



Annual Report

2024-25

This report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Copies are available from our website (www.boundaries.scot), or by request from our Secretariat.

Chair's foreword

The focus of our work for 2024/25 has been completing the Second Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries which began on 1 September 2022. Over the course of the review, we undertook an extensive engagement process which included five rounds of consultation and nine local inquiries. During this reporting period alone, we held four consultations and three local inquiries. Overall, we received close to 5,000 submissions which played a vital role in shaping our Final Recommendations.

In addition to this review, we also continued to engage with the Scottish Government on electoral reform particularly in relation to the Independent Review on the Process for Determining Electoral Boundaries in Scotland (Independent Review). Commissioners have shared their experience with the Chair of the Independent Review and submitted a formal response to the consultation paper. Boundaries Scotland remains committed to working with the Scottish Government towards a process that introduces automaticity, strengthens the independence of the Commission and is free from political interference.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in the various consultations and helped inform our Final Recommendations which were submitted to Scottish Ministers on 30 April 2025. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Commission and the Secretariat for their contributions towards completing and submitting the Second Review.

Professor Ailsa Henderson
Chair, Boundaries Scotland
August 2025

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Boundaries Scotland

1.1 Background

Boundaries Scotland is responsible for:

- reviews of local authority areas in Scotland;
- reviews of electoral arrangements for local authorities; and
- reviews of Scottish Parliament constituency and region boundaries.

Our duties and powers pertaining to local authority areas and electoral arrangements for local authorities are detailed in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (the 1973 Act).

Our duties and powers pertaining to the Scottish Parliament are detailed in the Scotland Act 1998.

We are an advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored and funded by the Scottish Government. We are an independent and non-political body.

1.2 Membership

The 1973 Act specifies that our membership comprises a Chair, Deputy Chair and up to four further Commissioners.

Members are appointed on a fixed-term basis and posts are filled through open competition using the procedures laid down by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life. Appointments are made by Scottish Ministers.

Chair

Professor Ailsa Henderson was appointed Chair from 1 June 2023 until 31 May 2027. Prior to this appointment, Professor Henderson was the Deputy Chair (2017 to 2023) and a Commissioner (2013 to 2017).

Deputy Chair

Simon Jones was appointed Deputy Chair from 1 February 2024 until 31 January 2028.

Commissioners

During 2024-25 the following Commissioners were in post:

Gordon Macmillan was appointed from 19 November 2018 and reappointed for a second four-year term from 19 November 2022 until 18 November 2026.

Alan Stewart and Martin Smith were both appointed from 1 June 2023 until 31 May 2027.

Alison McNab was appointed from 1 February 2024 until 31 January 2028.

1.3 Code of Conduct

We have a Code of Conduct issued by Scottish Ministers with approval of the Scottish Parliament, as required by the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000. The Code of Conduct is available on our website.

1.4 Register of Commissioners' Interests

We maintain a [Register of Interests](#) of Commissioners which is reviewed annually and is available on our website.

2 Secretariat

We are supported by a small Secretariat. Schedule 4 to the 1973 Act provides that Scottish Ministers may appoint a Secretary to the Commission, after consultation with Boundaries Scotland. The Secretary, who is the Secretariat's senior officer, is normally a civil servant assigned from the Scottish Government. Kirsty Mavor, joined as Secretary in April 2024.

The work of the Secretariat includes:

- facilitating boundary reviews;
- dealing with the everyday administrative matters relating to our business such as finance, purchasing and accommodation;
- liaising with other UK Boundary Commissions and government departments with an interest in boundary matters;
- maintaining contact with Ordnance Survey and other relevant bodies on boundary related issues;
- maintaining links with organisations involved with electoral matters;
- improving and extending published information explaining our work;
- responding to correspondence on our work and local government boundary issues;
- providing on-going training as appropriate to meet staff and review requirements; and
- continuing to meet all financial and other requirements of our Financial Memorandum, Framework Document and other key sponsorship documents.

The Secretariat is accommodated in Thistle House in central Edinburgh. Staff of the Secretariat are assigned from the Scottish Government. The number of staff assigned is dependent on the volume of review activity and the need to develop, maintain and update information systems, respond to enquiries and undertake other work in support of Boundaries Scotland's activities. During the year 2024-25, the proportion of Secretariat staff costs assigned to support Boundaries Scotland was as follows:

Post	Full-time equivalent
Secretary	0.5
Review Manager	0.5
Deputy Review Manager	0.5
Review Officer	0.5
Finance and Governance Officer	0.5
IT and Database Manager	0.2
General Office Manager	0.5
Total	3.2

Staff members' time is allocated between support for Boundaries Scotland and for the Boundary Commission for Scotland (BCS) which is responsible for reviewing constituencies for the United Kingdom Parliament. The Secretariat is funded separately by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland for that work.

3 Review activity

3.1 Meetings

The Commission met eight times during 2024-2025. Minutes of meetings and copies of our discussion papers are published on our website on a phased basis at appropriate stages during our reviews.

3.2 Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries

On 1 September 2022 we started the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Constituencies and Regions. As required, we used 1 September 2022 electorate data to prepare Provisional Proposals for constituencies with our first public consultation commencing in May 2023. A further four public consultations and nine local inquiries were held as set out in the following timetable:

1 Sep 2022	Start of Review
May 2023	Consultation on Provisional Proposals for constituencies
Dec 2023 – Jan 2024	Six local inquiries held
Apr – May 2024	Consultation on Revised Proposals for constituencies

August 2024	One local inquiry held
Sep – Oct 2024	Consultation on Further Proposals for constituencies Consultation on Provisional Proposals for regions
Nov – Dec 2024	Two local inquiries held
Jan – Feb 2025	Consultation on Additional Proposals for constituencies Consultation on Revised Proposals for regions
Mar – Apr 2025	Consultation on Supplementary Proposals for constituencies Consultation on Further Proposals for regions
30 April 2025	Report with Final Recommendations submitted to Scottish Ministers

3.3 Local Authorities (Administrative Area) reviews

We did not undertake any reviews of local authority areas or of electoral arrangements in any of the local authorities during 2024-25.

3.4 Other electoral reviews

We did not undertake any reviews or interim reviews of electoral arrangements in 2024-25.

4 Other activities

4.1 Staffing and training

Training has continued to meet staff and review requirements. Mandatory Scottish Government training such as data protection, managing information, health and safety, and working towards an inclusive culture has been completed by all members of the Secretariat.

4.2 Liaison with others

Other UK Boundary Commissions

On 27 and 28 February 2025, the Chair, two Commissioners and the Secretary attended the annual UK Boundary Commissions' meeting held in London. At the meeting we shared experiences and ideas with the other UK parliamentary commissions as well as those responsible for local government arrangements across the UK.

Sponsor Department

We continue to have regular contact and dialogue with the Elections and FOI Division within the Scottish Government who are our sponsor department.

viaEuropa

As a member of the Public Sector Geospatial Agreement, Boundaries Scotland has access to the optimum set of mapping data products to support our work, currently supplied by viaEuropa, and we receive technical advice on the deployment of those products.

National Records of Scotland

The Secretariat liaises regularly with staff of the National Records of Scotland on shared interests concerning geographic information, electoral statistics and national archives.

Other organisations

The Secretariat maintains and develops contacts with the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Scottish Assessors' Association, Electoral Management Board, and the Electoral Commission. This has been through attendance at meetings of the Scotland and Northern Ireland Branch of the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Electoral Management Board, the Electoral Commission's Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel in Scotland, and written correspondence. The Secretariat also liaises with Ordnance Survey

5 Governance

Our governance documents are available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request. Please see: www.boundaries.scot/corporate-documents

5.1 Legislation

Our reviews of administrative and electoral reviews for local authorities, are governed by the 1973 Act, specifically sections 12 to 28 and Schedules 4 and 6. The number of councillors in each local authority electoral ward is governed by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2004.

Our reviews of Scottish Parliament constituencies and regions are governed by the Scotland Act 1998 as amended in 2016, and by the Elections (Reform) Scotland Act 2020, which changed the date by which we were required to submit the Second Review report from 1 May 2022 to 1 May 2025.

The legislation can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk.

5.2 Directions from Ministers

Under the 1973 Act, Scottish Ministers can direct us on what reviews of local government area boundaries we should or should not undertake.

A Direction is currently in force for us not to undertake Scotland-wide reviews of local government area boundaries under section 14(1) of the 1973 Act in the period to 31 July 2027.

A Direction is currently in force for us not to undertake administrative reviews under section 14(2) of the Act in the period to 13 October 2028 that would affect more than 500 electors.

5.3 Framework Document

During this reporting year we agreed with the Sponsor Team a [Framework Document](#) which summarises how Boundaries Scotland and Scottish Government will work together. The agreed document sets out the broad terms within which we operate and provides greater detail of certain aspects of our financial arrangements.

In October 2024, the Oracle Cloud platform was implemented by Scottish Government. It brought together all HR, Finance and Procurement data into one integrated solution, delivering a single data source, improved processes, improved controls and greater transparency of data. We will continue to work with Scottish Government to ensure this platform delivers the data we require for governance purposes.

5.4 Data protection

We handle personal information in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All staff have completed annual mandatory training in data protection.

We have a [Privacy Policy](#) for handling any personal information contained in representations made during public consultations on our proposals.

5.5 Freedom of Information

We have adopted the Scottish Information Commissioner's Model Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and published our resulting [Guide to Information](#).

During 2024-2025, the Secretariat responded positively to 14 Freedom of Information enquiries addressed to Boundaries Scotland within the required 20 working days. No requests for a review of Freedom of Information requests were made. We regularly monitor the records maintained by the Secretariat at Commission meetings to ensure that all Freedom of Information requests are responded to appropriately and within the required timescales.

5.6 Records Management

The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 requires Scottish Public Authorities to produce and submit a records management plan setting out proper arrangements for the management of its public records to the Keeper of the National Records of Scotland. Boundaries Scotland's records management plan was received by the Keeper of the National Records of Scotland on 29 May 2024.

5.7 Risk Management

We updated our [Risk Management Policy](#) during this reporting year. In line with that policy we maintain a risk register which is reviewed regularly at Commission meetings.

5.8 Equality Duty

We are committed to equality and diversity in our work and aware of our responsibilities to meet the statutory public sector equality duty.

During this reporting year we updated our [Equality Statement](#) setting out our commitment to equality and diversity. We also completed and published an [Equalities Impact Assessment](#) for the Second Review.

5.9 Section 7 Duty: Islands (Scotland) Act 2018

We are named as a relevant authority to which the duty imposed by section 7 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 applies. We prepared an [Island Communities Impact Assessment](#) as part of the Second Review, which was updated throughout the review and published (in English and [Gaelic](#)) on our website.

5.10 Reporting requirements

Part 3 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 specifies certain reporting requirements for Scottish public bodies. For ease of reference, we have placed all the information required in Appendix A.

6 Engagement and public information

We use our website and social media to inform the public about our work, including answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#). In addition, the Secretariat responds to requests for information made by email, letter, or phone.

6.1 Website

Our website remains the primary means for us to make information available. We update the website with all the material which we publish. Archived versions of our website containing historical material are maintained by the National Records of Scotland.

To help publicise our work we use Facebook, X and bluesky social media channels.

6.2 Maps of Constituencies

We provide an interactive map browser which allows anyone to view maps showing a selection of the current and past electoral boundaries that we have been responsible for.

We have made downloadable data of past Scottish Parliament constituencies and electoral wards available on the website. These are in shapefile format which is widely used for geographic data.

6.3 Information Papers

We keep up to date our series of Information Papers which are all available on our website.

6.4 Minutes and meeting papers

We publish the minutes of our meetings on our website periodically.

Our meeting papers since 2017 are available on our website and earlier meeting papers are available on our archive website. Normally, we publish meeting papers once we have concluded our discussions on a particular topic or on completion of a

particular stage of a review, and the minutes of the relevant meeting have been agreed. Where the meeting papers include a draft of a document which is later published (such as our Annual Reports and Corporate Plans) we do not normally publish the draft.

7 Expenditure

Our expenditure for the year 2024-25 is set out under broad headings in the table below. After receiving an initial budget allocation from Scottish Government, the Secretariat re-forecasts expenditure during the year, and provides regular updates to the Sponsor Team.

The budget allocation to Boundaries Scotland from Scottish Government in 2024/25 was £415,000. Actual spend is shown in the table below. Any underspend is due to the challenge of predicting the number of local inquiries and consultations during the Second Review.

Financial Performance		
April 2024 - March 2025		
	Expenditure	
	Budget (£000's)	Actual (£000's)
Staff Costs	203	191
Commissioners' Fees	33	24
Accommodation	28	28
Administration (Includes IT)	54	21
Travel & Subsistence	5	2
Review Costs	92	75
Total	415	341

7.1 Staff salaries

Salary costs are determined by the pay arrangements for our staff, who are employees of the Scottish Government. We share staff with BCS. BCS's share of the staff salaries is paid for by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland (OSSS).

7.2 Commissioners' fees and expenses

Commissioners' fees and expenses are determined by the Scottish Government and cover attendance at our scheduled meetings and associated preparation and other ad hoc meetings. Expenses reimbursed to Commissioners, such as travel costs, are recorded under this heading. Where such costs were paid in advance by the Secretariat they are recorded under Travel and Subsistence or Review Costs (see below). Commissioners' fees are paid a daily fee for each meeting. The fee rates during the year 2024-25 were:

- Chair £347 per day
- Deputy Chair £252 per day
- Commissioner £219 per day

The Chair's fee has remained unchanged since August 2007 and the fees for the Deputy Chair and Commissioners have remained unchanged since 2013-14.

7.3 Accommodation

Boundaries Scotland share accommodation with BCS. The figures shown in the above table in respect of accommodation reflect our share of rent, business rates, utilities and services such as insurance, management fees and office cleaning.

7.4 Administration

Administration costs include IT and website costs, postage, telephony and printing.

The underspend in Administration costs is chiefly due to funds being set aside for legal costs and other items not being required to be spent.

7.5 Travel and subsistence

Travel and subsistence includes public transport and car-hire costs incurred by the Secretariat and Commissioners during official business which does not relate directly to a review (such costs fall under review costs). Travel and subsistence costs are paid at the same rate that applies to staff of Scottish Government.

7.6 Review costs

Review costs cover those items directly attributable to our boundary reviews such as advertising, use of a consultation portal or specialist printing costs and the cost of holding local inquiries, including any associated travel and accommodation.

8 Work Programme for 2025-26

Scottish Parliament Review

We submitted our Final Report on the Second Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries to Scottish Ministers on 30 April 2025. The report on our Third Review must be submitted not less than 8 years and not more than 12 years from the date of our Final Report on the Second Review.

Electoral Reform

We will continue to engage with Scottish Government on electoral reform and in fulfilling their commitment to implementing automaticity and any other legislative changes. Boundaries Scotland's operational and strategic planning for reviews of electoral arrangements will take account of developments regarding the implementation of automaticity.

Local authority electoral reviews

We have no immediate plans to conduct a review of local authority electoral arrangements in 2025-26. Our work plan for local government electoral reviews will be developed once we are aware of the outcome of the Independent Review. We are required to submit our review of local government electoral arrangements no later than 31 October 2030.

Administrative area reviews

Our reviews of administrative areas recommend changes to local authority boundaries.

We will consider any requests for minor reviews of administrative area boundaries of council areas (affecting less than 500 electors) and progress any such reviews we decide to conduct.

Interim reviews

Our reviews of electoral arrangements recommend the number of councillors within a local authority and its ward boundaries.

We will consider any requests for an interim review of electoral arrangements and progress any such reviews we decide to conduct.

Other activity

We will carry out our governance functions throughout the year to ensure that we manage Boundaries Scotland's operations efficiently and cost effectively and meet the requirements of our Framework Agreement with the Scottish Government.

9 Further information

If you have a query which cannot be answered by this report or our website (www.boundaries.scot) please contact us.

Appendix A – Reporting requirements

Part 3 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (the Public Services Reform Act) requires public bodies to publish specified items of information at the end of each financial year. This Appendix provides that information.

Expenditure on named matters

The Public Services Reform Act requires us to publish a statement on any expenditure on the following matters.

Expenditure Heading	Expenditure in 2024-25 (£)
Public relations	nil
Overseas travel	nil
Hospitality and entertainment	nil
External consultancy	nil
Special advisers	nil

Note on Public relations/Hospitality and entertainment

During our reviews, we advertise our public consultation and local inquiries in newspapers and social media posts, both free and paid for. During 2024/25 we spent £65,000 on publicity costs for the Second Review but do not consider that this constitutes public relations expenditure. Therefore, these publicity costs are recorded as review expenses.

Expenditure in excess of £25,000

The Public Services Reform Act requires us to publish details of any payment made during the year in excess of £25,000. There were no such costs.

Remuneration above £150,000

The Public Services Reform Act requires us to publish details of any Commissioners or staff remunerated above £150,000 during the year. There were no such individuals.

Sustainable growth

The Public Services Reform Act requires us to publish a statement on the steps taken to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of our functions.

We align our work with the Scottish Government's purpose of delivering sustainable growth through identification of the relevant parts of the National Performance Framework to which our work contributes.

Our work contributes to the following National Outcomes:

- *We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.*
- *We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.*
- *We value, enjoy and protect and enhance our environment.*

The first and second of these reflect the desired result from successful definition of effective and convenient local government electoral arrangements and Scottish Parliament boundaries, so that as far as possible people's votes have equal weight, and electoral boundaries do not divide communities.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 requires us to consider the unique challenges that face Island communities when we review areas that include inhabited islands. During the Second Review we published our [Island Communities Impact Assessment](#) (in English and [Gaelic](#)).

The third National Outcome reflects the environmental desirability of effective use of resources. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 requires all public bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 requires all public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty. Boundaries Scotland's [Biodiversity Report](#) 2020-2023 was agreed and published during this reporting year.

Further information on the National Performance Framework is available at <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

Efficiency, economy and effectiveness

The Public Services Reform Act requires us to publish a statement on the steps taken to improve efficiency, economy and effectiveness in the exercise of our functions:

The Scottish Government encourages improvement of efficiency, economy and effectiveness through shared services. We participate in shared services through:

- occupation of office accommodation owned and managed by another public sector body;
- a shared Secretariat with BCS;
- use of Scottish Government framework contracts and electronic purchasing card for purchase of supplies and services;
- Use of Scottish Government IT and HR systems.

Social Impact Pledge

The staff of the Secretariat volunteer on a regular basis to support charities and community groups. They also assisted with the launch of the Poppy Scotland Appeal in November 2024 with all staff volunteering for this Appeal as part of a team building event.

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