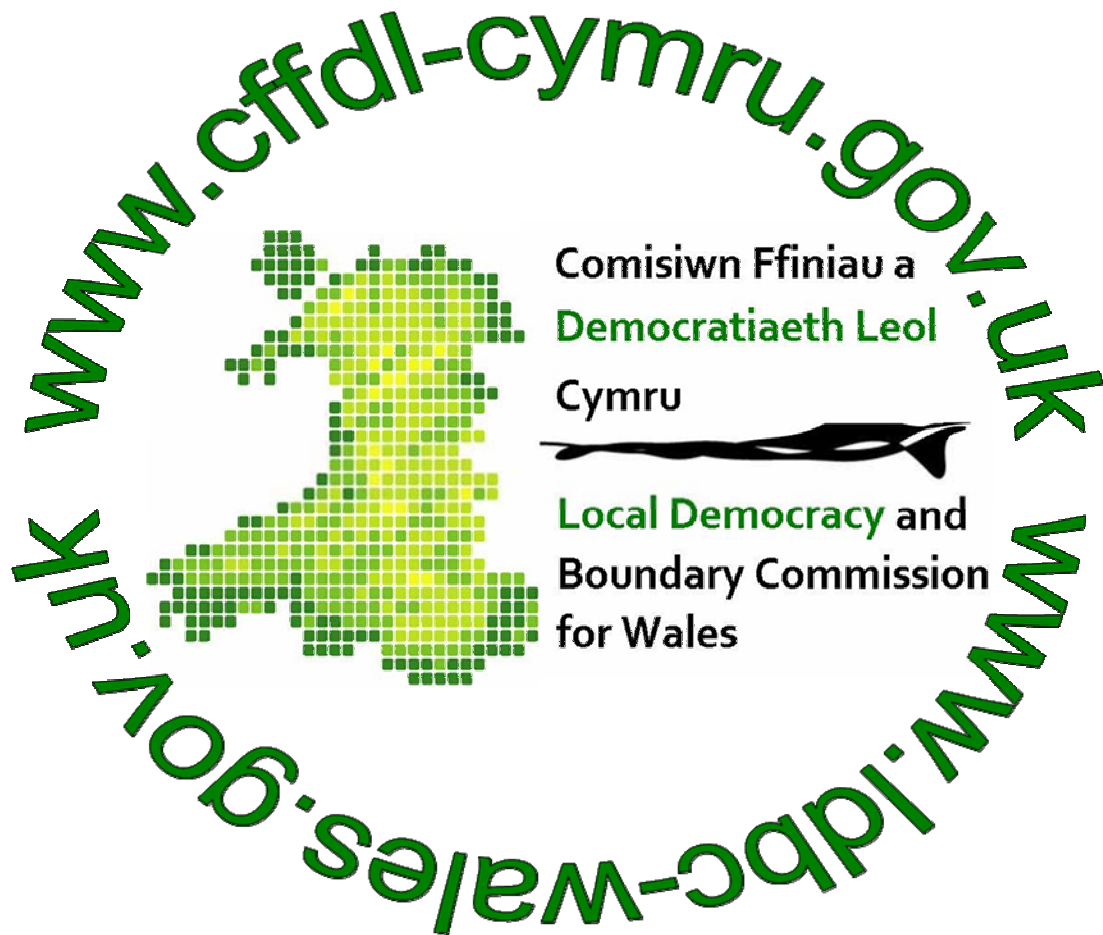


Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales



Communications Strategy

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Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales

Communications Strategy

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Introduction

The Commission

1. The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) was established in 1974 and renamed under the terms of Section 2 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. This 2013 Act replaces the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. The statutory functions of the Commission are specified in Parts 3 and 4 of the 2013 Act (the 2013 Act is referred to in this document as 'the Act'). In conducting reviews, Section 35 to the Act requires the Commission to consult: the mandatory consultees and such other persons it considers appropriate.

2. The purpose of the Commission is:

To monitor the areas and electoral arrangements relevant to local government in Wales for the purpose of considering whether it is appropriate to make or recommend changes. In carrying out its duties the Commission must seek to ensure effective and convenient local government.

Purpose of the communications strategy

3. The strategy sets out how the Commission will use its communications and public affairs capacity to ensure that it:

- Meets its statutory obligation to consult publicly as part of its review work.
- Encourages the submission of high quality evidence to assist its decision making.
- Promotes positive and constructive relationships with partners who influence the work of the Commission and improves customer satisfaction.

4. The strategy is targeted towards seven audiences (the public, interested parties, principal councils, town and community councils, Members of Parliament and Assembly Members, the local government representative bodies and Welsh Government). These seven groups together constitute the Commission's stakeholders. The purpose of an audience based approach is to ensure that its associated activities are focused and that the Commission's messages, advice and information are presented in the most appropriate way for each particular circumstance.

5. The major part of the Commission's work is conducting principal council electoral reviews. The references to review work in this document are specifically in respect of electoral reviews but many also apply to principal council boundary reviews.

Importance of the external relations strategy

6. The quality of the Commission's relationships with its partner organisations and the effectiveness of its communications with members of the public are critical in achieving its objectives.

Statutory obligation

7. For electoral, county and community reviews, the Commission must publicise and consult on aspects of reviews. In particular, the Commission is obliged to:

- (a) publish the report electronically,

- (b) secure that the report is available for inspection (without charge) at the offices of any principal council with an interest in the review for the duration of the period of representations,
- (c) send copies of the report to Welsh Ministers and mandatory consultees,
- (d) inform any other person who submitted evidence to the reviewing body how to obtain a copy of the report, and
- (e) invite representations and notify the persons mentioned in (c) and (d) of the period of representations.

Evidence

- 8. The Commission takes the view that the quality of its recommendations is affected by the quality of the representations made by principal councils, town and community councils, local organisations and individual members of the public. By publicising reviews effectively and providing the right information to all interested parties, staff and commissioners can encourage high quality decision making.

Relationships

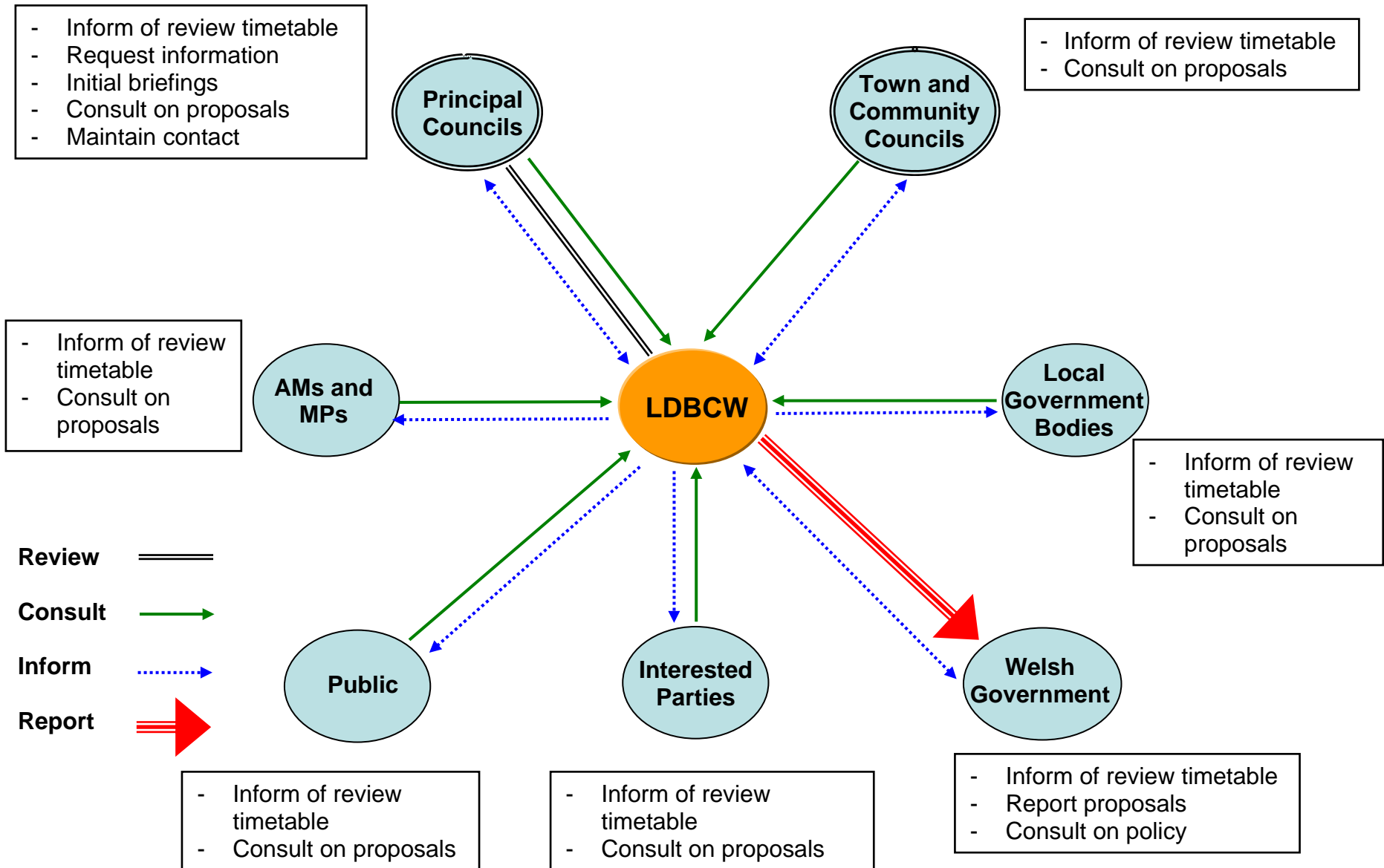
- 9. The quality of the Commission's relationship with principal councils and partner organisations can define the efficiency and effectiveness of a review. By engaging early with principal councils and being clear about the opportunities inherent in a review, councils are more likely to provide cooperation and information in a timely and accurate manner. In addition, where principal councils are fully engaged with a review, their evidence is likely to be more compelling than that of a council which is disengaged.

Reputation

- 10. Another important factor that influences the Commission's ability to carry out its work effectively is its reputation in the eyes of its stakeholders. One of the aims of this strategy is therefore to achieve and then maintain a positive reputation amongst all of its stakeholders.
- 11. The Commission is sponsored by the Democracy, Ethics and Partnership Division of the Welsh Government. The Commission is subject to periodic Policy Reviews that provide medium term strategic and policy guidelines for the Commission's annual Operational Plan. The Operational Plan takes account of the annual remit letter issued by the Welsh Government Minister. Though the Commission provides independent advice to the Welsh Government, it is however directly accountable to the Welsh Government which agrees the Commission's Operational Plan and its budget and has oversight of the Commission's activities. It must therefore ensure that the Welsh Government has confidence that it is delivering its objectives efficiently, fairly and delivering value for money. Other bodies such as WLGA and the wider local government community will have a substantial contribution to make as to whether the Commission is able to meet its objectives. Furthermore, the Commission strives to build and maintain a positive reputation with all organisations and individuals with whom it works and for whom it provides a service.

Values

- 12. This Communications Strategy embraces the Commission's guiding values of **independence, fairness, robustness, transparency and equitability.**



Part One: Public engagement

Objective: To use the most appropriate communication channels to inform the public of a review and provide the right guidance and information to allow them to contribute effectively to it.

Key message: *Local people know their area best. The Commission believes the strongest boundaries and the best electoral arrangements are those where members of the public have been able to make a meaningful contribution to the review.*

Measure of success: Increased levels of submissions and public satisfaction.

1. The Commission is committed to ensuring that local people can have a profound influence on the review process. Every review will include at least one extensive period of public consultation and the Commission will consider each submission on its merits regardless of whom it is from.
2. In addition to its statutory obligations to publicise the review, the Commission believes its recommendations – especially where community identity is concerned – are stronger where it has received high quality evidence. This may be from a wide range of sources but the views of local people who are directly affected by the review are particularly helpful.

Inform

3. The Commission's publicity material should initially give an overview of the review and then seek to channel audiences towards the Commission's website to gain further information about ways to provide views and evidence. The Commission will constantly seek ways to improve the content and accessibility of its website.
4. The Commission should seek to use the following channels to reach its public audience:

Principal Council marketing: Research by local authorities in England suggests that councils' own publicity material often delivers higher levels of penetration than traditional print media in disseminating information about local issues. The Commission should therefore seek to include publicity in councils' own regular newspaper / magazine as the review timetable allows and negotiate placement of the Commission's messages during the preliminary stage.

Print media: The Commission will provide press releases at every stage of the review and consider providing an ongoing narrative to print media (e.g. 'four weeks left to have your say') to maintain interest and momentum. It was the previous practice to produce press releases from a template and just basic facts about the proposals were added. It is considered that media coverage could be improved by producing news releases that are better tailored to the specific review.

Social media: The Commission will tweet and update its Facebook page at every stage of the review and provide an ongoing narrative (e.g. 'four weeks left to have your say') to maintain interest and momentum. The Commission will seek to include its announcements on a councils' own Facebook page and twitter accounts at every stage of the review stage.

The Commission will not, at present, accept representations via a social media platform. Any representations sent to the Commission will be re-directed to the Commission's website.

Local / regional radio and TV: At each phase of consultation, the Commission should alert local radio stations to the opportunity to interview the Chair or spokesperson on the day of the launch via its press release. Where a request is made for a Welsh language interview this will be undertaken by the Welsh speaking Commissioner (or the designated Commissioner if more than one speaks Welsh).

Direct Marketing: The Commission provides notices for libraries and community councils for each set of draft and final proposals. The Commission should also ensure that guidance material is provided in hard copy on request. Maps and reports should also be considered a form of direct marketing which should inform and guide members of the public.

Guide

5. Once local people have been alerted to the review and the opportunities to contribute, they should be given the right advice to be able to contribute effectively. To that end, the Commission's website should provide:
 - Maps and electorate information for the review area in question to enable members of the public and groups to produce their own proposals.
 - Guidance governing the conduct of the various types of reviews.
6. Members of the public are likely to begin the review process with low levels of knowledge about the role of the Commission, the review process and ways to contribute. It is therefore critical to ensure that it provides guidance that is clear, accessible and reflective of the level of knowledge and interest of the likely audience.

Code of practice on consultation

7. The Commission is committed to adhering to the Government's code of practice on consultation. Listed below are the code's seven principles and, in italics, are the ways in which the Commission's public consultation seeks to complement them. The Commission should monitor any future updates of the code and consider any changes it should make to its own practices in response.

When to consult

Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

The Commission's consultation exercises take place in advance of the Commission's deliberations on recommendations.

Duration of consultation exercises

The Act states that consultations be a period of not less than 6 weeks and not more than 12 weeks. The Commission is committed to normally consult for 12 weeks.

For most reviews, members of the public will have, in total, more than 12 weeks to feed into the review process (this includes both initial and draft stages). For reviews where the Commission or Council has previously consulted on the proposals, a shorter consultation period may be considered.

Clarity of scope and impact

Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence, and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

The Commission's reports and guidance documents will make clear the reasons for a review, its process and the outcomes.

Accessibility of consultation exercises

Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

All relevant information is accessible online and provided in hard copy to interested parties (see Part Two). Information is provided in both Welsh and English.

The burden of consultation

Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

The nature and complexity of much of the Commission's review work means that it is generally not possible to ease the burden on the consultees by providing questions that only require yes / no answers. The Commission's review guidance documents will provide information about the issues to be considered during the review.

Responsiveness of consultation exercises

Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

The Commission analyses all consultation responses, publishes them and gives equal weight to them regardless of who has submitted them. Reports make direct reference to submissions received and give reasons why they are accepted or rejected.

Capacity to consult

Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

The Commission will investigate a mechanism to provide ongoing evaluation of the quality and quantity of responses to consultation for all reviews (see Part Eight).

Part One: Public Engagement

Timing / Stage of review	Activity	Output	Responsible
Press / Radio / TV			
Start of review	Press release to local media announcing start of review and inviting proposals.	Raise awareness of review and encourage submissions.	Review Officer
	Answer media inquiries.	Encourage media activity.	Chief Executive
Launch of draft proposals	Press release to local media announcing start of consultation on draft proposals.	Encourage submissions.	Review Officer
	Answer media inquiries.	Encourage media activity.	Chief Executive or Lead Commissioner
Four weeks before end of draft proposals consultation	Letter to the editor of local media announcing that there are 'only four weeks left to have your say' on draft proposals	Encourage further submissions	Chief Executive
Publication of final proposals	Press release to local media announcing publication of final proposals.	Inform public of end of review and next steps.	Review Officer
	Answer media inquiries.	Encourage media activity.	Chief Executive or Lead Commissioner
Online / Social Media			
At start of review and updated throughout review	Create section on web page dedicated to each review and update throughout process	Full details of review available for inspection and to inform debate e.g. reports, maps, guidance etc	Review Officers
	Tweet and update the Facebook page at each stage. Respond to appropriate questions and enquiries	Inform public and encourage submissions and debate	Review Manager or Review Officers

Council resources			
Before start of review and / or publication of draft proposals	Secure space in council newspaper / magazine / social media site to promote review	Raise awareness of review and encourage submissions from target demographic	Review Officer to provide copy and to negotiate space
Following preliminary period of review	Secure space on council website promoting review and linking to Commission's site	Raise awareness of review and encourage submissions	Review Officer to provide copy and to negotiate space
Consultation materials			
Start of review consultation and draft proposals consultation	Notices provided to libraries and community councils	Raise awareness of review, direct people to website and encourage submissions	Review Officer
Draft proposals and final proposals	Full reports and maps made available to councils for distribution to members and public via libraries and information centres	Inform local people of detail of recommendations and encourage submissions (for draft proposals)	Review Officer
Throughout every review	Providing accessible guidance document	Encourage high quality submissions	Chief Executive
Equality and diversity			
All published material	All material available for translation, large print, easy read and Braille on request	Delivering accessible information and guidance	Review Manager and Review Officer

Part Two: Interested parties

Objective: To engage local groups, individuals and organisations having a specific interest in the electoral arrangements of their area and give them the tools to engage constructively in the review.

Key message: *Local groups and organisations have a unique insight into the way their community functions. The Commission will actively seek their views so that it can establish the nature of community identities and interests and ensure that they are reflected in the new electoral arrangements.*

Measure of success: Increased volume and quality of submissions and higher customer satisfaction.

1. As well as publicising details of each review widely in the local community, the Commission targets specific local organisations and individuals who might have an interest in the review and who might be able to make a constructive contribution during the consultation process.
2. Whilst all consultation activity undertaken by the Commission will be open to anyone, its activity should also be designed to seek views – in particular – from those who are likely to be affected specifically by the review and / or those who might be able to make a constructive contribution to the review process.
3. At present, the Commission consults directly with community councils in every review area (see Part Three) but there remains scope to extend the Commission’s activities so that more groups, with local knowledge, expertise and networks have the opportunity to contribute and generate debate.

Targeting

4. The Commission will rely heavily on intelligence from each principal council when targeting interested parties but should ensure that it obtains details from councils during the preliminary phase of the review of organisations who might have an interest in the review and whose networks might encourage further submissions.
5. The Commission should use the information provided by principal councils to establish its own stakeholder list in advance of the first phase of consultation and maintain it for the duration review by adding extra groups and organisations where there is evidence of their interest in a review (e.g. from press reports, direct submissions etc). At each stage of consultation, members of the list should receive relevant information about the review and appropriate guidance material.
6. Individuals and groups who respond to any phase of consultation should be added to the stakeholder list (if they are not already part of it) if they participate in any part of the review so that they are kept informed at the next stage of the review and can therefore participate further.
7. During the course of the review, each target group and individual should receive – on publication:
 - Copy of guidance documents at start of review and details of the key milestones.
 - All press releases associated with the review.
 - Copy of draft and final proposals (or a link to them on the Commission’s website).

8. The Commission will also seek to make use of any existing networks run by councils in relation to community engagement such as dedicated web pages and / or consultation alerts sent directly to interested individuals and groups.
9. The Commission will consider conducting a briefing for neighbourhood groups in areas where there are no community councils.

Equality and diversity

10. The Commission has a responsibility to ensure that it adheres to equalities legislation as part of the consultation and decision making phases of each review under the terms of the Equality Act 2010. As such, the Commission must ensure that it has due regard to the elimination of unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relationships across all protected characteristics¹.
11. In practice, the Act obliges public bodies to take reasonable steps to:
 - Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics².
 - Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
 - Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
12. The Commission will take steps to ensure that it removes barriers that might exist for minority groups who wish to participate in a review. Review information may therefore be provided in accessible formats to encourage wider participation.
13. The Commission will also consider whether it should conduct additional consultation activity in order to engage minority groups in the review on a case-by-case basis based on the information gathered in the preliminary stage and advice from the council. By actively engaging representative bodies of minority groups and directly providing them with appropriate consultation material, the Commission can ensure that it has provided adequate encouragement to minority groups to become involved in the review. During the course of a review, for example, the Commission may need to take a view as to whether it needs to carry out further consultation with specific groups through focus groups, to commission extra research or by providing additional guidance and information to groups who might otherwise be excluded from the process.
14. All Commission staff are required to attend training in equality and diversity.

¹ Section 149, Equality Act 2010.

² Chapter 1, section 4, Equality Act 2010.

Part Two: Interested Parties

Timing/ Stage of review	Activity	Output	Responsible
Preliminary stage	Establish stakeholder contact list based on information provided by principal council (update throughout review)	Direct consultation to target groups	Review Officer
Start of review	Direct mailing and / or email to all stakeholder representatives providing guidance documents and publicity material	Inform target groups of review and encourage submissions	Review Officer
Publication of draft proposals	Direct mailing and / or email to all stakeholder representatives providing draft proposals	Encourage submissions	Review Officer
Publication of final proposals	Direct mailing and / or email to all stakeholder representatives providing final proposals	Inform stakeholders of end of review and thank them for participation	Review Officer

Part Three: Town and Community Councils

Objective: To engage town and community councils in the changes being considered for their area and give them the tools to engage constructively in the review.

Key message: *Town and community councils have a pivotal role into the way their community functions. The Commission will actively seek their views so that it can establish the nature of community identities and interests and ensure that they are reflected in the new arrangements.*

Measure of success: Increased volume and quality of submissions and higher customer satisfaction.

1. The effective delivery and quality of a review depends, to some extent, on the engagement and quality of representations from town and community councils to the Commission.
2. The Commission believes that local areas are known best by the people who live and represent those areas. Town and community councils, as such, represent a powerful voice for the areas they represent and the people within them.
3. The Commission always looks to make evidence based proposals as a result of its reviews and town and community councils can provide key assistance to the Commission in providing evidence of community ties, or the breaking of ties, in areas where the Commission makes proposals.
4. At present, the Commission consults directly with town and community councils in every review area so that their local knowledge, expertise and networks have the opportunity to contribute and generate debate.
5. The Commission will engage with town and community councils at the start of and during the review process. When undertaking principal area electoral reviews, the Commission, at the start of the review, will invite representatives of the town and community councils to attend a briefing to inform them about the review. There is also a question and answer session at the end of the briefing to allow clarification of the process, impact and scope of the review.
6. The Commission will write to all town and community councils in the review area, providing notice of the start of the review, guidance and public notices for them to post on their community notice boards and facilities.
7. At every stage of the review process the Commission will seek to engage and encourage evidence based submissions from town and community councils to improve the recommendations the Commission will make.

Part Three: Town and Community Councils

Timing/ Stage of review	Activity	Output	Responsible
Preliminary stage	Meeting with community councils	Inform community councils of review process and encourage submissions	Lead Commissioner and Review Officer
Start of review	Direct mailing and / or email to all town and community councils providing guidance documents and publicity material	Inform community councils of review and encourage submissions	Review Officer
Publication of draft proposals	Direct mailing and / or email to all community councils providing report of draft proposals and publicity material	Encourage submissions	Review Officer
Publication of final proposals	Direct mailing and / or email to all community councils providing final proposals and maps	Inform Community councils of end of review, implications for them and next steps	Review Officer

Part Four: Principal Councils

Objectives: To enlist principal councils to become active participants in the review process and provide them with the necessary guidance and support to make a constructive input in to the review.

To understand and manage demand for reviews.

Key message: *The Commission is a facilitator of improvement in local government as much as a regulator. We aim to help principal councils realise the opportunities inherent in the review process and contribute to it constructively.*

Measure of success: Improved customer satisfaction, reviews completed on time without adverse media comments and with noticeably constructive dealings with the leadership of principal councils.

1. The successful delivery and quality of a review depends – to a large extent – on the strength of the relationship between the Commission and the principal council in question.
2. The Commission will rely on information and data provided by each council when formulating recommendations. For principal council electoral reviews, submissions by principal councils relating to electoral schemes are also likely to be key pieces of the evidence during the review. The principal council also has an important role in influencing other key opinion formers associated with the review such as local MPs AMs, media, members of the public and other councils. Collectively, as the Welsh Local Government Association, they are also an opinion former and are able to influence Welsh Government Ministers, MPs and AMs.
3. The quality of the relationship between the Commission and the principal council in question is usually defined at an early stage of the review regardless of the reasons for it being part of the programme. Actions taken before the formal start of the review will therefore be critical in determining the success or otherwise of the Commission’s management of the relationship in the long term.
4. Throughout a review, the Commission should ensure that its actions are guided by:
 - **Understanding** - the views, needs and context within which the principal council operates.
 - **Openness** – being clear with principal councils, at an early stage, about the Commission’s requirements and the rules within which the review must be conducted.
 - **Flexibility** – emphasising that the Commission will respond to compelling evidence and has no preconceptions as to the result of the review.
 - **Visibility** – the commissioners and named staff will provide visible leadership of the review and will engage directly with the principal council.
 - **Reliability** – delivering what it promises to schedule and keeps the council informed of progress.
5. **Where an principal council has not requested a review**, there is a higher possibility that it will be sceptical about the opportunities involved with an electoral review and may consider that it has more pressing priorities than participating in the process.
6. In its initial communication with a principal council, the Commission should be able to make four commitments (these are based on the relationship during a principal area electoral review but the principles of the commitments apply to all types of review):

i) Early Notification

The Commission should engage with the principal council as soon as it publishes its review programme and in the months leading up to the commencement of its review. By communicating early and directly with the leadership of principal councils, the Commission can maximise the possibility of establishing a constructive relationship for the duration of a review. Early engagement also means that principal councils will have an opportunity to give proper consideration to the potential opportunities offered by an electoral review.

The Commission should be open and clear about its requirements at this stage, namely:

- A single point of contact for officers at the Commission to liaise throughout the review;
- A single point of contact for commissioners at the Commission to liaise throughout the review;
- Information on local groups to assist the Commission in directing communications with stakeholders (See Part Two);
- Up to date electoral statistics;
- Electorate forecasts and methodology behind them;
- Copies of any statutory instruments or resolutions that have been made since the last review which might be relevant to the review; and,
- Local press and media contacts for the Review Officer to use to publicise the review.

ii) Information and guidance

In return, the Commission should provide guidance and assistance – at an early stage – which will help principal councils respond to the requests above and provide advice for them to respond effectively at the scheme development stage of the review.

To that end, the Commission can strengthen its relationship during its initial meetings with senior council officers and members by providing detailed written guidance on the opportunities inherent in the review process.

The Commission also provides relevant information and advice to council staff to assist the principal council in producing electoral schemes.

iii) Face to face engagement

The Commission already seeks to engage principal councils at a senior level in the preliminary stage of the review by meeting group leaders and presenting to the full council. In previous reviews, where the process has received buy-in from the leadership of the council (Leader, Chief Executive and senior members of the council), they have proven to be far more likely to result in positive reviews. The appointment of a lead commissioner for each review encourages councils to engage with the process at a high level and organising face-to-face meetings with senior members and staff prior to a reviews commencement demonstrates a commitment to a personalised service.

iv) Ongoing guidance

In addition to the meetings to be held in the preliminary phase of the review and in order to build and maintain relationships with principal councils throughout the review, consideration will be given to further meetings between the lead commissioner and senior council figures as and when required.

The Commission will monitor responses received during the course of the review and will consider issuing e-mail reminders to those it considers to have an interest in the review and have not yet responded.

7. Outside of the review process the Commission should maintain contact with principal councils to inform them of the progress that is being made with current reviews and details of forthcoming reviews. To assist with this process of ongoing communication the Commission will produce regular Newsletters that will provide updates of the different aspects of the work of the Commission. These, along with announcements and communications on all reviews will be on the Commission's Facebook page and tweeted.

Part Four: Principal Councils

Timing/ Stage of review	Activity	Output	Responsible
Annually	For those Councils due to have reviews starting within the following three years the Commission write to Chief Executives informing them of the timetable and the requirements of the review.	Provide information to plan for an upcoming review.	Review Manager
One month before formal start of review	Lead Commissioner, Chief Executive, Review Manager and Review Officer to meet council staff	Briefing on best practice and providing technical advice	Lead Commissioner, Chief Executive, Review Manager and Review Officer
One month before formal start of review	Lead Commissioner to meet Group Leaders	Establish face to face relationship and clarify scope and approach to the review	Lead Commissioner, Chief Executive, Review Manager and Review Officer
One week before formal start of review	Lead Commissioner to make a presentation to the full council	Establish face to face relationship and clarify scope and approach to the review	Lead Commissioner, Chief Executive, Review Manager and Review Officer
At each phase of consultation	The Commission will monitor the responses received and will consider issuing e-mail reminders to interested parties.	Encourage submissions from interested parties	Lead Commissioner and Review Officer
Periodically	Inform principal councils of the progress that is being made with current reviews and details of forthcoming reviews by means a periodic Newsletter	Provide information on review work and the work of the Commission in general	Chief Executive

Part Five: Members of Parliament and Assembly Members

Objective: To inform local Members of Parliament and Assembly Members in the review of their area to minimise misunderstanding and to enhance the reputation of the Commission in the House of Commons and the Senedd.

Key message: *The Commission has a transparent and helpful approach to its reviews. It engages Members of Parliament and Assembly Members throughout the process and actively seeks to resolve issues and respond to queries.*

Measure of success: Increasing number of requests for briefings and representations received from MPs and AMs.

1. The Commission's relationship with Members of Parliament and Assembly Members is important in determining the success of the review programme. Individual MPs and AMs will have an interest in each review as well as providing a potential source of high quality evidence.
2. Many MPs and AMs have close relationships with their local councillors and community groups and will expect to be able to speak with knowledge about the review and its impact locally. MPs are also likely to have an interest in the possible relationship between new electoral ward boundaries and constituency arrangements.
3. At the start of a review the Commission writes to MPs and AMs (including the regional AMs) in the affected area informing them of the commencement of the review.
4. MPs and AMs are sent hard copies of draft and final proposals and are encouraged to provide submissions at each stage of consultation. At the final proposals stage, the Commission will offer them the opportunity of a briefing with the Chair and Lead Commissioner to explain how the Commission came to its recommendations.
5. MPs and AMs are provided with copies of a Newsletter, produced periodically, that provides information on review work and the work of the Commission in general.
6. Regular monitoring of Welsh Government can help the Commission understand the risks and opportunities that may arise. Day to day analysis of the Welsh Government legislation, policy developments and debates alerts the Commission to any developments which might impact on a review or the review programme and will highlight areas where the Commission might wish to increase its lobbying activity. Where issues are raised in the Senedd concerning a specific review, the Commission should seek to contact the AM(s) in question to arrange a briefing. If the issue is a matter of policy, the Commission should seek to meet the Welsh Government Minister. The Commission should seek an annual opportunity to engage with the Welsh Government Minister to give a briefing on the work and ambitions of the Commission (see Part Seven). It may also be appropriate for the Chair of the Commission to meet the Welsh Government Minister on other occasions.

Part Five: Members of Parliament and Assembly Members

Timing/ Stage of review	Activity	Output	Responsible
At the start of the review	Direct mailing and / or email to all effected MPs and AMs providing guidance documents and publicity material	Inform of review and encourage submissions	Review Officer
At the draft stage of the review	Direct mailing and / or email to all effected MPs and AMs providing report of draft proposals	Encourage submissions	Review Officer
At the final stage of the review	Direct mailing and / or email to all effected MPs and AMs providing report of final proposals and offered briefing session with Chair and Lead Commissioner	Inform of end of review, implications and next steps	Chair, Lead Commissioner, Review Manager and Review Officer
Annually	Offer briefing session with Welsh Government Minister	Inform Minister of work of Commission and highlight positive achievements and future plans	Chair, Chief Executive
Periodically	Inform of the progress that is being made with current reviews and details of forthcoming reviews by means a periodic Newsletter	Provide information on review work and the work of the Commission in general	Chief Executive
Ongoing	Monitoring of legislation, Senedd debates, questions and media	Early warning of issues and opinion likely to affect local authorities and the Commission's work	Chief Executive

Part Six: Local Government Representative Bodies

Objective: To promote the value of the Commission's work as an independent body, alert principal and town and community councils to the opportunities inherent in the review programme and gain insight into the latest thinking and issues facing local government in Wales.

Measure of success: Positive engagement in consultations, positive feedback in post review questionnaires and positive feedback from local government representative bodies.

1. Local government in Wales has strong and influential networks. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), for example, represents the views of principal councils to government and coordinates councils at every tier of local government. The key groups who make up the wider local government community include:
 - Welsh Local Government Association.
 - One Voice Wales and other bodies representing community and town councils
 - Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE).
 - Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA).

Inform

2. In October 2011, the Commission wrote to every principal council in Wales and representative bodies in consultation on new guidance for electoral reviews. In March 2012 the Commission published the response to this consultation and guidance entitled Electoral Reviews: Policy and Practice.
3. Between May 2012 and June 2013 the Commission conducted two consultations regarding a methodology for the determination of council size to be employed as part of an electoral review. The outcome of this consultation was included in a new Electoral Reviews: Policy and Practice document published in December 2013.

Engage

4. The local government representative bodies are included in the list of organisations who are consulted during the reviews. Their participation in the review process is welcomed by the Commission.
5. The Commission will undertake an on-going engagement with local government representative bodies to inform them of the review work and the work of the Commission in general. To assist with this process of ongoing communication the Commission will produce regular Newsletters that will provide updates of the different aspects of the work of the Commission.

Part Six: Local Government Representative Bodies

Timing	Activity	Output	Responsible
Annually	An annual report is published and sent to all local authorities to report back on activity during the course of the year and presenting positive achievements	Alerting authorities to positive aspects of working with Commission	Chief Executive
Periodically	<p>Meet with senior officials of the representative bodies.</p> <p>Inform of the progress that is being made with current reviews and details of forthcoming reviews by means a periodic Newsletter</p>	Provide information on review work and the work of the Commission in general	Chief Executive

Part Seven: Welsh Government

Objective: To deliver the Commission's review proposals and to respond to consultation on Welsh Government's policy and legislation as it develops.

Measure of success: Review proposals agreed, 'no surprises' on policy development.

1. The Democracy, Ethics and Partnership Division (DEPD) of Welsh Government is an influential partner organisation for the Commission. It is responsible for:
 - Funding the Commission.
 - Commissioner appointments
 - Appointment of the Commission's Chief Executive
 - Legislation relating to the Commission's work.
 - The Minister responsible for considering the Commission's review proposals.
 - Its policy agenda will affect the environment in which principal councils operate.
2. DEPD is the responsible for progressing and administering most of the legislation relating to the work of the Commission. They were the primary division responsible for the new Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 recently given Royal Assent, reconstituting the Commission and re-writing the rules and processes surrounding reviews of electoral arrangements in Wales.
3. As well as ensuring that DEPD is formally included in all consultation exercises and policy development work, the Commission there is an established pattern of quarterly formal meetings and also informal meetings with key staff to enable a 'no surprises' culture and allow issues such as commissioner appointments to be raised at an early stage.
4. As the sponsor division for the Commission, DEPD is responsible for processing monthly request for Grant-in-Aid. The Commission's financial position is also reported to the liaison meetings.

Part Seven: Welsh Government (Democracy, Ethics and Partnership Division)

Timing/ Stage of review	Activity	Output	Responsible
Monthly	Grant-in-aid request	Funds transferred to the Commission's account	Finance Manager
Quarterly	Liaison meetings with key DEPD staff inc. a report on progress towards meeting key targets in the Operational Plan	Keeping DEPD informed of Commission's work and financial position and the Commission informed of WG's progress in the making of Orders	Chief Executive, Review Manager and Finance Manager
Annually	Request meeting with Minister	Updating the Minister on Commission's aims and discuss future government plans	Chief Executive
Annually	Submit Operational Plan to DEPD for approval	The Operational Plan is drafted following the receipt of the Minister's Remit Letter. The Plan is agreed by the Commission before submission	Chief Executive
Triennially	Submit updated Corporate Plan to DEPD for approval	The Corporate Plan is updated and agreed by the Commission before submission	Chief Executive
Ongoing	Informal meetings with key DEPD staff	Raise issues early and avoid surprises	Chief Executive

Part Eight: Monitoring and Evaluation

Objective: To inform the Commission about the effectiveness of its publicity campaigns, the views of its customers and the quantity of evidence generated by target audiences.

Publicity

1. The Commission currently has no formal method of tracking stories in local press or monitoring internet activity e.g. blogs and online-only news sources. Informal tracking is done by staff accessing Google News.
2. The Commission's website has had tracking metrics integrated into the design. This is able to provide information such as the number of visitors.
3. For each review the Commission maintains a database of the representations received at each stage of the review. It is possible therefore to provide an accurate count of the number of representations and thus gauge the public interest generated by a particular review (or stage of review).
4. The Commission also maintains a database of data produced from analytical tools for our social media pages. It is therefore possible to monitor and gauge stakeholder interest in our reviews and the Commission in general.

Customer satisfaction

5. Following each review the Commission publishes an online survey to assess stakeholder satisfaction. This survey is assessed by senior officers of the Commission and reported to Commissioners.
6. Furthermore the Commission annually publishes an online survey to assess stakeholder satisfaction of the Commission's general performance and processes. This survey is assessed by senior officers of the Commission and reported to Commissioners.

Best Practice

7. The Commission regularly liaises with other UK Boundary Commissions in order to learn how similar bodies carry out their consultation duties and ways in which they manage their relationships with partner organisations. Where examples of best practice are identified these can then be adopted.

Strategy Review

This Communications Strategy will initially be reviewed one year after first publication (January 2015) and then every two years.

Publication Date: January 2014