

**Boundary Commission
for Northern Ireland**



Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

**Annual Report
2009 - 2010**

June 2010

CONSTITUTION

The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland is constituted in accordance with section 2 of, and Schedule 1 to, the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986:

Chairman: The Speaker of the House of Commons*

Deputy Chairman: The Hon Mr Justice Richard McLaughlin

Members: Mr Richard Mackenzie CB
Dr William Smith

Assessors: The Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland
Mr Douglas Bain CBE, TD

The Commissioner of Valuation for Northern Ireland
Mr Alan Brontë

The Registrar General in Northern Ireland
Dr Norman Caven

Mr Iain Greenway, Chief Survey Officer,
Land & Property Services, provides professional advice.

Secretary: Ms Elizabeth Benson

* The Deputy Chairman, by custom, presided at all meetings of the Commission.

Contact Information

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REPORT 2009-2010

1. The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland is a permanent body constituted under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, and is an independent, advisory, non-departmental public body sponsored and wholly funded by the Northern Ireland Office.
2. The role of the Commission is to keep under continuous review the number, names and boundaries of the Parliamentary constituencies into which Northern Ireland is divided and to make recommendations about these to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Commission is also required to undertake general periodic reviews and to report recommendations to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland every 8 to 12 years.
3. This Annual Report covers the period from 16 May 2009 to 21 May 2010. The expenditure figures set out on the final page are for the financial year 2009/10 (from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010)

Appointments

4. On 30 June 2009 the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland appointed Ms Elizabeth Benson as Secretary to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland in accordance with paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act. She held this appointment in addition to her role as Secretary to the District Electoral Areas Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

Meetings and Consultation

5. The Commission met on 2 occasions during the reporting period. The first meeting, at which the Commission welcomed its new Deputy Chairman, Justice McLaughlin, took place on 2 July 2009. The

Commission also welcomed new member Dr. Bill Smith at this meeting. Dr. Smith replaces the former Commission member Mrs Joan Ruddock CBE. The second meeting, held on 8 January 2010 provided an opportunity for the Commission to discuss, among other things, its future work programme.

6. The Commission has been kept informed of other developments affecting its work through regular contact with the other UK Boundary Commissions and the Northern Ireland Office. The annual meeting of the Secretaries of the four UK Boundary Commissions was held in the Scottish Boundary Commission's offices in Edinburgh on 20 August 2009. The main topic of discussion was the possibility of changes to the size of the House of Commons should the Conservative Party win the general election and the implications for the Commissions' work programmes.
7. On 10 February 2010, the Secretaries of the four Boundary Commissions, together with officials from the Ministry of Justice, had a meeting with representatives of the Conservative Party (Mr Dominic Grieve MP, Mrs Eleanor Laing MP and Mr Rob Hayward) in the House of Commons. At the meeting, the Conservatives outlined their party's proposals for a smaller House of Commons, particularly their proposals for the conduct of a "reducing" boundary review. The meeting took place in accordance with established protocols for pre-election contact between government officials and representatives from the Opposition parties
8. The third Joint Meeting of the four UK Boundary Commissions was to have been hosted in Edinburgh by the Boundary Commission for Scotland on 21/22 April 2010. Unfortunately the meeting had to be cancelled due to the travel disruptions caused by the Icelandic volcanic ash cloud. The meeting has been rescheduled for 3/4 November 2010.

9. The Commission continues to work with the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, Land & Property Services and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The Commission's Secretariat also maintains contact with relevant Government departments and public bodies.
10. The Commission continues to have the support and professional advice of its assessors: Mr Douglas Bain, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland; Dr Norman Caven, Register General in Northern Ireland; and Mr Alan Brontë, Commissioner of Valuation for Northern Ireland. The Commission also relies upon the professional advice of Mr Iain Greenway, the Chief Survey Officer of Land & Property Services.

Fifth Periodic Review

11. Revised Parliamentary constituency boundaries were recommended in the Report of the Commission's Fifth Periodic Review¹ and were given effect by the Parliamentary Constituencies (Northern Ireland) Order 2008². The revised boundaries took effect on 12 April 2010 when a Proclamation was issued by Her Majesty, summoning a new Parliament.

Future Work Programme

12. The future work programme for the Commission will be determined by decisions of the new coalition government on political reform and decisions of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly on the Review of Public Administration.

¹ *Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland: Fifth Periodical Report on Parliamentary Constituencies* (Cm.7321, March 2008)

² S.I. 2008/1486

Accommodation and Equipment

13. The Commission continues to use office space at Forestview although the rent has been offset during this financial year by the sharing of the Commission's accommodation and facilities with the District Electoral Areas Commissioner to facilitate his review. By agreement with the Northern Ireland Office, reimbursement of costs is made to the Commission at a rate of 90% of the billed costs. The sharing of resources allows both Commissions the opportunity to reduce their running costs and offer better value for money.

14. The Commission's geographic information system which combines digitised boundaries with electorate figures and Land & Property Services mapping continues to perform well. The Commission will benefit from the enhanced functionality added to the system to facilitate the work of the previous Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and the District Electoral Areas Commissioner.

Expenditure

15. The Commission incurred the following provisionally calculated expenditure in the financial year 2009-2010. It should be noted that expenditure is low because Secretariat support for 2009/10 was wholly supplied by the Office of the District Electoral Commissioner which also paid 90% of all expenditure other than that relating solely to the operation of the Boundary Commission.

	Expenditure (£k)
Salaries and related costs	0
Members' attendance allowances, travelling and other expenses	3.1
IT and equipment ^a	0.2
Running costs ^b	6.1
Stationery, postage, printing, publishing and reprographics	0.7
Other ^c	0.5
Total	10.6

a includes licence and maintenance charges.

b includes maintenance and minor works, cost of cleaning, electricity charges, telephone rental and usage charges and accommodation rental, rates, and service charges.

c includes catering and hospitality, secretariat travel and subsistence and incidental expenditure.

Secretary

Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

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