

Boundaries Scotland

Corporate Plan 2024 - 2027

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1 Introduction

This Corporate Plan sets out the main activities to be undertaken by Boundaries Scotland during the period 2024-2027 and forecasts the required resources and expenditure. The information in this plan is designed to assist with budgeting and planning. The planned activities, resource forecasts and performance indicators for 2024-2027 will be expanded and confirmed in subsequent Corporate Plans.

2 Boundaries Scotland

2.1 Duties and Powers

Boundaries Scotland was established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (the 1973 Act), and prior to 14 May 2021 was known as the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland. Boundaries Scotland is responsible for:

- reviews of local authority areas in Scotland;
- reviews of electoral arrangements for local authorities; and
- reviews of Scottish Parliament constituency and region boundaries

The duties and powers pertaining to local authority areas and electoral arrangements for local authorities are detailed in the 1973 Act. Our duties and powers pertaining to the Scottish Parliament are detailed in the Scotland Act 1998.

We are an advisory Non-departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored and funded by the Scottish Government. We are an independent and non-political body.

2.2 Membership

The 1973 Act specifies that our membership comprises a Chair, Deputy Chair and up to four further Commissioners.

Members are appointed on a fixed-term basis and posts are filled through open competition using the procedures laid down by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life. Appointments are made by Scottish Ministers.

Chair

Professor Ailsa Henderson was appointed Chair from 1 June 2023 until 31 May 2027. Prior to this Professor Henderson was the deputy Chair (1 December 2017 to 31 May 2023) and Commissioner (1 June 2013 – 31 May 2017).

Deputy Chair

Simon Jones was appointed Deputy Chair from 1 February 2024 until 31 January 2028.

Commissioners

Boundaries Scotland can have up to four Commissioners in addition to the Chair and Deputy Chair. The following Commissioners are in post:

Gordon Macmillan was appointed from 19 November 2018 and reappointed for a second four-year term from 19 November 2022 until 18 November 2026.

Alan Stewart and Martin Smith were appointed from 1 June 2023 until 31 May 2027.

Alison McNab was appointed from 1 February 2024 until 31 January 2028.

2.3 Secretariat

Commissioners are supported by a small Secretariat. The work of the Secretariat includes:

- facilitating boundary reviews;
- dealing with the everyday administrative matters relating to our business such as finance, purchasing and accommodation;
- liaising with other UK Boundary Commissions and government departments with an interest in boundary matters;
- maintaining contact with Ordnance Survey and other relevant bodies on boundary related issues;
- maintaining links with organisations involved with electoral matters;
- improving and extending published information explaining our work;
- responding to correspondence on our work and local government boundary issues;
- providing on-going training as appropriate to meet staff and review requirements; and
- continuing to meet all financial and other requirements of our Financial Memorandum and other key sponsorship documents.

The Secretariat also supports the Boundary Commission for Scotland (“BCS”) which is responsible for reviews of United Kingdom Parliament constituencies in Scotland. The

Secretariat is funded separately by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland for that work.

The staff of the Secretariat are assigned from the Scottish Government. The number of staff assigned to support us is largely dependent on the volume of review activity. For the purposes of this Corporate Plan, staff costs have been shared equally between the Commission and the BCS.

3 Scottish Government

3.1 Direction from Ministers

Under the 1973 Act, Scottish Ministers can direct us on what reviews of local government area boundaries we should or should not undertake.

A Direction is currently in force for us not to undertake any Scotland-wide reviews under section 14(1) in the period to 31 July 2027.

A Direction is currently in force for us not to undertake reviews under section 14(2) of the Act that would affect more than 500 electors in the period to 13 October 2028.

3.2 National Performance Framework

Scottish Government intends that public bodies should align the outcomes of their activity with the Government's National Performance Framework and the associated National Outcomes. We have concluded that our work should contribute to the following National Outcomes:

- *We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.*
- *We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.*
- *We value, enjoy and protect and enhance our environment.*

The first and second of these reflect the desired result from successful definition of local government boundaries where electoral representation is fair, access to services is supported, and communities feel that boundaries support and reflect their communities of interest.

The third reflects the environmental desirability of effective use of resources.

Further information on the National Performance Framework is available at <http://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

4 Planned activities

4.1 Years 2024-2027

The planned activities, resource forecasts and performance indicators for 2024-27 will be expanded and refined in subsequent Corporate Plans.

4.2 Scottish Parliament Review activity

During 2024-2025 we will be fully engaged in the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries. We will carry out a public consultation on our proposals for Scottish Parliament constituencies and regions, as well as hold any statutory local inquiries required in support of the review.

Our final recommendations will be submitted by 1 May 2025.

4.3 Administrative Area Reviews

We will conduct administrative reviews of council area boundaries as required.

4.4 Local Government Electoral Reviews

The 1973 Act currently provides that any review of local government electoral arrangement should be submitted no later than 31 December 2028.

The Electoral Reform (Representation and Reform) Bill (“Electoral Reform Bill”) proposes to extend the deadline for submitting our next report on local authority wards and councillor numbers from 31 December 2028 to 30 April 2031. This is to reflect the change in the electoral cycle from 4 to 5 years and to ensure the review is completed one year prior to the 2032 election. Planned activity in relation to local government electoral arrangements will depend on the outcome of the Electoral Reform Bill.

4.5 Other activity

We will carry out our governance functions to ensure that we manage our operations efficiently and cost effectively and meet the requirements of our Management Statement and Financial Memorandum from the Scottish Government.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders including MSPs, political parties, councils, COSLA, the Electoral Commission and others with an interest in our work.

We will participate in the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions.

We will consider equality, diversity and inclusion in carrying out our work.

We will have consideration for the environment in carrying out our work, working with our landlords where possible.

4.6 Membership

We are not anticipating any planned changes to the membership of the Commission until year 2026-2027.

4.7 Finance and Staffing

The overall costs of the Commission during 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27 are expected to be:

- c. £415,000 per financial year

Scottish Government has indicated this will be our budget for these reporting years but the budget allocation will be formalised at the beginning of each year.

The overall staffing assigned to the Secretariat is expected to be:

- 6.38 Full Time Equivalent staff.

Boundaries Scotland will meet 50% of staff costs with the remainder met by BCS.

A breakdown of costs is given in Appendix A.

4.8 Performance indicators

Success in this period will be judged by the following indicators:

- progressing the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries and submitting the final recommendations before the 1 May 2025 deadline;
- working with the Scottish Government on fulfilling its commitment to implementing automaticity.
- progressing any administrative or interim reviews which may be required within this period;
- delivery within budget;
- having due care to equality, diversity and inclusion, biodiversity and climate change in our work;
- continuing to meet all financial and other sponsorship requirements as required under our Financial Memorandum and other key sponsorship documents.

5 Long term outlook

We will submit our final recommendation for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries by 1 May 2025.

We do not anticipate that we will be required to undertake reviews of the external boundaries of administrative areas, other than any localised reviews of cases where development has taken place across an existing administrative area boundary.

The timing of the next review of electoral arrangements for local authorities will depend on the outcome of the Electoral Reform Bill. We will continue to engage with our Sponsor Department on the Electoral Reform Bill and depending on the outcome, will then plan our next review of local government electoral arrangements.

We will also continue to work with our Sponsor Department on fulfilling their commitment to implement automaticity. Boundaries Scotland's operational and strategic planning will take account of developments regarding the introduction of automaticity in legislation.

Appendix A – Costs

Overall Costs

The overall costs of the Commission are expected to be as follows:

	<u>24-25</u>	-	<u>25-26</u>	-	<u>26-27</u>
	<u>£000s</u>		<u>£000s</u>		<u>£000s</u>
Secretariat Staff Costs	203		212		220
Commissioner Costs	33		33		36
Accommodation	28		30		32
Administration	54		55		56
Travel and Subsistence	5		5		5
Review Costs:					
Publicity	60		44		26
Consultation Portal	24		25		26
Design and print	3		4		5
Other (Halls/Transcription/Server/Courier)	5		7		9
	415		415		415

Staffing costs

The allocation of staff by grade, and the salary ranges for each of those grades is as follows:

Grade	FTE 2023-24	FTE 2024-25	FTE 2025-26	Salary range (£) (April 2024)
C1	1	1	1	57,141 to 71,243
B3	1	1	1	45,449 to 54,419
B2	2	2	2	36,585 to 41,834
B1	1.38	1.38	1.38	32,140 to 34,861
A3	1	1	1	25,235 to 28,131
Total	6.38	6.38	6.38	

Overall staffing costs include National Insurance and pension contributions, in addition to the salary in the listed range. The staffing costs are divided 50/50 between the Commission and the BCS.

Commissioners' fees and expenses

The figures are based on estimates of 12 meetings per year for the years 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27. The Commission will be very active in 2024-25 when we will be undertaking the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries. Depending on the outcome of the Electoral Reform Bill and the approach taken to reviewing local government electoral arrangements, 2025-26 and 2026-27 may also require up to 12 meetings per year. The costs include any additional meetings commissioners may attend, such as appraisals, meetings with ministers, training or the annual meeting of the UK Boundaries Commissions.

Accommodation

Accommodation costs cover rent and utility bills 3and are divided equally with the BCS. The plan budgets for a projected increase of £2k per year in 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27, based on historical increases.

Administration

Covers costs such as training, website costs, IT costs, postage, telephones and other office costs.

Travel and subsistence

Covers travel and subsistence costs for commissioners and staff excluding travel costs specifically related to a Review.

Review costs

The review costs during 2024-2025 will predominantly be for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries.

Depending on the outcome of the Electoral Reform Bill we will then commence our planning of the next review of local government electoral arrangements.

We may also carry out administrative area reviews of local authorities if requested to do so by Ministers and members of the public (if affecting fewer than 500 electors). We plan on the basis that we will conduct two local administrative area reviews over the three years of the Corporate Plan. We have assumed that a first review would begin in 2025-26, and a second review would begin in 2026-27.

Breakdown of Review Costs:

Publicity

Publicity costs cover publicising our proposals during the consultation stages of a review which may include placing public notices in newspapers, newspaper advertising and the use of social media advertising, as well as associated design costs. Please note, publicity costs associated with local inquiries are included under that heading.

Consultation Portal

We use a web-based consultation site during our reviews.

Local Inquiries

We are likely to hold Local Inquiries during the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries. Costs associated with Local Inquiries include venue hire and facilities, transport, transcription services and publicising the event.

Printing / Report publication costs

We produce guides to our work and proposals during our reviews, and at the conclusion of a Review, we submit a report to Scottish Ministers. Although the predominant means of disseminating our guides and reports is electronic, we are required to produce a limited number of hard copies.