**Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland**

Note of Meeting held on 4th July 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 Suzanne McLaughlin, Chief Survey Officer LPS (SMcL)

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

Angela McGrath, Commissioner of Valuation, LPS (AMcG)

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. Apologies were received from Dr Philip Wales, Registrar General for Northern Ireland.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

1. **Note of Previous Meeting**

Attendees agreed the note of BCNI meeting held on 23rd May.

1. **Final Recommendations Report – updates on publicity, press coverage, queries etc**

HMcK gave an update on the successful submission, laying and publication of the Final Recommendations Report. As required, printed copies had been made available for MPs and Peers as soon as the report was laid – BCNI had liaised with the Vote Office directly around these arrangements. An outline of the timeline around submission and publication was given, as follows:

* All four UK Commissions had submitted their reports to the Speaker of the House of Commons on Tuesday 27th June 2023.
* A copy of the report was then sent to the Secretary of State.
* All four reports were laid before Parliament by the Speaker on Wednesday 28th June.
* After which the Commission published the Final Report on its website, with accompanying press release, and the Spatial NI interactive map had also gone live.

AR updated members around the increased levels of public engagement on the Commission’s website, social media, and the interactive map since the publication of the Final Report on the Commission’s website. An update was also given on the public and press enquiries received by the Commission so far. MH thanked the Secretariat for their work in submitting and publishing the Final Recommendations Report, noting that it was a significant and complex achievement.

1. **Further update on arrangements for wrapping up the 2023 Boundary Review**

MH updated the members of the outcome of his meeting with the interim NIO Permanent Secretary. While there was no change in the NIO’s position on funding, the importance of maintaining the Commission’s independence was noted at that meeting and a commitment given that resources would be made available to ensure that the work of the Boundary Commission could be appropriately completed.

An overview of the winding up arrangements for the Secretariat was given, including contact arrangements for after 31st July when the Commission would no longer have a full-time Secretariat.

1. **AOB**

HMcK gave the members confirmation of BCNI’s financial position at the end of the 2022/23 financial year, which had now been confirmed by NIO Finance. AMcG asked whether the Commission undertook a ‘lessons learned’ exercise, to benefit future reviews. SH noted that while this piece of work would be advantageous, there were limitations given the Commission’s budgetary and staffing arrangements.

Finally, MH extended his appreciation for the hard work and support of AR and LMcB in the delivery of the 2023 Boundary Review, noting that this was their last BCNI meeting before returning to their Employers. Commissioners seconded his thanks, and also expressed their gratitude and good wishes for their future careers. MH and Commissioners also expressed their gratitude to HMcK for her commitment to the work of BCNI, her leadership of the team, particularly given the reduced staffing levels, and hard work in supporting the Commissioners to ensure the statutory work of the Commission was completed in a timely manner.

It was agreed that, having submitted the Final Recommendations Report of the 2023 Boundary Review, no further meetings of the Boundary Commission were to be scheduled. Should matters arise which required discussion, it was agreed that these could be managed by correspondence, or a meeting could be arranged if required.