

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Consideration of Initial Proposals for North Ayrshire council area

Action required

1. The Commission is invited to consider the response from North Ayrshire Council to the consultation on its Initial Proposals for electoral arrangements and consider whether it wishes to make changes before the public consultation.

Background

2. The Commission agreed its Initial Proposals for North Ayrshire council area at its meeting of 7 April 2020 (see Paper LGBCS 2526).
3. North Ayrshire Council were consulted on the Initial Proposals for a 2-month period, from 16 July to 30 September 2020.
4. The Commission's methodology for determining councillor numbers proposed 36 councillors for North Ayrshire council area. However, in developing its proposals, a better ward design was achievable with 33 councillors and accordingly we consulted on an electoral arrangement for 33 councillors representing three 5-member wards, two 4-member wards, three 3-member wards and one single-member ward, maintaining existing councillor numbers.
5. The Initial Proposals follow North Ayrshire Council's Localities which are based on local communities and are recognised by local communities and other public bodies.
6. A map of the Initial Proposals is shown at Appendix A. A map of the existing electoral arrangements is shown at Appendix D.
7. The Commission's proposals for the council area:
 - take into account North Ayrshire Council's Localities and the local ties and communities that they represent;
 - present a single member Arran ward reflecting its island status. We considered the case for a 2-member Arran ward but concluded that the special geographic circumstances of Arran did not justify a forecast variation from parity of -39%. An alternative would have been to retain the link between Arran and the mainland but this did not seem to us to recognise the importance of Arran's island communities in light of the Islands (Scotland) Act;
 - take account of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act that will allow the use of 2-member and 5-member wards to design that wards that better reflect local ties in the Garnock Valley, North Coast and Three Towns;
 - present a ward boundary between Ardrossan (ward 3) and Saltcoats and Stevenston (ward 5) that follows local community council area and historical burgh boundaries; and
 - make no changes to the boundaries for the existing Irvine and Kilwinning wards.
8. The table below details the electorates with actual and forecast variation from parity of the proposed wards.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Variation from Electoral Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2024)	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 Stevenston	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	

9. In their response to the consultation, see Appendix B, North Ayrshire Council support the Initial Proposals to align ward boundaries with North Ayrshire Localities but ask the Commission to make a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Garnock Valley and North Coast wards to follow the watershed boundary of the Localities.
10. The small area contains no electors but does contain two windfarms. The Council wish to align the ward boundaries with Localities in this area because windfarm community benefit monies are distributed by a Locality Partnership, these benefits are distributed by the Locality which is overlooked and impacted by the windfarm.
11. North Ayrshire Council made no other suggestions on the proposals.

Consideration of response

12. North Ayrshire Council asked the Commission to make a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed North Coast and Garnock Valley wards. The Initial Proposals follow the existing ward boundary, while the Locality boundary follows the watershed.
13. North Ayrshire Council's suggestion would affect no electors and align all ward boundaries with North Ayrshire Localities. It would, however, ensure that two wind turbines are sited in the Locality Partnership which they overlook, ensuring that community benefits from the windfarm go to that community and are distributed by the relevant Partnership.
14. Appendix C shows the North Ayrshire Council suggestion which amends the boundary on an upland area by Blaeloch Hill between Fairlie and Kilbirnie.
15. North Ayrshire Council have sought to align ward boundaries with their Locality boundaries for several years. In their response to the Commission's 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements consultation, North Ayrshire Council stated their desire to align ward and Locality boundaries. Their response was supported by other public bodies such as Police Scotland, NHS, Strathclyde Fire & Rescue. Ayrshire College etc. The Commission was unable to align ward and Locality boundaries during the 5th Reviews

because it was limited to 3 or 4-member wards. The introduction of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 has enabled the Commission to propose 5-member wards in North Ayrshire that can follow Locality boundaries.

16. Localities are recognised by local communities and follow the geography of the area. Localities are used for community planning and empowerment.

Recommendations

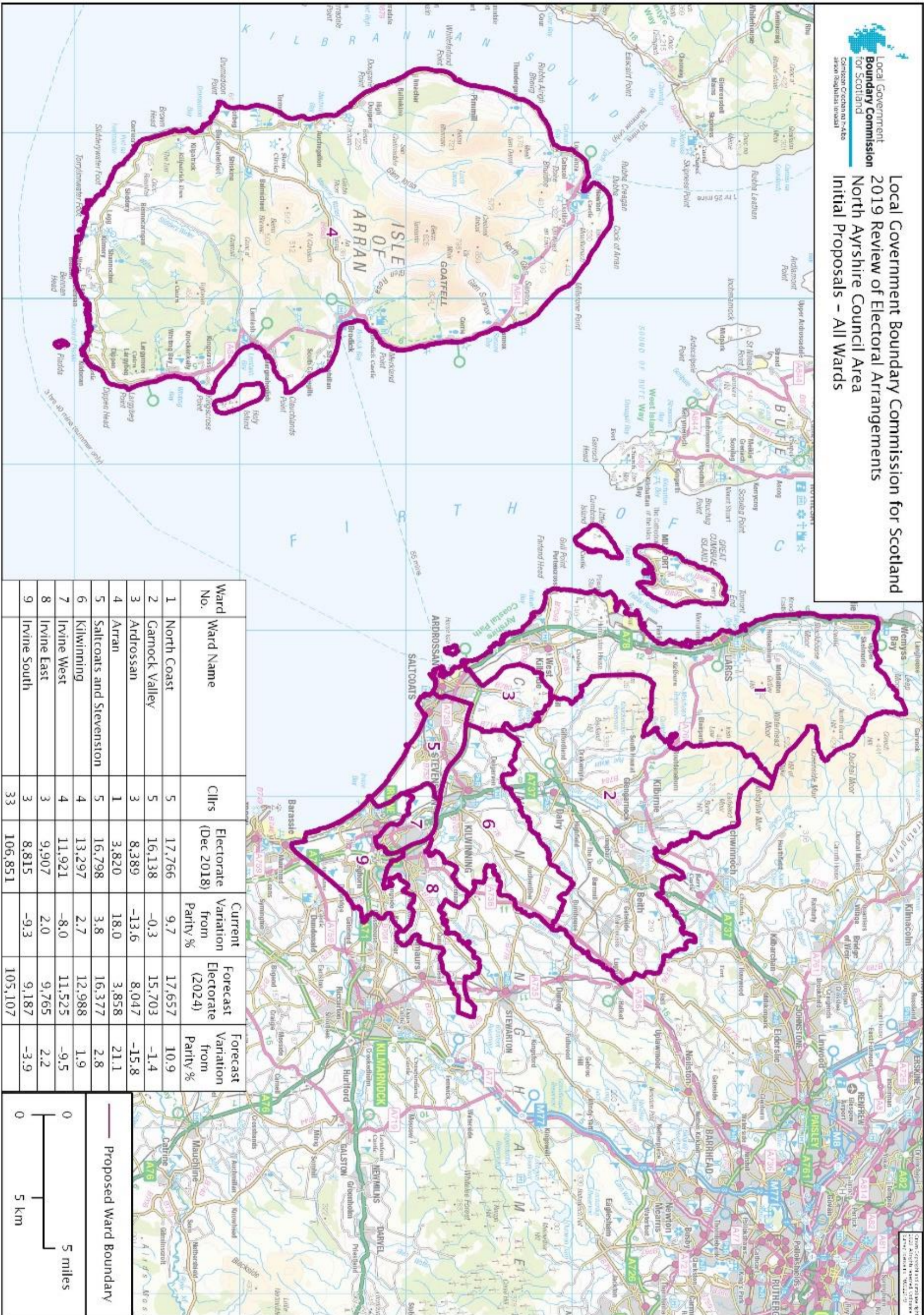
17. The Commission is invited to agree its Initial Proposals for the public consultation stage of the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in North Ayrshire council area.

18. The Secretariat recommends that the Commission:

- adopts the minor alternative suggestion from North Ayrshire Council to amend the boundary between the proposed North Coast and Garnock Valley wards to ensure all ward boundaries align with Localities; and
- subject to that amendment consults on its proposals unchanged from the council consultation.

Secretariat
October 2020

Appendix A - Initial Proposals



Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
 North Ayrshire Council Area
 Initial Proposals - All Wards

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24 September 2020

By email only: [REDACTED]
Ms Isabel Drummond-Murray



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Dear Isabel

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – North Ayrshire Council area

Thank you for your letter of 16 July consulting with the Council on the Commission's proposals for North Ayrshire wards. Can I again thank you for extending the period for response to 30 September to enable this to be considered by a meeting of full Council.

Council met yesterday and agreed to support the Boundary Commission's proposals for all wards subject to one change. The change is that of the boundary between the North Coast and Garnock Valley where the Commission's proposals for a small area south of the Muirhead Reservoir on the A760, depart from the watershed and the Locality Boundary. I attach a plan which shows the section of moorland which is currently excluded from the ward 2 boundary. This area contains no electorate so there should be no impact on issues of parity.

The background to this request is not simply one of aligning ward boundaries with those of North Ayrshire Localities. The issue of windfarms was a factor in determining the boundaries of Locality Partnerships. If Locality Partnerships were to be responsible for the distribution of community benefits, it was important that the boundaries of Locality Partnerships followed watersheds. In other words, if a windfarm was located on one side of a ridge line where it looked down onto a locality, then in future, community benefits should go to that community and its Locality Partnership. That had been a particularly sensitive issue for the Garnock Valley where none of the Kelburn windfarm money went to Dalry, the community which it overlooks.

The problem here is that the slight alteration has removed two wind turbines which look down on the Garnock Valley. This was identified by an eagle-eyed Dalry resident with whom a local councillor had shared the plans. Given that the area does not have any electors, I would hope this change can be accommodated.

I can confirm that this is the only change currently sought.

The Council appreciate the Commission's work in aligning wards with our Locality boundaries, which was our main ask at the last review. In case anyone raises this at the second stage of consultation, it may be helpful to reiterate the reasons why this is essential.

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The need to align wards with the 6 Localities of North Ayrshire recognises that increasingly the business of the Council, Community Planning Partners and community organisations would be done on a Locality basis. This has increasingly been the case since the Commission's last review. Audit Scotland's 2020 Best Value Report on the Council notes that our approach to community empowerment through Locality Planning is recognised by the Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) as sector leading.

At its heart, Locality Planning is about all Community Planning Partners and Communities agreeing the priorities relevant to the needs of their individual Locality. Thereafter everyone, Council, CPP and Community Groups, work together to deliver outcomes which address the agreed priorities. The reasons why wards and Locality boundaries need to align are: -

- Increasingly service delivery and resource allocation by the Council and Community Planning Partners will be aligned along Locality boundaries.
- Councillors need to be able to work along Locality boundaries. Where Councillors represent more than one Locality, not only do they have responsibilities to different Localities (which may even conflict), but time constraints make it difficult for them to be fully involved in the overall planning and allocation of resources to different Localities. For example, the current Ward 6, cuts across three separate Localities, each of which have differing needs and priorities.
- As communities with similar interests become empowered, and work in partnership with Council and CPP, it will be essential that Members are able to find time to support communities and their joint working in the Locality. This becomes difficult if Members are split across different Localities.
- This is relevant to those considerations which the Commission must have regard to, namely to fix boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable, and to local ties. The six Localities of North Ayrshire do exactly this. They are not merely areas which share a common demographic profile. The reason that they share a common demographic profile is often due to geographical factors, such as the hill barrier lying between the North Coast and the Garnock Valley or the geographical separation of Arran. That in turn has led to historical differences and local ties in terms of industry and agriculture, such as the development of Irvine as a port and the development of the ICI Ardeer munitions factory on a more isolated promontory adjacent to Stevenston. These are areas which have easily identifiable boundaries, local ties and special geographical considerations, not just similar demographic profiles.
- The fact that Locality boundaries were subject to extensive public consultation and acceptance, is relevant to the legislative factor of 'local ties'.

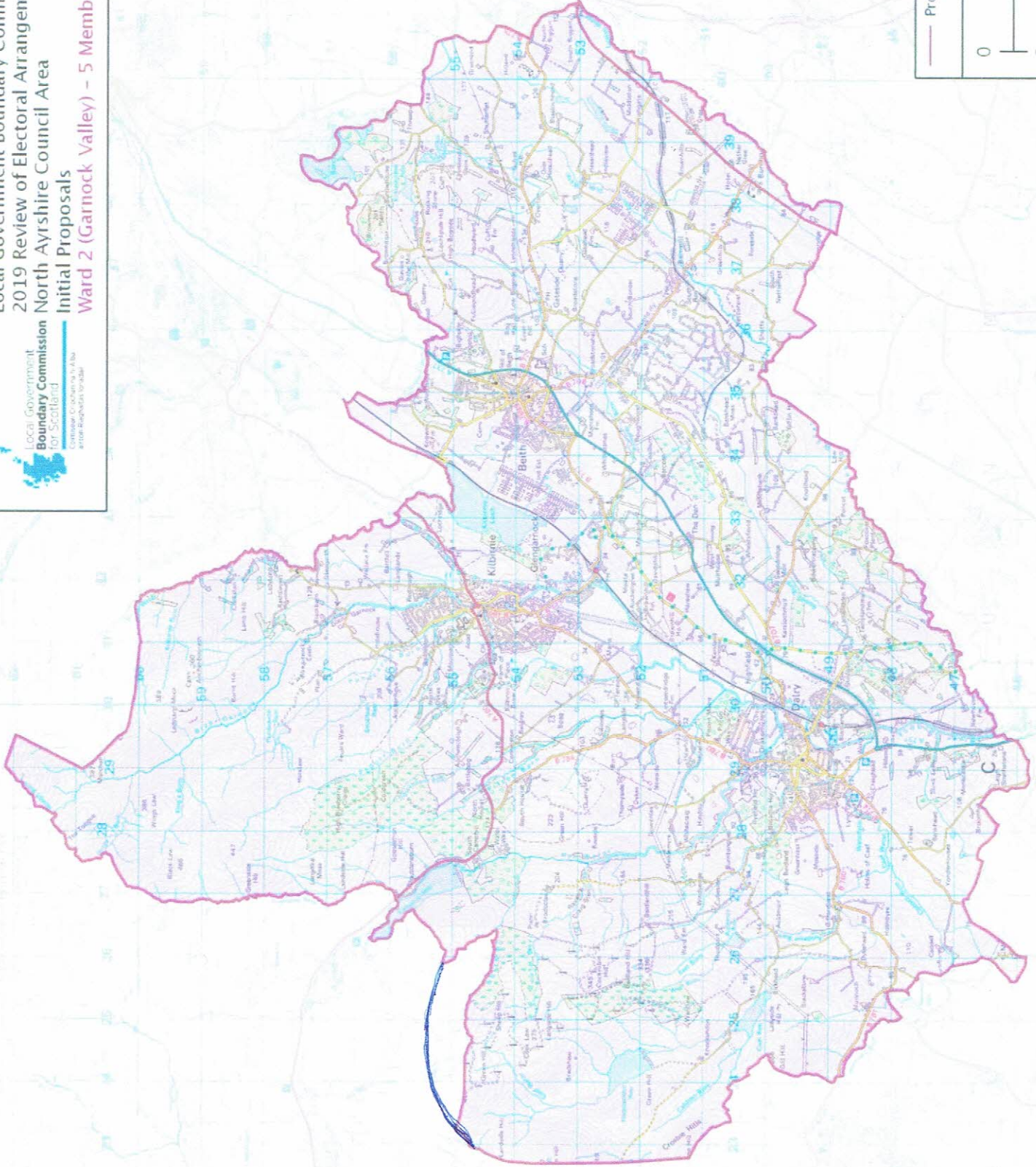
I hope this helps, but please do not hesitate to get in touch should you need any further clarification

Yours sincerely

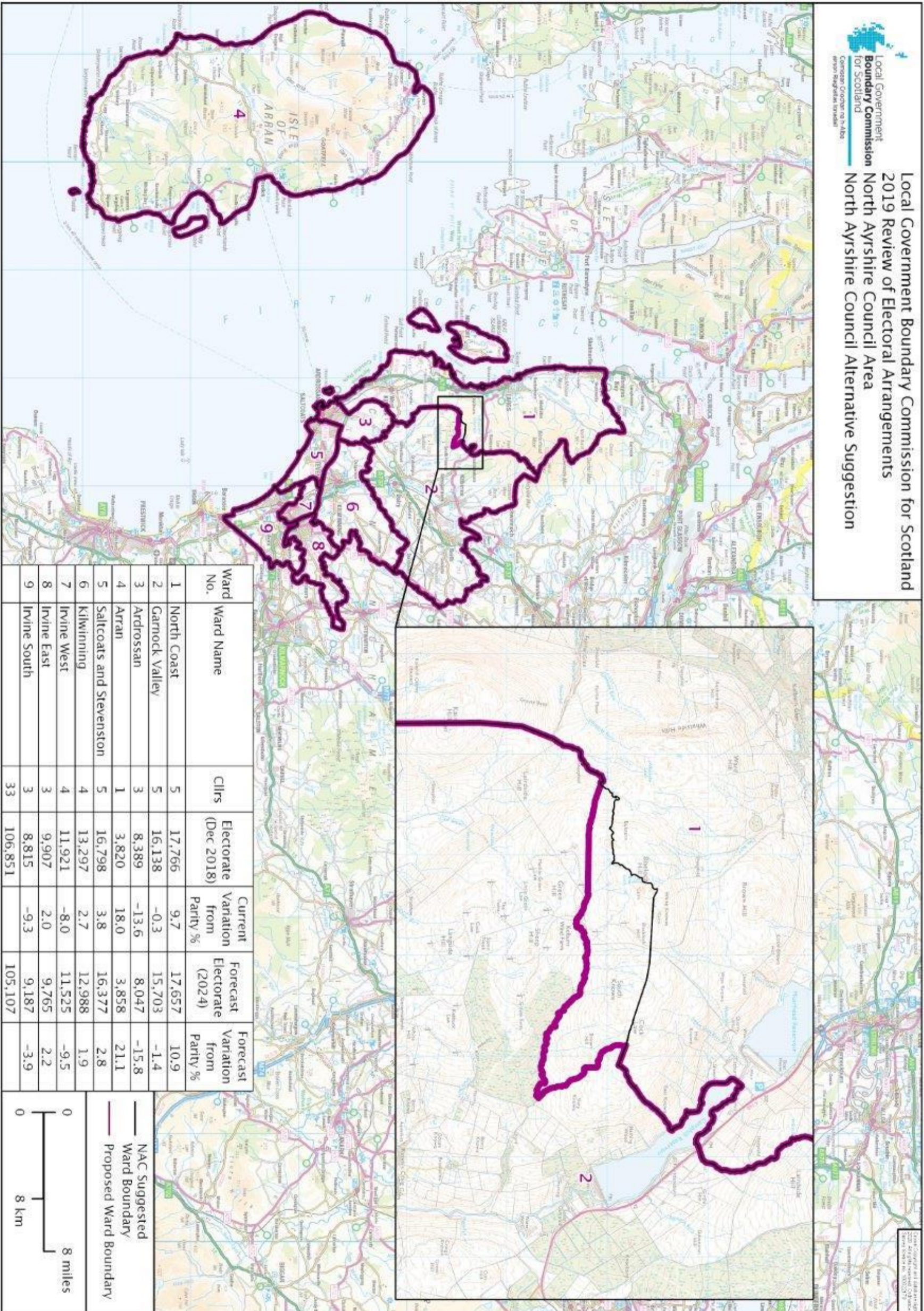


Andrew Fraser
Head of Service, Democratic Services

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
North Ayrshire Council Area
Initial Proposals
Ward 2 (Garnock Valley) – 5 Member Ward



Appendix C - North Ayrshire Council alternative suggestion



Appendix D – North Ayrshire Council – existing electoral arrangements

