

# **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2015**

Berwick-upon-Tweed, Blyth Valley,  
Hexham and Wansbeck constituencies

Public Consultation Document

June 2015

## **Northumberland County Council - Notice of Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2015**

The Representation of the People Act 1983, as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006

The Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006

Pursuant to Section 18C and Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended), Northumberland County Council gives notice that it is to conduct a review of all Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Berwick-upon-Tweed, Blyth Valley, Hexham and Wansbeck Parliamentary Constituencies.

Submissions on any aspect of Polling Districts and Polling Places are welcome from all electors and residents (particularly disabled residents) in any of these constituencies, any local constituency political party or any person or group who have a particular interest or expertise in access to premises or facilities for people with a disability. Persons or bodies making representations should, if possible, suggest alternative places that may be used as Polling Places.

The consultation document can be viewed on the Council's website at [www.northumberland.gov.uk/poll15](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/poll15) or by contacting the Council's Elections Office at the address below:

**Elections Services  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF**

Email: [elections@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:elections@northumberland.gov.uk) or Telephone 01670 624811.

Any submissions should be made via any of the points of contact mentioned above or to the (Acting) Returning Officer directly and should be received by 5pm on Tuesday the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2015.

Please note that all representations will be published on the Council's website upon receipt. Full details of the review timetable are set out in the consultation document.

The (Acting) Returning Officer will comment on existing and proposed Polling Stations on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. Publication of those comments will be via the Council's website (see above) and may be viewed in person at County Hall, Morpeth by appointment with Elections Services.

**Geoff Paul - (Acting) Returning Officer  
Northumberland County Council**

## **Background**

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty upon all local authorities to review their UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places at least once every 4 years. Northumberland County Council last formally reviewed its Polling Districts and Polling Places in 2011. As a result of an amendment to the timing of compulsory reviews made by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council is now conducting a further review of its Polling Districts, Polling Places and all Polling Stations.

This consultation document invites representations upon the Council's current arrangements of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations as detailed in Appendices A and B (attached).

Legislation requires that reviews are carried out according to Parliamentary Constituencies. Northumberland County Council is the relevant authority for the Berwick-upon-Tweed, Blyth Valley, Hexham and Wansbeck constituencies.

## **Definitions**

### **Polling District**

A Polling District is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election.

### **Polling Place**

A Polling Place is the building or area in which Polling Stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. Although it is usual to have one Polling Station in one Polling Place, there are situations where two Polling Stations are located in one Polling Place.

As the relevant authority, the Council is responsible for designating Polling Places and as a result must keep them under review. The Council must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, every Polling Place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

### **Polling Stations**

A Polling Station is the actual area in which the process of voting takes place. The Polling Station must be located within the Polling Place designated for the particular Polling District. The Polling Station may consist of a whole room or in certain circumstances a designated area within a room or building.

It is the (Acting) Returning Officer for that particular election, not the local authority, who is responsible for providing a sufficient number of Polling Stations and allocating electors to those Polling Stations.

## **The Formal Statutory Review process**

When conducting this review the local authority must comply with the legal requirements contained in section 18 and Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) namely:

- a. Publish a Notice of the holding of a review
- b. Consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- c. Publish all representations made by an (Acting) Returning Officer within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority's office and in at least one conspicuous place in the area and also by placing them upon the local authority's website.
- d. Seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the representations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
- e. On completion of a review, give reasons for its decisions and publish:
  - i) All correspondence sent to an (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with a review.
  - ii) All correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability
  - iii) All representations made by any person in connection with the review
  - iv) The minutes of any meeting held by the Council to consider any revision to the designation of Polling Districts or Polling Places within its area as a result of the review.
  - v) Details of the designation of Polling Districts and Polling Places within the local authority area as a result of the review.
  - vi) Details of the places where the results of the review have been published.

## **Overview of the legislative requirements**

Local authorities must comply with the following legislative requirements regarding the designation of Polling Districts and Polling Places:

- a. Each Parish in England is to be a separate Polling District, unless special circumstances apply.
- b. The Council must designate a Polling Place for each Polling District, unless the size or other circumstances of a Polling District are such that the situation of the Polling Station does not materially affect the convenience of the electors
- c. The Polling Place must be in an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible Polling Place can be identified in the district)
- d. The Polling Place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the Polling Station
- e. Seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- f. Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every Polling Place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

## **The Review Timetable**

Publication of Notice and Consultation Document	<b>23rd June 2015</b>
Closing date for submissions to the (Acting) Returning Officer	<b>28th July 2015</b>
Publication of representations from the (Acting) Returning Officer	<b>11th August 2015</b>
Final date for comments on the representations from the (Acting) Returning Officer	<b>8th September 2015</b>
Scheme presented to Full Council for approval	<b>4th November 2015</b>

The publication of this Consultation Document represents the first stage of the review process. The existing Polling Districts within Northumberland County Council are outlined in the maps contained in **Appendix A** which are set out as per each constituency.

- [Berwick-upon-Tweed](#)
- [Blyth Valley](#)
- [Hexham](#)
- [Wansbeck](#)

**Appendix B** lists the current Polling Places/stations adopted by Northumberland County Council. The list contains the address, polling station reference numbers and the electorate figure for the number of voters eligible to use that location as at April 2015.

- [Berwick-upon-Tweed](#)
- [Blyth Valley](#)
- [Hexham](#)
- [Wansbeck](#)

As part of this first stage you are invited to make representations on the existing arrangements/scheme. All aspects of the arrangements/scheme are open to comment and you should feel free to suggest any changes you feel are appropriate, regarding Polling Districts, Polling Places or Polling Stations. In order to assess any representations received, we would ask that you give reasons for any proposed changes and where possible, alternatives to the existing locations. Likewise if you feel the current arrangements are acceptable then there is nothing to prevent you expressing this view.

All representations received will be published on the Northumberland County Council website as soon as possible after receipt. If you do not wish your personal details or those of your organisation to feature in that publication, please make this clear at the time of submission. There is no limit on the number of representations you may make and there is nothing to prevent you providing additional evidence to support your representations.

The closing date for any representations you wish to make is the **28<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

Any representations should be sent to:

**Elections Services**  
**Northumberland County Council**  
**County Hall**  
**Morpeth**  
**Northumberland**  
**NE61 2EF**

Alternatively they may be E-mailed to: [elections@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:elections@northumberland.gov.uk)

## **Electoral Commission Guidance**

The Electoral Commission have provided a Guidance document entitled *Reviews of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations*. This document can be found at the EC website – [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk) and is designed to assist persons taking part in ongoing reviews.

## **What happens next?**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2015 the views of Geoff Paul – (Acting) Returning Officer, on both the current arrangements for Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations and on any representations received will be published.

You will then have until the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015 to comment upon the (Acting) Returning Officers representations.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015 Northumberland County Council will consider all the issues raised and determine its final arrangements to be adopted.

**Geoff Paul  
(Acting) Returning Officer  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF**