

= Evolution of Worcestershire county boundaries since 1844 =

The boundaries of Worcestershire , England have been fluid for over 150 years since the first major changes in 1844 . There were many detached parts of Worcestershire in the surrounding counties , and conversely there were islands of other counties within Worcestershire . The 1844 Counties (Detached Parts) Act began the processing of eliminating these , but the process was not completed until 1966 , when Dudley was absorbed into Staffordshire .

The expansion of Birmingham and the Black Country during and after the Industrial Revolution also altered the county map considerably . Local government commissions were set up to recommend changes to the local government structures , and as early as 1945 recommendations were made to merge Worcestershire with Herefordshire . Eventually in 1974 , a form of this recommendation was carried out , most of Worcestershire was combined with Herefordshire to form a new county named Hereford & Worcester , while the northern Black Country towns and villages of Worcestershire , along with adjoining areas of Staffordshire and Warwickshire , formed the new county of West Midlands .

Hereford & Worcester was re @-@ divided into the separate counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire in 1998 . Since that time Worcestershire 's boundaries have not changed . Redditch opted to join the West Midlands Combined Authority as an associate ' non @-@ constituent ' member in October 2015 , although this will not affect the borough 's status within Worcestershire .

= = Boundaries before 1844 = =

Worcestershire 's boundaries were relatively stable before the Victorian era , although some parishes or Manors changed hands with neighbouring counties , usually as ' gifts ' by the monarchy , church or through conquest . In 1844 ; the administration of Worcestershire was carried out by the Courts of Quarter Sessions , who were responsible for law and order , civil jurisdiction and certain administrative functions in the county . These roles included the licensing of alehouses , police , weights and measures , construction / maintenance of highways and bridges , poor law disputes and setting taxes . The county was then divided into five hundreds (a county subdivision) , four separate boroughs for the larger towns (Bewdley , Kidderminster , Droitwich , and Evesham) , and Worcester itself , which was a county corporate . Worcester was autonomous from Worcestershire and the boroughs had a certain degree of autonomy within the hundreds .

Worcestershire 's remaining hundreds prior to the reforms were Blakenhurst , Doddingtree , Halfshire , Oswaldslow and Pershore .

The main township part of St. John in Bedwardine parish was incorporated into the City of Worcester in 1837 .

The fractured layout of the hundreds was at best confusing . Most of the hundreds were split into two or even three divisions in differing parts of the county . As the above table and Fig 1 shows , some of these parishes were islands surrounded by other hundreds . Meanwhile , some of Worcestershire 's parishes existed in other counties jurisdictions , known as enclaves , exclaves , " outliers " or simply " islands " . There were also parishes that stretched over the county boundary as part of their contiguous area ; Old Swinford parish included Amblecote from Staffordshire for instance .

= = = Exclaves and enclaves = = =

Worcestershire had an unusually large number of exclaves (see Fig 1) , which were cut off from the main county and completely surrounded by the nearby counties of Warwickshire , Staffordshire , Gloucestershire , Herefordshire , Shropshire (Detached) and Oxfordshire . This relationship with neighbouring counties mirrored the confusing and fragmented layout of parishes within Worcestershire 's own hundreds (See images and table below) . The most notable islands were Dudley , Evenlode , Blockley and the area around Shipston @-@ on @-@ Stour . Herefordshire , Staffordshire , Warwickshire and Shropshire had their own exclaves within the main part of

Worcestershire at Rochford , Broome , Clent , Tardebigge (Tutnall and Cobley) and Halesowen respectively . Tardebigge 's history outside the county is even more colourful , changing hands from Worcestershire to Staffordshire and Warwickshire , before returning to Worcestershire at differing times over the centuries . The southern boundary of the county was also complex , with parish boundaries penetrating deep into Gloucestershire and vice versa .

The exclaves and enclaves of Worcestershire

= = Counties (Detached Parts) Act 1844 = =

The Counties (Detached Parts) Act 1844 was an Act of Parliament which abolished many of the exclaves of counties in England and Wales . The precursor to this legislation was the Reform Act 1832 and Parliamentary Boundaries Act 1832 , which redefined the boundaries for members of parliament . These acts changed the status of many exclaves and enclaves , starting the process of incorporating these ' outliers ' into their surrounding county . This Act of Parliament was designed to eradicate the issue of " islands " or " exclaves " , but numerous exclaves remained part of Worcestershire until the enactment of the Provisional Order Confirmation (Gloucestershire , Warwickshire and Worcestershire) Act 1931 . Dudley was Worcestershire 's final exclave ; it was transferred to Staffordshire in 1966 by the West Midlands Order 1965 .

= = = Warley Wigorn , Cradley and Lutley = = =

Halesowen parish became a detached part of Shropshire when it was gifted to the Earl of Shrewsbury in the late 11th century ; lying between Worcestershire 's northern border and Staffordshire 's southern border . Some small islands within Halesowen were excluded from the gift : Warley Wigorn , which was retained by the Barony of Dudley (and which consisted of over a dozen disconnected fragments of land) ; the manor of Cradley ; and Lutley . All three became detached parts of Worcestershire , isolated within Halesowen . Halesowen was returned to Worcestershire in 1844 , ending the detached status of these three islands . Forty years later , Warley Wigorn and the neighbouring parish of " Warley Salop " , which had been in the Shropshire part of Halesowen , joined to become a new parish , Warley .

= = = Civil Parishes = = =

Historically ; the division into ancient parishes was linked to the manorial system , with parishes and manors often sharing the same boundaries . However the Poor Law Amendment Act 1866 declared a divergence between the historic ecclesiastical parish and administrative functions within the locality , thus creating civil parishes . These administrative units formed the bottom @-@ tier of local government within England and were established from 1866 .

= = = Political Reform = = =

By the 1880s there was increasing pressure to reform the structure of English counties and the question of county government had become a major political issue . Both the Liberal and Conservative party manifestos for the 1886 general election contained promises to introduce elected local authorities . The Local Government (Boundaries) Act 1887 received Royal Assent in September 1887 and appointed Boundary Commissioners to review the existing county boundaries , except for the ' Counties Corporate ' . Worcestershire would have witnessed the formation of a county administration and a loss of territory to Birmingham . The Act also legislated for Dudley to unite with the rest of the county , although this would be achieved through a transfer of territory from Staffordshire . This Act was repealed in favour of the alternative Local Government Act 1888 .

= = 1888 ? 1958 = =

Worcestershire County Council or the administrative county of Worcestershire came into existence following the Local Government Act 1888 and was a level of subnational division of England used for the purposes of local government from 1889 . This new structure replaced many of the administrative functions carried out by the quarter sessions of Worcestershire . The administrative county covered the historic shire of Worcestershire , except for two newly designated county boroughs at Dudley and Worcester . A ' county borough ' was a ' single tier ' authority and regarded within the Local Government Act 1888 as independent of county council jurisdiction or an " administrative county of itself " . This was due to the size of the general population or historic status as ' Counties Corporate ' . The Act also ensured that Worcestershire 's boundaries for what was classified as " non @-@ administrative purposes " would match that of the administrative county (including the county boroughs in most cases) . The non @-@ administrative purposes were stated to be " sheriff , lieutenant (custos rotulorum) , justices , militia , coroner , or other " . Thus resembling the functions of modern ceremonial counties .

= = = Local Government Act 1894 = = =

The hundreds were replaced by a new district council formation of either urban or rural districts following implementation of the Local Government Act 1894 . These new ' districts ' were ' second @-@ tier ' administrative units under county council jurisdiction , but did not form part of a county borough which were ' single tier ' authorities . The Act did not legislate the abolition of the hundreds , but their remaining powers were given to the new district councils . The district council boundaries were also self @-@ contained in one administrative county as per the legislation and therefore , unlike some of their predecessors , did not stray over the external shire boundaries . For example , the former Poor Law Union of Alcester in Warwickshire included Abbots Morton , Feckenham , Inkberrow and Oldberrow within its area until the 1894 changes . The Act also introduced structural changes to civil parishes , abolishing vestries and established elected civil parish councils in all rural parishes with more than 300 electors . These were grouped into their rural districts . Boundaries were altered to avoid parishes being split between counties .

= = = Birmingham , Oldberrow , Upper Arley and Edvin Loach (1891 ? 1911) = = =

Within a short time after the 1888 Act , Worcestershire 's northern external boundaries began to alter (See Fig 3) . The district of Balsall Heath , which had originally constituted the most northerly part of the Parish of King 's Norton , was the first area of the county to be added to the newly designated City of Birmingham on 1 October 1891 . This was followed by the small island of Edvin Loach near Bromyard , which was transferred to Herefordshire in 1893 . Two years following the loss of Edvin Loach , the county gained the parish of Upper Arley , which was a Staffordshire parish nearly surrounded by Worcestershire and Shropshire (See Fig 2) . Oldberrow parish , which was situated in the north east Worcestershire border area was transferred to Warwickshire County Council jurisdiction during 1896 .

The continuous expansion of Birmingham city has been a large contributory factor to Worcestershire 's fluid boundary changes and associated housing issues . Balsall Heath was followed into Birmingham by Quinton Urban District in November 1909 , and then by both the Rural District of Yardley and the greater part of the Urban District of King 's Norton and Northfield . These latter transfers into the city were as part of the Greater Birmingham Act on 9 November 1911 , which saw a considerable expansion of the city into its surrounding districts . As a consequence of the transfer to Birmingham ; these areas (and Balsall Heath) were regarded as part of Warwickshire , though Birmingham 's status as a ' county borough ' ensured these areas were not administered by Warwickshire County Council .

= = = Expansion of Dudley and Smethwick (1926 ? 1928) = = =

The compact size of Dudley County Borough combined with an increasing population , the high

cost of reclaiming derelict land and urgent slum clearance contributed to a dire housing and land shortage . This resulted in the council " acquiring land from adjacent local authorities " . At the expense of Staffordshire , Worcestershire grew slightly in 1926 to allow for the construction of the Priory Estate on land which was mostly situated in Sedgley . These boundary changes also saw the purchase of the town 's castle and priory ruins by the council , primarily to free up surrounding land for social housing . Several thousand homes (mostly council owned) were built between 1929 and 1955 on what became known as the Priory , Wren 's Nest and Old Park Farm estates .

A similar housing and land shortage existed in nearby Smethwick County Borough , which also resulted in the authority acquiring land from adjoining council areas . By 1914 ; the urban area of Bearwood had already spread over the border of Oldbury Urban District as far as Rathbone Road and Warley Park . A further adjustment of the county boundary took place in 1928 and on this occasion however , Staffordshire gained territory from Worcestershire at Warley Woods (See Fig 4) . This enabled Smethwick to build new housing estates at Londonderry and to the west of Rathbone Road .

The housing and land shortage within Smethwick continued after World War II , rendering the council to concentrate primarily on constructing medium @-@ rise maisonettes , flats and high @-@ rise tower blocks for social housing needs .

== = Provisional Order Confirmation (Gloucestershire , Warwickshire and Worcestershire) Act 1931 == =

The Counties (Detached parts) Act 1844 was originally designed to eradicate exclaves or ' islands ' and amalgamate the area with the surrounding county ; Worcestershire however , still possessed many ' outliers ' to the south east . This was before enactment of the Provisional Order Confirmation (Gloucestershire , Warwickshire and Worcestershire) Act 1931 which nearly completed the task of amalgamating Worcestershire 's islands into their surrounding county , except for Dudley . This act transferred Blockley , Daylesford and Evenlode to Gloucestershire , whilst Warwickshire gained Alderminster , Tidmington and Tredington . The whole of Shipston @-@ on @-@ Stour Rural District was also merged into Warwickshire and subsequently amalgamated with Brailes Rural District .

The outliers were not the only boundary realignments as part of the Act . The south western tip of Worcestershire at Redmarley D 'Abitot and Staunton was transferred to Gloucestershire , whilst the county gained the parish of Ipsley from Alcester Rural District in Warwickshire (See Fig 5) , which was added to the expanding Redditch Urban District

== = Local Government Boundary Commission (1945 ? 1949) == =

The Local Government Boundary Commission proposed radical changes to the local government structures during 1948 . The plans included merging Worcestershire with Herefordshire to form a new administrative unit , except Dudley and Oldbury which would become part of a new " Stafford South " county . Worcester and Dudley would remain as county boroughs , however some services would be carried out by the respective county council . While the commission 's proposals were abandoned , revised proposals for a combined Herefordshire & South Worcestershire county were to surface twenty years later .

== = Local Government Act 1958 == =

Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries , the Birmingham and Black Country urban areas were coalescing into a single extensive conurbation spanning the borders of three counties : Warwickshire , Staffordshire and Worcestershire . Other similar urban areas in England , such as Lancashire , Tyneside , London and within Yorkshire West Riding , had grown in size since the Industrial Revolution . The expansion of these conurbations saw economic and physical integration with neighbouring towns and communities . This process became more prominent due to growing

housing issues , extensive bombing during World War II , slum clearance , and continuing migration into urban areas . The Black Country contained a combination of county boroughs , urban districts , municipal boroughs and county councils (See Fig 6) taking responsibility for services , which resulted in a fragmented local government infrastructure . The Local Government Act 1958 appointed a Local Government Commission to review administrative structures and boundaries in England outside London . The Act designated a West Midlands Special Review Area , whose recommendations would ultimately form the West Midlands Order 1965 legislation . A second report known as the West Midlands General Review looked into the administrative authorities within the wider region , including the remainder of Worcestershire .

= = = West Midlands Special Review Area = = =

The commission made its report in July 1961 . It recommended that the Black Country area be administered by large county boroughs , and that the remaining urban districts or municipal boroughs be merged into these authorities . The original county council 's responsibility for services within the majority of the conurbation were curtailed and association with the historic shire was for ceremonial purposes only . The West Midlands Special Review Area included Dudley , Oldbury , Stourbridge and Halesowen (as per Fig . 6) . The latter two council areas were not incorporated into a county borough , as part of the eventual West Midlands Order 1965 . Halesowen was proposed to be included within an enlarged Smethwick County Borough , but a successful campaign entitled " Hands off Halesowen " orchestrated by a non @-@ partisan group called the " Halesowen Independence Committee " helped stop the plans .

Meanwhile , the second report into the West Midland General Review area was also delivered in July 1961 and a proposal for Worcester to lose its county borough status was not implemented .

= = = West Midlands Order 1965 = = =

In April 1966 , Dudley expanded beyond its historical boundaries and took in the surrounding Staffordshire districts of Sedgley , Brierley Hill , Coseley and part of Amblecote . The West Midlands Order 1965 redefined its status and the Dudley County Borough became part of Staffordshire . Worcestershire County Council retained Halesowen and Stourbridge , but ceded Oldbury to an enlarged Smethwick County Borough which was renamed Warley County Borough . This enlarged county borough would be regarded as part of Worcestershire for " non @-@ administrative purposes " , but not under county council jurisdiction (see Fig 7) . Warley was an amalgamation of Oldbury Urban District , Rowley Regis Urban District , and Smethwick as well as the Oakham area of Dudley and Tividale area of Tipton . Subsequent associated legislation established the West Midlands Constabulary , which policed the area , and the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive .

= = = Amblecote and Redditch New Town = = =

During these reorganisations , the territory of the county council grew only where Stourbridge took in the majority of Amblecote Urban District from Staffordshire (See Fig 6) and the designation of Redditch in April 1964 as a " New town " . Historically , Redditch lies on the county boundary , so any expansion of the newly designated town would either fall under the Green Belt to the north , or the surrounding area of Warwickshire at Matchborough . Therefore , the boundary between the two counties was realigned in favour of Worcestershire , as a consequence of the Warwickshire and Worcestershire (Boundaries) Order 1969 legislation (Fig 7) . The Redditch New Town designation coincided with a programme of considerable social housing development , mainly due to enactment of the Town Development Act 1952 . Numerous housing developments took place across the county , especially in Droitwich , Worcester and near to the Birmingham boundary at Frankley , Hawkesley , Kitwell , Rednal , Rubery and Walkers Heath . The majority of these developments were designed to help alleviate the housing and land shortages within Birmingham 's boundaries .

= = = Redcliffe @-@ Maud Report (1966 ? 1969) = = =

The Redcliffe @-@ Maud Report (Cmnd . 4040) recommended the abolition of all the existing county , county borough , borough , urban district and rural district councils and replacement with new authorities . These new unitary (i.e. single tier) authorities were largely based on major towns , which acted as regional employment , commercial , social and recreational centres and took into account local transport infrastructure and travel patterns .

The proposals for the county included a considerable loss of territory to a proposed " West Midlands Metropolitan Area " , as per Fig 8 . Stourbridge was including in the planned Metropolitan District of Dudley , whilst West Bromwich @-@ Warley would have included Halesowen , and a district known as North Worcestershire was planned to incorporate Bewdley , Bromsgrove , Kidderminster , Redditch and Stourport @-@ on @-@ Severn . The remaining part of central and southern Worcestershire (including Worcester) , would be amalgamated with Herefordshire to form a new county . All of these areas would exist under an overarching " West Midlands Provincial Council " covering the entire region in a devolved capacity . The Conservative party won the 1970 general election and committed to a two @-@ tier system in local government . In 1971 a further White Paper entitled Local Government in England : Government Proposals for Reorganisation (Cmnd 4584) , which ultimately led to the 1974 re @-@ organisation saw a great deal of Redcliffe @-@ Maud 's recommendations discontinued .

= = Halesowen , Stourbridge and Malvernshire (1971 ? 1974) = =

The Local Government in England : Government Proposals for Reorganisation (Cmnd 4584) 1971 White Paper and Bill , which ultimately became the Local Government Act 1972 , did not go as far as the Redcliffe ? Maud Report . Plans for the amalgamation of Herefordshire , Worcester and the majority of Worcestershire remained , except for Halesowen , Stourbridge and Warley . These three areas would join a proposed metropolitan county along with Dudley . The West Midlands Order 1965 and associated legislation (i.e. the formation of the West Midlands Constabulary) instigated a large degree of local government integration within the West Midlands conurbation , however this was carried out under a county borough system in place since 1889 .

Stourbridge would be incorporated into an enlarged Dudley administrative unit , plus Halesowen would join Warley and West Bromwich . During the debates associated with the Local Government Bill , Terry Davis MP (Bromsgrove) tabled Amendment Numbers 73 , 74 and 100 which proposed maintaining Worcestershire and Herefordshire as separate counties . He also stated that the bill " is not welcomed in Halesowen or Stourbridge or the county as a whole " and " The situation has therefore been reluctantly accepted in Worcestershire , and this group of amendments would not change this part of the Bill . " He said that whilst agreement was in place for Worcester to be " included in the County of Worcestershire " , the merger with Herefordshire was " intensely unpopular " , especially from within the neighbouring county . Dr. John Gilbert MP (Dudley) said in the amendment debate regarding the future of Seisdon Rural District that whilst Dudley has " no imperialist ambitions We have no wish to engorge Stourbridge or Halesowen . Although the merger is going through smoothly , as a result of the exercise of tact and co @-@ operation on the part of all the local authorities and between and within all the political parties ... " . These amendments were defeated in the subsequent vote paving the way for the future " Hereford & Worcester " , as were with Amendment Numbers 294 and 295 which would have consented to the transfer of Kinver Parish from Seisdon in Staffordshire to the new combined Herefordshire & Worcestershire authority . In the accompanying debates in the House of Lords , Worcestershire Peer Lord Sandys said that Stourbridge and Halesowen 's respective borough council 's " duly elected , are wholly opposed to being joined to the conurbation " . He continued by stating that " a reason for the support of the county council , which is wholeheartedly for the boroughs of Halesowen and Stourbridge in their opposition to joining the conurbation , is the question of the Green Belt . " which could become threatened by future development .

Originally the combined authority was to be called Malvernshire and this term was used in the early

Local Government Bill debates and statistics . By the time the Bill became law , the county was renamed Hereford and Worcester .

= = = County of West Midlands = = =

The Local Government Act 1972 legislated for a new metropolitan administrative unit to be known as the County of West Midlands , incorporating the North West Warwickshire , South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire border area . The Act also legislated that the new county would be sub @-@ divided into metropolitan districts , although most districts became metropolitan boroughs after being granted or regranted Royal charters giving them borough status . The West Midlands was to be largely centred on the Birmingham and Black Country county boroughs , but with a boundary roughly matching the conurbation , as per Fig 9 . However the Meriden Gap in Warwickshire was included , enabling Coventry to be incorporated into the new structure . Within this new authority ; Dudley County Borough along with Stourbridge and Halesowen formed Dudley Metropolitan District (later to become Dudley Metropolitan Borough) , whilst Warley County Borough merged with West Bromwich to create Sandwell . Most of the rural hinterland proposed by Redcliffe @-@ Maud was discarded ; thus permitting Bewdley , Bromsgrove , Kidderminster , Redditch and Stourport @-@ on @-@ Severn to become part of the new Hereford & Worcester authority . On 1 April 1974 ; (the day of local government reorganisation) an article in The Times quoted an unnamed ' Department of the Environment ' official who said " The new county boundaries are solely for the purpose of defining areas of first @-@ level government of the future : They are administrative areas and will not alter the traditional boundaries of counties , nor is it intended that the loyalties of people living in them will change "

The West Midlands County Council existed for only a short period before abolition in April 1986 via enactment of the Local Government Act 1985 , which abolished the Metropolitan County Councils and Greater London Council . The individual metropolitan boroughs resumed most services which were provided at county level or through joint bodies such as the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority .

= = Hereford and Worcester (1974 ? 1998) = =

Legislation from the Local Government Act 1972 came into force on 1 April 1974 , which saw most of the county amalgamated with Herefordshire and Worcester City to form a single non @-@ metropolitan county of " Hereford and Worcester " .

The new county was divided into nine districts :

Meanwhile , the Local Government Boundary Commission for England started its periodic structural reviews and looked at all administrative areas on an individual basis . Leominster District Council proposed a boundary change at Burford , near Tenbury Wells to incorporate the area into Hereford & Worcester from Shropshire during 1987 / 1988 . This proposal was rejected by the LGBCE as well as a minor adjustment at Upper Arley . The commission also investigated splitting Hereford & Worcester in 1990 , following submissions by Hereford City Council and the " Herefordshire Action Committee " , although the proposals were rejected at that time . Boundary changes between Hereford & Worcester and Warwickshire at Mappleborough Green , Pebworth , Long Marston and Studley were also proposed , and some were accepted resulting in minor changes to both counties . In 1993 there were more minor adjustments of the county boundary , this time between Bromsgrove and Dudley Metropolitan Borough near to Wollescote and Solihull Metropolitan Borough near Hockley Heath .

= = = Review of the West Midlands (City of Birmingham) Boundaries with Bromsgrove (Hereford and Worcester) = = =

The most recent transfer of territory between the West Midlands County and Hereford & Worcester or Worcestershire occurred along sections of the Birmingham and Bromsgrove district boundary .

The draft proposals and final report of the LBGCE Review of the West Midlands (City of Birmingham) Boundaries with Bromsgrove (Hereford & Worcester) proposed that Frankley , Kitwell Estate , Rednal , Rubery , Walkers Heath and the remainder of Bartley Reservoir transfer to Birmingham , as per Fig 10 . These changes were intended to unify several housing estates built and maintained by Birmingham City Council under the Town Development Act 1952 , but which fell within the Bromsgrove boundary . Frankley was split into two parts with New Frankley and the area around Bartley Reservoir transferred from Bromsgrove to Birmingham in April 1995 . The small village of Frankley remained in Hereford & Worcester and formed a new Civil Parish under the same name . Hopwood 's surrounding areas were transferred from the city to Bromsgrove . Rubery remained within Hereford & Worcester and also Worcestershire after the county was recreated in 1998 , contrary to the LGBCE final proposal .

These boundary changes were relatively minor in comparison to previous transfers .

= = = Local Government Act 1992 = = =

Following the Local Government Act 1992 legislation ; the LGBCE was once again charged with examining all English non @-@ metropolitan counties , but was given authority to recommend proposals that would significantly alter or abolish administrative areas . Accompanying legislation known as the Local Government Changes for England Regulations 1994 also established a new single @-@ tier form of administrative unit known as a ' Unitary authority ' . These new councils would be responsible for all services carried out by non @-@ metropolitan district and county authorities within their area , thus resembling county boroughs . The county of Hereford & Worcester was to be reviewed again , despite an earlier structural review which recommended no change to the county .

Various options were put to consultation , including :

Other ideas put forward and discounted before the consultation stage included a complete restoration of the pre @-@ 1974 Worcestershire county boundary . This option included Stourbridge and Halesowen , as they were under the jurisdiction of Worcestershire County Council until 1 April 1974 . The LGBCE deemed that this Local Government review did not include metropolitan counties (except a one @-@ off review of Sefton on Merseyside) , so there would be no change to the boundaries of Dudley Metropolitan Borough .

The Local Government Boundary Commission recommended that Hereford & Worcester should be split into three unitary authorities centred on Herefordshire , North Worcestershire and South Worcestershire . However , Parliament chose the hybrid unitary and two @-@ tier option instead , resulting in the abolition of the county of Hereford & Worcester .

= = New Worcestershire (1998 to present) = =

Hereford and Worcester County Council ceased to exist on 1 April 1998 and was replaced by the new non @-@ metropolitan and ceremonial county of Worcestershire . The new county regained its historic border with Herefordshire , which became a unitary authority .

The former " Hereford & Worcester " districts of Redditch , Worcester , Bromsgrove , Wychavon and Wyre Forest were retained with little or no change . The Leominster and Malvern Hills districts crossed over the historic border , so a new Malvern Hills district was created from the parts of those two districts within the restored Worcestershire boundaries . The external boundaries of the new county are shown in Fig 11 ; they have not altered since the 1998 split .

Following the abolition of the county of Hereford & Worcester some cross @-@ boundary organisations and resources remain shared by the two counties . These include waste management , the youth offending service , Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service and the radio station BBC Hereford & Worcester . Meanwhile , the BBC 's commercial radio counterpart ; Free Radio (formerly Radio Wyvern) broadcasts to the two counties and is regarded as a single licence area by the Office of Communications . West Mercia Police is still shared with Herefordshire , Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin . The Hereford & Worcester Ambulance Service was merged into the wider

West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust in 2006 .

The West Midlands legally exists to this day as a metropolitan and ceremonial county , with countywide functions such as West Midlands Police , West Midlands Fire Service and the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive (known as Centro) . Most of the original metropolitan counties are now combined authorities , which are ' top tier ' statutory bodies resembling the former metropolitan county councils . However ' Non @-@ Metropolitan Authority ' groupings are also becoming involved with the combined authority process .

= = = Devolution = = =

There has been intense media debate and discussion throughout 2014 and 2015 about possible ' Combined Authorities ' within the West Midlands region , especially following the Scottish Independence Referendum 2014 , the ' Greater Manchester Agreement ' on devolution and the 2015 General Election . Five local authorities within the West Midlands County initially agreed to start the process to form a combined authority , however the official announcement in June 2015 encompassed all seven metropolitan councils . The new body will be known as the West Midlands Combined Authority and aims to be established in June 2016 . Originally the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership , covering Birmingham , Solihull and several district councils in Staffordshire and Worcestershire (Bromsgrove , Redditch and Wyre Forest) , discussed setting up a " Supervisory Board " with " a formal governance structure between a Joint Committee and a Combined Authority " . Sir Albert Bore , Birmingham City Council 's leader said that he envisioned a combined authority stretching from Wolverhampton to Coventry and beyond , and from East Staffordshire to Redditch would form the core of a Midlands powerhouse to compete with city regions around the world .

The Local Government Chronicle stated that Bromsgrove , Redditch and Wyre Forest have been invited to form part of a possible West Midlands combined authority , because of their membership of the ' Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership ' . So far ; Redditch is the only Worcestershire authority to join the new combined authority as an associate ' non @-@ constituent ' member , whilst Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest opted not to join " at this time " . The present Secretary of State for Business , Innovation and Skills ? Sajid Javid MP (Bromsgrove) said he welcomed the ambition shown by the new combined authority and will back them in their mission to drive forward the " Midlands Engine " . Previously ; Robin Walker MP (Worcester) and Sir Peter Luff (former MP for Mid Worcestershire) , along with Adrian Hardman (former leader of Worcestershire County Council) have spoken out against a future ' Birmingham and The Black Country ' combined authority incorporating the county . Councillor Hardman also said that empowering the city regions is essential to any new English devolution settlement , but the great counties of England have an equal role in ensuring the economic success of the UK . The possibility of a Worcestershire combined authority , focusing on four key areas of " transport , infrastructure planning , skills development and land planning " has been mooted by local media and politicians . The ' County Councils Network ' document " County Devolution ? Final Report " states that the collective local authorities and the (Worcestershire) Local Enterprise Partnership are currently considering options to establish an economic prosperity board , combined authority or similar . The same document mentions the name " World Class Worcestershire Combined Authority " , which provides consistency with present county council branding .

= = = A unitary future ? = = =

The subsequent local government restructuring in April 2009 , which abolished more two @-@ tier counties (including Shropshire and Cheshire) did not affect Worcestershire . The county still maintains a two @-@ tier administrative system as per the Local Government Act 1992 , although Lord Heseltine 's No stone unturned : in pursuit of growth review for the Department of Business , Innovation & Skills suggested that all English local authorities should be unitary or combined authority models similar to the existing structures in Scotland and Wales . As of 2014 ,

conversations are taking place within the local media about the positives and negatives of a possible unitary council structure within Worcestershire . Possibilities being put forward in these discussions are broadly similar to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England proposals prior to the ' Hereford & Worcester ' abolition . These ideas consist of either two unitary authorities based in North Worcestershire (Bromsgrove , Redditch , Wyre Forest) and South Worcestershire (Malvern Hills , Worcester , Wychavon) or a single countywide council as per Herefordshire . Already the three district councils in the south of the county have successfully worked together to produce the South Worcestershire Development Plan , which replaced the existing Local Plans of these three partner councils when it was adopted in February 2016 ; it also superseded elements of Worcestershire County Council 's County Structure Plan . There are also joint service provisions between the North Worcestershire districts including building control shared services , economic development and regeneration , water management and the emergency planning and business continuity service .

= = Historic county revival = = =

Separately , the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced on St. George 's Day 2013 in a symbolic move that England 's historic and traditional counties still exist . They are now recognised by the government , who will now encourage the marking and continued use of such traditional county names by the existing tiers of local government and residents . A follow up announcement in April 2014 put forward an initiative in changing planning regulations , stating that ' traditional county ' names can be placed on roadsigns . The same Government department also published an online map comparing the current and historic counties . The main body of the pre @-@ 1889 boundaries appear to be acknowledged , but Worcestershire 's islands including Dudley and Shipston @-@ on @-@ Stour are omitted .

= = Statistics = =

The table below features official statistics from the United Kingdom Census relating to Worcestershire 's size and population from 1801 onwards . The statistics are compiled across England and Wales on a decennial basis by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) . The population of Worcestershire increased over five @-@ fold between 1801 and the 1971 census , reaching a peak of 693 @,@ 253 people . According to the 1971 survey ; Warley County Borough accounted for 163 @,@ 567 people , Worcester with 73 @,@ 456 , whilst the remaining 456 @,@ 230 resided within the administrative county area . However this survey was based on different external boundaries as opposed to the present county .

The current population of Worcestershire is estimated at 566 @,@ 200 people , according to the 2011 census .

? ? No census taken due to World War II

? ? Statistics for the county of Hereford & Worcester , no individual statistics available for Worcestershire