

**LGBCS Paper 2518****2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements  
Argyll and Bute council area****Purpose**

1. The Commission is invited to give preliminary consideration to its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Argyll and Bute council area.

**Background**

2. The Commission agreed to adopt the same methodology from its 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews for its 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements. The 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews methodology placed Argyll and Bute council area as a Category 4 council area with ratio of electors per councillor of 2,800:1.
3. The methodology for councillor numbers recommended 24 councillors for Argyll and Bute council area. The 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews applied a 10% cap on change, reducing councillor numbers from 36 to 33. The Commission may wish to consider flexibility with councillor numbers when considering its ward design options and following feedback from its consultations.
4. At its meeting of October 2019, the Commission considered Paper 2502: “2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire Council areas – methodology for determining councillor numbers”. The Commission considered whether to propose electoral arrangements using councillor numbers from the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews or using councillor numbers based on the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews methodology with updated electorate and using the existing number of councillors as the starting point. The Commission asked for designs based on a range of options.
5. The 5 year forecast electorate Argyll and Bute shows an decline from 66,725 in 2018 to 65,833 in 2024.
6. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews of Electoral Arrangements the Commission’s recommended ward boundaries were rejected by Ministers.
7. The Commission met Argyll and Bute Council in October 2019 to discuss the approach to the review and in particular the new flexibility offered by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 to use 1 or 2–member wards. At that meeting, Argyll and Bute Council advised they would prefer no change to the existing electoral arrangements and advised it is a unique area with poor transport links. They wished the Commission to consider their four administrative areas that are used for community planning: Oban, Lorn and the Isles; Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands; Helensburgh and Lomond; and Bute and Cowal.

8. There are 20 inhabited islands within the council area. Bute has the largest electorate with 4,696 electors. The islands of Oronsay, Ulva, Gometra and Erraid have the smallest electorate with less than 10 electors on each island.

### Options

9. This paper sets out four options for the Commission to consider:

- Option 1 retains the existing ward boundaries that have been in place since 2007;
- Options 2 aims to minimise change to the existing electoral arrangements. Option 2A is identical to Option 2 but it proposes a 2-member Isle of Bute ward, while Option 2B offers alternative ward boundaries in Dunoon and Oban;
- Option 3 considers two-member island wards; and
- Option 4 is the Commission's recommendations from its 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews.

10. The four Options propose ward designs with 33, 34 and 36 councillors.

11. Options 1 and 4 propose 3 and 4-member wards. Options 2, 2A, 2B and 3 propose 2, 3, 4 and 5-member wards. None of the Options proposes a single-member ward.

12. Each of these options is considered in more detail below.

### Option 1 - Existing Wards

13. Option 1 retains the existing electoral arrangements. It makes no changes to the existing ward boundaries or number of councillors.

14. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 1 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix A:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate (2024)	Forecast Variation from Parity
1	South Kintyre	3	5,103	-8%	4,919	-10%
2	Kintyre and the Islands	3	5,148	-7%	5,230	-5%
3	Mid Argyll	3	5,985	8%	5,927	8%
4	Oban South and the Isles	4	7,896	7%	7,825	7%
5	Oban North and Lorn	4	7,862	6%	8,274	13%
6	Cowal	3	5,734	3%	5,596	2%
7	Dunoon	3	5,500	-1%	5,304	-3%
8	Isle of Bute	3	4,696	-16%	4,406	-20%

9	Lomond North	3	6,000	8%	5,858	7%
10	Helensburgh Central	4	7,357	-1%	6,924	-5%
11	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	5,444	-2%	5,570	2%
		<b>36</b>	<b>66,725</b>		<b>65,833</b>	

15. The advantages of Option 1 are:

- it offers no changes to the existing electoral arrangements, minimising change and so retaining recognisable ward boundaries. The Commission may expect support for Option 1 from Argyll and Bute Council and local community groups; and
- it considers the four administrative areas used by the Council.

16. The disadvantages of Option 1 are:

- it does not consider the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers which recommends 33 Councillors for the council area. The Commission last considered councillor numbers for Argyll and Bute council area in 1997 and the ward boundaries are unchanged since 2007; and
- there is wide variation from electoral parity in the Isle of Bute ward. However it is an island ward and special geographical circumstances could be considered to apply.

## Option 2

17. Option 2 proposes a ward design that minimises change to the existing electoral arrangements.

18. Option 2 amends the ward boundary in Helensburgh transferring approximately 950 electors from the Helensburgh Central ward to the Helensburgh and Lomond South ward. The proposed boundary follows a railway line, an easily identifiable boundary, and an historical ward boundary. It creates a 3-member Helensburgh Central ward, reducing councillor numbers in this ward by one.

19. Option 2 merges the existing 3-member South Kintyre ward with the 3-member Kintyre and the Islands ward to create a 5-member Kintyre ward.

20. The existing electoral arrangements (Option 1) highlight that the existing Helensburgh and Kintyre wards are over-represented.

21. Option 2 retains seven of the existing ward boundaries.

22. Option 2 is developed further in Options 2A and 2B below.

23. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 2 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix B:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from Parity
1	Kintyre and Islands	5	10,251	4%	10,149	5%
2	Mid Argyll	3	5,985	2%	5,927	2%
3	Oban South and the Isles	4	7,896	1%	7,825	1%
4	Oban North and Lorn	4	7,862	0%	8,274	7%
5	Cowal	3	5,734	-3%	5,596	-4%
6	Dunoon	3	5,500	-7%	5,304	-9%
7	Isle of Bute	3	4,696	-20%	4,406	-24%
8	Lomond North	3	6,000	2%	5,858	1%
9	Helensburgh Central	3	6,398	9%	6,051	4%
10	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,403	9%	6,443	11%
		<b>34</b>	<b>66,725</b>		<b>65,833</b>	

24. The advantages of Option 2 are it:

- minimises change to the existing electoral arrangements;
- retains seven of the existing ward boundaries thus retaining recognisable ward boundaries;
- considers the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers by reducing councillor numbers by two, although the Commission's methodology recommended 33 Councillors; and
- considers the four administrative areas used by the Council.

25. The disadvantages of Option 2 are:

- there is wide variation from electoral parity in the proposed Isle of Bute ward. Option 2A below improves variation from electoral parity for the Bute ward.

### Option 2A

26. Option 2A is identical to Option 2 but it proposes a 2-member Isle of Bute ward and meets the Commission's methodology, which recommended 33 councillors, while minimising change to the existing ward boundaries.

27. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 2A are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix C:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from Parity
1	Kintyre and Islands	5	10,251	1%	10,149	2%
2	Mid Argyll	3	5,985	-1%	5,927	-1%
3	Oban South and the Isles	4	7,896	-2%	7,825	-2%
4	Oban North and Lorn	4	7,862	-3%	8,274	4%
5	Cowal	3	5,734	-5%	5,596	-6%
6	Dunoon	3	5,500	-9%	5,304	-11%
7	Isle of Bute	2	4,696	16%	4,406	10%
8	Lomond North	3	6,000	-1%	5,858	-2%
9	Helensburgh Central	3	6,398	5%	6,051	1%
10	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,403	6%	6,443	8%
		<b>33</b>	<b>66,725</b>		<b>65,833</b>	

28. The advantages of Option 2A are it:

- minimises change to the existing electoral arrangements;
- retains seven of the existing ward boundaries retaining recognisable ward boundaries;
- proposes 33 Councillors, the same number of councillors as the Commission's methodology;
- considers the four administrative areas used by the Council.

29. The disadvantage of Option 2 is:

- variation from electoral parity is still over 10% in the proposed Isle of Bute ward.

### Option 2B

30. Option 2B is also similar to Option 2 but it considers placing Oban and Dunoon within their own ward. The existing electoral arrangements split both of these towns between wards.

31. The proposed ward boundary by Dunoon follows a community council area boundary and a historical ward boundary to place Dunoon within a single ward. It transfers approximately 1,700 electors from the proposed Cowal ward to a Dunoon ward. Option 2B proposes a 2-member Cowal ward and a 4-member Dunoon ward. The existing Dunoon ward boundary follows residential streets and partly historical ward boundaries.

32. The proposed ward boundary by Oban follows a community council area boundary. It transfers approximately 2,500 from the existing Oban North and Lorn ward to create a 4-member Oban and the Isles ward and 3-member North Argyll ward. Oban is situated within an Oban and the Isles ward.

33. Option 2B proposes 34 councillors. Although it could propose 33 councillors with a 2-member Isle of Bute ward, as Option 2A does.

34. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 2B are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix D:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from Parity
1	Kintyre and Islands	5	10,251	4%	10,149	5%
2	Mid Argyll	3	5,985	2%	5,927	2%
3	Oban and the Isles	5	10,292	5%	10,646	10%
4	North Argyll	3	5,466	-7%	5,453	-6%
5	Cowal	2	3,977	1%	3,946	2%
6	Dunoon	4	7,257	-8%	6,954	-10%
7	Isle of Bute	3	4,696	-20%	4,406	-24%
8	Lomond North	3	6,000	2%	5,858	1%
9	Helensburgh Central	3	6,398	9%	6,051	4%
10	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,403	9%	6,443	11%
		<b>34</b>	<b>66,725</b>		<b>65,833</b>	

35. The advantages of Option 2B are it:

- retains three existing ward boundaries retaining recognisable ward boundaries;
- considers local community ties by avoiding the division of Dunoon and Oban between wards;
- considers the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers by reducing councillor numbers by two; and
- considers the four administrative areas used by the Council.

36. The disadvantages of Option 2 are:

- there is wide variation from electoral parity in the Isle of Bute ward. It is an island ward and therefore special geographical circumstances could be considered or the Commission could consider a 2-member Bute ward.

- it focusses on avoiding the splitting Dunoon and Oban but it is uncertain how strong local feeling is on this issue.

### Option 3

37.Option 3 proposes a ward design that considers island wards.

38.Option 3 proposes three 2–member island wards:

- a North Isles ward which includes the islands of Mull, Iona, Coll, Tiree;
- a South Isles ward which includes the islands of Islay, Jura, Colonsay and Gigha; and
- an Isle of Bute ward.

39.Option 3 retains four of the existing wards: Cowal; Dunoon; Mid Argyll and Lomond North. Option 3 also retains the existing Isle of Bute ward boundary but it becomes a 2–member ward.

40.Option 3 offers an alternative ward boundary by Helensburgh. It adds approximately 1,400 electors from the Helensburgh and Lomond South ward to Helensburgh Central. The proposed ward boundary follows a historical ward boundary and reduces councillor numbers by Helensburgh by one. It proposes a 4–member Helensburgh North ward and a 2–member Helensburgh South and Lomond South ward.

41.Option 3 offers an alternative ward boundary by Oban. It extends the proposed Oban South ward southwards adding approximately 1,500 electors from the Oban North and Lorn ward. The proposed boundary follows a community council area boundary and a historical ward boundary.

42.Both Oban and Dunoon remain split between two wards.

43.The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 3 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix E:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity %	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from parity %
1	South Kintyre	4	7,270	-7%	7,187	-7%
2	Southern Isles	2	2,981	-24%	2,962	-24%
3	Mid Argyll	3	5,985	2%	5,927	2%
4	Oban South	3	6,263	6%	6,011	3%

5	Oban North and Lorn	3	6,284	7%	6,650	14%
6	North Isles	2	3,211	-18%	3,438	-11%
7	Cowal	3	5,734	-3%	5,596	-4%
8	Dunoon	3	5,500	-7%	5,304	-9%
9	Isle of Bute	2	4,696	20%	4,406	14%
10	Lomond North	3	6,000	2%	5,858	1%
11	Helensburgh North	4	8,767	12%	8,328	8%
12	Helensburgh South and Lomond South	2	4,034	3%	4,166	8%
		<b>34</b>	<b>66,725</b>		<b>65,833</b>	

44. The advantages of Option 3 are it:

- considers the Islands Act legislation and proposes three island-only wards; and
- considers the four administrative areas used by the Council.

45. The disadvantage of Option 3 is:

- there is wide variation from electoral parity in the proposed 2-member Southern Isles ward.

#### **Option 4 – Recommendations from 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews**

46. Option 4 adopts the Commission's recommendations from its 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews.

47. The 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews recommended an option which proposed 33 councillors, representing 7 3-member wards and 3 4-member wards, reducing the number of wards in the area by 1 and reducing councillor numbers by 3.

48. Scottish Ministers rejected the Commission's final recommendations for Argyll and Bute council area to maintain local community ties.

49. The electorates and associated variation from parity for Option 4 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix F:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from Parity
1	South Kintyre	3	5,886	-3%	5,689	-5%
2	Kintyre and the Islands	3	6,118	1%	6,108	2%
3	Mid-Argyll	3	5,542	-9%	5,614	-6%

4	Oban South and the Isles	4	7,896	-2%	7,825	-2%
5	Oban North and Lorn	3	6,463	7%	6,857	15%
6	Dunoon	4	8,248	2%	7,959	0%
7	Bute and Cowal	4	7,675	-5%	7,341	-8%
8	Lomond North	3	6,042	0%	5,897	-1%
9	Helensburgh Central	3	6,390	5%	6,182	3%
10	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,465	7%	6,361	6%
		<b>33</b>	<b>66,725</b>		<b>65,833</b>	

50. The advantage of Option 4 is it considers the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers which recommends 33 Councillors.

51. The disadvantages of Option 4 are:

- the proposals were strongly opposed during the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews;
- retains only one existing ward (Oban South and the Isles);
- does not consider the four administrative areas used by the Council; and
- proposes a Bute - mainland ward.

## Conclusions

### Legislation

52. The Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill could allow the Commission to recommend 2 and 5-member wards across Scotland as well as the current 3 and 4-member wards (and single-member and 2-member wards where there are inhabited islands). The timescale for the legislation passing through Parliament is summer 2020.

53. Options 1 and 4 propose the use of only 3 and 4-member wards. The other options propose 2, 3, 4 or 5-member wards.

### Argyll and Bute Council administrative areas

54. Argyll and Bute Council have suggested that the Commission consider developing ward designs which reflect their four administrative areas that are used for community planning and service provision.

55. The four areas are divided by the geography of the area. The Helensburgh and Lomond area is bounded by Loch Lomond and Loch Long; the Bute and Cowal area is bounded by Loch Fyne, Loch Long and the Arrochar mountains; the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands area contains the Kintyre peninsula and neighbouring islands; and the Oban, Lorn and the Isles area covers the north of the area including the Inner Hebrides.

56. Options 1 – 3 consider these four areas because they create recognisable ward boundaries.

### **Geography**

57. Argyll and Bute Council area is arguably the most diverse council area in Scotland geographically. There is a wide contrast from urban Helensburgh to the Inner Hebrides of Coll and Tiree, with the Arrochar mountains situated in-between.

58. It is also the second largest council area in Scotland at 7,160 square kilometres.

### **Islands**

59. Argyll and Bute contains more inhabited islands than the Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands or Western Isles.

60. Bute is the largest populated island in the council area with 4,696 electors. The options consider both a two and three-member Bute ward. Islay (2,500 electors) and Mull (2,400 electors) are the second and third most populated islands in the area but have too many electors for a single-member island ward and too few for a two-member ward. A single-member island ward for Argyll and Bute council area requires approx. 2,000 electors. Tiree is the fourth most populated island with 530 electors, too few for a single-member island ward.

### **Transport Links**

61. The Commission could consider special geographical circumstances for island-only wards. The remoteness of some of the islands within the council area varies considerably. For example the Isle of Bute ferry takes 5 minutes to reach the mainland (Colintraive to Rhubodach) while the Tiree–Oban ferry takes 3.5 hours. The other Bute ferry route from Rothesay to Wemyss Bay takes 35 minutes. From Wemyss Bay it takes less than an hour to reach Glasgow by either car or train.

62. There are also limited transport links within mainland parts of Argyll and Bute council area.

63. The road network is restricted by the geography of the area resulting in lengthy car journeys. There are few if any dual carriage-way roads. The A83 road which includes the “rest and be thankful” is regularly closed during the winter due to landslides.

64. There are few rail links. Only two rail-lines service the area. They run from Helensburgh to Tarbet and then northwards; and between Oban and Dalmally.

65. Loganair has airlinks with Tiree, Islay and Campbeltown. Oban also has a small airport.

66. The ferry from Kintyre to the second most populated island of Islay, takes approx. two hours, the ferry from Oban to Mull (the second largest island) takes approx. 45 minutes, while a ferry from Oban to Tiree takes approx. 3.5 hours. However the Bute-mainland ferry only takes 5 minutes.
67. It can take councillors a full day to travel to Council meetings at Lochgilphead. Some examples of approximate travel times to Lochgilphead include: Oban (1 hour); Rothesay, Bute (2 hours); Helensburgh (1.5 hours); Islay (3 hours); Mull (2.5 hours); and and Tiree (4.5 hours).
68. The geography and poor transport links make it challenging for councillors to represent communities within their wards.

### **Options summary**

#### **Option 1**

69. Option 1 retains the existing electoral arrangements but the number of councillors in this area have not been reviewed in over 20 years and the ward boundaries have remained unchanged since 2007.

#### **Option 2**

70. Option 2 aims to minimise change to the existing electoral arrangements by retaining seven of the existing ward boundaries.

#### **Option 2A**

71. Option 2A replicates Option 2, minimising change, but it proposes a two-member Isle of Bute ward. Option 2A meets the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers by proposing 33 councillors.

72. A three-member Bute ward (with total 34 councillors), as shown in Option 2, offers variation from electoral parity of -20%. A two-member Bute ward (with total 33 councillors) offers variation from electoral parity of +16%.

73. The Commission could consider a Bute-mainland ward as historically there was a Kyles and Bute ward (1995-1999). However during the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews there was strong opposition to a proposed Bute-mainland ward.

74. The Isle of Bute also offers an easily identifiable ward boundary.

#### **Option 2B**

75. Option 2B considers whether Oban and/ or Dunoon should be placed within a single ward. Both of these towns are currently split between two wards.

76. Argyll and Bute Council have indicated that they wish to retain the existing electoral arrangements but Option 2B highlights that the existing ward boundaries split some communities between wards. This ward design could

improve local community ties within these two towns. There are too many electors to place Helensburgh within a single ward.

### **Option 3**

77. Option 3 proposes three 2-member island only wards for Bute, Northern Isles (Mull, Iona, Coll, Tiree) and Southern Isles (Islay, Jura, Colonsay and Gigha).

### **Option 4 – Recommendations from 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews**

78. The 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews recommended an option which proposed 33 councillors, representing seven 3-member wards and three 4-member wards, reducing the number of wards in the area by 1 and reducing councillor numbers by 3. Ministers rejected the Commission's final recommendations to maintain local community ties. They stated "in a small number of cases – Argyll and Bute, Dundee City and Scottish Borders – we have listened to local representations and left boundaries as they currently stand, to ensure that strong historic ties in particular areas and communities are maintained. "Significant concerns were raised about aspects of the Commission's proposals for those areas, in particular that they would not reflect local communities. While the Commission did try to address these in its final recommendations, it was clear from the responses to those recommendations that many of those concerns remained. We therefore decided that the better course would be to keep the status quo for those areas."

79. Adopting Option 4 again as its Initial Proposals would likely receive strong opposition. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews public consultation stage, there were 292 responses, including four petitions containing over 500 signatures opposing the proposals. Responses focussed on retaining the existing arrangements, opposition to proposals that split Cowal and a desire to place Bute in a single ward.

80. Option 4 is the only option that does not consider Argyll and Bute Council's four area boundaries.

### **Recommendations**

81. The Commission is invited to consider which options it wishes the Secretariat to informally discuss with Argyll and Bute Council, along with possible ward names, before confirming its Initial Proposals at its next meeting.

**Secretariat**

**January 2020**





















