

BCW/ 2021/ Political parties Meeting

## **BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES**

Minutes of the meeting held via MS Teams at 9.30am on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

### **Present:**

Mrs Justice Jefford DBE	Deputy Chair
Mr Huw Vaughan Thomas CBE	Commissioner
Mr Sam Hartley	Commissioner
Mrs Shereen Williams MBE OStJ	Commission Secretary
Mr Tom Jenkins	Commission Secretariat
Mr Rhydian Fitter	Commission Secretariat
Mr Roger Pratt	Conservative Party
Mr Thomas James	
Mr Geraint Day	Plaid Cymru
Mr Marc Phillips	
Mr David Costa	Labour Party
Mr Tom Adams	
Mr Fraser Welsh	

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

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

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

- 2.1. There were no apologies for absence.

### **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 that the statistics for the Electorate of the UK were published by the ONS on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
- 4.2. The UK Electoral quota is 73, 393, with 32 constituencies in Wales. With the exception of Ynys Mon, every constituency the Commission proposes as part of the 2023 Review must be between 69, 724 and 77, 062.

## **5. Timetable**

- 5.1.** The Deputy Chair set out the timetable foreseen 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 Designations**

- 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.

- 8.5.** MP's and Political Parties will receive the proposal 24hrs in advance of publication, under embargo. The Commission will make contact closer to publication to confirm delivery and collection arrangements.

## **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 to 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 Commission intend to allow Political Parties to make extended representations at the first and last public hearings held in Wales.

## **10. Questions Received Prior to the Meeting and not Addressed through the Presentation**

- 10.1.** The representative from the Labour Party asked if the timetable has any clashes with scheduled elections or Conference season and if so, will the specific deadlines be set with these in mind. The Commission confirmed that there are no clashes with scheduled elections, and Consultations will not end during conference season.
- 11.** The representative from the Labour Party asked that while Parliamentary and Senedd constituencies have been uncoupled since 2016, and the difference in number in future will mean that they have to be different, will the commission give any consideration to the advantages of aligning some boundaries where possible. The Commission explained that the Act states that the Commission must have regard to local government boundaries such as electoral wards, communities and local authorities. The Commission further explained that Senedd constituencies are not a factor which it may consider in developing proposals.
- 11.1.** The representative from the Labour Party asked if the Commission take a particular view on 'orphan wards', where a single ward from another local authority is part of a constituency otherwise made up of wards from a different local authority. The Commission explained that there is no view on orphan wards. The Commission will try to avoid this however it may be necessary in order to create constituencies that comply with the other rules as set out in the legislation.
- 11.2.** The representative from the Labour Party asked when it comes to the public hearings, will the Commission be working with the other Commissions to ensure these are scheduled in a way to avoid lengthy travel across the country in a short span of time. The Commission explained it has worked with BCE to try to ensure

that its public hearings will not happen at the same time. Neither Commission has set its specific dates and locations for its public hearings at this point.

- 11.3.** The representative from the Conservative Party asked how and when the representations to the Secondary Consultation Period will together with the transcript of the public hearings be published. The Commission stated that these will be published as soon as possible following the end of the Secondary Consultation Period. They will be published on the Commission's website.
- 11.4.** The representative from the Conservative Party asked how the Commission will publish their initial and revised proposals in electronic form and if it will consult with political parties on the format of the data to be provided. The Commission confirmed that all reports and supporting information will be published on the website and the online consultation portal. The report will be in PDF and the data in excel.

## **12. Any further Questions**

- 12.1.** The Conservative Party representative asked if the representations published on the online consultation portal and website from the Initial Consultation Period will be published automatically or whether they will be published after the Secondary Consultation Period. The Commission explained that the representations will not be published automatically as they will require translation and redaction. The Commission will publish all the representations it has received during the Initial Consultation Period once the process has been completed. Publication of these representation will initiate the start of the Secondary Consultation Period.
- 12.2.** The Conservative Party representative asked if the publication of the Initial Proposal Report will be published in the September week when Parliament is sitting. The Commission confirmed the intention is to publish the Initial Proposal Report in September when Parliament is sitting. BCE have contacted the Speaker to ask for a preference for publishing. If Parliament are physically back in September, then the Initial Proposal Report will be distributed similar to last time but if not, there will be discussions on the best way to distribute.

The meeting closed at 10.30am.