BCS Paper 2022/08

2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies
Consideration of Revised Proposals for Aberdeen City council area

Action required

1. The Commission is invited to consider responses to the initial and secondary consultation on its initial proposals and whether it wishes to make changes to its proposals for Aberdeen City council area.

Background

2. The total electorate in Aberdeen City council area is 153,455 giving a theoretical entitlement to 2.09 constituencies.

3. Aberdeen City was part of the larger Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Highland and Moray council area grouping but as Aberdeen City presents a simple arrangement with two constituencies covering the whole council area it is being considered here in its own paper.

4. The Commission's initial proposals for this area comprise two constituencies which exactly cover Aberdeen City council area. A map of the constituencies is at Appendix A.

Proposed Constituency	Wards	Electorate
Aberdeen North	Aberdeen City 1-6, 7(part)	76,895
Aberdeen South	Aberdeen City 7(part), 8-13	76,560

Representations received

5. Seven responses were received during the two consultation periods that related to Aberdeen City council area. All responses have been shared with the Commission. All responses to the initial consultation stage are available on the Commission's consultation site www.bcs2023review.com. Each response has been allocated a reference number from the consultation site.

Summary of responses

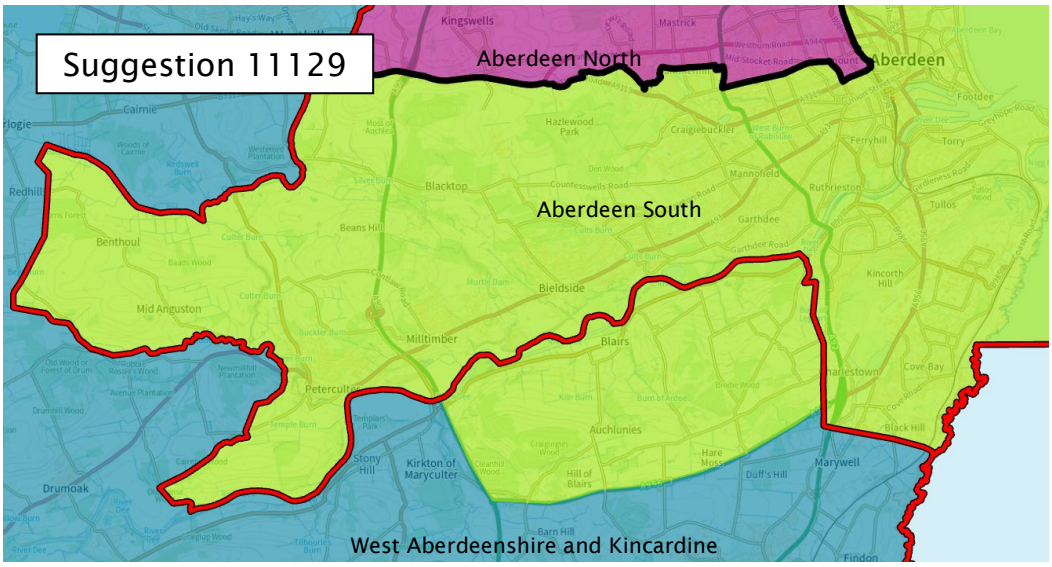
6. Four responses were supportive of the initial proposals.

7. The maps in this paper show alternative suggestions in block colours, existing ward boundaries are red and initial proposal boundaries are a black line.

Aberdeen City Consultation Responses and Analysis

8. A member of the public (11129) suggested that the recently completed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) would make a superior boundary south of Aberdeen, than the proposed boundary.

9. This suggestion would create a recognisable boundary by following a dual-carriageway road (see map below). The disadvantage of this suggestion is that the proposed Aberdeen South constituency boundary follows the council area and ward boundaries in this area and mainly the River Dee, also a recognisable boundary. The suggestion would add approximately 600 electors to the proposed Aberdeen South constituency exceeding the electoral quota. There has been some support and little opposition to the initial proposals in Aberdeen.



10. A member of the public (11378) stated that the proposed constituency was too large and rural constituencies in particular were too large.

11. The respondent was not clear as to which Aberdeen constituency they were referring.

12. A member of the public (11406) supported the initial proposals as they are coterminous with the council area boundary in the north of the city and align with Scottish Parliament boundaries in the area.

13. The Scottish Parliament Aberdeen Donside and Aberdeenshire East constituencies follow the Aberdeen City-Aberdeenshire council area boundaries.

14. A member of the public (11611) stated that the initial proposals offer a better balance of geography compared to the existing urban-rural constituency.

15. A member of the public (11727) supported the proposals as they largely retain the status quo and sit within the Aberdeen City council area boundary.

16. Aberdeen City Council (12020) stated the proposals are appropriate and support them.

17. A member of the public (12114) who stated that they live and work in the existing Aberdeen North constituency, opposed the proposals because they are being transferred to an Aberdeen South constituency but they have common interests in the north of the city.

18. The initial proposals broadly follow the existing constituency boundary in Aberdeen with the exception of the George Street/ Harbour ward which is transferred from an Aberdeen North constituency to an Aberdeen South constituency.

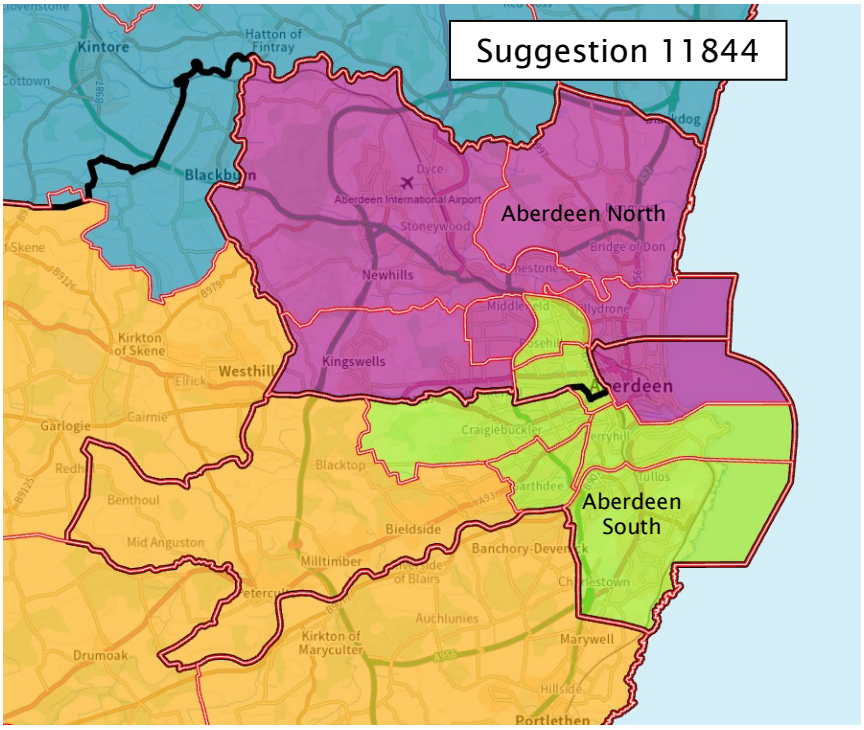
All Scotland Consultation Responses that apply to this grouping and Analysis

19. There were approximately 140 general responses to the initial consultation opposing the 2023 Review or making comments out-with the legislation for the review.

20. A member of the public suggested that the Commission should not group council areas for designing constituencies because it offers less flexibility in constituency design and may bring political bias. They also suggested constituency names based on the principle of a main area or town and a subsidiary area (12161).

21. A member of the public (11879) suggested smaller constituencies across Scotland.

22. A member of the public (11844) submitted an all Scotland alternative suggestion. They believe it is unnecessary to follow the council area boundary as a constituency boundary as the Commission has deviated from this principle elsewhere. Their suggestion avoids splitting wards but Aberdeen City ward 9 (Lower Deeside) is placed in an Aberdeenshire constituency. A map of the suggestion and accompanying electorate is shown below.



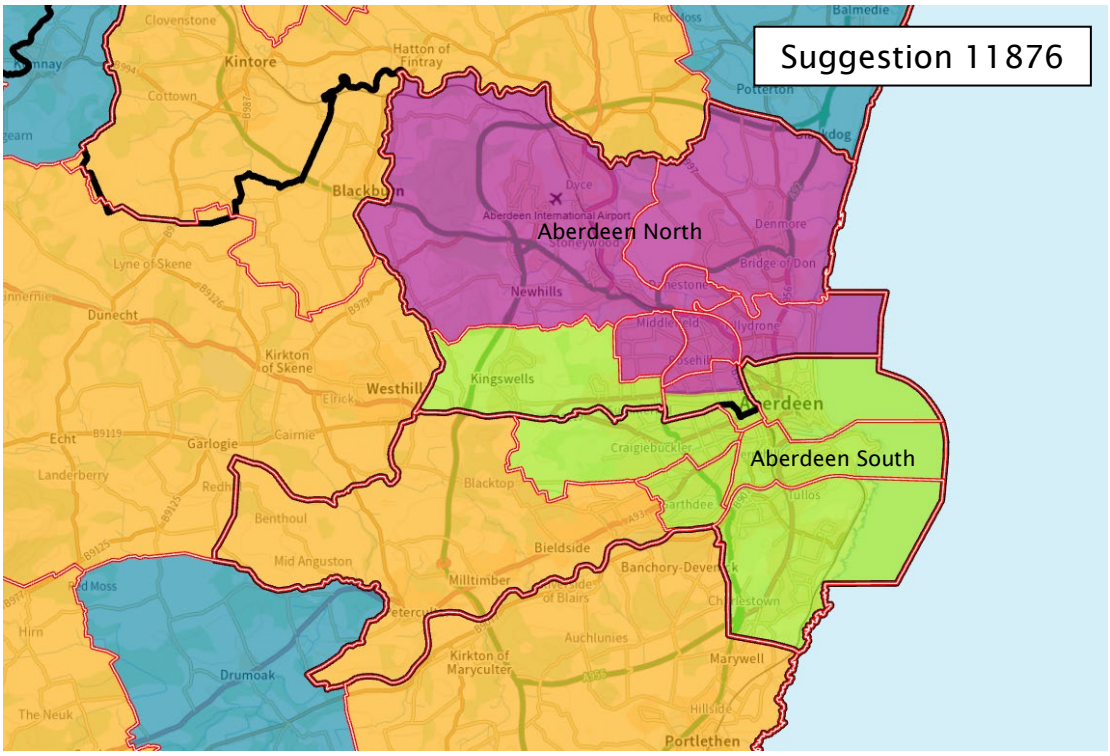
Constituency	Electorate
Aberdeen North	69,834
Aberdeen South	71,681

23. The advantages of this suggestion are that it respects local ward boundaries.

24. The disadvantages of this suggestion are that it:
    - places a single Aberdeen City ward in a constituency with Aberdeenshire wards as is the case in the existing Gordon constituency; and

- makes changes where there has been some support and little opposition to the initial proposals (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine and Aberdeen South).

25. A member of the public (11876) submitted an all Scotland alternative suggestion similar in aim to the suggestion above. They suggest making alterations to the proposed Aberdeen City constituencies in order to minimise the number of divided wards elsewhere in Scotland. Their suggestion places Aberdeen City ward 9 (Lower Deeside) in a constituency with Aberdeenshire wards. A map of the suggestion and accompanying electorate is shown below.



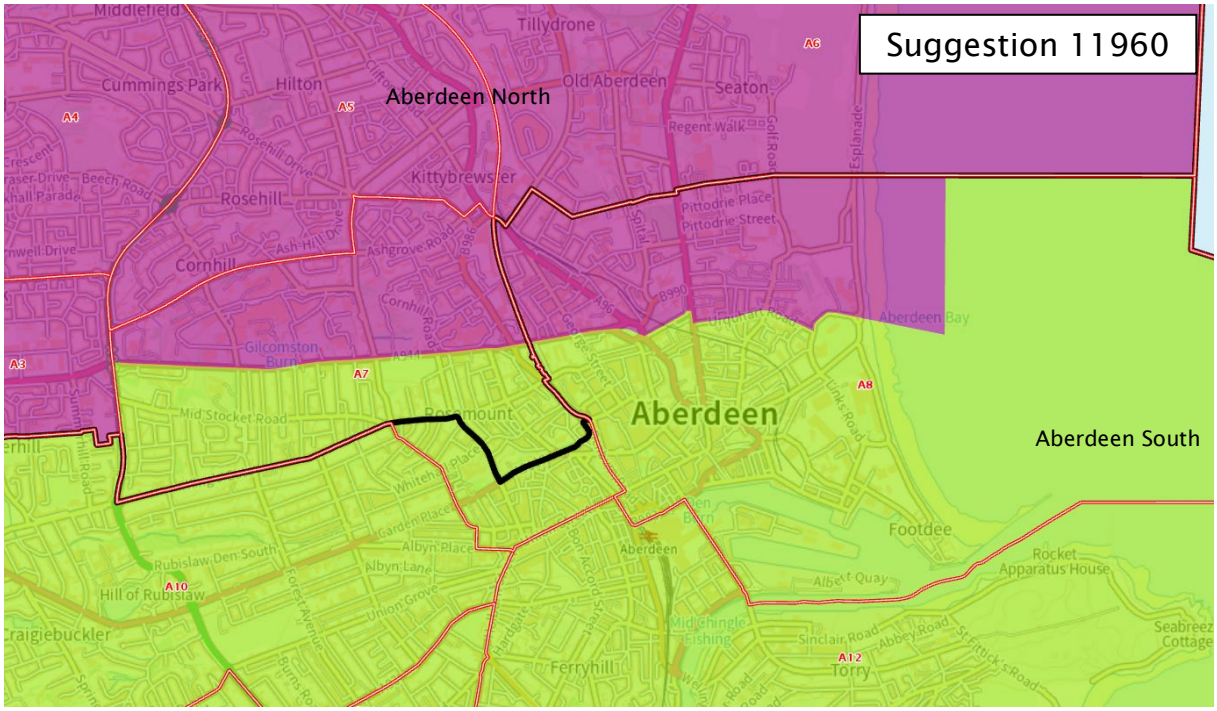
Constituency	Electorate
Aberdeen North	70,748
Aberdeen South	70,767

26. The advantages of this suggestion are that it respects local ward boundaries, splitting a single ward.

27. The disadvantages of this suggestion are that it:
    - places a single Aberdeen City ward in a constituency with Aberdeenshire wards as is the case in the existing Gordon constituency; and
    - makes changes where there has been some support and little opposition to the initial proposals (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine and Aberdeen South).

28. The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party (11960, 12170) submitted an alternative suggestion for the boundary between the Aberdeen North and Aberdeen South constituencies. They suggested that the wards in the area span the natural north / south divide within the city but rather than ward boundaries

the more appropriate boundary would be the A944 Westburn Road as it travels west to east through the city towards the sea. They also noted that others had suggested using the newly completed Aberdeen Bypass as a boundary but they opposed this suggestion. A map of their suggestion and accompanying electorate is shown below.



Constituency	Electorate
Aberdeen North	73,694
Aberdeen South	77,061

29. The advantages of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party suggestion are it:
    - minimises change to the initial proposals; and
    - follows an easily identifiable boundary in the city.

30. The disadvantages of this suggestion are that it:
    - splits more wards than the initial proposals; and
    - makes changes where there has been some support and little opposition to the initial proposals.

Constituency names

31. No alternative constituency names were submitted.

32. A member of the public submitted a general comment on constituency names and enclosed an article from Political Quarterly "What's in a Name? The Length of Westminster Constituency Titles, 1950-2024" (11977).

33. The constituency names in this paper are provisional. The Commission will have the opportunity to review all constituency names and designations prior to the publication of its revised proposals.

Summary

34. There has been a low level of response to the initial proposals for this council area.

35. The alternative suggestions made changes where there has been some support and little opposition to the initial proposals.

Recommendations

36. Taking into account all of the evidence arising from the public consultations on the initial proposals, the Secretariat invites the Commission to decide whether:
    - to adopt any of the alternative suggestions;
    - to adopt without amendment the initial proposals for Aberdeen City council area are adopted without amendment as the Commission's revised proposals (as in Appendix A), subject to consideration of all other constituencies.

Secretariat
April 2022

BCS Paper 2022/08

Appendix A

Initial Proposals – Aberdeen City council area