

# Update: Local Government Boundary Commissioner's Final Recommendations

August 2009



## Change to the Local Council Structure in Northern Ireland

Following a Review of Public Administration in 2008 and the Local Government (Boundaries) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, the Executive agreed to reduce the number of Councils in Northern Ireland from 26 to 11.

Richard H Mackenzie CB was subsequently appointed by the Environment Minister as the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner. The Commissioner was tasked to review and make recommendations to the Department of the Environment with respect to the boundaries and names of the 11 proposed new local government districts, and the number, boundaries and names of the wards into which district should be divided.

On 22 June 2009, the Commissioner reported his final recommendations for the proposed new 11 Councils in Northern Ireland and their constituent wards to the Department of the Environment. In making his final recommendation, the Commissioner considered not only the responses to the public consultation, but also to the findings and recommendations contained in the reports of 11 Assistant Commissioners who held public hearing as part of the process.

The final recommendations state that the new 11 new local government districts should be:

1. Belfast
2. Antrim and Newtownabbey
3. Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon
4. Causeway Coast and Glens
5. Derry and Strabane
6. Fermanagh and Omagh
7. Lisburn and Castlereagh
8. Mid and East Antrim
9. Mid Ulster
10. Newry, Mourne and Down and
11. North Down and Ards

Furthermore, the Commissioner recommends that there should be 60 wards in the Belfast District, 41 wards within the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon and Newry, Mourne and Down Districts and 40 wards in all the other districts.

In essence, it is hoped that the change will allow the creation of larger councils with greater powers to make decisions on local issues. For example: the majority of planning functions will move from the Planning Service to the new 11 Councils with the aim of reforming the planning system by making it more efficient and transparent. Apart from planning, other roles that the new Councils are expected to become responsible for include the public realm function of local roads, regeneration and emergency and community planning.

*Please note: The content of this article is for information purposes only and further advice should be sought from a professional advisor before any action is taken.*

The Environment Minister will now have to consider the recommendations contained in the Final Report before bringing it to the Executive in the autumn. Subject to the Executive's agreement, the Report will then go to the Assembly for approval alongside a draft Order. The draft Order may or may not contain modifications of the Commissioner's proposals.

It is anticipated that any necessary legislation will be approved in time so that the 11 new Councils will become effective from May 2011.

*For further information on any of the issues raised in this article please contact Karen Blair.*

*Please note: The content of this article is for information purposes only and further advice should be sought from a professional advisor before any action is taken.*

Cleaver Fulton Rankin Solicitors, 50 Bedford Street, Belfast, BT2 7FW  
T: 028 9024 3141, Fax: 028 9024 9096, [www.cfrlaw.co.uk](http://www.cfrlaw.co.uk)  
All Island Law – A legal alliance Matheson Ormsby Prentice, Dublin & Cleaver Fulton Rankin, Belfast