



INFORMATION PAPER

THE COMMISSION - A GENERAL GUIDE

www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk

About the Commission

The Boundary Commission for Scotland is a politically independent body which is responsible for reviewing and making recommendations for reviews of constituencies in Scotland for the United Kingdom Parliament at Westminster.

We are an advisory Non-departmental Public Body (NDPB), sponsored by the Scotland Office.

We are only responsible for UK parliamentary boundaries in Scotland: there are similar Commissions responsible for parliamentary boundaries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In common with the other parliamentary Boundary Commissions in the United Kingdom, we were established under the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1944, and our current constitution and procedures are defined in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

We were responsible for reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries until 17 May 2017 when it passed to Boundaries Scotland (formerly the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland), under the terms of Schedule 8 of the Scotland Act 2016. We also recommended European Parliament constituency boundaries in use from 1978 – 1999. From 1999 – 2020 Scotland was a single European Parliament region.

We are not responsible for boundaries of local government areas or electoral wards. Boundaries Scotland is responsible for those boundaries in Scotland. There are corresponding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

After completing a review, we submit a report to the Secretary of State for Scotland containing our recommendations. The Secretary of State is responsible for submitting legislation for approval by the United Kingdom Parliament to give effect to the report. New boundaries come into operation from the general election after they have been approved.

Membership

Our ex-officio Chairman is the Speaker of the House of Commons. However, the Speaker takes no part in the process of reviewing constituency boundaries.

Our Deputy Chair is a judge of the Court of Session, who is appointed by the Lord President of the Court of Session.

There are two other Commissioners who are appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland, following procedures approved by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. These appointments are for a period of 4 years, with the possibility of renewal, and attract a daily fee, plus expenses. Vacant posts are advertised and are subject to a process of selection and interview by a panel including the Deputy Chair, a representative of the Scotland Office and a representative of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

We have two Assessors who assist us in our deliberations: the Registrar General for Scotland (National Records of Scotland), and the Director General of Ordnance Survey.

A list of our past and present members appears at Appendix A.

Secretariat

We are supported by a small Secretariat staffed by civil servants who also provide support to Boundaries Scotland.

UK Parliament constituencies

The legislation governing reviews of UK Parliament constituencies is the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. The 1986 Act has been amended at various times, most recently by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020.

The most recent review of UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland was our 2023 Review. It took place between January 2021 and June 2023. The recommendations from that review took effect from the general election of 4 July 2024.

The table below summarises the reviews of UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland we have conducted since being established in 1944.

Review	Date of report	Number of constituencies	Used in general elections
2023 Review	June 2023	57	4 July 2024
2018 Review	Not enacted	-	-
Sixth Periodical Review	Cancelled	-	-
Fifth Periodical Review	November 2004	59	12 Dec. 2019 8 June 2017 7 May 2015 6 May 2010 5 May 2005
Fourth Periodical Review	December 1994	72	7 June 2001 1 May 1997
Third Periodical Review	February 1983	72	9 April 1992 11 June 1987 9 June 1983
Second Periodical Review	April 1969	71	3 May 1979 10 October 1974 28 February 1974
First Periodical Review	August 1954	71	18 June 1970 31 March 1966 15 October 1964 8 October 1959 26 May 1955
Initial Review	November 1947	71	25 October 1951 23 February 1950

In addition to these full reviews, we have also conducted a number of Interim Reviews in cases where local authority boundaries have been amended, and as a consequence UK Parliament constituency boundaries were no longer aligned with local authority boundaries.

More information and documentation on the UK Parliament constituencies resulting from our reviews is available on our website, and in our other Information Papers.

Appendix A – Membership of the Commission

The House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1944 determined that our membership was to be the Speaker of the House of Commons as Chair, plus two further members, one of whom was nominated by the Speaker as Deputy Chair. The practice in Scotland was for a judge to be nominated as the Deputy Chair.

The House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1958 altered our membership to the situation that has remained since then, namely the Speaker of the House of Commons as Chair, plus a Court of Session judge appointed as Deputy Chair by the Lord President of the Court of Session, plus two further members appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Deputy Chairs

Hon Lord Matthews (Hugh Matthews), 2015 onwards

Hon Lord Woolman (Stephen Woolman), 2009 - 2014

Hon Lord McEwan (Robin McEwan), 2007 - 2008

Right Hon Lady Cosgrove (Hazel Cosgrove), 1997 - 2006

Hon Lord Davidson (Charles Kemp Davidson), 1985 - 1996

Hon Lord Ross (Donald Ross), January 1977 - 1985

Hon Lord Keith of Kinkell (Henry Keith), 1976

Hon Lord Hunter (John Hunter), 1971 - 1976

Hon Lord Kilbrandon (Charles Shaw), 1963 - 1971

Hon Lord Guest (Graham Guest), 1958 - 1962

Hon Lord Mackintosh (Charles Mackintosh), 1945 - 1954

Commissioners

Mrs Gillian McGregor CBE, October 2024 onwards

Dr Sue Walker OBE, January 2021 onwards

Prof Ailsa Henderson, February 2016-2024

Mrs Paula Sharp, 2011 - 2020

Mr Ken McDonald, 2007 - 2015

Dr Elspeth Graham, 1999 - 2010

Professor Gavin McCrone, 1999 - 2006

Dr Charles M Glennie, 1994 - 1998

Mr Adam R Napier, 1985 - 1994

Professor Urlan A Wannop, 1983 - 1998

Mr Andrew A L Evans, April 1976 - 1985

Professor Gordon C Cameron, 1976 - 1983

Mr Ames L Imrie CBE, 1969 - 1975

Professor Archibald D Campbell CBE, 1961 - 1975

Sir Robert Nimmo, 1946 - 1969

Sir William White, 1945