

## Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries Draft Provisional Proposals for Highland Council area

### Action required

1. The Commission is invited to consider its Provisional Proposals for Highland council area for its Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries

### Background

2. The Commission previously considered Provisional Proposals for Highland Council area at its meeting of 9 February 2023, see BS Paper 32.
3. At the February 2022 meeting the Commission considered the four options presented and agreed that Option 1 was an acceptable arrangement but prior to agreeing its Provisional Proposals, the Commission asked the Secretariat to refine the boundaries in Option 1: by Tomatin and an area of the Monadhliath Mountains; and to improve variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to present a Highland-Moray constituency for consideration.
4. The electorate quota for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries is 59,902 electors per constituency.
5. The constituency entitlement for Highland Council area is for 3.2 constituencies or rounded to 3 constituencies.
6. The Commission may wish to consider this paper alongside Paper 38 Draft Provisional Proposals for Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas.

### Options

7. Three options are presented for consideration. Option 1, the existing constituencies, from Paper 32 are presented again as Option 1. Option 1A is a refinement of Option 1. Option 2 links Highland with Moray.
8. The constituency names in this paper are provisional. The Commission will have the opportunity to review all constituency names and designations prior to the publication of its Provisional Proposals.

### Option 1

9. Option 1, from Paper 32, proposed to retain the three existing constituencies within Highland Council area.

Proposed constituencies	Electorate	Variation from electoral quota	Highland Wards
Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	56,532	-5.6%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5(part) 6, 7
Inverness and Nairn	70,493	17.7%	12(part), 13 - 19, 20(part)
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	62,193	3.8%	5(part), 8-11, 12(part), 20(part), 21

10. A map of Option 1, the existing constituencies, can be found at Appendix A.

11. The advantages of Option 1 are it:

- retains the existing constituencies, which have been in place since 2011 and may avoid confusion for the local electorate;
- avoids splitting Inverness between two constituencies; and
- proposes two constituencies with variation from the electoral quota within 10%.

12. The disadvantages of Option 1 are it:

- proposes an Inverness and Nairn constituency with variation from the electoral quota at nearly 18%; and
- proposes two constituencies which cover large areas: Caithness, Sutherland and Ross; and Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch.

### Option 1A

13. Option 1A retains the existing Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency.

14. Option 1A proposes to amend the proposed constituency boundary by Tomatin or Strathdearn, an area of the Monadhliath Mountains, to avoid an oddly shaped Inverness and Nairn constituency. There are no recognised boundaries in Strathdearn so the proposed boundary follows streams at the end of a tarmac road. There are just over a dozen electors who reside further south down a track in Strathdearn. These electors are added to the proposed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency.

15. The proposed boundary at Strathdearn also transfers an area of approx. 160 km<sup>2</sup> to the Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency, increasing its area to just over 12,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The existing Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency covers an area of 12,792 km<sup>2</sup>.

16. Option 1A also proposes to amend the constituency boundary in Speyside to improve variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency. Option 1A follows an historical ward boundary which also partly follows the River Spey, south of Grantown. There are limited options in Speyside because most of the electorate reside by Grantown on Spey (approx. 3,000 electors).

17. The table below shows the electorate of Option 1A.

Proposed constituencies	Electorate	Variation from electoral quota	Highland Wards
Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	56,532	-5.6%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5(part) 6, 7
Inverness and Nairn	68,438	14.2%	12(part), 13 - 18, 19(part), 20(part)
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	64,248	7.3%	5(part), 8-11, 12(part), 19(part), 20(part), 21

18. A map of Option 1A can be found at Appendix B.

19. The advantages of Option 1A are it:

- retains the existing Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency and minimises change to the other two constituency boundaries, which have been in place since 2011 and may avoid confusion for the local electorate;

- avoids splitting Inverness between two constituencies; and
- improves variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency.

20. The disadvantages of Option 1A are it:

- variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency is over 14%, although this is a smaller, more urban, constituency than the other two more rural Highland constituencies;
- some electors in the Strathdearn valley are split between constituencies; and
- proposes two constituencies which cover large areas: Caithness, Sutherland and Ross; and Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch.

21. If the Commission were to include the whole of the Badenoch and Strathspey ward (to include the area by Grantown) in a Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency it would propose 12.2% variation from the electoral quota in that constituency. As a consequence the Inverness and Nairn constituency would propose 9.3% variation from the electoral quota.

### Option 2

22. Option 2 combines Highland with the grouping of Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland and Moray Council areas.

23. The constituency entitlement for an Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland and Moray Council area grouping is for 12.1 constituencies or rounded to 12 constituencies.

24. Option 2 is based on the existing constituency boundaries and aims to minimise change by amending the boundary of only three constituencies.

25. Option 2 transfers approx. 10,000 Nairn electors from the existing Inverness and Nairn to Moray, to create a Moray and Nairn constituency. As a consequence Keith is added to a Banffshire and Buchan Coast constituency.

26. Option 2 places the whole of the Moray, Keith and Cullen ward, in a Banffshire and Buchan Coast constituency. The existing Keith and Cullen ward is split with Keith in a Moray constituency and Cullen in a Banffshire and Buchan Coast constituency.

27. A map of Option 2 can be found at Appendix C.

<b>Proposed constituencies</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Variation from electoral quota</b>	<b>Wards</b>
Inverness	59,843	-0.1%	Highland 12(part), 13-17, 19, 20(part)
Moray and Nairn	69,222	15.6%	Highland 18 Moray 1, 4-8
Banffshire and Buchan Coast	63,528	6.1%	Moray 2-3 Aberdeenshire 1-3, 5, 6(part)

28. The advantages of Option 2 are it :

- improves variation from the electoral quota in an Inverness constituency;
- minimises change to the existing boundaries;
- avoids splitting the Keith and Cullen ward between two constituencies;
- and
- avoids splitting Inverness between two constituencies.

29. The disadvantages of Option 2 are it proposes:

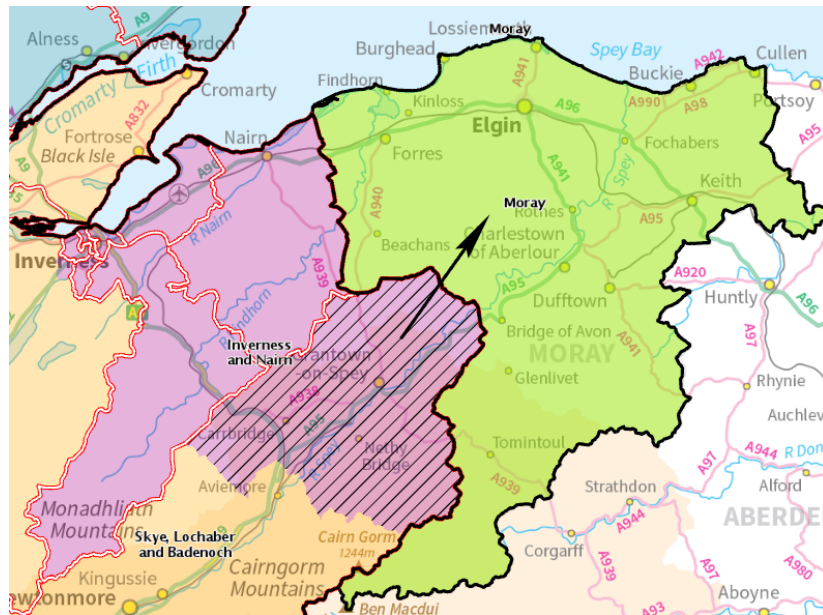
- a Moray and Nairn constituency with variation from the electoral quota at 15.6%;
- an oddly shaped Inverness constituency;
- two constituencies which cover large areas: Caithness, Sutherland and Ross; and Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch.

30. As an alternative, the Commission could simply amend the boundary of only two constituencies by adding Nairn to a Moray constituency. This would propose a Moray and Nairn constituency with 73,783 electors and variation from the electoral quota over 23%. It would avoid amending the Banffshire and Buchan Coast constituency.

31. As a further alternative, the Commission could simply add part of the Badenoch and Strathspey ward (Grantown, Nethbridge and Carrbridge) which currently sits within the existing Inverness constituency to a Moray constituency. This would propose the following:

<b>Proposed constituencies</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Variation from electoral quota</b>	<b>Wards</b>
Inverness	65,464	9.3%	Highland 12(part), 13-19
Moray and Grantown	68,162	13.8%	Highland 20(part) Moray 1, 2(part), 4-8

32. A Moray and Grantown constituency improves variation from the electorate quota in the proposed Inverness constituency. However it proposes a Moray and Grantown constituency with variation from the electoral quota at nearly 14% and the constituency crosses the Highland-Moray council area boundary. The map below shows the area of Strathspey that would be added to a Moray constituency.



### Summary

33. All three options propose at least one constituency with variation from the electoral quota over 10%. Option 1 proposes an Inverness and Nairn constituency with variation from the electoral quota +17.7%. Option 1A proposes an Inverness and Nairn constituency with variation from the electoral quota +14.2%. Option 2 proposes a Moray and Nairn constituency with variation from the electoral quota +15.6%. Highland Council area has an electorate of 189,218, with a constituency entitlement of 3.2 constituencies, therefore at least one constituency must have a slightly higher variation from the electorate quota.
34. Option 1 retains all three existing Highland constituencies. Option 1A retains one existing Highland constituency (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross). Option 2 retains two of the existing Highland constituencies but proposes changes to a further two constituencies in the Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray constituency grouping.
35. Option 1 and Option 1A consider the Highland Council area boundary and retain three constituencies within it, maintaining local ties within the area. Option 2 proposes a Highland-Moray constituency.
36. Options 1 and 2 both split three wards. Option 1A splits four wards.
37. Option 2 proposes an oddly shaped Inverness constituency. However this could be improved by adopting the proposed boundary at Strathdearn and amending the boundary to the south of the Nairn ward.

### Conclusion

38. The Commission is invited to agree its Provisional Proposals for public consultation, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in other groupings.

**Secretariat  
March 2023**

