

**Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries
Further Proposals for Constituencies and Provisional Proposals for Regions
Consultation
Request for Local Inquiry**

For decision

1. The consultation on Further Proposals for constituencies and Provisional Proposals for regions closes on 26 October 2024. Commissioners will be provided with all the responses and accompanying analysis at the 4 November 2024 meeting. Prior to this it would assist the Secretariat if Commissioners could consider this paper and provide formal approval for a local inquiry to be held in West Lothian.

Background

2. The Scotland Act 1998 out sets out the rules for when a local inquiry must be held – see Appendix A.
3. For constituencies, the Commission must hold a local inquiry during a consultation on constituency boundaries if “*relevant representations objecting to a proposed recommendation*” are received either from (1) a council for an area which is wholly or partly comprised in the constituency, or (2) a body of not less than 100 electors for the affected constituency.
4. For regions, the test set out in the Act is for a local inquiry to be held if a council objects or a body of not less than 500 electors.

Council Responses

5. West Lothian Council has objected to both the Further Proposals for constituencies and the Provisional Proposals for regions and has requested a local inquiry – see Appendix B. The trigger for holding a local inquiry has therefore been met.
6. The issues raised by West Lothian Council were:
 - Placing Whitburn and Fauldhouse in the Airdrie constituency disregards the boundaries of West Lothian Council and strong existing local ties.
 - Similar proposals were made in the first review and the position remains the same regarding lack of links with Lanarkshire.
 - The previous proposals in this review were more cognizant of local links than the current proposal for Airdrie.
 - Rule 3 should be applied to allow a departure from a strict interpretation of rule 2.
 - West Lothian has closer links with the wider Lothian region than communities to the West and should remain in the Lothian region.
7. Local inquiries have been held in Edinburgh relating to Edinburgh Forth and Linlithgow (at the Provisional Proposal stage) and in Falkirk (at the Revised Proposal stage). Neither of these local inquiries related to the Airdrie or Almond Valley constituencies but were connected to the electorate growth in West Lothian. West Lothian Council did not provide comments on previous consultations.
8. At this stage, we have not received objections from any other Councils or a group of 100 (constituencies) or 500 (regions) though this may change. Any decision made

at this stage does not preclude the Commission from agreeing to hold further local inquiries after considering all of the consultation responses.

Decision

9. The Secretariat invites the Commission to provide formal approval for a local inquiry to be held in West Lothian. This will allow the Secretariat to arrange for a Sheriff Principal to be appointed as Assistant Commissioner and set a date for the local inquiry. It is proposed that one local inquiry (with two sessions) will be held to allow the public to raise concerns with the Further Proposals for constituencies (Airdrie/Almond Valley) and the Provisional Proposals for regions (Lothian/Central Scotland).

10. The Secretariat will fully analyse all responses received during the public consultation and present analysis to the Commission at a later meeting. It is open to the Commission to agree to hold further local inquiries once it has conducted further analysis of all responses.

**Secretariat
November 2024**

Extract from the Scotland Act 1998 (as amended)

Local inquiries

- 6 (1) Boundaries Scotland may if it thinks fit cause a local inquiry to be held in respect of any constituency or constituencies.
- (2) If Boundaries Scotland receive any relevant representations objecting to a proposed recommendation for the alteration of a constituency it must not make the recommendation unless since the publication of the notice under paragraph 7(2) a local inquiry has been held in respect of the constituency.
- (3) If a local inquiry was held in respect of the constituency before the publication of the notice under paragraph 7(2), sub-paragraph (2) above does not apply if Boundaries Scotland after considering—
- (a) the matters discussed at the inquiry,
 - (b) the nature of the relevant representations received, and
 - (c) any other relevant circumstances,
- think that a further local inquiry is not justified.
- (4) A relevant representation is a representation made in accordance with paragraph 7(2)(b)—
- (a) by the council for an area which is wholly or partly comprised in the constituency;
 - (b) by a body of not less than 100 persons entitled to vote as electors at an election for membership of the Parliament held in the constituency.

- 7 (1) Boundaries Scotland may if it thinks fit cause a local inquiry to be held in respect of any region or regions.
- (2) If Boundaries Scotland receive any relevant representations objecting to a proposed recommendation for the alteration of a region it must not make the recommendation unless since the publication of the notice under paragraph 7(2) a local inquiry has been held in respect of the region.
- (3) If a local inquiry was held in respect of the region before the publication of the notice under paragraph 7(2), sub-paragraph (2) above does not apply if Boundaries Scotland after considering—
- (a) the matters discussed at the inquiry,
 - (b) the nature of the relevant representations received, and
 - (c) any other relevant circumstances,
- think that a further local inquiry is not justified.
- (4) A relevant representation is a representation made in accordance with paragraph 7(2)(b)—
- (a) by the council for an area which is wholly or partly included in the region;
 - (b) by a body of not less than 500 persons entitled to vote as electors at an election for membership of the Parliament held in any one or more of the constituencies included in the region.