

# Boundary Commission for Wales

## Annual Report 2019/20



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# **BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

**September 2020**

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*This document is available in Welsh*

# Foreword

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Boundary Commission for Wales for the financial year 2019-20.

The main activities during 2019-20 were centred around the preparation for the 2023 review of parliamentary constituencies which will begin in 2021. The Commission has also conducted a review of the 2018 review of parliamentary constituencies and has implemented the recommendations of that review as it looks to prepare for the next review of parliamentary constituencies.

With no active review work taking place, this has been a quiet year for the Commission. During the year we worked closely with and provided information to the Cabinet Office regarding the new legislation that is currently being debated in Parliament. This new legislation may have a significant impact on the next review of parliamentary constituencies which is due to start in 2021.

As I was only appointed Deputy Chair on 23 June 2020, the work that is being reported on here was carried out under the auspices of my predecessor Mr Justice Lewis. I have however been assured of the accuracy of the contents of the report by the two continuing Commission Members, Mr Paul Loveluck and Professor Robert McNabb.

**Th Hon Mrs Justice Jefford**  
**Deputy Chair**

# 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 Minister for the Cabinet Office and it is the Minister's statutory duty to lay them before Parliament. Where the report recommends that alterations are required to Parliamentary constituency boundaries the Minister for the Cabinet Office 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 Minister for the Cabinet Office 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)<sup>1</sup>, 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 Chair 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 Chair, who presides over the meetings, is a High Court Judge: The Honourable Mr Justice Lewis (term ended 31 December 2019). The Members are Mr Paul Loveluck and Professor Robert M<sup>c</sup>Nabb.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Chair) 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 Chair, 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. Both are represented by designated deputies at Commission meetings.
- 1.8** The Minister for the Cabinet Office also appoints a Secretary to the Commission. Under the joint Secretariat arrangements, the Secretary, Mrs Shereen Williams is also the Chief Executive of the LDBCW.
- 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 Cabinet Office and Welsh Government. This working relationship is covered by a memorandum of understanding between the two Commissions and their respective sponsor bodies and the MOU will be reviewed in 2019/20 as part of an exercise by the Commission reviewing all of its framework agreements.

### **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 Minister for the Cabinet Office 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 the distribution of Parliamentary seats.
- 1.12** The Act also removed the link between the Parliamentary constituencies and those of the National Assembly for Wales.
- 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 before 1 October 2023.



## 2. Objectives

### General Objective

- 2.1** To keep under continuous review the representation of Wales in the House of Commons.

### Specific Objective for 2019/20

- 2.2** The objectives for the Commission during the 2019-20 financial year were:

- By the end of August 2019 to conduct a review of the 2018 Review.
- During the year a report on the operation of Welsh Language Standards during 2018-19 will be submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner and published on the Commission's web site.
- Conduct any such activities and recommendations falling out of the review of the 2018 Review in preparation for the 2023 Review.

### Welsh Language Standards

- 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.

## 3. Outcomes

### Meetings

- 3.2** There was one meeting of the Commission during the financial year. In addition, one Commissioner and the Secretary met with colleagues from the other UK Boundary Commissions in November 2019 to discuss new developments and the implementation of operational improvements as a result of a review into the conduct of the 2018 Review.

### Welsh Language

- 3.3** The Commission's annual report on the operation of the Welsh Language Standards was submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

### Training

- 3.4** Essential training courses that members of staff are required to attend and for personal development have continued this year and include : Strategic Thinking, Coaching and Feedback, Taking Control of Your Career, Wellbeing, Understanding and Coping with Change, Critical Thinking and Effective Decision Making, Motivating Self and Setting Goals, The Leader in You. Members of staff continue to be reminded at the monthly team meeting of the support for and availability of Welsh Language training for any member of staff that is interested. One member of staff has enrolled on a Welsh Language course during the year.

### Information

- 3.5** The Commission makes as much information publicly available as is practicable through the web site ([www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk](http://www.bcomm-wales.gov.uk)). Requests for information that is not available on the web site are responded to. The Commission has set a target of 15 days to respond to such requests. In 2019-20 the Commission received four requests for information all of which were responded to within 15 days. This compares to eight requests received in 2018-19.

## 4. Budget and Expenditure

### Expenditure April 2019 to March 2020

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

**Table 1 – Budget and Expenditure**

| <b>Budget Component</b> | <b>Budget (£)</b> | <b>Actual (£)</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Staff Salaries          | 45,000            | 45,000            |
| Commissioners Fees      | 1,770             | 1,770             |
| Office Accommodation    | 33,808            | 33,808            |
| Travel and Subsistence  | 77                | 77                |
| Hospitality             | 65                | 65                |
| IT and Telecoms         | 9,180             | 9,180             |
| Other Review Costs*     | 10,100            | 10,100            |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100,000</b>    | <b>100,000</b>    |

\*includes media and advertising, training, postage, printing and translation.

4.2 For 2019-20 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.

### Member's Fees and Expenses

4.3 During 2019-20 the following fees and expenses were claimed by Commission Members:

| <b>Member</b> | <b>Fees</b> | <b>Expenses</b> |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Mr P Loveluck | £506        | £0              |
| Prof R McNabb | £1,264      | £77             |

## **5. Work Programme for 2020/21**

**5.1** The Commission's specific objectives in 2020/21 will be:

- To plan the work and resource requirements of the forthcoming review. This will involve liaison with the Cabinet Office to ensure that the additional resources required for the review are agreed and in place;
- To ensure that the information required for the review, including electoral data, is updated and maintained;
- To produce and publish a Guide to the Review booklet that explains how the process for the review will work;
- To publish an announcement of the start of the 2023 Review, and to begin formulation of Initial Proposals; and
- To prepare a report on the operation of Welsh Language Standards during 2019-20 will be submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner and published on the Commission's web site.
- To conduct any such activities and recommendations falling out of the review of the 2018 Review in preparation for the 2023 Review.

### **Budget**

**5.2** To enable the objectives listed at 5.1 above to be met, the Commission has been allocated a budget of £208,830 for the financial year 2020/21.

