

2018 Review – Lessons Learned

Background

1. In preparation for the 2023 Review, the Commission wished to be reminded of Paper 2018/25 “2018 Review – Lessons Learned.” It was originally discussed at the Commission’s 29 October 2018 meeting and reflected on the 2018 Review with a view to producing recommendations to inform the 2023 Review.
2. The minute from that meeting recommended that the Secretariat liaise with the Boundary Commissions for England, Northern Ireland and Wales to gain any useful suggestions or feedback from their 2018 Reviews.
3. The planned changes to the legislative framework mean that many specific issues are overtaken by events but the Secretariat continue to liaise with counterparts. Particular consideration will need to be given to the previously circulated appeal judgement in the judicial review against the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.

Discussion

4. This paper has updated Appendix A from Paper 2018/25. The main themes for consideration are discussed in Appendix A and highlight differences in approach to the 2018 Review between the four Commissions.
5. Map styles for the 2023 Review are discussed in a separate paper (Paper 2020/07).

Next steps

6. The Commission is invited to reflect on its, and the other Commissions, approach to the 2018 Review and to make recommendations or suggestions as it prepares for the 2023 Review.

Secretariat
July 2020

2018 Review – Lessons Learned

Consultation

Public Hearings

1. The Commission held 5 Public Hearings (Ayr, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness). 71 people attended the Hearings, mainly elected officials, with 63 making verbal comments. All Public Hearings were concluded within 1 to 4 hours, although accommodation and transcript services were booked for 2 days. At each Hearing the Secretary read a 10 minute statement. 2 other members of the Secretariat attended each hearing to assist with scheduling speakers and dealing with any queries.
2. The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland (BCNI) held 4 one-day Public Hearings (Ballymena, Omagh, Belfast and Portadown), including evening sessions. They received 55 comments from their Public Hearings and recommended holding single day hearings in the future.
3. The Boundary Commission for Wales (BCW) held 5 two-day Public Hearings (Carmarthen, Bangor, Cardiff, Llandrindod, Wrexham) which included evening sessions. 74 individuals spoke at their hearings.
4. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) held 36 Public Hearings which included evening sessions. They recorded a video of each Hearing. Attendance varied from less than 10 to hundreds but did not record the number of attendees or speakers at each hearing.
5. For the 2023 Review
 - the Secretary could present a short video instead of reading a statement. Most conference facilities have suitable IT and video equipment;
 - a single full day hearing, including evening session, may be preferable instead of scheduling 2 day public hearings; and
 - the Commission may wish to consider the timing of Hearings. MP's and MSP's prefer a morning session to enable them to travel to Parliament for voting later in the day. Members of the public would prefer an evening session. However, the availability of Sheriff Principals and suitable accommodation to host an event during the daytime and evening would need to be considered. The Commission could hold a formal morning Public Hearing with a Sheriff Principal and then hold an informal evening session later in the day.

Display Points

6. The Commission must display its proposals at a specified place within each proposed constituency. During the 2018 Review the Commission used up to 90 display points (libraries and council offices). Each display point location was sent a poster, policies and procedures booklet and booklet with its all Scotland proposals.
7. BCNI displayed its proposals in approximately 100 locations including council offices, libraries and Electoral Offices.

8. BCE and BCW have not published the number or location of display points used during their reviews.
9. For the 2023 Review the Commission could consider using fewer display materials but sending these to more display point locations. For example a leaflet instead of a booklet could be printed with basic information about the review this would direct users to the Commissions website for more detailed information.

Social Media

10. The Commission trialled paid Twitter advertising during the secondary consultation on its Initial Proposals but it was cut short following a Cabinet Office instruction in the wake of the Westminster Bridge terrorist attack. The Twitter advertising trial was too short to fully analyse the results.
11. BCW publicised their review on social media with Facebook and Twitter, while BCNI only used Twitter.
12. BCE had a £1m budget for their media campaign, managed by a Press Officer. Their campaign aimed to “inform, engage, educate, reassure” and used national press, radio adverts and social media. They received 92% of their responses online. They mainly used Facebook and Twitter as their social media channels but also made use of LinkedIn and YouTube. They considered that it was difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of radio and press advertising.
13. The Secretariat has undertaken some further trials of social media advertising. During the LGBCS Islands Reviews public consultation, advertisements were placed on both social media and the local press. Of those who responded to the consultation, 61% advised they were made aware of the review via social media, while 12% had seen the newspaper advertisements.
14. For the 2023 Review the Commission may wish to consider expanding its use of social media advertising.

Commission Meetings

15. During the 2018 Review, the Commission preferred holding meetings every 4 – 6 weeks. The Commission considered up to 3 groupings of constituencies at each meeting which usually lasted half a day. Meeting papers were posted a week before each meeting.
16. The Boundary Commission for England held several full day meetings within a single week to agree all of its proposals. BCNI held more frequent meetings. BCW do not publish Commission meeting information.
17. For the 2023 Review the Commission may wish to continue with shorter more regular Commission meetings and to consider designing meeting papers for its final recommendations which can be incorporated in the final report.

Legislation

18. The following points were considered relevant to the legislation in place during the 2018 Review. Further consideration will need to be given to the legal position following the enactment of the Parliamentary Constituencies Bill.

19. The Commission must consider “local government boundaries as they exist on the most recent ordinary council–election day before the review date.” For the 2018 Review this was 3 May 2012. During the 2018 Review, ward boundaries changed following the implementation of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland’s (LGBCS) 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements in May 2017. The Parliamentary Constituencies Bill seeks to offer greater flexibility by allowing consideration to be taken of “prospective” boundaries.
20. During the 2023 Review, new ward boundaries are likely to come into force in May 2022 following the Reviews of Electoral Arrangements of Argyll & Bute, North Ayrshire and Highland council areas. New ward boundaries will also be implemented for the preserved constituencies of Orkney and Shetland and Na h-Eileanan an Iar.
21. The Commission may wish to consider legal advice on the degree to which the Rule 5 factors are prescriptive ie whether other factors not listed may also be taken into account such as later boundaries.

Environmental strategy

22. During each consultation stage of the 2018 Review, over 250 copies of an all Scotland summary of proposals booklet, policies and procedures booklet, maps, news release were printed for distribution to interested parties and display points.
23. At the start of each consultation stage, BCS, BCE and BCW Secretariat staff hand delivered proposals to MPs at Westminster.
24. For the publication of the Commission’s Final Report, the report was only available to download from its website and only a few copies were printed.
25. For the 2023 Review the Commission may wish to consider minimising printed materials for future reviews, directing interested parties to the Commission’s website to download documents instead and emailing proposals to MP’s rather than hand delivering them at Westminster. The legacy of the Covid pandemic may limit face to face meeting anyway.

Misinformation during Reviews

26. The Commission received a number of responses and queries from the general public who were misinformed on the role and impact of the 2018 Review. These included a desire to reduce the size of the House of Lords or concern over changes to local services.
27. FAQs were published on the Commission’s website stating: the proposals do not affect: your council boundary, ward boundary or community council boundary; your council tax and the services your council provides; your school catchment area; your postcode or postal address; access to public or private facilities or transport; policing or fire service areas; or, NHS services, i.e. your GP or local hospital.
28. BCE employed a Press Officer who ran a media campaign that aimed to inform, engage, educate and reassure the general public.

29. For the 2023 Review the Commission will not have the budget to employ a Press Officer but may wish to make a more prominent statement on the impact of a review of UK Parliament constituencies.

Consultation Portal

30. The Commission shared development and running costs for a shared consultation portal with BCE and BCW. The cost of the portal was £77,000 inc vat for BCS.
31. The Commission received 3,236 consultation responses during the 2018 Review. Approximately 1,600 of these were submitted by email, 1,200 via the portal, 400 by post and 60 at Public Hearings.
32. BCW received a total of 5,000 comments and BCNI received 14,000 responses.
33. The BCE received a total of 37,000 responses. 92% or 34,000 comments were submitted online.
34. Ahead of the 2023 Review the Commission has already discussed Consultation Portal Options at its meeting of 17 February 2020, see Paper 2020/01. Informed Solutions have provided an approximate quote for re-using the existing consultation site rather than building a new site. This would be significantly cheaper compared to the 2018 Review site but costs are dependent on how many Commissions share the site and the apportionment of costs.

Constituency Names

35. A separate paper is being presented reviewing the Commission's policy on naming constituencies (Paper 2020/07).
36. A constituency naming policy is also being discussed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland at its meeting on 21 July to inform initial consideration before the Second Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries.

Most commented areas

37. The Commission may wish to note for future reviews the areas where its proposals received the most comments during the 2018 Review. They included:
- support for linking Ayr with Prestwick and Troon;
 - opposition to placing Banchory in a separate constituency from other communities in Deeside;
 - opposition to linking urban Fife with rural Perthshire;
 - opposition to splitting Bearsden between constituencies; and
 - opposition to the whole of Dumfries and neighbouring communities not being included within the same constituency.
38. The proposed reversion to 650 constituencies may mean different local issues arise.

Budgeting

39. The table below shows the approximate costs of the 2018 Review.

Staff costs	£521,000
Commissioner fees	£38,000
Consultation Portal	£77,000
Report Printing	£17,000
Public Hearings	£6,000
Miscellaneous	£2,000
Total	£661,000

40. The costs of the 2018 Review incurred by the other UK Boundaries Commissions were approximately:

- Boundary Commission for England: £4,125,912
- Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland: £602,900
- Boundary Commission for Wales: £697,420.

41. However, the Secretariat is not aware of the method(s) by which these costs were determined, so like-for-like comparison between Commissions may not be possible.

42. It is expected that Consultation Portal costs will be significantly lower.