BCS Paper 2017/51

2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies
Issues raised during public consultation

For information

1. This paper summarises the responses and main issues which have emerged during the initial public consultation on the Commission's Initial Proposals for constituencies.

Public consultation

2. The Commission received 1471 discrete responses to the public consultation: 183 by letter, 823 by email, 432 direct to the portal and a further 33 representations were made during the 5 public hearings.

3. The Commission may be interested to note that it received approximately 500 responses during its initial consultation for 6th Review of UK Parliament constituencies.

4. There were 71 attendees across the public hearings, which were held in Glasgow, Dundee, Ayr, Inverness and Edinburgh. Elected officials dominated the contributions with only 4 members of the public making statements. One such statement was in support of an MP and another was on behalf of their local community council. There were no public contributions in either Dundee or Ayr.

5. 487 representations were in support of the proposals and 975 were in opposition. The remaining 9 neither supported nor opposed the Commission's proposals. There was one petition/letter writing campaign by the residents of Craigton in East Dunbartonshire who objected to the Commission's proposals for the area.

6. The vast majority of responses were from individual members of the public, the breakdown of responses were as follows:

    - 1,354 from members of the public
    - 24 from Local Councillors or elected officials
    - 24 from community groups
    - 20 on behalf of a local authority
    - 14 from members of the Scottish Parliament
    - 12 official responses from a national political party (includes statements made at public hearings)
    - 12 official responses from a local political party
    - 8 from members of the UK Parliament
    - 2 on behalf of another organisation
    - 1 behalf of an organisation

7. When considering responses by council area, the areas which generated the greatest number of responses were as follows:

    - 403 in South Ayrshire, 402 of which supported the proposals
    - 225 in Aberdeenshire, 222 of which opposed the proposals
    - 172 in East Dunbartonshire, 167 of which opposed the proposals
    - 145 in Perth and Kinross, 141 of which opposed the proposals
    - 138 in Dumfries and Galloway, 137 of which opposed the proposals

- 118 in City of Edinburgh, 75 of which opposed the proposals
- 83 in Highland, 78 of which opposed the proposals

8. Over 200 alternative suggestions were submitted which included new boundaries and constituency names and they are described below in each grouping.

Summary of Comments by qualifying political parties

9. The Scottish Liberal Democrats support local suggestions in Banchory, Fife and Bearsden. They also support the alternative suggestion from Ian Murray MP in Edinburgh.

10. The Scottish Labour Party generally supports the grouping of council areas but has provided little comment on individual constituencies at the moment. However they support the alternative suggestion from Ian Murray MP in Edinburgh; suggest not splitting Renfrew; support the alternative suggestion from North Ayrshire Council; suggest linking Dumfries and Galloway council area with South Ayrshire council area; support the proposed Rutherglen and Hamilton West constituency as well as the proposed East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow constituency; and oppose the proposed constituencies in North Lanarkshire (Airdrie South and Shotts, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Monklands East, and Hamilton and Motherwell).

11. The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party have proposed alternative constituency boundaries, alternative council area groupings or alternative constituency names in most council areas across Scotland with the exception of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, Dundee and Aberdeen. The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party were the only respondents to supply gis shapefiles to support their representations.

Comments by council area groupings - suggestions and comments

12. *Highland, Moray, Argyll and Bute council areas*:
    - Most respondents raised concerns surrounding the proposal to split the Kilmallie Community Council area by Fort William. In support of their concerns Kilmallie CC made a representation at the Inverness public hearing. They suggested using the watershed as a boundary instead of the Caledonian Canal, by Caol and Corpach.
    - The size of the Highland constituencies as dictated by the legislation was commented upon and suggestions were made that were outwith the legislation.
    - There were a few comments in opposition to Nairn joining the Moray Constituency with most Nairn respondents wishing to retain links with Inverness.

13. *Angus, Aberdeenshire, Dundee City council areas*:
    - Over 170 responses in the Aberdeenshire area opposed the Commission's proposals for Banchory, which proposed including it in a constituency with areas of Angus. Banchory being retained in a constituency with the rest of Deeside was widely supported.
    - There were no alternative suggestions made for this grouping, opposition was based on the retention of the existing boundaries on Deeside.

14. *Aberdeen City council area*:
    - Some small changes were suggested in the way that the city is split into two constituencies

15. *Fife and Perth and Kinross council areas*:
    - Over 120 respondents commented on the proposed Kinross-shire and Cowdenbeath constituency, with most questioning links between central Perthshire and coastal Fife.
    - Most responses suggested combining Perthshire with northern parts of Stirling council area and also linking Clackmannanshire with parts of Fife.

16. *Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling council areas*:
    - Nearly 20 responses opposed the proposals.
    - Opposition particularly focused on the decision to split the City of Stirling between 2 constituencies.

17. *East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire council areas*:
    - There were in excess of 160 responses in opposition to the decision to split Bearsden between constituencies.
    - There were in excess of 40 letters received following a letter writing campaign from the residents of Craigton, north of Milngavie. The residents opposed the proposal to split the small village of Craigton in Milngavie between constituencies.
    - There have been few detailed alternatives provided in this area but some respondents have suggested linking these council areas with other areas.

18. *Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, and South Ayrshire and East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire council areas*:
    - There have been approximately 400 responses supporting the proposal to join Ayr, Troon and Prestwick in a single constituency.
    - Some representations suggested Largs has a closer affinity to towns in North Ayrshire rather than those on the Inverclyde coast but there was not a large volume of responses to support this.
    - The proposals effecting East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and East Ayrshire have received a low volume of responses. Some respondents have spoken of maintaining Kilmarnock's links with the Irvine Valley.
    - Some alternative suggestions to boundaries and constituency names have been submitted for this grouping.

19. *Dumfries and Galloway, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire council areas*:
    - In excess of 130 responses were received in opposition to the proposals in Dumfries and Galloway and in particular proposed changes to constituencies around Dumfries and the areas of Heathhall and Locharbriggs in particular.
    - The vast majority of respondents in the area also questioned the proposals near Annan and the decision to place Annan in a constituency apart from Annandale itself.
    - Some suggestions for alternative boundaries for the Dumfries and Galloway constituency boundary were received.
    - General support for the proposals in South Lanarkshire which aim to retain some existing constituency boundaries but also opposition to the proposals in North Lanarkshire where Airdrie is split and linked with Kilsyth.

20. *Glasgow City council areas*:
    - 20 out of 22 responses for the Glasgow City council area opposed the Commission's proposals
    - Opposition focused on Craigton and the new ward boundaries in this area following the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's 5th Reviews.
    - There were also alternative proposals for boundaries to the south of Glasgow.

21. *City of Edinburgh and West Lothian council area* - suggestions have included:
    - 75 responses out of 118 received for the City of Edinburgh council area were in opposition to the proposals.
    - The majority of responses supported Ian Murray MP's counter proposal that would place ward 11 in an Edinburgh East constituency and would obviate the need to split ward 15, instead placing it in its entirety in Edinburgh South and Central.
    - A significant number of responses were received from those in support of the proposals for Edinburgh and in particular the Edinburgh South and Central constituency.

22. *Midlothian, Scottish Borders council areas*:
    - The majority of responses for this area came from Peebles. Most respondents felt that the proposals would jeopardise Peebles's close relationship with the remainder of the Border towns. However Peebles is not currently in a constituency with other border towns.
    - A number of respondents made comments outwith the legislation that focused on factors outside the Commission's remit.
    - An alternative suggestion was received that suggested putting part of Scottish Borders ward 2 at Clovenfords into the Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Tweeddale constituency rather than the Midlothian and Tweeddale constituency.

23. *East Lothian council areas*:
    - There was one response for East Lothian council area and that was in favour of the status quo.

Secondary consultation

24. The Commission's secondary consultation period is expected to begin on Tuesday 28 February 2017 and conclude on Monday 27 March 2017.

25. The Commission will issue a news release, display poster and contact all interested stakeholders.

26. All of the redacted representations from the initial consultation will be available to view on the consultation portal, and can be searched by different fields, including council area, name, etc.

Conclusion

27. The Commission is invited to note this paper and to agree its general approach to further constituency design and in particular the impact consultation responses will have on constituency design and groupings of council areas.

Secretariat,
February 2017