

## INTRODUCTION

1. This Newsletter includes items about the:-
  - (a) appointment of a new Deputy Chairman to the Boundary Commission for Wales and the re-appointment of the other two Commissioners;
  - (b) transfer of responsibility for electoral law;
  - (c) future provision of the Commission's Secretariat service and the appointment of a new Joint Secretary to the Commission;
  - (d) Commission's future work programme;
  - (e) Electoral Commission; and
  - (f) Contacts.

## APPOINTMENTS

2. The Honourable Mr Justice Richards (Sir Stephen) has been appointed by the Lord Chancellor to be the Deputy Chairman of the Commission for the period 8 August 2001 to 31 December 2006.

### Background

3. The Commission are a permanent body constituted under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 which, as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, requires them to keep the Parliamentary constituencies in Wales under continuous review and periodically (every 8-12 years) to conduct a general review of all the constituencies.
4. The Government of Wales Act 1998 also requires the Commission to review the five electoral regions of the National Assembly for Wales (the Assembly), as well as the number of members to be returned from each electoral region, whenever a general review is conducted.
5. The constitution of the Commission is:-

**The Chairman** – the Speaker of the House of Commons is, ex-officio, Chairman of the Commission.

**The Deputy Chairman** – a judge of the High Court, appointed by the Lord Chancellor, who presides over meetings of the Commission.

Sir Stephen Richards, who is a judge of the Queen’s Bench Division of the High Court of Justice, has been appointed Deputy Chairman in succession to Sir Maurice Kay, who relinquished the post when his term of appointment expired on 31 December 2000.

**Two other Commissioners** – Mrs Susan Smith, appointed by the Secretary of State for Wales, and Professor Kenneth George appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.

Both Commissioners have been re-appointed until 30 June 2005. Mrs Smith is also Chair of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales. These appointments will enable the Commission to undertake the next general review of Parliamentary constituencies and the first review, which will run concurrently with the review of Parliamentary constituencies, of the Assembly electoral regions (see future programme below).

**Two Assessors** – The Registrar General for England and Wales and the Director General of Ordnance Survey.

#### **TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR ELECTORAL LAW**

6. As a result of the re-organisation of the machinery of Government, that was announced shortly after the last general election, responsibility for electoral law has been transferred from the Home Office to the new Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR). Prior to that announcement, the Home Office had sponsored the work of the Commission. The Commission’s sponsoring body is now the DTLR.
7. The Commission wish to confirm that their independence is unaffected by this change of sponsorship and that the next (fifth) general review of Parliamentary constituencies, and the concurrent review of the Assembly electoral regions, will also be unaffected.

#### **TRANSFER OF SECRETARIAT SERVICE**

8. Prior to the last general election, the Home Secretary sent a proposal to the Assembly that the Secretariat service provided to the Commission should, in future, be provided by the Secretariat currently employed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales (LGBCW) based in Cardiff. Historically, the Secretariat service to the Commission has been provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in London, who also provide the Secretariat to the Boundary Commission for England.
9. The Assembly accepted the proposal. Therefore, with effect from 1 January 2002, the Commission’s Secretariat service will be provided by the LGBCW Secretariat based in Cardiff. From that date, Mr Edward Lewis, who is the Secretary to the LGBCW, will be appointed as the Joint Secretary to the Commission. The ONS will continue to supply the Secretariat service to the Boundary Commission for England.

## **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

10. The Commission submitted their fourth periodical report on Parliamentary constituencies on 16 December 1994. Therefore, in accordance with the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the Boundary Commission Act 1992, the Commission must submit their fifth periodical report between 16 December 2002 and 15 December 2006.
11. The Commission intend to commence their next general review, and a review of Assembly electoral regions, in December 2002. Before commencing the two reviews, the Commission intend to carry out a thorough review of the policies they will apply during the reviews. The results of the policy review will be incorporated into an information booklet that the Commission will issue shortly after the formal commencement of both reviews has been announced.

## **ELECTORAL COMMISSION**

12. The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 established the Electoral Commission (EC) which came into being on 1 January 2001. When the Commission have completed their fifth general review, the Act provides for the functions they undertake to be transferred to the EC. The Act also provides for the functions undertaken by the other three parliamentary Boundary Commissions in the UK to be transferred to the EC when they complete their general reviews.
13. The EC will establish four Boundary Committees, one for each part of the UK. The Boundary Committees will be responsible for all future reviews of Parliamentary constituency boundaries in their respective countries.

## **CONTACTS**

14. From 1 January 2002, the Commission may be contacted at the following address:-

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