

Minutes of Meeting held by videolink at 2pm on Monday 6 September 2021

Present

Mr R Hinds, Chair
Prof. A Henderson, Deputy Chair
Mr R Bean
Mr G Macmillan
Dr S Walker

Ms I Drummond-Murray, Secretary
Mr C Wilson
Mr D Campbell

Apologies:

Mr J Collins

Declaration of Interests

1. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of previous meeting

2. The Commission agreed the minutes of its 13 May 2021 meeting without amendment.

Matters arising

3. The Secretary advised that the Commission's name change to Boundaries Scotland came into effect on 14 May 2021.
4. The Secretary advised that she had written to the councillor responsible for submitting multiple responses during the Islands Review public consultation and received no response. The letter had been copied to their Chief Executive. The Commission had earlier written to the Ethical Standards Commission regarding their conduct.
5. The Secretary advised the Commission that the consideration of an Islands Community Impact Assessment Summary with regard to the 2019 Islands Reviews had been completed and a paper published on the Commission's website.

Business Update

6. The Secretary updated the Commission on a meeting she and the Chair had with the Deputy First Minister. Boundaries Scotland now sits within the DFM's portfolio of responsibilities. This is a change from the previous arrangements where the Commission's work was overseen by the Minister for Parliamentary Business, the minister to whom the Scottish Government's sponsor team report.
7. The Secretary advised that work was underway to finalise an updated Memorandum of Understanding or Framework document between the Commission and the Scottish Government. This had been an outstanding action for Scottish Government for some time and the Commission asked the Secretariat to ensure it is completed as a matter of urgency.

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements (Paper BS 001)

8. The Commission gave further consideration to the progress of its 2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements in Argyll and Bute, North Ayrshire, Highland, Orkney

Shetland and Na h-Eileanan an Iar council areas (the “islands reviews”) as they progress through the legislative process.

9. The Commission discussed the Chair and Deputy Chair’s upcoming evidence session with the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee on 21 September 2021. The Commission agreed to monitor the process closely and were encouraged to watch the initial Committee session on 14 September 2021 and provide any comments.

Draft Annual Report 2020-21 (Paper BS 002)

10. The Commission considered Paper BS 002 and agreed the draft Annual Report subject to some minor amendments.

Return to Workplace – Future Meetings – Oral Update

11. The Secretary advised that the Secretariat will continue to follow Scottish Government advice and work from home where possible. The Commission were content with virtual Commission meetings for the foreseeable future. The Commission asked the Secretariat to continue to work within agreed guidelines and to keep the Commission informed as to best practice when arranging meetings.

Appointments (oral update)

12. The Secretary advised that the appointment of the Chair, Dr Walker and Mr Bean had been extended to May 2022. This would allow the Chair and the Commissioners to offer any assistance during the Islands Reviews passage through the Scottish Parliament. The Chair would also be available to assist with recruiting a successor.

Finance Update (Paper BS 003)

13. The Commission considered the latest Finance Update and agreed to remove any forecast expenditure for Research and Strategy; due to the ongoing impact of COVID19 it was unlikely that these monies would be spent in this financial year.

Future meetings (oral update)

14. The Commission provisionally agreed to meet again in October were it deemed necessary to further monitor and discuss the Scottish Parliament’s consideration of the Island Reviews Final Proposals.

Any other business

15. There was no other business.