

News Release



EMBARGO – NOT FOR USE BEFORE 0001 Hours on 4 November 2020

Review of Electoral Arrangements: Argyll and Bute council area – public consultation

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland has begun (on Wednesday 4 November) a public consultation on proposals for councillor numbers and ward boundaries in Argyll and Bute council area. The consultation will run until Tuesday 26 January 2020.

The Commission wants members of the public and local communities to give us their comments on the proposals so local views can be considered as the Commission develops its final recommendations for Scottish Ministers.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 allows the use of one or two member wards, in addition to the existing three and four member wards, where a ward includes an inhabited island.

The recently introduced Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 has also allowed us to consider mainland wards of between two and five members.

The Commission conducted a consultation on its proposals with Argyll and Bute Council from 16 July to 30 September 2020 and is now beginning a 12 week public consultation.

The current review covers the number of councillors on the council and the number and boundaries of wards for the election of those councillors.

The proposals for public consultation in Argyll and Bute recommend 34 councillors, across 12 wards.

We expect our recommendations, if accepted, to be in place for the next local government elections in May 2022.

Ronnie Hinds, Chair of the Commission, said:

“We are pleased to begin our public consultation on electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute council area. We have already consulted the Council and have considered their views carefully, amending our proposals by Tarbert and Skipness, before preparing the proposals published today. While we have not at this stage taken on board all the Council’s suggestions we agree that it is important to test the public’s views and look forward to receiving the thoughts of people across the council area.

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“We welcome the flexibility offered by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 to have wards of between one and five members as opposed to the existing three and four member wards. We have used this flexibility in Argyll and Bute council area where we propose four 2-member wards, three of these being island wards.

“We especially want to encourage those living on islands to give us their views on community ties between islands and with the mainland.

“It is important that electoral arrangements for Scottish councils are effective and that our proposals provide for electoral fairness while taking account of local ties and special geographical considerations as far as possible. Hearing local views on these issues is vitally important as we develop our final recommendations.”

Our proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area:

Our methodology for determining councillor numbers proposes 33 councillors for Argyll and Bute council area. However, in developing our proposals, a better ward design was achievable with 34 councillors. Therefore we present an electoral arrangement for 34 councillors representing four 2-member wards, six 3-member wards and two 4-member wards, reducing overall councillor numbers by two. Without the inclusion of the 10% limit to change of councillor numbers, our methodology would have proposed 24 councillors.

Our proposals for Argyll and Bute Council take account of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and use the flexibility offered by 2-member wards to better reflect local ties for island communities. The proposals present island-only wards for: Islay, Jura and Colonsay; Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree; and retain the existing Isle of Bute ward with 2 councillors rather than 3 as at present. We considered special geographic circumstances applied in relation to variation from electoral parity in the proposed island wards of: Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree; and Islay, Jura and Colonsay due to these islands' remoteness and their limited transport links.

The proposals take account of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act that allow the use of 2-member and 5-member wards to design a 2-member ward that considers local ties in Lorn.

The proposals make no changes to the boundaries of four of the existing wards (Cowal; Dunoon; Isle of Bute; and Lomond North).

The proposals place Oban within a single ward to avoid breaking local community ties.

The proposals minimise change to the existing ward boundaries in Helensburgh, while reducing councillor numbers there by one.

The proposals have regard to Argyll and Bute Council's four administrative areas and the local ties and communities that they represent.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Variation from Electoral Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2024)	Forecast Variation from Electoral Parity (%)
1	Kintyre	3	6,032	2.5%	5,847	0.7%
2	Islay, Jura and Colonsay	2	2,847	-27.5%	2,927	-24.4%
3	Mid Argyll	4	7,357	-6.3%	7,302	-5.7%
4	Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree	2	3,211	-18.2	3,438	-11.2
5	Oban	4	8,357	6.5	8,497	9.7
6	Lorn	2	4,190	6.8	4,164	7.5
7	Cowal	3	5,734	-2.6	5,596	-3.7
8	Dunoon	3	5,500	-6.6	5,304	-8.7
9	Isle of Bute	2	4,696	19.6	4,406	13.8
10	Lomond North	3	6,000	1.9	5,858	0.8
11	Helensburgh Central	3	6,424	9.1	6,075	4.6
12	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,377	8.3	6,420	10.5
		34	66,725		65,834	

Background

Under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the Commission is required to conduct electoral reviews at intervals of 8 to 12 years. One of the main reasons we undertake reviews is that the population, and therefore the electorate, of any local authority area is constantly changing, with migration into or out of areas as well as within the same area. As a result of these changes, some councillors may represent considerably more or fewer electors than other councillors in the same council area.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 requires the Commission to review the six councils containing inhabited islands (Argyll and Bute, Highland, North Ayrshire, Orkney, Shetland and Na h-Eileanan an Iar) as soon as practicable. The Commission will make its recommendations for these six council areas to Scottish Ministers by May 2021, in order that the resulting wards can be used for the local government elections in May 2022. The Commission consulted on its proposals for Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar council areas in 2019.

When reviewing electoral arrangements the Commission is required to take account of the following factors:

- The interests of effective and convenient local government
- Within each council, each councillor should represent the same number of electors as closely as possible
- Local ties which would be broken by making a particular boundary
- The desirability of fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable
- Special geographical considerations

Where a ward contains an inhabited island the Commission can recommend that it elects between one and five councillors. In all other circumstances a ward must return between two and five councillors.

Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 aims to underpin the Scottish Government's objective of ensuring that there is a sustained focus across Government and the public sector to meet the needs of island communities now and in the future.

Contact for Further Information:

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Maps of the proposals are available on request.

Following the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 our name will change to become "Boundaries Scotland". This reflects our wider responsibility for reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries as well as local government boundaries. We expect to change our name Spring 2021.

Information on the review can also be found on the Commission's website:
www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk

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