

News story

Eric Pickles: celebrate St George and England's traditional counties

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[Department for Communities and Local Government](#)

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[Bringing people together in strong, united communities](#)

Minister:

[The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP](#)

Series:

[England's traditional counties](#)

On St George's Day, the government will formally acknowledge England's traditional counties in the life of the nation.



The flag of Middlesex, which was abolished as an administrative council in 1965

A significant number of counties were 'administratively abolished' by the government in the [Local Government Act 1972](#).

In a symbolic move, Eric Pickles will assert that England's historic and traditional counties still exist, and are now recognised by the government - including the likes of Cumberland, Huntingdonshire, Westmorland and Middlesex.

Previously, many parts of Whitehall and municipal officialdom have shunned these counties, many of which date back over a thousand years of English history. Mr Pickles today (23 April 2013) will announce that the government will seek to encourage the marking and continued use of such traditional county names.

He will encourage local residents to continue to champion such local identities, irrespective of current tiers of local administration.

This move complements this government's abolition of the 'artificial' Government Office regions, based on European Union's NUTS1 administrative boundaries.

Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles said:

The tapestry of England's counties binds our nation together. This government has binned the arbitrary Government Office euro-regions, and instead, we are championing England's traditional local identities which continue to run deep.

Administrative restructuring by previous governments has sought to suppress and undermine such local identities. Today, on St George's Day, we commemorate our patron saint and formally acknowledge the continuing role of our traditional counties in England's public and cultural life.

Rupert Barnes Vice-Chairman of the Association of British Counties added:

The counties are the basic tapestry on which countless generations have made their lives. They have shaped our identities and our view of ourselves and have remained a constant throughout centuries of change to become a vital part of British culture, geography and heritage.

The counties predate any transient lines drawn for convenience or administration and predate the kingdom itself, rooted in history and cultural identity, so that the ancient counties are of the people not of the state. Statutes on administration have respectfully left the ancient counties alone. This pattern of the counties brought down to us through the centuries then is the pattern around which the nation has grown and grown great, and worthy of celebration.

Futher information

A [map of England's traditional counties](#) can be found on the Association of British Counties website. Media may republish with the permission of the [Association of British Counties](#) as long as they are credited.

The traditional counties are fundamental to our culture. Older than cathedrals, more historic than stately homes, county names like Lincolnshire, Cornwall, Middlesex are basic to our life. Many of these pre-date the Norman conquest. They are an indelible part of our history and important cultural entities. Yet several have fallen by the wayside.

From 1888 to 1965 local government 'administrative counties' were closely based upon the traditional counties. A modern local government map now bears far less resemblance to the traditional counties. The tendency for the media, map-makers, publishers etc. to use local government areas as a basis for popular geography has obscured the identities of the counties. The Association of British Counties encourages the use of the historic counties in postal addressing, in guide books, on boundary signs and maps and encourages their further use as a basis for sporting, social and cultural activities and organisations.

Westmorland in northern England is 1 of the 39 historic counties of England. The Normans conquered it in 1092 and created the baronies of Kendal and Westmorland, which were then formed into the single county of Westmorland in 1226. It formed an administrative county in 1889 under the Local Government Act 1888, until 1974 after which it became part of the county of Cumbria. But there is still the Westmorland Gazette or the Westmorland Shopping Centre in Kendal.

Middlesex County ceased as an administrative council in 1965. The former area of Middlesex now corresponds to much of Greater London and parts of Berkshire, Hertfordshire and Surrey. Middlesex is still used in the names of organisations based in the area, such as Middlesex County Cricket Club and Middlesex University.

Cumberland is a historic county of north west England that had an administrative function from the 12th century until 1974. The first record of 'Cumberland' was in 945. In 1974, under the Local Government Act 1972, the council was abolished and combined with parts of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire to form part of the new county of Cumbria. But the name continues today most famously as in Cumberland sausage, the HMS Cumberland, nicknamed 'The fighting sausage', the Cumberland County Cricket Club, and as the local newspaper The Cumberland News.

Huntingdonshire covers Huntingdon, St Ives, Godmanchester, St Neots, and Ramsey. Between 1889 and 1965 it formed an administrative county. Under the Local Government Act 1972, Huntingdon and Peterborough merged to form the new non-metropolitan county of Cambridgeshire. Huntingdonshire still has its own cricket board.

Historic counties

The 39 historic English counties were:

1. Bedfordshire (Bedford, Luton, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Biggleswade, Sandy)
2. Berkshire (Reading, Bracknell, Maidenhead, Newbury, Windsor, Wokingham, Abingdon)
3. Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury, Milton Keynes, Slough, Buckingham, High Wycombe)
4. Cambridgeshire (Cambridge, Wisbech, Ely, March, Whittlesey, Chatteris, Linton)
5. Cheshire (Chester, Stockport, Ellesmere Port, Birkenhead, Wallasey, Runcorn, Macclesfield, Crewe)
6. Cornwall (Bodmin, Truro, Camborne, Redruth, St. Austell, Falmouth, Penzance, Newquay)
7. Cumberland (Carlisle, Whitehaven, Workington, Penrith, Keswick, Brampton)
8. Derbyshire (Derby, Chesterfield, Glossop, Ilkeston, Long Eaton, Swadlincote, Buxton, Matlock, Ashbourne)
9. Devon (Exeter, Plymouth, Torquay, Paignton, Barnstaple, Tiverton, Newton Abbot, Tavistock)
10. Dorset (Dorchester, Poole, Weymouth, Sherborne, Wimborne Minster, Shaftesbury)
11. Durham (Durham, Sunderland, Stockton-on-Tees, Darlington, Hartlepool, Gateshead, Washington)
12. Essex (Chelmsford, Basildon, Romford, Southend, Colchester, Harlow, Brentwood, West Ham)
13. Gloucestershire (Gloucester, Bristol, Cheltenham, Stroud, Cirencester, Tewkesbury)
14. Hampshire (Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth, Bournemouth, Basingstoke, Newport)
15. Herefordshire (Hereford, Ross-on-Wye, Leominster, Ledbury, Bromyard, Kington)
16. Hertfordshire (Hertford, Watford, St. Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage, Hatfield)
17. Huntingdonshire (Huntingdon, St. Ives, St. Neots, Ramsey, Yaxley)
18. Kent (Maidstone, Canterbury, Bromley, Rochester, Margate, Folkestone, Dover, Greenwich)
19. Lancashire (Lancaster, Liverpool, Manchester, Preston, Bolton, Warrington, Barrow-in-Furness)
20. Leicestershire (Leicester, Loughborough, Hinckley, Melton Mowbray, Coalville, Lutterworth)
21. Lincolnshire (Lincoln, Grimsby, Scunthorpe, Boston, Grantham, Stamford, Skegness, Louth)
22. Middlesex (City of London, Harrow, Enfield, Staines, Ealing, Potters Bar, Westminster)
23. Norfolk (Norwich, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Dereham, Cromer, Hunstanton)

24. Northamptonshire (Northampton, Peterborough, Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough)
25. Northumberland (Alnwick, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Morpeth, Hexham, Berwick-upon-Tweed)
26. Nottinghamshire (Nottingham, Mansfield, Worksop, Newark, Retford, Southwell)
27. Oxfordshire (Oxford, Banbury, Witney, Bicester, Henley-on-Thames, Carterton, Thame)
28. Rutland (Oakham, Uppingham, Cottesmore)
29. Shropshire (Shrewsbury, Telford, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Ludlow)
30. Somerset (Taunton, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, Yeovil, Bridgwater, Wells, Glastonbury)
31. Staffordshire (Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Cannock, Lichfield)
32. Suffolk (Ipswich, Bury St. Edmunds, Lowestoft, Felixstowe, Sudbury, Haverhill, Bungay)
33. Surrey (Guildford, Croydon, Woking, Sutton, Kingston-on-Thames, Wandsworth, Wimbledon, Brixton)
34. Sussex (Chichester, Brighton, Worthing, Crawley, Hastings, Eastbourne, Bognor Regis, Horsham, Lewes)
35. Warwickshire (Warwick, Birmingham, Coventry, Nuneaton, Rugby, Solihull, Stratford-upon-Avon)
36. Westmorland (Appleby, Kendal, Windermere, Ambleside, Kirkby Lonsdale)
37. Wiltshire (Trowbridge, Salisbury, Swindon, Chippenham, Devizes, Marlborough, Warminster)
38. Worcestershire (Worcester, Dudley, Kidderminster, Stourbridge, Halesowen, Malvern, Evesham)
39. Yorkshire North Riding (Northallerton, Middlesbrough, Scarborough, Whitby) East Riding (Beverley, Hull, Bridlington, Driffield, Hornsea, Filey) West Riding (Wakefield, Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Halifax, Harrogate) York (within the Walls)