



# **2023 Review of Parliamentary constituencies**

**Report on progress during 2021**

**January 2022**



# **Boundary Commission for England**

## **2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies**

### **Report on progress during 2021**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 3(2C) of the  
Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the  
Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 and  
Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020.



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The Speaker  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

27 January 2022

Dear Chairman

1. As required by section 3(2B)(a) of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended by the Parliamentary Voting System Act 2011 and Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020), hereafter referred to as 'the Act', we are required to submit to you a report setting out the progress we have made on the current boundary review. As you will be aware, you are required by section 3(2C) to lay our report before Parliament.
2. We have set out below the key actions and stages that we have undertaken and completed since the review commenced. Understandably, COVID-19 has had some impact on the delivery of the 2023 Review, insofar as the Secretariat quickly needed to pivot to work more remotely so as to ensure that the public was able to participate in the first consultation period, together with the challenges in organising in-person public hearings. Notwithstanding, we are on course to deliver our Final Recommendations on the 2023 Review to you within the statutory period stated in the Act of 'before 1 July 2023'.

#### Start of the review

3. Along with our counterpart Commissions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, we formally commenced the 2023 Review on 5 January 2021, with the publication of the total UK electorate, electoral quota, and allocation of constituencies to each part of the UK (for the 2023 Review, England is allocated 543 constituencies). We publicised this by issuing national and regional press releases and writing to all our stakeholders. We also announced our intention to have regard to the nine England regions (as permitted under the Act), and to use the Sainte-Laguë method to allocate constituencies to each region (the same method that is used to allocate constituencies to each part of the UK).

#### Meeting with the representatives of the qualifying political parties

4. As has been our convention at previous reviews of parliamentary constituencies, we invited representatives from the qualifying political parties in England and independent MPs who represented constituencies in England to a meeting to discuss the statutory rules and broad issues of policy (the four qualifying parties in England are the Conservative Party, the Green Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Party). Representatives from all four parties attended the meeting on 26 November 2020, and minutes of the meeting are on our website.

## Guide to the 2023 Review

5. We decided that, as with previous reviews, we would produce a Guide to the 2023 Review. The Guide to the 2023 Review was published on 10 May 2021 on our website. We issued a press release to mark its publication and notified all our usual stakeholders. In common with all our publications for the 2023 Review, we took the 'digital by default' approach to publishing the Guide, and are reducing the number of hard copy publications we are printing throughout the 2023 Review.

## Our initial proposals for new constituency boundaries

6. We published our initial proposals for 543 constituencies in England on 8 June 2021. As required by Schedule 2 to the Act, all but the two 'protected' English constituencies (covering the Isle of Wight) had electorates within 5% (69,724 - 77,062) of the electoral quota (73,393).
7. Our initial proposals retained 47 (9%) of the existing 533 constituencies without change, whilst a further 69 (13%) were changed only to realign with changes to local government ward boundaries.

## Initial consultation period

8. We invited representations to be made to us about our proposals during the statutory eight-week period, which ran from 8 June 2021 to 2 August 2021. We conducted a national and local advertising campaign, including press adverts, digital adverts, and social media activity.
9. In response to that consultation period, we received over **34,000** representations along with numerous signatures on petitions and mailing-letter campaigns. That is an increase of over 40% when compared to the equivalent consultation period during the previous review. Over 90% of these representations were made through our specially-designed consultation website, which we launched in tandem with the proposals on 8 June.

## Assistant commissioners

10. Prior to the publication of the initial proposals, we ran a selection exercise for the appointment of Assistant Commissioners to assist us with the discharge of our functions. We received over **200** applications, and shortlisted over 40 for interview. A panel consisting of one of the Commissioners (Sarah Hamilton), the Secretary to the Commission (Tim Bowden) and an independent member (Rohan Sivanandan) interviewed all shortlisted applicants and made recommendations to the other Commissioners for appointments. We then recommended 18 individuals to the Government for appointment, which it accepted. The appointments were made in accordance with paragraph 6(1) of Schedule 1 to the Act.

11. The Assistant Commissioners have been appointed to consider the representations made during the initial consultation period and counter-representations made during the secondary consultation period (see below). A number of the Assistant Commissioners have been designated 'lead' Assistant Commissioners and will chair public hearings during the secondary consultation period (see below). In due course, the Assistant Commissioners will present and submit reports to us (to be prepared with the assistance of the Secretariat) with their recommendations regarding our initial proposals and any revisions to them.
12. In October 2021, we hosted an induction day for the Assistant Commissioners, who were briefed on the requirements of the Act and our initial proposals for each region.

### Secondary consultation period and public hearings

13. The next stage of the review will see us publish on our website all the written representations made during the initial consultation period. We will invite comments on those representations during a six-week consultation period. We expect this secondary consultation phase to be complete by Easter of this year. As is our usual practice, we will issue national and local press releases, alert all our stakeholders and intend to run another advertising and PR campaign in order to reach as many members of the public as possible.
14. Section 5(4)(c) of the Act requires us to hold public hearings in every region in England during the six-week secondary consultation period. During this six-week period, we intend to hold 32 public hearings across the regions in England. Each hearing will last two consecutive days. We published details on the secondary consultation and public hearings on 20 December 2021.

### Revised proposals

15. Following the conclusion of the secondary consultation period, with the support of Assistant Commissioners we will consider all of the representations and determine whether to revise our initial proposals in light of the evidence and representations received. We would expect the four week consultation period on any revised proposals to commence in Autumn 2022.



Next report

16. We will submit a further report to you in January 2023 on further progress of the 2023 Review.

Mr Justice Lane  
Deputy Chair of the Commission

Colin Byrne  
Boundary Commissioner

Sarah Hamilton  
Boundary Commissioner

Tim Bowden  
Secretary to the Commission

