

LGBCS Paper 2525**2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
Argyll and Bute council area****Purpose**

1. The Commission is invited to agree its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Argyll and Bute council area and consider if it wishes to attend a Argyll and Bute Council Community Planning Management Committee meeting during the summer/ autumn 2020 to help publicise the public consultation phase of the review.

Background

2. At its meeting of 4 February the Commission considered Paper 2518 and six ward design options for Argyll and Bute council area. The six options included:
 - Option 1 which demonstrated the status quo and existing ward boundaries that have been in place since 2007;
 - Option 2 proposed a minor ward boundary change in Helensburgh and merged the two existing Kintyre wards, reducing councillor numbers by two;
 - Option 2A was similar to Option 2, but proposed a 2-member Bute ward;
 - Option 2B, was also similar to Option 2, but avoided splitting Dunoon and Oban between wards;
 - Option 3 considered three 2-member island wards; and
 - Option 4 which considered the Commission's recommendations from its 5th Reviews.
3. The six designs offered flexibility with councillor numbers, presenting designs with between 33 and 36 councillors.

Meeting with Council Officers

4. The Secretariat met officers from Argyll and Bute Council in March 2020 to discuss informal views on local ties within the area and to seek advice on handling of the public consultation later in 2020. A note of that discussion is enclosed with the meeting papers.

Options

5. This paper sets out three options for the Commission to consider. Options 1 is unchanged from Paper 2518. Each of the options is considered in more detail below, but in summary:
 - Option 1 – retains the existing electoral arrangements with 36 Councillors;
 - Option 2 – considers island wards with 34 Councillors; and
 - Option 3 – aims to minimise change to the existing ward boundaries with 33 Councillors.

Option 1 – Existing electoral arrangements

6. Option 1 retains the existing electoral arrangements, making no changes to the existing ward boundaries or number of councillors. The existing electoral arrangements have been in place since 2007.

7. The existing electoral arrangements comprise 36 councillors, representing eight 3-member wards and three 4-member wards.
8. 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 Appendices A & D:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from electoral parity %	Forecast Electorate	Forecast variation from electoral 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%
		36	66,725		65,833	

9. The advantages of Option 1 are:
- it offers no changes to the existing electoral arrangements, minimising change and so retaining recognisable ward boundaries. This could be seen as the preferred option for the Council and local communities.
10. 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
 - it offers 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

11. Option 2 proposes an arrangement with 34 councillors, representing three 2-member wards, eight 3-member wards and one 4-member ward.
12. Option 2 retains four of the existing wards: Mid Argyll; Lomond North; Dunoon; and Cowal.
13. Option 2 considers island wards, it proposes a:
- 2-member Isle of Bute ward, retaining the existing Isle of Bute ward boundary but reducing councillor numbers by one;
 - 2-member Islay, Jura and Colonsay ward; and
 - 2-member Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree ward.

14. There is wide variation from electoral parity for the three proposed island wards. However:
- a 3-member Isle of Bute ward offers variation from electoral parity of -18%;
 - a single-member Islay, Jura and Colonsay ward, offers parity of +41%; and
 - a single-member Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree ward offers parity of nearly +60%.
15. The island wards offer wide variation from electoral parity but as islands they are less accessible than other areas within Argyll and Bute, therefore the Commission could consider special geographical circumstances for these wards.
16. Option 2 reduces representation in Helensburgh by one councillor. It transfers approximately 900 electors from the existing Helensburgh Central ward to the Helensburgh and Lomond South ward. The proposed ward boundary follows historical ward boundaries from the Commission's 2nd and 3rd Reviews of Electoral Arrangements, by St Josephs Primary School. As a consequence the Helensburgh Central ward becomes a 3-member ward, previously a 4-member ward.
17. Option 2 proposes a 4-member Kintyre ward, covering the whole of Kintyre and including the Isle of Gigha.
18. Option 2 proposes an Oban South ward and Oban North and Lorn ward that both cover the northern half of mainland Argyll. The proposed boundary between these wards follows the existing ward boundary and a community council area boundary. The community council area boundary follows the hill-line and watershed. Minor roads run parallel on either side of Loch Awe, maintaining links in the more remote areas of the proposed ward.
19. 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 Appendices B & E:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Variation from electoral parity %	Forecast Electorate	Forecast variation from electoral parity %
1	Kintyre	4	7,404	-6%	7,222	-7%
2	Islay, Jura and Colonsay	2	2,847	-27%	2,927	-24%
3	Mid Argyll	3	5,985	2%	5,927	2%
4	Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree	2	3,211	-18%	3,438	-11%
5	Oban South	3	5,998	2%	5,716	-2%
6	Oban North and Lorn	3	6,549	11%	6,945	20%
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 Central	3	6,424	9%	6,074	5%
12	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,377	8%	6,420	11%
		34	66,725		65,833	

20. The advantages of Option 2 are it:
- retains four of the existing wards;

21. The disadvantages of Option 2 are:

- proposes 34 Councillors, one more than the Commission's methodology; and
- offers wide variation from electoral parity in three island wards although special geographical circumstances could be considered to apply there.

Option 3

22. Option 3 aims to minimise change to the existing electoral arrangements and retains six of the existing wards: Mid Argyll; Lomond North; Dunoon; Cowal; Oban South and the Isles; and Oban North and Lorn.

23. Option 3 proposes an arrangement with 33 councillors, the same number as the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers, representing one 2-member ward, six 3-member wards, two 4-member wards and one 5-member ward.

24. Option 3 proposes a 5-member Kintyre and the Isles ward by merging the existing 3-member South Kintyre ward and 3-member Kintyre and Islands ward.

25. Option 3 proposes a 3-member Helensburgh Central ward as described above in Option 2.

26. Option 3 also proposes a 2-member Isle of Bute ward.

27. 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 Appendices C & F:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Variation from electoral parity %	Forecast Electorate	Forecast variation from electoral parity %
1	Kintyre and the Isles	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%
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8	Lomond North	3	6,000	-1%	5,858	-2%
9	Helensburgh Central	3	6,424	6%	6,074	1%
10	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,377	5%	6,420	7%
		33	66,725		65,833	

28. The advantages of Option 3 are:

- minimises change to the existing electoral arrangements by retaining six of the existing ward boundaries;
- proposes 33 councillors, the same number as the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers; and
- improves variation from parity in all areas.

29. The disadvantages of Option 3 are:

- variation from electoral parity is over 10% in the proposed Isle of Bute ward, although this is forecast to improve over the next 5 years. As discussed above in Option 2 a 3-member Bute ward would offer variation from electoral parity of 20%.

Conclusions

Councillor numbers

30. The Commission's methodology recommends 24 councillors for Argyll and Bute council area but with a 10% cap on change, councillor numbers are reduced from 36 to 33.
31. The three options propose 36, 34 and 33 councillors. Options 2 and 3 could both consider a 3-member Isle of Bute ward but this would increase overall councillor numbers to 35 and 34 respectively.

Islands

32. Argyll and Bute contains more inhabited islands than the Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands or the Western Isles.
33. Bute is the largest populated island within the council area with 4,696 electors.
34. The Commission could consider either a 2 or 3-member Isle of Bute ward.
35. Option 1 proposes a 3-member Isle of Bute ward. Options 2 and 3 both propose a 2-member Isle of Bute ward to improve variation from electoral parity.
36. During the Commission's 5th Reviews there was strong opposition to a Bute-mainland ward.
37. Islay (2,500 electors) and Mull (2,400 electors) are the second and third most populated islands in the area. Tiree is the fourth most populated island (530 electors).
38. If the Commission considers special geographical circumstances for island wards, the remoteness of some of the islands 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.

Legislation - Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill

39. The expected introduction of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill will allow the Commission to consider greater flexibility with 2 or 5-member wards.
40. Option 1 proposes 3 or 4-member wards.
41. Option 2 proposes three 2-member wards. All other wards are either 3-member or 4-member wards.

42. Option 3 proposes: one 2-member ward; six 3-member wards; two 4-member wards; and one 5-member ward.

Electorate and forecasting

43. Legislation states that the Commission must consider a 5-year electorate forecast when developing its proposals.

44. The electorate of Argyll and Bute is expected to decline by approximately 900 electors over the next 5 years. There are no significant electoral changes within any single ward.

Argyll and Bute Council's administrative areas

45. Argyll and Bute Council divide the council area into four administrative areas that are used for community planning and service provision. The four areas are divided by the geography of the area and include: Helensburgh and Lomond; Bute and Cowal; Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands; and the Oban, Lorn and the Isles.

46. All three options consider Argyll and Bute Council's administrative areas.

Options summary

47. Option 1 retains the existing electoral arrangements, but Councillor numbers have not been reviewed since 1997 and the ward boundaries are unchanged since 2007.

48. Option 2 considers island wards but offers wide variation from electoral parity, although special geographical circumstances could be considered to apply for island wards.

49. Option 3 aims to minimise change to the existing arrangements by retaining six of the existing ward boundaries and proposes 33 Councillors, the same as the Commission's methodology.

Public consultation

50. Argyll and Bute Council suggested that the Commission could attend a Community Planning Management Committee meeting to raise awareness of the public consultation phase of the review. The meetings are usually held quarterly at either Arrochar, Helensburgh or Lochgilphead. The Secretariat can liaise with Argyll and Bute Council on future meeting dates and if the agenda allows time for the Commission to make a presentation.

Recommendations

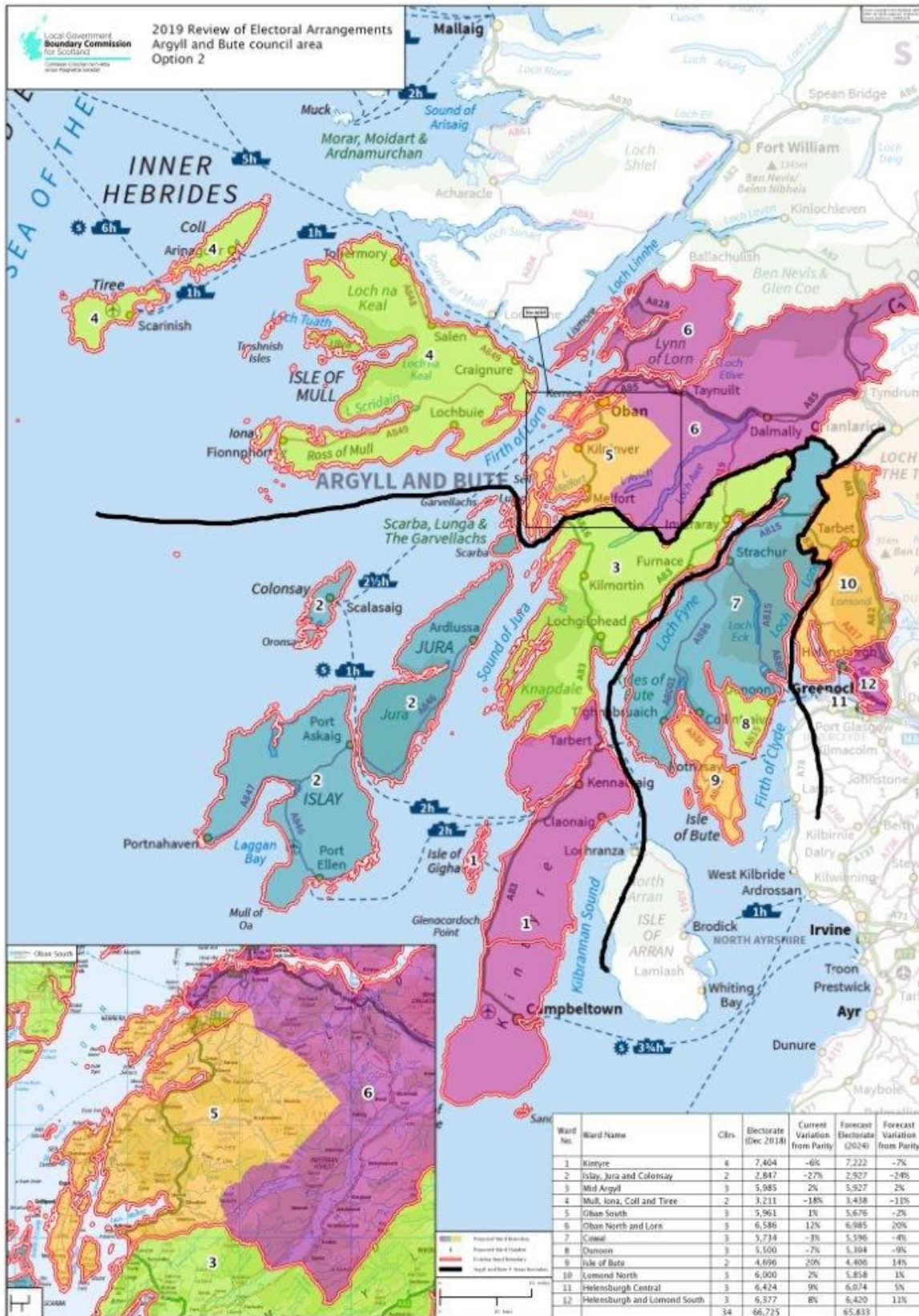
51. The Commission is invited to agree its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Argyll and Bute council area and discuss whether it wishes to attend an Argyll and Bute Council Community Planning Management Committee meeting during the summer/ autumn to help publicise the public consultation phase of the review.

Secretariat, April 2020

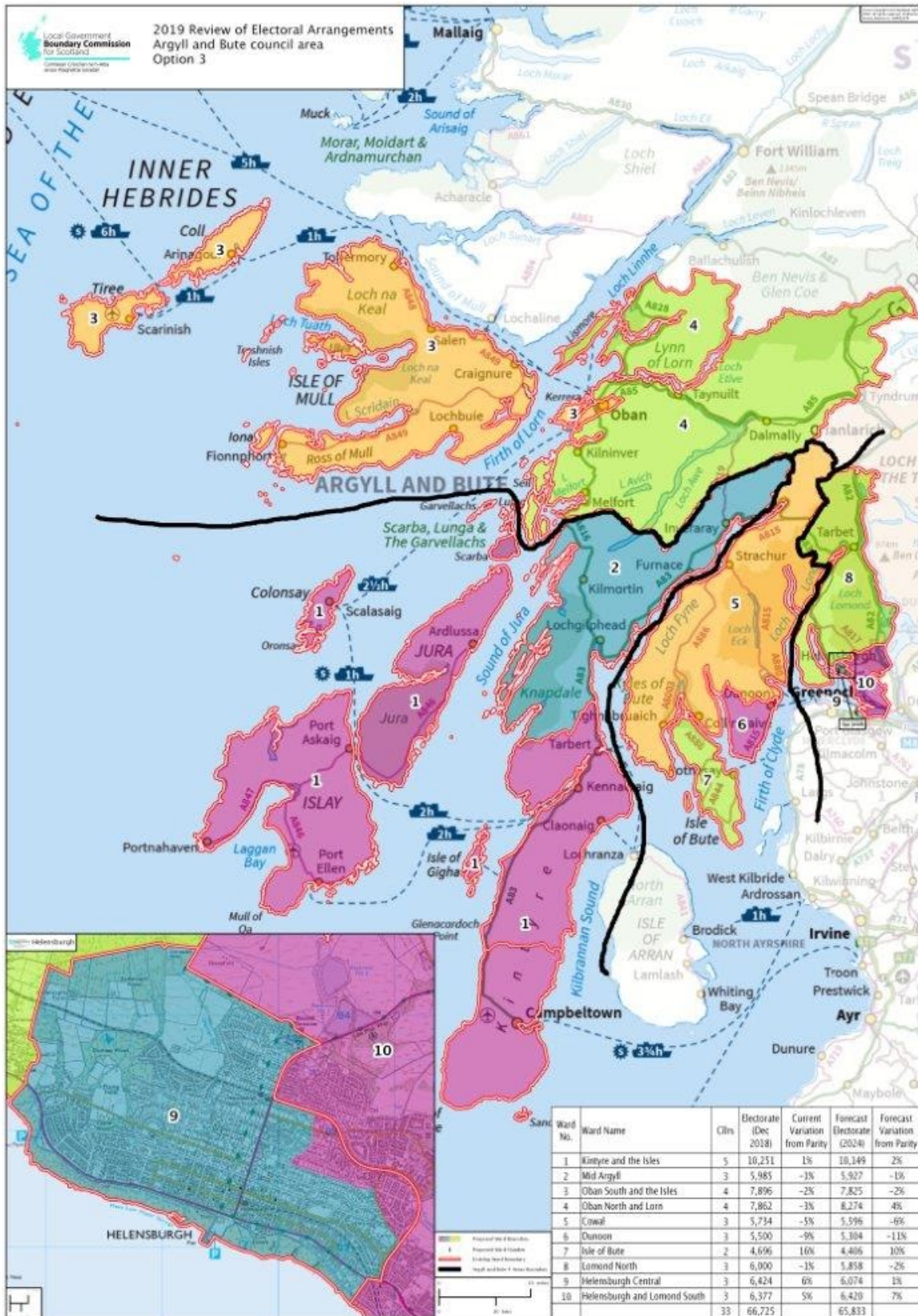
Appendix A - Option 1 (Existing wards)



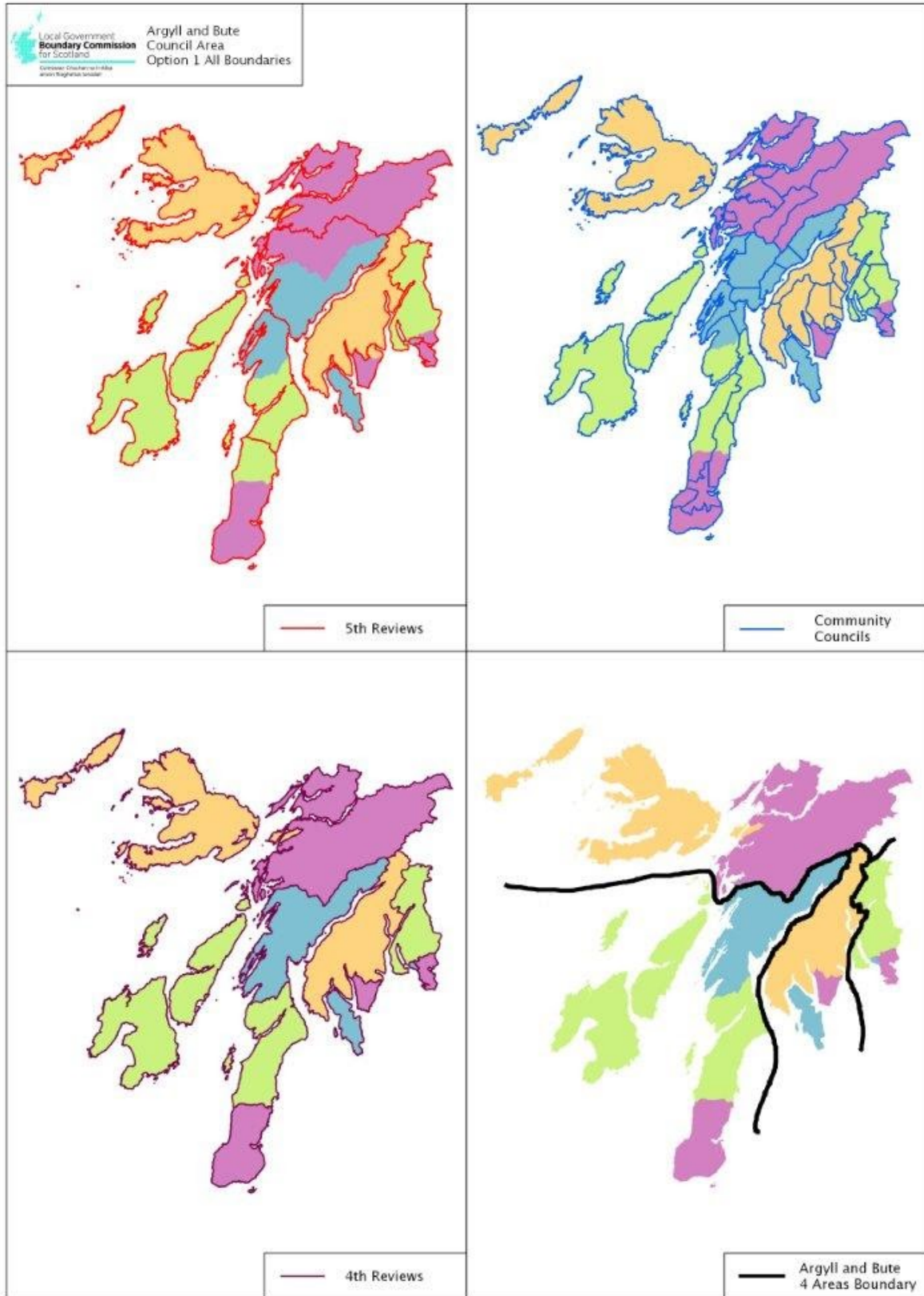
Appendix B – Option 2



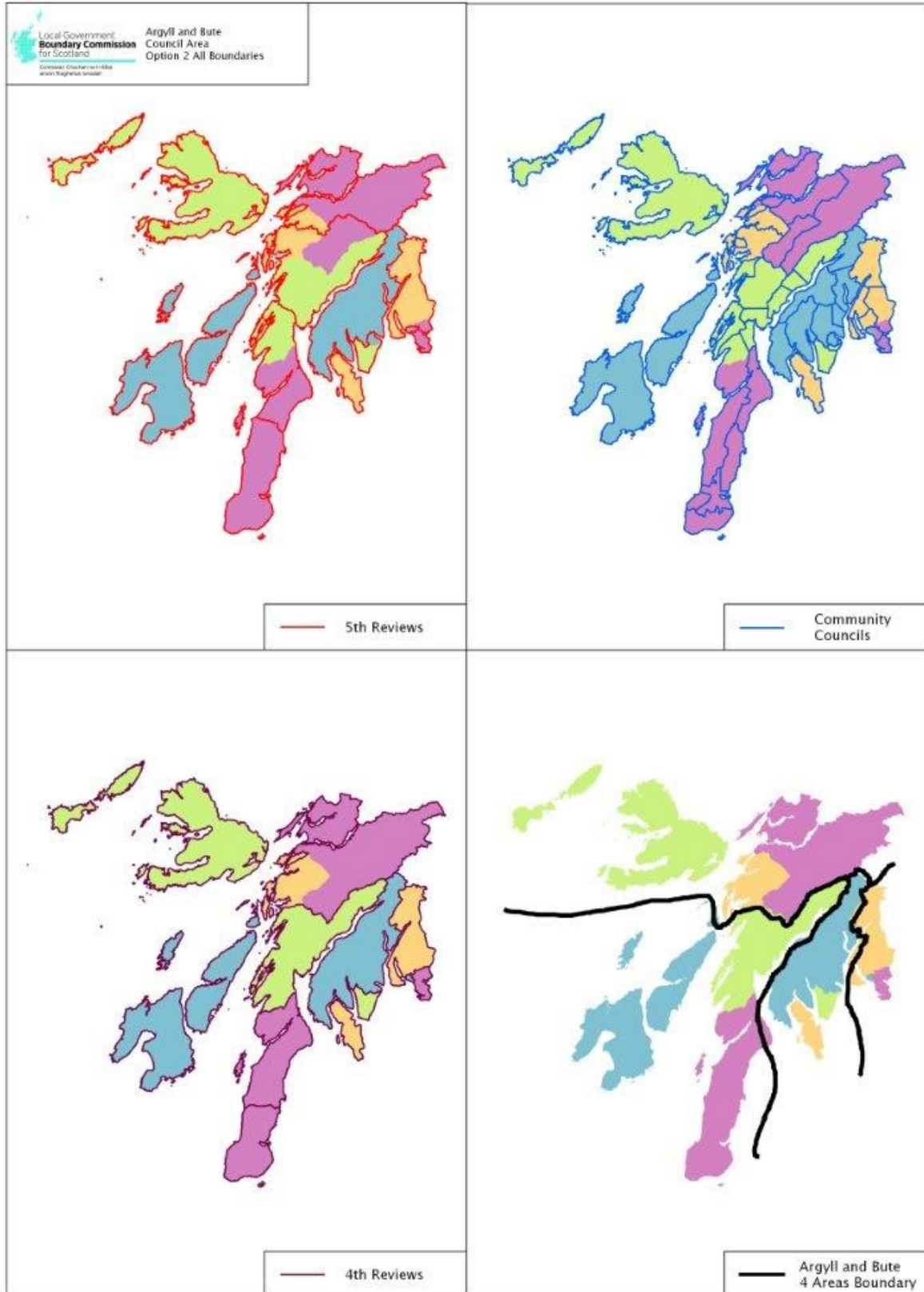
Appendix C – Option 3



Appendix D – Option 1 (All Boundaries)



Appendix E – Option 2 (All Boundaries)



Appendix F – Option 3 (All Boundaries)

