

**Minutes of Meeting held at
Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh and remotely via MS Teams
10am on Tuesday 23 July 2024**

Present

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

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

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 19 June 2024 subject to some amendments being made.

Matters arising

3. The Commission noted progress of actions from the previous Commission meetings. The Islands Impact Assessment will be updated after this meeting, translated into Gaelic, published and thereafter updated routinely. Also, the Secretary confirmed that she met with the Scottish Government Data Protection Unit to discuss the data protection shared service they provide. The Commission will sign up to this shared service which has no annual charge with charges incurred as and when this service is needed.

Business update

4. The Secretary attended a meeting in London with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region UK Election Assessment Mission. Whilst this meeting related to BCS work, the full report of will be shared with the Commission once published. The Secretary also met with the Chief Executive of the Local Government Boundary Commission and the Review Manager for Boundary Commission for England to discuss review and governance processes.
5. The Chair advised that she hopes to commence Commissioner appraisals starting in September 2024.

Electoral Reform (oral)

6. The Secretary reported that Stage 1 of the Electoral Reform Bill had been debated at the Scottish Parliament on 27 June 2024 where automaticity was

mentioned in the closing statement. Stage 2 of the Bill is expected to commence in October 2024.

7. The Commission noted that the Chair plans to meet with the recently appointed Minister for Parliamentary Business, Jamie Hepburn MSP, in August 2024.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: City of Edinburgh and East Lothian Council Areas (BS 115)

8. At its June 2024 meeting the Commission had considered Paper BS 101 (Proposals for East Lothian and Edinburgh Council areas) and asked the Secretariat to provide further details about alternative boundaries suggested in the consultation process relating to Morningside, Davidsons Mains and Gorgie/Dalry and also in Lothian Eastern.
9. As recorded in the minutes of the Commission's meeting of 19 June 2024 the Commission had previously agreed that a further local inquiry was not justified if the inclusion of Leith in the Edinburgh North Eastern constituency alleviated concerns. It was noted that a response had been received from the local MSP confirming that this proposed solution would address concerns. The Commission also noted that East Lothian Council had been informed of its decision to not hold a further local inquiry for the reasons previously stated, and the Commission had not heard anything further.
10. The Commission considered alternative boundary suggestions from a community group, local MSP and Councillor relating to Davidson Mains which avoided splitting the area between two constituencies and also created a more identifiable natural boundary - using parkland - between constituencies in the area. The Commission agreed to consult on this amended boundary as set out in paper 115 because it may better reflect local ties (rule 4).
11. The Commission considered alternative boundaries suggestions from a community group, local MSP and Councillor for the proposed Edinburgh Southern constituency by Morningside and Oxfords. The suggested alternative extended the boundary northwards to ensure more of the Morningside area was contained in the Edinburgh Southern constituency and, as a consequence, adding Oxfords to the Edinburgh South Western constituency to ensure both constituencies were close to the electorate quota. Oxfords historically has been in the same constituency as Colinton Mains and other communities in the South West of Edinburgh. The Commission agreed that the amendments to the suggested boundaries by Morningside and Oxfords offers more recognisable boundaries and reflects local ties in those areas (rule 4).
12. The Commission then considered the suggestion made during the consultation process that the communities of Gorgie and Dalry be placed in the same constituency based on their strong local ties. It was noted that the amendments in the Morningside and Oxfords area affected the electoral quota for the respective constituencies and the Commission discussed placing Gorgie and Dalry placed in an Edinburgh Central constituency. The Commission agreed to adopt this approach because it improved variation from the electoral quota, reflected local ties in Gorgie and Dalry and also reflected the existing constituency boundaries by Gorgie and Dalry (rules 2 and 4).

13. For the Lothian Eastern constituency, the Commission noted the consultation responses from members of the public and East Lothian Council which raised concerns about splitting East Lothian between two constituencies and breaking local ties between Tranent and the rest of East Lothian. The Commission explored alternatives including two alternative options by Ormiston and Pencaitland which addressed variation from the electorate quota in the existing East Lothian constituency and avoided a boundary by Prestonpans or Tranent. The Commission agreed that the proposals would likely break local ties by both Ormiston and Pencaitland and would create an East Lothian - Midlothian constituency which crossed council area boundaries where it had not previously (rule 1). After considering the alternatives put forward during the consultation, the Commission reached the view that they did not offer an improvement on the Revised Proposals.
14. After considering all the consultation responses in the City of Edinburgh and East Lothian Council areas the Commission agreed to adopt its Revised Proposals for the boundaries in Lothian Eastern, Edinburgh North Eastern and Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas.
15. The Commission will consult on the boundary changes detailed above relating to Morningside, Oxbgangs, Gorgie/Dalry and Davidson Mains in the Further Proposals relating to the boundaries for Edinburgh Central, Edinburgh Southern, Edinburgh South Western, Edinburgh North Western and Edinburgh Northern.
16. The Commission agreed to consider the names and designations for all constituencies when discussing Paper 117.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council Areas (BS 116)

17. At its June 2024 meeting the Commission considered Paper BS 102 (Proposals for Glasgow City, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Council areas) and asked the Secretariat to highlight any possible anomalies.
18. As recorded in the minutes of the 19 June 2024 meeting the Commission had previously agreed that there was an obvious solution to the concerns raised by Neilston Community Council and others. The Commission noted that the Secretariat advised Neilston Community Council, East Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Council of its intended approach and no concerns were raised. After considering the relevant representations received and agreeing on a possible solution which was shared prior to this meeting, the Commission agreed that a further local inquiry was not justified. It, therefore, agreed to adopt the boundary changes by Neilston and Bishopton suggested at paragraph 36 in Paper BS 102, on the basis that it reflected local ties (rule 4), as its Further Proposals.
19. The Commission considered Paper BS 116 which set out the details of possible changes to the Revised Proposals. The Commission confirmed its decision to consult on Further Proposals including changes by Neilston, Bishopton, Phoenix Retail Park and Govan. These changes affected the Eastwood, Paisley, Renfrewshire West, Erskine and Cardonald, Glasgow Central and Glasgow South Eastern constituencies.

20. The Commission noted that the agreed changes resulted in a Glasgow South Eastern constituency (as named in the paper) with variation from the electorate quota over 11%. An option was presented in Paper BS 116 which made a minor change to the proposed boundaries by the Gorbals which would improve variation from electoral quota in the Glasgow South Eastern constituency (rule 2) whilst considering local ties in the surrounding area (rule 4) and offering a recognisable boundary, a railway line. The Commission agreed that this further change was an improvement and should be included in the Further Proposals.
21. After considering all of the consultation responses in this Council area the Commission agreed to adopt its Revised Proposals for the boundaries in Glasgow Eastern, Glasgow North Eastern, Glasgow Northern, Glasgow Southern, Glasgow Western and Inverclyde as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas.
22. The Commission will consult on Further Proposals relating to the boundaries for Eastwood, Paisley, Renfrewshire West, Erskine and Cardonald, Glasgow Central and Glasgow South Eastern. There will be no further consultation for Eastwood as this constituency had reverted to its existing boundaries.
23. The Commission agreed to consider the names and designations for all constituencies when discussing Paper 117.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Constituency Names and Designations (BS117)

24. The Commission considered Paper BS 117 which asked the Commissioners to either adopt the name referred to in the Revised Proposals as its Final Recommendation or an alternative name which will be consulted on at the Further Proposal stage. The Commission noted all the consultation responses on the proposed names for constituencies as set out in the Revised Proposals.
25. In Dumfries and Galloway Council area the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of Dumfriesshire; and Galloway and West Dumfries, as set out in the Revised Proposals, as its Final Recommendations.
26. In Dundee City Council area the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of: Dundee City East; and Dundee City West, as set out in the Revised Proposal, as its Final Recommendations.
27. In Perth and Kinross Council area the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of: Perthshire South and Kinross-shire; and Perthshire North, as set out in the Revised Proposals, as its Final Recommendations.
28. In Fife Council area the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of: Cowdenbeath; Dunfermline; Kirkcaldy; Mid Fife and Glenrothes as its Final Recommendations. The Commission also agreed to adopt the constituency name of Fife North East (as set out in the Revised Proposals), as its Final Recommendations.
29. In Highland Council area the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of: Caithness, Sutherland and Ross; Inverness and Nairn; and Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, as set out in the Revised Proposals, as its Final Recommendations.

30. In Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of: Aberdeen Central; Aberdeen Donside; Aberdeenshire East; Aberdeenshire West; Angus North and Mearns; Angus South; Banffshire and Buchan Coast; and Moray as set out in the Revised Proposals as its Final Recommendations. Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine was suggested during consultation to mirror the constituency name of Aberdeen Donside and the Commission agreed to adopt this suggestion and consult on this at the Further Proposal stage.
31. In East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of: Ayr; Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley; Cunninghame North; Cunninghame South; and Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley as set out in the Revised Proposals as its Final Recommendations.
32. When considering the final names of constituencies in the Edinburgh and East Lothian Council areas the Commission agreed to adopt the names set out in the Revised Proposals for: Edinburgh Central; Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent; Edinburgh North Western; Edinburgh Northern; Edinburgh South Western; and Edinburgh Southern.
33. The Commission agreed to amend the constituency name for Edinburgh North Eastern to Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith following the large number of responses to the consultation on Revised Proposals for constituencies and its historical use as part of a constituency name. The Commission agreed the name East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs because it was suggested as an alternative during the consultation on the Revised Proposals for Lothian Eastern and to recognise all parts of the proposed constituency which could not be achieved by including numerous settlement names. The Commission opted not to use East Lothian as the constituency does not cover the full extent of the council area.
34. In Clackmannanshire and Stirling Council areas the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of: Clackmannanshire and Dunblane; and Stirling, as set out in the Revised Proposals, as its Final Recommendations.
35. In Midlothian and Scottish Borders Council areas the Commission agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of: Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire; and Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale as its Final Recommendations. The Commission also agreed to adopt the constituency name of Midlothian North (as set out in the Revised Proposals) as its Final Recommendation.
36. In East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Glasgow City Council areas the Commission considered consultation responses and the historical precedent of naming Glasgow constituencies after neighbourhoods or areas in the city rather than compass points. The Commission agreed to consult on the following names: Glasgow Anniesland; Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston; Glasgow Southside; Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok; Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn; Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill; and Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald; at the Further Proposal stage.

The Commission intends to retain the name of Glasgow Central, as set out in the Revised Proposals, as the most suitable name for the area covered by the

constituency and adopt this name as its Final Recommendation. It is also agreed to adopt the existing constituency names of Eastwood and Paisley as its Final Recommendations and Renfrewshire West and Inverclyde (as set out in the Revised Proposals) as its Final Recommendations.

37. The Commission deferred agreeing constituency names for Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas until it had received the Assistant Commissioner's Report from the Falkirk local inquiry.
38. The Commission also deferred agreeing constituency designations for all areas until after the Falkirk local inquiry.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Regions (BS118)

39. The Commission considered Paper BS 118 and the five options for region boundaries presented within it. It was noted that the Rules require constituencies to fall wholly within a region (rule 1) and for each region to have electoral parity where practicable, having regard to special geographical considerations (rule 2).
40. The Commission preferred Options 1, 2 and 3 because they all applied special geographical considerations and retained the existing Highlands and Islands region. This region included Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Highland, Moray and part of the Argyll and Bute Council areas and all three options recognised the special geographical considerations in the regions by allowing a significant variation from the electoral parity.
41. The Commission rejected Option 4 because it proposed a Highland and Islands region that extended from Shetland to Irvine and similarly Option 5 because it extended from Shetland to Barrhead. The Commission noted that Option 1 created a constellation of communities with limited community ties in Central Scotland that partly wrapped around Glasgow and a South Scotland region that extended to Stirling. They also noted that Option 2 proposed a Central Scotland region with variation from the electorate quota of 15%.
42. After discussion, the Commission confirmed it preferred Option 3 on the basis it minimised change to the existing arrangements by closely retaining three existing regions and variation from electoral parity was acceptable as special geographical considerations applied in Highlands and Islands region (rule 2). The Commission asked the Secretariat to prepare variations of option 3 to see if it could be improved further and explore the possibility of the East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs constituency being joined with Edinburgh. The Commission will consider these further options before making a decision on the Provisional Proposal for regions.
43. The Commission noted that any decisions relating to Provisional Proposals for regions depended on the outcome of the Falkirk Local Inquiry in August 2024.

Draft Annual Report 2023/24 (BS119)

44. The Commission considered Paper BS 119 and agreed the draft Annual Report subject to some minor amendments.

Corporate Plan 2024-2027 (BS120)

45. The Commission considered Paper BS 120 and agreed the draft Corporate Plan subject to some minor amendments.

Risk Register (BS121)

46. The Commission considered Paper BS 121 and noted the updated register. It was agreed that risk seven should be amended to refer to the possibility of additional pressure on resources if UK-wide electoral reform impacts on the timing of the next UK parliament boundaries review.

Equalities Statement (BS122)

47. The Commission considered Paper BS 122 and was content with the first draft of the Equality Impact Assessment. The Commission asked for some amendments to be included in the next draft including consideration of streaming local inquiries online and the collection of data from the consultation via voluntary equality questions.

Finance update (Paper BS 123)

48. The Commission noted the finance update.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Regions (BS118) – Updated version

49. Following the meeting of 22 July 2024 the Commission considered an updated version of paper BS 118 via email setting out three variations of option 3.

50. The Commission agreed that options 3A and 3B did not offer an improvement on option 3. Option 3A was rejected as the Central region was less cohesive with West Lothian Council area split between three regions. Option 3B was also rejected as it extended the South Scotland region too far into the Central Belt and also resulted in the greatest variation in the number of electors.

51. The Commission then considered whether the original option 3 remained the preferred option or whether option 3C offered an improvement. It was noted that option 3 included Bathgate; and Livingston and Breich Valley with Edinburgh whereas option 3C included East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs and Midlothian North with Edinburgh. The electorate of Edinburgh was not high enough to form a region on its own so a part of Lothian was required to ensure electoral parity.

52. The Commission noted that option 3 offered slightly better parity than option 3C. However, the difference was not significant, and the Commission preferred option 3C as it included the East Lothian constituencies bringing together communities that had been split in constituency designs. It was noted that the South Scotland region extended further in option 3C but local ties were maintained in Lanarkshire. After considering the advantages and disadvantages of option 3 compared to option 3C, it was agreed that option 3C is the preferred option.

53. The Commission agreed to consider the names for all regions at the September meeting. At this meeting, the Commission would consider whether the outcome of the Falkirk Local Inquiry had any impact on its decision relating to the Provisional Proposals for regions (option 3C).

54. The Commission also confirmed by email its decision relating to the names for constituencies.

55. A decision on names for the Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas will be made after the Falkirk Local Inquiry. A decision on all constituency designations will be made at the September meeting.

Future meetings

56. The next meeting will take place in mid-September.

Any other business

57. The Commission discussed its approach to consultation on its Further Proposals for constituencies and Provisional Proposals for regions and agreed to work with the Secretariat in developing the presentation of the consultation site.