**Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland**

Note of Meeting held on 25 January 2022 at 3.30pm

Via video link

**In Attendance:**

Mr. Justice Michael Humphreys, Deputy Chair to the Boundary Commission (MH)

Sarah Havlin, Boundary Commissioner (SH)

Vilma Patterson, Boundary Commissioner (VP)

Angela McGrath, Commissioner of Valuation, LPS (AMcG)

Jim Lennon, Chief Survey Officer, LPS (JL)

David Marshall, Director of Census and Population Statistics, NISRA (DM)

Heather McKinley, Secretary to the Boundary Commission (HMcK)

Andrea Richardson, Deputy Secretary to the Boundary Commission (AR)

Lisa Hay, Office Manager to the Boundary Commission (LH)

Lyn McBride, Support Officer to the Boundary Commission (LMcB)

**Apologies:**

Siobhan Carey, Registrar General in Northern Ireland

Virginia McVea, Chief Electoral Officer

1. **Welcome and Declarations of Interest**

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting. There were no declarations of interest.

# Note of Previous Meeting

# Attendees agreed the note of the BCNI meeting held on 17th November 2021. This had been circulated in December, together with a written update on the completion of the initial consultation, in lieu of a full December BCNI meeting.

# Secondary Consultation Update

It was noted that the initial consultation period closed on 15th December 2021 and that 31 written representations had been received – this number being broadly in line with engagement at the equivalent stage of the 2018 Review. It was also noted that the representations received during the initial consultation period would be published on the Commission’s website in line with the Commission’s statutory duties. It was agreed that the representations received during the initial consultation would be published on 27th January 2022, ahead of the start of the secondary, 6-week, consultation period on 9th February 2022, in order to facilitate the public’s timely access to, and engagement with, the material. A Guide to the Secondary Consultation had also been circulated to attendees in advance of the meeting and it was agreed that this be published together with the representations received during the initial consultation period.

It was noted that the secondary consultation has two statutory elements – written representations and public hearings. Commissioners had agreed to hold three, one-day public hearings, located in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Cookstown to offer wide geographical coverage - it was noted that representations regarding any of the 18 parliamentary constituencies may be made at any of the hearings. There was discussion about the procedure of the hearings, noting in particular that all three hearings would be hybrid format, to facilitate both in-person and virtual attendance and participation. It was agreed that the hybrid format conferred benefits in terms of facilitating accessibility and broad participation, particularly in the context of the ongoing public health considerations.

# Privacy Policy

The Commission’s privacy policy had been updated to incorporate considerations around the public hearings element of the consultation process. An updated document was circulated to attendees prior to the meeting, and was noted after some discussion.

# Report to the Speaker

The Commission has a statutory duty to submit an annual progress report to the Speaker of the House of Commons in January of each year, until it submits its Final Recommendations. Attendees were provided with a copy of the January 2022 report prior to the meeting for their consideration. An overview of the report was provided, summarising key actions taken by the Commission to date - attendees noted that it would be submitted to the Speaker before the end of the month, after which it would be laid in Parliament.

# AOB

A letter had been received from NIO PUS which outlined BCNI’s budget for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25, following on from the Spending Review. This showed a 5% reduction in the BCNI budget for 2022/23 - the potential impacts of that reduction in budget were discussed, and it was agreed to keep this under review.

There was an update relating to accommodation. It was noted that the NIO was vacating Stormont House for Erskine House on 4th February, and the Secretariat had packed and cleared the Bungalow accordingly. The Secretariat would continue to primarily work from home, with plans for occasional use of Erskine House. However, HMcK updated the meeting that arrangements for BCNI’s proposed occasional usage of meeting facilities in Erskine House have not yet been confirmed.

# Next Meeting

The date for the next meeting is Tuesday 22 February 2022.