

Planning for Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries

Purpose

1. Further to Paper BS 007 which was considered at the February meeting, this paper provides a more detailed draft outline project plan covering the 2nd review of Scottish Parliament boundaries.

Background

2. The Scotland Act 1998, as amended by the Scottish Elections Reform Act 2020, states that the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries must be submitted by 1 May 2025. It is intended that the review be announced on 1 September 2022. This allows 32 months for the completion of the review.
3. Unlike the 1st review, this review plan assumes a pre-consultation engagement period with stakeholders. These are likely to include political parties, councils and the Scottish Parliament itself but the Commission will need to consider its approach in due course. The plan assumes that this engagement is best placed to occur after the data from 1 September has been published but well before the first formal consultation period. An added dimension to this will be the work to examine the scrutiny and approval process as well as any legislative change consulted on by Scottish Government.
4. There is a fair amount of flexibility in the plan. This is necessary as it cannot be predicted with any certainty how many local inquiries will be required nor how many rounds of consultation bearing in mind that, unlike reviews of electoral arrangements, any changes to recommendations must be consulted upon. This means there may be several overlapping periods where the Commission can consider revisions to areas where local inquiries are not being held at the same time as holding local inquiries in others.
5. Legal advice is awaited which will help clarify whether virtual/hybrid inquiries may be held. This would allow a quicker process than that set out in the plan.
6. The project plan does not cover any reviews of electoral arrangements that may be conducted before the 2027 local government elections. The Commission will need to decide its approach to future local government reviews in sufficient time to ensure resources are in place. At present there is no requirement to complete any reviews before the next elections but if there are to be any they would need to be submitted to Scottish Ministers by May 2026 and so commence before the end of the Scottish Parliament review.
7. Flexibility is also required to ensure the Secretariat can support the Boundary Commission for Scotland as it completes the 2023 review of Westminster constituencies in June 2023. The final consultation period for that review will take place this summer/autumn and last for 4 weeks. After that, final recommendations will need to be agreed and the report prepared for submission to the Speaker of the House of Commons.
8. With regard to resources, the Secretariat is in discussion with the Elections Team about finalising the corporate plan for 2022-25. There is considerable pressure on the middle year, 2023-24, in particular and officials have asked for re-examination of the budget required. Any steps that can be taken to reduce the

required budget by either bringing forward or putting back expenditure into years 1 or years 3 will help spread the costs of the review more evenly.

Conclusion

9. The Commission is invited to note and make any comments on this paper. The Secretariat will continue to develop the plan and incorporate the specific sub-tasks required to support the headline tasks.

**Secretariat
April 2022**