

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Public Consultation

Action required

1. The Commission is invited to note the preparations being made for the start of the public consultation of its Initial Proposals and draft materials that will be produced

Background

2. During the public consultation stages of previous electoral reviews the Commission has issued a news release, a public notice for newspapers, made its proposals available at selected Council offices and local libraries and published its proposals on its website.
3. During the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements there was a limited response to the public consultation stages of the reviews, especially in Orkney and Shetland.
4. For the 2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements the Commission agreed, at its 13 February 2019 meeting, to consider various suggestions to improve publicity and engagement with stakeholders during the public consultation stages of the reviews.
5. The Secretariat have been working with APS, who provide design and print services to Scottish Government, to further develop some of these ideas.

Public consultation

Start date

6. The Secretariat proposes conducting the 12 week public consultation from Monday 26 August until 18 November. Monday 26 August is the first week after all schools in the three areas return from their summer holidays.

News Release

7. A news release will be published for the start of the public consultation. It will provide an overview of the reviews but also include a more detailed explanation of the proposals in each area. The news release will be issued to: Councils, Councillors, political parties, Community Councils, MSPs/ MPs and other stakeholders.
8. A draft news release is at Appendix A. The news release will be published through the Scottish Governments Communications Division. The Secretariat hope to issue a Gaelic version and are discussing with the Scottish Government Gaelic team how this might be progressed.

Policy and Procedures Booklet

9. The Policy and Procedures Booklet provides background information to the reviews. The booklet will have a design consistent with other publicity materials. The Commission previously considered the Policy and Procedures Booklet at its meeting of 30 October 2018 and provided some minor comments. The booklet will be sent to key stakeholders and will be available at some display points. To save print costs, people will be encouraged to download the booklet from the Commissions website. A draft of the Policy and Procedures Booklet is at Appendix B.

Newspaper advertisements

10. APS are designing newspaper adverts for the Orcadian (half-page advert), Shetland Times (full-page advert) and Stornoway Gazette (4-page wrap).
11. The newspaper adverts are still in the design stage but a draft advert might be available for the Commission meeting. The newspaper adverts will have a similar design to other publicity materials.

Display Posters

12. APS have designed posters for use at display points. The posters will have a simple message to inform, raise awareness and explain how to engage with the reviews. Some draft poster designs will be available to view at the Commission meeting.
13. During previous reviews the Commission has only made posters available at selected Council offices and local libraries. For this review, a wider range of venues have been identified for use such as: community schools; health centres; ferries/ ferry terminals; and places of worship. The Secretariat will aim to have at least one poster on display within each ward.
14. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar advised it would be welcomed if some posters were produced in Gaelic. The Secretariat are liaising with the Scottish Government Gaelic team to provide a translation. According to the latest Census data, Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area has a far greater number of Gaelic speakers than any other council area. (Percentage of the population by council area who have some skill or understanding of Gaelic: Eilean Siar 61%; Orkney Islands 1%, Shetland Islands 1%).

Local Radio

15. The Secretariat have discussed broadcasting an interview or feature with BBC Radio Orkney and BBC Radio Shetland. The interview can be conducted at the BBC studio in Edinburgh or recorded elsewhere with an audio file emailed to the BBC news team. Both radio stations have a wide audience in their respective areas.
16. The Secretariat have also held initial discussions with the BBC regarding coverage in Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council area. The BBC have proposed sending a Community Politics Reporter from their Glasgow offices to interview the Chair or Deputy Chair.
17. The Secretariat will liaise with the Chair and Deputy Chair to schedule the radio interviews.

Social Media

18. APS are developing an engagement plan for the public consultation to assist with scheduling social media activity. The aim of the engagement plan is to raise awareness at the start and close of the consultation period and address any concerns during the consultations. The engagement plan will be shared with the Commission when available.
19. APS have developed GIFs for use on social media. The GIFs complement other publicity materials such as the posters and may encourage interest from a younger audience. Some draft GIFs will be available to view at the Commission meeting.

20. All three Councils are happy to publicise the Islands Reviews via their social media channels and have suggested targeting community groups on Facebook.

Meeting with Community Councils

21. The Commission will write to community councils to inform them that the public consultation has commenced. It is hoped that contacting community councils will encourage comment on the proposals from local communities.

22. Shetland Islands is the only council area where representatives from all community councils meet. The Association of Community Councils in Shetland are scheduled to meet on 17 September 2019 in Lerwick. The Commission may wish to attend the meeting and consider who wishes to represent it.

Online Consultation

23. During the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements the Commission's online consultation tool provided details of the proposals and accompanying maps and simply asked users to submit comments on its proposals. There were no specific questions relating to particular aspects of ward design. Similarly, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ask for comments during consultations on their electoral reviews.

24. Adopting the same approach an outline of a very simple draft consultation survey is available at Appendix C for comment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

25. An overview of the public consultation activities are shown in the table below.

	Council area		
	Orkney Islands	Shetland Islands	Na h-Eileanan an Iar
News Release	√	√	√*
Display points	√	√	√
Policy and Procedures Booklet	√	√	√
Posters*	√	√	√*
Newspaper advert	√ (half-page)	√ (full-page)	√ (4-page wrap)
Radio interviews	√	√	√
Meet with Community Councils		√	
Social media - Twitter/ Facebook - target local groups	√	√	√
* <i>Gaelic version</i>			

26. The Commission is invited to consider and comment on preparations for the public consultation. In particular it is asked to:

- agree the timing of the public consultation;
- agree the draft News Release;
- offer any final comments on the draft Policies and Procedures booklet;
- comment on the APS draft materials that will be shown at the meeting;
- agree that the Chair or Deputy Chair will undertake radio interviews on or before the start date of the consultation;
- decide if it wishes to seek to attend the Association of Community Councils meeting in Shetland on 17 September;

- agree the approach for the online consultation; and
- note other arrangements and offer comments as necessary.

**Secretariat
July 2019**