

Durham District Councils Forum

Dear Councillor

Proposal for a Single Council for County Durham

Over the last week, you will have seen the results of the local Referendum asking the people of the County whether or not they want a single council for County Durham.

Across the whole of County Durham, a massive 76% of the people, we together serve and represent, have told us that they do not want a single unitary council.

With a turnout of 40%, higher than recent elections, almost 160,000 people voted, with almost 120,000 preferring the retention and improvement of the two-tier arrangements. Only 24% wanted a single council.

Some people have chosen to rubbish the Referendum, calling it 'not legitimate', 'unofficial' and 'biased'.

The **FACTS** are:-

- Guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government to Chief Executives on 19th April advised *"Councils are able to seek the views of local people on proposals that affect them (including referendums, citizens juries, user panels and opinion polls) as they see fit."*
- The full ballot pack was validated both by the independent Electoral Reform Services and legal advisors. This confirmed that the pack was balanced, impartial and not leading.

The results speak for themselves. Furthermore, they agree with the County Council's own opinion poll which showed only 27% of the people support the proposal for a single unitary council.

The District and Borough Councils also contacted a wide range of local stakeholder groups, as we were asked as part of the consultation process. We sent all of these views to Government, not just those supporting our own. Our stakeholder consultation gathered views from over 300 stakeholders,

including business, residents and community groups and town and parish councils.

We found a staggering level of opposition to a single council for County Durham among stakeholders, with 81% being opposed to the proposal. Put another way, those opposing a single council outnumber those supporting it by a ratio of 4:1!

In the light of this emphatic public opposition to the County Council's proposal we, the Leaders of the County Durham District and Borough Councils, ask that you stand by the views of the people of County Durham. It is time for us to work together to improve the existing arrangements, as the people have asked, for the benefit of the diverse communities of County Durham.

We ask that you call upon your Council to withdraw the County Council bid for a single council for County Durham.



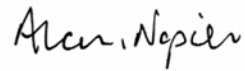
Linda Ebbatson
Leader, Chester-le-Street



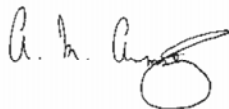
Alex Watson (OBE)
Leader, Derwentside



Fraser Reynolds
Leader, Durham City



Alan Napier
Leader, Easington



Agnes Armstrong
Leader, Sedgefield



Richard Betton
Leader, Teesdale



Neil Stonehouse
Leader, Wear Valley

Neil Stokell, Secretary, Durham District Councils' Forum
Teesdale District Council, Teesdale House, Galgate, Barnard Castle,
Co Durham { HYPERLINK
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