

SCOTLAND OFFICE

**Issued on behalf of
The Boundary Commission for Scotland**



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before 0001 Hours on 21 May 2009**

**First Periodic Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries
Highland Council area
Revised Recommendations for constituencies and Provisional
Proposals for regions**

**Commission launches public consultation on proposals for
Scottish Parliament boundaries**

The Boundary Commission for Scotland today publishes its Revised Recommendations for constituencies and its Provisional Proposals for regions as part of its first review of boundaries for the Scottish Parliament. The review of Scottish Parliament boundaries is unrelated to the elections for the European Parliament.

The Commission has produced its Revised Recommendations for constituencies in the Highland Council area in response to representations received, the report of the Local Inquiry which was held in Inverness in November 2008, and Local Inquiries held elsewhere. The revised recommendations for constituencies continue to recommend 3 constituencies exactly covering the council area but significantly alter the provisionally proposed constituencies and amend the proposed constituency names.

The Commission's Revised Recommendations adopt the Highland Council's alternative configuration suggesting three constituencies exactly covering the council area, with one amendment. The Commission concluded that the Council's alternative addressed many of the concerns raised at the Local Inquiry, and was compatible with decisions made by the Commission nationally in terms of theoretical entitlements to seats. In addition, the Commission agreed that the Council's alternative complied well with the statutory provisions governing the review. The Commission did however consider that the large geographical area combined with a large electorate (61,162) suggested for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch was excessive and decided to transfer the Boat of Garten, Nethy Bridge and Grantown on Spey areas to the suggested Inverness and Nairn constituency. This will result in Inverness and Nairn having the highest electorate and smallest geographical extent of the

three constituencies under the revised recommendations. The amended constituency names have been chosen in response to comments received during the consultation.

The changes to the Commission's Provisional Proposals can be summarised as follows:

- ward 10 (Black Isle) has been transferred to Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency (West Highland under the earlier proposals) from Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency (North Highland under the earlier proposals) and an area to the north of Stromeferry, in ward 6 (Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh), has been transferred in the opposite direction; and
- all of ward 14 (Inverness West) has been placed in Inverness and Nairn constituency (East Highland under the earlier proposals) and in ward 21 (Badenoch & Strathspey), the area from Aviemore south and westwards has been transferred to Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch (West Highland under the earlier proposals).

The full set of constituencies recommended for this council area is:

Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	55,690 electors
Inverness and Nairn	61,600 electors
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	56,470 electors

The Commission has also made Provisional Proposals for the 8 Scottish Parliament regions. The Highlands and Islands region will include the constituencies in Highland council area together with constituencies covering Argyll and Bute council area, the island council areas, and parts of Moray and West Dunbartonshire council areas. This will result in a region containing 388,990 electors which is 20.6% below the average regional electorate.

The public's views are sought on these proposals. Representations should be submitted by 21 June 2009 by e-mail to representations@scottishboundaries.gov.uk; by using the reply facility on the Commission's web site; in writing to The Secretary, Boundary Commission for Scotland, 3 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7QJ; or by fax to 0131 538 7511. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, representations will be made available to those interested in the Review except in very exceptional circumstances.

The Commission's Secretary, Dr Hugh Buchanan said: "The Commission believes that these recommendations provide a good basis for Scottish Parliament boundaries. It is keen to hear any views on them, whether in agreement with the proposals or not."

The Commission expects to complete the review and submit its report to the Secretary of State for Scotland by 30 June 2010.

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Notes for News Editors

This is one of a series of News Releases explaining the Commission's proposals for different parts of Scotland.

Further details of the Commission's proposals are:

Constituency	Designation	Electorate	Description
Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	County Constituency	55,690	Highland Council electoral wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (part), 7, 8
Inverness and Nairn	County Constituency	61,600	Highland Council electoral wards 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21(part)
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	County Constituency	56,470	Highland Council electoral wards 6(part), 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 21(part), 22

Region	Electorate	Description
Highlands and Islands	388,990	The constituencies of Argyllshire and Bute; Caithness, Sutherland and Ross; Dumbarton; Inverness and Nairn; Moray; Na h-Eileanan an Iar; Orkney Islands; Shetland Islands; Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch.

Local display points

Full details of the proposals are being made available for public inspection at:

- Highland Council Offices, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness;
- Area Office, Market Square, Wick;
- 24 High Street, Tain;
- Dornoch Service Point, The Meadows, Dornoch;
- Tigh-na-Sgìre, Park Lane, Portree;
- Council Offices, Dingwall;
- 23 Church Street, Inverness;
- Lochaber House, High Street, Fort William.

Legal framework

This is the first review of constituencies and regions for the Scottish Parliament and is governed by the Scotland Act 1998 as amended by the Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Act 2004.

The current constituency boundaries were established following the Commission's Fourth Periodical Report of Parliamentary Constituencies for the purpose of returning Scottish members to the Westminster Parliament, which was published in 1995. The current region boundaries were established as European Parliament constituencies in June 1996.

The Scotland Act 1998 envisaged that the boundaries of constituencies for the Westminster and Holyrood parliaments would be coterminous. This was amended by the Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Act 2004, which fixed the number of constituencies for the Scottish Parliament at 73 and thus broke the link between the Holyrood and Westminster constituencies. The Commission's Fifth Periodical Review was completed in 2004 and resulted in the number of Scottish constituencies for Westminster being reduced to 59.

The legislation stipulates:

- 73 constituencies returning members to the parliament, only 71 are subject to review – for Orkney and Shetland, the Act specifies that each will be a separate constituency;
- 8 regions in Scotland, all of which are subject to review. Each region returns 7 members to the Scottish Parliament;
- A set of rules for designing constituencies and regions.

The review

Changes in the distribution of electorate, as well as changes to local government areas since the existing constituencies were defined have led the Commission to conclude that a comprehensive review is required. The review was announced on 3 July 2007.

The Commission published its Provisional Proposals for constituencies on 14 February 2008. This is the publication of Revised Recommendations following consideration of comments received on those Provisional Proposals.

The Commission is required to complete a review of the boundaries of constituencies and regions for the Scottish Parliament between 1 July 2007 and 30 June 2010.

Constituency and region design

When designing constituencies and regions, the Commission is required to observe rules which are set down in legislation. The rules for constituencies include requirements to have regard to local authority boundaries; to aim to have the same number of electors in each constituency; to take account of special geographical considerations; and to consider the local effects of alterations. The rules for regions include requirements to form each region by combining a number of constituencies; to take account of special geographical considerations; and to aim to have the same number of electors in each region.

The electoral quota for the review is 54,728 - this is the average number of electors in each constituency, outside Orkney and Shetland. The electoral quota is fixed and is used throughout the review. The average electorate for each region is 489,914.

In previous reviews of parliamentary constituencies in Scotland, the Commission relied on the use of local government wards as building blocks for constituencies. In 2007, a new structure of local government wards was introduced in Scotland to accommodate proportional representation for local authority elections, with much larger wards that each return either 3 or 4 members. As a result, in many areas across Scotland it is not possible to use the significantly enlarged wards to construct revised constituencies within the terms of the statutory rules. As a consequence, the boundaries for the proposed constituencies have been created from whichever geographic feature or boundary creates a constituency approaching electoral parity, while respecting community ties wherever possible.

Each constituency is designated as either a burgh constituency (BC) or county constituency (CC) – this designation affects the regulations concerning election expenditure.

Maps of Current and Proposed Constituencies and Regions

The Commission has produced sets of maps showing the current constituency and region boundaries, its Provisional Proposals and its Revised Recommendations. The relevant maps are displayed at selected council offices, libraries, etc. for the duration of the consultation. The locations for display are listed in Statutory Notices which are being published today in newspapers, and are also available on the Commission's website. The maps are also available in PDF, GIF and TIF format on the Commission's website at www.bcomm-scotland.gov.uk.

A media webpage giving access to images for use in media publications is available at

http://www.bcomm-scotland.gov.uk/1st_holyrood/media/April_09.htm .

Local Inquiries

Where representations objecting to a proposal concerning a constituency are made by a local authority covering the constituency, or by a body of 100 or more electors resident in the proposed constituency, and no Local Inquiry has already been held in the area as part of the review, the Commission will hold a Local Inquiry. Otherwise, a Local Inquiry may be held, but is not obligatory.

Where representations objecting to a proposal concerning a region are made by a council whose area is wholly or partly within the region, or by a body of 500 or more electors in the proposed region, and no Local Inquiry has already been held about the proposal as part of the review, the Commission will hold a Local Inquiry. Otherwise, a Local Inquiry may be held, but is not obligatory.

Implementation of the Recommendations

The Commission is required to submit its report on the review to the Secretary of State for Scotland by 30 June 2010. It is the Secretary of State for Scotland's duty to lay the Commission's report before the UK Parliament together with a draft Order in Council giving effect to the recommendations. The draft Order is submitted to both Houses of Parliament for approval and the new boundaries take effect at the next general election to the Scottish Parliament following the making of the Order.

A copy of the Commission's report must also be laid before the Scottish Parliament.

Elections to the European Parliament

The Commission is aware that these proposals are being published during preparations for the European Parliament elections on 4 June 2009. In deciding upon the publication date for these proposals, the Commission took this into account, together with the constraints of the legislative timetable governing the review. A later publication date would jeopardise the required completion of the review by June 2010.

Contact for Further Information:

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