



Annual Report

2023-24

www.boundaries.scot

This report covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Copies are available from our website (www.boundaries.scot), or by request from our Secretariat.

Chair's foreword

I am very pleased to welcome Simon Jones as the new Deputy Chair and a new Commissioner, Alison McNab to Boundaries Scotland. I am also grateful to Dr Susan Walker OBE who accepted an appointment as interim Deputy Chair until December 2023. Boundaries Scotland continued to benefit from Dr Walker's depth of knowledge and experience during a period of transition as both Roland Bean and Jon Collins completed their terms in May 2023. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Walker for her commitment and valuable insight during her time as Deputy Chair and Commissioner and also extend my thanks to Roland Bean and Jon Collins.

The focus of our work for 2023/24 has been the Second Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries. During this reporting period, we held a public consultation on the Provisional Proposals for constituencies, analysed the responses received and held six local inquiries. Boundaries Scotland values all consultation responses received and recognises how important engaging directly with the public is. There will be further opportunity for the public to comment on our work when we consult further before we submit our final recommendations.

During 2023/24 we have continued to engage with Scottish Government on the Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Bill. We presented evidence at the Scottish Parliament's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee and put forward our view that an automatic approval process is key to ensuring the boundary setting process is free from political interference.

Another highlight during 2023/24 was co-hosting, alongside Boundary Commission for Scotland, the annual meeting of UK Boundary Commissions in Edinburgh. This event was attended by colleagues from the UK commissions, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Scottish Government. Our guest speaker was George Adam MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Parliamentary Affairs. I attended in my capacity as Chair and Dr Walker attended in her capacity as Commissioner for Boundary Commission for Scotland. Gordon Macmillan, Martin Smith and Alan Stewart also attended this successful event which provided the opportunity for the UK Commissions to share their learning.

For 2024/25 Boundaries Scotland looks forward to progressing the Second Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries and submitting the final recommendations before the 1 May 2025 deadline. We will also continue to work with the Scottish Government on fulfilling its commitment to implementing automaticity.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Isabel Drummond-Murray for her commitment to the work of Boundaries Scotland over her 10+ years as Secretary and wish her well in retirement. I also pass on my gratitude to Colin Wilson for acting as Interim Secretary during the time taken to recruit the new Secretary, Kirsty Mavor who I would like to welcome to Boundaries Scotland.

Ailsa Henderson
Chair, Boundaries Scotland
September 2024

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Boundaries Scotland

1.1 Background

Boundaries Scotland is responsible for:

- reviews of local authority areas in Scotland;
- reviews of electoral arrangements for local authorities; and
- reviews of Scottish Parliament constituency and regional boundaries.

Our duties and powers pertaining to local authority areas and electoral arrangements for local authorities are detailed in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 Act (the 1973 Act).

Our duties and powers pertaining to the Scottish Parliament are detailed in the Scotland Act 1998.

We are an advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored and funded by the Scottish Government. We are an independent and non-political body.

1.2 Membership

The 1973 Act specifies that our membership comprises a Chair, Deputy Chair and up to four further Commissioners.

Members are appointed on a fixed-term basis and posts are filled through open competition using the procedures laid down by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life. Appointments are made by Scottish Ministers.

Chair

Professor Ailsa Henderson was appointed Chair from 1 June 2023 until 31 May 2027.

Deputy Chair

Simon Jones was appointed Deputy Chair from 1 February 2024 until 31 January 2028. Prior to this appointment, Dr Susan Walker OBE was the interim Deputy Chair from 1 June 2023 until 31 December 2023 and Professor Ailsa Henderson was Deputy Chair from 1 December 2017 until 31 May 2023.

Commissioners

Boundaries Scotland can have up to four Commissioners in addition to the Chair and Deputy Chair. During 2023-24 the following Commissioners were in post:

Dr Susan Walker OBE was a Commissioner from 1 November 2013 until 31 May 2023 when she was appointed interim Deputy Chair. Roland Bean and Jonathan Collins also completed their terms as Commissioners in May 2023.

Gordon Macmillan was appointed from 19 November 2018 and reappointed for a second four-year term from 19 November 2022 until 18 November 2026.

Alan Stewart and Martin Smith were both appointed from 1 June 2023 until 31 May 2027.

Alison McNab was appointed from 1 February 2024 until 31 January 2028.

1.3 Code of Conduct

We have a Code of Conduct issued by Scottish Ministers with approval of the Scottish Parliament, as required by the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000. The Code of Conduct is available on our website.

1.4 Register of Commissioners' Interests

We maintain a Register of Interests of Commissioners which is reviewed annually and is available on our website.

2 Secretariat

We are supported by a small Secretariat. Schedule 4 to the 1973 Act provides that Scottish Ministers may appoint a Secretary to the Commission, after consultation with Boundaries Scotland. The Secretary, who is the Secretariat's senior officer, is normally a civil servant assigned from the Scottish Government. The previous Secretary, Isabel Drummond-Murray retired in 2023 (having been in post since 2014) and the new Secretary, Kirsty Mavor joined in April 2024.

The work of the Secretariat includes:

- facilitating boundary reviews;
- dealing with the everyday administrative matters relating to our business such as finance, purchasing and accommodation;
- liaising with other UK Boundary Commissions and government departments with an interest in boundary matters;
- maintaining contact with Ordnance Survey and other relevant bodies on boundary related issues;
- maintaining links with organisations involved with electoral matters;
- improving and extending published information explaining our work;
- responding to correspondence on our work and local government boundary issues;
- providing on-going training as appropriate to meet staff and review requirements; and
- continuing to meet all financial and other requirements of our Financial Memorandum and other key sponsorship documents.

The Secretariat is accommodated in Thistle House in central Edinburgh. Staff of the Secretariat are assigned from the Scottish Government. The number of staff assigned is dependent on the volume of review activity and the need to develop, maintain and update information systems, respond to enquiries and undertake other work in support of Boundaries Scotland's activities. During the year 2023-24, the proportion of Secretariat staff costs assigned to support Boundaries Scotland was as follows:

Post	Full-time equivalent
Secretary	0.5
Review Manager	0.5
Deputy Review Manager	0.5
Review Officer	0.5
Finance and Governance Officer	0.5
IT and Database Manager	0.19
General Office Manager	0.5
Total	3.19

Staff members' time is allocated between support for Boundaries Scotland and for the Boundary Commission for Scotland which is responsible for reviewing constituencies for the United Kingdom Parliament. The Secretariat is funded separately by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland for that work.

3 Review activity

3.1 Meetings

The Commission met eight times during 2023-2024. Minutes of meetings and copies of our discussion papers are published on our website on a phased basis at appropriate stages during our reviews.

3.2 Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries

On 1 September 2022 we started the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Constituencies and Regions. We used 1 September electorate data to prepare Provisional Proposals for constituencies with public consultation commencing on 17 May 2023. We considered representations made on the Provisional Proposals and held six local inquiries over December 2023 - January 2024. Our Revised Proposals were published for consultation on 16 April 2024.

Work will continue on the proposals for constituencies and regions with further consultation to take place in Autumn 2024.

The statutory deadline for the completion of the Review is 1 May 2025.

3.3 Administrative Area reviews

We did not undertake any administrative reviews in 2023-24.

3.4 Electoral reviews

We did not undertake any reviews or interim reviews of electoral arrangements in 2023-24.

4 Other activities

4.1 Staffing and training

Training has continued to meet staff and review requirements and mandatory Scottish Government training, such as data protection training has been completed.

4.2 Liaison with others

Other UK Boundary Commissions

On 7-8 December 2023, we co-hosted and participated in the annual UK Boundary Commissions' meeting held in Edinburgh. At the meeting we shared experiences and ideas with the other UK parliamentary commissions as well as those responsible for local government arrangements across the UK.

Sponsor Department

We continue to have regular contact and dialogue with the Elections and FOI Division within the Scottish Government who are our sponsor department. A representative of the sponsor department was on the panel for the recruitment of the Secretary as well as the recently appointed Commissioner and Chair.

Ordnance Survey

The Secretariat continues to work with Ordnance Survey to ensure that we have access to the optimum set of mapping data products to support our work, and that we receive technical advice on the deployment of those products.

National Records of Scotland

The Secretariat liaises regularly with staff of the National Records of Scotland on shared interests concerning geographic information and electoral statistics.

Other organisations

The Secretariat maintains and develops contacts with the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Scottish Assessors' Association, Electoral Management Board, and the Electoral Commission. This has been through attendance at meetings of the Scotland and Northern Ireland Branch of the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Electoral Commission's Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel in Scotland, and written correspondence.

5 Governance

Our Governance documents are available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request. Please see: www.boundaries.scot/corporate-documents

5.1 Legislation

Our local government work is governed by the 1973 Act, specifically sections 12 to 28 and Schedules 4 and 6. The number of councillors in each local authority electoral ward is governed by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2004.

Our reviews of Scottish Parliament constituencies and regions are governed by the Scotland Act 1998 as amended in 2016, and by the Elections (Reform) Scotland Act 2020, which changed the latest date by which we must submit the next review report from 1 May 2022 to 1 May 2025.

The legislation can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk.

5.2 Directions from Ministers

Under the 1973 Act, Scottish Ministers can direct us on what reviews of local government area boundaries we should or should not undertake.

A Direction is currently in force for us not to undertake Scotland-wide reviews under section 14(1) of the 1973 Act in the period to 31 July 2027.

A Direction is currently in force for us not to undertake administrative reviews under section 14(2) of the Act in the period to 13 October 2028 that would affect more than 500 electors.

5.3 National Performance Framework

Scottish Government intends that public bodies should align the outcomes of their activity with the Government's National Performance Framework and the associated National Outcomes. Our work contributes to the following National Outcomes:

- *We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.*
- *We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.*
- *We value, enjoy and protect and enhance our environment.*

The first and second of these reflect the desired result from successful definition of effective and convenient local government electoral arrangements and Scottish Parliament boundaries, so that as far as possible people's votes have equal weight, and electoral boundaries do not divide communities.

The third reflects the environmental desirability of effective use of resources.

The performance of Boundaries Scotland contributes to national outcomes being achieved.

Further information on the National Performance Framework is available at <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

5.4 Management Statement and Financial Memorandum

We have a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum agreed with the Scottish Government. The Management Statement sets out the broad framework within which we operate, while the Financial Memorandum sets out certain aspects of the financial framework in greater detail. Both are in the process of being reviewed and replaced with a new Framework Document based on the Model Framework issued by Scottish Government.

5.5 Data protection

We handle personal information in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All staff have completed annual mandatory training in data protection.

We have a Privacy Policy for handling any personal information contained in representations made during public consultations on our proposals.

5.6 Freedom of Information

We have adopted the Scottish Information Commissioner's Model Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and published our resulting Guide to Information; these are available from the FOI and Copyright section of our website.

During 2023-2024, the Secretariat responded positively to 11 Freedom of Information enquiries addressed to Boundaries Scotland. No requests for a review of Freedom of Information requests were made. Enquiries are reviewed to assess whether they indicate possible improvements to our procedures or the need for additions to our website.

5.7 Records Management

The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 requires Scottish Public Authorities to produce and submit a records management plan setting out proper arrangements for the management of an authority's public records to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland, for his agreement.

5.8 Risk Management

We have a risk management policy which is available on our website. In line with that policy we maintain a risk register which is reviewed regularly.

5.9 Equality Duty

We are committed to equality and diversity in our work and aware of our responsibilities to meet the statutory public sector equality duty.

Our Equality Statement is available on our website setting out our commitment to equality and diversity.

5.10 Section 7 Duty: Islands (Scotland) Act 2018

We are named as a relevant authority to which the duty imposed by section 7 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 applies. The Commission has prepared an Island Communities Impact Assessment which will be updated throughout the review and then published.

5.11 Reporting requirements

Part 3 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 specifies certain reporting requirements for Scottish public bodies. For ease of reference, we have placed all of the information required in Appendix A.

6 Enquiries and public information

We use our website and social media to inform the public about our work, including answers to Frequently Asked Questions. In addition, the Secretariat responds to requests for information made by email, letter, or phone.

6.1 Website

Our website remains the primary means for us to make information available. We update the website with all the material which we publish. An archive version of our website containing historical material is maintained by the National Records of Scotland, and a link to the archive is available on our website.

<https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20190111180009/http://lgbc-scotland.gov.uk/>

6.2 Maps of Constituencies

In conjunction with Boundary Commission for Scotland, we provide an interactive map browser. The map browser allows anyone with internet access to view maps showing a selection of the current and past electoral boundaries that we have been responsible for on a background of current Ordnance Survey mapping.

We have made downloadable data of past Scottish Parliament constituencies and electoral wards available on the website. These are in shapefile format which is widely used for geographic data.

6.3 Information Papers

We keep up to date our series of Information Papers and Quick Guides which are all available on our website.

6.4 Minutes and meeting papers

We publish the minutes of our meetings on our website periodically.

Our meeting papers since 2017 are available on our website and earlier meeting papers are available on our archive website. Normally, we publish meeting papers once we have concluded our discussions on a particular topic or on completion of a particular stage of a review, and the minutes of the relevant meeting have been agreed. Where the meeting papers include a draft of a document which is later published (such as our Annual Reports and Corporate Plans) we do not normally publish the draft.

7 Expenditure

Our expenditure for the year 2023-24 is set out under broad headings in the table below. After receiving an initial budget allocation from Scottish Government, the Secretariat re-forecasts expenditure during the year, and provides regular updates to the Sponsor Team.

The budget allocation to Boundaries Scotland from Scottish Government in 2023/24 was £437,000. Actual spend is shown in the table below: -

Financial Performance		
April 2023 - March 2024		
	Expenditure	
	Budget (£)	Actual (£)
Staff Costs	195,849	185,287
Commissioners' Fees	35,346	28,932
Accommodation	24,734	31,727
Administration	34,773	25,982
Travel & Subsistence	3,828	1,493
Review Costs	142,470	71,814
Total	437,000	345,235

7.1 Staff salaries

Salary costs are determined by the pay arrangements for our staff, who are employees of the Scottish Government. We share staff with the Boundary Commission for Scotland. Boundary Commission for Scotland's share of the staff salaries is paid for by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland (OSSS).

7.2 Commissioners' fees and expenses

Commissioners' fees and expenses are determined by the Scottish Government and cover attendance at our scheduled meetings and associated preparation and other ad hoc meetings. Expenses reimbursed to Commissioners, such as travel costs, are recorded under this heading. Where such costs were paid in advance by the Secretariat they are recorded under Travel and Subsistence or Review Costs (see below). Commissioners' fees are paid on a daily basis for each meeting. The fee rates during the year 2023-24 were:

- Chair £347 per day
- Deputy Chair £252 per day
- Commissioner £219 per day

The Chair's fee has remained unchanged since August 2007 and the fees for the Deputy Chair and Commissioners have remained unchanged since 2013-14.

7.3 Accommodation

Boundaries Scotland share accommodation with the Boundary Commission for Scotland. The figures shown in the above table in respect of accommodation reflect our share of rent, business rates, utilities and services such as insurance, management fees and office cleaning.

7.4 Administration

Administration costs include IT and website costs, postage, telephony and printing.

The underspend in Administration costs is chiefly due to contingency funds not being required to be spent (for example legal costs).

7.5 Travel and subsistence

Travel and subsistence includes public transport and car-hire costs incurred by the Secretariat and Commissioners during official business which does not relate directly to a review (such costs fall under review costs). Travel and subsistence costs are paid at the same rate that applies to staff of Scottish Government.

7.6 Review costs

Review costs cover those items directly attributable to the conduct of our boundary reviews, such as newspaper advertising, the use of a consultation portal or specialist printing costs, and holding local inquiries, including any associated travel and accommodation costs. The underspend in review costs is mainly due to the timings of the consultations with the second consultation just falling outside this reporting period.

8 Work Programme for 2024-25

Scottish Parliament Review

We will continue our work on the Second Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries holding consultations on our proposals for constituencies and regions and, where appropriate, conducting local inquiries.

During 2024-25, we will hold a consultation on the Revised Proposals for constituencies, listen to the responses we receive including those submitted at local inquiries and then consult on any further changes. We will begin the consultation process for these Further Proposals in Autumn 2024. At the same time, we will consult on our Provisional Proposals for regions.

We will submit our final recommendations by the 1 May 2025 deadline.

Electoral Reform

We will continue to engage with Scottish Government on their work around electoral reform and in fulfilling their commitment to implement automaticity. Boundaries Scotland's operational and strategic planning will take account of developments regarding the implementation of automaticity.

Local government electoral reviews

We have no plans to conduct a review of electoral arrangements in 2024-25.

Administrative area reviews

We will consider any requests for minor reviews of administrative area boundaries of council areas (affecting less than 500 electors) and progress any such reviews we decide to conduct.

Interim reviews

We will consider any requests for an interim review (affecting less than 500 electors) and progress any such reviews we decide to conduct.

Other activity

We will carry out our governance functions throughout the year to ensure that we manage Boundaries Scotland's operations efficiently and cost effectively and meet the requirements of our Management Statement and Financial Memorandum with the Scottish Government.

9 Further information

If you have a query which cannot be answered by this report or our website (www.boundaries.scot) please contact us.

Appendix A – Reporting requirements

Part 3 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (the Act) requires public bodies to publish specified items of information at the end of each financial year. This Appendix provides that information.

Expenditure on named matters

The Act requires us to publish a statement on any expenditure on the following matters.

Expenditure Heading	Expenditure in 2023-24 (£)
Public relations	nil
Overseas travel	nil
Hospitality and entertainment	1,240.61
External consultancy	nil
Special advisers	nil

Note on Public relations/Hospitality and entertainment

During our reviews, we publish our proposals or recommendations through public notices in newspapers or posts, both free and paid-for, and on social media. During 2023/24 we spent £21,750.42 on publicity costs but do not consider that this constitutes public relations expenditure.

Boundaries Scotland shared the costs of hosting the UK Boundary Commission's meeting and paid £1,240.61. If hospitality had not been provided at this event, most attendees would have been entitled to claim subsistence/expenses.

Expenditure in excess of £25,000

The Act requires us to publish details of any payment made during the year in excess of £25,000. There were no such costs.

Remuneration above £150,000

The Act requires us to publish details of any Commissioners or staff remunerated above £150,000 during the year. There were no such individuals.

Sustainable growth

The Act requires us to publish a statement on the steps taken to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of our functions.

We align our work with the Scottish Government's purpose of delivering sustainable growth through identification of the relevant parts of the National Performance Framework to which our work contributes.

Efficiency, economy and effectiveness

The Act requires us to publish a statement on the steps taken to improve efficiency, economy and effectiveness in the exercise of our functions:

The Scottish Government encourages improvement of efficiency, economy and effectiveness through shared services. We participate in shared services through:

- occupation of office accommodation owned and managed by another public sector body;
- a shared Secretariat with the Boundary Commission for Scotland;
- use of Scottish Government framework contracts and electronic purchasing card for purchase of supplies and services.
- Use of Scottish Government IT and HR systems.

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