

**Minutes of Meeting held in person and by videolink at
10:00am on Thursday 9 March 2023**

Present

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

Ms I Drummond-Murray, Secretary
Mr C Wilson
Mr D Campbell
Mrs Y Croll
Mr A Grant

Apologies

1. None

Declaration of Interests

2. The Chair and Deputy Chair declared an interest in Paper BS 39 as they both reside within the council area grouping of City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian Council areas. Dr Walker declared an interest in Paper BS 38 as she resides within the council area grouping of Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas. Mr Collins declared an interest in Paper BS 41 as he resides within the council area grouping of East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas.

Minutes of previous meeting

3. The Commission agreed the minutes of the meeting of 9 February 2023 without amendment.

Matters arising

4. The Secretary advised she had pursued an update from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) regarding their work on customer satisfaction and council size and had shared it with the Commission by email. It had also been published on the LGBCE website.

Business update

5. The Secretary informed the Commission the Boundary Commission for Scotland (BCS) are due to meet on 20 March 2023 to sign off its Final Recommendations for the Westminster review. It must submit its report to the Speaker in June 2023.
6. The Commission were informed that the successful applicant is due to start on 20 March 2023 in the position of Finance and Governance Officer.
7. The Secretary informed the Commission that interviews took place mid-February for a new Chair and new Commissioner(s). The Secretary has been in touch with Scottish Government about induction arrangements for the new Chair and new Commissioners.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries (oral update)

8. The Chair reported that he and the Deputy Chair are planning to attend an event with MSPs hosted by the SPPA (Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments) Committee Convenor, Martin Whitfield MSP, on 29 March 2023. The Chair informed the Commission that the event is open to any Commissioners that wish to attend.
9. The Commission were advised that the Chair and Deputy Chair hope to meet the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament and the Deputy First Minister before the Chair's term in office concludes at the end of May 2023.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Draft Provisional Proposals for Highland Council area (Paper BS 37)

10. At its February 2023 meeting the Commission had considered Paper BS 32 (Draft Provisional Proposals for Highland Council area) but asked the Secretariat to refine the boundaries in Option 1: by Tomatin and an area of the Monadhliath Mountains; and to improve variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to present a Highland-Moray constituency for consideration.
11. The Commission re-considered Option 1 (the existing boundaries) from the earlier paper, an Option 1A which had refined Option 1 and a new Option 2 which linked Highland with Moray.
12. The Commission felt Option 1A offered an improved boundary while improving variation from electoral quota but asked the Secretariat to refine the boundaries in Option 1A at Speyside by Carrbridge following the A9 and A85 roads which offered an easily recognisable boundary.
13. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to investigate whether the boundary in Option 1A could be altered at the Black Isle to see if placing the Black Isle ward in the Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency would improve the variation from electoral quota whilst acknowledging that such a change would create a larger Caithness, Sutherland and Ross.
14. The Commission agreed that Option 2 offered no improvement on variation from the electorate quota and crossed a local authority boundary.
15. The Commission asked the Secretariat to bring a paper with a revised Option 1A to the next meeting for consideration.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Draft Provisional Proposals for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas (Paper BS 38)

16. At its February meeting the Commission considered Paper BS 34 (Draft Provisional Proposals for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas) but asked the Secretariat to refine the boundaries in Option 1: in a way that recognised Rules 2 and 3 of the legislation by Keith in Moray and Maud in Aberdeenshire.

17. The Commission re-considered Option 1 (the existing boundaries) from the earlier paper and an Option 1A which amended the existing constituency boundaries by Maud/Mintlaw in Aberdeenshire and Keith in Moray.
18. The Commission preferred Option 1A because it offered an improved boundary and improvement on the existing variation from the electoral quota but asked the Secretariat to use the A950 as a boundary by Mintlaw in Aberdeenshire so as to avoid splitting the town.
19. The Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the constituencies in Option 1A as its Provisional Proposals for public consultation, subject to the changes outlined above and satisfactory constituencies being designed in other groupings.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Draft Provisional Proposals for City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian Council areas (Paper BS 39)

20. At its February meeting the Commission had considered Paper BS 35 (Draft Provisional Proposals for City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian Council areas) but asked the Secretariat to refine the boundaries in Option 3 in a way that better recognised Rule 3 of the legislation at Fountainbridge and to the south of Edinburgh airport.
21. The Commission re-considered Option 3 presented again in this paper as Option 1 and an Option 2 which is a refined version of the original Option 3.
22. The Commission preferred Option 2. While acknowledging it split more wards than option 1 the Commission agreed that it offered an improvement on the existing variation from the electoral quota, considered local ties and proposed more coherent boundaries in the proposed Edinburgh Pentlands; Edinburgh Southern; Edinburgh Western; and Linlithgow constituencies.
23. The Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the constituencies in Option 2 as its Provisional Proposals for public consultation, subject to the changes outlined above and satisfactory constituencies being designed in other groupings.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Draft Provisional Proposals for Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire Council areas (Paper BS 40)

24. The Commission discussed Paper BS 40 and the three options presented for Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire Council areas.
25. The Commission noted Option 1A may break local ties by Blantyre and East Kilbride.
26. The Commission preferred Option 2 as it offered an improvement on the existing variation from the electoral quota and maintained local ties by splitting no wards but asked the Secretariat to refine the boundaries in Option 2 by Blantyre.
27. The Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the constituencies in Option 2 as its Provisional Proposals for public consultation, subject to the changes outlined above and satisfactory constituencies being designed in other groupings.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Draft Provisional Proposals for East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas (Paper BS 41)

28. The Commission discussed Paper BS 41 and the four options presented for Glasgow City, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas.
29. The Commission agreed Option 2B offered the best variation from electoral quota in comparison with the other options.
30. The Commission acknowledged the challenges of designing constituencies in this grouping given the higher average electorate and the desire to maintain the integrity of council area boundaries as per the legislation. The Commission asked that an option be brought to the next meeting that aims for each constituency in the grouping to be within 10% variation from electoral quota.
31. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to look at linking this council area grouping with a neighbouring council area grouping to see if variation from electoral quota can be improved whilst also considering local ties.
32. The Commission asked the Secretariat to bring a paper with revised Options to the next Commission meeting for consideration.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Draft Provisional Proposals for Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire Council areas (Paper BS 42)

33. The Commission discussed Paper BS 42 and the four options presented for Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire Council areas.
34. The Commission preferred Option 4 as it splits fewer towns, better reflecting local ties, and offered better variation from electoral quota in comparison with the other options.
35. The Commission asked that an option be brought to the next meeting that aimed to improve variation from electoral quota between the proposed Bearsden constituency and Dumbarton and Helensburgh constituency while considering local ties in Clydebank.
36. The Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the constituencies in Option 4 as its Provisional Proposals for public consultation, subject to the changes outlined above and satisfactory constituencies being designed in other groupings.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Draft Provisional Proposals Constituency Names (Paper BS 43)

37. The Commission discussed Paper BS 43 and agreed to defer its detailed consideration of constituency names and designations of constituencies until its next meeting. The Commission asked the Secretariat to present a map of the proposed constituencies in the revised paper.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Draft Provisional Proposals for Public Consultation (Paper BS 44)

38. The Commission discussed Paper BS 44 and considered its approach to preparing for its consultation on provisional proposals for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries.

39. The Commission made a number of suggestions and asked the Secretariat to draft a revised paper for its next meeting.

40. The Commission heard that engagement with APS was ongoing regarding designing publicity materials for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries and asked the Secretariat to consider the merits of seeking professional input in creating a marketing strategy.

41. The Commission were asked to email comments to the Secretariat on the draft text for the consultation site.

Electoral reform consultation – draft response (Paper BS 45)

42. The Commission discussed the draft response in Paper BS 45 from Boundaries Scotland to the current Scottish Government consultation on electoral reform.

43. The Commission were asked to submit any comments by email to the Secretariat by close of play on Friday 10 March 2023.

Finance update (Paper BS 46)

44. The Commission noted the finance update.

Future meetings (oral)

45. The Commission will next meet on 5 April 2023.

Any other business

46. There was no other business.