

Minutes of Hybrid Meeting held at 1 pm on 29 May 2024

Present:

The Right Hon Lord Matthews, Deputy Chair (by VC)
Dr Sue Walker, Commissioner
Professor Ailsa Henderson, Commissioner
Mr Dominic Cuthbert, Ordnance Survey, Assessor

Kirsty Mavor, Secretary
Colin Wilson
Douglas Campbell (by VC)
Yvonne Croll
Pat Allan

Apologies and Declarations of Interest

No apologies as all present. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of previous meeting

1. The minutes of the 16 November 2023 meeting were agreed.

Matters Arising

2. Dr Walker reported on the UK Commissions meeting hosted by the Secretariat on 7-8 December 2023. Professor Henderson also attended the meeting in her capacity as Chair of Boundaries Scotland. It was a useful meeting with lessons learned being shared by the UK Commissions and there were also suggestions for research. There was a proposal for the next meeting to be held in Spring 2025 as opposed to late Autumn 2024. It was agreed that the Secretariat would liaise with the hosts over the dates to ensure that it would not affect the number of attendees. The Commission thanked the Secretariat for successfully arranging the meeting.

Business Update

3. The Secretary provided an update on Boundaries Scotland and their work on the 2nd Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries. It was confirmed that six local inquiries were held in December 2023 and January 2024. The public consultation on revised proposals closed on 15 May 2024 and Boundaries Scotland will be considering whether any local inquiries or further consultation need to take place before finalising the recommendations in relation to constituencies. The Commission also heard that Simon Jones and Alison McNab, the new Deputy Chair and Commissioner respectively, were now in post.
4. The Commission is awaiting confirmation that the recruitment of Prof Henderson's successor is on hold due to the announcement of the General Election on 4 July 2024. Further to the announcement of the general election, our website has been updated with details of the Ordnance Survey postcode search facility and staff have been reminded to remain politically neutral and guidance on the pre-election period has been shared.

2023 Review: Lessons Learned (2024/01)

5. The Commissioners discussed the paper and suggested some further amendments. It was agreed that this document should be shared with the new Deputy Chair, once appointed, and added to the agenda for a Commission meeting in early 2025.

Annual Report (2024/02)

6. The Commission agreed its Annual Report subject to minor amendments. It was noted that the report should not be sent to OSSS or published on the website until after the General Election.

Corporate Plan (2024/03)

7. The Commissioners requested some minor amendments to the draft plan. Any underspend was to be highlighted to the sponsor team at the earliest opportunity and the Corporate Plan was to be added to the agenda for the new Deputy Chair to consider.

Risk Management (2024/04)

8. Risk Management was discussed at the meeting in some detail. Several improvements were suggested including additional risks and it was decided to consider these at a future meeting.

Finance Update (2024/05)

9. The Commission noted the finance update.

Any Other Business

10. The Deputy Chair was content for letters to be drafted to the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Speaker of the House of Commons on the Deputy Chair's departure providing reflections from his time in post.
11. Following discussions with Mr Cuthbert and colleagues from Ordnance Survey it was agreed that the Commission should consult with Ordnance Survey earlier in the process when drafting its final recommendations as to better reflect changes to topographical features and their impact on common electoral boundaries.
12. Mr Cuthbert noted he had been representing Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Chief Executive of Ordnance Survey. With the appointment of a new Chief Executive he would confirm if this would still be the case going forward.
13. The Deputy Chair thanked Prof Henderson for her 8 years of service and all she has contributed to the Commission.

Dates of next meeting

14. The Commission agreed to meet again in Autumn 2024.

Secretariat

May 2024