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Proposals for local government reorganisation in Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool

I am making this submission to the consultation on *Proposals for local government reorganisation in Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool* on behalf of the Association of British Counties (ABC), an unincorporated association which promotes the importance of the 92 historic counties of the UK to our heritage and culture. We are pleased that the Government recognises the import role of the historic counties in our history and our sense of identity and community^[1].

The main threat to the identities of the historic counties is their confusion with local government. Hence, although ABC has no views on the structures of local government, we firmly believe that local government terminology and council names should be chosen so as to draw a clear distinction between local government and the historic counties.

Our response addresses Item 4(d) of the consultation's *Criteria for unitary local government*:
"Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance."

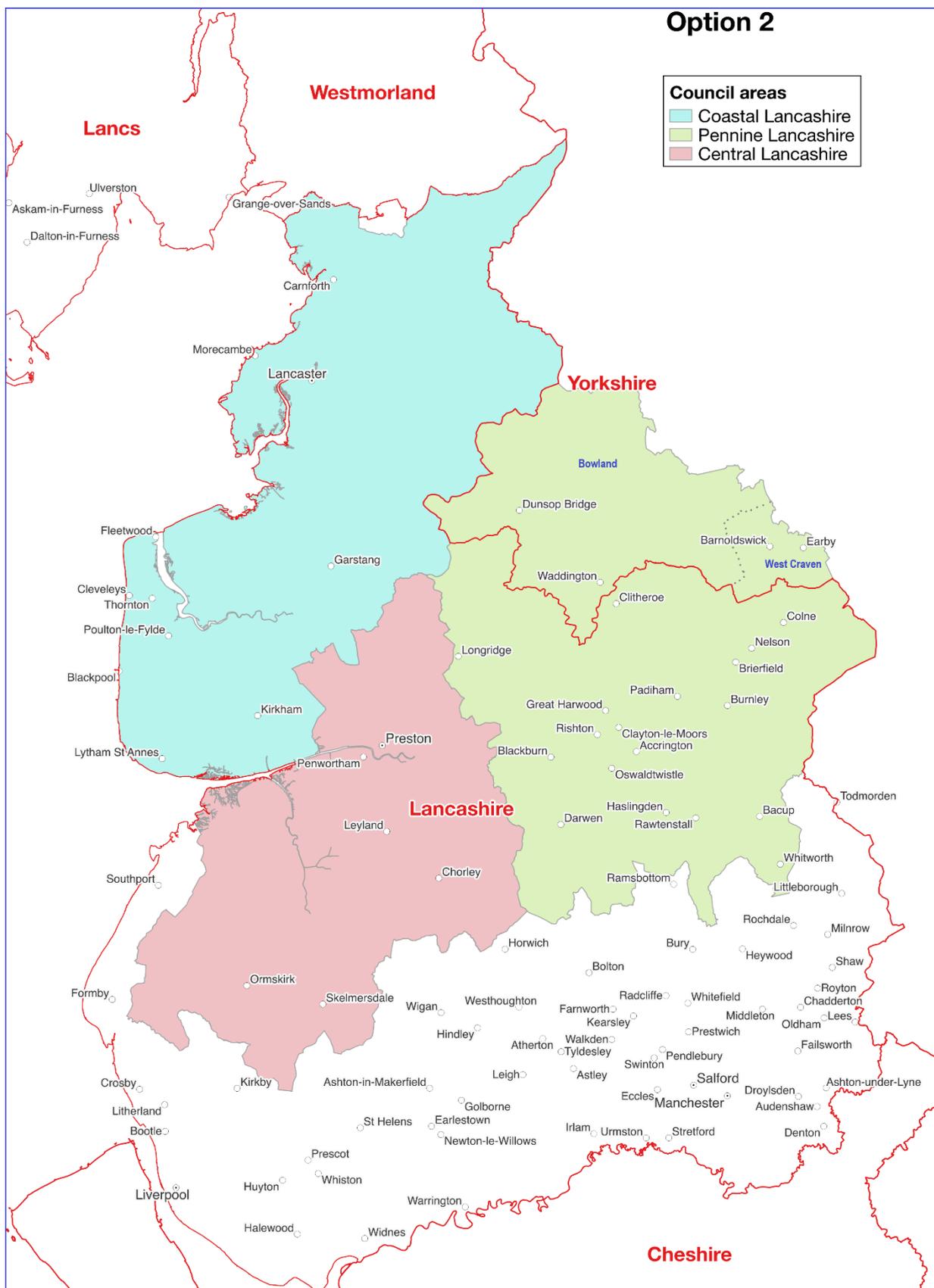
None of the 10 consultation questions refers specially to Item 4(d). Hence, our response most accurately lies within the *"any other comment you have on this proposal"* of Question 8.

ABC considers that none of the five proposed unitary local government set-ups presented by the consultation document adequately considers issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance, in so far as some of the proposed names for the new unitary councils are in direct conflict with the historic county identities of the areas concerned.

The use of the unqualified name 'Lancashire' to describe the current Lancashire County Council and 'Lancashire' lieutenancy areas has long been a source of confusion and irritation. Each of these areas includes only the northern two-thirds of the main body of the historic county, excluding altogether the southern third of the county - where the majority of Lancastrians live. The administrative areas also exclude the Cartmel and Furness peninsulas (Lancashire North of the Sands) but include the Forest of Bowland and West Craven areas of Yorkshire. This absurd situation stems from the Local Government Act 1972 and the *"counties"* it created.

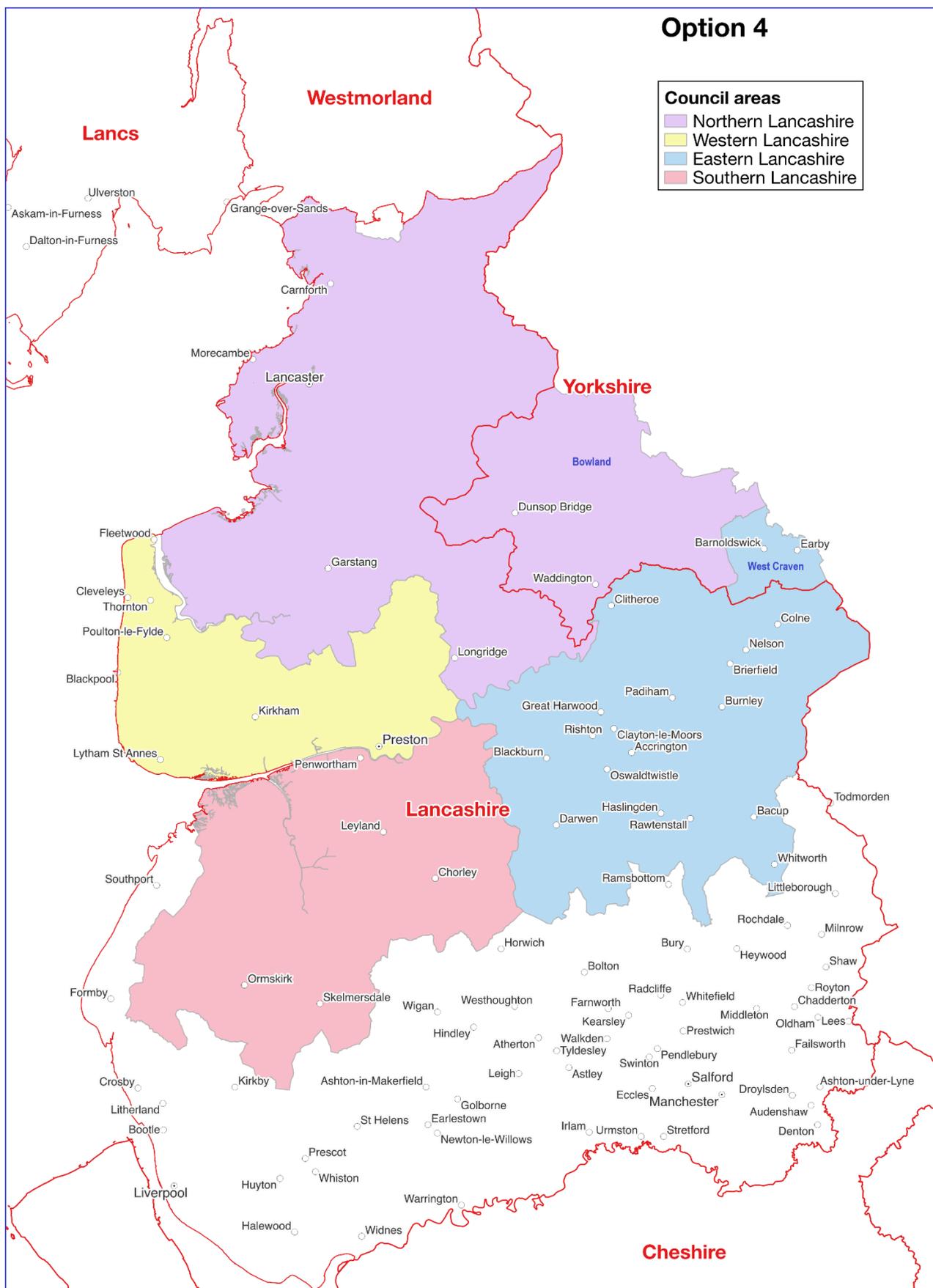
The current local government reorganisation provides a great opportunity to finally deal with this misapplication of the name 'Lancashire' to administrative areas which simply are not anything like being Lancashire. This could easily be done by choosing names for the new councils which properly reflect the local identities and culture of these areas. The lieutenancies should be re-appointed to the historic counties.

Below, we suggest appropriate council names for all five of the options in the consultation.



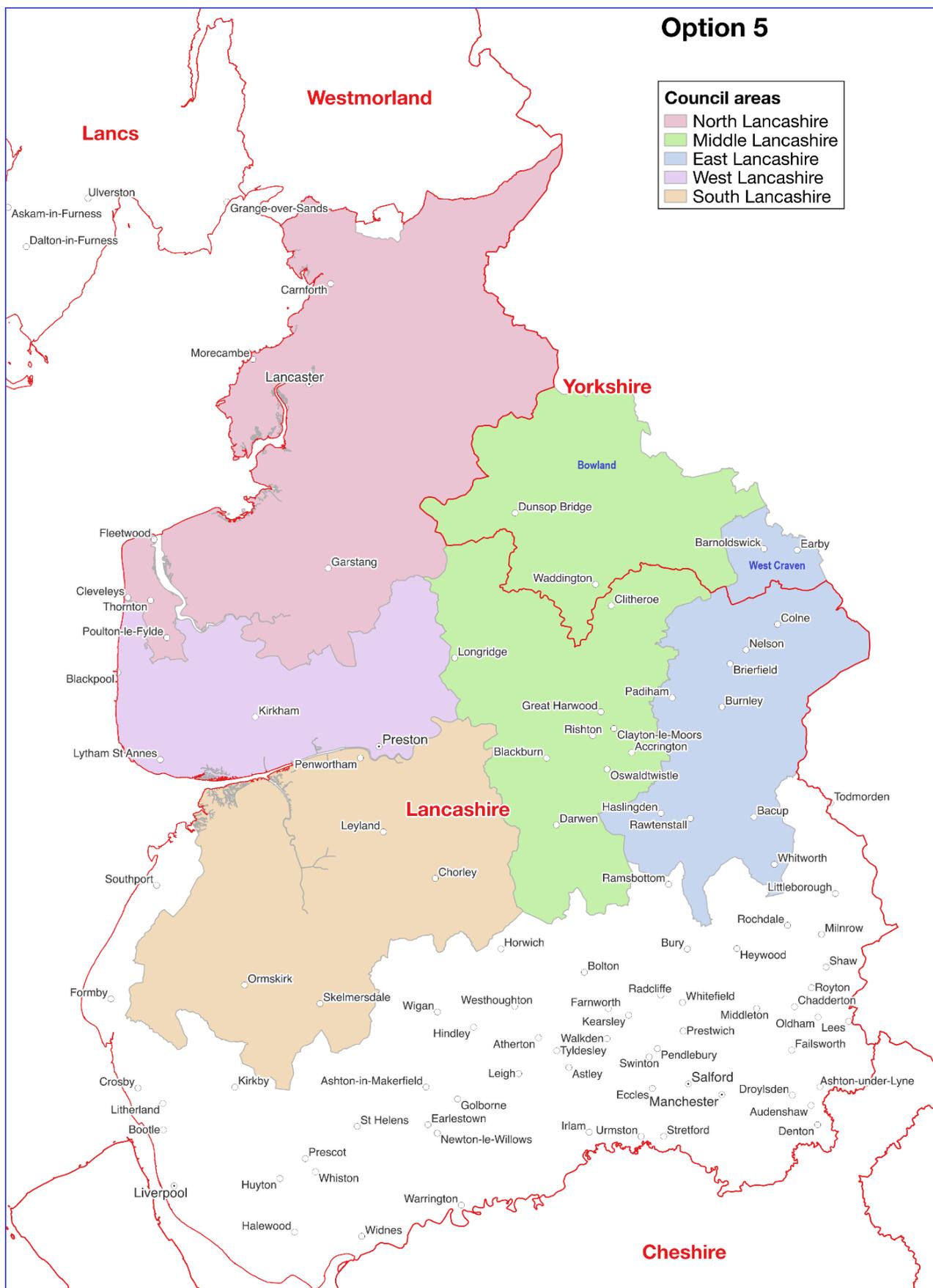
The council areas proposed in Option 2 compared to the historic counties

- We are pleased that “*Central Lancashire Council*” properly reflects the position of this council area within the real county. Sadly, this approach is not followed in Options 3-5.
- ABC has no issue with the name “*Coastal Lancashire Council*”.
- “*Pennine Lancashire Council*” is not a credible name since around 35% of the council area lies in Yorkshire, including both the Forest of Bowland and West Craven areas. The council’s name must at least reflect the fact that a large part of the area is not in Lancashire. One possible name is “*East Lancashire and Ribble Valley Council*”. The River Ribble flows between the Bowland and West Craven areas of Yorkshire and across the whole of the council area.



The council areas proposed in Option 4 compared to the historic counties

- ABC has no issue with the name *“Western Lancashire Council”*.
- *“Southern Lancashire Council”* should be *“Central Lancashire Council”* (as in Option 2).
- Around 35% of the *“Northern Lancashire Council”* area comprises the Forest of Bowland area of Yorkshire. It should be named *“North Lancashire and Bowland Council”*.
- The *“Eastern Lancashire Council”* area includes the West Craven area of Yorkshire. A better name would be *“East Lancashire and West Craven Council”*.



The council areas proposed in Option 5 compared to the historic counties

- ABC has no issue with the names “North Lancashire Council” and “West Lancashire Council”.
- “South Lancashire Council” should be “Central Lancashire Council” (as in Option 2).
- Nearly half of the “Middle Lancashire Council” area comprises the Forest of Bowland area of Yorkshire. It would be far better named “Mid Lancashire and Bowland Council”.
- The “East Lancashire Council” area includes the West Craven area of Yorkshire. A better name would be “East Lancashire and West Craven Council”.

The consultation notably makes no mention of the Government's intentions in relation to the 'Lancashire' lieutenancy. As noted above, this lieutenancy area bears no resemblance to the real county whose name it borrows. The opportunity should be taken to recast the lieutenancy to cover the historic county palatine of Lancaster. This should be done as part of a wider move to re-appoint the lieutenancies to the historic counties throughout the UK (see below).

As part of this reorganisation, the Government should replace the terms 'county' and 'county council' within local government terminology and parlance with 'council area' and 'council', as used in Scotland. Council names should take the form 'Central Lancashire Council'. This would ensure that local government has an identity distinct from the historic counties.

Clearing the confusion with local government could be backed up by two further measures to strengthen official recognition for the importance of the historic counties:

- Including a definition of 'historic county' within the Interpretation Act 1978 would ensure the consistent use of the historic counties across Government, its agencies and within the heritage sector. The definition used by the Office for National Statistics is ideal^[2,3].
- Appointing the lieutenancies of England^[4] to the historic counties, as are many lieutenancies in Scotland^[5], would be a suitable official recognition of the importance of both the historic counties and the office of lord lieutenant.

Our *Historic Counties of the United Kingdom Bill*^[6] details the small legislative changes which would be necessary to implement these measures.

Many thanks for giving us the opportunity to express our views on the ongoing local government reorganisation. We trust that you will give these views your due consideration.

Yours sincerely

Peter Boyce

Peter Boyce
Chairman, Association of British Counties

NOTES

[1] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019, *Celebrating the historic counties of England*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/celebrating-the-historic-counties-of-england/celebrating-the-historic-counties-of-england>

[2] Office for National Statistics, 2024, *Index of Place Names in Great Britain*

<https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/datasets/208d9884575647c29f0dd5a1184e711a/about>

[3] Historic Counties Trust, 2022, *Historic Counties Standard*,

https://www.historiccountiestrust.co.uk/Historic_Counties_Standard.pdf

[4] Association of British Counties, 2022, The lieutenancies of England and their relation to the historic counties

https://gazetteer.org.uk/ABC_Fact_Sheet_Lieutenancy_Areas_England.pdf

[5] Association of British Counties, 2022, The lieutenancies of Scotland and their relation to the historic counties

https://gazetteer.org.uk/ABC_Fact_Sheet_Lieutenancy_Areas_Scotland.pdf

[6] Association of British Counties, 2025, *Historic Counties of the United Kingdom Bill*

https://gazetteer.org.uk/ABC_Historic_Counties_of_the_UK_Bill.pdf