**Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland**

Note of Meeting held on 23rd May 2023 at 3.30pm

Erskine House, Belfast & Microsoft Teams

**In Attendance**

Mr. Justice Michael Humphreys, Deputy Chair to the Boundary Commission (MH)

Sarah Havlin, Boundary Commissioner (SH)

Vilma Patterson, Boundary Commissioner (VP)

Dr Philip Wales, Registrar General for Northern Ireland (PW)

Dr Suzanne McLaughlin, Chief Survey Officer LPS (SMcL)

Sarah Ling, Interim Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland (SL)

Heather McKinley, Secretary to the Boundary Commission (HMcK)

Andrea Richardson, Deputy Secretary to the Boundary Commission (AR)

Lyn McBride, Support Officer to the Boundary Commission (LM)

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Attendees were welcomed to the hybrid meeting. In particular, those joining for the first time were welcomed - Sarah Ling (SL) Interim Chief Electoral Officer for NI and Suzanne McLaughlin (SMcL) Chief Survey Officer for LPS. Apologies were received from Angela McGrath (Commissioner of Valuation).

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

1. **Note of Previous Meeting**

Attendees agreed the note of BCNI meeting held on 28th March.

1. **Final Recommendations Comms** **Plan**

HMcK provided attendees with an overview of the timeline, including around timings for submission and publication of the Final Recommendations Report. It was noted that there are a number of specific statutory duties relating to this stage of the review:

* The Commission must submit a report to the Speaker of the House of Commons before 1st July 2023.
* A copy of the final report must also be sent to the Secretary of State.
* “As soon as is reasonably practicable” once the Speaker has laid the report before Parliament, the Commission must publish it “in such manner as they think fit”.

HMcK advised the members that the four UK Commissions proposed to submit their respective reports to the Speaker on Tuesday 27th June. The Speaker’s Office has indicated that they plan to lay the four reports promptly, perhaps either on the same day as they are submitted, or the next day (Wednesday 28th June). Printed copies must be available for MPs and Peers as soon as it is laid. As soon as reasonably practical after laying, the report will be published on the Commission’s website, with an accompanying press release and social media updates. It was also noted that we plan to have a professional print run of 200 copies of an A1 Northern Ireland Recommended Constituencies map, which includes ward lists, that can also be sent out on request. Our bespoke interactive map will be updated with the final recommendations and go-live alongside the published report. Following some discussion, the comms plans was agreed.

1. **Arrangements for wrapping up the 2023 Boundary Review**

It was agreed that Secretariat staff would meet with EONI staff in July to provide an overview of the boundary changes - date to be confirmed following this BCNI meeting. HMcK advised attendees that an Order in Council giving effect to the recommendations in all four UK Commissions’ Reports must be submitted within four months of the Reports being laid in Parliament.

Looking further ahead, it was noted that the 2020 Act provides for a Boundary Review every 8 years following the 2023 Review (rather than the previous 5-year cycle) so the next review is anticipated to begin in 2028-29, with submission of final recommendations by 1st October 2031. Once the various wrapping-up tasks from the current Review are completed and the final recommendations enacted, BCNI will move out of its live review phase until such times as preparations for the next review begin. No BCNI meetings were planned for this phase, and work will only be undertaken as it arises, on an ad hoc basis.

MH advised colleagues that further to his letter, there has been no change in position from the Northern Ireland Office regarding funding for the Commission for the period past the end of July 2023 until the Order in Council is made. MH advised that he has requested a meeting with the Permanent Secretary to discuss these concerns. HMcK advised attendees that, while these discussions were ongoing, it was now confirmed that LMcB and AR will be returning to their home employers at the end of July.

1. **AOB**

It was confirmed the date of the next meeting be Tuesday 4th July 2023, rather than Tuesday 27th June (to facilitate the submission of the Report on that day).