

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Consideration of Initial Proposals for Orkney Islands council area

Action required

1. The Commission is invited to consider the response from Orkney Islands Council to the consultation on its Initial Proposals for electoral arrangements and consider whether it wishes to make changes before the public consultation.

Background

2. The Commission agreed its Initial Proposals for Orkney Islands Council area at its meeting of 13 February 2019.
3. Orkney Islands Council were consulted on the Initial Proposals for a 2-month period, from 20 March to 20 May 2019. The Deputy Chair and Secretariat also presented the Initial Proposals to the Council on 18 April 2019 in Kirkwall.
4. The Initial Proposals for Orkney Islands Council area set out an electoral arrangement for 21 councillors representing three 3-member wards and three 4-member wards, maintaining the current number of wards and councillors.
5. A map of the Initial Proposals is shown at Appendix A.
6. The Initial Proposals for Orkney Islands council area:
 - addressed variation from electoral parity in existing wards 3 (Stromness and South Isles) and 5 (East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray);
 - minimised change to the existing electoral arrangements;
 - considered local ties in the whole council area;
 - retained the existing North Isles and Kirkwall West and Orphir wards;
 - proposed a West Mainland ward boundary which follows recognisable current and historical boundaries;
 - recognised special geographical circumstances in the North Isles ward due to it comprising rural, sparsely populated islands with limited transport links;
 - renamed the Stromness and South Isles ward as Stromness, Sandwick and South Isles to reflect changes to the ward boundary but retained all other ward names; and
 - proposed a Kirkwall East boundary which follows an historical ward boundary and natural features which place Kirkwall airport within a Kirkwall ward.

7. The table below details the electorates with actual and forecast variation from parity of the Initial Proposals:

Ward no.	Ward name	CLLrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,622	11.6	3,605	11.4
2	Kirkwall West and Orphir	4	3,454	6.4	3,492	7.9
3	Stromness, Sandwick and South Isles	3	2,607	7.1	2,590	6.7
4	West Mainland	4	3,061	-5.7	3,042	-6.0
5	East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray	3	2,496	2.5	2,488	2.5
6	North Isles	3	1,798	-26.1	1,771	-27.0
		21	17,038		16,988	

Response from Orkney Islands Council

8. In their response to the consultation, see Appendix B, Orkney Islands Council opposed the proposed Stromness, Sandwick and South Isles ward boundary from a community perspective. The Council recognised that the Commission had considered electoral parity in the area but stated that Sandwick has closer ties with Dounby than Stromness; and the proposed boundary would break local community ties in West Mainland and divide Harray and Sandwick Community Council with consequences for councillor workload. The Council also raised concerns that the proposed ward could weaken the islands voice within a ward that would include islands, a small town and an additional rural parish area. The Council raised the importance of a councillor being resident on one of the South Isles and the risk that a mainland focussed ward would diminish the possibility of isles residents proposing candidates. The Council wished to retain the existing West Mainland ward boundary in this area.
9. Orkney Islands Council supported the proposed boundary to the south of Kirkwall because it “aligns better with the natural community links and also with the community councils for the area.”
10. Orkney Islands Council also made an alternative suggestion to amend the ward boundary by Kirkwall harbour to create a more easily identifiable ward boundary in Kirkwall.
11. Orkney Islands Council made no comments on overall councillor numbers or ward names and indicated they were content with the wards to which no change is proposed.

Consideration of response

12. Orkney Islands Council opposed the proposed ward boundary by Sandwick and wished to retain the existing West Mainland ward boundary. The Council stated that Sandwick looks towards Dounby and has few ties with Stromness and the South Isles (Hoy, Flotta etc). The existing West Mainland ward places Sandwick and Dounby within the same ward as does the historic Sandwick ward (1995–

1999), although historically there has been a Sandwick and Stromness Landward ward (1999–2005).

13. The Council stated that Dounby is the focus of a Local Development Plan and acts as the centre of the local catchment area for local communities such as Sandwick in West Mainland. The Local Development Plan is “based on Orkney’s most sustainable settlements, which are promoted as the main focus for new development, acting as service centres for Orkney’s rural communities and the non-linked isles.”
14. Orkney Islands Council advised that school catchment areas reflect local community areas. The catchment area of Dounby Primary School includes Birsay, Dounby, Harray and Sandwick. The catchment area of Stromness Primary School includes Stromness. There are two secondary schools in Orkney, Kirkwall and Stromness. The primary school catchment area boundary follows a similar boundary to the existing ward boundary by Stromness.
15. Orkney Islands Council also raised concerns that increasing the size of the ward may diminish representation of the South Isle communities and that mainland communities may become more of a focus of the ward. The existing and historic ward boundaries have placed the islands of Hoy and Flotta with the Stromness and Houton ferry terminals on the mainland. Hoy or Flotta have never been placed in the same ward as Sandwick.
16. The Council stated that having a councillor resident on one of the islands was important to hear issues of local island residents and that their voice would diminish within a larger ward with more of a mainland focus. Legislation states that councillors only need to live or work within the council area, rather than a specific ward.
17. Orkney Islands Council supported the Commission’s proposed ward boundary south of Kirkwall because it better reflects local community ties in the area. The Commission’s Initial Proposals designed a ward boundary that follows an historic ward boundary and natural features. The proposed boundary also follows a similar boundary to the existing community council area boundary.
18. Orkney Islands Council made an alternative suggestion to amend the ward boundary by Kirkwall harbour to create a more easily identifiable boundary. The proposed boundary would follow Bridge Street and transfer approximately 40 electors from Kirkwall West and Orphir ward to Kirkwall East ward. The existing ward boundary follows the harbour boundary, St Catherine’s Place (B9054), Garden Street and St Olafs Wynd before reaching Bridge Street.
19. The small number of additional electors to the proposed Kirkwall East ward increases variation from electoral parity from 11% to 12%. The Commission’s Initial Proposals amended the ward boundary south of Kirkwall to improve variation from electoral parity in the more remote East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray ward. The Commission may consider that a small urban Kirkwall East ward that better reflects local community ties with a higher variation from electoral parity is more acceptable than a more remote rural ward. The Schedule 6 rules also mention “the desirability of fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable”. The proposed boundary by Kirkwall harbour follows Bridge Street, an A road, while the existing ward boundary follows a B road and St Olafs Wynd.

20. The table below shows the ward electorate and variation from electoral parity from the Orkney Islands Council alternative suggestion. A map of the alternative suggestion from Orkney Islands Council is shown at Appendix C.

Ward no	Ward name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity %	Forecast Electorate	Variation from parity %
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,661	12.8	3,645	12.6
2	Kirkwall West and Orphir	4	3,415	5.2	3,452	6.7
3	Stromness and South Isles	3	2,147	-11.8	2,140	-11.8
4	West Mainland	4	3,521	8.5	3,492	7.9
5	East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray	3	2,496	2.5	2,488	2.5
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Conclusion and Recommendations

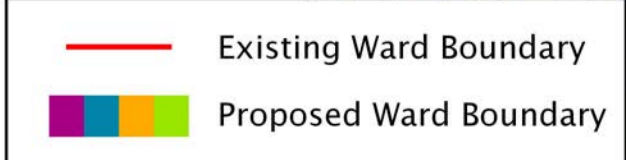
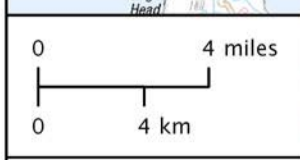
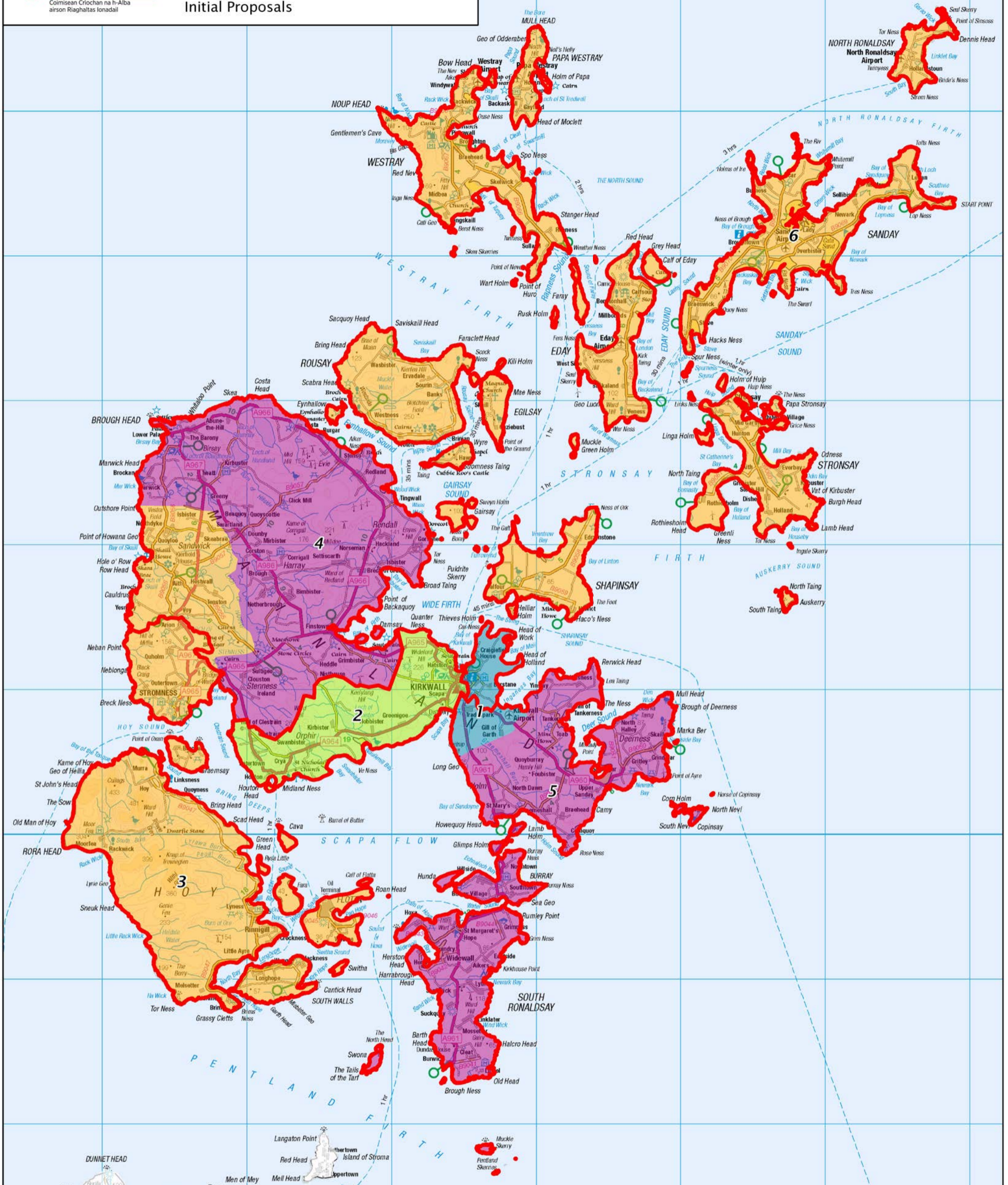
21. The existing electoral arrangements in Orkney Islands council area offered variation from electoral parity of over 10% in three wards: Stromness and South Isles; East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray; and North Isles.

22. The Commission's Initial Proposals considered local ties, while addressing variation from parity in two rural wards: Stromness and South Isles; and East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray. The Commission retained the North Isles ward with wide variation from electoral parity due to its special geographic circumstances, noting that it is arguably one of the most remote wards in Scotland, comprising 12 inhabited islands with limited transport links. The Initial Proposals retained two existing ward boundaries, minimising change, (North Isles; and Kirkwall West and Orphir). The Initial Proposals considered historical boundaries in the West Mainland and Kirkwall East wards.

23. Orkney Islands Council support the Commission's proposed boundary south of Kirkwall as it considers local ties in the area. The Council oppose the proposed boundary by Sandwick as it breaks local community ties by Dounby in West Mainland. The Council also suggest designing a more easily identifiable boundary by Kirkwall harbour.

24. The Secretariat invites the Commission to consider either:

- retaining its Initial Proposals for public consultation; or
- adopting the alternative suggestion from Orkney Islands Council which: retains the existing Stromness and South Isles ward boundary; adopts the proposed ward boundary south of Kirkwall; amends the ward boundary by Kirkwall harbour; and retains the existing ward names as its Initial Proposals for public consultation.



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Our Ref: AB/kg/AW.

21 May 2019.

Isabel Drummond-Murray
Secretary
Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD

Dear Isabel

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Council Areas

Firstly, a belated thank you for coming to Orkney last month in order to talk through the consultation on the Local Government Boundary Commission proposals for our area with our elected members. We recognise the time and cost involved in undertaking a visit to Orkney and are very grateful that you were able to do this.

I must also apologise for the delay in replying formally to the consultation however we have been busy preparing for the EU Election later this week.

In response to the consultation we appreciate the proposals are based on principles which you outlined. In the main we are content with the wards to which no change is proposed but have the following comments to make on the wards where change is proposed.

Proposed Ward 3 – Stromness, Sandwick and South Isles

We appreciate the effect of this proposal in terms of moving a number of electors to even the ratio of elected members: electors, however the Council is not supportive of this change from a community perspective.

The rural parish of Sandwick identifies strongly with the neighbouring rural village of Dounby as part of the West Mainland, rather than identifying with Stromness and South Isles. The village of Dounby is very much the 'centre' of the West Mainland and the local community councils are structured around this and work closely together. In addition, the local West Mainland community are working towards a local community development plan with Dounby at the centre, focussing on the Dounby catchment area. The Harray and Sandwick Community Council covers a very integrated area and in splitting this rural area into two different Council wards would be viewed as unhelpful by the community. There are also

consequences for elected members as it would have the impact of 7 Councillors, from two wards, required attend a meeting of the Harray and Sandwick Community Council.

The present ward, Stromness and South Isles, contains a small town and a small isles grouping. Amending this ward to include a rural parish area will result in three different types communities, rather than two, and there is a danger that the isles voice may be diluted, and isles residents become disenfranchised. Having a Councillor who is resident on one of the South Isles is critically important in ensuring the isles communities' voice is represented in the Council. At present there is one elected member in the present ward who is resident on one of the South Isles. We feel that the present arrangement encourages the isles residents to propose candidates for the Local Government elections and would be concerned that this could diminish if the ward becomes more 'mainland focussed' due to covering the proposed larger geographical area on the Orkney mainland.

Splitting the ward would therefore be at odds with the local context and ties stated above and we would strongly urge that the status quo was therefore maintained for this ward.

Proposed Ward 5 – East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray

This proposal aligns better with the natural community links and also with the Community Councils for the area. We therefore support this proposal.

Other comments

We agree that the local context may not give rise to any suitable single member wards. We are content for the status quo for the North Isles Ward being the best proposal in the context of maintaining councillor numbers. We could not envisage reducing numbers in this ward due to the challenges in geography and ability to physically attend constituent business and related meetings. The areas which our Isles councillors are representing are our most fragile, have the most challenges in basic service provision such as transport, connectivity and access to services and hence have an associated heavy workload.

Finally, one small anomaly was raised in Kirkwall East, a boundary in the area of St Catherine's Place, Garden Street and Bridge Street Wynd, is confusing to local residents and we would be grateful if consideration could be given to amending it to a more natural boundary. I've attached a map to indicate the relevant area.

In summary, our democratic processes are enhanced by powerful local Community Councils and the Council wishes to continue to work with them can't support a proposal which is at odds to the communities' work in progressing their local development plans. In addition, our community schools play an important role in the rural areas which means the school catchment areas tend to define the local informal boundaries and how the community associates with its local area. We feel that this is also an important consideration.

We would therefore be grateful if consideration can be given to our comments.

If you have any queries or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



Alistair Buchan



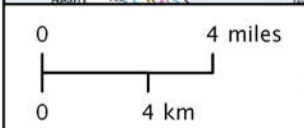
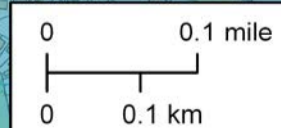
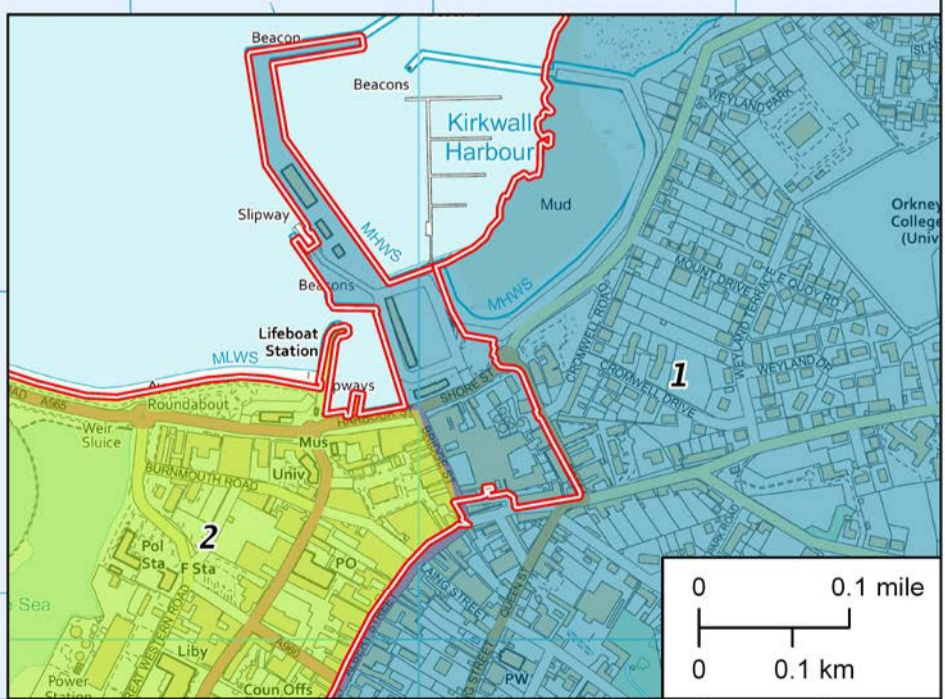
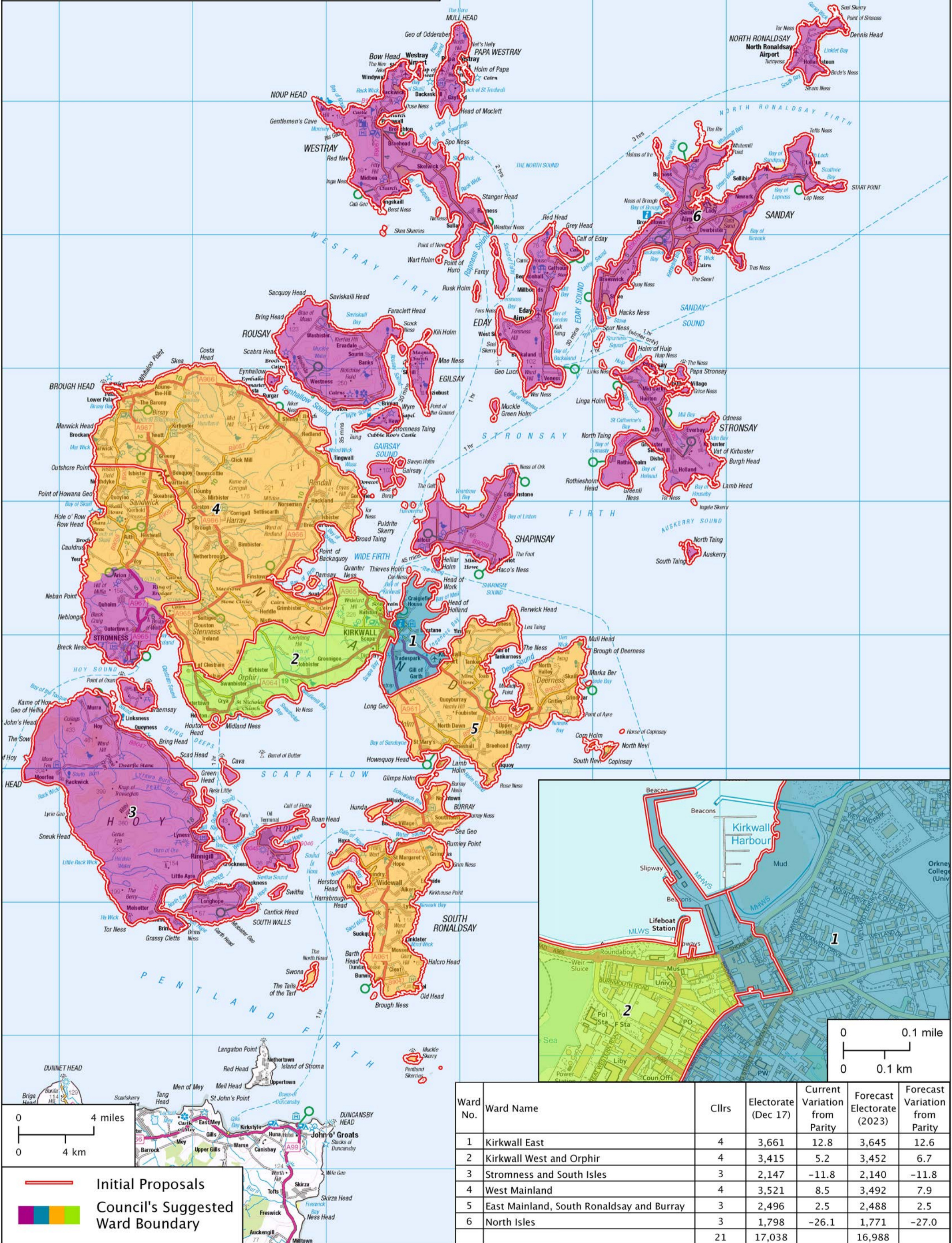
Layers

- Council Area from 1 April 2019 (inc. Cardowan boundary)
- Wards from 1 April 2019 (inc. Cardowan boundary)
- Council Area (2018)
- Wards from 2017
- Wards from 2007
- Wards from 1999
- Wards from 1995

The map shows the Kirkwall East Ward boundary in blue. Key locations include Ferry Terminal (W), Harbour Street, Education Facility, Museum, Bus Station, and various residential streets like Palace Road and White Street. A pop-up window is open over the ward, displaying the name 'Kirkwall East Ward' and 'NAME Kirkwall East Ward'.



ORKNEY ISLANDS

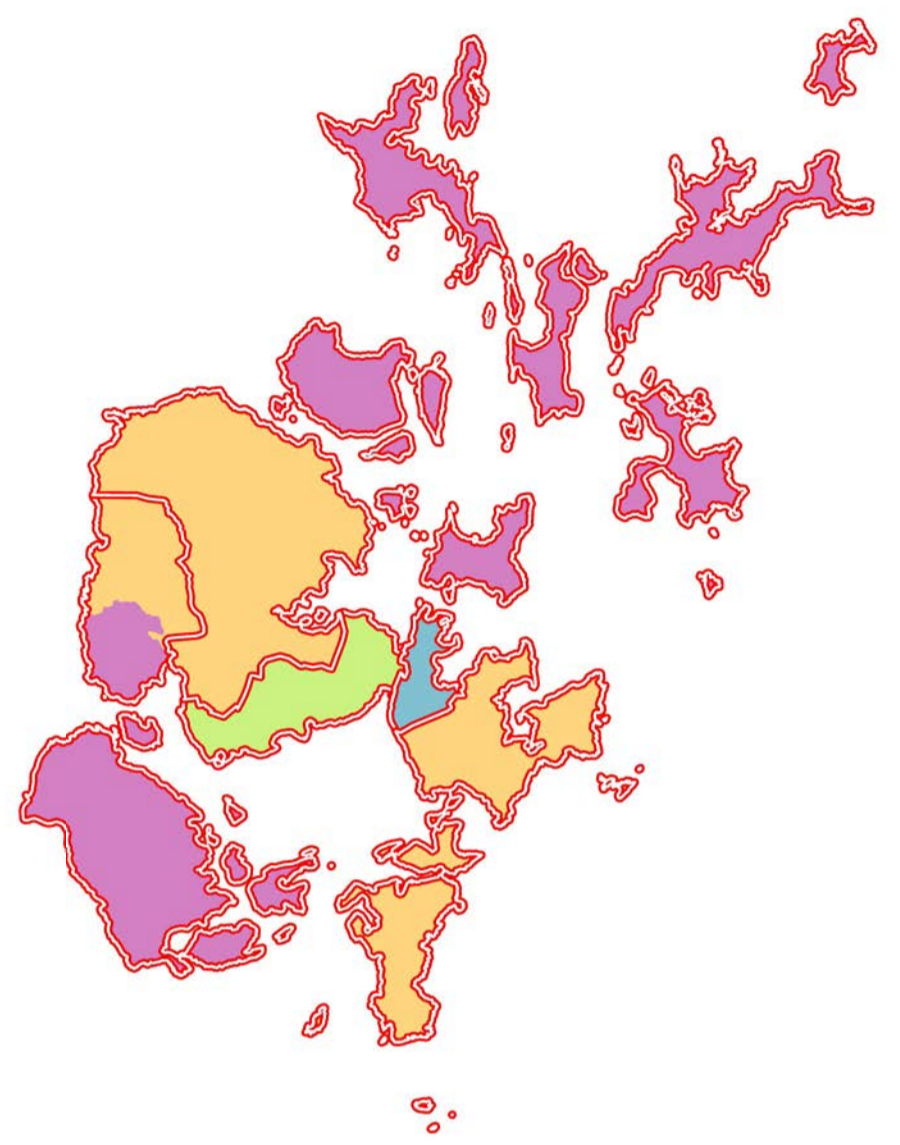


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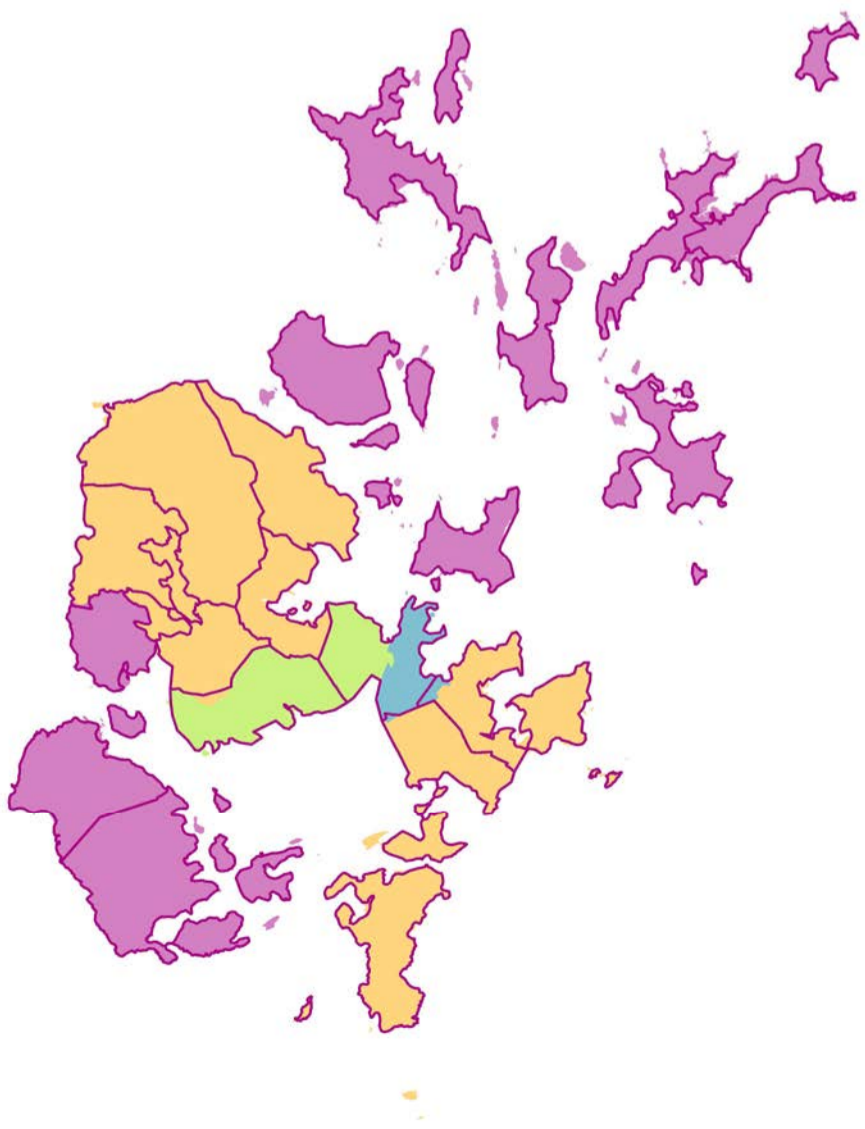
Initial Proposals
 Council's Suggested Ward Boundary



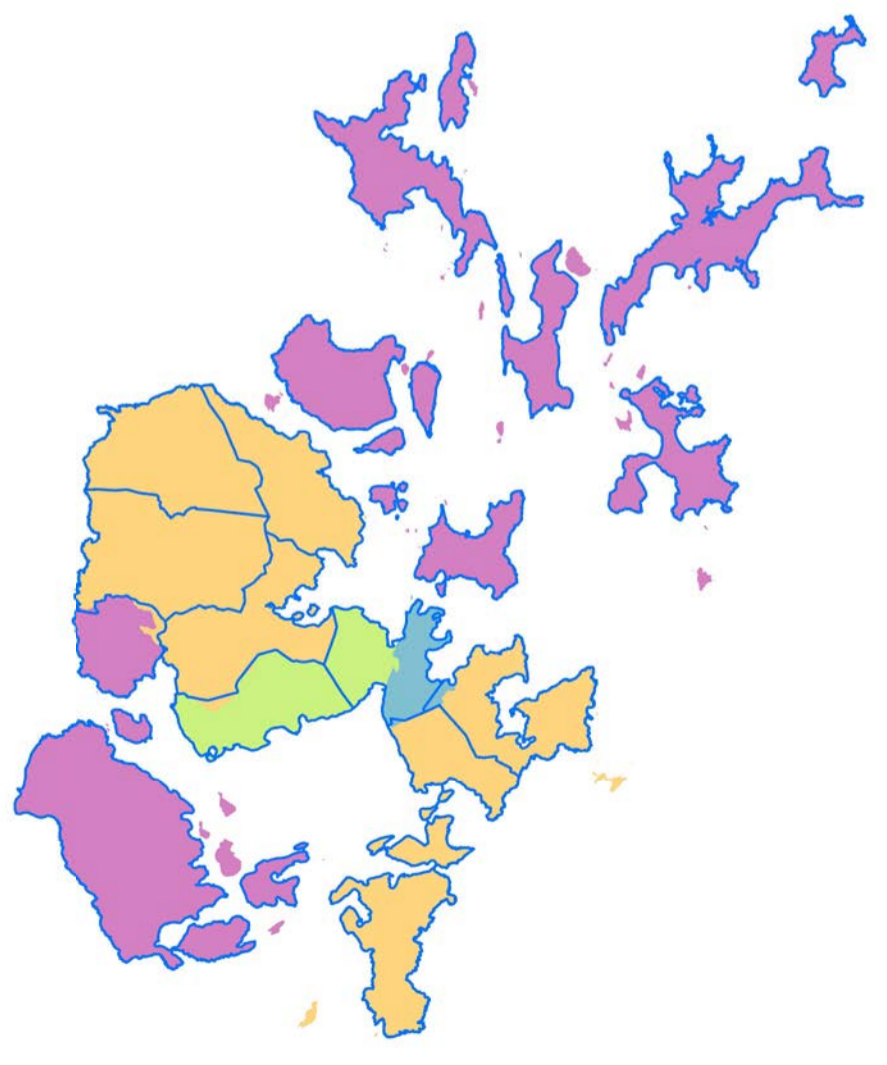
Existing Wards



Initial Proposals



Civil Parishes



Community Councils