

Boundaries Scotland

Equality Impact Assessment for the  
Second Review of Scottish Parliament  
Boundaries

**Title of policy/strategy/service:** the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries:

**Summary of aims and desired outcomes:** The purpose of the current review is to make recommendations for the boundaries and names for constituencies and regions for the Scottish Parliament. This review is undertaken following rules set out in legislation.

## **Background**

Boundaries Scotland is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing: -

- local authority areas in Scotland;
- electoral arrangements for local authorities; and
- Scottish Parliament constituency and regional boundaries.

Our duties and powers pertaining to the Scottish Parliament are detailed in the Scotland Act 1998. Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act 1998 requires Boundaries Scotland to conduct reviews of Scottish Parliament Boundaries for constituencies and regions at intervals of every 8 to 12 years. Each review is required to comply with rules set out in the Scotland Act 1998.

Boundaries Scotland is currently carrying out the Second Review of Scottish parliament boundaries for constituencies and regions and a formal report will be submitted to Scottish Ministers by 1 May 2025. This review is undertaken following rules set out in legislation and the process is informed by public consultation.

## **The Scope of the EQIA**

The public sector equality duty that is set out in the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Boundaries Scotland has published an equality statement setting out its commitment to the equality duty. The duty covers nine areas: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and marriage or civil partnership.

This Equality Impact Assessment looks at the impact on: -

- **the boundary review – the policy:** The decisions taken relating to the Provisional Proposals, Revised Proposals and Final Recommendations; and
- **public engagement:** The way Boundaries Scotland engages, communicates and consults with the general public and stakeholders.

## Key Findings

### Boundary Review

There are 73 constituencies for the Scottish Parliament. Each constituency returns a single member (MSP) to the Scottish Parliament. In addition, there are eight regions which each elect 7 list MSPs. Our review cannot change the number of constituencies and regions nor the number of MSPs.

There are three constituencies which will not be under review as they are protected under the legislation. They are: Orkney Islands; Shetland Islands; and Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Western Isles).

The review must follow as set out in full in the Scotland Act 1998 but in summary for constituencies they are:

- Rule 1 - take account of council area boundaries.
- Rule 2 - create constituencies and regions that have broadly the same number of electors.
- Rule 3 - take account of special geographical considerations (including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency or region).
- Rule 4 - take account of local ties and other inconveniences caused by changes to constituencies.

For regions the following rules apply: -

- Rule 1 - “a constituency must fall wholly within a region” and
- Rule 2 - “the regional electorate of a region must be as near the regional electorate of each of the other regions as is practicable, having regard (where appropriate) to special geographical considerations.”

The electorate for the review consists of the persons on the register of local government electors in force on the start of the review. The Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries commenced on 1 September 2022. Electorate data from that day is supplied by Electoral Registration Officers and published on our website.

The Provisional Proposals for constituencies and regions are formed from a position of independent and impartiality and are not influenced by any particular viewpoint or opinion. The Provisional Proposals are consulted on and the Revised Proposals are

then formed after considering representations received on the consultation and at any local inquiries held. A similar process is then followed for both Revised and Further Proposals until Final Recommendations are made.

During consultation some respondents may make representations that may have an impact on one or more of the protected characteristics named in the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Any such representations will be considered when the Commission considers the rule relating to local ties when making recommendations about a boundary.

## Public Engagement

Public consultation informs Boundaries Scotland’s work. Steps are taken by the Secretariat to ensure that information about the review and the consultation process reaches as many people from different backgrounds as possible. The table below sets out Boundaries Scotland’s observations from previous work and the consultation on Provisional Proposals for constituencies.

<b>Equality Strand/group</b>	<b>Key Potential Barriers</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p><b>Race/ethnicity:</b></p> <p>Observations of those attending Local Inquiries identified that ethnic minority groups had a lower participation rate. The ethnic mix of communities varies considerably in different constituencies</p>	<p>There is a risk that some ethnic groups may be less aware of Boundaries Scotland’s work and less likely to make representation, sometimes due to language barriers.</p>	<p>The increasing use of social media is likely to reach a wider group of people compared to more traditional ways of advertising (eg newspapers).</p> <p>The Secretariat has the capacity to translate materials on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<p><b>Gender:</b></p> <p>The attendees at local inquiries were predominantly male</p>	<p>Women with varying working patterns and childcare responsibilities may be prevented from attending local inquiries.</p>	<p>We will continue to publicise local hearings locally and also increase our social media presence.</p> <p>By holding two sittings for a local inquiry, this should allow a greater chance of people attending outside normal working hours.</p>

<p><b>Age:</b></p> <p>Based on evidence from those attending local inquiries, less people from the 16-25 group participated</p>	<p>Young people tend not to be as engaged in the formal political process and may not access information through traditional means.</p>	<p>Increasing social media presence as a way of publicising a consultation/ local inquiry is likely to reach a wider audience.</p> <p>Continue to hold two sessions, including one early evening session which may be more accessible to the 16-25 who may have work/education commitments. For future reviews, consider holding hybrid local inquiries.</p> <p>Engage with Youth Scottish Parliament and advise of consultation exercises.</p>
<p><b>Disability:</b></p> <p>No formal notification of any individuals requiring reasonable adjustments at any of the local inquiries.</p>	<p>There may be barriers that prevent people from this group from accessing information or attending events.</p>	<p>Alternative versions of publications such as hard copy, large print will be made available upon request.</p> <p>Accessibility is a factor taken into account when booking venues and the Secretariat provides reasonable adjustments to enable attendance.</p>

There is a data gap in information about the other protected characteristics as it is not available to Boundaries Scotland. Also, the above information is based on observations so it may, therefore, have some limitations. For future reviews, Boundaries Scotland will explore collecting data on protected characteristics during consultations.

## Recommendations and Conclusions

Boundaries Scotland will adhere to the following principles during the review: -

- **Communications of the proposals and public consultation** – we will ensure that our work is publicised widely to reach a range of diverse communities, including under-represented groups. We will publicise our work in the local media, on our website and on social media. We will continue to provide hard copies of our work at different locations including libraries and local authority offices.
- **Making or view representations** – we will accept representations in writing either via email or our consultation portal. Representation can also be made verbally at local inquiries. Boundaries Scotland attaches equal significance to all forms of representation. All representations are published on our website at the appropriate point.
- **Access to documents** – we will publish all official documents on our website and hard copies will be provided at public libraries and other local places. Alternative versions of publications can be requested from the Secretariat.
- **Local inquiries** – details of the locations and dates will be widely published. Two sittings will be held to increase the chance of individuals with education, work or childcare commitments attending. All venues will be accessible and close to public transport and attendees will be encouraged to advise the Secretariat of any adjustments required. A full transcript of the local inquiry will be published for those who are unable to attend.