

**Minutes of Meeting held in person
10:00am on Tuesday 29 August 2023**

Present

Prof. A Henderson, Chair
Dr S Walker, Deputy Chair
Mr G Macmillan
Mr A Stewart
Mr M Smith

Ms I Drummond–Murray, Secretary
Mr C Wilson
Mr D Campbell
Mr P Allan
Mrs Y Croll

Present for pre-meeting only

Maria McCann and James Newman, Elections and FOI Division, Scottish Government

Pre-meeting

1. Maria McCann and James Newman from the Elections and FOI Division of Scottish Government provided a presentation on Boundary Approval Processes following the conclusion of the Scottish Government’s Electoral Reform consultation which ran from 14 December 2022 to 15 March 2023.
2. The Commission thanked Maria and James for their presentation.

Declaration of Interests

3. The Deputy Chair declared a connection in Paper BS 64 as she resides within the constituency grouping of Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas. Mr Stewart declared a connection in Paper BS 63 as he resides within the constituency grouping of Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling Council areas. Mr McMillan declared a connection in Paper BS 67 as he resides within the constituency grouping of Perth and Kinross Council area.

Minutes of previous meeting

4. The Commission agreed the minutes of the meeting of 19 July 2023 without amendment.

Matters arising

5. The Commission discussed planning for the UK Boundary Commissions' meeting to be hosted in Edinburgh on 7 and 8 December 2023. The Commission asked the Secretariat to continue to progress the booking of a suitable venue. The Commission was asked to consider possible themes as areas of discussion and possible guest speakers.
6. The Chair informed the Commission that the planned timeline for recruitment to fill the vacant Deputy Chair and Commissioner roles is expected to be concluded by January 2024.
7. The Commission noted that the Secretary is currently awaiting a response from the Scottish Government's sponsor team regarding the updated Framework document that was discussed at the Commission's previous meeting.

Business update

8. The Secretary informed the Commission that she had written to a number of stakeholders who had raised queries during the Scottish Parliament consultation on provisional proposals for constituencies offering engagement on issues they had raised. The Commission also agreed that, where possible, it should write to all consultation respondents or key stakeholders thanking them for their engagement so far and inviting them to participate in a local inquiry (if held in their locality) or the next consultation stages.
9. The Secretary plans to discuss with the SPPA (Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments) Committee Convenor, Martin Whitfield MSP, the merits of hosting a further informal session with MSPs to discuss the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries.
10. The Secretary informed the Commission that she had received an invitation from the Chair of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee to meet to discuss timescales for the next reviews of electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute and Highland Council areas. The Chair will inform the Commission of the meeting in due course.
11. The Secretary informed the Commission that she is retiring on 3 January 2024. The Commission noted that the process to find a suitable replacement had begun.

Electoral Reform (oral)

12. The Commission discussed the presentation from Scottish Government officials from the Elections and FOI Division on the consultation on Electoral Reform and agreed to draft a response to the Minister with further comments on the possible models for the approval process.

Scottish Parliament Boundary Review – Rules – draft

13. The Commission discussed the draft paper on the rules for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries.

14. The Commission thought the paper provided useful information for publicity materials such as frequently asked questions.

15. The Commission suggested that it would be helpful when they considered constituency design meeting papers that the Secretariat to include comments on which options best met the rules.

Conduct of Local Inquiries (Paper BS 59)

16. The Commission discussed the background information provided for holding local inquiries.

17. The Commission asked the Secretariat to provide further clarification on how local inquiries were conducted during the First Periodical Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries and present an updated paper on local inquiries at its next meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Consideration of responses to consultation on Provisional Proposals for constituencies – Highland Council area (Paper BS 60)

18. The Commission discussed Paper BS 60 and noted the responses to its consultation on its provisional proposals for constituencies in Highland Council area.

19. The Commission noted that Highland Council did not object to the provisional proposals for constituencies and nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies. Therefore a local inquiry was not required within Highland Council area.

20. The Commission considered all of the responses to the consultation and their alternative suggestions.

21. The Commission considered a suggestion for four constituencies within Highland Council area but noted it proposed constituencies with wide variation from the electoral quota and constituencies still covering vast areas.
22. The Commission considered a suggestion to include the Black Isle in a Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency because the Black Isle had little in common with Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch. The Commission recalled it had considered this at an earlier meeting (5 April 2023 – Paper 50) and that it would worsen variation from electoral parity in a remote constituency and increase the area of an already large constituency with poor transport links.
23. The Commission considered the suggestion from Highland Council that the proposed boundary between the Inverness and Nairn constituency and Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency should follow a ward boundary. The Commission agreed that the suggestion improved variation from the electorate quota and avoided splitting the Badenoch and Strathspey ward therefore maintaining local ties in that area.
24. After considering all of the evidence the Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the suggestion from Highland Council (Appendix B) as its revised recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other council areas being agreed. The proposals:
- retain three constituencies within the council area;
 - improves variation from the electoral quota in comparison to both the existing arrangements and the provisional proposals; and
 - avoids splitting the Badenoch and Strathspey ward thus maintaining local ties and local representation south of Inverness.
25. The Commission agreed to consider constituency names for all constituencies at a later meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Consideration of responses to consultation on Provisional Proposals for constituencies – Fife Council area (Paper BS 61)

26. The Commission considered Paper BS 61 and noted the responses to its consultation on its provisional proposals for constituencies for Fife Council area.
27. The Commission noted that Fife Council did not object to the provisional proposals for constituencies and nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any

of the proposed constituencies. Therefore a local inquiry was not required within Fife Council area.

28. The Commission noted the low number of responses to the consultation but strong opposition to Burntisland being placed in a separate constituency to Kirkcaldy as well as some suggestions for alternative constituency names.
29. The Commission discussed its provisional proposals which had aimed to improve variation from the electoral quota, although the improvement was relatively minor. The Commission noted that reverting to the existing constituency boundaries would provide acceptable variation from the electoral quota and avoid breaking local ties between Burntisland and Kirkcaldy.
30. After considering all of the evidence the Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the existing Scottish Parliament constituency boundaries within Fife Council area as its revised recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other council areas being agreed.
31. The Commission agreed to consider constituency names for all constituencies at a later meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Consideration of responses to consultation on Provisional Proposals for East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas (Paper BS 62)

32. The Commission considered Paper BS 62 and noted the responses to its consultation on its provisional proposals for East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas.
33. The Commission noted that a relevant body of 100 electors did not object to the proposals. It likewise noted that East Ayrshire Council recorded an objection to the provisional proposals but had stopped short of calling for an inquiry in their response to the consultation. The Commission will write to East Ayrshire Council to clarify if their objection was indeed a request for a local inquiry and will arrange one if this is the case..
34. The Commission evaluated the alternative suggestion in Appendix F. It had split a single ward but made changes to all five Ayrshire constituencies where there was no requirement to do so.
35. The Commission assessed the alternative suggestions from a local political party (Appendix D) but believed it may break local ties in the area.

36. The Commission discussed the suggestion from Willie Coffey (Appendix C) MSP but noted it proposed wide variation from the electorate quota.
37. The Commission discussed the alternative suggestion from East Ayrshire Council and North Ayrshire Council (Appendix B) and stated it minimised change to the existing arrangements while offering more equal variation from the electorate quota.
38. After considering all of the evidence the Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the suggestion from East Ayrshire Council and North Ayrshire Council as its revised recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other council areas being agreed.
39. The Commission agreed to consider constituency names for all constituencies at a later meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Consideration of responses to consultation on Provisional Proposals for Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling Council areas (Paper BS 63)

40. The Commission considered Paper BS 63 and noted the responses to its consultation on its provisional proposals for Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling Council areas.
41. The Commission noted that none of the Councils objected to the provisional proposals for constituencies and nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies. Therefore a local inquiry was not required within this grouping.
42. The Commission noted that most of the responses had opposed the addition of Doune to a Clackmannanshire and Dunblane constituency because there is little to connect Doune with Clackmannanshire. The Commission then considered the alternative suggestions.
43. The Commission assessed the suggestion by Bannockburn (Appendix D) which had minimised change but still offered wide variation from the electorate quota.
44. The Commission reviewed the suggestion in Falkirk (Appendix C) for two north-south rather than east-west constituencies but argued it may break local ties within the area.

45. The Commission examined the suggestion from Keith Brown MSP (Appendix B) which addressed variation from the electorate quota, proposed a recognised boundary (River Teith) and minimised change to the existing arrangements.
46. After considering all the evidence the Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the alternative suggestion as shown in Appendix B as its revised recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other council areas being agreed.
47. The Commission agreed to consider constituency names for all constituencies at a later meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Consideration of responses to consultation on Provisional Proposals for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas (Paper BS 64)

48. The Commission considered Paper BS 64 and noted the responses to its consultation on its provisional proposals for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas.
49. The Commission noted that none of the Councils objected to the provisional proposals for constituencies and nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies. Therefore a local inquiry was not required within this grouping.
50. The Commission noted there were few comments regarding the provisional proposals in Angus, Aberdeen and Moray Council areas where there had been no change. In Aberdeenshire the Commission considered the alternative suggestions for constituency boundaries and names.
51. The Commission examined the suggestion by Arradoul (Appendix B) which would align constituency and ward boundaries.
52. The Commission assessed the suggestions by Longside (Appendix C) which would avoid the village being split between two constituencies.
53. After discussion and considering all the evidence the Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the alternative suggestions to amend the proposed boundaries by Arradoul and Longside as shown in Appendix B and C as its revised recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other council areas being agreed.

54. The Commission agreed to consider constituency names for all constituencies at a later meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Consideration of responses to consultation on Provisional Proposals for Dundee City Council area (Paper BS 65)

55. The Commission discussed Paper BS 65 and noted the responses to its consultation on its provisional proposals for Dundee City Council area.

56. The Commission noted that Dundee City Council did not object to the provisional proposals for constituencies and nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies. Therefore a local inquiry was not required within Dundee City Council area.

57. The Commission noted there no responses to the consultation in this area.

58. After discussion and considering all the evidence the Commission agreed to adopt without amendment its provisional proposals (Appendix A) as its final recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other council areas being agreed.

59. The Commission agreed to consider constituency names for all constituencies at a later meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Consideration of responses to consultation on Provisional Proposals for Dumfries and Galloway Council area (Paper BS 66)

60. The Commission considered Paper BS 66 and noted the responses to its consultation on its provisional proposals for Dumfries and Galloway Council area.

61. The Commission noted that Dumfries and Galloway Council did not object to the provisional proposals for constituencies and nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies. Therefore a local inquiry was not required within Dumfries and Galloway Council area.

62. The Commission noted there no responses to the consultation in this area.

63. After discussion and considering all the evidence the Commission agreed to adopt without amendment its provisional proposals (Appendix A) as its final recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other council areas being agreed.

64. The Commission agreed to consider constituency names for all constituencies at a later meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – Consideration of responses to consultation on Provisional Proposals for Perth and Kinross Council area (Paper BS 67)

65. The Commission considered Paper BS 67 and noted the responses to its consultation on its provisional proposals for Perth and Kinross Council area.

66. The Commission noted that Perth and Kinross Council did not object to the provisional proposals for constituencies and nor did a body of 100 electors resident in any of the proposed constituencies. Therefore a local inquiry was not required within Perth and Kinross Council area.

67. The Commission noted there no responses to the consultation in this area.

68. After discussion and considering all the evidence the Commission agreed to adopt without amendment its provisional proposals (Appendix A) as its final recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other council areas being agreed.

69. The Commission agreed to consider constituency names for all constituencies at a later meeting.

Annual Report 2022–23 (Paper BS 68)

70. The Commission agreed the draft Annual Report, with minor amendments.

Finance update (Paper BS 69)

71. The Commission noted the finance update.

Future meetings

72. The next meeting is scheduled for 5 October 2023.

Any other business

73. There was no other business.