



# Annual Report 2020-21

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## Deputy Chair's foreword

This year we began our work on the 2023 Review of UK Parliament constituencies, at the conclusion of which we are required to submit our recommendations for UK Parliamentary constituencies in Scotland to the UK Parliament, before 1 July 2023. We have been carefully considering options for our initial proposals, which we plan to consult upon publically in autumn 2021.

We thanked Paula Sharp, whose term of appointment as a Commissioner ended in December 2020 for her excellent work since 2011, and welcomed Dr Sue Walker as a new Commissioner.

Professor Henderson participated in the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions on our behalf, where we shared our thoughts and experiences with the other UK Commissions on the 2023 Review and working arrangements during the coronavirus pandemic.

During the coronavirus pandemic we conducted our meetings by videoconference, and our secretariat worked from home. We thank them for helping to keep disruption to our work to a minimum. We expect to continue our meetings in this manner until Government advice allows us to return to face to face meetings in our office.

The Hon Lord Matthews  
Deputy Chair, Boundary Commission for Scotland  
July 2021



# Boundary Commission for Scotland

## Annual Report 2020- 21

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This report covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Copies are available from our website [www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk](http://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 2020-21, 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 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.
- Dr Sue Walker, appointed, 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2024.

### 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, or a copy can be provided on request.

### 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 officials in the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland. 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 2020-21, the assignment of Secretariat staff to support the Commission was as follows:

<b>Post</b>	<b>Full- time equivalent</b>
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.24</b>

Staff members' time is allocated between support for us and for Boundaries Scotland, which is responsible for reviewing electoral ward and local authority areas in Scotland and Scottish Parliament boundaries. Prior to 14 May 2021 Boundaries Scotland was

known as the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (LGBCS). The Secretariat is funded separately by the Scottish Government for that work.

## **3 Review activity**

### **3.1 Meetings**

We met on five occasions in 2020-21. Our meetings were held by videoconference this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. 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 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Our Final Recommendations were laid before Parliament on 10 September 2018 but were not implemented.

Following the passage of the UK Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020, which amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, we commenced our work on the 2023 Review of UK Parliament constituencies, and began developing our initial proposals.

We will submit our recommendations for the fifty-seven constituencies in Scotland which are under review before 1 July 2023. The two protected constituencies of Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Western Isles) and Orkney and Shetland do not require to be reviewed.

## **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.

### **4.2 Liaison with others**

#### **4.2.1 Other UK Boundary Commissions**

On 27 November 2020, we participated in the annual UK Boundaries Commissions meeting, this year held by video conference where we were represented by Professor Henderson. At the meeting we discussed preparations for the 2023 Review with the other Commissions as well as working arrangements during the coronavirus pandemic.

We also worked with the Boundary Commission for England and the Boundary Commission for Wales in developing a tender for, and procuring, a shared consultation portal, to be used during the 2023 Review.

#### **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 (OSSS) 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.

#### **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**

Our Governance documents below are available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request. Please see: [Corporate Documents | The Boundary Commission for Scotland \(independent.gov.uk\)](#)

### **5.1 Legislation - UK Parliament reviews**

Our reviews of UK Parliament constituencies are governed by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the UK Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020. The text of the legislation, incorporating current amendments, is available from [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://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 (OSSS). This was adopted in May 2017, following a review in conjunction with the OSSS.

### **5.3 Data protection**

We handle personal information in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, 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 is available on our website which sets out our approach to equality and diversity issues.

## 5.5 Risk Management

The Secretariat has developed a Risk Management policy covering our work. In line with this policy we maintain a risk register which is reviewed regularly.

# 6 Enquiries and public information

We 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 2018. 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 Freedom of Information Requests

Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, the Secretariat recorded 9 Freedom of Information requests. 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 received.

## 6.2 Website

Our website remains the primary means for us to make information available. We update the website with all the material which we publish. 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 Boundaries 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 Boundaries 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 2020-21 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 (OSSS), the Secretariat re-forecasts expenditure during the year and keeps the OSSS 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 2020-21 was £408,000. Of this, £100,800 was returned to the Treasury as part of the Supplementary Estimate process, following notification by the Commission of a forecast underspend. The forecast as shown below is that set out in the 2020-23 Corporate Plan.

<b>Financial Performance April 2020 - March 2021</b>		
	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Spend</b>
Staff costs	£188,603	£188,598
Commissioners' fees and expenses	£11,321	£8,472
Accommodation	£22,451	£22,421
Administration	£39,660	£18,483
Travel and subsistence	£2,000	£0
Review costs	£6,000	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£270,035</b>	<b>£237,974</b>

### 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 Boundaries Scotland.

### 7.2 Commissioners' fees and expenses

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 was £505.50 per day, and has been unchanged since April 2009. No expenses were claimed in 2020-21. The Deputy Chair post is not remunerated.

### **7.3 Accommodation**

We share accommodation with Boundaries Scotland. 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 contingency funds not being required to be spent, reductions in office and external training costs due to coronavirus, and savings on some IT costs.

### **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. Due to the impact of coronavirus we did not have any such costs in 2020-21.

### **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, legal advice and printing. We did not have any such costs in 2020-21.

### **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.

In 2020-21 we made no transactions exceeding £25,000, and we made no reportable ePC transactions.

## **8 Work programme for 2021- 22**

### **8.1 United Kingdom Parliament Review**

We will continue our work on the 2023 Review of UK Parliament constituencies throughout 2021-22.

We expect to publish our initial proposals for an 8-week initial public consultation in autumn 2021. We will publish the responses to this public consultation, and in spring 2022, hold a further 6-week secondary publication consultation, during which we will hold public hearings on our proposals.

After considering the responses to the public consultations, we may choose to revise our proposals. If we do this, we will hold a further public consultation on these revised proposals, before submitting our recommendations to the UK Parliament before 1 July 2023.

## 8.2 Other activity

- The Deputy Chair's term of appointment ends on 31 December 2021. We will provide any support required to the Private Office of the Lord President of the Court of Session to ensure continuity of appointment.
- 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 regular basis.
- We will keep under review any developments in the area in which we work.

## 8.3 Funding for 2021- 22

The Commission has been allocated £408,000 by Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland for 2021-22. This allocation reflects the Spending Review settlement which rolled forward the baseline from the previous year.

The Commission's Corporate Plan for 2021-24, which is available on our website, forecast spending of £423,049. The Secretariat expects that the Commission will be able to achieve its work for the year within a budget of £408,000 through savings on Accommodation and Review Costs.

## 9 Further information

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







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