

## Draft Corporate Plan

1. The Commission is invited to consider the Draft Corporate Plan for the period April 2021 to March 2024 which appears at Appendix A.

### Background

2. The Draft Corporate Plan covers the conclusion of the Islands Reviews in Spring 2021, a significant part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Periodic Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries, which is expected to begin in 2022, and the start of the next set of reviews of local authority electoral arrangements, which are expected to begin in 2023–24. A provisional timetable for these Reviews is at Appendix B.
3. As well as providing for work directly related to Reviews, the Draft Corporate Plan also makes provision for the Commission to undertake strategic seminars, including research and survey work, as well as secure legal advice if needed.
4. The Commission’s Memorandum of Understanding with the Scottish Government requires the Corporate Plan to be submitted by 31 December 2020.

### Discussion

5. Apart from Staff Costs, which are partly outwith the Commission’s control as staff salaries are set by the Scottish Government, Review Costs form the biggest part of the Commission’s expenditure. This section of the paper discusses the reviews the Commission expects to carry out in the period of the Draft Corporate Plan, and the cost assumptions made.

### *Islands Reviews*

6. The Draft Corporate Plan incorporates costs associated with the consultation portal, printing a number of final reports and some miscellaneous costs for Islands Reviews which are expected to be submitted in May 2021. The Draft Corporate plan assumes minimal additional costs if the Commission is asked to reconsider its recommendations by the Scottish Parliament.

### *Scottish Parliament Reviews*

7. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Periodic Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries is due to be submitted to Scottish Ministers by 1 May 2025.
8. The Draft Corporate Plan assumes a timetable based on the timetable of the 1<sup>st</sup> Periodic Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries, carried out by the Boundary Commission for Scotland (BCS) from 2007–10. It budgets on the basis that:
  - the Review will begin in the second half of 2022;
  - the Commission will publish its Provisional Proposals for Constituencies for public consultation around February 2023;
  - the Commission will hold statutory Local Inquiries either at its own hand or in response to representations made to its Provisional Proposals for constituencies in c. August–November 2023;

- the Commission will publish its Revised Proposals for Constituencies and Provisional Proposals for Regions around May 2024, i.e. outwith the time-period of the plan.

### *Public Consultations*

9. Following the passage of the Elections Reform (Scotland) Act in 2020, the Commission is no longer required to place public notices in a newspapers circulating in constituencies affected by the proposals, as in the 1<sup>st</sup> Review. This allows a significant saving as public notices for the Provisional Proposals for Constituencies cost c. £150,000 during the 1<sup>st</sup> Review. The Corporate Plan has allocated £60,000 for publicity, including design costs.

### *Local Inquiries*

10. Local Inquiries are a statutory requirement where the Commission has received one hundred or more objections to proposals which affect a constituency. The Commission can also choose to hold a Local Inquiry.
11. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Review these were chaired by Sheriffs Principal acting as Assistant Commissioners, appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland. In autumn 2008, the Commission held 10 Local Inquiries which covered constituencies in 22 of Scotland's 32 council areas. Some of these Local Inquiries were held over several days (25 days in total), and some were held in multiple locations to make them conveniently accessible to a large number of people.
12. While at the time of writing, during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, it is unclear when public meetings such as Local Inquiries will be able to resume, the Draft Corporate Plan budgets on the basis that they will take place as normal.
13. Due to Local Inquiries being "demand led" to a certain extent, it is difficult to predict with certainty how many will be required and what the costs will be. The Draft Corporate Plan budgets on the basis that a similar number of Local Inquiries will be held as during the 1<sup>st</sup> Review, and will incur similar (inflation-adjusted) costs for verbatim reporters, venue hire and travel and accommodation. The Draft Corporate Plan has allocated £20,000 to publicise the Local Inquiries.
14. The Draft Corporate Plan assumes that the Commission will not undertake any interim reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries prior to the 2nd Periodic Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries discussed above.

### *Future Local Government Reviews*

#### *Reviews of Local Authority Electoral Arrangements*

15. Legislation requires the next set of Reviews of Local Government Electoral Arrangements be completed by May 2028. Following discussion with Scottish Government, the Commission expects that deadline to be changed by primary legislation to 2031. This would enable the Commission to stagger the Reviews so that some of them could be completed in 2026 for use at the local government elections scheduled for May 2027; with the remainder being completed in 2031, for use at the local government elections scheduled for May 2032.

16. Following the timetable of the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews of Local Government Electoral Arrangements (2014–2016), the Draft Corporate Plan assumes that Commission will begin its next Reviews of Local Authority Electoral Arrangements in 2023–24, in order to submit recommendations in 2026 for use in the 2027 elections. A later start may be possible if the Commission chooses, as it did in the Islands Reviews, not to consult on councillor numbers prior to consultation on initial proposals for wards.
17. The Draft Corporate Plan assumes minimal spending on the initial stages of the next set of reviews in 2023–24, other than on a consultation portal.
18. The Draft Corporate Plan assumes that the Commission will not undertake any Interim Reviews of electoral arrangements for local authorities over its period, due to the upcoming 6<sup>th</sup> Reviews of Local Authority Electoral Arrangements discussed above.

*Administrative Reviews of Local Authority Boundaries*

19. The Draft Corporate Plan makes provision for two Administrative Reviews of Local Authority boundaries, with one beginning in 2021–22 and concluding in 2022–23; with a second such review commencing in 2023–24. This is precautionary, and takes into account the recent frequency of such reviews.

**Conclusion**

20. The Commission is invited to provide any comments on the Draft Corporate Plan. Once the plan has been agreed with the Commission and the Sponsor Division within the Scottish Government, it will be placed on the Commission's website.

Secretariat  
December 2020

A final version of our Corporate Plan is available on our website:  
[boundaries.scot/corporate-documents](https://boundaries.scot/corporate-documents)