

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR  
ENGLAND**

***ANNUAL REPORT***

***2013/2014***



# **BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

## **Membership**

The Speaker, the Rt. Hon John Bercow MP  
(ex-officio Chairman)

The Hon. Mr Justice Sales, Deputy Chairman

Mr David Elvin, QC, Commissioner

Mr Neil Pringle, Commissioner

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# **Boundary Commission for England Annual Report 2013/14**

## **Deputy Chairman's Report on Commission's activities 2013/14**

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Boundary Commission for England for the financial year 2013-14. With the formal early termination of the 2013 Review at the beginning of the year, this has unsurprisingly been a relatively quiet year for the Commission. The early part of the year was spent finalising the proper archiving of the records from the 2013 Review, conducting an analysis of the lessons learned from that first practical application of the new statutory framework introduced by the Parliamentary Voting and Constituencies Act 2011 and winding down the complement of staff in the Commission's Secretariat to the minimum required to perform basic administrative tasks and undertake long-range planning and preparation for the next Review. The Commission expects to launch the next Review in early 2016.

During the year, the Commission decided that it should replace the Geographic Information System software which it first started using in 1991. The software has been a reliable tool to support the Commission's work, as evidenced by its use for over two decades. However, the necessary support to keep it operational is being withdrawn and demands for increased functionality in more recent reviews mean that the time has come to upgrade our mapping system. The Commission is taking steps now to ensure that our system is upgraded before the next Review commences. We have also been working with Ordnance Survey and local elections officers to develop digital mapping of polling districts, as well as wards, across England, to increase flexibility in the development of new constituency boundaries. Our hope is that as well as allowing for increased efficiency in working for Secretariat staff, the new system will also facilitate online consultation with the public in future constituency reviews.

The bulk of the Secretariat's time in the latter part of the year was taken up with developing the detailed policy and delivery requirements associated with these initiatives and liaising with the Commission's Cabinet Office sponsors regarding finance and procurement in relation to them.

This is the last Annual Report for which I will have responsibility. I will cease to be the Deputy Chair of the Commission in November 2014, upon appointment to the Court of Appeal. I would like to express profound thanks to my fellow Commissioners, all Assistant Commissioners who helped with the 2013 Review and, in particular, the staff of the Secretariat, who worked so hard for the Commission during my period in office. It was a pleasure to work with you all.

***Philip Sales***  
Deputy Chairman  
21 October 2014

## **Information about the Boundary Commission for England**

### **The Sponsor**

1. The Boundary Commission for England is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), which is sponsored by the Cabinet Office. The Secretariat staff and corporate functions such as Finance, IT and HR support are all provided by the Cabinet Office, which also oversees the corporate governance arrangements for the Commission.

### **The Commission**

2. The Commission is constituted under Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). The Commission is an independent, non-political and impartial body and it takes every opportunity to emphasise that the results of previous elections do not, and should not, enter into its considerations. Nor does it consider the effects of its recommendations on future voting patterns.

3. The Commission is required to submit periodical reports in respect of the parliamentary constituencies to the Secretary of State (the Deputy Prime Minister). It is his statutory duty to lay the reports before Parliament together with the draft of an Order in Council giving effect to the Commission's recommendations.

### **Membership of the Commission**

4. The Speaker of the House of Commons is the ex-officio Chairman of all four Boundary Commissions in the United Kingdom. The appointment of the Speaker emphasises the independent, impartial, and non-political nature of the Commission. The Speaker plays no part in the conduct of reviews.

5. The Deputy Chairman of the Boundary Commission for England, who presides over meetings, is a High Court judge appointed by the Lord Chancellor. The Deputy Chairman for the period covered by this report was the Honourable Mr Justice (Sir Philip) Sales (first appointed to the role with effect from 1 June 2009). The two other Members of the Commission are Mr David Elvin QC, (first appointed with effect from 12 January 2009), and Mr Neil Pringle, (first appointed with effect from 1 July 2009).

6. The Commissioners are part-time appointees who meet whenever the work programme requires at the Secretariat offices in London. Since the passing of the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, the Commissioners (not including the Deputy Chairman) are paid a daily fee set by the Treasury and, together with the Deputy Chairman, are entitled to recover any expenses incurred on Commission work.

### **Code of Practice**

8. The Commission maintains a Code of Practice and a Register of Members' Interests. These documents are updated annually and can be accessed on the Commission's website.

### **Assessors**

9. There are two statutory assessors, i.e. technical advisers, to the Commission. They are the Director General of Ordnance Survey and the Statistics Authority. Both are represented at Commission meetings by deputies, whenever the Commission has a need to consult them on their areas of expertise. The Commission did not require the presence of the Assessors at its meetings during 2013-14.

### **Assistant Commissioners**

10. The Commission may arrange for Assistant Commissioners to be appointed by the Secretary of State to assist it with its work. During an active constituency review, Assistant Commissioners chair the public hearings that the Commission are now statutorily required to hold. They are also asked to undertake an assessment of the representations submitted to the Commission in respect of its provisional recommendations, together with subsequent comments on those representations, received during the secondary consultation period. The Assistant Commissioners then submit reports, with recommendations, to the Commission. The Assistant Commissioners are paid a daily rate set by the Treasury when they work for the Commission.

11. 27 Assistant Commissioners were appointed for the period 1 September 2011 – 30 September 2013, in order to support the 2013 Review. However, that Review was formally ended in April 2013, so there has been no Assistant Commissioner activity between that time and the expiry of their terms of office.

### **The Secretariat**

12. The Secretary to the Commission for the period of this report was Mr Anthony Bellringer. The Secretary heads the Secretariat, the role of which is to service and assist the Commission in its conduct of reviews and in executing the decisions it takes. The Secretariat may be contacted at the address at the front of this report.

### **Statutory Duties**

12. The Commission's statutory function is to keep under review the distribution of constituencies in England and to make periodical reports with recommendations to the Secretary of State in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended).

13. During an active general review of the constituencies in England, by virtue of the provisions introduced by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 (which further amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986), the Commission allocate a defined number of constituencies to England, the precise number being calculated using a formula defined in the Act and producing a figure broadly in proportion to the size of England's electorate as against that of the whole United Kingdom. Each constituency is also required to have an electorate that is within 5% of the United Kingdom 'electoral quota' (also defined in the Act).

14. Once the Commission has completed its consideration of the distribution of the constituencies, it announces its initial proposals. Interested parties have a twelve week period in which to submit representations of support or objection. During this initial consultation period, the Commission holds public hearings, so that oral submissions can be made to it as well as written representations. The Commission is then required to make the representations submitted during the twelve week period available so that interested parties can consider them and submit counter-representations during a further four week period. Once the four week 'secondary consultation' period for counter-representations has closed, the Assistant Commissioners are asked to consider:-

- The Commission's initial proposals,
- the representations received in respect of those,
- the oral submissions made at the public hearings, and
- the counter-representations received

also taking into account a number of statutory factors listed in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended).

15. The Assistant Commissioners are asked to submit reports with recommendations to the Commission. Once the reports have been considered, the Commission may decide to announce revised proposals for those initially proposed constituencies where change has been recommended by the Assistant Commissioners. The Commission may also propose no change, or their own changes in light of the recommendations from the Assistant Commissioners. If revised proposals are announced, a period of eight weeks is made available, during which representations on those revised proposals can be made to the Commission. Further public hearings are not held at this stage and there is no subsequent period for counter-representations to be submitted.

16. The Commission is required to submit its final report and recommendations following an active review to the Deputy Prime Minister at a time specified in the Act, with subsequent reports to be submitted every five years thereafter.

17. Section 6 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 in effect postponed the Parliamentary constituencies review by five years (to report in September 2018), so for the period covered by this report, the Commission has not been conducting active review work.

## OBJECTIVES 2013/14

### Overall objective

17. The Commission's overall objective for first part of the 2013/14 period was to conclude the orderly close-down of the 2013 Review of Parliamentary constituencies in England. During the latter half of the year, the task switched to long-range planning and preparation for the 2018 Review.

### Main objectives for 2013/14, with outcomes

18. The main objectives for the Commission during the 2013/14 financial year were to:-

- **Publish by the end of June 2013 the Minutes and associated Papers from all Commission meetings relating to the 2013 Review.** All Minutes and associated Papers from the Commission meetings held during the Review (2011 and 2012) were published before the end of June 2013, and appear in the 'Publications' section of the BCE website.
- **Audit and archive by the end of June 2013 all records from the 2013 Review.** All records from the Review were audited and archived by the target date, including the responses to the final stage of consultation on the BCE's revised proposals in the 2013 Review. The National Archives took a 'snapshot' of the BCE website and its contents, as well as the BCE's consultation databases from the 2013 Review. Additionally BCE staff attended the offsite storage facility where records from previous constituency reviews are kept, and arranged for the further audit and reduction of the number of records to be kept for long-term retention at The National Archives.
- **Publish by the end of June 2013 a management evaluation of the procedural handling of the 2013 Review, identifying best practice and areas for improvement, to be taken into account in preparations for the next constituency boundary review.** The management evaluation was conducted and the resulting 'Review Closure Report' was published by the target date. The report can be viewed on the BCE website in the 'Publications' section.
- **Make a decision by the end of November 2013 on the use of polling districts as a sub-ward unit in future boundary reviews.** The Commission meeting in November 2013 considered in detail the use of sub-ward units during a constituency review. The resulting decision was that, subject to appropriate funding being made available to establish the underpinning digital mapping, the Commission would be more willing to consider splitting of wards in future constituency reviews, using polling districts as the sub-ward unit. However, wards would still be considered the basic 'building block' of constituencies, and splitting of wards in an area would only be considered if there was a strong reason to do so.

- **Participate in the next Annual Meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions.** The Commission was represented at the Annual Meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions, which took place on 21 November 2013 in Cardiff, at which the Commissions from across the UK discussed relevant current issues and best practice.
- **Participate fully in a Triennial Review of the Commission, likely to commence early in 2014.** In the event, the Triennial Review of the UK Parliamentary Boundary Commissions was not formally announced and commenced until 7 April 2014. The Commission stands ready to co-operate fully with the review.
- **Develop by the end of March 2014 a detailed specification for an updated Geographic Information System (GIS) software package to support future constituency boundary reviews.** An initial specification was developed by the end of the financial year, in order for the Commission to obtain a broad estimate of likely costs for a replacement GIS.
- **Update databases with the 2014 (1 December 2013) electoral statistics by the end of March 2014.** Due to preparation for the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER), the date of publication of the relevant registers in England was delayed until 17 February 2014, which consequentially delayed the Commission's receipt and collation of the published registers, and development of the related statistics.

## BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2013/14

19. The Commission agreed a budget of **£370,000** with the sponsor Department, which it considered would be necessary to conclude the winding up the 2013 Review, begin planning and preparation for the 2018 Review, and perform ongoing ‘housekeeping’ functions between reviews. Two tables are set out below. The first provides a quarterly profile of the planned and actual staffing levels of the Secretariat during the financial year. The second compares the Commission’s actual expenditure during the year against the final budget agreed with, and provided by, the Cabinet Office as sponsor Department. Total actual expenditure for the year was **£284,189**.

### Staff Complement (Full Time Equivalent)

Grade	Apr-Jun 2013		Jul-Sep 2013		Oct-Dec 2013		Jan-Mar 2014	
	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual
SCS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Band A	2	2	2	1.2	1	0.2	1	0.4
Band B2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Band B1	5	2	1	1	1	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.4</b>

Figures shown represent the position as at the end of the relevant financial quarter.

### 2013/14 Budget and Expenditure by Subhead

Budget component	Budget 13/14 (£)	Expenditure (£)*	Variance (£)
Staff salaries, superannuation and NI	316,703	255,035	(61,668)
Staff travel and subsistence	600	526	(74)
Commissioner fees and expenses	3,400	1,722	(1,678)
Conferences and events	3,000	0	(3,000)
Legal fees	3,000	101	(2,899)
GIS, data loads, technical support, and website hosting	28,022	21,145	(6,877)
Ordnance Survey (mapping and support)	6,111	6000	(111)
Hospitality	600	65	(535)
Publicity	3,300	(1,748.34)**	(5,048)
Postage and courier services	1,500	0	(1,500)
Stationery, subscriptions and consumables	600	347	(253)
Print services	2,000	0	(2,000)
Records and data storage and management	1,164	996	(168)
<b>Total</b>	<b>370,000</b>	<b>284,189</b>	<b>(85,811)</b>

\*Rounded up or down to the nearest pound.

\*\*Reimbursement

### Monitoring Expenditure

20. The Secretariat maintained information that recorded by date, topic, sub-head, and component, every item of expenditure. Each month, the Secretariat met with officials from the Elections and Democracy Division of the Cabinet Office in order to confirm monthly expenditure and to provide accurate financial reports, to profile expenditure for the financial year, confirm quarterly expenditure, and report on potential under-spends or over-spends.

## OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2014/15

### Programme

21. For the 2014/15 financial year, the budget provisionally agreed with the Cabinet Office is **£400,000** and the Commission expects to:-

- Hold at least one formal Commission meeting during the year to assess progress in planning and preparation for the 2018 Review;
- Establish a high-level project board with joint membership from BCE Commissioner and SCS Cabinet Office official(s) to oversee and facilitate planning and preparation for the 2018 Review, to meet three or four times during the year;
- Work with the sponsor Department to secure the Ministerial re-appointment or replacement of the Deputy Chairman, whose term of office expires at the end of June 2014;
- Negotiate and agree a contract with Ordnance Survey for the digital mapping of all polling districts in England, secure existing polling district information from all English local authorities and supply to OS by October 2014, with substantive OS work to commence in October 2014 and final delivery in spring 2015;
- Refresh the Commission's website by the end of October 2014.
- Secure external GIS expertise in order to develop during spring and summer 2014 a detailed technical specification for a replacement GIS, to form the basis of a formal procurement exercise in November/December 2014 with award of the contract in early 2015;
- Participate fully in the Cabinet Office's Triennial Review of the UK Parliamentary Boundary Commissions (timetable driven by Cabinet Office);
- Participate in the next Annual Meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions;
- Update databases with the 2015 (1 December 2014) electoral statistics by the end of March 2015.

### Budget for 2014/2015 by subhead

Budget component	Budget 14/15 (£)
Staff salaries, superannuation and NI	219,907
Staff travel and subsistence	1,200
Commissioner fees and expenses	6,400
Conferences and events	1,200
Legal fees	3,000
Ordnance Survey and mapping	133,000
GIS and website	27,393
Hospitality	400
Publicity	1,990
Postage and courier services	900
Stationery, subscriptions and consumables	850
Print services	800
Records and data storage and management	2,960
<b>Total</b>	<b>400,000</b>