

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR  
ENGLAND**



**Boundary  
Commission  
for England**

***ANNUAL REPORT***

***2024-2025***

## **BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

### **Membership**

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

The Hon. Mr Justice Jonathan Swift, 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 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Secretariat staff and corporate functions such as Finance, and HR support are all provided by MHCLG, 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 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 Jonathan Swift (appointed on 16 February 2024), for a term of three years. 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. Both commissioners have been reappointed through to 31 March 2032.
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 2024-25.

## **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 their 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 2024-2025, Assistant Commissioners were not required to assist the Commission.

## **The Secretariat**

11. Following the completion of the Review in June 2023, all members of the Secretariat subsequently left post, and the position of Secretary to the Commission is currently vacant. However, assistance has been provided by Tom Jenkins of Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC), who has assumed the role of Acting Secretary. Roger Ashton-Winter a former member of the Secretariat now working for the DBCC also provides assistance in a part-time capacity. 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 Acting Secretary 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 of which amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986), the Commission allocates 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.
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 received

also, the taking into account of 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 the 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. We must submit the next final report before 1 October 2031, with subsequent reports to be submitted every eight years thereafter.

## **Objectives 2024/25**

### **Overall objective**

18. The Commission's focus this year was on ensuring it received sufficient support in the absence of any permanent Secretariat staff.

### **Main objectives for 2024/25, with outcomes**

19. The main objectives for the Commission during the financial year 2024/25 were:
  - The Commission's sole statutory duty during 2024-2025 has been to keep under review the Parliamentary constituencies in England. This entails the collection of Parliamentary electorate data from all local electoral registration officers in England, as at the date of the statutory annual publication of their register, by the end of March 2025.
  - By 31 July 2024 to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the BCE and Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru, to provide sufficient funding and staff resources to the Commission during the years of relative inactivity. This has been established.
  - To hold one formal Commission meeting in July 2024, and one before the end of the financial year in 2025. The Commission met in July 2024 and February 2025.
  - To carry out research into areas that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the next review. The Commission considered the feasibility of carrying out research however with the limited budget it currently works within it would require further exploration with sponsor division.

### **Budget and expenditure 2024/25**

20. The Commission initially agreed a budget of **£23,000** with the sponsor Department, which it considered would be necessary to deliver the functions of the Commission during the 2024-25 financial year. However, due to unforeseen staff costs incurred by the Commission the budget was increased by **£9,000** in a supplementary budget in September meaning the budget for the 2024-25 financial year was agreed at **£32,000**. The table below 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.

**Budget and expenditure by subhead (figures supplied by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government\*)**

| <b>Budget component</b>                            | <b>Budget<br/>24/25(£)</b> | <b>Expenditure<br/>(£)*</b> | <b>Variance<br/>(£)**</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Pay and related costs, including Commissioner fees | 24,000                     | 24,446                      | 446                       |
| Travel and subsistence costs                       | 0                          | 644                         | 644                       |
| Accommodation costs                                | 0                          | 0                           | 0                         |
| IT and equipment costs                             | 6,100                      | 6,120                       | 20                        |
| Other professional services                        | 0                          | 0                           | 0                         |
| Other goods and services                           | 1,900                      | 1,996                       | 96                        |
| Miscellaneous expenditure                          | 0                          | 0                           | 0                         |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>32,000</b>              | <b>33,206</b>               | <b>1,206</b>              |

\*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.

**Outline work programme and budget for 2025/26**

**Programme**

21. The work programme for 2025/26 will be:

- The Commission's sole statutory duty during 2025-2026 will be to keep under review the Parliamentary constituencies in England. This will entail the collection of Parliamentary electorate data from all local electoral registration officers in England, as at the date of the statutory annual publication of their register, by the end of March 2026.
- To hold one formal Commission meeting in July 2025.
- To carry out research into areas that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the next review.

22. The budget for 2025-2026 is minimal. We will continue to assess the budget allocated for pay and related costs (as set out in the table below) should we be in a position to return funds to the Department prior to the end of the financial year.

**Budget by subhead**

| <b>Budget component</b>                            | <b>Budget 25/26 (£)</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pay and related costs, including Commissioner fees | 4,200                   |
| Travel and subsistence costs                       | 0                       |
| Accommodation costs                                | 0                       |
| IT and equipment costs                             | 5,200                   |
| Other professional services                        | 0                       |
| Other goods and services                           | 100                     |
| Miscellaneous expenditure                          | 0                       |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>9,500</b>            |