



Annual Report 2024 – 2025

This report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Copies are available from our website www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk, or by request from our Secretariat.

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Deputy Chair's foreword

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Ailsa Henderson for over 8 years' service as a Commissioner. Her expertise was key to the completion of the 2023 UK Parliament Review and I look forward to continuing to liaise with Professor Henderson in her current role as Chair of Boundaries Scotland. I am also pleased to welcome Gillian McGregor CBE to the Commission and look forward to continuing to work with Dr Susan Walker OBE who has been reappointed for a further term.

The 2024/2025 year has been a relatively quiet period for the Boundary Commission for Scotland as there are no current live reviews. We have continued to meet regularly to discuss the lessons learned from the 2023 review and to ensure improvements are in place before the next review commences. We have also kept informed of developments with two Commissioners attending the UK Commissions' meeting in London in February 2025.

This time last year I thought I would be coming to the end of my term. I have been reappointed as Deputy Chair and I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure the Commission is in the best possible position to undertake the next UK Parliamentary Review.

The Right Honourable Lord Matthews
Deputy Chair, Boundary Commission for Scotland
May 2025

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The Commission

1.1 Background

The Boundary Commission for Scotland was established in its current form by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended) (the 1986 Act).

Our duties and powers are detailed in the 1986 Act. We are responsible for reviews of United Kingdom Parliament constituencies in Scotland.

We are an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored and funded by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland (OSSS). We are an independent and non-political body.

1.2 Membership

The 1986 Act specifies that our membership comprises a Chair, Deputy Chair and two further Commissioners. In addition, the Act specifies that our officers shall include two ex-officio Assessors.

1.2.1 Chair

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

1.2.2 Deputy Chair

The Deputy Chair 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 Chair is the Right Honourable Lord Matthews who was appointed from 1 January 2016 and subsequently reappointed up until 31 December 2027.

1.2.3 Commissioners

The Commissioners, other than the Chair and Deputy Chair, are appointed on a term basis through open competition using the procedures laid down by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The OSSS makes the appointments.

In the year 2024-25, the Commissioners were:

- Professor Ailsa Henderson, appointed from 16 February 2016 until 15 February 2020, and re-appointed until 31 January 2024 with an extension until 30 September 2024.
- Gillian McGregor CBE appointed on 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2028.
- Dr Susan Walker OBE, appointed from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2024 and reappointed from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2028.

1.2.4 Assessors

Our two ex-officio Assessors are the Registrar General for Scotland and the Director General of Ordnance Survey, represented by Dominic Cuthbert.

1.3 Code of Practice

The Cabinet Office Code of Practice for Members of Non-Departmental Public Bodies is available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

1.4 Register of Commissioners' Interests

We maintain a Register of Interests of Commissioners, in accordance with the 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 officials in the OSSS. The Secretary, Kirsty Mavor, joined the Commission in April 2024.

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.
- consulting with other UK Boundary Commissions and government departments with an interest in boundary matters.
- maintaining contact with Ordnance Survey and other relevant bodies on boundary related issues.
- maintaining links with organisations involved with electoral matters.
- improving and extending our published information explaining our work.
- responding to correspondence on our work and constituency boundary issues.
- providing ongoing training as appropriate to meet staff and review requirements; and
- continuing to meet all financial and other requirements of our Memorandum of Understanding and other key sponsorship documents.

The Secretariat is accommodated in Thistle House, in central 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 2024-25, the average assignment of Secretariat staff to support the Commission was as follows:

Post	Full-time equivalent
Secretary	0.5
Review Manager	0.5
Deputy Review Manager	0.5
Review Officer	0.5
Finance and Governance Officer	0.5
IT Database Manager	0.2
General Office Manager	0.5
Total	3.2

Staff members' time is allocated between support for us and for Boundaries Scotland, which is responsible for reviewing electoral ward, 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 Meetings

During the reporting period three meetings were held on 29 May 2024, 4 November 2024 and 21 February 2025. Minutes of meetings and copies of our discussion papers are published on our website.

3.2 UK Parliament constituencies

The recommendations from the 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies were developed and consulted on with the final recommendations laid before Parliament on 28 June 2023. The Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023 was made on 15 November 2023 and came into force on 29 November 2023. The new constituencies were in effect at the 4 July 2024 UK General Election.

The next Review of UK Parliament Constituencies is due to be completed in 2031, and work is expected to commence on this in 2028. The Commission will work towards implementing changes resulting from the lessons learned from the 2023 UK Parliamentary Review to ensure that improvements are in place before the next review commences.

4 Other activities

4.1 Staffing and training

Training has continued to meet staff and future review requirements as well as mandatory requirements from the Scottish Government as employer, such as data protection training.

4.2 Liaison with others

4.2.1 Other UK Boundary Commissions

Both Gillian McGregor CBE and Dr Sue Walker OBE attended the UK Boundary Commission meeting held on 28 February 2025. This meeting provided the opportunity for discussion to take place about best practice and to participate in an informative training session on effective consultations.

4.2.2 OSSS

We continue to have regular contact and dialogue with the OSSS as our sponsoring department (see 5.2 below). OSSS led the recruitment process for appointment of a new Commissioner and reappointment of a current Commissioner.

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 consults regularly with staff of the National Records of Scotland on shared interests concerning geographic information, electoral statistics and archiving information.

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

Our Governance documents below are available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request. Please see: www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk/?q=corporate-documents

5.1 Legislation - UK Parliament reviews

Our reviews of UK Parliament constituencies are governed by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the UK Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020. 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 OSSS. This was adopted in May 2017, following a review in conjunction with the OSSS.

5.3 Data protection

We manage personal information in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We have notified the Information Commissioner's Office of the personal data which we manage. All staff have completed annual mandatory training in data protection issues.

We have a Privacy Policy for managing any personal information contained in representations made during public consultations on our proposals.

5.4 Equality issues

We updated our Equality Statement which is available on our website and sets out our approach to equality and diversity issues.

5.5 Risk Management

The Secretariat has developed a Risk Management policy covering our work. In line with this policy, we maintain a risk register which is reviewed at each Commission meeting.

6 Enquiries and public information

We 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 2018. 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 Freedom of Information Requests

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, the Secretariat recorded 10 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. During 2024/25 we began routinely monitoring FOI requests. We are pleased to report that all requests were responded to within the appropriate timescales and no requests for review were received.

6.2 Website

Our website remains the primary means for us to make information available. We update the website with all the material which we publish. An archive version of our website containing historical material is maintained by the National Records of Scotland and is available via our website and here:

<https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20190111180034/http://www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk/>.

6.3 Maps of constituencies

In conjunction with Boundaries Scotland, we provide an interactive map browser. The map browser allows anyone with internet access to view maps showing a selection 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.

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:

- A General Guide to the Commission.
- UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland: 1832 – present day.
- UK constituency names 1950 – present day.

The Information Papers are available on our website, or a copy can be provided on request.

6.5 Minutes and meeting papers

We publish our minutes and meeting papers of our meetings. Where meeting papers include a draft of a document which is later published on its own (such as our Information Papers, Annual Reports and Corporate Plans), we do not normally publish the draft.

7 Expenditure

Our expenditure for the year 2024-25 is set out under broad headings in the table below. After receiving an initial budget allocation from the OSSS, the Secretariat re-forecasts expenditure monthly during the year and provides regular updates of the expenditure for the year. The UK Parliament must approve budgeted resources.

The budget allocation to the Commission from OSSS in 2024-25 was £413,000. Actual spend is shown in the table below:

Financial Performance April 2024 – March 2025		
	Forecast £000s	Spend £000s
Staff costs	£233	£230
Commissioners' fees and expenses	£5	£5
Accommodation	£26	£28
Administration (includes IT)	£50	£16
Travel and subsistence	£5	£2
Review costs	£94	£0
Total	413	281

7.1 Staff salaries

Salary costs are determined by the pay arrangements for our 6.4 staff (3.2 FTE for this Commission), who are employees of and on loan from the Scottish Government. The Commission agrees the number of staff it requires with OSSS and agrees an apportionment of staff costs shared with Boundaries Scotland.

7.2 Commissioners' fees and expenses

Commissioners' fees are determined by OSSS and cover attendance at all 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 day basis. The fee rate for Commissioners during the year was £505.50 per day, and this has been unchanged since April 2009. The Deputy Chair post is not remunerated.

7.3 Accommodation

The Commission shares accommodation costs with Boundaries Scotland. The figures shown in the above table in respect of accommodation reflect our share of rent, utilities and services such as insurance, managements fees and cleaning.

7.4 Administration

Administration costs include office equipment, stationery, telephone, website costs, internet and email, training, computer software maintenance, licence fees and IT costs. The underspend in administration costs is mainly due to contingency funds not being required to be spent.

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, which does not relate directly to a review (such costs fall under review costs). Travel and subsistence costs are paid at the same rate that applies to staff of the Scottish Government.

7.6 Review costs

Review costs normally covers those items directly attributable to the conduct of our boundary reviews, and include our consultation portal, newspaper and social media advertising, public hearing costs, legal advice, and printing. During 2024-25 there were no reviews undertaken by this Commission so no associated costs were recorded.

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 on our website. In 2024-25 we made no transactions greater than £25,000 and made no ePC transactions over £500. These types of transactions are also published on the Scottish Government website.

8 Work programme for 2025-26

8.1 United Kingdom Parliament Review

The next UK Parliament Review must be submitted before 1 October 2031. We are scheduled to commence work on this in 2028. Prior to then, we will ensure that we implement improvements identified in our lessons learned document from the 2023 review.

8.2 Other activity

- We will conduct 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 develop our website to ensure it is up-to-date and also provides information in an accessible format.
- We will attend the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions.
- We will meet with our sponsor department, the OSSS on a regular basis.
- We will keep under review any developments in the area in which we work.

8.3 Funding for 2025-26

The Commission has been allocated £413,000 by OSSS for 2024-2026

The Commission's Corporate Plan for 2025-2028, which is available on our website, forecasts spending of £313,00 for 2025-2026.

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 contact us either by email, telephone or in writing.