



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Shona Robison,
Deputy First Minister
By email only

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Email: localgov.committee@parliament.scot

14 February 2024

Dear Shona,

Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Bill

Further to the introduction of the above Bill, the Committee considered a briefing paper by the clerks. We note that the Standards, Appointments and Public Appointments Committee will lead on scrutiny at stage 1 and whilst parts of the Bill relate to local government elections in addition to those for the Scottish Parliament, the Committee does not intend to play an active role in this. However, we plan to closely monitor progress and our clerks will continue to liaise with the SPPA Committee's clerks to this end.

The Committee notes that the Policy Memorandum confirms that the Scottish Government has consulted on a number of options to prevent political influence on the boundary-setting process and is "sympathetic" to the automatic approval of recommendations made by independent boundary commissions but that further consideration on the best way to approach such a reform is required.

As you know, under the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020, this Committee has responsibility for considering regulations giving effect to Boundary Scotland recommendations for changes to local government areas or electoral arrangements. We have done so on one occasion in September 2021 when we considered proposals relating to the six local authority areas in Scotland containing inhabited islands.

Boundaries Scotland confirmed in August 2023 that it had "no current plans to conduct any reviews" and that its "principal work focus at the moment is the review of Scottish Parliament constituencies and regions which will report by May 2025." We further note that the Minister for Parliamentary Business wrote to Boundaries Scotland in July 2022 and again in October 2023 directing it not to carry out any

reviews under sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 respectively.

The Committee would welcome an update on the Scottish Government's intentions in respect of potential reforms to the approval process for Boundary Scotland recommendations. We would further welcome confirmation of when you expect Boundary Scotland to undertake its next set of reviews of arrangements for local government elections.

I am copying this letter to the Convener of the SPPA Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Ariane Burgess
Convener, Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee