

LGBCS Paper 2464**2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements
Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area****Purpose**

1. The Commission is invited to consider its Initial Proposals for the 2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area.

Background

2. The Commission agreed to adopt the same methodology from its 5th Reviews for its review of Island-only council areas. The 5th Reviews' methodology placed Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar council areas in the same category with a ratio of electors per councillor of 800:1.
3. The methodology recommended 27 councillors for Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area. As there was a 10% cap on change in councillor numbers and there were 31 councillors, the Commission therefore proposed 28 councillors. However during its ward design stage of the 5th Reviews the Commission agreed an option with 26 councillors which considered local ties and minimised consequential changes. The Commission may wish to consider flexibility with councillor numbers when considering its ward design options and following feedback from its consultations.
4. The 5 year forecast electorate in Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area shows a decline from 21,661 in 2018 to 20,910 in 2023.
5. The Commission met with Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar in July 2018 to discuss the approach to the review and in particular the new flexibility offered by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 to use 1 or 2-member wards. At that meeting the Comhairle suggested that Barra and Vatersay might be an appropriate single member ward but that 2, 3 and 4 member wards would be the norm. The Comhairle suggested that the islands of North and South Uist and Benbecula along with Stornoway may be suitable candidates for two member wards.

Options

6. This paper sets out four options for the Commission to consider.
 - Option 1 – Commission's recommendations from its 5th Reviews – 26 councillors;
 - Option 2 – ward design similar to 5th Reviews but with 1, 2, 3 or 4-member wards – 26 councillors;
 - Option 3 – ward design that addresses variation from parity in wards 1,2,3,4 and 5 – 28 councillors
 - Option 4 – demonstrates the status quo and existing ward boundaries that have been in place since 2007 – 31 councillors.
7. Each of these options is considered in more detail below.
8. Where necessary the Secretariat will liaise with Council Officials to consider possible ward names. The Commission will wish to consider these before confirming its initial proposals.

Option 1 – Recommendations from 5th Reviews

9. Option 1 adopts the Commission’s recommendations from its 5th Reviews.
10. The 5th Reviews recommended 26 Councillors and retained 3 ward boundaries; Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas; Beinn na Foghla agus Uibhist a Tuath; and Loch a Tuath. The 5th Reviews Report states the Commission “agreed on an option which proposed 26 councillors, 2 less than our methodology proposed because it allowed us to contain the Lochs area within a single ward, re-instating local community ties in the area. The option also minimised changes to ward boundaries at Stornoway and would also be likely to be supported by respondents to the public consultation on councillor numbers as it reduced the number of councillors in the council area further than the 28 originally proposed by the Commission.”
11. The Commission’s 5th Reviews final recommendations allowed for some variation from parity and three of the eight proposed wards had forecast electorate of over 10% however this was considered acceptable given special geographic circumstances.
12. During the 5th Reviews public consultation stage on councillor numbers, there were five responses which mainly opposed the proposals and sought a further reduction in councillor numbers. The Comhairle supported a reduction in councillor numbers.
13. During the 5th Reviews consultation on ward boundaries the Comhairle suggested some minor changes to the proposed boundaries by Stornoway. The main theme from the public consultation support for retaining 4 councillors in ward 1 (Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas) and for retaining the existing electoral arrangements. The Commission decided against retaining 4 councillors in ward 1 as the variation from parity would have been in excess of -20% and any consequential changes to improve this would have broken local ties elsewhere.
14. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 1 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendices A & E:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast variation from parity
1	Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas	3	2,493	-0.3	2,372	-1.7
2	Beinn na Foghla agus Uibhist a Tuath	3	2,313	-7.5	2,202	-8.7
3	Na Hearadh, Sgìre nan Loch, Uig agus Beàrnaraigh	4	3,552	6.6	3,420	6.3
4	Sgìre an Rubha agus Sanndabhaig	3	2,438	-2.5	2,391	-0.9
5	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	3	2,605	4.2	2,702	12.0
6	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	3	2,829	13.2	2,673	10.8
7	Loch a Tuath	3	2,180	-12.8	2,094	-13.2
8	Nis, An Taobh Siar agus Càrlabhagh	4	3,251	-2.4	3,056	-5.0

	Totals	26	21,661		20,910	
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15. The advantages of Option 1 are:

- It retains three of the existing wards thus retaining and respecting local ties;
- Retains local ties in the Lochs ward; and
- Recognises the local support for a reduction in councillor numbers from current levels.

16. The disadvantages of Option 1 are:

- There was some opposition to this ward design during the 5th Reviews public consultation stage most of which centred on the desire to retain 4 councillors in the Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas ward; and
- Forecast variation from parity is over 10% in three wards.

Option 2 – 26 Councillors – Alternative Boundaries

17. Option 2 adopts a ward design that uses 1, 2, 3 and 4-member wards. It aims to create a ward design based on existing boundaries where possible, it also attempts to recognise individual islands and their local communities.

18. Option 2 proposes a 1-member ward for Barra and Vatersay. Whilst Barra and Vatersay have over 900 electors and a variation from parity in excess of 15% making it a 2-member ward would mean over representation by an even greater amount.

19. Barra may be considered to have closer transport links to Oban than to Stornoway. It is 140 miles and 6 hours to drive from Castlebay in Barra to Stornoway via 2 ferries and there is no direct flight from Barra to Stornoway (only via Glasgow).

20. This option proposes discrete South Uist and North Uist & Benbecula wards where in previous reviews South Uist has been included in wards with Barra and Vatersay during ward design. Whilst forecast parity in these wards would be close to or in excess of $\pm 10\%$, the opportunity to recognise the distinct island communities is one that is in keeping with the rest of this overall design.

21. The Lochs ward is retained from the proposals of the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements.

22. The proposed ward boundaries by Stornoway follow an existing ward boundary to the west and a historical ward boundary in Stornoway itself.

23. Option 2 also recognises that the number of councillors suggested by the 5th reviews was seen as acceptable by respondents and therefore this option does not suggest any additional councillors.

24. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 2 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendices B & F:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from parity
1	Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	1	972	16.7	931	15.8
2	Uibhist a Deas	2	1,521	-8.7	1,441	-10.4
3	Uibhist a Tuath agus Beinn na Foghla	3	2,313	-7.5	2,202	-8.7
4	The Lochs – from 5th Reviews	4	3,552	6.6	3,419	6.3
5	Rubha Peninsula	2	1,661	-0.3	1,564	-2.8
6	Steòrnabhagh a Deas (East)	4	3,382	1.5	3,529	9.7
7	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath (West)	4	3,367	1.0	3,179	-1.2
8	Loch a Tuath (Lewis North East)	2	1,642	-1.5	1,589	-1.2
9	Nis, An Taobh Siar agus Càrlabhagh – from 5th Reviews (Lewis North West)	4	3,251	-2.4	3,056	-5.0
	Totals	26	21,661		20,910	

25. The advantages of Option 2 are:

- It considers existing ward boundaries in many areas;
- Adopts ward boundaries from 5th Reviews but also considers new boundaries and individual island communities using flexibility to create 1 and 2 member wards as per the Islands Bill and council suggestions; and
- It improves parity in the wards to the north of the council area in comparison to the 5th Reviews and the existing arrangements in particular.

26. The disadvantages of Option 2 are:

- Forecast variation from parity in two of the proposed wards, Barra and South Uist, is in excess of 10%; and
- Makes a number of changes from the existing arrangements which may cause issue as changes can be unpopular.

Option 3 – 28 Councillors – Alternative Boundaries

27. Option 3 adopts a ward design based on 28 councillors.

28. Option 3 is similar to Option 2 in that it proposes a 1-member ward in Barra; a 2-member ward in South Uist; 3-member ward in North Uist and Benbecula.

29. The proposed boundary between the Harris and The Lochs wards partially follows the existing ward boundary and also follows a community council boundary.

30. Stornoway is split between two wards rather than three as in the existing ward structure with the western ward being retained in its entirety from the existing arrangements.

31. The ward containing the Rubha Peninsula is clearly identifiable and the proposed boundary follows a historical ward boundary.

32. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 3 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendices C & G:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from parity
1	Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	1	972	25.6	931	24.7
2	Uibhist a Deas	2	1,521	-1.7	1,441	-3.5
3	Uibhist a Tuath agus Beinn na Foghla	3	2,313	-0.3	2,202	-1.7
4	Harris	2	1,524	-1.5	1,482	-0.8
5	The Lochs	3	2,179	-6.1	2,079	-7.2
6	Rubha Peninsula	2	1,661	7.4	1,564	4.7
7	Stornoway East	4	3,165	2.3	3,098	3.7
8	Stornoway West	4	2,931	-5.3	2,997	0.3
9	Lewis North West	4	3,100	0.2	2,914	-2.4
10	Lewis North East	3	2,295	-1.1	2,202	-1.7
	Totals	28	21,661		20,910	

33. The advantages of Option 3 are:

- There is only a single ward with a variation from parity in excess of 10% and that is an island ward where special geographical circumstances would be a mitigating factor.
- Adopts ward boundaries from 5th Reviews but also considers new boundaries and individual island communities using flexibility to create 1 and 2 member wards as per the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

34. The disadvantages of Option 3 are:

- Change to existing and recognised boundaries particularly in Harris and Lewis.

Option 4 – 31 Councillors – Existing Wards

35. Option 4 retains the existing electoral arrangements. It makes no changes to the existing ward boundaries or number of councillors.

36. The electorates and associated variation from parity for Option 4 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendices D & H:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from 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	Sgìre an Rubha	3	1,869	-10.8	1,760	-13.0
6	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	2,972	6.3	3,142	16.5
7	Steòrnabhagh 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
	Totals	31	21,661		20,910	

37.The advantages of Option 4 are:

- It maintains the existing electoral arrangements and may avoid confusion by retaining identifiable ward boundaries; and
- It maintains local ties.

38.The disadvantages of Option 4 are:

- It proposes 3 more councillors than the methodology recommends; and
- In six wards forecast variation from parity is over 10%.

Conclusions

39.The Commission is invited to decide on its Initial Proposals for electoral arrangements in Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area.

40.Options 1 and 4 only consider 3 or 4-member wards whereas Options 2 and 3 each include proposals for wards represented by 1, 2, 3 and 4 councillors as enabled by the legislation.

41.Options 1 and 2 consider 26 councillors in recognition of the Commission's methodology and the Comhairle's initially stated preference for an overall reduction in councillor numbers.

42.Option 3 proposes 28 councillors and uses a variety of existing, well recognised local boundaries (community council, ward and civil parish) to ensure that the islands' communities are represented as well as is possible.

43.Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 – have 3, 2, 1 and 6 wards respectively in excess of $\pm 10\%$ forecast variation from parity.

Recommendations

44.The Commission is invited to provisionally agree its Initial Proposals for the 2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area.

**Secretariat
November 2018**