

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: [scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

Ariane Burgess MSP  
Convenor  
Local Government, Housing and Planning  
Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

By email: [localgov.committee@Parliament.scot](mailto:localgov.committee@Parliament.scot)

18 March 2025

Dear Ariane,

### **Independent Review of the Process for Determining Electoral Boundaries in Scotland**

I am writing to follow up on my recent letter of 27 February 2025 about the Scottish Government's intention, set out during the passage of the Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Act 2025, to establish an independent review of the process for determining electoral boundaries in Scotland.

I am pleased to update you now that I have appointed Andrew Kerr OBE to chair the Independent Review of the Process for Determining Electoral Boundaries in Scotland. Mr Kerr, who until his retirement last year was the Chief Executive Officer and Returning Officer for the City of Edinburgh Council for nine years, has a long career of local government leadership, having been CEO of four local authorities across the UK, and is a highly experienced Returning Officer who oversaw thirty-nine elections in the role and previously served as a member of the Electoral Management Board for Scotland. I am delighted that Mr Kerr has accepted Scottish Ministers' invitation to chair this independent review.

The review will consider the process for implementing changes to electoral boundaries in Scotland, in particular options for the introduction of a form of automaticity, taking account of the experience elsewhere in the United Kingdom and internationally. It has also been tasked with considering whether changes should be made to the processes that form part of boundary reviews, such as engagement and consultation with the public and elected representatives, and the supporting structures and resources.

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As I set out in my previous letters, I consider it important that the review is independent of Government so that consideration of, and any potential future reforms to, laws and rules pertaining to electoral boundaries can be done in a way that carries as much cross-party support in the Scottish Parliament and amongst the electoral community. To that end, while Mr Kerr will be fully supported with secretariat support from officials in the Scottish Government, he has been asked to lead the review independently and produce a report and recommendations that will be laid in Parliament.

The review will begin its work immediately and has been asked to produce a report as soon as is practicable, anticipated to be in September or October this year. I have met with Mr Kerr and understand from our discussion that he is keen for early engagement with your Committee and that his secretariat team will follow up this letter shortly to make arrangements.

I welcome the background and wealth of senior experience that Mr Kerr brings to fulfilling the role, which I believe will ensure that the review's work helps lead the debate and thinking, and inform future decisions, on a key area of electoral law that directly affects the fair and effective functioning of Scotland's democracy, and is of impact and interest to all of our communities and citizens. I look forward to reading its report in due course and to engaging with your Committee further on these issues.

I have written in similar terms to the Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, as well as to the Presiding Officer and Business Managers.

Yours,

**JAMIE HEPBURN**

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