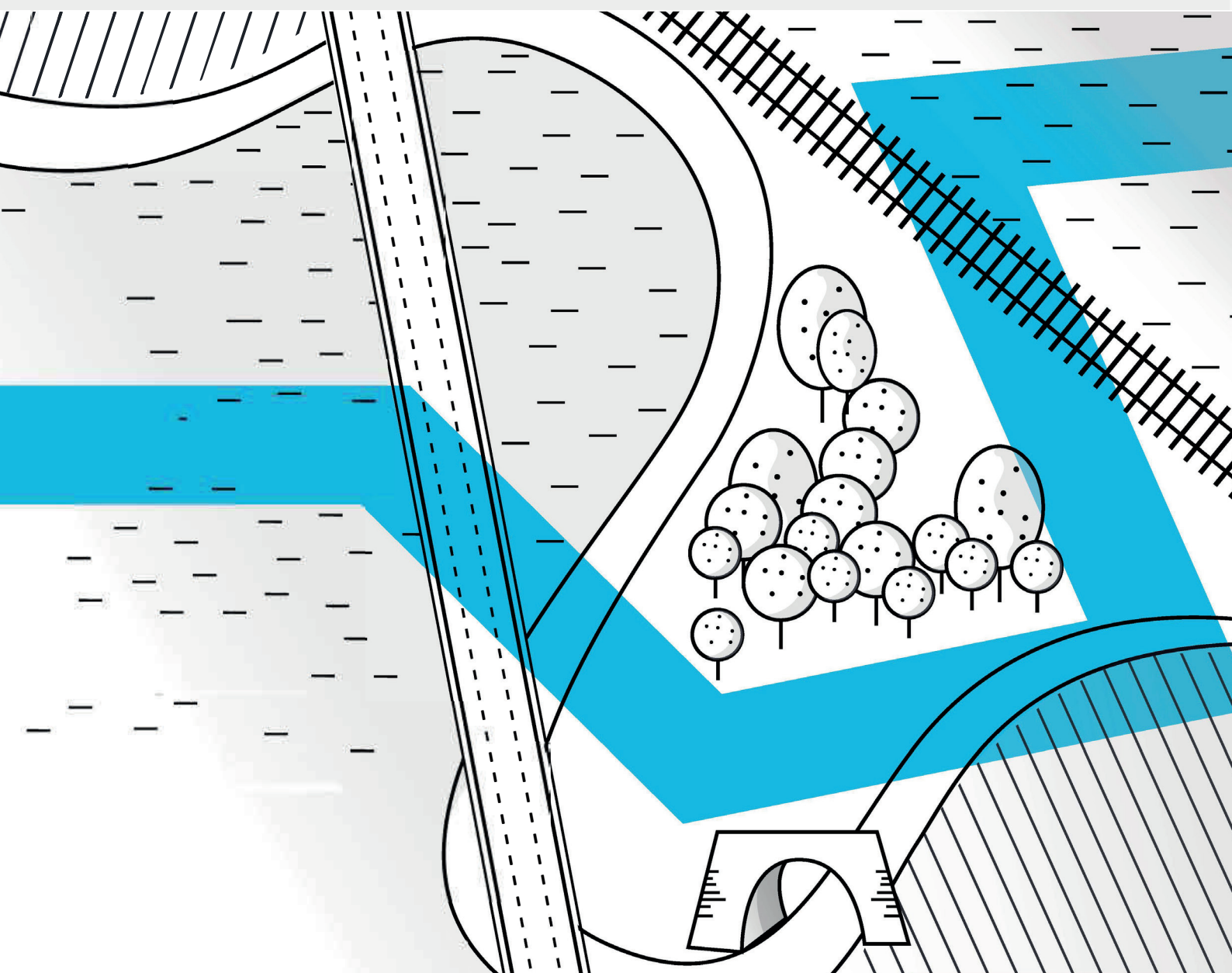




Boundary  
Commission  
for England

# Boundary Commission for England

## Guide to the public hearings



# Get in touch

This guide provides information about the public hearings taking place as part of the 2023 Boundary Review.

If you have any questions, or require this document in a different format, please get in touch. You can contact the Boundary Commission for England via:

## **Letter**

Boundary Commission for England  
35 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BQ

## **Phone**

020 7276 1102

## **Email**

[information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk](mailto:information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk)

## **For press enquiries only**

Email: [press@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk](mailto:press@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk)

Or call: 07821 637558



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Finding your local public hearing</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Booking to speak at a public hearing</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Attending a public hearing</b>	<b>7</b>
Timings	7
Political parties	7
Assistant Commissioners	7
Accessibility	8
Coronavirus	8
Media	9
Recording the hearing	9
<b>What happens next?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Find out more</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix: Legislation</b>	<b>12</b>



# Introduction

We are the Boundary Commission for England (BCE), an independent and impartial public body.

A review of Parliamentary constituencies is taking place to ensure each one has roughly the same number of electors. As part of this process, the number of constituencies in England will increase to 543. The Commission is required by law to make sure that each constituency in England has between 69,724 and 77,062 electors.

Due to population changes, the number of people registered to vote is much higher in some constituencies than in others. The 2023 Boundary Review will therefore rebalance the number of electors represented by each MP. It's an important process, and one which requires considerable change to the existing map of constituencies.

Our task is to redraw the map of constituencies in England so that it represents local communities as best as possible, while keeping to the legal requirements outlined above. In June 2021, we published our initial proposals for new constituency boundaries and names, and asked for your feedback. We have gathered all the responses we received during this first consultation, and will publish these on our consultation website, [bcereviews.org.uk](https://bcereviews.org.uk).

During our six-week secondary consultation, which begins on **22 February**, you can tell us what you think about our suggestions as well as the responses already submitted. To give us your views in writing, send your comments via [bcereviews.org.uk](https://bcereviews.org.uk), letter, or email to reach us by **4 April 2022**. We are also holding a number of public hearings throughout the consultation period, where you can have your say in person.

In this Guide to public hearings, you will learn where and when the public hearings in your region are taking place; how to register for a slot to speak at a hearing; how the hearings will take place; and what happens next.

We look forward to welcoming you at a public hearing in your region, and listening to your views about how we can best reflect your area in our proposed new map of constituencies in England.

# Finding your local public hearing

The dates and locations for public hearings in England are as follows:

Region	Location	Dates
Eastern	Cambridge*	17-18 March
	Southend	21-22 March
	Ipswich	24-25 March
East Midlands	Nottingham*	7-8 March
	Leicester	10-11 March
	Northampton	14-15 March
London	Westminster*	24-25 February
	Havering	28 February - 1 March
	Ealing	3-4 March
	Merton	7-8 March
	Bromley	10-11 March
North East	Newcastle*	28-29 March
	Middlesbrough	31 March - 1 April
North West	Manchester*	3-4 March
	Liverpool	7-8 March
	Chester	10-11 March
	Preston	14-15 March
	Kendal	17-18 March
South East	Crawley*	14-15 March
	Portsmouth	17-18 March
	Reading	21-22 March
	Ashford	24-25 March
South West	Exeter*	21-22 March
	Gloucester	24-25 March
	Bath	28-29 March
	Dorchester	31 March - 1 April
West Midlands	Birmingham*	28 February - 1 March
	Stafford	3-4 March
	Worcester	7-8 March
Yorkshire and the Humber	Leeds*	10-11 March
	Hull	14-15 March
	Northallerton	17-18 March

\* = Location for the lead hearing in the region

If you're reading this Guide to the public hearings on your device:

To find information about the venues where the public hearings are being held, as well as book your slot to speak, you can [click here](#).

If you're reading a printed copy:

Search online for [bit.ly/bcepublichearings](https://bit.ly/bcepublichearings).

Or, go to the Boundary Commission for England website: [boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk](https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk). Click on the 2023 Review tab, and from there you'll be directed to the public hearings webpage.

## Booking to speak at a public hearing

Booking to speak at a public hearing is free, and a quick and easy process. You can register for a ten minute slot through the events booking site Eventbrite.

Go to [bit.ly/bcepublichearings](https://bit.ly/bcepublichearings) to view the list of public hearings on our website. Find your region and choose the location closest to you. The link will take you to the event booking page, where you can follow the instructions to register.

On the registration form, we encourage you to provide a summary of the points you wish to make at the public hearing. This information isn't required, but helps us with the smooth running of the hearing. Similarly, if you wish to make a presentation (for example, with Powerpoint slides), we will ask you to send these materials to us before the hearing. These will be included in the published record of the public hearings. There will be a laptop and projector available to use during your presentation.

If you would like to speak at a public hearing, you are strongly encouraged to book a slot. We may not be able to accommodate you on the day if you turn up without one, and whether you are able to speak is up to the discretion of the Chair. Members of the public who wish to attend the hearing just to listen do not need to register beforehand. If you wish to provide evidence at a hearing, you must give it in person - a member of the Commission cannot read it on your behalf if you are unable to attend.

If you have any difficulties in making your booking online, please contact us for help. You can also book over the phone on 020 7276 1102.



# Attending a public hearing

## Timings

Each hearing takes place over two consecutive days. The timings for each day are as follows:

Day One: 10am to 8pm

Day Two: 9am to 5pm

At the discretion of the Chair, the hearing may close slightly earlier if we are not aware of anyone intending to speak at a later time. The chair may also adjourn for short breaks through the day.

The hearing will begin with a short introduction from the Chair, and an official from the Commission will summarise the proposals for the area where the hearing is held.

## Political parties

The first hearing in each region is designated as the 'lead' hearing. On the first day of each lead hearing, the four qualifying English political parties (as defined in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended) will have an extended speaking slot of 30 minutes to allow them to present their overall view for the whole region.

In some instances, a political party may decide not to attend a lead hearing.

The Commission places no more weight on comments that are submitted by political parties than on those from any other individuals or organisations.

## Assistant Commissioners

All public hearings will be chaired by one of the 17 Assistant Commissioners appointed by the Commission to support and advise on our review of parliamentary constituencies in England. To learn more about our Assistant Commissioners, [click here](#) or go to the 'About us' section on our website.

The Chair will manage the hearing, including the time allocated to those wishing to speak, to make sure it runs on time. The purpose of the hearings is to allow people to make their representation orally during the public consultation, and it is not to enter into a debate about the initial proposals.

The Chair may ask those making a speech questions in order to clarify the points they are making. Other participants may ask to direct their own questions of clarification through the Chair, but will not be allowed to cross-examine the speaker.

Please remember that everyone should feel comfortable at public hearings and participants should not be intimidated by others, even if you disagree with the points they are making.

Our Assistant Commissioners look forward to listening to your views during the public hearings, to help get the boundary lines and constituency names we propose right for your area. The content of your representation is up to you. Some things you may wish to include in your speech are:

- Whether you agree or disagree with the initial proposals
- If you have an alternative suggestion for the boundary lines or constituency names
- Information about your local area - such as your community groups, the places of worship you attend, your libraries and schools, or even how you travel within and between communities. This all helps us to improve our initial proposals.

## **Accessibility**

All venues for the public hearings are compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and have step-free access. If you have any concerns or questions regarding accessibility, please get in contact.

When booking a timeslot, you will be asked whether you intend to make your oral representation in a language other than English. This will help us look into making arrangements (i.e. translation services, such as sign language interpretation) at hearings where needed.

## **Coronavirus**

The Commission will follow Government guidance around Covid-19 (available online at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)) as well as any restrictions set by the public hearing venues themselves. We ask you to wear a mask and practice social distancing throughout the hearing, and encourage you to take a lateral flow test prior to your arrival. Where allowed by venue restrictions, you can remove your mask while making your speech. If you have tested positive, or have any coronavirus related symptoms, please do not attend under any circumstances. We will note down the contact details of all those attending as part of the NHS Test and Trace service.



## Media

We expect there to be media interest in the public hearings and members of the media may attend some dates.

If you are a member of press and wish to get in touch with the Commission to request an interview, please contact our Press Office:

Email: [press@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk](mailto:press@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk)

Phone: 07821 637558

## Recording the hearing

An official video recording will be made of all public hearings, and placed on our [YouTube channel](#) shortly after each hearing has concluded. A transcript of each hearing will also be made, which may not be published until later in the year.

We are required by law to publish all representations, and it therefore will not be possible to stop recording during a presentation. However, please let us know as early as possible if you would like the camera pointed away from you while you speak. Participants will be asked to state their name and local area, which will be recorded in the video and transcript made of the hearing. Personal details, such as home addresses or contact details, will be redacted. An official from the Commission present at the hearing will also make a written record of speakers' names and the place names mentioned during presentations to help with the accuracy of the transcript.

Photos may be taken at hearings for our own social media channels in order to promote the consultation. Please let us know as early as possible if you would not like to be photographed.

Our Data Protection and Privacy Policy will be available in hard copies at the public hearings, and can also be found on our website. [Click here](#) or search for 'data protection' on our website.

We ask members of the public not to record or photograph the hearing themselves, as this may be distracting and make other participants uncomfortable.

Members of the press may be allowed to film certain parts of the hearings at the Chair's discretion and subject to any policies of the venue itself.



# What happens next?

The information you provide during the hearings helps us to improve our suggestions for the new map of constituencies across England.

Your feedback is valuable, and we take every representation made into account. During the previous review, we changed over half of our original proposals based on the responses we received in our consultation periods.

We attach just as much significance to the feedback we receive at public hearings, as to that we receive in writing via our website, or by email or letter.

If you attend a public hearing, and wish to submit your response in writing as well, please remember that the secondary consultation deadline is **Monday 4 April 2022**. Responses that reach us after this deadline cannot be taken into consideration.

After the secondary consultation has ended, the Commission will consider all the representations received during the initial proposals and secondary consultations. We will produce a report deciding on whether the initial proposals should change and which details any suggested changes. Alongside this report, we will publish all the written representations we received during the secondary consultation, as well as the transcripts from public hearings.

If our proposals change, we will hold a further four-week written consultation on our revised proposals inviting you to tell us what you think about them. There will be no public hearings at this stage.

Those comments will be published along with our final report, which will be sent to Parliament by **July 2023** and subsequently made into law.

# Find out more

If you would like to find out more about the public hearings, the work of the Commission, or the 2023 Boundary Review more generally, please get in touch (see page 2 for our contact information).



We also publish news about the Boundary Review on social media. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) - we're called **@BCEReviews**.

## Useful resources and links

- Visit our consultation website to view our initial proposals for your area, and tell us your views: [bcereviews.org.uk](https://bcereviews.org.uk)
- Keep up to date with 2023 Boundary Review news on our website: [boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk](https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk)
- Find your local public hearing on our dedicated public hearings page: [bit.ly/bcepublichearings](https://bit.ly/bcepublichearings)
- Read our [Guide to the 2023 Review](#), which provides a detailed description of the 2023 Boundary Review process. An [easy read version](#) is also available to view or print from our website.



# Appendix: Legislation

The following is taken from Schedule 2A to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, and includes amendments put in place by the 2020 Act.

## **SCHEDULE 2A PUBLIC HEARINGS ABOUT BOUNDARY COMMISSION PROPOSALS**

### **Purpose of hearings**

1. The purpose of a public hearing is to enable representations to be made about any of the proposals with which the hearing is concerned.

### **Number of hearings**

2. (1) In relation to any particular report under section 3(1)(a) of this Act –
  - a) the Boundary Commission for England shall cause at least two and no more than five public hearings to be held in each English region;
  - b) the Boundary Commission for Scotland shall cause at least two and no more than five public hearings to be held in Scotland
  - c) the Boundary Commission for Wales shall cause at least two and no more than five public hearings to be held in Wales
  - d) the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland shall cause at least two and no more than five public hearings to be held in Northern Ireland.
- (2) The public hearings in an English region shall be concerned with proposals for that region, and shall between them cover the whole region.
- (3) The public hearings in Scotland shall be concerned with proposals for Scotland, and shall between them cover the whole of Scotland.
- (4) The public hearings in Wales shall be concerned with proposals for Wales, and shall between them cover the whole of Wales.

(5) The public hearings in Northern Ireland shall be concerned with proposals for Northern Ireland, and shall between them cover the whole of Northern Ireland.

### **Chair of hearing**

3. For each public hearing the Boundary Commission concerned shall appoint a person to chair the hearing.

### **Length of hearings**

4. A public hearing shall be completed within two days.

### **Procedure at hearings**

5. It is for the chair of each public hearing to determine the procedure that is to govern that hearing.
6. The chair shall make arrangements for a public hearing to begin with an explanation of –
  - a) the proposals with which the hearing is concerned;
  - b) how written representations about the proposals may be made (as mentioned in section 5(1)(a), (4)(b), or (5)(c) of this Act).
7. (1) The chair of a public hearing must allow representations to be made –
  - (a) by each qualifying party;
  - (b) by any other persons (whether individuals or organisations) considered by the chair to have an interest in any of the proposals with which the hearing is concerned.

Paragraph (b) above has effect subject to sub-paragraph (3)(b) below.

(2) The chair may restrict the amount of time allowed for representations –

- a) by qualifying parties, and
- b) by other persons, and need not allow the same amount to each.

(3) The chair may determine –

- (a) the order in which representations are made, and
- (b) if necessary because of shortage of time, which of those wishing to make representations are not allowed to do so, in whatever way the chair decides.

8. (1) The chair may put questions, or allow questions to be put, to a person present at the hearing.

(2) If questions are allowed to be put, the chair may regulate the manner of questioning or restrict the number of questions a person may ask.

### **Interpretation**

9. In this Schedule –

“the chair” means the person appointed under paragraph 3 above;

“English region” means a region specified in rule 5(2A) of Schedule 2 as the region existed on the day referred to in rule 5(2) of that Schedule;

“public hearing” means a hearing under section 5(1)(b) of this Act;

“qualifying party” means a party that is registered under Part 2 of the Political Parties, Elections, and Referendums Act 2000 and either –

- (a) Has at least one Member of the House of Commons representing a constituency in the region, or (as the case may be) the part of the United Kingdom, in which the hearing is held, or
- (b) Received at least 10% of the votes cast in that region or part in the most recent parliamentary general election.



