

**Minutes of Meeting held at  
Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh  
9:30am on Monday 4 November 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  
Mr P Allan – via Teams for papers 148 and 149  
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 12 September 2024 subject to some amendments being made.

**Matters arising**

3. The Secretary reported that Boundaries Scotland's draft Corporate Plan is currently with the Minister for Parliamentary Business for consideration.
4. The Commission was informed that the number of Commissioners required to be present for a meeting to be quorate is three.
5. The Secretary reported that she had met with the Sponsor Team to discuss the process for laying the Final Report for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries. A meeting had also taken place with APS regarding the design of the Final Report, proof reading and ensuring it meets accessibility guidelines.

**Business update**

6. The Commission was informed that the Minister for Parliamentary Business, Jamie Hepburn MSP, had responded to the Chair following their meeting in August 2024. He restated his commitment for automaticity to be introduced.
7. A further letter had been received from Kate Forbes MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch in similar terms to that which had been received previously. The Secretary has contacted Ms Forbes MSP to ask if there is any new or additional information since her last request and is awaiting a response.
8. The Secretary reported that the Scottish Government's new Oracle Cloud Finance and HR system is now live.

9. Boundary Commission for Scotland has appointed a new Commissioner, Mrs Gillian McGregor and will be meeting on 25 November 2024. The Secretary also reported that Lord Matthews' term as Deputy Chair of the Boundary Commission for Scotland has been extended.
10. The Secretary advised that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England will host the next UK Boundary Commissions' meeting. No date has been set but it is likely to be a single day event held in March 2025. The Commission was asked to consider delegates for the meeting and any topics for discussion.

#### **Electoral Reform (oral)**

11. The Secretary reported that MSPs have until 1 November 2024 to comment on the Electoral Reform Bill. Stage 2 is scheduled to be completed by 15 November 2024.

#### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Project Plan (BS 136)**

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

#### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Full Set of Responses (BS 137)**

13. The Commission noted that it had received and considered the full set of responses to the consultation on Further Proposals for constituencies and Provisional Proposals for regions.

#### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Media Coverage (BS 138)**

14. The Commission noted the media coverage regarding the public consultation on Further Proposals for constituencies and Provisional Proposals for regions. There had been some inaccuracies in the reporting with one article incorrectly suggesting that Council boundaries will be changed. This article was corrected after the Secretariat contacted the journalist. The Commission continued to include clear messaging in materials about the remit of the review. However, it was noted that there continues to be a level of misunderstanding about the review which is possibly influenced by inaccurate reporting.

#### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – City of Edinburgh and East Lothian Council areas (BS 139)**

15. The Commission considered Paper BS 139 and noted the responses to its consultation on its Further Proposals for constituencies for City of Edinburgh and East Lothian Council areas.
16. The Commission noted the relatively low number of responses to the consultation but there had been some suggestions for alternative constituency boundaries and names. In particular, there were suggested alternatives to the name of East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs but the Commission noted that there was not a strong consensus for a single alternative name. The Commission considered the alternative suggestions for both boundaries and names and reached the view that they did not offer an improvement to the proposals set out at the Further Proposal stage as they did not provide a better way to address the rules governing this review.

17. City of Edinburgh Council Elections Team submitted a detailed response which suggested Scottish Parliament constituency boundaries should align with polling district boundaries. The Commission appreciated the effort put into this response but noted that it was not required to take into account polling district boundaries when agreeing its Final Recommendations. Polling boundaries flow from boundaries and the reverse is not true. The Commission also did not consider polling districts to be an indirect indicator of local ties. It was noted that once constituency boundaries are adopted polling districts would then need to be aligned to the new boundaries.
18. The Commission noted that no council in this grouping had objected to the Further Proposals for constituencies nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies in the council areas. The Commission agreed that it did not require any further information on its Further Proposals for City of Edinburgh and East Lothian Council areas therefore a local inquiry was not required.
19. After considering all the consultation responses the Commission agreed to adopt its Further Proposals for the seven Edinburgh constituencies as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas. Therefore, no further consultation was required. For Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent the Commission confirmed its previous decision to adopt the Revised Proposals as its Final Recommendations.
20. The Final Recommendations were agreed on the basis that the following rules were met: rule 1 (regard must be had to the boundaries of local government areas) with six constituencies wholly within City of Edinburgh and one constituency wholly within East Lothian Council area; rule 2 (the electorate of a constituency must be as near the electoral quota as is practicable) with eight constituencies having variation from the electorate quota within 10%; that rule 3 (special geographical considerations) was not required and rule 4 (inconveniences of any alterations of constituencies and local ties which would be broken) had been considered by amending the boundaries at Davidson's Mains, Morningside, Oxbgangs/ Colinton Mains and Dalry/ Gorgie following the Revised Proposal stage.

### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas (BS 140)**

21. The Commission considered Paper BS 140 and noted the responses to its consultation on its Further Proposals for constituencies for East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas.
22. The Commission noted that Renfrewshire Council objected to the Further Proposals for constituencies (Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald; and Renfrewshire West) and to the Provisional Proposals for regions (Glasgow and West Scotland). It was noted that Renfrewshire Council had suggested that an alternative constituency should be included in the proposed Glasgow region. Prior to this meeting the Commission had considered paper BS 135 which was shared via email and agreed to hold a local inquiry in Renfrewshire.
23. The Commission noted that no other Councils objected to the Further Proposals for the other constituencies in this grouping nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the other proposed constituencies. The Commission did not

require any further information on its Further Proposals therefore a local inquiry was not required for the remaining constituencies in East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City and Inverclyde Council areas.

24. The Commission agreed to defer making a decision on these constituencies until after the outcome of the Renfrewshire local inquiry.

**Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries - Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas (BS 141)**

25. The Commission considered Paper BS 141 and noted the responses to its consultation on its Further Proposals for constituencies for Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian Council areas.

26. The Commission noted that West Lothian Council objected to the Further Proposals for an Airdrie constituency and the Provisional Proposals for regions (Central Scotland and Lothian). The Commission considered paper BS 134 which was shared via email and agreed to hold a local inquiry in West Lothian.

27. The Commission also noted that members of the public and others had raised concerns about the lack of local ties between Airdrie and Fauldhouse and Whitburn. It was noted that there will be the opportunity for these views to be shared further at the local inquiry.

28. The Commission noted concern was also raised about the proposed Airdrie constituency because it broke local ties to the north of Airdrie by removing the villages of Caldercruix, Plains and others. A petition signed by over 200 residents of Plains had been received. The Commission noted that a local inquiry had been previously held in Falkirk regarding the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency. It was agreed that residents of Plains, Caldercruix and other villages in North Airdrie would have the opportunity to share their views on the proposed Airdrie constituency at the local inquiry to be held in West Lothian.

29. The Commission noted that no other Councils in this grouping objected to the Further Proposals for the other constituencies in this grouping nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the other proposed constituencies. The Commission did not require any further information on its Further Proposals therefore a local inquiry was not required for the remaining constituencies in this area.

30. The Commission agreed to defer making a decision on all of these constituencies until after the outcome of the Whitburn local inquiry.

**Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas (BS 142)**

31. The Commission considered Paper BS 142 and noted the responses to its consultation on its Further Proposals for constituencies for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas. The Commission only consulted on the name of one constituency within this council area.

32. The Commission agreed the boundaries of the constituencies in this grouping of council areas at its meeting of 19 June 2024. The Commission, when considering the names of constituencies, agreed to consult on the alternative name of Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine (previously proposed Aberdeen South and North Kincardine constituency).
33. The Commission noted there were few responses to the consultation regarding the alternative constituency name with the majority supporting the revised constituency name.
34. The Commission noted that no Council had objected to the Further Proposals for constituencies nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies in the council areas. The Commission agreed that it did not require any further information on its Further Proposals for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas therefore a local inquiry was not required.
35. After considering all the consultation responses the Commission agreed to adopt its Further Proposals for Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas. Therefore, no further consultation was required. For the other constituencies in this grouping (Aberdeen Central; Aberdeen Donside; Aberdeenshire East; Aberdeenshire West; Angus North and Mearns; Angus South; Banffshire and Buchan Coast; Moray), the Commission confirmed its previous decision to adopt the Revised Proposals as its Final Recommendations.
36. The Final Recommendations were agreed on the basis that the following rules were met: rule 1 (regard must be had to the boundaries of local government areas) with six constituencies wholly within one Council area; rule 2 (the electorate of a constituency must be as near the electoral quota as is practicable) with nine constituencies having variation from the electorate quota within 10%; that rule 3 (special geographical considerations) was not required and rule 4 (inconveniences of any alterations of constituencies and local ties which would be broken) had been taken into account by minimising change.

### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Highland Council area (BS 143)**

37. The Commission considered Paper BS 143 and noted the responses to its consultation on its Further Proposals for constituencies for Highland Council area. The Commission had consulted on only two constituencies in the Highland Council area (Inverness and Nairn; Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch).
38. The Commission noted the low number of responses to the consultation and lack of opposition to the amended constituency boundary by Strathdearn. The Commission also noted that some consultation responses had commented on issues that had previously been raised during earlier consultation stages, such as the constituency name, but agreed there was no further compelling information submitted to alter its earlier decision to retain the existing Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency name.
39. The Commission noted that Highland Council did not object to the Further Proposals for constituencies nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies in the Council area. The Commission agreed that it

did not require any further information on its Further Proposals for Highland Council area therefore a local inquiry was not required.

40. After considering all the consultation responses the Commission agreed to adopt its Further Proposals as its Final Recommendations for Inverness and Nairn; and Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas. Therefore, no further consultation was required. For Caithness, Sutherland and Ross, the Commission confirmed its previous decision to adopt the Revised Proposals as Final Recommendations.
41. The Final Recommendations were agreed on the basis that the following rules were met: rule 1 (regard must be had to the boundaries of local government areas) with three constituencies wholly within Highland Council area; and rule 2 (the electorate of a constituency must be as near the electoral quota as is practicable) with two constituencies having variation from the electorate quota within 10%. The Commission agreed that the variation in the Skye, Badenoch and Strathspey constituency of 12% from the electoral quota was acceptable given the importance of maintaining local ties in this constituency (rule 4), could be justified by geographic circumstances and was within the 15% limit referred to in the Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice.

#### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Region Consultation (BS 144)**

42. The Commission considered the responses to its consultation on Provisional Proposals for regions.
43. The Commission noted that Renfrewshire Council objected to the Provisional Proposals for the Glasgow and West Scotland regions on the basis that no part of Renfrewshire should be in a Glasgow region and it had agreed to hold a local inquiry in Paisley.
44. The Commission also noted that West Lothian Council objected to the Provisional Proposals for the Central Scotland region on the basis that West Lothian should be in a Lothian region and East Lothian should remain in a South Scotland region. The Commission had agreed to hold a local inquiry in Whitburn.
45. The Commission noted that there had been few responses and there had been general support for the three proposed regions that had retained the existing Mid Scotland and Fife region boundary and made a minor change to the boundary between the proposed Highland and Islands and North East Scotland regions. The Commission agreed to adopt its Provisional Proposals as its Final Recommendations, for the regions of: Highland and Islands; North East Scotland; and Mid Scotland and Fife, subject to satisfactory constituency and regions boundaries being designed in neighbouring areas.
46. The Commission agreed to defer making a decision on the remaining regions (West Scotland, Glasgow, Central Scotland, Lothian and South Scotland) until after the outcome of the local inquiries.

#### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Draft front section of final report (BS 145)**

47. The Commission considered the draft final report and suggested some amendments. A further draft will be considered at the next meeting.

**Framework Agreement (BS 146)**

48. The Commission considered the draft Framework Agreement further and agreed it should be signed on behalf of the Commission.

**Risk Register (BS 147)**

49. The Commission considered the updated risk register. It was agreed it should be updated to reflect the fact that the requirement for further local inquiries and consultation may impact the submission date. Risk three should also be updated to add a mitigation of proactively engaging with journalists and their agencies to reduce the spread of misinformation, particularly about the fact that Scottish parliament boundary reviews do not affect council boundaries or the way individuals access council services

**Freedom of Information Report (BS 148)**

50. The Commission noted the FOI requests submitted since September 2024. The Commission commended the Secretariat for the prompt response to the requests.

**Finance update (Paper BS 149)**

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

52. The Commission were asked to submit any outstanding expense claims as Oracle is now live.

**Post Review Work (BS 150)**

53. The Commission discussed this paper and noted the potential areas of development which could be carried out when the Second Review is completed.

**Future meetings**

54. The Secretariat was asked to canvas for a date late December 2024 or early January 2025.

**Any other business**

55. The Commission noted with sadness the passing of prominent Scottish psephologist, Professor David Denver. Professor Denver was a long-time correspondent of the Commission and always took a keen interest in its work.