

**Local Government  
Boundary Commission for Scotland**

**Information Paper**

**Local government electoral arrangements in  
Scotland: 1995 onwards**

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This paper is one of a small series of Information Papers developed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland since 2008. The series currently comprises the following titles:

- Emergency service and Health Board boundaries in Scotland
- Local government area boundaries in Scotland: 1995 onwards
- Local government electoral arrangements in Scotland: 1995 onwards
- Local government area boundaries in Scotland: 1974-1996
- Local government electoral arrangements in Scotland: 1974-1996

## Local government electoral arrangements in Scotland: 1995 onwards

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland was established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, with responsibility for keeping under review local government areas and electoral arrangements in Scotland. The Commission has produced this series of Information Papers explaining local government in Scotland since its establishment.

The Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 created the 32 single-tier local authorities that form local government in Scotland. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland Information Paper *Local government area boundaries in Scotland: 1995 onwards* gives more detail of the definition and development of those local authority areas.

Each local authority is divided for electoral purposes into wards. Appendix A lists the number of wards and councillors for each local authority since its inception.

When the local authority areas were first established, the Secretary of State for Scotland made a series of Directions on 8 November 1994 which defined electoral wards for each local authority. In general, these were wards recommended for District Councils by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland in its Second Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements, conducted between 1989 and 1994. Since in most cases the new local authority areas covered the area of a number of complete preceding District Councils, the use of these wards for the new local authorities was straightforward. In those cases where the new local authority boundaries did not align with previous council or ward boundaries (Angus, Argyll and Bute, Dundee City, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire) the Directions defined wards for the areas where it was not possible to use those recommended by the Commission. For Highland Council, the Direction defined wards that were combinations of the preceding District Wards.

The resulting wards were used for the initial elections to the new councils in 1995, with a total of 1,245 electoral wards defined across the 32 local authorities, with each ward returning 1 councillor. The first elections took place on 6 April 1995, with the Councils assuming their responsibilities from 1 April 1996.

The 1994 Act envisaged that subsequent elections would be in 1999 and then every 3 years, but this was amended by the Scottish Local Government (Elections) Act 2002 so that local government elections would coincide with Scottish Parliament elections, and take place every 4 years on the first Thursday in May: this was the case in 2003 and 2007. The Scottish Local Government (Elections) Act 2009 re-established a separation between Scottish Parliament and local government elections by requiring local government elections to take place in 2012, 2017 and then at 4 yearly intervals.

During the period from 1996 to 1998, the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland completed its Third Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for each local authority. Those Reviews included the determination of the appropriate number of councillors for each local authority, using a methodology that took into account population and area, which is set out in Appendix B. As a result, the

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number of councillors on some councils changed significantly, with reductions of more than 20% in Dumfries and Galloway; Orkney; and Scottish Borders, and increases of more than 20% in Aberdeenshire; Clackmannanshire; East Lothian; Moray; and Perth and Kinross. The number of wards across Scotland reduced as a result of those reviews to 1222, each returning 1 councillor. The wards resulting from those reviews were used for local authority elections in May 1999 and May 2003.

The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 introduced multi-member wards for Scottish local government, with each ward returning either 3 or 4 councillors. As a result of the passage of that Act, the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland conducted its Fourth Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements between 2004 and 2006 to make recommendations for the necessary wards. The number of councillors in each council remained the same, but since each ward returned 3 or 4 councillors, the number of wards reduced considerably to 353 across Scotland. The first elections using these new wards took place on 3 May 2007.

The Commission has not completed any Interim Reviews of electoral arrangements during the existence of these unitary authorities. Consequential amendments are made to electoral wards whenever a local authority boundary is modified as a result of an administrative area boundary review by the Commission. Amendments to local authority boundaries are detailed in the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's Information Paper *Local government area boundaries in Scotland: 1995 onwards*.

**Appendix A – Numbers of wards and councillors by local authority**

The tables below list the number of electoral wards and councillors for each local authority since its inception.

The full text of the Directions by the Secretary of State, Statutory Notices and reports by the Commission which resulted in the definition of these electoral wards is available on the Commission's website.

Local Authority	1995 wards and councillors	1999 wards and councillors	2007	
			wards	councillors
Aberdeen City	50	43	13	43
Aberdeenshire	47	68	19	68
Angus	26	29	8	29
Argyll and Bute	33	36	11	36
Clackmannanshire	12	18	5	18
Dumfries and Galloway	70	47	13	47
Dundee City	36	29	8	29
East Ayrshire	30	32	9	32
East Dunbartonshire	26	24	8	24
East Lothian	18	23	7	23
East Renfrewshire	20	20	6	20
Edinburgh, City of	58	58	17	58
Eileanan an Iar, Na h-	30	31	9	31
Falkirk	36	32	9	32
Fife	92	78	23	78
Glasgow City	83	79	21	79
Highland	72	80	22	80
Inverclyde	20	20	6	20
Midlothian	15	18	6	18
Moray	18	26	8	26
North Ayrshire	30	30	8	30
North Lanarkshire	69	70	20	70
Orkney Islands	28	21	6	21
Perth and Kinross	32	41	12	41
Renfrewshire	40	40	11	40
Scottish Borders	58	34	11	34
Shetland Islands	26	22	7	22
South Ayrshire	25	30	8	30
South Lanarkshire	74	67	20	67
Stirling	22	22	7	22
West Dunbartonshire	22	22	6	22
West Lothian	27	32	9	32
<b>Scotland total</b>	<b>1245</b>	<b>1222</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>1222</b>

## Appendix B – Council size methodology

This is a summary of the methodology used in the 1990s by the Commission to determine council size, which is explained in more detail in the Commission's reports on the Third Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements conducted between 1996 and 1998, and in the Commission's meeting papers and minutes from that period.

In its Third Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements, the Commission took decisions on the appropriate number of councillors for each local authority. In doing so it was guided by two main principles:

- effective management of councils, which led to conclusions about the maximum and minimum number of councillors; and
- equity amongst electors, which led to conclusions about determining the correct number of councillors for each local authority.

The Commission recognised that there are practical bounds on the appropriate number of councillors since a minimum number of councillors is required to allow a council to discharge its duty to deliver services to its population, and too large a number of councillors would make a council unwieldy and cumbersome.

In agreeing what these limits should be, the Commission was influenced by the Royal Commission on Local Government in Scotland 1966-69 (the Wheatley Commission) which recommended that the maximum council size for the regional councils which it proposed should be 75. This was in line with other work in England and Wales under the Redcliffe-Maude Commission. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland concluded that, taking into account that it was considering unitary authorities, an upper limit of 80 councillors should be set, and that the minimum number of councillors should be 18.

Turning to the number of councillors in each local authority, the Commission noted that across Scotland there is great geographical and demographical diversity. As a result it concluded that it was useful to classify local authorities according to these factors, and aim for the same level of representation within each category.

The classification was based on measures of density and distribution of population derived from the 1991 Census of Population, and used 6 categories for mainland councils, plus a separate category for the 3 islands councils. For each category, the Commission determined the ratio of councillors to electorate that would allow for efficient management and appropriate representation. The table below sets out the categories and ratios.

Category	Description	Ratio
1	Large Cities	1:6,000
2	Cities	1:4,000
3	Authorities with less than 60% of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 or more persons AND an overall population density of one person or more per hectare	1:3,500
4	Authorities with EITHER 60% or more of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 or more persons OR an overall population density of less than one person per hectare	1:3,000

Category	Description	Ratio
5	Authorities with 60% or more of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 or more persons AND an overall population density of less than one person per hectare	1:2,500
6	Authorities with 60% or more of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 or more persons AND an overall population density of less than 0.2 persons per hectare	1:2,000
7	Island authorities	1:750

The table below lists the local authorities in each category, together with the data used by the Commission to categorise each local authority.

Category	Local authority	% population outwith settlements of 10,000	Persons per hectare
1	Edinburgh, City of	4.02	15.97
	Glasgow City	0.00	34.66
2	Aberdeen City	1.92	11.03
	Dundee City	1.89	23.00
3	Clackmannanshire	46.07	3.04
	East Dunbartonshire	13.14	6.37
	East Renfrewshire	13.84	4.94
	Falkirk	5.56	4.72
	Fife	30.18	2.58
	Inverclyde	9.60	5.57
	Midlothian	14.27	2.22
	North Ayrshire	31.67	1.55
	North Lanarkshire	9.93	6.84
	Renfrewshire	4.29	6.63
	South Lanarkshire	21.22	1.69
	West Dunbartonshire	1.20	5.92
	West Lothian	26.30	3.39
4	Angus	43.80	0.49
	East Ayrshire	47.21	0.98
	East Lothian	75.47	1.24
	South Ayrshire	31.74	0.94
	Stirling	47.77	0.36
5	Aberdeenshire	84.70	0.34
	Dumfries & Galloway	66.94	0.23
	Moray	77.24	0.37
	Perth and Kinross	67.16	0.24
	Scottish Borders	71.54	0.22
6	Argyll and Bute	68.47	0.13
	Highland	70.63	0.08
7	Eileanan an Iar, Na h-	100.00	0.09
	Orkney Islands	100.00	0.20
	Shetland Islands	100.00	0.16

The final step in the methodology was to determine the appropriate council size for each council. The electorate figures used, and tabulated below, were those available to the Commission in early 1996. Where the number of councillors calculated from

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the ratio and the electorate was only 1 different from the existing council size, the Commission discussed and agreed with the affected council whether to retain the existing council size.

<b>Local authority</b>	<b>Ratio</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Aberdeen City	1:4,000	172,259	43
Aberdeenshire	1:2,500	170,653	68
Angus	1:3,000	86,220	29
Argyll and Bute	1:2,000	69,597	36 <sup>1</sup>
Clackmannanshire	1:3,500	37,256	18 <sup>2</sup>
Dumfries & Galloway	1:2,500	116,528	47
Dundee City	1:4,000	116,031	29
East Ayrshire	1:3,000	95,440	32
East Dunbartonshire	1:3,500	84,094	24
East Lothian	1:3,000	68,723	23
East Renfrewshire	1:3,500	66,162	20 <sup>3</sup>
Edinburgh, City of	1:6,000	353,627	58 <sup>4</sup>
Eileanan an Iar, Na h-	1:750	23,100 <sup>5</sup>	31
Falkirk	1:3,500	110,500	32
Fife	1:3,500	273,690	78
Glasgow City	1:6,000	474,990	79
Highland	1:2,000	164,093	80 <sup>6</sup>
Inverclyde	1:3,500	69,160	20
Midlothian	1:3,500	61,167	18 <sup>7</sup>
Moray	1:2,500	65,640	26
North Ayrshire	1:3,500	105,812	30
North Lanarkshire	1:3,500	246,386	70
Orkney Islands	1:750	15,624 <sup>5</sup>	21
Perth and Kinross	1:2,500	102,469	41
Renfrewshire	1:3,500	136,859	40 <sup>8</sup>
Scottish Borders	1:2,500	85,055	34
Shetland Islands	1:750	16,744 <sup>5</sup>	22
South Ayrshire	1:3,000	90,141	30
South Lanarkshire	1:3,500	235,373	67
Stirling	1:3,000	64,697	22
West Dunbartonshire	1:3,500	73,297	22 <sup>9</sup>
West Lothian	1:3,500	112,719	32

<sup>1</sup> Ratio suggests 35 councillors: increased to 36 to reflect the geography of the islands.

<sup>2</sup> Ratio suggests 10 councillors: increased to 18 to meet minimum council size.

<sup>3</sup> Ratio suggests 19 councillors: increased to 20 to retain council size.

<sup>4</sup> Ratio suggests 59 councillors: decreased to 58 to retain council size.

<sup>5</sup> Inferred electorate count.

<sup>6</sup> Ratio suggests 82 councillors: decreased to 80 to meet maximum council size.

<sup>7</sup> Ratio suggests 17 councillors: increased to 18 to meet minimum council size.

<sup>8</sup> Ratio suggests 39 councillors: increased to 40 to retain council size.

<sup>9</sup> Ratio suggests 21 councillors: increased to 22 to retain council size.