

The Highland Council

15 December 2016

Agenda Item	15
Report No	HC/56/16

Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies: Initial Proposals

Report by the Chief Executive

Summary

The purpose of this Report is to advise the Council of the publication of the Boundary Commission for Scotland's Initial Proposals relating to the 2018 Review of UK Parliament constituencies. The Proposals are subject to a 12 week public consultation, which ends on 11 January 2017.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2012 the Boundary Commission for Scotland started the Sixth Review of UK Parliament Constituencies. The Highland Council was consulted at that time and suggested some changes to the boundaries proposed in the initial scheme.
- 1.2 The Commission accepted the Council's representations that Moray and Nairn should form a new Constituency instead of that proposed of Moray and Badenoch and Strathspey. The Commission also agreed with the Council's suggestion that Caol, but not Corpach, should be in the proposed Argyll, Bute and South Lochaber Constituency. However the Commission did not accept the Council's suggestions for the Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty (CSRC) Constituency. The electorate of the constituency proposed by the Council was below the then minimum electorate (72,810) set out in the Act. Further, the Commission stated that it considered that it is possible for the constituency to comply with the electorate rule, as demonstrated by their Initial and Revised proposals.
- 1.3 In January 2013, Parliament amended the legislation governing the Sixth Review of UK Parliament Constituencies. As a result, work was stopped on the Review.
- 1.4 The provisions of the Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011 will result in a UK Parliament elected from 600 constituencies in place of the current 650. Scotland will have 53 constituencies in place of the current 59.
- 1.5 The electoral quota for the review, which is the average electorate per constituency across the UK, is 74,769.2, with the electorate of each constituency having to be within five per cent of that figure. This requires every constituency in Scotland to have an electorate of between 71,031 and 78,507. The island constituencies of Orkney and Shetland and Na h-Eileanan an Iar are defined under the Act and are not subject to the above rules. Exceptions to

the minimum electorate can be accepted where a constituency exceeds 12,000 square kilometres and the Boundary Commission is satisfied that it is not reasonable to comply with that rule. A constituency cannot exceed 13,000 square kilometres.

2. Boundary Commission Initial Proposals

2.1 The Boundary Commission's initial proposals are similar but not identical to those published in their amended proposals in 2012 prior to the stopping of that review. The Commission has grouped the Highland, Moray, and Argyll and Bute local government areas and determined that 4 UK Parliamentary constituencies should cover these areas. In order to meet the legislation rules, as detailed in paragraph 1.5 above, two constituencies are proposed in Highland named Highland North and Inverness and Skye.

Ward 19 (Nairn) is allocated to Moray to form a new Moray and Nairn constituency this does not include Cawdor which has recently been added to Nairn to form the new Highland Council Ward of Nairn and Cawdor from May 2017.

Ward 22 (Fort William and Ardnamurchan) plus part of Ward 12 consisting of polling districts R12A,B and C is allocated to the proposed Argyll, Bute and Lochaber constituency.

Constituency Name	Electorate	Area (sq.km)
Argyll, Bute and Lochaber	77,574	10,302
Highland North	73,147	12,985
Inverness and Skye	78,220	9,995
Moray and Nairn	78,477	2,612

2.2 Maps of the proposed constituencies can be found by accessing the link at the end of this paper and are available in the Members' Library.

3.0 Consultation

3.1 The Highland Council has received copies of the initial proposals and have placed them on display at our Service Points throughout the area since the 20 October 2016. E-mail links to the consultation web site were also sent to all Council Members and Community Councils inviting responses to be sent direct to the Boundary Commission. The Commission are to hold 5 public events in Scotland, one of which was scheduled for Inverness on the 5 December 2016.

3.2 Responses from neighbouring Councils

3.3 Argyll and Bute Council considered the initial proposals affecting their area on 24 November 2016. After considering the proposals they agreed that

“Council maintains the position that the future boundaries should reflect local community ties. On this basis it is suggested that the northern boundary be adjusted so that it more closely follows the former Argyllshire County Council Boundary, with the new constituency therefore including the full area of Argyll and Bute Council area, and in addition the catchment areas of Kinlochleven and Ardnamurchan High Schools from the Highland Council area.”

Whilst such an amendment would conform to the legislation it would however have impact on the Inverness and Skye Constituency by increasing its electorate to above the upper limit allowed in the legislation.

3.4 Moray Council are due to discuss the proposals on Wednesday the 7 December 2016. The report going to their Council expresses concerns about Ward 19 Nairn and the effect on voters in the Cawdor area.

Concern is also expressed about the electorate being well in excess of the upper limit before the 2020 election due to housing developments, along the A96 corridor and an increasing population as a consequence.

3.5 The consultation will run until 11 January 2017. Members of the public and interested parties can get further information and submit views on the Commission’s interactive portal at www.bcs2018.org.uk

4.0 Implications

4.1 With regards to the Returning Officer responsibilities for election administration the inclusion of the Highland Council areas in neighbouring Councils constituencies will involve cross boundary cooperation with regard to polling stations staff and other resources including transport of ballot boxes etc.

4.2 There should be no financial implications as the cost of running these elections are met by Government.

4.3 There are no known specific equality; climate change/carbon clever; rural; risk or Gaelic implications arising from this Report.

4. Recommendation
4.1 Members are invited to discuss and respond to the boundaries proposed.
4.2 Members are invited to discuss and respond to the proposed names of the constituencies.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 5 December 2016

Author: David Sutherland Elections Manager

Background Papers:

http://www.bcomm-scotland.independent.gov.uk/2018_westminster/initial_proposals/index.asp