

Scottish Parliamentary Boundary Review

Submission of the Scottish Labour Party to Public Inquiry

Johnstone, Clarkston

14 December 2023

This submission is made on behalf of the Scottish Labour Party following consultations with the party's elected representatives, voluntary officials and local parties.

We welcome the Provisional Proposals of Boundaries Scotland for Scottish Parliamentary constituencies. The Scottish Labour Party has carefully considered those proposals and made a written representation during the initial consultation period (Rep. 25785556) where we set out our overall views, some objections to those proposals and specified those where we believed there would be a benefit to holding a public inquiry.

In respect of the areas under consideration in this inquiry, we set out our concerns in that representation but owing to the short duration of the consultation period we were unable to finalise a counter proposal. Our submission to this inquiry does set out a formal counter proposal which we trust will be helpful to the Assistant Commissioner and to Boundaries Scotland in addressing some of the concerns which have been raised and objections made to the Provisional Proposals.

Council Areas

We note that the three councils of East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire have a combined electorate of 277,905 which when divided by the Electoral Quota of 59,902 gives a Theoretical Entitlement (TE) to 4.64 constituencies.

The City of Glasgow with an electorate of 460,012 has a Theoretical Entitlement to 7.68 constituencies.

The aggregate electorate of 737,917 therefore gives a TE to 12.32 constituencies which if rounded down to 12 would be a reduction of one.

We support the grouping of councils proposed by Boundaries Scotland and agree that linking Glasgow with East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire is the best way of addressing the shortfall in TE which means that currently most of the seats have electorates below the Electoral Quota.

Local Authority	TE	Current Grouping		Provisional Proposals	
		TE	Seats Allocated	TE	Seats Allocated
Glasgow	7.68	7.68	8	11.30	11
East Renfrewshire	1.25	4.64	5		
Renfrewshire	2.37				
Inverclyde	1.01			1.01	1

With marginal entitlements to 0.68 of a seat in Glasgow and 0.64 in the grouping of East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire there obviously needs to be at least one constituency containing parts of the City of Glasgow and parts of one of the other authorities.

We also note that the electorate of Inverclyde council area at 60,794 is just 892 (1.5%) above the Electoral Quota. With the average electorate of the council grouping being above the Electoral Quota we believe there is no reason to retain a low electorate in the Greenock & Inverclyde constituency and that therefore it should become coterminous with its local authority.

The Seat Shared between Glasgow and Renfrewshire/East Renfrewshire

We do not wish to make any objection to the Provisional Proposal that would include two wards of East Renfrewshire council in a Glasgow Priesthill & Giffnock constituency. Of course we regret the changes that these entail with the abolition of the Eastwood constituency but we also recognise that with a reduction of one seat there are major alterations to most of the seats in this council grouping.

We believe there are ties between the two areas which make for a coherent constituency with much of the local authority boundary made up of continuous residential development. We also believe there are strong transportation links within the proposed constituency. The rail route to East Kilbride runs from Pollokshaws through Giffnock and Clarkston while the Barrhead line runs through the Glasgow part of the constituency. We believe that the boundary with Newton Mearns is reasonably well defined given that this is a mainly urban area.

We accept that there are long-standing ties within the Eastwood constituency which would be broken by the Provisional Proposals but we do not accept the argument that it is necessarily better

for a medium-sized local authority to be divided so that it contains one whole constituency and one smaller part which is a small minority of another constituency. We believe there may be equally valid arguments for a relatively even division with each part contributing the majority of the electorate of its seat as Boundaries Scotland has proposed.

We also note that the suggestion has been made that it is preferable for the shared seat to link Glasgow and Renfrewshire in the same place as will be the case for Westminster constituencies where the Cardonald ward is included in the Paisley & Renfrewshire North seat. We accept there may be some logic to this, but we would also argue that the circumstances are very different. Specifically with the higher Electoral Quota and the Westminster franchise it is possible for the East Renfrewshire seat to remain unchanged and coterminous with its local authority which is obviously sensible and compliant with the rule that existing constituency boundaries should be respected. It is not possible for the whole of East Renfrewshire to comprise a Scottish parliamentary constituency nor is respect for existing constituencies specifically mandated in the rules.

Objections to the Provisional Proposals

Our objections to the Provisional Proposals centre on the Renfrewshire South constituency which we believe to be unwieldy and to have poor internal transportation links. It comprises disparate parts straddling three different road and rail corridors.

The proposals also break ties by dividing the town of Johnstone and splitting it from Elderslie.

We believe the Renfrewshire West constituency is also awkward dividing Renfrew from Erskine and Inchinnan but also including one ward of Paisley comprising part of the town centre, and part of the town of Johnstone.

Counter Proposal

We believe that seeking to place all or nearly all of the town of Paisley on one constituency may be to the detriment of other towns in Renfrewshire. Paisley itself has a long history of being divided between two different seats. The former seats of Westminster seats of Paisley North and Paisley South were created in 1983 and persisted as Scottish parliamentary seats until 2011. The existing Westminster seats of Paisley & Renfrewshire North and Paisley & Renfrewshire South again contain

roughly equal numbers of Paisley voters and are being retained with relatively little change under the latest proposals. The current arrangement whereby one constituency comprises effectively the whole of the town of Paisley has only been in place since the First Review.

Towns such as Linwood, Renfrew and Johnstone have at different times been part of Paisley seats, and we believe that the town of Barrhead also has much stronger ties to Paisley than it has to Johnstone: It may make more sense to treat Paisley as the centre of a much larger urban area all of which has mutual ties and which is too large to form one whole seat.

We would argue therefore that the Barrhead and Newton Mearns wards should be linked in a constituency with the south of Paisley, that the remainder of the town of Paisley should be in a seat with the whole of the town of Johnstone, and that Renfrew should remain in a Renfrewshire North & West constituency. We believe a seat containing part of Paisley with Barrhead and Newton Mearns would be much better balanced than the Provisional Proposal for Renfrewshire South, would be more compact and would respect the ties which Barrhead has with Paisley as well as those it has with Newton Mearns as part of the same authority.

The electorates of Scottish Labour's Counter Proposal would be:

Constituency	Made up of	Estimated Electorate
Paisley North & Johnstone	Paisley Central & East, Paisley Northeast & Ralston, Paisley Northwest, Paisley Southeast (part PD SP17), Paisley Southwest (part PD SP18), Johnstone South & Elderslie, Johnstone North, Kilbarchan, Howwood & Lochwinnoch	61,041
Paisley South & East Renfrewshire	<u>East Renfrewshire</u> : Barrhead, Liboside & Uplawmoor, Newton Mearns North & Neilston, Newton Mearns South & Eaglesham Renfrewshire: Paisley Southeast (except PD SP17), Paisley Southwest (except PD SP18)	64,260
Renfrewshire North & West	Renfrew North & Braehead, Renfrew South & Gallowhill, Houston, Crosslee & Linwood, Bishopton, Bridge of Weir & Langbank, Erskine & Inchinnan	62,211

Our estimate of the electorate of Renfrewshire Polling District SP17 is 1,373 and that of Polling District SP18 is 1,349, so these figures have been deducted from the electorates provided by Boundaries Scotland for the Paisley Southeast and Paisley Southwest wards in respect of the Paisley

