

Minutes of Meeting held by video conference at 10am on 6 June 2022.

Present

The Hon Lord Matthews, Deputy Chair
Dr Sue Walker, Commissioner
Professor Ailsa Henderson, Commissioner

Isabel Drummond-Murray, Secretary
Colin Wilson
Douglas Campbell
David Logue
Yvonne Croll

Apologies

Mr Paul Lowe, National Records for Scotland, Assessor
Mr Dominic Cuthbert, Ordnance Survey, Assessor

Minutes of previous meeting

1. The Commission approved the minutes of the meeting on 9 May 2022 without amendment.

Matters Arising

2. The Secretary informed the Commission that she had received an update from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland (OSSS) confirming that existing legislation would not allow the public hearings to be conducted in a hybrid format and any necessary legislative amendment could be considered prior to the next scheduled review, the 2031 Review.
3. The Commission noted this, and agreed to include reference in the final report. The Commission asked the Secretary to check whether there is planned electoral reform legislation that this could be added to, and to have hybrid public hearings added to the agenda of the next UK Boundaries Commissions meeting.

Business Update

4. The Secretary advised the Commission that OSSS had been in touch regarding an audit of the sponsorship of the Commission, with a date to be confirmed. The last such audit took place in 2017.

2023 Review: Consideration of Revised Proposals – City of Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian council areas (Paper 2022/14)

5. The Commission considered Paper 2022/14, having previously considered Paper 2022/10 on this council area grouping at its meeting of 9 May 2022.
6. The Commission considered the three options presented in the paper. The Commission dismissed Option 1 because it focussed solely on a revised Musselburgh boundary and did not address concerns raised elsewhere within Edinburgh. The Commission examined the other two options and noted that although there were some benefits to Option 2 it made changes, such as the existing Edinburgh South West constituency, where there had been some support

or little opposition to the initial proposals. The Commission preferred Option 3 because it respected community ties, minimised change, followed recognised boundaries and addressed concerns raised during the initial consultation. The Commission agreed to adopt Option 3 as the Commission's revised proposals subject to consideration of all other constituencies

2023 Review: Consideration of Revised Proposals – Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Highland and Moray council areas (Paper 2022/15)

7. The Commission considered Paper 2022/15, having previously considered Paper 2022/12 on this council area grouping at its meeting on 9 May 2022.
8. The Commission noted the Secretariat's advice that including this group of council areas with the group of Angus, Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, Falkirk, Fife, Perth and Kinross, Stirling and West Lothian council areas to resolve issues raised in Fife and Perthshire would be very challenging in finding an alternative set of proposals that would address the issues raised with the Commission's initial proposals across Scotland, while preserving recognised boundaries.
9. The Commission agreed that Option 2 (Appendix C) was an improvement on the initial proposals, by reducing the size of the proposed Highland North constituency, while also improving the shape of the proposed Highland Central constituency suggested by the Scottish Liberal Democrats. The Commission also agreed that Option 2 would be preferable to the initial proposals because it seeks to minimise change by dividing Moray council area into two rather than three constituencies, as well maintaining the existing West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine constituency boundary.
10. With regards to the Argyll constituency boundary by Lochaber, the Commission noted the alternative boundaries suggested in Option 1 were similar, but considered that following community council boundaries would be most likely to avoid breaking local ties whilst also providing an identifiable boundary along hilltops in the area.
11. The Commission agreed to adopt Option 2, with the Argyll constituency boundary by Lochaber following community council boundaries, as its revised proposals, subject to consideration of all other constituencies.

2023 Review: Consideration of Revised Proposals – Dumfries and Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders and West Dunbartonshire council areas (Paper 2022/16)

12. The Commission considered Paper 2022/16 and noted the responses to its consultation on its initial proposals for Dumfries and Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders and West Dunbartonshire council areas.
13. The Commission noted that the responses to its initial proposals produced few indications of strong support or opposition to any particular proposed constituency boundary.

14. The Commission agreed with the suggestion to incorporate the whole of Nith ward, south of Dumfries, into Dumfries and Galloway constituency with the town of Dumfries, to avoid breaking local ties by Glencaple, and following a more recognisable local boundary, the river Lochar Water, which also acts as the ward boundary.
15. The Commission agreed to include Glencairn community council area and Dunscore community council area to the northwest of Dumfries in Dumfries and Galloway constituency to avoid breaking local ties with Dumfries.
16. The Commission noted that many suggestions had been made to change the names of the constituencies in the initial proposals. The Commission agreed to consider the names of the constituencies in its revised proposals in a paper at a future meeting.
17. The Commission agree to adopt the option prepared by the Secretariat to create a Bearsden, Milngavie, Bishopbriggs and Stepps constituency and a Kilsyth, Kirkintilloch and Cumbernauld constituency. This could potentially address many of the issues raised in the consultation regarding local ties in East Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire by keeping Croy, Kilsyth and Cumbernauld in the same constituency.
18. The Commission agreed to include the change to the boundary between the proposed Coatbridge and Bellshill constituency and the proposed Airdrie and Shotts constituency near Coatdyke railway station suggested in the paper, to preserve local ties by placing the Lomond Court area within Coatbridge and Shotts constituency. The initial proposals in this area followed a ward boundary but split the Lomond Court development between two constituencies. The proposed revised proposals boundary would follow a railway line and the A89 road.
19. The Commission agreed to adopt the suggestion from West Dunbartonshire Council which considered solely polling district boundaries, transferring a smaller number of Yoker electors to a West Dunbartonshire constituency than in the initial proposals.
20. The Commission noted that the all-Scotland suggestions it had received would require significant consequent changes to other council area groupings and their adoption would be unlikely to have an overall positive effect on preserving local ties.
21. The Commission considered the other suggestions received, but felt they lacked strong arguments and noted the limited opposition to the initial proposals.
22. The Commission agreed to adopt its initial proposals as its revised proposals for these council areas, save for: the amendments agreed northwest and south of Dumfries; the amendments to create a Bearsden, Milngavie, Bishopbriggs and Stepps constituency and a Kilsyth, Kirkintilloch and Cumbernauld constituency; the change to the initial proposals' boundary near Coatdyke railway station; and the change to the initial proposals' boundary at Yoker. All subject to consideration of all other constituencies.

2023 Review: Consideration of Revised Proposals – Glasgow City, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire council areas (Paper 2022/17)

23. The Commission considered Paper 2022/17 and noted the responses to its consultation on its initial proposals for Glasgow City, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire council areas.
24. The Commission noted that the overall number of responses was low considering the high population of this group of council areas.
25. The Commission noted that many respondents had objected to the division of the Strathbungo area in the south of Glasgow. It agreed to adopt the Secretariat's suggestion in the paper to avoid this division, and the consequent change to follow the existing constituency boundary at Arden to keep the proposed Glasgow South constituency within the electoral quota.
26. The Commission agreed to adopt a suggestion to include Strathcona Gardens within Glasgow West constituency rather than Glasgow North constituency, following the existing constituency boundary and reflecting the physical boundaries in the immediate area.
27. The Commission agreed to adopt the Glasgow North East and Glasgow South East constituencies suggested in the paper, noting the suggestions in relation to this in the responses to the initial proposals, to avoid dividing neighbourhoods in the east of the city, and because east-west constituencies would more reflective of transport links, historical boundaries and existing ward boundaries in the city than the initial proposals north-south constituencies.
28. The Commission acknowledged the opposition to forming constituencies comprising parts of Glasgow City council area and Renfrewshire council area, and part of Renfrewshire council area and Inverclyde council area. The Commission noted however that the low electorate totals across the three council areas in the grouping gave it limited scope to propose alternative boundaries.
29. The Commission noted the opposition to including part of the Cardonald area of Glasgow in a constituency with Renfrewshire, but did not think that using an alternative boundary at Govan would be an improvement. Govan is divided from Renfrewshire by a dock and an industrial area, including it with Renfrewshire would produce an elongated constituency, and a boundary at Govan would likely be as disruptive to local ties as the proposed boundary at Cardonald.
30. The Commission was not persuaded that suggestions to link Inverclyde with Ayrshire would be less disruptive to existing ties than linking it to Renfrewshire, noting that such a constituency would require changing the proposals in

Ayrshire, which attracted little opposition, and were unchanged from existing constituencies.

31. The Commission considered the other suggestions for boundaries in this council area grouping, but felt they lacked strong arguments and noted the limited opposition to the initial proposals, apart from the issues discussed above.
32. The Commission noted there were some suggestions to use population data rather than electorate but this unfortunately was out-with the rules for the 2023 Review.
33. The Commission noted that many suggestions had been made to change the names of the constituencies in the initial proposals. The Commission agreed to consider the names of the constituencies in its revised proposals in a paper at a future meeting.
34. The Commission agreed to adopt its initial proposals for these council areas as its revised proposals, save for the changes discussed above: at Strathbungo and Arden; at Strathcona Gardens; and replacing the proposed Glasgow Central and Glasgow East constituencies with a Glasgow North East and a Glasgow South East constituency. All subject to consideration of all other constituencies.

Finance Update (Paper 2022/13)

35. The Commission noted the finance update. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Secretariat does not plan to recruit another permanent member of staff this year, and that the funds set aside for the equivalent of another member of staff may be used to fund temporary external assistance to meet workload pressures during the overlap between the this Commission's 2023 Review, and Boundaries Scotland's Second Periodic Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries, which is expected to begin in Autumn 2022. The Secretary advised that external assistance could be sourced in a matter of weeks if required.

Any other business

36. The Commission asked the Secretariat to canvass for an alternative date in July and August for the next meeting.

Secretariat
June 2022