

Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986

As amended by:

- *Boundary Commissions Act 1992 (c.55)*
- *Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 (c.19)*
- *Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 (c.39)*
- *Scotland Act 1998 (c.46)*
- *S.I. 2002/2626*
- *S.I. 2003/1887*
- *Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (c.18)*

An Act to consolidate the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Acts 1949 to 1979 and certain related enactments. ¹

1 *Parliamentary constituencies*

(1) There shall for the purpose of parliamentary elections be the county and borough constituencies (or in Scotland the county and burgh constituencies), each returning a single member, which are described in Orders in Council made under this Act.

(2) In this Act and, except where the context otherwise requires, in any Act passed after the Representation of the People Act 1948, “constituency” means an area having separate representation in the House of Commons.

2 *The Boundary Commissions*

(1) For the purpose of the continuous review of the distribution of seats at parliamentary elections, there shall continue to be four permanent Boundary Commissions, namely a Boundary Commission for England, a Boundary Commission for Scotland, a Boundary Commission for Wales and a Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.

(2) Schedule 1 to this Act shall have effect with respect to the constitution of, and other matters relating to, the Boundary Commissions.

3 *Reports of the Commissions*

(1) Each Boundary Commission shall keep under review the representation in the House of Commons of the part of the United Kingdom with which they are concerned and shall, in accordance with subsection (2) below, submit to the Secretary of State reports with respect to the whole of that part of the United Kingdom, either —

(a) showing the constituencies into which they recommend that it should be divided in order to give effect to the rules set out in paragraphs 1 to 6 of Schedule 2 to this Act (read with paragraph 7 of that Schedule), or

¹ Functions of the Secretary of State in this Act made exercisable concurrently with the Lord Chancellor by The Transfer of Functions (Transport, Local Government and the Regions) Order 2002 (S.I. 2002/2626)

(b) stating that, in the opinion of the Commission, no alteration is required to be made in respect of that part of the United Kingdom in order to give effect to the said rules (read with paragraph 7).

(2) Reports under subsection (1) above shall be submitted by a Boundary Commission not less than eight or more than twelve years from the date of the submission of their last report under that subsection. ²

(2A) A failure by a Boundary Commission to submit a report within the time limit which is appropriate to that report shall not be regarded as invalidating the report for the purposes of any enactment. ³

(3) Any Boundary Commission may also from time to time submit to the Secretary of State reports with respect to the area comprised in any particular constituency or constituencies in the part of the United Kingdom with which they are concerned, showing the constituencies into which they recommend that that area should be divided in order to give effect to the rules set out in paragraphs 1 to 6 of Schedule 2 to this Act (read with paragraph 7 of that Schedule).

(4) A report of a Boundary Commission under this Act showing the constituencies into which they recommend that any area should be divided shall state, as respects each constituency, the name by which they recommend that it should be known, and whether they recommend that it should be a county constituency or a borough constituency (or in Scotland a county constituency or a burgh constituency).

(5) As soon as may be after a Boundary Commission have submitted a report to the Secretary of State under this Act, he shall lay the report before Parliament together, except in a case where the report states that no alteration is required to be made in respect of the part of the United Kingdom with which the Commission are concerned, with the draft of an Order in Council for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report.

(6) Schedule 2 to this Act which contains the rules referred to above and related provisions shall have effect.

(7) For the purposes of the application of the rules in paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to this Act (relationship between constituencies and certain local government boundaries) a report of a Boundary Commission under subsection (1) above shall take account only of those boundaries (whether of counties, London boroughs, local authority areas in Scotland or wards in Northern Ireland) which are in operation at whichever is the earlier of —

(a) the date of the report; and

(b) the tenth anniversary of the date of the submission of the most recent report of the Commission under subsection (1) above;

² Subsection 3(2) amended by Boundary Commissions Act 1992

³ Subsection 3(2A) inserted by Boundary Commissions Act 1992

but nothing in this subsection shall prevent a Boundary Commission publishing proposed recommendations which take account of boundaries which at the time of publication are prospective only. ⁴

(8) For the purposes of subsection (7) above, a boundary shall be regarded as prospective at any time if, at that time, it is specified in a provision of an Act, Measure of the Northern Ireland Assembly, statutory instrument or statutory rule but the boundary has not yet come into operation. ⁵

3A ⁶

4 *Orders in Council*

(1) The draft of any Order in Council laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State under this Act for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report of a Boundary Commission may make provision for any matters which appear to him to be incidental to, or consequential on, the recommendations.

(2) Where any such draft gives effect to any such recommendations with modifications, the Secretary of State shall lay before Parliament together with the draft a statement of the reasons for the modifications.

(3) If any such draft is approved by resolution of each House of Parliament, the Secretary of State shall submit it to Her Majesty in Council.

(4) If a motion for the approval of any such draft is rejected by either House of Parliament or withdrawn by leave of the House, the Secretary of State may amend the draft and lay the amended draft before Parliament, and if the draft as so amended is approved by resolution of each House of Parliament, the Secretary of State shall submit it to Her Majesty in Council.

(5) Where the draft of an Order in Council is submitted to Her Majesty in Council under this Act, Her Majesty in Council may make an Order in terms of the draft which (subject to subsection (6) below) shall come into force on such date as may be specified in the Order and shall have effect notwithstanding anything in any enactment.

(6) The coming into force of any such Order shall not affect any parliamentary election until a proclamation is issued by Her Majesty summoning a new Parliament, or affect the constitution of the House of Commons until the dissolution of the Parliament then in being.

(7) The validity of any Order in Council purporting to be made under this Act and reciting that a draft of the Order has been approved by resolution of each House of Parliament shall not be called in question in any legal proceedings whatsoever.

⁴ Subsection 3(7) inserted by Boundary Commissions Act 1992

⁵ Subsection 3(8) inserted by Boundary Commissions Act 1992

⁶ Section 3A proposed by Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, but not brought into force, and repealed by Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

5 *Notices*

(1) Where a Boundary Commission intend to consider making a report under this Act they shall, by notice in writing, inform the Secretary of State accordingly, and a copy of the notice shall be published —

(a) in a case where it was given by the Boundary Commission for England or the Boundary Commission for Wales, in the London Gazette.

(b) in a case where it was given by the Boundary Commission for Scotland, in the Edinburgh Gazette, and

(c) in a case where it was given by the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, in the Belfast Gazette.

(2) Where a Boundary Commission have provisionally determined to make recommendations affecting any constituency, they shall publish in at least one newspaper circulating in the constituency a notice stating —

(a) the effect of the proposed recommendations and (except in a case where they propose to recommend that no alteration be made in respect of the constituency) that a copy of the recommendations is open to inspection at a specified place within the constituency, and

(b) that representations with respect to the proposed recommendations may be made to the Commission within one month after the publication of the notice;

and the Commission shall take into consideration any representations duly made in accordance with any such notice.

(3) Where a Boundary Commission revise any proposed recommendations after publishing a notice of them under subsection (2) above, the Commission shall comply again with that subsection in relation to the revised recommendations, as if no earlier notice had been published.

6 *Local inquiries*

(1) A Boundary Commission may, if they think fit, cause a local inquiry to be held in respect of any constituency or constituencies.

(2) Where, on the publication of the notice under section 5(2) above of a recommendation of a Boundary Commission for the alteration of any constituencies, the Commission receive any representation objecting to the proposed recommendation from an interested authority or from a body of electors numbering one hundred or more, the Commission shall not make the recommendation unless, since the publication of the notice, a local inquiry has been held in respect of the constituencies.

(3) Where a local inquiry was held in respect of the constituencies before the publication of the notice mentioned in subsection (2) above, that subsection shall not apply if the Commission, after considering the matters discussed at the local inquiry, the nature of the representations received on the publication of

the notice and any other relevant circumstances, are of opinion that a further local inquiry would not be justified.

(4) In subsection (2) above, “interested authority” and “elector” respectively mean, in relation to any recommendation, a local authority whose area is wholly or partly comprised in the constituencies affected by the recommendation, and a parliamentary elector for any of those constituencies; and for this purpose “local authority” means —

(a) in England and Wales, the council of a county, county borough, London borough or district,⁷

(b) in Scotland, a council constituted under section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, and⁸

(c) in Northern Ireland, the council of a district.

(5) Subsections (2) and (3) of section 250 of the Local Government Act 1972 (which relate to the attendance of witnesses at inquiries) shall apply in relation to any local inquiry which the Boundary Commission for England or the Boundary Commission for Wales may cause to be held in pursuance of this Act.

(6) In relation to any local inquiry which the Boundary Commission for Scotland may cause to be held in pursuance of this Act, the said subsections (2) and (3) shall apply as if that Act applied to Scotland but with the substitution of references to an order for references to a summons.

(7) In relation to any local inquiry which the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland may cause to be held in pursuance of this Act, sections 19 and 20 of the Poor Relief (Ireland) (No. 2) Act 1847 shall apply.

6A⁹

7 *Consequential amendments*

Schedule 3 to this Act shall have effect.

8 *Repeals and revocation*

(1) The enactments specified in Schedule 4 to this Act are hereby repealed to the extent specified in the third column of that Schedule.

(2) Article 2(7) of the Local Government Reorganisation (Consequential Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 is hereby revoked.

(3) Where a period of time specified in any enactment repealed by this Act is current at the commencement of this Act, this Act shall have effect as if the corresponding provision of this Act had been in force when the period began to run.

⁷ Subsection 6(4)(a) amended by Local Government (Wales) Act 1994

⁸ Subsection 6(4)(b) amended by Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994

⁹ Section 6A inserted by S.I. 2002/2626 and repealed by S.I. 2003/1887

9 *Citation commencement and extent*

(1) This Act may be cited as the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, and shall be included among the Acts which may be cited as the Representation of the People Acts.

(2) This Act shall come into force at the end of the period of three months beginning with the day on which it is passed.

(3) This Act extends to Northern Ireland.

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1

THE BOUNDARY COMMISSIONS

Constitution

1 The Speaker of the House of Commons shall be the chairman of each of the four Commissions.

2 Each of the four Commissions shall consist of the chairman, a deputy chairman and two other members appointed by the Secretary of State.

3 The deputy chairman —

(a) in the case of the Commission for England shall be a judge of the High Court appointed by the Lord Chancellor,

(b) in the case of the Commission for Scotland shall be a judge of the Court of Session appointed by the Lord President of the Court of Session,

(c) in the case of the Commission for Wales shall be a judge of the High Court appointed by the Lord Chancellor,

(d) in the case of the Commission for Northern Ireland shall be a judge of the High Court in Northern Ireland appointed by the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland.

4 A Member of any Commission (other than the chairman) shall hold his appointment for such term and on such conditions as may be determined before his appointment by the person appointing him.

4A In the case of a member of a Commission other than the chairman or deputy chairman, the conditions referred to in paragraph 4 above may include such provisions with respect to remuneration as the Secretary of State may determine with the approval of the Treasury.¹⁰

¹⁰ Paragraph 4A inserted by Boundary Commissions Act 1992

Officers

5 The officers of each Commission shall include, as assessors, the following persons —

(a) in the case of the Commission for England, the Statistics Board and the Director General of Ordnance Survey,¹¹

(b) in the case of the Commission for Scotland, the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages for Scotland and the Director General of Ordnance Survey,

(c) in the case of the Commission for Wales, the Statistics Board and the Director General of Ordnance Survey,¹²

(d) in the case of the Commission for Northern Ireland, the Registrar General of Births and Deaths in Northern Ireland, the Commissioner of Valuation for Northern Ireland and the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland.

6 (1) The Secretary of State may, at the request of any Commission, appoint one or more assistant Commissioners to inquire into, and report to the Commission upon, such matters as the Commission think fit.

(2) Any such assistant Commissioner shall be appointed either for a certain term or for the purposes of a particular inquiry, and on such conditions as to remuneration and otherwise as may be determined before his appointment by the Secretary of State with the approval of the Treasury.

7 The Secretary of State shall appoint a secretary to each of the Commissions, and may appoint such other officers of any Commission as he may determine with the approval of the Treasury, and the term and conditions of any such appointment shall be such as may be so determined.

Expenses

8 The expenses of each Commission, including the remuneration and travelling and other expenses of the members, assistant Commissioners, secretary and other officers, shall be paid out of money provided by Parliament.¹³

Proceedings and instruments

9 A Commission shall have power to act notwithstanding a vacancy among their members, and at any meeting of a Commission two, or such greater number as the Commission may determine, shall be the quorum.

10 For the purpose of considering any matter of common concern, the Commissions, or any two or three of them, may hold joint meetings.

¹¹ Paragraph 5(a) amended by Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007

¹² Paragraph 5(c) amended by Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007

¹³ Paragraph 8 amended by Boundary Commissions Act 1992

11 Subject to the provisions of this Act, each of the Commissions shall have power to regulate their own procedure.

12 Every document purporting to be an instrument made or issued by a Commission and to be signed by the secretary or any person authorised to act in that behalf, shall be received in evidence and shall, until the contrary is proved, be deemed to be an instrument made or issued by the Commission.

SCHEDULE 2

RULES FOR REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS

The rules

- 1 (1) The number of constituencies in Great Britain shall not be substantially greater or less than 613.
(2)¹⁴
(3) The number of constituencies in Wales shall not be less than 35.
(4) The number of constituencies in Northern Ireland shall not be greater than 18 or less than 16, and shall be 17 unless it appears to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland that Northern Ireland should for the time being be divided into 16 or (as the case may be) into 18 constituencies.
- 2 Every constituency shall return a single member.
- 3 There shall continue to be a constituency which shall include the whole of the City of London and the name of which shall refer to the City of London.
- 3A A constituency which includes the Orkney Islands or the Shetland Islands shall not include the whole or any part of a local government area other than the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands.¹⁵
- 4 (1) So far as is practicable having regard to rules 1 to 3A —¹⁶
 - (a) in England and Wales, —
 - (i) no county or any part of a county shall be included in a constituency which includes the whole or part of any other county or the whole or part of a London borough,
 - (ii) no London borough or any part of a London borough shall be included in a constituency which includes the whole or part of any other London borough,

¹⁴ Rule 1(2) repealed by Scotland Act 1998

¹⁵ Rule 3A inserted by Scotland Act 1998

¹⁶ Rule 4(1) amended by Scotland Act 1998

(b) in Scotland, regard shall be had to the boundaries of local authority areas,

(c) in Northern Ireland, no ward shall be included partly in one constituency and partly in another.

(1A) In sub-paragraph (1)(a) above “county” means, in relation to Wales, a preserved county (as defined by section 64 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994).¹⁷

(2) In sub-paragraph (1)(b) above “area” and “local authority” have the same meanings as in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.¹⁸

5 The electorate of any constituency shall be as near the electoral quota as is practicable having regard to rules 1 to 4; and a Boundary Commission may depart from the strict application of rule 4 if it appears to them that a departure is desirable to avoid an excessive disparity between the electorate of any constituency and the electoral quota, or between the electorate of any constituency and that of neighbouring constituencies in the part of the United Kingdom with which they are concerned.

6 A Boundary Commission may depart from the strict application of rules 4 and 5 if special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, appear to them to render a departure desirable.

General and supplementary

7 It shall not be the duty of a Boundary Commission to aim at giving full effect in all circumstances to the above rules (except rule 3A)¹⁹, but they shall take account, so far as they reasonably can —

(a) of the inconveniences attendant on alterations of constituencies other than alterations made for the purposes of rule 4, and

(b) of any local ties which would be broken by such alterations.

8 In the application of rule 5 to each part of the United Kingdom for which there is a Boundary Commission —

(a) the expression “electoral quota” means a number obtained by dividing the electorate for that part of the United Kingdom by the number of constituencies in it existing on the enumeration date,

(b) the expression “electorate” means —

¹⁷ Rule 4(1A) inserted by Local Government (Wales) Act 1994

¹⁸ References to a local authority under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 are to be construed to be to a council under the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994, as required by section 183 of the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994.

¹⁹ Rule 7 amended by Scotland Act 1998

(i) in relation to a constituency, the number of persons whose names appear on the register of parliamentary electors in force on the enumeration date under the Representation of the People Acts for the constituency,

(ii) in relation to the part of the United Kingdom, the aggregate electorate as defined in sub-paragraph (i) above of all the constituencies in that part,

(c) the expression “enumeration date” means, in relation to any report of a Boundary Commission under this Act, the date on which the notice with respect to that report is published in accordance with section 5(1) of this Act.

9 In this Schedule, a reference to a rule followed by a number is a reference to the rule set out in the correspondingly numbered paragraph of this Schedule.

SCHEDULE 3
CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Not reproduced here

SCHEDULE 4
REPEALS

Not reproduced here