

## Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries Highland Council area

### Action required

1. The Commission is invited to:
  - Consider the consultation responses for Highland Council area as set out in paragraphs 17 to 53 decide whether to hold a local inquiry.
  - Consider whether it wishes to
    - (a) adopt the published Revised Proposals as Final Recommendations subject to satisfactory design in other groupings being agreed OR
    - b) amend its proposals for constituency boundaries or names and consult upon them again.
  - If a local inquiry or further consultation is not required, consider the draft Final Report as set out in paragraphs 3 to 16 and agree the proposed wording.

### Rules

2. The rules for reviewing Scottish Parliament constituencies state:
  - **Rule 1**
    - So far as is practicable, regard must be had to the boundaries of the local government areas having effect from time to time under section 1 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994.
  - **Rule 2**
    - The electorate of a constituency must be as near the electoral quota as is practicable, having regard to Rule 1.
    - Boundaries Scotland may depart from the strict application of Rule 1 if it thinks that it is desirable to do so to avoid an excessive disparity between the electorate of a constituency and the electoral quota or between the electorate of a constituency and that of neighbouring constituencies.
  - **Rule 3**
    - Boundaries Scotland may depart from the strict application of Rules 1 and 2 if it thinks that special geographical considerations (including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency) render it desirable to do so.
  - **Rule 4**
    - Boundaries Scotland need not aim at giving full effect in all circumstances to Rules 1 to 3 but it must take account (so far as it reasonably can)—
      - (a) of the inconveniences attendant on alterations of constituencies other than alterations made for the purposes of Rule 1, and
      - (b) of any local ties which would be broken by such alterations.

### Constituencies at the start of this review

3. At the start of this review, Highland Council area was covered by three constituencies wholly within the council area. The constituencies are shown in Table 1.

*Table 1 - Constituencies at the start of this review*

Constituency name	Council areas	Designation	Electorate	Variation from Electoral Quota
Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	Highland	County	56,532	-5.6%
Inverness and Nairn	Highland	County	70,493	17.7%
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	Highland	County	62,193	3.8%

### Provisional Proposals

4. We designed constituencies for this area within our overall approach to grouping council areas for constituency design. Our proposed grouping for this area included three constituencies exactly covering the extent Highland Council area. The combined area had an electorate of 189,218 and a theoretical entitlement to 3.2 constituencies.
5. We discussed our Provisional Proposals for Highland council area and our discussion and conclusions are recorded in the minutes of our meeting of 9 February, 9 March and 5 April 2023. We agreed proposed constituency names and designations and our discussion and conclusions are recorded in the minute of our meeting of 5 April 2023.
6. In deciding upon our Provisional Proposals for Highland Council area we agreed a constituency design that aimed to address variation from the electorate quota in the existing Inverness and Nairn constituency while minimising change to the existing arrangements, retaining one existing constituency - Caithness, Sutherland and Ross and all three existing constituency names (rule 2).
7. Our Provisional Proposals were as shown in Table 2. Details of the wards contained within each constituency in the Provisional Proposals were included in the maps of our Provisional Proposals which are available on our website.

*Table 2 - Provisional Proposals*

Constituency name	Council areas	Designation	Electorate	Variation from Electoral Quota
Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	Highland	County	56,532	-5.6%
Inverness and Nairn	Highland	County	69,113	15.4%
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	Highland	County	63,573	6.1%

8. On 17 May 2023 we published our Provisional Proposals for these council areas for the specified consultation period of one month.

### Responses to Provisional Proposals Public Consultation

9. We considered the representations received on our Provisional Proposals in Highland Council area and our discussion and conclusions are recorded in the minutes of our meeting of 29 August 2023.
10. We received 12 representations in response to the consultation on our Provisional Proposals for Highland Council area. All responses have been shared with the Commission. The representations included suggestions for: alternative boundaries; constituency names; and four constituencies within Highland Council area. There was also opposition to the proposals and size of the proposed Highland constituencies.
11. Some representations contained suggestions that did not comply with the statutory rules governing this review. We did not consider those suggestions further.
12. On 15 November 2023 we published the representations we received during the consultation on our Provisional Proposals.

### Local Inquiry

13. Neither Highland Council nor a body of 100 electors objected to the Provisional Proposals therefore the Commission agreed not to hold a local inquiry there
14. We agreed revised constituency names and designations and our discussion and conclusions are recorded in the minutes of our meeting of 22 February 2024.

### Revised Proposals

15. On 16 April 2024 we published our Revised Proposals for Highland Council area for the specified consultation period of one month.
16. Our Revised Proposals are shown in Table 3. Details of the wards contained within each constituency in the Revised Proposals were included in the maps of our Revised Proposals which are available on our website.

*Table 3 – Revised Proposals*

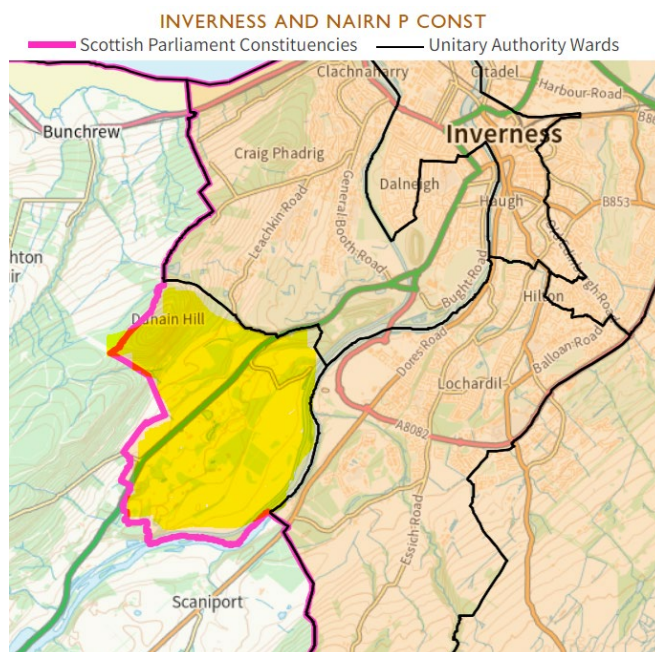
Constituency name	Council areas	Designation	Electorate	Variation from Electoral Quota
Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	Highland	County	56,532	-5.6%
Inverness and Nairn	Highland	County	65,450	9.3%
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	Highland	County	67,236	12.2%

**Responses to Revised Proposals Public Consultation**

17. Some representations contained suggestions that did not comply with the statutory rules governing this review. We did not consider those suggestions further.
18. Seven members of the public stated the proposed Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency is geographical too large.
19. Three members of the public stated the proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency covers a very large area.
20. A member of the public opposed the proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency because it has the largest number of electors and is one of the largest is area with poor transport links making it challenging for electors to meet their MSP.
21. Two members of the public stated the proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency covers too large an area for an MSP to effectively represent the electorate and suggest naming it Skye, Lochaber, Badenoch and Strathspey.
22. A member of the public suggested the proposed Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency be 'reduced in size with a requirement for MSPs to hold surgeries in order to retain their positions.'
23. A member of the public supported the Revised Proposals because they avoid splitting Inverness between two constituencies but raised concerns with the size of the constituencies.
24. A number of comments stated the proposed constituencies are too large but there are no constituency area rules for the Scottish Parliament. UK Parliament constituencies are to be no larger than 13,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency covers an area of 12,745 km<sup>2</sup>.
25. A member of the public stated north west Sutherland has very little in common with anywhere east of the area.
26. A member of the public stated Caithness has different needs to Easter Ross and Sutherland and suggests they need to be separated.
27. Historically Caithness and Sutherland have always been in the same Scottish or UK Parliament constituency (rule 4).
28. Three members of the public supported no change to the proposed Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency.
29. A member of the public stated 'why aren't the highlands kept as a single area. The area should be dealt with as a single entity and be big enough to contribute substantially to the Scottish nation.'
30. Three members of the public supported retaining Lochaber in a Highland rather than an Argyll and Bute constituency.

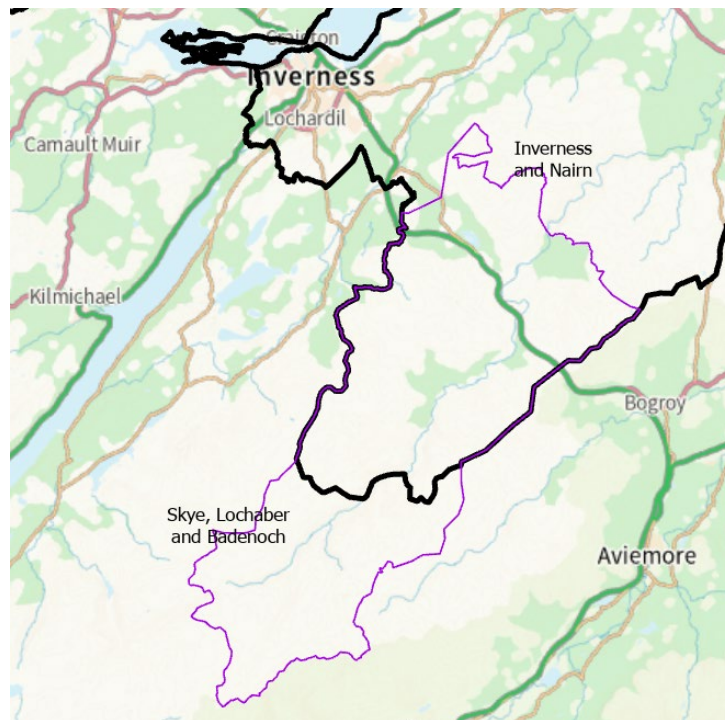
31. The three individuals could be commenting on proposals for the recent review of UK Parliament constituencies which recommended an Argyll, Bute and South Lochaber constituency.
32. A member of the public stated the Black Isle has little in common with Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch and belongs with Inverness or Nairn instead.
33. A member of the public suggested the Black Isle belongs with Ross-shire.
34. When considering its Provisional Proposals the Commission did consider an option which placed the Black Isle in a Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency. However this option would have created a constituency of two parts – the Black Isle would be separate from Easter Ross, Caithness and Sutherland, worsen variation from electoral parity in a remote constituency and increase the area of an already large constituency with poor transport links (rule 2, 4).
35. A member of the public suggested including the Black Isle or Central Highland in a Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency name.
36. A UK Parliament constituency was named Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey from 2005 – 2023. The Black Isle or Central Highland has never been included in a constituency name.
37. A member of the public suggested a Skye constituency because it is the second most visited place in Scotland and they wish an MSP to protect their needs.
38. A Skye constituency would have 8,833 electors with variation from the electorate quota of -85% (rule 2).
39. A member of the public stated ‘Highland Council area is way too large. I would like to see that changed to Islands only.’
40. An islands constituency which included Skye and the Small Isles (Canna, Eigg, Muck and Rum) etc would have just over 9,000 electors (rule 2).
41. A member of the public stated Grantown-on-Spey and Skye have little in common.
42. The distance between Grantown and Skye by road is just over 110 miles. Grantown and Skye were in the same Inverness UK Parliament constituency from at least 1950 – 1983. From July 2024, Grantown and Skye, will both be situated in an Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire UK Parliament constituency.
43. A member of the public supported the proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency but suggested renaming it Skye, Lochaber, Badenoch and Strathspey.
44. A member of the public stated there is an east-coast bias in the Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency. They believe that Skye has more in common with other west coast areas such as Fort William/Lochaber or Ullapool/Assynt-Coigach.

45. A member of the public is concerned an Inverness and Nairn constituency will now include Skye and Lochaber.
46. The proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency does not include Skye or Lochaber.
47. A member of the public would prefer if Nairn was not included in an Inverness constituency.
48. The Inverness and Nairn SNP Constituency Association pointed out Highland Council area covers a third of the land mass of Scotland yet two of the proposed Highland constituencies are above the electorate quota. They suggest four MSPs should represent Highland Council area because it is challenging for three MSPs to represent it and suggest Glasgow could lose a constituency instead. They suggest avoiding the division of: the Aird and Loch Ness ward and placing all of it in a Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency and the Inverness South ward and placing all of it in an Inverness and Nairn constituency. They believe the workload and responsibility of a Highland MSP differs greatly from an urban constituency due to the differences with public transport and poor broadband. They believe that the Commission has not considered special geographical circumstances (rule 3) when considering its proposals for Highland. They suggest naming the proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency Skye, Lochaber, Badenoch and Strathspey.
49. When considering its Revised Proposals the Commission did consider an option with four Highland constituencies. Divided equally four Highland constituencies would have an average electorate of 47,304 with variation from electorate quota of -21% (rule 2).
50. The Revised Proposals follow the existing constituency boundary by the south-west of Inverness. The map below shows part of the Aird and Loch Ness ward, highlighted yellow, which they suggest should be added to the Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency.



51. The Scottish Liberal Democrats Party and Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party both supported the Revised Proposals for Highland.
52. Highland Council suggested the Inverness and Nairn constituency include polling district II19F. They also suggested naming the proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency as Skye, Lochaber, Badenoch and Strathspey.
53. Including the whole of polling district II19F in an Inverness and Nairn constituency, would transfer 14 electors from the proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency. Polling district II19F follows the Inverness South ward boundary. The map below shows polling district II19F boundary as a purple line and the black line is the Revised Proposals. The suggested boundary would extend the Inverness and Nairn constituency boundary southwards.

Highland Council suggestion Constituency name	Electorate	Variation from electoral quota
Inverness and Nairn	65,464	9.3%
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	67,222	12.2%



**Summary**

54. At the start of the review the existing Inverness and Nairn had 70,493 electors and variation from the electorate quota of 17.7%. The other two Highland constituencies had variation from the electorate quota within 10%.
55. The Commission’s Provisional Proposals: retained all of the existing constituency names; retained the existing Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency boundary; and made minor changes to the existing constituency boundaries south of Inverness to address variation from the electorate quota in the Inverness and Nairn constituency.

56. During the provisional consultation neither Highland Council nor a body of 100 electors objected to them therefore the Commission agreed not to hold a local inquiry there.
57. The Commission's Revised Proposals: retained all of the existing constituency names; retained the existing Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency boundary; and adopted a suggestion to amend the Provisional Proposals by Grantown.
58. During the revised consultation a number of comments opposed the size of the constituencies but there is no limit or rules on Scottish Parliament constituency size.
59. There were minor suggestions to amend the proposed boundaries by Inverness, from Highland Council and Inverness and Nairn SNP Constituency Association. Both options would affect few electors and align constituency and ward boundaries.
60. During the revised consultation neither Highland Council nor a body of 100 electors objected to them.

### **Constituency Names**

61. There were a number of alternative suggestions for constituency names. The Commission will have the opportunity to review all constituency names and designations prior to the publication of its Final Recommendations.

**Secretariat**

**June 2024**

Revised Proposals – Highland Council Area

