

**Minutes of Meeting held at
Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh
10:00 on Monday 10 March 2025**

Present

Prof. A Henderson, Chair
Mr S Jones, Deputy Chair
Ms A McNab
Mr G Macmillan
Mr M Smith
Mr A Stewart

Ms K Mavor, Secretary
Mr C Wilson
Mr D Campbell
Mr P Allan
Ms Y Croll

Apologies

None.

Declaration of Interest or Connection

1. The Commission noted previous declarations about the constituency each Commissioner resides in.

Minutes of previous meeting

2. The Commission agreed the minutes of the meeting of 13 January 2025 with one minor amendment.

Matters arising

3. The Secretary informed the Commission that a background paper to Electoral Reviews will be brought to a future meeting.

Business update

4. The Secretary and Chair gave a brief update following their meeting with the Minister for Parliamentary Business, Jamie Hepburn MSP, that took place on 24 January 2025.
5. The Secretary provided an update from the UK Boundary Commissions meeting, hosted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in London on 27 and 28 February 2025. The Chair, Mr Smith and Mr Stewart also attended the meeting. Boundary Commission for England are expected to host the next meeting in late 2025/early 2026 in Cardiff.
6. The Commission heard that further correspondence has been sent to Kate Forbes MSP about the potential for a Highland Council review. There have been no directions from the Minister in relation to this.
7. The Commission had received a letter from the Chair of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee seeking an update on when the Commission may commence the next review of electoral arrangements. A response was sent

on 25 February 2025 advising that the Commission will be discussing its programme of work after the completion of the Second Review.

8. The Commission noted that the Framework Agreement between Boundaries Scotland and Scottish Ministers has now been agreed and published.
9. The Chair advised that she plans to meet with the Deputy Director, Elections and Constitutional Projects this week to discuss progress of the Second Review and other matters.

Electoral reform (oral)

10. The Commission noted the Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Act 2025 had received royal assent on 29 January 2025. The Act will impact both Scottish Parliament and Local Government reviews by introducing a deadline to report 18-months prior to any elections. This change will not impact the current Review.
11. The Secretary confirmed that the independent review of the approval process for electoral boundaries in Scotland has been formally announced. The timeframe for this review has not been set but is expected to report in Autumn 2025. It is likely that the appointment of the Chair will be announced shortly.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Local Inquiries (BS 164)

12. The Commission considered paper BS164 which was circulated by email on 25 February 2025 and briefly discussed at a pre-meet on 4 March 2025. Further information about the timing of holding any further local inquiries and/or further consultation was requested and provided to Commissioners.
13. The Commission noted that objections had been received from Falkirk Council and West Lothian Council during the consultation on Additional Proposals for constituencies. South Lanarkshire Council had also objected to the Revised Proposals for regions. Submissions had also been received from some community groups which the Commission considered may meet the body of 100 (or 500 for regions) requirement to amount to a relevant representation.
14. The Commission considered the responses to the consultation and considered whether any local inquiries should be held. The Commission noted that if a local inquiry has already been held in a constituency or region, the legislation provides a discretion to not hold a further local inquiry. In terms of the Rules, this discretion can be exercised after considering the nature of the relevant representations received, matters discussed at the previous local inquiries and any other relevant circumstances.
15. In relation to the proposed Falkirk East and Linlithgow and Falkirk West constituencies, the Commission noted that Falkirk Council had raised a further objection. In the most recent submissions, Falkirk Council's position remained that the current Falkirk East and Falkirk West constituencies should be retained. The Commission considered Falkirk Council's representations and agreed that Falkirk Council's objections were sufficiently clear to the Commission since they had been raised earlier and aired extensively at a previous local inquiry in Falkirk. On this basis and after considering the matters discussed at the Falkirk Local Inquiry, the Commission agreed that a further local inquiry was not justified.

16. In relation to the proposed constituencies in West Lothian, the Commission noted that West Lothian Council has raised a further objection. In the most recent submissions, West Lothian Council expressed a strong preference for the current constituencies to be retained. West Lothian Council also remained of the view that the West Lothian constituencies should remain in a Lothian region. An alternative was provided in the Council's submissions relating to Polbeth.
17. The Commission considered West Lothian Council's representations and agreed that West Lothian's objections were sufficiently clear to the Commission since they had been raised earlier and aired extensively at a previous local inquiry in Whitburn. The Commission also noted that the Falkirk Local Inquiry and Edinburgh Local Inquiry covered matters relating to adding part of a West Lothian constituency with a neighbouring constituency. On this basis, and after considering the matters discussed at the Whitburn, Falkirk and Edinburgh Local Inquiries, the Commission agreed that a further local inquiry was not justified in relation to the West Lothian constituencies or the Central Scotland and Lothians West region.
18. The Commission noted South Lanarkshire Council had objected to the Revised Proposals for regions and this was the first objection raised by this Council. The Commission noted a local inquiry had already been held in relation to the Glasgow region. It was clear to the Commission from South Lanarkshire Council's objection what the concerns were, and an alternative solution had been put forward. The Commission noted that the matters discussed at the Paisley Local Inquiry raised similar concerns (about a neighbouring constituency being placed in the Glasgow region) to the concerns now raised by South Lanarkshire Council. After considering the nature of South Lanarkshire Council's representations, the Commission agreed that a further local inquiry in relation to the Glasgow region was not justified.
19. The Commission also noted the relevant circumstances that the Commission's Final Recommendations are due with Ministers on 1 May 2025. Holding a further local inquiry in response to any of the objections raised would not leave enough time for the Commission to engage with the substance of the inquiry and devise alternative proposals before consulting on them further. It was, therefore, agreed that letters should be sent to each Council to advise of the Commission's position that no further local inquiries were justified.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Project Plan (BS 165)

20. The Commission noted the updated project plan for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Media Coverage (BS 166)

21. The Commission noted the media coverage regarding the public consultation on Additional Proposals for constituencies and Revised Proposals for regions.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas (BS 167)

22. The Commission considered Paper BS 167 and noted the responses to its consultation on its Additional Proposals for the proposed Paisley; Renfrewshire North and Cardonald; and Renfrewshire West and Lovern Valley constituencies.

23. The Commission noted that no council had objected to the Additional Proposals for constituencies nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies in the council areas. The Commission agreed, therefore, that it did not require any further information on its Additional Proposals for Paisley; Renfrewshire North and Cardonald; and Renfrewshire West and Lavern Valley constituencies and a local inquiry was not required.
24. The Commission discussed the suggestions for alternative constituency names for the proposed Renfrewshire North and Cardonald constituency but agreed there were no waterways which could better describe the constituency area. The Commission also discussed the suggestion to name the proposed Renfrewshire West and Lavern Valley as Renfrewshire South and Lavern Valley but noted it had consulted on a constituency with the name Renfrewshire West throughout the review and this name had been largely supported. The Commission agreed to adopt the proposed constituency names as its Final Recommendations for the three constituencies it consulted on.
25. The Commission discussed the suggestion for an alternative boundary by Phoenix Retail Park. During the review the Commission had consulted on Phoenix Retail Park being situated within both a Paisley and a Renfrewshire West constituency. After considering the consultation responses, the Commission agreed to adopt its Additional Proposals as its Final Recommendations to avoid splitting an electoral ward (Johnstone South and Elderslie) between constituencies as it may better reflect local ties (Rule 4).
26. After considering all the consultation responses the Commission agreed to adopt its Additional Proposals for the Paisley; Renfrewshire North and Cardonald and Renfrewshire West and Lavern Valley as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas.
27. For the other constituencies in this Council grouping, the Commission confirmed its previous decision at its 23 July and 19 December 2024 meetings to adopt the Revised Proposals and Further Proposals as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas (BS 168)

28. The Commission considered Paper BS 168 and noted the responses to its consultation on its Additional Proposals for the proposed Almond Valley; Bathgate; Falkirk West; and Falkirk East and Linlithgow constituencies.
29. The Commission confirmed its earlier view that it did not require any further information on its Additional Proposals for the proposed Almond Valley; Bathgate; Falkirk West; and Falkirk East and Linlithgow constituencies and a local inquiry was not required.
30. The Commission noted that both Falkirk Council and West Lothian Council wished to retain the existing constituencies which were wholly within their Council areas and to protect local ties (Rules 1 and 4). It was also noted that retaining the two existing constituencies in the Falkirk area met the requirements of Rule 2. The Commission noted that it had discussed retaining

two constituencies wholly with the West Lothian area at its January meeting. However, this approach was rejected on the basis that the variation from the electoral quota would be +20% which did not meet the requirement of Rule 2.

31. The Commission reflected on its obligation to consider and apply the review rules across the whole of Scotland. After considering this and arguments in favour of retaining the status quo, the Commission remained of the view that it was not appropriate to retain the existing constituencies within the West Lothian and Falkirk areas on the basis that the electoral quota requirements were not met (Rule 2). Also, the second part of Rule 2 provided the Commission with a discretion to depart from the strict application of Rule 1 to avoid an excessive disparity between the electoral quota of a constituency and that of neighbouring constituencies (Rule 2). The Commission agreed that it had an obligation to make changes to the boundaries as the West Lothian area had experienced the highest electorate growth.
32. It was noted that the Additional Proposals addressed some of the concerns raised by Falkirk Council previously by ensuring that local ties were maintained by ensuring Denny, Banknock, Hags and Longcroft remained in a Falkirk West constituency (Rule 4). Also, Falkirk Council's concerns about Falkirk Council area being split across three constituencies had been addressed by the Additional Proposals (when compared to the Revised Proposals) (Rule 1). The Commission noted that East Falkirk and Linlithgow had been linked together in a UK Parliament constituency before and were content that local ties were not being broken in creating a Falkirk East and Linlithgow constituency (Rule 4).
33. The Commission then discussed the alternative suggestion from West Lothian Council which aimed to retain local ties by Polbeth. The Commission noted consultation submissions had been received from both members of the public and elected officials that suggested placing Polbeth in an Almond Valley constituency as it would better reflect local ties (Rule 4). It was noted that this would have minimal impact on variation from the electorate quota across the two proposed constituencies of Bathgate and Almond Valley, both of which are wholly within the West Lothian Council area (Rule 2). Also, Polbeth is currently in the existing Almond Valley constituency.
34. The Commission therefore agreed to adopt the suggestion to revise the boundary by Polbeth by placing the whole of the town of Polbeth in an Almond Valley constituency. As this is a change to the proposed boundary, the Commission agreed to consult on an Almond Valley and Bathgate constituency as its Supplementary Proposals.
35. The Commission agreed to adopt its Additional Proposals as its Final Recommendations for the Falkirk East and Linlithgow constituencies and Falkirk West and, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas.
36. For the other constituencies in this Council grouping, the Commission noted that submissions had been made about the name of the Airdrie, and Rutherglen and Cambuslang constituencies. The Commission remained of the view that these were the appropriate names for these constituencies and was not minded to amend its earlier decision. The Commission confirmed its previous decision at its 12 September 2024 and 13 January 2025 meetings to adopt the Revised

Proposals and Further Proposals as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Region Consultation (BS 169)

37. The Commission considered the responses to its consultation on Revised Proposals for the five regions of West Scotland; Glasgow; Central Scotland and Lothians West; Edinburgh and Lothians East; and South Scotland.
38. The Commission agreed that it did not require any further information on its Revised Proposals for the proposed West Scotland; Glasgow; Central Scotland and Lothians West; and Edinburgh and Lothians East; and a local inquiry was not required.
39. The Commission noted the strong opposition to the inclusion of an East Kilbride constituency within a Glasgow region on the basis East Kilbride looks more to neighbouring South Lanarkshire constituencies rather than to Glasgow. Some submissions to the consultation had suggested that Eastwood could sit within a Glasgow region instead of East Kilbride. The Commission noted that East Renfrewshire Council had opposed this suggestion at the Paisley Local Inquiry.
40. The Commission considered the suggestion from South Lanarkshire Council that the constituencies of East Kilbride and Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse should remain within the same region and suggested they sit within either a Central Scotland and Lothians West region or South Scotland region as this would avoid administrative difficulties and possible voter confusion. The Commission noted that adding East Kilbride to the proposed Central Scotland and Lothians West region would result in an electorate of 671,076 and variation from the average electorate of 26.3%. It was noted that concerns had been raised by Falkirk Council and others about the size of the proposed Central Scotland and Lothians West region and it was agreed that it was not appropriate to add a further constituency to this region.
41. The Commission agreed to include both the East Kilbride and Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse constituencies in a South Scotland region. This had previously been consulted on during the Provisional Proposals stage of the review. The Commission noted there had been fewer objections to East Kilbride and Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse being included in the South Scotland region (Provisional Proposals) consultation compared to East Kilbride being included in the proposed Glasgow region (Revised Proposals).
42. Following consideration of the consultation responses, the Commission agreed that it was no longer appropriate to apply special geographical considerations in the South Scotland region. The Commission reached this view after considering both representations from members of the public and the Scottish Conservative Party.
43. The Commission also noted there was some support or lack of opposition to the other proposed regions. It was agreed that the Revised Proposals for Edinburgh and Lothians East and West Scotland, should be adopted as Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory design in neighbouring regions. The Commission agreed to revert to the Provisional Proposals for Central Scotland and Lothians West; and South Scotland as its Final Recommendations, therefore

no further consultation was required as these boundaries had been consulted on at the Provisional Proposals stage.

The Commission agreed to consult on the new Glasgow region boundary as Further Proposals.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Draft Final Report (BS 170)

44. The Commission discussed the Second Review draft final report and provided some suggested amendments. It was agreed that any further comments on the draft final report should be submitted to the Secretariat by 17 March 2025.

Islands Assessment (BS 171)

45. The Commission discussed Paper BS 171 and provided comments and suggestions on the Islands Communities Impact Assessment document for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries. The updated draft will be shared with the Chair and Deputy Chair for final approval before it is translated and published.

Risk Register (BS 172)

46. The Commission considered the updated risk register and agreed to upgrade Risk 7 - Failure to maintain and apply robust governance systems to Medium/High and to add further detail to the register about the role of third party providers.

Freedom of Information (BS 173)

47. The Commission noted the FOI requests submitted in the financial year 2024/25. The Commission commended the Secretariat for the prompt response to these requests.

Finance update (BS 174)

48. The Commission noted the finance update and Commissioners were asked to submit any outstanding expense claims.

Future meetings

49. The Commission will next meet on 16 April 2025.

Any other business

50. The Chair confirmed that she will provide an update to the Deputy Director and will ask him to inform the Minister for Parliamentary Business, Jamie Hepburn MSP, on the planned approach for the consultation on Supplementary Proposals for constituencies and Further Proposals for regions.