

Islands Reviews: Communications and Engagement Plan

Purpose

1. The Commission will wish to publicise its Islands Reviews as widely as possible to engage with as many stakeholders as possible to assist the Commission in informing its recommendations.
2. The Commission is invited to consider options for communications, consultation and engagement during the Islands Reviews, specifically Shetland Islands, as well as Orkney Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar council areas. It is expected that the reviews of North Ayrshire, Highland and Argyll and Bute council areas will follow a similar format but could be refined following the initial island reviews.

Background

3. The Commission met with the 3 Island council areas during June and July 2018 to discuss the Islands Reviews.

Expected Timetable and Review stages

4. The table below shows the expected timeframe and stages of the islands reviews.

Dates (approx.)	Review Stage
October 2018 – February 2019	Development of initial proposals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission considers and agrees initial proposals for councillor numbers and ward designs • Secretariat discusses ward design options with Council officials for advice on whether they break local ties. Commission considers this feedback before agreeing its proposals. Secretariat will also seek guidance from officials on best consultation and engagement methods for public consultation. If face to face meeting – opportunity for Secretariat to view how boundaries fit on the ground.
December 2018	Commission formally announces start of the reviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • press release issued • letter to all Councils advising them of commencement of reviews • letter to interested stakeholders (Cosla, Solace, Electoral Commission, political parties, MSPs) • update Commissions website • consider article in Holyrood magazine
March 2019 – May 2019	Statutory 2 month consultation with Councils – councillor numbers and ward designs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write to 3 Councils • publish Policies and Procedures Booklet
July 2019 – October 2019	Public consultation – councillor numbers and ward designs. 12 weeks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release issued • Ask council to display proposals at display points (libraries and council offices) and publicise on their website and social media channels • Public notices issued to local newspapers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to interested stakeholders (Cosla, Solace, Electoral Commission, political parties, MSPs) • Consultation tool available on Commissions website for public to submit comments • Website updated • Video – simple guide to Reviews • Meet community councils or other community group leaders • Roadshows • Mail all residents leaflet
November 2019 – January 2020	<p>Consider responses to consultations. <i>Optional – Develop revised proposals</i></p>
February 2020 – June 2020	<p><i>Optional – Consult with public and Councils on revised proposals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Press release issued</i> • <i>Ask council to display proposals at display points (libraries and council offices) and publicise on their website and social media channels</i> • <i>Public notices issued to local newspapers</i> • <i>Letter to interested stakeholders (Cosla, Solace, Electoral Commission, political parties, MSPs)</i> • <i>Consultation tool available on Commissions website for public to submit comments</i> • <i>Website updated</i> • <i>Meet community councils or other community group leaders</i> • <i>Roadshows</i>
June 2020 – July 2020	<p>Commission considers all responses and develops its final recommendations before submitting its reports to Scottish Ministers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release issued • Send copies of Report to Councils for display proposals at display points (libraries and council offices) • Public notices issued to local newspapers • Website updated

Timetable

5. This timetable could be accelerated but with a target submission date of May 2021 there is no significant time pressure and the Commission will need to factor in meetings with the 3 mainland councils as well as commencement of any interim reviews it chooses to undertake.

Community Councils

6. There are 20 community councils in Orkney Islands and 32 in Na h–Eileanan an Iar council areas. Of the 16 Shetland community councils, there are 6 island community councils (Bressay, Fetlar, Skerries, Unst, Whalsay and Yell) and 10 mainland community councils. The community councils generally meet every 2 months.
7. The Association of Shetland Community Councils meet twice a year, the next scheduled meetings will be March 2019 and then September 2019, but no dates have been confirmed yet.

8. The Secretariat will consider engagement with Community Councils and other community groups in Shetland, such as community associations, during discussions with Shetland Council officers.

Roadshows

9. The Commission has never held a roadshow during a public consultation but this could be trialled during the Islands Reviews. Councils could advise on suitable locations, such as council offices or hotels. Alternative venues include agricultural events or festivals which are usually held between June and August.

Display Points

10. During the 5th Reviews 3 display points were used in Shetland, however they were all in based in Lerwick (library, town hall and council office). Historically the Commission has generally used council offices or libraries as display points.
11. For the Islands Review a display point within each ward or island could be considered. Alternative display points include notice boards on ferries.

Household mailing

12. If the Commission wishes to mail all households, a draft leaflet has been prepared, see Appendix A. It is expected that designers from APS, who have the print and design contract for Scottish Government and agencies, would create a more professional-looking leaflet. The aim of the leaflet is to provide the public with a simple guide to the Island Reviews and how to get involved. The Secretariat received an approximate quote from Royal Mail in 2017 of £0.10 to deliver to each household. Based on National Records for Scotland statistics there are 10,340 households in Shetland and this would therefore cost £1,034 for postage. There are a further 23,160 households in Orkney Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar council areas.
13. If a leaflet posted to all households is shown to be successful the Commission could consider mailing households in other areas. There are 213,500 households in North Ayrshire, Highland and Argyll and Bute council areas.

Other suggestions for communication and engagement

14. At the annual UK Boundary Commissions meeting, the Boundary Commission for England will be discussing their communications strategy during its recent review of UK Parliament constituencies. This will be an opportunity to consider alternative communication suggestions, such as video, radio advertising and paid social media advertising.
15. The Secretariat have also engaged with APS to gain ideas for improving communications and engagement. Examples of their work will be available to view at the meeting.

Conclusions and Recommendations

16. The Commission is invited to provide feedback, comments and suggestions on the proposed engagement and communications plan for the islands Reviews.

Secretariat

October 2018