



Comisiwn Ffiniau
i Gymru

Boundary Commission
for Wales

Boundary Commission for Wales

Annual Report 2021/22

The Commission welcomes correspondence
and telephone calls in Welsh or English.

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Foreword



I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Boundary Commission for Wales for the financial year 2021-22.

The main activities during 2021-22 were centered on the initial stages of the 2023 Review. The Commission published its Initial Proposal Report on the 08 September 2021 and ran an 8-week consultation that ended on the 03 November 2021. The 6-weeks secondary consultation period ran from the 17 February 2022 to the 30th of March 2022 and public hearings were also held during this period.

The representations received during the two consultation periods, along with the Assistant Commissioners' recommendations will inform the Commission's considerations for its Revised Proposals Report which is due to be published in the Autumn 2022.

The Hon Mrs Justice Jefford DBE

Deputy Chair



Introduction

The Sponsor

1.1 The Boundary Commission for Wales is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored and wholly funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The Lord Chancellor appoints the Deputy Chair, 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 Chair of all four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions in the United Kingdom. The appointment of the Speaker emphasises the

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

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 Mrs Justice Jefford. The Members are Mr Huw Vaughan Thomas CBE and Mr Sam Hartley (both appointed from 05 October 2020).

1.5 The Commissioners are part-time appointees who meet whenever the work programme demands. 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 MBE OStJ DL 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.

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 Constituencies Act 2020 made substantial changes to the legislation governing the distribution of Parliamentary seats.

1.12 The Act also designated the constituency of Ynys Môn as a 'protected constituency, introduced the rule of 'automaticity' on the implementation of the recommendations of the four Boundary Commissions and made changes to the consultation process.

Objectives

General Objective

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

Specific Objectives for 2021/22

- 2.2 The objectives for the Commission during the 2021/22 financial year were:
- To have developed and published an online consultation portal to allow for comments to be made on the Initial Proposals of the 2023 Parliamentary constituencies review;
 - To have secured the appointment of a suitable number of Assistant Commissioners to assist the Commission in its work, particularly in relation to chairing public hearings and assessing responses to the Commission's proposals for new constituencies;
 - To develop initial proposals for new constituencies to be published in September 2021;
 - To publish all hard copy and electronic documentation for publication of the initial proposals;
 - To have conducted two comprehensive statutory consultation on the initial proposals, one 8-week consultation period and a further 6-week consultation that will include the required public hearings;
 - To have prepared and published all written responses received in the first consultation on initial proposals;
 - To prepare a report on the operation of Welsh Language Standards during 2020-21 which will be submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner and published on the Commission's web site;

- To provide an update to the Speaker of the House of Commons on the work undertaken by the Commission in the first year of the 2023 Review; and
- To continue with activities and recommendations falling out of the review of the 2018 Review and incorporate it as part of 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.

Outcomes

Meetings

3.1 There were 6 meetings of the Commission during the financial year. The focus of the meetings was to plan for the publication of the Initial Proposals Report, coordination of the initial and secondary consultation periods as well as the public hearings. The Commission also participated in the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions in January 2022 that was held via Microsoft Teams.

Welsh Language

3.2 The Commission's annual report on the operation of the Welsh Language Standards was submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner and published online.

Training

3.3 Essential training courses that members of staff are required to attend and for personal development have continued this year and include : 1 day Insights Personal Development course for all staff, Welsh Language beginner's course, Coaching and Online Resilience training.

COVID-19

3.4 During 2020-21 the Commission established a robust Work from Home system for all staff and developed new digital procedures to replace existing paper-based ones to ensure the continuity of business during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The Commission continued to

follow COVID-19 guidance and restrictions issued by the Welsh Government. Staff continued to work from home during full lockdown periods with a rota based partial return to office working for a low number of staff during periods when restrictions were eased.

Information

3.5 The Commission makes as much information publicly available as is 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 set a target of 20 days to respond to such requests. In 2021-22 the Commission received 10 requests for information all of which were responded to within 20 days. This compares to 5 requests received in 2020-21.

Budget and Expenditure

Expenditure April 2021 to March 2022

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

Table 1 – Budget and Expenditure 2021-22

Budget Component	Budget (£)	Actual (£)
Staff Salaries	393,000	343,654
Commissioners Fees	50,500	53,766
Office Accommodation	40,550	33,539
Travel and Subsistence	23,400	8,308
Hospitality	1,700	514
IT and Telecoms	76,650	40,588
Other Review Costs*	227,200	228,037
Total	813,000	708,406

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

4.2 Table 1 shows that for 2021-22 the Boundary Commission underspent its budget by £104,594. Staff Salaries were lower than estimated because overall staff costs being less than estimated due to the departure of a staff member early in the year. Commissioners Fees were more than estimated due to Assistant Commissioner's fees for running the public hearings being slightly more than estimated. Travel and Subsistence was less than estimated due to meeting being held remotely. Overall LDBCW Accommodation and IT costs were less than estimated resulting in lower costs being allocated to the Boundary Commission expenditure.

Member's Fees and Expenses

4.3 During 2021-22 the following fees and expenses were claimed by Commission Members:

Member	Fees £	Expenses £
Mr H V Thomas	7,077	163
Mr S Hartley	3,539	0

Work Programme for 2022/23

5.1 The Commission's specific objectives in 2022/23 will be:

- To have published all the representations received in the secondary consultation period and the transcripts of the public hearings
- To consider the representations received and the ACs recommendation to develop the Revised Proposals Report to be published in Autumn 2022;
- To publish all hard copy and electronic documentation for publication of the revised proposals;
- To have conducted a 4-week consultation on the Revised Proposals Report ;
- To consider all the representations received and develop the Final Recommendations Report;
- To prepare a report on the operation of Welsh Language Standards during 2021-22 which will be submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner and published on the Commission's web site; and
- To provide an update to the Speaker of the House of Commons on the work undertaken by the Commission in the second year of 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 £565,070 for the financial year 2022/23.





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