

## **In Brief: 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies**

Boundary Commission for Scotland began its review in January 2021. Scotland has been allocated 57 constituencies 2 less than at present. Proposals published on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2021.

### Rules;

- Each constituency must contain no less than 69724 electors and no more than 77062 electors. (Barring the 2 special designated Island constituencies).
- Commission can recommend a constituency with less electors if it is over 12000kmsq, no constituency can be over 13000kmsq.

### Local Context;

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey to be split up across 3 separate constituencies: 'Highland North', 'Highland Central' and 'Highland East and Elgin'.

- Size of each constituency = North: 12781kmsq (largest constituency in the UK, bigger than 49 countries including Cyprus or Qatar), Central: 8717kmsq (larger than 32 Countries), East: 3570kmsq
- Electorate of each constituency = North: 76654, Central: 75651, East: 72038

### **Issues;**

- The scale of the newly created Highland North and Highland Central constituencies; Highland North is the largest constituency in terms of land mass in the UK. Whilst retaining significant numbers of electors, close to the maximum allowable, even though the rules mean it isn't required to meet the minimum threshold as it exceeds 12000kmsq.
- The significant possibility that Inverness will have 3 different MP's representing the city and its surrounding immediate adjoining areas. Inverness remains one of the fastest growing cities in Europe and INBS has consistently had significantly above average new housing growth on the NHBC's assessments, which they have agreed to let me share. According to NHBC registration data, which covers 70-80% of new homes in the UK, INBS has consistently had significantly above average new homes. NHBC registrations for INBS were over twice the national constituency average for the whole of 2021, more than double for 2019, and even during 2020 were nearly 20% higher than the UK average.
- With the cities growth already beginning to expand along the new boundaries the city will no longer have a single MP. The proposals split Culloden in two, put Tornagrain outside of the new Highland Central constituency containing Inverness, and creates a new boundary on the road to Bunchrew from Inverness, in an area that is liable to have significant development in short order. All of us who have seen Inverness grow could attest to the speed it has expanded.
- Scottish Cities Alliance named Inverness the fastest growing city in Scotland in 2020, saying its population has increased by 15% since 2001.

- This growth causes additional problems with the proposed Highland North constituency; With house building already proposed in areas on the edge of Inverness within Highland North. The constituency, which is only 408 electors from the maximum number of 77062, will begin 2024 already exceeding that figure.
- Inverness Airport is outside the constituency comprising most of the city, Highland Central. With clear issues for representations on regional connectivity for the city resulting from this discrepancy.
- Highland Central would span from the East to West Coast of Scotland, and have highly urban communities like Inverness combined with traditional fishing communities like Mallaig. – Clear issues with representation on economic activity in this proposed constituency. Diverse interests/desires/needs between urban communities and those of rural and island communities.
- Badenoch and Strathspey, which would be in ‘Highland East and Elgin’, would;
  - Have no easy singular public transport system to the largest urban areas within the new constituency.
  - Be in a constituency that excluded core healthcare facilities, with Raigmore not Dr. Grays been the main treatment centre for the area.
  - No longer be included with Inverness as a commuter route along the A9, leaving it with representation that didn’t include a major aspect of its local economy.
- Nairn – Has similar issues to B&S, and is also been added to ‘Highland East and Elgin’ constituency, so the same issues with health care representation exists, and it will also no longer be included with Inverness where a significant number of people from Nairn commute regularly via the A96.
- ‘Highland East and Elgin’, would;
  - Have 3 different constituency MSP’s.
  - Span 2 Local Authority areas Highland and Moray.
- To go from Inverness to Portree for surgeries is 114 miles one way, and about a five and a half hour round trip. Currently only one constituency requires additional funding for a second office; Ross, Skye and Lochaber. – This would additionally need to be replicated in the new ‘Highland Central’ constituency due to scale and travel links, whilst also been needed in ‘Highland North’ due to geographical area.