

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND

2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

Progress Report

January 2017



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Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 3(2C) of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.

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1 Introduction

1.1 As required by section 3(2B)(a) of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended by the Parliamentary Voting System Act 2011), hereafter referred to as 'the Act', we are required to submit to you a report setting out the progress we have made on the current boundary review. As you will be aware, you are required by section 3(2C) to lay our report before Parliament.

2 Start of review

2.1 We announced on 24 February 2016, on the same day as the other UK Boundary Commissions, that we were commencing our 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies.

2.2 When announcing the review, the 4 UK Boundary Commissions set out the allocation of constituencies to each of the 4 home countries, resulting from the publication of electorate data from 1 December 2015. The allocation for Scotland is 51 constituencies, plus 2 island constituencies specified by the legislation, one covering Na h-Eileanan an Iar (the Western Isles) and the other covering the Orkney and Shetland Islands.

2.3 Under the review, the smallest permitted electorate of a constituency is 71,031 and the largest permitted electorate is 78,507, unless the area of a constituency is more than 12,000 square kilometres when it may have a smaller electorate. In addition, no constituency may have an area of more than 13,000 square kilometres.

2.4 We met with the representatives of the Scottish Parliamentary political parties on 16 May 2016, as we had done at previous reviews of parliamentary constituencies, to explain our policy and procedures for the review. As suggested by the political parties we commenced our public consultation after the political party conference season.

3 Initial Proposals

3.1 From April onwards we held monthly meetings to agree our Initial Proposals for constituencies. One of our objectives when designing constituencies was to minimise the number of constituencies which combine parts of more than one council area. In order to assist with that, we designed constituencies for groups of council areas where it was possible for a whole number of constituencies to exactly cover the combined extent of the council areas in each group.

3.2 In our discussions, we considered each area of Scotland, and agreed our Initial Proposals, subject to any changes which might have been required as a result of our consideration of neighbouring areas. We made our final decisions on our Initial Proposals at our meeting in October 2016.

3.3 We published our Initial Proposals on 20 October 2016 for the statutory 12 week period of public consultation, which lasted until Wednesday 11 January 2017. When we published our Initial Proposals, we held a press conference and distributed information widely, including:

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- 83 display points around Scotland, such as public libraries and council offices, which had been suggested to us by local authorities;
- Hand delivering our proposals to Members of Parliament for Scottish constituencies at the House of Commons;
- House of Commons Library and Vote Office;
- House of Lords Printed Papers Office;
- Members of the Scottish Parliament;
- Scottish Parliament Information Centre;
- Scottish headquarters of political parties with MPs representing Scottish constituencies;
- Scotland's 32 local authorities;
- Electoral Registration Officers; and
- Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA).

3.4 We also published the Initial Proposals on our website which includes a consultation facility incorporating interactive mapping and online submission of comments.

3.5 At the same time, we published the papers and minutes from our meetings at which we had developed the Initial Proposals.

3.6 Section 5(1)(b) of the Act requires us to hold public hearings during the twelve week initial consultation period: beginning in the fifth week and ending in the tenth week. We held 5 Public Hearings between 24 November and 5 December 2016 in Ayr, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Inverness. We decided to hold the maximum permitted number of Hearings in order to make them readily accessible to as many people as possible. Each of the Hearings was chaired by a Sheriff Principal, a senior Scottish judge, and each concluded within 1 day.

3.7 Our initial consultation period ended on 11 January 2017. We received approximately 1,500 comments on our Initial Proposals during the consultation period.

4 Secondary consultation period

4.1 We are currently preparing all of the comments which we received during the consultation period for publication for the secondary consultation period required by the legislation. This will include transcripts of the oral representations made at the public hearings together with all written representations received by email, via the website and by post.

4.2 We expect to hold the secondary consultation period in the Spring, inviting people to consider these materials and make written representations about the written and oral representations submitted to us during the initial consultation period. There will be a period of four weeks for people to submit such written representations.

5 Next report

5.1 We will submit a further report to you in January 2018 on further progress with the 2018 Review.

