



BRIEFING PAPER

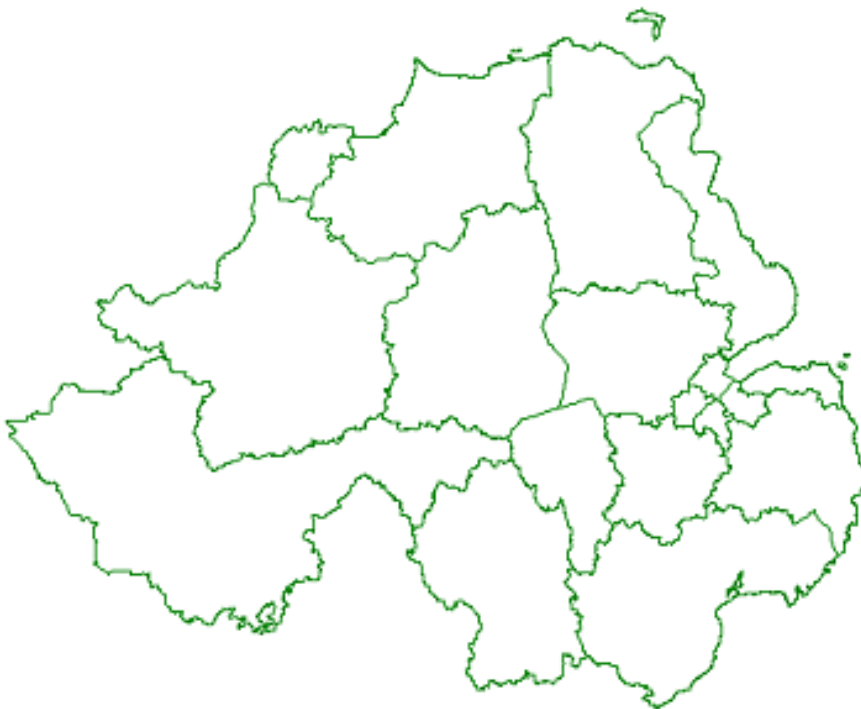
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2018 Review of Parliamentary constituencies: Northern Ireland

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Summary

The current review is the seventh general review of UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries. These are conducted by independent and impartial boundary commissions, one for each country of the UK.

Many of the rules governing the reviews are set out in legislation but the boundary commissions have some discretion about how they conduct their review.

Parliamentary constituency boundaries are periodically reviewed to take account of changes in electorates but the boundary commissions also take the opportunity to realign constituency boundaries so they coincide with other administrative boundaries, such as local government boundaries.

Since the last review of constituency boundaries in Northern Ireland the local government and ward areas have been revised following the reduction in the number of councils from 26 to 11. This followed the [reorganisation of local government in Northern Ireland](#).

Northern Ireland has been allocated 17 seats. This is one fewer than the current number. A number of proposed constituencies cross local government district boundaries. As a result of the changes in ward boundaries, it is not possible to track electorate changes from current constituencies to the proposed constituencies.

Library Briefing Paper 5929 [Constituency boundary reviews and the number of MPs](#) provides background to the boundary review process and discusses the 2013 Review which was halted. Information on the public consultation process that follows the publication of the initial proposals is provided in Library Briefing Paper 7696 [Parliamentary boundary reviews: public consultation](#).

Maps showing the proposed constituency boundaries in each region are on <http://constituencyboundaries.uk/>. Maps and discussion for individual proposed constituencies are on the [Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland's website](#).

The [initial proposals](#) for revised Parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland were released on 6 September 2016. The publication of the initial proposals signalled the start of an initial 12 week public consultation.

The proposed constituency with the largest electorate is Strangford (74,741). The proposed seat with the smallest electorate is Belfast North West (71,266). The proposed constituency covering the largest geographical area is Fermanagh and South Tyrone (3,083 km²). The proposed constituency covering the smallest area is Belfast East (45 km²).

Anyone could submit written representations or counter-proposals to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland [either online](#), via email or by post. Oral representations were also possible at one of the four public hearings being held in October.

On 5 September 2017, the Boundary Commission will publish the transcripts of the public hearings and also all the written representations received in the initial consultation. This will trigger the secondary four week consultation where people can comment on submissions made in the initial consultation.

Initial proposals

Belfast

In its initial proposals the Commission has recommended that Belfast should have three rather than four seats. The three seats will be almost wholly contained within the boundary of the new Belfast local government district.

The Belfast local government district has a theoretical entitlement to 2.87 seats. With the addition of just two wards from other districts the Commission has proposed three new constituencies. The current four seat arrangement includes a number of wards from local government districts surrounding Belfast.

Outside Belfast

Beyond Belfast there are modifications to eight seats;

- North Down,
- Strangford,
- South Down,
- Newry and Armagh,
- Fermanagh and South Tyrone,
- Foyle,
- East Antrim,
- South Antrim.

The Commission proposals abolish five seats:

- Lagan Valley,
- Mid Ulster,
- West Tyrone,
- East Londonderry,
- North Antrim

Proposed new seats are called:

- Dalriada
- Glenshane
- North Tyrone
- Upper Bann and Blackwater
- West Antrim
- West Down

The Lagan Valley seat, south of Lisburn, and part of the Upper Bann seat are transferred to the proposed new seat of West Down.

There are also significant changes to the existing Upper Bann seat and the Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat for the creation of the proposed new Upper Bann and Blackwater constituency.

The existing West Tyrone seat is split between the modified Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat and a new proposed seat of North Tyrone. The proposed North Tyrone seat also takes in the southern part of the existing Mid Ulster seat.

A new seat called Glenshane is proposed. This largely replaces the East Londonderry seat and the northern part of the Mid Ulster seat. It means that the name Londonderry disappears from any constituency name.

Most of the existing North Antrim area is combined with the Coleraine and Portrush area to form the proposed new seat of Dalriada. The existing South Antrim and East Antrim seats are shifted further south to form two modified seats with the same name. Ballyclare and Ballymena are joined together in the proposed new seat of West Antrim.

1. Background

The four Parliamentary boundary commissions announced the commencement of the Seventh Periodical Review, the 2018 Review, on 24 February 2016.¹

The initial proposals for Northern Ireland were released on 6 September 2016 and the first phase of the consultation process will run to 28 November 2016. For more detail of how the public consultation process works see the Library briefing, [Parliamentary boundary reviews: public consultations](#).

This is the second review conducted under the new Rules of Redistribution introduced by the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*. However, the first review conducted under the new rules, the 2013 Review, was not completed. Although many of the proposals in the 2018 Review have similarities to those in 2013, this is a new review.

The changes in electorates and the restructuring of the wards used for the building blocks of constituency construction combined with a different allocation of seats overall means the Commission had a different starting point for this review.

The Boundary Commission's 2018 Review work must be completed with final recommendations and reports handed to the UK Government by 1 October 2018. If approved by Parliament the new constituency boundaries are due to take effect at the 2022 General Election.

A brief background to Parliamentary constituency boundary reviews is available in the Library briefing [Constituency boundary reviews and the number of MPs](#).

Number of seats

For this review, Northern Ireland has been allocated 17 seats. This is one fewer than the current number of seats, but one more than was allocated in the 2013 review.

This allocation is determined by the Rules of Redistribution contained in legislation.² The Rules are contained in the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986*. They were amended by the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011* to include the requirements that:

- the House of Commons must have 600 seats; and
- all constituencies (with the exception of four island seats) must have electorates within 5% of the electoral quota. This is the total number of voters in the UK divided by the total number of constituencies (with the exception of the four island seats and their electorates).

¹ Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, [2018 review announced](#), 24 February 2016

² The *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011* inserted a new Schedule 2 containing Rules for Redistribution of seats to replace the original Schedule 2 in the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986*

The number of seats for each country of the UK is calculated using a formula prescribed in the Rules of Redistribution which also make provision for four excepted constituencies that do not need to meet the electoral quota criteria (see below).

There are no excepted seats in Northern Ireland (there are two in Scotland and two in England).

The current allocation and the allocation for the 2013 and 2018 reviews is shown below.

Country	Current number of seats	2013 Review allocation	2018 Review allocation
England	533	502	501
Scotland	59	52	53
Wales	40	30	29
Northern Ireland	18	16	17
Total	650	600	600

Electoral quota

The quota for the 2018 Review is 74,769. This means constituencies must have electorates between 71,031 and 78,507. The quota for the 2013 Review was 76,641 and the range was 72,810 to 80,473.

The electoral data is set by the legislation to be the electorates calculated two years and ten months before the final reports have to be delivered to the Government. This sets the electorates to be used as those produced by the Office for National Statistics on the 1 December 2015.³

Rule 7

The Rules of Redistribution of seats generally apply to all four nations of the UK equally. However, Rule 7 only applies in Northern Ireland.

The Rules of Distribution prevent any of the boundary commissions from recommending a seat that crosses a national boundary and sets a formula for allocating the number of whole seats to each of the four countries of the UK. A country's theoretical allocation of constituencies will be almost always be slightly higher or lower than the actual whole number allocated.

Northern Ireland's smaller electorate means that the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland may be more constrained than other commissions in its ability to construct constituencies within the required 5% of the electoral quota.

As a result Rule 7 includes a formula that allows the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland some leeway to recommend

³ Office for National Statistics, *Electoral Statistics for UK: 2015*

constituencies outside the required range if the application of the UK-wide quota would “unreasonably impair” its ability to recommend constituencies.⁴

For the 2018 Review this meant the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland could have recommended one or more seats that had an electorate fewer than 71,031 but no fewer than 69,403.

For the 2013 Review the allowable electorate range was 72,810 to 80,473 electors based on an electoral quota of 76,641. Rule 7 allowed one or more constituencies of fewer than 72,810 electors, provided that the number is not less than 70,583.

The Commission has not used this power in either review.

Increase in electorates since December 2015

There have been suggestions that because there was a UK-wide increase in electoral registration in the run up to devolved and local elections in May 2016 and the EU referendum in June 2016 that the electorates for the review should be updated. The number of Parliamentary electors in the UK, the number used for boundary reviews, increased by over 1.7 million between the December 2015 figures and 23 June 2016, the polling day for the EU referendum. This issue is examined in more detail in the House of Commons Library blog piece: [Boundary Review: missing voters, missing seats?](#)

The Boundary Commissions cannot use the increased electorate figures. Schedule 2 of the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986* (as amended) states the date to be used and it would require legislative change to alter this.

Any change would also cause major disruption to the current review. The Boundary Commission would need to start their work on the current review from scratch.

Review process

The Boundary Commission has released guidance on how it has approached the review.⁵

As well as taking into account the statutory numerical requirements set by the electoral quota, the Commission has stated the following:

- Local government wards will be the building blocks. The Commission must use the wards in existence in place at the most recent council election before the review date – in the case the wards in existence on 22 May 2014.
- The Commission will, as far as possible, avoid splitting wards
- Constituencies will comprise adjacent wards
- The boundaries of the existing 18 constituency boundaries will be taken into account but because the reduction in the number of

⁴ See the [relevant part of the explanatory notes](#) to the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*

⁵ Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, [Guide to the 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies](#), August 2016.

seats required and the numerical requirements imposed by the Rules of Redistribution changes in boundaries will be inevitable

- The Commission has the discretion to take account of geographic considerations, such as loughs and main rivers, and to take account of local ties, but these are subordinate to the numerical requirements.

The Commission commented that it was unlikely to be able create seventeen constituencies that exactly matched the boundaries of the eleven new local government areas in Northern Ireland.

The Commission will **not** take into account the following:

- Voting patterns or possible impact on election results
- Changes in ward boundaries after 22 May 2014
- Any changes in electoral registration after 1 December 2015
- Predictions on demographic changes or development proposals.

2. Current seats

There are currently 18 Parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland.



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The electorates of the current seats, shown in the table below, range from 62,643 (Belfast West) to 80,251 (Upper Bann). Upper Bann is the only existing seat above the allowable range.

Only four existing seats fall within the required range, between 71,031 and 78,507, Lagan Valley, Newry and Armagh, North Antrim, and South Down.

The remaining thirteen seats are below the required range for this review. None of the existing four Belfast seats are within the required range.

Although four seats are within the range the Boundary Commission's initial proposals have not included any unaltered seats. This is as a result

of the requirement to reduce the number of seats to 17; the requirement for all seats to be within the required range and adjustments required to bring constituency boundaries within the specified electoral range (see Section 3).

Existing Parliamentary Constituency	2018 Review electorate
Belfast East	63,358
Belfast North	69,041
Belfast South	64,876
Belfast West	62,643
East Antrim	63,304
East Londonderry	67,359
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	70,238
Foyle	70,602
Lagan Valley	71,855
Mid Ulster	68,327
Newry and Armagh	78,158
North Antrim	76,278
North Down	64,700
South Antrim	68,020
South Down	75,606
Strangford	64,750
Upper Bann	80,251
West Tyrone	64,003

Source: ONS Electoral statistics December 2015

Because of changes in the structure of wards in Northern Ireland it is not possible to track the extent of change of electorates of current constituencies to the proposals. However, using mapping data it is possible calculate how many current constituencies are drawn upon to create the proposals.

All of the proposed constituencies draw partially from at least two current constituencies. The proposed South Down constituency is drawn from 5 current constituencies.

The table below shows where the proposed constituencies will draw their electorate from, and which political party controls the current constituencies.

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Proposed constituencies drawn from current constituencies

Proposed	Current		
Belfast South West	Belfast West	Lagan Valley	Belfast South
Belfast East	Belfast East	Lagan Valley	Belfast South
Belfast North West	Belfast West	Belfast North	
Newry and Armagh	Newry and Armagh	South Down	Upper Bann
South Down	South Down	Newry and Armagh	Upper Bann
Upper Bann and Blackwater	Mid Ulster	Upper Bann	Newry and Armagh
West Down	Upper Bann	Lagan Valley	Belfast South
Foyle	Foyle	West Tyrone	
North Down	Belfast East	North Down	Strangford
Strangford	Belfast South	North Down	South Down
South Antrim	South Antrim	Belfast West	Lagan Valley
East Antrim	East Antrim	Belfast North	South Antrim
Dalriada	North Antrim	East Londonderry	East Antrim
Glenshane	Mid Ulster	East Londonderry	Foyle
West Antrim	North Antrim	South Antrim	East Antrim
North Tyrone	West Tyrone	Mid Ulster	Fermanagh and South Tyrone
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	West Tyrone	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	Mid Ulster

Note:

Colour to left of current constituency indicates current controlling party: DUP, SF, SDLP, UUP, Other

3. Initial proposals

The proposals were published 6 September 2016.⁶ Interactive maps are available on the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland's [website](#).



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⁶ Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, *Provisional Review of Parliamentary Constituencies: 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies*, 6 September 2016

Proposed Parliamentary Constituency	2018 Review electorate	Area (km ²)
Belfast East	72,001	45
Belfast North West	71,266	51
Belfast South West	73,643	48
Dalraida	74,654	1,303
East Antrim	73,317	405
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	73,194	3,083
Foyle	71,398	207
Glenshane	74,355	1,858
Newry and Armagh	74,715	939
North Down	74,317	123
North Tyrone	71,379	1,753
South Antrim	71,614	506
South Down	74,040	1,238
Strangford	74,741	684
Upper Bann and Blackwater	73,641	696
West Antrim	72,664	810
West Down	72,430	562

As well as naming the proposed seats, the Commission designates the seats as either 'county' or 'borough' seats. This designation relates to the level of election spending allowed by candidates during regulated campaign periods. The levels are slightly higher in county constituencies to reflect that they are usually geographically larger areas.

The three proposed seats in Belfast are designated borough seats. The remaining 14 proposed seats in Northern Ireland are designated as county constituencies.

The boundaries of the historic counties of Northern Ireland do not match exactly with current administrative local government boundaries but they provide a convenient regional breakdown of the proposals.

Local Government Districts

Northern Ireland is divided into 11 districts for local government purposes. All but 3 of the 17 proposed constituencies cross one or more local government district boundaries.

Proposed constituencies that cross local government districts

Constituencies	Local Government Districts		
Belfast North West	Antrim and Newtonabbey	Belfast	
Dalriada	Causeway Coast and Glens	Mid and East Antrim	
East Antrim	Antrim and Newtownabbey	Mid and East Antrim	
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	Derry and Strabane	Fermanagh and Omagh	Mid Ulster
Glenshane	Causeway Coast and Glens	Derry and Strabane	Mid Ulster
Newry and Armagh	Newry, Mourne and Down	Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	
North Down	Lisburn and Castlereagh	North Down and Ards	
North Tyrone	Derry and Strabane	Fermanagh and Omagh	Mid Ulster
South Antrim	Antrim and Newtownabbey	Lisburn and Castlereagh	
South Down	Newry, Mourne and Down	Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	
Strangford	Lisburn and Castlereagh	Newry, Mourne and Down	North Down and Ards
Upper Bann and Blackwater	Mid Ulster	Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	
West Antrim	Antrim and Newtownabbey	Mid and East Antrim	
West Down	Lisburn and Castlereagh	Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	

The requirement for the proposed constituencies to be within 5% of the electoral quota means that none of the 11 local government districts within Northern Ireland are capable of containing a whole number constituencies.

Only 2 local government districts contain at least one full whole constituency: Belfast, containing the whole of Belfast East and Belfast South West; and Derry and Strabane, containing the whole of Foyle. Under any proposal all local government districts, including Belfast and Derry and Strabane, would contain at least one partial constituency.

3.1 Belfast

The electorate of the existing Belfast constituencies gives a theoretical entitlement of 3.48 seats. As a result the Boundary Commission modelled proposals based on 3 seats and 4 seats for Belfast.

In the 2013 The Commission also modelled for 3 and 4 seats. The Commission concluded that Belfast should have 3 seats as to allocate four meant substantial extensions into adjacent rural areas.⁷

In the 2018 Review, the Commission has to take into account the new boundaries of the local government district (LGD) of Belfast. This reflects the inclusion of parts of the former LGD of Lisburn within the Belfast LGD boundary (the southwest corner which now forms part of the Collin district electoral area).

⁷ Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, *Sixth Periodical Review of Parliamentary Constituencies*, September 2011.

The theoretical entitlement of the local government district of Belfast is 2.87 seats.

The Commission concluded that the best solution was to model for three seats for Belfast and that the models showed that it was best to use the Belfast seats as the starting point for the whole of Northern Ireland.

The three proposed seats in Belfast comprise all the wards of the local government district of Belfast plus two wards from the Antrim and Newtownabbey LGD – Collinbridge and Valley.

The proposed new Belfast East constituency comprises the 21 Belfast LGD wards to the east of the River Lagan. The Dundonald and Ballyhanwood areas in the current Belfast East seat are transferred to the proposed North Down seat.

The existing Belfast South seat is split four ways. The Belfast LGD wards to the east of the Lagan are included in the proposed new Belfast East seat and the Belfast LGD wards to the west of the Lagan are transferred to the proposed Belfast South West seat.

The areas beyond the Belfast LGD boundary currently in the Belfast South seat are split between the proposed Strangford seat and the proposed West Down seat. Carryduff is split between the two seats, Cairnshill and Galwally are allocated to the Strangford seat and Beechill, Knockbracken and Newtonbreda are allocated to the proposed West Down seat.

The proposed Belfast South West seat is largely formed from the existing Belfast West seat except for the wards in the north of the existing seat. The Forth River, Ballygomartin, Clonard, Falls, Beechmount and the Shankhill wards are allocated to the proposed Belfast North West seat.

The proposed Belfast North seat comprises the remaining wards of Belfast LGD to the west of the Lagan plus the two non-Belfast ward of Collinbridge and Valley.

The proposed seats in the 2013 Review followed a broadly similar pattern as the seats proposed this time around, but in 2013 the boundary between the proposed eastern constituency, named Belfast South East, included some areas to the west of the Lagan. In 2013 the proposed Belfast north seat extended further north into Newtown abbey.

3.2 Down

In the 2013 Review it left the pattern of seats covering Down largely unchanged to the existing seats. The main change was the proposed transfer of the Ards peninsular to a modified North Down seat from the Strangford seat.

In the 2018 Review it has proposed that the North Down constituency be retained with the addition of Dundonald and Ballyhanwood, currently in the existing Belfast East seat. The Commission has proposed

that the Millisle area in the current North Down seat should be transferred to the Strangford seat.

The proposed Strangford seat is largely unchanged to the existing seat. The main difference is the addition of the Carryduff East, Cairnshill and Galwally wards from the existing Belfast South seat and the addition of the Crossgar and Killyleagh ward from the existing South Down seat.

The Commission has also proposed a South Down constituency largely the same as the existing seat of the same name. The main alteration is to the south of Banbridge to take account of modified ward boundaries. The whole of the ward of Loughbrickland is allocated to the South Down seat, which means the village of Loughbrickland will transfer from the Upper Bann seat to the proposed South Down seat.

The remaining area is currently split between the existing seats of Upper Bann (including Banbridge, Bleary, Gilford, Magheralin and Donaghcloney) and the existing seat of Lagan Valley (including Drumbo, Hillsborough and Dromore and the area south of Lisburn and the River Lagan). In this review the Commission has recommended that these area form the proposed West Down seat.

The northern part of the existing Lagan Valley seat (Lisburn, Maghaberry and Ballinderry) is transferred to the proposed South Antrim seat.

3.3 Armagh

Most of Armagh is currently allocated to the Newry and Armagh constituency. The Commission has proposed that this constituency should be retained with some modifications. The existing boundaries make the constituency the second largest by electorate in Northern Ireland.

The Commission has proposed some minor adjustments with the boundary of the proposed South Down constituency to realign the constituency boundary with new ward boundaries.

The northern part of the existing Newry and Armagh seat (the wards of Blackwatertown and Loughgall) are transferred to the proposed new seat of Upper Bann and Blackwater. This new seat also includes the Portadown, Craigavon, Lurgan and Aghagallon areas of the existing Upper Bann seat.

The proposed Upper Bann and Blackwater seat also includes most of Dungannon and the Killyman, Moy and Caledon wards to the south of Dungannon (which are currently in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat). It also includes the Coalisland and Washing Bay area (currently in the Mid Ulster constituency).

3.4 Fermanagh and Tyrone

The electorate of the existing Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat is just below the lower end of the allowable electorate. With the proposed transfer of the eastern end of the seat to the new Upper Bann and Blackwater seat the Commission had to extend the boundaries of the proposed Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat.

The wards of Trillick, Fintona, Newtonsaville, Dromore, Drumquin, Newtonstewart, Glenderg and Castlederg are transferred from the existing West Tyrone seat to the proposed Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat.

The proposed reconfiguration of Fermanagh and Tyrone has meant the Commission has proposed that the West Tyrone and Mid Ulster constituencies are abolished and the remainder of the Tyrone should form a new seat called North Tyrone.

The Omagh, Strabane, Glenelly Vally and Sixmile Cross areas of the existing current West Tyrone seat are transferred to the proposed North Tyrone seat.

The southern part of the existing Mid Ulster seat, Cookstown, Dunnamore and across to Moortown and Lough Neagh are also transferred to the proposed North Tyrone seat. This is with the exception of the Coalisland and Washing Bay area which has been allocated to the proposed Upper Bann and Blackwater seat.

This pattern of seats is broadly similar to that recommended in the 2013 Review but the proposed Upper Bann and Blackwater seat has changed the configuration of boundaries around Dungannon. In the 2013 Review the area north of Strabane was allocated to the proposed Foyle seat which led to the proposed name of the main Tyrone seat as Mid Tyrone.

3.5 Derry/Londonderry

The constituency of Foyle is only altered to realign the constituency boundary with the new ward boundary of Slievekirk. This has the effect of transferring the village of Bready from the existing West Tyrone seat to the proposed Foyle seat.

The Commission proposals abolish the East Londonderry constituency with most of the area in the existing seat being transferred to the proposed new seat of Glenshane. The exception is the Coleraine and Portrush area. The Commission proposes to transfer this to another new seat called Dalriada.

The proposed Glenshane seat also includes the areas north of Cookstown currently in the Mid Ulster seat. This seat is broadly similar to the proposed Glenshane seat included in the 2013 Review.

3.6 Antrim

In the Commission's proposals the existing North Antrim constituency would be abolished. It would be replaced by the proposed constituency of Dalriada. This would be formed of the Coleraine and Portrush area currently in the East Londonderry seat, the northern most tip of the current East Antrim constituency (around Red Bay) and the area of the current North Antrim seat north of Ballymena.

The proposed Dalriada seat is similar to the proposed Coleraine and North Antrim constituency included in the Commission's revised proposals from the 2013 Review.

The Commission is proposing combining the town of Ballymena itself, in the current North Antrim seat, with the Ballyclare and Randalstown area, in the existing South Antrim seat, to form the new proposed seat of West Antrim.

The proposed South Antrim seat shifts further south to include the town of Antrim and the Lisburn and Ballinderry area currently in the Lagan Valley seat.

The remaining part of Antrim, the coastal area centred on Larne is retained. The northern boundary is modified to allow for the proposed Dalriada seat (as mentioned above). The southern boundary is altered to include the Newtonabbey area currently included in the existing Belfast North seat.

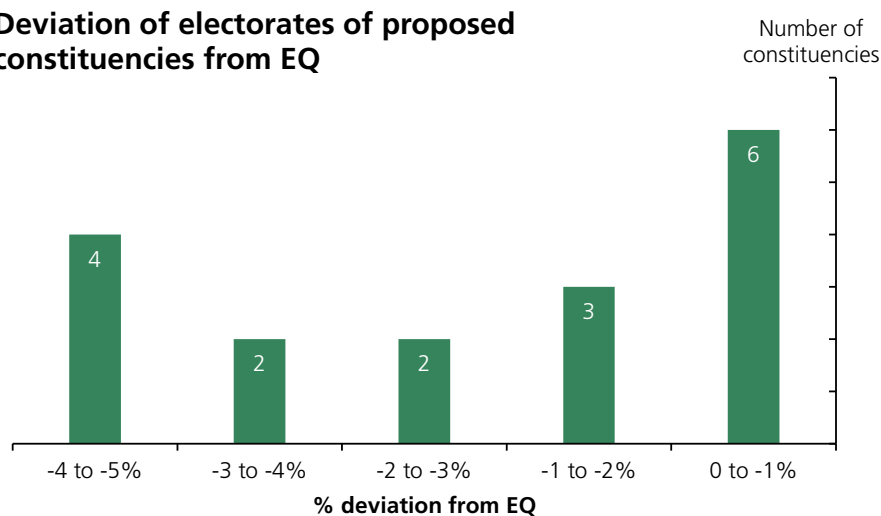
4. Electorates of the proposed constituencies

4.1 Deviation from the electoral quota

The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland is required to propose constituencies that have an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota of 74,769 – constituency electorates must be between 71,031 and 78,507.

The electorates of the proposed constituencies are all below the electoral quota.

Deviation of electorates of proposed constituencies from EQ



4.2 Largest and smallest electorates

Under the current proposals the largest constituency in Northern Ireland (in terms of electorate) would be Strangford, with 74,741 electors. It is comprised of 27 wards (the average per proposed constituency).

Proposed constituencies with largest and smallest electorates

Largest		Smallest		
1	Strangford	74,741	Belfast North West	71,266
2	Newry and Armagh	74,715	North Tyrone	71,379
3	Dalriada	74,654	Foyle	71,398
4	Glenshane	74,355	South Antrim	71,614
5	North Down	74,317	Belfast East	72,001

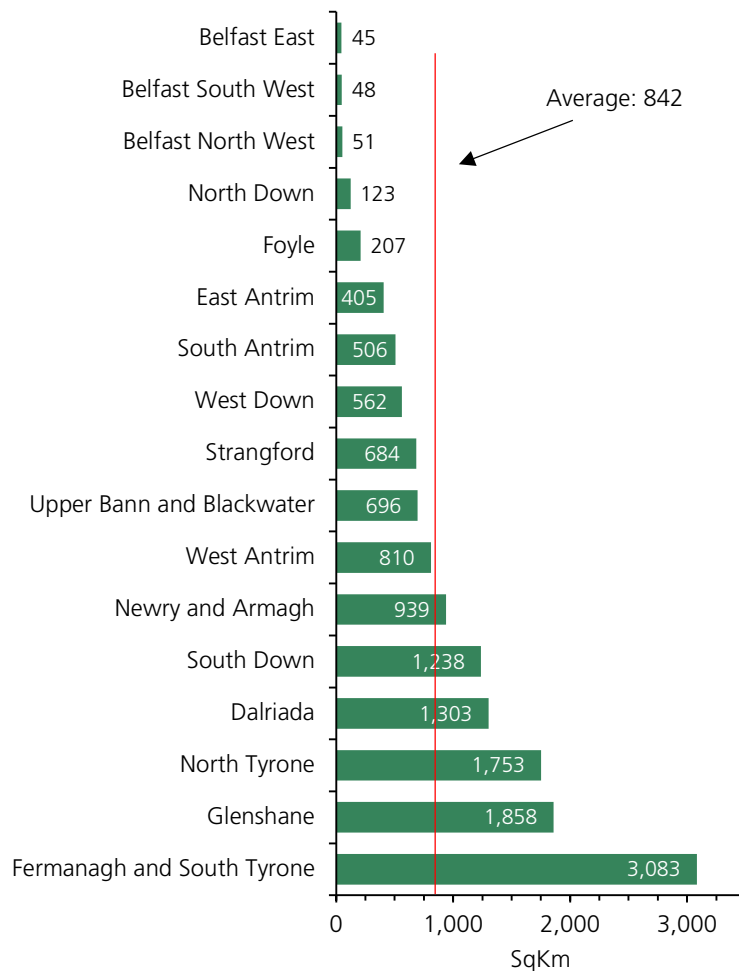
The constituency with the smallest electorate is Belfast North West, with 71,266. This is 235 electors more than the minimum permissible electorate. The constituency is comprised of 21 wards (below the average of 27).

5. Area of the proposed constituencies

The reduction in the number of seats means that the average size of a Northern Ireland constituency increases to 842 km². The largest of the proposed constituencies in Northern Ireland is Fermanagh and South Tyrone, which has an area of 3,083 km². There are only four other proposed constituencies which cover an area greater than 1,000 km². The proposed constituency covering the smallest geographical area is Belfast East, with an area of 45 km².

The chart below shows the proposed constituencies for Northern Ireland ranked by area size smallest to largest.

Proposed constituencies ranked by area



6. Consultation

Initial consultation

The publication of the initial proposals triggered the initial twelve week consultation process. This closed on 28 November 2016. The initial period includes four public hearings (see below).

Submissions can be made to the Commission in writing, electronically via its website or in person at one of the four hearings. All representations, regardless of how they are submitted, are given equal consideration.

Public hearings

The legislation makes provision for the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland to arrange for at least two and no more than five public hearings to hear oral representations.

Each hearing has to be no longer than two days and has to be held in a 5 week window within the 12 week initial consultation (from the beginning of the fifth week to the end of the tenth week).

During the 2013 review there were three hearings held in October 2011. The Commission held them in the areas most affected by the initial proposals: Belfast, Omagh and Ballymena.⁸ Each hearing was scheduled to be two days but none of them lasted longer than one day. A total of 12 people made representations,⁹ 3 in Belfast, 4 in Omagh and 5 in Ballymena.

For the 2018 Review the Commission has arranged for four public hearings.

Date	Location
05 October 2016	Tullyglass Hotel, Ballymena
11 October 2016	Silverbirch hotel, Omagh
20 October 2016	Ramada Hotel, Shaws Bridge, Belfast
25 October 2016	Seagoe Hotel, Portadown

Each hearing will last for one day and will include an evening session. The Commission has appointed independent Chairs for each hearing. The Chairs are responsible for the procedures to be followed at their hearing.¹⁰

⁸ Library briefing, *Constituency boundaries: the Sixth General Review in Northern Ireland*, SN/PC/06225, February 2013.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, *Provisional Review of Parliamentary Constituencies: 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies*, 6 September 2016, p5

Secondary Consultation

The Commission will publish all the representations received during the initial consultation. At the same time it will publish transcripts of the public hearings held in October 2016. Publication of these will trigger the secondary consultation which will last four weeks.

The Commission has announced that the secondary consultation will now start on 5 September 2017 and end on 2 October 2017.

During the 2013 Review the secondary consultation took place early in 2012, only a few weeks after the initial period of consultation closed. If the Commission had followed the same timetable as before the secondary consultation on the 2018 Review would have been released early in 2017.

However, the early Assembly elections in March 2017 and the early general election for the UK Parliament in June 2017 meant that the Boundary Commission had delayed launching the secondary consultation.

Revised proposals

If the Commission decides to revise its proposals in the light of representations received it will publish a new report. This is likely to be in the autumn of 2017.

Once revised proposals are published an eight week consultation begins. Only written submissions, either submitted via the Boundary Commission's website or sent direct to them, will be invited. There will be no public hearings.

The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland has said it will publish submissions on its website.¹¹

Details of the consultation process are in the briefing [Parliamentary boundary reviews: public consultations](#).

¹¹ Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, [Guide to the 2018 review of Parliamentary Constituencies](#), August 2016, p9

7. Final recommendations

The four commissions are required to publish their final recommendations and reports before 1 October 2018.

Once the reports and recommendations are submitted to the Government the four commissions' involvement in the review is concluded.

7.1 Parliamentary Approval

Once the Government receives the reports from the four boundary commissions it must lay them before Parliament. If any new constituency boundaries are required, the Government must lay a draft Order in Council before Parliament to give effect to the changes.

Following the last review there were separate Orders for each nation of the UK. However, a single draft order is expected to be laid before Parliament at the conclusion of the current review.

At this stage the Government cannot make alterations to the recommendations unless it has been expressly requested to do this by a boundary commission.

The draft Order in Council must be approved by both Houses of Parliament. If approved the Orders are submitted to be made by Her Majesty in Council.

The constituencies do not take effect until the next general election, due to be May 2022 under the provisions of the *Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011*.

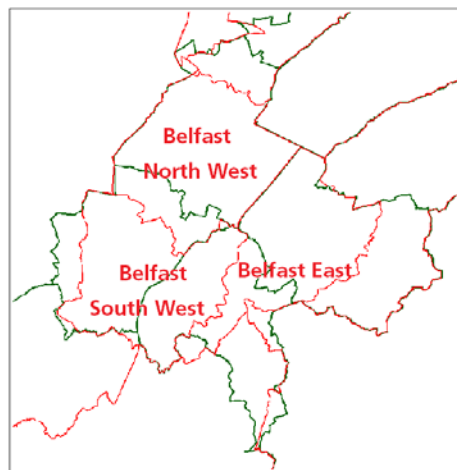
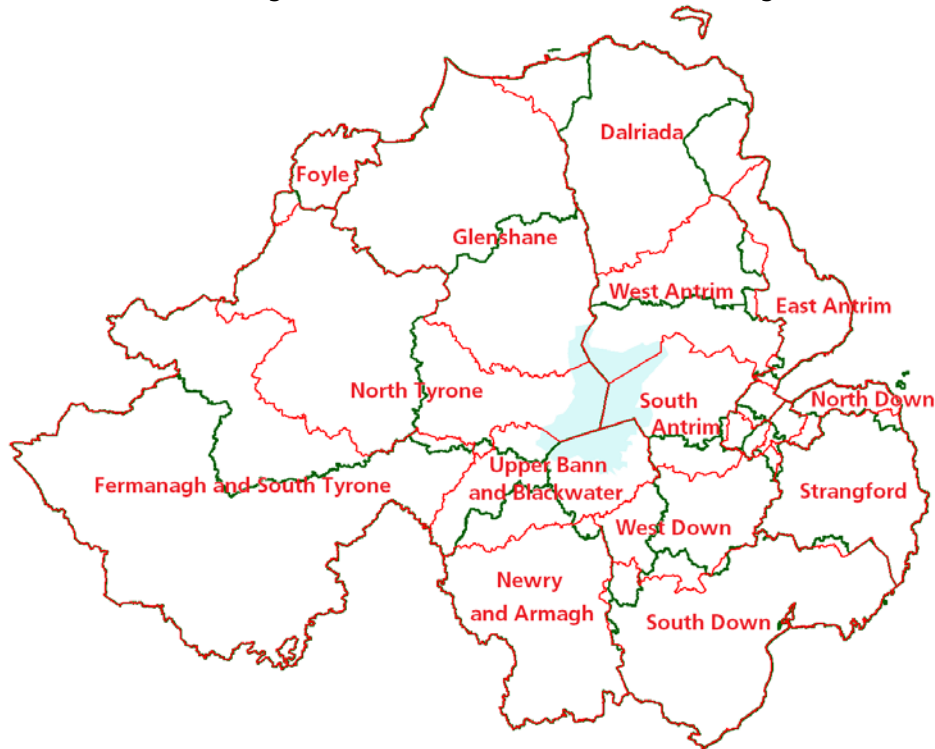
Any by-elections in the time between the Orders being approved and the next general election are held using the current constituency boundaries.

If Parliament does not approve the draft Orders, the Government may then amend the proposals and lay new draft Orders in Council. These will still require Parliamentary approval to take effect.

The validity of an Order in Council, once made, cannot be called into question in any legal proceedings.

8. Appendix

This map shows the proposed new constituencies' boundaries and names in red, with the existing UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries shown in green. The table below shows the sitting MPs.



- Existing constituency boundaries
- 2018 Review - initial proposals

Existing Parliamentary Constituency	Current MP	Party
Belfast East	Gavin Robinson	DUP
Belfast North	Nigel Dodds	DUP
Belfast South	Dr Alasdair McDonnell	SDLP
Belfast West	Paul Maskey	Sinn Féin
East Antrim	Sammy Wilson	DUP
East Londonderry	Gregory Campbell	DUP
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	Tom Elliott	UUP
Foyle	Mark Durkan	SDLP
Lagan Valley	Sir Jeffrey Donaldson	DUP
Mid Ulster	Francie Molloy	Sinn Féin
Newry and Armagh	Mickey Brady	Sinn Féin
North Antrim	Ian Paisley	DUP
North Down	Lady Hermon	Independent
South Antrim	Danny Kinahan	UUP
South Down	Margaret Ritchie	SDLP
Strangford	Jim Shannon	DUP
Upper Bann	David Simpson	DUP
West Tyrone	Pat Doherty	Sinn Féin

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