

## Scottish Parliament: Next review of constituencies

### Background

1. The Commission considered the question of timing of the next Scottish Parliament review at its meetings in 2017. LGBCS Papers 2408, 2416, 2421 and 2426 refer.
2. In September 2017 it agreed its preference was to complete the next review in time for the election expected in 2021. However, in light of the Scottish Government's consultation on electoral reform it subsequently decided not to pursue that option, but to keep the matter under review, noting that the legislation requires the next review to be complete by May 2022.
3. In order to change the May 2022 deadline which is enshrined in the Scotland Act 1998, primary legislation will be required. Legislation following the electoral reform consultation is likely to be introduced to the Scottish Parliament early in 2019 so if the Commission does wish either to ask the Scottish Government to extend that deadline, or support any Scottish Government proposal for extension, then a decision needs to be made soon in order that that primary legislative route can be used to amend the Scotland Act.
4. The Chair of the Commission is due to meet the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary responsible for elections and boundaries in September. The question of review timing is likely to be on the agenda. The head of the SG Elections Team will be attending the meeting on 10 September to give an update on plans following the electoral reform consultation.

### Discussion

5. The 1<sup>st</sup> Scottish Parliament Review ran from July 2007 to May 2010. Assuming a broadly similar timescale of around 35 months would require the next review to start in summer 2019 in order to meet the legislative deadline of May 2022.
6. However, the Commission has considered before whether completion by May 2022 is helpful – because of changes to the scheduling of elections to avoid clashes with UK General elections, that May 2022 date now falls a year after the next Scottish Parliament election in May 2021 and 3 years before the election currently expected in 2025. There remains uncertainty over future decisions about parliamentary term lengths and it is possible that the 2025 election may be put back until 2026.
7. As a general principle, in order to ensure currency of electorate data and so support the rules for constituency design, completing as near to an election as possible while allowing sufficient time for implementation of recommendations is desirable. This points to submission 12 months before the next relevant election. Completing the next review for May 2022 would mean submission of recommendations 3 or 4 years before the next election.
8. If the Commission were to complete the next Scottish Parliament review for May 2024 it would need to start in summer 2021; if the date of the 2025 election is put back to 2026 then the review could commence a year later ie in summer 2022.

### **Review planning**

9. In terms of resource planning, the Commission will be conducting the 6 Islands Reviews between 2018 and 2021. It will also need to complete any interim reviews it deems necessary before 2021 and prepare for the possibility of rolling reviews being introduced to replace the current schedule of reviewing all 32 councils every 8 to 12 years.
10. The Secretariat's work for the Boundary Commission for Scotland remains uncertain – the 2018 Review of UK Parliament constituencies will be submitted on 5 September and an update will be given at the meeting. At present the next UK Review is scheduled to start in early 2021 in order to complete before October 2023 as required under the current legislation.

### **Conclusion**

11. The Commission is invited to further consider its approach to the timing of the 2nd Review of Scottish Parliament constituencies and regions.

**Secretariat  
September 2018**