

Future Electoral Reviews Scheduling

For discussion

1. At its 21 July 2025 meeting the Commission considered [Paper BS184 Future Reviews of Electoral Arrangements](#) and asked the Secretariat to provide further analysis on the scheduling of the next reviews of electoral arrangements.
2. At that meeting the Commission confirmed a preference for a phased approach for the next reviews, to be named the 2032 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements. It was agreed that it was likely that these would not be started until after the 6 May 2027 Local Government elections.
3. The Commission is invited to consider various approaches to scheduling and advise if it has a preferred approach for the 2032 Reviews.

Historical reviews

4. The 3rd, 4th and 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements reviewed all 32 council areas at the same. The Islands Reviews which reported in 2021 were conducted in a phased approach, firstly the three solely island councils and then the three island-mainland councils. There was a nine-month gap between the two phases of Island Reviews.

Timing / Scheduling

5. The next set of electoral reviews, for 28 council areas, must be completed by 31 October 2030. Na h-Eileanan an Iar, North Ayrshire, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands are to be completed by 2036, this is the 15-year period since the recommendations from those reviews were implemented. Also, Scottish Ministers could direct the Commission to conduct a further review of Argyll and Bute and Highland Council areas at any time.
6. Appendix A provides three examples for either a two, three or four phase approach for the 2032 Reviews. 24 months have been scheduled for each phase, this includes a 6-month pre-review period to collate electorate data, calculate forecast electorate and engage with councils. It provides an example of an estimated review timetable, the: two phase approach has a gap of 10 months in-between phases; three phase approach proposes a gap of 6-months in-between phases; and four phase approach proposes a gap of between two to six months in-between phases. Some reviews may progress more quickly than others, if there is little opposition to the Commission's proposals.
7. Appendix A includes a pre-election period for the 2029 UK General Election when the Commission will not be able to consult on its proposals. It also shows when the shared Secretariat will commence Boundary Commission for Scotland's 2031 Review of UK Parliament Boundaries.
8. The pre-review engagement has been scheduled to start a few months after the 2027 local government elections as the Council Leader may change following the election.
9. Once the Commission has agreed on a preferred approach, a more detailed programme of reviews can be developed for a later Commission meeting.

Phased approaches

10. Various approaches to a phased programme for the 2032 Reviews are discussed below but the list is not exhaustive and the Commission may have alternative suggestions. The approaches include:

- date recommendations implemented.
- electoral parity.
- council areas in the same category.

Method 1 - date recommendations implemented

11. The Commission may wish to prioritise those council areas whose recommendations were not implemented following the 5th Reviews or Island Reviews. These are Argyll and Bute, Dundee City, Highland and Scottish Borders Council areas. (The 5th Reviews recommendations for the three island council areas were deferred following the introduction of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018).
12. The electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute, Dundee City and Scottish Borders Council areas are unchanged since 2007. The electorate data used for considering electoral arrangements for those council areas dates back to 1996. The electoral arrangements for Highland and a further 23 council areas are unchanged since 2017.
13. This approach only prioritises four council areas and would result in a secondary phase of 24 areas. Alternatively, there could be an initial phase of four areas then secondary and third phases of 12 council areas. Another option could be to combine these four areas with areas with the worst electoral parity to create an initial phase of 10 or 12 council areas thus providing a more equal spread of workload.

Method 2 - electoral parity

14. The Commission may wish to consider prioritising council areas depending on their electoral parity. [Paper BS-184](#), Appendix B, provided electoral parity based on the December 2024 electorate data published by National Records Scotland (NRS).
15. Based on that data there are:
- seven council areas where all wards have electoral parity within 10%. These are: Clackmannanshire; Dumfries and Galloway; East Ayrshire; East Dunbartonshire; East Lothian; Falkirk; and West Dunbartonshire.
 - nine council areas where all wards have electoral parity within 15%. These are: Angus, Dundee City; East Renfrewshire; Inverclyde; North Lanarkshire; Scottish Borders; South Ayrshire; Stirling; and West Lothian.
 - 12 council areas include at least one ward with electoral parity over 15%. Of those seven council areas have wards over 20% (Aberdeen City, City of Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, Renfrewshire and South Lanarkshire Council areas).
16. This method could divide the 28 council areas into three groups: those areas where all wards are within 10%; 15%; or over 15% of electoral parity. Electoral parity is likely to worsen over the forthcoming years and there could be a larger number of councils with wards over 15% or 20% by the time the 2032 Reviews commence. However, the Commission could apply different cut-off points, rather than the 10% or 15% used above, to create a more equal number of council areas

in each phase. It could be more challenging or time-consuming working on many areas with wide electoral parity at the same time as there is likely to be significant changes in these areas.

Method 3 – council areas in the same category

17. The Commission could schedule reviews based on dividing council areas by the category they are assigned to. The Commission has still to agree its methodology for the 2032 Reviews but the categories from both the 3rd and 5th Reviews are shown below as examples.

18. For both the 3rd and 5th Reviews the smallest category had two council areas and the largest had 12 council areas (5th) or 13 council areas (3rd).

5th Reviews Methodology		
Cat.	Council area	Total no. areas
1	Glasgow City; Inverclyde	2
2	Clackmannanshire; Dundee City; East Ayrshire; North Ayrshire; North Lanarkshire; Renfrewshire; West Dunbartonshire	7
3	Aberdeen City; Angus; City of Edinburgh; East Dunbartonshire; East Lothian; East Renfrewshire; Falkirk; Fife; Midlothian; South Ayrshire; South Lanarkshire; West Lothian	12
4	Aberdeenshire; Argyll and Bute; Dumfries and Galloway; Highland; Moray; Perth and Kinross; Scottish Borders; Stirling	8
5	Na h-Eileanan an Iar; Orkney Islands; Shetland Islands	3

3rd Reviews Methodology		
Cat.	Council area	Total no. areas
1	Edinburgh; Glasgow City	2
2	Aberdeen; Dundee	2
3	Clackmannanshire; East Dunbartonshire; East Renfrewshire; Falkirk; Fife; Inverclyde; Midlothian; North Ayrshire; North Lanarkshire; Renfrewshire; South Lanarkshire; West Dunbartonshire; West Lothian	13
4	Angus; East Ayrshire; East Lothian; South Ayrshire; Stirling	5
5	Aberdeenshire; Dumfries and Galloway; Moray; Perth and Kinross; Scottish Borders	5
6	Argyll and Bute; Highland	2
7	Na h-Eileanan an Iar; Orkney Islands; Shetland Islands	3

19. Scheduling by category would allow for consistent messaging in news releases and may avoid public and stakeholder confusion. However, some categories may have only two or three council areas and combining them with different categories may also cause some confusion.

Other methods

20. The Commission could simply divide the 28 council areas into two groups of 14 council areas, four groups of seven council areas or another combination.

21. Councils could be divided into groups using one or more factors discussed above or simply alphabetically, geographically (south of Scotland, north of Scotland, central belt) or if requested by a council.
22. A geographical split would aid marketing in local areas. An example of how the council areas could be divided includes a:
- north of Scotland grouping with Argyll and Bute, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Dundee, Highland, Moray, Perth and Kinross and Stirling Council areas.
 - south of Scotland grouping with East/North/ South Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, East Lothian and Midlothian Council areas.
 - Central belt grouping with Edinburgh, West Lothian, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, East/West Dunbartonshire, Fife and Clackmannanshire Council areas.

Summary

23. The Commission must complete its 2032 Reviews by 31 October 2030.
24. The 2032 Reviews could start a phased programme of reviews between mid 2027 and October 2028, as shown in Appendix A. The timetable suggests starting the process by engaging with Councils a few months after the May 2027 local government election as council leadership may change.
25. Three different phased approaches are discussed with proposed timetables set out in Appendix A but the Commission could suggest another approach or adopt a hybrid approach.
26. NRS publish electorate data annually in April. Future electorate data will likely show a worsening of electoral parity.
27. The reviews could be conducted in two, three or four phases but the greater number of phases may result in confusion and the national press may lose interest. The alternative is a simpler approach of two phases of 14.

Conclusion

28. The Commission is invited to advise if it has a preferred approach for the 2032 Reviews. The Commission can group the first tranche of reviews by electoral parity, date last recommendations were implemented, category, an alternative method or a combination of these approaches. The Commission can also defer making a decision until after it has consulted with stakeholders on its methodology and approach to the 2032 Reviews, this consultation would likely take place in early 2026.
29. The simplest approach would be to conduct two phases of 14 council areas which would be easier to understand for stakeholders. Appendix A provides an example of two, three or four phases with each phase scheduled to take 24 months (including a six-month pre-engagement). Some reviews will be concluded earlier than others.

Two phase approach																									
Council areas	2027						2028					2029				2030									
	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	
Phase 1			Local election							CC			PC	PC	UK election										
Phase 2			Local election												UK election	CC			PC	PC					
BCS:2031 Review prep												BCS: 2031 Review													

Three phase approach																									
Council areas	2027						2028					2029				2030									
	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	
Phase 1			Local election						CC			PC	PC		UK election										
Phase 2			Local election									CC			UK election	PC	PC								
Phase 3			Local election												UK election	CC			PC	PC					
BCS:2031 Review prep												BCS: 2031 Review													

Four phase approach																									
Council areas	2027						2028					2029				2030									
	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	
Phase 1			Local election						CC			PC	PC		UK election										
Phase 2			Local election									CC			UK election	PC	PC								
Phase 3			Local election												UK election		PC	PC							
Phase 4			Local election												UK election	CC			PC	PC					
BCS:2031 Review prep												BCS: 2031 Review													

■ Local election
 Pre-engagement Review
 CC 2-month consultation with Councils
■ UK election
 PC 12 week public consultation