

## Further Review of Argyll and Bute Council area

### For discussion

1. At its 9 December 2025 meeting the Commission considered Paper BS-202 - further review of Argyll and Bute and Highland Council areas. After considering the direction from the Scottish Minister and the Commission's obligations under s17A Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (s17A), it was agreed that a further review of both Argyll and Bute and Highland Council areas should be started.
2. The Commission asked the Secretariat to draft a paper which (a) summarises the original review reports and proposed recommendations (b) the Scottish Parliament representations (c) the relevant Council's reaction to the original recommendations and concerns raised at the time (d) Boundaries Scotland's response to the recommendations being rejected and (e) an assessment of potential engagement approaches with likely timescales.
3. The Commission is invited to consider the background information provided in this paper, the possible options and agree its approach to the further review of Argyll and Bute Council area.

### Legislation

4. Section 17A sets out the requirements for a further review – see Appendix A. In summary, the Commission has a discretion to determine the manner and extent of the review but is required to:

“(a)consider the representations (if any) of the Scottish Parliament, and

(b)reconsider the proposals and make any further or supplementary proposals as it thinks fit.”

There is also a requirement to provide an explanation if the Commission agrees to recommend two councillors for a ward which does not contain an inhabited island (s17A(7)).

### 2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements (Islands Reviews)

5. Below is a summary of the 2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements (Islands Reviews) for Argyll and Bute Council area and how the Commission conducted it. The full report with recommendations can be viewed on the Commission's website [www.boundaries.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Argyll\\_and\\_Bute\\_Final\\_Report\\_Low-Res\\_1758892799.pdf](http://www.boundaries.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Argyll_and_Bute_Final_Report_Low-Res_1758892799.pdf)
6. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 required the Commission to review the six councils containing inhabited islands (Argyll and Bute, Highland, North Ayrshire, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar) as soon as practicable.
7. The Commission reviewed these six council areas during its 5th set of Reviews of Electoral Arrangements (5<sup>th</sup> Reviews), which reported in 2016, but Scottish Government did not implement the proposals for the Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council areas because of the introduction of the Bill on the Scottish Islands, which became the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

8. Further to this the recommendations from the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews for three further council areas, including Argyll and Bute, were not implemented. At that time Scottish Ministers stated: “In a small number of cases – Argyll and Bute, Dundee City and Scottish Borders - we have listened to local representations and left boundaries as they currently stand, to ensure that strong historic ties in particular areas and communities are maintained. Significant concerns were raised about aspects of the Commission’s proposals for those areas, in particular that they would not reflect local communities. While the Commission did try to address these in its final recommendations, it was clear from the responses to those recommendations that many of those concerns remained. We therefore decided that the better course would be to keep the status quo for those areas.”
9. After the Commission had submitted its 5<sup>th</sup> Review recommendations, Argyll and Bute Council met on 30 June 2016 and agreed to write to the Minister opposing the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews recommendations. The Council opposed the Commission’s use of SIMD in its methodology for determining councillor numbers and also sought no change to the existing arrangements in order to maintain local ties. See link to [Argyll and Bute Council meeting minute of 30 June 2016](#).
10. Electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute Council area have remained unchanged since 2007. The current wards are based on electorate data from 1996.
11. The Commission agreed to apply the same methodology for councillor numbers for the Islands Review as that used during its 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews, with a proposed ratio of one councillor per 2,800 electors for Argyll and Bute. The methodology proposed 33 councillors for Argyll and Bute. This was calculated by dividing the electorate of 66,725 by 2,800. This would have resulted in 24 councillors except for a 10% cap on change rule ( $36 - 3 = 33$ ).
12. At the start of the Islands Reviews there were 11 wards in Argyll and Bute Council area. Only one ward, Isle of Bute (-15.5%), had variation from electoral parity over 10%. The five-year forecasts expected three wards with forecast variation from electoral parity of 10% or more: Isle of Bute (-19.7%); Oban North and Lorn (13.1%); and South Kintyre (-10.3%).
13. The Commission met with all Councils before the island reviews commenced to discuss its approach to the review and how best to engage with local communities. When the Commission met with Argyll and Bute Council in October 2019 they advised: there would likely be a preference from members to retain the existing arrangements; islands communities will wish the same ratio of electors per councillors as the three wholly island councils; and that the challenges of poor transport links within the council area were still pertinent.
14. The Commission consulted Argyll and Bute Council on both councillor numbers and ward boundaries for a statutory two-month period and:
  - proposed 34 councillors, one more than the Commission’s methodology recommended. The Commission considered that this was acceptable as it improved representation for the more remote island communities;
  - took account of the flexibility of two-member wards to better reflect local ties for island communities. Proposed three two-member island wards. One further two-member ward was recommended, the island – mainland Lorn ward;

- proposed nine wards with variation from electoral parity within 10%;
- considered special geographic considerations in two of the proposed island wards due to their remoteness;
- considered local ties and made no changes to the boundaries of five of the existing wards (Cowal; Dunoon; Isle of Bute; Lomond North; and Mid Argyll). Oban was also placed within a single ward to avoid breaking local ties. Argyll and Bute Council's four administrative areas were also used to form the ward boundaries;
- considered easily identifiable boundaries by retaining five ward boundaries and proposing three island wards.

15. In response to the consultation Argyll and Bute Council supported the use of their four Area Committees in establishing ward boundaries and supported the proposals where no change was proposed. They opposed any reduction in the overall number of councillors and especially any reduction in representation on Bute. They raised concerns with the wide variations in electoral parity between the three proposed island wards. They suggested extending the existing Mid Argyll ward southwards to include Skipness and Tarbert. They would support including the smaller islands (Gigha, Seil, Lismore, Luìng, Easdale and Kerrera) within wholly island wards if the public suggested this. Some councillors also raised concerns that the proposed Islay, Jura and Colonsay ward may increase their workload.

16. For its 12-week public consultation the Commission made one change and agreed to adopt Argyll and Bute Council's suggestion to amend the proposed boundary by Skipness to follow a community council area boundary.

17. This change had negligible impact on electoral parity, considered local ties but as a result only four of the existing ward boundaries remained.

18. There were over 200 responses to the public consultation. Most respondents opposed the proposals and wished to keep the existing arrangements. There was both support and opposition for island-only wards. There was some opposition to a 2-member Isle of Bute ward. Argyll and Bute Council did not submit further comments during the public consultation.

19. The Commission agreed to make no further changes and retained its proposals as its Final Recommendations and submitted its report to Scottish Ministers on 10 June 2021. A draft Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSI) was laid in Parliament and the recommendations were referred to the Local Government, Housing and Planning (LGHP) Committee.

[www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2021/9780111050972/body](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/sdsi/2021/9780111050972/body)

### **LGHP Committee Meeting 14 September 2021**

20. The LGHP Committee met on 14 September 2021 to discuss the reports. At that meeting the Committee heard evidence from five of the councils, North Ayrshire submitted written evidence.

21. At that meeting Argyll and Bute Council stated "there are significant elements of the Commission's final proposals with which the Council is in agreement, but the Council's official response to the recommendations set out a number of areas in which it was not possible for members to come to a single, consolidated view, and there were a small number of areas in which members did not agree with the

Commission’s final recommendations.” They continued and in summary repeated their consultation response which:

- supported the use of their four Area Committees in establishing ward boundaries;
- supported the proposals where no change was proposed;
- opposed a reduction in councillor numbers;
- made no preference for island only or mainland-island wards;
- expressed concern that the final recommendations did not consider demographic changes and the ageing population as well as social and economic deprivation;
- agreed with the Commission’s approach to the review but that more flexibility could be considered. They agreed with grouping councils into categories but believed Argyll and Bute was more aligned to the Islands councils; agreed with different ratios of electors per councillors for council areas across Scotland but local communities and local ties should also be considered.
- hopes the recommendation are rejected.
- noted the commission tried to engage on a wide front.

22. See minute of LGHP Committee meeting 14 September 2021: [www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13303](http://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13303)

### **LGHP Committee Survey**

23. The Committee conducted a short two-week public survey which closed on 17 September 2021. The survey asked residents of the six island council areas for their views on the island reviews and the recommendations.

24. There were 42 responses to the survey relating to Argyll and Bute, including a response from Argyll and Bute Council. Most of the responses were from island residents objecting to the recommendations including: opposition to Bute becoming a 2-member ward; opposition to island-only wards; and a desire to retain existing arrangements. Some were also unaware of the review and others believed their views were not considered.

25. See summary of survey responses [www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-local-government-housing-and-planning/business-items/regulations-on-proposals-made-by-boundaries-scotland/summary-of-responses-to-boundaries-scotland-proposals](http://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-local-government-housing-and-planning/business-items/regulations-on-proposals-made-by-boundaries-scotland/summary-of-responses-to-boundaries-scotland-proposals)

### **LGHP Committee Meeting 21 September 2021**

26. The Committee met on 21 September 2021 and heard evidence from the Commission.

27. When discussing the recommendations for Argyll and Bute the Commission highlighted that they had considered special geographical considerations for island communities and that the Council had been very helpful in enabling the Commission to engage with local communities.

28. The Committee's final question was "If the Parliament were to reject one or more of the regulations, what would Boundaries Scotland do next? Ronnie Hinds: It is not entirely clear what we could do. It is clear what we could not do, because there would not be time to carry out a full review of a whole council area ahead of the elections that are scheduled for next year. That would mean that a given area would go into those elections with the current form of representation that they got through the previous reviews. For some, that might not be such a difficulty—that would not change anything at all for Orkney, for example. However, the proposed changes are significant in Highland in particular, as well as in Argyll and Bute. The levels of disparity in those areas do not serve the electorate well and it would be a mistake to allow that to prevail for the coming elections. The main point is that we could not do anything in advance of the elections. That would be the price of rejecting the regulations. What happens after that would be new ground for all of us. We are not entirely sure about that, but the commission stands ready to act on instructions from ministers and, ultimately, the Parliament about what has to happen following the reviews that we have just completed."

29. See minute of LGHP Committee meeting 21 September 2021  
[www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13319](http://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13319)

### **LGHP Committee Meeting 28 September 2021**

30. The Committee met on 28 September 2021 and heard evidence from John Swinney (Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery).

31. Mr Swinney was aware of the opposition to some aspects of the proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area but was "confident that Boundaries Scotland has discharged its duties competently and professionally, and there would need to be very strong reasons for rejecting its recommendations." He acknowledged the challenges faced by the Commission as it has to consider electoral parity and local ties in remote, rural areas with a declining population and that the Commission had engaged with local communities during the review."

32. The Committee concluded "I want to record our thanks to Boundaries Scotland. It is important that we recognise the substantial work that it has undertaken. However, from the correspondence that I and, I know, all committee members have received, I am aware that there are still real concerns about the proposals for Argyll and Bute and Highland. With that in mind, I suggest that we reject this set of boundary changes." All members of the Committee agreed with the motion.

33. See minute of LGHP Committee meeting 28 September 2021  
[www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13337](http://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13337)

34. Below is a link to the Committee's final report which sets out the representations that the Commission is required to consider under s17A. There were no further written representations regarding Argyll and Bute.  
[www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/committee-reports/lghp/2021/9/30/lghps062021r1/pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/committee-reports/lghp/2021/9/30/lghps062021r1/pdf)

35. The representations in full were:

"The Committee notes that where the recommendations have been welcomed by local authorities, those authorities have also been very positive about the

consultation and engagement work undertaken by Boundaries Scotland. This points to the value of effective dialogue between local authorities and Boundaries Scotland and the Committee would encourage all parties to participate in such conversations in the context of the re-examination of proposals for Argyll and Bute and Highland Council areas with a view to reaching recommendations acceptable to all parties.

The Committee recommends the benefits from building in additional time for discussion with councils in advance of the formal consultation stage of a review should be incorporated into all future reviews of local authority boundaries.

The Committee notes the benefits of digital engagement but also recognises the challenges it will present to others. The Committee asks that these concerns are taken into account in any future engagement.

The Committee asks the Scottish Government to provide detail of whether the further reviews of the boundaries in Highland and Argyll and Bute will be carried out in as a separate piece of work or as part of a suite of other reviews.”

36. Appendix C provides a summary of the correspondence between the Commission and Minister after the recommendations had been rejected.

### **Further Proposals - Options**

37. The legislation states the Commission must “reconsider the proposals and make any further or supplementary proposals as it thinks fit.”
38. The Secretariat has set out some options that Commissioners may wish to consider as part of the further review. Possible timelines are also provided.
39. The options include the most recent electorate data available to the Secretariat (the electorate data, used during the Second Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries, at 1 September 2022). The existing electoral arrangements are also provided for information (it includes the December 2024 electorate data). Further, none of the options include 5-year electorate forecasts, which electoral reviews must consider.
40. More recent electorate data can be requested from the relevant Electoral Registration Officer’s (Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute and Highland & Western Isles). It can take up to 3-4 months to collate electorate data and calculate 5-year electorate forecasts.

### **Minimal change to recommendations from the Island Reviews**

41. The Commission could minimise change to the Island Review recommendations and add or remove a councillor from a ward (or wards) to improve variation from electorate parity.
42. The table below proposes that the Isle of Bute ward gains an additional councillor. The Isle of Bute ward has variation from electoral parity at -18.5% but a 2-member Isle of Bute ward would have variation from parity at +18%.

43. Special geographical considerations remain in two wards: Islay, Jura and Colonsay; and Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree.

44. A map of this option is available at Appendix D. To improve electoral parity in those wards over 10% variation from parity the Commission could consider amending the following ward boundaries:

- Lorn (+11%) - the boundary could be amended with the neighbouring Oban ward but parity is nearly 10% there. Also higher ground acts as a natural boundary between it and the Mid Argyll ward south of it.
- Islay, Jura and Colonsay (-24%); and Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree (-15%) - retain as special geographical considerations but these could become island-mainland wards or a single 3-member ward.
- Isle of Bute (-18.5%) - as mentioned above a 2-member ward would have a similar variation from parity or an island-mainland ward could be considered.
- Helensburgh and Lomond South (+12.7%) and Helensburgh Central (+14.9%) wards only neighbour the Lomond North ward. Any changes to those ward boundaries may result in Helensburgh split between three wards.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2022)	Variation from Parity
1	Kintyre	3	6,218	4.8%
2	Islay, Jura and Colonsay	2	2,983	-24.6%
3	Mid Argyll	4	7,494	-5.3%
4	Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree	2	3,347	-15.4%
5	Oban	4	8,694	9.8%
6	Lorn	2	4,392	11.0%
7	Cowal	3	5,941	0.1%
8	Dunoon	3	5,629	-5.2%
9	Isle of Bute	3	4,837	-18.5%
10	Lomond North	3	6,202	4.5%
11	Helensburgh Central	3	6,823	14.9%
12	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,692	12.7%
		<b>35</b>	<b>69,252</b>	

45. The advantages of this option are:

- variation from electoral parity is over 15% in three wards but these are island wards where special geographical considerations can apply and the electorate is over-represented.
- recognises local ties in Oban by keeping the town in a single ward and by Cowal by adopting a suggestion from Argyll and Bute Council.
- retains six existing ward boundaries.

46. The disadvantages of this option are:

- three wards (two Helensburgh wards and Lorn ward) have variation from electoral parity over 10% and there are limited options to address this.
- there was some opposition to island only wards during the consultation.

**Recommendations from the Island Reviews and no further or supplementary proposals to make**

47. This option considers the ward boundaries recommended from the Island Reviews with no further proposals made.

48. The table below shows how many electors are in each of the recommended wards from the Island Reviews. The latest electorate data available to the Secretariat has been used (September 2022).

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2022)	Variation from Parity
1	Kintyre	3	6,218	1.8%
2	Islay, Jura and Colonsay	2	2,983	-26.8%
3	Mid Argyll	4	7,494	-8.0%
4	Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree	2	3,347	-17.8%
5	Oban	4	8,694	6.7%
6	Lorn	2	4,392	7.8%
7	Cowal	3	5,941	-2.8%
8	Dunoon	3	5,629	-7.9%
9	Isle of Bute	2	4,837	18.7%
10	Lomond North	3	6,202	1.5%
11	Helensburgh Central	3	6,823	11.7%
12	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,692	9.5%
		<b>34</b>	<b>69,252</b>	

49. The advantages of this option are:

- considers special geographical considerations in the island wards of Islay, Jura and Colonsay and Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree.
- recognises local ties in Oban by keeping the town in a single ward and by Cowal by adopting a suggestion from Argyll and Bute Council.
- Aside from the island wards only Helensburgh Central has a variation from parity in excess of 10%.
- retained four existing ward boundaries.

50. The disadvantages of this option are:

- there was some opposition to island only wards during the consultation.

### Existing electoral arrangements

51. The existing electoral arrangements with electorate data from 2024 are shown below:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2024)	Variation from Parity (%)
1	South Kintyre	3	5,102	-13%
2	Kintyre and the Islands	3	5,374	-8%
3	Mid Argyll	3	6,200	6%
4	Oban South and the Isles	4	8,185	5%
5	Oban North and Lorn	4	8,615	10%
6	Cowal	3	6,012	3%
7	Dunoon	3	5,580	-5%

8	Isle of Bute	3	4,902	-16%
9	Lomond North	3	6,289	7%
10	Helensburgh Central	4	7,920	1%
11	Helensburgh and Lomond South	3	6,131	5%
		<b>36</b>	<b>70,310</b>	

52. The existing electoral arrangements have variation from electoral parity over 10% in only two wards, one of which is the Isle of Bute.

53. The Commission could consider reaching the view that the recommendations made in the Islands Review are no longer insisted upon and no proposed changes to the electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute Council are advanced at this time.

### Interim Reviews of Electoral Arrangements

54. There is one further possibility the Commission may wish to consider.

55. The Commission could submit a report to Ministers recommending no changes are made to the existing electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute Council area but then undertake a fresh review later. As discussed at the 9 December 2025 meeting, this could be undertaken either as an interim review under s16(3) or as a second report under s16(2A)(b).

56. In recent years the Commission has considered undertaking Interim Reviews of Electoral Arrangements at a point halfway between the scheduled electoral review cycle.

57. When NRS publishes its annual electorate statistics in April 2026 or April 2027 the Commission may wish to analyse the data and consider whether it should undertake an interim review for the six 'island review' council areas. It will consider the forecast electorate from the island reviews, the latest electorate and evaluate if there are any wide electoral disparities that could be addressed. An interim review could start after the local government elections in May 2027.

58. The Commission previously considered interim reviews in 2019 following its Fifth Reviews. At that time the Commission agreed not to undertake any interim reviews. [www.boundaries.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/LGBCS\\_2485\\_Interim\\_Reviews\\_2019\\_Combined\\_1758892800.pdf](http://www.boundaries.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/LGBCS_2485_Interim_Reviews_2019_Combined_1758892800.pdf)

### Timeline - further review

59. There is no direction from the Minister in terms of timing. Therefore, the Commission must complete a further review of Highland Council and Argyll and Bute Council within a reasonable time.

60. The Commission will wish to note the timing of any further review and the possible impact on it by the Scottish Parliament election in May 2026 and local government elections in May 2027. Further, the Scottish Parliament Easter recess is from 26 March to 8 April 2026, Parliament then dissolves on 9 April ahead of the 7 May 2026 election. Also, if any changes are to be made prior to the 2027 elections, it is good practice for these to be in place 6 months prior to the next

election (Gould principle). The Sponsor Team has confirmed that a report would need to be submitted by approximately August 2026 at the latest.

61. As set out in s18, the Commission has an obligation to take such steps as it thinks fit to secure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of the proposal to conduct it and of any directions of the Secretary of State which are relevant to it. As referred to above, the Minister has not made any directions on timing or process. While there are no requirements to consult, as discussed at the 9 December meeting, the Commission was of the view that it would be good practice to do so if there are any proposed changes.
62. If the Commission agreed to make further proposals to its final recommendations from its Island Reviews, an outline timeline would follow:
- February 2026 - write to Argyll and Bute Council, advising them the Commission is undertaking a further review under s17A, its general approach to the review and expected timeline. Also ask the Council for expected home build data and likely timeframe for providing.
  - February 2026 - request electorate data from ERO
  - February - March 2026 - collate and check electorate data and calculate 5-year forecast electorate data.
  - April 2026 - develop alternative proposals (for consultation)
    - May - June 2026 conduct shortened consultation with Argyll and Bute Council and public at same time (6 weeks), or
    - May - November 2026 follow usual electoral review schedule of 2-month consultation with council, consider their response and revise proposals if required, then 12-week public consultation
  - if shortened consultation - responses considered in summer, report drafted and submitted to Ministers in August 2026.
  - if full consultation - responses considered in late 2026, report drafted and submitted to Ministers in March 2027.
63. If the Commission agreed to make no further proposals to the recommendations from its Island Reviews, an outline timeline could be:
- February 2026 - write to Argyll and Bute Council, advising them the Commission is undertaking a further review under s17A, its general approach to the review and expected timeline.
  - February - April 2026 Draft report discussing background to Islands Reviews with reasons for no further proposals.
  - mid to late May 2026 (after election) - submit report to Scottish Ministers.

## Conclusion

64. Scottish Ministers directed the Commission to conduct a further review of Argyll and Bute Council and Highland Council and the Commission agreed at its 9 December 2025 meeting to commence a further review.
65. This paper provides background information on the Commission's approach to the Islands Review for Argyll and Bute Council area and summarises the concerns raised at the time.

66. The Commission is invited to consider the possible options set out in this paper, the proposed timelines and agree its approach to the further review. The Commission is required to inform Argyll and Bute Council of this further review.
67. The approval process (positive affirmation) which applied to the Islands Review applies to the further review process unless there is a proposal of no change to existing electoral arrangements. However, if the Commission's further or supplementary proposals are rejected, a Scottish Parliament resolution is required before a further review can be directed by the Minister (s17A(9)).

**Secretariat**  
**January 2026**



# Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

## 1973 CHAPTER 65

### PART II

#### CHANGES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

##### *[<sup>F1</sup>Proposals by Boundaries Scotland]*

##### **[<sup>F1</sup>17A Further reviews and reports by Boundaries Scotland**

- (1) Boundaries Scotland must conduct a further review of proposals to alter any local government area or electoral arrangements where it has been notified by the Scottish Ministers under section 17(6)(b).
- (2) Boundaries Scotland may determine the manner and the extent of the review under this section, provided that the purpose of the review is to—
  - (a) consider the representations (if any) of the Scottish Parliament, and
  - (b) reconsider the proposals and make any further or supplementary proposals as it thinks fit.
- (3) Sections 18 (except subsections (2) and (3)) and 19 apply to a review under this section as they apply to a review under section 17 (but subject to the modification in subsection (4)).
- (4) The modification is that the reference in subsection (2A) of section 18 to a consultation under subsection (2)(a) of that section is to be read as if it were a reference to any consultation carried out by Boundaries Scotland in connection with a review under this section.
- (5) Boundaries Scotland may take such steps under section 18(3) as it thinks fit in relation to a review under this section.
- (6) Boundaries Scotland must—
  - (a) before such date as the Scottish Ministers may direct, or in the absence of such direction, within such reasonable time as it may determine, submit a report to the Scottish Ministers on its further review under this section, and

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*Changes to legislation: Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Section 17A is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 25 September 2025. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes*

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- (b) include in the report either—
  - (i) any further or supplementary proposals it has formulated following the review, or
  - (ii) a notification that it has no further or supplementary proposals to make.
- (7) Where the report includes a further or supplementary proposal that the number of councillors to be returned in an electoral ward is two, Boundaries Scotland must include in the report an explanation as to why it considers the proposal to be appropriate unless the proposal relates to an electoral ward consisting wholly or partly of one or more inhabited islands (within the meaning of section 1(2) of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018).
- (8) Subsections (4) to (9) of section 17 apply to a report submitted under this section as they apply to a report submitted under section 17.
- (9) But where a report has already been submitted under this section, the Scottish Ministers may notify Boundaries Scotland under subsection (6)(b) of section 17 that it is required to conduct a further review only if the Scottish Parliament has by resolution directed them to do so.
- (10) A further review under this section is to be disregarded for the purposes of calculating the intervals between reviews under this Part.]

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**Textual Amendments**

- F1** Ss. 17, 17A substituted for s. 17 (14.5.2021) by [Scottish Elections \(Reform\) Act 2020 \(asp 12\)](#), ss. [31\(2\)](#), [35](#); S.S.I. 2021/124, [reg. 2](#), [sch.](#) (with [reg. 3](#))

**Changes to legislation:**

Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Section 17A is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 25 September 2025. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations.

[View outstanding changes](#)

**Changes and effects yet to be applied to :**

- Sch. 7 para. 7(3) inserted by [1989 c. 42 Sch. 11 para. 36](#)

**Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:**

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- Sch. 7 para. 7(3) inserted by [1989 c. 42 Sch. 11 para. 36](#)

## Appendix B - Summary of Argyll and Bute Council meetings discussing the Island Reviews

There was little mention of the review or outcomes on the Argyll and Bute Council website under news or council meeting minutes.

- 14 June 2021 News section - announcement that Boundaries Scotland had submitted its final recommendations to the Scottish Parliament. [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/news/2021/jun/electoral-arrangements-review-final-proposals-argyll-and-bute](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/news/2021/jun/electoral-arrangements-review-final-proposals-argyll-and-bute)
- 24 June 2021 The minute of the Argyll and Bute Council meeting of stated: “a report providing an update on the Boundaries Scotland, Review of Electoral Arrangements was before the Council for noting.
- Noted the final proposals from Boundaries Scotland in regard to the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements for Argyll and Bute Council area at Appendix 1 to the report.
  - Noted that if Scottish Ministers are content with the report, any proposals approved by them will be in force prior to the Local Government Elections in May 2022. (Ref: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 11 June 2021, submitted).” Copy of the report <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s175901/Boundaries%20Scotland%20Review%20Council%20240621.pdf>
- Meeting minute <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=257&MId=14232&Ver=4>

### Appendix C – Summary of correspondence between Boundaries Scotland and Ministers after LGHP Committee decision

Date	Meeting/ correspondence
August 2021	The Chair met the Deputy First Minister regarding a number of matters including an overview of the Islands Reviews and Highland Councils approach to the review.
4 Oct 2021	<p><b>The Chair wrote to the Convenor of the LGHP Committee and Deputy First Minister following the Committee’s decision to reject the recommendations for Argyll and Bute and Highland Council areas.</b></p> <p>The letter to the Convenor stated the Commission was “deeply disappointed by the rejection of its proposals”; that Highland Council had objected to the review before it had started, had made little effort to engage with the Commission and had made suggestions outwith the legislation; and that the Committee report had implied it would need the acceptance of councils before the recommendations could be adopted but this was outwith the legislation of our reviews.</p> <p>The letter to the Deputy First Minister mirrored the points made to the Convenor but also highlighted that: international best practice is that electoral boundaries are to be designed by an independent body and free from partisan influence; the Committee has also ignored principles such as electoral parity that are in the legislation and has created a principle not in the legislation, consent of administrators or elected officials.</p>
12 Oct 2021	<p><b>The Deputy First Minister wrote to the Chair</b></p> <p>He understood the concerns raised and noted international best practice. As this was the first review since the commencement of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 that any lessons learned should be collated to see if any aspects of the Act needs to be reconsidered.</p>
19 October 2021	<p><b>The Chair wrote to the Deputy First Minister following a Commission meeting held on 12 October 2021.</b></p> <p>The letter stated that the Commission has serious reservations about conducting further reviews of electoral arrangements and the next review of Scottish Parliament boundaries under the current arrangements where our recommendations can be rejected with no substantive reason. The letter also highlighted that the Minister must notify us that we must undertake a further review of our proposals in Highland and Argyll and Bute.</p>
November 2021	<p><b>The Chair met with the Deputy First Minister and then wrote to him on 12 November 2021.</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked him for acknowledging that the Commission conducted the reviews in a professional and competent manner.</p>

	<p>That both parties had agreed that the new procedures introduced by the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 for the approval of reviews of electoral arrangements have been shown to be less than satisfactory. Raised concerns that without improvements to the approval process there was a serious risk to the implementation of the forthcoming review of Scottish Parliament boundaries. That further consideration is required on how to make improvements of the approval process for boundary reviews.</p>
20 December 2021	<p><b>Deputy First Minister wrote to the Chair</b></p> <p>He stated “we should seek to improve the parliamentary process for boundary setting where possible, learning from recent experience and from international practice. It is our intention to reflect on possible approaches ahead of the Government’s planned consultation on electoral reform next year.” At that time he also wrote to the Convenor and mentioned I am required to write to Boundaries Scotland, to ask them to carry out a further review for Highland and Argyll and Bute. I intend to work with Boundaries Scotland and with the parliament to learn from the recent experience and see where the process could potentially be improved before writing to request further reviews.</p>
June 2022	<p><b>The Deputy First Minister wrote to the Chair</b></p> <p>He advised he had met with the Presiding Officer to discuss the consideration of legislation relating to boundary changes and importance of encouraging MSPs to take a non-partisan approach to the consideration of changes to boundaries. He mentioned the Scottish Government consultation on Electoral Reform this year with a view to introducing a Bill in 2023.</p>