

# Boundary Commission for Wales

## Annual Report 2011/12



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# **BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12**

**JUNE 2012**

Boundary Commission for Wales  
Caradog House  
1-6 St Andrews Place  
Cardiff  
CF10 3BE  
Telephone: +44 (0)29 20395031  
Fax Number: +44 (0)29 20395250  
E-mail: [bcomm.wales@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:bcomm.wales@wales.gsi.gov.uk)



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# Foreword

In 2011 the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales formally began its 2013 Review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries. This review follows the rules laid out in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 and represents the most significant review since the Commission's inception in 1944.

In accordance with the new legislation, the Commission developed proposals for a revised Parliamentary constituency map of Wales with 30, rather than 40, constituencies which were all within 5% of the UK electoral quota. These initial proposals were published on 11 January 2012. This started a process of public consultation during which members of the public and other interested parties were invited to comment on the Commission's proposals. A lively and useful debate began which will continue in 2012/13 as the Commission will be listening to people's views and considering where changes to its initial proposals may be appropriate.

Carrying out a review which represents such an unprecedented level of change to Parliamentary constituencies has been a real challenge.

During this time the Commission has also had to manage a change in personnel. In July 2011 Mr Paul Wood and Mr John Bader resigned from the Commission, due to matters unrelated to the work of the Boundary Commission for Wales. In December 2011 the Secretary to the Commission, Mr Edward Lewis, also resigned. Two new Commissioners (Mr Paul Loveluck CBE and Professor Robert McNabb) were recruited in October 2011 and a new Secretary (Mr Ben Whitestone) in December 2011. I am most grateful to all of the Commissioners and all staff from the Commission's Secretariat for their assistance, hard work and dedication throughout the past year.

As we work towards delivering final recommendations for the 2013 Review, in October 2013, we will continue to work closely with our stakeholders, endeavour to provide the best possible value for money and adhere to our values of independence, impartiality and professionalism.

**The Hon. Mr Justice Lloyd Jones**  
**Deputy Chairman**





# 1. Introduction

## The Sponsor

- 1.1** The Boundary Commission for Wales is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored and wholly funded by the Cabinet Office (CO). The Commission submits reports to the Secretary of State and it is the Secretary of State's statutory duty to lay them before Parliament. Where the report recommends that alterations are required to Parliamentary constituency boundaries or the boundaries of the Welsh Assembly electoral regions, the Secretary of State must also lay before Parliament the draft of an Order in Council for giving effect to the Commission's recommendations. The Lord Chancellor appoints the Deputy Chairman, the Secretary of State appoints one of the members of the Commission, the Assistant Commissioners, and the Secretary to the Commission (see Membership below).

## The Commission

- 1.2** The Commission is constituted under section 2 and schedule 1 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). It is an independent, non-political, and totally impartial body. The Commission does not take political factors into account and the effects of the Commission's recommendations on future voting patterns are not considered.
- 1.3** With effect from 1 January 2002, officials of the Secretariat to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales (LGBCW), located in Cardiff, have also staffed the Secretariat of the Boundary Commission<sup>1</sup>. Although accommodation and some staff resources are shared the Secretariats of the two Commissions operate independently from each other.

## Membership

- 1.4** The Speaker of the House of Commons is the ex-officio Chairman of all four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions in the United Kingdom. The appointment of the Speaker emphasises the independence, impartiality, and non-political nature of the Commissions. The Speaker plays no part in the conduct of reviews. The Deputy Chairman, who presides over the meetings, is a High Court Judge: the Honourable Mr Justice Lloyd Jones. The Members are Mr Paul Loveluck and Professor Robert McNabb.

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the Secretary from December 2011 - see membership.

- 1.5** The Commissioners are part-time appointees who meet whenever the work programme demands. Since the passing of the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, the Commission Members (not including the Deputy Chairman) have been paid a daily fee agreed by the Sponsor Department with HM Treasury for work carried out on behalf of the Commission and, with the Deputy Chairman, are entitled to recover any expenses (such as travel and subsistence) incurred on Commission work.
- 1.6** The Commission has established both a Code of Practice and a Register of Members' Interests, which are updated annually. Copies of these documents are available on request.
- 1.7** The Commission has two statutory assessors. One is the Statistics Board (represented by the National Statistician), and the other is the Director General of Ordnance Survey. Deputies represent both at Commission meetings.
- 1.8** The Secretary of State also appoints a Secretary to the Commission, Mr Ben Whitestone, who heads the Secretariat and is Accounting Officer. The Secretary is formally employed by the Cabinet Office. Until December 2011 there was a Joint Secretary with the LGBCW, this post was held by Mr Edward Lewis.
- 1.9** The role of the Secretariat is to service and assist the Commissioners in the conduct of their reviews and in executing their decisions. The Secretariat is based at the offices of the Secretariat to the LGBCW in Cardiff and liaison about staffing and accommodation takes place with the Welsh Government.

### **Statutory Duties**

- 1.10** The Commission's primary statutory function is to keep under continuous review the distribution of seats at Parliamentary elections, to conduct regular reviews of the boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies and to make reports with recommendations to the Secretary of State in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). The Commission may also undertake discretionary or Interim reviews in one or more constituencies where the Commissioners believe this appropriate.
- 1.11** The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 made substantial changes to the legislation governing distribution of Parliamentary seats. The On 4 March 2011 the Boundary Commission for Wales announced the start of the 2013 Review of Parliamentary constituencies in Wales which would follow the changes to legislation.
- 1.12** The Act also removed the link between the Parliamentary constituencies and those of the Welsh Assembly. New legislation is now expected to put into place a mechanism for the regular review of the Welsh Assembly constituencies.

## 2. Objectives

### General Objective

- 2.1** To keep under continuous review the representation of Wales in the House of Commons and in the National Assembly for Wales<sup>2</sup>.

### Specific Objectives for 2011/12

- 2.2** To progress the 2013 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies pursuant to the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.

### Welsh Language Scheme

- 2.3** The Commission operates a fully bilingual policy. All official documentation published by the Commission will be available in Welsh and English. The Commission welcomes correspondence from individuals and organisations in Welsh and English.

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<sup>2</sup> See paragraph 1.12

# 3. The 2013 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

## Progress with the 2013 Review

- 3.1** On 4 March 2011 the Boundary Commission for Wales announced the start of the 2013 review of Parliamentary constituencies in Wales with the publication of a newsletter that summarised the changes to legislation and the effect this would have on Parliamentary constituencies in Wales (i.e. reduction from 40 to 30 constituencies and every constituency to be within 5% of the UK quota).
- 3.2** The 2011 electorate data for every unitary authority and electoral division in Wales was made available on the same day.
- 3.3** A meeting was held with qualifying political parties in Wales on 20 April 2011 to brief them on the changes to the legislation and the proposed review operation and timetable. The meeting was informed that the Commission intended to publish its initial proposals on 6 September 2011.
- 3.4** On 3 August 2011 the Commission published a newsletter explaining that, for reasons unconnected with the work of the Commission, two of the Commissioners, Mr Paul Wood and Mr John Bader had indicated their intention to resign and that steps would be taken to appoint new Commissioners. It was announced that, as a consequence, the publication of initial proposals would be postponed until January 2012.
- 3.5** Two new Commissioners, Mr Paul Loveluck and Professor Robert McNabb were appointed on 4 October 2011.
- 3.6** In December 2011 Mr. Edward Lewis resigned as Secretary of the Commission, for reasons unconnected with the work of the Commission. His successor, Mr. Ben Whitestone, took up post on 19 December 2011.

## Initial Proposals

- 3.7** Between October 2011 and January 2012 the Commission developed its initial proposals to meet the requirements of the 2011 Act. The Commission's Secretariat supported the Commission in this task by developing options, drafting the initial proposals report, preparing the report for publication and communicating with key stakeholders, the media and the general public.

- 3.8** On 11 January 2012 the Commission published its Initial Proposals for the 2013 Review. This was the beginning of a 12 week consultation process where the Commission asked the people of Wales to help shape the revised Parliamentary constituencies by responding in support of, or in objection to, the Commission's proposals. From 11 January to 4 April 2012 the Commission received representations on its initial proposals, both in writing and orally at five public hearings.
- 3.9** The Commission decided to hold the maximum number of public hearings allowed by legislation. Five two-day hearings were therefore held at various locations across Wales. The dates and venues of the public hearings were as follows:
- 15/16 February, Swansea  
22/23 February, Cardiff  
29 February/1 March, Wrexham  
7/8 March, Caernarfon  
20/21 March, Llandrindod Wells
- 3.10** During the initial consultation period the Commission received around 500 written representations, which reflected the views of over 4000 individuals and organisations, and heard from over 100 speakers at its public hearings. Public response was largely positive and although there were areas of the Commission's proposals which generated objections and counter-proposals, the initial proposals were generally seen as a solid basis for discussion, bearing in mind the constraints of the legislation.

### **The Next Steps**

- 3.11** During 2012 the initial representations and transcripts of the public hearings will be published in Welsh and English and a period of four weeks will follow during which written comments may be made on the initial representations.
- 3.12** Following the consideration of the representations it may be considered appropriate to publish revised proposals. A further period of consultation will then follow.
- 3.13** Final recommendations will be published on or before 1 October 2013.

## 4. Budget and Expenditure

### Expenditure April 2011 to March 2012

- 4.1 Table 1 compares the actual expenditure with the budget, during the financial year covered by this report.

**Table 1 – Budget and Expenditure**

Budget Component	Budget (£)	Actual (£)
Staff Salaries	134,838	162,954
Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners Fees	33,643	47,101
Office Accommodation	40,333	19,003
Travel and Subsistence	16,500	5,383
Hospitality	2,000	61
Training	1,300	5,640
IT and Telecoms	20,000	6,956
Other Review Costs*	212,793	172,492
<b>Total</b>	<b>461,407</b>	<b>419,591</b>

\*includes public hearing costs, postage, advertising, printing, transcription and translation.

- 4.2 Table 1 shows that for the 2011/12 financial year the Boundary Commission under-spent on its budget by £41,816. The main reasons for this under-spend were that:
- The 2013 Review was the most extensive review in the history of the Boundary Commission (it was established in 1944) meaning that it was difficult, at the start of the process, to estimate the budget that would be required. An element of contingency was therefore built in to the overall budget but was not drawn upon to any great extent.
  - The timetable for the 2013 Review was delayed by several months due to factors unrelated to the work of the Commission. This delay meant that some key tasks that were scheduled for the 2011/12 financial year were moved into 2012/13.
  - The Commission sought to achieve the maximum possible value for money in all of its work.

## 5. Work Programme for 2012/13

### General Objective

- 5.1** To keep under continuous review the representation of Wales in the House of Commons and in the National Assembly for Wales.

### Specific Objectives for 2012/13

- 5.2** The Commission's key high level objectives for 2012/13 are<sup>3</sup>:
- To progress the 2013 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies pursuant to the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.
  - To ensure that all work of the Boundary Commission for Wales is carried out with a view to providing the best possible value for money.
  - To ensure that all interested stakeholders are effectively engaged in order that they are fully informed about Parliamentary constituency reviews and are able to contribute to the process of review.

### Welsh Language Scheme

- 5.3** The Commission operates a fully bilingual policy. All official documentation published by the Commission will be available in Welsh and English. The Commission welcomes correspondence from individuals and organisations in Welsh and English.

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<sup>3</sup> More detail is included in the Commission's Business Plan for 2012/13 available at [www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk](http://www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk)

