



Boundaries Scotland

Criochan na h-Alba

Review of Electoral Arrangements Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council Area Final Proposals

Report to Scottish Ministers



Boundaries Scotland

Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements

Final Proposals

Na h-Eileanan an Iar 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 Na h-Eileanan an Iar 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 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 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 Comhairle offices.



Ronnie Hinds
Chair



Isabel Drummond-Murray
Secretary

Boundaries Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD

boundaries.scot@scottishboundaries.gov.uk
www.boundaries.scot
Twitter: @boundaries_scot

May 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.

Contents

Part 1 Final Proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council Area	3
Map of proposed ward boundaries	4
Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	5
Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla	6
Uibhist a Tuath	7
Na Hearadh	8
Sgìre nan Loch	9
Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	10
An Taobh Siar agus Nis	11
Loch a Tuath	12
Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	13
Steòrnabhagh a Deas	14
Sgìre an Rubha	15
Part 2 Background	16
Who we are	16
Why we conduct electoral reviews	16
How we work	17
Effective and convenient local government	17
Determining councillor numbers	17
Determining ward boundaries	17
Councillors per ward	18
Electoral parity	18
Special geographical considerations	18
Electoral change	19
Local ties	19
Easily identifiable boundaries	19
Ward names	19
Consultation	20
Reporting arrangements	20
Part 3 Conducting the Review	21
Review Stages	21
Consultation	21
Existing electoral arrangements	22
Initial Proposals – Consultation with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	23
Initial Proposals – Public Consultation	24
Final Proposals	25
Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020	26
Electoral Parity and Special Geographical Circumstances	26
Avoidance of breaking local ties	26
Easily identifiable boundaries	26
Conclusion	27
Appendices	28
Appendix A: Legislation governing our work as of 14 May 2021	28
Appendix B: Index of meeting papers and Commission meetings	29

Part 1 Final Proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area

1. We propose that in the interests of effective and convenient local government the future electoral arrangements for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area should provide for a council of 29 councillors in 11 wards, comprising six wards each returning 2-members, three wards each returning 3-members and two wards each returning 4-members as follows:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Variation from Electoral Parity (%) ¹	Forecast Electorate (2023) ²	Forecast Variation from Electoral Parity (%) ¹
1	Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	2	972	-34.9	931	-35.4
2	Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla	3	2,491	11.2	2,361	9.1
3	Uibhist a Tuath	2	1,346	-9.9	1,285	-10.9
4	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	2.0	1,482	2.8
5	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,436	-3.9	1,353	-6.2
6	Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	2	1,299	-13.0	1,232	-14.6
7	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	3	2,524	12.6	2,373	9.7
8	Loch a Tuath	3	2,180	-2.7	2,094	-3.2
9	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	3,046	2.0	3,105	7.7
10	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	3,182	6.5	3,130	8.5
11	Sgìre an Rubha	2	1,661	11.2	1,564	8.5
		29	21,661		20,910	

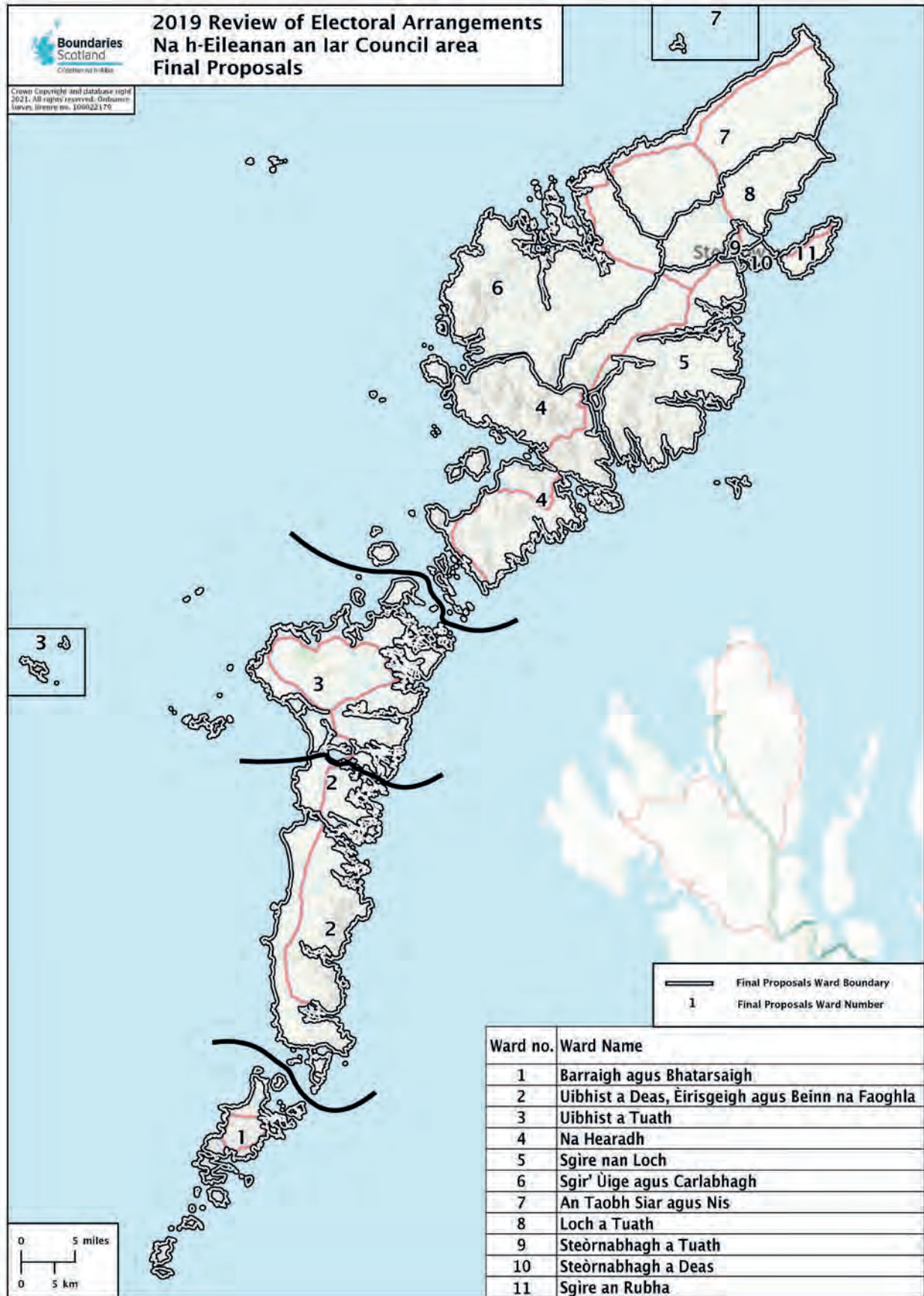
¹ Absolute parity throughout the council area would result in each ward being at 0% that is each councillor representing exactly the same number of electors. A negative parity % figure indicates a ward is over-represented, that is that each councillor represents fewer electors than absolute parity would 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 new build and demolition data provided by each council and population estimates published by National Records of Scotland.

2. Our proposals:

- reduce the imbalance in the number of electors per councillor throughout the area. Three wards have forecast variation from parity of over 10% compared to six wards at present;
- reduce the number of councillors from 31 to 29 while increasing the number of wards from 9 to 11;
- retain the existing boundary of the An Taobh Siar agus Nis ward;
- retain five ward names: An Taobh Siar agus Nis; Loch a Tuath; Sgìre an Rubha; Steòrnabhagh a Tuath; and Steòrnabhagh a Deas;
- adopt the recognised Harris-Lewis boundary as a ward boundary; and
- take account of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2020 by using the flexibility offered by 2-member wards to better reflect local ties throughout the council area and present 2-member wards in: Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh; Na Hearadh; Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh; Sgìre nan Loch; Sgìre an Rubha; and Uibhist a Tuath.

Map of proposed ward boundaries



Ward 1 Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh – 2 councillors

Our proposals create a ward that includes the populated islands of Barra and Vatersay. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 35.4% fewer electors than absolute parity would require.



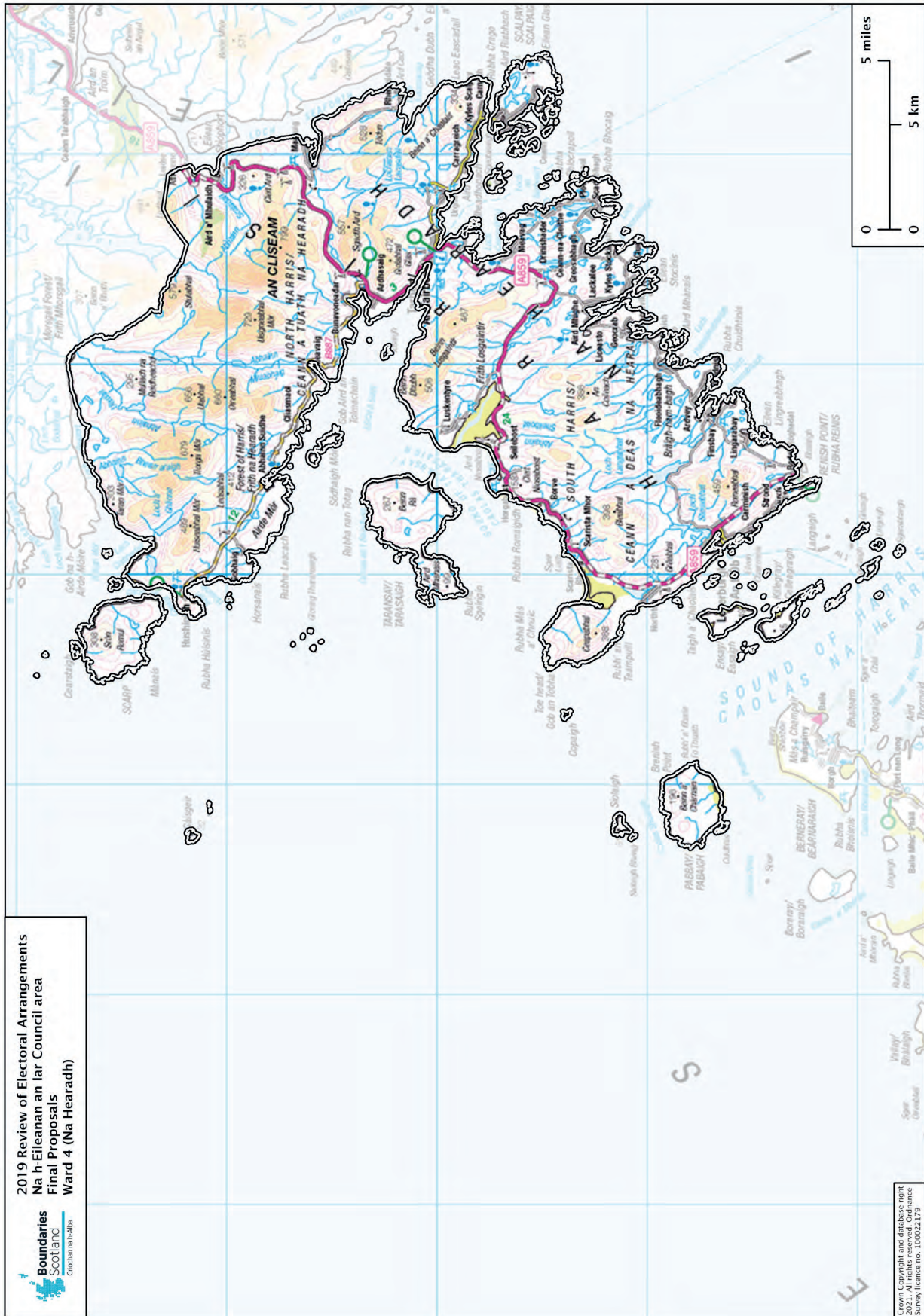
Ward 2 Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla – 3 councillors

Our proposals create a ward that includes the inhabited islands of Benbecula, Eriskay and South Uist. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 9.1% more electors than absolute parity would require.



Ward 4 Na Hearadh – 2 councillors

Our proposals create a Harris ward that follows the historical and recognised boundary between Lewis and Harris. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 2.8% more electors than absolute parity would require.



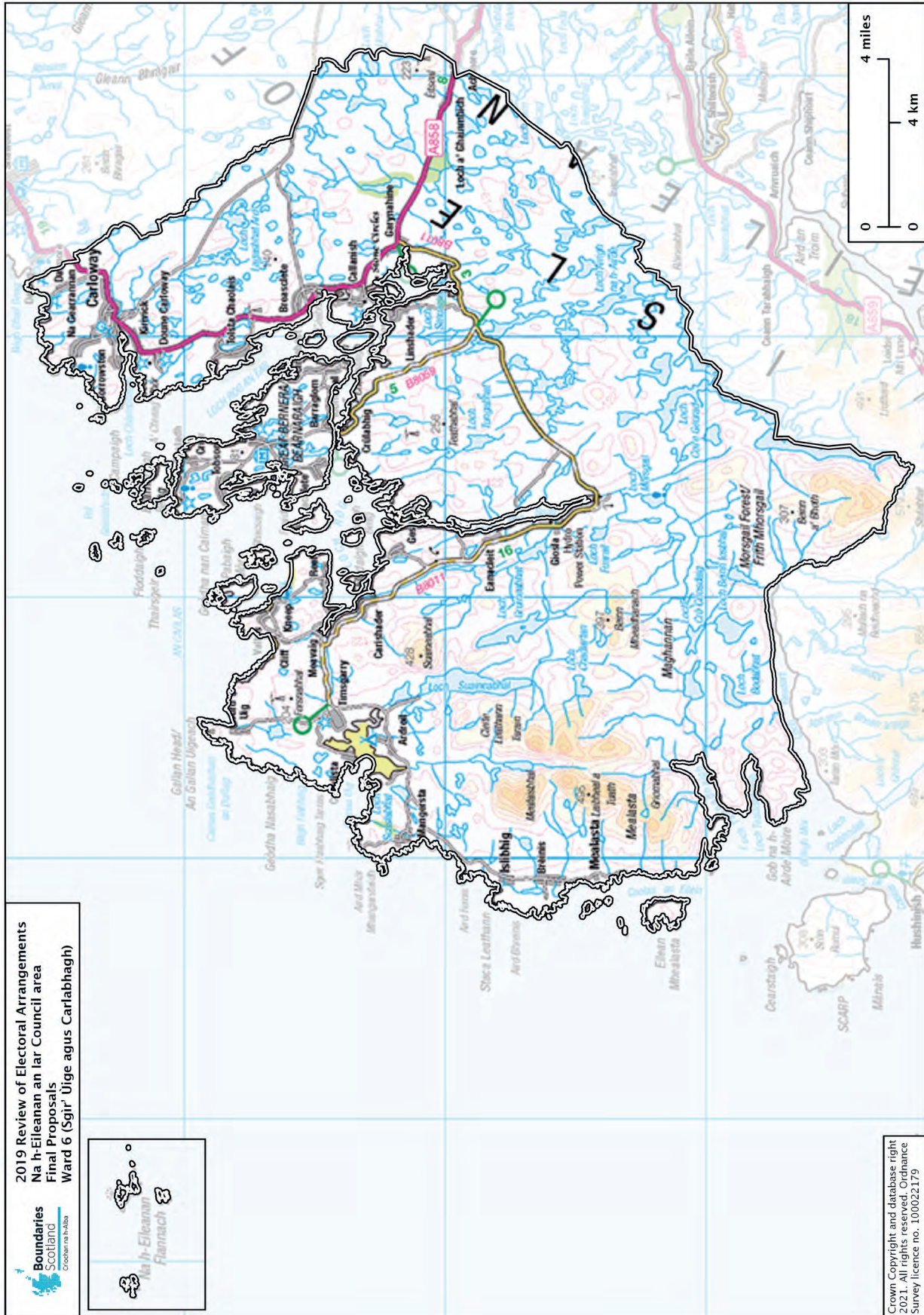
Ward 5 Sgìre nan Loch – 2 councillors

Our proposals create a ward that includes the Lochs. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 6.2% fewer electors than absolute parity would require.



Ward 6 Sgir' Ùige agus Carlabhagh – 2 councillors

Our proposals create a ward that includes the communities of Breascleite, Callanish, Carloway and Uig. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 14.6% fewer electors than absolute parity would require.



2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area
Final Proposals
Ward 6 (Sgir' Ùige agus Carlabhagh)



Crown Copyright and database right
2021. All rights reserved. Ordnance
Survey licence no. 100022179

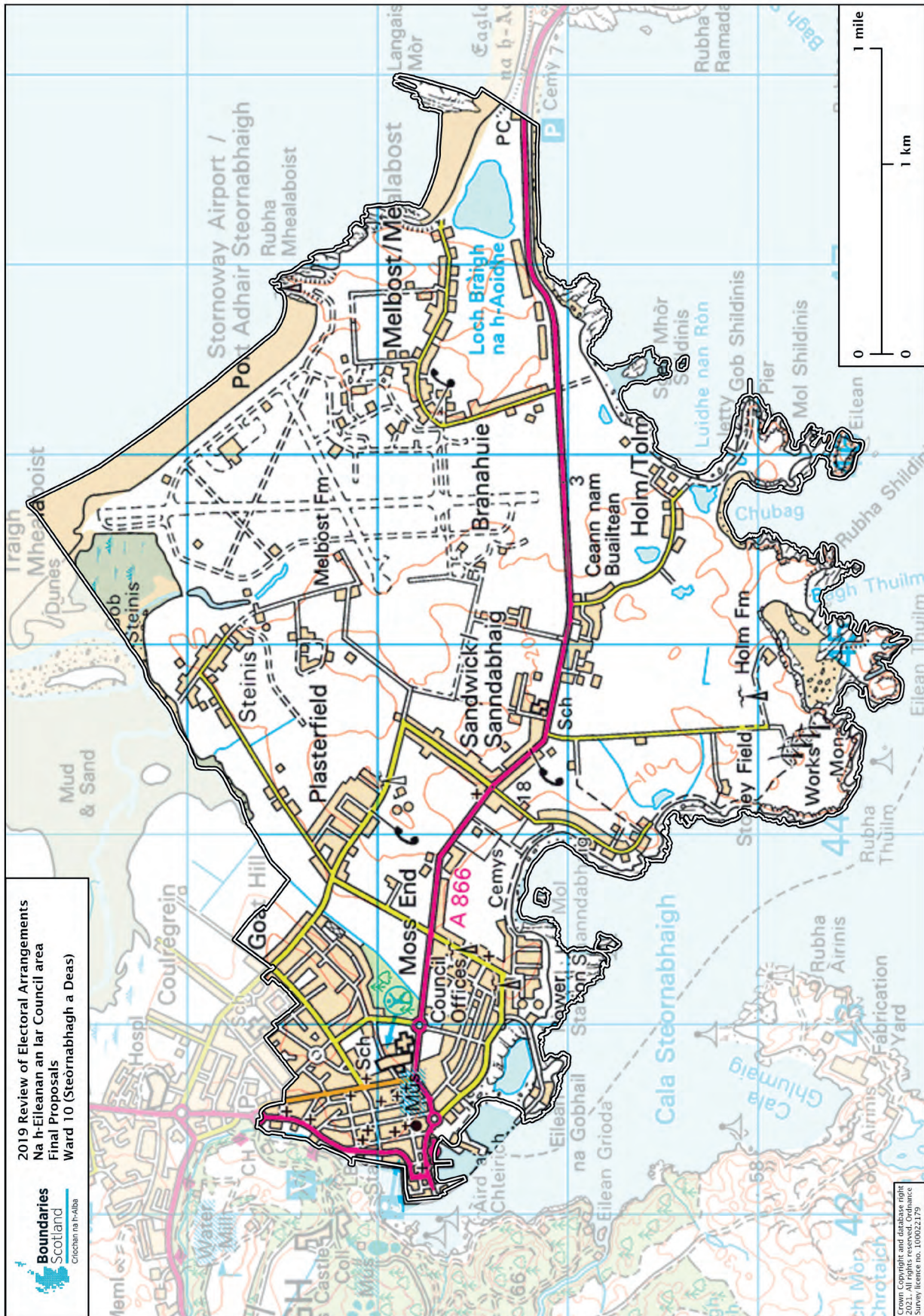
Ward 9 Steòrnabhagh a Tuath – 4 councillors

Our proposals follow existing ward boundaries to the west and centre of Stornoway and make minor changes by Marybank, Newmarket and to include the Arnish peninsula. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 7.7% more electors than absolute parity would require.



Ward 10 Steòrnabhagh a Deas - 4 councillors

Our proposals follow existing ward boundaries to the west and centre of Stornoway and the natural boundary of the causeway to the east. We have retained the existing ward name. Councillors in this ward are forecast to represent 8.5% 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 Na h-Eileanan an Iar 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 Government (Scotland) Act 2004 by section 4 of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 which take effect from 14 May 2021.
10. The current electoral arrangements in the Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area have remained unchanged since 2007. They have been used for local government elections in 2007, 2012 and 2017.
11. Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area was last reviewed during our 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements which reported in 2016. However, the Scottish Government did not implement the proposals for the Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area because of the introduction of the Bill on the Scottish Islands, which became the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

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 1:800 in Na h-Eileanan an Iar 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 Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area can return between one and five councillors. Single member wards are permitted by legislation where all or part of the ward contains an inhabited island, which is the case for all of the Na h-Eileanan an Iar wards. 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 introduced 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 Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area would be:
 - 1 councillor ward = 800 electors
 - 2 councillor ward = 1,600 electors
 - 3 councillor ward = 2,400 electors
 - 4 councillor ward = 3,200 electors
 - 5 councillor ward = 4,000 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 2,160 and 2,640 electors, while a 4-councillor ward could have between 2,880 and 3,520 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 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 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 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 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 Comhairle 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 met with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to provide background to the Reviews and discuss its approach.	July 2018
Commission formally announced start of the Review.	January 2019
Commission developed proposals on councillor numbers and ward boundaries.	December 2018 – February 2019
Two month statutory consultation with the Comhairle on councillor numbers and ward boundaries.	March – May 2019
Commission considered the Comhairle response and developed proposals for public consultation.	June 2019
12 week public consultation on councillor numbers and ward boundaries.	September – December 2019
Commission considered all comments submitted and developed its Final Proposals.	From December 2019
Final Proposals and Report submitted to Scottish Ministers.	May 2021

Consultation

45. We consulted with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on our proposals for a period of two months from 20 March to 20 May 2019.

46. We considered how best to publicise our 12 week public consultation and we: issued a news release; placed a large 4 page “wrap” newspaper advertisement in the Stornoway Gazette; sent posters and further information regarding the Review to over 50 local display points (such as airport terminals, schools, council offices, libraries, health centres and places of worship); 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 10 September until 2 December 2019.

Existing electoral arrangements

47. At the start of this Review, Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area was represented by 31 councillors in five 3-member wards and four 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 Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area shows a minor reduction from 21,661 in 2017 to 20,910 in 2023.

Existing electoral arrangements						
Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Variation from Electoral Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Electoral Parity (%)
1	Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas	4	2,493	-10.8	2,372	-12.1
2	Beinn na Foghla agus Uibhist a Tuath	3	2,316	10.5	2,205	9.0
3	Na Hearadh agus Ceann a Deas nan Loch	3	1,865	-11.0	1,803	-10.9
4	Sgir' Uige agus Ceann a Tuath nan Loch	3	2,407	14.8	2,294	13.3
5	Sgire an Rubha	3	1,869	-10.8	1,760	-13.0
6	Steòrnabhadh a Deas	4	2,972	6.3	3,142	16.5
7	Steòrnabhadh a Tuath	4	2,959	5.9	2,787	3.3
8	Loch a Tuath	3	2,256	7.6	2,175	7.5
9	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	4	2,524	-9.7	2,373	-12.1
		31	21,661		20,910	

50. The existing electoral arrangements in Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area contain six wards with forecast variation from electoral parity of 10% or more: An Taobh Siar agus Nis (-12.1%); Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas (-12.1%); Na Hearadh agus Ceann a Deas nan Loch (-10.9%); Sgir' Uige agus Ceann a Tuath nan Loch (13.3%); Sgire an Rubha (-13.0%); and Steòrnabhadh a Deas (16.5%).

51. The number of councillors we initially proposed for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area is set out below and includes our 10% limit change of councillor numbers rule.

Council area	Existing councillor numbers	Electorate (Dec. 2017)	Electorate divided by ratio councillors per electors (1:800)	Proposed councillor numbers
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	31	21,661	$21,661 \div 800 = 27$	28

Initial Proposals – Consultation with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

52. We considered four options for our Initial Proposals at our meetings of 3 December 2018 (Paper 2464) and 13 February 2019 (Paper 2472). The option we selected:

- improved overall forecast variation from electoral parity – three wards had forecast variation from parity of over 10% compared to six wards at present;
- retained three existing ward boundaries (An Taobh Siar agus Nis, Loch a Tuath and Steòrnabhadh a Tuath) but otherwise made changes throughout the council area to better reflect local communities;
- took account of the Islands (Scotland) Act by using the flexibility offered by 1-member and 2-member wards to better reflect local ties;
- proposed ward boundaries that followed historical or easily identifiable boundaries;
- considered special geographic circumstances in rural, sparsely populated areas with limited transport links; and
- took account of local ties within the council area.

53. We agreed to consult Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on an electoral arrangement for 28 councillors representing one 1-member ward, five 2-member wards, three 3-member wards and two 4-member wards.

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 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar						
Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Variation from Electoral Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from Electoral Parity (%)
1	Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	1	972	25.6	931	24.7
2	Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla	3	2,491	7.3	2,361	5.4
3	Uibhist a Tuath	2	1,346	-13.0	1,285	-14.0
4	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	-1.5	1,482	-0.8
5	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,447	-6.5	1,380	-7.6
6	Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	2	1,299	-16.0	1,232	-17.5
7	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	3	2,524	8.8	2,373	5.9
8	Loch a Tuath	3	2,256	-2.8	2,175	-2.9
9	Steòrnabhadh a Tuath	4	2,959	-4.4	2,997	0.3
10	Steòrnabhadh a Deas	4	3,182	2.8	3,130	4.8
11	Sgìre an Rubha	2	1,661	7.4	1,564	4.7
		28	21,661		20,910	

55. We consulted on our Initial Proposals with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for a 2-month period from 20 March to 20 May 2019.
56. We considered the response received on our Initial Proposals from the Comhairle at our meeting of 17 June 2019 (Paper 2483).
57. In their response to the consultation Comhairle nan Eilean Siar supported the Commission's Initial Proposals because they recognised the provisions of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and took account of the geographical and community links within the council area. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar proposed some minor changes to the proposed ward boundaries by Arnish, Marybank and Newmarket.
58. We agreed to adopt the Comhairle's suggested amendments to our Initial Proposals. The Commission noted that the suggestions by the Comhairle would not materially affect the number of electors in any of the amended wards, and that changing the boundary in the manners suggested would better reflect local ties.

Initial Proposals – Public Consultation

59. Our Initial Proposals for public consultation presented an electoral arrangement for 28 councillors representing one 1-member ward, five 2-member wards, three 3-member wards and two 4-member wards. The proposals:
- reduced the number of councillors from 31 to 28 while increasing the number of wards from 9 to 11;
 - reduced the imbalance in the number of electors per councillor throughout the area. Three wards had forecast variation from parity of over 10% compared to six existing wards;
 - retained one existing ward boundary – An Taobh Siar agus Nis ward;
 - retained five ward names: An Taobh Siar agus Nis; Loch a Tuath; Sgìre an Rubha; Steòrnabhagh a Tuath; and Steòrnabhagh a Deas;
 - took account of the Islands (Scotland) Act by using the flexibility offered by 1-member and 2-member wards to better reflect local ties, including a 1-member Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward and 2-member wards in Uibhist a Tuath, Na Hearadh, Sgìre nan Loch, Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh and Sgìre an Rubha; and
 - aimed to: better reflect local communities; followed historical or easily identifiable boundaries; considered special geographic circumstances in rural, sparsely populated areas with limited transport links.

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 17)	Variation from Electoral Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Electoral Parity (%)
1	Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	1	972	25.6	931	24.7
2	Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla	3	2,491	7.3	2,361	5.4
3	Uibhist a Tuath	2	1,346	-13.0	1,285	-14.0
4	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	-1.5	1,482	-0.8
5	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,436	-7.2	1,353	-9.4
6	Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	2	1,299	-16.0	1,232	-17.5
7	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	3	2,524	8.8	2,373	5.9
8	Loch a Tuath	3	2,180	-6.1	2,094	-6.5
9	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	3,046	-1.6	3,105	3.9
10	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	3,182	2.8	3,130	4.8
11	Sgìre an Rubha	2	1,661	7.4	1,564	4.7
		28	21,661		20,910	

61. The public consultation on our Initial Proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area ran for a 12-week period from 10 September to 2 December 2019.

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

63. There were 64 responses to the public consultation for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area. Nearly half of the responses supported the Commission's proposed reduction in councillor numbers and the Commission's proposed ward boundaries. Those opposing the proposals generally sought greater representation in the southern isles.

Final Proposals

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

65. Our Final Proposals took account of comments from our public consultation and we have proposed a 2-member, rather than a 1-member, Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward to improve representation in the southern isles in an area remote from Stornoway. Our Final Proposals are otherwise unchanged from our public consultation because our proposals had been generally supported and some of the alternative suggestions we had received were out-with the legislation for this review.

66. 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

67. In developing our proposals we tested the flexibility of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 which allowed for options such as six 2-member wards spread throughout the area: Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh; Uibhist a Tuath; Na Hearadh; Sgìre nan Loch; Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh; and Sgìre an Rubha.
68. During the Review we were aware of the imminent Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 (enacted on 8 July 2020). We received no suggestions for a 5-member ward during our consultations and did not consider use of a 5-member ward would enable us to propose a better ward design option for the council area.

Electoral Parity and Special Geographical Considerations

69. 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.
70. Eight of our proposed wards are within 10% of forecast variation from electoral parity.
71. Only three wards propose forecast variation from electoral parity over 10%. The Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward contains two relatively small inhabited islands, Barra and Vatersay, with a distinct community, poor transport links to other islands and are particularly remote to Stornoway. Councillors in Uibhist a Tuath and Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh will represent fewer electors than strict parity requires to create more easily identifiable ward boundaries.

Avoidance of breaking local ties

72. Our proposals recognise the strong local ties within the islands and have avoided large wards containing multiple inhabited islands.
73. Our proposed boundaries draw heavily on the existing boundaries in creating new wards that more accurately reflect communities across the islands.
74. Our proposals retain one existing ward boundary An Taobh Siar agus Nis, in the north of the council area.
75. We have minimised change to the existing ward boundaries by Stornoway.
76. Our proposals adopt the recognised Lewis-Harris boundary as a ward boundary.

Easily identifiable boundaries

77. The proposals retain one existing ward boundary An Taobh Siar agus Nis, in the north of the council area.
78. We have minimised change to the existing ward boundaries by Stornoway, adopting suggestions from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.
79. Our proposals adopt the recognised Lewis-Harris boundary as a ward boundary.
80. We have adopted islands as ward boundaries in the south of the council area, recognising island communities, their geography and local ties within them.

Conclusion

81. At our meetings of 10 December 2019, 4 February and 7 April 2020 we considered Papers 2508, 2517 and 2524 respectively, and the views expressed by respondents to our consultations before agreeing our Final Proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area as set out in Part 1.
82. 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.
83. 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 Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area and that there was not a need for further consultation or a local inquiry.
84. Both Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and members of the public were generally supportive of our proposals as they improve forecast variation from parity across the islands in comparison to the existing arrangements to better reflect local community ties and create a more easily identifiable ward boundaries.
85. We believe that our proposals fully meet all requirements of the legislation and provide for effective and convenient local government for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area.
86. All papers and minutes of meetings relating to our consideration of Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area are available on our website: www.boundaries.scot.
87. The timetable for this Review of electoral arrangements and index of our meetings, papers and minutes concerning Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area is at Appendix B.
88. 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.
89. Our report has also been deposited for public inspection at offices designated by the Comhairle and a news release announcing the publication of our report has also been issued.
90. 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 geographic 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
3 December 2018	Paper 2464 Review of Electoral Arrangements Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area
13 February 2019	Paper 2472 Review of Electoral Arrangements Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area
20 March to 20 May 2019	2-month statutory consultation period with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
17 June 2019	Paper 2483 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Consideration of Initial Proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area
10 September to 2 December 2019	12-week public consultation period
10 December 2019	Paper 2508 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Consideration of responses to public consultation for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area
4 February 2020	Paper 2517 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Further consideration of responses to public consultation for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area
7 April 2020	Paper 2524 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Consideration of responses to public consultation and agreement of final proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area
May 2021	Commission submits its reports to Scottish Ministers

Boundaries Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD

www.boundaries.scot

Telephone: 0131 244 2001

Email: boundaries.scot@scottishboundaries.gov.uk

Twitter: [@boundaries_scot](https://twitter.com/boundaries_scot)