

## **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries Additional Proposals for Constituencies and Revised Proposals for regions Consultation**

### **For decision**

1. The Commission is invited to consider an overview of responses received during the consultation on its Additional Proposals for constituencies and Revised Proposals for regions and decide if any local inquiries should be held.
2. The consultation ran for the statutory one-month period, from 24 January to 24 February 2025.
3. The Scotland Act 1998 (Appendix A) states the Commission must hold a local inquiry during a consultation on boundaries if “*relevant representations objecting to a proposed recommendation*” are received either from (i) 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. For regions, the body must be of not less than 500 electors.
4. The Commission has agreed to hold nine local inquiries so far. Details are provided in Appendix B.
5. Full analysis of all responses will be discussed in later meeting papers. The Commission is asked to decide, at this stage, whether any further local inquiries should be held.

### **Council Responses**

6. Objections have been received from West Lothian, Falkirk and South Lanarkshire Council.

### **West Lothian Council**

7. West Lothian Council has objected to the Additional Proposals for Bathgate and Falkirk East and Linlithgow constituencies. West Lothian’s Council submission is attached as Appendix C and summarised as follows:
  - The proposal conflicts with Rule 1 as West Lothian Council area will be split by placing Linlithgow in a constituency with part of Falkirk Council area.
  - The placing of Linlithgow in a Falkirk East and Linlithgow constituency conflicts with Rule 4. It disregards the local identity of Linlithgow, longstanding ties with the rest of West Lothian and there is potential for voter confusion.
  - The Commission is requested to apply Rules 3 and 4 to depart from the strict application of Rule 2.
  - Previous submissions at the Further Proposal stage are referred to that asked to maintain the status quo by retaining two constituencies wholly within West Lothian Council. An alternative suggestion is provided for a Linlithgow and Bathgate and Almond Valley constituency.
  - Provides an alternative if the Commission is unwilling to depart from Rule 2 (electoral quota). This alternative places Polbeth in the Almond Valley rather than Bathgate constituency.

8. West Lothian Council also stated that its position remains the same for the Revised Proposals for regions as it was for the Provisional Proposals for regions. West Lothian Council's position was that the West Lothian constituencies should remain in a Lothian remain in a Lothian region.
9. West Lothian Council did not make a submission in relation to the Provisional Proposals (requested an extension but advised they did not want to submit a response) or Revised Proposals for constituencies. The Whitburn Local Inquiry was held in response to West Lothian Council's objection at the Further Proposals stage.
10. As set out in Appendix B, relevant local inquiries have been held in Edinburgh (Provisional Proposals: Edinburgh Forth and Linlithgow), Falkirk (Revised Proposals: Falkirk North, Linlithgow and Falkirk South, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) and Whitburn (Further Proposals: Airdrie).

### **Falkirk Council**

11. Falkirk Council has objected to the Additional Proposals for Falkirk West and Falkirk East and Linlithgow constituencies. Falkirk's Council submission is attached as Appendix D and summarised as follows: -
  - The current constituencies should be retained to give best effect to rules 1 and 2.
  - The Additional Proposals result in constituencies 12.4% and 14.9% above quota which results in a significant dilution of the vote for Falkirk voters.
  - Proposed changes will result in inconvenience from the perspective of electoral administration.
  - Refers to a single or conjoined local inquiry.
  - Raises general concern about 10 constituencies in the proposed Central and Lothians West region.
12. A local inquiry was held in Falkirk on 22 August 2024 in response to Falkirk Council's objection to the Revised Proposals.

### **South Lanarkshire Council**

13. South Lanarkshire Council has objected to the Revised Proposals for Glasgow region. South Lanarkshire's submission is attached as Appendix E and summarised as follows:
  - East Kilbride should not be a part of a Glasgow region.
  - East Kilbride has strong historical and local ties with the Lanarkshire area not Glasgow.
  - Placing East Kilbride in a Glasgow region would confuse voters and they would not be as well served by Glasgow regions MSPs.
  - Suggestion that Eastwood would be a better fit for the Glasgow region.
  - East Kilbride should be in the same region as Hamilton, Larkhill and Stonehouse. Both Central Scotland and Lothian West and South Scotland would be preferable regions for the South Lanarkshire constituencies.
  - Supports proposals for South Lanarkshire's constituencies.
14. This is the first objection from South Lanarkshire Council. A local inquiry was held in Paisley regarding the Glasgow region in response to Renfrewshire Council's objection.

### **Other Responses**

15. There were 26 responses received relating to the Additional Proposals for constituencies and 22 responses relating to the Revised Proposals for regions. Of these, 12 related specifically to the proposed constituencies in West Lothian, 2 to the proposed Falkirk constituencies and 10 to the proposed Glasgow region.
16. Responses were received from the following organisations: Falkirk East Constituency Labour Party, Scottish Conservatives, Almond Valley SNP Constituency Association, Linlithgow Constituency Association SNP, Hamilton, Larkhill and Stonehouse Labour Party, Springburn Community Council, Polbeth Community Council and Polbeth Community Hub. Some of these organisations may meet the *body of not less than 100 persons*" (or 500 persons for regions) required to amount to a relevant representation.

### Summary

17. West Lothian Council and Falkirk Council objected to the Additional Proposals for constituencies. South Lanarkshire Council objected to the Revised Proposals for regions. All these objections amount to a "relevant representation" in terms of the rules as may some of the responses from organisations. West Lothian and South Lanarkshire Councils did not specifically request a local inquiry (the rules do not require this) but Falkirk Council did.
18. The Commission has the discretion to decide not to hold a local inquiry if "*a local inquiry was held in respect of the constituency before the publication of the notice*". As set out in the legislation, before exercising its discretion the Commission should consider (a) the matters discussed at the inquiry (b) the nature of the relevant representations received and (c) any other relevant circumstances. After considering these factors, the Commission is required to decide whether a further local inquiry is not justified. This same test applies to regions (see section 10(3)).
19. The Commission may recall that it exercised this discretion in relation to East Lothian Council's objection to the Revised Proposals – see minutes of 19 June 2024 meeting. Also, for the Edinburgh North East and Leith constituency, a local inquiry was not held as the Commission agreed there was an obvious fix.
20. The Commission is asked to reach a view on whether it considers a local inquiry has already been held in respect of the constituencies. A local inquiry has been held regarding Edinburgh Forth and Linlithgow (Provisional), Falkirk North and Linlithgow and Falkirk South (Revised) constituencies. A local inquiry has also been held in Whitburn regarding the Airdrie (Further) constituency and this was attended by residents from Whitburn and Fauldhouse. A local inquiry has not been held in relation to the Bathgate constituency.
21. The local inquiries held in Edinburgh, Falkirk and Whitburn all related to concerns about proposed constituency boundaries in this area conflicting with Rule 1 (Edinburgh/West Lothian, Falkirk/West Lothian and North Lanarkshire/West Lothian split) and Rule 4, breaking of local ties.
22. For regions, a local inquiry has been held in Paisley in response to Renfrewshire Council's objection. This local inquiry was attended by Renfrewshire Council and East Renfrewshire Council. Both Councils objected to the potential for voters from their Council area being included in a Glasgow region which is also the main concern of South Lanarkshire Council.

23. If the Commission is satisfied that a local inquiry has already been held in respect of the constituencies/region the next step, as set out in sections (9)(3) and 10(3) of the Schedule, is for the Commission to consider the matters discussed at the local inquiry, the nature of the representations received and other relevant circumstances. Copies of the transcripts and Assistant Commissioners' report are available on Boundaries Scotland's website at <https://boundaries.scot/reviews/second-review-scottish-parliament-boundaries>

## **Decision**

24. The Secretariat invites the Commission to consider: -

- whether to hold a local inquiry regarding Falkirk West, Falkirk East and Linlithgow and Bathgate constituencies in response to West Lothian and Falkirk Council's further objections;
- whether to hold a local inquiry regarding Glasgow region in response to South Lanarkshire Council's first objection.
- whether it wishes to exercise its general discretion to hold a local inquiry in any of the regions/constituencies "if it thinks fit".

25. When making the above decision, the Commission is asked to note the 1 May 2025 deadline for submitting the Final Recommendations and the statutory requirement for a one-month consultation period.

**Secretariat**  
**February 2025**

**Extract from the Scotland Act 1998 (as amended)**

*Local inquiries*

- 9 (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.

10 (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.

**Appendix B: Local Inquiries**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Assistant Commissioner</b>	<b>Proposed constituencies or regions</b>	<b>Reason for Local Inquiry</b>
7 December 2023	Musselburgh Racecourse	Sheriff Principal Ross	East Lothian; and Midlothian North and Musselburgh	East Lothian Council objected.
12 December 2023	The Park Hotel, Kilmarnock	Sheriff Principal Murphy	Cunninghame South; Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley	East Ayrshire Council objected.
13 December 2023	Clydebank Leisure Centre	Sheriff Principal Murphy	Bearsden, Milngavie and Clydebank North; and Dumbarton and Helensburgh	Large number of responses opposing the proposed constituencies.
14 December 2023	Afternoon session - Lynnhurst Hotel, Johnstone Evening session - Parklands Hotel & Country Club, Newton Mearns	Sheriff Principal Murphy	Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock; Paisley and Renfrew; Renfrewshire South; Renfrewshire West	Renfrewshire Council objected and a large number of responses opposing the proposed constituencies.
9 January 2024	Village Hotel Club, Edinburgh	Sheriff Principal Ross	Edinburgh Forth and Linlithgow	Large number of responses opposing the proposed constituency.
11 January 2024	Peebles Hydro	Sheriff Principal Ross	Clyde Valley and Tweeddale	Scottish Borders Council objected and large number of responses opposing the proposed constituency.
<b>Local Inquiry - Revised Proposals - Constituencies consultation</b>				
22 August 2024	Falkirk Stadium	Sheriff Principal Wade	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth; Falkirk North; and Linlithgow and Falkirk South	Falkirk Council objected.
<b>Local Inquiries - Further Proposals - Constituencies and Region consultation</b>				
28 November 2024	Courtyard Glasgow Airport Hotel	Sheriff Principal Murphy	Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald; Renfrewshire West Constituencies West Scotland Region and Glasgow Region	Renfrewshire Council objected
3 December 2024	Whitburn Partnership Centre	Sheriff Principal Ross	Airdrie Constituency Central Region and Lothian Region	West Lothian Council objected