

## National Assembly for Wales

### The review of parliamentary constituencies in Wales

September 2011

The *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011* require the four UK Boundary Commissions to conduct a general review of parliamentary constituencies in their respective parts of the UK before 1 October 2013.

This paper provides an outline of the review process in Wales, an overview of the key dates in that process and an indication of how changes to the parliamentary constituencies may affect constituencies for the National Assembly for Wales.

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**Enquiry no:** 11/1659

# **National Assembly for Wales**

## The review of parliamentary constituencies in Wales

September 2011

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Paper number: 11/055



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## Summary

This document includes:

- a summary of the changes required to parliamentary constituencies in Wales by the *Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011*;
- an overview of the 2013 boundary review process including details about statutory consultation exercises that will be conducted by the Boundary Commission for Wales;
- a map showing the current parliamentary constituencies in Wales and the number of those registered to vote in each constituency;
- information about the effect that changes to parliamentary constituencies will have on constituencies for the National Assembly for Wales; and
- information about the decoupling of constituencies for the UK and Scottish parliaments.



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# The review of parliamentary constituencies in Wales

## 1. Introduction

The number of parliamentary constituencies in Wales is due to be reduced by a quarter - from 40 to 30 - by the date of the next UK General Election, to be held on 5 May 2015.

These changes are required by the *Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011*<sup>1</sup> (“the 2011 Act”) which received Royal Assent on 17 February 2011. Part 2<sup>2</sup> of the 2011 Act states that:

- the total number of parliamentary constituencies in the UK should be reduced from 650 to 600 (502 seats in England, 16 in Northern Ireland, 52 in Scotland and **30 in Wales**); and that
- the population size of each constituency should be within 5 per cent of the “UK electoral quota”, which currently stands at 76,641.

In order to achieve this, the 2011 Act requires each of the four UK Boundary Commissions to conduct a general review of parliamentary constituencies in their area and submit final reports on the reviews to the UK Government before 1 October 2013.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an outline of the boundary review process in Wales, including the key reporting and consultation dates of the Boundary Commission for Wales. The paper will also set out how these changes may affect Assembly constituencies for forthcoming Assembly elections.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011 \(c.1\)\*](#)

<sup>2</sup> Part 1 of the 2011 Act allowed for a referendum on whether the Alternative Vote or the First Past the Post electoral system should be used for UK parliamentary elections to take place on 5 May 2011.

## 2. The boundary review process in Wales

The review of parliamentary constituency boundaries in Wales is carried out by the [Boundary Commission for Wales](#) (“the Commission”), who also review the boundaries of Assembly electoral regions. It is one of the four Boundary Commissions for the UK, along with the Boundary Commissions for England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission is established and constituted under Schedule 1 of the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986*<sup>4</sup> (“the 1986 Act”) (as amended by the *Boundary Commissions Act 1992*<sup>5</sup> and the *Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000*<sup>6</sup>) for the purpose of the continuous review of the distribution of seats at parliamentary elections. It is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body funded by the [Cabinet Office](#).

The Commission is responsible for periodically conducting a general review of all the constituencies in Wales and for submitting reports to the UK Government recommending how parliamentary seats in Wales should be distributed. The 1986 Act requires the Commission to submit such reports at any time between eight and twelve years from the submission date of the previous report.

The last review conducted by the Commission was the fifth periodical report on parliamentary constituencies (which was also the first report on the Assembly’s constituencies), which was laid before the UK Parliament on 14 December 2005. The *Parliamentary Constituencies and Assembly Electoral Regions (Wales) Order 2006*<sup>7</sup> gave effect to the recommendations contained in the report, including retaining the number of parliamentary seats in Wales at 40 and making numerous changes to 24 of those constituencies.<sup>8</sup> The Order came into force ahead of the Assembly elections in May 2007 and also provided the basis for the parliamentary boundaries used in Wales for the 2010 UK General Election.

### 2.1. The 2013 review of parliamentary constituencies

In order to effect the requirements of the 2011 Act, the Commission must review the current parliamentary boundaries in Wales and submit a report to the UK Government by no later than 1 October 2013. During the course of that review, the 2011 Act stipulates that the Commission must also:

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<sup>3</sup> The Boundary Commission for Wales is separate from the [Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales](#) which is an independent body that keeps under review all local government areas in Wales and the electoral arrangements for those areas. Further information about the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales is included in a [research paper](#) published by the Research Service.

<sup>4</sup> [Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 \(c.56\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Boundary Commissions Act 1992 \(c.55\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 \(c.41\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Parliamentary Constituencies and Assembly Electoral Regions \(Wales\) Order 2006 \(SI 2006/1041\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> Further information about the changes made by the 2006 Order can be found in paragraph 1.1 of [Research Paper 07/006, Assembly Constituencies and Electoral Regions, January 2007](#) [Accessed 3 August 2011]

- allocate a precise number of constituencies to Wales of 30 (calculated from a fixed total for the whole UK of 600 constituencies); and
- ensure that every constituency has an electorate that is within 5 per cent of the 'UK electoral quota' which currently stands at 76,641. In practice, this means that every constituency in Wales by the UK general election in 2015 must have an electorate that is between 72,810 and 80,473.<sup>9</sup>

Under the 2011 Act, the Commission must base its recommendations in its final report on the number of electors whose names appear on the register of parliamentary electors published between 1 December 2010 and 1 February 2011.

<sup>10</sup> This is available on the [Commission's website](#). A map, which includes the current parliamentary constituencies in Wales along with the number of those registered to vote in each constituency, is included overleaf.

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<sup>9</sup> [Boundary Commission for Wales, \*Newsletter\*, March 2011, paragraph 6 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 9



In conducting the review, the Commission has stated that it intends to take account of current local government boundaries when forming its provisional recommendations. According to the Commission such an approach, where whole local government electoral divisions are used as building blocks to create constituencies, would be desirable as:

... any splitting of an electoral division between constituencies would be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations, cause difficulties for Electoral Registration and Returning Officers and, possibly, cause confusion to the electorate.<sup>11</sup>

This reflects the approach taken by the Commission during the third (1976 – 1983), fourth (1991 – 1995) and fifth (2000 – 2006) general review processes, where no local government electoral division was split between constituencies.<sup>12</sup> The Commission admits however that a departure from this general approach may be “unavoidable”<sup>13</sup> during the sixth general review in order to meet the statutory requirements of the 2011 Act.

In preparing its initial proposals for the new parliamentary constituencies, the Commission held a joint meeting with representatives of the Welsh parliamentary political parties in April 2011. Although the Commission had aimed to publish these proposals in September 2011,<sup>14</sup> they will now not be available until January 2012, following the resignation of Commissioners Paul Wood and John Bader.<sup>15</sup>

In its March 2011 newsletter, the Commission also stated that it would issue a guidance booklet “to assist with making the review process more widely known and understood”.<sup>16</sup> Although the Commission initially expected to publish the document in April 2011,<sup>17</sup> such guidance has not yet been produced and no revised publication date has since been provided.

## *2.2. Consultation on the initial proposals*

Following the publication of the initial proposals in January 2012, Section 12 of the 2011 Act creates a new statutory framework for consultation that relies on a combination of written representations and oral representations at public hearings:

- **Written representations:** The Commission is required to consider all written representations made to it within a statutory 12 week period commencing with the publication of the initial proposals.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, paragraph 15

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, paragraph 12

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, paragraph 16

<sup>14</sup> [Boundary Commission abandons September deadline for proposals to cut Welsh constituencies, Wales Online \[Online\], 3 August 2011 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Boundary Commission for Wales, Newsletter, August 2011 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Boundary Commission for Wales, Newsletter, March 2011, paragraph 17 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, paragraph 18

- **Public hearings:** The old style of public inquiries has been abolished and replaced by shorter public hearings. These hearings are not inquiries, public meetings or debates, but are there to provide an opportunity both for the Commission to explain its initial proposals and for people to give their views on those proposals. The Commission is required to conduct between two and five public hearings in Wales. These must take place during weeks five to ten of the 12 week initial consultation period.

After the end of the initial consultation period, the Commission is required to publish all the representations received. Once these representations have been published, there is a further statutory four-week period during which people can submit written comments to the Commission. There are no public hearings at this stage.

Following both consultation periods, the Commission will consider the representations received and publish a notice stating whether or not revisions have been made to the initial proposals. If the proposals are revised, the 2011 Act then provides for a further period of 8 weeks for written representations about the revised proposals to be made.

The Commission will then take into account any additional written representations made in the eight week consultation about the revised proposals, before publishing its final decisions in a formal written report to the UK Government. The submission of the formal final report concludes the review process. The 2011 Act states that this must be done at any time before 1 October 2013.

Before the boundary changes for the whole of the UK can take effect however, the 2011 Act requires the proposals to be formally approved by MPs in the House of Commons by a simple majority, on a motion tabled by the UK Government.

**An illustrative timetable of the review process, which summarises the information included above, is available at annex A.**

### *2.3. Initial responses and seat predictions*

In losing a quarter of its seats, Wales is the part of the UK most affected by the requirements of the 2011 Act. As a result, significant changes to the current parliamentary constituencies are expected. This was acknowledged by the Commission who stated that:

... implementing the new statutory framework is likely to require very extensive and wide-ranging changes to be made to the existing pattern and composition of constituencies.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid

Paul Flynn MP states in addition that the change from 40 to 30 Welsh MPs is the “biggest change ever” and that “Almost every seat in Wales will be changed because of the knock-on effects that a change in Newport could affect the boundaries in Anglesey”.<sup>19</sup>

Such reductions are also likely to lead to significant political tensions. By losing ten MPs in Wales, the lawyer and constitutional specialist Alan Trench argues that “a bitter fight for selection particularly among the Labour members is likely”.<sup>20</sup>

Since the UK Government’s proposals were announced, analysts have been attempting to predict the size, geography and general political impact of the new constituencies. The only such study made specifically in relation to Wales was published by the [Electoral Reform Society](#) in May 2010.<sup>21</sup> A table summarising their predictions is included below:

New seat	Main predecessor	Other principal areas of new seat
<b>MID AND WEST WALES</b>		
Brecon & Montgomery	Brecon & Radnorshire	Montgomeryshire (main part)
Carmarthen	Carmarthen East & Dinefwr	Half of Carmarthen West & Pembrokeshire South
Ceredigion & Rhaedr	Ceredigion	Western Powys, Northern Pembrokeshire
Gwynedd & Machynlleth	Dwyfor Meirionnydd	Arfon (Caernarfon area), Montgomeryshire (Machynlleth area)
Llanelli	Llanelli	Gower (Pontarddulais area), Carmarthen E & Dinefwr (Ammanford area)
Pembroke	Preseli Pembroke	Half of Carmarthen West & Pembrokeshire South
<b>NORTH WALES</b>		
Conwy & Abergale	Clwyd West	Aberconwy (Conwy area)
Denbigh, Llangollen & Vale of Conwy	Clwyd South	Clwyd West (Ruthin area), Vale of Clwyd (Denbigh area)
Flint & Rhyl	Vale of Clwyd	Delyn (Flint area)
Mold & Shotton	Alyn & Deeside	Delyn (Mold area)
Wrexham	Wrexham	Clwyd South (Broughton area)
Ynys Mon & Bangor	Ynys Mon	Arfon (Bangor area)
<b>SOUTH WALES CENTRAL</b>		
Barry & Penarth	Vale of Glamorgan	Cardiff South & Penarth (Penarth)
Cardiff Central	Cardiff Central	Cardiff South & Penarth (Bute Town and Splott), Cardiff North (Gabalfa area)
Cardiff North East	Cardiff North	Cardiff South & Penarth (Llanrumney area), Cardiff Central (Cyncoed area)
Cardiff West	Cardiff West	Cardiff North (Whitchurch area), Cardiff Central (Grangetown)
Pontypridd & Aberdare	Cynon Valley	Pontypridd (Pontypridd town area)
Vale of Ely	Pontypridd	Cardiff West (Ely area), Vale of Glamorgan (Cowbridge area)
<b>SOUTH WALES EAST</b>		
Blaenau Gwent & Tredegar	Blaenau Gwent	Islwyn (Tredegar area), Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney (Rhymney area)
Caerphilly	Caerphilly	Islwyn (Risca area)
Newport	Newport West	Newport East (urban core)
Merthyr Tydfil & Ystrad Mynach	Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney	Caerphilly (Ystrad Mynach area)
Monmouth	Monmouth	Newport East (Llanwern and Caldicot)
Torfaen	Torfaen	Newport West (Caerleon and Malpas)
<b>SOUTH WALES WEST</b>		
Bridgend	Bridgend	Ogmore (Aberkenfig and north)
Rhondda & Ogmore	Rhondda	Ogmore (Ogmore Vale area), Pontypridd (Tonyrefail)
Neath & Aberavon	Aberavon	Neath (Neath town), Ogmore (Maesteg)
Swansea East & Vale of Neath	Neath	Swansea East (St Thomas area), Brecon & Radnorshire (Ystradgynlais area)
Swansea North & Loughor	Swansea East	Gower (Loughor area), Swansea West (Cockett)
Swansea West & Gower	Swansea West	Gower (Gower peninsula)

**Please note that this table represents the findings of the Electoral Reform Society only and may not reflect in any way the future findings and recommendations of the Boundary Commission for Wales.**

<sup>19</sup> [Will boundaries squeeze Tory? Paul Flynn blog \[Online\], 1 August 2011 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>20</sup> [The new electoral map for Westminster, Devolution Matters \[Online\], July 2010 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Electoral Reform Society, 'Reduce and Equalise' and the Governance of Wales, May 2010](#)

An interactive guide detailing how the parliamentary constituencies for the whole of the UK could change as a result of the 2011 Act was also published by the Guardian on their website on 6 June 2011.<sup>22</sup> Information on seat predictions conducted on behalf of the Conservative Party by the former MP Rob Hayward also appeared in the Financial Times on 28 July 2011.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> [How UK parliamentary constituencies could change - interactive guide, \*The Guardian\* \[Online\], 6 June 2011 \[Accessed 4 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Tensions rise as Tories set to gain from boundary changes, \*Financial Times\* \[Online - Paywall\], 28 July 2011 \[Accessed 4 August 2011\]](#)



### 3. Impact on Assembly constituencies

The 2011 Act provides for the decoupling of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies. Section 13(1) states that:

The Assembly constituencies are the constituencies specified in the *Parliamentary Constituencies and Assembly Electoral Regions (Wales) Order 2006* (S.I. 2006/1041)<sup>24</sup> as amended by—

the *Parliamentary Constituencies and Assembly Electoral Regions (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2008* (S.I. 2008/1791)<sup>25, 26</sup>.

**No further changes are therefore required by the 2011 Act to the Assembly's constituencies ahead of the next Assembly elections in May 2016.** As it stands, 40 constituency and 20 regional seats will be retained for Assembly elections, while 30 different parliamentary constituencies will be in place ahead of the UK General Election in May 2015.

The 2011 Act does provide however in limited circumstances (along with provisions in the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986*<sup>27</sup>) for the Assembly's constituencies to be amended by Order following the submission of a report by the Commission to the Secretary of State recommending changes to the size of Welsh parliamentary constituencies.

#### 3.1. *Debate on changing the Assembly's constituency boundaries*

Despite the decoupling of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies provided for by the 2011 Act, the proposed reduction in the number of MPs in Wales has led to a debate on whether the number of Assembly constituencies should be subject to a corresponding reduction in order to make them coterminous with parliamentary constituencies. This in turn has led some to question whether changes are required to the Assembly's current electoral system.

During Welsh questions in the House of Commons on 11 May 2011, Jonathan Edwards MP asked the Secretary of State for Wales, the Rt. Hon Cheryl Gillan MP:

Given the Labour party's opposition to decoupling Westminster and National Assembly constituency boundaries, would it not make sense to base the make-up of the fifth National Assembly on 30 regional and 30 constituency Assembly Members?<sup>28</sup>

In response, the Secretary of State stated:

That is a very interesting thought. Hon. Members are well aware that the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 broke the link between Assembly constituencies

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<sup>24</sup> [Parliamentary Constituencies and Assembly Electoral Regions \(Wales\) Order 2006 \(S.I. 2006/1041\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Parliamentary Constituencies and Assembly Electoral Regions \(Wales\) \(Amendment\) Order 2008 \(S.I. 2008/1791\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011 \(c.1\), Section 13\(1\)](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 \(c.56\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> [HC Deb 11 May 2011 c1147 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

and parliamentary constituencies. I have agreed that we need to look carefully at the implications of having constituency boundaries relating to different areas and regions for UK and Assembly elections in Wales. I am taking the hon. Gentleman's question as a recommendation that we have 30 first-past-the-post seats and 30 elected on a list system, and I will look seriously at that suggestion.<sup>29</sup>

The Secretary of State answered additional questions in relation to Assembly constituency boundaries at a meeting of the Welsh Affairs Committee on 13 July 2011. During the meeting, the following exchange took place between the Secretary of State and Owen Smith MP:

**Owen Smith:** Is it true, Secretary of State, that Wales Office officials recently met the Boundary Commission and political parties in Wales and said at that meeting that they were looking for a legislative vehicle to address changing the boundaries of the Assembly constituencies in Wales?

**Mrs Gillan:** I think Mr Edwards raised the matter with me on the Floor of the House. He raised the change of boundaries and in the number of parliamentary seats that will be going through in Wales and how that will affect the Assembly boundaries and any future shape in Wales. As far as I am concerned, we will have to look at that because I agreed with the First Minister before the last Assembly elections that we would decouple the Assembly boundaries from the parliamentary constituency boundaries, and therefore if any meetings have taken place they are quite right and proper because it is my duty to have a look at what possibilities exist and what options there would be.<sup>30</sup>

Mr Smith also asked the Secretary of State whether she was considering making changes to the Assembly's electoral system:

Is it also true that your preferred proposal, as I understand it, is to go to what is called 3030? In order to achieve coterminosity between the 30 parliamentary boundaries, you go to 30 past the post seats in Wales and 30 list seats. Is it not true that, if you were pursuing that, it would benefit the Tory party significantly and other opposition parties in Wales and, therefore, is it not more gerrymandering?<sup>31</sup>

In response, the Secretary of State told members that:

... as I say, it was raised on the floor of the House by Mr Edwards. I said I would look at it very carefully. It is very interesting. I have reached no conclusions whatsoever. Can I just assure this Committee that before anything goes forward to do with boundaries there would be a loud, long and large period of consultation? I think you are jumping the gun. Mr Smith, if you do not mind my saying so, you are setting a hare running when no hare is even in the field yet. We are doing the correct and responsible thing in the Department and we will continue to do so, but I would be very interested in your views.

... when we have any information gathered in the Department on this subject, I will share it with the Committee. At the moment I have no such plans within the Department.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> [Welsh Affairs Committee Deb 13 July 2011 \[Accessed 9 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

Additional comments in relation to the decoupling of Assembly and parliamentary constituencies were made by the shadow Secretary of State for Wales, the Rt. Hon Peter Hain MP, on 14 July 2011:

As we've seen in Scotland, when you separate assembly seats from parliamentary seats, it creates a great deal of confusion for voters, for parties and for the wider public. If that happened in Wales, you would be likely to have a situation where one assembly seat straddled three parliamentary seats, which leads to confusion for voters, political parties and their representatives.

... I think everybody accepts there has to be change. There's a total agreement on this and we need to do it in a way that is non-tribal, crosses parties and seats to build consensus which I hope Cheryl Gillan does.<sup>33</sup>

Mr Hain also argued that such boundary changes for parliamentary constituencies in Wales provide the UK Government with an opportunity to change the current semi-proportional electoral system for Assembly elections:

The only acceptable option given the AV referendum result is to have all AMs elected by first-past-the-post, and we believe that each of the 30 new constituencies should elect two AMs by that system. I think in retrospect we have to accept that we got it wrong when we set up the assembly with a two-tier electoral system that has two kinds of AM, and it should now be changed. We believe the only change that would be possible without a further referendum or general election manifesto commitment is a change to first past the post.

The case for AV at Westminster level was defeated by a thumping majority for first-past-the-post. This is the only voting system that commands cross-party and public support in Wales ... In the end it's not about who wins and who loses, it's about accepting the verdict of the electorate and they were clear in this referendum.<sup>34</sup>

Mick Antoniw AM, in a letter published on 18 July 2011 in the Western Mail, did not however see the need to make changes to the electoral system in Wales as a result of the proposed changes to parliamentary constituencies and stated that "any changes to the Welsh constitutional system of government should only take place with the consent of the Assembly".<sup>35</sup> He added that:

... no party has a mandate for any change to the Welsh electoral system. It did not appear in any party manifesto. Such a major change in Wales must require at the very least a referendum and probably an election manifesto commitment.

At the end of the day, the voting system in Wales for the Assembly belongs to the people of Wales and it would seriously undermine the devolution settlement and constitutional relations between Wales and Westminster to attempt to do anything without the consent of the people of Wales.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> [Peter Hain plans Welsh assembly election vote change, BBC News \[Online\], 14 July 2011 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>35</sup> [No mandate for electoral change, Western Mail letters, Wales Online \[Online\], 18 July 2011 \[Accessed 8 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Ibid](#)

### 3.2. *Decoupling of constituencies in Scotland*

Scottish parliamentary constituencies and UK parliamentary constituencies have been decoupled since the 2005 UK General Election. This was as a result of *The Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Act 2004*<sup>37</sup> (“the 2004 Act”) which removed the statutory link between the constituencies for the Scottish Parliament and those for the House of Commons included in the *Scotland Act 1998*.<sup>38</sup> The 2004 Act also ensured that the total number of MSPs would remain at 129.

In response to a UK Government consultation paper which preceded the *Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Bill*’s introduction in the UK Parliament, concerns were raised about the effect of having different boundaries for Westminster and Scottish parliamentary constituencies.<sup>39</sup> The then Secretary of State for Scotland, the Rt. Hon Helen Liddell MP, made a statement on the outcome of this consultation exercise on 18 December 2002 and acknowledged the concerns about the operation of different boundaries for Westminster and Holyrood. In response she proposed that an independent commission should be established “to examine and make recommendations on issues caused by different boundaries”.<sup>40</sup>

The creation of a *Commission on Boundary Differences and Voting Systems* was announced by the then Secretary of State for Scotland, the Rt. Hon Alastair Darling MP, during the second reading debate on the *Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Bill* on 9 February 2004. Its terms of reference would be to:

... examine the consequences of having four different voting systems in Scotland, and different boundaries between Westminster and Holyrood. It will consider the implications for voter participation, the relationship between public bodies and authorities in Scotland and MPs and MSPs, and the representation of constituents by different tiers of elected members. It will be asked to make representations on whether the consequences require action to be taken in respect of arrangements between elected representatives, to ensure that constituents and organisations receive the best possible service; the pattern of electoral boundaries in Scotland; the relationship with other public bodies and authorities in Scotland; and the method of voting in Scottish parliamentary elections.

The commission will be independent. It will consider the case for change, and make recommendations to me and to the First Minister. I intend to discuss the chairmanship and membership of the commission with the other political parties in the House, and I will announce its membership in due course.<sup>41</sup>

The Commission was formally set up in July 2004 under the chairmanship of Professor Sir John Arbuthnott and held its first meeting on 9 September 2004. It

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<sup>37</sup> [Scottish Parliament \(Constituencies\) Act 2004 \(c.13\)](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Scotland Act 1998 \(c.46\)](#)

<sup>39</sup> [House of Commons Library, Standard Note: The Arbuthnott report and Scottish elections SN/PC/03918, 21 May 2007, page 3 \[Accessed 4 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>40</sup> HL Debates 18 December 2002 c859

<sup>41</sup> HC Deb 9 February 2004 c1151

published its [report](#) on 19 January 2006. In relation to boundaries, the report made the following recommendations:

- Having the same constituencies for the Scottish Parliament and Westminster is desirable but not essential and should not drive change to the electoral system for the Scottish Parliament.
- The boundaries for Scottish Parliamentary constituencies should be within and respect local authority areas rather than Westminster constituencies.
- Scottish Parliament regions should be revised to reflect natural local communities and identity and should be built on local authority areas.
- The functions of the Boundary Commission for Scotland and the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland should be combined to enable the constituencies and regions for the Scottish Parliament and local authorities to be reviewed together. Consideration should also be given to integrating the review of Westminster constituencies in Scotland into this process.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, the Commission found that individuals interviewed in its focus groups showed little interest in the location of boundaries and indicated that this was not an issue which would dissuade them from voting. The Electoral Commission had also advised that there was no evidence in Scotland to suggest that boundary issues had an impact on turnout at elections. This was also indicated by international evidence which showed that non-coterminosity was normal in most countries which have multi-level government.<sup>43</sup>

In response, the UK Government was:

... pleased to note that the Commission was able to confirm that having different boundaries between the constituencies of the House of Commons and those of the Scottish Parliament is not a matter which requires further action and should not drive change to the electoral system for the Scottish Parliament.<sup>44</sup>

A report commissioned by the authors of the Commission found however that the vast majority of Scottish MPs were opposed to the ending of coterminosity.

According to the report, the main reasons for their opposition were the following:

- Organisation of local parties.
- Political party campaigning..
- Lack of clarity for constituents.
- Logistical difficulties for members in organising local constituency services.
- Logistical difficulties for local groups.
- Added risks of competition between elected members.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> [Commission on Boundary Differences and Voting Systems, \*Putting Citizen's First: Boundaries, Voting and Representation in Scotland\*, January 2006, page 21 \[Accessed 3 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>43</sup> [House of Commons Library, \*Standard Note: The Arbuthnott report and Scottish elections SN/PC/03918\*, 21 May 2007, page 5 \[Accessed 4 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>44</sup> [The Scotland Office, \*Response by the Secretary of State for Scotland to the Report of the Commission on Boundary Differences and Voting Systems \(Arbuthnott Commission\)\*, 23 January 2007 \[Accessed 4 August 2011\]](#)

<sup>45</sup> [Bradbury, J and Russell, M \(2005\) \*The Local Work of Scottish MPs and MSPs: Effects of Non-coterminous Boundaries and AMS, Report to the Commission on Boundary Differences and Voting Systems\*. UCL Constitution Unit and University of Wales Swansea, pages 27 – 28 \[Accessed 4 August 2011\]](#)

**A. Illustrative timetable of the boundary review process in Wales**

Please note that the dates included below may not be accurate and are included for illustrative purposes only. Up to date information about the work of the Boundary Commission for Wales and the 2013 review is available on their [website](#).

Action	Date
<i>The Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011</i> receives Royal Assent.	17 February 2011
The Boundary Commission for Wales informs Deputy First Minister that it has formally commenced its sixth general review.	4 March 2011
The Boundary Commission for Wales holds a joint meeting with representatives from the Welsh parliamentary parties.	April 2011
Publication of the Boundary Commission for Wales' initial parliamentary constituency proposals (statutory 12 week consultation period begins).	January 2012
Between 2 and 5 public hearings on the initial proposals take place.	February - April 2012
Consultation period ends.	April 2012
All consultation responses published and secondary 4 week consultation period begins.	May 2012
Secondary consultation period ends	June 2012
The Boundary Commission for Wales publishes a notice stating whether or not revisions have been made to the initial proposals.	Date unknown

If proposals have been revised, a further 8 week consultation period begins.	Date unknown
Further consultation period ends.	Date unknown
The Boundary Commission for Wales publishes its final decisions in a report submitted to the UK Government	By 1 October 2013
Vote takes place in the House of Commons on whether the boundary changes for the whole of the UK should take effect.	Date unknown - to be decided by the UK Government
UK General Election.	7 May 2015
Welsh General Election.	5 May 2016

