

Boundary Commission publishes proposals for change today

The Boundary Commission for Scotland today published its Initial Proposals for United Kingdom Parliament constituencies in Scotland as part of its Sixth Review. This marks the start of a 12 week public consultation process on the proposals, lasting from Thursday 13 October 2011 to Wednesday 4 January 2012.

Parliament has decided to reduce the number of UK Parliament constituencies from 650 to 600. In Scotland this means that there will be 52 constituencies instead of 59. Of these, 2 constituencies are defined in the legislation: Na h-Eileanan an Iar (the Western Isles) and Orkney and Shetland. The remaining 50 constituencies must each have between 72,810 and 80,473 electors. This is the first time the legislation has specified exact limits on the number of electors in each constituency. The Commission has also had to ensure that no constituency exceeds the maximum permitted area of 13,000 square kilometres. The requirements set by Parliament limit the number of possible constituency designs.

Due to the reduction in the number of constituencies and the requirement for nearly equal numbers of electors in each constituency, it has not been possible to leave constituencies as they currently are. In developing its Initial Proposals across Scotland, the Commission has tried to minimise the number of constituencies which combine parts of different council areas. The Commission has had to divide 29 wards out of a total of 353, each between 2 constituencies. When dividing wards, the Commission has followed community council boundaries or other recognisable boundaries.

Hugh Buchanan, Secretary to the Commission said:

“The Commission has worked intensively to design this set of constituencies, which we believe provide a good implementation of the rules set by Parliament. We now want to get people’s views on these proposals so we can improve them where the legislation allows us to do so. The number of Scotland’s constituencies is reducing from 59 to 52, with each mainland constituency having the same number of electors within 5%.”

The Boundary Commission for Scotland has today also made available papers and minutes from its meetings when it discussed these proposals.

Further information on the Commission’s Initial Proposals can be found on the Commission’s website www.bcomm-scotland.gov.uk/6th_westminster/.