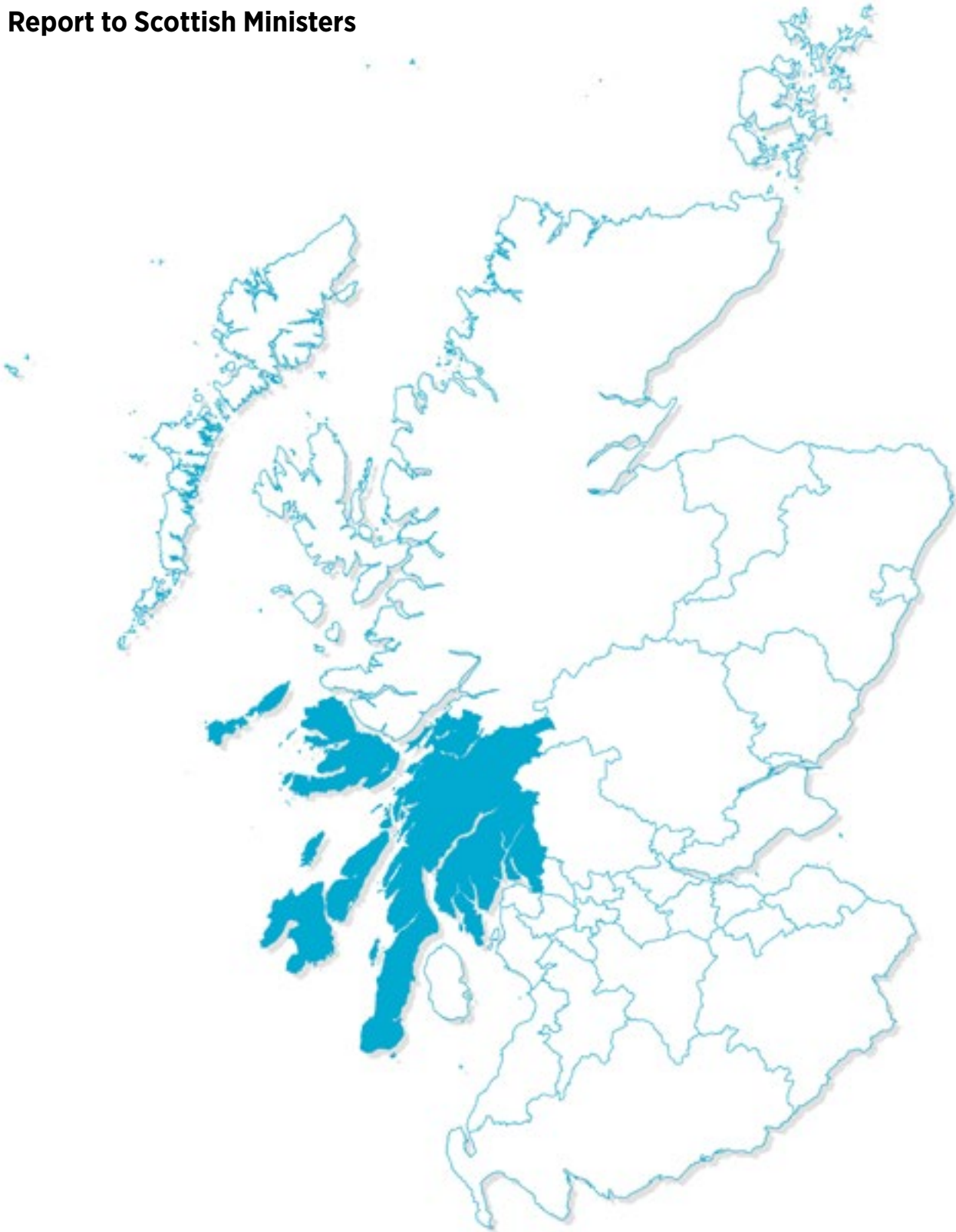




**Review of Electoral Arrangements
Argyll and Bute Council Area
Final Proposals**

Report to Scottish Ministers



Boundaries Scotland

Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements

Final Proposals

Argyll and Bute Council Area

Membership of the Commission

Chair:	Ronnie Hinds
Deputy Chair:	Ailsa Henderson
Commissioners:	Roland Bean Jon Collins Gordon Macmillan Susan Walker

Boundaries Scotland

Scottish Ministers

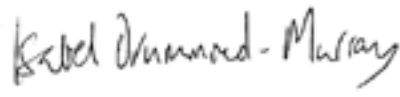
We, Boundaries Scotland¹, present our proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area resulting from our Review of Electoral Arrangements under, and in accordance with, section 20 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

In accordance with the provisions of section 18(3) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, copies of our report, together with illustrative maps, are being sent to Argyll and Bute Council with a request that the report and maps should be made available for public inspection at its offices.

The report is available on our website and is being publicised on social media. Notice is also being given in newspapers circulating in the council area of the fact that the report has been made so that interested persons may inspect the report and maps at the Council's offices.



Ronnie Hinds
Chair



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Secretary

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June 2021

¹ We conducted this Review as the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland but have submitted our proposals and report to Ministers as Boundaries Scotland following the commencement of section 28 of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 on 14 May 2021.

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Part 1 Final Proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area

1. We propose that in the interests of effective and convenient local government the future electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute Council area should provide for a council of 34 councillors in 12 wards, comprising four wards returning 2-members, six wards returning 3-members and two wards each returning 4-members as follows:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 18)	Variation from Electoral Parity (%) ¹	Forecast Electorate (2024) ²	Forecast Variation from Electoral Parity (%) ¹
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	

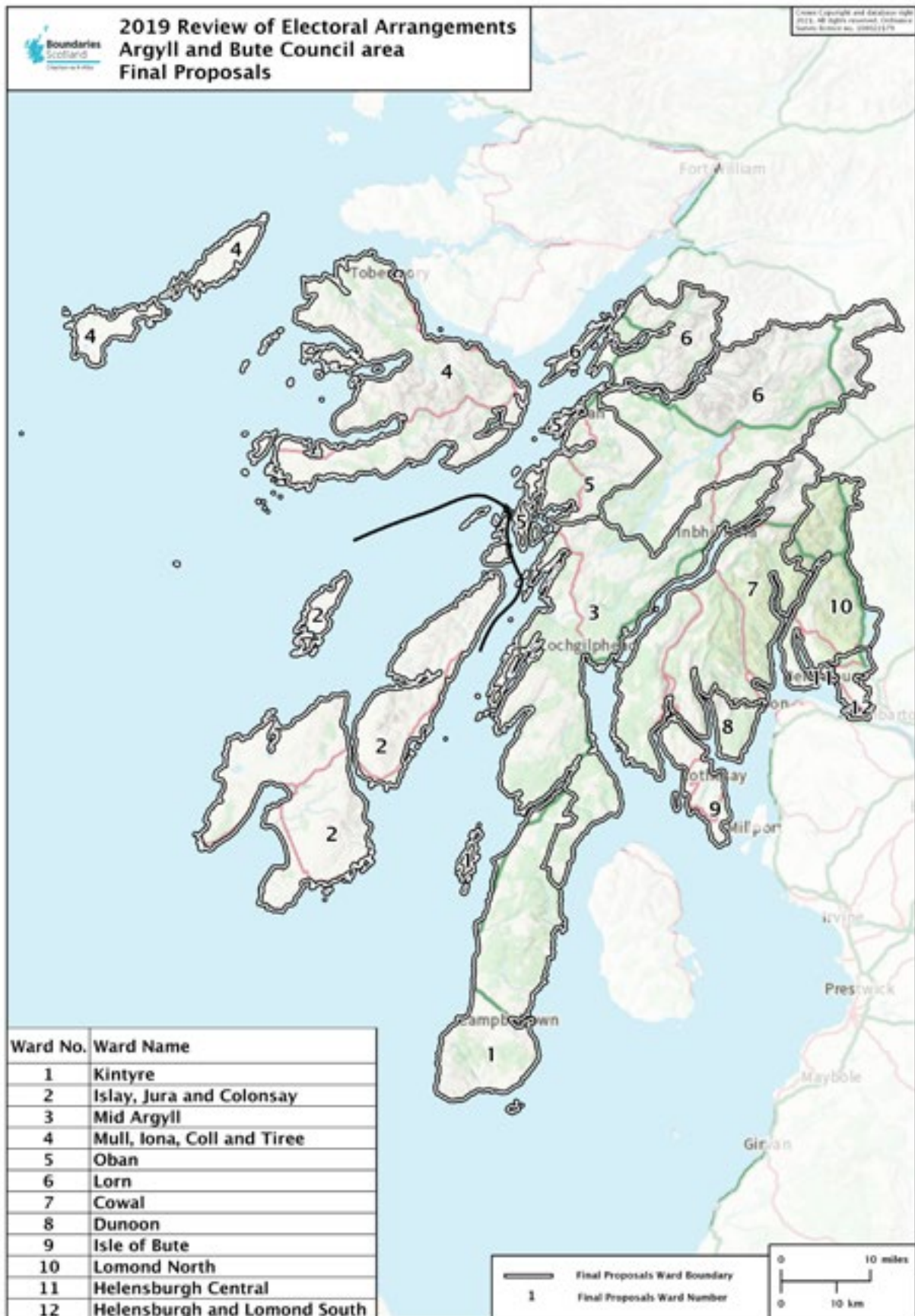
¹ Absolute application of parity throughout the council area would result in each ward being at 0% that is each councillor representing exactly the same number of electors. A negative parity % figure indicates a ward is over-represented, that is, that each councillor represents fewer electors than absolute parity would require. A positive % figure indicates a ward is under-represented, that is, each councillor represents more electors than absolute parity would require.

² Forecast electorate is derived from data provided by each council, including new build and demolition data and population estimates published by National Records of Scotland.

2. Our proposals:

- take account of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 by using the flexibility offered by two-member wards to better reflect local ties for island communities. The proposals present island-only wards for Islay, Jura and Colonsay and Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree; retain the existing Isle of Bute ward with two councillors rather than three as at present, and present a 2-member Lorn ward which includes the inhabited island of Lismore;
- reflect special geographic circumstances 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;
- make no changes to the boundaries of four of the existing wards (Cowal; Dunoon; Isle of Bute; and Lomond North);
- place Oban within a single ward to avoid breaking local community ties;
- minimise change to the existing ward boundaries in Helensburgh, while reducing councillor numbers there by one; and
- have regard to Argyll and Bute Council's four administrative areas and the local ties and communities that they represent.

Map of proposed ward boundaries



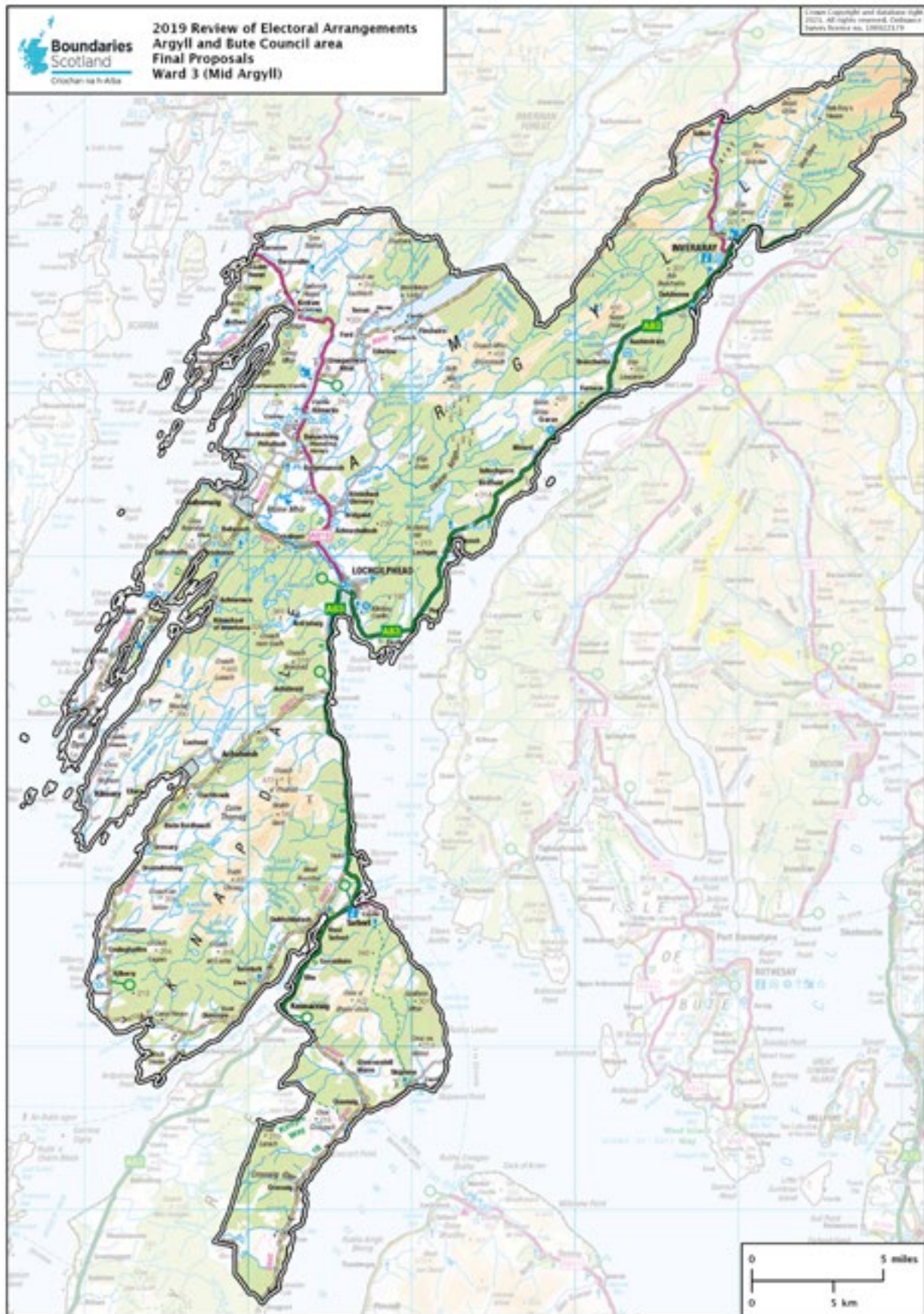
Ward 2 Islay, Jura and Colonsay – 2 councillors

Our proposals place the inhabited islands of Colonsay, Islay and Jura in a single ward. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 24.4% fewer electors than absolute parity would require.



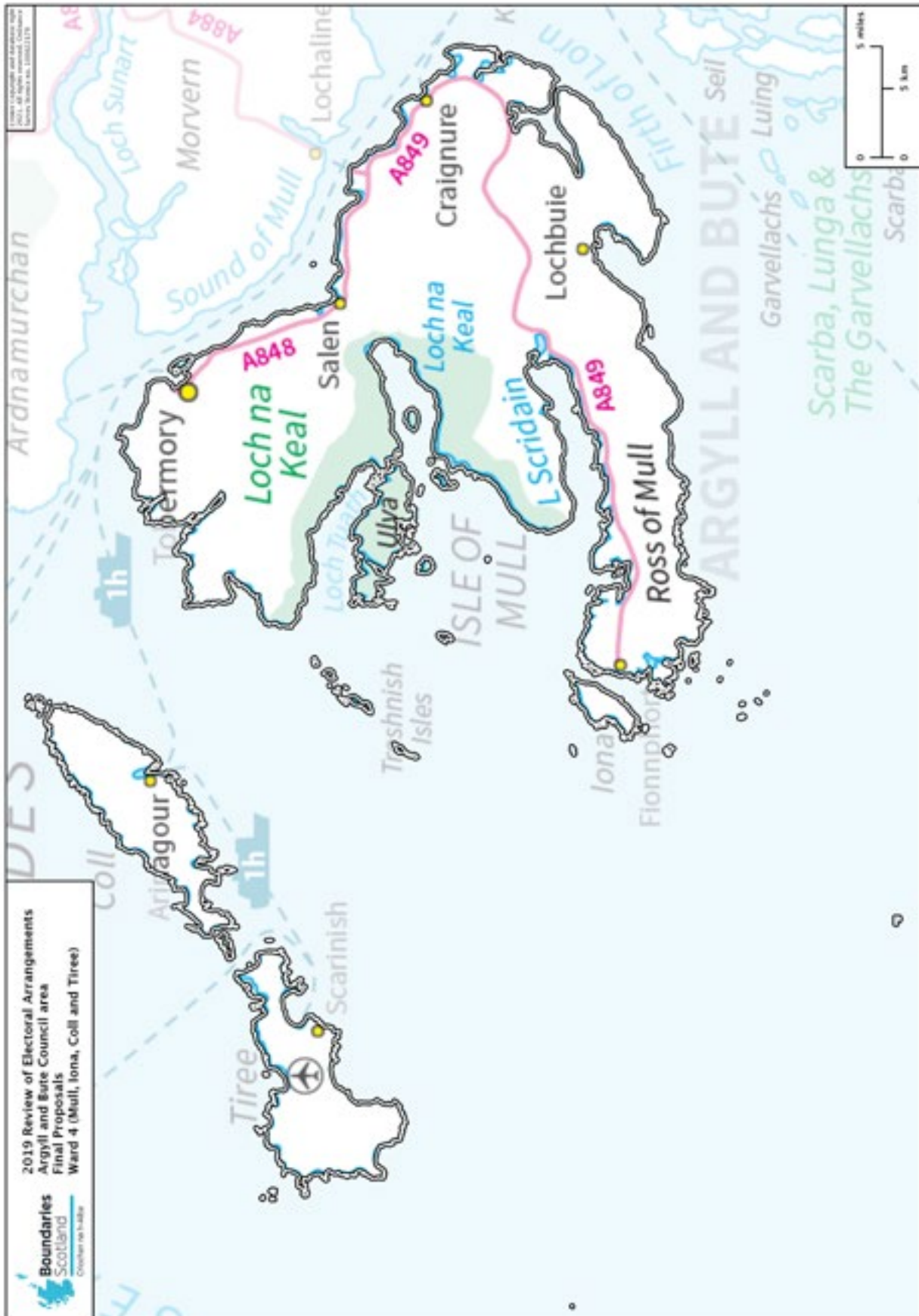
Ward 3 Mid Argyll – 4 councillors

Our proposals extend the existing Mid Argyll ward boundary southwards to include Tarbert and Skipness. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 5.7% fewer electors than absolute parity would require.



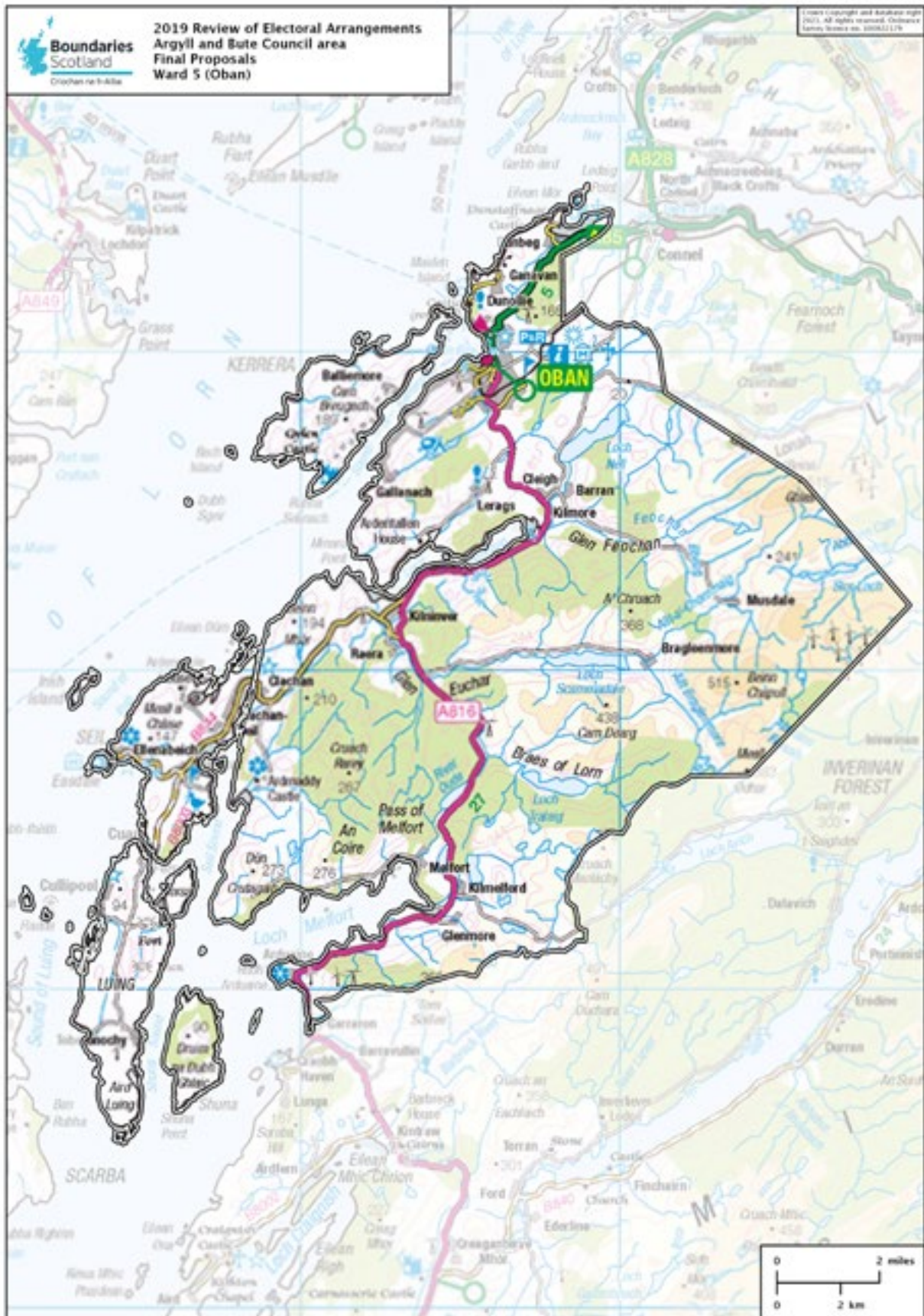
Ward 4 Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree – 2 councillors

Our proposals place the inhabited islands of Coll, Iona, Mull and Tiree in a single ward. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 11.2% fewer electors than absolute parity would require.



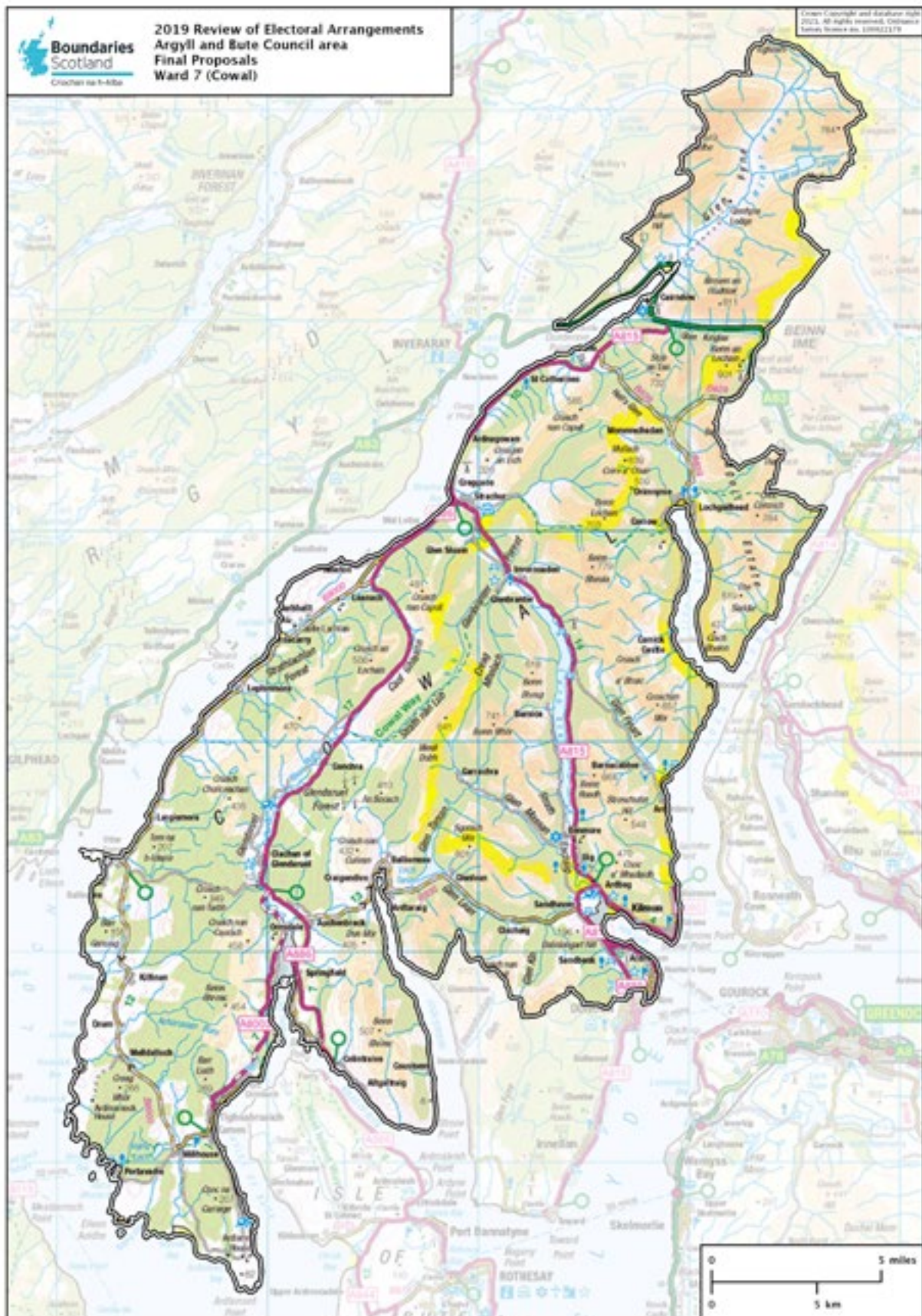
Ward 5 Oban – 4 councillors

Our proposals place Oban and the inhabited islands of Easdale, Kerrera, Luing and Seil within a single ward. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 9.7% more electors than absolute parity would require.



Ward 7 Cowal – 3 councillors

Our proposals retain the existing Cowal ward, with the name, boundary and number of councillors unchanged. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 3.7% fewer electors than absolute parity would require.



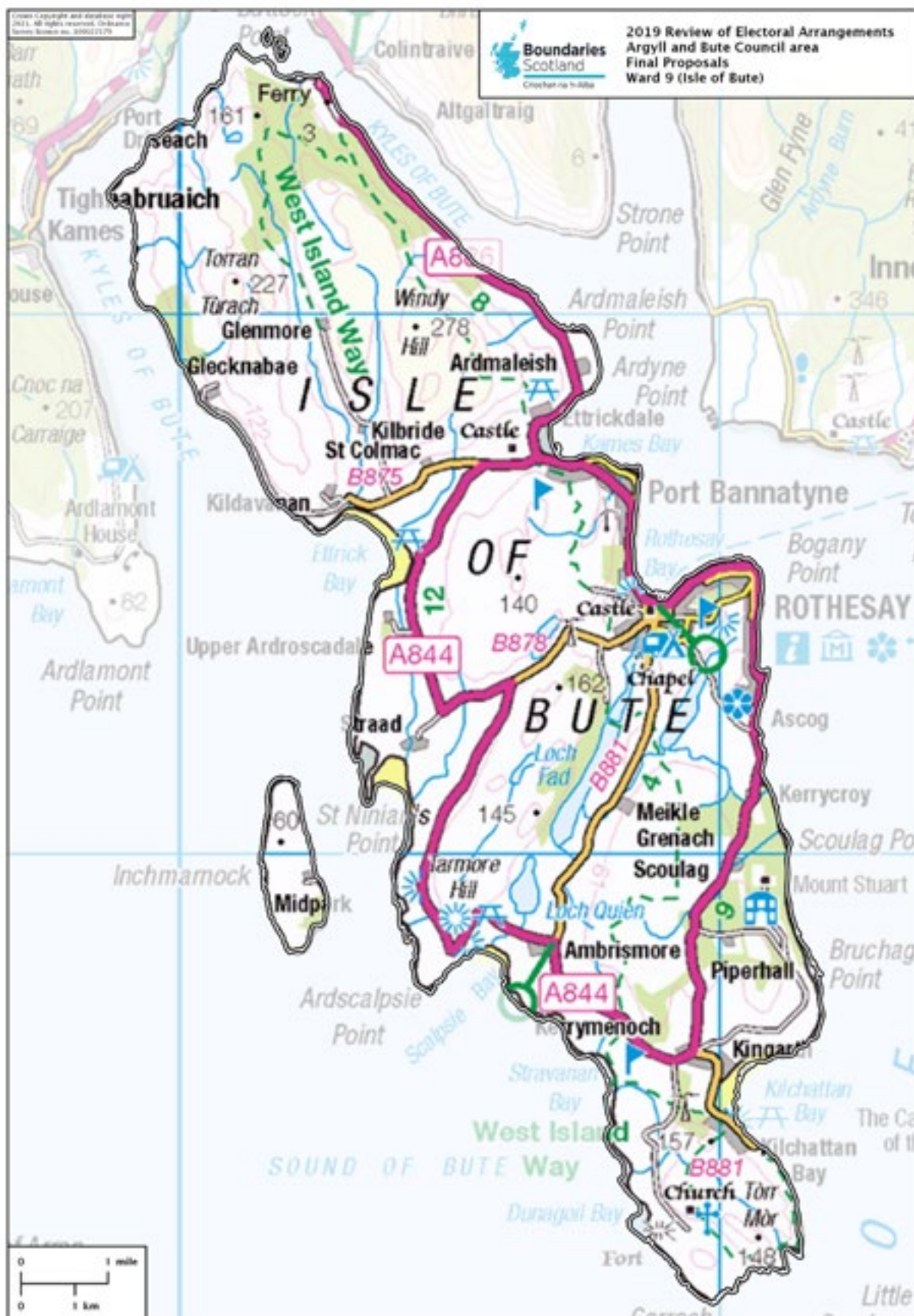
Ward 8 Dunoon – 3 councillors

Our proposals retain the existing Dunoon ward, with the name, boundary and number of councillors unchanged. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 8.7% fewer electors than absolute parity would require.



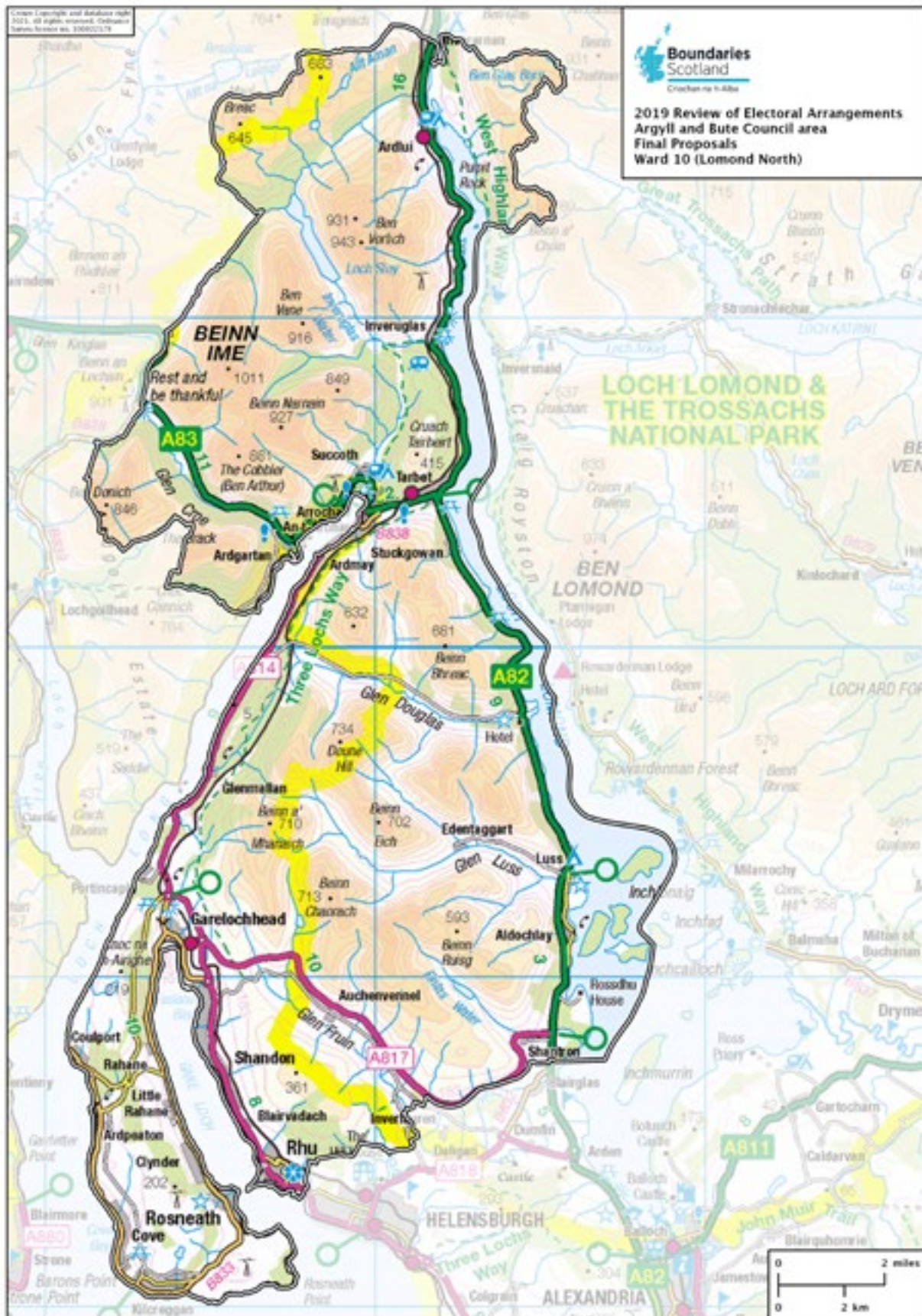
Ward 9 Isle of Bute – 2 councillors

Our proposals retain the name and boundary of the existing Isle of Bute ward. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 13.8% more electors than absolute parity would require.



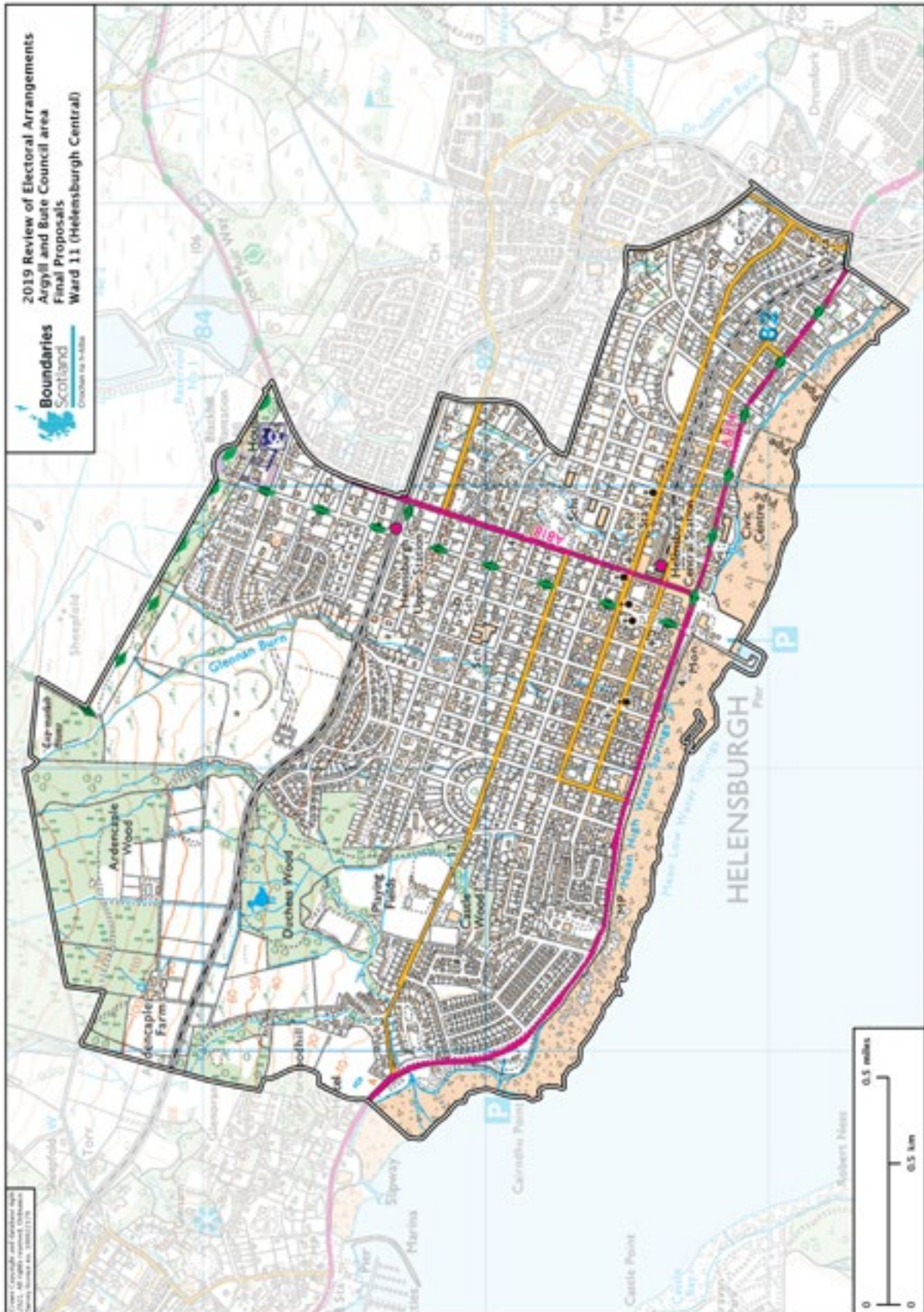
Ward 10 Lomond North – 3 councillors

Our proposals retain the existing Lomond North ward, with the name, boundary and number of councillors unchanged. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 0.8% more electors than absolute parity would require.



Ward 11 Helensburgh Central – 3 councillors

Our proposals retain most of the existing Helensburgh Central ward. The existing ward boundary is amended by following historical ward boundaries along Charlotte Street, Havelock Street and Old Luss Road. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 4.6% more electors than absolute parity would require.



Ward 12 Helensburgh and Lomond South – 3 councillors

Our proposals retain most of the existing Helensburgh and Lomond South ward. The existing ward boundary is amended by following historical ward boundaries along Charlotte Street, Havelock Street and Old Luss Road. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 10.5% more electors than absolute parity would require.



Part 2 Background

Who we are

3. Boundaries Scotland¹ is an independent, non-political statutory body responsible for carrying out reviews of councillor numbers and electoral wards for council areas.
4. Under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (as amended) we undertake reviews to ensure effective and convenient local government and electoral fairness, which means that each councillor should represent broadly the same number of electors. Councillors represent electoral areas called wards.
5. The Commission is also responsible for carrying out reviews of council area boundaries and of constituencies and regions for the Scottish Parliament.

Why we conduct electoral reviews

6. We conduct electoral reviews at intervals of no more than 15 years and take account of the factors set out in the 1973 Act (as amended by subsequent legislation). These say we must ensure that the number of electors per councillor in each ward are as nearly as may be the same. Subject to this, we must have regard to local ties that would be broken by fixing a particular boundary and to the desirability of fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable. Of these, local ties are more important.
7. We may depart from the strict application of electoral parity to reflect special geographical considerations.
8. The population of any council area is constantly changing, with people moving 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 others. Such variations in levels of representation are one of the reasons that we carry out electoral reviews.
9. This Review of the Argyll and Bute Council area is required under section 20 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. This Act recognises the importance of the Scottish islands and the particular opportunities and challenges that apply to them. It offers additional flexibility allowing us to create wards that elect one or two councillors in wards which contain inhabited islands as well as the two, three, four or five councillor wards permitted elsewhere in Scotland following the amendments made to section 1 of the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 by section 4 of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 which took effect from 14 May 2021.
10. The current electoral arrangements in the Argyll and Bute Council area have remained unchanged since 2007. They have been used for local government elections in 2007, 2012 and 2017.
11. The Argyll and Bute Council area was last reviewed during our 5th set of Reviews of Electoral Arrangements, which reported in 2016. However, the Scottish Government did not implement the proposals for Argyll and Bute. At that time Scottish Ministers stated: “In a small number of cases – Argyll and Bute, Dundee City and Scottish Borders – we have listened to local representations and left boundaries as they currently stand, to ensure that strong historic ties in particular areas and communities are maintained. Significant concerns were raised about aspects of the Commission’s proposals for those areas, in particular that they would not reflect local communities. While the Commission did try to address these in its final recommendations, it was clear from the responses to those recommendations that many of those concerns remained. We therefore decided that the better course would be to keep the status quo for those areas.”

¹ We conducted this Review as the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland but have submitted our final proposals and report to Ministers as Boundaries Scotland following the commencement of the relevant section of Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020. Part 4 of the Act amended our name to reflect our added responsibilities for reviewing Scottish Parliament boundaries.

How we work

Effective and convenient local government

12. Effective and convenient local government is the fundamental consideration for proposals arising from any of our reviews.
13. Among the factors we recognise as contributing to effective and convenient local government are:
 - the ability of councils to manage and deliver all of the services they are responsible for in an efficient manner;
 - the ability of individual councillors to carry out their functions including representing the residents in their area; and
 - the ability of residents to access services and participate in local democracy readily and conveniently.

Determining councillor numbers

14. We agreed at our meeting of 4 December 2017 to adopt the same methodology for councillor numbers for this Review as that used during our 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements. At that meeting we considered Paper 2429 (Islands Review: councillor numbers methodology) and agreed that, building on our research into councillor role and workload, we were broadly comfortable with the councillor number methodology, though would give further consideration to the role of councils in suggesting what its number of councillors should be and why. We agreed to consider a degree of flexibility over the number of councillors a council may have in order to assist with ward design, noting that we used such flexibility a number of times during the 5th Reviews.
15. We decide the number of councillors for each council area by placing it into a category with other similar councils. The categories we use are based on available data on population distribution and socio-economic conditions from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). This Index includes a range of factors including data on: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing. The categorisation reflects the characteristics of the council area as a whole and the ratio for each category applies across the whole council area to ensure electoral fairness and compliance with the legislation. In determining the appropriate ratio for each category we also have regard to the minimum and maximum number of councillors required for a council to conduct its business and discharge its duties effectively.
16. Reflecting the process outlined above, for this Review we have applied the same ratio of councillors to electors of 1:2,800 in Argyll and Bute Council area as we applied during our 5th Reviews.
17. We are aware that a large change of councillor numbers might be disruptive so we incorporated a 10% change rule. This means that we will not propose increasing or decreasing the total number of councillors in any council area by more than 10% unless there is a strong case for doing so.
18. When we come to propose designs for wards we may move away from the exact number of councillors proposed by the methodology, if doing so means creating a pattern of wards that better meets the needs of the council area for effective and convenient local government.

Determining ward boundaries

19. Once we have determined the proposals for the number of councillors, the next stage of the review is to consider proposals for ward boundaries and councillors per ward.

Councillors per ward

20. As mentioned previously, for this Review each ward within the Argyll and Bute Council area can return between one and five councillors if it contains an inhabited island in whole or part and between two and five councillors for a mainland ward. Use of two and five member wards throughout Scotland, in addition to the existing three or four member wards, was introduced by the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 from 14 May 2021.
21. The Bill that became the 2020 Act had not been enacted at the point we commenced our review. However, we were aware of the progress of the Bill and were open to use of a 5-member ward if the ward design process had suggested this would help meet the legislative requirements of the review.
22. The choice of the number of councillors for each ward depends on the overall pattern of wards we feel best meets all the legislative requirements which apply.

Electoral parity

23. One of the principal aims of a review is to ensure a good level of electoral parity. This means, as far as possible, having the same number of electors per councillor in all wards of a council area. The legislation gives priority to electoral parity over other factors in ward design so we cannot use different ratios of electors to councillors within a council area.
24. Applying strict electoral parity for a review, the number of electors for each ward in Argyll and Bute Council area would be:
 - 1 councillor ward = 2,800 electors
 - 2 councillor ward = 5,600 electors
 - 3 councillor ward = 8,400 electors
 - 4 councillor ward = 11,200 electors
 - 5 councillor ward = 14,000 electors
25. Best practice and previous reviews suggest an electorate within 10% of absolute electoral parity is acceptable. This is also suggested by the Venice Commission's 'Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters'². This means, for example, a 3-councillor ward could have between 7,560 and 9,240 electors, while a 4-councillor ward could have between 10,080 and 12,320 electors. This is intended to provide a reasonable degree of flexibility in most circumstances.
26. In designing wards, we aim to allow effective and convenient local government and to take account of local circumstances. We will consider moving away from electoral parity within the terms of the legislation if we consider special geographical considerations apply.

Special geographical considerations

27. We can move away from strict adherence to electoral parity for a ward where there are special geographical considerations that make it desirable to do so. Such considerations include areas where transport and communication links are slow, infrequent or subject to interference by the weather and seasons. Examples include distinct island communities, sparsely populated areas and remote areas.

² ['Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters', Venice Commission, 2002](#)

Electorate change

- 28.** When aiming for electoral parity we take into account the likely change in the number or distribution of the local government electorate over a five year period from the start of the Review.
- 29.** To do this, we collected data from Argyll and Bute Council on expected new residential development and demolition within its area over the five-year period. Using this data, combined with data on the average number of electors per household in the area, and population projections for the same period from the National Records of Scotland, we calculate a forecast of electorate for the five-year period.

Local ties

- 30.** When designing wards, we aim to reflect local ties, and in particular we aim to avoid breaking local ties. According to the legislation, however, electoral parity must outweigh local ties.
- 31.** For some, local ties could be defined by their community council area, school catchment area, or historical areas. For island communities we may consider transport links to the mainland or other islands.
- 32.** Major roads could be seen to be the focus of an area if they are the location of shops or community facilities which people visit regularly. Alternatively, roads or rivers or other natural features could be seen as physical barriers marking the boundary between different communities. In sparsely populated areas, we may have to combine two or more distinct and separate communities within a single ward. Here we would also consider how the communities interact with each other.

Easily identifiable boundaries

- 33.** The legislation requires us to take into account the desirability of fixing boundaries that are and will remain easily identifiable.
- 34.** In urban areas, a case can be made to define ward boundaries along roads since they are likely to remain clearly identifiable, and are unlikely to be straddled by new dwellings. As an alternative, drawing a boundary along the rear fences between houses will result in neighbours across a street being in the same ward which may better reflect local ties.
- 35.** In rural areas, natural features may be appropriate where a ward boundary is required. Field boundaries may also be used while recognising that they may be subject to change, particularly in the case of fences. In upland areas, a watershed may be an appropriate ward boundary feature, particularly along narrow, well-defined ridges.
- 36.** Where there is a conflict between the desirability of fixing boundaries that are and will remain easily identifiable and local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular boundary, the legislation requires us to give greater weight to local ties.

Ward names

- 37.** When considering ward names we may use an existing ward name where there is a successor ward that is recognisably similar and aim to propose ward names that are reasonably short rather than attempt to describe an area exhaustively. We also welcome local views when proposing ward names.

Consultation

38. As required by the legislation, we consulted Argyll and Bute Council for a period of two months and considered their response before consulting publicly.
39. All responses to our consultations are fully considered by the Commission. When considering consultation responses from the Council and others we took full account of our obligations in terms of the legislative framework within which we work.
40. This means that even a well-articulated proposal for change may not be accepted if it does not allow compliance with the legislation (either as it stands or in light of any forthcoming amendments). For example, suggestions which would require change to boundaries between council areas cannot be taken forward as part of a review of electoral arrangements. We are also unable to pursue suggestions which disregard the need to consider parity across a council area as a whole.
41. Where suggestions do comply with the legislative framework we look to see the weight of the argument and supporting evidence. For example, suggestions for alternative boundaries which are felt to better reflect community ties will carry more weight if there is supporting information explaining the community issues involved and any local support that has been canvassed. Evidence in support of a more easily identified boundary might include explanation of the suggested boundary features and an explanation of why it is a feature that divides rather than links communities. Evidence in support of special geographical considerations would include explanation of the factors affecting councillors' representation of and engagement with ward residents.

Reporting arrangements

42. Our Final Proposals arising from this Review are to be laid before the Scottish Parliament and may be implemented by regulations made by Scottish Ministers (which, depending on the content of the proposals, may be subject to the negative or affirmative procedure) under revised procedures introduced by the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020.
43. We have planned our work so that our proposals from this Review will, if implemented in accordance with those revised procedures, be ready for the local government elections expected in May 2022.

Part 3 Conducting the Review

Review Stages

44. We followed the timetable laid out below for this Review.

Stage	Date
Commission formally announced start of the Review.	January 2019
Commission met with Argyll and Bute Council to provide background to the Review and discuss its approach.	October 2019
Commission developed proposals on councillor numbers and ward boundaries.	February – April 2020
Two-month statutory consultation with the Council on councillor numbers and ward boundaries.	July – September 2020
Commission considered Council response and developed proposals for public consultation.	October 2020
Twelve-week public consultation on councillor numbers and ward boundaries.	November 2020 – January 2021
Commission considered all comments submitted and developed its Final Proposals.	From March 2021
Final Proposals and Report submitted to Scottish Ministers.	June 2021

Consultation

45. We consulted with Argyll and Bute Council on our proposals for a period of two months from 16 July to 30 September 2020.

46. We considered how best to publicise our 12 week public consultation and we: issued a news release; placed newspaper advertisements in the *Helensburgh Advertiser*, *West Highland Free Press*, *Campbeltown Courier*, *Dunoon Observer*, *Argyllshire Standard* and *The Iealach*; wrote to over 50 Community Councils; sent posters and further information regarding the Review to display points (such as libraries, community centres and leisure centres); discussed our proposals with the: Oban, Lorn and the Isles Areas Community Planning Group; Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands Area Community Planning Group; Coll Community Council; and Tiree Community Council; and paid-for social media advertising on Facebook and Twitter. The materials encouraged those interested to respond to the consultation via the Commission's consultation site. Our public consultation ran from 4 November 2020 to 26 January 2021.

Existing electoral arrangements

47. At the start of this Review, Argyll and Bute Council area was represented by 36 councillors in eight 3-member wards and three 4-member wards.
48. The electorates and associated variation from electoral parity for the existing electoral arrangements are shown in the table below.
49. The 5-year forecast electorate in Argyll and Bute Council area shows a minor reduction from 66,725 in 2018 to 65,834 in 2024.

Existing electoral arrangements						
Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Variation from electoral parity %	Forecast Electorate (2024)	Forecast variation from electoral parity %
1	South Kintyre	3	5,103	-8.2%	4,919	-10.3%
2	Kintyre and the Islands	3	5,148	-7.4%	5,230	-4.7%
3	Mid Argyll	3	5,985	7.6%	5,927	8.0%
4	Oban South and the Isles	4	7,896	6.5%	7,825	7.0%
5	Oban North and Lorn	4	7,862	6.0%	8,274	13.1%
6	Cowal	3	5,734	3.1%	5,596	2.0%
7	Dunoon	3	5,500	-1.1%	5,304	-3.3%
8	Isle of Bute	3	4,696	-15.5%	4,406	-19.7%
9	Lomond North	3	6,000	7.9%	5,858	6.8%
10	Helensburgh Central	4	7,357	-0.8%	6,925	-5.3%
11	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	5,444	-2.1%	5,570	1.5%
		36	66,725		65,834	

50. The existing electoral arrangements in Argyll and Bute Council area contain three wards with forecast variation from electoral parity of 10% or more: Isle of Bute (-19.7%); Oban North and Lorn (13.1%); and South Kintyre (-10.3%).
51. The number of councillors we initially proposed for Argyll and Bute Council area is set out below which applies our 10% limit change of councilor numbers.

Council area	Existing councillor numbers	Electorate (Dec. 2018)	Electorate divided by ratio councillors per electors (1:2,800)	Proposed councillor numbers
Argyll and Bute	36	66,725	$66,725 \div 2,800 = 24$	33

Initial Proposals – Consultation with Argyll and Bute Council

52. We considered six options for our Initial Proposals at our meetings of 4 February and 7 April 2020 (Papers 2518 and 2525). The option we agreed:

- took account of the Islands (Scotland) Act by using the flexibility offered by 2-member wards to better reflect local ties for island communities. The proposals presented island-only wards for Islay, Jura and Colonsay; Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree; and retained the existing Isle of Bute ward with two councillors rather than three as at present. The proposals also presented a 2-member Lorn ward which includes the inhabited island of Lismore;
- considered special geographic circumstances 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;
- made no changes to the boundaries of five of the existing wards (Cowal; Dunoon; Isle of Bute; Lomond North; and Mid Argyll);
- placed Oban within a single ward to avoid breaking local community ties;
- minimised change to the existing ward boundaries in Helensburgh, while reducing councillor numbers there by one; and
- had regard to Argyll and Bute Council's four administrative areas and the local ties and communities that they represent.

53. We agreed to consult Argyll and Bute Council on an electoral arrangement with 34 councillors representing four 2-member wards, six 3-member wards and two 4-member wards, reducing overall councillor numbers by two.

54. The electorates and associated variation from parity for the Initial Proposals council consultation are shown in the table below.

Initial Proposals for consultation with Argyll and Bute Council						
Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Variation from electoral parity %	Forecast Electorate (2024)	Forecast Variation from electoral parity %
1	Kintyre	4	7,404	-5.7	7,222	-6.8
2	Islay, Jura and Colonsay	2	2,847	-27.5	2,927	-24.4
3	Mid Argyll	3	5,985	1.7	5,927	2.0
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	

55. We consulted on our Initial Proposals with Argyll and Bute Council for a two-month period from 16 July to 30 September 2020.
56. We considered the response received on our Initial Proposals from Argyll and Bute Council at our meeting of 12 October 2020 (Paper 2534).
57. We noted that Argyll and Bute Council supported the use their four Area Committees in establishing ward boundaries and supported the proposals where no change was proposed. They opposed any reduction in the overall number of councillors numbers and especially any reduction in representation on Bute. They raised concerns with the wide variations in electoral parity between the three proposed island wards. They suggested extending the existing Mid Argyll ward southwards to include Skipness and Tarbert. They would support including the smaller islands (Gigha, Seil, Lismore, Luing, Easdale and Kerrera) within wholly island wards if the public supported this. Some councillors also raised concerns that the proposed Islay, Jura and Colonsay ward may increase their workload.
58. We agreed to adopt the Council's suggested amendment to our Initial Proposals that would place Tarbert and Skipness within a Mid Argyll ward. The proposed boundary followed a community council area boundary. The suggestion by Argyll and Bute Council transferred approximately 1,500 electors between wards and as a consequence we proposed a 3-member Kintyre ward and 4-member Mid Argyll ward. We believed that changing the boundary in the manner suggested would better reflect local ties and enhance effective and convenient local government.

Initial Proposals – Public Consultation

59. Our Initial Proposals for public consultation presented 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. The proposals:
- took account of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 by using the flexibility offered by 2-member wards to better reflect local ties for island communities. The proposals presented island-only wards for: Islay, Jura and Colonsay; Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree; and retained the existing Isle of Bute ward with two councillors rather than three as at present;
 - took account of special geographic considerations 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;
 - made no changes to the boundaries of four of the existing wards (Cowal; Dunoon; Isle of Bute; and Lomond North);
 - placed Oban within a single ward to avoid breaking local community ties;
 - minimised change to the existing ward boundaries in Helensburgh, while reducing councillor numbers there by one; and
 - had regard to Argyll and Bute Council's four administrative areas and the local ties and communities that they represent.

60. The electorates and associated variation from parity for our Initial Proposals for public consultation are shown in the table below.

Initial Proposals for public consultation						
Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 18)	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	

61. The public consultation on our Initial Proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area ran for a 12-week period from 4 November 2020 to 26 January 2021.

62. During the public consultation we publicised the review as outlined in paragraph 46.

63. There were 221 responses to the public consultation for Argyll and Bute Council area. The majority of responses opposed the proposals and wished to retain the existing arrangements. There was both support and opposition for island-only wards. There was some opposition to a 2-member Isle of Bute ward.

Final Proposals

64. In developing our Final Proposals we considered carefully all responses received, both from the Council and during the public consultation.

65. Our Final Proposals retain four existing ward boundaries: Cowal; Dunoon; Isle of Bute; and Lomond North.

66. We noted that there had been opposition to the proposals and a desire to retain the existing arrangements and retain links between islands and the mainland. However we were pleased to see there was some support for the proposed island-only wards, particularly the proposed Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree ward. We noted there had been support for the Commission's proposals in Cowal and Dunoon where the proposed wards were unchanged from the existing arrangements.

- 67.** We noted that a number of responses opposed island-only wards and wished to retain island – mainland wards because they share common interests such as the ferry service. Those who suggested island-only wards believed they would allow for better representation for island residents, recognising distinctive, common interests, different to those of the mainland. We considered that the creation of island-only wards would be within the spirit of the Islands (Scotland) Act, which sought to recognise the distinctive needs of remote island communities, and advantageous in terms of effective and convenient local government, and decided to adopt three island-only wards for our Final Proposals.
- 68.** We propose a 2-member Isle of Bute ward with forecast variation from electoral parity of 14%. We were not persuaded that the arguments presented for a 3-member ward justified the variation from parity that would result. A 3-member Bute ward would offer forecast variation from electoral parity of -20%. We did not consider special geographical circumstances sufficient to justify the variation because Bute covers a relatively small area and has closer links to the mainland along with better transport links than other islands within the council area.
- 69.** We propose a 2-member, Islay, Jura and Colonsay ward with forecast variation from electoral parity of -24.4%. We believe special geographic considerations apply in relation to variation from electoral parity because the proposed ward contains a number of inhabited island communities. Some consultation respondents had suggested that Gigha be included within the Islay, Jura and Colonsay ward. However, due to its transport links and proximity to the mainland we retained Gigha in a Kintyre ward.
- 70.** We propose a 2-member Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree ward with a forecast variation from electoral parity of -11.2%. We believe special geographic considerations justify the variation from electoral parity in the ward due to its containing a number of inhabited island communities. We met Coll Community Council and and Tiree Community Council during the public consultation. They argued strongly for a 1-member Coll and Tiree ward to meet the needs of their islands' communities. However, a 1-member Coll and Tiree ward offered variation from electoral parity in excess of -60% and we did not consider the arguments in favour of a 1-member ward justified the level of over representation.
- 71.** We have minimised change to the existing ward boundaries in Helensburgh while reducing councillor numbers there by one.
- 72.** We have placed Oban within a single ward to avoid breaking local community ties.
- 73.** We have recognised Argyll and Bute Council's four administrative areas and the local ties and communities that they represent.
- 74.** We received no alternative suggestions that met the requirements of our methodology for councillor numbers or provided a council area-wide ward design.
- 75.** We agreed to retain our Initial Proposals for Public Consultation as our Final Proposals.
- 76.** In developing our Final Proposals we took full account of the legislative factors governing our work and these are summarised below.

Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020

77. In developing our proposals we tested the flexibility of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 which allowed for options such as a: 2-member Isle of Bute ward; 2-member Islay, Jura and Colonsay ward; 2-member Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree ward. We considered a 1-member Coll and Tiree ward and 1-member Mull and Iona ward but they proposed wide forecast variation from electoral parity.
78. During the Review we were aware of the imminent Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 (enacted on 8 July 2020) and had considered a 5-member Kintyre and the Isles ward when developing our Initial Proposals but believed the overall ward design did not reflect island communities within the area.

Electoral Parity and Special Geographical Considerations

79. We believe our Final Proposals meet the legislative requirement to ensure that the number of electors per councillor within a council area are as nearly as may be the same.
80. Eight of our proposed wards are within 10% of forecast variation from electoral parity.
81. We have proposed four wards with variation from parity of over 10%: Helensburgh and Lomond South; Islay, Jura and Colonsay; Isle of Bute; and Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree.
82. Our proposals consider special geographical circumstances in the proposed: Islay, Jura and Colonsay; and Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree due to their remoteness and limited transport links.
83. In the Isle of Bute we have proposed a 2-member ward because it covers a relatively small area and has closer links to the mainland than other islands within the area.
84. The Helensburgh and Lomond South ward is under-represented but is a more densely populated ward covering a relatively smaller area.

Avoidance of breaking local ties

85. Our proposals retain four of the existing ward boundaries maintaining local ties within: Cowal; Dunoon; Isle of Bute; and Lomond North.
86. Our proposals minimise change to the existing ward boundary in Helensburgh whilst reducing councillor numbers there by one.
87. Our proposals place Oban within a single ward rather than it being split between two wards as at present.
88. We have proposed three island wards because we felt that islands are more likely to have common issues and challenges than with island – mainland wards.
89. In Kintyre and Lorn we have considered local ties by following local community council area boundaries.
90. Our proposals align with Argyll and Bute Council's four Area Committee boundaries which reflect local ties and communities throughout the council area.

Easily identifiable boundaries

- 91.** The proposals retain four of the existing ward boundaries preserving easily identifiable ward boundaries within: Cowal; Dunoon; Isle of Bute; and Lomond North.
- 92.** Our proposals create three island wards offering easily identifiable boundaries for Islay, Jura and Colonsay; Isle of Bute; and Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree.

Conclusion

- 93.** At our meeting of 11 March 2021 we considered Paper 2552 and the views expressed by respondents to our consultations before agreeing our Final Proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area as set out in Part 1.
- 94.** In considering responses to our consultations we have acted in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004, and the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. Certain of those provisions are amended by the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020, and following its enactment (it received Royal Assent on 8 July 2020) we were aware that our proposals would be submitted after their commencement. We have, therefore, exercised our functions, where we have considered it to be necessary or expedient, in anticipation of those provisions in the 2020 Act being commenced in order to give full effect to those provisions at the time our Report is submitted.
- 95.** When developing our Final Proposals we considered the issues raised and suggestions made during our consultations. We agreed that the information we had available was sufficient to reach a decision for Argyll and Bute Council area and that there was not a need for further consultation or a local inquiry.
- 96.** We adopted suggestions from Argyll and Bute Council when developing our Final Proposals where they better reflected local community ties within Kintyre.
- 97.** We believe that our proposals fully meet all requirements of the legislation and provide for effective and convenient local government for Argyll and Bute Council area.
- 98.** All papers and minutes of meetings relating to our consideration of Argyll and Bute Council area are available on our website: www.boundaries.scot.
- 99.** The timetable for this Review of electoral arrangements and index of our meetings, papers and minutes concerning Argyll and Bute Council area is at Appendix B.
- 100.** A digitised description of the ward boundaries in the form of GIS shapefiles has been securely stored on digital media storage at the date of publication of our report.
- 101.** Our report has also been deposited for public inspection at offices designated by the Council and a news release announcing the publication of our report has also been issued.
- 102.** Our report is available on our website at www.boundaries.scot.

Appendix A

Legislation governing our work as of 14 May 2021

1. The legislative framework for these reviews is set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended. In particular, section 28 and Schedule 6 sets out the rules to be observed:

Schedule 6 – Rules to be observed in considering electoral arrangements

1 (1) This schedule applies to the consideration by Scottish Ministers or the Boundary Commission of electoral arrangements for election of councillors of local government areas.

(2) Having regard to any change in the number or distribution of electors of a local government area likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration, the number calculated by dividing the number of local government electors in each electoral ward of that local government area by the number of councillors to be returned in that ward shall be, as nearly as may be, the same.

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) above, in considering the electoral arrangements referred to in sub-paragraph (1) above regard shall be had to –

- (a) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable;
- (b) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular boundary but if, in any case, there is a conflict between those criteria, greater weight shall be given to the latter.

2. The strict application of the rule stated in paragraph 1(2) above may be departed from in any area where special geographical considerations appear to render a departure desirable.

2. The requirement for this review at this time is set out in the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018:

20 Review of wards in certain local government areas

(1) As soon as practicable after the commencement of this section, the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (“Boundary Commission”) must—

- (a) review the electoral arrangements for each local government area mentioned in subsection (2), for the purpose of considering future electoral arrangements for those areas, and
- (b) formulate proposals for those arrangements.

(2) The local government areas are the areas of—

- (a) Argyll and Bute Council,
- (b) Comhairle nan Eilean Siar,
- (c) Highland Council,
- (d) North Ayrshire Council,
- (e) Orkney Islands Council,
- (f) Shetland Islands Council.

3. With regards to numbers of councillors per ward allowed, section 1 of the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended by the Islands Scotland Act 2018 and the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 provides:

1 Electoral wards

(1) Each local government area shall be divided into electoral wards; and there shall be a separate election for each electoral ward.

(2) The number of councillors to be returned in an electoral ward shall be two, three, four or five, as determined by order made under section 17 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (c. 65) (“the 1973 Act”) (regulations giving effect to proposals made by Boundaries Scotland after, in particular, complying with the duty in section 28(2), and schedule 6, of the 1973 Act).

(2A) But, in relation to an electoral ward consisting wholly or partly of one or more inhabited islands (within the meaning of section 1(2) of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018), an order made under section 17 of the 1973 Act may determine that the number of councillors to be returned is one.

(3) Different numbers may be determined in relation to different electoral wards.

Appendix B

Index of meeting papers and Commission meetings

Date	Meeting Papers
4 December 2017	Paper 2429 Islands Reviews: councillor numbers methodology
4 February 2020	Paper 2518 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Argyll and Bute Council area – Preliminary consideration of Initial Proposals.
7 April 2020	Paper 2525 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Argyll and Bute Council area – Agree Initial Proposals
16 July to 30 September 2020	2-month statutory consultation period with Argyll and Bute Council
12 October 2020	Paper 2534 Islands Reviews: Consideration of Initial Proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area – Consideration of responses to council consultation
4 November 2020 to 26 January 2021	12-week public consultation period
11 March 2021	Paper 2552 Islands Reviews: Final Proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area – Consideration of responses to public consultation
June 2021	Commission submits its reports to Scottish Ministers

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