

**Minutes of Meeting held at  
Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh  
13:00 on Thursday 19 December 2024**

**Present**

Prof. A Henderson, Chair  
Mr S Jones, Deputy Chair – via Teams  
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 – via Teams

**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 4 November 2024.

**Matters arising**

3. Following discussion with the Secretariat the Commission had agreed to defer considering a background paper on its next review of Local Government electoral arrangements to a later meeting.

**Business update**

4. The Commission discussed the recently held Local Inquiries in Whitburn and Paisley and noted that the Whitburn Local Inquiry had been particularly well attended. The Commission reiterated its concern regarding the impact misinformation was having on the review process and agreed to consider different ways of addressing this in future reviews.
5. The Secretary informed the Commission that there was ongoing correspondence with Kate Forbes MSP's office and the Sponsor Team. The Secretary is to share the letters from the Minister with the Commissioners for further discussion.
6. The Secretary shared the dates for the 2025 UK Boundary Commissions' meeting due to be hosted in London by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Commissioners are to inform the Secretariat if they are interested in attending.
7. The Commission noted that the budget for 2025-2026 had been agreed. It was unchanged from 2024-2025.

**Electoral Reform (oral)**

8. The Commission noted that the stage 3 debate for the Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Bill was held on 17 December 2024 and the Bill was passed as amended. An 18-month deadline for submitting reports before an election had been introduced and the next Local Government Reviews of Electoral Arrangements is now due on 31 October 2030. An 18-month deadline will also apply to the next Scottish Parliament review.
9. During the stage 3 debate, a formal announcement was made regarding the independent review of automaticity and the boundary approval process. Any changes are likely to require primary legislation which the Minister suggested was unlikely to happen in this session. The Secretary has a meeting scheduled with the Sponsor Team in January 2025 to discuss the approach to the review and likely timescales. It was agreed that the Commission should discuss this further once more detail is known.

**Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Project Plan (BS 151)**

10. The Commission noted the updated project plan for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries and suggested some amendments.

**Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Consultation advertising (BS 152)**

11. The Commission considered this paper and noted that online advertising had been the most successful method of publicity. The Commission agreed that alternative media such as Bluesky, YouTube and other platforms should be explored for future campaigns, and that the Secretariat should sign the Commission up for a Bluesky account. The Commission also agreed that whilst digital avenues are likely to be the main approach to advertising it remained important to engage with those who are digitally excluded.
12. The Commission reflected on the cost-effectiveness and reach of newspaper advertising in combination with other forms of media. The Commission asked the Secretariat to add the key points from this paper into the Second Review Lessons Learned report and noted that before the next review commenced it should consider alternative locations for advertising reviews, including bus shelters, buses, ferries or other public buildings.

**Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Glasgow City, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas (BS 153)**

13. The Commission considered this paper at length as well as the transcript and Assistant Commissioner's report from the Paisley Local Inquiry. The Commission also discussed Paper BS 140 from the 4 November 2024 meeting which had been deferred until after the outcome of the Paisley Local Inquiry.
14. The Commission discussed the various suggestions put forward. It agreed to adopt the suggestion to include Langbank in the proposed Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald constituency. This maintained local ties between Langbank and Bishopton and also did not have an adverse impact on the variation from the electoral quota (Rules 2 and 4).
15. The Commission agreed to adopt the suggestion to include Glasgow Airport in a Paisley constituency because the boundary would follow a ward boundary and

may better reflect local ties there (Rule 4). It was noted that this suggestion only affected seven electors in this area (Rule 2).

16. It was noted that Renfrewshire Council believed Phoenix Retail Park should be included in a Renfrewshire West constituency as this followed the ward boundary. The Commission noted this was the approach taken at the Revised Proposal stage. The Further Proposals boundary had followed a railway line (the existing constituency boundary), and submissions had also been made in support of the Further Proposals. The Commission, after weighing up the alternatives, agreed to adopt the proposal to follow the ward boundary as it better reflected local ties (Rule 4). The Commission noted that this suggestion had minimal impact on variation from the electorate quota (Rule 2).
17. The Commission then considered Renfrewshire Council's submissions during the consultation and at the Local Inquiry. It was noted that Renfrewshire Council remained of the view that no part of a Renfrewshire constituency should be in the same constituency as part of the Glasgow electorate. This view was also shared by other elected officials and members of the public. An alternative suggestion was put forward by Renfrewshire Council to follow the UK Parliament constituency boundary in Cardonald.
18. The Commission referred to the fact that UK Parliament and Scottish Parliament boundary reviews were conducted under different rules with different numbers of constituencies and markedly different electoral quotas. Scottish Parliament and UK Parliament constituency boundaries were, therefore, unlikely to be coterminous. It was further noted that Renfrewshire Council's suggestion did not include any proposals for what would happen with the remaining 11,675 electors if the UK Parliament boundary was adopted. The Commission also examined an alternative option, shared during the meeting which followed the UK Parliament boundary at Cardonald, but it proposed wide variation from the electorate quota in Glasgow (Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald - 52,983 electors, Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok - 68,988 electors, Glasgow Central - 68,606 electors and Glasgow Southside 67,503 - electors) (Rule 2) and made changes to several of the proposed constituencies in Glasgow where there had been little opposition during the earlier consultation periods.
19. The Commission noted the submissions from members of the public about trying to avoid placing Cardonald in the same constituency as Erskine and Renfrew. One suggestion to explore a Renfrewshire South and Pollok constituency may better reflect local ties in Renfrewshire (Rule 4), however it did not consider Rule 1. It also had wide variation from the electorate quota (Rule 2).
20. The Commission agreed that the suggestions amending the Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald constituency to include fewer Cardonald voters did not meet the review rules or offer an improvement on its Further Proposals. The Commission, therefore, agreed not to adopt these alternative suggestions relating to Cardonald in the Additional Proposals for Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald.
21. The Commission then discussed the alternative suggestions about the Glasgow constituencies received during the consultation as set out in paper BS 140. These addressed minor changes and did not offer improvements on further proposals in terms of the review rules. The Commission also noted these

suggestions were in areas where there had been broad support for the Further Proposals. This combination of lack of improvement to Further Proposals according to review rules and a lack of strong support for the change did not, in the Commission's view, justify the change.

22. For the suggestions relating to Strathcona and Ilay Court, it was agreed that this alternative boundary should not be adopted as it did not offer an improvement on Further Proposals with respect to review rules. It was a similar position for the suggestion relating to Dennistoun with this alternative suggestion also not meeting the requirements of Rule 2. The suggestions relating to Possilpark and Woodlands did not offer an obvious improvement in local ties (Rule 4) and there was not any significant opposition to the Further Proposals in this area. The Commission reached the view that these suggestions 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.
23. The Commission then considered constituency names and the alternatives put forward during the consultation and the Local Inquiry. It agreed to adopt two alternative suggestions proposed in the consultation: Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley; and Renfrewshire North and Cardonald to better reflect communities in this area. It was agreed that these two names will be consulted on further at the Additional Proposal stage.
24. The Commission noted that the changes adopted relating to Langbank, the Airport and Phoenix retail park would need to be consulted on further as Additional Proposals for the Renfrewshire West; Paisley; and Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald constituencies. The names of Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley; and Renfrewshire North and Cardonald would also need to be consulted on.
25. For the remaining constituencies in this Council grouping, after considering all the consultation responses, the Commission agreed to adopt its Further Proposals for the seven Glasgow constituencies as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in neighbouring areas. Therefore, no further consultation is required. For the Inverclyde and Eastwood constituencies, the Commission confirmed its previous decision at its 22 July 2024 meeting to adopt the Revised 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 154)**

26. The Commission discussed the paper at length and noted the transcript and Assistant Commissioner's report from the Whitburn Local Inquiry. The Commission also discussed Paper BS 141 from the 4 November 2024 meeting, which had been deferred until after the outcome of the Whitburn Local Inquiry.
27. The Commission noted the strength of feeling regarding the Further Proposals for the Airdrie constituency by Whitburn and Fauldhouse residents and also from the residents north of Airdrie who had submitted a petition via their MSP.
28. The Commission noted that arguments had been put forward during the Local Inquiry that the status quo should be maintained. The Commission agreed that

retaining the status quo would ensure that Rule 1 is met with council area boundaries remaining intact within North Lanarkshire, Falkirk and West Lothian council areas. Retaining the existing constituency boundaries was also favoured by many on the basis that local ties would be retained (Rule 4).

29. The Commission noted that retaining the existing constituency boundaries would result in variation from the electoral parity in the West Lothian constituencies of +17% in Almond Valley and +27% in Linlithgow. Also, for Airdrie and Cumbernauld and Kilsyth the variation from electoral parity would be -10% and -15% respectively (Rule 2). The Commission noted that the Rules provided a discretion to the Commission and its Final Recommendations could potentially give effect to Rule 1 and 4 in this area. However, it was agreed that ensuring an equitable solution for Scotland as a whole was an important part of the boundary setting process. It also noted that these variations from parity would be beyond the 15% limit recommended by the Venice Commission. The Commission also noted at its 12 September meeting the view was reached 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 Commission agreed that it had an obligation to consider alternatives even if they resulted in breaking local ties and crossing council boundaries.
30. The Commission discussed the potential application of special geographic circumstances in light of changes in population density within this area (Rule 3). It was acknowledged that there is little concrete guidance within the legislation as to how this term may be applied. At this stage, the Commission was of the view that special geographic circumstances did not apply in this area.
31. The Commission noted that Option 1 in the paper had the benefits of retaining local ties by: placing Whitburn and Fauldhouse with neighbouring West Lothian communities; and avoided local ties being broken to the north of Airdrie. The Commission was concerned that local authority boundaries were being split by both Denny and Blackridge, particularly when reflecting on the response to the Falkirk and Whitburn local inquiries (Rule 1). The Commission noted that the proposed Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency would be in excess of 10% variation from the electoral quota (Rule 2) although further changes could be made to place Banknock, Higgs and Longcroft in a Falkirk West constituency. This would address the strong views about retaining these three villages in the same constituency, as expressed during the Falkirk Local Inquiry.
32. The Commission noted that Option 2 retained the existing Falkirk constituencies and avoided placing parts of West Lothian in a constituency with parts of North Lanarkshire. (Rules 1, 2, 4). However, it would break a number of local authority boundaries elsewhere (Rule 1), disrupt areas where proposed boundaries had been arrived at after lengthy consultation and would break local ties in areas such as the west of Edinburgh and by Pencaitland (Rule 2). It was noted that there had already been a Local Inquiry about placing parts of West Lothian with Edinburgh constituencies. Overall, the Commission agreed that it did not wish to consider Option 2 further.
33. The Commission asked that a further option, based on Option 1, be developed for consideration in North Lanarkshire, West Lothian and Falkirk Council areas. This further developed option would seek to maintain local ties as much as

possible around the Denny area and, where possible, minimise the number of electors from the Falkirk Council area that would be included in the proposed Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency. It was agreed that further mapping and analysis of the impact on the review rules should be provided for discussion at its next meeting with a view to agreeing Additional Proposals for consultation.

34. The Commission also considered alternative suggestions which had been presented in Paper BS 141 where a decision had been deferred until after the Whitburn Local Inquiry. The Commission considered the suggestion to add Moodiesburn or Gartcosh to a Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency. It agreed there were insufficient grounds to break the existing constituency boundary (Rule 4). The Commission also considered the suggestion to use the River Clyde as a constituency boundary between Uddingston and Bellshill; and Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse but agreed there was insufficient support to change an existing constituency boundary (Rule 4).
35. The Commission agreed at its 12 September 2024 meeting to adopt 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 to better reflect local ties and to minimise inconveniences (Rule 4) and was consulted on at the Further Proposals stage.
36. The Commission then considered alternative constituency names that had been suggested during the consultation on the Further Proposals. The Commission agreed with its previous decision of retaining Airdrie as a constituency name to ensure the Scottish Parliament constituency name is different from the UK Parliament constituency name of Airdrie and Shotts. It also agreed to retain the name of Rutherglen and Cambuslang to reflect the largest settlements. Further discussion will take place about the remaining names in West Lothian, Falkirk and West Lothian constituencies at the next meeting.
37. The Commission deferred agreeing its Additional Proposals in this constituency grouping until its next meeting. At this next meeting the Commission will consider a further variation of Option 1 (particularly around Denny and Blackridge) and whether there would be any benefits to extending the Almond Valley constituency into the Clydesdale constituency. Also, the Commission was interested to explore how the existing Almond Valley and Linlithgow constituencies could be amended to improve variation from the electoral quota.

### **Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries – region consultation (West Scotland, Glasgow, Central Scotland, Lothian and South Scotland) (BS 155)**

38. The Commission considered this paper along with the transcripts and Assistant Commissioners' reports from the Local Inquiries. The Commission also discussed Paper BS 144 from the 4 November 2024 relating to the Glasgow, West Scotland, Lothian, Central and South Scotland regions which had been deferred until after the Local Inquiries.
39. The Commission noted the strong opposition to the proposed Glasgow region because it included an Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald constituency. The Commission considered the arguments put forward for the Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald constituency being placed in the West Scotland region. The Commission agreed that it was appropriate for Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald

constituency to be placed within a West of Scotland region with the other areas of Renfrewshire. The Commission acknowledged that this would affect a number of Glasgow electors (22,444) who would not remain within a Glasgow region. However, the majority of the electors within the Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald constituency were in the Renfrewshire Council area and the Commissioners agreed, on balance, the Revised Proposals for West Scotland should include the Erskine, Renfrew and Cardonald constituency.

40. The Commission noted the alternative suggestion from Renfrewshire Council to place an Eastwood constituency in a Glasgow region had already been strongly opposed at the Paisley Local Inquiry. The Commission noted that strong opposition to this suggestion had already been expressed by several elected representatives and East Renfrewshire Council. The Commission did not think it was appropriate to include the Eastwood constituency in the Glasgow region as a way of ensuring the electorate was close to the electorate of other regions.
41. There had been suggestions during the consultation that East Kilbride and Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse constituencies should sit in more urban regions than the more rural South Scotland region. The Commission agreed that these suggestions had merit and should be explored further. To maintain a more equal number of electors between the three regions of West Scotland, Glasgow and Central Scotland the Commission agreed to add the East Kilbride constituency to the Glasgow region and the Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse constituency to the Central Scotland region.
42. The Commission noted the strong preference for West Lothian to be included in a Lothian region and its suggestion that East Lothian be placed in a South of Scotland region. The Commission considered the electoral numbers and noted that it was not possible to have one Lothian region with Edinburgh, West Lothian, Midlothian and East Lothian all included. The Commission was of the view that West Lothian should remain in a Central Scotland region as set out in its Provisional Proposals and the Midlothian North; and East Lothian and Lammermuirs constituencies should remain in a Lothian region as this better addressed the review rules across a broader area. The Commission was not convinced that West Lothian had less in common with other Central Scotland constituencies than East Lothian and Lammermuirs had with other South of Scotland constituencies.
43. The Commission agreed that special geographical circumstances applied in the proposed South Scotland region due to its rurality and low population density links, just as it had previously agreed for the Highlands and Islands region.
44. In light of the changes outlined above the Commission agreed to retain the existing region names of West Scotland, Glasgow and South Scotland. It agreed to consult on Central Scotland region being renamed Central Scotland and Lothians West; and Lothian region to be renamed Edinburgh and Lothians East. This change reflected the fact that the four Lothian council areas must be split across two regions. The Commission also felt that as Glasgow was named in its respective region, so too should Edinburgh.
45. The Commission recognised that it had not yet made its Final Recommendation in relation to all constituencies. However, based on the information currently before it, the Commission agreed to consult on Revised Proposals for the

regions for the boundaries of Glasgow; West Scotland; Central Scotland and Lothians West; and South Scotland regions. The Commission will also consult on the region names of Central Scotland and Lothians West; and Edinburgh and Lothians East. The Commission agreed to adopt the boundaries of Lothian (to be renamed Edinburgh and Lothians East) as its Final Recommendations, subject to satisfactory design in neighbouring regions.

#### **Draft Final Report (BS 156)**

46. The Commission noted it had been provided with a draft of the introductory section of the Final Report and the appendices for constituencies where Final Recommendations had been agreed so far. It was agreed that comments on the draft should be emailed to the Secretariat.

#### **Risk Register (BS 157)**

47. The Commission considered the updated risk register and agreed more mitigations should be added to risk one. Risk three should also be updated for steps to be taken to understand the level of engagements of councils in the review process and whether this impacts on the level of misinformation.

#### **Finance update (Paper BS 158)**

48. The Commission noted the finance update. The Commission asked for the Secretariat to continue recording the costs of holding local inquiries.

#### **Future meetings**

49. The Secretariat was asked to canvas for a date for an online meeting in early January 2025.

#### **Any other business**

50. The Chair notified the Commission that she would be arranging annual appraisals near the end of the Review and the Secretariat would be in touch to arrange dates.

51. The Secretary referred to some inconsistencies being noted in the minutes during the drafting of the Final Report. It was agreed that a short paper be provided at the next meeting.