

Third Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements

Argyll and Bute Council Area

Report to the Secretary of State for Scotland

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Report Number F98029
October 1998

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Introduction

1. The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 determined that on and after 1 April 1996, Scotland should be divided into local government areas as named and described in Schedule I to the Act and that, for each area, there should be a council consisting of a convener and councillors. It further determined that each council should have all the functions exercised immediately before 1 April in relation to their area by any existing regional, islands or district council.

2. On 1 April 1996 all local government areas existing immediately before that date which were regions and districts and all regional and district councils ceased to exist.

3. Schedule 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 also established that every local government area (other than areas of the old islands councils) should be divided into such electoral wards as may be specified in a direction made by the Secretary of State after carrying out such consultations as he considered appropriate. Those wards were to apply for the purpose of any election of councillors held before 'the relevant year of election' (defined as meaning the first year of ordinary election of councillors for the area in question occurring after the making of an order constituting the new electoral wards of that local government area in consequence of the review currently being undertaken by the Commission). In accordance with procedures that applied prior to the reorganisation in 1975, the views of councils were invited. Thereafter, the Secretary of State determined that, for the purpose of any election of councillors before the relevant year of election, 33 electoral wards were appropriate for Argyll and Bute local government area. Additionally, the proposed wards should be as described in the reports of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland to the Secretary of State for Scotland on its second statutory review of electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute District dated 18 August 1994 (27 wards) and Dumbarton District dated 13 September 1994 (Wards 6 - 8, 10 and 11). An additional ward should comprise District Ward 9 as described in Dumbarton District report plus that part of Electoral Division 8 described in the Strathclyde Region (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1993, which falls within Argyll and Bute Local government area.

Origin and Commencement of the Review

4. The Commission has a statutory duty under section 14 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to undertake periodic reviews of local authority electoral arrangements. The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 amended section 20 and schedule 5 of the 1973 Act, directing that:

as soon as practicable after 1 April 1996, the Boundary Commission shall-

review the electoral arrangements for all local government areas for the purpose of considering the future electoral arrangements for those areas; and

formulate proposals for those arrangements.

5. This, therefore, is one of the statutory reviews required in terms of section 16(2) and Schedule 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended.

6. On 22 March 1996, the Scottish Office Development Department gave local authorities advance notice of the intention of the Commission to carry out a third statutory review of electoral arrangements. On 29 March 1996, we wrote to all councils to announce the commencement of the third statutory review of electoral arrangements and to explain the procedures to be followed. We also gave notice of the commencement of the review to all Community Councils, Electoral Registration Officers, Members of Parliament with a constituency interest and the Scottish headquarters of the political parties. In addition, public notice of the commencement of the review, which included an invitation to interested parties to apply to us for a copy of our consultation letter to councils, was given in newspapers.

Background

7. During the passage through Parliament of the 1994 Act, there was cross-Party understanding that we would review the number of councillors and boundaries of electoral wards for each council in time for changes to be implemented for the 1999 local elections. This was seen to be important because at the time of reorganisation, as mentioned above, the Secretary of State defined the electoral wards for the new councils and to a great extent based these on existing district wards. It was, however, recognised that using the existing district wards led to some councils being significantly over-represented in relation to other areas. Further, it also led to councillors within the same local authority areas representing wards with significantly different numbers of electors. Accordingly, our review was seen as important to ensure equity in representation across and within all local authorities. Further, the new authorities were now responsible for the provision of the full range of all services and, accordingly, consideration had to be given to determining an appropriate number of councillors for service provision to be effectively managed.

8. This review is, therefore, the first conducted by us which sets out to determine the appropriate number of councillors required for councils to operate efficiently and to establish the boundaries of electoral wards. To achieve both objectives our review was conducted in 2 main stages:

identification of a suitable methodology for determining numbers of councillors which, applied across all local authority areas, would be seen to be equitable and consistent; and

the division of each local authority area into the appropriate number of electoral wards in accordance with the statutory rules.

9. A copy of the statutory rules to be employed by us and the Secretary of State in considering proposals for electoral arrangements is provided at Appendix A.

Number of Councillors

10. In formulating proposals for the number of councillors we have been guided by two main principles:

effective management of councils; and

equity amongst electors.

11. We recognised that the number of councillors is crucial because there is, undoubtedly, some number below which it would be impossible for a council to discharge its duty to deliver services to its population and, conversely, there is also some number above which a council becomes unwieldy and cumbersome. We were influenced in this respect by the prior considerations of two other bodies.

12. The Royal Commission on Local Government In Scotland 1966-69, under the Chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. Lord Wheatley, provided a basis by which the number of regional councillors and the size of constituency to be represented might be determined by taking into account the fact that population density varies widely in Scotland as a whole and within regions. The then accepted view was that council size should not generally exceed 75 members. In England and Wales the Redcliffe-Maude Commission, which reported to Parliament in 1969, also drew attention to the management problems of large councils and endorsed the recommendation of The Committee on the Management of Local Government that a maximum number of 75 councillors should be set.

13. After careful consideration we concluded that, in the Scottish context and to provide additional flexibility, an upper limit of 80 councillors should be set. We also concluded that a minimum number of councillors should be set, recognising that even the smallest local government areas are now responsible for a wide range of functions. Accordingly, we decided that the minimum number of councillors should be 18. Further, these limits should apply to all councils.

14. Regarding equity as between voters, we considered that ideally each elector's vote should possess the same weight and significance in local government elections throughout the country; furthermore, ideally, there should be similar mutual accessibility between electors and councillors. However, since Scotland is a country of great diversity, both geographically, and demographically, a fact reflected in the areas for which councils created by the Act of 1994 are responsible, and since we are satisfied that, in the interests of good local government, the number of councillors in any council must fall within certain limits, we concluded that these ideals are unattainable in practice. In this situation, recognising that a fair degree of homogeneity exists within certain groups of councils, which exhibit broadly similar geographic and demographic characteristics, we resolved to strive for equity in the senses mentioned within these groups, so far as that is possible within the constraints of the legislation under which we operate.

15. We, therefore, proposed a methodology which initially categorised council areas by density and distribution of population using data available from the 1991 Census of Population. Having classified council areas according to these criteria and adjusted the ratio of electors to each councillor to take account of similar characteristics, we have been able to achieve a broad equity of electorate across and within all council areas.

16. In our letter of 29 March 1996, all councils were informed of the proposed methodology and future pattern of representation for their council area. Councils were requested to make any representations they wished on numbers of councillors by 29 April 1996 so that a meeting could be arranged with the Deputy Chairman and Secretary to discuss the pattern of representation and any matters regarding our review that the Council wished to raise. Following visits to all councils by the Deputy Chairman and Secretary to discuss the proposed methodology and to consider alternatives which could be applied across Scotland, no alternative methodologies were offered but a number of councils suggested that the underlying classification should be amended to include an additional category.

17. At our meeting of 17 June 1996, we re-examined the criteria to be used to categorise mainland councils with similar characteristics in light of the representations made by a number of councils. We concluded that there should be 6 rather than 5 categories. The final categorisation of similar mainland councils was then agreed as follows:

- Category 1 Large Cities Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- Category 2 Cities Aberdeen and Dundee.
- Category 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.
- Category 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.

- Category 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.
- Category 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.

18. In addition to the 6 categories we then determined the ratio of councillors to electorate for mainland councils that would allow for efficient management and appropriate representation, as set out in paragraphs 11 - 14 above, and considered that the following would be appropriate:

- | | |
|--------------|---------|
| • Category 1 | 1:6,000 |
| • Category 2 | 1:4,000 |
| • Category 3 | 1:3,500 |
| • Category 4 | 1:3,000 |
| • Category 5 | 1:2,500 |
| • Category 6 | 1:2,000 |

19. On 20 June 1996 we wrote to all mainland councils informing them of the revised criteria for determining councilor numbers and inviting them to prepare a draft scheme of electoral arrangements for their Council area. Following upon that, Aberdeen City Council brought a petition for Judicial Review of the decision taken by us at our meeting of 17 June, 1996 in the Court of Session. In it they sought a decree of declarator that that decision in relation to them was unlawful, ultra vires and null and void; they also sought a decree of reduction of the decision in relation to them and certain ancillary remedies. We resisted this petition, which was dismissed by the Court on 20 December 1996 after a hearing.

20. We considered the ratio of councillors to electors for the 3 islands councils at our meeting of 26 August 1996 and concluded that the appropriate ratio would be 1:750. On 28 August 1996 we wrote to these councils informing them of our decision.

Argyll and Bute Council's Proposals

21. The Council submitted a scheme of electoral arrangements for 35 wards on 9 June 1997. Copies of the draft scheme were made available for public inspection at Council offices and interested parties were invited to make representations to the Commission by 14 July 1997. Community Councils were informed of the proposals directly.

22. Following publication of the Council's scheme seven representations were received. Prior to publication of the Council's draft scheme a number of representations had been made based on speculation about the Council's proposals and we include these below.

23. Dumbarton Constituency Liberal Democrats offered an alternative five ward solution for the Helensburgh area.

24. Helensburgh Community Council opposed the Council's draft proposals and wrote to request that an Assistant Commissioner be appointed to hold a local meeting to consider representations, from the Community Council and other interested parties, that the Council's draft scheme failed to meet the statutory rule regarding electoral parity. It also asked that consideration be given to the scheme that it had submitted prior to publication of the Council's draft proposals. The Community Council subsequently submitted revised alternative proposals for the Helensburgh area.

25. A letter was received which set out to demonstrate that the Council's proposals seriously departed from the overriding principle of electoral parity and offered support for proposals being developed by Helensburgh Community Council.

26. A letter was received which stated that the Council's proposals were flawed in the Rothesay and Helensburgh areas. It was suggested that Rothesay and Helensburgh should have two wards and five wards respectively.

27. Three letters were received regarding the level of representation for the Isle of Bute. It was thought that Bute should not sacrifice a Councillor to Helensburgh and that, although Helensburgh had only just joined the Council area, some people were greedy for power within the Council Chambers. It was stated that Bute had lost out through local government reorganisation and needed the additional representation to survive the economic blight.

28. Ray Michie MP wrote to say that she opposed the proposal to add additional wards to Helensburgh if this meant the loss of an electoral ward on Bute, which would adversely effect on the proper representation of the people.

29. The Dumbarton and Helensburgh Constituency Association of the Scottish National Party wrote to say that there should be five wards in Helensburgh. The Association also considered that the proposals for Wards 32 - 35 were acceptable but it considered that a 36 ward scheme would allow for more equitable representation.

30. Our initial analysis of the Council's draft scheme indicated that, in compiling the scheme, little if any attempt had been made to observe the primary rule regarding electoral parity. Parity in the Council's scheme ranged between -63% and 45%. Further, in 27 of the 35 wards, we concluded that the parity figures were wholly unacceptable. Moreover, 21 of the wards in the Council's scheme appeared to be unchanged from the previous review and the boundaries between two wards had been slightly amended to produce a better defined line.

31. We noted that, in the islands to the west of the Council area, the Council proposed that Tiree and Coll should form a single ward which was over-represented and that Islay Jura and Colonsay, should be represented by two wards were similarly over-represented. Mull, which also

formed a single ward, was marginally under-represented. However, because of the geography and communications in these areas, we concluded that it was unlikely that a satisfactory solution better reflecting electoral parity could be achieved.

32. In Oban and the surrounding area, the Council proposed eight wards although the number of electors suggested that nine wards would be more appropriate. Conversely, in the Kintyre peninsula seven wards were proposed although six appeared to be the correct number. In the area covered by Wards 18-27, it was clear that nine wards would be more appropriate than the ten proposed by the Council. In the area covered by Wards 28-35, it was also clear that eleven wards could be justified.

33. We noted that representations which offered alternative proposals for part of the Council area, did not properly address the primary rule regarding electoral parity, although we concluded that there were no justifiable reasons why a scheme of electoral representation which better reflected the statutory rules should not be developed for the Council area. Accordingly, we directed our Secretariat to develop an alternative scheme of electoral representation which, as far as practicable, better reflected the statutory rules, particularly with regard to electoral parity.

Development of an Alternative Draft Scheme

34. Officers of the Commission visited the Council area and examined the options available for a revision of the boundaries as we had directed. During their visit they met with senior Council officials and outlined, in broad terms, their remit.

35. Our Secretariat recognised that the islands to the west of the Council area posed problems with regard to electoral parity and concluded that the key to producing a solution for the Council area which, overall, better reflected electoral parity, lay with a decision as to whether these islands should be represented by three or four wards. Our Secretariat concluded also that, if a four ward solution for the islands was considered necessary, the Commission would need to decide whether the remainder of the Council area should be represented by 31 or 32 wards, the latter representing an increase in the overall number of wards in the Council area.

36. Having examined the mainland/islands and inter-island communications, our Secretariat concluded that there appeared to be no realistic alternative to Tiree and Coll forming a single, albeit significantly over-represented, ward. Mull was marginally under-represented but, similarly, there appeared to be no practical solution. Further, it was not considered possible to link Mull to Tiree and Coll to produce two better balanced wards because of the likely communications problems and problems with developing a rational division of Mull. The alternative, which would link either Tiree and Coll or part of Mull to a mainland ward in Oban, was also not attractive.

37. Our Secretariat considered that the two existing wards on Islay, Jura and Colonsay were substantially over-represented but that a single ward solution, which would undoubtedly produce

a ward which was under-represented, would be likely to prove controversial. Consideration was given to associating Colonsay with Oban, which would marginally reduce the divergence from parity and appeared feasible because of the direct ferry link. It was noted that similar solutions had been applied in the Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands although, in these areas, the ferry services between the mainland and associated islands were much more frequent and the journey time was considerably shorter. Linking Colonsay with Mull was also not considered a feasible alternative.

38. Given the circumstances, we concluded that the islands should be represented by three wards and that Islay, Jura and Colonsay should be contained within a single ward.

39. In the Kintyre peninsula, our Secretariat concluded that a solution which better reflected parity could be achieved by developing four wards for the area covered by Wards 1 - 5 in the Council's scheme.

40. In the Oban area, the possibility of reducing the divergence from electoral parity in Ward 15 was examined but no practical solution, which had any significant impact on electoral parity, could be found because of the overall settlement pattern and large concentration of electors at Connel. In Oban, a three ward solution, which better reflected electoral parity, was proposed. The areas to the west and south of Oban, covered by Wards S and 14 in the Council scheme, were also revised to produce a better balance of electorate.

41. Our Secretariat concluded that the Isle of Bute should be covered by three wards which were close to electoral parity. Similarly, in Dunoon and the surrounding area, better electoral parity was achieved by adjusting the boundaries offered by the Council in its draft scheme.

42. In Helensburgh, our Secretariat proposed six wards which significantly improved the divergence from electoral parity to $\pm 1\%$ compared with the range of -35% to 45% in the Council's proposals. The remainder of the wider Helensburgh area was also revised improve electoral parity, although it was recognised that, in this area, ward boundaries would cross the perceived boundaries of existing communities and that this might prove controversial. Having carefully considered the draft scheme prepared by the Council and representations made during the period of consultation, we concluded that 35 wards were appropriate for the Council area and that the revised proposals developed by our Secretariat should be published as the Commission's provisional proposals.

Publication of Commission's Provisional Proposals

43. Public notice was given of the publication of our provisional proposals on 2 July 1998. Argyll and Bute Council was asked to make available for inspection at its offices copies of the electoral ward boundary descriptions, electoral statistics and illustrative maps. Additionally, copies of our proposals were sent to all who had received our consultation letter or had expressed an interest. We asked that any comments should be made to us by 30 July 1998.

Consideration of Representations

44. Sixty-four representations were received:

- **Argyll and Bute Council** wrote to say that it unanimously opposed the proposal that Islay, Jura and Colonsay should form a single ward. It believed that this was a fundamental flaw in the provisional proposals. Islay and Jura are served by a ferry providing a once daily service in the winter and up to 3 services per day during the summer. Attending a Council or related meeting, therefore, committed a councillor to spend two nights away from home. Colonsay is served by three ferries per week, in summer two ferries are from Oban and one from Islay but in winter all services are from Oban. It appeared that Islay, Jura and Colonsay were paying the price for the need to have one ward for Tiree and Coll. The Council suggested that there should be two wards for Islay, Jura and Colonsay, one comprising part of Islay, with the two main settlements of Bowmore and Port Ellen, and the other comprising the rural parts of Islay together with Jura and Colonsay. The 1997 electorate in each of the wards was approximately 1,601 and 1,337 respectively.

The Council accepted the provisional proposals for Wards 10- 12 and 15-16.

The Council noted that Ward 8 (Awe) had been the subject of discussion in earlier reviews and considered that the provisional proposals were not yet right. The ward spanned approximately 60 miles from the Atlantic seaboard islands to Bridge of Orchy and there were no community ties between the seaboard communities and the inland areas to the north-east. It considered that the two islands of Luing and Seil were part of a common community and that to travel between Seil and the remainder of Ward 8 involved passing through Luing. The proposals would also separate Kilninver and Kilmelford which was one Community Council area. The Council believed that communication links suggested that the areas around Bridge of Orchy and Dalmally would be better served by being linked with Ward 14. Alternative proposals for Wards 8,13 and 14 were offered which the Council believed would be acceptable in terms of electoral parity and made more sense in terms of the geographical association of settlements.

The Council suggested that Wards 17-19 should be named 'Rothesay/Bute North', 'Rothesay/Bute Central' and 'Rothesay/Bute South', respectively to reflect the fact that they each comprised parts of the former Royal Burgh of Rothesay and a landward part of the island. The suggestion also corrected the misapprehension that the island is on an east/west axis rather than the north/south axis on which it actually lies.

Whilst accepting that the Island of Bute should comprise three wards, the Council believed that polling districts AR50 and AR53 should be included within Ward 20 rather than Ward 25. Also, Ward 25 should be named 'Holy Loch'. The Council questioned the electorate data quoted for Wards 20 and 25 in the provisional proposals and concluded that the amendment proposed would produce better balanced wards with appropriate community associations.

The Council drew our attention to three small corrections to the boundary descriptions of Ward 22

For Wards 26 - 35, the Council proposed a radical redrawing of the boundaries. Whilst recognising that the need to accommodate 10 wards in the Helensburgh area would not reflect everyone's view about maintaining community links, it believed that its revised proposals addressed most community links issues and maintained parity within acceptable limits. The Council noted that the proposals for Ward 31 involved the division of Rim and the amalgamation of its core with part of west Helensburgh. The Council proposed that the boundaries be redrawn to maintain Rhu as one unit and, to achieve this, made adjustments to the wards in Helensburgh. The Council also proposed substantially redrawing boundaries so that Cove and Kilcreggan, which was formerly a Burgh, were maintained in the same ward. It maintained that the changes also brought together the communities to the east and north of Loch Long in a single ward and allowed communities to the west of Loch Lomond to be similarly associated.

The Council was anxious that the Commission should move forward with all speed because of concerns about putting revised electoral arrangements into place.

- **Arrochar and Tarbet Community Council** wrote to request that the Commission reject the Council's proposal to place Arrochar and Tarbet in different wards which was being proposed to solve difficulties in other areas.
- **Bute Community Council** wrote to say that it recognised the justification for the proposed wards but was unhappy with the names which were misleading. It was thought that 'Bute North', 'Bute Central' and 'Bute South' were more appropriate and better reflected local views than the alternatives offered by the Council.
- **Campbeltown Community Council** forwarded a petition with 198 signatures which requested that the existing level of representation be maintained and asked for a public hearing to be held. The Community Council also wrote to say that any alteration to the boundaries should not take place until all the parties had been involved in the consultation. The proposed changes appeared to have been instigated by the inclusion of Helensburgh and Lomond in the Council area which resulted in an imbalance in the allocation of councillors in each district within the local authority and gave Helensburgh and Lomond an in-built majority. The Community Council objected to the actions of Argyll and Bute Council which

accepted the Commission's proposals. Representation in the area should not be based solely on numbers. The area was fragile in economic terms and had a declining population. It needed strong representation. Further, the boundaries did not preserve the Royal Burgh of Campbeltown while allowing villages in Kintyre to retain individuality. Villages which had nothing in common with Campbeltown were being placed in a ward which had the worst poverty indicators in the country. The status quo should remain.

- **Cove and Kilcreggan Community Council** stated that the provisional proposals were a very bad idea. Suggesting that Cove be linked with Garelochhead flew in the face of geography and left Cove in an isolated quarter sharing no easily accessible facilities such as the public hall, library, shops and post office. All facilities were in Kilcreggan and the two places were one community. Some account should be taken of the physical and social geography of the peninsula. A petition with 209 signatures which opposed the proposals was forwarded by the Community Council. The alternative submitted by Argyll and Bute Council, though far from perfect, was considered preferable.
- **Dunadd Community Council** wrote to say that although it was not affected by the provisional proposals it considered that a mistake had been made by not providing two wards for Islay, Jura and Colonsay which, did not give the area parity with Helensburgh. The Community Council did not want Helensburgh to be included in the Council area as its area had nothing in common with what was a sleeper town for Glasgow. Ten pushy councillors from Helensburgh would mean that the majority rural population would be ignored. The wards on Bute should be renamed 'Bute West', 'Bute Central' and 'Bute East'.
- **Garelochhead Community Council** stated that it supported the revised proposals submitted by the Argyll and Bute Council.
- **Glenorchy and Innishail Community Council** wrote to say that the current Community Council area worked well, that splitting its area would require duplication of effort as natural communications were more tenuous and that the Community Council area should remain intact regardless of electoral ward boundaries.
- **Jura Community Council** wrote to say that combining the present wards in the area would create the largest ward in the Council area in terms of electors and one of the largest and most widespread wards in terms of geography. It would be difficult for a single councillor to cover such an area. There were practical difficulties in servicing the three island communities bearing in mind the travelling distances and the difficulties of inter-island travel. Any diminution of representation would be a retrograde step.

- **Killarow and Kilmeny Community Council** was opposed to the proposals for Islay, Jura and Colonsay. The task for a single councillor would be impossible.
- **Kildalton and Oa Community Council** wished to record its dismay at the proposals for Islay, Jura and Colonsay which would stretch a single councillor beyond endurance. The existing arrangements should be retained.
- **Kilninver and Kilmelford Community Council** stated that the parish of Kilninver and Kilmelford and Seil and Luing were stable, unified, close-knit communities which should remain in one ward. Drawing a line between the two villages could become the thin end of a wedge. The Commission was urged to accept the revised proposals submitted by Argyll and Bute Council.
- **Luing Community Council** objected to the provisional proposals. The only link to the mainland was via the Cuan ferry and Seil island. Luing and Seil have the same councillor and arranging for two councillors to attend Community Council meetings would be difficult. There were plans for the water supply to come from Seil, both teachers for the Luing School lived on Seil, the ferries were run by the Council and the islands shared the same minister and doctor. Luing and Seil should be in the same ward.
- **Rhu and Shandon Community Council** stated that the provisional proposals were unacceptable because they divided the communities of Rhu and Shandon. The Council's proposals were marginally more acceptable but any decision to divide the area was abhorrent. It was felt that the time allowed for consultation was inadequate during a period when many Community Councils were in recession.
- **Roseneath and Clynder Community Council** opposed the provisional proposals on the grounds that they were flawed. The proposals would split an area which had been a united community since the time of St Modan. Clynder was split from Garelochhead by the bulk of the peninsula and several miles of uninhabited road and the residents of Roseneath and Clynder wished to remain as a single entity. It was considered that the statutory rules required the Commission to consider population, social links, historical links, community type, physical and commercial geography and infrastructure and that all these criteria, other than population, had been ignored. The Commission was willing to exceed electoral parity in Islay, Jura and Colonsay. The Commission should create a unified ward which incorporated the communities of Cove, Kilcreggan, Roseneath and Clynder which would exceed parity by only 9%. The Area Committee of Helensburgh and Lomond's proposed that Cove and Kilcreggan should remain unified, but its proposal to split Roseneath and Clynder were flawed. Further, the Commission's dictat that the ideal ward should not exceed 2,000 electors $\pm 10\%$ might be ideal for a town, but was less practical in a rural situation.

- **Sandbank Community Council** wished the Holy Loch Ward to remain unchanged and for Colintrave and Glendaruel to be added to the East Lochfyne Ward.
- **Seil Community Council** stated that the provisional proposals excised the island of Luing from the islands of Sell and Easdale by placing them in a different electoral ward, which was divisive of a community linked by ties which were historical and of utter importance. The island of Luing was dependent on the island of Seil for road and ferry access, the Primary School in the area was located on Sell, the Parish extended to all three islands and was served by the same Minister, the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages was resident on Seil and the Easdale village ball and the Seil Island Games were common meeting places. It was, therefore, inconceivable that an arbitrary line be drawn through the island community.
- **Tarbert and Skipness Community Council** wrote to say that the proposals for its ward were logical and acceptable.
- **Taynuilt Community Council** wrote to suggest that the River Noe should be the new boundary for the area which would incorporate polling districts AR17 and AL67.
- **Councillor Banks** wished to endorse the Council's response to the provisional proposals and support the revised wards in Oban.
- **Councillor Cameron** wrote to say that he agreed with the Council's alternative proposals, except those which affected the Awe, Ardconnel and Kilmore and North Loin Wards. On balance the Commission's proposals in these areas should be accepted as the best solution available. The Council's proposals would dismantle three wards and link communities which had nothing in common. Councillor Cameron suggested that the wards on Bute be named after the island and not simply the main settlement.
- **Councillor Currie** wrote to say that the proposals for Islay, Jura and Colonsay were not acceptable. The proposals would mean that the elected representative would be a full-time councillor spending most of his or her time on the mainland. The proposals submitted by Argyll and Bute Council were more appropriate.
- **Councillor Gillies** supported the provisional proposals in as far as they related to the Islands of Tiree and Coll and Mull.
- **Councillor Kelly** wrote to say that the provisional proposals for the Roseneath peninsula were unacceptable to him and to the local population, because they divided the peninsula and placed Cove in an adjacent ward. The Councillor noted that Cove and Kilcreggan had been a Burgh for many years and the proposal to

divide the area were vehemently opposed. The proposals submitted by the Council were equally unacceptable to the Councillor because Clynder was part of the community which he represented. He objected also because the Council's proposals would separate Arrochar and Tarbet against the wishes of the people. The Councillor contended that the existing ward, which had approximately 2,500 electors, could be accommodated within the overall scheme, given that the Commission accepted that Islay, Jura and Colonsay should have 2,900 electors. The peninsula could be likened to an island community and should be afforded the same status to ensure that cohesiveness and unity in the community were not undermined. The Councillor stated that he was supported by the local Community Councils and asked that the proposal for the peninsula be reconsidered and that any proposal which split Arrochar and Tarbet be rejected.

- **Councillor Macaskill** wrote to say that the two islands of Luing and Seil should be in the same ward. The ferry ran from Seil to Luing and the ferrymen lived on Sell. There was no connection between Luing and the Awe ward unless Sell was included. Similarly, Kilninver and Kilmelford should be in the same ward. The settlements formed one Community Council and children attended the same school. Taynuilt and Bridge of Awe formed one Community Council and the two areas were closely linked. The Councillor stated that Council had proposed amendments which were clearly correct and, if the Commission were minded to reject them, the Councillor wished to attend a hearing to support them.
- **Councillors McKinley and Currie** wished to object to the provisional proposals for Kintyre which was a fragile community. It was a disservice to alter the representation in Argyll and Bute Council and the Councillors continued to believe that establishing 10 councillors in Helensburgh would mitigate against Kintyre. A public hearing was requested.
- **Councillor Petrie** wrote to say that he had received a request from the residents of Rhu who were concerned that the proposals would split the village. The boundary should be moved east towards Helensburgh, because the proposals submitted by the Council, which went some way to improving the situation, did not go far enough.
- **Argyll and Bute Constituency Labour Party** objected to the proposals which reduced the number of councillors in Kintyre. Kintyre was a depressed area with the highest unemployment statistics in Argyll and Bute and the second highest within the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area. The Scottish Office accepted that Kintyre was a remote area and had been allowed the status of a lifeline air service, the only mainland area in Scotland with such a status. Kintyre had the potential to be cut off from the rest of Scotland as a recent landslide demonstrated. It was also anticipated that the population would increase once the impact of the Campbeltown/Ballycastle ferry service reached its full potential and the present number of councillors should be retained to influence the regeneration of the area.

At the end of a peninsula, Kintyre has the characteristics of an island community and should be treated accordingly. Should the Commission's proposals be implemented, the potential existed for the rural area to be dominated by an urban majority with which it shared no community of interest. Kintyre should have five councillors and the boundaries in Helensburgh should be revised with a view to restricting the number of councillors in that area.

- **The Dumbarton Constituency Liberal Democrats** wrote to say that the Commission's provisional proposals were their preferred option for Helensburgh.
- **The Scottish National Party, Isle of Bute Branch** wrote to say that the wards on Bute should be renamed 'Bute West', 'Bute Central' and 'Bute East'.
- **The Scottish National Party, Argyll and Bute Liaison Committee** stated that the electorate given in the Council's proposals for Ward 27 was incorrect. It was also thought that Islay, Jun and Colonsay would be disadvantaged by the proposals. The 25 wards within the Argyll and Bute Constituency could be divided into two categories and it was clear that the rural areas had some of the highest electorates, which suggested that the proposals were not balanced. Whilst Helensburgh was under-represented at present, geographically and demographically it was quite different from the rest of the Council area. The proposed increase in representation, however, suggested that the imbalance had been over-corrected. In summing up, the Committee thought that the scattered rural areas should not be disadvantaged and that an additional seat should be added to the islands. If the Commission could not increase the level of representation to 36 seats, then Helensburgh should be reduced by one seat. The proposals for Ward 27 were based on an error and should be reconsidered. The Community Council for Colintrave and Glendaruel wished to be in the same ward as Tighnabuaich. While population projections were difficult, recent trends indicated that growth was in the rural areas. The wards in Bute should be named 'Bute North', 'Bute Central' and 'Bute South'.
- **Forum for North Argyll** wrote to say that the Oban and North Argyll area should have an additional councillor because of the increasing population and the need to give the public greater representation at local government level.
- **Kintyre Civic Society** objected to the provisional proposals which it felt breached the statutory rules. The area was almost an island and the strict application of the statutory rules was inappropriate. Compared with other urban settlements, Campbeltown was isolated. This meant that there were staffing difficulties for schools. Youngsters were frustrated by being cut off from mainstream interests and opportunities which meant that the most promising deserted their home district because it afforded them no career prospects. There was higher than average unemployment and a wider than average gulf between the 'haves' and 'have nots' because public transport was limited. The tourist industry was

disadvantaged and the area was dependent on a single road. The idea that such an area should be tied to the same quota of councillors was patently unacceptable. In all fairness the area deserved more than four councillors. An Assistant Commissioner should be appointed to hear representations at first hand. Whatever the outcome, the Royal Burgh, which had never been less than 90 miles from a railway network, should not have to put up with a name which sounded like an inner city station.

- **Roseneath Peninsula Amenity Society** wrote to say that breaking up the former Burgh of Cove and Kilcreggan would be an act of vandalism. Over time the area had developed common secular and religious interests. Cove had little to do with Garelochhead and shared community activities, clubs and a church with Kilcreggan. When the Society was formed, Garelochhead did not wish to be involved. Taking apart the community of Cove and Kilcreggan ignored the practicalities of geography and the interests of the people. The needs of a cohesive community should transcend the convenience of administrators and councillors and regard should be had to the statutory rules concerning the fixing of any particular boundary. It would make more sense to treat the peninsula as one unit.
- **Rhu Tenants'/Residents' Association** wrote to object to the provisional proposals. The Association considered that almost all of the village of Rhu, which the Scottish Office deemed to be rural and a conservation village, had nothing in common with the ward in which it had been placed. It considered that the eastern boundary of Rhu should be drawn at Pier Road and Station Road which would cause the least damage and allow the village to retain its conservation and rural status.
- A submission was received which stated that the signatories were in some way or other involved with the affairs of communities in Kintyre, mid-Argyll, Bute and the Cowal peninsula. It stated that the Council area was conspicuously rural in geographic and socio-economic terms and, as such, the ward boundaries should not reflect the interests of the more densely populated areas at the expense of the Council's predominantly rural communities. This was already the case whereby Helensburgh returned 20% of the Council's members. If the provisional proposals were implemented, the urban/rural imbalance would be further exaggerated. Moreover, the anomaly at local level would be compounded at parliamentary level because the wards of Helensburgh did not form part of Argyll and Bute Constituency. It was of considerable importance to recognise that Helensburgh looked towards Glasgow and lay outwith the main geographical area of the local authority. Because of this, equity of representation was inappropriate for the Council area and, within the statutory rules, a form of weighting should be adopted to take account of the socio-economic geography of the Council area in such a way that the needs and interests of its urban and rural communities were brought into a more effective balance. The signatories asked that an Assistant

Commissioner be appointed to visit the area and examine the relevance of the proposals more closely.

- A letter was received which stated that the correspondent opposed the both the Commission's and Council's proposals for Cove, Kilcreggan, Roseneath and Clynder.
- A letter was received which stated that the proposals for Helensburgh were acceptable but that Wards 26, 27 and 31 should be named 'Colgrain and Kirkmichael', 'Helensburgh East' and 'Rhu and Ardencaple', respectively.
- Four representations were received which objected to the provisional proposals for Islay, Jura and Colonsay. Correspondents considered that the area was much more difficult to represent than a more compact urban area and that it would be impossible for a single councillor effectively to cover the area. Geographical considerations and travelling distance, especially in the winter should be given greater consideration. The ward as proposed by the Commission was the largest in the Council area.
- A petition with 57 signatures was received which opposed the proposals to reduce the number of Kintyre Councillors.
- A letter was received which stated that the additional ward in Oban was welcomed and that the Council's proposals to return Council's proposal to return Connell to the Ardconnel -Kilmore ward was appropriate.
- Nine letters were received which expressed opposition to the proposals for the Roseneath peninsula. The correspondents considered that Cove and Kilcreggan had always operated as a single unit. Cove had nothing to do Garelochhead and Kilcreggan had no shared interests with Roseneath and Clynder. The proposals were unjustifiable when considered against what the Commission had considered acceptable for Islay, Jura and Colonsay.
- Twelve letters opposing both the Commission's and Council's names for Wards 17 - 19 were received. The consensus view was that 'Bute North', 'Bute Central' and 'Bute South' would be more appropriate.

45. We carefully considered the views expressed by the Council, Community Councils and others regarding our provisional proposals for Islay, Jura and Colonsay. We noted that the communication links with and between islands on the Council's western seaboard were significantly worse compared to services in other islands areas. We noted the views expressed that a Councillor representing these areas could expect to be away from home for two or three days to attend a Council, or other meeting, on the mainland or on Colonsay. We concluded that, creating two wards for Islay, Jura and Colonsay would not reduce the time spent away from

home by island councillors, although it would significantly reduce the constituency size and associated workload.

46. We considered the potential for developing alternative proposals for the islands of Tiree and Coil, Mull, Islay, Jura and Colonsay which created links with other islands. None of the alternatives available were thought to improve upon the provisional proposals. We also considered whether it would be possible to link island communities to wards on the mainland, as was the case in other Council areas. We concluded that the potential offered from such a course of action was very limited and would not improve upon the provisional proposals. We noted that, where this had been successful elsewhere, the ferry services were more frequent than those serving the western seaboard of Argyll and Bute Council area and the journey times were considerably shorter.

47. We concluded, therefore, that creating a two ward solution for Islay, Jura and Colonsay would only be possible if other wards across the Council area could be adjusted in such a way as to maintain acceptable electoral parity within a 35 ward solution for the Council area or if the number of wards for the Council area was increased. We carefully examined the options available for redesigning wards across the Council area, other than those on the Isle of Bute, that would provide for a 35 ward scheme. A detailed examination suggested that, given the geography of the area, there was little scope for making the size of changes which would be necessary to accommodate another ward in Islay, Jura and Colonsay without increasing the overall number of wards in the Council area.

48. Having examined in detail the options available, we concluded that, because of the undoubted communications difficulties with islands on the western seaboard of the Council area, the number of wards should be increased to 36 and that the additional ward should be utilised, in conjunction with Ward 9 in our provisional proposals, to create two wards for Islay, Jura and Colonsay along the lines set out in the Council's representation. We noted that the one effect of this decision would be to alter parity at 1997 and 2001 and that this would have an effect on other wards in our provisional proposals. Accordingly we examined the impact of creating an additional ward on electoral parity as set out in our provisional proposals. We concluded that, overall, the effect on electoral parity elsewhere was broadly acceptable.

49. We noted the various representations regarding the number and distribution of wards in the Kintyre peninsula. We concluded that the provisional proposals properly reflected the level of representation necessary for the number of electors in this area. We concluded that there were no special geographical conditions which would allow us to deviate significantly from the primary rule concerning electoral parity and concluded, therefore, that our provisional proposal for this area should remain unchanged.

50. We carefully considered the views expressed by the Council, Community Councils and others with regard to the areas covered by Wards 8, 13 and 14. We noted that the revised boundaries for North Loin significantly increased the geographical spread of the ward and that the link between settlements in the eastern and western areas involved travelling through two other wards and a distance of approximately 70 miles. We noted also that our proposals for

North Loin and Awe had not generated significant comment outwith the Luing/Seil area. Further, there was a view expressed by others that the Council's revised proposals dismantled three wards and linked communities which had nothing in common simply to rectify a perceived anomaly in the Luing/Seil area. The Council's revised proposals also had an adverse effect on electoral parity, the revised North Loin and Ardconnel/Kilmore Wards diverged from parity by 17% and -8% respectively compared with 11% and 0 in the provisional proposals. We concluded, therefore, that we were not prepared to amend our provisional proposals in this area.

51. We noted that the Council and others requested that the names of the three Bute Wards be revised. We considered the alternatives proposed and agreed that Wards 17 - 19 should be renamed 'Bute North', 'Bute Central' and 'Bute South' in line with the majority of representations received.

52. We noted the Council's revised proposals for the areas covered by Wards 20 and 25 and the comments received from Community Councils and others. We observed that the electorate data in the Council's draft scheme had incorrectly stated the 1997 electorate of the East Lochfyne and Holy Loch Wards. The Council proposed that 156 electors in polling district AR56 should be transferred from East Lochfyne and that polling districts AR50 and AR53 should be included in the East Lochfyne Ward. The electorate in the revised wards exceeded parity and, because of this, we examined the possibility of further amending boundaries in adjacent wards in order to achieve a better balance in the area. No practicable solutions were apparent and, accordingly, we agreed to revise our provisional proposals in line with the Council's request because of the geography and communications links in the area. We agreed to alter the name of Ward 25 to 'Holy Loch' as the Council requested.

53. We carefully considered the Council's revised proposals for Wards 26 – 35 together with the representations received from Community Councils and others. We concluded that, in the areas concerned, there were no special geographical considerations which allowed us to depart from the application of the primary rule concerning electoral parity. We noted that either the revised counts of electorate or the boundaries of the Helensburgh Wards shown on the maps provided by the Council were incorrect. Our Secretariat, with assistance from the Council and staff of the Valuation Joint Board obtained revised counts of electorate for the areas in question and also considered what consequential changes would be necessary if the Council's proposals for the area were to be adopted. We concluded that, overall, the alternatives proposed by the Council and others in these areas did not improve on the electoral parity achieved in our provisional proposals. We noted further that there was opposition to the revisions proposed by the Council which were also widely viewed as unacceptable. We concluded, therefore, that our provisional proposals in the areas covered by Wards 26 - 35 should remain as our final proposals in this area and that the wards names should also remain unchanged.

Final Recommendation

54. Having conducted the third statutory review of electoral arrangements for Argyll and Bute Council area in accordance with the procedures described above, we **recommend** that future electoral arrangements for the said Council should provide for a Council of 36 members.

55. The designation of the electoral wards that we recommend for Argyll and Bute Council, together with information which we have received from the Council as to the 1996 electorate and forecast 2001 electorate of the proposed wards, are set out at Appendix B to this report.

56. The boundaries of the proposed electoral wards are described in Appendix C and the following illustrative maps accompany this report:

Map	Area	Scale
1A	Argyll and Bute Council Area	1:100,000
1B	Argyll and Bute Council Area	1:100,000
1C	Argyll and Bute Council Area	1:100,000
1D	Argyll and Bute Council Area	1:100,000
2	Dunoon	1:10,000
3	Rothesay	1:10,000
4	Helensburgh	1:10,000
5	Oban	1:10,000
6	Campbeltown	1:10,000

Appendix B

Argyll and Bute Council Area Proposed Electoral Wards

Number	Name	Electorate	
		1997 (Actual)	2001 (Estimated)
a	b	c	d
1	South Kintyre	2,025	2,083
2	Campbeltown Central	2,087	2,098
3	East Central Kintyre	2,164	2,162
4	North and West Kintyre	1,979	2,063
5	Knapdale	1,873	1,940
6	Lochgilphead	2,028	2,075
7	Craignish-Glenaray	1,991	2,035
8	Islay North, Jura and Colonsay	1,337	1,325
9	Islay South	1,601	1,587
10	Awe	1,746	1,799
11	Oban North	2,008	2,038
12	Oban Central	2,155	2,155
13	Oban South	1,958	2,180
14	Ardconnel-Kilmore	1,843	1,936
15	North Loin	2,143	2,202
16	Mull	2,252	2,364
17	Tiree and Coil	736	759
18	Bute North	1,974	1,984
19	Butt Central	1,968	1,963
20	Butt South	1,951	1,947
21	East Lochfyne	2,220	2,247
22	Kim and Hunter's Quay	1,975	2,028
23	Ardenslate	2,002	2,048
24	Milton	1,880	1,955
25	Auchamore and Innellan	2,033	2,102
26	Holy Loch	2,079	2,156
27	Helensburgh East	1,991	2,080
28	East Central Helensburgh	1,948	2,076
29	Helensburgh Central	1,938	2,014
30	Helensburgh North	1,979	2,126
31	Helensburgh West	1,931	2,068
32	West Helensburgh and Rhu	2,018	1,938
33	Garelohead and Cove	1,957	1,906

34	Arrochar, Luss, Arden and Ardenconnel	1,956	1,863
35	Roseneath, Clynder and Kilcreggan	2,050	2,138
36	Cardross	1,828	1,949
	Total	69,654	71,439