

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements Final Recommendations for North Ayrshire council area

For information

1. The Commission is invited to consider responses to the public consultation on its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements in North Ayrshire council area and agree if any changes are required to its Initial Proposals and agree its Final Recommendations.

Electoral arrangements at the start of this review

2. At the start of the review North Ayrshire council area was represented by 33 councillors representing 10 wards.
3. The electorates and associated variation from electoral 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 2018)	Current Variation from Electoral Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2024)	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	Ardrossan 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	

Initial Proposals – Consultation with Councils

4. The Commission agreed to adopt its methodology for councillor numbers from its 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for this review. The 5th Reviews' methodology placed North Ayrshire council area with other more urban council areas with above average levels of deprivation according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), with a ratio of electors per councillor of 3,000:1.
5. The methodology recommended 36 councillors for North Ayrshire council area ($106,851 \div 3,000 = 36$). The 5th Reviews applied a 10% cap on change, increasing councillor numbers from 30 to 33 in 2017.
6. The Initial Proposals presented an electoral arrangement of 33 councillors representing nine wards. They:
 - took into account North Ayrshire Council's localities and the local ties and communities that they represent;
 - presented a single member Arran ward reflecting its island status. The Commission 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 recognise the importance of Arran’s island communities in light of the Islands (Scotland) Act;

- took 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;
- presented a ward boundary between Ardrossan (ward 3) and Saltcoats and Stevenston (ward 5) that follows local community council area and historical burgh boundaries; and
- made no changes to the boundaries for the existing Irvine and Kilwinning wards.

7. The electorates and associated variation from electoral parity for the consultation with North Ayrshire Council are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendix B.

Ward No.	Ward Name	CLRs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current 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	

8. The Commission consulted on its Initial Proposals with North Ayrshire Council for a 2–month period from 16 July to 30 September 2020.

9. In their response to the consultation, North Ayrshire Council supported the Initial Proposals to align ward boundaries with North Ayrshire Localities but asked the Commission to make a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Garnock Valley and North Coast wards by a wind farm.

Initial Proposals – Public Consultation

10. The Commission’s Initial Proposals for public consultation included the minor amendment to a ward boundary as suggested by North Ayrshire Council, which made no difference to the electorate figures. The Initial Proposals were otherwise unchanged from the consultation with North Ayrshire Council.

11. The 12–week public consultation was conducted from 4 November 2020 until 26 January 2021.

Summary of responses – Public Consultation

12. 72 responses were received with 67 comments submitted to the consultation site. Five were submitted by email or letter. 70 responses were submitted by members of the public, one was received from a community council and one

from a community group. A spreadsheet of all responses has been sent to the Commission and this paper captures the main themes and arguments presented.

13. We asked respondents if they are responding on behalf of an organisation. Two community groups responded to the public consultation. North Ayrshire Council did not respond during the public consultation nor did any elected representatives. All responses to the consultation are considered equally.

Key themes

14. The main themes raised during the consultation were:

- support for 1-member Arran ward;
- suggestions for 2-member Arran ward;
- support for Arran and Ardrossan being placed in separate wards;
- support for retaining the existing Kilwinning ward;
- suggestion for a single member Cumbrae ward;
- suggestions to merge the three Irvine wards into two 5-member Irvine wards.

15. Overall most responses supported the Commission's proposals for councillor numbers and ward boundaries.

General comments

16. 45% of all respondents responded to the question, "What general comments would you like to make regarding the Commission's proposals for councillor numbers and wards in North Ayrshire council area?"

17. Most of the general comments support the Commission's Initial Proposals.

18. Other comments repeated observations on specific wards or stated the review was a waste of money.

19. One respondent raised concerns with proportionality with the Commission proposing three 5-member wards. They believe 5-member wards will disadvantage independent candidates because the vote for the local independent councillors would be diluted and political parties would be much better funded during election campaigns.

20. One respondent suggested creating 6-member wards but this is out-with the legislation for this review.

Comments on individual wards

21. The consultation then asked respondents to comment on individual wards. These are summarised below by individual wards or groups of neighbouring wards.

North Coast ward

22. The Commission's proposed 5-member North Coast ward contains all of the existing North Coast and Cumbraes ward and part of the existing Dalry and West Kilbride ward.

23. 31% of all respondents commented on the proposed ward.

24. Some responses made alternative suggestions for a single-member Cumbrae ward and there were also suggestions for an Arran and Cumbrae ward.
25. There are 1,069 electors on Cumbrae. A single-member Cumbrae ward would offer variation of parity of -65%, with a total of 34 councillors. A 2-member Arran and Cumbrae would offer variation of parity of over -20%, with a total of 34 councillors.
26. Cumbrae is served by a short ferry from Largs on the mainland. There is no direct ferry link between the islands of Arran and Cumbrae.

Garnock Valley ward

27. The Commission's proposed 5-member Garnock Valley ward contains all of the existing Kilbirnie and Beith ward and part of the existing Dalry and West Kilbride ward.
28. 25% of all respondents commented on the proposed ward.
29. Two respondents were supportive of the proposed Garnock Valley ward. One felt the old boundary of Dalry and West Kilbride made no sense and the other stated they would like the boundary changed for political reasons.
30. One respondent felt the Garnock Valley covered too large a geographical area for 5 councillors to represent it.
31. The area of the proposed Garnock Valley ward is 156 km². The proposed North Coast ward is slightly larger at 160km². Arran is nearly three times larger than the Garnock Valley at 439 km². The Garnock Valley has a good road network, the A737 links Beith and Dalry. An A road also serves Kilbirnie. The Garnock Valley contains large areas of moorland to the north and west of Kilbirnie which contain no electors. The Commission could consider dividing the Garnock Valley into smaller wards. Variation from electoral parity for a 2-member Beith ward and a 3-member Kilbirnie and Dalry is shown in the table below but there was no strong support for this suggestion.

Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Variation from Parity %
Kilbirnie and Dalry	3	10,338	6.4
Beith	2	5,800	-10.4

32. Other comments stated councillors should reside in the ward they represent and for councillors to reside within each town of the Garnock Valley.

Ardrossan ward

33. The proposed 3-member Ardrossan ward boundary follows the burgh boundary between Ardrossan and Saltcoats. The ward splits the existing island-mainland Ardrossan and Arran ward.
34. 19% of all respondents commented on this ward.
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35. Most comments were supportive of the proposed 3-member Ardrossan ward.
36. One respondent suggested a 2-member Ardrossan ward, another respondent suggested more councillors for Ardrossan.
37. Two respondents suggested that the ward boundary should follow the A78 road.
38. The proposed ward boundary is coterminous with the North Ayrshire Locality boundary and extends beyond the A78 to include a windfarm which generates income for the local area.

Arran ward

39. The proposed 1-member Arran ward splits the existing island-mainland Ardrossan and Arran ward.
40. 56% of all respondents commented on the proposed Arran ward.
41. Nearly an equal number of respondents supported either a 1-member or a 2-member Arran ward.
42. The respondents supportive of a 1-member Arran ward stated an Arran councillor will be able to focus solely on island issues.
43. A number of respondents suggested a 2-member Arran ward. Their arguments included:
- a 1-member Arran ward is against the spirit of the Islands Act;
 - a 1-member ward defeats the purpose of proportional representation;
 - a 1-member ward would result in under representation in both numbers and possibly less experience or knowledge with one rather than two councillors' breadth of views;
 - comparisons with island council areas with ratios of 800 electors per councillor;
 - Arran covers a large geographical area;
 - population increases due to tourism;
 - suggestion for a 2-member Arran and Cumbrae ward; and
 - lack of representation should a councillor be sick, on holiday or be in a dispute with an islander.
44. The table below shows a 2-member Arran ward and a total of 34 councillors. A 2-member Arran ward offer variation from electoral parity of nearly -40%.

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2	Garnock Valley	5	16,138	2.7	15,703	1.6
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5	Saltcoats and Stevenston	5	16,798	6.9	16,377	6.0
6	Kilwinning	4	13,297	5.8	12,988	5.0
7	Irvine West	4	11,921	-5.2	11,525	-6.8

8	Irvine East	3	9,907	5.1	9,765	5.3
9	Irvine South	3	8,815	-6.5	9,187	-0.9
		34	106,851		105,107	

45. The Commission considered a 2-member Arran ward when developing its proposals 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 an Arran and Ardrossan ward.

46. During the council consultation stage of the review, North Ayrshire Council was content with a 1-member Arran ward.

Transport links

47. The Arran coastal road is approximately 56 miles long. It takes 2 hours to drive around Arran according to AA Route Planner.

48. The Arran to Ardrossan ferry journey takes 55 minutes. The ferry journey from Lochranza to Claonaig (Kintyre) takes 30 minutes.

49. Some respondents made comparisons with other island areas that have a ratio of electors per councillor of 800:1 and they suggested Arran is treated the same. The Review of Electoral Arrangements in Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area had a ratio of electors per councillor of 800:1 but the ferry journey from Ullapool on the mainland to Stornoway is 2 hours and 45 minutes and the council area contains many island and dispersed communities which cover a very large area with poor transport links.

50. A 2-member Arran ward with 34 councillors would offer variation from electoral parity over 10% in three wards within the council area. The Initial Proposals presented variation from electoral parity over 10% in two wards.

51. A 2-member Arran and Cumbrae ward would offer variation of parity of -22%, with a total of 34 councillors.

52. A couple of respondents flagged up that the population of Arran increases due to tourism. According to Visit Scotland the most popular months to visit are between May and September but no actual visitor numbers for Arran are readily available.

53. One respondent suggested linking Arran with Argyll and Bute council area but this is outwith the legislation for this review.

Saltcoats and Stevenston ward

54. The Commission's proposed 5-member ward boundary follows the burgh boundary between Ardrossan and Saltcoats.

55. 17% of all respondents commented on this ward and most were supportive of the proposed ward.

56. Two respondents stated Saltcoats and Stevenston are two distinct towns and should be in separate wards.

57. The boundary road sign between Saltcoats and Stevenston is shown on the High Road (A738), just east of the B714, next to Tesco Express. There is no natural boundary between the two towns such as a river, railway line or open land. The two urban towns appear to merge into one another. The two towns were situated in a Saltcoats and Stevenston ward from 2007 to 2017.

58. One respondent suggested a 4-member ward. A 4-member Saltcoats and Stevenston ward would offer +26% variation from electoral parity, with a total of 32 councillors.

59. One respondent wished to retain the existing ward boundary and another believes the proposals do not consider new housing developments.

Kilwinning ward

60. The Kilwinning ward is unchanged from the existing electoral arrangements.

61. 18% of all respondents commented on this ward and were mainly supportive of the proposals.

62. Two respondents suggested fewer councillors but offered no reasons why.

Irvine wards

63. The Commission's proposals made no changes to the electoral arrangements in Irvine and retained the existing 4-member Irvine West ward, 3-member Irvine East ward and 3-member Irvine South ward.

64. 13% of all respondents commented on each of the three Irvine wards, mostly repeating their comments for each ward.

65. There was some support for the proposals.

66. There were a couple of suggestions to create two 5-member Irvine wards. One suggested using the River Irvine as a ward boundary but the A78 road could act as a more equal boundary within Irvine and this is shown in the table below with approximate electorate figures.

Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Variation from Electoral Parity %	Forecast Electorate (2024)	Forecast Variation from Electoral Parity %
Irvine East	5	14,098	-12.9	14,638	-8.1
Irvine West	5	16,545	2.2	15,839	-0.5

67. A couple of comments stated Irvine was over-represented.

68. Some suggestions were made out-with the legislation for this review such as transferring Irvine to South Ayrshire council area or creating a single Irvine ward.

Electorate forecasts

69. Some responses to the consultation queried the Commission's 5-year electorate forecasts. The responses highlighted changes in the North Coast ward from 17,766 electors in 2018 to a forecast electorate of 17,657. The issue may be the scaling factor used when forecasting electorate which aims to dampen the forecast developments. The raw forecast electorate data for the existing North Coast and Cumbraes ward shows an electorate increase of over 600 electors.

70. The overall council area electorate is forecast to change in the next five years from 106,851 to 105,107, a difference of 1,744 electors. According to NRS the local government electorate was 108,567 in 2010 and 108,157 in 2020. However historical ward comparisons are not accurate due to changes in the electorate franchise following the 'Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Act', when 16 and 17 year olds became eligible to vote in Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections.
71. The Commission has the opportunity to address any electorate anomalies and conduct an interim review before the next full review is due.

Ward names

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

Summary

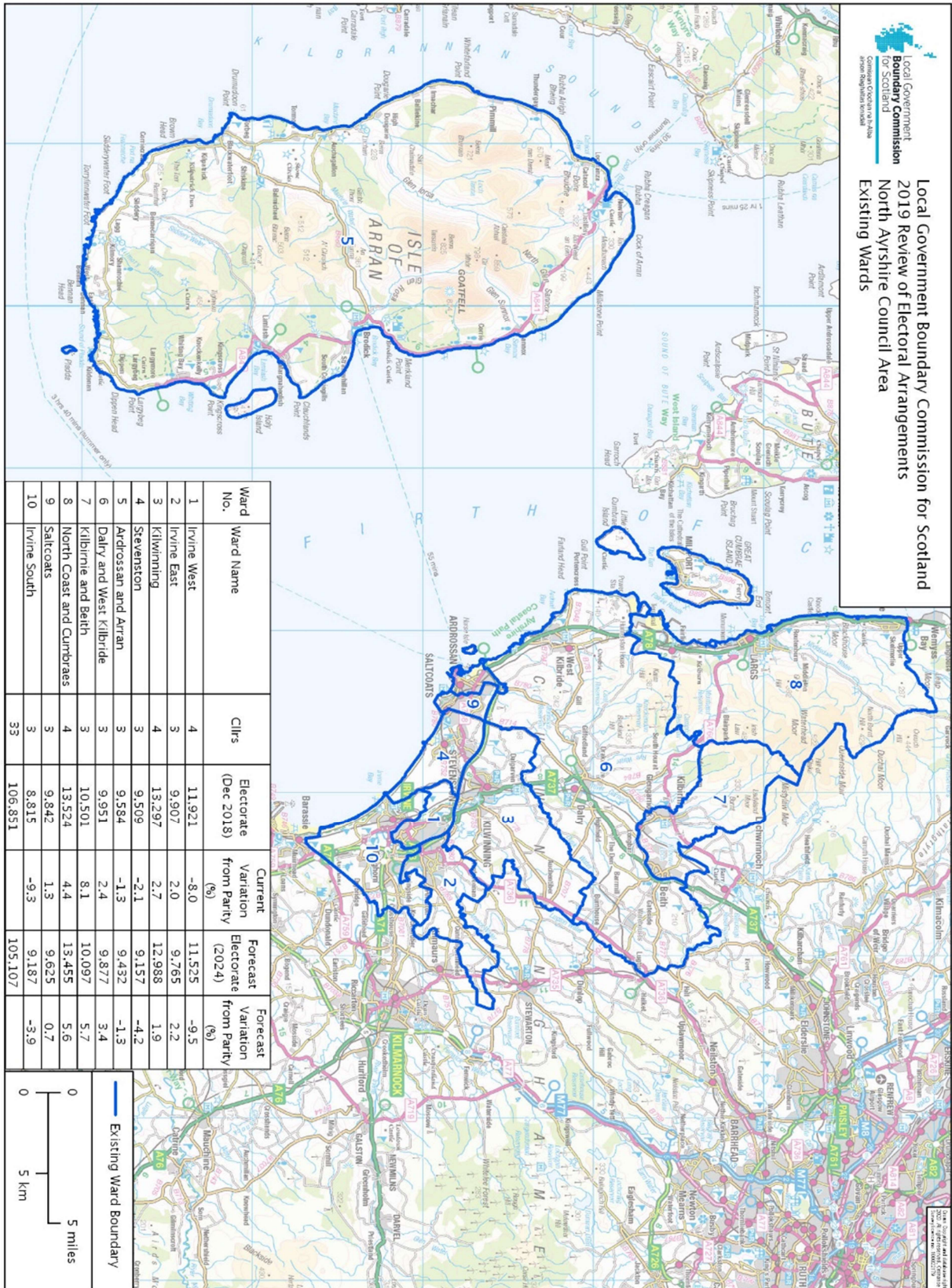
73. Most comments received during the public consultation focussed on the proposed Arran ward where there were equally compelling arguments for either a 1-member or a 2-member ward.
74. North Ayrshire Council did not respond to the public consultation but were supportive of the proposals and have wished locality boundaries and ward boundaries to be coterminous since the Commission's 5th Reviews.
75. Few responses were submitted during the consultation which may mean the public and stakeholders are generally supportive of the proposals.

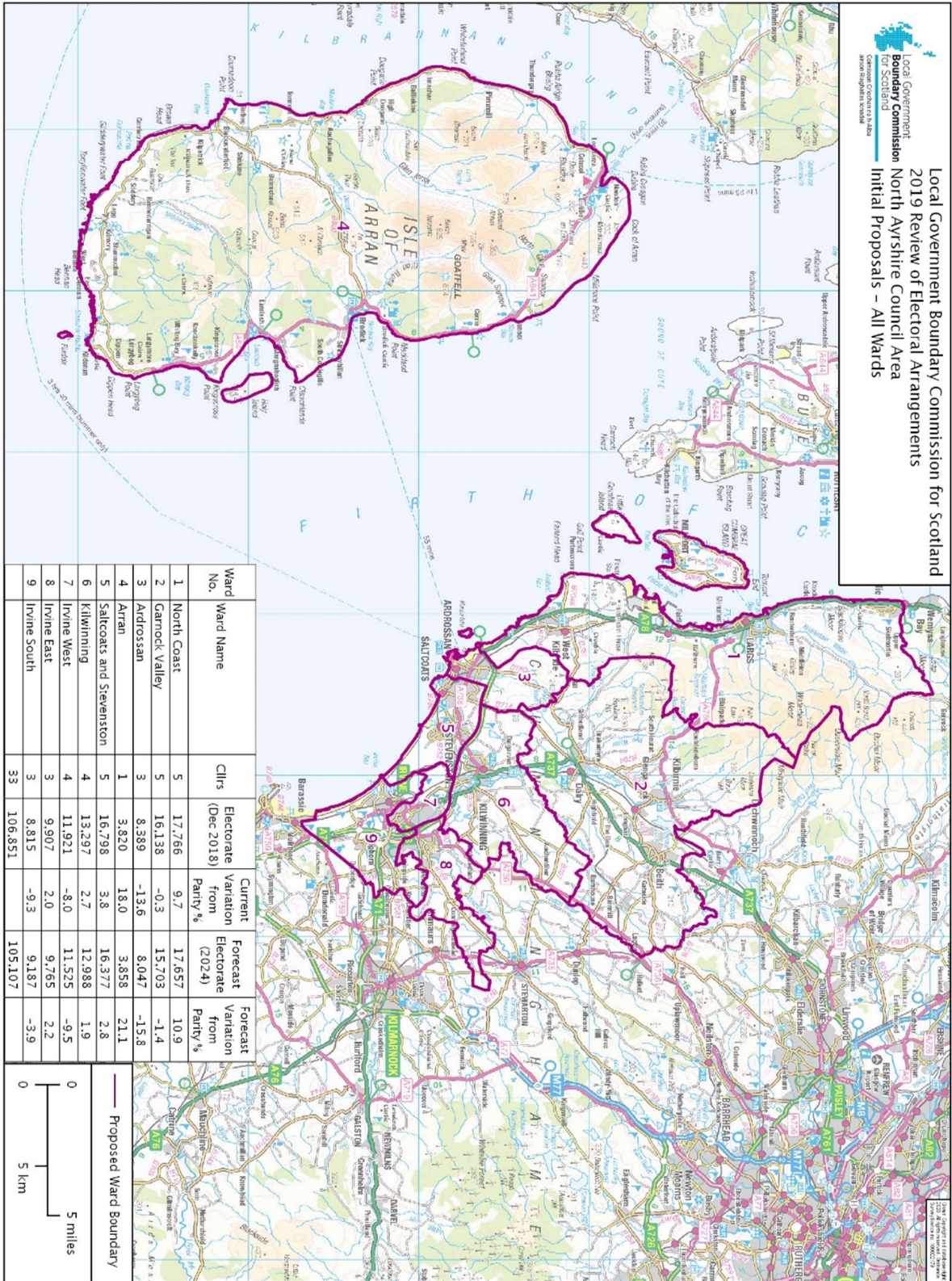
Recommendations

76. Taking into account all of the evidence arising from the public consultation, the Secretariat invites the Commission to decide for North Ayrshire council area whether to:
- adopt without amendment the Initial Proposals as its Final Recommendations, (see Appendix B);
 - retain the existing electoral arrangements as its Final Recommendations (see Appendix A); or
 - make amendments to its Initial Proposals, either councillor numbers or ward boundaries as its Final Recommendations.

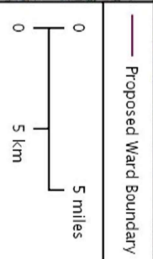
Secretariat
March 2021

Appendix A – Existing Arrangements





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



Appendix C – Consultation responses by postcode

