

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 and its meeting of 9 March 2023, see BS paper 37.
3. At the February 2022 meeting the Commission considered the four options presented in Paper 32 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. At the March 2022 meeting the Commission considered the three options presented in Paper 37 and agreed that Option 1A was an acceptable arrangement but prior to agreeing its Provisional Proposals, the Commission asked the Secretariat to refine the boundaries in Option 1A: by Aviemore following the A9 as a boundary. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to present a version of Option 1A with the Black Isle ward in the Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency for consideration.
5. The electorate quota for the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries is 59,902 electors per constituency.
6. The constituency entitlement for Highland Council area is for 3.2 constituencies or rounded to 3 constituencies.

Options

7. Three options are presented for consideration. Option 1A the Commission's preferred option from BS paper 37 and a Revised Option 1A which makes a revision to the boundary between the proposed Inverness & Nairn and the Skye, Lochaber & Badenoch constituencies. A further Revised Option 1A Black Isle, which places the Black Isle in a Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency is also considered.
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 1A

9. Option 1A from Paper 37 retained the existing Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency.

10. Option 1A amended the Inverness and Nairn constituency and Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency boundary by: Tomatin or Strathdearn, an area of the Monadhliath Mountains; and to the south of Grantown on Spey.

11. 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

12. A map of Option 1A can be found at Appendix A.

13. 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. The existing Inverness and Nairn constituency currently has 70,493 electors and variation from the electoral quota of +17.7%.

14. The disadvantages of Option 1A are:

- 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.

Revised Option 1A

15. The Revised Option 1A retains all the elements of Option 1A from Paper 37 but differs in that the boundary north of Aviemore follows the more easily recognisable A9 and A95 roads. It transfers nearly 700 electors from a Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency to an Inverness and Nairn constituency.

16. The table below shows the electorate of Revised 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	69,113	15.4%	12(part), 13 - 18, 19(part), 20(part)
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	63,573	6.1%	5(part), 8-11, 12(part), 19(part), 20(part), 21

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

18. The advantages of Revised 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;
- may offer a more recognised boundary, the A9 road, south of Inverness; and
- improves variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency in comparison with the existing Inverness and Nairn constituency boundary.

19. The disadvantages of Revised Option 1A are it:

- variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency is over 15%, which is worse than Option 1A;
- 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.

Revised Option 1A - Black Isle in a Caithness, Sutherland and Ross

20. The Commission asked the Secretariat to present a version of Option 1A with the Black Isle ward in the Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency for consideration.

21. This Revised Option 1A transfers the Black Isle ward, with approx. 8,800 electors, from a Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency to a Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency. It retains the Inverness and Nairn constituency from the Revised Option 1A

Proposed constituencies	Electorate	Variation from electoral quota	Highland Wards
Caithness, Sutherland and Ross	65,306	9.0%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5(part) 6, 7,9
Inverness and Nairn	69,113	15.4%	12(part), 13 - 18, 19(part), 20(part)
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch	54,799	-8.5%	5(part), 8,10,11, 12(part), 19(part), 20(part), 21

22. A map of Revised Option 1A – Black Isle can be found at Appendix C.

23. The advantages of this constituency design are it:

- avoids splitting Inverness between two constituencies;
- may offer a more recognised boundary, the A9 road, south of Inverness; and
- improves variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency in comparison with the existing Inverness and Nairn constituency boundary.

24. The disadvantages of this constituency design are it:

- no longer retains the existing Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency;
- proposes a Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency with poor transport links with variation from the electorate quota at +9%;
- proposes a Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency covering an area of 13,050 km². There is no area limit rule for Scottish Parliament constituencies but for the UK Parliament no constituency should be larger than 13,000 km²; and
- variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency is over 15%, which is worse than Option 1A.

Summary

25. The existing Inverness and Nairn constituency has 70,493 electors and variation from the electoral quota at +17.7%. All of the options presented in this paper aim to improve variation from the electoral quota in the proposed Inverness and Nairn constituency, but it remains over 10% in all options. Option 1A proposes an Inverness and Nairn constituency with variation from the electoral quota at 14.2%. The other two options propose an Inverness and Nairn constituency with variation from the electoral quota at 15.4%.
26. Option 1A and Option 1A Revised retain the existing Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency boundary. Option 1A Revised Black Isle adds the Black Isle to a Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency proposing a geographically large Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency. Option 1A Revised Black Isle proposes variation from the electoral quota at 9% in a remote Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency with poor transport links covering an area of 13,050 km².
27. Option 1A follows an historical ward boundary from 1995 to the south of Grantown of Spey. The other two options follow the A9 and A95 roads. The A9 road is an easily recognisable boundary and does not divide communities as its route in this area generally avoids settlements.
28. All of the options presented split four wards.

Conclusion

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

Secretariat
March 2023





