

BCW/ 2021/ MPs Meeting

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

Minutes of the meeting held via MS Teams at 09:30pm on Monday 8th March 2021.

Present:

Mrs Justice Jefford DBE	Deputy Chair
Mr Huw Thomas CBE	Commissioner
Mr Sam Hartley	Commissioner
Mrs Shereen Williams MBE OStJ	Commission Secretary
Mr Tom Jenkins	Commission Secretariat
Mr Rhydian Fitter	Commission Secretariat
Tonia Antoniazzi	MP
Huw Griffith (Simon Baynes)	MP
Wayne David	MP
James Davies	MP
Alex Davies-Jones	MP
Stephen Doughty	MP
Nia Griffith	MP
Gerald Jones	MP
David Jones	MP
Fay Jones	MP
Stephen Kinnock	MP
Ben Lake	MP
Christina Rees	MP
Rob Roberts	MP
Liz Saville-Roberts	MP
Jo Stevens	MP
Mark Tami	MP
Jamie Wallis	MP
Hywel Williams	MP
Craig Williams	MP
Kevin Brennan	MP

Stephen Crabb	MP
Geraint Davies	MP
David Davies	MP
Jessica Morden	MP
Beth Winter	MP
Ruth Jones	MP
Robert James	
Ian Bounds	
Cari Morgans	
Khadja Uddin	

1. Welcomes and Introductions

- 1.1. The Deputy Chair opened the meeting.
- 1.2. The Deputy Chair introduced herself and explained that two Commissioners, Huw Thomas and Sam Hartley were in attendance, along with Commission Secretariat members and representatives from Interested Parties.

2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1. 2.1. There were no apologies for absences.

3. Background and Purpose

- 3.1. The Deputy Chair gave a background to the review and what would be discussed during the meeting.

4. Number of Constituencies and Electoral Quota

- 4.1. The Deputy Chair stated the number of constituencies and the electoral quota for each constituency as set out by the Act.
- 4.2. There are 32 constituencies in Wales and the UK Electoral quota is 73, 393. The Commission will, by law, have to remain with 5% above or below this figure. With the exception of Ynys Mon, every constituency the Commission proposes as part of the 2023 Review must have between 69, 724 and 77, 062 electors.

5. Timetable

- 5.1. The Deputy Chair set out the foreseen timetable for the review and when the Commission envisages reaching the different milestones of the review.
 - Review Launch- January 2021.
 - Publication of Guide to the Review- March 2021.

- Initial Proposals Publication- September 2021.
 - Initial Proposals Consultation Period- September 2021- November 2021.
 - Secondary Consultation Period including public hearings- January 2022- February 2022.
 - Revised Proposals Publication- September 2022.
 - Revised Proposals Consultation Period- September 2022- October 2022.
 - Final Recommendations- June 2023.
- 5.2. The Commission will be submitting their Final Recommendations in June 2023.

6. Development of Proposals

6.1. The Commission will consider several factors from Rule 5 in Schedule 2, when establishing a new map of constituencies for the 2023 Review.

6.2. The Commission will seek to avoid splitting electoral wards between constituencies and create constituencies from whole electoral wards where it is possible to do so.

7. Constituency Names and Designation

7.1. The Commission is required to specify a name and designation for each proposed constituency.

7.2. The Commission considers it appropriate for each constituency in Wales to have alternative names in English and Welsh to ensure that both languages are treated equally. There will be exceptions for constituencies where the name is the same in Welsh and English.

7.3. The Commission will adopt compass point names when there is not a more suitable name.

8. Consultations

8.1. The Act sets out three consultation periods for the Review.

8.2. The online consultation portal for the 2023 Review is currently in development and will be ready in time for the publication of the Initial Proposals and the subsequent consultation period.

8.3. The Commission will publish all representations received during the consultation periods on the website and online consultation portal.

8.4. The Commission intends to produce a small number of hard copies of the report in English and Welsh for all those on the distribution lists deemed necessary. Other interested parties will receive letters directing them to the Commission website, online consultation portal and to the places of deposit. All MPs informed they will receive copy 24hr before publication. Informed they will receive bilingual copy in guide with welsh language regulation.

9. Public Hearings

9.1. The Deputy Chair explained that a recruitment exercise will be carried out to appoint Assistant Commissioners to run the public hearings.

9.2. The Commission are aware of the current restrictions on travel and large gatherings and the four Boundary Commissions are currently exploring options to incorporate virtual elements into the public hearings. A guide to public hearings will be published in due course.

9.3. Following consideration of the representations the Commission will hold the maximum number of five public hearings in Wales. An amendment to the Act means the public hearings will be held in the Second Consultation Period. The location of the public hearings will be decided considering the representations received during the Initial Consultation Period.

9.4. The public hearings will be open to the public and all stakeholders.

10. Any Further Questions

10.1. Question from Kevin Brennan MP – *What influence will work of previous work of commission have on outcome?* Deputy Chair stated this process is a fresh review and will be using new and different/updated numbers. So, the process will be entirely new and independent from previous work.

10.2. Questions from LSR MP- 's 1. *Issues regarding use of Welsh* 2. *On top of local authorities' issues, what impact on health board and police boundaries as policing is not devolved?* Deputy Chair explained that such factors, especially regarding local inconveniences regarding health boards/police forces can be raised in the context of local ties and representations. If those issues fall within statutory considerations.

10.3 Question from Hywel Williams MP- *Rule 5 Specific Questions – Cultural considerations – 1. what weight have these considerations been given compared to others? 2. What consideration have been given with regards to new boundaries being coterminous to local authorities and future/current Senedd boundary changes?* The Deputy Chair explained that changes to Senedd boundaries are not part of the remit and therefore not a considered factor for this review. Also added that the coterminous principle is not applied to local authority boundaries. Finally, the Deputy Chair answered Question 2 reaffirming once more there is no weighting within the statutory considerations. Therefore, cultural issues and language will not be viewed as later or beneath any others.

10.4 Question from Rob Roberts MP– *local authority, geographical factors – are any factors given more weighting? And if school catchment areas are under consideration?* The Deputy Chair informed the member that no specific factor is given greater priority. Secondly, the Commission Secretary also confirmed that over the last 3 years of reviews the Commission has never been informed at any point that school catchment areas are linked to boundaries. Therefore, these will not be considered.

10.5 Question from Geraint Davies MP – *asked if consultations if held virtually can be stretched past the limit of 5 under the regulation, and if virtually held, could we adopt hybrid format whereby online questions for other parts of Wales can be answered?* The Deputy Chair explained we cannot go beyond statutory regulated 5 hearings. Secondly, due to online nature if there is a meeting held virtually in Cardiff, commission hopes other parts of the country should query online. Currently under consideration. If able to work within statutory and legal framework, hopeful this can be resolved and possible. Hybrid meeting are being pursued. The Deputy Chair thanked the member for his suggestion.

10.6. Stephen Doughty MP – *local authority boundaries – member asked if there will there be a concerted effort to keep changes and merging of wards/communities within a 1 or 2 maximum? Also asked, is there an intent to keep within existing historical boundaries?*

Deputy Chair informed member the review will aim for the minimum possible of ruptures. Commission Secretary reiterated that due to the nature of the review in changing the number from 40 to 32, the Commission cannot possibly commit to not crossing more than 2 boundaries. However, the aim is to limit this effect. Finally, the Commission Secretary also explained that no historical boundary considerations will be given. However, there will still be an attempt to comply with the regulation surrounding keeping existing communities whole where possible.

10.7 Question from Jo Stevens MP- regarding local government boundary review running simultaneously to this review. *How will commission manage the process of coordinating and considering local boundaries changes during review?* The Deputy Chair and Commission Secretary confirmed the review will use and consider existing information and boundaries as of December 2020 as set out in presentation. Difficult to consider, as Welsh government has made no decision on proposals sent out for housing minister.

The meeting closed at 10:15 am.