

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements Shetland Islands council area

Purpose

1. The Commission is invited to consider responses to the public consultation on its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Shetland Islands council area and whether it wishes to make amendments to the Initial Proposals.

Electoral Arrangements at the start of this review

2. At the start of this review, Shetland Islands council area was represented by 22 Councillors consisting of six 3-member wards and one 4-member ward.
3. The electorates and associated variation from parity for the existing electoral arrangements are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix A.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity %	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity %
1	North Isles	3	2,207	-8.7	2,207	-9.4
2	Shetland North	3	2,504	3.6	2,523	3.5
3	Shetland West	3	2,038	-15.7	2,051	-15.8
4	Shetland Central	3	2,365	-2.2	2,400	-1.5
5	Shetland South	3	2,836	17.3	2,852	17.0
6	Lerwick North	3	2,334	-3.5	2,336	-4.2
7	Lerwick South	4	3,445	6.9	3,504	7.8
		22	17,729		17,873	

Initial Proposals – Consultation with Councils

4. The Commission agreed to adopt its methodology for councillor numbers from its 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for this review. The 5th Reviews' methodology placed Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands council areas in the same category with a ratio of electors per councillor of 800:1.
5. The methodology recommended 22 councillors for Shetland Islands council area ($17,729 \div 800 = 22$) the same as at present.
6. The existing electoral arrangements in Shetland Islands council area offered variation from electoral parity of over 10% in two wards: Shetland West; and Lerwick South.
7. The Initial Proposals presented an electoral arrangement for 23 councillors representing one 1-member ward, two 2-member wards, two 3-member wards and three 4-member wards. The Commission agreed 23 councillors, one more than the methodology proposed, because it enabled better consideration of local ties and improved variation from electoral parity throughout the whole council area. The Initial Proposals:

- addressed variation from parity in existing ward 3 (Shetland West) and ward 5 (Shetland South);
- retained the existing Shetland North and Shetland South ward boundaries;
- adopted recognised boundaries throughout the area – Shetland Localities (used by both the Council and NHS Shetland to deliver local services) and existing wards;
- proposed five wards coterminous with Shetland Localities (North Isles, Whalsay and Skerries, Shetland North, Shetland West and Shetland Central);
- retained local ties near Lerwick by keeping Gulberwick within a Lerwick ward;
- minimised change to the existing ward boundary in Lerwick by following existing and historical ward boundaries;
- renamed the existing Lerwick North ward as Lerwick North and Bressay;
- took account of the Islands (Scotland) Act by using the flexibility offered by 1-member and 2-member wards to better reflect local community ties; and
- considered local ties in the whole council area.

8. The electorates and associated variation from parity for the Initial Proposals – council consultation are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix B.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2017)	Current Variation from Parity %	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity %
1	North Isles	2	1,345	-12.8	1,345	-13.5
2	Whalsay and Skerries	1	862	11.8	862	10.9
3	Shetland North	3	2,504	8.3	2,523	8.2
4	Shetland West	2	1,373	-10.9	1,374	-11.6
5	Shetland Central	4	3,030	-1.7	3,077	-1.0
6	Lerwick North and Bressay	3	2,424	4.8	2,426	4.1
7	Lerwick South	4	3,355	8.8	3,414	9.8
8	Shetland South	4	2,836	-8.0	2,852	-8.2
		23	17,729		17,873	

9. The Commission consulted on its Initial Proposals with Shetland Islands Council for a 2-month period from 20 March to 20 May 2019.

Initial Proposals – Public Consultation

10. The Commission considered the response received on its Initial Proposals from Shetland Islands Council at its meeting of 17 June 2019.

11. In their response to the consultation, Shetland Islands Council asked the Commission to collaborate with them in developing a ward design that retained a 3-member and 4-member ward in Lerwick but proposed a further eight 2-member wards throughout the area. The Council believed that their suggested ward design would improve representation in rural areas and avoid a single-member ward which they thought would be challenging for an individual to fully represent the electorate. The Council also advised that if the Commission adopted their suggestion they would revise their community council area boundaries to align with the new ward boundaries.

12. When discussing Paper 2482 at its 17 June 2019 meeting the Commission noted that the Council's suggestions sought to preserve local ties. However, it

considered that the possible advantages of a pattern of 2 members per ward with respect to effective and convenient local government and rural representation, did not justify the variations from electoral parity which would be necessary to accommodate this suggestion whilst also preserving local ties. For example it proposed a Levenwick, Dunrossness and Fair Isle ward with variation from parity of nearly -20% and a Whiteness, Weisdale and Tingwall ward with variation from parity of -17%.

13. In summary, the Commission agreed ward designs for public consultation similar to its Initial Proposals, the only difference being that it took account of the Council's suggestion to merge the 3-member Shetland North ward with the 1-member Whalsay and Skerries ward to create 2 2-member wards.
14. The Initial Proposals decided on by the Commission for public consultation presented an electoral arrangement for 23 councillors representing four 2-member wards, one 3-member ward and three 4-member wards. The proposals:
- addressed the imbalance in number of electors per councillor in two of the existing wards, Shetland West and Shetland South. This was achieved by adjusting ward boundaries and increasing the overall number of councillors in the whole council area from 22 to 23. The Commission also increased the total number of wards from seven to eight.
 - retained the existing Shetland South ward boundary but increased the number of councillors to represent this ward from 3 to 4.
 - made a minor change to the boundary between the two Lerwick wards. The existing Lerwick North ward was renamed Lerwick North and Bressay.
 - the existing North Isles ward was reduced in size. The islands of Yell, Unst and Fetlar remained together within a ward named North Isles but the islands of Whalsay and Skerries were linked with the mainland and the communities of Lunnasting, Vidlin, Nesting and Voe, to create a Shetland North East ward.
 - the Shetland North ward comprised communities in the north of the mainland including Brae, Hillswick, Mossbank and North Roe.
 - the Shetland West ward included the communities of Aithsting, Sandness, Walls and the island communities of Foula and Papa Stour.
 - the Shetland Central ward includes the communities of Burra, Trondra, Scalloway, Tingwall, Weisdale and Whiteness.
15. The electorates and associated variation from parity for the Initial Proposals – Public Consultation are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix C.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2017)	Current Variation from Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity (%)
1	North Isles	2	1,345	-12.8	1,345	-13.5
2	Shetland North	2	1,699	10.2	1,717	10.5
3	Shetland North East, Whalsay and Skerries	2	1,667	8.1	1,669	7.4
4	Shetland West	2	1,373	-10.9	1,373	-11.7
5	Shetland Central	4	3,030	-1.7	3,077	-1.0
6	Lerwick North and Bressay	3	2,424	4.8	2,426	4.1
7	Lerwick South	4	3,355	8.8	3,414	9.8
8	Shetland South	4	2,836	-8.0	2,852	-8.2
		23	17,729		17,873	

16. The Commission's public consultation on its Initial Proposals with Shetland Islands Council area ran for a 12-week period from 10 September to 2 December 2019.
17. During the public consultation the Commission: issued a news release; placed a single page advertisement on the back page of the Shetland Times; placed posters and further information regarding the review in over 50 display points (such as airport terminals, schools, council offices, libraries, health centres and places of worship); and paid for social media advertising. The materials encouraged those interested to respond to the consultation via the Commission's consultation site. The Commission also met the Association of Shetland Community Councils in Lerwick.

Responses to Initial Proposals – Public Consultation

18. Thirty-six responses were received during the public consultation (see Annex for responses submitted via the consultation site). Responses submitted by email or post have been printed for information as well. All responses will be available on the Commission's website or consultation site at a later date, if permission was granted for publication.
19. The Commission received 32 responses via its consultation site and four email or postal responses.
20. There was broadly equal support and opposition to the proposed number of councillors. The arguments in support are explained later. The main argument opposing the proposed number of councillors was there were sufficient councillors for the small population of Shetland.
21. Only a third of respondents supported the proposed ward boundaries. The main reasons were that the proposed ward boundaries recognise the geography of the area and a preference for smaller wards – making it easier to contact elected members.
22. The main issues raised in opposing the proposed ward boundaries included: breaking local ties in the proposed Shetland North and Shetland West wards; opposition to an island-mainland (Shetland North East, Whalsay and Skerries) ward; and suggestions to place Gulberwick within a Shetland South ward.
23. Shetland Islands Council (SIC36) supported the proposed number of councillors and made an alternative ward boundary suggestion. Shetland Islands Council believed their suggestion better reflected the views of local communities after discussing the Commission's proposals with community councils. They wished to:
- retain the existing three-member North Isles ward which includes the islands of Yell, Unst and Fetlar in the north with Whalsay and Bruray;
 - retain the existing Shetland North ward to avoid breaking local community ties by Voe;
 - propose a four-member Shetland South ward that includes Gulberwick due to the increasing population within the area. However they only wish the Commission to consider this if Gulberwick, Quarff and Cunningsburgh community council made a similar suggestion;
 - retain the existing Lerwick South and Lerwick North ward boundaries;

- adopt the Commission's proposals to rename the Lerwick North ward as Lerwick North and Bressay; and
- accept the proposed Shetland West and Shetland Central ward boundaries. The Council had some concerns about the boundary between these two wards but they could not provide an acceptable alternative solution to the variation from electoral parity in the existing Shetland West ward.

24. Shetland Islands Council also suggested that if the Commission agreed to adopt its alternative ward boundary suggestion, the Commission could undertake a further period of consultation before making its final recommendations.

25. The electorates and associated variation from parity for the Shetland Islands Council suggestion are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix D.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2017)	Current Variation from Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity (%)
1	North Isles	3	2,207	-4.6	2,207	-5.3
2	Shetland North	3	2,504	8.3	2,523	8.2
4	Shetland West	2	1,373	-10.9	1,373	-11.7
5	Shetland Central	4	3,030	-1.7	3,078	-1.0
6	Lerwick North and Bressay	3	2,334	0.9	2,336	0.2
7	Lerwick South	4	3,174	2.9	3,208	3.2
8	Shetland South	4	3,107	0.8	3,148	1.3
		23	17,729		17,873	

Consideration of Representations – Councillor Numbers

26. The comments supporting the proposed increase in councillor numbers included:

- the proposals reflect the number of wards and the number required for the Council to function (SIC2);
- new councillors may offer new ideas (SIC7, SIC9);
- preference for an increase rather than a reduction in councillor numbers (SIC14);
- desire for a councillor to represent Whalsay and Skerries (SIC15);
- better access to councillors for local residents (SIC25);
- increasing the number of councillors will not have an adverse affect (SIC28);
- more shared responsibility for councillor workload (SIC23, SIC29);
- Lerwick Community Council support the proposals but there was some disagreement about this within the community council (SIC27); and
- six responses supported the proposed number of councillors but made no comment to support their response (SIC3, SIC6, SIC8, SIC19, SIC21, SIC26).

27. Three responses opposed the proposed number of councillors but made no comment to support their response (SIC10, SIC12, SIC16).

28. Fifteen members of the public opposed the proposed increase in councillor numbers. The issues raised included:

- concern with under-representation in the west of Shetland (SIC1, SIC34, SIC35);
- difficulty in attracting potential candidates (SIC4);
- concern with the cost of an additional councillor or there are too many councillors at present or desire to reduce the number (SIC5, SIC13, SIC18, SIC20, SIC22, SIC24, SIC30, SIC31);
- concern that island communities will be further under-represented (SIC17); and
- concern with under-representation in Shetland North (SIC32, SIC33).

Consideration of Representations – Ward Boundaries

29. Five responses supported the proposed ward boundaries but made no comment to support their response (SIC3, SIC16, SIC19, SIC21, SIC29).

30. The comments supporting the proposed ward boundaries included:

- the proposals reflect the geography of the area (SIC2, SIC25);
- easier for a councillor to represent Whalsay within the proposed Shetland North East, Whalsay and Skerries ward (SIC8);
- better representation for Nesting (an area west of Whalsay on the mainland) and Whalsay (SIC11); and
- preference for smaller wards (SIC23).

31. Two responses opposed the proposed ward boundaries but made no additional comment in support (SIC10, SIC17).

32. A member of the public (SIC22) sought no change to the existing ward boundaries.

33. The alternative suggestions to the proposed ward boundaries are discussed below.

Shetland South/ Gulberwick

34. The Commission's public consultation proposals retained the existing Lerwick South and Shetland South ward boundaries, keeping Gulberwick within a Lerwick South ward.

35. Gulberwick is situated approximately 2 miles south of Lerwick and contains about 300 electors.

36. Sandwick Community Council (SIC26) supported an additional councillor for the proposed Shetland South ward. They believed Gulberwick is part of the south mainland because Gulberwick participates in local community events in south mainland.

37. Lerwick Community Council (SIC27) also suggested placing Gulberwick within the proposed Shetland South ward because it would improve variation from electoral parity in the area due to new housing developments expected in Lerwick.

38. Shetland Islands Council suggested a Shetland South ward that included Gulberwick but only if the Gulberwick, Quarff and Cunningsburgh community council also supported this suggestion.

39. Gulberwick, Quarff and Cunningsburgh community council did not respond during the public consultation but at their meeting of 1st October 2019 the minute of that meeting mentions the review. It states “members agreed that the plans seem very sensible and that they seem to be doing their best to accommodate all who are involved.” Therefore it can be assumed that Gulberwick, Quarff and Cunningsburgh community council are content with the existing ward boundary and keeping Gilberwick within a Lerwick South ward.
40. The Commission’s previous electoral reviews at different times have placed Gulberwick within and out-with a Lerwick ward. The Commission’s 3rd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements recommended an Upper Sound, Gulberwick and Quarff ward. This ward included the southern part of Lerwick, Gulberwick and extended southwards to include Easter Quarff and Wester Quarff. The Commission’s 2nd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements placed Gulberwick within a Gulberwick, Quarff and Cunningsburgh ward. The ward boundary extended from the south of Lerwick to north of Sandwick.
41. The Commission could place Gulberwick within either a Shetland South ward or Lerwick South ward. Earlier in the review the Commission considered a ward design based on Shetland Localities, which placed Gulberwick within a Shetland South ward, but after discussion with Shetland Council the Commission retained the existing Shetland South ward boundary. The locality boundary also follows the community council area boundary to the north of Gulberwick.

Shetland North

42. Northmaven Community Council (SIC32 and SIC33) opposed the proposed ward boundaries in Shetland North because they reduce representation within the area. They suggested merging the proposed Shetland North and Shetland North East, Whalsay and Skerries ward to create a 5-member Shetland North ward or a 3-member Shetland North ward (including Voe) and a 2-member Shetland North East, Whalsay and Skerries ward.
43. The suggested Shetland North ward (including Voe) would have an electorate of approximately 2,000 electors and the suggested Shetland North East, Whalsay and Skerries ward an electorate of approximately 1,400. This suggestion would increase the overall number of councillors to 24. There have been no other suggestions to increase councillor numbers in Shetland North or overall within the council area.
44. Delting Community Council (SIC28) opposed the ward boundary proposals because they split Voe from the parish of Delting, breaking local community ties within the parish.
45. The Delting Community Council and Delting Parish follow similar boundaries. Both extend from Sullom Voe oil terminal to just south of Voe and from Muckle Roe to just east of the A968 road. The Commission’s proposals split the Delting parish boundary and community council area in half. Historically, the Commission’s 3rd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements placed both Voe and Brae within a Delting West ward. The Commission’s 2nd Reviews placed Voe and Brae in separate wards (Delting West and Delting East).
46. A member of the public opposed the proposed Shetland North ward because it breaks social, cultural and community ties between Voe and Brae (SIC30). A

member of the public (SIC4) opposed the proposed ward boundaries in Shetland North but offered no explanation.

47. The Commission could consider adopting the Shetland Islands Council suggestion which retains the existing Shetland North ward thus avoiding the breaking of local community ties by Delting and Voe. The existing three-member Shetland North ward contains 2,504 electors.

Shetland West

48. Sandsting and Aithsting Community Council (SIC35) and Sandness and Walls Community Council (SIC34) both opposed a reduction in councillor numbers in Shetland West. They believed that a reduction in councillor numbers in this area would diminish their influence at Shetland Council committee meetings.

49. Sandness and Walls Community Council further noted:

- that the existing ward boundary is recognised and they saw no advantage in changing it;
- the Commission could consider special geographical circumstances and a wide variation from electoral parity in Shetland West because the area includes the inhabited islands of Foula, Papa Stour and Vaila;
- they have a preference for 3 and 4-member wards to put across views at Council meetings; and
- their concern that the southern wards are better represented than the more rural, less populated northern and western wards.

50. Shetland Islands Council recognised that there is some opposition to the Commission's proposals in Shetland West but they could not offer a suitable alternative ward boundary that addressed variation from electoral parity in this area.

51. The proposed Shetland West ward boundary follows recognised boundaries: a parish; locality; and community council area boundary. The proposed boundary also follows an easily identifiable boundary, the watershed to the west of Weisdale.

52. The existing Shetland West ward, which includes Weisdale, offers variation from electoral parity of nearly -16%.

North Isles (Yell, Unst, Fetlar and Whalsay, Skerries)

53. Two members of the public (SIC7, SIC12) opposed the division of the existing North Isles ward. They believed the current councillors work well together in representing the existing North Isles ward.

54. Two members of the public (SIC9, SIC14) advised that the North Isle islands have common issues and little in common with the mainland.

55. A member of the public stated the proposed Shetland North East, Whalsay and Skerries ward is too large and suggested a single-member Whalsay and Skerries ward (SIC15).

56. The Commission consulted on a single-member Whalsay and Skerries ward during its consultation with the council. In their response Shetland Islands

Council raised concerns with how effectively one councillor could manage their Council functions.

57. Historically none of the these islands has been placed within an island-mainland ward.

58. There are no direct ferry links between Yell, Unst and Fetlar, and Whalsay and Skerries.

59. Shetland Islands Council wish to retain the existing North Isles ward boundary which includes Yell, Unst, Fetlar, Whalsay and Skerries.

Lerwick

60. A member of the public (SIC13) suggested placing Lerwick within a single ward.

61. There are just over 5,000 electors within Lerwick, too many for a single Lerwick ward.

Ward Names

62. Shetland Islands Council supported the proposed Lerwick North and Bressay ward name.

63. No alternative ward names were suggested during the public consultation.

Conclusion

64. During the public consultation there was no overwhelming opposition or support for the proposals in any single area.

65. The Commission received a balanced response in both support and opposition to its proposed number of councillors. The proposals increased the number of councillors by one, with Shetland South becoming a four-member ward.

66. Comments on the proposed ward boundaries focused on four main areas: Gulberwick/ Shetland South; Shetland North; Shetland West; and the North Isles.

Gulberwick/ Shetland South

67. Two Community Councils, to the north and south of Gulberwick, as well as Shetland Islands Council suggested placing Gulberwick within a Shetland South ward. Although Gulberwick, Quarff and Cunningsburgh Community Council did not respond to the consultation, a minute of their meeting states they are content with the existing ward boundary. The Commission could place Gulberwick within either a Lerwick South or Shetland South ward.

Shetland North

68. In Shetland North, a Community Council and two members of the public oppose the Commission's proposals because they split local community ties by Voe. Another Community Council has raised concerns with the high level of under-representation in the proposed Shetland North ward. Shetland Islands Council have suggested retaining the existing Shetland North ward boundary which would avoid the division of Voe and offer less variation from electoral parity than the proposals.

Shetland West

69. The two community councils within the proposed Shetland West ward both oppose the proposals. They wished to retain the existing three-member Shetland West ward and have asked the Commission to consider special geographical circumstances because the ward includes the populated islands of Foula, Papa Stour and Vaila. The proposed Shetland West ward offers a more recognisable ward boundary than the existing ward boundary. The proposed ward boundary follows a community council area, parish and locality boundary as well as the watershed. Shetland Islands Council acknowledged the opposition to the proposed Shetland West ward but it could not suggest another recognisable ward boundary which addressed variation from electoral parity in the Shetland West.

North Isles

70. Four members of the public and Shetland Islands Council opposed the proposals which split the existing North Isles ward. They believed the North Isle islands have common issues and should remain within the same ward and not be linked with mainland communities. Although there are no direct links between the North Isle islands, island communities face common issues such as transport links and access to services.

Shetland Islands Council suggestion

71. Shetland Islands Council made an alternative suggestion which addresses a number of issues raised during the public consultation. Their suggestion: considers retaining an existing ward boundary to avoid the breaking of local community ties by Voe; keeps Yell, Unst, Fetlar, Whalsay and Skerries within a North Isles ward; recognises the challenges in Shetland West of addressing electoral parity while designing an acceptable boundary; and considers amending the ward boundary by Gulberwick if there is sufficient support.

72. Shetland Islands Council also suggested a period of further consultation before the Commission agrees its final recommendations. There is no legislative requirement for the Commission to undertake further consultation and no imminent deadline for the Commission to submit its recommendations. The Commission may wish to consider further consultation if it places Gulberwick within a Shetland South or suggests alternative ward boundaries elsewhere.

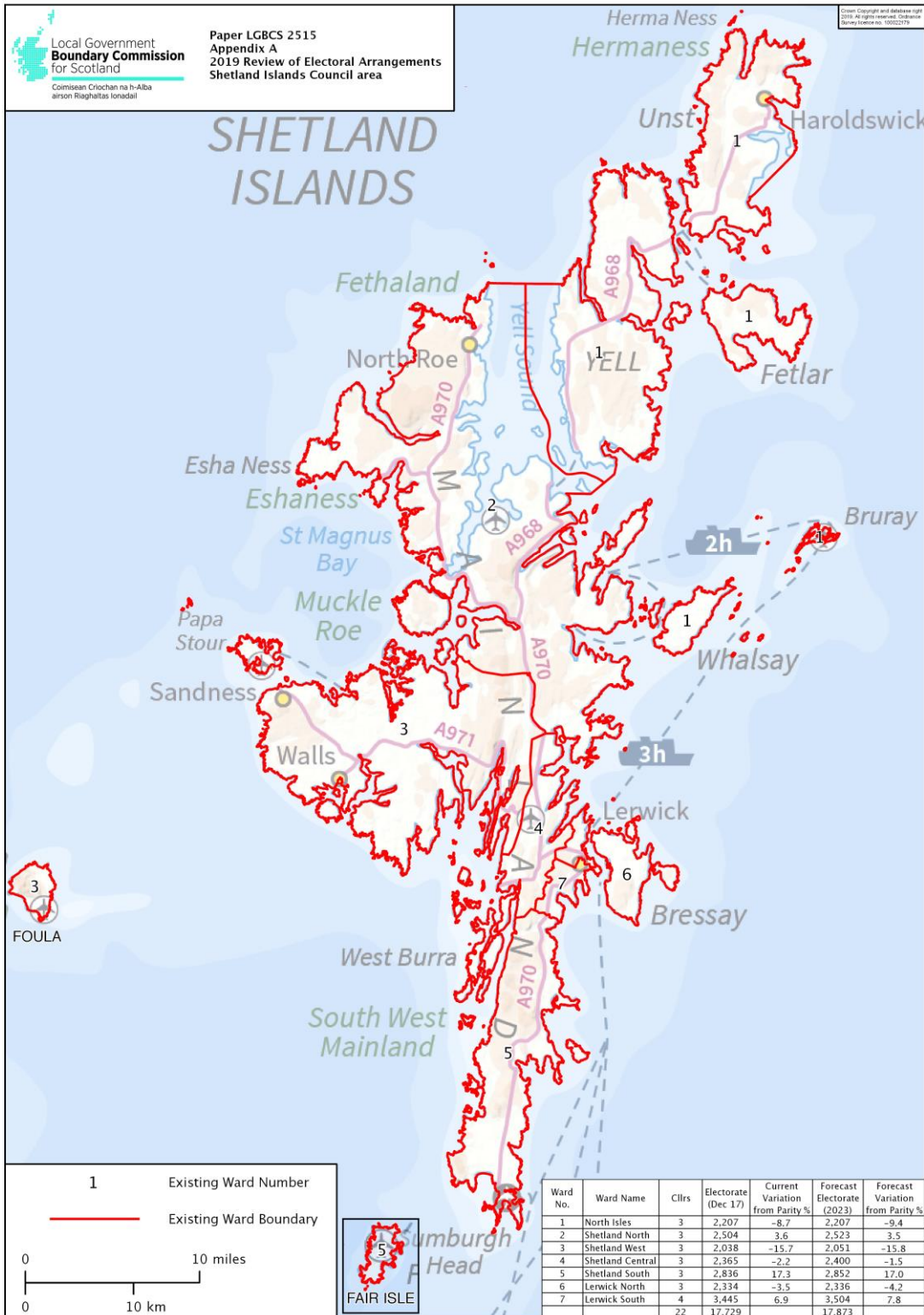
Recommendations

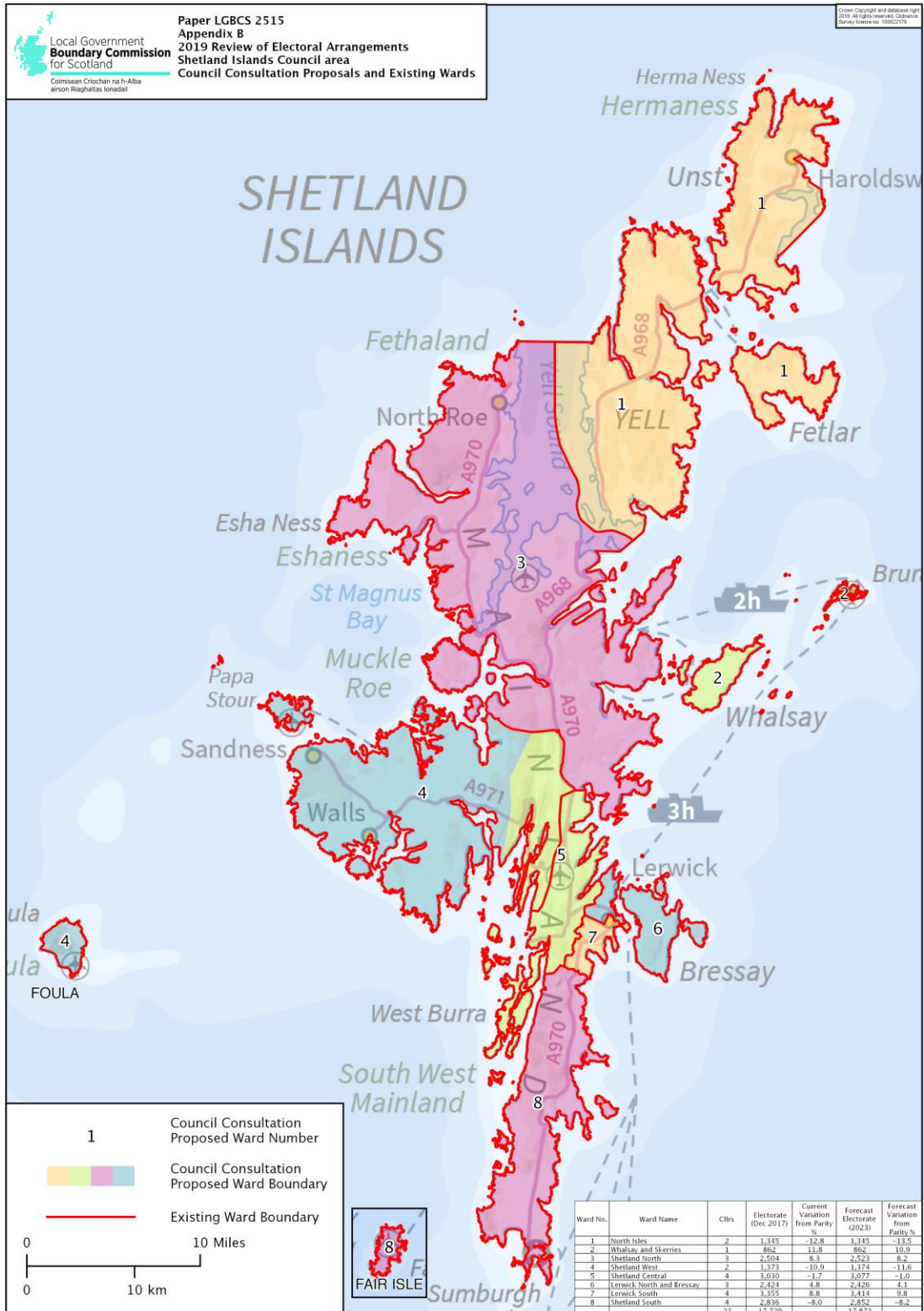
73. Taking into account all of the evidence arising from the public consultation, the Secretariat invites the Commission to decide for Shetland Islands Council area whether to:

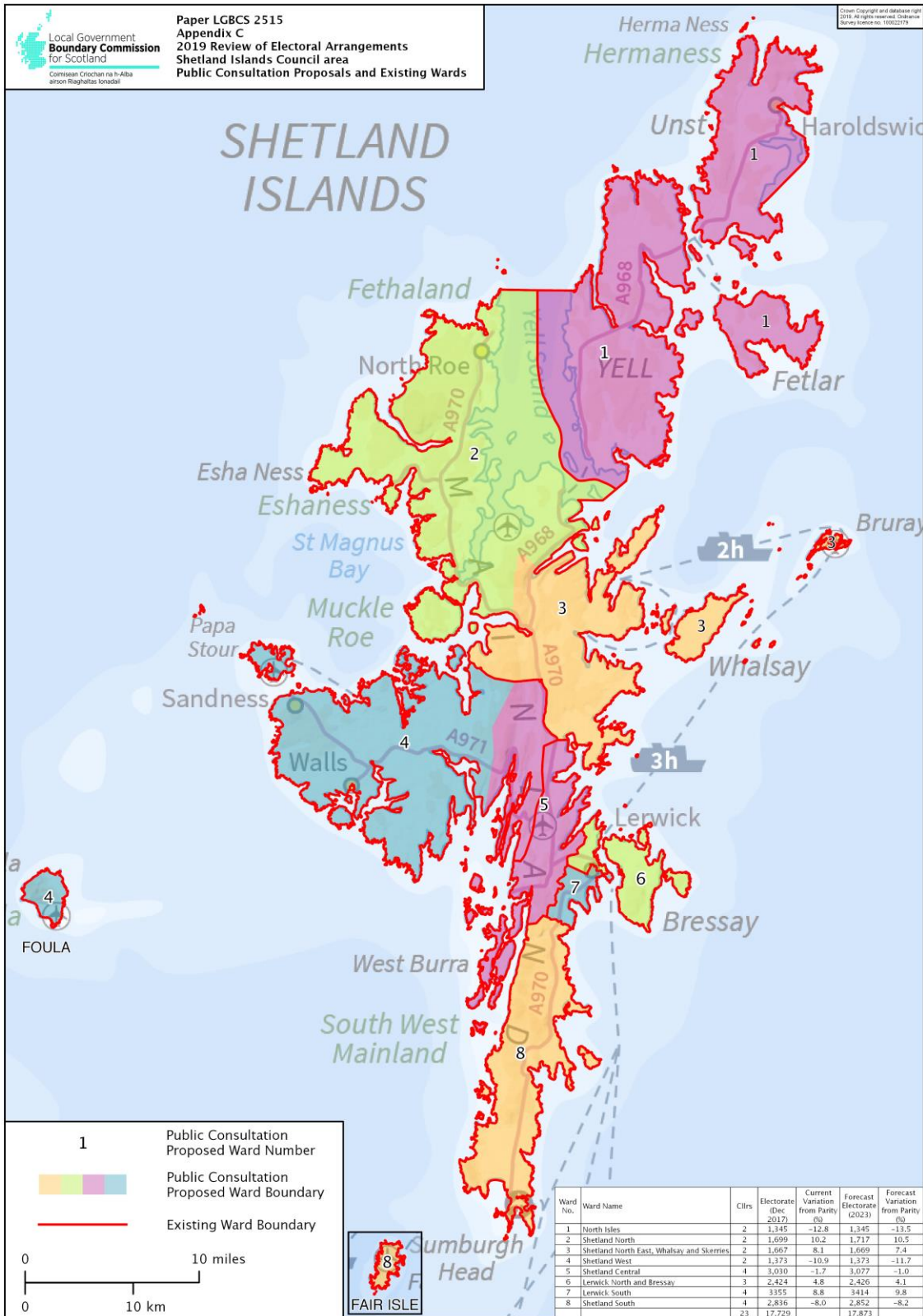
- adopt without amendment the Initial Proposals as its Final Recommendations, (see Appendix C); or
- adopt the alternative suggestion from Shetland Islands Council, (see Appendix D);
- if amendments are made whether to consult on revised proposals; and
- to amend or retain its proposed ward names.

Secretariat
January 2020

Appendix A







Appendix D

