

Introduction

1. Under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 we are charged with the duty of keeping the representation of Scotland in the House of Commons under review. We are required under Section 3(1) to submit a report to you with respect to the whole of Scotland showing the constituencies into which we recommend that Scotland should be divided. In addition, under Section 3(3) we may submit recommendations regarding the boundaries of any particular Scottish constituency from time to time between general reviews. In forming recommendations for alterations to or maintenance of existing constituency boundaries, we are required to give effect to the rules in the second schedule to the 1986 Act, as amended. In particular, the Scotland Act 1998 amended the 1986 Act so that we were required to apply the electoral quota for England to Scotland for this review. As a result, this is a more far reaching review than its predecessors and involves a substantial reduction in the number of Scottish constituencies. The rules are reproduced at Appendix A and are referred to as “the Rules” throughout this report.

2. The present arrangements for determining constituency boundaries in Scotland were set out in the Representation of the People Act 1948. Alterations to the boundaries determined at that time were made following reports by the Commission under Section 2(3) of the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1949 (Cmnds 8151, 8164 and 8703). Further alterations were made following the Commission’s periodical reports in 1954, 1969, 1983 and 1994 (Cmd 9312, Cmnd 4085, Cmnd 8794 and Cm 2726). Since the Order in Council relating to the 1994 Report was made (SI 1995 No 1037(S.90)), the Commission has not submitted any further reports concerning Westminster parliamentary constituencies.

3. A booklet entitled *Background, Processes and Procedures*, which provided information regarding the review and the processes and procedures to be adopted, was issued at the start of the review and forms Appendix A. Appendix B comprises a second booklet entitled *Local Inquiry – Processes and Procedures*, which provided information regarding local inquiries and was issued prior to the start of the local inquiry process. Appendix C sets out the number of parliamentary electors in the existing constituencies at the start and end of the previous and current reviews. Appendix D shows the change in the parliamentary electorate in each Council area between 2001 and 2004. Appendix E lists the constituencies we recommend as a result of our current review. Maps showing both the existing parliamentary constituency boundaries in each Council area in Scotland and our final recommendations for these areas are contained at the beginning and end respectively of the relevant sections of Chapter 3. Appendix F contains maps showing the boundaries of each of our recommended new constituencies.

Timing of the General Review

4. The Commission's last report, the Fourth Periodical Report, was submitted in 1994 to the Secretary of State under Section 3(1) of the 1986 Act. Under Section 3(2) of the 1986 Act as amended, the Commission is required to submit its fifth report not less than 8 or more than 12 years from the date of submission of the fourth report, i.e. between December 2002 and December 2006.

Procedure

5. In compliance with the Rule which requires that regard shall be had to the boundaries of local authority areas, and for practical reasons concerned with the administration of elections and the local organisation of political parties, we prepared proposals on the basis of the 32 Council areas which were introduced by the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994. As a consequence of the change to the number and structure of local authorities and the increase in the electoral quota, it was likely we would require to make proposals for constituencies that crossed Council boundaries.

6. We announced at the outset of the review that we intended to use existing local government electoral wards as the basic building blocks for the construction of constituencies. Although the legislation does not require us to do so, we believed that it would not be appropriate to ignore the structure of these electoral arrangements when reviewing parliamentary constituency boundaries. We agreed that the effective administration of parliamentary elections (both for the local authorities which are charged with this duty, and the political parties which have to organise themselves for the elections) would best be served if parliamentary constituency boundaries were based on territorial areas which fitted in with existing local structures.

7. Formal notice of the Commission's decision to start the general review of parliamentary constituencies was given on 29 June 2001 and a notice of the Commission's intention was published in the Edinburgh Gazette on that date.

8. The Rules require us to conduct our general review on the basis of the parliamentary electorates existing when we announce our intention to carry out the review (the enumeration date). Electoral Registration Officers supplied us with particulars of the electorates in each local government electoral ward in Scotland from the electoral registers at June 2001. These data were added to our geographic information systems so that options for revised constituencies could be developed and examined against the background of existing constituency boundaries, settlement geography, topography, communication links and other relevant information.

9. We are not required to enter into consultations with political parties, local authorities or any other bodies before forming our provisional proposals. Like our predecessors we considered that provisional proposals are best arrived at independently without regard to conflicting suggestions. In our view the statutory consultation process, together with the local inquiry procedures, provided ample opportunity for the consideration of counter-proposals.

10. As required by Section 5(2) of the 1986 Act, we published our provisional proposals in newspapers circulating in the areas affected, inviting any persons who wished to do so to make representation to us about our proposals. The statutory notices were supplemented by a news release. Copies of our proposals, illustrative maps and the explanatory booklet on the conduct of the review (see Appendix A) were made available for inspection by the public at local authority offices, public libraries and other suitable places within each constituency affected. The addresses of the premises where the documents could be inspected were included in the statutory notices. We are grateful to the local authorities and their officers for their cooperation in these arrangements.

11. All the documentation and maps were made available on our web site. Local authorities were also provided with all documentation and maps on CD ROM which they were free to disseminate to the public. Similarly, local authorities that expressed an interest were provided with computer data files containing the local government electoral ward boundaries, together with electorate data, boundaries of existing constituencies and boundaries of the proposed constituencies. These data could be utilised by computer-based geographic information systems thus allowing Councils to examine the information in detail and, where they thought necessary, to develop counter-proposals.

12. Our proposals for all 32 Council areas were published on 7 February 2002. Because of the radical nature of the review, we considered that it would be beneficial if the extent of the changes to constituency geography arising from the significant reduction in the number of constituencies was made known simultaneously on a Scotland-wide basis.

13. The political parties in Scotland represented at both the Westminster and Scottish Parliaments were kept fully informed of our proposals, and copies of all notices and other documents were sent to them immediately in advance of issue. Additionally, Members of Parliament were informed in advance of the provisional recommendations affecting their particular constituencies, and copies of notices and maps were deposited in the Parliamentary libraries for inspection. Members of the Scottish Parliament were similarly informed and copies of the notices and maps were sent to the Scottish Parliament Information Centre.

14. We recognised that the statutory consultation period of one month might sometimes allow too little time for detailed consideration to be given to our provisional proposals. We therefore took account of all the representations received in respect of our provisional proposals, including those received after the statutory period but prior to our meeting of 22 March 2002. All representations received after that date about areas where local inquiries were to be held were made available to the Assistant Commissioners.

15. We have held 23 meetings since the notice to commence our review was published. These were all held under the chairmanship of our Deputy Chairman but we kept our ex-officio Chairman, Mr Speaker, informed of the course of our deliberations.

Local Inquiries

16. Under Section 6 of the 1986 Act, we are obliged to arrange for a local inquiry to be held where objections to our provisional proposals are received from an interested local authority

or from a body of electors numbering 100 or more. We are not obliged, however, to hold a local inquiry in respect of objections to revised or modified recommendations, but we may do so if we consider it necessary to obtain more information or to ascertain local opinion on certain matters.

17. As a result of such objections, local inquiries involving 20 Council areas were held into our provisional proposals, but no further local inquiries took place into our revised recommendations. At our request, you agreed to appoint a Sheriff Principal to act as Assistant Commissioner for each of the local inquiries. Under these arrangements the Sheriff Principal for South Strathclyde and Dumfries and Galloway conducted the inquiry for the combined Council areas of East Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire. The Sheriff Principal for Grampian, Highlands and Islands conducted the inquiry for the combined Council areas of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The Sheriff Principal for Tayside, Central and Fife conducted the inquiries for the combined Council areas of Perth and Kinross and Clackmannanshire, the combined Council areas of Angus and Dundee City and the combined Council areas of Falkirk and West Lothian. The Sheriff Principal of North Strathclyde conducted the inquiries for the combined Council areas of East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire and for Renfrewshire Council area. The Sheriff Principal for Glasgow and Strathkelvin conducted the inquiries for the combined Council areas of Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire. Since counter-proposals received for this area involved Midlothian Council area, we also included our proposals for that Council area within the scope of this inquiry. The then Sheriff Principal for Lothians and Borders conducted the local inquiry into our proposals for the City of Edinburgh. Because the existing configuration of constituencies covering the City of Edinburgh Council area included part of East Lothian Council area, we included that Council area within the scope of this inquiry.

18. The Assistant Commissioners were entirely independent of the Commission and took no part in preparing our provisional proposals. We refer later to the reports of the Assistant Commissioners but we should like to record here our thanks to them for the careful and constructive way in which they conducted the inquiries, and for the full and informative reports which they made to us. We found their reports of great assistance in reaching our final recommendations.

19. Notices advertising the holding of local inquiries were published in newspapers in the same way as notices advertising our provisional proposals. Copies of representations addressed to the Commission were sent to the political parties and to the relevant local authorities for public inspection. In addition, summaries of the representations were sent to local authorities for public inspection at local authority offices and public libraries, together with a statement explaining our provisional proposals. These statements were read out by the Assistant Commissioner at the start of each inquiry. Each Assistant Commissioner also received a full set of documents for his inquiry, including all representations received after our meeting of 22 March 2002. Additionally, where detailed counter-proposals had been notified to us prior to an inquiry, they were mapped and displayed at the relevant inquiry venue.

20. All of the documents, with the exception of copies of the representations, were made available on our web site. Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament were informed of the holding of local inquiries affecting their particular constituencies and

summaries of the relevant representations were sent to them. All persons who made representations were informed of the date and time of local inquiries, the address of the premises where the inquiries were to be held and the locations at which the relevant documentation could be inspected.

21. Where we decided, after considering the report of a local inquiry, to revise our proposals, these were published in exactly the same way as the provisional proposals in accordance with the 1986 Act. Copies of the Assistant Commissioner's reports were deposited for local inspection, along with our revised recommendations and maps (where appropriate). Where we decided to adhere to our provisional proposals after holding a local inquiry, we followed a similar pattern of publication of the Assistant Commissioner's report when we announced our decision. All relevant information was made available on our web site.

Discussions with Political Parties

22. We decided to follow the practice of our predecessors during the fourth periodical review and arrange a meeting with representatives nominated by the political parties in Scotland that had Members of Parliament in the House of Commons or in the Scottish Parliament. We held the meeting in June 2000.

Re-appraisal of Recommendations

23. Towards the end of the review we re-appraised our recommendations for the whole of Scotland to ensure fair and consistent treatment of different areas. In doing so we noted the 2004 electorate figures and any further representations we had received following intimation of our final recommendations. We are satisfied that our review is fair and consistent across Scotland.