

## 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area

### Purpose

- Following discussion of Paper 2508 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 Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area and whether it wishes to make amendments to the Initial Proposals.

### Electoral Arrangements at the start of this review

- At the start of this review, Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area was represented by 31 councillors in five 3-member wards and four 4-member wards.
- 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 2017)	Current Variation from Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity (%)
1	Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas	4	2,493	-10.8	2,372	-12.1
2	Beinn na Foghla agus Uibhist a Tuath	3	2,316	10.5	2,205	9.0
3	Na Hearadh agus Ceann a Deas nan Loch	3	1,865	-11.0	1,803	-10.9
4	Sgir' Uige agus Ceann a Tuath nan Loch	3	2,407	14.8	2,294	13.3
5	Sgire an Rubha	3	1,869	-10.8	1,760	-13.0
6	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	2,972	6.3	3,142	16.5
7	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	2,959	5.9	2,787	3.3
8	Loch a Tuath	3	2,256	7.6	2,175	7.5
9	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	4	2,524	-9.7	2,373	-12.1
		<b>31</b>	<b>21,661</b>		<b>20,910</b>	

### Initial Proposals – Consultation with Councils

- The Commission agreed to adopt its methodology for councillor numbers from its 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for this review. The 5<sup>th</sup> 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.
- The methodology recommended 27 councillors for Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area ( $21,661 \div 800 = 27$ ). As there was a 10% cap on change in councillor numbers, the Commission therefore proposed 28 councillors, three fewer than at present.
- The existing electoral arrangements in Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area offered variation from electoral parity of over 10% in five wards.
- The Initial Proposals presented 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. They:

- 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; 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 above and the boundaries are shown in Appendix B.

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	1,447	-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>	

9. The Commission consulted on its Initial Proposals with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 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 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar at its meeting of 17 June 2019.
11. The Commission noted that the Comhairle supported the Initial Proposals, but made suggestions for minor changes to ward boundaries by Stornoway.
12. The Commission agreed to adopt the Comhairle's suggested amendments to include the areas of Arnish / Marybank and Newmarket within the Initial Proposals' Steòrnabhagh a Tuath ward. These areas lie on the edge of Stornoway, and the Commission accepted that local ties would be better reflected by including them in a Stornoway ward. These changes could be accommodated without causing the forecast variation from parity of the affected wards to exceed 10%. The Comhairle had made similar suggestions to amend ward boundaries in these areas during the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews of Electoral Arrangements which the Commission adopted and recommended.

13. The Initial Proposals – Public Consultation presented an electoral arrangement for 28 councillors representing one 1–member ward, five 2–member wards, three 3–member wards and two 4–member wards. The proposals:
- retained one existing ward boundary – An Taobh Siar agus Nis ward;
  - retained a further four ward names: Loch a Tuath; Steòrnabhagh a Tuath; Steòrnabhagh a Deas; and Sgìre an Rubha;
  - took account of the Islands (Scotland) Act by using the flexibility offered by 1–member and 2–member wards to better reflect local ties. The Initial Proposals included a 1–member Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward. This ward has a wide variation from electoral parity but a 2–member Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward would have a wider variation from parity. There are also 2–member wards proposed in North Uist, Lewis, Harris, the Lochs and Eye Peninsula; and
  - aimed to better reflect local communities, follow historical or easily identifiable boundaries, consider special geographic circumstances in rural, sparsely populated areas with limited transport links, and consider local ties in the whole council area.
14. 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)	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	1,436	-7.2	1,353	-9.4
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	3,046	-1.6	3,105	3.9
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	

15. The Commission's public consultation on its Initial Proposals with Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area ran for a 12–week period from 10 September to 2 December 2019.
16. During the public consultation the Commission: issued a news release; placed a 4–page newspaper cover wrap in the Stornoway Gazette; 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

17. Sixty–four 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.

18. The Commission received 61 responses via its consultation site and three by email.
19. The Comhairle advised that they supported the Commission's proposals and appreciated the flexibility displayed by the Commission along with its recognition of the geographic and community links in the Islands.
20. The Comhairle were appreciative that the Commission had adopted its suggestions to make minor amendments to the boundary of the proposed Steòrnabhagh a Tuath ward following its consultation with the Comhairle.
21. Nearly half of all responses supported the Commission's proposals to reduce councillor numbers and to redraw ward boundaries. Half the responses opposed the proposed reduction in councillor numbers and also the proposed ward boundaries. A large number cited a desire for greater representation in the southern isles and fewer councillors representing Stornoway.
22. Seventeen out of a total of 64 responses supported the Commission's proposals for both councillor numbers and ward boundaries.

### **Consideration of Responses – Councillor Numbers**

23. Twenty-seven out of 64 responses to the public consultation supported the proposed reduction in councillor numbers. However 4 of those called for a greater reduction in councillor numbers (CNES6,8,24,28).
24. The main reason given in support of a reduction was cost savings, which was cited by 9 responses (CNES1,4,5,12,15,22,30,35,46). Other reasons in support of the proposed reduction in councillor numbers were:
  - opposition to a single member Barra ward (CNES38);
  - over-representation in the council area, particularly in Stornoway (CNES9);
  - a belief the councillors don't do anything (CNES29);
  - too many wards with badly thought out boundaries (CNES37); and
  - agreement that a 2 member ward focused on Harris would best represent the community there (CNES55).
25. Whilst agreeing with the proposed reduction, two members of the public (CNES19 and 20) suggested that the reduction should be more focussed on Lewis and Stornoway in particular. They suggested that Stornoway was over-represented and that rural island communities would benefit from greater representation whilst the more urban areas were easier to represent.
26. A community organisation, Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay (VABV), suggested 2 councillors would be better suited to represent the proposed Barra ward. VABV suggested that this would tackle the real and perceived issues of remoteness that exist as barriers to adequate representation for the island communities in Na h-Eileanan an Iar.(CNES62)
27. Councillors Manford and Macmillan who both represent the existing Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas ward made a submission in which

they agreed with the Commission's proposals for councillor numbers but they offered an alternative suggestion for ward boundaries and the number of councillors representing those wards (CNES63).

28. Six members of the public offered no comment in support of their representations (CNES3,26,34,50,51,61).
29. Thirty-five members of the public opposed the proposed reduction in councillor numbers.
30. Councillor Paul Steele who represents the existing Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eiriosgaigh agus Uibhist a Deas ward made a submission in which he opposed the proposed single member Barra ward. Councillor Steele suggested that the single councillor would have to attend all 6 of the Comhairle's standing committees in order to effectively represent their ward. He went on to suggest that using current population to decide on overall councillor numbers was unfair in areas where the population was increasing (CNES46).
31. Whilst opposing the proposed reduction in councillor numbers, 7 responses called for a greater reduction in councillors than that proposed by the Commission (CNES7,10,11,18,23,42,43).
32. A member of the public made an alternative suggestion based on 20 councillors with boundaries based on those defined by the Integration Joint Board (CNES7).
33. Nine of the members of the public who disagreed with the proposed reduction in councillors cited opposition to a reduction in democratic representation as a factor (CNES21,25,27,31,32,36,40,41). This included a response from Lochdar Community Council (CNES,44).
34. Two members of the public suggested an additional councillor for the proposed 3-member Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla ward as there are five community councils in the area (CNES36,41).
35. Other reasons given in support of opposition to the proposed reduction in councillor numbers were:
  - a need for greater diversity (CNES14);
  - population on Uist is growing (CNES16); and
  - North Uist requires its own voice (CNES17).
36. A member of the public called for an increase in councillor numbers based on the difficulty posed in effectively representing a single member ward on all Council committees (CNES2).

#### **Further reduction in councillors**

37. Seven responses opposed a reduction in councillor numbers as they believed that any reduction would diminish representation in rural areas rather than centres of population such as Stornoway (CNES47,48,51,55,56,58,59).
38. A member of the public called for fewer councillors in the wards proposed (CNES11) whilst another suggested fewer wards than proposed by the Commission (CNES18) but neither offered alternative suggestions.

#### **Reduction in Stornoway's representation**

39. A member of the public suggested that the loss of 3 rural councillors further skews power towards Stornoway. They suggested that this is already a problem, and the proposals makes it worse. They also stated that those in the southern isles, and the rural north, got a very bad deal from the council (CNES1).
40. A member of the public suggested that the ward boundaries in support of an overall reduction in councillors would reduce “the proper representation of vulnerable rural areas” (CNES48).
41. A member of the public suggested that rural areas need more representation and should retain all their councillors. They claimed that Stornoway has most of the expenditure anyway and is, therefore, where any councillor reduction should be made. (CNES50)

### Alternative suggestions

42. A member of the public made an alternative suggestion based on 20 councillors. The Commission’s methodology proposes 28 councillors for Na h–Eileanan an Iar council area, a reduction of 3 from the existing 31 councillors. The Commission applies a 10% cap on change in councillor numbers to limit disruption and clearly a reduction to 20 councillors would be a substantial departure from the Commission’s methodology and also potentially disruptive to the delivery of effective and convenient local government in the council area (CNES7).
43. A single ward in Stornoway with approximately 6,200 electors would require 8 councillors to remain within 10% of parity. The legislation does not permit an 8–member ward (CNES29).
44. Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay (VABV), a Barra based community organisation suggested an additional councillor to represent the proposed Barra ward. This suggestion would require an additional councillor and would worsen parity in six of the 11 proposed wards (CNES62). This suggestion is shown in the table below.

Ward no.	Ward Name	Councillors	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity (%)
1	Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	2	972	-34.9	931	-35.4
2	Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla	3	2,491	11.2	2,361	9.1
3	Uibhist a Tuath	2	1,346	-9.9	1,285	-10.9
4	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	2.0	1,482	2.8
5	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,436	-3.9	1,353	-6.2
6	Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	2	1,299	-13.0	1,232	-14.6
7	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	3	2,524	12.6	2,373	9.7
8	Loch a Tuath	3	2,180	-2.7	2,094	-3.2
9	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	3,046	2.0	3,105	7.7
10	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	3,182	6.5	3,130	8.5
11	Sgìre an Rubha	2	1,661	11.2	1,564	8.5
		29	21,661		20,910	

### Consideration of Responses – Ward Boundaries

45. Thirty out of 64 responses to the public consultation supported the proposed ward boundaries. However 2 of those in support called for a greater reduction in the number of wards (CNES5,8).
46. There were a range of reasons for supporting the Commission's proposals: however 12 responses offered no further comment (CNES 9,10,12,14,15,16,24,28,34,37,42,59).
47. A member of the public stated the proposed wards reflect population change (CNES4).
48. A member of the public called for a reduction of councillors in the proposed Loch a Tuath ward and suggested that other wards could have their councillor numbers reduced (CNES6).
49. A member of the public agreed with overall pattern of wards (CNES7).
50. A member of the public agreed with the proposals and suggested Harris should be a single ward (CNES30).
51. A member of the public agreed with changes to the proposed Uig ward in particular (CNES26).
52. Two members of the public agreed with the proposals on the grounds that they better reflected and linked the existing communities than the current arrangements (CNES35,47).
53. A member of the public agreed with the proposals but commented that they had some difficulty understanding the accompanying maps (CNES27).
54. Two members of the public suggested an additional councillor for the proposed 3-member Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla ward. This would lead to the ward varying from parity by -16.6% rather than 7.3% as in the Commission's proposals. It would also necessitate an increase in councillor numbers as opposed to the 28 proposed by the Commission's proposals (CNES36,41).
55. A member of the public suggested that Eriskay, South Uist and Benbecula ward should be represented by four members rather than the proposed three (CNES36).
56. A member of the public agreed that Barra should have a single dedicated representative (CNES41).
57. A representative of South Harris Community Council commented that they agreed with a reduction in the overall number of councillors and wards, but suggested a 2-member Harris ward to better represent the views of the people of Harris (CNES54).

58. A member of the public commented that they approved of the proposal to split Uig, Bernera and West from the Lochs (CNES61).
59. Thirty-two out of 64 responses to the public consultation disagreed with the proposed ward boundaries.
60. Four members of the public offered no comment in support of their disagreement with the Commission's proposals (CNES17,49,52,56).
61. Two responses suggested retaining the existing ward arrangements (CNES50,57)
62. A member of the public was concerned that the proposals would result in wards that were too large in terms of geographical area (CNES31).
63. A member of the public called a reduction in wards to support their suggested reduction in councillors and a single councillor per main island group and 2 councillors for Stornoway (CNES43).

### **Southern Isles (North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist, Eriskay, Barra and Vatersay)**

64. A member of the public opposed a reduction in wards to the south of the Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area. They suggested a 2-member ward for Barra and Vatersay, a 3-member ward for South Uist and Eriskay and a 3 member ward for North Uist and Benbecula. With no changes elsewhere in the council area this would offer 30 councillors across 11 wards and both the Barra and South Uist and Eriskay wards would be overrepresented at close to -30% variation from parity (CNES2). ). This suggestion is shown in the table below.

Ward no.	Ward Name	Councillors	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity (%)
1	Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	2	972	-32.7	931	-33.2
2	Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh	3	1,521	-29.8	1,441	-31.1
3	Uibhist a Tuath & Beinn na Faoghla	3	2,316	6.9	2,205	5.5
4	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	5.5	1,482	6.3
5	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,436	-0.6	1,353	-2.9
6	Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	2	1,299	-10.0	1,232	-11.6
7	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	3	2,524	16.5	2,373	13.5
8	Loch a Tuath	3	2,180	0.6	2,094	0.1
9	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	3,046	5.5	3,105	11.4
10	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	3,182	10.2	3,130	12.3
11	Sgìre an Rubha	2	1,661	15.0	1,564	12.2
		30	21,661		20,910	0.0

65. A member of the public opposed Barra and Vatersay being a single member ward. Their preference was for the status quo of a larger ward with 4 councillors. They suggested that this arrangement would lead to a bigger pool of experience and knowledge to draw upon and would be more conducive to working together. They went on to say that many of the issues in Barra and Vatersay are similar to the ones in Uist (CNES13).
66. A member of the public opposed the proposals on the grounds that "South Uist only gets 2 councillors but is 2nd largest island". They suggested that ward

arrangements generally favour centres of population in Lewis rather than the southern isles (CNES 19).

67. A member of the public suggested a 2–member North Uist ward, a 2–member Benbecula ward, a 3–member South Uist ward and a single member Barra and Vatersay ward (CNES20). This suggestion is shown in the table below. It is worth noting the high number of wards whose variation from parity is in excess of  $\pm 10\%$ .

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	34.6	931	33.6
3	Uibhist a Deas agus Èirisgeigh	3	1,521	-29.8	1,441	-31.1
2	Beinn na Faoghla	2	970	-32.8	920	-34.0
4	Uibhist a Tuath	2	1,346	-6.8	1,285	-7.8
4	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	5.5	1,482	6.3
5	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,436	-0.6	1,353	-2.9
6	Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	2	1,299	-10.0	1,232	-11.6
7	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	3	2,524	16.5	2,373	13.5
8	Loch a Tuath	3	2,180	0.6	2,094	0.1
9	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	3,046	5.5	3,105	11.4
10	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	3,182	10.2	3,130	12.3
11	Sgìre an Rubha	2	1,661	15.0	1,564	12.2
		30	21,661		20,910	

68. A member of the public suggested that given the size of the southern isles area and the needs of the population, the councillors and wards should be retained as they are (CNES21).
69. A member of the public suggested that there are far too many wards and that several could be combined such as Barra and South Uist (CNES23).
70. A member of the public opposed the proposed Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward and wished to retain the existing 4–member Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas ward because multi–member wards offer “unbiased representation” (CNES38).
71. A member of the public suggested retaining the existing 4–member Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas ward as these areas have common issues. They also suggested a 2–member Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh ward if the status quo was not possible (CNES 40).
72. Iochdar Community Council suggested a 4–member Eriskay, South Uist and Benbecula ward as they believed that this would better represent the area as its population continues to grow (CNES44).
73. For the above suggestion the proposed ward 2’s forecast variation from parity would change from 5.4% to -18.1% and parity in other wards would be adversely affected in order to accommodate an additional councillor (CNES44). This suggestion is shown in the table below.

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	30.1	931	29.1
2	Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh agus Beinn na Faoghla	4	2,491	-16.6	2,361	-18.1
3	Uibhist a Tuath	2	1,346	-9.9	1,285	-10.9
4	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	2.0	1,482	2.8
5	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,436	-3.9	1,353	-6.2
6	Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	2	1,299	-13.0	1,232	-14.6
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9	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	3,046	2.0	3,105	7.7
10	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	3,182	6.5	3,130	8.5
11	Sgìre an Rubha	2	1,661	11.2	1,564	8.5
		29	21,661		20,910	

74. Councillor Paul Steele who represents the existing Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eiriosgaigh agus Uibhist a Deas ward suggested a 2-member Barra ward would allow more effective representation on the island. Councillor Steele also suggested a 3-member North Uist and Benbecula ward, a 3-member South Uist and Eriskay ward and 6-member Stornoway ward. Legislation does not currently allow for a six member ward (CNES46)

75. A member of the public suggested that South Uist and Eriskay be paired together due to their long historical connection. They also suggested Benbecula and North Uist be paired together (CNES53).

76. Whilst the suggestion above offers acceptable parity in the wards suggested (if South Uist and Eriskay is a 2 member and Benbecula and North Uist a 3 member ward) it is very similar to the existing arrangements with the exception of a separate Barra ward and offers a total of 28 councillors (CNES53). This suggestion is shown in the table below.

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	2	1,521	-1.7	1,441	-3.5
3	Uibhist a Tuath agus Beinn na Faoghla	3	2,316	-0.2	2,205	-1.6
4	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	-1.5	1,482	-0.8
5	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,436	-7.2	1,353	-9.4
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	3,046	-1.6	3,105	3.9
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	0.0

77. A member of the public suggested that North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Barra should be separate wards and that Eriskay should be included as South Uist

(CNES58). This would result in a total of 29 councillors and is shown in the table below.

Ward no.	Ward Name	Councillors	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity (%)	Councillors	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity (%)
1	Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	1	972	30.1	1	931	29.1
2	Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh	2	1,521	1.8	2	1,441	-0.1
3	Beinn na Faoghla	2	970	-35.1	2	920	-36.2
4	Uibhist a Tuath	2	1,346	-9.9	2	1,285	-10.9
5	Na Hearadh	2	1,524	2.0	2	1,482	2.8
6	Sgìre nan Loch	2	1,436	-3.9	2	1,353	-6.2
7	Sgìr' Ùige agus Carlabhagh	2	1,299	-13.0	2	1,232	-14.6
8	An Taobh Siar agus Nis	3	2,524	12.6	3	2,373	9.7
9	Loch a Tuath	3	2,180	-2.7	3	2,094	-3.2
10	Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	4	3,046	2.0	4	3,105	7.7
11	Steòrnabhagh a Deas	4	3,182	6.5	4	3,130	8.5
12	Sgìre an Rubha	2	1,661	11.2	2	1,564	8.5
		29	21,661		29	20,910	

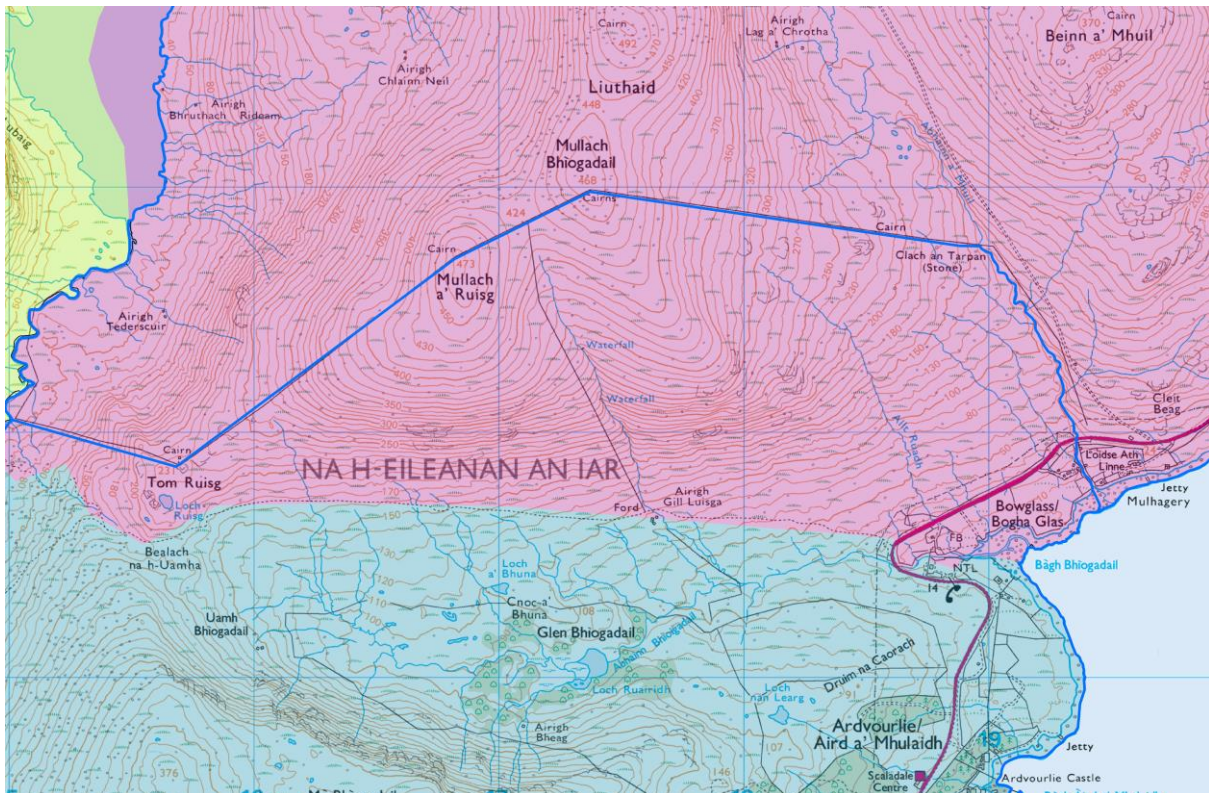
78. Councillor Manford and Councillor Macmillan made a joint submission in which they suggested a 2-member Barra ward and 6-member wards for Uist and Stornoway. (CNES64)
79. The Commission cannot consider 6-member wards because this is out-with the legislative framework for this review.
80. Councillors Manford and Macmillan further reasoned that both the UK and Scottish Parliament Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituencies are allowed wide variation from electoral parity from other constituencies in the country because of the geography of the area and distance to travel to both Parliaments. They believed the Commission should consider a similar approach for local government. Legislation preserves both the Scottish and UK Parliament constituency of Na h-Eileanan an Iar. There is currently no legislation to preserve a local government ward.
81. A member of the public disagreed with the overall pattern of wards proposed by the Commission, but supported a single member ward for Barra and Vatersay (CNES32).
82. A member of the public disagreed with the proposals on the grounds that Barra is a unique island with its own culture and way of being and should be represented as the individuals they are and that South Uist problems are not Barra problems (CNES25).

### Harris – Lewis boundary

83. A member of the public advised that the Commission's ward boundary proposals in Harris do not follow the historical Harris – Lewis boundary. They advised that the Harris – Lewis boundary should follow two streams: Abhainn a Mhuill and Abhainn Bhiogadail (CNES3).

84. The Harris – Lewis boundary has historically been disputed. The Commission's proposals follow the current community council boundary between North Harris – Kinloch. The suggestion to follow the streams as a boundary would move the hamlet of Bowglass with five properties from Harris to a Lewis ward. The public consultation proposals are shown below in block colours and the suggested alternative is a blue line (CNES3).

85. The Comhairle have confirmed that the Harris–Lewis boundary in this area follows the streams Abhainn a Mhuill and Abhainn Bhiogadail.



### Ward Names

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

### Conclusions

87. During the public consultation nearly half of the responses supported the Commission's proposed reduction in councillor numbers and the Commission's proposed ward boundaries. Nearly a third of all responses supported the Commission's proposals for both councillor numbers and ward boundaries.

### Southern Isles

88. Most of the responses opposing the proposals commented on the number of councillors in the southern isles (Barra, South Uist, Benbecula and North Uist).

The Commission received very few comments on the proposals in Harris and Lewis.

89. Although there were a number of responses regarding the southern isles, there was no strong support for any single suggestion.
90. The existing electoral arrangements offer a 4-member Barra and South Uist ward and a 3-member Benbecula and North Uist ward. The Commission's proposals included a 1-member Barra ward, 3-member South Uist and Benbecula ward and 2-member North Uist ward.
91. Some commented that the proposals reduce representation in rural areas and that there should be reduction in representation in Stornoway as well. The Commission's proposals have reduced councillor numbers by one in the southern isles and by two in the more populated Harris and Lewis. The proposed Stornoway wards are slightly under-represented based on forecast electorate.
92. There was some opposition to a single-member Barra ward from councillors who represent the ward. Only one of the councillors who represent the existing Barra and South Uist ward resides on Barra. One of the councillors stated it would be challenging for a single councillor to attend Council committee meetings.
93. The Comhairle support the Commission's proposals including the single-member Barra ward.
94. A single-member Barra ward offers variation from parity +25% while a two-member Barra ward offers -35% (based on 29 Councillors).
95. Barra is remote and therefore time consuming for Councillors to attend Council meetings but the Comhairle offers video-conferencing facilities for Council meetings.
96. The Comhairle response to the council consultation included a suggestion from an individual councillor for the Commission to consider a 2-member Barra ward. The Commission agreed to consider this after the public consultation.
97. The Commission could consider a 3-member Barra and South Uist ward and 3-member Benbecula and North Uist ward. Both of these wards would offer variation from electoral parity within 10%. The Commission could also consider a 4-member Barra, South Uist and Benbecula ward and a 2-member North Uist ward. However, this offers a wider variation from electoral parity. Placing Barra within a multi-member ward may not guarantee a Barra councillor within the ward. In the past it has not always been possible for the Comhairle to attract candidates who live on Barra.
98. Further representation in the southern isles widens variation from parity.

#### **Lewis-Harris boundary**

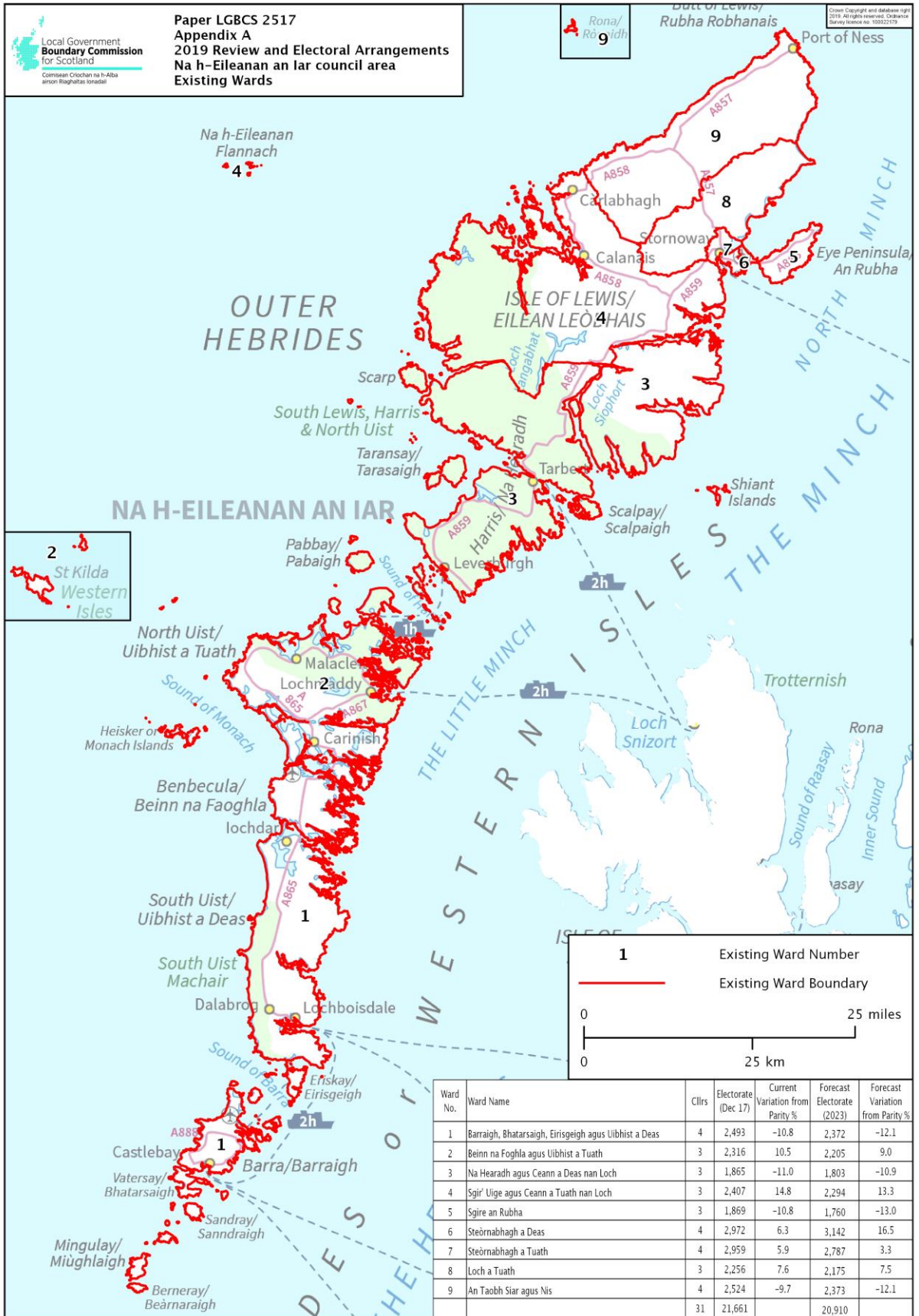
99. The Comhairle have confirmed the Harris - Lewis boundary . Adopting the Lewis-Harris boundary transfers 5 properties between the proposed Harris and Lochs wards. Adopting this suggestion will have only a minor impact on electoral parity.

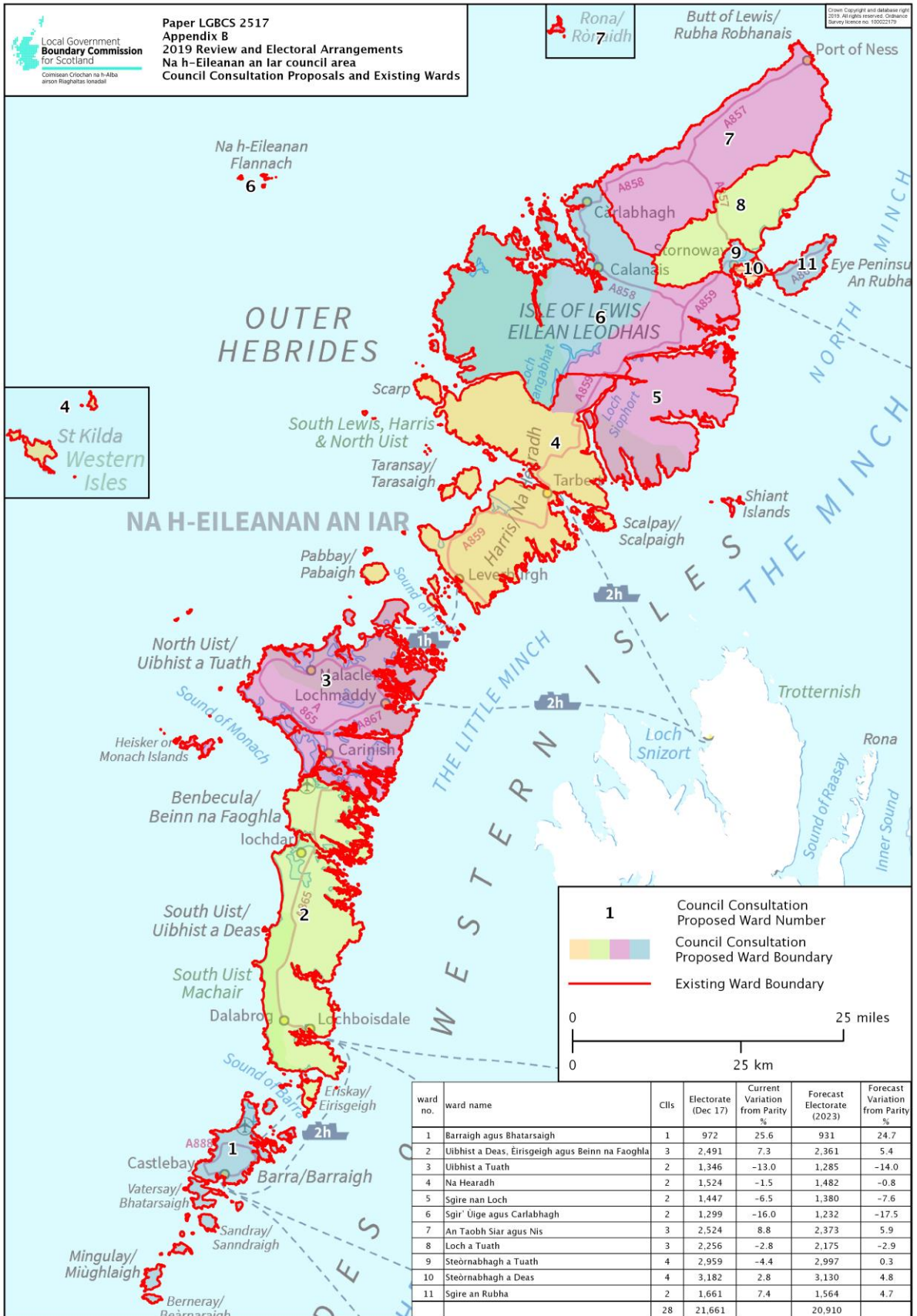
**Recommendations**

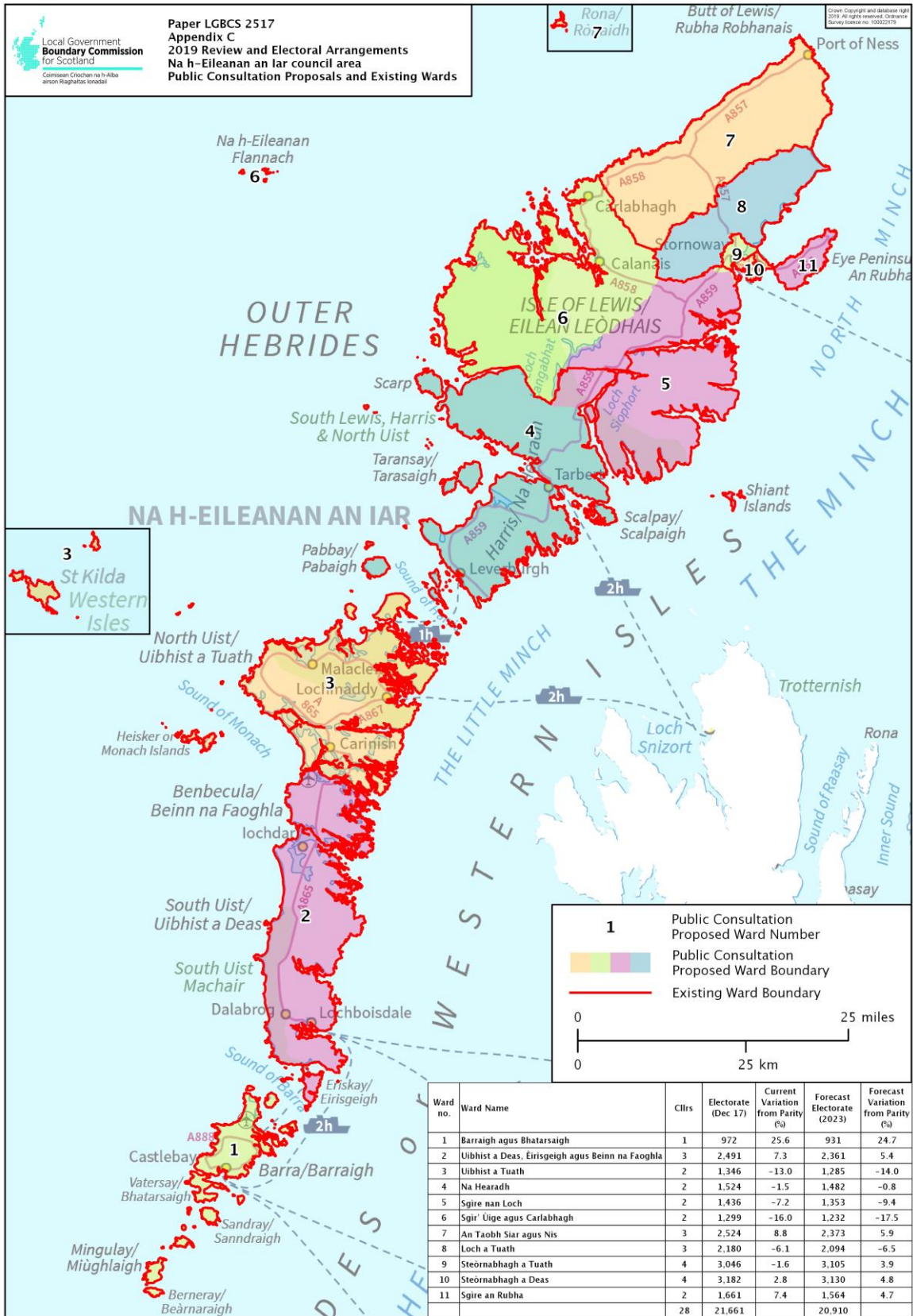
100. Taking into account all of the evidence arising from the public consultation, the Secretariat invites the Commission to decide for Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area whether:

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

**Secretariat**  
**January 2020**







Appendix D

