

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Subject: SIXTH PERIODICAL REVIEW OF UK PARLIAMENT
CONSTITUENCIES**
Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL
Date: 7 DECEMBER 2011
Author: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Boundary Commission for Scotland published its initial proposals for revised constituencies for the UK Parliament for public consultation on 13 October 2011, advising that the consultation period would last for 12 weeks, thereby concluding on 4 January 2012.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Report is to notify Members of the proposals for the area comprising Falkirk Council, to provide details on the consultation process and to recommend that officers respond to the Commission on behalf of the Council.

2. THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION'S INITIAL PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The Commission proposes that the area comprising Falkirk Council shall be divided between two county constituencies for the UK Parliament, with the undernoted names and extents:-

Constituency	Designation	December 2010 electorate	Description
Falkirk	County Constituency	80,426	The electoral wards in Falkirk Council area numbered 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (part).
Linlithgow and Falkirk East	County Constituency	80,155	The electoral wards in Falkirk Council area numbered 1, 2, 8(part), 9 The electoral wards in West Lothian Council area numbered. 1, 2(part), 7(part), 8, 9.

- 2.2 Members are advised that, in the Falkirk Council area, the electorate in December 2010 was 117,307, which gives an entitlement to 1.5 constituencies. The Commission's initial proposals link Falkirk with West Lothian Council area which has allowed it to propose a three constituency scheme for the two Council areas – as in the current scheme of constituencies. Their initial proposals are for two constituencies covering Falkirk which

are broadly similar to the current constituencies and which retain the existing names – Falkirk and; Linlithgow and Falkirk East – with electorates as shown in the table above.

- 2.3 The Commission has followed its established practice of publishing initial proposals without prior consultation with local authorities and other interested bodies, formulating the initial proposals using all information available to it but without being influenced by any particular view point from external bodies. These initial proposals are now made available for public comment and consultation, as outlined in Section 3 below.
- 2.4 Recent legislation – the Parliamentary Voting System Act 2011 – specifies that there are to be 600 constituencies in total across the UK. Four are specified in the legislation, including two in Scotland (Orkney and Shetland and Na h-Eileanan an Iar) with the remainder of Scotland being divided into 50 constituencies.
- 2.5 The legislation also specifies that this review uses the electorate figures at December 2010. This gives a UK electoral “quota” of 76,641, which is the average calculated by dividing the total UK electorate at December 2010 by the 596 non-specified number of constituencies. Additionally, the legislation now states that every one of the 596 constituencies must have no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the electoral quota, so the electorate of every constituency must be no fewer than 72,810 and no more than 80,473 electors. This very strict limit on the size of constituencies creates a significant constraint on the Commission in designing a scheme of constituencies across Scotland.
- 2.6 The Commission has aimed to:
- Design as many constituencies as practicable that do not cross a council area boundary;
 - recognise existing community ties
 - Take into consideration local geography (for example transport links, other electoral boundaries, administrative boundaries and natural features); and
 - Consider special geographical considerations where appropriate.
- 2.7 In practice, the Commission has used the existing ward boundaries where possible. This has resulted in Members’ wards in Falkirk being wholly within the proposed constituencies, with one exception. Ward 8 – Lower Braes has been split along the M9 motorway with the majority of the ward in the Falkirk constituency but the small area to the north of the motorway being in the Linlithgow and Falkirk East Constituency. Unfortunately the electorate constraints set out in the legislation do not allow the whole of the ward to be contained in the Falkirk constituency, as to do so would put the number of electors over the maximum allowed of 80,473.
- 2.8 Members should note the following proposed changes to the existing constituency boundaries.
- Skinflats, Shieldhill and the part of Brightons in the Upper Braes ward move from the Falkirk constituency to Linlithgow and Falkirk East, together with the electors in Ward 8 north of the M9.

- Conversely, Reddingmuirhead, the part of Brightons south of the Young Offenders Institution together with the new development sites at Overton and the Nobel site move from Linlithgow and Falkirk East to the Falkirk constituency.

- 2.9 The current Review was announced on 4 March 2011 and the initial proposals published on 13 October 2011. The Scotland Act 1998, as amended by the Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Act 2004, requires the Boundary Commission to submit its first report the Secretary of State not later than 30 June 2010.

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 3.1 A copy of the statutory notice concerning the initial proposals has been published in the Falkirk Herald. In addition, a copy of the notice, press release of 13 October, maps illustrating the proposals, the Commission's Summary of its Initial Proposals and the Policies and Procedures for the Review can be inspected at the following locations:-

Falkirk Council, Municipal Buildings, Falkirk
 Falkirk Library, Hope Street, Falkirk
 Library Service, Victoria Buildings, Queen Street, Falkirk
 Bo'ness Library, Scotland Close, Bo'ness
 Denny Library, Church Walk, Denny
 Bonnybridge Library, Bridge Street, Bonnybridge
 Larbert Library, Main Street, Stenhousemuir
 Meadowbank Library, Stevenson Avenue, Polmont
 Slamannan Library, The Cross, Slamannan
 Grangemouth Library, Bo'ness Road, Grangemouth
 One Stop Shop, 308 Main Street, Camelon
 One Stop Shop, Dawson Centre, David's Loan, Bainsford
 Banknock Community Centre, Kilsyth Road, Banknock

- 3.2 The Statutory Notice, maps and descriptive booklet are also available on the Commission's website at www.bcomm-scotland.gov.uk.
- 3.3 The Commission held a series of Public Hearings across Scotland during November which interested parties were invited to attend. The Commission explained their proposals and gave anyone who wished to do so the opportunity to make representations on the proposals. The Hearing in Edinburgh on 14 November was designated to consider any representations on the Falkirk area (although it was open for anyone to attend any Hearing to discuss their area). An officer from the Council attended the Hearing in Edinburgh. No representations were made at the Hearing regarding the Falkirk Council area and those comments which were made were supportive of the initial proposals from the Boundary Commission.
- 3.4 Representations on the proposals are invited to be submitted to the Commission by 4 January 2012 in writing, on-line, by e-mail or fax. Contact details can also be found on the Commission's website.

4. NEXT STAGES OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

- 4.1 After the end of the 12 week consultation period, the Boundary Commission will publish on their website the representations received and the record of the Public Hearings and invite further written comments on these during a further four week period. The Commission will then consider all representations, the proceedings of the Public Hearings, and comments made concerning representations and any other relevant information. If complex issues are raised regarding their proposals for any area, the Commission may ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to appoint an Assistant Commissioner to assist in the consideration of the proposals. Members should note that there is no provision for a further public local inquiry to be held.
- 4.2 If the Commission decides to publish Revised Proposals for public consultation, representations about these will be invited over a consultation period of eight weeks but there will be no public hearings in connection with any Revised Proposals.
- 4.3 Once the Commission has completed its review, they will submit their recommendations in a report to the Secretary of State for Scotland who is responsible for laying the report before the UK Parliament. Once all four Boundary Commissions have reported, Ministers will submit a draft Order in Council to implement these proposals and these will come into operation for the next General Election which is due to be held in May 2015.

5. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

- 5.1 Relatively small change to the existing constituencies is proposed in the Falkirk Council area with the two new constituencies having similar but not identical boundaries to the existing ones. Secondly, the strict constraints on the size of each constituency in terms of electorate make it very difficult to devise alternative proposals which would meet the criteria of the legislation. Thirdly, the much closer match between Member's wards and the new constituency boundaries will make it easier for Members to liaise with MPs as necessary. On that basis, it is recommended that the Council respond to the Commission in support of their initial proposals, including the retention of the existing names for the constituencies.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Members are requested to note:-

- (i) the initial proposals for the UK Parliament constituencies within the Falkirk Council area, as outlined within the body of the report and as detailed on the maps available for inspection at the locations listed in paragraph 3.1 and on the Boundary Commission's website;
- (ii) the details of the consultation and Review processes; and
- (iii) that further update reports will be submitted to Council as the Review progresses.

6.2 It is recommended that Members authorise officers to respond to the Commission on behalf of the Council as follows:-

- (i) The Council supports the Commission's initial proposals for UK Parliament constituencies in the Falkirk Council area including the retention of the existing constituency names.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Date: 28 November 2011

Contact Officer: Dale Robb, Business and Members' Services Manager

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Letter dated 12 October 2011 from the Boundary Commission for Scotland to the Chief Executive, with enclosures (maps, Boundary Commission news release, descriptive booklet and CD-rom)

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01324 506111 and ask for Dale Robb.