



Constituency boundaries: the Sixth General Review in England

Standard Note: SN/PC/06229

Last updated: 4 February 2013

Author: Isobel White and Neil Johnston

Section Parliament and Constitution Centre

The *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011* made provision for the number of constituencies to be reduced to 600.

The four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions announced the commencement of the sixth general review of Parliamentary constituencies (also known as the 2013 review) on 4 March 2011. The Boundary Commission for England announced on the same day that England would have 502 constituencies, a reduction of 31. Two constituencies are exempt from the new requirement for constituencies to be within 5% of the electoral quota. These are the two constituencies allocated to the Isle of Wight.

The Boundary Commission for England published its initial proposals on 13 September 2011. The Commission's revised proposals were published on 16 October 2012. However, following the *Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013* receiving Royal Assent on 31 January 2013, the date of the next boundary review has been postponed until 2018. The Boundary Commission for England has therefore ceased working on the 2013 Review.

This Note gives details of the 2013 review in England, its progress and the consultation process up to the point of cessation. It should be read in conjunction with Library Standard Note, [Initial proposals for new constituency boundaries: England](#) (SN 6068) which looks at the extent to which the proposed constituencies can be identified with existing seats and which existing constituencies will be most affected by the proposals. Library Standard Note, [Revised proposals for new constituency boundaries](#) (SN6445) looks at how the revised proposals from the Boundary Commissions differ from the initial proposals published last year and the extent to which proposed constituencies can be identified with existing seats.

For details of the review in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland see Standard Notes SN 6227 [Constituency boundaries: the Sixth General Review in Scotland](#); SN 6226 [Constituency boundaries: the Sixth General Review in Wales](#) and SN 6225 [Constituency boundaries: the Sixth General Review in Northern Ireland](#).

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as being up to date; the law or policies may have changed since it was last updated; and it should not be relied upon as legal or professional advice or as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

This information is provided subject to [our general terms and conditions](#) which are available online or may be provided on request in hard copy. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.

Contents

1 Background 3

1.1 Wards 4

1.2 Electoral regions 5

2 Initial recommendations 8

London 8

South East 9

South West 9

East Midlands 10

West Midlands 10

Eastern 10

North East 11

North West 11

Yorkshire and the Humber 11

3 Initial consultation 12

4 Secondary consultation 12

5 Revised recommendations 13

London 13

South East 14

South West 15

East Midlands 16

West Midlands 16

Eastern 17

North East 18

North West 19

Yorkshire and Humber 20

6 Final Recommendations and Order in Council 21

1 Background

The four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions announced the commencement of the Sixth Periodical Review on 4 March 2011. The Boundary Commissions agreed, for the purposes of the Sixth Review, that the total UK electorate was 45,678,175 which gave an electoral quota for the whole of the UK of 76,641. This means that every constituency in Great Britain, apart from the specific exceptions given to four island constituencies in the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*, must have an electorate no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473. Separate calculations apply in Northern Ireland.¹

The Boundary Commission for England published a press notice and a newsletter on 4 March 2011 which announced that the Commission had commenced work on the sixth review of Parliamentary constituencies following the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*.² Under the method of allocating the number of seats for each constituent country of the UK the Boundary Commission for England announced that England would have 502 constituencies, a reduction of 31 from the current number. Two seats in England are exempt from the strict numerical requirements of the new Rules of Distribution; these are the two seats allocated to the Isle of Wight.

Announcing the Sixth Review, Simon James, the Secretary to the Boundary Commission for England said:

Parliament has set the Commission clear rules about how many electors each constituency can have. The first stage of the review is for the Commission to come up with its provisional recommendations – we will be seeking views on these once they are published in the autumn. Everyone will have a chance to see and comment on the proposals.³

The Boundary Commission for England stated that there were likely to be “very extensive and wide-ranging changes to be made to the existing pattern and composition of constituencies”.⁴ The Commission added that it

...wishes to make very clear that those with an interest in the review process should understand that the defined number of constituencies and the 5% electoral parity target are statutory requirements that it must apply and that it has absolutely no discretion in respect of either matter. Those areas where the Commission does have some discretion, such as the local government boundaries to be observed or the local ties that will be broken by the changes made to the existing constituencies are, as stated above, all subordinate to these two main statutory requirements.

8. The Commission emphasises that one of the effects of reducing the overall number of constituencies allocated to England, together with the requirement that all those constituencies (with the exception of the two Isle of Wight constituencies) must have an electorate that is within 5% of the UK electoral quota, is that many of the existing constituencies that have an electorate that is currently within the 5% parity target will, nonetheless, need to be altered as a result of the need to create feasible constituencies in the surrounding area. It cannot be assumed that, simply because an

¹ See Library Standard Note SN/SG/5677 *Sizes of constituency electorates*

² <http://assets.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/newsletter2-2011.pdf>

<http://www.boundarycommissionforengland.org.uk/docs/newsrelease-040311.pdf>

³ Boundary Commission for England, *News Release*, 4 March 2011

⁴ Boundary Commission for England, *Newsletter, Issue 2/2011*, 4 March 2011, p2

existing constituency appears to have an electorate within the mandatory parameters of 72,810 and 80,473, it will be immune from change in the course of the review.⁵

In its annual report for 2010/11 the Commission set out its agreed budget for 2011/12. The Commission is funded by the Cabinet Office and has been allocated £3,235,986 for the year 2011/12. The Commission's expenditure for this period includes costs relating specifically to the initial phase of the 2013 review (publishing initial recommendations, holding public hearings, publishing responses, and publicity associated with the review).⁶

1.1 Wards

In its newsletter of March 2011 the Boundary Commission for England commented on the established practice of using local government wards as the building blocks for constituencies:

12. The Commission first adopted its policy of using wards as the basic building block for constituencies at the third general review (1976-1983) and it continued with this policy at both the fourth (1991-1995) and fifth (2000-2006) general reviews, where no ward was divided between constituencies. In considering its policies for the 2013 Review, the Commission has decided that it would be desirable, once again, to use whole wards to create constituencies where it is feasible to do so, having regard to the 5% statutory requirement.

13. Using wards will allow the Commission to benefit from the considerable information that is already available about them. The composition and the area of each ward is clearly defined in a Statutory Instrument, and the electoral statistics for each are available from the Electoral Registration Officers for the districts in which they are located.

14. The Commission also noted the other reasons that it had previously given for using whole wards to construct constituencies. These were that:

- wards are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest.
- wards usually have an established and well run administrative machinery in place for organising elections within them.
- wards have an identity that is generally known to the local electorate who understand how they are organised and where they may vote in them.
- local political party organisations are usually based on wards or groups of wards.

15. The Commission's experience from previous reviews also confirmed that any division of a ward between constituencies would be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations, cause difficulties for Electoral Registration and Returning Officers and, possibly, cause confusion to the electorate.

The Commission published its guide to the 2013 review on 28 June 2011. The guidance confirmed the Commission's view that:

⁵ Ibid, p2

⁶ Boundary Commission for England, [Annual report 2010/11](#), pp18-9

in the absence of exceptional and compelling circumstances...it would not be appropriate to divide wards in cases where it is possible to construct constituencies that meet the statutory electoral range without dividing them.⁷

The Commission also stated that it would refer to local government boundaries as they existed at 6 May 2010 and would not generally take into account local government boundaries that took effect at the local elections in May 2011.⁸

1.2 Electoral regions

In previous reviews the Boundary Commission for England has used counties as the basis for review areas. In Greater London, and increasingly in the metropolitan counties, the individual boroughs have formed the basis for review areas, although boroughs have often been paired or grouped to assist the allocation of appropriately sized constituencies. In its announcement of the Sixth Review the Boundary Commission said that it considered this approach to be 'no longer viable' and was

...minded to use the electoral regions, which are already defined in legislation for the purposes of European elections, as a template for grouping and allocating the 500 constituencies across England.⁹

Under the new Rules for Redistribution the Boundary Commission for England may take account 'if and to such extent as they think fit' the boundaries of the electoral regions specified in Schedule 1 of the *European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002*. However, the Commission noted that the use of the electoral regions for the initial allocation 'would represent a change from its previous methodology' and it has 'therefore decided to consult on its proposed use of the regions, in accordance with section 5(10) of the 1986 Act'.¹⁰ The Commission gave details of the number of constituencies that it would allocate to each of the English regions if it used this approach:

The Boundary Commission explained why it favoured using the boundaries of the European election regions:

...this appears to be the most appropriate way in which the Commission could fulfil the task which it has been given by Parliament. The Commission considers that adopting this process will enable it best to meet the statutory requirement to allocate a precise number of constituencies to England which all satisfy the statutory 5% electoral parity requirement (subject to the exception made for the two constituencies to be allocated to the Isle of Wight). It seems to the Commission that such a process will allow that objective to be achieved in a way which best affords recognition to regional and local affiliations while at the same time making its task manageable within the statutory timetable (since this general approach will limit the number of permutations and combinations of wards and, as necessary, polling districts which need to be considered in order to comply with the new statutory requirements). The Commission also notes that rule 5(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the 1986 Act provides that it may take into account the boundaries of the existing constituencies and that all those constituencies are wholly contained within the boundaries of the electoral

⁷ Boundary Commission for England, *A Guide to the 2013 Review*, June 2011, p6

⁸ Ibid, pp8-9

⁹ Boundary Commission for England, *Political Parties Meeting 4 April 2011*, May 2011, p4

¹⁰ <http://www.boundarycommissionforengland.org.uk/docs/newsletter2-040311.pdf>

regions – so a region-based approach seems to be appropriate as a method which gives proper weight to that factor.¹¹

The consultation on the use of the electoral regions closed on 1 April 2011. The Boundary Commission received 29 responses of which 18 gave broad approval to the proposal to use the European electoral regions as a template for grouping and allocating the English constituencies. Of the other responses 7 gave qualified approval, 3 were neutral and 1 was opposed. The Boundary Commission provided an analysis of the responses in a newsletter published on 18 April 2011.¹²

The main issue of debate during the consultation was the treatment of the Isle of Wight constituencies. Some respondents suggested that the electorate of the Isle of Wight should be considered as part of the total electorate for the South East region for the purposes of the Sainte-Laguë calculation. The Commission disagreed and said it had

...given careful consideration to the points raised in support of this modified approach. It has, however, concluded that it should adopt the approach to the application of the Sainte-Laguë methodology for allocation of constituencies between the regions which it originally set out in Newsletter 2/2011. The Commission considers that that approach properly reflects the approach chosen by Parliament in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 for the allocation of constituencies between the four parts of the United Kingdom. In the legislation, Parliament decided that the two Isle of Wight constituencies and two Scottish constituencies should be left out of the statutory Sainte-Laguë calculation as special cases. The Commission considers it appropriate that it should adopt an approach similar to that determined by Parliament, treating the Isle of Wight as a special case which has been given its own allocation regime for particular reasons already fully considered by Parliament. The Commission's proposal to use a regional approach for the allocation of constituencies in England has not been put forward with a view to creating equality between the regions as such (including the Isle of Wight within the South East region), but rather with a view to assisting the Commission and the public to produce practical and focused proposals for the creation of the number of constituencies allocated to England according to the statutory Sainte-Laguë calculation all of which satisfy the statutory parameters applicable across the whole area covered by that calculation (that is, England excluding the Isle of Wight).¹³

The three Members of Parliament representing constituencies in Worcestershire responded to the consultation to suggest that the local ties of Worcestershire were closer to the neighbouring South West region than to the rest of the West Midlands region. They proposed that there should be flexibility in crossing the regional border between Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. The Commission noted that 'there will be flexibility to cross regional boundaries if arguments of sufficient weight are presented' and that the adoption by the Commission of the regional approach to the allocation of constituencies

does not preclude anyone from making representations during the statutory consultation on the Commission's initial proposals for constituencies to the effect that regional boundaries should be crossed when identifying the

¹¹ <http://www.boundarycommissionforengland.org.uk/docs/newsletter2-040311.pdf>

¹² Boundary Commission for England Newsletter 3/2011, 18 April 2011

¹³ *ibid*, p2

boundaries of a particular constituency, but it is likely that compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade the Commission of that.¹⁴

After considering the responses to the consultation the Commission decided to adopt the proposed approach to the use of the regions set out in Newsletter 2/2011 and said that it would also adopt, without modification, its approach to the use of the Sainte-Laguë methodology for allocation of constituencies between the regions set out in the same newsletter. Details of the European Parliament electoral regions were given in an Appendix to the Commission's *Guide to the 2013 Review*¹⁵ which is reproduced as an Appendix to this note.

The Boundary Commission announced provisional regional allocations of seats on the basis that the regional allocation of seats was adopted. The following table is taken from the Boundary Commission Newsletter 2/2011:

Region	Electorate	Allocation
East of England	4,280,707	56
East Midlands	3,361,089	44
London	5,266,904	68
North East	1,971,249	26
North West	5,253,019	68
South East*	6,192,504*	81
South West	4,042,475	53
West Midlands	4,115,668	54
Yorkshire and the Humber	3,848,942	50
Total	38,332,557*	500

*after deduction of the electorate (110,924) of the Isle of Wight

¹⁴ *ibid*, p3

¹⁵ Boundary Commission for England, *A Guide to the 2013 Review*, June 2011, p20

The number of seats lost in each region is shown in the table below.



Source: Feargal McGuinness, Library Standard Note SN/SG/5677 *Sizes of constituency electorates*.

At the same time as announcing the Sixth Review the Boundary Commission for England published the electoral statistics and made them available on its website for download.¹⁶ The statistics give details of the 2011 electorates of existing constituencies and gives the number of Parliamentary electors in each London Borough, Unitary Authority, County and District Council in England.

2 Initial recommendations

The Boundary Commission for England published its initial proposals on 13 September 2011. Under the initial proposals 77 of the constituencies in England remain unchanged.

London

The London region has been allocated 68 constituencies, a reduction of 5 seats.

- Four of the 73 existing constituencies were unchanged; two in the London Borough of Barnet and two in the London borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 38 of the new constituencies crossed London borough boundaries, 37 of these contained parts of 2 London boroughs and one (the new City of London and Islington South constituency) contained parts of two London boroughs and the whole of the City of London.
- The proposed new constituency of Chingford and Edmonton crossed the River Lee and the new Richmond and Twickenham constituency crossed the River Thames.¹⁷

¹⁶ Boundary Commission for England, [Guide to the 2011 electoral figures](#)

¹⁷ [Initial proposals for London](#), Boundary Commission for England, 2011

South East

The South East region has been allocated 83 constituencies, a reduction of one.

- 18 of the existing 84 constituencies were unchanged, and only minor changes were proposed to 23 constituencies.
- The new Rules for Redistribution in the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011* requires the Isle of Wight to be divided into two constituencies. The initial proposals divided the island into the Isle of Wight North and Isle of Wight South constituencies.
- In Berkshire six of the eight constituencies were unchanged and the other two were changed only by the transfer of one ward.
- In Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex seven of the 25 existing constituencies were unchanged.
- One new constituency (The Weald) crossed the county boundary between East Sussex and Kent.
- The proposed constituency of Buckingham contained electors from the Borough of Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire.
- Two proposed constituencies (Portsmouth West and Portsmouth East) contained electors from the City of Portsmouth and Hampshire.
- Three proposed constituencies contained electors from the City of Southampton and Hampshire. These were Southampton Test, Eastleigh and Southampton Itchen.¹⁸

South West

The South West region has been allocated 53 constituencies, a reduction of two.

- 14 of the existing 55 constituencies were unchanged.
- The two existing constituencies in North Somerset were unchanged.
- The two existing constituencies in the Borough of Swindon were unchanged.
- In the city of Bristol two of the four current constituencies were unchanged and the other two were changed only by the transfer of one ward.
- In Gloucestershire two of the six current constituencies were unchanged, two were changed only by a small ward boundary change and two were changed only by the transfer of one ward.
- One new constituency (Bideford and Bude) crossed the county boundary between Cornwall and Devon.
- The proposed new constituency of Warminster and Shaftesbury crossed the boundary of Dorset and Wiltshire.

¹⁸ [Initial proposals for the South East](#), Boundary Commission for England, 2011

- The proposed new constituency of Kingswood and Keynsham contained electors from South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset.
- The proposed new constituency of North East Somerset contained electors from Bath and North East Somerset and the County of Somerset.¹⁹

East Midlands

The East Midlands region has been allocated 44 constituencies, a reduction of two.

- Ten of the 46 current constituencies were unchanged.
- In Lincolnshire three of the seven current constituencies were unchanged and two were changed only by the exchange of wards between the two.
- In Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire seven of the 28 current constituencies were unchanged; five of these were in Leicestershire.
- In Derbyshire all the existing constituencies had boundary changes.
- Two proposed constituencies crossed county boundaries; one (Daventry) contained electors from both Northamptonshire and Leicestershire; the other (Coalville and Keyworth) contained electors from Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.²⁰

West Midlands

The West Midlands region has been allocated 54 constituencies, a reduction of five.

- Ten of the 59 current constituencies were unchanged.
- In Shropshire, and Telford and Wrekin, two of the five existing constituencies were unchanged and in Worcestershire two of the six existing constituencies were unchanged.
- One proposed constituency (Ludlow and Leominster) contained electors from Shropshire and Herefordshire and another (Malvern and Ledbury) contained electors from Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
- In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent three of the existing 12 constituencies were unchanged.
- Two proposed constituencies (Kenilworth & Dorridge and Meriden) crossed the county boundary between Warwickshire and the metropolitan boroughs of the West Midlands.
- The three current Coventry constituencies were unchanged.²¹

Eastern

The Eastern region has been allocated 56 constituencies, a reduction of two.

- Nine of the 58 existing constituencies were unchanged; one in Cambridgeshire, one in Essex, one in Norfolk, five in Suffolk and one in the Borough of Thurrock.

¹⁹ [Initial proposals for the South West](#), Boundary Commission for England, 2011

²⁰ [Initial proposals for the East Midlands](#), Boundary Commission for England, 2011

²¹ [Initial proposals for the West Midlands](#), Boundary Commission for England, 2011

- Three proposed constituencies contained electors from Central Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, these were Hemel Hempstead, Hitchin and Harpenden, and Letchworth.
- One proposed constituency, Wisbech and Downham Market, contained electors from both Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.
- The proposed constituency of Newmarket and Ely contained electors from Newmarket in Suffolk and the whole district of East Cambridgeshire.²²

North East

The North Eastern region has been allocated 26 constituencies, a reduction of three.

- None of the existing constituencies were unchanged.
- Three proposed constituencies cross the boundary between Northumberland and Tyne and Wear, these were Hexham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne North and Cramlington, and Whitley Bay.
- One proposed constituency contained electors from Durham and Northumberland (Consett and Barnard Castle).
- On Teesside the borough of Middlesborough was split between three proposed seats and the borough of Stockton-on-Tees was divided between four constituencies.

North West

The North West region has been allocated 68 seats, a reduction of seven.

- Seven of the existing 75 seats remained unchanged.
- One proposed seat crossed the boundary between Cheshire East and Greater Manchester (Hazel Grove and Poynton).
- One proposed seat contained electors from Lancashire and Greater Manchester (Rochdale North and Rawtenstall).²³

Yorkshire and the Humber

The Yorkshire and the Humber Region has been allocated 50 seats, a reduction of four.

- Five of the existing 54 constituencies were unchanged.
- Three proposed seats cross the boundary between North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire; these were Leeds North West and Nidderdale, Selby and Castleford and Wakefield East and Pontefract.
- Two proposed seats combined wards from the unitary authority of the City of York and North Yorkshire (Malton and York Outer).²⁴

²² [Initial proposals for the Eastern region](#), Boundary Commission for England, 2011

²³ [Initial proposals for the North West](#), Boundary Commission for England, 2011

²⁴ [Initial proposals for Yorkshire and the Humber](#), Boundary Commission for England, 2011

3 Initial consultation

The provisions for public consultations and hearings following the publication of the Boundary Commissions' initial proposals are set out in Section 12 of the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*. There have been a number of changes to the procedure used for public consultations at previous boundary reviews.

The initial consultation lasts for 12 weeks from the date of publication of the initial recommendations and written representations can be made in this period. Public hearings are also held during this time, each hearing lasting no more than 2 days. The Boundary Commissions for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are able to hold at least 2 and no more than 5 hearings; the Boundary Commission for England is able to hold at least 2 and no more than 5 hearings in each region.

In England the initial consultation period of 12 weeks ran from the date of the publication of the initial recommendations, 13 September 2011, to 5 December 2011. There were 36 public hearings; each was completed within the statutorily required two days and each was chaired by an Assistant Commissioner.²⁵ The Boundary Commission for England announced that well over 22,000 written representations were received during the initial consultation period and over 1,100 oral representations were made at the public hearings.²⁶

4 Secondary consultation

The publication of the representations from the initial consultation triggered the start of the secondary consultation. The Boundary Commission gave advanced notice of its intention to start the secondary consultation on 31 January 2012.²⁷

A press release, issued via the wired-gov.net website on the 6 March 2012 announced the start of the secondary consultation:

Simon James, Secretary to the Commission, said: "We are really delighted by the number of people who responded to our consultation on the proposed changes to Parliamentary constituencies. More than 40,000 have already had their say and we are looking forward to people joining the debate and letting us know what they think of the comments already received."

People can send their written comments to the Commission either by using the online form (consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk), by email [information@bcommengland.x.gsi.gov.uk] or by post 35 Great Smith St, London, SW1P 3BQ. The consultation ends midday on 3 April 2012.²⁸

Assistant Commissioners consider all the written representations received and representations made at public hearings in the initial consultation period, and all the written representations made in the secondary consultation period. They then write reports for the Boundary Commission on each region, and made recommendations as to whether the initial recommendations should be revised. The Commission considered each report and decided to what extent revisions should be made to its initial proposals.

²⁵ [2013 Boundary Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in England: progress report](#), Boundary Commission for England, January 2012

²⁶ Boundary Commission for England, [Newsletter 01/2012](#), issued 31 January 2012

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ <http://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/0/C661CE140807E7B9802579B8005349AE?OpenDocument> accessed 6 March 2012

5 Revised recommendations

The Commission announced that it would publish revised recommendations on 16 October 2012.²⁹

If a Boundary Commission's initial proposals are revised, then the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011* provides for a further period of eight weeks for written representations to be made to the Commission. There are no public hearings at this stage; nor is there a repeat of the four-week period for commenting on the representations of others.

The consultation on the Boundary Commission's revised proposals for England closed on 10 December 2012.

Analysis of the extent of the changes to the revised recommendations is available in Library briefing SN06445 [Revised proposals for new constituency boundaries](#). A brief summary of the revised recommendations is given below.

London

The Commission revised 50 of the 68 constituencies it recommended in its initial proposals.³⁰ The boundaries of three constituencies would remain the same as the current boundaries, a reduction of one from the initial recommendations. These are the proposed Chipping Barnet, Hendon, and Hornchurch and Upminster seats. In the Commission's initial recommendations Hornchurch and Upminster was altered but the revised recommendations have reinstated it. In the initial recommendations the boundaries of two proposed seats in Tower Hamlets (Bethnal Green and Bow and Poplar and Limehouse) were the same as existing boundaries, but the revised recommendations have now altered these.

The revised recommendations are split into two sub-regions rather than the three sub-regions used for the initial recommendations. The two regions are to the north and to the south of the River Thames. The proposed Richmond and Twickenham seat (unchanged from the initial proposals) is the only seat that straddles the River Thames. A cross-Thames constituency is not necessary to achieve the electoral quota restrictions in the 68 constituencies for London but the Commission decided that all statutory factors for constituency construction were better achieved if one seat did cross the Thames.³¹

The main changes in London include the Commission's decision to cross the River Lee further south than originally proposed, joining Bow and Stratford rather than Chingford and Edmonton, and continuing the link between the Cities of London and Westminster rather than combining the City with parts of Islington.

In the 25 constituencies allocated to the south of the Thames (excluding the proposed cross-River seat of Richmond and Twickenham) only five proposed seats are retained from the initial recommendations; Kingston and Surbiton, Brixton, and the three seats in the borough of Bromley (Beckenham, Bromley and Chislehurst, and Orpington). The remaining 21 seats have been revised.

²⁹ <http://consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/news/publication-date-for-revised-proposals/> accessed 4 September 2012

³⁰ Boundary Commission for England, [London revised proposals report](#), October 2012

³¹ Ibid

North of the River (including the proposed seat of Richmond and Twickenham) 13 of the 43 proposed seats have remained the same as the initial recommendations although two have been renamed. The proposed Ealing seat has been renamed Ealing Central in the revised recommendations and the proposed Teddington and Hanworth seat has been renamed Hampton.

The other 11 seats retained from the initial proposals are Brentford and Isleworth, Chelsea and Fulham, Chipping Barnet, Enfield North, Hammersmith and Acton, Hendon, Ilford North, Southall and Heston, Wanstead and Woodford, and Willesden.

South East

The Assistant Commissioners' report to the Boundary Commission noted that the region has a sizeable number of urban areas where it was not possible to include all the urban wards within a constituency and that it had been necessary to combine urban and rural wards. It also noted that the region was the largest in England and that "a solution for one area provoked disruption to adjoining constituencies with a knock-on effect locally" that led to "some complex challenges in reconfiguring constituency boundaries...in Milton Keynes, Oxford, Southampton, Portsmouth, Brighton and Hove, and Maidstone and the Medway towns".³²

Of the 83 seats recommended for the South East region, the Boundary Commission has revised 58. The remaining 25 seats recommended by the Commission are the same as the initial proposals, although 5 seats have been renamed (Henley has become Henley and Thame, Wantage has become Didcot and Wantage, Gravesend has become Gravesham and the existing names of the two seats covering Oxford have been retained instead of being altered). The Commission has also proposed renaming the Wantage seat despite making no changes to the existing constituency boundary.³³

In the initial proposals the Commission proposed no change to 18 of the existing 84 seats. In the revised recommendations the Commission proposes to retain 25 of the existing seats (Basingstoke, Beaconsfield, Bracknell, East Surrey, East Worthing and Shoreham, Eastbourne, Eastleigh, Epsom and Ewell, Esher and Walton, Hastings and Rye, Maidenhead, Mid Sussex, Newbury, Reading East, Reading West, Rochester and Strood, Runnymede and Weybridge, Sittingbourne and Sheppey, South West Surrey, Southampton Itchen, Surrey Heath, Wantage, Witney, Woking, Wokingham, Worthing West).³⁴

The Isle of Wight (which is exempted from the strict numerical electoral quotas) is revised to be split into East and West constituencies. The revised Isle of Wight East seat includes Ryde, Shanklin, Ventnor and Godshill. Newport, Ryde and the rest of the island forms the revised Isle of Wight West seat.

Other major changes include a revision to the constituencies covering Brighton and Hove. The revised recommendations are now more closely aligned with the existing seats; the revised Brighton, Kemptown seat is renamed Brighton East and Seahaven and extended further east to the coastal settlements from Newhaven and Seaford.

³² Boundary Commission for England, [South East revised proposals report](#), October 2012, pp11-2

³³ Boundary Commission for England, [South East revised proposals report](#), October 2012

³⁴ House of Commons Library, Standard Note SN06445 [Revised proposals for new constituency boundaries](#)

The Commission has made substantial revisions to the proposed constituencies in Hampshire. The revised Spelthorne seat now straddles the Surrey county boundary with Slough in order to retain a greater number of existing seats within Surrey.

South West

In the revised recommendations the Boundary Commission has altered the proposals for 29 of the 53 constituencies in the region. Of the 24 seats unaltered from the initial proposals three had name changes. In each case the name change was to revert to an existing constituency name (Liskeard reverts to South East Cornwall and the two seats in Swindon revert to North Swindon and South Swindon following the Commission's proposal to rename them Swindon North and Swindon South).³⁵

The revised recommendations include 13 constituencies that have the same boundaries as those currently in existence (Bristol North West, Bristol South, Cheltenham, Exeter, North Devon, North Somerset, North Swindon, South Dorset, South Swindon, Tiverton and Honiton, Torbay, West Dorset, Weston-Super-Mare). This is a drop of one from the initial recommendations where 14 existing seats were unchanged (Tewkesbury has been altered in the revised proposals).

Two of the most controversial proposals in the Commission's initial recommendations were the proposal for a constituency that crossed the Cornwall/Devon county boundary and for the transfer of the Westgate ward (which includes Gloucester Cathedral and much of Gloucester city centre) from the existing Gloucester constituency to the proposed Forest of Dean seat.

The Assistant Commissioners' report noted the strong opposition within Cornwall to a cross-border constituency based on "a range of historical, cultural, constitutional, and economic arguments supporting the proposition that Cornwall was a separate entity from the rest of England."³⁶ However, there was recognition that to meet the statutory requirements on electoral quotas a cross-border constituency was inevitable and that a majority of respondents thought that crossing the border in the north, as the Commission had proposed, was the most appropriate. The Commission did modify the composition of the seat on the Devon side of the border and changed the name of the proposed seat from Bideford and Bude to Bideford, Bude and Launceston.

With the exception of the Westgate ward the Commission's proposals for Gloucestershire received a "wide degree of support".³⁷ The key issue in Gloucester was that the Westgate ward, currently in the Gloucester constituency, was to be transferred to the Forest of Dean seat in the Boundary Commission's initial proposals. The Assistant Commissioners noted that although the Westgate ward appears to be on the western periphery of the existing Gloucester constituency it contains the entire urban city centre of Gloucester.³⁸ The Boundary Commission has a long established policy of not splitting local government wards between constituencies but although the Assistant Commissioners recognised and supported this principle they noted that in the case of Gloucester "we believe there are indeed exceptional and compelling circumstances in this case that justify the division" of wards.³⁹

³⁵ Boundary Commission for England, *South West revised proposals report*, October 2012

³⁶ Ibid, p16

³⁷ Ibid, p59

³⁸ Ibid, p60

³⁹ Ibid, p67

The Boundary Commission accepted the counter-proposal recommended by the Assistant Commissioners and the Westgate ward is now split between the revised West Gloucestershire and Gloucester seats. The counter-proposal also involves splitting another ward, the Tewkesbury borough ward of Coombe Hill, between the revised West Gloucestershire and Tewkesbury seats.

There are no revisions to the recommendations for Bristol, North Somerset or for the seats covering Bath and Exeter but there are revisions to Poole, Bournemouth, Wiltshire and Wiltshire. There are also revisions to the recommendations for Plymouth and south and west Devon.

East Midlands

The Boundary Commission has decided to revise only 9 of the 44 recommended constituencies in the East Midlands region.⁴⁰ Under the revised proposals 11 of the existing constituencies in the region will retain their existing boundaries, an increase of one from the initial recommendations (these are Ashfield, Corby and East Northamptonshire, Gainsborough, Grantham and Stamford, Harborough, Leicester East, Leicester South, Loughborough, Mansfield, Rutland and Melton, South Holland and The Deepings). The additional constituency to be retained is Mansfield.

Of the 35 recommended constituencies that have been retained from the Commission's initial proposals 4 have been renamed: Daventry has become Daventry and Lutterworth, Corby has been renamed Corby and East Northamptonshire, Derby South and Swadlincote has been renamed South Derbyshire and Mid Leicestershire has been renamed Charnwood.

Although the Boundary Commission generally does not alter constituency names when the boundaries have been unaltered, in the case of the proposed Corby and East Northamptonshire the Commission recommended acceptance of the Assistant Commissioners' conclusion that there were "compelling reasons for the opportunity...to introduce a more appropriate and accurate name and one that commands very substantial support".⁴¹

The main changes in the East Midlands were revisions to the boundary between the proposed Kettering and Wellingborough seats, the High Peak and Derbyshire Dales seats, and the Mid Derbyshire (renamed Amber Valley) and Bolsover constituencies.

The revised proposals have also made alterations between the Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood seats which have enabled the Commission to recommend that Mansfield should retain its existing constituency boundaries.

West Midlands

In the West Midlands region the Boundary Commission has revised 26 of the 54 recommended constituencies from its initial proposals.⁴² Of the 28 proposed seats that have remained unaltered from the initial recommendations, one has been renamed (Walsall North has become Aldridge, Brownhills and Bloxwith).

The revised proposals retain ten existing constituencies without boundary changes. This is the same number as under the initial proposals. Nine of the ten are the same (Burton,

⁴⁰ Boundary Commission for England, [East Midlands revised proposals report](#), October 2012

⁴¹ Ibid, p61

⁴² Boundary Commission for England, [West Midlands revised proposals report](#), October 2012

Cannock Chase, Coventry North East, Coventry North West, Coventry South, North Shropshire, Shrewsbury and Atcham Worcester, and Wyre Forest) but South Staffordshire, which was to be unaltered as proposed in the initial recommendations, has had an additional ward added to it in the revised proposals (Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood, and Lapley). Sutton Coldfield was realigned in the Commission's initial proposals but is retained with the same boundaries as the existing seat in the revised recommendations.

The initial recommendations have not been changed for the proposed seats covering Coventry, northern Shropshire, eastern Staffordshire, Kidderminster, Bromsgrove, Worcester, Redditch and most of Birmingham.

One of the main issues was the proposed division of the existing Sutton Coldfield seat and the alignment of proposed boundaries in the Erdington area of Birmingham and Castle Bromwich. Revised proposals have allowed for the retention of the existing Sutton Coldfield seat and the revision of Birmingham, Erdington to include Castle Bromwich.

The proposed constituencies for Wolverhampton and the southern parts of Dudley have been significantly altered. The proposed seats covering northern Dudley and most of Sandwell are unaltered from the initial proposals.

In Warwickshire the pattern of seats remains broadly the same as in the initial proposals but there are realignments in all of the seats to accommodate the inclusion of the Coleshill North, Coleshill South and Water Orton wards, which had been allocated to Birmingham, Erdington in the initial proposals for the North Warwickshire seat.

The main changes in Herefordshire alter the proposed Hereford seat. The Commission has revised the Hereford seat so that it more closely resembles the existing Hereford and South Herefordshire seat. The name has also been altered to retain the existing name to reflect the changes. The rest of Herefordshire remains split between two proposed seats (Ludlow and Leominster and Malvern and Ledbury) but with revised boundaries to accommodate the changes to the Hereford seat.

There have been minor alterations to the proposed Stafford seat but the boundaries of the proposed seats covering Stoke, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove have been significantly altered.

Eastern

The Boundary Commission has revised its proposals for 32 of the 56 recommended constituencies in the Eastern region.⁴³ This would leave 11 existing constituencies unchanged an increase of two from the initial proposals. There are three additional existing constituencies that would remain unchanged in the revised proposals (Chelmsford, North West Norfolk, South West Hertfordshire, and Thurrock) and one existing seat that was unchanged in the initial proposals, but is now altered by the revised proposals (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich has had an additional ward allocated to it).

The areas unaltered from the initial proposals are mostly in the east of the region and cover the coastal areas of Norfolk and Suffolk, Norwich, Ipswich and most of Essex. The proposed Cambridge seat, the two seats covering Luton and Dunstable, and the Hertsmere seat are also unchanged from the initial proposals.

⁴³ Boundary Commission for England, [Eastern region revised proposals report](#), October 2012

Of the 24 proposed constituencies that are unaltered from the initial recommendations three have had their names changed (Great Yarmouth has been renamed Norfolk Coastal; South Norfolk has been renamed South East Norfolk, and North West Essex has been renamed Saffron Walden).

The areas of change are mostly in the west of the region, Bedfordshire, and most of Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. There are also changes around Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket; to the north and west of Norwich and around Chelmsford, Billericay and Southend.

The main changes in Essex involve the alignment of constituency boundaries between the proposed Southend seats and also between the Southend seats and the proposed neighbouring seats of Rayleigh and Wickford and Castle Point.

In Suffolk the most significant change from the initial proposals is the modification to the West Suffolk seat, which now includes Newmarket. In the initial proposals Newmarket had been combined with the Ely area of Cambridgeshire.

In Hertfordshire all of the proposed seats have been revised with the exception of the proposed Hertsmere seat. In the west of the county the revised proposals more closely resemble the pattern of existing seats. Further east the proposals for the realignment of the boundaries around Stevenage, Bishop's Stortford, Broxbourne and Letchworth are more significant. The revised proposals for the Hertfordshire/Bedfordshire sub-region also reduce the number of seats that cross the Hertfordshire county boundary from three to one. The transfer of Hitchin to the revised North Hertfordshire constituency means that Harpenden is combined with Kimpton and Ickleford in Hertfordshire and with Caddington, Barton-le-Clay and Stotfold in Bedfordshire to form a cross-county boundary seat that encircles most of Luton and Dunstable.

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough all but the proposed Cambridge seat have been significantly revised.

North East

In the North East the Commission has revised all but 4 of the 26 constituencies recommended in the initial proposals.⁴⁴ Of the four unaltered seats in the revised recommendations two have been renamed (Gateshead West and South Shields are unaltered, Chester-le-Street has been renamed North Durham and in the revised Gateshead East and Jarrow seat the order of the towns has been reversed).

Only one seat would remain with the same constituency boundaries as an existing seat (Sunderland Central).

There are minor changes from the initial recommendations to the proposed seats in Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. In the initial recommendations Stockton and Billingham were combined in a single seat with the area south of the town of Stockton combined with the county Durham towns of Newton Aycliffe and Sedgefield. The revised recommendations follow existing constituency boundaries more closely and preserve the existing Stockton South with the addition of one ward from the existing Stockton North. The existing Stockton North seat is combined with Newton Aycliffe and Sedgefield.

⁴⁴ Boundary Commission for England, [North East revised proposals report](#), October 2012

In Durham the main changes from the initial recommendations are the retention of the Bishop Auckland and North West Durham constituencies with modifications. The initial recommendations had proposed a seat that combined Consett and Barnard Castle which straddled two geographically distinct valleys and included the southern tip of Northumberland resulting in a significantly altered Bishop Auckland seat. The revisions give greater recognition to the existing seats. The revised Easington seat extends south to Trimdon and Fishburn. The existing Sedgefield seat is abolished and redistributed to several other proposed seats.

The Darlington seat is revised and is now conterminous with the unitary authority of the same name.

All the seats in Northumberland have been revised. The revised recommendations more closely reflect the existing seats of Berwick-upon-Tweed and Hexham. The existing Wansbeck and Blyth Valley seats are abolished with Blyth and Ashington forming one revised seat and Cramlington combined with the north and west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in a similar pattern to that included in the initial recommendations. In Newcastle and North Tyneside the revised seats again reflect the existing pattern of seats but with necessary adjustments to meet the statutory electoral quota requirements.

North West

The Boundary Commission has revised 45 of the 68 recommended in the region.⁴⁵ The revised recommendations leave 15 existing constituencies unaltered (Congleton, Crewe and Nantwich, Heywood and Middleton, Knowsley, Leigh, Makerfield, Manchester Withington, Rochdale, Salford and Eccles, St Helens North, St Helens South and Whiston, West Lancashire, Wigan, Worsley and Eccles South, Wythenshawe and Sale East). This is an increase from the initial recommendations where only 7 existing seats were retained with unaltered boundaries.

One of the most controversial proposals in the Commission's initial recommendations was for the Mersey Banks constituency, particularly the inclusion of the Ditton and Hale ward. The Assistant Commissioners concluded that Ditton and Hale should not be part of the proposed seat and substituted the Halton ward of Heath. The seat has been renamed Mersey Banks and Weaver but the general shape has been retained. The Assistant Commissioners acknowledged the difficulties posed by the geography of the Cheshire and Wirral sub-region and the large size of the wards in the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester. There have been minor revisions to the composition and names of the proposed Wallasey, Birkenhead and Tatton constituencies but the Wirral and Cheshire sub-region largely follows the same pattern as the initial recommendations.

In the metropolitan areas of Greater Manchester and Merseyside north of the River Mersey most of the seats have been revised. Only the proposed seats of Cheadle, Hazel Grove and Poynton, Bolton South East, Wigan, St Helens North, St Helens South, and Stalybridge and Hyde are unchanged from the initial recommendations (Bolton South East was called Bolton South in the initial recommendations).

In Lancashire and Blackpool the changes affect the seats covering Preston, the Wyre and Lancaster area, Pendle, Burnley, Rossendale and Darwen areas. The proposed seats covering Blackburn, Blackpool, Fylde, Southport, West Lancashire, Chorley and Morecombe are unchanged from the initial recommendations.

⁴⁵ Boundary Commission for England, [North West revised proposals report](#), October 2012

In Cumbria only the proposed seat covering Carlisle remains unchanged from the initial recommendations. Kendal and Penrith are also no longer combined in a single seat and Workington and Keswick are no longer combined in a seat. Penrith is now combined with Keswick and Aspatria to form the proposed seat of Penrith and Solway. Kendal is combined with the Kirkby Stephen area of the Eden district in the proposed Westmorland and Lonsdale seat.

Ulverston, Broughton in Furness and the southern part of the Copeland district are included in a revised Barrow and Furness seat with the northern half of the Copeland district combined with Workington and Maryport to form the proposed West Cumbria seat.

Yorkshire and Humber

In the Yorkshire and Humber region the Commission has revised proposals for 37 of the 50 proposed seats.⁴⁶ Only the proposals for Doncaster and Rotherham are unaltered. The proposals in Sheffield are unaltered except for the four northern wards allocated to the proposed Barnsley West and Ecclesfield constituency in the initial recommendations which are now allocated to a revised and renamed Sheffield North and Dodworth constituency. Two of the seats in Kirklees are unchanged from the initial recommendations and one from North Yorkshire. There have been 4 name changes in the 13 proposed seats unchanged from the initial recommendations (Rawmarsh has been renamed Rotherham North, Sheffield South West has been renamed Sheffield Heeley; Sheffield West and Penistone has been renamed Sheffield Hallam and Penistone, and Colne Valley and Skelmanthorpe has been renamed Colne Valley and Denby Dale).

Under the revised proposals the boundaries of 15 existing constituencies would be retained unaltered. In the initial proposals only 5 existing seats were retained (Don Valley, Doncaster Central, Doncaster North, Rother Valley and Scarborough and Whitby). Part of the increase in this number is due to the revised recommendations within North Yorkshire and York. All the existing seats in this area are within the required electoral quota range but in the initial recommendations only the Scarborough and Whitby seat was retained. In the revised recommendations the Commission has decided to recommend that all the seats in the sub-region are retained (Harrogate and Knaresborough, Richmond (Yorks), Scarborough and Whitby, Selby and Ainsty, Thirsk and Malton, York Central, York Outer).

The other three existing seats that will now be retained are Calder Valley, East Yorkshire and Beverley and Holderness. In retaining two of the existing seats in the Humberside sub-region of East Yorkshire and North and North East Lincolnshire the Commission has revised all the seats since the initial proposals. The revised proposals split Grimsby between two seats. Scunthorpe is retained in one seat but the constituency boundary no longer crosses the River Trent. The revised Goole seat still crosses the boundary between East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire but now includes the whole of the Isle of Axholme.

Apart from the two seats in the Kirklees district all the seats covering West Yorkshire are revised. Most of the proposed boundaries of the Barnsley area are also revised, including a seat that crosses the Barnsley-Wakefield boundary (the proposed Barnsley North and Hemsworth seat).

⁴⁶ Boundary Commission for England, [Yorkshire and the Humber revised proposals report](#), October 2012

6 Final Recommendations and Order in Council

When the Commission had decided on its final recommendations for the whole of England, it had been due to submit its final recommendations to the Government. It had to do this by 1 October 2013.

Section 3 of the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986* (amended by the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*) requires the Secretary of State ‘as soon as may be’ after the submission of each report by the Boundary Commissions to lay the report before Parliament. After all four reports have been submitted the Secretary of State ‘shall lay before Parliament the draft of an Order in Council for giving effect to the recommendations contained in them.’ This also has to be done ‘as soon as may be’.⁴⁷

The Government may not modify the recommendations of any of the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions, unless it has been expressly requested to do so (in writing and with reasons) by the relevant Parliamentary Boundary Commission (section 3(5B) of the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986*).

The draft Order needs to be approved by both Houses of Parliament for the new boundaries to come into operation. If the draft Order in Council is debated but not approved, the Government may then amend the draft and lay an amended draft before Parliament for approval.⁴⁸ Once the draft Order in Council has been approved by Parliament, the Government is required to submit it to be made by Her Majesty in Council. The new constituencies must come into force all at once therefore the Order takes effect at the next general election. Under the terms of the *Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011* the next general election is due to be held in May 2015. Any by-elections held in the meantime have to be held on the basis of the old (existing) constituencies.

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

The Deputy Prime Minister announced on 6 August 2012 that plans to reform the House of Lords were to be dropped and that the Liberal Democrats will not vote to approve the Order implementing the recommendations of the Boundary Commissions. Mr Clegg subsequently made a statement to the House of Commons on 3 September 2012.⁴⁹ In response to an intervention by Bernard Jenkin MP, Mr Clegg said;

On boundaries, we are, I suppose, strictly speaking, adhering to the coalition agreement, unlike on Lords reform...The hon. Gentleman is right to say that, because the primary legislation is still on the statute book, there is nothing in my power to stop the work of the boundary commissions, but I have made it clear that, since I think I reasonably believe that the constitutional reform package was exactly that—a package—and since this is the first time that either of the coalition parties has been unable to deliver on a major coalition agreement commitment, it is therefore right to rebalance things and not to proceed with an unbalanced package.⁵⁰

Mr Clegg later added

⁴⁷ S10, *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*

⁴⁸ [Guide to the 2013 Review](#), Boundary Commission for England, p15

⁴⁹ [HC Deb 3 September 2012 c35](#)

⁵⁰ [HC Deb 3 September 2012 c39](#)

As I have explained, the primary legislation is as it is, and no one is proposing that we repeal it. My own view—I have made this perfectly public—is that it would be better not to complete the outstanding stages of the Boundary Commission investigations because the end result is now a foregone conclusion, but if that is what is felt necessary then a vote will be held and the boundary changes will not go through before 2015.⁵¹

The Boundary Commissions therefore had to continue with their work, in the absence of any statutory requirement to desist, and, as the Deputy Prime Minister noted in his statement on 3 September 2012, there was ‘no agreement within Government to repeal that primary legislation’.⁵²

During the passage of the *Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2012-13*, which made provision for a legislative framework for the introduction of a new system of individual electoral registration (IER) under which electors will be registered individually instead of by household, an amendment was tabled which would amend the timing of the 2013 review.

The *Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013* therefore amends the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986* and delays the boundary review by one electoral cycle. It requires that the Boundary Commissions conduct a review after the 2015 general election and submit reports in 2018.⁵³ The Boundary Commission for England therefore announced all work on the 2013 Review would cease.⁵⁴

Following the cessation of the 2013 Review no Orders will be laid before the current Parliament. Instead an Order will be laid after the Boundary Commission reports due in the autumn of 2018.

⁵¹ HC Deb 3 September 2012 c43

⁵² HC Deb 3 September 2012 c47

⁵³ See Library SN05929 [HConstituency boundaries: the Sixth General Review](#) and Standard Note SN06359 [Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2012-13: progress of the Bill](#) for more details

⁵⁴ Boundary Commission for England, [Closure of the 2013 Review](#), 31 January 2013