



**Boundary Commission
for Northern Ireland**



Annual Report 2022-2023

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This publication is available at www.boundarycommission.org.uk.

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Section 1: Deputy Chairman's Report

I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce this Annual Report, reflecting on the previous 12 months of work on the 2023 Parliamentary Boundary Review.

Following the completion of the secondary consultation period in March 2022, the Commission published on our website the written representations received during this consultation, and the records of the public hearings held. In November 2022, the Commission published our Revised Proposals for Parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland and commenced the third consultation period, in accordance with the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). In March 2023, the representations from the third consultation period were published on the Commission's website, and we continued working towards our Final Recommendations, required by the Act to be submitted to the Speaker of the House of Commons before 1st July 2023.

During the 2022-23 reporting period, I was particularly grateful to Boundary Commissioners Ms Sarah Havlin and Ms Vilma Patterson for their diligent approach to the development of the Commission's Revised Proposals, supported by our Secretary, Ms Heather McKinley and the Secretariat team. I wish to thank Land & Property Services (LPS) whose mapping expertise was invaluable to the Commission in the modelling and publication of those Revised Proposals, and whose static and interactive mapping products supported the third consultation period. I am also grateful to Libraries NI and to local Councils for facilitating public display points for our consultation materials. Finally, I would like to record my thanks to the Commission's statutory Assessors for their advice and expertise, and to those individuals and organisations who have engaged with the 2023 Boundary Review's extensive statutory consultation process.

Mr Justice Michael Humphreys
Deputy Chairman
4th September 2023



Section 2: The Commission

2.1 Background

The Boundary Commission is an independent and impartial public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in Northern Ireland on the basis of rules set out in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). The Boundary Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body of the Northern Ireland Office.

2.2 Membership

Appointments to the Commission are made under Schedule 1 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended. The 1986 Act specifies that the Commission's membership comprises a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and two further Members.

The ex-officio Chairman for all four UK Boundary Commissions is the Speaker of the House of Commons, although in practice the Chairman takes no active part in the business of any of the Commissions. The Deputy Chair of the Commission is a judge of the High Court appointed by the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland. The other two Commission Members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland through a public appointments process. The Commission is supported in its work by four statutory Assessors and a small Secretariat.

Chairman:

The Speaker of the House of Commons

Deputy Chairman:

Mr Justice Michael Humphreys

Members:

Ms Sarah Havlin

Ms Vilma Patterson MBE

Assessors:

Ms Angela McGrath, Commissioner of Valuation for Northern Ireland

Ms Siobhan Carey, Registrar General Northern Ireland¹

Ms Virginia McVea, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

Mr Jim Lennon, Chief Survey Officer of Land & Property Services

Secretary:

Ms Heather McKinley

¹ Deputised by Dr David Marshall, Director of Census and Population Statistics, during part of this reporting period and succeeded by Dr Philip Wales from February 2023.



2.3 Meetings

The Commission met formally on six occasions during the period covered by this report. These meetings were used to discuss the delivery of the Commission's statutory obligations, as well as operational, financial and governance matters.

The Commission also attended the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions in November 2022. This meeting provided an opportunity to share updates on our respective work, explore opportunities to work together on the delivery of our statutory duties and to discuss good practice in common areas of interest.

2.4 Code of Practice

The Commission's Code of Practice is available on the Boundary Commission website (www.boundarycommission.org.uk) or a copy can be provided on request.

2.5 Register of Members' Interests

The Commission maintains a Register of Members' Interests, in accordance with the Code of Practice, which is available on request.

2.6 Secretariat

Heather McKinley is the Secretary to the Commission. Her appointment is in accordance with paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act. The Secretary, together with a small Secretariat, supports the work of the Commission.

During the period of this report the Secretariat's work has included the following key areas:

- Supporting the development of the Commission's Revised Proposals, and their publication;
- Delivery and completion of the third statutory consultation stage of the 2023 Boundary Review;
- Managing the Commission's corporate and operational infrastructure;
- Financial and administrative matters;
- Liaison with other UK Boundary Commissions and other public bodies to support the work of the Commission;
- Responding to queries and correspondence from members of the public, elected representatives, and other stakeholders;
- Maintenance of the Commission's [website](http://www.boundarycommission.org.uk) and social media.



Section 3: Governance

3.1 Legislation

The work of the Boundary Commission is governed by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act (1986), as amended most recently by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act (2020), which is available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>. The 2020 Act brought the 2018 Parliamentary Boundary Review to a close without implementation, and introduced some key changes to the statutory boundary review process, as follows:

- 650 seats across the UK, compared to 600 in the 2018 Review;
- There are three periods of public consultation, rather than two;
- Public hearings now take place during the secondary consultation period rather than the first;
- The interval between reviews will be 8 years once the 2023 Review is completed, meaning the next review after 2023 is currently anticipated to finish in 2031;
- Other changes include reintroduction of the ‘inconvenience’ Rule 5 factor and a change to the Parliamentary process after submission.

The Act specifies which electorate figures are to be used by the Commission when carrying out a review. For the 2023 Review, the Commission is required to use the total number of persons whose names appeared on the Parliamentary electoral register as at 2nd March 2020. The Commission has obtained the [electorate figures](#) for the 2023 Review from the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland.

A mathematical formula specified in the Act is used to distribute constituencies across the four parts of the United Kingdom. For the 2023 Review, Northern Ireland has 18 seats, compared to 17 for the 2018 Review. The Act also specifies a mathematical formula which is used to calculate the number of electors which must be in each proposed constituency. As provided for by the legislation, Commissioners may take into account a number of factors, if and to such extent as they think fit, when deciding on their recommendations for Parliamentary constituencies.

3.2 Framework Document

The Commission operates in accordance with a Framework Document which outlines the respective roles of the Commission and the Northern Ireland Office, and the governance arrangements between them. This document was most recently updated and agreed in September 2022.

3.3 Data Protection

Our handling of personal information under General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection legislation is covered by the Commission’s registration with the Information



Commissioner's Office. Our [Data Protection and Privacy Policy](#) sets out how the Commission handles personal information.

Section 4: Enquiries and Information

The Commission uses its website and social media presence on Twitter as channels to inform the public about its work. In addition, we welcome requests for information through other means, such as by email or by post.

4.1 Enquiries

The Commission has a Freedom of Information policy which incorporates the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) model Publication Scheme for public bodies under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Commission's [Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme](#) is available on its website.

During the period of this Report, the Secretariat received and responded to a number of enquiries relating to the ongoing work of the Commission. Fifteen requests for information were made under the Freedom of Information Act and all were answered within the statutory deadline for dealing with such requests. The nature of these enquiries included requests for records relating to the Commission's staffing, IT and telephony provision, as well as operational queries. No requests for review or appeals to the Information Commissioner's Office were made regarding the handling of these information requests.

4.2 Website

The Commission's website is the primary means of making information available to the public. The Commission also has a Twitter account to help reach a wider audience. During the reporting period, the website was used to provide updates about the 2023 Boundary Review, and to publish the Revised Proposals and accompanying maps, as well as representations received and records of the public hearings, in line with the legislation. The Commission also used the Citizen Space online consultation portal to facilitate members of the public, political parties and wider civic society in making representations about the Commission's Revised Proposals.



Section 5: The 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

5.1 The 2023 Review

In our previous Annual Report, we set out the key actions that we had undertaken since the 2023 Boundary Review commenced in January 2021. These included the publication of our Initial Proposals in October 2021, and the initial consultation period which was held between October and December 2021. A total of 31 written representations were received during this consultation period, which were then published on our website.

The secondary consultation period of the 2023 Boundary Review commenced on 9th February 2022 and ended on 23rd March 2022. This provided an opportunity for the submission of further written representations with respect to the representations from the initial consultation period, as well as to give representations at public hearings. Five representations were given at the public hearings, and records of these were published on the Commission's website, in line with the legislation. The three written representations received during the secondary consultation period were also published on our website in May 2022.

Having considered the written representations received during the initial and secondary consultation periods, and the records of the public hearings, and having undertaken a number of site visits, the Commission decided on revisions to its initial proposals. Of the 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland, ten remained the same as in the Initial Proposals and eight were revised. A change of name was proposed in one of the revised constituencies. In the Revised Proposals, as in the Initial Proposals, the Commission proposed 18 constituencies within the Rule 2 statutory range. The Commission did not consider that its ability to take into account the Rule 5 factors was unreasonably impaired in respect of any constituency, and so the threshold for the use of Rule 7 was not met.

The Commission's Revised Proposals were published on 17th November 2022, marking the start of the third statutory consultation period. This lasted for four weeks (in line with the legislation) and closed on 15th December 2022. As with the initial consultation period, a map showing the Revised Proposals, along with information about how to participate in the consultation, was displayed in public libraries and local council premises across Northern Ireland. The Commission provided information and a range of consultation resources via our website, including an interactive map of the Revised Proposals. We also issued a press release, used social media to boost engagement, and provided an online consultation portal to facilitate the submission of representations. By the close of the third consultation period, 28 written representations had been received. A petition had also been received. These materials were subsequently published on the Commission's website. Taking into account representations received throughout the review process, Commissioners will consider what final recommendations to make for Parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland, ahead of the 1st July 2023 statutory deadline.



Section 6: Other activities

6.1 Accommodation and IT provision

The Commission utilises office facilities at Erskine House as required and has continued to use the comprehensive service provided by IT Assist for its IT and telephony requirements.

6.2 Risk Management

The Commission's Risk Management framework is in place and is kept under review.

6.3 Staffing and training

Training has been delivered during this reporting year in line with Commission and staff requirements.

6.4 Liaison with others

6.4.1 Northern Ireland Office

The Commission regularly liaises with the Northern Ireland Office as our sponsoring department in relation to governance matters, in line with the Framework Document. The Department has no role in relation to the operational matters connected with the Commission's exercise of their powers and duties.

6.4.2 Other Boundary Commissions

The Commission maintains regular contact with the other UK Boundary Commissions on matters of mutual interest. The Commission attended the annual meeting of UK Boundary Commissions in November 2022.

6.4.3 Land & Property Services

During the period of this Report the Commission has had regular contact with Land & Property Services (LPS) in relation to the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology needed to support the Parliamentary Boundary Review, and the delivery of related mapping.

6.4.4 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

The Commission liaises with staff of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in relation to statistical and geo-statistical matters.

6.4.5 The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland

The Commission liaises with staff of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland in relation to information and advice on electoral data required for the Parliamentary Boundary Review.



Section 7: Expenditure

The Commission's operational expenditure in the financial year 2022/23 is shown in the table below:

	Operational Expenditure 2022/23 (£k)
Staff Costs:	
Salaries & related costs	167.4
Commissioners' Costs:	
Members' attendance allowances & related costs	37.2
Non-Staff Costs:	
Accommodation & related costs	3.1
Office costs (IT, telephony etc)	10.0
Professional fees	30.7
Total	248.4

Salary costs are determined by the pay arrangements for our staff who are on loan or secondment from other public bodies. Commissioners' fees are determined by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and cover attendance at scheduled meetings and associated preparation, meetings held with other UK Boundary Commissions and ad hoc meetings held with other bodies. The fee rate for Commissioners is £505.50 per day. Travel and subsistence in the course of official business are paid at Northern Ireland Office rates.



Section 8: Further information

If you have any queries or require further information, please contact us:

By email: contact@boundarycommission.org.uk
By post: Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland
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You can also find more information on our website, at www.boundarycommission.org.uk.



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