

**Local Government  
Boundary Commission for Scotland**

**Information Paper**

**The Commission - a general guide**

**Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland  
Thistle House  
91 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH12 5HD**

**[www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk)**

**Telephone:** 0131 538 7510  
**Fax:** 0131 538 7511  
**Email:** [lgbc@scottishboundaries.gov.uk](mailto:lgbc@scottishboundaries.gov.uk)

This is one of a series of Information Papers and Quick Guides from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland. The series currently comprises the following titles:

### **Information Papers**

- The Commission - a general guide
  - Local government area boundaries in Scotland: 1995 onwards
  - Local government electoral arrangements in Scotland: 1995 onwards
  - Health Board boundaries in Scotland
  - European statistical areas (NUTS and LAU) in Scotland
  - Electoral reviews: guidance
  - Administrative area reviews: guidance
- 
- Local government area boundaries in Scotland: 1974 to 1996
  - Local government electoral arrangements in Scotland: 1974 to 1996
  - Local government in Scotland: before 1975

### **Quick Guides**

- Electoral reviews
- Local government in Scotland

Publications in the series are available from the **Publications** section of our website: [www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk). Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at the contact details on the cover.

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## **About the Commission**

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is an independent body which is responsible for reviewing and making recommendations for:

- the number of councillors on each council in a local government area;
- the number of wards for local government elections and their boundaries; and
- the extent of council areas.

We are an advisory Non-departmental Public Body (NDPB) which is appointed, sponsored and financed by the Scottish Government. We were established under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, which also defines our constitution and procedures (in Part II and Schedules 4 and 6 of the Act).

We are responsible only for local government boundaries in Scotland: there are similar Commissions responsible for local government boundaries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We are not responsible for boundaries of UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland or Scottish Parliament boundaries. The parliamentary Boundary Commission for Scotland is responsible for those boundaries, and there are corresponding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

After completing a review, we submit a report to Scottish Ministers containing our recommendations. Scottish Ministers are responsible for deciding whether and how to implement our recommendations, and submitting any necessary secondary legislation for approval by the Scottish Parliament.

## **Membership**

Our membership comprises a Chair, a Deputy Chair, and up to 4 further Commissioners. Appointments are made by Scottish Ministers, following procedures approved by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. These appointments are usually for a period of 3 or 4 years, with the possibility of renewal, and attract a daily fee, plus reimbursement of expenses. Vacant posts are advertised in the national press and are subject to a process of selection and interview by a panel including the Chair and a representative of the Scottish Government.

Commissioners must be politically neutral. Many of them have knowledge and understanding of local government. Since 1973 the Deputy Chair has always been someone who has served at a senior level in local government.

A list of our past and present members appears at Appendix A.

## **Secretariat**

We are supported by a small Secretariat staffed by civil servants. Contact details are given at the beginning of this document.

The Secretariat also provides support to the parliamentary Boundary Commission for Scotland, and this is paid for by the Scotland Office from monies voted by the United Kingdom parliament.

## Our work

Our work comprises the following, each of which are explained in more detail below:

- electoral reviews which result in recommendations on the number of councillors on the council of each local government area, electoral wards used for their election, and the boundaries of those wards; and
- administrative area reviews which result in recommendations on the extent of council areas.

A chronology of key dates relating to the work of the Commission is as follows:

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 1973    | Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 establishes our responsibility for electoral reviews and administrative area reviews, and a Region, District and Islands Area structure of local government. |
| 1975    | first elections to Region, District and Islands Area councils.  |
| 1976-81 | initial set of electoral reviews, covering all Region, District and Islands Area councils.  |
| 1991-94 | second set of electoral reviews, covering all Region, District and Islands Area councils.   |
| 1994    | Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 establishes structure of 32 unitary local government areas.  |
| 1995    | councils for 32 unitary local government areas first elected.   |
| 1997-98 | third set of electoral reviews, covering all local government areas.  |
| 2004    | Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 requires multi-member wards, each with either 3 or 4 members elected by the Single Transferable Vote form of proportional representation.                    |
| 2004-06 | fourth set of electoral reviews, covering all local government areas, and defining multi-member wards.  |
| 2007    | first elections using multi-member wards.   |

Our conduct of a review, and the rules which we have to apply when designing boundaries, is governed by the legislation. In addition, Scottish Ministers have the power to instruct us on how and when we should conduct reviews, using a *Ministerial Direction*.

There are some principles which are common to all reviews which we carry out:

- we operate independently of all political parties;
- we do not take account of past election results, or anticipate those in the future;
- the legislation requires us to consider the number of registered electors, rather than total population;
- our proposals are subject to public consultation to allow anyone with an interest to express support or opposition; and
- we aim for a consistent application of the rules, prescribed in schedule 6 of the 1973 Act and any Ministerial direction, while reflecting local circumstances in each area.

We publish guidance on our approach to reviews to aid understanding, and to encourage participation in the process.

## Electoral reviews

The law requires us to carry out a review of the *electoral arrangements* for all local government areas on a periodic basis. Currently, the required interval between such reviews is 8 to 12 years. The term *electoral arrangements* is defined as being the number of councillors on each council, the number of wards that a council area is divided into, and the boundaries of those electoral wards.

An important requirement of the legislation is that each councillor on a council must represent approximately the same number of electors as every other councillor on that council: this is termed *electoral parity*. The ratio of councillors to electors may vary between councils, and in the past we have varied the ratio across 7 different categories of council defined by population density and distribution.

There are some matters relating to the arrangements for elections which we do not have any power to alter. Examples are that each ward elects 3 or 4 councillors to serve on the council, and that the electoral system uses the Single Transferrable Vote form of proportional representation.

The most recent electoral reviews in Scotland were our Fourth Reviews which took place between 2004 and 2006. The wards resulting from those reviews were used for local government elections in May 2007 and May 2012.

Since being established in 1973, we have conducted 4 sets of electoral reviews, which are summarised in Figure 1. We expect to conduct our Fifth Reviews of electoral arrangements between 2013 and 2016.

In addition to the electoral areas resulting from our reviews, on both occasions when a new structure of local government has been formed by legislation (in 1973 and in 1994) Ministers defined a set of electoral areas to be used for elections until we had completed our reviews of the new local government areas.

In addition to our full electoral reviews, we have also conducted a number of interim electoral reviews in cases where the distribution of electorate within a council area has changed to such an extent from the previous review that the wards no longer provide an acceptable level of electoral parity.

More information and documentation on our electoral reviews is available on our website, and in our other Information Papers.

Review	Date of reports	Number of electoral areas	Councillors	Used in elections
Fifth Reviews				
Fourth Reviews (introducing multi-member wards)	2006	353	1,222 <sup>1</sup>	2007, 2012
Third Reviews	1997 to 1998	1,222	1,222	1999, 2003
Second Reviews	1991 to 1994	453 Region 1,214 District 84 Islands Area	453 1,214 84	1994 - 1994
Initial Reviews	1976 to 1981	441 <sup>2</sup> Region 1,155 <sup>3</sup> District 79 Islands Area	441 <sup>2</sup> 1,155 <sup>3</sup> 79	1982 to 1990 1980 to 1992 1978 to 1990

**Figure 1: electoral reviews**

<sup>1</sup> Increased to 1,223 from 2012

<sup>2</sup> Increased to 445 from 1986

<sup>3</sup> Later increased to 1,158

## Administrative area reviews

Since our establishment, legislation has required us to undertake administrative area reviews of all council areas in Scotland. However, in accordance with ministerial directions, we have never carried out a comprehensive set of administrative area reviews of that sort. The new council areas which came into existence in 1995 resulted from legislation prepared by the government of the day, not by us.

Instead, each of our 81 administrative area reviews has focussed on a localised area. In the period 1975 to 1976, the Secretary of State directed us to conduct a series of 10 administrative area reviews of localities which had attracted attention during the establishment of the Region and District local government areas in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

In the period 1982 to 1992, after completing our initial set of electoral reviews, we conducted a total of 64 administrative area reviews which arose from a variety of local circumstances.

Since the establishment of the current 32 local government areas in Scotland in 1995 by the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994, we have conducted 7 administrative area reviews. Most of these have taken place in cases where development has taken place across a local government area boundary, resulting in individual houses or commercial premises being partly in one council area and partly in another.

Dates	Number of reviews
1975 to 1976	10
1982 to 1992	64
1995 onwards	7

**Figure 2: administrative area reviews**

More information and documentation on our administrative area reviews is available on our website, and in our other Information Papers.

## Communication and information

We put considerable effort into communicating our work, and we wish to encourage wide public participation in consultation on our proposals.

One of the main means of communication is our website. We update the website with all information which we publish.

During a review, we publish our proposals for public consultation. These are made available through public libraries and council offices, and also on our website, where there is also a facility to submit views on those proposals.

We publish Information Papers, including this one, which summarise key aspects of our work. The Information Papers are available to download free of charge from the **Publications** section of our website. Paper copies are available on request. There is a complete list of our Information Papers on the inside front cover of this paper.

**Appendix A – Membership of the Commission****Chair**

Mr Ronnie Hinds	2013 onwards
Mr Peter Mackay	2007 - 2013
Mr John Marjoribanks	2000 - 2007
The Hon Lord Osborne (Kenneth Osborne)	1990 - 2000
Mr Ronald Bennett QC	1974 - 1990

**Deputy Chair**

Mr William Magee	2008 onwards
Mr Brian Wilson	1999 - 2008
Mr Kenneth Clark	1995 - 1999
Mr Frederick Marks	1989 - 1995
Mr George Carlton	1985 - 1988
Mr Andrew Evans	1980 - 1985
Mr Ian Paterson	1974 - 1980

**Commissioners**

Professor Ailsa Henderson	2013 onwards
Mr Roland Bean	2013 onwards
Dr Susan Walker	2013 onwards
Mrs Paula Sharp	2007 - 2013
Professor Brian Clark	2007 - 2013
Mr Kenneth McDonald	2004 - 2012
Mr Richard Millham	2004 - 2008
Dr I Ann Glen	1999 - 2007
Professor Hugh Begg	1999 - 2007
Mrs Gillian Silver	1995 - 1999
Dr Elspeth Graham	1994 - 2004
Professor Susan Smith	1993 - 1994
Professor James Caird	1985 - 1993
Mr Adam Napier	1985 - 1994
Mr Stuart McDowall	1982 - 1999
Mr George Carlton	1980 - 1988 latterly as Deputy Chair
Mr Andrew Evans	1979 - 1985 latterly as Deputy Chair
Professor Alan Thompson	1976 - 1982
Mr Ian Hamilton	1975 - 1978
Mr Ames Imrie	1974 - 1975
Miss Jean Forbes	1974 - 1985