

**Minutes of Meeting held at
Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh
10am on Thursday 12 September 2024**

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
Mrs 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 23 July 2024 subject to some amendments being made.

Matters arising

3. The Secretary provided an update on the actions set out in the rolling actions grid.

Business update

4. The Secretary gave an update on the local inquiry which took place at Falkirk Stadium on 22 August 2024.
5. The Secretary reported that it is anticipated a new Commissioner will be appointed to Boundary Commission for Scotland by the end of September 2024. Also, there has been discussion at external meetings about the electorate franchise being extended to age 16 and over for UK Parliament elections. If enacted this would likely require Boundary Commission for Scotland to undertake a UK parliamentary boundary review
6. The Secretary advised that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region UK Election Assessment Mission has now published its report and the link will be shared.
7. The Secretary reported that Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru recently launched a public consultation on its Initial Proposals for Wales 16 new Senedd constituencies. The consultation closes on 30 September 2024.

8. The Secretary advised that Oracle Cloud launches in October 2024. Oracle Cloud will replace the Scottish Government's existing HR, finance and purchasing systems.
9. The Secretary and Chair reported on their meeting with the Minister for Parliamentary Business, Jamie Hepburn MSP, that took place on 19 August 2024. A letter will be sent to the Minister for Parliamentary Business summarising the meeting.

Electoral Reform (oral)

10. The Secretary advised that the Minister for Parliamentary Business, Jamie Hepburn MSP had appeared before the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee on 5 September 2024. The Commission expressed concern that there was no mention of automaticity. However, there was mention of the Commission's access to the electoral register for attainer information and the Secretary is currently in discussions with the Sponsor team about secondary legislation relating to this.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Project Plan (BS 124)

11. The Commission noted the updated project plan for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries. The Commission agreed that it may need to be flexible in its approach to how meetings are held in the lead up to submitting the final report, for example by considering hybrid meeting options to ensure the meeting is quorate.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Falkirk Local Inquiry (BS 125)

12. The Commission considered the summary of the Falkirk local inquiry as well as the Assistant Commissioner's report and the transcript from the Falkirk local inquiry. The Commission noted the positive survey responses about the running of the local inquiry and thanked the Secretariat for its work.
13. The Commission agreed to write to the Assistant Commissioner thanking her for her role in chairing the meeting and in dealing with several queries from the attendees. The Commission also noted the continued misunderstanding about electoral reviews, with members of the public often assuming a parliamentary boundary review will change their council boundaries or the way they access council services.
14. The Commission asked the Secretary to write to council officials and some newspaper journalists in Falkirk at the start of the consultation on further proposals for constituencies.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries - Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas (BS 126)

15. At its meeting of 19 June 2024, the Commission was provided with Paper BS 103 (Second review - Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas) and agreed to defer full consideration until after the outcome of the Falkirk local inquiry (22 August 2024).
16. The Commission noted the suggestion from both North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire Councils to make a minor amendment to the boundary by Blantyre

to follow a ward boundary. It was agreed this suggestion should be adopted so as to better reflect local ties and to minimise inconveniences.

17. The Commission discussed Paper 126 and noted that two of the options proposed maintaining or minimising change to the existing constituencies of Falkirk East and Falkirk West while changing neighbouring constituencies to address the disparity between the electorate quota in constituencies in this area. The other two options developed the Revised Proposals further to try to maintain local ties between the three villages of Banknock, Hags and Longcroft.
18. After considering the consultation responses and the Assistant Commissioner's report, the Commission agreed that the possibility of retaining the existing Falkirk East and Falkirk West constituencies should be explored further. The Commission asked the Secretariat to develop further the first option discussed in paper BS 126 which proposed retaining the two existing Falkirk constituencies but extended the proposed Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency boundary southwards. This option attempted to address the existing disparity in the electoral quota in both Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and the West Lothian constituencies but created divisions in and near Airdrie. The Commission asked that a further option be developed which retains the existing Falkirk constituencies but adjusts the boundary near Airdrie to minimise the potential of breaking local ties and minimise changes.
19. It was noted that the suggested changes for Torphichen and Wester Breich as set out in paper BS 126 may be addressed by the options being explored further in the West Lothian constituencies. In relation to Bearsden, the Commission agreed that the suggestion from the Scottish Liberal Democrats should not be adopted as it would result in changes across a wide area where there had been support for the Commission's proposals. It also noted that there had been no strong objection to the Revised Proposals from the residents of Bearsden.
20. For the remaining constituencies in this Council grouping (Argyll and Bute; Clydebank and Milngavie; Clydesdale; Coatbridge and Chryston; Dumbarnton; East Kilbride; Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse; Motherwell and Wishaw; Strathkelvin and Bearsden) after considering all the consultation responses, the Commission agreed to adopt its Revised Proposal as its Final Proposals, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas. Therefore, no further consultation would be required.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Further Proposals or Final Recommendations – Constituency Names and Designations (BS 127)

21. The Commission had deferred agreeing constituency names for its grouping of Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas until after its Falkirk local inquiry.
22. The Commission discussed Paper BS 127 and agreed to adopt existing constituency names as its Final Recommendations where they had no or little change to their boundaries. These included: Argyll and Bute; Clydebank and Milngavie; Clydesdale; Coatbridge and Chryston; Dumbarnton; East Kilbride; Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse; Motherwell and Wishaw; Strathkelvin and Bearsden; and Uddingston and Bellshill.

23. Further to this, the Commission noted there was both a Scottish and UK Parliament constituency named Rutherglen. The Commission agreed to rename this constituency as Rutherglen and Cambuslang to differentiate it from the UK Parliament constituency name. This name had been suggested in responses to the consultation on its Revised Proposals.
24. The Commission deferred agreeing names for constituencies in North Lanarkshire and in West Lothian Council areas until after agreeing its Further Proposals.
25. The Commission agreed that all burgh constituencies should be similar in size to existing burgh constituencies and agreed the same for county constituencies. It was agreed that the Secretariat will share an updated list recording proposed designations after a decision was made on the remaining constituencies in North Lanarkshire/West Lothian and that it would look for a suitable division point between burgh and county constituencies. The Commissioners would then confirm their views via email.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Provisional Proposals for Region Names (BS 128)

26. At its meeting of 23 July 2024, the Commission had considered Paper BS 118 (Provisional Proposals for Regions) and preferred Option 3 but wished the Secretariat to develop three further options: 3A, 3B and 3C which were shared after the meeting for consideration.
27. The Commission agreed to adopt Option 3C as its Provisional Proposals for regions because: it did not split a council area (West Lothian) between three regions as proposed in Option 3A; it offered acceptable electoral parity and it included East Lothian in its entirety in the Lothian region. Including East Lothian, West Lothian, Midlothian and Edinburgh in a single region would produce a significant deviation from parity. From 1999 East Lothian had been in the South of Scotland region. The Commission agreed that locating East Lothian within a Lothian region would bring together communities that had been split in constituency designs due to population growth in East Lothian. Special geographical considerations were recognised in the Highlands and Islands region by allowing a significant variation from the electoral parity.
28. The Commission discussed Paper BS 128 and agreed to retain the existing region names: Central Scotland; Glasgow; Highland and Islands; Lothian; Mid Scotland and Fife; North East Scotland; South Scotland and West Scotland as its Provisional Proposals for regions for consultation.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Consultation on Provisional Proposals for Regions and Further Proposals for Constituencies (BS 129)

29. The Commission discussed the planned approach for the consultation on Further Proposals for constituencies and Provisional Proposals for regions and made several suggestions.
30. The Commission asked the Secretariat to email publicity materials in relation to the consultation on the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Further Proposals so as they can provide feedback and comments.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Final Report style (BS 130)

31. The Commission considered the style of its Final Report and offered some suggestions. These included a preference for: a shorter report in comparison to the First Review Report; an executive summary; emphasis on the review rules when discussing the Commission's decision making; provide total number of responses to each consultation stage; a total number of attendees at each Local Inquiry; and reference to the number of changes the Commission made after each consultation stage.
32. The Commission noted the draft maps and preferred the use of block colour to display regions. The Commission asked the Secretariat to discuss with the Scottish Government Sponsor Team the accessibility requirements for the final report.

Freedom of Information Report (BS 131)

33. The Commission noted and approved a revised Guide to Information available through its FOI publication scheme.
34. The Commission agreed that FOI requests should be reported to each Commission meeting if new requests have been received.

Climate Change/Biodiversity (BS 132)

35. The Commission approved the draft Biodiversity Duty Report with minor amendments.

Finance update (Paper BS 133)

36. The Commission noted the finance update and asked for further clarification on some points which will be shared by email after the meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries - Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas (BS 126) – Updated Version

37. Following the meeting of 12 September 2024 the Commission considered via email a revised version of the first option in Paper 126. This option explored retaining the two existing constituencies of Falkirk East and Falkirk West while trying to minimise the required changes to neighboring constituencies to address electoral disparity.
38. The Commission noted that rule 2 provided a discretion to depart from the strict application of rule 1 to avoid an excessive disparity with the electorates of neighbouring constituencies. It was agreed that the status quo could not be maintained in neighbouring constituencies due to disparity from the electorate quota in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and the West Lothian constituencies. The option shared by email, while making changes to the existing constituencies of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth; Airdrie; Almond Valley; and Linlithgow, reflected local ties by keeping all of Airdrie in the same constituency (rule 4); proposed two West Lothian constituencies (Almond Valley; and Linlithgow) which resembled the existing constituency boundaries, minimised change and may better reflect local ties (rule 4). This option also maintained a constituency boundary from the Revised Proposal consultation (Livingston and Breich Valley) where there had been little opposition (rule 4). Overall, the Commission agreed that this approach to addressing the excessive disparity in the electorate of neighbouring constituencies was the preferred option (rules 2, 4).

39. The Commission agreed to adopt the revised option set out in the email, as its Further Proposals because it: retained the two existing Falkirk constituencies and maintained local ties in Falkirk (rule 1 and 4); minimised the number of constituencies crossing council area boundaries (rule 1); proposed four constituencies with acceptable levels of variation from the electoral parity (rule 2) and recognised local ties in neighbouring constituencies (rule 4).
40. The Commission will consult on Further Proposals relating to the boundaries for Airdrie; Cumbernauld and Kilsyth; Almond Valley; and Linlithgow. The Commission also agreed to consult on the amendment by Blantyre which affected both Rutherglen and Cambuslang; and Uddingston and Bellshill constituencies (rule 4).

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Further Proposals or Final Recommendations – Constituency Names and Designations (BS 127)

41. Following the meeting of 12 September 2024, the Commission also confirmed by email its decision relating to the remaining names within the constituency grouping of Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas.
42. As it was agreed that the existing constituencies should be retained in Falkirk, the Commission agreed that the names of Falkirk East and Falkirk West should also be retained. It was also agreed that the existing name of Almond Valley should be retained as the boundaries consulted on at the Revised Proposal stage, closely resembled the existing constituency. Further consultation on the name of Almond Valley will take place at the Further Proposals stage.
43. The Commission noted the consultation suggestion to retain the existing Airdrie and Shotts constituency name. As the current UK Parliament constituency is named Airdrie and Shotts, it was agreed that the Scottish Parliament constituency name should be different to the UK Parliament constituency name to avoid voter confusion. The Commission, therefore, agreed to retain Airdrie as a constituency name, as it consulted on at the Revised Proposal stage.
44. The Commission agreed that the following names should be adopted for the constituencies that were being consulted on further: Airdrie; Almond Valley; Cumbernauld and Kilsyth; Linlithgow; Uddingston and Bellshill; and Rutherglen and Cambuslang.
45. The Commission also agreed the designations of all constituencies as provided by the Secretariat via email. It was agreed that there was a natural division point between Burgh and County between Falkirk West (Burgh at 109 km²) and Eastwood (County at 129 km²).

Future meetings

46. The Secretariat was asked to canvas for a date early November 2024.

Any other business

47. There was no other business.