

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Communication and engagement update

Purpose

1. At its meeting on 13 February the Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2473 and discussed various suggestions to improve public engagement during the public consultation stage of the Review process.
2. The Commission asked the Secretariat to prepare a detailed strategy paper for the three council areas (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council) outlining a timetable and potential actions to undertake to increase public participation. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to consider how to evaluate participation in comparison to the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements.
3. This paper provides an update on the actions requested above.

Key messages

4. Drawing on the information shared by the Boundary Commission for England at the UK Commissions meeting in November 2018, the Secretariat has drawn up key messages that it is suggested be the focus for the communications and engagement effort throughout the public consultation. These are attached at Appendix A and the Commission is invited to consider and comment on them.

Timing

5. The consultation with councils will start on 20 March and run until 20 May. The Commission is scheduled to meet on 13 May when a progress report will be given and on 17 June when responses from the three councils and any proposed changes to the Commission's proposals can be considered. Assuming decisions on the proposals for public consultation are made at that June meeting then it is suggested that the public consultation commence mid-July and run until mid-October.

Consultation activity

6. Preliminary plans for expected public consultation activity are attached at Appendix B. This is still in draft form as the Secretariat develops its approach and can be considered again at a future meeting.
7. In addition, the Secretariat has contacted APS Group to discuss production of communications materials and branding to support consistent messaging across all consultation platforms in an engaging way. An oral update will be given at the meeting.

Evaluation

8. The Secretariat is considering both measurement of activity and measurement of participation.
9. For all digital activity the Secretariat will utilise appropriate mechanisms to track engagement for example hits on the website (via Google analytics) or Twitter engagement (via Twitter analytics). For other activity a simple count will be undertaken for example, number of local press articles, number of responses and analysis of location of respondent.

10. Some comparison can be made with the 5th Reviews. For example, in July 2015 at the start of the public consultation on ward design, a tweet was issued for each council area, containing a map of the proposals and copying in the official twitter account of each council. No paid promotion of the tweets was undertaken. An example for Orkney is below:

LGBCS @lgbcscs · 30 Jul 2015
 Have your say on our proposals for wards in @OrkneyCouncil. Find out more at lgbc-scotland.gov.uk/reviews/5th_el...

ward no.	ward name	no. councillors
1	Kirkwall East	4
2	Kirkwall West and Orphir	4
3	Stromness and South Isles	3
4	West Mainland	4
5	East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray	3
6	North Isles	3
Total		21

Background
 We are undertaking a 12 week period of public consultation on proposed ward boundaries for each council area in Scotland as part of our Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements.
 Legislation says that we must conduct electoral reviews of each local authority at intervals of 8 to 12 years. For further background on the Commission and this review please visit our website.

Orkney Islands ward boundary proposals
 Our proposals for wards in Orkney Islands council area retain an electoral arrangement for 21 councillors representing 3 3-member wards and 3 4-member wards.
 Our proposals for the council area make no changes to councillor numbers, ward boundaries or ward names.

How to comment on our ward boundary proposals
 We need you to tell us what you think of our proposals via our interactive consultation portal at www.consultation.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk or by emailing or writing to us at the address below.
 Our proposals and further information are available in this building and also on our website. Please submit your comments by 22 October 2015.

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 Thistle House
 91 Haymarket Terrace
 Edinburgh, EH12 5HD
 Phone: 0131 538 7510
 Fax: 0131 538 7511

11. For these tweets, Twitter analytics shows:

- Shetland – 349 Impressions and 3 engagements
- Orkney – 372 impressions and 7 engagements
- Western Isles – 405 impressions and 14 engagements

12. At that time the Commission had fewer followers than now (87 as at September 2015 compared to 345 now). The Secretariat will also explore options around paid promotions to boost the impact of Twitter activity during the Islands Reviews.

13. In terms of number of respondents to the consultations during the 5th Reviews:

- in Shetland there were no responses to the consultation on councillor numbers and 5 during the consultation on ward design (all from Mainland)
- in Orkney there were 2 responses to the consultation on councillor numbers (location not available) and none during the consultation on ward design
- in Western Isles there were 5 responses to the consultation on councillor numbers (no location available) and 24 during the consultation on ward design (9 from Barra, 5 from Lewis, 5 from South Uist).

Recommendations

14. The Commission is invited to:

- a. Consider the draft messages in Appendix A
- b. Agree the provisional timescale for the public consultation
- c. Consider the draft Islands-specific consultation plans in Appendix B
- d. Consider the plans for evaluation

Secretariat
March 2019

Islands Reviews: Communications and engagement – key messages

Objectives

- **Inform:** Ensure key audiences are aware the review is happening. Let as many people as possible know they have the opportunity to have their say and how to do this.
- **Engage:** Encourage citizens to go online to view proposals and share their views. Position local people and communities as the experts needed to help shape local wards, ensuring local ties and any special geographic considerations are taken account of.
- **Educate:** Explain in a simple manner what electoral reviews are about. Reinforce that the process is fair and open. Convey that the consultation is genuine and does not have a predetermined outcome.
- **Reassure** citizens that ‘day-to-day life’ won’t change (eg school catchment areas, access to public services).

Key messages

- LGBCS is an **independent** body tasked with reviewing councillor numbers and ward boundaries periodically.
- We **need the help of local people** and communities to help shape wards ensuring they take into account important local ties, recognised boundaries and any special geographic circumstances.
- It’s **easy to help us and have your say**. You can view the proposed changes online and have your say in a couple of minutes.
- You can **find out more** about the review and the different ways to get involved online at **www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk**.