

Boundary Commission for Wales

Annual Report 2013/14

© Crown copyright 2014

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence.

To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at: bcomm.wales@wales.gsi.gov.uk

This document is also available from our website at www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

JANUARY 2014

Boundary Commission for Wales
Hastings House
Fitzalan Court
Cardiff
CF24 0BL
Telephone: +44 (0)29 20464819
Fax Number: +44 (0)29 20464823
E-mail: bcomm.wales@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Contents

Foreword	1
Introduction	2
Objectives	5
Outcomes	6
Budget and Expenditure	7
Work Programme for 2014/15	8

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Boundary Commission for Wales for the financial year 2013-14. Following the early termination of the 2013 Review in January 2013 we revised our work plan for this year and this was reflected in the agreed budget and the outcome expenditure.

During the year we have sought to ensure that the expertise of the staff is maintained and developed by providing opportunities for training specifically in the use of our geographical information system and in project management.

The Hon. Mr Justice Wyn Williams
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 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 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 Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (LDBCW)¹, located in Cardiff, have also staffed the Secretariat of the Boundary Commission. Although accommodation and some staff resources are shared 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 Wyn Williams who was appointed until the end of September 2017. The Members are Mr Paul Loveluck and Professor Robert M^cNabb who were both appointed until the end of September 2016.

¹ The name was changed from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales by the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

- 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. Following the departure of Mr Ben Whitestone in June 2013, Mr Steve Halsall was appointed as Secretary from January 2014. Under the joint Secretariat arrangements Mr Halsall was also appointed as the Chief Executive of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales.
- 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 LDBCW 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).
- 1.11** The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 made substantial changes to the legislation governing distribution of Parliamentary seats.
- 1.12** The Act also removed the link between the Parliamentary constituencies and those of the Welsh Assembly. This has the effect that, until new legislation is put into place, there is no mechanism for the regular review of the Welsh Assembly constituencies.
- 1.13** The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. This

changed the date which the Commission is required to report its recommendations to Parliament from 'before 1 October 2013' to 'not before 1 September 2018 and before 1 October 2018'. This effectively means that the next review is due to start in Spring 2016 with preparatory work being done in 2015.

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 Wales².

Specific Objective for 2013/14

2.2 The objectives for the Commission during the 2013-14 financial year were:

- To maintain an office for the Commission in order to handle enquiries and to undertake statutory duties;
- To ensure that all work of the Commission is carried out with a view to providing the best possible value for money;
- To ensure that the knowledge and expertise within the Commission is retained; and
- To implement the changes to the Commission's operation as recommended in the Review Closure report.

In addition, the Commission will monitor the outcomes of the recommendations of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery and consider the implications for the work of the Commission.

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.

² See paragraph 1.12

3. Outcomes

Meetings

- 3.1** The Commission held one meeting which took place in September 2013. A joint meeting with the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales was held in November 2013 where a Memorandum of Agreement in respect of the operation of the joint Secretariat was agreed. The Commissioners also met with colleagues from the other UK Boundary Commissions in November 2013 to discuss new developments and the implementation of operational improvements.

Training

- 3.2** Training courses that members of staff are required to attend have continued this year and include: Information and Records Management and Equality Diversity and Human Rights Awareness. Staff with a responsibility for updating the Commission's web site attended a website content management course. In addition, staff development training has been supported by the Commission and courses attended include '7 Habits of Highly Effective People' and Report Writing. Three members of staff have started on the Welsh Government Leadership Programme (Cultivar). All staff attended a Programme and Project Management Level 1 course and are booked on Level 2 and 3 courses in the next year. A new Review Officer received job specific training which included MapInfo Professional Introduction, and in-house coaching was arranged and supported. Welsh Language coaching has been given on an informal basis to non Welsh speaking staff, to help them improve their pronunciation of Welsh place names.

Information

- 3.3** The Commission makes as much information publically available as practicable through the web site (www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk). Requests for Information that is not available on the web site are responded to. The Commission has a target of 15 days to respond to such requests. In 2013-14 we received 10 requests for information all of which were responded to within 15 days. This compares to 3 requests received in 2012-13.

4. Budget and Expenditure

Expenditure April 2013 to March 2014

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	45,000	45,000
Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners Fees	8,000	3,692
Office Accommodation	27,500	27,500
Travel and Subsistence	900	699
Hospitality	100	100
IT and Telecoms	5,500	5,000
Other Review Costs*	13,000	11,779
Total	100,000	94,270

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

4.2 For 2013-14 the Cabinet Office agreed to provide the Commission with a fixed funding of £100,000 to cover the cost of keeping a Secretariat based in Wales during years when no parliamentary review work was being undertaken. Table 1 shows the various categories to which the fixed funding was allocated. The main reasons for the under-spend were:

- Fewer Commission meetings were held than had been anticipated; and
- The Commission sought to achieve the maximum possible value for money in all of its work.

5. Work Programme for 2014/15

5.1 As the Boundary Commission for Wales shares its Secretariat with the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, the staff will be mainly engaged on review work of local government boundaries and electoral arrangements. However within the terms of its general objectives to keep under continuous review the representation of Wales in the House of Commons, the Commission's specific objectives in 2014/15 will be:

- To maintain an office for the Commission in order to handle enquiries and to undertake statutory duties;
- To ensure that all work of the Commission is carried out with a view to providing the best possible value for money;
- To ensure that the knowledge and expertise within the Commission is retained; and
- To implement the changes to the Commission's operation as recommended in the Review Closure report.

5.2 At the end of March 2014 the Commission received notification of the start of a Triennial Review of the Boundary Commissions of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Commission will undertake such work as is required to facilitate this review.

Budget

5.3 To enable the objectives listed at 4.1 above to be met, the Commission has been allocated a budget of £100,000 for the financial year 2014/15.

