

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR
ENGLAND**

ANNUAL REPORT

2012/2013

June 2013

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

Membership

The Speaker, the Rt. Hon John Bercow MP
(ex-officio Chairman)

The Hon. Mr Justice Sales, Deputy Chairman

Mr David Elvin, QC, Commissioner

Mr Neil Pringle, Commissioner

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Boundary Commission for England

Annual Report 2012/13

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Statutory progress report for 2012

As required by section 3(2B)(a) of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011), we submitted in January 2013 a report to the Speaker of the House of Commons setting out the progress we had made with the current '2013 Review' between January and December of 2012. Information about the progress of our work programme between those dates can therefore be viewed in that statutory progress report, a copy of which is available to view on our website (www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland).

Activities January – March 2013

Towards the end of January 2013, an amendment was made to the Electoral Registration and Administration Bill then before Parliament, the effect of which was to postpone until September 2018 the submission of the first report to Government following a boundary review under the new procedures established by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. This means that there will have to be a new review using data which is appropriate for that later time (the 2018 Review), and the work done on the 2013 Review will not be relevant. The Bill containing the amendment received Royal Assent on 31 January 2013. Although the commencement date of the section dealing with the postponement of the date for submission of the report of the boundary review (section 6) was in April 2013, we promptly took the pragmatic course from January of commencing the closing down of the operations of the 2013 review in an orderly and efficient manner.

This close-down work has involved formal project closure, termination of various contracts with suppliers, final auditing and archiving of paperwork from the 2013 Review, re-deployment of staff and undertaking a formal analysis of the procedures employed during the 2013 Review, so as to ensure best practice is adopted for the 2018 Review.

Philip Sales
Deputy Chairman

23 May 2013

Information about the Boundary Commission for England

The Sponsor

1. The Boundary Commission for England is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) which is sponsored by the Cabinet Office. The Secretariat staff and corporate functions such as Finance, IT and HR support are all provided by the Cabinet Office, which also oversees the corporate governance arrangements for the Commission.

The Commission

2. The Commission is constituted under Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). The Commission is an independent, non-political and impartial body and it takes every opportunity to emphasise that the results of previous elections do not, and should not, enter into its considerations. Nor does it consider the effects of its recommendations on future voting patterns.

3. The Commission is required to submit periodical reports in respect of the parliamentary constituencies to the Secretary of State (the Deputy Prime Minister). It is his statutory duty to lay the reports before Parliament together with the draft of an Order in Council giving effect to the Commission's recommendations.

Membership of the Commission

4. The Speaker of the House of Commons is the ex-officio Chairman of all four Boundary Commissions in the United Kingdom. The appointment of the Speaker further emphasises the independent, impartial, and non-political nature of the Commission. The Speaker plays no part in the conduct of reviews.

5. The Deputy Chairman of the Boundary Commission for England, who presides over meetings, is a High Court judge appointed by the Lord Chancellor. The current Deputy Chairman, who was appointed with effect from 1 June 2009, is the Honourable Mr Justice (Sir Philip) Sales. The two other Members of the Commission are Mr David Elvin QC, who was appointed with effect from 12 January 2009, and Mr Neil Pringle, who was appointed with effect from 1 July 2009.

6. The Commissioners are part-time appointees who meet whenever the work programme requires at the Secretariat offices in London. Since the passing of the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, the Commissioners (not including the Deputy Chairman) are paid a daily fee set by the Treasury and, together with the Deputy Chairman, are entitled to recover any expenses incurred on Commission work.

Code of Practice

8. The Commission maintains a Code of Practice and a Register of Members' Interests. These documents are updated annually and can be accessed on the Commission's website.

Assessors

9. There are two statutory assessors, i.e. technical advisers, to the Commission. They are the Director General of Ordnance Survey and the Statistics Authority. Both are represented at Commission meetings by deputies, whenever the Commission has a need to consult them on their areas of expertise.

Assistant Commissioners

10. The Commission has a panel of Assistant Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State to assist it with its work. The Assistant Commissioners chair the public hearings that the Commission are now statutorily required to hold. They are also asked to undertake an assessment of the representations submitted to the Commission in respect of its provisional recommendations, together with subsequent comments on those representations, received during the secondary consultation period. The Assistant Commissioners then submit reports, with recommendations, to the Commission. The Assistant Commissioners are paid a daily rate set by the Treasury when they work for the Commission.

The Secretariat

11. The Secretary to the Commission from April 2012 to February 2013 was Mr Simon James and since March 2013 has been Mr Anthony Bellingranger. The Secretary heads the Secretariat, the role of which is to service and assist the Commission in its conduct of reviews and in executing the decisions it takes. The Secretariat may be contacted at the address at the front of this report.

Statutory Duties

12. The Commission's statutory function is to keep under review the distribution of constituencies in England and to make periodical reports with recommendations to the Secretary of State in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended).

13. During an active general review of the constituencies in England, by virtue of the provisions introduced by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 (which further amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986), the Commission allocate a defined number of constituencies to England, the precise number being calculated using a formula defined in the Act and producing a figure broadly in proportion to the size of England's electorate as against that of the whole United Kingdom. Each constituency is also required to have an electorate that is within 5% of the United Kingdom 'electoral quota' (also defined in the Act).

14. Once the Commission has completed its consideration of the distribution of the constituencies, it announces its initial proposals. Interested parties have a twelve week period in which to submit representations of support or objection. During this initial consultation period, the Commission holds public hearings, so that oral submissions can be made to it as well as written representations. The Commission is then required to make the representations submitted during the twelve week period available so that interested parties

can consider them and submit counter-representations during a further four week period. Once the four week 'secondary consultation' period for counter-representations has closed, the Assistant Commissioners are asked to consider:-

- The Commission's initial proposals,
- the representations received in respect of those,
- the oral submissions made at the public hearings, and
- the counter-representations received

also taking into account a number of statutory factors listed in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended).

15. The Assistant Commissioners are asked to submit reports with recommendations to the Commission. Once the reports have been considered, the Commission may decide to announce revised proposals for those initially proposed constituencies where change has been recommended by the Assistant Commissioners. The Commission may also propose no change, or their own changes in light of the recommendations from the Assistant Commissioners. If revised proposals are announced, a period of eight weeks is made available, during which representations on those revised proposals can be made to the Commission. Further public hearings are not held at this stage and there is no subsequent period for counter-representations to be submitted.

16. The Commission is required to submit its final report and recommendations following an active review to the Deputy Prime Minister at a time specified in the Act (now defined as during September 2018), with subsequent reports to be submitted every five years thereafter.

OBJECTIVES

Overall objective

17. The Commission's overall objective for most of the 2012/13 period was to progress the 2013 Review of Parliamentary constituencies in England, as required by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). During February and March 2013, the task switched to managing an orderly close-down of that Review.

Main objectives for 2012/13, with outcomes

18. The main objectives for the Commission during the 2012/13 financial year were to:-

- **Hold three or four meetings to progress the conduct of the 2013 Review.**
Three meetings were held during the year: 1 May 2012, 23-26 July 2012; and 18 December 2012. Papers and Minutes from these meetings are due to be published before the end of June 2013.
- **By the beginning of May 2012, provide the regional teams of Assistant Commissioners with the written representations received in respect of the Initial Proposals, copies of the verbatim transcripts (oral representations) from the public hearings, and the counter-representations submitted during the statutory four-week period, so that they can be analysed.**
The Secretariat prepared and despatched to the Assistant Commissioner teams the packs of information described, with appropriate indexing to assist the Assistant Commissioners in their use of the material.
- **Receive reports from the regional teams of Assistant Commissioners by mid July 2012. The reports are expected to analyse all the representations (written and oral), the counter-representations, the Initial Proposals, and make recommendations to the Commission for the distribution of the constituencies in each region.**
All the Assistant Commissioner teams submitted comprehensive reports with recommendations to the Commission by mid-July 2012. The reports from the regional Assistant Commissioner teams were published verbatim as part of the Commission's published Revised Proposals documentation in October 2012.
- **By the end of July 2012, hold a meeting with each team of Assistant Commissioners to consider their reports and recommendations.**
The Commission's extended formal meeting of 23-26 July 2012 considered the reports and recommendations from the Assistant Commissioners, and was attended by each of the regional Assistant Commissioner teams.
- **Where considered necessary, publish revised proposals on a regional basis during autumn 2012 and invite written representations to be made about them within a statutory eight week period.**

Having formally considered and adopted the recommendations of the Assistant Commissioners, the Commission made the recommended changes to its initial proposals, and published its Revised Proposals on 16 October 2012. A copy of the relevant report was sent to each Member of Parliament representing an English constituency and all English local authorities, as well as at least one public place of deposit in each English constituency. Copies were also made available on the Commission's website. The consultation period on those Revised Proposals was open from 16 October 2012 to 10 December 2012.

- **Plan, organise and attend the annual meeting of the UK Local Government and Parliamentary Boundary Commissions to be held in London.**

The annual meeting of Boundary Commissions from across the UK was held in Admiralty House in London (provided by the Cabinet Office) on 17 January 2013. The meeting considered the progress that each part of the UK was making with its review of House of Commons constituencies, as well as a number of points of common interest.

- **Submit the statutorily required report about the progress made with the review to the Speaker of the House of Commons before the end of January 2013.**

The statutory annual update to the Speaker was submitted on 23 January 2013. A copy was also published on the Commission's website

- **Analyse the written representations made in respect of the revised proposals by mid-March 2013.**

The Secretariat had made reasonable progress with the analysis of representations made on the revised proposals. With the securing of Royal Assent at the end of January 2013 for the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (which postponed the Review for five years), substantive work on progressing the 2013 Review was halted.

- **Update databases with the 2013 (1 December 2012) electoral statistics by the end of March 2013.**

The Commission received all the electorate data for the 2013 electorates (1 December 2012), allowing it to update its databases. This annual update information allows the Commission to monitor the electorates of constituencies in England, including outside an active general review period.

- **Commence preparation of the report to be submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister before 1 October 2013, which contains recommendations for 502 constituencies.**

As the Review was postponed by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, substantive work on preparation of a final report for the 2013 Review was not commenced.

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2012/13

19. Prior to the start of the financial year, the Commission agreed a budget of £2,470,917 with the sponsor Department, which it considered would be necessary to progress the 2013 Review. This was later very slightly revised to **£2,473,717**. Two tables are set out below. The first provides a quarterly profile of the planned and actual staffing levels of the Secretariat during the financial year. The second compares the Commission's actual expenditure during the year against the final budget agreed with, and provided by, the Cabinet Office as sponsor Department.

Staff Complement (head count)

Grade	Apr-Jun 2012		Jul-Sep 2012		Oct-Dec 2012		Jan-Mar 2013	
	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual
SCS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Band A	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Band B2	7	7	7	6	7	6	6	3
Band B1	10	10	10	8	10	7	10	5
Casual (Band C)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
TIS1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
Total	21	22	21	18	21	16	20	10

Figures shown represent the position as at the end of the relevant financial quarter.

2012/13 Budget and Expenditure by Subhead

Budget Component	Budget (£)	Expenditure (£)	Difference (£)
Salaries, superannuation and NI	900,542	828,627	71,915 (1)
Commissioners' fees and expenses	374,000	376,625	-2,625
Staff travel and subsistence	6,000	2,371	3,629
Miscellaneous staff related costs	1,626	1,867	-241
Legal and professional fees	25,000	437	24,563 (2)
GIS software, data loads and technical support (ESRI UK)	34,009	33,044	965
Mapping (Ordnance Survey)	165,000	31,739	133,261 (3)
Hospitality (including hosting the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions)	11,660	3,517	8,143 (4)
Staff training	0	0	0
Postage and courier services	13,520	2,500	11,020 (5)
Stationery, subscriptions, and other general office expenses	30,442	3,132	27,310 (6)
Publicity	899,994	358,031	541,963 (7)
Print services	11,000	0	11,000 (8)
Records data and storage	924	573	351
Grand Total	2,473,717	1,642,463	831,254

Notes: Minor differences are due to rounding up or down to the nearest £.

- (1) Staff costs are less due to staff departures following the cancellation of the 2013 Review.
- (2) The legal advice sought from Treasury Solicitors was less than expected.
- (3) As Ordnance Survey had produced digital base maps at the earlier initial proposals stage, this significantly reduced the costs at later stages.

- (4) The hosting of the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions was achieved at much lower cost than budgeted for.
- (5) The cancellation of the 2013 Review meant maps, documents and representations were not sent to Commissioners.
- (6) The cancellation of the 2013 Review meant that stationery requirements were much less than anticipated.
- (7) Decisions made on the communications strategy during the year, cheaper advertising costs and the benefits from using Williams Lea meant that the Commission did not have to use its full allocated budget.
- (8) The cancellation of the review meant that no printing of the representations for the consideration of Commissioners was required.

Monitoring Expenditure

20. The Secretariat maintained information that recorded by date, topic, sub-head, and component, every item of expenditure. Each month, the Secretariat met with officials from the Elections and Democracy Division of the Cabinet Office in order to confirm monthly expenditure and to provide accurate financial reports, to profile expenditure for the financial year, confirm quarterly expenditure, and report on potential under-spends or over-spends.

OUTLINE BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2013/14

Programme

21. In the 2013/14 financial year, the budget provisionally agreed with the Cabinet Office is **£370,564** and the Commission expects to:-

- Publish by the end of June 2013 the Minutes and associated Papers from all Commission meetings relating to the 2013 Review
- Audit and archive by the end of June 2013 all records from the 2013 Review
- Publish by the end of June 2013 a management evaluation of the procedural handling of the 2013 Review, identifying best practice and areas for improvement, to be taken into account in preparations for the next constituency boundary review
- Make a decision by the end of November 2013 on the use of polling districts as a sub-ward unit in future boundary reviews
- Participate in the next Annual Meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions
- Participate fully in a Triennial Review of the Commission, likely to commence early in 2014.
- Develop by the end of March 2014 a detailed specification for an updated Geographic Information System (GIS) software package to support future constituency boundary reviews.
- Update databases with the 2014 (1 December 2013) electoral statistics by the end of March 2014.

Agreed budget for 2013/2014

Budget Component	Budget (£)
Salaries, superannuation and NI	317,267
Staff travel and subsistence	600
Commissioner fees and expenses	3,400
Conferences and Events	3,000
Legal fees	3,000
GIS software, data loads and technical support (ESRI UK)	17,322
Mapping (Ordnance Survey)	6,111
Hospitality	600
Web hosting	10,700
Publicity	3,000
Postage and courier services	1,500
Stationery, subscriptions and consumables	900
Print services	2,000
Records data and storage	1,164
Grand Total	370,564