

**Minutes of Meeting held at
Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh
13:30 on Tuesday 9 December 2025**

Present

Prof. A Henderson, Chair
Mr S Jones, Deputy Chair
Ms A McNab (via teams)
Mr G Macmillan
Mr M Smith

Ms K Mavor, Secretary
Mr C Wilson
Mr D Campbell
Mr P Allan
Mrs Y Croll

Apologies

Mr A Stewart

Declaration of Interest or Connection

1. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of previous meeting

2. The Commission agreed the minute of the 23 September 2025 meeting without amendment.

Matters arising

3. The Commission discussed the further analysis of Council social media engagement during the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries. The Commission agreed to consider approaches to improving engagement before any future reviews. The Secretary has been in contact with the local government communication network and will attend a meeting in the New Year.
4. The Commission discussed the analysis on voting turnout at the 2022 local government elections and asked for the analysis to be shared with Commissioners. The remaining items are either complete or on the agenda.

Business update

5. The Secretary confirmed that the final report of the Independent Review of the Process for Determining Electoral Boundaries in Scotland is scheduled to be published this week.
6. The Commission noted that the Annual Report and Corporate Plan are now published on the website. There was a slight delay with the publication of these documents to allow for the website work, to improve security and maintenance, to be completed.
7. The Commission noted a summary from the meeting of 31 October 2025, when the Chair and Secretary met with Michael Kay (Deputy Director, Welsh Office) and James Newman (Elections Team, Scottish Government).

8. The Secretary shared the potential dates (March 2026) for the UK Boundary Commissions' meeting due to be hosted in Cardiff. Commissioners are to inform the Secretariat if they are available to attend.
9. The Secretary reported that she is awaiting confirmation of a date for the Chair to meet with the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans.
10. A meeting is scheduled with the Electoral Commission on 15 January 2026 to discuss the boundary setting process in Scotland. The Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary will attend this meeting.
11. The Secretary thanked Commissioners for completing the skills matrix which will help inform the recruitment process for a replacement Commissioner in late 2026. The Sponsor Team has been advised of this upcoming vacancy.

Document sharing and emails (oral update)

12. The Commission discussed its approach to sharing meeting papers and other information and agreed to seek advice from the Scottish Government's Information Governance Team to clarify current working practices. The Commission requested details about the approach taken by similar organisations.

Further review of Highland Council area and Argyll and Bute Council area (BS 202)

13. The Commission discussed Paper BS 202 and referred to the Minister's direction under s17(6) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to carry out a s17A further review. It was noted that the Commission has a statutory obligation to carry out this further review which is a separate process. It was agreed that the Commission will now start this further review.
14. The Commission requested a paper for its next meeting providing a summary for each Council of (a) the original review reports and proposed recommendations (b) the Scottish Parliament representations (c) the relevant Council's reaction to the original recommendations and concerns raised at the time (d) Boundaries Scotland's response to the recommendations being rejected and (e) an assessment by the secretariat of potential engagement approaches with likely timescales.
15. It was further agreed that, once the Commission had the opportunity to consider this background information, it would consider the best approach to the timing of the review and engaging with both Argyll and Bute Council and Highland Council. The Commission asked for a proposed timeline for the further review to be provided at the next meeting.

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries: Stakeholder feedback survey (BS 203)

16. The Commission noted Paper BS 203 and users' experience of participating in consultations and local inquiries during the Second Review and provided some comments and suggestions for any future surveys.
17. It was noted that there was a relatively good response rate to the survey particularly from members of the public. Several areas were identified where improvements could be made. It was agreed that steps could be taken to

improve how the launch of the review is communicated, including a visual timeline setting out the key stages of the review. Also, easier to read communication materials could be produced and a 'you said/we listened' update may assist with increasing confidence that consultation submissions were taken into account. It was agreed that the lessons learned document should be updated to reflect the feedback from the stakeholder survey.

Summary of recent approach to consultation (BS 204)

18. The Commission considered Paper BS 204 and discussed approaches to consultation in general. Commissioners agreed that improving engagement and communication is likely to be a key area of development. It was agreed that there was scope for an internal position focusing on improving engagement, developing communication materials, overseeing hybrid public hearings and liaising with key stakeholders including local authorities. It is likely that an increased budget would be required to support engagement and communications before the next reviews. This will be taken forward with both the Sponsor Team and the Deputy Director at the next scheduled meetings.

2032 Electoral Reviews: Consultation on methodology (BS 205)

19. The Commission discussed Paper BS 205 and provided some comments and suggestions to the draft questions and contact list. Once these updates have been made the list of questions will be shared further with the Commissioners before the consultation takes place in Autumn 2026.

2032 Electoral Reviews: Research – background paper (BS 206)

20. The Commission considered Paper BS 206 and asked the Secretariat to prepare a further paper to inform the procurement of research regarding councillor workload. The Commission is particularly interested in trying to understand more about the challenges facing councillors and may commission independent surveys of both councillors and voters to assist with this. Commissioners are also interested in developing case studies of experiences in different parts of the country. A further paper will be considered at the next meeting.

Finance Update (BS 207)

21. The Commission noted the finance update and discussed the possible impact of the procurement of any research on the financial forecast.

Risk Register (BS 208)

22. The Commission noted from the risk register that risk 1 (risk of not meeting submission deadline) has been removed as the approval process for the Second Review is now complete. It also noted that three risks have been downgraded (risk of political interference, delay in legislative change and risk of insufficient staff resource).

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests (BS 209)

23. The Commission noted the FOI requests submitted from September to November 2025. The Commission commended the Secretariat for the prompt response to these requests.

Future meetings

24. The Secretariat was asked to canvass for a meeting date in late January 2026.

Any other business

25. There was no other business.