

## **2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Consideration of Initial Proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area**

### **Action required**

1. The Commission is invited to consider the response from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 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 Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area at its meeting of 13 February 2019.
3. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar were consulted on the Initial Proposals for a 2-month period, from 20 March to 20 May 2019.
4. The Initial Proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area set out an electoral arrangement for 28 councillors representing one 1-member ward, five 2-member wards, three 3-member wards and two 4-member wards, reducing councillor numbers by 3.
5. A map of the Initial Proposals is shown at Appendix A.
6. The Initial Proposals for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area:
  - improved overall forecast variation from electoral parity – three wards have forecast variation from parity of over 10% compared to six wards at present;
  - retained three existing ward boundaries (An Taobh Siar agus Nis, Steòrnabhagh a Tuath and Loch 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 follow historical or easily identifiable boundaries;
  - considered special geographic circumstances in rural, sparsely populated areas with limited transport links; and
  - considered local ties in the whole council area.

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

Ward no.	Ward name	Councillors	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from 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	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	2,959	-4.4	2,997	0.3
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
		<b>28</b>	<b>21,661</b>		<b>20,910</b>	

### Response from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

8. In their response to the consultation, see Appendix B, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar supported the Commission's Initial Proposals because they recognised the provisions of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and considered the geographical and community links within the council area.
9. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar proposed some minor changes to the proposed ward boundaries by Arnish/ Marybank and Newmarket.
10. In their response, individual Councillors also asked the Commission to consider: four 2-member wards instead of two 4-member wards in Stornoway; increasing the number of Councillors in Barra and Uist due to the distance for Councillors to travel to the Council Headquarters in Stornoway; and for two Councillors to represent the proposed Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward.

### Consideration of response

11. The Comhairle made an alternative suggestion to amend the proposed ward boundaries by Arnish/ Marybank and Newmarket to better reflect local ties and consider new housing developments.
12. The proposed ward boundaries follow a minor road and natural features (stream and loch) by Arnish/ Marybank and a small stream and the rear fenceline of properties by Newmarket.
13. The Comhairle made a similar suggestion to amend the ward boundaries in these areas during the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews of Electoral Arrangements which the Commission adopted and recommended.
14. The Comhairle suggestion amends the proposals by transferring approximately 20 electors from the Sgìre nan Loch ward to a Steòrnabhagh a Tuath ward by Arnish/ Marybank and nearly 80 electors by Newmarket from the Loch a Tuath ward to a Steòrnabhagh a Tuath ward.

15. The three wards where the ward boundaries have been amended remain within 10% forecast variation from electoral parity: Loch a Tuath (-6%), Sgìre nan Loch (-9%) and Steòrnabhagh a Tuath (4%).
16. The Comhairle made no comment or suggestions on the proposed ward names.
17. The table below shows the ward electorate and variation from electoral parity from the Comhairle alternative suggestion. A map of the alternative suggestion is shown at Appendix C.

ward no.	Ward name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from 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	1,427	-7.8	1,345	-9.9
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	3,055	-1.3	3,113	4.2
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	7.4

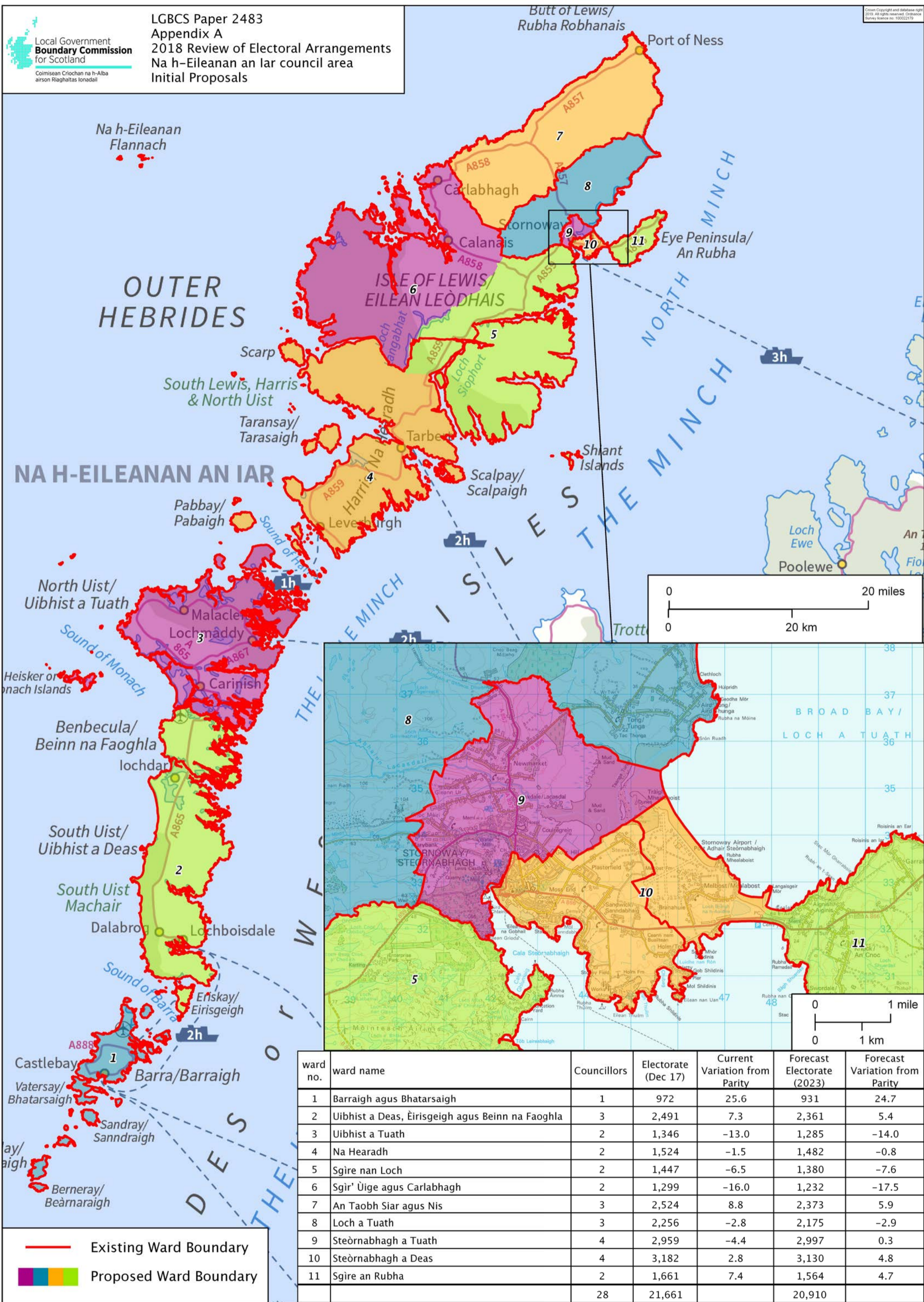
18. In the Comhairle submission individual Councillors raised comments for the Commission to consider. The Commission may wish to consider these comments again later this year when it studies the responses it receives during its public consultation.
19. A Councillor suggested a 2-member Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward. This would offer forecast variation from electoral parity of -40%, with a total of 28 Councillors or -35% with 29 Councillors. The Commission proposed a 1-member Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward with variation from electoral parity of 25%.
20. A Councillor suggested increasing the number of Councillors in Barra and Uist due to the distance and time involved in travelling to Council meetings in Stornoway. Councillors in Barra and Uist are currently able to use video-conferencing to attend Council meetings.
21. A Councillor suggested four 2-member wards instead of two 4-member wards in Stornoway but did not express a preference for ward boundaries.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

22. The existing electoral arrangements in Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area comprise 31 Councillors representing nine wards.
23. The Commission's Initial Proposals reduced the total number of Councillors by three to 28, proposed 11 wards, considered the provisions of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, improved overall forecast variation from parity, retained three ward boundaries and considered local ties in island and rural communities.

24. In their response to the consultation Comhairle nan Eilean Siar supported the Commission's proposals but have made some minor suggestions to amend ward boundaries to improve local community ties.
25. The Secretariat recommends that the Commission retains its Initial Proposals for public consultation amended to include the suggestion from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to make minor alterations to the proposed ward boundaries by Arnish/ Marybank and Newmarket.

**Secretariat  
June 2019**



ward no.	ward name	Councillors	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity
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		28	21,661		20,910	

Existing Ward Boundary  
Proposed Ward Boundary



## COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

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Commission for Scotland

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Date	17 May 2019

Dear Ms Drummond-Murray,

### 2019 REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS: NA H-EILEANAN AN IAR

Thank you again for your letter of 20 March 2019 setting out the Commission's proposals for our Council area. The Comhairle considered the proposals at its Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 May 2019, the recommendations of which were approved by the full meeting of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar the same day.

I am pleased to advise that the Comhairle was unanimously supportive of the Commission's proposals, and recognises with appreciation the application by the Commission of the flexibility given by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 as regards the proposals for Electoral Wards, and the recognition of the geographic and community links and issues for the Western Isles.

The following specific issues have been identified by colleagues, which we are sure can be addressed by minor adjustment:

Arnish:

There are a number of houses along the Arnish/Lochs Road, which, together with Arnish, it is believed would be better represented within the Steornabhagh a Tuath Electoral Ward; and

Lochs Road, Marybank:

There are a number of houses near the Creed River on the Lochs Road which, for reasons of Common Grazings boundaries, currently lie within the Loch a Tuath Electoral Ward but are surrounded by, and linked with, the Steornabhagh a Tuath Electoral Ward; it is likewise felt that these houses, believed to be around three in number, should be incorporated into the Steornabhagh a Tuath Electoral Ward.

Gleann Dubh, Newmarket:

The Commission's welcome proposal for the Gleann Dubh area, agreed but not implemented owing to the deferral of the Review in 2016, whereby the Gleann Dhubh area be incorporated within the Steornabhagh a Tuath Electoral Ward, should be implemented in this Review.


The following specific comments were made by **individual** Members, who requested that the Commission consider:

- whether, for the two Stornoway Wards, consideration could be given to there being four two-Member Wards, rather than two four-Member Wards, to assist community cohesion and ease of representation;
- whether a positive weighting should be given to areas such as Uist and Barra as regards an increase in the number of Councillors, to reflect greater workload of Councillors *pro rata* their distance from Council Headquarters in Stornoway;
- whether the proposed Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh Ward should have two Councillors, to reflect its substantial variation from parity.

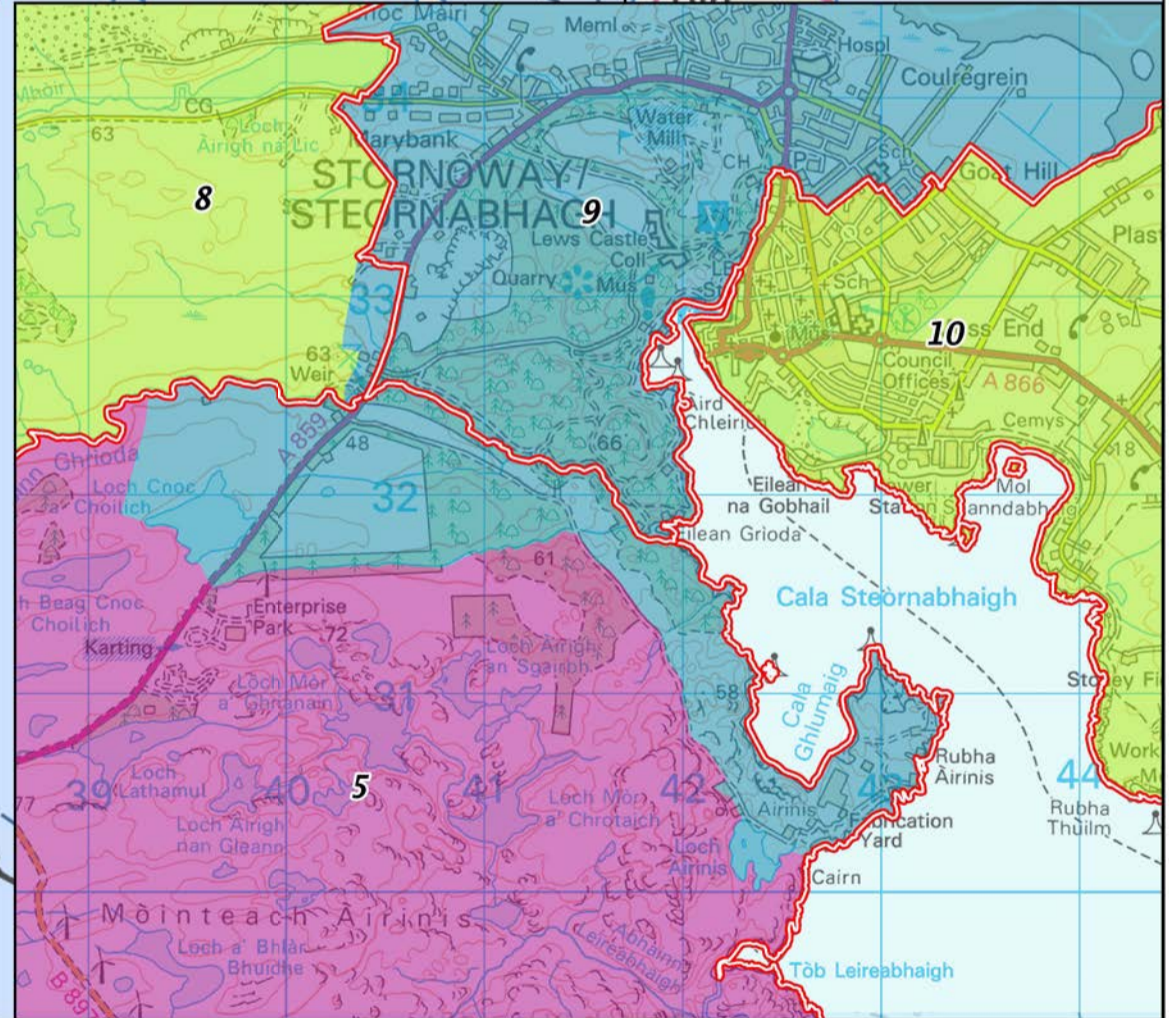
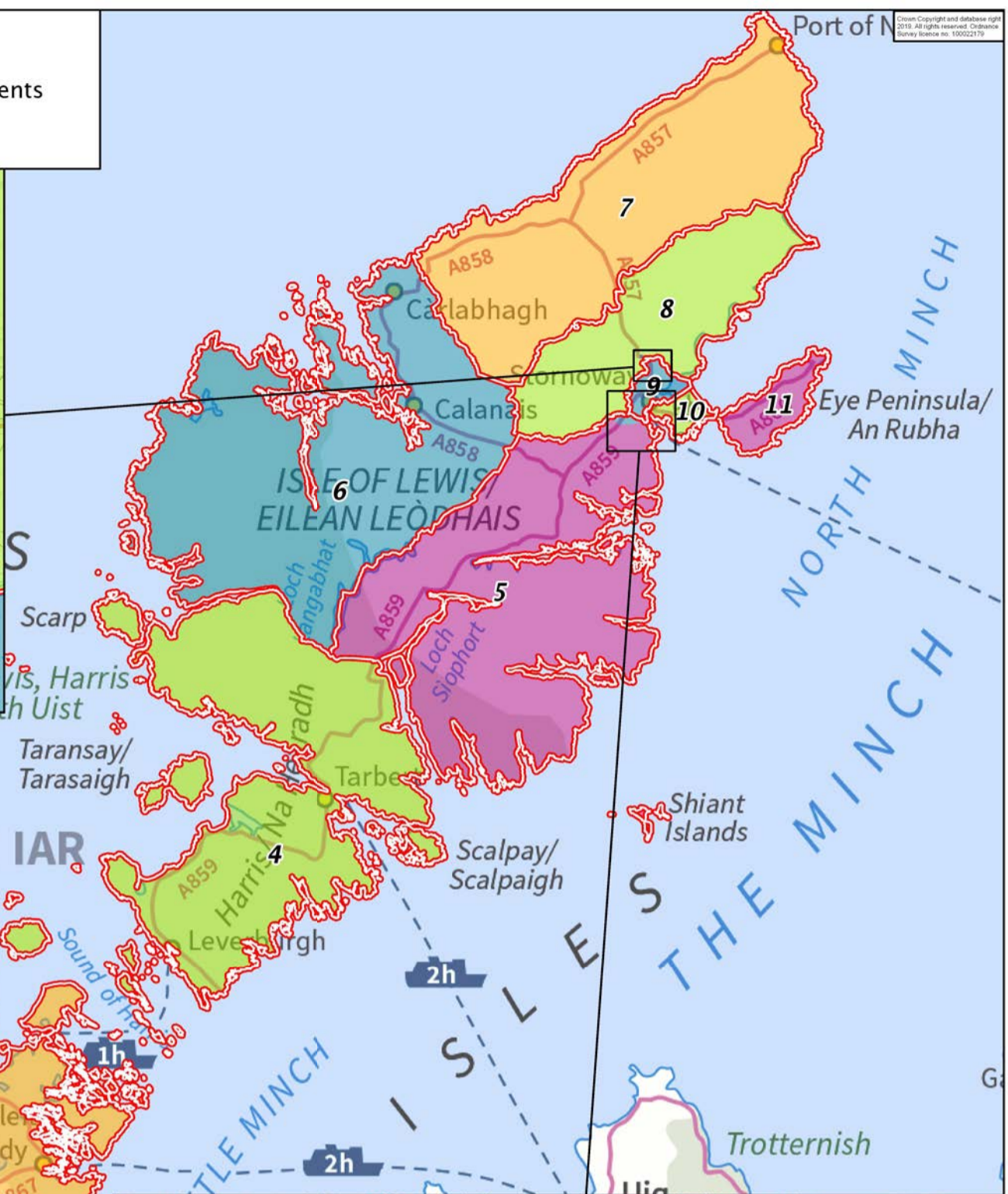
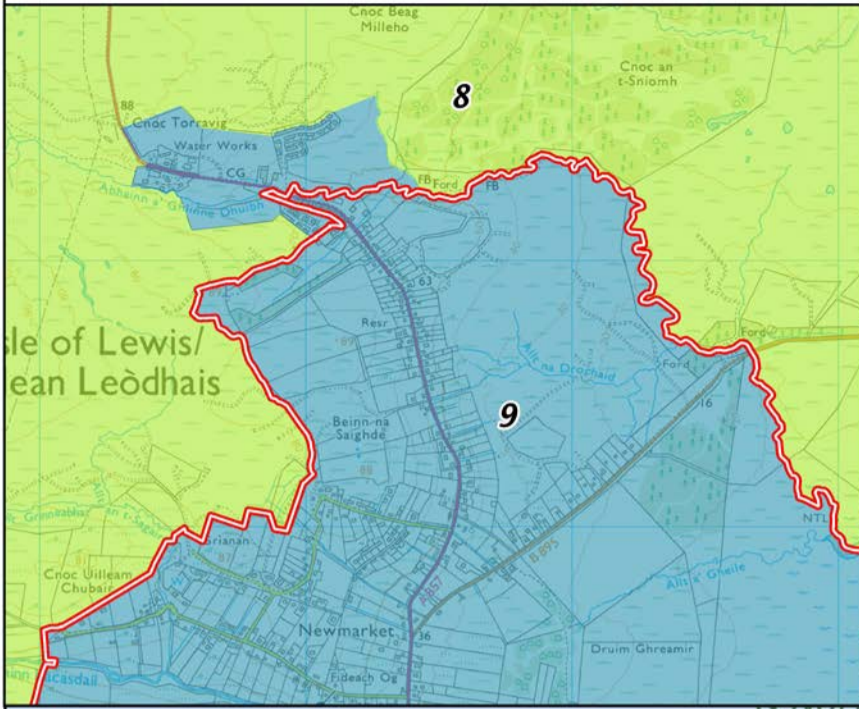
The Comhairle looks forward to continuing discussions with the Commission on the final details of these Wards.

We have adjusted the maps supplied with your letter of 20 March to mark the suggested changes.

Yours sincerely,



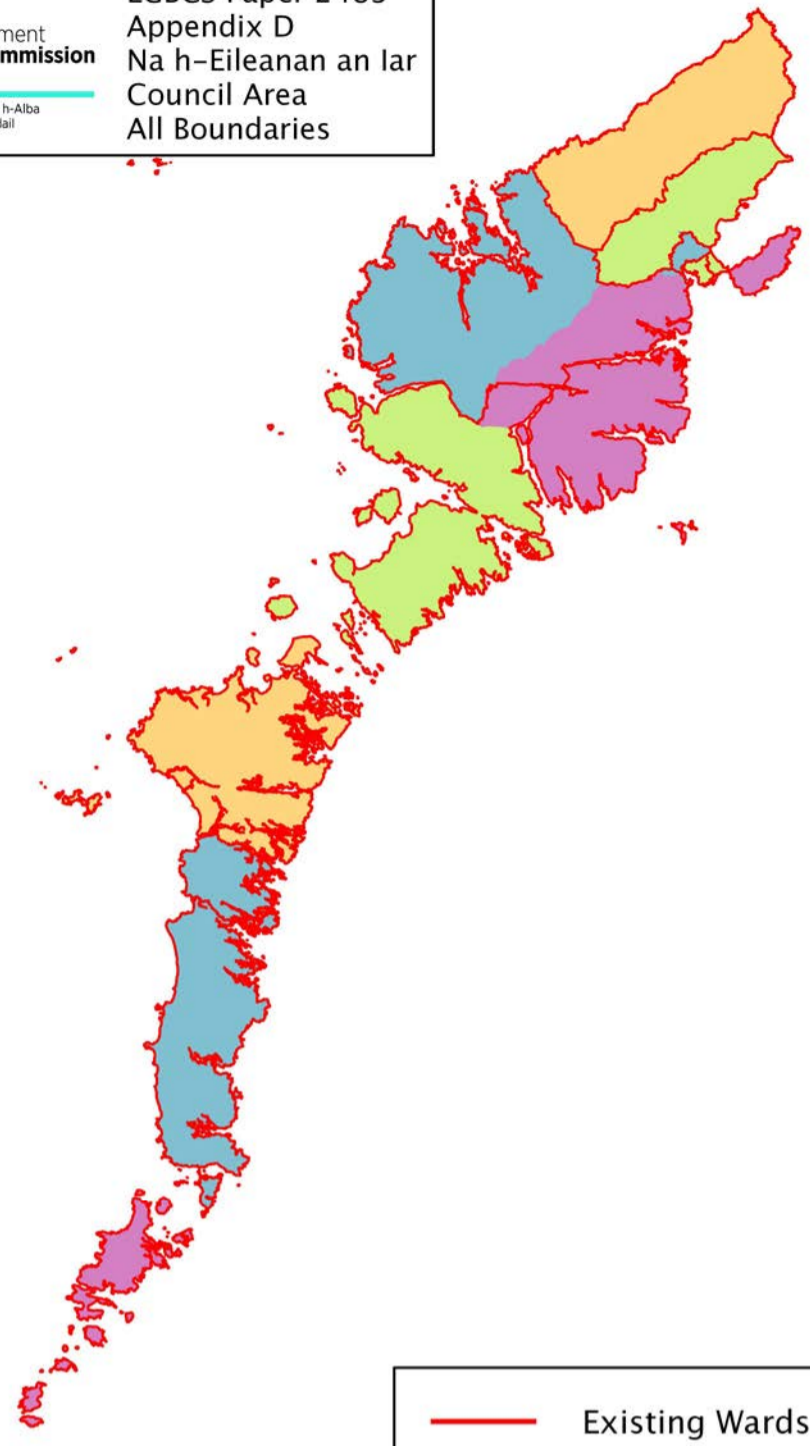
Malcolm Burr  
Chief Executive



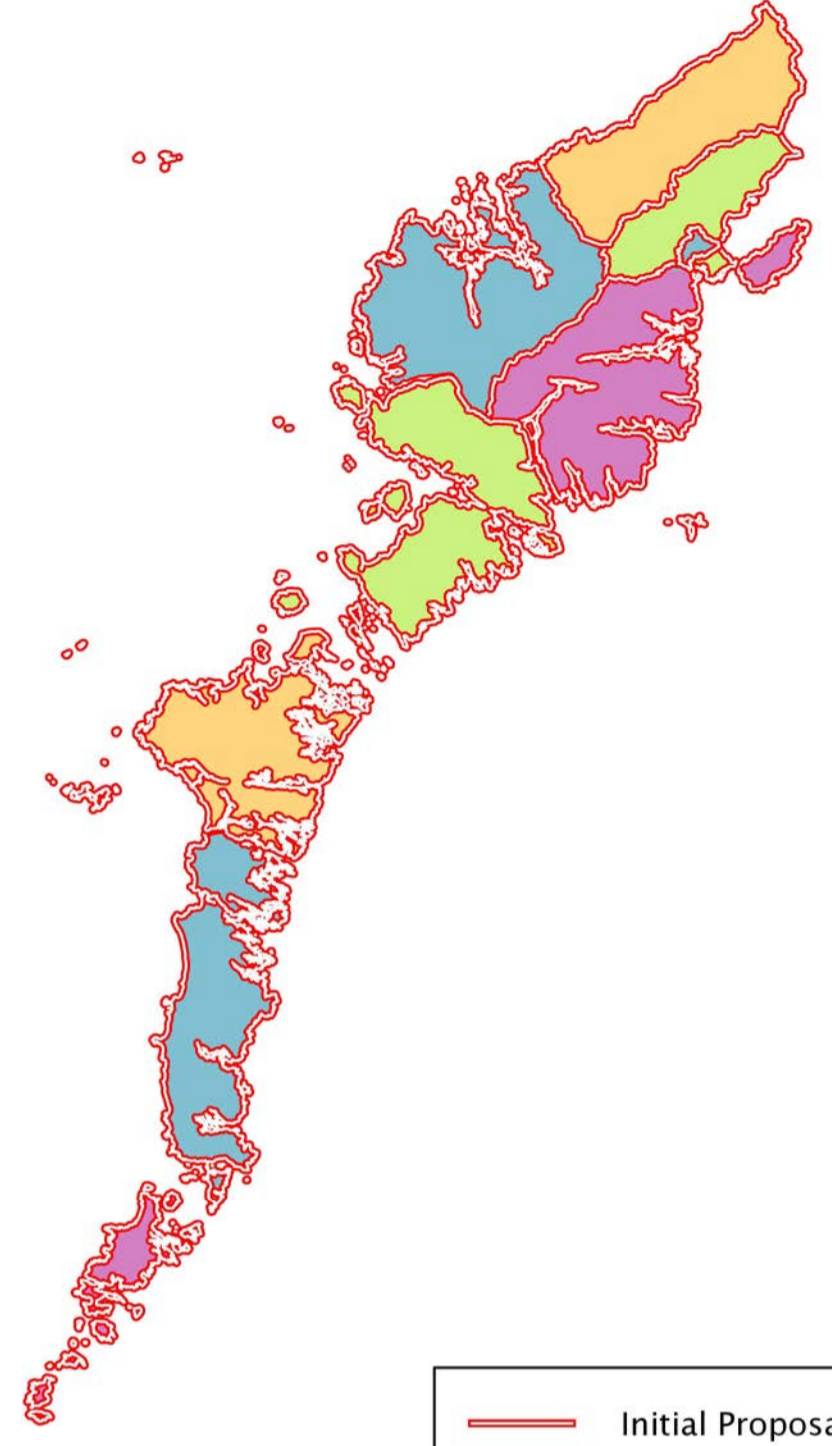
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0 10 miles  
0 10 km

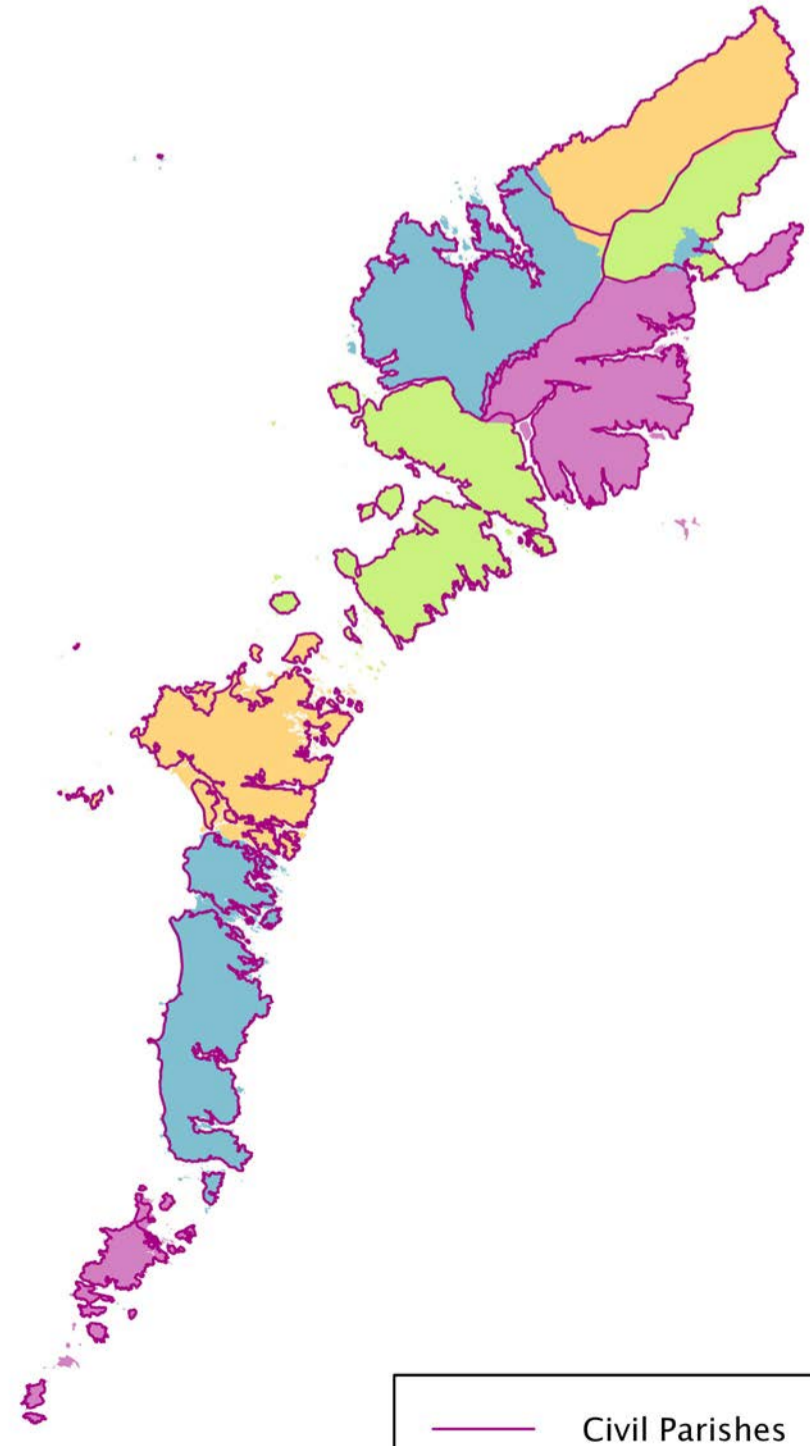
Initial Proposals  
Council's Suggested Ward Boundary



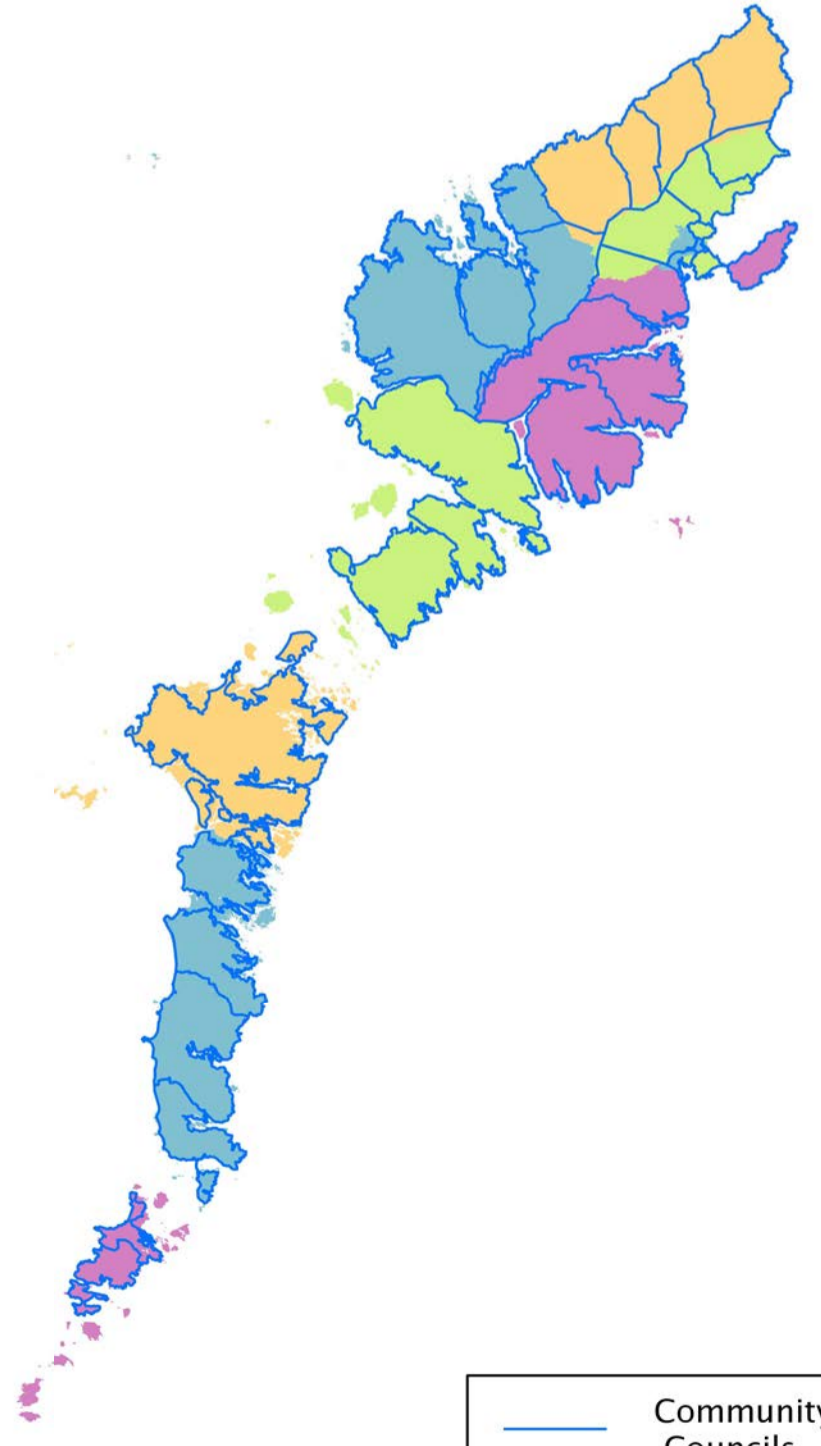
Existing Wards



Initial Proposals



Civil Parishes



Community Councils