

First Periodical Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries
Provisional Proposals for constituencies for
Fife Council area

**Statement to be made by the Assistant Commissioner on behalf of the Commission at
the opening of the Local Inquiry**

Introduction

1. In view of the representations which were received concerning the Commission's provisional proposals for 2 constituencies for the council area, the Commission agreed that this local inquiry should take place, in accordance with paragraph 9 of Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act 1998, as amended by the Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Act 2004. The 2 proposed constituencies in question are Mid Fife and Glenrothes and North and East Fife. The Commission welcomes this inquiry which provides an opportunity for local views to be heard as part of the process of reviewing Scottish Parliament boundaries. The Commission also welcomes the opportunity to explain the legislative provisions and procedures it must follow.

Background

2. The existing constituencies for the Scottish Parliament were defined by the Commission's Fourth Periodical Review of Parliamentary Constituencies which reported in December 1994. The Scotland Act 1998 determined that the boundaries of the constituencies for the Scottish and Westminster Parliaments should be the same, with one exception regarding Orkney and Shetland. Section 86 of the 1998 Act also envisaged that the number of constituencies would be reduced, and this occurred for Westminster constituencies with the Commission's Fifth Review, which reported in 2004 and reduced the number of constituencies from 72 to 59. However, by that time, the Scottish Parliament (Constituencies) Act 2004 had severed the link between Westminster and Scottish Parliament constituencies. The 2004 Act determines that the number of constituencies for the Scottish Parliament should be 73, and requires that a review of the Scottish Parliament constituencies should start after 30 June 2007 and be completed by 30 June 2010. This is that review.

Redistribution of seats

3. In formulating its provisional proposals for constituencies, the Commission has a statutory duty to apply Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act 1998 as amended. That Schedule sets out a set of rules to be applied when designing constituencies.

4. The Commission's approach and statutory rules for the redistribution of seats can be summarised as follows:

- There are to be 73 constituencies and the constituencies will be the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands and 71 other constituencies covering the remainder of Scotland.
- In applying the rules outlined below, the Commission must seek to achieve a balance between conflicting requirements and must do so in a way which, so far as practicable, is consistent throughout the whole of Scotland.

Rule 1 - So far as is practicable, regard must be had to the boundaries of local authority areas.

Rule 2 - The electorate of each constituency is to be as near the electoral quota as is practicable, while having regard to Rule 1. The electoral quota is determined by dividing the total number of local government electors on the July 2007 electoral registers for all of Scotland, except Orkney and Shetland, by 71. The electoral quota remains fixed throughout the period of a review, and is 54,728.

The Commission may depart from Rule 1 if it thinks that it is desirable to do so to avoid an excessive disparity between the electorate of a constituency and the electoral quota or between the electorate of a constituency and that of neighbouring constituencies.

Rule 3 - The Commission may depart from the strict application of the preceding rules if it considers that special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, make a departure desirable.

Rule 4 - The Commission must take account, so far as it reasonably can, of inconveniences attendant on altering constituencies and of any local ties which would be broken by doing so.

Construction of constituencies

5. For previous reviews of parliamentary constituencies in Scotland the Commission has aggregated local government electoral wards to form constituencies. However, in 2007, a new structure of local government electoral arrangements was introduced to accommodate proportional representation for Council elections in Scotland. These wards are much larger than those previously in use, and each returns either 3 or 4 councillors. Preliminary work for this review of Scottish Parliament constituencies made it clear that in many areas across Scotland it would not be possible to use the significantly enlarged wards as building blocks to design revised constituencies within the terms of the statutory rules. As a consequence, the Commission has designed revised constituencies using electorate data from the July 2007 electoral register held within its computer mapping system. Proposed constituencies were designed within the terms of the statutory rules by aggregating electorate data and taking account of existing community ties and electoral ward boundaries, as well as other natural and administrative boundaries.

6. The Commission's recommendations for each constituency are required by statute to include a name by which it should be known and whether it is to be designated a burgh or county constituency. Where constituencies comprise predominantly urban areas, they will normally be designated as burgh constituencies (BC), and where constituencies are predominantly rural they will normally be designated as county constituencies (CC).

7. From past experience, the Commission is aware that the naming of constituencies can be a very contentious issue for the local electorate. The Commission's aim is to secure short names that are acceptable locally and to adopt a consistent naming convention. It is the general policy of the Commission to follow the advice provided by Councils, following the publication of provisional proposals, to determine final recommendations for constituency names. In this review, the Commission has taken the approach of uniformly placing names of compass points at the beginning of the names to differentiate Scottish Parliamentary constituency names from Westminster constituency names.

Election results and future voting patterns

8. The Commission wishes to emphasise that the results of previous elections have not entered into its consideration. Similarly, it is not for the Commission to speculate upon the effects which its recommendations may have on future voting patterns.

Local Authorities – boundaries and provision of services

9. The Commission wishes to emphasise that its review relates solely to boundaries for the Scottish Parliament and does not affect the structure or arrangements of local government areas or the services they provide. Parliamentary boundaries **do not** affect the provision of council services or council tax.

The Review in Fife Council Area

10. When examining the existing constituencies for Fife Council area, the Commission noted that it currently comprises 5 county constituencies all of which are contained fully within the council area. The Commission noted that with a current electorate of 280,590 (5.13 theoretical entitlement) the council area continued to justify five constituencies wholly contained within its administrative boundaries. Considering the wider area, the Commission concluded that there was no added benefit to grouping this council area with others in order to configure revised arrangements for constituencies at the Scottish Parliament. However, changes in the distribution of that electorate have resulted in imbalances between the existing constituencies. The Commission concluded that these were of a magnitude that needed to be addressed.

11. The Commission noted that it was possible to produce a configuration of constituencies that broadly retained much of the existing constituencies, avoided having to divide the urban areas of Dunfermline, Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy, avoided splitting local government ward boundaries, and went some way to redressing the imbalances of electorate between the existing constituencies.

12. The largest increase of electorate has occurred in the existing North East Fife constituency and to address this imbalance it is necessary to amend the existing boundary. Alignment of the revised constituency boundary with the northern boundaries of wards 15 (Glenrothes North, Leslie and Markinch) and 22 (Leven, Kennoway and Largo) produces an acceptable solution within the terms of the statutory rules. The Commission was aware that, at the Fourth Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements, the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland was unable to meet the wishes expressed by a sizeable number of those making representations who wished the Lundin Links, Lower Largo and Upper Largo area to be included in the East Neuk and Landward ward (ward 20). The Commission recognised that including Lundin Links, Lower Largo and Upper Largo in the proposed North and East Fife constituency would not address the imbalance of electorate in North East Fife and would involve splitting a ward. Following evaluation of these considerations, the Commission agreed to adopt its initial proposals which aligned the proposed constituencies to ward boundaries.

13. After further consideration of the initial proposals, the Commission also re-examined the proposed arrangements in the Methil and Leven areas to see if there was scope to improve the community, geography and parity aspects of the Kirkcaldy constituency and the Mid Fife and Glenrothes constituency at the point where they converge in this area. On examination, the Commission concluded that any improvements in parity could only be achieved at the expense of dividing communities in the Methil area. Following evaluation of these considerations, the Commission agreed to adopt its initial proposals which also aligned the proposed constituencies to ward boundaries.

14. The Commission, therefore, proposes that wards 1-4 should be combined to form Dunfermline CC (53,410 electors); wards 5-9 should be combined to form Cowdenbeath CC (54,490 electors); wards 10-13 and 23 should be combined to form Kirkcaldy CC (59,580 electors); wards 14-16 and 22 should be combined to form Mid Fife and Glenrothes CC (53,750 electors); and wards 17-21 should be combined to form North and East Fife CC (59,360 electors).

Publication of provisional proposals for constituencies

15. In accordance with the Scotland Act 1998 as amended, statutory notices setting out the Commission's provisional proposals for constituencies were published in newspapers on 14 February 2008. Information on the proposals, with illustrative maps, was placed on deposit at locations in each of the Council areas and made available on the Commission's website. The statutory notice stated that representations regarding its proposals should be made to the Commission by 14 March 2008 - the length of the consultation period being fixed by the legislation. The Commission is required to consider representations made about its provisional proposals and to hold a local inquiry if the issues raised are sufficient.

Any person may make a representation at this inquiry whether or not they have previously submitted a representation to the Commission.

Representations

16. During the statutory consultation period, the Commission received over 110 representations relating to the Fife Council area. These included over 100 representations received from parliamentary electors objecting to the proposed constituencies of Mid Fife and Glenrothes and North and East Fife, which triggered the statutory requirement to hold a local inquiry. No representation was received from Fife Council. A copy of all the representations is available for scrutiny at this inquiry. The main issues that have arisen from the publication of the Commission's provisional proposals concern:

Issues within representations that triggered the need for a local inquiry

Representations suggesting amendments

- whether Methil should instead be included in the proposed Mid Fife and Glenrothes constituency; and
- whether Upper and Lower Largo and Lundin Links should instead be included in the proposed North and East Fife constituency.

Representations seeking changes to Constituency Names

- whether the proposed Mid Fife and Glenrothes constituency should be renamed 'Glenrothes', 'Glenrothes and Mid Fife' or 'Glenrothes and Leven'; and
- whether the proposed North and East Fife constituency should be renamed 'North East Fife'.

Other issues raised

Representations suggesting amendments

- whether Kingseat should instead be included in the proposed Dunfermline constituency.

Representations seeking changes to Constituency Names

- whether the proposed Cowdenbeath constituency should be renamed 'Dunfermline East' or if this is not possible 'Fife Lochs and Forth';
- whether the proposed Cowdenbeath constituency should be renamed 'Central Fife and Bridgehead';
- whether the proposed Cowdenbeath constituency should be renamed 'Fife Lochs and Forth Bridgehead'; and
- whether Rosyth should be included in name for the proposed Cowdenbeath constituency.

Representations Intimating support

- support for the five proposed constituencies.