
Re: Freedom of Information request - FOI - Review processes

1 message

Boundary Commission England Information Mailbox
<information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk>

9 November 2022 at
14:59

To: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

BCE FOI/2022/13

Thank you for your email request for information to the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) on 7 November 2022, which has been considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. In your request for information you asked:

I would like to request a breakdown of the process of defining new constituency boundaries - in the current boundary review or if that is not possible then in the previous boundary review in 2018.

Specifically:

- 1. Please provide an outline of the process of determining new boundaries.*
- 2. What datasets are used in this process?*
- 3. To what extent is the actual drawing of new boundaries an automated (computer assisted) process?*
- 4. What is the internal review process of newly drawn boundaries?*
- 5. Are conflicts of interests for staff working on boundaries documented?*

1. Please provide an outline of the process of determining new boundaries.

We began this review in January 2021. We published electorate data from 2 March 2020 (the relevant date specified by the legislation) for each local government ward in England, including – where relevant – wards that were prospective on 1 December 2020. The electorate data was provided by individual local electoral registration officers and the Office for National Statistics. These figures are available on our website. The Commission then considered the statutory factors outlined in Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 and drew up the initial proposals. We published our initial proposals for consultation for each of England's nine regions on 8 June 2021.

We consulted on our initial proposals for eight weeks, from 8 June 2021 until 2 August 2021. We received over 34,000 discrete written representations across the country as a whole. The legislation required us to publish all the responses we received on our initial proposals. We published the representations on 7 February 2022 ahead of a six-week 'secondary consultation' period, which took place from 22 February 2022 until 4 April 2022. The purpose of the secondary consultation was for people to see what others said in response to our initial proposals, and to make comments on those views, for example by countering an argument, or by supporting and reinforcing what others said. We received over 10,000 unique written representations across the country as a whole. We also convened between two and five public hearings in each region.

Having considered the evidence presented to us, we have decided that the evidence is such that it is appropriate to revise our initial proposals in some areas. We are consulting on our revised proposals for the statutory four-week period, which closes on 5 December 2022. Unlike the secondary consultation period, there is no provision in the legislation for further public hearings.

Once the consultation on revised proposals has closed on 5 December 2022, we will consider all the representations received at this stage, and throughout the review, before determining our final recommendations. The recommendations will be set out in a report to the Speaker of the House of Commons, who will lay it before Parliament, at which time we will also publish the report. The legislation states that we should submit that report to

the Speaker by 1 July 2023. Further details about what the Government must then do with our recommendations in order to implement them are contained in our Guide to the 2023 Review.

Throughout each consultation period, we have taken – and are continuing to take – all reasonable steps to publicise our proposals, so that as many people as possible are aware of the consultation and can take the opportunity to contribute to our review of constituencies.

2. What datasets are used in this process?

The BCE obtained electorate figures from Electoral Registration Officers in local authorities, either directly, or indirectly through the Office for National Statistics. When all the figures had been received, the four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions agreed the UK electoral quota and the number of constituencies allocated to each part of the UK, applying the formulae set out in the Act.

3. To what extent is the actual drawing of new boundaries an automated (computer assisted) process?

While the BCE does make use of Geographic Information Software (GIS), there is no automation of drawing boundaries.

4. What is the internal review process of newly drawn boundaries?

We have appointed 18 Assistant Commissioners, who were not involved in the formulating of initial proposals to analyse the evidence received in consultation and make recommendations for revisions to the initial proposals. Assistant Commissioners have written a report on each region for the Commissioners, summarising and considering the representations, and recommending whether – and, if so, how – the initial proposals for that region should be revised in the light of those representations. The Commissioners then consider each report and determine whether and to what extent revisions should be made to their initial proposals.

5. Are conflicts of interests for staff working on boundaries documented?

Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and staff are obliged to record any conflicts of interest in line with usual Civil Service practice.

Under the provisions of the FOI Act if you are dissatisfied with the response provided you may wish to ask for an internal review. If this situation arises you should write to:

The Secretary to the Boundary Commission for England
35 Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BQ
Email: information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk

If it transpires you are not content with our response or the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the BCE. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Office of the Information Commissioner,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF

Kind Regards,



Boundary Commission for England

35 Great Smith Street | London | SW1P 3BQ

t: 020 7276 1102

e: information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk

w: www.bcereviews.org.uk



On Mon, 7 Nov 2022 at 15:51, [REDACTED] wrote:

To whom it may concern,

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Kind regards,
[REDACTED]