

**6th REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES –BOUNDARY
COMMISSION PROPOSALS**

1. SUMMARY

This report advises members of the consultation on the 6th review of UK parliamentary constituency boundaries which proposes adding Lochaber ward 22 of Highland Council to the existing Argyll and Bute Constituency.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Council is invited to raise no objections to the proposed adjustment to the constituency given the criteria laid down by statute.

3. DETAIL

3.1 Parliament has decided to reduce the number of constituencies from 650 to 600 and therefore there is a reduction in Scottish constituencies. The proposal is to enlarge the existing Argyll and Bute constituency to include the ward 22 of Highland Council adding in the Lochaber area as shown on the map to create a constituency of 75,941 and with an area of 9765 square hectares, the second largest constituency in Scotland. In terms of the Boundary Commission's requirements, the electorate has to fall within a range of 72,810 and 80,473 and cannot exceed 13,000 square kilometres. In the circumstances the proposed area and electorate meets the requirements laid down by statute. It is clear that there is no traditional link between the community of Lochaber ward and the rest of Argyll and Bute but it is fair to assess that the communities share similar issues around remoteness, rurality, sparsity and economic challenges arising therefrom.

- 3.2 The Returning Officer has been consulted and has indicated that the inclusion of the area would involve cross boundary cooperation with Highland Council in regard to polling stations staff and other resources as well as creating a short term challenge for staff in familiarising themselves with the area of Lochaber. It is also necessary to address the additional time for collection of ballot boxes and delivery to a count centre in Lochgilphead will mitigate against any night time counting of votes as the travel time from Fort William to Lochgilphead is upwards of 2 hours and that would be after the arrival of all boxes from outlying areas.
- 3.3 The Council has always been keen to see coterminosity of Council boundaries with electoral processes but given the parameters set by the commission that isn't possible. The Council may wish to consider if there is any alternative option for the Council to meet the parameters

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The proposals are compliant with the legislative requirements placed on the Commission but represent a substantial increase in the area of the constituency which will create the second largest in Scotland. Whilst the communities have similar characteristics they fall within different Local Authority areas and have little tradition of interaction with Fort William looking north to Inverness for all its public and private sector services.

5. IMPLICATIONS

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| Policy - | Council policy has been to seek coterminosity where possible. That will not be possible in this instance. |
| Financial – | The costs of running an election will be increased but are met by Government. |
| Legal - | None. |
| Personnel - | There will be an increased burden on council staff in supporting elections covering the enlarged area. |
| Equal Opportunities - | None. |

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