

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR
ENGLAND**



**Boundary
Commission
for England**

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

Membership

The Speaker, the Rt. Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP
(ex-officio Chairman)

The Hon. Mr Justice Peter Lane, Deputy Chair

Colin Byrne, Commissioner

Sarah Hamilton, Commissioner

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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 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The Secretariat staff and corporate functions such as Finance, and HR support are all provided by DLUHC, which also oversees the corporate governance arrangements for the Commission. At present the Commission is in the very final stage of transitioning its IT arrangements from the Cabinet Office (its previous sponsor) to DLUHC systems.

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 and voting patterns of previous elections do not, and should not, enter into its considerations. Nor does it consider the possible effects of its recommendations on future voting patterns.
3. The Commission is required to submit periodical reports in respect of the parliamentary constituencies in England to the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is the Speaker's statutory duty to lay the reports before Parliament and for the Government to present an Order to the Privy 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 actual conduct of reviews.
5. The Deputy Chair of the Boundary Commission for England, who presides over meetings, is a High Court Judge appointed by the Lord Chancellor. The Deputy Chair is the Honourable Mr Justice Peter Lane (appointed on 23 June 2020, for a term of three years, which was extended by six months to 22 December 2023). The two other Members of the Commission are Mr Colin Byrne and Mrs Sarah Hamilton (both appointed for a term of five years, to June 2024).
6. The Commissioners are part-time appointees who meet whenever the work programme requires it. The Commissioners (not including the Deputy Chair) are paid a daily fee set by the Treasury and, together with the Deputy Chair, are entitled to recover any expenses incurred on Commission work.

Code of Practice

7. The Commission adheres to the Cabinet Office's code of conduct for board members of public bodies. It also maintains a Register of Members' Interests, which is updated at least annually and can be accessed on the Commission's website.

Assessors

8. 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 officials 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 2022-23.

Assistant Commissioners

9. 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 is statutorily required to hold. They are also asked to undertake an assessment of the representations submitted to the Commission in respect of its initial proposals, together with subsequent comments on those representations, received during the secondary consultation period. The Assistant Commissioners then submit recommendations to the Commissioners on how they consider the initial proposals might be improved in light of the consultation evidence received. The Assistant Commissioners are paid a daily rate set by the Treasury when they work for the Commission.
10. In the 2022 - 23 year, the Commission was assisted by 16 Assistant Commissioners from April to September. During this time, Assistant Commissioners assessed the evidence received during the initial and secondary consultation stages of the boundary review, and made recommendations to the Commission on any revisions necessary to the initial proposals.

The Secretariat

11. The Secretary to the Commission is Tim Bowden. The Secretary heads the Secretariat, the role of which is to service and assist the Commission in its conduct of reviews and executing the decisions it takes, and generally to facilitate the smooth and efficient administration of the Commission's business. 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 (currently every eight years) with recommendations to the Speaker of the House of Commons, 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 and Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020 (both which 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. It is important to emphasise that those calculations are again defined in the Act, based on the electorates returned by local authorities for the period ending 2 March 2020 (in the case of the 2023 Review) and are not open to debate by us.
15. Once the Commission has completed its consideration of the distribution of the constituencies, it announces its initial proposals. Interested parties have an eight week period in which to submit representations of support or objection. The Commission is then required to make the representations submitted during the eight week period available so that interested parties can consider them and submit counter-representations during a further six week period. During the secondary consultation period, the Commission holds public hearings, so that oral submissions can be made to it as well as written representations. Once the six 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 receivedalso taking into account a number of statutory factors listed in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended).
16. The Assistant Commissioners are subsequently asked to submit recommendations to the Commission, taking into account all the evidence from consultation. Once those recommendations 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 evidence presented by the Assistant Commissioners. If revised proposals are announced, a period of four 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.

17. The Commission is required to submit its final report and recommendation following an active review to the Speaker of the House of Commons at a time specified in the Act. For the 2023 Review, this is specified before 1 July 2023, with subsequent reports to be submitted every eight years thereafter.

Objectives 2022/23

Overall objective

18. The Commission's clear focus this year has been on formulating revised proposals, consulting on them, and beginning the work on determining final recommendations for new Parliamentary constituencies. It is a busy financial year in the 2023 Review cycle, as it includes the analysis of all the responses to the initial proposals (received during both the initial and secondary consultation), taking those into account during the development of revised proposals, then assessing the further responses received during the final public consultation on those revised proposals.

Main objectives for 2022/23, with outcomes

19. The main objectives for the Commission during the financial year 2022/23 were:
 - **By the end of August 2022, to agree revised proposals for new constituencies, taking into account the public responses to the initial and secondary consultation.** This was completed on time, with revised proposals being agreed by the Commissioners at dedicated meetings between 19 - 25 August 2022.
 - **By autumn 2022, to have conducted a comprehensive four week statutory consultation on the revised proposals.** The public consultation was delivered as planned, between 8 November and 5 December 2022. The consultation was supported by a comprehensive and successful advertising and publicity campaign, designed to raise awareness and encourage engagement with the review (an evaluation of this activity is included with the published papers of the Commissioners subsequent meeting on 20 March 2023). The Commission received over 18,000 responses to this consultation.

- **By the end of January 2023, have published the statutory ‘annual report on progress’, which the Commission is required to provide to the Speaker of the House of Commons, updating on progress with a live review.** The Commission formally submitted its annual report of progress – covering the calendar year of 2022 – to the Speaker of the House of Commons on 17 January 2023. The report was also published on the Commission website.
- **By the end of March 2023 be completing the analysis of responses to the revised proposals consultation and formulating the final recommendations.** This was completed on time as evidenced by the Commission being in a position to determine its final recommendations at a series of meetings between 20 and 24 March 2023. The papers and minutes of these meetings are available to view on the Commission’s website.
- **During the course of the year the Commission will aim to hold three formal meetings to assess progress with the Review and make key decisions, and will also be represented at the Annual Meeting of UK Boundary Commissions.** The Commission considered it necessary to hold ten formal meetings during the 2022-23 financial year. It met on: 6 June 2022 to discuss general progress, and to make policy and strategic operational decisions, it met on 19-24 August 2022, to take detailed decisions on what its revised proposals should be, and met on 20-24 March, primarily to determine the Commissions’ final decisions on constituency recommendations for the 2023 Review. The Commission was represented at the Annual Meeting of UK Boundary Commissions in Cardiff.

Budget and expenditure 2022/23

20. The Commission agreed a budget of **£1,808,000** with the sponsor Department, which it considered would be necessary to deliver the substantial elements of the 2023 Review during the 2022-23 financial year. 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 initial budget agreed with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as sponsor Department. The Commission had an underspend of approximately **£100,000**.

Staff complement (Full Time Equivalent)

	Apr-Jun 2022		Jul-Sep 2021		Oct-Dec 2021		Jan-Mar 2022	
Grade	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual
SCS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Band A	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Band SEO	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Band HEO	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3
Band EO	9	9	9	8	9	5	9	2
Band AO	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
Temp staff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	18	17	18	16	18	12	18	9
Figures shown represent the position as at the end of the relevant financial quarter.								

Budget and expenditure by subhead (figures supplied by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities*)

Budget component	Budget 22/23(£)	Expenditure (£)*	Variance (£)
Pay and related costs	897,000	879,500	-17,500
Travel and subsistence costs	5,000	19,942	14,942
Accommodation costs	115,000	75,048	-39,952
IT and equipment costs	310,000	298,723	-11,277
Staff related costs	5,000	0	-5,000
Other professional services	33,000	51,060	18,060
Marketing and media	312,000	308,342	-3,658
Other goods and services	100,000	96,440	-3,560
Training and development	10,000	0	-10,000
Conference and hospitality	16,000	0	-16,000
Miscellaneous expenditure	5,000	0	-5,000
Rental income***	0	-28,028	28,028
Total	1,808,000**	1,701,027	106,973

*Rounded up or down to the nearest pound and inclusive of VAT where this was originally applied by DLUHC in the budget setting process.

**Rounded to nearest pound from total derived from detailed (not rounded) component expenditure and variance figures.

***IT costs reimbursed by Boundary Commission for Scotland and Boundary Commission for Wales for a shared IT service.

Monitoring expenditure

21. The Secretariat maintained information that recorded by date, topic, sub-heading, and component, every item of expenditure. Each month, the Secretariat met with officials from the DLUHC central finance team, 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 2023/24

Programme

22. The 2023/24 financial year should see the Commission conclude the 2023 Review and submit its final recommendations to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The budget agreed with DLUHC is **£1,051,000** and the Commission expects to:
 - By the end of April 2023, approve the draft text of the final report of the 2023 Review.
 - By the end of May 2023, conclude quality assurance checks on the final reports and associated data.
 - By 1 July 2023, formally submit the final report and recommendations from the 2023 Review to the Speaker of the House of Commons. Publication will follow as soon as the report has been laid before Parliament by the Speaker (as required by the legislation).
 - By the end of March 2024, collect Parliamentary electorate data from all local electoral registration officers in England, as at the date of the statutory annual publication of their register.
 - By March 2024, produce an evaluation report on the administration of the 2023 Review, highlighting areas that could be improved and instances of good practice.
 - During the course of the year, aim to hold at least two formal meetings to assess progress with the Review and make key decisions, and also be represented at the Annual Meeting of UK Boundary Commissions.

23. As the 2023 Review draws to a conclusion, the number of staff forming the Secretariat will continue to reduce as the Commission returns to its normal staffing levels during non Review years. We will continue to assess the budget allocated for pay and related costs (as set out in the table below) as we would anticipate being in a position to return funds to the Department prior to the end of the financial year.

Budget by subhead

Budget component	Budget 23/24 (£)
Pay and related costs	850,619
Travel and subsistence costs	5,000
Accommodation costs	75,000
IT and equipment costs	100,000
Other professional services	5,000
Other goods and services	10,000
Miscellaneous expenditure	5,381
Total	1,051,000