

Minutes of Meeting held by video conference at 10am on 12 April 2021.**Present**

The Hon Lord Matthews, Deputy Chair
Dr Sue Walker, Commissioner
Professor Ailsa Henderson, Commissioner
Mr Dominic Cuthbert, Ordnance Survey, Assessor

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

Apologies

Mr Paul Lowe, National Records for Scotland, Assessor

Minutes of previous meeting

1. The Commission approved the minutes of the meeting on 8 March 2021 without amendment.

Matters Arising

2. The Secretary advised that the Secretariat is awaiting an update from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland (OSSS) in regard to the Director of the OSSS and the Chair of ARAC attending the start of a future Commission meeting, and has shared future meeting dates with OSSS.
3. The Commission asked the Secretary to update National Records of Scotland (NRS) on the progress of the Reviews and to discuss NRS representation at future Commission meetings.

Business Update

4. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is in the process of finishing its Islands Reviews, which are due to be submitted in May 2021.
5. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Scottish Government have advised that there will be no return to offices for civil servants until end of June at the earliest. The Secretariat continues to work from home.

2023 Review (oral update)

6. The Secretary advised the Commission that a contract had been agreed for the consultation portal for the 2023 Review, which the Commission will share with the Boundary Commission for England and the Boundary Commission for Wales.
7. The Commission were informed that the electorate-by-ward data for the 2023 Review had recently been published on the Commission's website.
8. Secretary advised that the contract for legal advice should be finalised in the next few weeks. The Secretariat will then seek legal advice on the contents of the 2023 Review's Policies and Procedures booklet.

9. The Secretary advised that the meeting with political parties to discuss the 2023 Review will be held in late May or early June.
10. The Commission were advised that the Boundary Commission for England are working with Cabinet Office with a view to changing legislation in order to make virtual public hearings possible in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

2023 Review: Constituency design – Argyll & Bute, Glasgow City, Highland, Inverclyde, Moray, Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire council areas (Paper 2021/09)

11. The Commission discussed Paper 2021/09. The Commission noted the difficulties in designing constituencies within the electoral quota and within the area rule covering Argyll and Bute council area and Highland council area, given the large size of the area and the distribution of the electorate. The Commission were concerned that the Argyll and Highland South constituency proposed in each of the options would be too extensive to be represented by a single MP, including taking into account the accessibility of the islands and the travel required.
12. The Commission asked the Secretariat to present alternative options at its next meeting, within a new grouping of council areas that included: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Highland and Moray council areas. The Commission had considered this grouping at its meeting of 8 March 2021 (Paper 2021/05) but at that time wished to design constituencies within a smaller grouping of council areas.

2023 Review: Constituency design – East, North, South Ayrshire council areas (Paper 2021/09)

13. The Deputy Chair declared an interest that he lives within this council area grouping.
14. The Commission discussed Paper 2021/09. The Commission considered that Option 2 may break local ties: by Kilmarnock, with respect to communities in the Irvine Valley; between Troon and Prestwick; and its combination of an urban coastal area at Troon with a large rural inland area may not reflect local ties as well as Option 1, which retains the existing constituencies.
15. The Commission provisionally agreed to adopt the constituencies in Option 1 as its initial proposals for public consultation, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in other groupings.

2023 Review: Constituency design – East Renfrewshire council areas (Paper 2021/10)

16. The Commission considered Paper 2021/10, and noted that that the existing East Renfrewshire constituency was within the electorate quota for the 2023 Review, and coterminous with East Renfrewshire council area. The Commission were content to adopt the existing East Renfrewshire constituency within its initial proposals for public consultation, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in other groupings.

Finance update (Paper 2021/11)

17. The Commission noted the finance update. The Secretariat advised that OSSS had now advised the Commission's budget allocation for 2021-22 would be £408,000. This is the same as last year, because the Spending Review settlement simply rolled forward the baseline from the previous year.

18. The Secretariat advised that it would discuss with the Boundary Commission for England the timing of payments for the consultation portal this financial year to ensure it has sufficient funds set aside.

Future meetings (oral update)

19. The next meeting is on Monday 17 May 2021.

Any other business

20. There was no other business.

Secretariat

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