

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries
Draft Revised Proposals for Constituencies - East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and
South Ayrshire Council areas

Action required

1. The Commission is invited to agree its Revised Proposals for constituencies in East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas, in light of the report from Assistant Commissioner Murphy on the local inquiry held in that area.

Background

2. The Commission agreed its provisional proposals for East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas after consideration of Paper BS31 at its meeting of 9 February 2023. The Commission agreed to consult on five constituencies within these areas. The provisional proposals made changes to two of the existing constituency boundaries (Cunninghame South and Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) in order to improve variation from the electoral quota. The existing Cunninghame South constituency has 51,298 electors with variation from the electorate quota of -14%.
3. A table of the provisional proposals is shown in the table below and a map is shown in Appendix A.

Proposed constituencies	Electorate	Variation from Electoral Quota	Wards
Ayr	62,566	4.4%	South Ayrshire 1-5
Carrick, Cumnock, and Doon Valley	59,218	-1.1%	East Ayrshire 7(part), 8-9 South Ayrshire 6-8
Cunninghame North	56,604	-5.5%	North Ayrshire 1-4, 5(part)
Cunninghame South	62,113	3.7%	East Ayrshire 1(part), North Ayrshire 5(part), 6-9
Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley	54,927	-8.3%	East Ayrshire 1 (part), 2-6, 7(part)

4. The Commission consulted on its provisional proposals between 16 May and 17 June 2023.
5. The Commission considered responses to the consultation for East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas at its meeting of 29 August 2023 (Paper BS 62) and that paper is attached as an Annex. The Commission agreed to conduct a local inquiry in respect of the proposed Cunningham South and Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley constituencies because East Ayrshire Council objected to the proposals.

Local Inquiry

6. Sheriff Principal Murphy (North Strathclyde Sheriffdom) acted as Assistant Commissioner at the local inquiry relating to this grouping, held at the Park Hotel Kilmarnock on 11 December 2023.
7. The local inquiry was attended by representatives of East Ayrshire Council, local councillors and political parties.

8. The Assistant Commissioner has submitted his report on the inquiry to the Commission and it appears at Appendix B. A full transcript of the Kilmarnock local inquiry is available at Appendix C.
9. The main issue raised at the Kilmarnock local inquiry was opposition to the proposals by Kilmarnock because they broke local ties between Kilmarnock, Kilmaurs and Stewarton. The comments made at the local inquiry were similar to those received during the earlier public consultation. In summary:
 - East Ayrshire Council stated that Kilmaurs, Dunlop, Lugton and Stewarton have closer ties with Kilmarnock than with communities in the proposed Cunninghame South constituency. They suggested Kilmaurs could remain within a Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley constituency.
 - East Ayrshire Conservative Association accepted that some boundary change is necessary due to the differences in electorate of the existing constituencies . They suggested an alternative boundary to the west of Kilmarnock by Crosshouse, to address variation from the electorate quota.
 - The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party supported the suggestion from East Ayrshire Conservative Association.
 - Councillor Barry Douglas (Kilmarnock East and Hurlford) and Vice Chair of the Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley Constituency Branch opposed the proposals because they broke local ties. He supported the alternative suggestion from East Ayrshire Council.
 - Councillor David Richardson (Kilmarnock North ward) opposed the proposals because they break historical links between Kilmaurs, Fenwick, Stewarton and Dunlop with Kilmarnock, areas linked by road and rail. He also stated that any variation from the electorate quota would be addressed by future housing developments.
10. The Assistant Commissioner's report acknowledged that the Commission's provisional proposals had addressed variation from the electorate quota in the existing Cunninghame South constituency by adding electors from the Annick ward to it. The report noted the strong opposition to adding Kilmaurs, Dunlop and Stewarton to a Cunninghame South constituency, as these are seen to be communities with historical local ties with Kilmarnock.
11. The Assistant Commissioner observed that a number of comments referenced expected housing development but they acknowledged the Commission could not consider future development and only the electorate at 1 Sept. 2022.
12. The Assistant Commissioner did not make any recommendations but noted that the suggestion to amend the boundary by Fardalehill, near Crosshouse, west of Kilmarnock may not offer a clear boundary. However, he asked the Commission to consider all of the alternative suggestions that were presented "to determine a practical solution in accordance with Rules 1-4."

Options

13. The Commission is invited to consider alternative options and suggestions for constituencies.
14. There were a number of alternative suggestions provided in Paper BS 62 - attached as an Annex - and at the local inquiry. No new alternative suggestions were presented at the local inquiry.
15. In other areas, alternative options have been developed following their local inquiries. Paper 62 shows a range of possible solutions, therefore no new options have been developed within Ayrshire.
16. The Commission will wish to consider Paper BS 62 again, it considered suggestions from:
 - both North Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Council suggested placing Kilmaurs in a Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley constituency and including Stewarton in a Cunninghame South constituency;
 - Willie Coffey, MSP for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, suggested an alternative boundary by Dundonald to the south of Irvine;
 - East Ayrshire Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party suggested an alternative boundary by Crosshouses, west of Kilmarnock;
 - the Secretariat developed an alternative boundary, based on the East Ayrshire Conservative Association suggestion that may create a more recognisable boundary; and
 - a member of the public suggested five new Ayrshire constituencies.
17. At its meeting of 5 October 2023, the Commission also discussed Paper BS 73 - Alternative constituency design groupings - and asked the Secretariat to develop alternative proposals for constituencies based on different council area groupings that might identify possible improvements to the provisional proposals. One option is discussed in Paper BS 87 that includes East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas with East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas.

Summary

18. The existing Cunninghame South constituency has 51,298 electors with variation from the electorate quota of -14%.
19. The provisional proposals retained five constituencies within the existing Ayrshire council area grouping.
20. The Commission's provisional proposals added part of the East Ayrshire Annick ward, with approx. 11,000 electors (includes Stewarton, Dunlop and Kilmaurs) to the Cunninghame South constituency to improve variation from the electorate quota. The provisional proposals retained three of the other existing Ayrshire constituencies.
21. East Ayrshire Council objected to the provisional proposals requiring the Commission to conduct a local inquiry. North Ayrshire Council opposed the proposals. 10 comments were submitted during the consultation on the provisional proposals for constituencies in Ayrshire. Four alternative suggestions were submitted and are discussed in Paper BS 62.

22. At the local inquiry similar issues were raised that had been submitted during the earlier consultation and no new alternative suggestions were presented.
23. The Assistant Commissioner's Report made no recommendations but asked the Commission to review all of the alternative suggestions that had been submitted.
24. Paper BS 62 discussed a number of alternative suggestions from:
- Both East Ayrshire Council and North Ayrshire Council suggested an alternative boundary by Kilmaurs;
 - East Ayrshire Conservative and Unionist Association suggested an alternative boundary by Crosshouses, west of Kilmarnock;
 - The Secretariat developed an option based on the East Ayrshire Conservative and Unionist Association that aimed to follow stronger boundaries;
 - Willie Coffey, MSP for Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley, submitted an alternative suggestion which considered historical links between Irvine and Dundonald; and
 - One response suggested five new constituency boundaries based mainly on ward boundaries. This suggestion makes changes to all five Ayrshire constituencies when the provisional proposals had retained three of the existing constituency boundaries.
25. The Commission asked the Secretariat to develop alternative proposals for constituencies based on different council area groupings if they could make improvements upon the provisional proposals. One alternative option is discussed in Paper BS 87, it combines Ayrshire with East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Council areas.

Conclusion

26. The Commission is invited to agree its Revised Proposals constituencies for public consultation in East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council areas, subject to satisfactory constituencies being designed in other groupings.

Secretariat
February 2024

Appendices B and C on website

