

2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies Questions and Answers

February 2016

Why is the review taking place?

The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended) requires that a review of the boundaries of all Westminster constituencies should take place before 1 October 2018 and every 5 years thereafter. The Act also introduces significant changes to the number of constituencies, the process and the timing of reviews of Westminster constituencies.

Who is carrying out the review?

The review will be carried out by the 4 parliamentary Boundary Commissions in the United Kingdom, one each for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Commissions are independent of government.

What happens once the review has been completed?

Each Boundary Commission will complete its part of the review and submit its recommendations to Ministers, who are responsible for implementing them. It is expected that the resulting constituencies will be used for the next General Election, expected in 2020.

What will the result be for constituencies?

- There will be 600 constituencies across the United Kingdom, down from the current 650.
- The number of constituencies in each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is calculated broadly in proportion to electorate. The result is: England 501, Scotland 53, Wales 29 and Northern Ireland 17.
- This replaces the current constituency numbers of England 533, Scotland 59, Wales 40 and Northern Ireland 18.
- No constituency is to be larger than 13,000 square kilometres, which is slightly larger than the current largest constituency - Ross, Skye and Lochaber.
- The following island constituencies are defined in the legislation and so will not be reviewed: Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituency, Orkney and Shetland constituency and 2 constituencies for the Isle of Wight.
- A single United Kingdom electoral quota is calculated by taking the United Kingdom parliamentary electorate on 1 December 2015, excluding the islands listed above, and dividing by 596. This gives a figure of 74,769.2
- Constituency electorates are to be within 5% of the United Kingdom electoral quota (i.e. no less than 71,031 and no more than 78,507), apart from the islands listed above.
- The minimum electorate requirement does not apply if the area of a constituency is greater than 12,000 square kilometres. This will probably only affect Highland council area.
- Within the constraints outlined above, we are able to take into account special geographical considerations, local government boundaries, existing constituency boundaries, and local ties that would be broken by changes to constituencies.

What is the review timing?

- The review is to report by 1 October 2018, using the 1 December 2015 electoral register.
- The start of the review was announced on 24 February 2016.
- The review is taking place simultaneously for all parts of the United Kingdom, with the resulting constituencies expected to be used for the next General Election.
- Subsequent reviews will take place every 5 years.

What is the review process?

- All 4 Commissions in the United Kingdom liaise at the start of the review to agree the allocation of constituencies.
- We prepare our Initial Proposals, and publish them for public consultation. We will put the Initial Proposals on our website, and with the help of local authorities they will be available at Display Points around Scotland.
- There is a 12 week consultation period on our Initial Proposals, with representations on the proposals encouraged.
- We hold Public Hearings during the consultation on our Initial Proposals to enable representations to be made.
- All representations received are published online for public scrutiny for 4 weeks.
- We decide on any amendments to our Initial Proposals after considering all representations, and we publish any resulting Revised Proposals for public consultation. We will put the Revised Proposals on our website, and with the help of local authorities they will be available at Display Points around Scotland.
- There is an 8 week consultation period on our Revised Proposals.
- We can incorporate any further amendments to our constituency proposals into our Final Report without further public consultation.
- We give a progress report on the review to the Speaker of the House of Commons, who is Chair of each of the parliamentary Boundary Commissions, each January.

Will constituencies be different after this review?

- We expect that few, if any, of the existing constituencies will remain unchanged.
- Even where an existing constituency has an electorate within the required range for this review, it may not be possible to retain that constituency, because of changes required to surrounding constituencies.
- In Scotland, constituencies will probably not all be constructed from complete wards.
- The new rules for designing constituencies will probably lead to more constituencies that cross local authority boundaries.

What hasn't changed?

- The constitution and resourcing of the Commission.
- The use of electorate at the start of the review as the basis for the number of people in each constituency. Note that this is used instead of population or the expected electorate in the future.

Do these changes apply to future Scottish Parliament boundary reviews?

No. As a consequence, the process and rules for Scottish Parliament reviews will differ from those for Westminster reviews.

How are constituencies allocated to each part of the United Kingdom?

- Constituencies are allocated broadly in proportion to the electorate of each of the 4 parts of the United Kingdom, using the Sainte-Laguë method. The legislation sets out the calculation steps.
- The two Scottish island constituencies and the 2 Isle of Wight constituencies are not included in the constituency allocation process.
- Using the Sainte-Laguë method provides an allocation without having to make decisions on rounding – in other words each of the parts of the UK is allocated a whole number of constituents.

What rules determine constituency electorates?

- The specified island constituencies (Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituency, Orkney and Shetland constituency and 2 constituencies for the Isle of Wight) are excluded from the rule limiting constituency electorates. This exclusion does not apply to other populated islands.
- Any constituency larger than 12,000 square kilometres is excluded from the rule setting a minimum constituency electorate.
- The electorate of every other constituency must be no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the United Kingdom electoral quota. This means no fewer than 71,031 electors and no more than 78,507 electors.
- The average electorate in each constituency within a country will be different from the United Kingdom electoral quota. For Scotland the average electorate per constituency, outside the islands, will be 75,347.8, which is 578.6 more than the United Kingdom electoral quota.

How can I find out more?

We will update our website www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk with all information about the review as it becomes available. We will also issue News Releases at key stages of the review. We have a Facebook page which will carry all news items which we place on our website. We will also provide regular updates on Twitter @bcommscot .

What happens next?

We will now start the process of developing our Initial Proposals for constituencies, which we expect to publish for public consultation towards the end of 2016. At that time, everyone will have the opportunity to let us know their views on our proposals.

How can I participate?

- Comment on our proposals during the public consultation stages, either individually or through a club, committee or other body.
- Look out for information on our proposals at Display Points in your area.
- Keep an eye on our website to keep track of the review.

Why was the 6th Review of UK Parliamentary constituencies not completed?

In the 6th Review we expected to submit our recommendations for constituencies in Scotland before 1 October 2013 and for the resulting constituencies to be used in the General Election in May 2015. In January 2013, the UK Parliament amended the

legislation governing the Sixth Review of UK Parliament Constituencies. As a result, we stopped work on the Review and it was not completed.

Will you consider responses submitted during the 6th Review?

No. The 2018 Review will be based on the electorate data from 1 December 2015 and it should not be assumed that proposals from the 6th Review will remain relevant. We will be consulting fully on our proposals for the 2018 Review in due course.