

**Minutes of Meeting held by video-conference  
at 10am on Tuesday 7 April 2020**

**Present**

Mr R Hinds, Chair  
Prof. A Henderson, Deputy Chair  
Mr R Bean  
Mr J Collins  
Mr G Macmillan  
Dr S Walker

Ms I Drummond-Murray, Secretary  
Mr C Wilson  
Mr D Campbell

**Declaration of Interests**

1. There were no declarations of interest.

**Minutes of previous meeting**

2. The Commission deferred formal approval of the minute of the meeting of 4 February 2020 until its next meeting.

**Business Update**

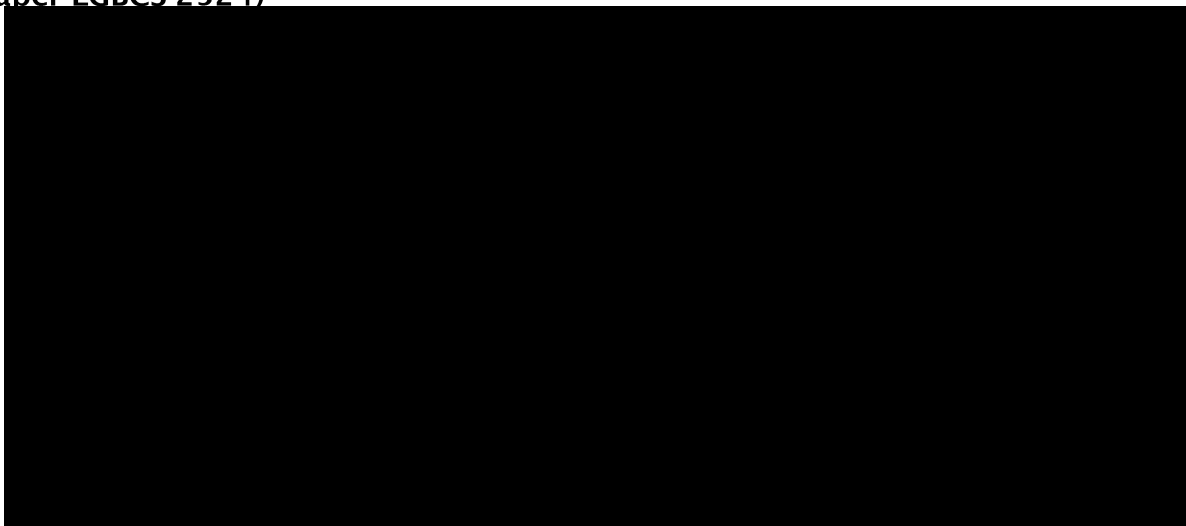
3. The Secretary had provided a written business update by email due to the current circumstances of the Covid-19 virus lockdown.
4. The Secretary highlighted the progress of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill which, if passed will have implications for the scheduling and conduct of future Scottish Parliament and local authority electoral reviews. The Bill is currently at Stage 3 in the Scottish Parliament. The Secretary will continue to monitor progress of the Bill and keep the Commission informed.
5. The Secretary advised the Commission that there is still uncertainty about the timing of the Boundary Commission for Scotland's 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies. The Secretary will inform the Commission of the 2023 Review timetable once it is known.

**2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Na h-Eileanan an Iar council area  
(Paper LGBCS 2524)**

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**2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Argyll and Bute council area (Paper LGBCS 2525)**

13. The Commission considered three options for Argyll and Bute council area. Option 1 was unchanged from Paper 2518.
14. The Commission noted that Option 1, the existing electoral arrangements, did not take account of the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers nor the Islands (Scotland) Act.
15. The Commission noted that Option 3 proposed 33 councillors, improved forecast variation from electoral parity and minimised change to the existing ward boundaries.
16. The Commission considered variation from electoral parity in Option 2 for the proposed island wards.
17. The proposed 2-member Isle of Bute ward is under-represented but the Commission considered that it covers a relatively small area and has closer links to the mainland than other islands within the area.
18. The Commission noted the wide variations from electoral parity in the proposed Islay, Jura, Colonsay and Mull, Iona, Coll, Tiree wards. The proposed wards are over-represented but the Commission considered the variation from electoral parity was acceptable due to these islands' remoteness and their limited transport links. The Commission agreed that special geographical circumstances applied in these wards.
19. The Commission considered that Option 2 better reflected island communities within the area. The Commission felt that islands are more likely to have common issues and challenges and that communities within island wards may have more in common with each other than with island-mainland wards.

20. The Commission considered the proposed ward boundary between the two Oban wards and asked the Secretariat to consider if anything might be done to improve variation from electoral parity in the Oban North and Lorn ward.
21. The Commission discussed the proposed number of councillors for Option 2. It proposed 34 councillors, one more than the Commission's methodology for councillor numbers. The Commission considered that this was acceptable as Option 2 improved representation for the more remote island communities.
22. The Commission agreed to adopt Option 2 as its Initial Proposals for ward boundaries in Argyll and Bute council area, subject to further consideration of the proposed boundary by Oban which would be agreed in correspondence (see minute addendum below).

#### **2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – North Ayrshire council area (Paper LGBCS 2526)**

23. The Commission considered three options for North Ayrshire council area. Option 1 was unchanged from Paper 2519.
24. The Commission noted that Option 1, the existing electoral arrangements, did not consider North Ayrshire Council's locality boundaries and it proposed a Dalry and West Kilbride ward which stretched across the council area from Beith to the Ayrshire Coast, areas with few links.
25. The Commission then considered Options 2 and 3 which proposed wards that reflected North Ayrshire Council's locality boundaries. Options 2 and 3 both proposed 5-member wards which are expected to become available as an option for the Commission in the summer of 2020, following the passage of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill through the Scottish Parliament.
26. The Commission noted that Option 3 offered better variation from electoral parity than Option 2 but it did not fully consider all of North Ayrshire Council's locality boundaries. Option 3 proposed an Arran and Ardrossan ward.
27. The Commission considered that Option 2 better reflected North Ayrshire Council's locality boundaries because the proposed wards were coterminous with localities, including a single ward for Arran.
28. The Commission discussed representation for the proposed Arran ward. The Commission noted that Option 2 proposed a single-member Arran ward with variation from electoral parity of +18% but a 2-member Arran ward would offer variation from electoral parity of -39%. On balance the Commission believed that a single-member Arran ward offered more acceptable variation from electoral parity. In terms of effective and convenient local government, Arran enjoys good quality transport links both to and from the mainland and within the island compared to other island communities.
29. The Commission agreed to adopt Option 2 as its Initial Proposals for ward boundaries in North Ayrshire council area.

#### **2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Highland council area (Paper LGBCS 2527)**

30. The Commission considered three options for Highland council area. Option 1 was unchanged from Paper 2520.

31. The Commission noted that Option 1, the existing electoral arrangements, offered wide variation from electoral parity in comparison to Options 2 and 3.
32. The Commission then considered Options 2 and 3 both of which better reflected local ties in Caithness and proposed more recognisable ward boundaries in Inverness.
33. The Commission noted that Option 2, with a total of 74 councillors, proposed more wards with wider forecast variation from electoral parity, than did Option 3 with 72 councillors.
34. The Commission further discussed Option 3 and noted that it improved local ties in the Black Isle and better reflected Highland Council's local community planning areas to the west of Strathpeffer.
35. The Commission believed that the 5-year forecast electorate growth in Option 3's proposed 5-member Culloden and Ardersier ward was subject to some uncertainty. The Commission therefore proposed a 4-member Culloden and Ardersier ward noting that if necessary it could consider an interim review, and need for an additional councillor, to address any future variation from electoral parity in this ward.
36. The Commission noted that Option 3 proposed a 3-member Eilean a' Chèò (Skye) ward and discussed the merits of a 4-member Eilean a' Chèò ward as proposed in Option 2. The Commission noted that a 3-member Eilean a' Chèò ward offered improved variation from electoral parity and that within the context of the council area as a whole, and Skye's connectivity to the mainland, there was not a compelling case for considering special geographical circumstances.
37. The Commission discussed the proposed 3-member Fort William and Ardnamurchan ward for Option 3 and considered if its remoteness and poor road network could justify a 4-member ward due to special geographical circumstances.
38. The Commission also noted that the proposed Caol and Mallaig ward extends from the Small Isles (Canna, Rum, Eigg and Muck) to Spean Bridge. However, the Commission concluded that the Small Isles have closer transport and other ties to Mallaig than to Skye.
39. The Commission asked the Secretariat to consider an alternative ward boundary for the proposed Caol and Mallaig and Fort William and Ardnamurchan wards in this large remote area of south-west Highland. The Commission suggested that the Great Glen could act as a natural boundary for two wards on an east-west, rather than north-south, axis. The Commission recognised that most of the electorate for these wards reside in the Fort William area and Fort William is the focus for local amenities.
40. The Commission agreed to adopt Option 3 as its Initial Proposals for ward boundaries in Highland council area but with a 4-member Culloden and Ardersier ward.
41. The Commission asked the Secretariat to further consider the merits of a 3-member or 4-member Fort William and Ardnamurchan ward and an alternative

ward boundary that follows the Great Glen in the Lochaber area This would be agreed in correspondence (see Addendum below).

**Future meetings (oral update)**

42. The Commission confirmed that its next meeting would be held on 21 July 2020 either in Thistle House or online depending on circumstances.

**Any other business**

43. There was no other business raised.

**Addendum of Meeting (by correspondence)****2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Argyll and Bute council area (Paper LGBCS 2525)**

1. The Commission considered by correspondence whether to: retain the proposed 3-member Oban North and Lorn ward in Option 2 with wide variation from electoral parity; consider a 4-member Oban North and Lorn ward which addressed variation from parity with a total of 35 Councillors; or whether to propose a wholly Oban ward.
2. Option 2 had proposed a 3-member Oban North and Lorn ward and a 3-member Oban South ward. Option 2 split Oban between two wards by partly following the existing ward boundary and a community council area boundary but it offered wide variation from electoral parity in the proposed Oban North and Lorn ward.
3. The Commission considered the other options and agreed to adopt the option that placed Oban within a single ward because it improved variation from electoral parity and considered local ties in Oban.
4. The Commission agreed to recommend a 4-member Oban ward and a 2-member Lorn ward.

**2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Highland council area (Paper LGBCS 2527)**

5. The Commission also considered by correspondence whether to adopt: Option 3, from Paper 2527, with a 3 or 4-member Fort William and Ardnamurchan ward that retained the existing ward boundary; Option 3A which split Caol and Corpach and followed the Great Glen as a ward boundary but offered wide variation from parity; or Option 3B which placed Caol, Corpach and Fort William all within the same ward.
6. The Commission noted that although Option 3A proposed a more easily identifiable ward boundary, that followed the Great Glen, it proposed significant changes to existing ward boundaries where no strong desire to do so had been expressed during previous reviews.
7. The Commission noted that Option 3B retained local ties by Fort William but offered wide variation from parity in a West Lochaber ward that included remote areas such as Ardnamurchan and Knoydart.

8. The Commission agreed to retain the existing electoral arrangements in the Lochaber area (as shown in Paper 2527 Option 3), retaining a 3-member Caol and Mallaig ward and a 4-member Fort William and Ardnamurchan ward. Paper 2527 had considered a 3-member Fort William and Ardnamurchan ward because it improved variation from electoral parity. However the Commission reflected that special geographical circumstances could be considered to apply here due to the remoteness and dispersed population.