



Annual Report 2018-19

www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk

Deputy Chairman's foreword

In the last year we completed our work on the 2018 Review of UK Parliament constituencies.

In Spring 2018 we continued to develop our Final Recommendations for UK Parliament Constituencies, carefully considering the responses we had received to our public consultation on our Revised Proposals, which had been held from 17 October 2017 to 11 December 2017.

Having completed our Final Recommendations, we submitted these in a report to the Secretary of State for Scotland on 5 September 2018, as required by the legislation governing our reviews. The report was then laid before Parliament on 10 September 2018. At the time of writing, colleagues in Cabinet Office are preparing the Order required to implement the recommendations, which will then be considered by Parliament.

In November 2018, alongside the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, we co-hosted the annual meeting of the UK Boundaries Commissions in Edinburgh. I was very pleased to host the dinner which was attended by colleagues from all the UK commissions, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Government and at which the guest speaker was Michael Russell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations. We were represented at the meeting the following day by Commissioner Paula Sharp. Professor Henderson also attended in her capacity as Deputy Chair of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland. We found it very helpful to share the experiences of our carrying out the reviews with the other UK Commissions.

Following submission of our report of the 2018 Review we expect to complete the next review by September 2023 unless the timetable and other requirements for the review are changed by Parliament.

The Hon Lord Matthews
Deputy Chairman, Boundary Commission for Scotland
July 2019

Boundary Commission for Scotland

Annual Report 2018–19

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This report covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. 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 wholly 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 Chairman, Deputy Chairman and two further Commissioners. In addition, the Act specifies that our officers shall include two ex-officio Assessors.

1.2.1 Chairman

The ex-officio Chairman 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 Chairman takes no active part in the business of any of the Commissions.

1.2.2 Deputy Chairman

The Deputy Chairman 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 Chairman is the Honourable Lord Matthews who was appointed from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018, and re-appointed from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

1.2.3 Commissioners

The Commissioners other than the Chairman and Deputy Chairman 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 2018–19, the Commissioners were:

- Mrs Paula Sharp, re-appointed until 31 December 2020, having originally been appointed from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2014, and reappointed to 31 December 2018.
- Professor Ailsa Henderson, appointed from 16 February 2016 until 15 February 2020.

1.2.4 Assessors

Our two ex-officio Assessors are the Registrar General for Scotland and the Director General of Ordnance Survey. We are very grateful to Tim Ellis and Dominic Cuthbert for their valuable contributions to our work.

1.3 Meetings

We met on four occasions in 2018–19. 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).

1.4 Code of Practice

We have a Commissioners' Code of Practice. The Code of Practice is available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

1.5 Register of Commissioners' Interests

We maintain a Register of Interests of Commissioners, in accordance with the Commissioners' 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 Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland senior management. The Secretary is Ms 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, near Haymarket, 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 2018–19, the assignment of Secretariat staff to support this Commission was as follows:

Post	Full-time equivalent
Secretary	0.5
Casework Managers	0.5
Casework Officers	1.5
Database Manager	0.24
General Office Manager	0.5
Total	3.24

Staff members are employed on a full-time basis, with their time allocated between support for us and for the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (LGBCS), 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 UK Parliament constituencies

We submitted our report on the 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies to the Secretary of State for Scotland on 5th September 2018. Our Final Recommendations were laid before Parliament on 10 September 2018. At the time of writing, the Order to implement the recommendations from BCS and the other UK Commissions is being drafted.

We began our review in February 2016. The review was conducted simultaneously with the other 3 parliamentary boundary commissions in the UK.

The existing UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland, which resulted from our Fifth Review, have been in use since 2005. Under the current legislation, the number of constituencies in the United Kingdom following the 2018 Review will be 600. The number of constituencies in Scotland, and in each of the other home countries, was calculated in proportion to each country's parliamentary electorate on 1 December 2015. As a consequence, we were required to make recommendations for 53 constituencies in Scotland. The legislation specified that 1 constituency would cover the Orkney and Shetland islands, and another constituency would cover Na h-Eileanan an Iar (the Western Isles). The remaining constituencies in Scotland would result from our deliberations and recommendations. The electorate of every constituency in Scotland had to be between 71,031 and 78,507 electors, i.e. within 5% of the UK-wide electoral quota of 74,769, unless its area exceeded 12,000 square kilometres. No constituency could exceed 13,000 square kilometres.

In 2016–17 we developed and published for public scrutiny our Initial Proposals for constituencies in Scotland. We also carried out a secondary consultation in which members of the public could view the comments made in the first consultation, and make further comments upon our Initial Proposals.

In 2017–18 we developed and published for public scrutiny our Revised Proposals for constituencies in Scotland, and following the public consultation, began consideration of our Final Recommendations.

In 2018–19, we further considered the responses to the Revised Proposals, and, decided upon our Final Recommendations, and prepared our Final Report on those recommendations.

4 Other activities

4.1 Staffing and training

Training has continued to meet staff and review requirements as well as mandatory requirements from the Scottish Government as employer.

4.2 Liaison with others

4.2.1 Other UK Boundary Commissions

In November 2018, alongside the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, we hosted the annual UK Boundaries Commissions meeting in Edinburgh. At the meeting we shared our experiences of the 2018 Review with the other UK Boundaries Commissions, and we hope to be able to use what we learned to inform the consultations for future boundary reviews.

We were represented at the meeting by our Deputy Chair, Lord Matthews, and Mrs Sharp, and by members of the Secretariat. Professor Henderson also attended the meeting, in her capacity as Deputy Chair of the LGBCS.

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 as our sponsoring department (see 5.2 Memorandum of Understanding).

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

5.1 Legislation – UK Parliament reviews

Our reviews of UK Parliament constituencies are governed by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. 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. This was adopted in May 2017, following a review in conjunction with the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland. It is available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

5.3 Data protection

We handle personal information in line with the Data Protection Act, 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 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 sets out our approach to equality and diversity issues. The Statement is available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

5.5 Risk Management

The Secretariat has developed a Risk Management policy covering our work which is available on our website. A copy can be provided on request. In line with this policy we maintain a risk register which is reviewed regularly.

6 Enquiries and public information

During reviews, we undertake extensive public consultation, hold public hearings, issue news releases, meet with political parties and provide an online consultation portal to enable public scrutiny of, and comment on, our proposals for constituencies.

We also 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 2000. 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 Enquiries

Between April 2018 and March 2019, the Secretariat recorded 10 requests which stated that they were being made under the Freedom of Information Act. These did not directly relate to the work of the Commission, and were most commonly regarding contracts and expenditure. All were complied with and no requests for review were made.

6.2 Website

Our website remains a primary means for us to make information available. We update the website with all material which we publish. We are in the process of refreshing our website, and expect this will be completed in the summer of 2019.

6.3 Maps of constituencies

In conjunction with the Local Government Boundary Commission for 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.

The Map Browser includes the last 6 sets of UK Parliament constituencies (from 1950 to date), the last 2 sets of Scottish Parliament boundaries (from 1999 to date) and 3 sets of European Parliament constituencies (from 1979 to date). The Map Browser also shows data from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland since 1995.

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;
- Scottish Parliament constituencies and regions 1999 – present day;
- UK and Scottish Parliament constituency names 1950 – present day;
- European Parliament constituencies in Scotland 1979–1999; and
- 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 2018 Review are available to view on our website. Where meeting papers include a draft of a document which is later published in its own right (such as our Information Papers, Annual Reports and Corporate Plans), we do not normally publish the draft.

During a review, we publish our proposals for public scrutiny on a web-based consultation portal that allows users to compare proposals with other electoral boundaries on an interactive map, comment on our proposals, and view and comment on others' comments. We also publish information on our proposals at display points which we agree with local authorities, typically libraries and council offices.

7 Expenditure

Our expenditure for the year 2018–19 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, the Secretariat re-forecasts expenditure during the year and keeps the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland informed of the likely expenditure for the year. Any required resources have to be approved by the UK Parliament.

The budget allocation from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland was £400,000, of which the Commission notified a forecast underspend of approximately £100,000. The budget as shown below is that set out in the 2018–21 Corporate Plan.

Financial Performance April 2018 – March 2019		
	Corporate plan estimated outturn (£)	Actual (£)
Staff costs	165,164	163,553
Commissioners' fees and expenses	10,190	6,514
Accommodation	19,098	18,798
Administration	36,859	43,211
Travel and subsistence	2,000	252
Review costs	13,790	18,395
Accruals not realised*	0	-41,997
Total	247,101	208,726
*VAT on staff salaries and other activities were lower than originally anticipated		

7.1 Staff salaries

Salary costs are determined by the pay arrangements for our staff, who are employees of the Scottish Government.

7.2 Commissioners' fees

Commissioners' fees are determined by the Secretary of State for Scotland and cover attendance at all of 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 diem basis. The fee rate for Commissioners during the year has been £505.50 per day, and has been unchanged since April 2009. The underspend in Commissioner fees was due to lower average claims per meeting and fewer meetings than budgeted for. The Deputy Chair post is not remunerated.

7.3 Accommodation

We share accommodation with the LGBCS. The figures shown in the above table in respect of accommodation reflect our share of these costs.

7.4 Administration

Administration costs include office equipment and furniture, stationery and other consumables, telephone, email, publications and advertising, staff and Commissioner training, computer software maintenance, support and licence fees. The additional spending on administration costs was chiefly due to higher than anticipated costs for refreshing the Commission's website, following appointment of a new contractor. The project will now be completed in summer 2019.

7.5 Travel and subsistence

Travel and subsistence includes rail, air and car-hire costs incurred by the Secretariat and Commissioners in the course of official business. Travel and subsistence costs

necessarily and actually incurred in the course of official business are reimbursed, on the production of receipts, within civil service limits.

7.6 Review costs

Review costs cover those items directly attributable to the conduct of our boundary reviews, and include newspaper advertising, our consultation website and printing. The higher than forecast Review Costs were chiefly due to higher than forecast design and printing costs of our Final Report for the 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies, following our decision to use external copy editing and proofreading services.

7.7 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.

We made no transaction exceeding £25,000. We made two reportable ePC transactions of £500 and £1,486 to hotels in Edinburgh in association with hosting the annual UK Boundaries Commissions meetings. These costs were shared with the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, which co-hosted the meeting.

8 Work programme for 2019–20

On 15 May 2019 the Commission received a letter from the Principal Accounting Officer of the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, delegating authority to incur expenditure of £400,000, on pay costs and non-pay related costs during 2019–20. Within that overall budget we will undertake review and other activity as set out below.

8.1 United Kingdom Parliament Review

We do not expect to have to undertake work on a UK Parliament Review in 2019–20. The next Review is due to be completed by September 2023, and we expect to begin work on it in early 2021.

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 complete the project of refreshing our website, working with Whitespace Ltd, and with the assistance of the Scottish Government.
- We expect one of our commissioners to attend the annual meeting of the UK boundary commissions.
- We will meet with our sponsor department, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland on a quarterly basis.
- We will keep under review any developments in the area in which we work.

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.



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