



**Boundary Commission  
for Northern Ireland**



# Annual Report 2023-2024

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## Section 1: Deputy Chairman's Report

I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce this Annual Report, reflecting on the work of the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland for the financial year 2023/ 2024. I should like to record my thanks to my predecessor, Mr Justice Humphreys, whose tenure covered almost the entirety of the reporting period.

Following the completion of the third and final consultation period of the 2023 Parliamentary Boundary Review, and taking into account all representations received throughout the review process the Commissioners presented their final recommendations for Parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland to the Speaker of the House of Commons on 27 June 2023. The report was published, alongside those from the Boundary Commissions of England, Scotland and Wales on 28 June. The recommendations were brought into force on 29 November 2023 in the Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023.

Thanks are due to Boundary Commissioners Ms Sarah Havlin and Ms Vilma Patterson for their diligent work throughout every stage of the 2023 Review and to the Secretary, Heather McKinley, and the Secretariat team who supported them. I wish to thank Land & Property Services (LPS) whose mapping expertise and mapping products were invaluable to the Commission. Finally, I would like to record my thanks to the Commission's statutory Assessors for the part they played, as well as to all the other individuals and organisations who engaged with the various stages of the 2023 Boundary Review.

**Mr Justice Kinney**  
**Deputy Chairman**  
March 2025



## Section 2: The Commission

### 2.1 Background

The Boundary Commission is an independent and impartial public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in Northern Ireland on the basis of rules set out in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). The Boundary Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body of the Northern Ireland Office.

### 2.2 Membership

Appointments to the Commission are made under Schedule 1 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended. The 1986 Act specifies that the Commission's membership comprises a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and two further Members.

The ex-officio Chairman for all four UK Boundary Commissions is the Speaker of the House of Commons, although in practice the Chairman takes no active part in the business of any of the Commissions. The Deputy Chair of the Commission is a judge of the High Court appointed by the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland. The other two Commission Members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland through a public appointments process. The Commission is supported in its work by four statutory Assessors and a small Secretariat.

#### **Chairman:**

The Speaker of the House of Commons

#### **Deputy Chairman:**

Mr Justice Michael Humphreys to 28 February 2024

Mr Justice Patrick Kinney from 1 March 2024

#### **Members:**

Ms Sarah Havlin

Ms Vilma Patterson MBE

#### **Assessors:**

Ms Angela McGrath, Commissioner of Valuation for Northern Ireland

Dr Philip Wales, Registrar General Northern Ireland

Ms Sarah Ling, interim Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland from 3 April 2023

Dr David Marshall, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland from 7 August 2023

Suzanne McLaughlin (SMcL), Chief Survey Officer of Land & Property Services

#### **Secretary:**

Mrs Heather McKinley, to 19 January 2024

Mrs Katherine Herrick, from 22 January 2024



### 2.3 Meetings

With the Commission's Final Recommendations being presented to Parliament in June 2023, the Commission met formally on 2 occasions in May and July 2023. These meetings were used to discuss the delivery of the Commission's statutory obligations, as well as operational, financial and governance matters.

The Commission also attended the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions in December 2023. This meeting provided an opportunity to share lessons learned in the delivery of our respective 2023 reviews, explore opportunities to work together in the future and to discuss good practice in common areas of interest.

### 2.4 Code of Practice

The Commission's Code of Practice is available on the Boundary Commission website ([www.boundarycommission.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommission.org.uk)) or a copy can be provided on request.

### 2.5 Register of Members' Interests

The Commission maintains a Register of Members' Interests, in accordance with the Code of Practice, which is available on request.

### 2.6 Secretariat

Heather McKinley was the Secretary to the Commission throughout the delivery of the 2023 review and was succeeded by Katherine Herrick on 22 January 2024. Their appointments are in accordance with paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act. The Secretary supports the work of the Commission and during an active review period is assisted by a small secretariat.

During the period of this report the Secretariat's work has included the following key areas:

- Supporting the Commission in their consideration of the representations received during the third consultation stage of the 2023 Boundary Review;
- Supporting the drafting of, and preparing for publication, the Commission's Final Recommendations Report for the 2023 Review
- Scrutinising the draft Order in Council for accuracy to ensure it accurately reflected the Commission's final recommendations
- Managing the Commission's corporate and operational infrastructure;
- Financial and administrative matters;
- Liaison with other UK Boundary Commissions and other public bodies to support the work of the Commission;
- Responding to queries and correspondence from members of the public, elected



representatives, and other stakeholders;

- Maintenance of the Commission's [website](#) and social media.



## Section 3: Governance

### 3.1 Legislation

The work of the Boundary Commission is governed by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act (1986), as amended most recently by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act (2020), which is available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>. The 2020 Act brought the 2018 Parliamentary Boundary Review to a close without implementation, and introduced some key changes to the statutory boundary review process, as follows:

- 650 seats across the UK, compared to 600 in the 2018 Review;
- There are three periods of public consultation, rather than two;
- Public hearings now take place during the secondary consultation period rather than the first;
- The interval between reviews will be 8 years once the 2023 Review is completed, meaning the next review after 2023 is currently anticipated to finish in 2031;
- Other changes include reintroduction of the 'inconvenience' Rule 5 factor and a change to the Parliamentary process after submission.

The Act specifies which electorate figures are to be used by the Commission when carrying out a review. For the 2023 Review, the Commission is required to use the total number of persons whose names appeared on the Parliamentary electoral register as at 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020. The Commission has obtained the [electorate figures](#) for the 2023 Review from the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland.

A mathematical formula specified in the Act is used to distribute constituencies across the four parts of the United Kingdom. For the 2023 Review, Northern Ireland has 18 seats, compared to 17 for the 2018 Review. The Act also specifies a mathematical formula which is used to calculate the number of electors which must be in each proposed constituency. As provided for by the legislation, Commissioners may take into account a number of factors, if and to such extent as they think fit, when deciding on their recommendations for Parliamentary constituencies.

### 3.2 Framework Document

The Commission operates in accordance with a Framework Document which outlines the respective roles of the Commission and the Northern Ireland Office, and the governance arrangements between them. This document was most recently updated and agreed in September 2022.

### 3.3 Data Protection

Our handling of personal information under General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection legislation is covered by the Commission's registration with the Information Commissioner's Office. Our [Data Protection and Privacy Policy](#) sets out how the Commission handles personal information.





## Section 4: Enquiries and Information

The Commission uses its website and social media presence on X (previously Twitter) as channels to inform the public about its work. In addition, we welcome requests for information through other means, such as by email or by post.

### 4.1 Enquiries

The Commission has a Freedom of Information policy which incorporates the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) model Publication Scheme for public bodies under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Commission's [Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme](#) is available on its website.

During the period of this Report, the Secretariat received and responded to a number of enquiries relating to the ongoing work of the Commission. Ten requests for information were made under the Freedom of Information Act and all were answered within the statutory deadline for dealing with such requests. The nature of these enquiries included requests for records relating to the Commission's staffing, IT and telephony provision, as well as operational queries. No requests for review or appeals to the Information Commissioner's Office were made regarding the handling of these information requests.

### 4.2 Website

The Commission's website is the primary means of making information available to the public. The Commission also has an X (previously Twitter) account to help reach a wider audience. During the reporting period, the website was used to publish the Final Recommendations Report and accompanying interactive maps.



## Section 5: The 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

### 5.1 The 2023 Review

In our previous Annual Reports, we set out the key actions that we had undertaken since the 2023 Boundary Review commenced in January 2021. These included;

- Publication of our Initial Proposals in October 2021 followed by the initial consultation period between October and December 2021. The resulting 31 written representations were published on our website.
- The secondary consultation period was held between 9th February 2022 and 23rd March 2022. This provided an opportunity for the submission of both written representations, as well as representations at public hearings with respect to the representations from the initial consultation period. Five representations were given at the public hearings and three written representations received during the secondary consultation period. Records of these were published on the Commission's website, in line with the legislation.
- Having considered the written representations received during the initial and secondary consultation periods, and the records of the public hearings, and having undertaken a number of site visits, the Commission decided on revisions to its initial proposals. Of the 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland, ten remained the same as in the Initial Proposals and eight were revised. A change of name was proposed in one of the revised constituencies. In the Revised Proposals, as in the Initial Proposals, the Commission proposed 18 constituencies within the Rule 2 statutory range. The Commission did not consider that its ability to take into account the Rule 5 factors was unreasonably impaired in respect of any constituency, and so the threshold for the use of Rule 7 was not met.
- The Commission's Revised Proposals were published on 17th November 2022, marking the start of the third statutory consultation period. This lasted for four weeks (in line with the legislation) and closed on 15th December 2022. As with the initial consultation period, a map showing the Revised Proposals, along with information about how to participate in the consultation, was displayed in public libraries and local council premises across Northern Ireland. The Commission provided information and a range of consultation resources via our website, including an interactive map of the Revised Proposals. We also issued a press release, used social media to boost engagement, and provided an online consultation portal to facilitate the submission of representations. By the close of the third consultation period, 28 written representations had been received. A petition had also been received. These materials were subsequently published on the Commission's website.



Following the close of the third consultation period, and taking into account representations received throughout the review process the Commissioners conducted a small number of field visits and considered their final recommendations ahead of the 1st July 2023 statutory deadline. Greater detail with regard to the approach adopted in determining the final recommendations is provided in the [Final Recommendations Report of the 2023 Review of the Parliamentary Constituencies](#) on our [website](#).

In line with statutory requirements, the Commission's Final Recommendations Report were submitted to the Speaker of the House of Commons on 27th June 2023 alongside those produced by the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions for England, Scotland and Wales. The Speaker laid the Final Recommendations Reports of all four UK Boundary Commissions before Parliament on 28 June 2023. The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland published its Final Recommendations Report and accompanying maps on our website at [www.boundarycommission.org.uk/2023-review-parliamentary-constituencies](http://www.boundarycommission.org.uk/2023-review-parliamentary-constituencies)

## 5.2 Legislative Implementation

[Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986](#) (as amended) requires that no later than four months from the first date on which all four reports have been laid, the Government must submit a draft of an Order in Council giving effect to the recommendations in the reports. The Order in Council giving effect to the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries, including those for Northern Ireland, was submitted by the Government to the Privy Council Office on 27th October 2023 and approved at the Privy Council on 15th November 2023. [The Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023](#), which came into force on 29th November 2023 contained a small typographical error which was corrected by the [Parliamentary Constituencies \(Amendment\) Order 2024](#). The new boundaries took effect at the next UK Parliamentary election, which was held on 4 July 2024.



## Section 6: Other activities

### 6.1 Accommodation and IT provision

The Commission utilises office facilities at Erskine House as required and has continued to use the comprehensive service provided by IT Assist for its IT and telephony requirements.

### 6.2 Risk Management

The Commission's Risk Management framework is in place and is kept under review.

### 6.3 Staffing and training

Training has been delivered during this reporting year in line with Commission and staff requirements.

### 6.4 Liaison with others

#### 6.4.1 Northern Ireland Office

The Commission regularly liaises with the Northern Ireland Office as our sponsoring department in relation to governance matters, in line with the Framework Document. The Department has no role in relation to the operational matters connected with the Commission's exercise of their powers and duties.

#### 6.4.2 Other Boundary Commissions

The Commission maintains regular contact with the other UK Boundary Commissions on matters of mutual interest. The Commission attended the annual meeting of UK Boundary Commissions in November 2023.

#### 6.4.3 Land & Property Services

During the period of this Report the Commission has had regular contact with Land & Property Services (LPS) in relation to the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology needed to support the Parliamentary Boundary Review, and the delivery of related mapping.

#### 6.4.4 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

The Commission liaises with staff of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in relation to statistical and geo-statistical matters.

#### 6.4.5 The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland

The Commission liaises with staff of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland in relation to information and advice on electoral data required for the Parliamentary Boundary Review.



## Section 7: Expenditure

The Commission's operational expenditure in the financial year 2023/24 is shown in the table below:

	Operational Expenditure 2023/24 (£k)
<b>Staff Costs:</b>	
Salaries & related costs	<b>71.4</b>
<b>Commissioners' Costs:</b>	
Members' attendance allowances & related costs	<b>14.3</b>
<b>Non-Staff Costs:</b>	
Accommodation & related costs	<b>16.9</b>
Office costs (IT, telephony etc)	
Professional fees	
<b>Total</b>	<b>102.6</b>

Salary costs are determined by the pay arrangements for our staff who are on loan or secondment from other public bodies. Commissioners' fees are determined by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and cover attendance at scheduled meetings and associated preparation, meetings held with other UK Boundary Commissions and ad hoc meetings held with other bodies. The fee rate for Commissioners is £505.50 per day. Travel and subsistence in the course of official business are paid at Northern Ireland Office rates.



## Section 8: Further information

If you have any queries or require further information, please contact us:

By email: [contact@boundarycommission.org.uk](mailto:contact@boundarycommission.org.uk)

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You can also find more information on our website, at [www.boundarycommission.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommission.org.uk).



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