



Boundaries Scotland

Crìochan na h-Alba

Corporate Plan 2025 - 2028

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1 Introduction

This Corporate Plan sets out the main activities to be undertaken by Boundaries Scotland during the period 2025-2028 and forecasts the required resources and expenditure. The information in this plan is designed to assist with budgeting and planning. The planned activities, resource forecasts and performance indicators for 2025-2028 will be expanded and confirmed in subsequent operational plans.

2 Boundaries Scotland

2.1 Duties and Powers

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) 1973 Act (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.

2.2 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

The following Commissioners are 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 appointed from 1 June 2023 until 31 May 2027.

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

2.3 Secretariat

Commissioners are supported by a small Secretariat. 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 also supports the Boundary Commission for Scotland (BCS) which is responsible for reviews of United Kingdom Parliament constituencies in Scotland. The

Secretariat is funded separately by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland for that work.

The staff of the Secretariat are assigned from the Scottish Government. The number of staff assigned to support us is largely dependent on the volume of review activity. For the purposes of this Corporate Plan, staff costs have been shared equally between the Commission and BCS.

3 Scottish Government

3.1 Direction 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.

3.2 National Performance Framework

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 live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.*
- *We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.*
- *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](#)) and will carry out further Impact Assessments for any future reviews that include inhabited Islands.

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 the 2024-25 reporting period.

The performance of Boundaries Scotland contributes to national outcomes being achieved.

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

4 Planned activities

4.1 Years 2025-2028

The planned activities, resource forecasts and performance indicators for 2025-28 will be expanded and refined in subsequent operational plans.

4.2 Scottish Parliament Constituency & Region Review activity

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.

4.3 Local Authorities (Administrative Area) Reviews

We will conduct administrative reviews of council area boundaries as required (if affecting fewer than 500 electors).

4.4 Other Electoral Reviews

The 1973 Act, as amended by the Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Act 2025, provides that any reviews of local government electoral arrangement should be submitted no later than 31 October 2030.

4.5 Other activity

During the period 2025- 2028 we will: -

- carry out our governance functions to ensure that we manage our operations efficiently and cost effectively and meet the requirements of our Framework Document and Financial Memorandum from the Scottish Government;
- establish stronger and more effective links with stakeholders including Electoral Management Board, MSPs, political parties, councils, COSLA, the Electoral Commission to improve engagement and understanding of the boundary setting process;
- contribute to the Independent Review on the Process for Determining Electoral Boundaries in Scotland (Independent Review) and continue to engage with

Scottish Government on electoral reform and in fulfilling their commitment to implementing automaticity and any other legislative changes;

- improve our digital engagement to increase public participation in and knowledge of the boundary setting process;
- participate in the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions;
- pay due care to equality, diversity and inclusion in carrying out our work and when we develop new processes and policies;
- pay due care to the environment in carrying out our work and will continue to improve our efficiency, economy and effectiveness through shared services.

4.6 Membership

We are not anticipating any planned changes to the membership of the Commission until year 2026-2027.

4.7 Finance and Staffing

The overall costs of the Commission during 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 are expected to be:

- c. £415,000 per financial year

Scottish Government has indicated this will be our budget for these reporting years but the budget allocation will be formalised at the beginning of each year.

The overall staffing assigned to the Secretariat is expected to be 6.4 full time equivalent staff (3.2 equivalent for Boundaries Scotland). The staffing costs will be shared equally between Boundaries Scotland and the Boundary Commission for Scotland.

A breakdown of costs is given in Appendix A.

4.8 Performance indicators

Success in this period will be judged by the following indicators:

- agreeing the lessons learned from the Second Review and monitoring the implementation of improvements before the Third Review;
- contributing to the Independent Review and ensuring our views are shared and taken into account;
- working with the Scottish Government on fulfilling its commitment to implementing automaticity;
- planning and commencing local authorities electoral reviews once the outcome of the Independent Review is known;
- progressing any administrative or interim reviews which may be required within this period;
- delivery within budget;
- having due care to equality, diversity and inclusion, biodiversity and climate change in our work;
- continuing to meet all financial and other sponsorship requirements as required under the Framework document with Scottish Government.

5 Long term outlook

We submitted our Final Report on the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries on 30 April 2025. The report on our Third Review must be submitted not less than 8 years and no more than 12 years from the date of our Final Report on the Second Review.

We do not anticipate that we will be required to undertake reviews of the external boundaries of administrative areas, other than any localised reviews of cases where development has taken place across an existing administrative area boundary.

The timing of the commencement of the next reviews of electoral arrangements for local authorities will depend on the outcome of the Independent Review. Our reviews must be submitted no later than 31 October 2030 which would imply we would need to begin any reviews no later than 1 April 2029.

Boundaries Scotland's operational and strategic planning will take account of developments regarding the introduction of automaticity in legislation.

Appendix A – Costs

Overall Costs

The overall costs of the Commission are expected to be as follows:

	<u>25-26</u>	<u>26-27</u>	<u>27-28</u>
	<u>£000s</u>	<u>£000s</u>	<u>£000s</u>
Secretariat Staff Costs	212	220	230
Commissioner Costs	33	34	35
Accommodation	30	32	34
Administration & IT	55	56	57
Travel and Subsistence	5	5	5
Review Costs:			
Publicity	44	26	26
Consultation Portal	25	25	14
Design and print	4	8	5
Other (Halls/Transcription/Server/Courier)	7	9	9
	415	415	415

Staffing costs

The allocation of staff by grade, and the salary ranges for each of those grades is as follows:

Grade	FTE 2024-25	FTE 2025-26	FTE 2026-27	Salary range (£) (January 2025)
C1	0.5	0.5	0.5	57,701 to 71,942
B3	0.5	0.5	0.5	45,894 to 54,952
B2	1	1	1	36,944 to 42,244
B1	0.7	0.7	0.7	32,455 to 35,203
A3	0.5	0.5	0.5	25,235 to 28,131
Total	3.2	3.2	3.2	

Overall staffing costs include National Insurance and pension contributions, in addition to the salary in the listed range. The total staffing costs for the equivalent of 6.4 full time staff (3.2 equivalent for Boundaries Scotland) is divided 50/50 between the Commission and the BCS.

Commissioners' fees and expenses

The figures are based on estimates of 12 meetings per year for the years 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28. The number of meetings held will depend on the approach taken to reviewing local government electoral arrangements. The costs include any additional meetings Commissioners may attend, such as appraisals, meetings with Ministers, training and/or the annual meeting of the UK Boundaries Commissions.

Accommodation

Accommodation costs cover rent and utility bills and are divided equally with the BCS. The plan budgets for a projected increase of £2k per year in 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28, based on historical increases.

Administration

Covers costs such as training, website costs, IT costs, postage, and other office costs.

Travel and subsistence

Covers travel and subsistence costs for Commissioners and staff excluding travel costs specifically related to a review. Typically this is for the annual meeting of UK boundary commissions, the location for which rotates throughout Edinburgh, London, Belfast and Cardiff.

Review costs

The review costs during 2025-2026 will relate to any follow up costs from the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries.

Depending on the outcome of the Independent Review we will then commence our planning of the next reviews of local government electoral arrangements.

We may also carry out administrative area reviews of local authorities if requested to do so by Ministers and members of the public (if affecting fewer than 500 electors). We have planned on the basis that we will conduct two local administrative area reviews over the three years of the Corporate Plan. We have assumed that a first review would begin in 2026-27, and a second review would begin in 2027-28.