



Annual Report 2019-20

www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk

Deputy Chair's foreword

We completed our work on the most recent review of UK Parliament constituencies, the 2018 Review, in September 2018 when we submitted our recommendations to the Secretary of State for Scotland. Throughout the year we monitored developments related to the 2018 Review, and at the time of writing legislation is being considered by the UK Parliament which would bring the review to an end without implementation and provide for a further review to be completed by 2023. We are following progress of the legislation and will be prepared to commence the next review in 2021.

As part of that preparatory work we completed during 2019-20 a project to refresh our website, and members of our Secretariat visited Ordnance Survey to learn more about its mapping technology. We have also been considering lessons learned from the 2018 review and were helped in that by participation in the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions held in November 2019.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, our Secretariat began working from home in March 2020, which has resulted in minimal disruption to our work. We plan to conduct our meetings by videolink in 2020-21, until such time as Government safety advice allows us to return to face to face meetings in our office.

The Hon Lord Matthews
Deputy Chair, Boundary Commission for Scotland
July 2020

Boundary Commission for Scotland

Annual Report 2019-20

Contents

1	The Commission	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Membership	1
1.3	Code of Practice.....	2
1.4	Register of Commissioners' Interests	2
2	Secretariat	2
3	Review activity.....	3
3.1	Meetings.....	3
3.2	UK Parliament constituencies	3
4	Other activities	3
4.1	Staffing and training	3
4.2	Liaison with others	3
5	Governance	4
5.1	Legislation - UK Parliament reviews	4
5.2	Memorandum of Understanding.....	4
5.3	Data protection.....	4
5.4	Equality issues	4
5.5	Risk Management	4
6	Enquiries and public information	5
6.1	Enquiries	5
6.2	Website.....	5
6.3	Maps of constituencies	5
6.4	Information Papers	5
6.5	Minutes and meeting papers.....	6
7	Expenditure.....	6
7.1	Staff salaries	6
7.2	Commissioners' fees.....	6
7.3	Accommodation.....	7
7.4	Administration.....	7
7.5	Travel and subsistence	7
7.6	Review costs	7
7.7	Reportable transactions	7
8	Work programme for 2020-21	7
8.1	United Kingdom Parliament Review	7
8.2	Other activity.....	7
9	Further information	8

This report covers the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. Copies are available from our website www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk, or by request from our Secretariat.

1 The Commission

1.1 Background

The Boundary Commission for Scotland was established in its current form by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

Our duties and powers are detailed in the 1986 Act (as amended). We are responsible for reviews of United Kingdom Parliament constituencies in Scotland.

We are an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored and wholly funded by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland. We are an independent and non-political body.

1.2 Membership

The 1986 Act specifies that our membership comprises a Chair, Deputy Chair and two further Commissioners. In addition, the Act specifies that our officers shall include two ex-officio Assessors.

1.2.1 Chair

The ex-officio Chair of all four of the parliamentary Boundary Commissions in the United Kingdom is the Speaker of the House of Commons, as specified by the 1986 Act. In practice, the Chair takes no active part in the business of any of the Commissions.

1.2.2 Deputy Chair

The Deputy Chair is a judge of the Court of Session, appointed by the Lord President of the Court of Session, as specified by the 1986 Act. The current Deputy Chair is the Honourable Lord Matthews who was appointed from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018, and re-appointed from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

1.2.3 Commissioners

The Commissioners other than the Chair and Deputy Chair are appointed on a term basis through open competition using the procedures laid down by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Appointments are made by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

In the year 2019-20, the Commissioners were:

- Mrs Paula Sharp, re-appointed until 31 December 2020, having originally been appointed from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2014, and previously reappointed to 31 December 2018.
- Professor Ailsa Henderson, re-appointed until 31 January 2024, having originally been appointed from 16 February 2016 until 15 February 2020.

1.2.4 Assessors

Our two ex-officio Assessors are the Registrar General for Scotland, Paul Lowe, and the Director General of Ordnance Survey, represented by Dominic Cuthbert.

1.3 Code of Practice

The Cabinet Office Code of Practice for Members of Non-Departmental Public Bodies is available on our website.

1.4 Register of Commissioners' Interests

We maintain a Register of Interests of Commissioners, in accordance with the Code of Practice. The Register of Interests is available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

2 Secretariat

We are supported by a small Secretariat. Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 provides that the Secretary of State shall appoint a Secretary to the Commission. The Secretary, who is the Secretariat's senior officer, is normally a civil servant assigned from the Scottish Government, and the Secretary of State is invited to approve the appointment following a recommendation by Scotland Office senior management. The Secretary is Ms Isabel Drummond-Murray who has been in post since October 2014.

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 Commissions and government departments with an interest in boundary matters;
- responding to general and other correspondence concerning boundary issues; and
- managing workload across commissions.

The Secretariat is accommodated in Thistle House, near Haymarket, 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 the Commission's activities. During the year 2019-20, the assignment of Secretariat staff to support the Commission was as follows:

Post	Full-time equivalent
Secretary	0.5
Review Manager	0.5
Deputy Review Manager	0.5
Casework Officers	0.5
Finance and Governance Officer	0.5
IT Database Manager	0.24
General Office Manager	0.5
Total	3.24

Staff members are employed on a full-time basis, with their time allocated between support for us and for the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (LGBCS), which is responsible for reviewing electoral ward and local authority areas in Scotland and Scottish Parliament boundaries. The Secretariat is funded separately by the Scottish Government for that work.

3 Review activity

3.1 Meetings

We met on three occasions in 2019-20, which we considered adequate as we were not conducting a review during that time. We place minutes of meetings and copies of our discussion papers on our website on a phased basis at appropriate stages during our reviews (see section 6.5 below).

3.2 UK Parliament constituencies

We submitted our report on the 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies to the Secretary of State for Scotland on 5th September 2018. Our Final Recommendations were laid before Parliament on 10 September 2018 but were not implemented.

The Parliamentary Constituencies Bill 2019-21, which may make changes to the rules governing our reviews, is under consideration by Parliament

4 Other activities

4.1 Staffing and training

Training has continued to meet staff and future review requirements as well as mandatory requirements from the Scottish Government as employer, such as data protection training. Training in 2020-21 included creating and editing data using geographic information systems software and advanced use of spreadsheets.

4.2 Liaison with others

4.2.1 Other UK Boundary Commissions

In November 2019, we participated in the annual UK Boundaries Commissions meeting, this year held in London, where we were represented by Professor Henderson who attended via videolink. At the meeting we discussed lessons the Commissions could take from the 2018 Review, and planning for the next Review. We also received an update on the work of the other parliamentary and local government commissions.

4.2.2 Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland

We continue to have regular contact and dialogue with the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland as our sponsoring department (see 5.2 below).

4.2.3 Ordnance Survey

The Secretariat continues to work with Ordnance Survey to ensure that we have access to the optimum set of mapping data products to support our work, and that we receive technical advice on the deployment of those products. In October 2019 members of

the Secretariat visited Ordnance Survey's headquarters in Southampton to learn more about its mapping technology and observe all aspects of its cartographic processes.

4.2.4 National Records of Scotland

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

4.2.5 Other organisations

The Secretariat maintains and develops contacts with the Association of Electoral Administrators; the Scottish Assessors' Association, Electoral Registration Committee 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 Commission's Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel in Scotland, and written correspondence.

5 Governance

5.1 Legislation - UK Parliament reviews

Our reviews of UK Parliament constituencies are governed by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. The text of the legislation, incorporating current amendments, is available from www.legislation.gov.uk

5.2 Memorandum of Understanding

We have a Memorandum of Understanding setting out governance arrangements between us and our sponsoring department, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland. This was adopted in May 2017, following a review in conjunction with the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland. It is available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

5.3 Data protection

We handle personal information in line with the Data Protection Act, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We have notified the Information Commissioner's Office of the personal data which we handle. All staff have completed annual mandatory training in data protection issues.

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

5.4 Equality issues

We have an Equality Statement which sets out our approach to equality and diversity issues. The Statement is available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request. See <https://www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk/?q=corporate-documents>

5.5 Risk Management

The Secretariat has developed a Risk Management policy covering our work which is available on our website. A copy can be provided on request. In line with this policy we maintain a risk register which is reviewed regularly.

6 Enquiries and public information

We also use our website and social media to inform the public about our work, including answers to Frequently Asked Questions. We publish our meeting papers and minutes of our meetings on our website. In addition, the Secretariat responds to requests for information made by email, letter or phone.

We have a freedom of information policy which incorporates the Information Commissioner's Office model publication scheme for public bodies under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Our freedom of information policy and the model publication scheme are available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

6.1 Enquiries

Between April 2019 and March 2020, the Secretariat recorded 9 requests which stated that they were being made under the Freedom of Information Act. These did not directly relate to the work of the Commission, and were most commonly regarding contracts and expenditure. All were complied with and no requests for review were made.

6.2 Website

Our website remains the primary means for us to make information available. We update the website with all material which we publish. We completed our refresh of our website in summer 2019. An archive version of our website containing historical material is maintained by the National Records of Scotland and is available via our website and here:

<https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20190111180034/http://www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk/>.

6.3 Maps of constituencies

In conjunction with the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, we provide an interactive Map Browser. The Map Browser allows anyone with internet access to view maps showing some of the current and past electoral boundaries that we have been responsible for since our establishment in 1944 on a background of current Ordnance Survey mapping.

The Map Browser includes the last 6 sets of UK Parliament constituencies (from 1950 to date), the last 2 sets of Scottish Parliament boundaries (from 1999 to date) and 3 sets of European Parliament constituencies (from 1979 to date). The Map Browser also shows data from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland since 1995.

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

6.4 Information Papers

We have a series of Information Papers which explain our work. They cover:

- UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland: 1832 – present day;
- Scottish Parliament constituencies and regions 1999 – present day;
- UK and Scottish Parliament constituency names 1950 – present day;
- European Parliament constituencies in Scotland 1979-1999; and

- A General Guide to the Commission.

The Information Papers are available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

6.5 Minutes and meeting papers

We publish the minutes and meeting papers of our meetings on a staged basis during a review. Our minutes and meeting papers relating to the 2018 Review are available to view on our website. Where meeting papers include a draft of a document which is later published in its own right (such as our Information Papers, Annual Reports and Corporate Plans), we do not normally publish the draft.

7 Expenditure

Our expenditure for the year 2019-20 is set out under broad headings in the table below. After receiving an initial budget allocation from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Secretariat re-forecasts expenditure during the year and keeps the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland informed of the likely expenditure for the year. Any required resources have to be approved by the UK Parliament.

The budget allocation to the Commission from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland in 2019-20 was £400,000. Of this, £100,000 was returned to the Treasury as part of the supplementary estimate, following notification by the Commission of a forecast underspend. The budget as shown below is that set out in the 2019-22 Corporate Plan.

Financial Performance April 2019 – March 2020		
	Forecast	Spend
Staff costs	166,833	180,614
Commissioners' fees and expenses	3,693	1,775
Accommodation	21,963	20,785
Administration	46,201	24,049
Travel and subsistence	2,000	617
Review costs	0	0
Total	240,635	227,840

7.1 Staff salaries

Salary costs are determined by the pay arrangements for our seven staff, who are employees of the Scottish Government. The Commission agrees the number of staff it requires with the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and agrees an apportionment of staff costs shared with the LGBCS. The overspend on staff costs was due to the net effect of the Scottish Government's pay settlement for 2019-20 and tax, national insurance and pension costs being higher than forecast.

7.2 Commissioners' fees

Commissioners' fees are determined by the Secretary of State for Scotland and cover attendance at all of our scheduled meetings and associated preparation, meetings held with other UK Boundary Commissions and ad hoc meetings held with other bodies. Commissioners' fees are paid on a per diem basis. The fee rate for

Commissioners during the year has been £505.50 per day, and has been unchanged since April 2009. The Deputy Chair post is not remunerated.

7.3 Accommodation

We share accommodation with the LGBCS. The figures shown in the above table in respect of accommodation reflect our share of these costs.

7.4 Administration

Administration costs include office equipment and furniture, stationery and other consumables, telephone costs, secretariat and commissioner training, computer hardware, computer software maintenance, support and licence fees and website support costs. The underspend in Administration costs is chiefly due to funds set aside for work on website being spent late in 2018-19 and deferring IT refresh to 2020-21.

7.5 Travel and subsistence

Travel and subsistence includes rail, air and car-hire costs incurred by the Secretariat and Commissioners in the course of official business. Travel and subsistence costs necessarily and actually incurred in the course of official business are reimbursed, on the production of receipts, within civil service limits.

7.6 Review costs

Review costs cover those items directly attributable to the conduct of our boundary reviews, and include newspaper advertising, our consultation portal and printing. We did not have any such costs in 2019-20.

7.7 Reportable transactions

In line with UK Government policy, we publish data on all single transactions greater than £25,000 and all Electronic Purchasing Card (ePC) transactions over £500.

We made no transaction exceeding £25,000. We made one reportable ePC transaction of £577 for a tablet computer to assist the secretariat. This cost was shared with the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland.

8 Work programme for 2020-21

8.1 United Kingdom Parliament Review

At the time of writing, the next UK Parliament Review is due to be completed in September 2023. We will engage in planning activity for that review throughout the year, and we expect to begin work on it in early 2021, announcing the Review and developing Initial Proposals.

As discussed, we are aware that at the time of writing Parliament is considering making changes to the structure and timetable of the next Review. We will adjust our planning to reflect any changes Parliament may make.

8.2 Other activity

- We will work with the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland to appoint a new Commissioner, to replace Mrs Paula Sharp, whose appointment ends on 31 December 2020.
- We will carry out our governance functions throughout the year to ensure that we manage the Commission's operations efficiently and cost effectively, and meet the Government's requirements of an advisory Non-departmental Public Body (NDPB).
- We expect one of our commissioners to attend the annual meeting of the UK boundary commissions.
- We will meet with our sponsor department, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland on a quarterly basis.
- We will keep under review any developments in the area in which we work.

9 Further information

If you have a query which cannot be answered by this report or our website (www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk) please do not hesitate to contact us either by email, telephone or in writing.



Boundary Commission for Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD
0131 244 2001
bcs@scottishboundaries.gov.uk