

LGBCS Paper 2526**2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
North Ayrshire council area****Purpose**

1. The Commission is invited to agree its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in North Ayrshire council area and consider whether it wishes to attend any North Ayrshire Council locality meetings in June 2020 to help publicise the public consultation phase of the review.

Background

2. At its meeting of 4 February the Commission considered Paper 2519 and four ward design options for North Ayrshire council area. The four options included:
 - Option 1 which demonstrated the status quo and existing ward boundaries that have been in place since 2017;
 - Options 2 and 3 which aligned with North Ayrshire Council locality boundaries; and
 - Option 4 which considered a North Ayrshire Council ward design suggestion from the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements.
3. The four designs offered flexibility with councillor numbers, presenting designs with 33 and 35 councillors.

Meeting with Council Officers

4. The Secretariat met with officers from North Ayrshire Council in February 2020 to informally discuss their 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. Option 1 is unchanged from Paper 2519. All three options propose 33 Councillors. Each of the options is considered in more detail below, but in summary:
 - Option 1 – Commission’s recommendations from its 5th Reviews and the existing electoral arrangements;
 - Option 2 – aligns with North Ayrshire Council locality boundaries; and
 - Option 3 – aligns with North Ayrshire Council locality boundaries except Arran. It is placed within an Ardrossan and Arran ward.

Option 1 – Recommendations from 5th Reviews/ 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 May 2017.
7. The 5th Reviews recommended an arrangement which proposed 33 councillors, representing seven 3-member wards and three 4-member wards, increasing the number of wards in the area by two and increasing councillor numbers by three.

8. During the 5th Reviews public consultation stage, there were 15 responses. The comments included a desire for ward boundaries to align with locality boundaries, suggestions for an Arran ward and comments on the proposed ward boundaries in the Garnock Valley.
9. 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	Irvine West	4	11,921	-8.0	11,525	-9.5
2	Irvine East	3	9,907	2.0	9,765	2.2
3	Kilwinning	4	13,297	2.7	12,988	1.9
4	Stevenston	3	9,509	-2.1	9,157	-4.2
5	Ardrrossan and Arran	3	9,584	-1.3	9,432	-1.3
6	Dalry and West Kilbride	3	9,951	2.4	9,877	3.4
7	Kilbirnie and Beith	3	10,501	8.1	10,097	5.7
8	North Coast and Cumbraes	4	13,524	4.4	13,455	5.6
9	Saltcoats	3	9,842	1.3	9,625	0.7
10	Irvine South	3	8,815	-9.3	9,187	-3.9
		33	106,851		105,107	

10. The advantages of Option 1 are:

- it maintains the existing electoral arrangements and may avoid confusion by retaining identifiable ward boundaries.

11. The disadvantages of Option 1 are:

- it does not consider North Ayrshire Council locality boundaries; and
- it retains a Dalry and West Kilbride ward which extends across the council area from Beith to the Ayrshire Coast, areas with few links.

Option 2

12. Option 2 proposes a ward design based on North Ayrshire Locality boundaries.

13. Option 2 proposes an arrangement with 33 councillors, representing one single-member ward, three 3-member wards, two 4-member wards and three 5-member wards retaining the existing number of councillors.

14. Option 2 retains the existing Irvine and Kilwinning wards.

15. Option 2 proposes a 5-member Garnock Valley ward and a 5-member North Coast ward, coterminous with the locality area boundary.

16. Option 2 proposes a single-member Arran ward. Variation from electoral parity is 18% but a 2-member Arran, with a total of 34 Councillors, offers variation from electoral parity of -39%. The Commission could consider special geographical circumstances for an Arran ward because Arran is remote from other North Ayrshire communities and there are few ties between Arran and the mainland. Arran also creates an easily identifiable ward.

17. Option 2 divides the Three Towns locality into two wards, it proposes a 3-member Ardrossan ward and a 5-member Saltcoats and Stevenston ward. The proposed boundary between Ardrossan and Saltcoats follows the historical burgh boundary.

18. 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	Variation from electoral parity %	Forecast Electorate	Forecast variation from electoral parity %
1	North Coast	5	17,766	9.7	17,657	10.9
2	Garnock Valley	5	16,138	-0.3	15,703	-1.4
3	Ardrossan	3	8,389	-13.6	8,047	-15.8
4	Arran	1	3,820	18.0	3,858	21.1
5	Saltcoats and Stevenson	5	16,798	3.8	16,377	2.8
6	Kilwinning	4	13,297	2.7	12,988	1.9
7	Irvine West	4	11,921	-8.0	11,525	-9.5
8	Irvine East	3	9,907	2.0	9,765	2.2
9	Irvine South	3	8,815	-9.3	9,187	-3.9
		33	106,851		105,107	

19. The advantages of Option 2 are it:

- retains four of the existing ward boundaries; and
- follows locality boundaries and therefore will likely be supported by North Ayrshire Council and local community groups.

20. The disadvantages of Option 2 are:

- variation from electoral parity is high in the proposed single-member Arran ward.

Option 3

21. Option 3 is very similar to Option 2 but it places Arran within an Ardrossan and Arran ward.

22. Option 3 proposes an arrangement with 33 councillors, representing two 3-member wards, three 4-member wards and three 5-member wards retaining the existing number of councillors.

23. 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	Variation from electoral parity %	Forecast Electorate	Forecast variation from electoral parity %
1	North Coast	5	17,766	9.7	17,657	10.9
2	Garnock Valley	5	16,138	-0.3	15,703	-1.4

3	Ardrossan and Arran	4	12,209	-5.7	11,905	-6.6
4	Saltcoats and Stevenson	5	16,798	3.8	16,377	2.8
5	Kilwinning	4	13,297	2.7	12,988	1.9
6	Irvine West	4	11,921	-8.0	11,525	-9.5
7	Irvine East	3	9,907	2.0	9,765	2.2
8	Irvine South	3	8,815	-9.3	9,187	-3.9
		33	106,851		105,107	

24. The advantages of Option 3 are it:

- retains four of the existing ward boundaries;
- mainly follows locality boundaries; and
- improves variation from parity in Arran from Option 2.

25. The disadvantages of Option 3 are:

- it proposes an Ardrossan and Arran ward and therefore does not exactly follow all North Ayrshire locality boundaries.

Conclusions

Councillor numbers

26. The Commission's methodology recommends 36 councillors for North Ayrshire Council. The 5th Reviews applied a 10% cap on change, increasing councillor numbers from 30 to 33.

27. North Ayrshire Council advised they are flexible with between 33 and 36 councillors. All three options propose 33 councillors, although Option 2 could consider a 2-member Arran ward with 34 councillors.

Islands

28. Cumbrae with 1,046 electors has too few electors for a single-member ward.

29. Option 2 proposes a single-member Arran ward with variation from electoral parity of 18%. Option 2 could propose a two-member Arran, with a total of 34 Councillors but it worsens variation of electoral parity at -39%. North Ayrshire Council prefer a 2-member Arran ward.

30. Arran and Cumbrae could be combined to create an island ward but there are no ferry links between these islands.

31. Arran is linked by ferry to Ardrossan on the mainland but there is little else that these communities have in common. Options 1 and 3 both propose an Ardrossan and Arran ward.

North Ayrshire Localities

32. North Ayrshire Council asked the Commission to consider locality boundaries when designing ward boundaries because localities consider both the local geography of the area and local community ties.

33. There are six North Ayrshire locality areas: Arran, North Coast, Kilwinning, Irvine, Three Towns and Garnock Valley. Localities are used for community planning and are chaired by a Councillor.

34. North Ayrshire Council advised that localities are recognised by local communities and public bodies. In their response to a 5th Reviews consultation stage, North Ayrshire Council advised they wished to align ward boundaries with locality boundaries, their response was supported by other public bodies including: NHS Ayrshire and Arran; Police Scotland; Scottish Enterprise; Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; Strathclyde Partnership for Transport; Third Sector Interface; Ayrshire College; Irvine Bay Regeneration Company and KA Leisure.
35. The Garnock Valley locality places Beith, Dalry and Kilbirnie within the same ward. During the Commission's 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements there was opposition to proposals that split these communities between wards.
36. The Irvine locality contains approximately 30,000 electors and North Ayrshire Council suggested retaining the existing three wards which sit within the Irvine locality.
37. The Council also suggested retaining the existing Kilwinning ward which is coterminous with the Kilwinning locality.
38. The North Coast locality follows the topography of the area, the hills above Largs and Fairlie.
39. The Three Towns locality contains Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston. The existing ward boundary between Saltcoats and Ardrossan splits a historical burgh boundary but options 2 and 3 both consider the burgh boundary. Saltcoats has closer links to Stevenston than Ardrossan, therefore Options 2 and 3 both propose a Saltcoats and Stevenston ward. Stevenston has an electorate of approx. 7,000 electors, too few electors for a 3-member ward although the Commission could consider a 2-member Stevenston ward.
40. The boundary between the Garnock Valley and Three Towns locality extends to higher ground. A more easily identifiable boundary would be for the boundary to continue along the A78 road. The Three Towns locality boundary is deliberately extended to incorporate and receive funding from a wind-farm.
41. The Arran locality is discussed above under the Islands section.

Legislation - Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill

42. The expected introduction of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill will allow the Commission to consider greater flexibility with 2 or 5-member wards.
43. Option 1 proposes 3 or 4-member wards.
44. Option 2 proposes: a single member ward; three 3-member wards; two 4-member wards; and three 5-member wards.
45. Option 3 proposes: two 3-member wards; three 4-member wards; and three 5-member wards.

Electorate and forecasting

46. Legislation states that the Commission must consider a 5-year electorate forecast when developing its proposals.
47. The electorate of North Ayrshire is expected to decline by approximately 1,700 electors over the next 5 years. There are no significant electoral changes within any single ward.

Options summary

48. All three options retain the existing Irvine and Kilwinning ward boundaries and propose 33 councillors.
49. Option 1 retains the existing electoral arrangements but it breaks local community ties within the proposed Dalry and West Kilbride ward because there are no links between Beith and communities on the Ayrshire coast. They are two different geographical areas, coastal West Kilbride and upland Garnock Valley.
50. Option 2 follows North Ayrshire Council locality area boundaries. Option 2 proposes a single-member Arran ward with variation from electoral parity of nearly +20%. A 2-member Arran ward, with 34 councillors, would offer variation from parity of nearly -40%.
51. Option 3 considers North Ayrshire Council locality area boundaries but places Arran within an Ardrossan and Arran ward to improve variation from electoral parity.

Public consultation - Locality Meetings

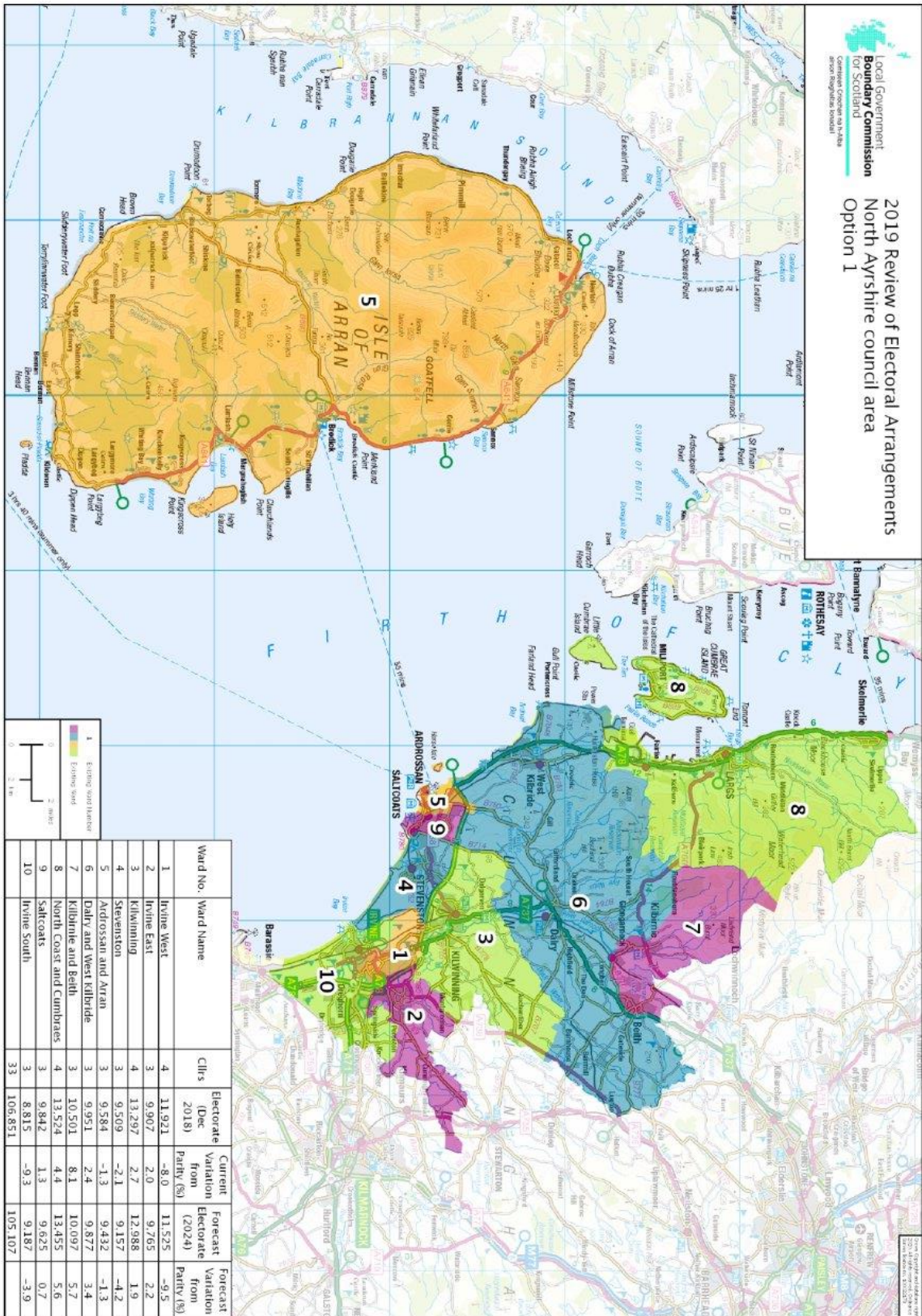
52. The Commission may wish to consider attending a North Ayrshire Locality conference. Unfortunately the North Ayrshire Community and Locality Planning Conference was recently held in January 2020 and the next conference will not be held until 2021.
53. North Ayrshire Council have suggested that the Commission could attend individual Locality Partnership meetings to be held in June 2020. The meeting venues and dates are:
- Kilwinning – 1 June 2020 at 7pm in Kilwinning Academy
 - North Coast – 2 June 2020 at 6pm in Cumbrae Parish Church
 - Arran – 3 June 2020 at 4.45pm, Venue tbc however will be on Arran
 - Irvine – 15 June 2020 at 6pm in Dreghorn Fire Station
 - Garnock Valley – 16 June 2020 at 7pm in St Bridget's Primary
 - Three Towns - 17 June 2020 at 6pm, Ardrossan Civic Centre

Recommendations

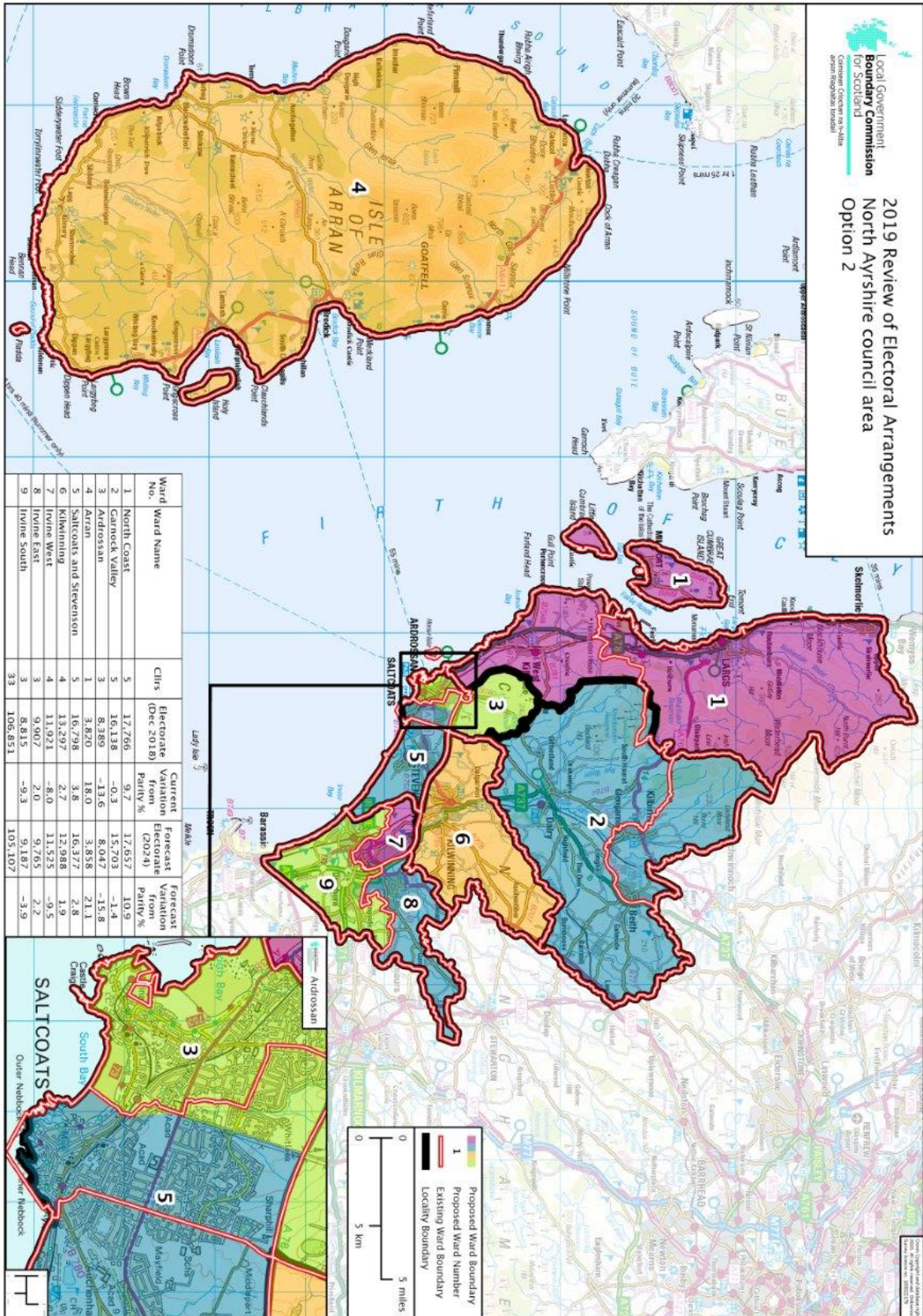
54. The Commission is invited to agree its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in North Ayrshire council area and whether it wishes to attend North Ayrshire Council locality meetings in June 2020.

Secretariat
April 2020

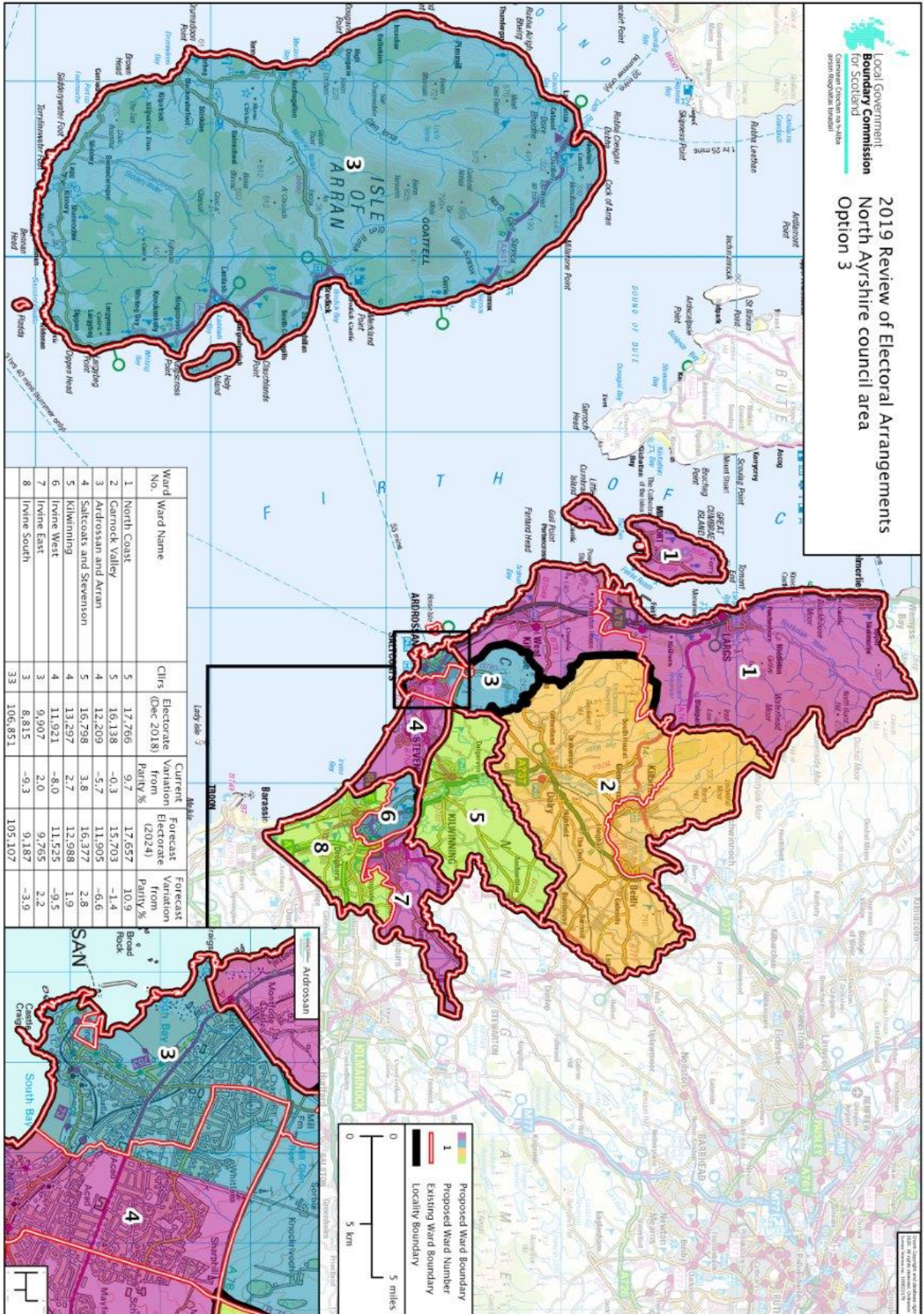
Appendix A – Option 1 (Existing Electoral Arrangements)



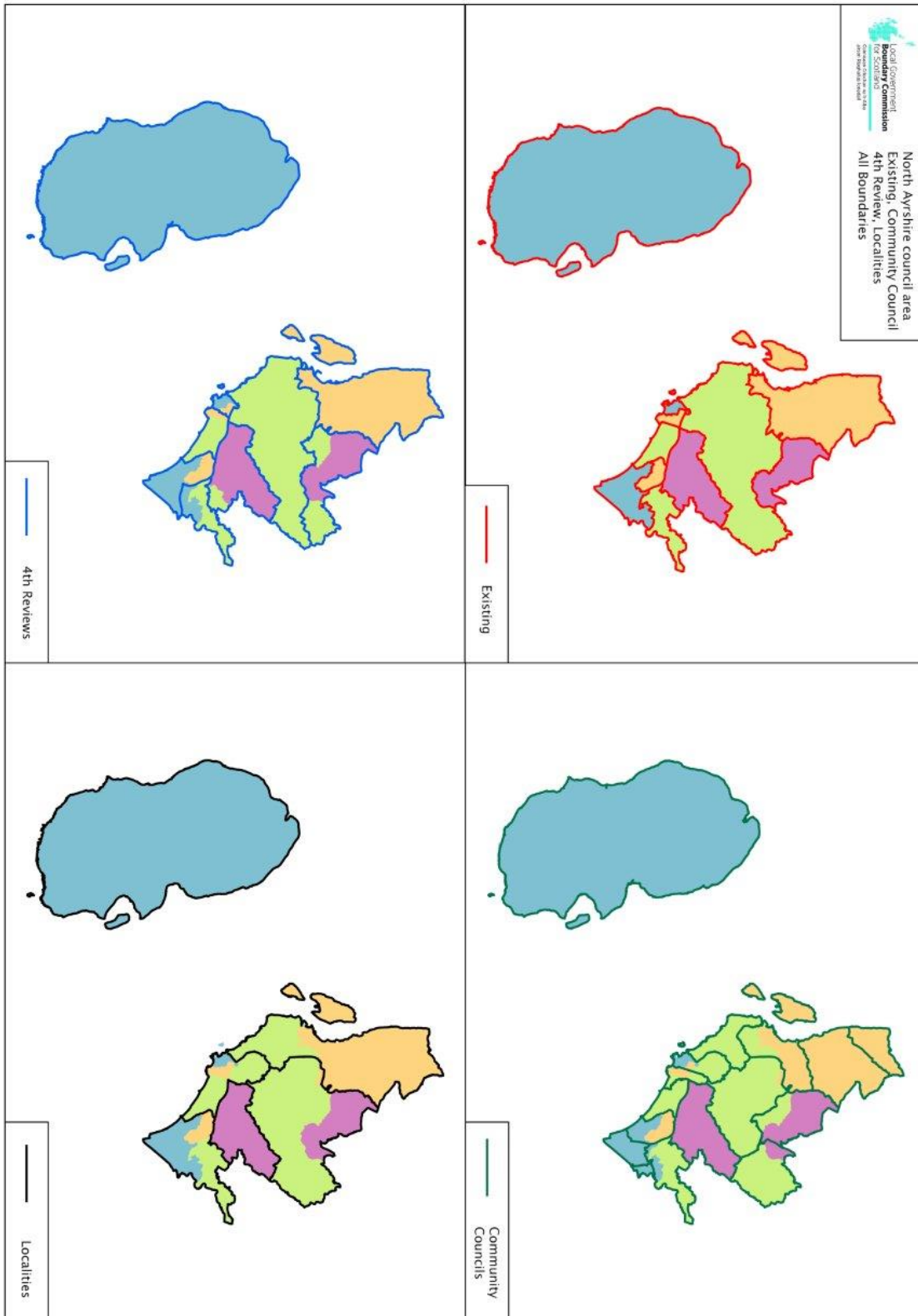
Appendix B – Option 2



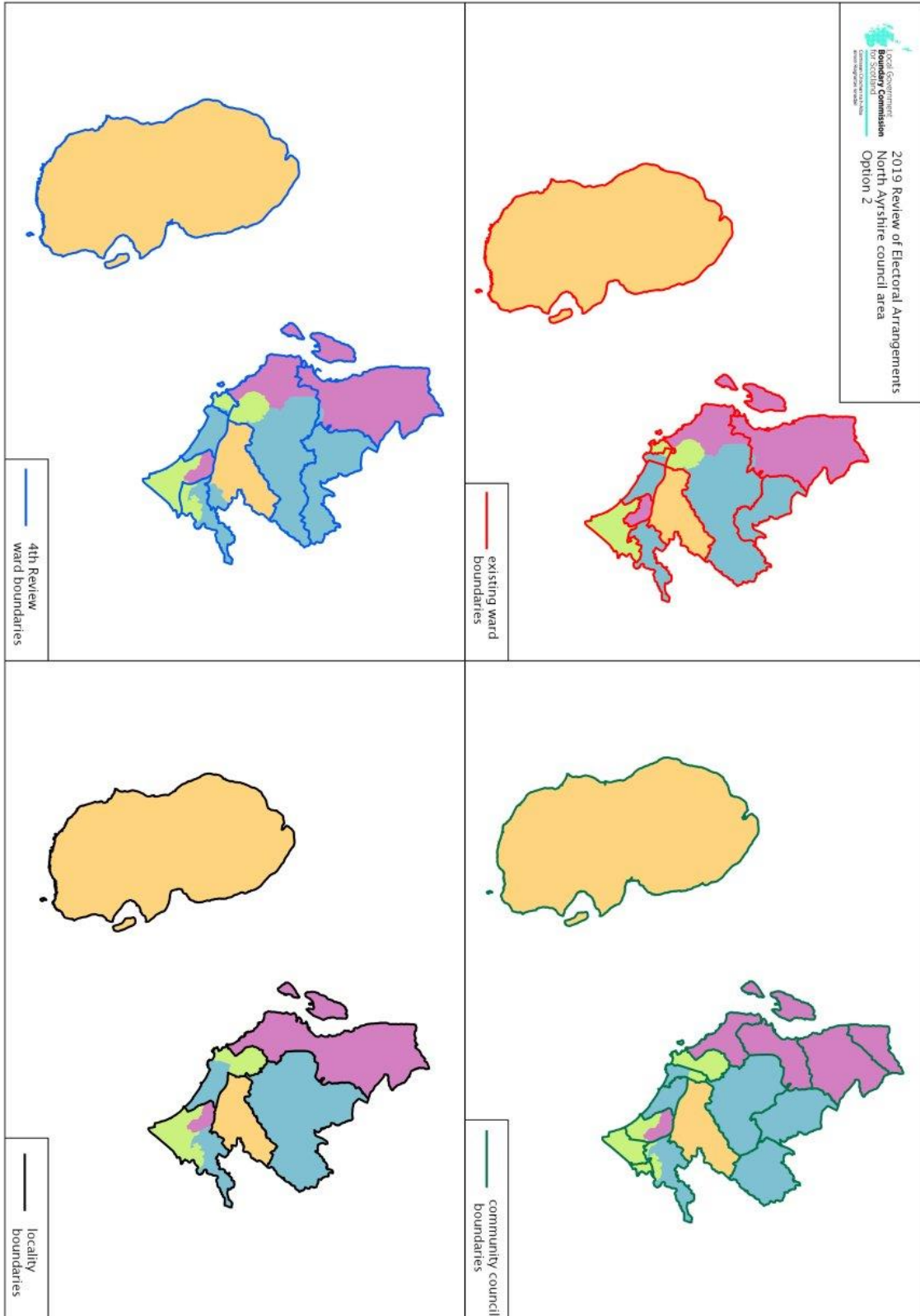
Appendix C – Option 3



Appendix D - Option 1 (All Boundaries)



Appendix E - Option 2 (All Boundaries)



Appendix F - Option 3 (All Boundaries)

