



**Boundary
Commission**
for Scotland

Coimisean Crìochan
na h-Alba

Annual Report 2022 – 2023

Boundary Commission for Scotland
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Deputy Chair's foreword

This year we continued to work on the 2023 Review of UK Parliament constituencies, finalising our recommendations in suitable time and submitting our report before the statutory deadline of 1 July 2023.

Following our 6-week secondary consultation which started on 10 February 2022 we considered the responses received and developed our revised proposals. We published these for a final 4-week consultation stage from 8 November to 5 December 2022. We presented our report on progress of the 2023 Review to the Speaker in January 2023. We then developed our final recommendations which were submitted to the Speaker on 27 June and laid before Parliament on 28 June 2023.

With the challenges of a review under new legislation and against the background of the Covid pandemic and two reviews ongoing, with shared staffing with Boundaries Scotland Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries, we were pleased with the progress and conclusion of the 2023 Review. We will of course be considering lessons learned to take into future reviews but are happy to note that, with the introduction of automaticity to the process, the 2023 Review, unlike its immediate predecessors, seems likely to be implemented with the new boundaries in force for the next UK General Election.

I would like to thank the Commissioners and staff of BCS (Boundary Commission for Scotland) as well as our Assessor, Dominic Cuthbert. Undertaking a review particularly against the background of the last 3 years, is always a challenge and it is a credit to the Commission that it was completed successfully.

The Right Hon. Lord Matthews
Deputy Chair, Boundary Commission for Scotland
October 2023

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This report covers the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. 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 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 Right Honourable Lord Matthews who was appointed from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018, re-appointed from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021, and again until 31 December 2024.

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 2022–23, the Commissioners were:

- Professor Ailsa Henderson, appointed from 16 February 2016 until 15 February 2020, and re-appointed until 31 January 2024,

- Dr Susan Walker appointed 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2024.

1.2.4 Assessors

Our two ex-officio Assessors are the Registrar General for Scotland 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 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, in central 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 2022-23, the average 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
Review Officer	0.5
Finance and Governance Officer	0.5
IT Database Manager	0.19
General Office Manager	0.5
Total	3.19

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. The Secretariat is funded separately by the Scottish Government for that work.

3 Review activity

3.1 Meetings

From April 2022 to February 2023 our meetings were held by videoconference due to the coronavirus pandemic and following government guidelines. From March 2023 we started to meet in person again. 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 began work on the 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies in January 2021.

We published our revised proposals for a final 4-week consultation stage from 8 November to 5 December 2022.

As required by legislation we submitted our 2023 Progress Report to the Speaker in January 2023. It recorded our activities during 2022.

We then developed our final recommendations, which were laid before Parliament on 28 June 2023.

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 25th November 2022, we participated in the annual UK Boundaries Commissions meeting, held in Cardiff where we were represented by Professor Henderson. At the meeting we discussed the ongoing 2023 Review and shared experiences and ideas with the other parliamentary commissions as well as those responsible for local government arrangements across the UK.

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: www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk/?q=corporate-documents

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

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 2022 and 31 March 2023, the Secretariat recorded 14 Freedom of Information requests. 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.nrsotland.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.

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;
- UK constituency names 1950 – present day;
- 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 2023 Review are available to view on our website. Where meeting papers include a draft of a document which is later published on its own (such as our Information Papers, Annual Reports and Corporate Plans), we do not normally publish the draft.

7 Expenditure

Our expenditure for the year 2022–23 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 monthly during the year and keeps the OSSS informed of the expenditure for the year. Any required resources must be approved by the UK Parliament.

The budget allocation to the Commission from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland in 2022–23 was £408,000. Actual spend is shown in the table below:

Financial Performance		
April 2021 – March 2022		
	Forecast	Spend
Staff costs	£201,962	£198,612
Commissioners' fees and expenses	£23,803	£7,082
Accommodation	£22,752	£18,029
Administration	£39,700	£18,796
Travel and subsistence	£2,000	£596
Review costs	£117,783	£41,133
Total	£408,000	£284,249

7.1 Staff salaries

Salary costs are determined by the pay arrangements for our 6.4 staff (3.2 FTE for this Commission), 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 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 day basis. The cost was significantly lower than forecast as the Commission held fewer meetings than budgeted for, with lower average cost per meeting. The fee rate for Commissioners during the year was £505.50 per day, and this has been unchanged since April 2009. No additional expenses were claimed in 2022–23. The Deputy Chair post is not remunerated.

7.3 Administration

Administration costs include office equipment and furniture, stationery and other consumables, telephone, website costs, internet and email, training, computer software maintenance, support and licence fees and other IT costs.

The underspend in Administration costs is chiefly due to contingency funds not being required to be spent, in addition to lower training and office costs than budgeted, due in part to working arrangements during the coronavirus pandemic, and savings on some IT costs.

7.4 Travel and subsistence

Travel and subsistence include rail, air and car-hire costs incurred by the Secretariat and Commissioners during official business, which does not relate directly to a review (such costs fall under Review Costs). Travel and subsistence costs necessarily and actually incurred during official business are reimbursed, on the production of receipts, within civil service limits.

7.5 Review costs

Review costs cover those items directly attributable to the conduct of our boundary reviews, and include our consultation portal, newspaper and social media advertising, public hearing costs, legal advice, and printing. The underspend in Review Costs is chiefly due to lower costs than budgeted for our Consultation Portal and for the design costs of the publicity materials for our public consultations.

7.6 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 on our website. In 2022–23 we made one transaction greater than £25,000 and made nine ePC transactions over £500.

8 Work programme for 2023–24

8.1 United Kingdom Parliament Review

We will provide any assistance required to the Speaker, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as they work to implement the recommendations of the four UK Boundary Commissions, such as providing written definitions of constituency boundaries.

8.2 Other activity

- 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 will with Boundaries Scotland jointly host the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions in Edinburgh in November.
- We will meet with our sponsor department, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland on a regular basis.
- We will work with OSSS to ensure continuity of Commissioner appointments
- We will keep under review any developments in the area in which we work.

8.3 Funding for 2023–24

The Commission has been allocated £408,000 by Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland for 2023–24.

The Commission’s Corporate Plan for 2022–25, which is available on our website, forecast spending of £359,186.

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.