

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements Orkney Islands council area

Purpose

1. Following discussion of Paper LGBCS 2509 at its meeting of 10 December 2019, the Commission is invited to consider responses to the public consultation on its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Orkney 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, Orkney Islands council area was represented by 21 councillors in three 3-member wards and three 4-member wards.
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)	Variation from parity %	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast variation from parity %
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,416	5.3	3,422	5.8
2	Kirkwall West and Orphir	4	3,454	6.4	3,492	7.9
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	2,702	11.0	2,670	10.0
6	North Isles	3	1,798	-26.1	1,771	-27.0
		21	17,038		16,988	

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 21 councillors for Orkney Islands council area ($17,038 \div 800 = 21$) the same as at present.
6. 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.
7. The Initial Proposals presented an electoral arrangement which maintained 21 councillors representing three 3-member wards and three 4-member wards. They:
 - 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 and which place Kirkwall airport within a Kirkwall ward.

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 17)	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 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	

9. The Commission consulted on its Initial Proposals with Orkney 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 Orkney Islands Council at its meeting of 17 June 2019.

11. The Commission noted that the Council were mainly content with the wards to which no change was proposed.

12. The Commission agreed to adopt the Council's suggested amendment to its Initial Proposals for wards 1 and 2 in Kirkwall. The Commission agreed that using Bridge Street as a boundary between the wards by the harbour area in Kirkwall, would provide for a more easily identifiable boundary between those wards, with only a minor change to electoral parity compared to its Initial Proposals.

13. The Commission accepted the Council's view that the Commission's proposed boundary which placed Sandwick in ward 3 (Stromness, Sandwick and South Isles) would break local ties in the West Mainland area, around the village of Dounby, and agreed to retain the existing ward boundary between wards 3 and 4 and retain the existing ward names. The Commission considered the variation from electoral parity in ward 3 acceptable due to the special geographic circumstances of the ward, which contained inhabited island communities.

14. The Initial Proposals decided on by the Commission for public consultation presented an electoral arrangement with no changes to the existing number of councillors, number of wards or ward names. The proposals:

- minimised change to the existing ward boundaries. They retained three existing ward boundaries: North Isles; Stromness and South Isles; and West Mainland;
- only made changes to ward boundaries by Kirkwall. The boundary between the two Kirkwall wards is amended by Kirkwall harbour to create a more easily identifiable ward boundary;
- extended the Kirkwall East ward boundary southwards to better reflect local ties. It places Kirkwall airport within a Kirkwall ward; and
- retained the existing North Isles ward with a wide variation from electoral parity to better reflect local communities and the special geographical circumstances in the ward due to it comprising of rural, sparsely populated islands with limited transport links.

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 17)	Variation from parity %	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast variation from parity %
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,661	12.8	3,644	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	2,670	2.6
6	North Isles	3	1,798	-26.1	1,771	-27.0
		21	17,038		16,988	

16. The Commission's public consultation on its Initial Proposals for Orkney 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 half page newspaper advertisement in The Orcadian; placed posters and further information regarding the review in over 60 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.

Responses to Initial Proposals – Public Consultation

18. Twenty-nine responses were received during the public consultation (see Annex for responses submitted via the consultation site). Responses submitted by email and 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 28 responses via its consultation site, and one by email from Orkney Islands Council.

20. Orkney Islands Council supported the Commission's proposals (OIC29).

21. Over half of the responses supported maintaining the current number of councillors because they felt there are sufficient councillors to cover the council area. A third of responses opposed maintaining the current number of councillors. The issues raised included a desire to further reduce councillor numbers to save costs or improve efficiency or service.
22. Responses supporting the proposed ward boundaries advised the proposals minimise change and the existing ward boundaries consider local communities. 12 members of the public opposed the proposed ward boundaries, with some responses making alternative suggestions such as further representation in the proposed North Isles ward.

Consideration of Representations – Councillor Numbers

23. About a half of the responses supported retaining the current number of councillors (OIC 2, OIC 4, OIC 6, OIC 7, OIC 8, OIC 10, OIC 14, OIC 16, OIC 23, OIC 24, OIC 26, OIC 27, OIC 29).
24. Ten responses opposed maintaining the current number of councillors because they wish to further reduce councillor numbers to save costs or improve efficiency or service (OIC 9, OIC 11, OIC 12, OIC 13, OIC 15, OIC 17, OIC 18, OIC 19, OIC 21, OIC 22).
25. The number of councillors has remained unchanged since the Commission's 3rd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements. The 3rd Reviews methodology applied a ratio of 750 electors per councillor for Orkney islands council area based on an electorate of 15,581 (1996 electorate data).
26. A number of responses made specific suggestions concerning the level of representation in the North Isles in particular. These suggestions either increased the overall number of councillors or increased councillors across the North Isles with reductions elsewhere in the council area. These suggestions are considered further below.

Additional representation in North Isles ward

27. Five responses wished greater representation in the proposed North Isles ward.
28. One member of the public suggested a 4-member North Isles ward due to the additional travel time to cover the area (OIC 5).
29. A 4-member North Isles ward would offer variation from electoral parity of over -42% (based on a total of 22 councillors) and worsens variation from electoral parity in all other wards except the proposed Stromness and South Isles ward. The Commission retained the existing North Isles ward with wide variation from electoral parity (-27%) to reflect the special geographical circumstances in the ward with limited transport links.
30. Two members of the public supported the overall number of councillors but suggested reducing representation in the proposed Kirkwall East ward and increasing representation in the proposed North Isles ward (OIC 1, OIC 20).
31. The suggestion to create a 3-member Kirkwall East ward and 4-member North Isles ward offers variation from electoral parity of +50% in the Kirkwall East ward

and -45% in the proposed North Isles ward. The Commission could consider addressing variation from parity in Kirkwall by amending the Kirkwall ward boundary; this could create two Kirkwall wards with variation from parity of approximately +25%.

32. One member of the public advised the proposed North Isles ward is under-represented. They suggested a 2-member Westray, Papa Westray and Rousay ward; 2-member Sanday, Stronsay and North Ronaldsay ward; and a single-member Eday and Shapinsay ward (OIC 28).
33. This suggestion would propose a total of 23 councillors and variation from electoral parity in each of the three suggested North Isles wards would be approximately -50%. This suggestion would also worsen variation from electoral parity in all other wards, except Stromness and South Isles.
34. One member of the public suggested that at least a third or half of all councillors should represent the North Isles. They believed the North Isles are under-represented due to the poor transport links between the islands. 7 councillors (third) representing the North Isles in two wards would result in variation from electoral parity of nearly -70% in each ward. 10 councillors (half) representing the North Isles in three wards would result in variation from electoral parity of nearly -80% (OIC 27).
35. None of the suggestions offer improved electoral parity compared to the Initial Proposals, and each has implications for other wards in Orkney, but the issues raised highlight the challenging nature of representing the North Isles communities.

Consideration of Representations – Ward Boundaries

36. Responses supporting the proposed ward boundaries stated:
- they minimise change and the existing ward boundaries currently work quite well (OIC 2, OIC 3, OIC 6, OIC 7, OIC 8, OIC 16, OIC 23, OIC 24, OIC 26, OIC 29);
 - the proposed wards reflect the current number of electors (OIC 14); and
 - two members of the public made no comment on ward boundaries (OIC 5, OIC 17).
37. Twelve members of the public opposed the proposed ward boundaries or made alternative suggestions. The alternative suggestions are discussed below.

Over-representation of Kirkwall

38. Two members of the public (OIC 10 and OIC 11) argued that Kirkwall is over-represented. One further stated that island communities with a resident councillor are better represented than other island communities.
39. The two proposed Kirkwall wards in fact have the highest and third highest under-representation within the council area.

Health Board boundaries

40. One member of the public suggested aligning ward boundaries with Health Board boundaries (OIC 19).

41. According to the Orkney Health Board website the council area is divided into two NHS boundaries: the Mainland, which is subdivided into the West and East Mainland, and the Isles. The suggestion would therefore seem to propose only three wards covering the whole council area and has not been considered further.

South Isles

42. A member of the public suggested creating a Hoy ward (OIC 4).

43. There are approximately 400 electors on the South Isles (Hoy, Flotta and Graemesay). A single-member South Isles ward would offer variation from electoral parity of over -50%. Historically, the Commission's 3rd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements recommended two single-member wards which linked the South Isles with the Orkney mainland. These were a Stromness South, Graemesay and North Hoy ward and an Orphir, Walls and Flotta ward. The Commission's 2nd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements recommended a single-member South Isles ward called Hoy, Graemesay, Walls and Flotta.

5-member West Mainland ward

44. A member of the public suggested adding an additional councillor to the proposed West Mainland ward (OIC 25) thus increasing the overall number of councillors to 22.

45. The respondent offered no reasoning or explanation for their suggestion and no other responses suggested this. The West Mainland ward in the Initial Proposals is a 4-member ward. The suggestion would create a 5-member ward which is currently outwith the legislation but the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill could offer the Commission the flexibility of 5-member wards. A 5-member West Mainland ward, with an overall total of 22 councillors, is shown in the table below.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity (%)
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,661	18.2	3,644	18.0
2	Kirkwall West and Orphir	4	3,415	10.2	3,452	11.8
3	Stromness and South Isles	3	2,147	-7.6	2,140	-7.6
4	West Mainland	5	3,521	-9.1	3,492	-9.6
5	East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray	3	2,496	7.4	2,489	7.4
6	North Isles	3	1,798	-22.6	1,771	-23.5
		22	17,038		16,988	

East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray

46. A member of the public suggested that the proposed East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray ward should be split into an island ward and a mainland ward arguing that island communities have different needs (OIC 18).

47. South Ronaldsay and Burray are linked to each other and to the mainland by causeways, therefore these islands are not as inaccessible as other inhabited islands in the council area. Ronaldsay and Burray are less than a 30 minute drive from Kirkwall. Historically the south mainland has been linked to at least one of these islands: the Commission's 3rd Reviews recommended a Holm and Burray ward and the 2nd Reviews recommended a Holm and Wideford ward.

48. There are approximately 1,100 electors on Burray and South Ronaldsay, too many for a single member ward and too few for a 2-member ward. The Commission could consider a South Ronaldsay ward with approximately 750 electors. This would create an island ward and an island-mainland ward and may break local ties between the two islands. A single-member South Ronaldsay ward is shown in the table below.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity (%)
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,661	12.8	3,644	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 and Burray	2	1,750	7.8	1,758	8.7
6	South Ronaldsay	1	746	-8.1	731	-9.6
7	North Isles	3	1,798	-26.1	1,771	-27.0
		21	17,038		16,988	

Inner islands (Rousay, Egilsay, Wyre and Shapinsay) linked to mainland

49. A member of the public suggested transferring the inner islands of Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre from the proposed North Isles ward to the proposed West Mainland ward and transferring Shapinsay to a Kirkwall ward because there are better transport links between the inner islands and the mainland than with the outer islands (OIC 21).

50. The suggestion would transfer approximately 200 electors from the islands of Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre to the proposed West Mainland ward, increasing its under-representation to over 14%. Historically, the Commission's 3rd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements recommended an Evie, Rendall, Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre ward which linked these islands to the mainland. The Commission's 2nd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements placed these islands within their own ward, it was named Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre. A 3-member North Isles ward, less with a total of 22 Councillors is shown in the table below.

51. The suggestion would also transfer approximately 235 Shapinsay electors from the proposed North Isles ward to the proposed Kirkwall West and Orphir ward. Historically, the Commission's 3rd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements recommended a Shapinsay and Kirkwall Harbour ward. The Commission's 2nd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements placed Shapinsay within its own ward.

52. This suggestion would reduce the electorate of the proposed North Isles ward by approximately 450 electors and further widen variation from electoral parity in the North Isles to -45%.

Other – Cost savings

53. One member of the public stated that the proposals will not save money (OIC 12).

54. The Commission does not consider cost savings when developing its proposals.

Ward Names

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

Conclusions

56. During the public consultation most of the responses supported retaining the existing number of councillors or wished a further reduction in councillor numbers.

North Isles

57. Several responses suggested that the proposed North Isles ward is under-represented. These responses included suggestions to increase councillor numbers in the ward by 1, 2, 4 or 7 members and were discussed in paragraphs 28–35.

58. The Commission's proposals retained the existing North Isles ward boundary with wide variation from parity, forecast at -27%. If the Commission were to apply strict adherence to parity, the North Isles, with 1,771 forecast electors, would have two councillors. However, the Commission considered that due to the limited transport links in the area and remoteness, special geographical circumstances could be considered in this ward.

59. The table below shows travel times to the North Isles and other islands. Although the North Isles islands are remote, nearly all islands can be reached within 45 minutes travel time of Kirkwall whether by ferry or plane, however these travel times are dependent on good weather conditions. The other challenge within the North Isles is although there are good transport links between individual islands and Kirkwall, there are poor transport links between each island. All the islands are linked by flights except Rousay and Shapinsay who have no airport. Loganair offers an inter island route which links Eday, Stronsay, Sanday, Westray, Papa Westray and North Ronaldsay. Similarly the ferry routes link the northern islands with Kirkwall rather than neighbouring islands. The islands of Westray and Papa Westray have a connecting ferry route. The other connecting ferry route is Eday, Stronsay, and Sanday. Ferry and air travel times are shown in the table below.

Ferry routes		Travel time
Kirkwall	North Ronaldsay	2 hours 45 minutes
Kirkwall	Stronsay	1 hour 40 minutes
Kirkwall	Sanday	1 hour 25 minutes
Kirkwall	Westray	1 hour 25 minutes
Kirkwall	Eday	1 hour 15 minutes
Kirkwall	Shapinsay	45 minutes

Tingwall (mainland)	Rousay (Rousay: Wyre - 15 minutes) (Rousay: Egilsay - 20 minutes)	35 minutes
Houton (mainland)	Hoy	35 minutes
<i>Note: there are no direct ferry from Kirkwall to Papa Westray</i>		
Flight routes		
Kirkwall	North Ronaldsay, Papa Westray, Eday, Stronsay	All within 20 minutes
<i>Note: there are no flights to Rousay or Shapinsay</i>		

60. The Commission's 3rd Reviews recommended four single-member wards which covered the North Isles, although two of these were linked to the mainland, including Kirkwall. The Commission's 2nd Reviews recommended five single-member North Isles wards.

61. There are poor transport links between individual islands within the North Isles but all islands can be reached within 45 minutes from Kirkwall, whether by air or ferry. An inter-island air route links some of the islands. It takes approximately 25 minutes to drive from Kirkwall to Stromness or Dounby/ Sandwick.

Alternative suggestions

62. The Commission received some alternative suggestions regarding other parts of the council area during the public consultation:

- A 5-member West Mainland ward but the respondent offered no strong argument or reasoning for this suggestion;
- Ward boundaries to follow health board boundaries but there are only three health board areas within the area;
- To place the south Isles (Hoy, Flotta, Graemsay) within their own ward but variation from electoral parity would be -50%;
- To place South Ronaldsay and Burray within their own islands ward. These islands contain approx. 1,100 electors - too many for a single-member ward. South Ronaldsay and Burray are both linked to mainland by a causeway and do not face the dependence of other islands on air/ ferry transport links. The Commission could consider a single-member South Ronaldsay ward (approx. 750 electors) but this would likely break local ties with Burray.
- To link the islands of Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre to a West Mainland ward and link Shapinsay to a Kirkwall ward because there are better transport links between the inner islands and the mainland. If the Commission linked the inner isles to mainland then it may be logical to create a 2-member North Isles ward.

63. Overall most responses to the public consultation support the proposed electoral arrangements for Orkney Islands council area. There have not been a large number of responses supporting any single alternative suggestion, nor have any of the suggestions received been supported by compelling arguments.

Recommendations

64. Taking into account all of the evidence arising from the public consultation, the Secretariat invites the Commission to decide for Orkney Islands council area whether:

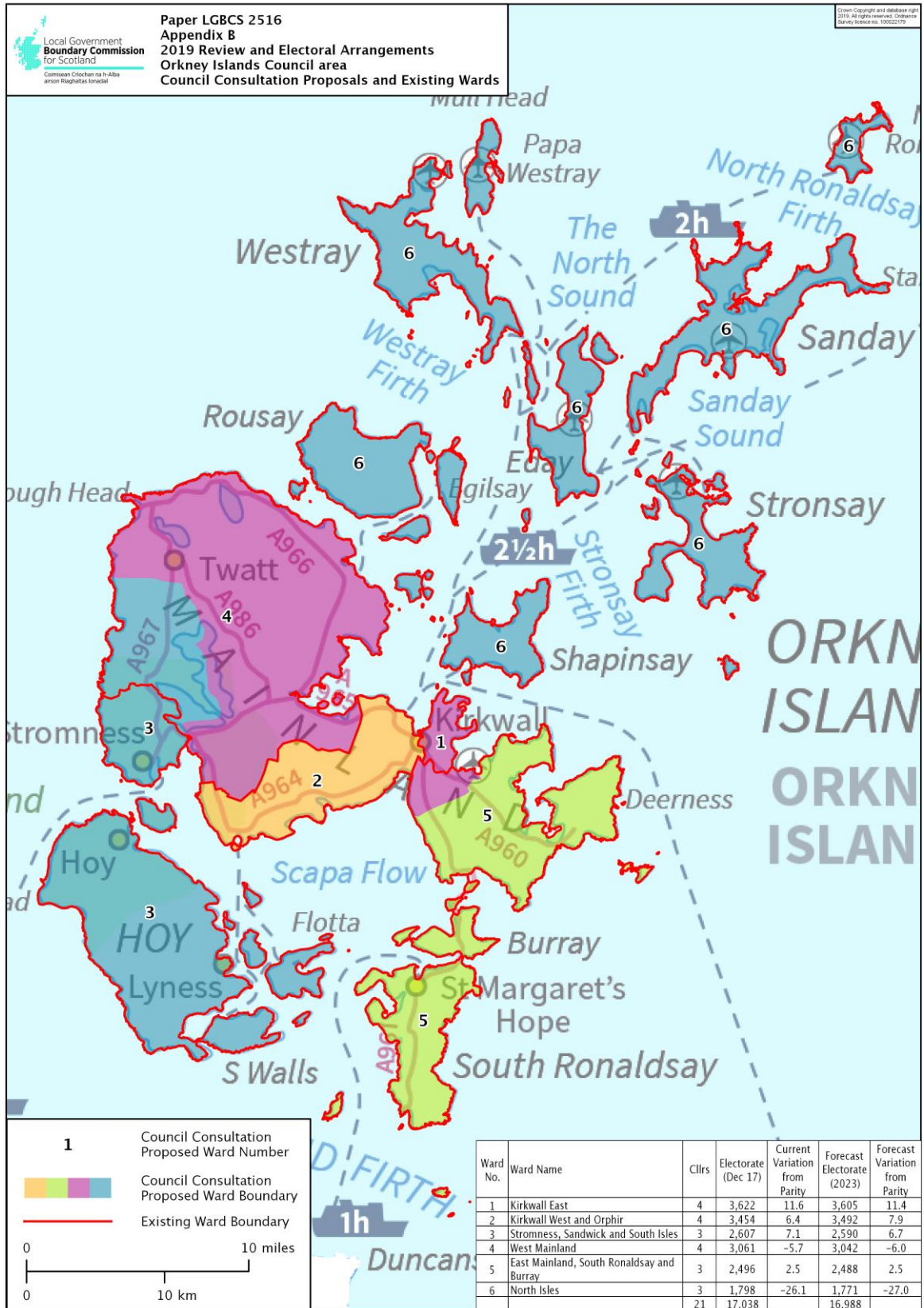
- to adopt without amendment the Initial Proposals as its Final Recommendations, (see Appendix C); or
- to make amendments to its Initial Proposals, either councillor numbers or ward boundaries, as its Final Recommendations;
- if amendments are made whether to consult on revised proposals; and
- to amend or retain its proposed ward names.

Secretariat
January 2020

Appendix A



Appendix B





Appendix D

