

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09**

## CONSTITUTION

The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland are 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

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Mr Iain Greenway, Chief Survey Officer,  
Land & Property Services, provides professional advice  
on matters affecting mapping matters

Secretary: Mr Lee Hegarty

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

\*\* The former Deputy Chairman, The Hon Mr Justice Coghlin was appointed to the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland on 5 September 2008.

\*\*\* Dr Smith replaced Mrs Joan Ruddock whose warrant of appointment expired on 31 December 2008.

## **REPORT 2008-2009**

1. The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland are a permanent body constituted under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, and are an independent advisory non-departmental public body. 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 to the Secretary of State. The Commission are also required to undertake general periodic reviews and to report to the Secretary of State with recommendations every 8 to 12 years.
2. This Annual Report covers the twelve month period to 16 May 2009.

### **Appointments and Acknowledgments**

3. The Hon Mr Justice Richard McLaughlin was appointed as Deputy Chairman to the Commission by the Lord Chief Justice for Northern Ireland on 22 September 2008. Mr Justice McLaughlin replaced the former Deputy Chairman the Rt. Hon Lord Justice Patrick Coghlin who was appointed to the Court of Appeal of Northern Ireland on 5 September 2008. The Commission are most grateful to Lord Justice Coghlin for providing valuable guidance and leadership to the Commission throughout the last Periodic Review of constituencies.
4. The Commission also expresses their gratitude to Mrs Joan Ruddock CBE whose warrant of appointment as a Member of the Commission expired on 31 December 2008 thus completing the maximum permitted period of 10 years service. The Commission greatly appreciate the advice and support that Mrs Ruddock provided during her time as a member. Dr William Smith was appointed on 16 May 2009 by the Secretary of State following an open competition to fill the vacancy

resulting from Mrs Ruddock's departure. Richard Mackenzie was reappointed as a member of the Commission on 14 November 2008 for a further four year term.

## **Meetings and Consultation**

5. During the reporting period, the Commission met on 2 occasions. In addition, the Commission was represented by Mr Mackenzie at the annual meeting of the United Kingdom Boundary Commissions in London on 1 April 2009.
6. A joint meeting of all four United Kingdom Boundary Commission Secretaries was held in Belfast on 29 August 2008 to discuss matters of concern, as provided for by Schedule 1 to the 1986 Act. The Commission Secretaries considered the arrangements for the review of legislation in relation to the conduct of boundary work earlier recommended in the Eleventh Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life<sup>1</sup>. The meeting also considered regional developments.
7. 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.
8. The Commission continues to have the support and professional advice of their 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

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<sup>1</sup> *Committee on Standards in Public Life: Review of the Electoral Commission. Eleventh Report* (Cm.7006, January 2007)

Mr Iain Greenway, the Chief Survey Officer of Land & Property Services,

### **Fifth Periodic Review**

9. The Report of the Commission's Fifth Periodic Review<sup>2</sup> and its recommendations were submitted to the Secretary of State in September 2007. The Report was published and laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State in March 2008 together with a draft Order to give effect to the Commission's recommendations without modification. The draft Order was approved by both Houses of Parliament and made at the Privy Council on 11 June 2008<sup>3</sup>. The revised boundaries will take effect at the next Parliamentary Election.

### **Local Government Boundaries and Interim Review of Constituencies**

- 10 The Northern Ireland Executive announced last year its decision to restructure local government on the basis of 11 local government districts. The Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, Mr Richard Mackenzie CB, submitted his Final Recommendations Report to the Minister with responsibility for local government in Northern Ireland on 22 June 2009.
- 11 The Northern Ireland Office announced earlier this year that a District Electoral Areas Commissioner will be appointed with effect from 1 July 2009 to review the District Electoral Areas following the completion of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's work.

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<sup>2</sup> *Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland: Fifth Periodical Report on Parliamentary Constituencies* (Cm.7321, March 2008)

<sup>3</sup> The Parliamentary Constituencies (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 (S.I. 2008/1486).

- 12 The Commission will consider whether an interim review of parliamentary constituencies will be necessary once a final decision has been taken on the restructuring of local government wards by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

### **Staffing**

13. The Commission were ably supported by the Secretary to the Commission, Mr John Fisher, and by Mrs Jennifer Hamilton until end September 2008.
14. From 1 October 2008, the Secretariat role has been fulfilled by the Northern Ireland Office Elections Unit. Lee Hegarty has been appointed as Secretary to the Commission by the Secretary of State and will retain this role until the Commission commences its next substantive review.

### **Other Matters**

15. The Commission have been kept informed of other developments affecting their work through regular contact with the other UK Boundary Commissions and the Northern Ireland Office. The Commission have subscribed to proposals by the Office of National Statistics on a naming methodology which seeks to ensure consistency in names of electoral divisions in Northern Ireland. This would remove the duplication of ward names in different district councils.
16. The Commission's geographic information system which combines digitised boundaries with electorate figures and Land & Property Services mapping continues to perform well.

## **Accommodation and Facilities**

17. The Commission's offices at Forestview are leased for a period of 10 years however one of the provisions contained in the lease is that a review of rent would be completed after 5 years. The review was completed with the assistance of Land and Property Services in June 2008 and resulted in an increase of £3k per annum. Rent is now fixed at £23k per annum for the remaining period of the lease.
18. The increase in rent has been offset during this financial year by the loan of the Commission's accommodation and facilities to the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner to facilitate his review. By agreement with the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, reimbursement of costs is made to the Commission in proportion to the use made by the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner to the Commission's offices, facilities, and maintenance at a rate of 90% of the billed costs.
19. The sharing of resources allows both Commissions the opportunity to reduce their running costs and offer better value for money services. It is likely that a similar arrangement will be put in place with the Northern Ireland Office and District Electoral Areas Commissioner in regard to usage made by the Commissioner.
20. The Commission will be able to benefit from the enhanced functionality that has been introduced to the geographic information system to allow the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner to complete his review. The system will also be made available to the District Electoral Areas Commissioner when he commences his review later in the year.

## **Expenditure**

19. The Commission incurred the following provisionally calculated expenditure in the financial year 2008-2009.

	<b>Expenditure (£k)</b>
Salaries and related costs	32.8
Members' attendance allowances, travelling and other expenses	11.4
IT and equipment <sup>a</sup>	1.5
Running costs <sup>b</sup>	17.2
Stationery, postage, printing, publishing and reprographics	11.5
Other <sup>c</sup>	10.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>84.5</b>

*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**

**June 2009**