

Motion for Full Council – 15 December 2021

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND – 2023 REVIEW OF UK PARLIAMENT CONSTITUENCIES

Currently, the Perth and Kinross Council area is served by two UK Parliamentary constituencies – Perth and North Perthshire (which is entirely set within the council boundary) and Ochil and South Perthshire (which is set within Perth and Kinross and Clackmannanshire council areas).

The Boundary Commission for Scotland 2023 Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies has recently published its initial proposals. These proposals have significant implications for Perth and Kinross Council, its residents, communities and voters.

Over and above the minimum and maximum numbers of the electorate for each constituency and the maximum size of 13,000 square kilometres for any constituency, the rules permit the Boundary Commission to take into account certain factors in determining parliamentary constituencies. Consequently, the Boundary Commission's stated principles are to design constituencies that:

- recognise community ties;
- consider special geographical considerations where appropriate;
- take into consideration local geography (for example, transport links, other electoral boundaries, administrative boundaries and natural features);
- do not cross a council area boundary, and
- minimise disruption caused by boundary changes.

In considering the proposed new constituencies against the current position and the design principles above, Perth and Kinross Council makes the following comments regarding the 2023 Review proposals:

1. The Council recognises that Perth and Kinross does not qualify for a whole, number of constituencies, with its total of 114,440 voters equating to 1.56 quotas. While the Council acknowledges that this requires Perth and Kinross to be joined with one other Council area, the initial proposals sub-divide the local authority by no fewer than five new UK Parliamentary constituencies, far in excess of what may be reasonably expected. **This fails to meet with the stated design principle of not crossing council boundaries where possible.**
2. The design of the five proposed new UK Parliamentary constituencies involves parts of Perth and Kinross aligning with no fewer than three other local authority areas – Angus Council, Dundee City Council and Fife Council. No other Council of comparable size has been so severely divided in the current or any previous review of parliamentary boundaries. **This fails to take into consideration the local geography design principle.**

3. Currently, Perth and Kinross Council works closely with one other local authority (Clackmannanshire) for the administration of a UK Parliamentary election. The proposed five new constituencies would require the Tayside Valuation Joint Board and the Council to liaise with the three other local authorities in terms of administering the electoral register and conducting the four cross-border elections and counts. This will cause significant administrative issues for both bodies and will lead to confusion for prospective candidates, agents, voters, officers, other stakeholders and, most importantly, communities. **This fails to meet the minimum disruption design principle.**
4. The Boundary Commission proposals involve the division of two Council wards (the Carse of Gowrie and the Kinross-shire wards) across two UK Parliamentary constituencies. In the case of the Carse of Gowrie ward, this would involve splitting the Council ward into the new *Angus and Strathmore* and *Dundee West and Gowrie* constituencies. For Kinross-shire ward, this would involve splitting the ward, which includes the county of Kinross-shire, between the new *Glenrothes and Loch Leven* and *West Fife* constituencies. Perth and Kinross Council believes these specific proposals contradict best practice in relation to the policies on Council Areas/Electoral Wards. They group communities which have a keen sense of identity linked with Perth and Kinross but which have little in common with the rest of the proposed constituency. The division of wards and communities marginalises and effectively disenfranchises the residents of these areas; will have a negative impact on voter participation and awareness; is likely to be contentious; and will cause voter confusion. The boundary changes are also likely to cause disruption to the structures of community organisations within these areas. **This fails to recognise the community ties design principle.**
5. The Perth and Kinross Council area would be represented by five different Members of Parliament requiring the Council to establish and build new relationships with the five MPs and vice versa. As well as being an additional administrative burden on all parties, it is likely to impact on the quality of parliamentary representation provided to the Perth and Kinross electorate and to the Council. The multiple representation situation would be especially detrimental to Perth and Kinross in a way which no other local authority is being required to experience. **This fails to meet the minimum disruption design principle.**

The implications for Perth and Kinross Council brought about by the initial proposals from the Boundary Commission's 2023 Review are wide ranging and detrimental to the electorate. In many instances, the Boundary Commission's proposals fail to adhere to their own design principles, resulting in multiple cross-boundary issues, numerous local geography complications, an unwelcome level of disruption and confusion and an impact detrimental to various communities across the Council area. Perth and Kinross Council feels that this local authority and its voters are quite probably the most disadvantaged of all local authorities as a result of the proposed changes to parliamentary boundaries contained within the Review.

Perth and Kinross Council therefore calls upon the Boundary Commission to take note of its very significant concerns and bring forward a revised set of proposals which creates one constituency wholly within Perth and Kinross and one constituency which links Perth and Kinross with one neighbouring local authority only.

Mover: Councillor John Duff

Seconder: Councillor Andrew Parrott