

# MINUTES OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON THE INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR THE SOUTH WEST REGION

Session 1: Wednesday 8 June 2016

Present:

David Elvin QC, Commissioner  
Neil Pringle, Commissioner  
Sam Hartley, Secretary to the Commission  
Tony Bellringer, Deputy Secretary to the Commission  
Tim Bowden, Head of Reviews  
Gerald Tessier, Review Manager  
Rashid Burki, Review Officer

Mr Tessier and Mr Burki presented the schemes for the South West region that had been prepared by the Secretariat.

## Cornwall and Devon

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is entitled to 5.27 constituencies. The Commissioners noted that it is, therefore, not mathematically possible to allocate five whole constituencies to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, where all five constituencies would have an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota. The Commissioners agreed that Cornwall should be considered along with the county of Devon, including the unitary authorities of Plymouth and Torbay, as a sub-region. Cornwall and Devon together are entitled to 16.67 constituencies. The Commissioners noted that the allocation of 17 constituencies would result in a reduction of one constituency.

The Commissioners noted that, in each of the three alternative schemes put before them, the boundary between Cornwall and Devon had been crossed in the north of the county, between the towns of Bude and Launceston in Cornwall, and Bideford in Devon. Commissioners agreed that this was the preferred crossing, as the River Tamar was not as significant a geographical factor in the north, as it was in the south between Plymouth and Saltash. The Commissioners also noted the number of roads that cross the River Tamar in the northern part of the two counties.

Commissioners noted that two of the three alternative schemes suggested constituencies in Cornwall that crossed the county from the north coast to the south coast. They preferred this option to constituencies that ran along the north coast, between the towns Bodmin and Newquay, or along the south coast, between the towns of Truro and St Austell.

The Commissioners noted that the electorate of the existing St Ives constituency was below 5% of the electoral quota and agreed that it should be extended to include the town of Hayle. They also agreed that the town of Falmouth should be included in a renamed Falmouth and Camborne constituency, together with the towns of Camborne and Redruth. They accepted that the town of Newquay should be linked with the town of Truro, in a constituency named

Truro and Newquay, and that the town of Bodmin should be linked with the town of St Austell, in a constituency named Bodmin and St Austell.

The electorate of the existing South East Cornwall constituency is below 5% of the electoral quota and Commissioners agreed that it should be extended by the inclusion of two wards (Altarnun, and Stokeclimsland) from the existing North Cornwall constituency. They agreed that the nine remaining Cornwall wards, including the towns of Bude, Camelford and Launceston, should be included in a cross-county boundary constituency together with 18 wards from Torridge district in Devon, including the town of Bideford, and that the constituency should be called Bideford, Bude and Launceston.

In Plymouth, the Commissioners agreed to minimum change, by transferring the Plymouth city ward of Peverell from the existing Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport constituency to the Plymouth, Moor View constituency. They also agreed to transfer the two Plymouth city wards of Plymstock Dunstone, and Plymstock Radford from the existing South West Devon constituency to the Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport constituency. In view of the changes made to these two constituencies, they agreed that the new constituencies should be called Plymouth North and Plymouth South respectively.

The Commissioners considered that the wards in South Hams district had close ties with the town of Totnes and southern coastal area towards Torbay, but they noted that to create a constituency which gave effect to those ties would result in the need for more far-reaching changes in the rest of Devon, than was actually required. They agreed that the only change in South Hams district would be to realign the constituency boundary with the new ward boundaries, by including the whole of the Loddiswell & Aveton Gifford ward in the Totnes constituency. They also agreed to transfer 10 West Devon borough wards, including the town of Tavistock, from the existing Torridge and West Devon constituency to the South West Devon constituency. They agreed that the constituency should be called Tavistock and Ivybridge.

The Commissioners noted that the electorate of the existing Totnes constituency was below 5% of the electoral quota and decided to extend the constituency by including the two Teignbridge district wards of Ambrook, and Ipplepen, from the existing Newton Abbot constituency. To compensate for the loss of these two wards from the Newton Abbot constituency, they agreed to the transfer of the two Teignbridge district wards of Chudleigh, and Kenn Valley, from the existing Central Devon constituency to the Newton Abbot constituency.

The Commissioners noted that there was no need to alter either of the existing Exeter, and Torbay constituencies, and that the only change required to the existing East Devon, and Tiverton and Honiton constituencies was to realign the constituency boundary to include the whole of the East Devon district ward of Feniton and Buckerell in the Tiverton and Honiton constituency. Commissioners noted that when the five remaining Torridge district wards were transferred from the existing Torridge and West Devon constituency to the Central Devon constituency, it would mean that the Central Devon constituency would contain wards from five districts (East Devon, Mid Devon, Teignbridge, Torridge, and West Devon) and they considered that this should be avoided if possible. They considered alternative divisions of Devon, which would avoid a Central Devon constituency containing more than

three districts, but decided that the significant level of change throughout Devon that would result from such a proposal was difficult to justify. They agreed that the East Devon district ward of Exe Valley should be transferred from the existing Central Devon constituency to the East Devon constituency, thereby ensuring that the proposed Central Devon constituency continued to contain parts of four districts.

### Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset

Somerset is entitled to 5.20 constituencies. The Commissioners noted that it was possible to treat the county on its own, with only minimal change to the five existing constituencies. Bath and North East Somerset is entitled to 1.73 constituencies, and therefore needs to be paired with a neighbouring authority. Commissioners noted that it was possible to combine Bath and North East Somerset with South Gloucestershire across the River Avon, but that configuration would have knock-on effects through South Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire, and also into Wiltshire. Commissioners agreed with the Secretariat's proposal to combine the county of Somerset with the unitary authority of Bath and North East Somerset as a sub-region and to continue the allocation of seven constituencies.

The Commissioners agreed to make no change to the existing Taunton Deane, and Yeovil constituencies. They also agreed to transfer the three Bath and North East Somerset district wards of Bathavon North, Bathavon South, and Peasedown from the existing North East Somerset constituency to the Bath constituency. They noted that the electorate of the existing Bridgwater and West Somerset constituency was over 5% above the electoral quota and agreed to re-adjusting the constituency boundary to follow the new ward boundaries in Sedgemoor district and to transferring the two Sedgemoor district wards of Huntspill and Pawlett, and Puriton and Woolavington to the Wells constituency. That change allowed for six Mendip district wards, four from the existing Wells constituency, including the town of Shepton Mallet, and two from the existing Somerton and Frome constituency, to be included in the North East Somerset constituency.

Commissioners noted that it was possible to include the Bath and North East Somerset district ward of Bathavon West in the proposed Bath constituency. However, this configuration would have resulted in greater change to other constituencies in Somerset to compensate for the transfer, and they agreed that the consequences of such a change were difficult to justify.

### North Somerset

The Commissioners noted that none of the proposals made any changes to the existing constituencies in the unitary authority of North Somerset. They agreed not to make any changes to the existing North Somerset, and Weston-super-Mare constituencies.

### Bristol

Bristol is entitled to 4.01 constituencies. Commissioners noted that two of the four existing constituencies (Bristol North West, and Bristol South) have an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota, and two (Bristol East, and Bristol West) did not. Commissioners also noted that it was possible to create four constituencies in Bristol, all with electorates within 5% of

the electoral quota, by transferring the Bristol city ward of Easton from the existing Bristol West constituency to the Bristol East constituency. Commissioners agreed that this was the only change required in Bristol.

### Gloucestershire, and South Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire is entitled to 6.16 constituencies. The Commissioners noted that it was possible to treat the county on its own, with only minimal change to the six existing constituencies. South Gloucestershire is entitled to 2.71 constituencies, and therefore needs to be paired with a neighbouring authority. Having rejected the combination of Bath and North East Somerset with South Gloucestershire, Commissioners agreed with the Secretariat's proposal to combine the county of Gloucestershire and the unitary authority of South Gloucestershire as a sub-region and to continue the allocation of nine constituencies.

Commissioners noted that it was necessary to increase the electorates of the existing Filton and Bradley Stoke, and Kingswood constituencies. Commissioners agreed to the transfer of the South Gloucestershire district ward of Frampton Cotterell from the existing Thornbury and Yate constituency to the Filton and Bradley Stoke constituency, and to the transfer of the South Gloucestershire district ward of Boyd Valley from the existing Thornbury and Yate constituency to the Kingswood constituency, on the grounds that this was the minimum change required.

To compensate for the loss of those two wards, Commissioners agreed to the transfer of seven Stroud district wards, five from the existing Stroud constituency, including the towns of Cam and Dursley, and two from the existing The Cotswolds constituency, to the Thornbury and Yate constituency. They also agreed that the constituency should be called Dursley, Thornbury and Yate.

The Commissioners agreed that the Stroud district ward of Nailsworth should be transferred from the existing Stroud constituency to The Cotswolds constituency to compensate for the transfer of the two Stroud District wards of Kingswood, and Wotton-under-Edge.

Commissioners noted that the electorate of the existing Gloucester constituency was over 5% above the electoral quota. In order to reduce the electorate, they agreed to the transfer of the two Gloucester city wards of Quedgeley Fieldcourt, and Quedgeley Severn Vale to the Stroud constituency, which would also contain the remaining 21 wards of Stroud district. They also agreed that the Gloucester city ward of Longlevens should be transferred from the existing Tewkesbury constituency to the Gloucester constituency.

Commissioners noted that the electorate of the existing Forest of Dean constituency was below 5% of the electoral quota. To increase the electorate, Commissioners agreed to the transfer of the Tewkesbury borough ward of Coombe Hill from the existing Tewkesbury constituency to the Forest of Dean constituency. They also agreed that the Forest of Dean constituency should be called West Gloucestershire.

Commissioners noted that the transfer of the Coombe Hill ward divided the existing Tewkesbury constituency into two parts. In order to provide a link between the two parts, Commissioners agreed to the transfer of the Cheltenham borough ward of Springbank from

the existing Cheltenham constituency to the Tewkesbury constituency. Commissioners noted that this would be the only change to the Cheltenham constituency.

Commissioners considered alternative proposals for the West Gloucestershire constituency, including the inclusion of the town of Tewkesbury, but rejected these, as it would require far greater change than the agreed constituencies. They also noted that it was possible to divide the Coombe Hill ward between constituencies, but rejected this option at this stage, as it was not required in developing a set of constituencies that reflected the statutory criteria.

### Swindon

Swindon is entitled to 1.99 constituencies. Commissioners noted that one of the two existing constituencies (North Swindon) has an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota, and the other one (South Swindon) did not. Commissioners agreed that the only change required was to realign the new ward and constituency boundaries in Swindon. They rejected more radical alterations in Swindon, such as creating a more urban western constituency, and a more rural eastern constituency.

Commissioners noted that two of the new wards (Covingham and Dorcan, and Mannington and Western) are divided between constituencies. They agreed that the Swindon borough ward of Covingham and Dorcan should be included in the North Swindon constituency, and the Swindon borough ward of Mannington and Western should be included in the South Swindon constituency. They noted that to include the Mannington and Western ward in the North Swindon constituency would mean that there would be no direct road link between the Swindon borough wards of Lydiard and Freshbrook, and Shaw and the remainder of the South Swindon constituency, but did not consider this an over-riding factor.

### Dorset and Wiltshire

Dorset, including the unitary authorities of Bournemouth and Poole, is entitled to 7.43 constituencies, and therefore needs to be paired with a neighbouring authority. Wiltshire is entitled to 4.64 constituencies, and therefore also needs to be paired with a neighbouring authority. Commissioners, therefore, agreed to the Secretariat's proposal that Dorset and Wiltshire should be combined as a sub-region and allocated 12 constituencies, one less than currently.

Commissioners noted that it was possible to leave the existing Bournemouth East constituency unchanged, making only those changes to the existing Bournemouth West constituency required to realign ward and constituency boundaries in Poole, adding one Poole borough ward to the existing Poole constituency, and extending the existing Christchurch constituency by adding additional East Dorset district wards. They also noted that this would result in a revised Mid Dorset and North Poole constituency that would contain parts of four districts (East Dorset, North Dorset, Poole, and Purbeck). The Commissioners decided that this was not suitable and rejected these proposed changes.

The Commissioners agreed that five Bournemouth wards from the north of the borough would be added to the existing Christchurch constituency, which would also lose the wards

from East Dorset district. They decided that the constituency should be called Bournemouth North and Christchurch.

Commissioners agreed that ten Bournemouth borough wards from the south of the borough should form a constituency called Bournemouth South. They also agreed that the three Poole borough wards of Alderney, Branksome East, and Branksome West, which are currently divided between the existing Bournemouth West, and Poole constituencies should be wholly included in the Poole constituency, together with eight other Poole wards.

Commissioners decided that the remaining five Poole borough wards, the remaining three Bournemouth borough wards, and four East Dorset district wards should form a constituency called Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson.

It was noted that the existing South Dorset and West Dorset constituencies would need to be altered to realign new ward boundaries in West Dorset district with the constituency boundaries. Commissioners agreed that the West Dorset district ward of Puddletown should be included wholly in the West Dorset constituency, and that the West Dorset district ward of Broadmayne & Crossways should be included wholly in the South Dorset constituency. They noted that the electorate of the South Dorset constituency was below 5% of the electoral quota and agreed to include the three Purbeck district wards of Bere Regis, St Martin, and Wareham in the South Dorset constituency.

Commissioners agreed that the remaining three Purbeck district wards, together with the remaining 12 East Dorset district wards, including the town of Wimborne Minster, and seven wards from North Dorset district, including the town of Blandford Forum, should form a constituency called Blandford and Wimborne. They also agreed that the remaining 12 North Dorset district wards, including the towns of Shaftesbury and Gillingham, should form a cross county boundary constituency with 12 wards from Wiltshire, including the towns of Warminster and Westbury. They agreed that the constituency should be called Warminster and Shaftesbury.

Commissioners agreed that the existing Salisbury constituency should be extended to take in the whole of the two Wiltshire wards of Bulford, Allington and Figheldean, and Fovant and Chalke Valley, and that the Wiltshire ward of Durrington and Larkhill be transferred from the existing Devizes constituency to the Salisbury constituency. As the existing Devizes constituency had an electorate below 5% of the electoral quota, the Commissioners agreed that the five Wiltshire wards that comprised the town of Calne should be transferred from the existing North Wiltshire constituency to the Devizes constituency.

Commissioners agreed that the 10 Wiltshire wards that comprise the town of Chippenham and most of the town of Corsham should be transferred from the existing Chippenham constituency to the North Wiltshire constituency. They decided that the constituency should be called Chippenham. Commissioners also decided that the remaining 21 Wiltshire wards, including the towns of Bradford-on-Avon, Melksham, and Trowbridge should be included in a constituency called Trowbridge.

Session 2: - Monday 13 June 2016

Present:

The Hon Mrs Justice Patterson, Deputy Chair of the Commission

Neil Pringle, Commissioner

Sam Hartley, Secretary to the Commission

Tony Bellringer, Deputy Secretary to the Commission

Tim Bowden, Head of Reviews

Mr Pringle presented the Commissioners' agreed conclusions from Session 1. Firstly, Mr Pringle detailed the proposed sub-regions of Cornwall and Devon, Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset, Bristol, Gloucestershire, and South Gloucestershire, Swindon, and Dorset and Wiltshire.

In Cornwall and Devon, the Secretariat outlined the proposed crossing of the River Tamar and the different constituency configurations in Cornwall - i.e. north to south constituencies rather than coastal ribbon constituencies. In Devon, the Secretariat outlined the proposed Central Devon constituency given that it includes part of four district councils. The alternatives were also discussed, but not put forward given the impact these would have on existing constituencies.

In Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset, the Secretariat outlined the wards of Bathavon West and Peasedown. It was noted that the Peasedown ward had to be included in a Bath constituency to ensure that the electorate was within 5% of the electoral quota, but that the constituency agreed during session 1 did not include the Bathavon West ward, so as not to require greater change in the other Somerset constituencies.

In North Somerset and Bristol, Commissioners agreed that either no change, or only limited change was required to existing constituencies in ensuring constituencies within 5% of the electoral quota.

In Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, Commissioners agreed with these areas forming a sub-region and agreed with the wards of Gloucester and Cheltenham being included in neighbouring constituencies. Commissioners carefully considered the Secretariat's proposals for the Tewkesbury area and agreed that dividing a ward at this stage was not required.

In Swindon, Commissioners carefully considered the different constituency patterns and agreed with the Secretariat's recommendation.

In Wiltshire and Dorset, Commissioners carefully considered the constituency patterns in the Bournemouth area. Commissioners were of the view that the alternative pattern as put forward during the initial session provided a better reflection of the statutory criteria.

The Deputy Chair agreed that the Commission's initial proposals would be as agreed during session 1.