

Argyll and Bute Council Area

Introduction

1. Argyll and Bute Council area is currently covered by 2 county constituencies. Argyll and Bute county constituency is contained wholly within the Council area. The remainder of the Council area is combined with part of West Dunbartonshire Council area to form Dumbarton county constituency and accounts for approximately 35 per cent of the total electors within that constituency. The electorates of both existing constituencies at the start and finish of the previous and current reviews are shown at Appendix C.

Initial Considerations

2. In forming our provisional proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area we had in mind the following considerations:

2.1 At the enumeration date of June 2001, Argyll and Bute Council area contained 69,587 parliamentary electors, giving the Council area a theoretical entitlement of 0.99 seats.

2.2 At the enumeration date of June 2001, West Dunbartonshire Council area contained 71,694 parliamentary electors, giving the Council area a theoretical entitlement of 1.03 seats.

3. Bearing in mind the theoretical entitlement to seats in these Council areas and the requirement that we should have regard to Council boundaries, we acknowledged that the electorate of Argyll and Bute Council area was sufficient to justify a single seat. We equally acknowledged that, potentially, there were difficulties which might arise from the particular geography and topography of the Council area. Accordingly, we considered whether or not it would be possible and practicable to maintain a link with West Dunbartonshire Council area by creating a revised constituency based on the existing Dumbarton constituency. However, we recognised that this would undoubtedly have consequences for the design of constituencies to the east of this area and an examination of alternative options highlighted difficulties which could not be resolved to our satisfaction.

4. We considered whether it would be advantageous to combine any part of Argyll and Bute Council area with part of either Highland Council area or Stirling Council area but concluded that the geography of the various boundaries, the scarcity of electors and the rural nature of the adjoining areas made this impracticable. We also considered combining the Island of Bute with North Ayrshire Council area, thereby re-establishing a link which

had existed prior to the Third Periodical Review. However, our examination of potential constituency designs for the combined Ayrshire Council areas led us to conclude that a satisfactory outcome was not possible.

5. Accordingly, we agreed that Argyll and Bute Council area should comprise a single Argyll and Bute constituency.

Provisional Proposals

6. On 7 February 2002 we published our provisional proposals for one county constituency in Argyll and Bute Council area as follows:

Constituency	Comprising	Electorate (June 2001)
Argyll and Bute CC	All electoral wards in Argyll and Bute Council area	69,587

Representations on Provisional Proposals

7. During the statutory consultation period, we received 20 representations regarding our provisional proposals for Argyll and Bute Council area. Argyll and Bute Council welcomed our recommendation, and both the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats supported our proposals. The Scottish National Party's Argyll and Bute Constituency Association and the Scottish National Party's Argyll and Bute Council Liaison Group both objected to our proposals on the grounds of the size of the constituency, the increase in electorate and the change in the balance of the constituency. Alex Reid MP supported our proposals and John McFall MP was satisfied with the proposed changes that affected the Dumbarton constituency. Oban Community Council objected on the grounds that Helensburgh has no links with the rest of Argyll and Bute Council area, and Helensburgh and Lomond Community Forum objected as it considered the proposed changes would be detrimental to the local area.

8. We received 6 representations from residents in the existing Argyll and Bute constituency. Of these, 3 supported our proposals and 2 objected to the inclusion of Helensburgh in the proposed Argyll and Bute constituency, as they felt it would alter the balance of the area. One representation requested that the constituency name "Argyll and Bute" be changed to its Gaelic form.

9. We received 5 representations from residents in the existing Dumbarton constituency. Of these, one supported our proposals and 4 objected, mainly on the grounds that Helensburgh has more links with Dumbarton and Glasgow rather than with the more rural areas of Argyll and Bute.

10. Following the end of the statutory consultation period, we received a further representation which supported our proposals.

Consideration of Representations on Provisional Proposals

11. We noted that Argyll and Bute Council welcomed our provisional proposals. We agreed that the number and nature of the representations did not justify a local inquiry.

12. We recognised the extensive area covered by the constituency. During our initial deliberations we had considered options for combining parts of Argyll and Bute Council area with adjoining Council areas but had not been able to identify any solution which produced a satisfactory outcome.

13. We examined the representations objecting to the inclusion of Helensburgh and its surrounding area in the proposed Argyll and Bute constituency, which, it was suggested, would affect the balance of the constituency. Similarly, we noted concerns regarding the increase in the electorate of the enlarged constituency. However, since Helensburgh is an integral part of Argyll and Bute Council area, it must be considered as such within the terms of the Rules. Further, it was not, in our view, possible to maintain the existing link between Helensburgh and West Dunbartonshire Council area, because of the consequential adverse impact on constituencies across a wider area. Accordingly, we were not persuaded to amend our provisional proposals.

14. We considered, but rejected, on grounds of insufficient support, the proposal that the constituency name should be changed to its Gaelic form.

Revised Recommendations

15. Following the publication of our provisional proposals, the boundary between Argyll and Bute Council area ward 36 (Cardross) and West Dunbartonshire Council area ward 16 (Dumbarton West) was amended by The Argyll and Bute Council and West Dunbartonshire Council Boundaries (Ardoch Sewage Works) Amendment Order 2002. This administrative change transferred a small area, containing 16 electors, from Argyll and Bute Council area to West Dunbartonshire Council area. This boundary change affected our provisional proposals for a constituency with boundaries coterminous with those of the local authority.

16. We agreed to publish modified proposals to incorporate the boundary change and to re-establish the link between the constituency and the Council area. Accordingly, on 23 October 2003, we published revised recommendations to reflect the realignment of the boundary which affected Argyll and Bute Council area ward 36 as follows:

Constituency	Comprising	Electorate (June 2001)
Argyll and Bute CC	All electoral wards in Argyll and Bute Council area	69,571

17. No representations were received in respect of our revised recommendations.

Final Recommendations

18. On 11 December 2003 we announced that we were making no further changes to our proposals for one county constituency and that these were our final recommendations.

19. We accordingly recommend the adoption of our proposals for one county constituency comprising the whole of Argyll and Bute Council area, as set out in paragraph 16 above.

