

## **Boundaries Scotland Summary of Recent Approach to Consultation**

### **Background**

1. At its meetings in June and July 2025, the Commission agreed that it would like a paper that:
  - Outlines different approaches to consultation and engagement during reviews;
  - Provides some discussion of the costs associated with other consultation sites; and
  - Includes an analysis of the consultation approaches used by other UK Commissions.

### **Consultation – Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries**

2. The Commission advertised the start of the Second Review by way of a news release and a notice in the Edinburgh Gazette (as required by legislation).
3. As in all its reviews the Commission also wrote to a wide range of interested parties including MSPs, MPs, political parties, community councils, COSLA and other representative bodies to inform them of the consultation.
4. Citizen Space was used to host online consultations which has been the approach since 2019. The Citizen Space subscription costs approximately £10k per annum. Citizen Space is used extensively by the Scottish Government, UK Government departments and numerous councils and public sector organisations across the UK and worldwide.
5. Citizen Space's features include advanced survey tools and real-time analysis. It supports public consultation and public participation across desktop and mobile devices. For the Second Review the Commission added the Citizen Space geospatial mapping tool which provides interactive maps and captures alternative suggested boundaries from respondents. There was an additional annual subscription of £10k for the use of the geospatial mapping tool. Whilst only 4% of respondents from the consultation on provisional proposals drew alternative boundaries, the tool also allows the Commission to share active, zoomable maps with layers that can be turned on and off, rather than static maps in PDF or image formats.
6. To drive engagement during the Second Review consultations the Commission contracted a media agency to advertise online, mainly via Facebook (approx. £39k). Newspaper adverts (£40k) were used along with Twitter posts to raise awareness of the Second Review and drive visits to the consultation site. Display points were also used as required by legislation. Evidence collected via the consultation site suggested that both display points and newspaper advertising accounted for a tiny fraction of responses.
7. The Secretariat did investigate the possibility of bus stop and radio adverts but were advised by the media agency that bus stops were not the best method of communication for the type of messaging being shared. The costs of radio advertising were seen as too expensive (approx. £30k for each consultation stage).

8. For future reviews the Commission should consider the [use of easy read materials](#) like those produced by the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC). This type of material along with further development of our social media presence, via YouTube and Instagram would help the Commission with improving its engagement.

### **Consultation – Islands Reviews**

9. During the Island Reviews, the Commission met with each council to explain the review and with some individual community councils or community council associations. Later the Secretariat met with the council election teams to discuss publicity options who recommended that attending agricultural shows and council wide mailshots would not be beneficial. The Chair was also interviewed on local radio (BBC Radio Shetland).
10. Periods of consultation were publicised by issuing a news release, using display points, social media (Facebook and Twitter) and asking Councils to publicise the review on their websites. As some of the island councils had limited venues adverts were placed in ferries, ferry terminals, school/ community centres and places of worship.

### **Consultation – 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements**

11. When publicising the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews consultations the Commission issued a news release, placed public notices in the local press and supplied materials for councils to make available at council-nominated display points. The Commission also used Facebook, Twitter and its website for publicity and asked councils to publicise the reviews on their websites. Local newspapers were used extensively across Scotland and display points were agreed with the appropriate local council.
12. The Commission made use of a bespoke consultation portal for the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews which cost approx. £100k to develop and maintain over the three years of the review.

### **Consultation – DBCC**

13. DBCC is responsible for defining local government boundaries in Wales and Senedd constituency boundaries.
14. For its 2026 Review of Senedd boundaries it published a 90 second YouTube video explaining why the review was happening, how it would happen and what the outcomes would be. It also produced videos for release at each stage of the review. Some of the videos have had more than 35,000 views. DBCC also shared these videos across Twitter and Instagram.
15. DBCC also used BBC radio interviews with the Chair and Secretary to publicise the outcomes of the review. They applied themed graphics to support their messaging at all stages of the review.
16. For reviews of local government boundaries, DBCC generally uses the following: paid advertising; newspapers (print and online); local radio; and social media (Facebook/Instagram).
17. For Senedd Reviews they advertise in: online newspapers; radio/DAX; Spotify; social media (Facebook/Instagram/YouTube/Snapchat); Google; buses; and digital screens in public transport hubs

18. DBCC have developed their own consultation site for Senedd and local government reviews - <https://www.reviewswales.wales/>. Its costs are comparable to the Citizen Space subscription, including the geospatial functionality.

19. DBCC's Secretariat team includes a Communications and Engagement Manager.

### **Consultation – Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)**

20. LGBCE works closely with local authorities to help raise awareness of consultations. They provide Councils with promotional media to assist with raising awareness and have created a councillor toolkit. They have also established a resident-focused community briefing.

21. LGBCE publicise consultations through traditional media outlets such as newspapers. They focus social media advertising on Facebook because it has a wide demographic and use targeted Facebook advertising to encourage participation in their consultations. They evaluate Facebook advertising by engagement such as someone viewing the consultation site rather than simply liking or sharing a post.

22. Examples of advertising material can be found on LGBCE's website for each review including [promotional posters](#) and a [fact sheet](#).

23. LGBCE employ both a Communications and Engagement Manager and Communications Officer to improve their communication and engagement.

### **UK Parliament Boundary Reviews – BCS, BCE, BCW and BCNI**

24. During its 2023 Review, the Boundary Commission for Scotland (BCS) faced significant challenges in engaging the public due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Many of the buildings identified as display points for review materials were council-owned and, as non-essential facilities, remained closed throughout the consultation periods. This limited opportunities for in-person engagement and access to physical information.

25. For the 2023 Review, BCS expanded its publicity strategy and invested in professional graphic design services to create visually engaging content—such as GIFs and JPEGs. Advertisements were placed in national newspapers at the cost of £44k. Social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, were also used extensively. Feedback from respondents indicated that most had learned about the review via Facebook, followed by newspapers, Twitter, other social media, websites, and TV or radio, with only a small number citing display points as their source of information.

26. For the 2023 Review, BCE, BCW, and BCS shared a consultation portal developed by Informed Solutions and re-developed from one used by those three Commissions during the 2018 Review. The BCS share of the 2023 Review consultation portal costs was £61k over three years. BCNI used the Citizen Space consultation site for the 2018 and 2023 Reviews.

27. BCW had a large publicity budget for the 2023 Review and advertised on buses, radio, newspapers, online, and social media. Social media was their most successful outlet.

28. The BCE publicity included national press adverts, a national and local media briefing session, supported by a national and local media news release, spokesperson interviews on national and local media outlets, and audience-specific digital advertising on websites and popular social media applications. Social media was also their most effective method of publicity.

29. BCNI are currently in abeyance and there is little information on their website regarding the approach taken to publicity during the 2023 Reviews.

### **Conclusion**

30. The Commission is invited to note the different consultation approaches and consider if it wishes the Secretariat to undertake any further analysis before it commences its 2032 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements.

**Secretariat**  
**December 2025**