

Introduction

The Sponsor

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored and wholly funded by the Scottish Executive Finance and Central Services Department.

The Commission

2. The Commission was created by section 12 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. It is an independent, non-political, and totally impartial body. Members are appointed on a term basis and posts are filled through open advertisement using the procedures laid down by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Appointments are confirmed by Scottish Ministers following consultation with the principal political parties in Scotland.
3. Schedule 4 to the 1973 Act specifies that the Commission should comprise a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and a maximum of four Commissioners.
4. The Commission has responsibility for all functions conferred on it for the purpose of undertaking reviews set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended by the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994. In this respect the Commission is required to conduct statutory reviews of electoral and administrative arrangements, respond to requests for ad hoc reviews of administrative arrangements and monitor electoral arrangements to identify areas where changes to the density or distribution of the electorate indicate that existing arrangements do not sufficiently comply with the requirements of the statutory rules so that the need for a review can be considered. Administrative boundary reviews undertaken by the Commission may be the subject of direction given by Scottish Ministers under section 15 of the 1973 Act.

Chairman

5. The Chairman of the Commission is Mr John Marjoribanks. Mr Marjoribanks was appointed Chairman of the Commission on 1 November 2000 for a period of 3 years.

Deputy Chairman

6. The Deputy Chairman is Mr Brian Wilson OBE. Mr Wilson was appointed Deputy Chairman on 1 October 1999 for a period of 4 years.

Commissioners

7. There are normally three Commissioners, although the legislation allows for a fourth. Dr Elspeth Graham was first appointed to the Commission in April 1994. She will complete her term of office in April 2004. Professor Hugh Begg and Dr Ann Glen were appointed from 1 October 1999 until 30 September 2003.

Code of Practice

8. The Commission in 1998 introduced a Code of Practice. It follows the Guidance on Codes of Practice for Board Members to Public Bodies, published by the Cabinet Office.
9. The document includes a commitment to observe stated public service values including the need to:
 - observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice provided to Scottish Ministers regarding proposals for the revision of local government electoral or administrative boundary arrangements;
 - be accountable to the Scottish Parliament and the public more generally for its activities and for the standard of advice it provides; and
 - comply fully with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information in accordance with Government policy on openness.
10. The Code of Practice states that Commissioners must:
 - follow the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life;
 - comply with the Code, and ensure they understand their duties, rights and responsibilities, and that they are familiar with the function and role of the Commission and any relevant statements of Government policy;
 - not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations;
 - not hold any paid or high-profile unpaid posts in a political party, and not engage in specific political activities on matters directly affecting the work of the Commission; and

- be conscious of their public role and exercise proper discretion when engaging in other political activities.

11. The Code of Practice can be inspected at the Commission's Offices at the address on page 11 of this report. Alternatively, a copy can be provided on request.

Register of Commissioners' Interests

12. Members of the Commission are required to declare any financial or other business or personal interests which may conflict with the duties and responsibilities set out in the Commission's Code of Practice. Commissioners are asked to notify the Commission of any appointments which might lead to an allegation of a conflict of interest, and to report within one month any change to the information provided in this register. In making returns for inclusion in the register, Commissioners have declared that the information is, to the best of their knowledge, complete and correct.

13. The register shows whether Commissioners:

- were paid employees, partners or proprietors of a company, partnership, trust or other body at any time since 1 January 1992;
- held any Company Directorships at any time since 1 January 1992; and
- held membership of a local health authority, health authority and trust, training enterprise council or other relevant voluntary sector body since 1 January 1992.

14. The register shows also companies and organisations in which either Commissioners, their family members or close associates could be involved in the supply of goods or services to, or have business dealings with, the Commission. In practice the Commission's Secretariat deal directly with all purchases and contracted works following the procedures set out in the Scottish Executive procurement manual. Commissioners are not, therefore, involved in purchasing or contractual issues.

15. The Register of Interests can be inspected at the Commission's Offices at the address on page 11 of this report. Alternatively, a copy can be provided on request.

Secretariat

1. Support to the Commission in undertaking its statutory functions is provided by a small Secretariat. The work of the Secretariat includes monitoring changes in the electorate and dealing with the everyday administrative matters relating to the Commission's business such as finance, purchasing, accommodation etc., liaison with other UK Commissions and government departments with an interest in boundary matters and responding to general and other correspondence concerning boundary issues.
2. Staff of the Secretariat are assigned to the Commission from the Scottish Executive. The number of staff assigned to the Commission is wholly dependent on the volume of review activity and the need to develop, maintain and update information systems and respond to enquiries etc. During the year 2002-2003 support to the Commission was provided by 4 full-time and one part-time staff deployed as follows:

Post	Whole - Time Equivalent
Secretary	0.20
Senior Case Officer	1.00
Network Manager	1.00
General Office Manager	1.00
Assistant General Officer Manager	1.00

3. From 1 April 1999, the Commission's Secretary has also fulfilled the role of Secretary to the Boundary Commission for Scotland which is responsible for reviewing parliamentary constituency boundaries and the boundaries of regions for the election of additional members to the Scottish Parliament.

Objectives and Performance

Statutory Functions

1. The Commission is required by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to undertake periodic statutory reviews of electoral and administrative arrangements, to keep electoral arrangements under continuous review and to respond to requests for interim reviews of administrative boundaries.

Principal Objectives and Performance

2. Our principal objectives and performance for 2002-2003 were as follows:

Monitoring Third Review Outcome

Objective – to continue monitoring progress changes in electorate at ward level. To plot year on year change and identify areas where divergences are occurring. Identify reasons for divergences and where necessary consider remedial action.

Performance – examination of electorate data at 2002 together with previous years data already held by the Commission revealed that the divergences found within electoral wards throughout Scotland for the most part remained of a level that did not require remedial action. No interim reviews of electoral arrangements were therefore undertaken. Further, the relatively few imbalances that had been identified would be resolved once arrangements for the introduction of proportional representation were implemented for local government elections in Scotland.

Administrative Boundary Changes

Objective – to respond to requests for interim administrative reviews within the terms of Scottish Ministers' Direction.

Performance – Statutory Instruments made by Scottish Ministers and brought into effect on 1 June 2002, implemented four changes proposed by the Commission to the administrative boundaries between Glasgow City/Renfrewshire, Argyll and Bute/West Dunbartonshire, Aberdeen City/Aberdeenshire and City of Edinburgh/West Lothian.

During the year the Commission considered a request for an Administrative Review between Glasgow City Council and East Dunbartonshire Council. This concerned an ongoing development at Greenacres that straddled the two Council areas. Having considered the matter, Commissioners concluded that, in line with general policy,

consideration of a proposal for an administrative review on the basis of allocation of land in development plans would be inappropriate. A review could only take place when the site was fully developed.

The Commission also received an inquiry from North Ayrshire Council regarding the potential for a review of electoral arrangements following a residential development in Kilwinning and the likelihood of a review being completed in time for the next scheduled local elections in May 2003. The Commission concluded that no assurance could be given that, were a review to proceed, any recommendations leading to revised electoral arrangements would be accepted by Scottish Ministers or that changes would necessarily be brought into effect by May 2003. The Council, therefore, did not pursue with its request.

Preparations for an Administrative Review

Objective – to consider the Commission’s approach to previous statutory reviews of administrative boundaries, determine research requirements for the next statutory review (which was due to be completed between 2004 and 2008.), develop procedures and processes and develop an initial stage plan.

Performance – Commissioners agreed to defer work on this area until direction was received from the centre on whether an administrative review would be taken forward.

Website and Knowledge Base Development

Objective – to arrange installation of a dedicated web server with the ISP, migrate the current web site to the new location, add ward boundary maps, continue to develop the information available on the website. Arrange the transfer the web site currently held on an in-house server and create a knowledge base of previous review documentation to inform future review activity.

Performance – the web server became fully operational and online in November 2002. The postcode search facility for locating ward maps was made available. Early usage statistics for 2003 showed that the web site was receiving around 8,500 hits per month (3 month moving average). Accessing maps accounted for more than 90 per cent of the web site visits.

Work continued throughout the year on the creation of the knowledge base which included Commission discussion papers, minutes of meetings and Reports produced by the Commission since its establishment in 1972. Conversion of this information into text searchable PDF files was completed in June 2002.

A digital record of all administrative boundaries which had been subject to review since the Commission came into being was completed. Maps showing proposed and agreed changes were made available on the Internet. Work commenced on the digitisation of boundaries resulting from the first statutory review of local government electoral arrangements.

Work commenced on the collection of digital boundary data sets held by local Councils. These data will be held within a GIS library to inform future review activity.

The Secretary has also continued to provide input to an Office of National Statistics led group on statistical geographies and Association of Electoral Administrators meetings on matters of relevance to the Commission as and when required.

Work on the potential use of postcodes as building blocks for wards

Objective – to continue examining the potential use of postcodes as building blocks for the creation of wards.

Performance - the Representation of the People (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 provides that the Commission will receive a copy of the electoral register in electronic format. With effect from December 2002, the Commission received a series of data files containing the full electoral register. These data are updated on a monthly basis

Steps were taken to clean the data files by correcting missing and invalid postcode information. Sub-set statistics showing counts of electors at addresses, postcodes, polling districts and wards are created on a monthly basis. Steps were taken to link the statistical information at postcode level to the General Registers Office (GRO) postcode geography. Data matching issues, largely concerning large user postcodes on the electoral register, were successfully resolved. Tests indicated that the geocoded electorate data could be used as a means of reviewing electoral arrangements and offered a potentially powerful tool should a review of local government electoral arrangements for proportional representation be introduced.

Expenditure 2002-2003

1. The Commission's running costs for the year 2002-2003 are set out under broad headings in the table below. Figures are rounded to the nearest £1,000.

	Expenditure	
	Forecast	Actual
Commissioners' Fees	16,000	12,000
Staff Salaries	107,000	97,000
Accomodation, Rent etc	33,000	32,000
Travel & Subsistence	5,000	4,000
General Expenses	79,000	92,000
Total	240,000	237,000

Commissioners' Fees

2. Commissioners' fees are determined by the Scottish Executive and cover attendance at all scheduled Commission meetings and associated preparation, meetings held with other UK Boundary Commissions and ad hoc meetings held with other bodies. From November 1999, Commissioners' fees moved from an agreed annual fee paid in 12 monthly instalments to a fee paid for each meeting.
3. Commissioners are reimbursed for any travelling and subsistence costs incurred whilst undertaking Commission business. Rates paid are those which apply to staff of the Scottish Executive. The amounts paid to Commissioners are included in the global travel and subsistence figure shown in the above table.
4. The Commission met on 7 occasions during 2002 – 2003. This limited number of meetings is reflected in the amount paid in Commissioners' fees.

Staff Salaries

5. Staff salaries are determined by the Scottish Executive. The underspend in staff salaries occurred because the case officer post was not filled within the current year.

Accommodation

6. Since April 1999, the Commission's accommodation has been shared with the Boundary Commission for Scotland, which is responsible for advising the Secretary of State for Scotland on matters relating to parliamentary constituency boundaries. The figures shown in the above table in respect of accommodation etc reflect the Local Government Boundary Commission's share of rent, business rates, utilities and services such as insurance, management fees, office cleaning etc.

Travel and Subsistence

7. Travel and subsistence includes rail, air and car-hire costs incurred by the Secretariat and Commissioners in the course of official business, such as site visits required in conjunction with administrative review activities. Travel and subsistence costs are paid at the same rate that applies to staff of the Scottish Executive.

General Expenses

8. General expenses cover office equipment and furniture, stationery and other consumables, telephone, facsimile and e-mail, etc, publications and advertising, staff and Commissioner training and computer software maintenance, support and licence fees.
9. The amount shown for 2002-2003 shows an overall underspend of £3,000.

Work Programme for 2003-2004

1. For the financial year 2003-2004 the Commission's planned expenditure is £240,000. The Commission expects to: -

- process requests for interim administrative reviews within the terms of Scottish Ministers' Direction
- continue to monitor progress changes in electorate, calculating and plotting year on year change and identifying areas where imbalances of electorate are occurring. Research reasons for divergences and where necessary consider remedial action;
- develop interim processes for handling the electronic electoral register including reformatting, postcode clean-up for missing and invalid data and handling of monthly updated information.
- install and configure new secure server and firewall. Load database of Electoral Register data and produce statistical sub-sets. Transfer map libraries and digital boundary data sets and rebuild project files from the most recent administrative reviews.
- progress website development and arrange training for Network Manager so that much of the work can be brought in-house.
- arrange and complete formal staff training in the use of ArcGIS.
- maintain and develop links with Ordnance Survey led group on re-engineering the boundary making process. Continue to develop links with related organisations including the Association of Electoral Administrators.
- continue to build up a library of digital boundary datasets of other appropriate geographies that exist, capture boundary information from earlier reviews and produce individual ward maps to be added to the Commission's web site.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Address: 3 Drumsheugh Gardens
Edinburgh EH3 7QJ

Website: www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk

Telephone: 0131 538 7510

Fax: 0131 538 7511

e-mail: secretariat@lgbc-scotland.gov.uk