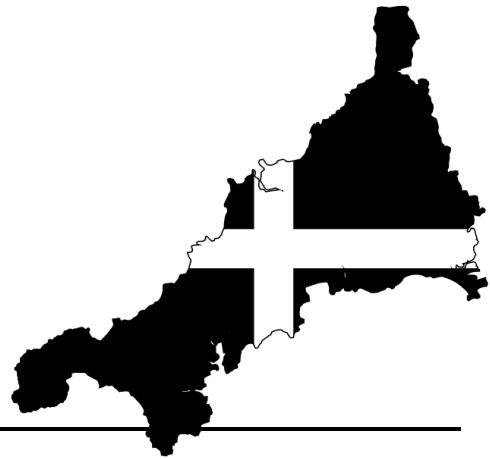


KEEP CORNWALL WHOLE



Chris Skidmore MP
Minister for the Constitution
Cabinet Office
London
SW1A 2AS

Dear Mr Skidmore

Cornwall and the Parliamentary Boundary Review

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the present proposal for a "Devonwall" parliamentary constituency, which would breach Cornwall's historic territoriality.

I fully understand that the Boundary Commission's approach to the Review is being driven by legislation which (i) does not recognise Cornwall as a distinct political unit and (ii) specifies that electorates for individual parliamentary seats must lie within the range of 71,031 and 78,507 voters, making it a statistical impossibility for the Commission to propose five whole seats for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The prospect of a cross-Tamar constituency is causing great upset across Cornwall and we would therefore request that the UK Government amend the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 (the Act) to ensure Cornish constituencies remain entirely within the boundaries of Cornwall (and the Isles of Scilly).

As you will be aware, Cornwall is a Celtic nation with its own distinct identity, culture and language – just like Scotland and Wales. The border between Cornwall and England has been in place since the early tenth century and, I believe, this should have been respected by the Act, just as the borders between England and Scotland, and England and Wales, were safeguarded through the legislation. Cornwall also has a unique constitutional position which sets it apart from the rest of the United Kingdom.

It is also my view that any failure to treat Cornwall as a distinct political unit would undermine the design and provision of public services that specifically meet the needs of Cornwall and its communities.

In addition, after the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill became an Act in 2011, central government recognised the Cornish as a national minority (April 2014) through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

At that time, central government stated: "The decision to recognise the unique identity of the Cornish, now affords them the same status ... as the UK's other Celtic people, the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish."

I am therefore very disappointed that the UK Government has failed to live up to its own pledge because it is clear that the Act is in conflict with the Framework Convention which, as well as protecting the culture and identity of national minorities, seeks to protect the political integrity of territories associated with such groups.

The Act ensures that the territories of other national minorities within the United Kingdom (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) are not breached and it is illogical that the same protections should not be applied to Cornwall.

As the Minister for the Constitution, you are in a position to promote a positive amendment to the legislation to define Cornwall as an electoral unit which would respect the spirit of the Convention. We would respectfully ask that you take this course of action.

I would also add I am not arguing that Cornwall should be over-represented in the Westminster Parliament.

In December 2015, Cornwall's electorate was recorded as 392,223, while that of the Isles of Scilly was 1,651, making a total of 393,874 voters. If Cornwall had five seats, the average electorate would be about 78,775, which is extremely close to the top end of the Government's own range of between 71,031 and 78,507 voters.

It is my view that it would be ridiculous for the UK Government to override Cornwall's identity and culture, as well as one thousand years of history, because of such a limited numerical difference from the Government's preferred electorate size.

Please use your position to Keep Cornwall Whole.

Signature

Name

Address

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