
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

23 September 2020

North Ayrshire Council

Title: Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland-
Consultation on Review of North Ayrshire Ward
Boundaries

Purpose: To consider the Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's consultation on the review of North Ayrshire ward boundaries.

Recommendation: It is recommended that Council agrees (a) to support the Commission's proposals to align ward boundaries with those of Localities; (b) to recommend that the small variation between ward and Locality boundaries between the Garnock Valley and North Coast is aligned along the watershed boundary of the Localities; (c) to otherwise support the Commission's proposals for the Irvine, Kilwinning, Three Towns, Garnock Valley and North Coast and Cumbræes wards; (d) to note the Commission's proposals regarding the islands and to re-iterate our view that they be given appropriate representation that reflects their nature; and (e) authorise the Head of Democratic Services to finalise the response to the Commission in accordance with Council's decision and thereafter forward the response to the Commission for the deadline of 30 September 2020.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland are obliged to review the ward boundaries of island authorities in time for the 2022 Local Government Election. The Commission have sought the views of the Council on their initial proposals.

1.2 The Council's response to the last Commission review of ward boundaries focussed on ensuring that ward boundaries aligned with those of Localities. As a result of legislative changes relating to the number of Members in each ward, the Commission's current proposals now align ward boundaries with those of the six North Ayrshire Localities.

1.3 The report recommends that Council supports the Commission's proposals to align wards with Locality boundaries. It also provides information on other potential issues, such as the number and size of wards within each Locality and the Commission's proposal for a single Member Arran ward. The response is due for submission by 30 September and the response will be informed by Council's decision.

2. Background

- 2.1 Currently North Ayrshire has ten wards, comprising 33 Members in total. The last Local Government Boundary Review (the Fifth Review) took place in 2015 and came into effect in time for the 2017 Local Government Elections. At that time, legislation provided that wards could only comprise three or four Members. As part of the Fifth Review, a 10% cap was imposed on any variation to Councillor numbers. This meant that while the Commission's methodology, (details of which are set out on 2.6), would have recommended 36 Councillors for North Ayrshire, the 2017 increase from 30 to 33 Councillors was capped at that level.
- 2.2 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 allowed island wards to also comprise of one or two Members, in addition to the normal three- or four-Member ward.
- 2.3 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 also required the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland to undertake a review of the ward boundaries of island authorities in time for the 2022 Local Government Election. North Ayrshire as a whole is an 'island authority' as defined in the Act, and the review therefore applies to the whole of North Ayrshire. Accordingly, the reason for this review is the Islands (Scotland) Act.
- 2.4 The Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 also now allows mainland wards to comprise 2 or 5 Members. While the relevant provision is not yet in force, it is expected that this will come into force prior to finalisation of the Commission's review. For that reason, the Commission have based their recommendations on the assumption that mainland wards can comprise two or five Members, in addition to the current three- and four-Member provision.
- 2.5 The Commission's initial proposals are set out in Appendix 1. There are two consultation stages. This is the first stage when the Commission consult with the relevant local authority. The Council's response is due by 30 September 2020, the Commission having extended the consultation period to enable Council to agree a response. After the Commission consider whether to make changes to their proposals, there is then a further public consultation. It is understood the Commission aim to put recommendations to Scottish Ministers in May 2021, thereby ensuring the new wards are in place for the 2022 Local Government Elections. The final decision on ward boundaries is by Scottish Ministers.
- 2.6 Prior to detailing the Commission's proposals it may help to explain the rules under which the Commission operate when proposing ward boundaries. To have any chance of success, any proposals by the Council must also have regard to these rules. In terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the primary consideration is that the number calculated by dividing the total local government electors in each ward by the number of councillors to be returned in that ward, shall be, as nearly as may be, the same. It needs to be the same across the whole Council area, but different Councils will have a different ratios of electorate per councillor, depending on the degree of rurality and deprivation in that Council area. North Ayrshire has a ratio of 3000 electorate per councillor, whereas the purely island authorities have a ratio of 800 electorate per councillor. Subject to this overriding consideration, the Commission must have regard to—
- (a) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable;
 - (b) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular boundary.

2.7 As detailed in 2.1, the Commission's methodology would recommend that there are 36 Councillors in North Ayrshire. Clearly every ward cannot achieve an absolute parity or 0% variation from the figure of 3000 electors per councillor. Where possible the Commission try to keep this as low as possible and within 10% variation from parity. In addition, the Commission are of the view that the intention behind the introduction of 2 Member wards in the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act was that the Commission must have a strong reason for recommending a 2-member mainland ward i.e. its remoteness or local community ties. This suggests there would need to be compelling reasons for a 2 Member urban ward

2.8 The Commission's proposals retain 33 Members in total. Subject to one exception, the Commission align ward boundaries with those of the six North Ayrshire Localities. The proposals for each Locality are: -

- Irvine- no change. This would remain as 10 Members in total, based on two 3 Member wards and one 4 Member ward. The existing boundaries would remain
- Kilwinning- no change. This would remain as a single, 4 Member ward with the existing boundaries
- Garnock Valley- a single 5 Member ward aligned to the Locality boundary, subject to a small variation at the watershed between Fairlie and Dalry, discussed at 2.23
- North Coast and Cumbraes- a single 5 Member ward aligned to the Locality boundary, subject to the same variation at the watershed between Fairlie and Dalry, discussed at 2.23
- Arran- a single Member ward covering Arran, Holy Island and Pladda.
- Three Towns- a 3 Member ward for Ardrossan and a 5 Member ward for Saltcoats and Stevenston, which the Commission have attempted to align along the Ardrossan/Saltcoats boundary.

2.9 In considering a response to the Commission, there are a number of issues which Council may wish to consider. These are detailed in the following paragraphs, and are:

- The principle of aligning wards with Localities;
- The total number of Councillors in North Ayrshire
- Arran- a 1- or 2-Member ward?
- The small boundary discrepancy between the North Coast and Garnock Valley wards;
- Whether it would be preferable to split the 5 Member Garnock and North Coast wards into two wards in each Locality?
- The split of wards within the Three Towns.

It would also be open to Council not to submit a response at this stage, and to await the second stage of public consultation before submitting a response

Aligning Wards with Localities

2.10 The previous review of ward boundaries was considered by Council at its meeting on 25th May 2015. The key ask of Council's response to the Commission was that ward boundaries should be aligned with Localities. Detailed proposals were made on this basis, while recognising the legislative restrictions in force at that time which restricted wards to having 3 or 4 Members. The need to align wards with the 6 Localities of North Ayrshire recognised that increasingly the business of the Council, Community Planning Partners and community organisations would be done on a Locality basis. This has proved to be the case and the report on the Council's recent Best Value Report which appears elsewhere on the agenda, notes that our approach to community

empowerment through Locality Planning is recognised by the Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) as sector leading.

2.11 At its heart Locality Planning is about all Community Planning Partners and Communities agreeing the priorities relevant to the needs of their individual Locality. Thereafter everyone, Council, CPP and Community Groups, work together to deliver outcomes which address the agreed priorities. The reasons why wards and Locality boundaries need to align are: -

- Increasingly service delivery and resource allocation by the Council and Community Planning Partners will be aligned along Locality boundaries.
- Councillors need to be able to work along Locality boundaries. Where Councillors represent more than one Locality, not only do they have responsibilities to different Localities (which may even conflict), but time constraints make it difficult for them to be fully involved in the overall planning and allocation of resources to different Localities. For example, the current Ward 6, cuts across three separate Localities, each of which have differing needs and priorities.
- As communities with similar interests become empowered, and work in partnership with Council and CPP, it will be essential that Members are able to find time to support communities and their joint working in the Locality. This becomes difficult if Members are split across different Localities.
- The Boundary Commission need to have regard to fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable, and to local ties. The six Localities of North Ayrshire do exactly this. They are not merely areas which share a common demographic profile. The reason that they share a common demographic profile is often due to geographical factors, such as the hill barrier lying between the North Coast and the Garnock Valley or the geographical separation of Arran. That in turn has led to historical differences and local ties in terms of industry and agriculture, such as the development of Irvine as a port and the development of the ICI Ardeer munitions factory on a more isolated promontory. These are areas which have easily identifiable boundaries, local ties and special geographical considerations, not just similar demographic profiles.
- The fact that Locality boundaries were subject to extensive public consultation and acceptance, is relevant to the legislative factor of 'local ties'.

The Total Number of Councillors in North Ayrshire

2.12 As mentioned in 2.1, North Ayrshire Council currently has 33 Councillors, whereas an application of the Commission's methodology of 3000 electorate per councillor would result in 36 councillors. This means that North Ayrshire is under-represented in comparison to neighbouring local authority areas. The shortfall arises due to a cap of 10% on any increase which was applied as part of the previous Fifth Review of ward boundaries. This cap also applies to the current review, meaning that the Commission will not recommend any more than 36 councillors in total. However, this also means that if Council wishes to propose extra Members for specific wards, an extra three Members can be accommodated within the 10% cap. For example, an extra Member for the North Coast and Arran would not reduce representation elsewhere, but increase the overall number of Members to 35, still within the 10% cap.

2.13 Any overall increase in the number of councillors, will inevitably result in some extra cost. However, this is in the context that Scotland has, by some way, the least number of councillors per head of population across Europe.

Arran

- 2.14 The Commission propose an Arran ward with a single Member. It is important not to forget that the current boundary review of North Ayrshire is required because we are an 'islands authority' in terms of the Islands (Scotland) Act. This review is linked to the principle of 'island proofing' in the Act, which recognises that the needs of islands can be different from those of the mainland, and regard should be had to the needs and impacts of islands, rather than simply adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' solution driven by mainland needs. This aligns with Locality Planning in North Ayrshire, which embeds this principle in all six of our Localities.
- 2.15 The proposal in the Islands (Scotland) Bill to allow a 1- or 2-Member ward for islands arose from a commitment by the then Local Government Minister to Arran community groups to include this in the consultation on the Bill. The concern by Arran groups, common to islands elsewhere, was that if part of a mixed mainland/island ward it could end up with no resident councillors. As much of the community work of the island takes place in the evening when ferries no longer run, it would be difficult for non-resident councillors to fully engage in that work.
- 2.16 At this stage it should be noted that any island ward is subject to the same constraint as the rest of North Ayrshire, that there should as far as possible be a ratio of 3000 electorate per councillor. These issues were considered by Cabinet on 27 September 2017 when it agreed the terms of the Council's response to stage 1 of the Islands Bill. Council's response sought changes to the Bill to allow the ratio to be altered for islands, on the basis that a ratio of 3000-1 for North Ayrshire reflected the profile of the mainland population, contrary to the principle of island proofing. In practice the likely effect of this provision would be to half number of ward councillors currently resident in Arran and give none to the Cumbraes.
- 2.17 The amendment did not succeed. The result of this is that with an electorate of approximately 1000, it will not be possible for the Cumbraes to be a ward in their own right. Arran also has a forecast electorate of 3858, which would result in a 1 Member ward having a variation from parity (i.e. under-represented) of 18%, and a 2 Member ward having a variation from parity (i.e. over-represented) of 39%.
- 2.18 Nevertheless, during discussions on the amendment a number of relevant points were made by both the Boundary Commission Chair and the Minister. These made it clear that a greater than normal variation from parity is possible in relation to island wards, and either a 1- or 2-Member ward in Arran is possible. For example, the Minister, Humza Yousaf, during the stage 2 debate on 30 May 2018 at the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee reiterated earlier comments by Ronnie Hinds, Local Government Boundary Commission Chair: -
"Our feeling is that in the spirit of what the Bill is seeking to achieve, the ability to have a choice between one or two Member wards in the island areas would probably get us to a position comparable to what is being sought. For example, we can readily construe a means by which we would change the current representation in Arran. That might mean that a ratio applied in Arran that was different from the ratio that applied in the rest of North Ayrshire, but to achieve such an end there would be no need for a new provision in the Bill, it could be done by means of what is being offered in the Bill".
- 2.19 The Commission's proposal for an Arran ward meets the Council's previous aspiration that wards should be aligned with Locality boundaries. Regardless of whether it is a 1- or 2-Member ward there will be a variation from parity (i.e. variation from the figure of

3000 electorate per councillor). While the variation from parity would be greater under the two Member solution, taking a purposive interpretation to the Islands Act amendment might imply that wherever possible the Commission's proposals should aim to address the specific needs of islands, rather than being based on the needs of the mainland. For example, based on Arran's profile of rurality and deprivation, had it been located in one of the purely island authorities, it would have had a ratio of 800 electorate per councillor, entitling it to 5 councillors. Because it is located in a predominantly mainland authority, its ratio is driven by the mainland population, contrary to the principle of island proofing. Having regard to this, if it is in the interests of Arran that there are two Members rather than one, there should be scope for the Commission to exercise greater latitude than normal.

2.20 In developing the current proposals, the Commission on 7 April 2020 noted that "a single-member Arran ward with variation from electoral parity of +18% but a 2-member Arran ward would offer variation from electoral parity of -39%. On balance the Commission believed that a single-member Arran ward offered more acceptable variation from electoral parity. In terms of effective and convenient local government, Arran enjoys good quality transport links both to and from the mainland and within the island compared to other island communities." It is also understood that the Commission was keen to understand the views of the Arran community before considering a two Member ward.

2.21 While Arran groups were anxious to ensure that there was a resident councillor, this can never be guaranteed. Electoral law allows candidates to stand for any Council ward as long as they either live or work within North Ayrshire or an immediately adjoining authority. Nevertheless, if Arran was a ward in its own right, only Arran voters would determine this.

2.22 In summary, the key considerations for Arran are: -

- An Arran ward aligns with the Council's previous aspiration of having wards which align with Localities;
- While either a 1- or 2-Member ward is significantly adrift of parity, in the context of an island ward and 'island proofing', this is permissible to an extent which would not be possible on the mainland;
- A two Member ward has a greater variation from parity and will require something extra to justify it. Arran's degree of rurality could be such a factor in arguing that it needs to be over-represented, not under-represented. Equally, community views at the second stage of the consultation are likely to be an important consideration.
- It would be open to Council not to respond to this issue at this stage in order to better gauge community views during the stage 2 public consultation.

The small boundary discrepancy between the North Coast and Cumbraes and Garnock Valley wards

2.23 Detailed analysis of the Commission's proposals have shown that there is a small boundary discrepancy between the ward and Locality boundaries between the North Coast and Garnock Valley. The Locality boundaries follow the watershed. A reason for this is to ensure that if there are windfarm community benefit monies to be distributed by a Locality Partnership, these benefits are distributed by the Locality which is overlooked and impacted by the windfarm. The Commission's proposals depart from this in a small area south of the Largs-Kilbirnie road, resulting in the North Coast ward including ground beyond the watershed, which looks onto Dalry. It is recommended this

is realigned to the watershed. There will be no impact on electorate numbers and parity as there are no residents living in this ground. Nor will this impact on community benefit monies currently distributed. There are two wind turbines on the ground but community benefits from these turbines are distributed by a private trust, not a Locality Partnership.

The 5 Member Garnock and North Coast wards

2.24 The Commission has proposed a single 5-Member ward for each of the Garnock and North Coast wards. Arguably there are benefits to this as it means that each Member represents the entirety of the Locality, supporting their ability to focus on strategic issues which effect the whole of the Locality. This is likely to be more of an issue than currently in the Irvine and Three Towns Localities, as the North Coast and Garnock Valley comprise a number of very distinct communities.

2.25 The following information is provided in case Council wish to consider any alternative proposals, such as two smaller wards in place of the 5 Member ward. Any such proposal will have to address the following issues: -

- The extent to which any proposal varies from parity (the % difference between the figure of 3000 electors per councillor);
- The Commission generally try to avoid variations from parity beyond 10%; This is also suggested by the Venice Commission's 'Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters'.
- If the variation from parity is worse than the Commission's proposals, what are the extra advantages which outweigh this?
- The need to avoid splitting communities. This runs contrary to the following factors which the Commission must have regard to- "the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and local ties";
- The intention behind the introduction of 2 Member wards in the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act was that the Commission must have a strong reason for recommending a 2-member mainland ward i.e. its remoteness or local community ties. This suggests there would need to be compelling reasons for a 2 Member urban ward

2.26 In relation to the North Coast, a 2+3 ward solution would inevitably involve splitting Largs. Otherwise this would result in a variation from parity of over 25% compared to the Commission's proposed variation from parity of 9.7%. In order to bring the electoral parity figures for two wards back to the 9.7% for the 5-member ward would mean moving approximately 1,545 Largs electors from Largs to the West Kilbride & Fairlie ward. An alternative would be for a larger part of Largs to be added to a 3 member West Kilbride/Fairlie ward with the smaller 2-member ward comprising of Skelmorlie and the northern part of Largs. Again, there would remain the same issue of splitting Largs into two uneven parts, in the absence of any rational physical boundary.

2.27 An alternative option for the North Coast which would avoid splitting towns might be a 2+4 solution, increasing the overall number of Councillors to 34. Appendix 2 demonstrates this. This results in a 2.8% variation from parity for the 4 Member ward and 11.7% for the 2 Member ward, which is in line with the Commission's current proposal. While a 2 Member ward would also need a justification based on rurality, this is easier to do for a West Kilbride/Fairlie ward than many other parts of North Ayrshire.

2.28 The Cumbraes have an electorate of approximately 1000. As the North Ayrshire ratio is 3000 electorate per councillor, it will not be possible for the Cumbraes to form a ward in their own right. They will have to be linked to a mainland ward. In light of the 'local ties' consideration, the Commission have, as usual, linked the islands to the mainland

port which is their transport link. This is logical, especially as this Review is driven by the Islands Act. Any proposal which involved splitting the North Coast ward on a basis which did not link the Cumbraes with Largs would be very unlikely to find favour with the Commission.

- 2.29 Options for a 3/2 ward split in the Garnock Valley could involve a 2 Member ward for either Beith or Kilbirnie, with Dalry forming part of a ward with the other town. A Kilbirnie, 2-Member ward would have a variation from parity of 11.5% and a Beith, 2-Member ward would have a variation from parity of 11.8%. A 2 Member Dalry ward is not an option as this gives a variation from parity of 27.5%. This is because Dalry's electorate is about 1000 less than either Kilbirnie or Beith. It should be noted that both alternative options have at least one ward with a variation from parity greater than the Commission's 10% criteria. Although two are only just over this limit, the Commission's 5-Member option has almost exact parity with North Ayrshire as a whole. Therefore, it would seem unlikely that the Commission would want to make any changes from their proposals unless a very strong argument could be made relating to why one town should be allowed a stand-alone ward.
- 2.30 As regards a Garnock solution of 4+2, to avoid splitting towns, this would result in a maximum variation from parity of 17%, compared to the Commission's proposals which have a variation from parity of 2.7%. This is unlikely to be acceptable. An option of having three 2 member wards, would result in a variation from parity of 27.5% for Dalry which is even less acceptable. The reason why the 6 Member option is not possible for the Garnock Valley but is possible for the North Coast, is that the North Coast has 1600 more electorate than the Garnock Valley.

The split of wards within the Three Towns

- 2.31 The Commission have proposed a 3 Member ward for Ardrossan and a 5 Member ward for Saltcoats and Stevenston, which attempts to follow the Ardrossan/Saltcoats boundary, albeit at the expense of a variation from parity of -13.2 for the Ardrossan ward. An obvious question is whether there could be three wards, aligned to the town boundaries of Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston. Interestingly the papers put to the February 2020 Commission meeting included an option which included 3, three Member wards in the Three Towns, with variations of 9.9%, 6.75 and 8.4% from parity. However, that option took a significant part of Stevenston east of Dalry Road into the Saltcoats ward. On that basis it is arguably no better than the Commission's current proposals. A 3-Member Stevenston ward which aligned to that town's boundaries would have a variation from parity of 24%, which would be unacceptably high.
- 2.32 Another option might be a 3 Member Saltcoats ward, a 3 Member Ardrossan ward and a 2 Member Stevenston ward. This would result in Stevenston having an electoral parity of 14.2%, significantly under-represented compared to North Ayrshire as a whole. Saltcoats on its own is close to parity at +3.2% and Ardrossan would remain as per the Commission's current proposals. Regard also needs to be had to the Commission's view that a very strong justification would be needed for a 2-Member ward in an urban area. While Stevenston does have a rural hinterland, the methodology which the Commission applies to determine rurality is based on the % of the population which lives in a built-up area. On that basis, Stevenston is an urban area, and it is difficult to see any convincing argument which could persuade the Commission otherwise. Therefore a 2 Member Stevenston ward is unlikely to find favour with the Commission, particularly when the variation from parity is worse than that of the Commission's current

proposals. For all these reasons, any alternative proposals which try to split the Three Towns along town boundaries are unlikely to be justifiable. The basic problem is that Stevenston with a population of 7393 is midway between being a 2- or 3-Member ward. Accordingly, unless part is added to or from another ward, (bearing in mind that avoidance of this is the whole point of the exercise) the % variation from parity will always be too high.

3. Proposals

3.1 In relation to each of the foregoing issues, the recommendations are: -

3.1.1 To support the Commission's proposals to align ward boundaries with those of Localities, including an Arran ward.

3.1.2 To support the Commission's proposals to make no changes to the Irvine and Kilwinning wards.

3.1.3 To recommend that the small variation between ward and Locality boundaries between the Garnock Valley and North Coast is aligned along the watershed boundary of these Localities

3.1.4 Arran- It is recommended that Council notes the respective arguments in favour of a 1- or 2-Member ward and re-iterate its view that they be given appropriate representation that reflects their nature. In doing so, the Commission should have regard to responses from the Arran community in response to the second public stage of consultation.

3.1.5 North Coast- to support the Commission's proposals for a 5 Member ward. In the event that Council wish to consider a two-ward solution, the proposal for two 3 Member wards is the better option

3.1.6 Garnock Valley -to support the Commission's proposals for a 5 Member ward. Alternatively, if Council wish to consider a two-ward solution, the proposal for a 2-Member Kilbirnie ward and 3-Member Beith and Dalry ward is marginally the better option. Insofar as this has a higher variation from parity than the Commission's proposals, a clear justification in terms of geography and/or local ties will be required to substantiate this.

3.1.7 Three Towns- to support the Commission's proposals.

3.1.8 That the Head of Democratic Services is authorised to finalise the response to the Commission in accordance with the Council's decision and thereafter forward the response to the Commission by the deadline of 30 September 2020.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 Any increase in the total number of Councillors will involve payment of an additional salary and expenses in respect of the additional Members. This requires to be balanced against the factors set out in 2.13

Human Resources

4.2 There are no human resources implications.

Legal

4.3 The Boundary Commission is obliged to carry out this review by virtue of the provisions of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. A combination of that Act and the Scottish Elections

(Reform) Act 2020 now provide the Commission with greater flexibility in terms of the number of councillors in each ward, which in turn gives it greater latitude in the design of ward boundaries. This has enabled it to align ward boundaries with those of Localities, which was the Councils' key request at the last boundary review. The factors the Commission must consider when determining boundaries are set out in 2.6 and 2.7. The key factor relates to parity, the aim being to have as close to 3000 electors per councillor as possible. There is greater scope to vary from this on islands.

- 4.4 Electorate and Population Projections continue to be published on an ongoing basis. As a result, some of the figures contained in Appendix 1 and 2 and this report differ slightly. The calculations in 2.24 to 2.31 are based on a best fit basis using data zone populations adjusted to match the Commission's electorate figures. While these may not be identical, the variations are slight and do not make any material difference to the projected variations from parity or the conclusions of this report.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 There are no significant equalities or socio-economic implications. There are implications for the islands and these are considered in paragraphs 2.14 to 2.22. The ultimate decision will require to be island-proofed as part of the Scottish Government's final decision.

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.5 There are no significant environmental or sustainability implications

Key Priorities

- 4.6 Having ward boundaries aligned to Localities supports Active and Strong Communities as well as a Council for the Future.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 There are no implications.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 This is the first stage of the Commission's consultation. A further public consultation stage will follow, and the Council will have a further opportunity to respond at that stage. This report has also been informed by consultation with individual Groups and Independent Members.

Andrew Fraser
Head of Democratic Services

For further information please contact Andrew Fraser, **Head of Democratic Services**, on **01294 324125**.

Background Papers

Craig Hatton
Chief Executive
North Ayrshire Council
Cunninghame House
Irvine KA12 8EE

16 July 2020

Dear Mr Hatton

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – North Ayrshire council area

I am writing to you with the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's proposals for electoral arrangements in North Ayrshire council area.

As you know, we are required to consult councils on our proposals for a period of at least 2 months before seeking the views of others who have an interest. We are very aware of the pressures councils are under during the Covid-19 pandemic and the Commission has agreed that the consultation with you should run to 30 September 2020. We trust that this allows sufficient time for the Council to give us its considered response and would ask that if possible you submit this to us as soon as practicable and certainly no later than 30 September. I would also remind you that the Council, and individual councillors, will have a second opportunity to comment, during the public consultation which we will commence in the Autumn.

The attached appendix, shapefiles and maps describe our proposals which have been prepared following consideration of both the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 which allows use of 1, 2 3 or 4 member wards where a ward contains an inhabited island, and the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 which will allow use of 2, 3, 4 or 5 member wards across Scotland.

Further information concerning the reviews is available on our website: www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk. You may wish to know that the Commission is also commencing its consultations with Argyll and Bute and Highland Councils today.

If you have any questions at this stage then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Isabel Drummond-Murray
Secretary

CC Andrew Fraser, Head of Service, Democratic Services

Enclosures:
Appendix explaining our proposals
PDF maps and GIS data of our proposals



2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
North Ayrshire Council area
Initial Proposals Consultation

July 2020

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Membership of the Commission

Chair: Mr Ronnie Hinds

Deputy Chair: Prof. Ailsa Henderson

Commissioners: Mr Roland Bean

Mr Jonathan Collins

Mr Gordon Macmillan

Dr Susan Walker

Secretary to the Commission: Ms Isabel Drummond-Murray

Introduction

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is an independent, non-political body with responsibility for:
 - carrying out reviews of electoral wards for local authorities;
 - carrying out reviews of the boundaries of local authority areas; and
 - carrying out reviews of constituencies and regions for the Scottish Parliament.
2. We are tasked by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to undertake reviews of local government electoral arrangements in Scotland every 8 to 12 years. North Ayrshire council area was last reviewed during the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements which reported in 2016. A further review is now required under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. The Act recognises the importance of the Scottish Islands and the particular challenges they face. It offers additional flexibility to allow the Commission to recommend wards that elect 1 or 2 councillors as well as 3 or 4 councillors where such a ward contains an inhabited island.
3. The Scottish Elections (Reform) Act, which has recently completed its passage through the Scottish Parliament, allows us to recommend two and five member wards, in addition to three and four member wards, throughout Scotland. We considered the Act in developing our proposals while bearing in mind that the relevant sections of the legislation are not yet commenced.

This review

4. This review uses the same methodology for determining overall councillor numbers as was used in the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements.
5. We decide the number of councillors for each council by placing it into a category with similar councils. North Ayrshire council area is grouped with other more urban council areas with above average levels of deprivation according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), with a ratio of electors per councillor of 3,000.
6. We are aware that a large change of councillor numbers in a council area can be disruptive, therefore our methodology also incorporates a 10% change rule. This means that we will not normally propose increasing or decreasing the total number of councillors in a council area by more than 10% as an immediate consequence of a review.
7. For each electoral ward, we make recommendations about its boundary, its name and the number of councillors to represent the ward.
8. When reviewing electoral arrangements the legislation requires us to take account of the following factors:
 - the interests of effective and convenient local government;
 - within each council, that each councillor should represent the same number of electors as nearly as may be;
 - local ties which would be broken by making a particular boundary;
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable; and
 - special geographical considerations.
9. We developed our proposals using electorate data from 1 December 2018 but must also consider the likely change in the number of electors forecast within a 5 year period. We have prepared our forecasts using data supplied by councils as well as population forecasts from National Records of Scotland.

Consultation

10.The legislation states that we must first of all consult on our proposals with councils for at least two months. We agreed to a period of consultation and that period runs from 16 July until 30 September 2020. After consideration of responses received, we will conduct a public consultation on our proposals commencing in the autumn of 2020. After considering all the responses to our consultations, we will submit our final recommendations to Scottish Ministers.

11.All comments we receive in response to our consultations will be available to view on our website in due course.

Next steps

12.We intend to submit a report containing our recommendations for electoral arrangements for North Ayrshire council area to Scottish Ministers by May 2021, in time for implementation for the next local government elections in May 2022.

Proposals for North Ayrshire council area

13. Our methodology for determining councillor numbers proposed 36 councillors for North Ayrshire council area. However, in developing our proposals, a better ward design was achievable with 33 councillors and accordingly we present an electoral arrangement for 33 councillors representing three 5-member wards, two 4-member wards, three 3-member wards and a single 1-member ward, maintaining existing councillor numbers

14. We have prepared maps which illustrate our proposals for wards in North Ayrshire council area and these are attached.

15. Our proposals for the council area:

- take into account North Ayrshire Council's localities and the local ties and communities that they represent;
- present a single member Arran ward reflecting its island status. We considered the case for a 2-member Arran ward but concluded that the special geographic circumstances of Arran did not justify a forecast variation from parity of -39%. An alternative would have been to retain the link between Arran and the mainland but this did not seem to us to recognise the importance of Arran's island communities in light of the Islands (Scotland) Act;
- take account of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act that will allow the use of 2-member and 5-member wards to design that wards that better reflect local ties in the Garnock Valley, North Coast and Three Towns;
- present a ward boundary between Ardrossan (ward 3) and Saltcoats and Stevenston (ward 5) that follows local community council area and historical burgh boundaries; and
- make no changes to the boundaries for the existing Irvine and Kilwinning wards.

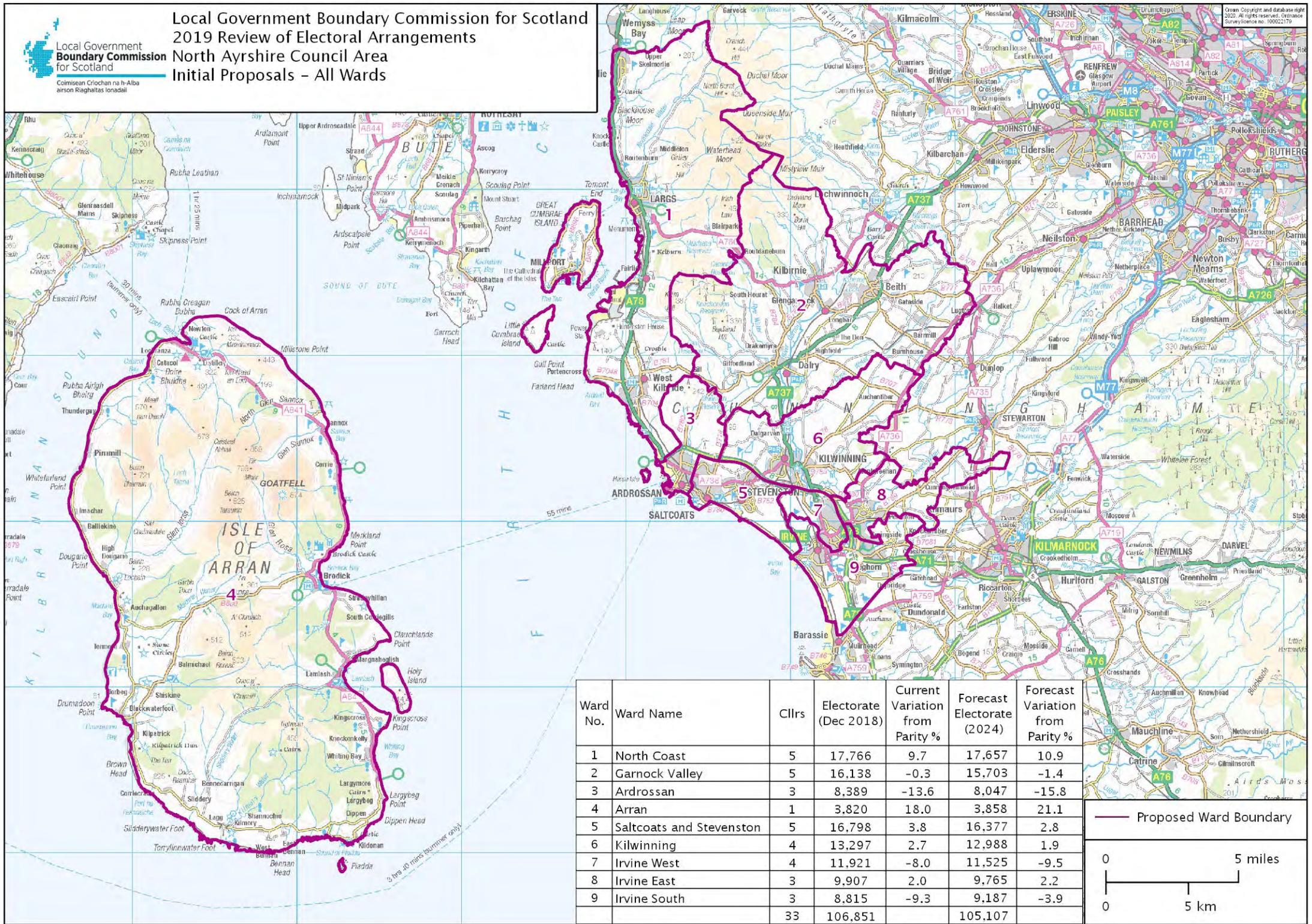
16. The table below details the electorates with actual and forecast variation from parity of the proposed wards.

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Variation from Electoral Parity (%)	Forecast Electorate (2024)	Forecast Variation from Electoral Parity (%)
1	North Coast	5	17,766	9.7	17,657	10.9
2	Garnock Valley	5	16,138	-0.3	15,703	-1.4
3	Ardrossan	3	8,389	-13.6	8,047	-15.8
4	Arran	1	3,820	18.0	3,858	21.1
5	Saltcoats and Stevenston	5	16,798	3.8	16,377	2.8
6	Kilwinning	4	13,297	2.7	12,988	1.9
7	Irvine West	4	11,921	-8.0	11,525	-9.5
8	Irvine East	3	9,907	2.0	9,765	2.2
9	Irvine South	3	8,815	-9.3	9,187	-3.9
		33	106,851		105,107	

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
 North Ayrshire Council Area
 Existing Wards



Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
 North Ayrshire Council Area
 Initial Proposals - All Wards

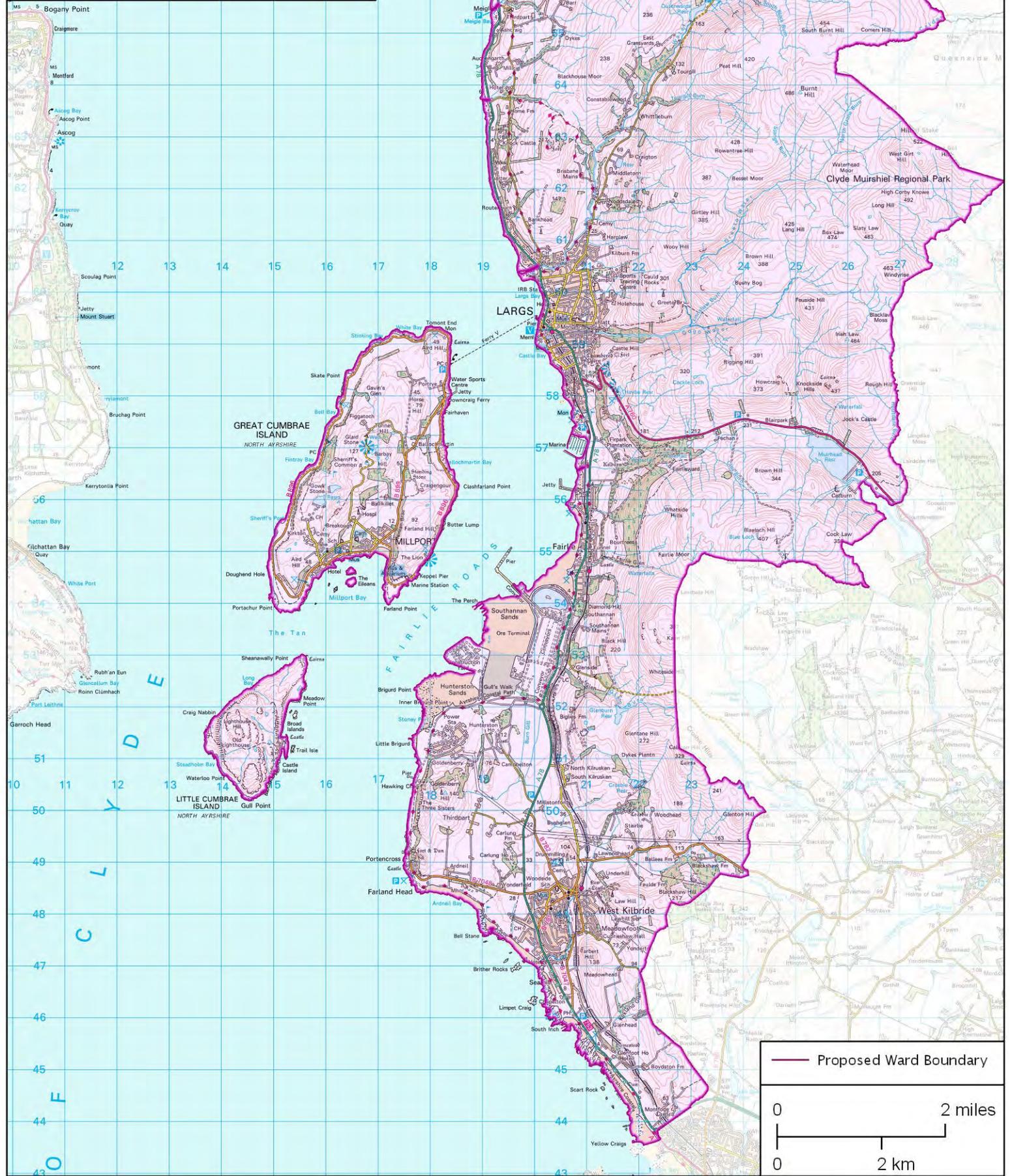


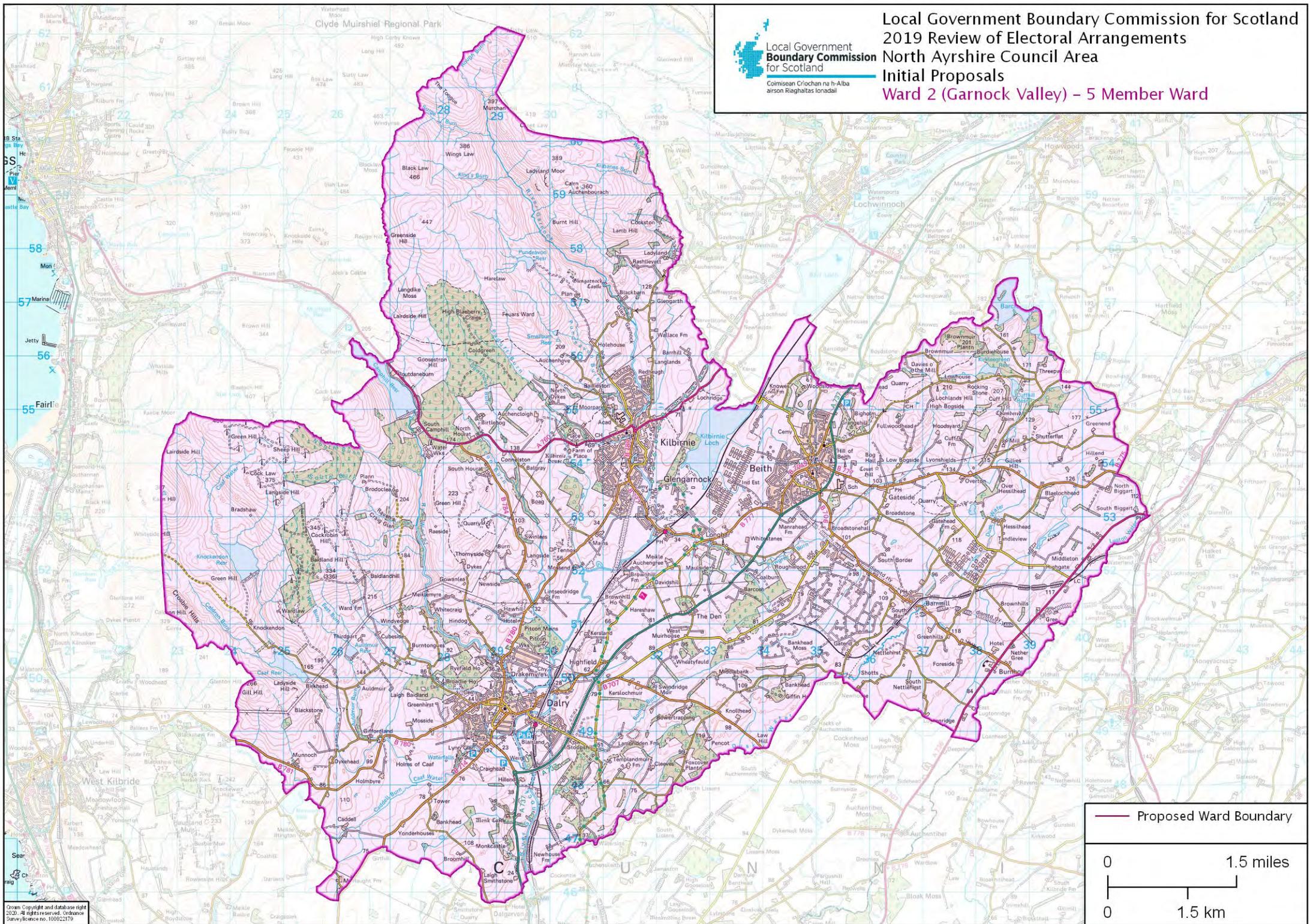
— Proposed Ward Boundary

0 5 miles
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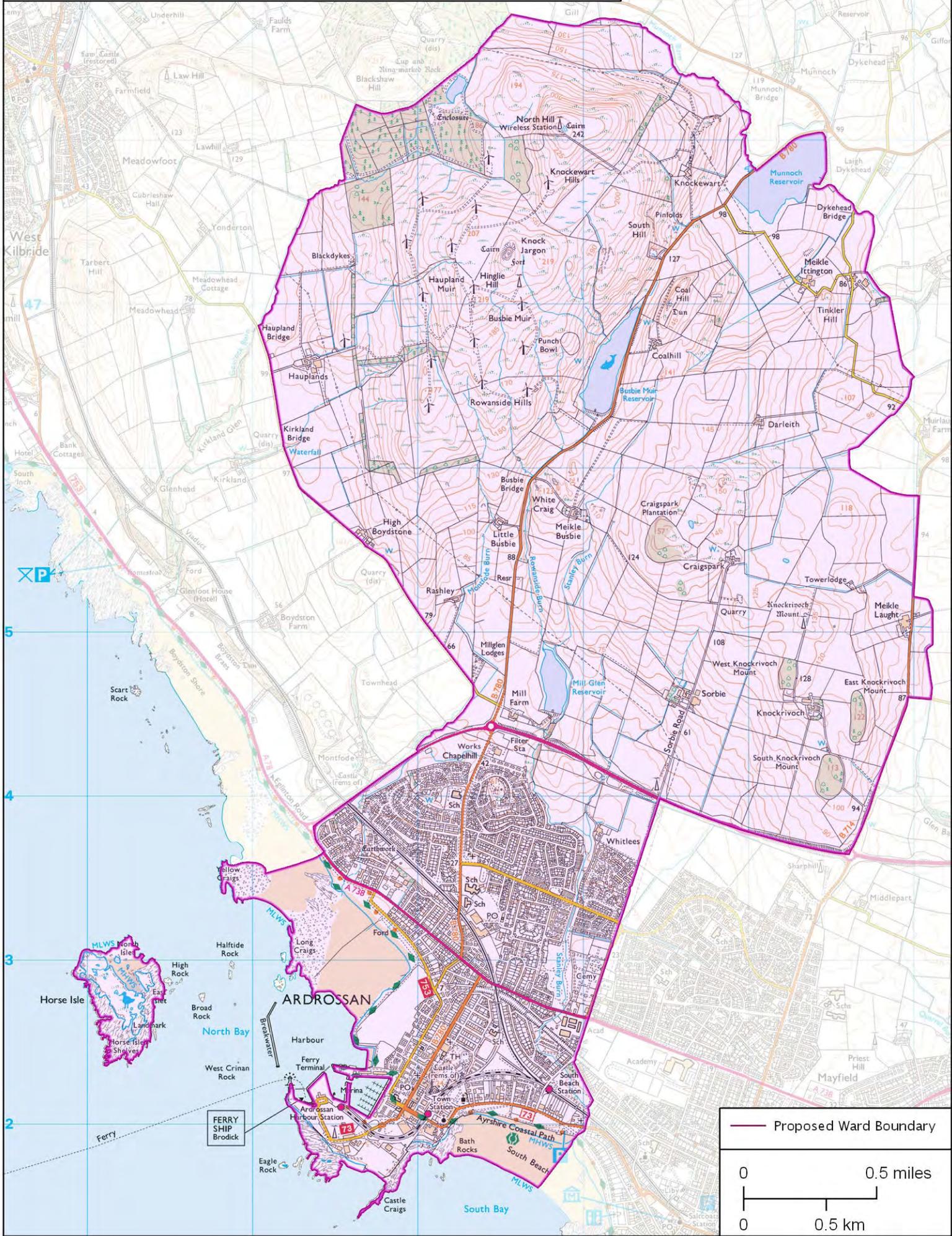
Local Government Boundary Commission
 for Scotland
 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
 North Ayrshire Council Area
 Initial Proposals
Ward 1 (North Coast) - 5 Member Ward



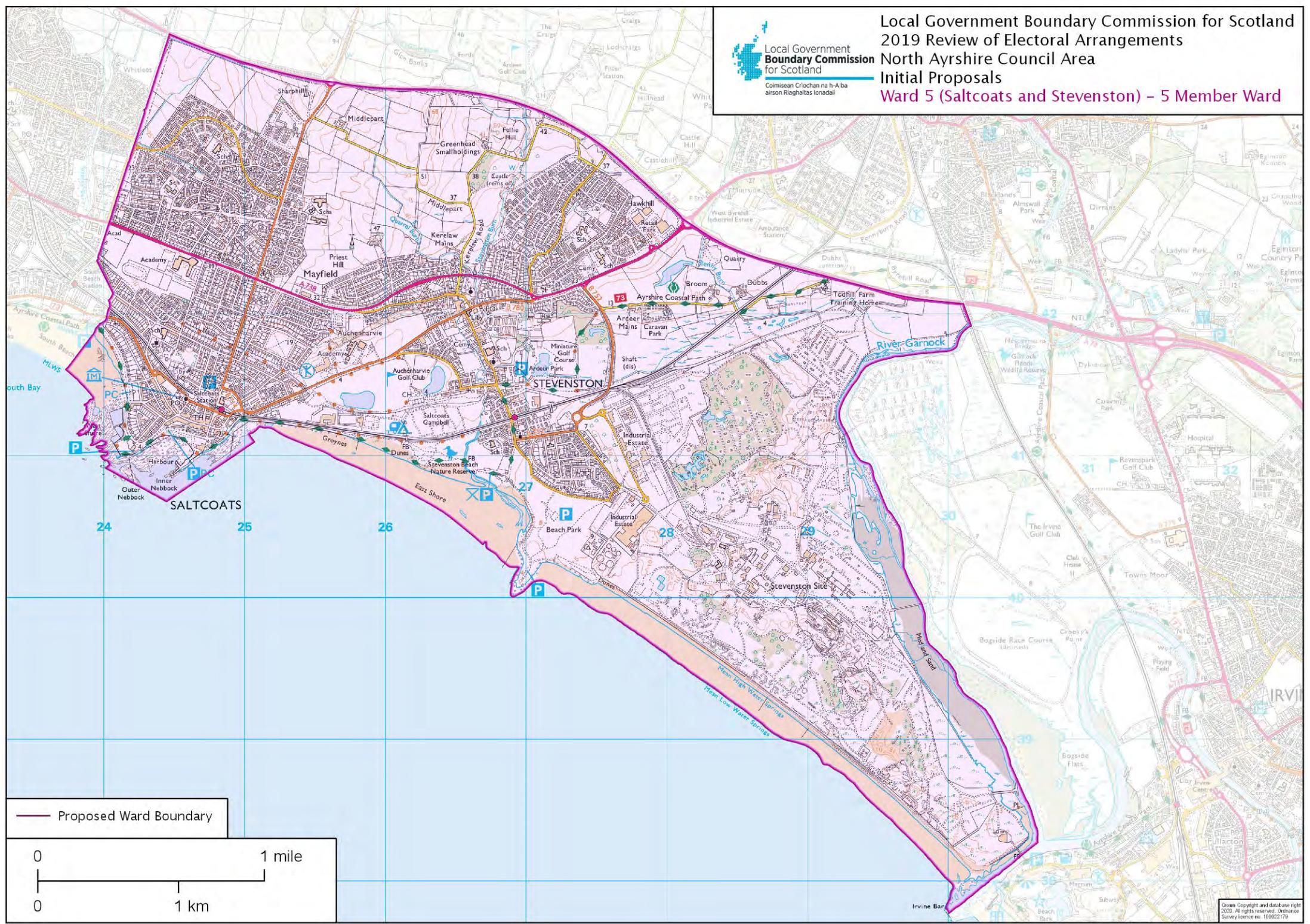


Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
 North Ayrshire Council Area
 Initial Proposals
 Ward 3 (Ardrossan) – 3 Member Ward

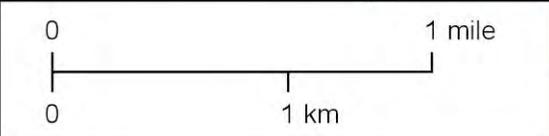
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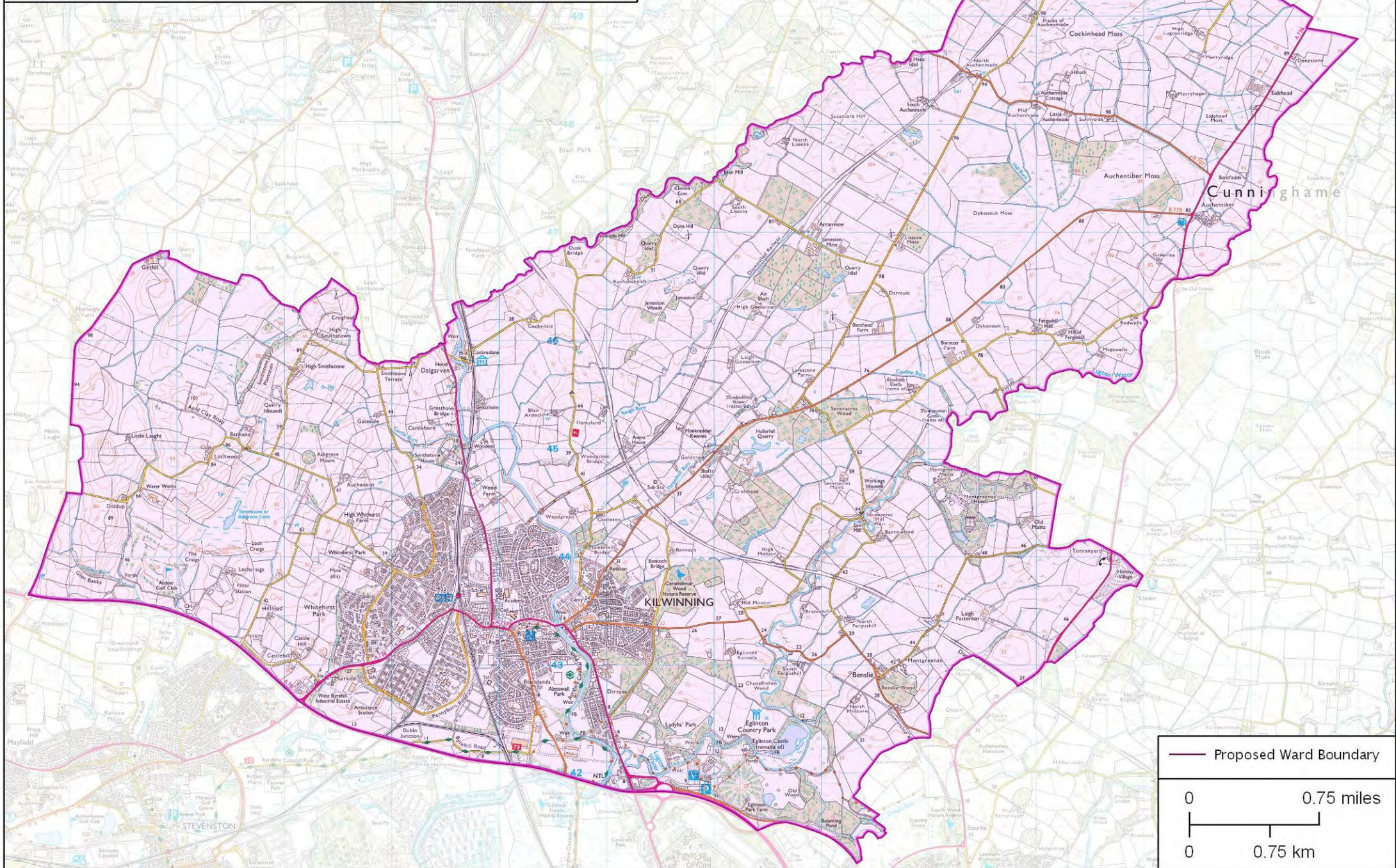






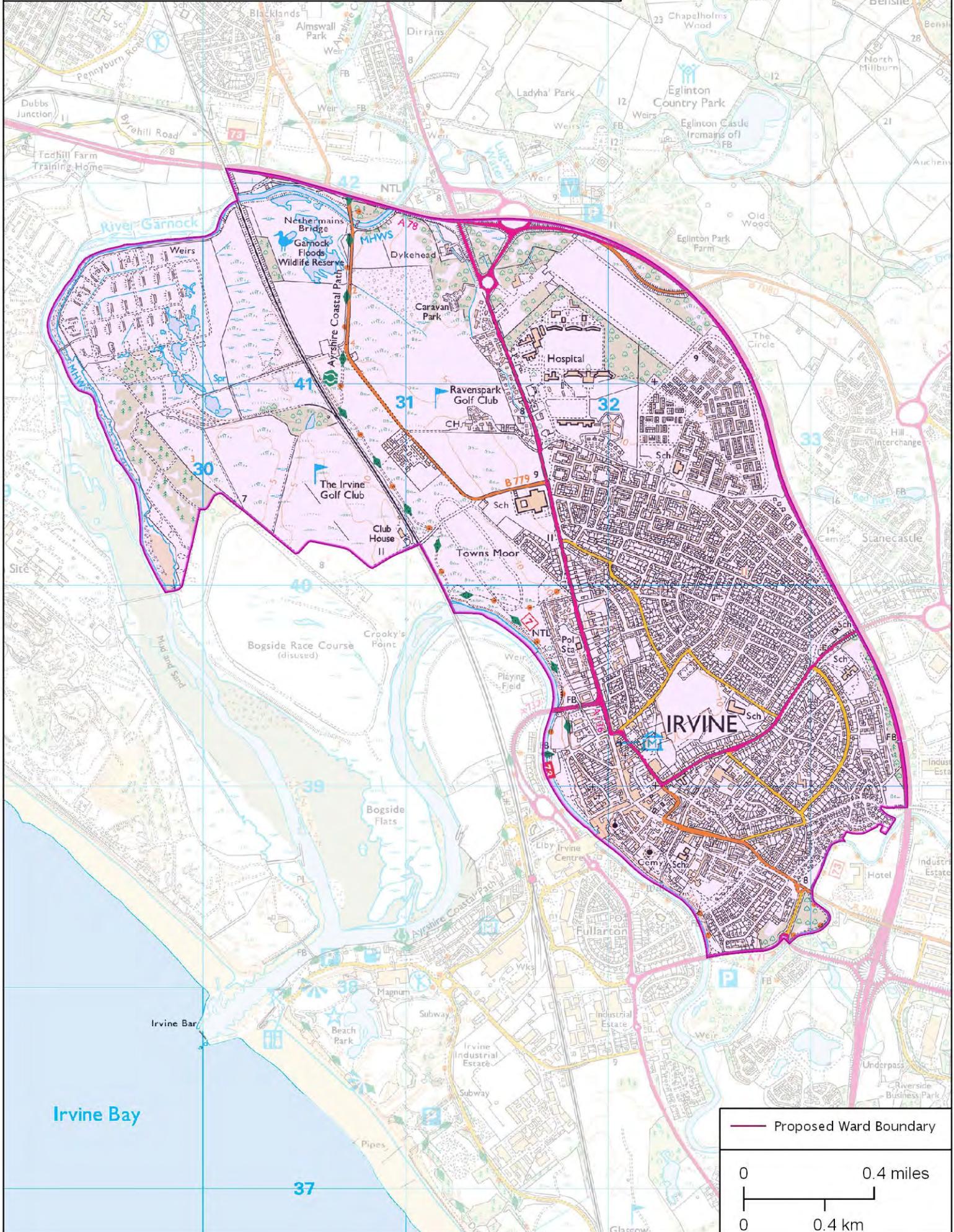
— Proposed Ward Boundary





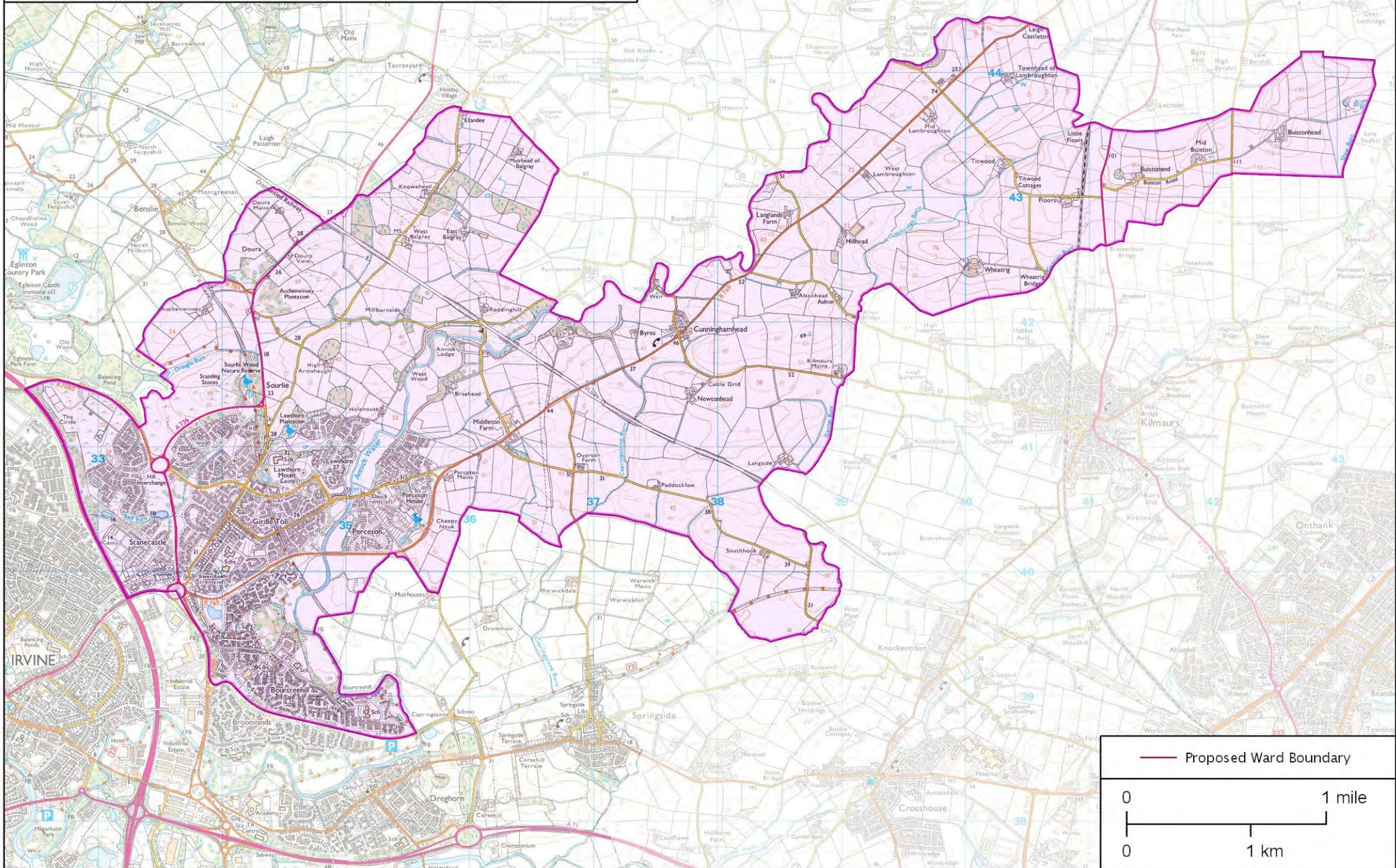
Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
 North Ayrshire Council Area
 Initial Proposals
 Ward 7 (Irvine West) – 4 Member Ward

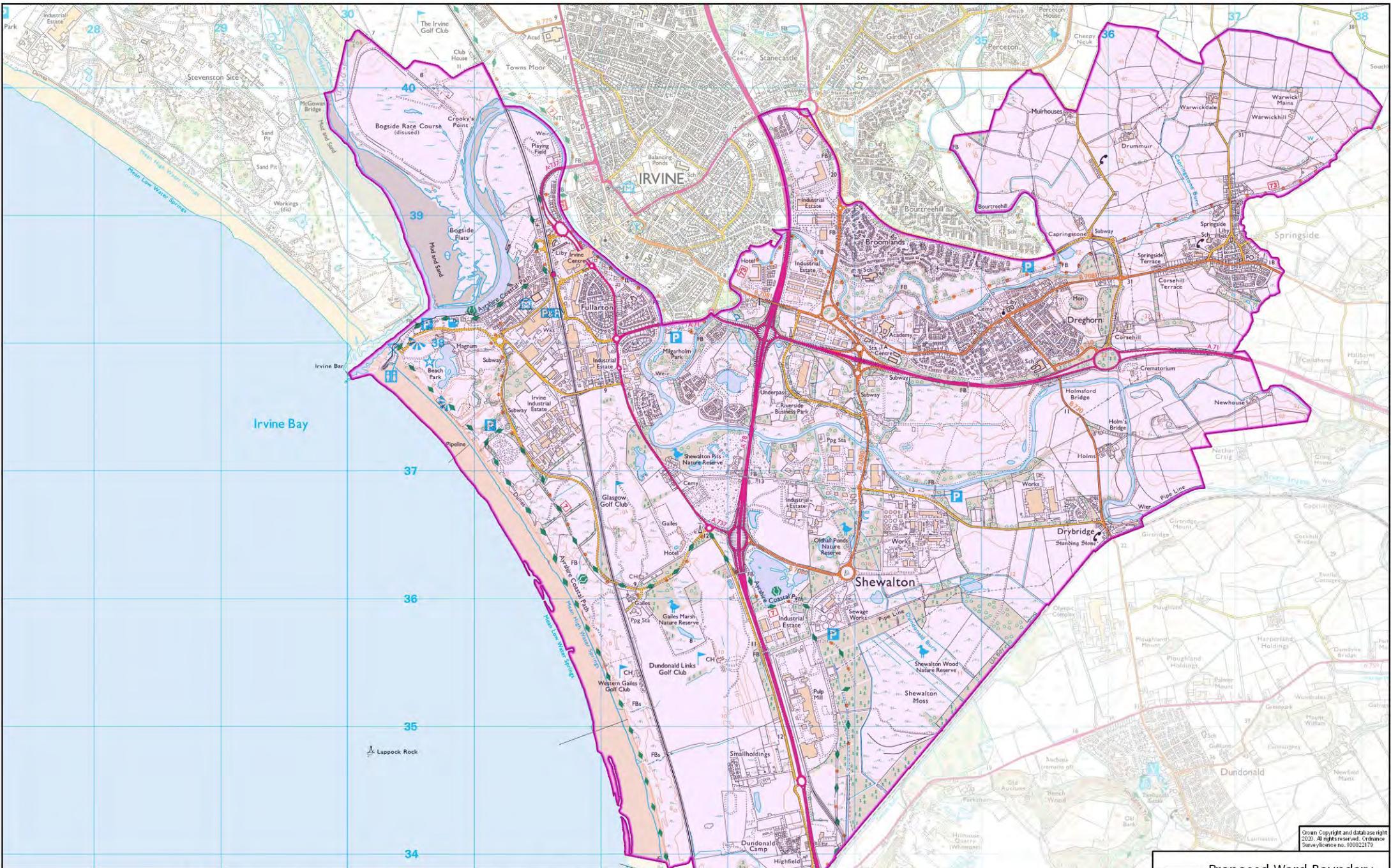
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— Proposed Ward Boundary

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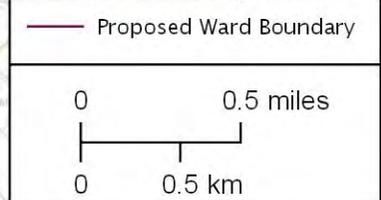




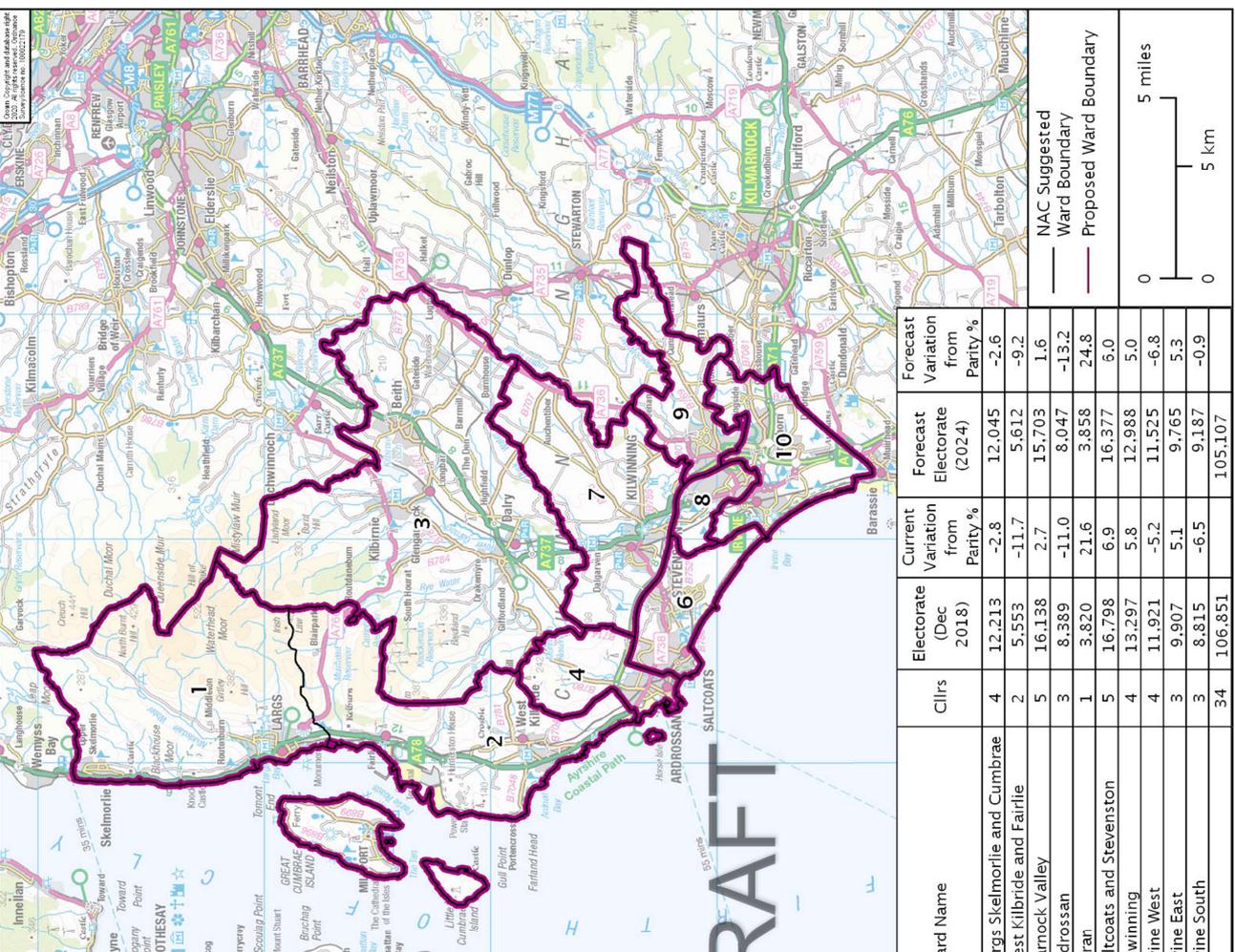
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Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
 North Ayrshire Council Area
 Initial Proposals
 Ward 9 (Irvine South) – 3 Member Ward



Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements
North Ayrshire Council Area
North Ayrshire Council Alternative Suggestion



Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Variation Parity %	Forecast Electorate (2024)	Forecast Variation from Parity %
1	Largs Skelmorlie and Cumbræ	4	12,213	-2.8	12,045	-2.6
2	West Kilbride and Fairlie	2	5,553	-11.7	5,612	-9.2
3	Garnock Valley	5	16,138	2.7	15,703	1.6
4	Arran	3	8,389	-11.0	8,047	-13.2
5	Saltcoats and Stevenston	5	16,798	6.9	16,377	5.0
6	Kilwinning	4	13,297	-5.2	12,988	-5.0
7	Irvine West	4	11,921	-5.2	11,525	-6.8
8	Irvine East	3	9,907	5.1	9,765	5.3
9	Irvine South	3	8,815	-6.5	9,187	-0.9
10		34	106,851		105,107	

— NAC Suggested
 — Ward Boundary
 — Proposed Ward Boundary

