

Agenda Item	8
Report No	BSAC/11/23

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Badenoch and Strathspey Committee

**Date:** Monday 29 May 2023

**Report Title:** Review of Scottish Parliamentary Boundaries: Initial Proposals

**Report By:** Elections Manager

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this Report is to advise of the publication of the Boundary Commission for Scotland's Initial Proposals relating to the 2023 Review of Scottish Parliament constituencies.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider these proposals and submit any comments or feedback on the proposals to Boundaries Scotland via the consultation site [consult.boundaries.scot](https://consult.boundaries.scot). The provisional proposals are made available for a one-month consultation period from 17 May 2023 until 17 June 2023. The length of the consultation period is fixed in legislation.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - If approved a working group between the Election Officers, Electoral Registration Officer, and GIS staff would need to be set up to readjust the boundaries and redefine allocation of electors to the right constituencies.
- 3.2 Legal - there are no direct implications as a consequence of this report. The legislation governing this review is the Scotland Act 1998.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – there are no direct implications as a consequence of this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – there are no direct implications as a consequence of this report.
- 3.5 Risk - there are no direct implications as a consequence of this report.

3. Gaelic - there are no direct implications as a consequence of this report.

## 4. Background

4.1 The Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries commenced in September 2022. The Review is required by the Scotland Act 1998 and Boundaries Scotland must submit a report with the recommendations to Scottish Ministers by 1 May 2025. If approved by the Scottish Parliament, the new boundaries will be effective at the next Scottish Parliament election, expected in May 2026.

4.2 The rules state for Boundaries Scotland to review and make recommendations for the boundaries of the 73 constituencies and eight regions. Three constituencies are defined in legislation and are not under review which are Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands. The overall number of MSPs will remain at 129.

4.3 The review does not affect UK Parliament boundaries, council area or ward boundaries or any services provided within them.

4.4 Since the last review reported in 2010, there has been significant change to the electorate, including the extension of the franchise for Scottish Parliamentary elections to those 16 and over. Changes to the population and the electorate have varied across Scotland, with some areas experiencing significant increases and others remaining relatively unchanged or falling. Even areas which have not experienced population growth or reduction may find that the constituency boundaries alter as a result of change required elsewhere to ensure that all constituencies and regions are of a similar electoral size. Boundaries Scotland developed their proposals using electorate data of 1 September 2022.

## 5. Provisional Proposals - Constituencies

5.1 Boundaries Scotland provisional proposals are as follows:

- 21 Constituencies are unchanged (including the three protected island constituencies)
- One constituency retains its boundary but with a new name
- 26 constituencies have new boundaries but retain their existing names
- 25 constituencies have both new names and new boundaries

5.2 For the Highland Constituencies the changes are:

**Caithness, Sutherland and Ross** geographically biggest constituency in Scotland remains unchanged.

**Inverness and Nairn** a minor change with losing Nethy Bridge and Boat of Garten.

**Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch** picking up Nethy Bridge and Boat of Garten from Inverness and Nairn constituency.

Constituency Name	Electorate	Area (sq. km)	Designation	Changes
Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	56,532	12,792	County	unchanged
Inverness and Nairn	69,113	1,314	County	Boundary changed
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	63,573	12,367	County	Boundary changed

Detailed maps of the changes are included in Annex 1 and on the Boundaries Scotland consultation. Site maps of the provisional proposals comparing them with the existing constituency boundaries can be found on the consultation site [consult.boundaries.scot](https://consult.boundaries.scot).

5.3

For the wider Highland Region area the anticipated impacts are:

The Highland Region constituencies, Moray and the three Island constituencies of Orkney, Shetland and Na h-Eileanan an Iar) all remain unchanged except for Argyll and Bute with a minor change taking Lomond North from the current Dumbarton (West Region). Highlands and Islands would be the second least altered region overall.

## 6 Next Steps

6.1 The public consultation on the provisional proposals runs from 17 May until 17 June 2023. Where comments contain suggestions for improvements to the proposals it would be helpful if they were accompanied by an alternative proposal that takes account of the statutory requirements and considers the consequences for the wider area.

Comments can be made via:

- Consultation site [consult.boundaries.scot](https://consult.boundaries.scot).
- In writing to: Boundaries Scotland, Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5HD
- By email: [boundaries.scot@scottishboundaries.gov.uk](mailto:boundaries.scot@scottishboundaries.gov.uk)

6.2 Depending on responses to the consultation stage, Boundaries Scotland may hold a one month consultation on revised recommendations later in 2023 and may need to hold a number of local inquiries. They may also consult on further recommendations for constituencies in 2024. They expect to consult on the proposals for the regions in 2024. The final recommendations will be submitted to the Scottish Parliament in 2025, ahead of the next Scottish Parliamentary Election in 2026.

Designation:

Date: 25 May 2023

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Annex A

