

**2023 REVIEW OF UK PARLIAMENT CONSTITUENCIES – BOUNDARY
COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND PROPOSALS**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides information on the Boundary Commission for Scotland consultation on its proposals relating to the 2023 Review of UK Parliament constituencies.
- 1.2 Under the proposals the Argyll and Bute constituency boundary will spread north to incorporate part of ward 21 within Highland Council including areas such as Ballachullish, Kinlochleven, Morvern, Ardamurchan, Moidart and Ardgour. The new constituency will be called Argyll and will have 71,422 electors.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Council is invited to consider the Boundary Commission proposals and determine its response with regards to the 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies.

3.0 DETAILBackground to the Review

- 3.1 The 2023 review of UK Parliament constituencies is required by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). The Review is being conducted simultaneously and independently by the four UK Parliamentary Boundary Commissions. It will result in a UK Parliament elected from 650 constituencies. Scotland has been allocated 57 constituencies for the 2023 Review, two fewer than at present. England has been allocated 543 (+10), Northern Ireland 18 (no change) and Wales 32 (-8).
- 3.2 The electoral quota for the Review, which is the average electorate per constituency across the UK, is 73,393, with the electorate of each constituency having to be within five per cent of that. That means that the smallest permitted electorate for a constituency is 69,724 and the largest permitted electorate is 77,062. The maximum permitted area is 13,000 square kilometres. In Scotland, exceptions to these limits apply for Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituency (Western Isles), and Orkney and Shetland constituency, each of which are defined in the legislation.
- 3.3 An exception to the minimum electorate requirement can be made if a constituency is larger than 12,000 square kilometres which can only

occur in very sparsely populated areas. The electorate for this review is taken from the electoral register published on 2 March 2020.

3.4 Subject to the above requirements, the legislation states that the Boundary Commission may take into account, as it thinks fit, other factors, namely:

- Special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
- Boundaries of council areas and electoral wards
- Existing Westminster constituency boundaries; and
- Any local ties which would be broken by changes in constituencies.

3.5 Due to the reduction in the number of constituencies, and the requirements for each constituency to have a number of electors within set limits, changes to constituencies are required. Those proposed changes are set out in the attached link and are out for consultation until 8 December 2021.

www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk.

www.bcs2023review.com.

3.6 Argyll Constituency

Under the proposals the current Argyll and Bute Constituency boundary will be spread north to incorporate part of ward 21 (Fort William and Ardnamurden) within Highland Council including areas such as Ballachullish, Kinlochleven, Morvern, Ardamurchan, Moidart and Ardgour. A map of the proposed geographic area is attached at Appendix 1. The new constituency will be called Argyll, will have 71,422 electors and cover an approximate area of 9,294 square kilometres. Geographically this is the second largest constituency in Scotland. These proposals are not dissimilar to those mooted in the 2018 review, however this proposal does not include part of ward 21 and the town of Fort William.

3.7 In the circumstances the proposed area and electorate meetings the requirements laid down by statute. It is clear that there is no established link, other than an historical one, between the communities of Lochaber ward, and the rest of Argyll and Bute but it is fair to assess that the communities share similar issues around “island proofing”, remoteness, rurality, sparsity and economic challenges arising therefrom.

3.8 Election Responsibilities

With regards to the Returning Officer responsibilities for election administration the inclusion of the additional areas would involve cross boundary cooperation with Highland Council in regard to polling stations staff, polling stations and other resources as well as creating a short term challenge for staff in familiarizing themselves with the area of Lochaber and Ardnamurchan.

It would also be necessary to address that additional time for collection of ballot boxes and delivery to a count centre in Lochgilphead could mitigate against any night time counting of votes as the travel time from

some of the outer areas such as Lochaline to Lochgilphead is up to 4 hours and that would be after the arrival of all boxes from outlying areas.

3.9 Further stages

In early 2022 the Commission will hold a secondary six week consultation period where all the comments received on the initial proposals will be published. These comments will be able to be viewed on the Boundary Commissions website.

After the secondary consultation period, the Commission will consider all the evidence and the resulting Revised Proposals will be published for a 4 week public consultation in 2022 with final recommendations being submitted to the Speaker by 1 July 2023.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 The proposals are compliant with the legislative requirements placed on the Commission but represent a substantial increase in the geographical area of the constituency which will create the second largest in Scotland. Whilst the communities have similar characteristics they fall within different Local Authority areas and have little tradition of interaction with Ardnamurchan and the Lochaber areas which look north to Inverness for all its public and private sector services.

4.2 The Council is invited to consider the Boundary Commission proposals and determine its response with regards to initial proposals for the 2023 Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Policy - none

5.2 Financial – the costs of running an election will be increased but these are met by the Government

5.3 Legal - none

5.4 HR – there will be an increased burden on council staff in supporting elections covering the enlarged area

5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty - none

5.5.1 Equalities – protected characteristics - none

5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - none

5.5.3 Islands - none

5.6 Risk - none

5.7 Customer Service - none

Douglas Hendry

Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support

Policy Lead – Councillor Mary Jean Devon

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Appendix 1: 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies – Initial Proposals Argyll County Constituency – Electorate 71,442

Appendix 2: previous report and extract of minute of Council 30 November 2017

