

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries Local Inquiry Attendee Survey

Action required

1. The Commission is invited to consider responses to a survey which looked to gauge the attendees' experience of participating in the local inquiries held in Musselburgh, Kilmarnock, Clydebank, Johnstone, Newton Mearns, Edinburgh and Peebles in December 2023 and January 2024.
2. The feedback will be used to inform future local inquiries which may be held later in this review.

Survey questions

3. The Secretariat designed a short 12 question survey which was sent to consenting individuals who had attended the local inquiries. The survey asked questions that looked to gauge public opinion of:
 - satisfaction with the publicity prior to the inquiries;
 - process on the day; and
 - an individual's willingness to take part in further consultation on the process.
4. There was also a final free-form text box for written comments and suggestions.
5. The survey questions and responses are summarised below:

Before the Local Inquiry, I was satisfied with the way arrangements for the Local Inquiry were communicated (details about location, timing)

Option	Total	Percent
agree strongly	4	13.33%
agree	17	56.67%
neither agree nor disagree	2	6.67%
disagree	5	16.67%
disagree strongly	1	3.33%
Not Answered	1	3.33%

Before the Local Inquiry, I understood how I would be able to participate

Option	Total	Percent
agree strongly	5	16.67%
agree	20	66.67%
neither agree nor disagree	2	6.67%
disagree	2	6.67%
disagree strongly	0	0.00%
Not Answered	1	3.33%

During the Local Inquiry, I felt I had a good opportunity to express my views

Option	Total	Percent
agree strongly	21	70.00%
agree	6	20.00%
neither agree nor disagree	1	3.33%

disagree	0	0.00%
disagree strongly	0	0.00%
Not Answered	2	6.67%

During the Local Inquiry, I felt the Assistant Commissioner listened to my views

Option	Total	Percent
agree strongly	12	40.00%
agree	12	40.00%
neither agree nor disagree	4	13.33%
disagree	0	0.00%
disagree strongly	0	0.00%
Not Answered	2	6.67%

Overall, I feel the Local Inquiry provided a useful opportunity to identify possible improvements to existing proposals

Option	Total	Percent
agree strongly	11	36.67%
agree	15	50.00%
neither agree nor disagree	3	10.00%
disagree	0	0.00%
disagree strongly	0	0.00%
Not Answered	1	3.33%

Overall, I feel I understand the different rules that Boundaries Scotland has to apply when creating electoral constituencies

Option	Total	Percent
agree strongly	12	40.00%
agree	15	50.00%
neither agree nor disagree	2	6.67%
disagree	0	0.00%
disagree strongly	0	0.00%
Not Answered	1	3.33%

Overall, I am confident that the information gathered in the Local Inquiry will be used by Boundaries Scotland to improve boundary proposals in my area

Option	Total	Percent
agree strongly	4	13.33%
agree	12	40.00%
neither agree nor disagree	13	43.33%
disagree	0	0.00%
disagree strongly	0	0.00%
Not Answered	1	3.33%

Is there anything else about your experience with our Local Inquiries that you would like to tell us about? There were 19 responses to this part of the question and the response are organised in the table in Appendix A below, organised by Local Inquiry.

Would you be willing to participate in any further research into the boundary review process?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes - please feel free to contact me in future	24	80.00%
No - I do not wish to participate	5	16.67%
Not Answered	1	3.33%

Summary

6. Questions that received negative feedback were “before the Local Inquiry, I was satisfied with the way arrangements for the Local Inquiry were communicated (details about location, timing)” and “before the Inquiry I understood how I would participate”.
7. In the future the Commission could consider increasing its advertising budget for Local Inquiries. For each inquiry a news releases was sent to all local newspapers, Councils, MSPs, MPs, political parties, local community councils etc. Facebook adverts, newspaper adverts, social media and display points were also used.
8. Approximately 20 individuals attended each local inquiry. During the Boundary Commission for Scotland’s 2023 Review, it held five Public Hearings, which were attended by between 1 and 10 individuals at each hearing.
9. The Local Inquiry news item published on the Boundaries Scotland homepage received over 2,500 views last month. Usually the most visited website pages receive between 500- 1,000 views per month.
10. When publicising future local inquiries, the Commission could include further information on the process of the local inquiry such as the possibility participants may be asked further questions or provide further explanation to the Assistant Commissioner or audience.
11. To the statement “Overall, I am confident that the information gathered in the Local Inquiry will be used by Boundaries Scotland to improve boundary proposals in my area” received 13 responses which neither agreed nor disagreed.
12. In the future the Commission could draft news releases or materials which state the revised proposals were influenced by suggestions made at local inquiries.

Conclusion

13. The Commission is invited to consider responses to the survey and how it may wish to publicise and conduct any future local inquiries.

Secretariat
February 2024

Question: Is there anything else about your experience with our Local Inquiries that you would like to tell us about?

Musselburgh	It would have been helpful to know in advance the process to be followed at the inquiry and an agenda of the meeting.
Musselburgh	I think it would be a useful addition to the process if those who participated in hearings had a mechanism to submit further comments following them. I think I understand more clearly where Norman Hampshire and Ian Gray were coming from, and am going to reflect on everything that was said, and write, without knowing whether the commissioners will attach any weight to further reflections. Other participants might want to do the same, and it seems a bit of a gap in the process that interested parties are invited to reflect on, and make representations about, the Initial Proposals but not about what has come up in the inquiries. I appreciate that there would be no value in re-hashed arguments, but some post-inquiry reflections might be of value when commissioners come to consider revised proposals. I don't think that this would be contrary to any of the legislation, and I think a tight timescale could be prescribed so as to avoid delaying the entire process unduly. It could be as simple as a concluding invitation from the chair that, if anyone feels later that they have something they think could be added, they should write to the Secretary.
Musselburgh	Not convinced that Musselburgh Racetrack was necessarily the best venue for such an event. Signage showing way to hearing room was difficult to see at night. Perhaps it looked clearer during the day?
Musselburgh	I feel like it could have been better communicated to the public when, why and what was happening as I had several constituents say they would have come along if they knew when it was on and that they were allowed to be there. It was quite difficult to find out information about it.
Kilmarnock	I was not there to present the views of the Council but just to observe
Kilmarnock	Not sure how we can do this but we really need to find ways to reach more of the general Public and have them engage in the process.
Clydebank	No
Clydebank	Satisfied overall
Clydebank	Local Inquiry arrangements satisfactory it would have been useful to know about cookies before I completed the form. Second time lucky, I hope
Clydebank	The sound system could have been improved as a number of people had difficulty in hearing the speakers. The maps that were provided excluded most of the Lomond North Ward area in Argyll & Bute that was the focus of the points that I wished to raise. It appeared that West Dunbartonshire and the constituencies to the east were of a higher priority than the parts of Argyll & Bute that could be affected by the proposed changes.
Johnstone	As this was the first time I had taken part in an event such as the Boundaries Scotland - Johnstone and Newton Mearns Local Inquiry, I have to say that the meeting was chaired extremely well by Sheriff Principal Murphy. At no time did I feel as a member of the community that I was not being listened to because of the mood he set for the proceedings.

	<p>I found this a positive experience and will report back to the members of Johnstone Community Council not only the points being made by the participants, but that the experience as a whole was a good one where as a member of the public I never felt at any time that I was either not being listened to, or having lip service paid to the views I voiced.</p> <p>Due to this having been a very positive experience I would certainly advise anyone that I know who gets the opportunity to take part in such an event in the future to do so.</p>
Johnstone	<p>These could be more widely or better advertised. I am sure that many members of the public may still be completely unaware of the proposed changes. Mind you I have to agree that there is a considerable degree of public apathy because no Government nor Local Authority in Scotland is functioning properly or working to maintain let alone improve public services.</p>
Johnstone	<p>Whilst I had not really appreciated the formalities of the event, I felt it was welcoming, inclusive and transparent.</p> <p>I would be better prepared in the future and welcomed the opportunity to participate.</p>
Newton Mearns	<p>I do not think that many people locally knew anything about the inquiry. I haven't spoken to a single soul who thinks the proposals have any local merit.</p> <p>One of the audience members raised the issue of publicity and I think the BC need to accept on this. If people had known about it there would have been many more attendees.</p>
Newton Mearns	<p>It was raised at the meeting in Parklands that more advance publicity for the meeting should have been made available. Perhaps the Council in conjunction with the Boundary Commission should have advertised the event more than it did.</p> <p>The meeting was well managed and the Sheriff was polite and considerate to all those who wanted to speak.</p>
Edinburgh	<p>It appeared that the Scotland wide responses from both the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives had not been tagged in your website with the names of all constituencies referred to. This meant that the SNP representatives had not found both responses in advance of the hearing.</p>
Edinburgh	<p>I was a bit surprised that members of the audience were given the opportunity to question those making oral submissions. I had expected members of the panel to ask questions, and although I had no problem answering any questions from the public and welcomed the opportunity to further make my case, it wasn't something I had prepared for.</p>
Peebles	<p>I had no idea that I would be questioned by others in attendance including senior parliamentarians and staff of a political party. In fact, the council's legal officer had advised that would not be the case. I felt the questioning was very political/politically motivated when it should not have been.</p> <p>One speaker talked at length about other boundaries and the one we were there to discuss was barely mentioned and I was surprised this was allowed.</p>
Peebles	<p>It was a little disappointing to hear other participants outlining detailed alternative plans for other constituencies rather than the proposals covered by the inquiry.</p>

