

MEETING BETWEEN THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Minutes of the meeting held at Caradog House, 1-6 St. Andrews Place, Cardiff at 14:00 on Wednesday 20th April 2011.

Present:

Boundary Commission for Wales (BCW)	
The Hon Mr Justice Lloyd Jones	Deputy Chairman (in the Chair)
Mr P Wood	Commissioner
Mr J Bader	Commissioner
Mr E H Lewis	Secretary
Mr M Redmond	Secretariat

Ordnance Survey
Ms M Gordon

Conservative Party
Mr M Lane
Mr R Pratt

Labour Party
Mr G Cook

Liberal Democrats
Mr I Walton

Plaid Cymru
Mr G Day

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- 1.1 The Deputy Chairman for BCW welcomed everyone to the meeting and those present introduced themselves.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Mr D Hagenyck of the Labour Party, Mr K O'Connor of the Liberal Democrats and Ms G Lansdown of Plaid Cymru.
- 1.3 **It was agreed** that a note of the meeting would be published in due course.

2. THE NEW LEGISLATION

- 2.1 The Deputy Chairman briefly outlined the new legislation emphasising the significant departure from the previous legislation, the strictness of the rules and the permitted building blocks for new constituencies.
- 2.2 The Deputy Chair confirmed that the Boundary Commissions of the UK had met and, using the method described in the legislation, decided that Wales would have 30 constituencies. This reduction of 10 Members of Parliament, a 25%

reduction, would result in a significant change to the constituency pattern in Wales. The parties asked what criteria would be used in deciding the constituencies and the Commission confirmed in applying the statutory criteria it would be considering unitary authorities and existing constituencies where it is possible to do so but it was likely to be very difficult to adhere to these given the tight constraints of the legislation.

- 2.3 The parties also asked a question about cultural community and the importance of keeping linguistic communities together in forming constituencies. The Commission confirmed that these issues would be considered within the confines of the rules that have been set out in the legislation. With specific regard to the Welsh language the Commission confirmed that this would be considered using the data from the 2001 census

3. SPECIFIC ISSUES

Review Terminology

- 3.1 The Deputy Chairman advised that the Commission would be using modified terminology for the review. The changes are:
- This will be the '2013 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies', not the 'Sixth General Review'
 - The booklet which we will be issuing will be an 'Information Booklet'
 - 'Provisional Recommendations' will now be 'Initial Proposals'
 - 'Revised Recommendations' will now be 'Revised Proposals'
 - 'Final Recommendations' will remain as they are in the Act.

Timetables and Timing: Key stages

- 3.2 A paper detailing the provisional key stages timetable was distributed and discussed. The Commission were currently drafting the information booklet which would be available later in the year. It was expected that the initial proposals will be published early in September. It was asked if there would be a 24 hour pre-notice of the proposals as had occurred in past reviews, and whether this would make publishing on a Monday a difficulty. The Commission agreed that the political parties would be given the normal 24 hour advanced notice given to the parties and Members of Parliament and that they would consider the timing of the proposals to allow for this to happen. The Commission hopes that publication will be on 6 September 2011.
- 3.3 It was noted by the Conservative party that the period for public hearings covers that of their party conference. The Commission informed them that this would be taken into account when considering when the hearings would be held. The Commission planned that the public hearings to begin in the week commencing 10 October 2011. It was intended that there should be one hearing each week for the five-week period. Details in respect of venues had not been finalised.

It was possible that the publication of the initial representations and records of the public hearings, together with the "secondary consultation period" would be in February 2012 at the very earliest. In the event of a February publication, the end of the consultation period would be the middle of March 2012.

Based on this timetable, the revised proposals and consultation period could possibly be in the summer of 2012, between June and August. The consultation period would then end during the autumn between September and November 2012.

There will not be any further public hearings during this phase. This would mean that the final recommendations were likely to be published early in 2013.

The Commission will be required to publish a progress report to its Chairman (Mr Speaker) which will be in January of each year.

- 3.4 A further question was raised as to what the parties would receive from the Commission in the proposals. The Commission informed them that the parties would receive copies of the written report and two copies of the constituency maps that would also be put on deposit. **It was agreed** that one set of maps would be sent to the UK office of each of the parties and one copy would be sent to the Wales office of each of the parties.

Representations

- 3.5 The representations periods were reiterated and the parties were informed of the Commission's policy not to consider any representations received before or after the designated consultation periods.
- 3.6 The Deputy Chairman asked that any representations made to the Commission should bear in mind the rules by which the Commission is bound and that submissions should be as evidence-based as possible. The Commission also requested proposals for any possible constituency names, as this has been identified as an area of potential difficulty.

Public Hearings

- 3.7 The Deputy Chairman noted that the Commission was still developing its policy for the procedure at the public hearings but confirmed that for this review we intend to hold the full five permitted hearings across Wales. It was likely that most would occupy two days each.
- 3.8 It was also explained that we would be requesting speaking notes in advance of the meetings. The Commission asked whether the parties would like to receive a designated timeslot. **It was agreed** that the parties would receive designated timeslots at the public hearings.
- 3.9 In addition to the designated timeslots, since the parties would each submit an all-Wales written representation to the Commission, it would be helpful to receive these before week 5 of the consultation period. The Deputy Chairman asked if the parties would make an effort to speak predominantly at each public hearing with regard to the area within which the meeting was held. There was broad consensus from the parties that they would make an effort to do so but they did not rule out taking the time at one hearing to make an all-Wales representation.

4. INFORMATION BOOKLET AND PUBLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Deputy Chairman explained that the Information Booklet is presently being drafted and will be published in due course. It was hoped it would be available in June but it may be later in the summer.
- 4.2 The Deputy Chairman informed the parties that all the data for the number of electors for each electoral division is available on the Commission's website, and if, in the course of the review, it was considered necessary to use Community Areas in order to achieve electoral parity then the appropriate electoral data would also be placed on the website. In terms of mapping, Ordnance Survey presently has all of the existing unitary authorities, constituencies and electoral divisions in their BoundaryLine Product and the October 2011 version of BoundaryLine will also include all the Community Areas and warding of those areas where they are warded, in Wales.

5. QUESTIONS

- 5.1 The parties requested that they be given notice of the Commission's intention to publish the final recommendations. The Commission agreed that they would let the parties know when Final Recommendations were adopted and a publication date agreed.

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLES AND TIMING

Key Stages

1. Announcement
 - 4th March 2011
2. Meeting with Political Parties
 - 20th April 2011
3. Information booklet
 - Drafting now
4. Initial Proposals and 'Initial Consultation Period'
 - Early September 2011 publication.
 - Initial period would run from 5 September to 25 November, avoiding December.
5. Public Hearings (PH)
 - On above basis PH would fall between 3 October to 4 November
 - During UK conference season
 - 5 meetings which may be up to two days
6. Progress report to Speaker
 - New requirement - each January
7. Publication of Initial Representations and Records of Public Hearings and 'Secondary Consultation Period'
 - Because of the need for translations, February 2012 at the very earliest.
 - End of consultation mid March (based on February publication)
8. Revised Proposals and Consultation Period
 - Publication possibly in the Summer (June – August).
 - Consultation period will end in the Autumn (September – November).
 - No PH
9. Progress report to Speaker (January 2013)
10. Final Recommendations
 - Likely publication early 2013.
11. Preparation for the 2018 Review