

2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies
Final recommendations – Argyll and Bute, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Moray Council areas

Action required

1. The Commission is invited to agree its Final Recommendations for constituencies in Argyll and Bute, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Moray Council areas.

Background

2. At its meeting of 14 February 2023 the Commission agreed paragraphs 2 to 16 of Paper 2023/06 as part of the text for its Final Report.
3. After considering all of the issues raised at its February 2023 meeting the Commission asked the Secretariat to consider alternative boundaries that respected local ties by: Culloden, so it could sit within an Inverness constituency; Elgin, to consider new housing development; and by Strichen to maintain local ties.

Alternative Option

4. The proposed Nairn, Strathspey and Moray West constituency had 76,914 electors and the boundary between it and the proposed Aberdeenshire North and Moray East constituency boundary followed a ward boundary, just east of Elgin. Some responses to the revised consultation had mentioned that the proposed boundary by Elgin would break local ties by Longmorn and Fogwatt due to new housing developments being built, expanding Elgin to the east and south.
5. An alternative option has been developed that extends the proposed Nairn, Strathspey and Moray West constituency boundary eastwards to include Longmorn and Fogwatt. The proposed boundary follows the River Spey – the western boundary of Lennox community council – and then the south west of Moray's Keith and Cullen ward.
6. Some respondents to the revised consultation had opposed the size or length of the proposed Aberdeenshire North and Moray East constituency and that it may break local ties in Buchan. The alternative option divides the Central Buchan ward in Aberdeenshire by following community council area boundaries. New Pitsligo, Strichen, Mintlaw and Longside are added to the proposed Aberdeenshire North and Moray East constituency. Strichen and surrounding areas have historically been placed in a constituency with Fraserburgh and Peterhead and this change would preserve this arrangement and restore local ties in the area while offering the flexibility to extend the boundary by Elgin. The option also reduces the length of the proposed Aberdeenshire North and Moray East constituency.
7. The alternative option aims to address issues raised by Culloden that stated the revised proposals broke local ties between Culloden and Inverness. The revised proposals had placed Culloden in a Nairn, Strathspey and Moray West constituency. Historically Culloden has always been in a UK Parliament constituency with Inverness.
8. The Culloden and Ardersier ward contains 8,122 electors, too many to be added to an Inverness-shire and Wester Ross constituency. Most of the electors in the

Culloden and Ardersier ward are concentrated at the western end of the ward towards Inverness. The alternative option divides the Culloden and Ardersier ward by following the Culloden and Balloch community council area boundaries and places Culloden, Smithton and Balloch in an Inverness-shire and Wester Ross constituency while Ardersier, Croy and Tornagrain are added to a Nairn, Strathspey and Moray West constituency. In order to accommodate the changes to the east of Inverness, electors from the proposed Inverness-shire and Wester Ross constituency are added to the Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross constituency. The proposed boundary in Wester Ross reverts to the Initial Proposals boundary, which had followed community council area boundaries.

9. The alternative option is shown in Appendix A and the electorate of its constituencies are shown in the table below.

Constituency	Council area	Electorate	Area km ²
Aberdeenshire Central	Aberdeenshire	70,880	2,112
Aberdeenshire North and Moray East	Aberdeenshire Moray	70,843	1,314
Argyll, Bute and South Lochaber	Argyll and Bute Highland	71,707	9,303
Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross	Highland	76,654	12,781
Inverness-shire and Wester Ross	Highland	75,422	8,704
Nairn, Strathspey and Moray West	Highland Moray	76,237	4,748
West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine	Aberdeenshire	73,634	3,271

10. The advantages of the new alternative option are that it:

- responds to suggestions to retain the Culloden area in an “Inverness” constituency;
- seeks to retain local ties by Elgin by amending the constituency boundary; and
- responds to suggestions to improve local ties in Aberdeenshire by amending the constituency boundary by Strichen.

11. The disadvantages of the new alternative option are that:

- as a consequence of the boundary changes by Inverness it reverts to the Highland North constituency from the initial proposals. During the initial consultation there was opposition to the area of the proposed Highland North constituency. The Revised Proposals had proposed a smaller Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross constituency that had received some support; and
- it may break local ties between Culloden and Ardersier.

Discussion

12. The Commission could adopt as its final recommendations the Initial Proposals, Revised Proposals or the alternative option described above.
13. The Commission could reconsider the Initial Proposals for this grouping. The Initial Proposals: included Culloden and Inverness in the same constituency; placed Elgin and its surrounding in the same constituency; and placed the whole of the Aberdeenshire Central Buchan ward in a Banff and Buchan constituency. A map of the Initial Proposals is at Appendix B.

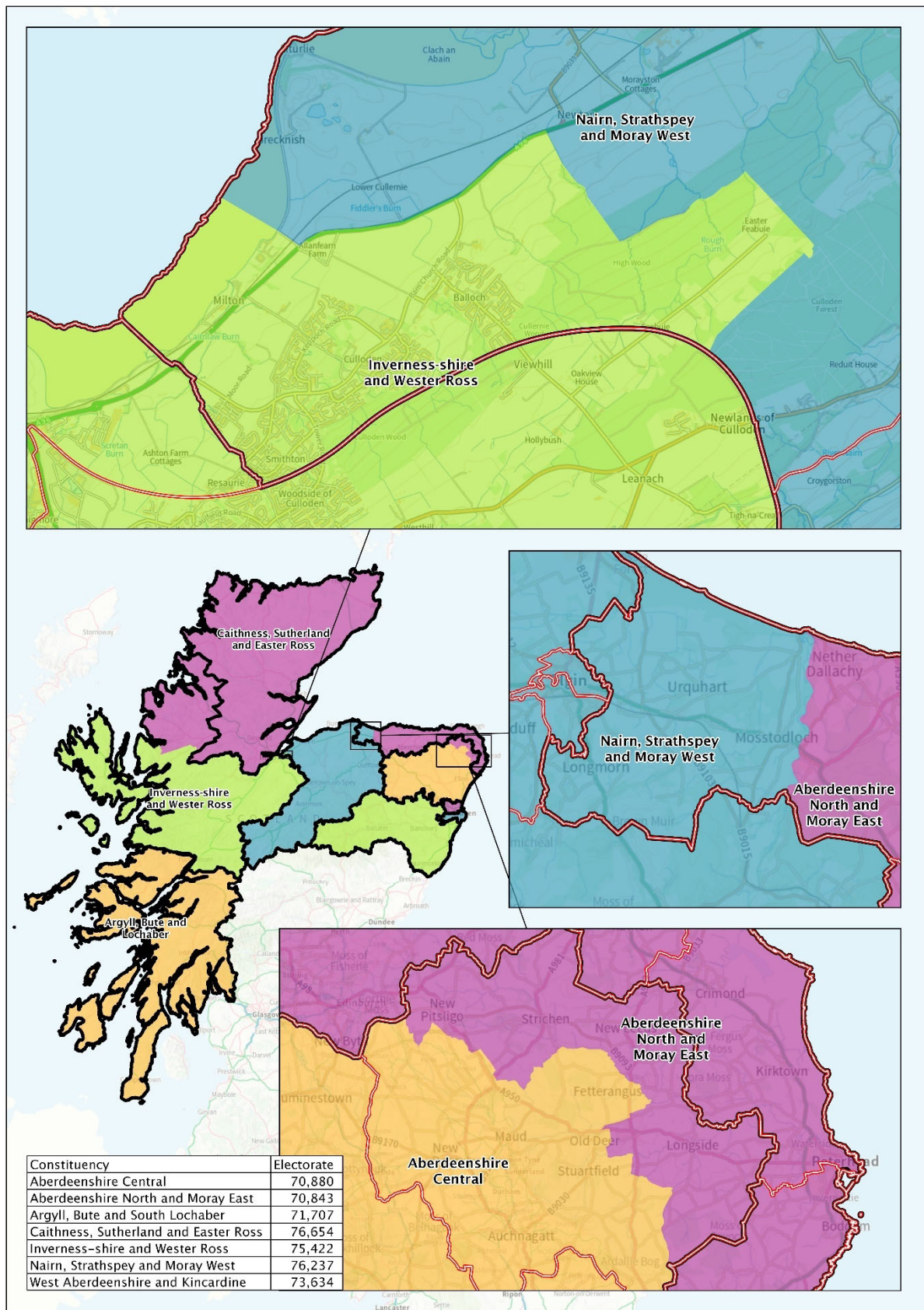
14. However the comments received during the initial public consultation included: strong opposition to Moray being split between three constituencies, when the existing Moray constituency is within the electorate quota for the 2023 Review; opposition to the size of the proposed Highland North constituency; suggestions to name a constituency Argyll and Bute; and opposition to the proposed boundary in Lochaber.
15. The largest constituency proposed in the Initial Proposals, Highland North, is only 13 km² larger than the current largest constituency, Ross, Skye and Lochaber, which covers an area of 12,768 km² and has an electorate of 54,325. The existing Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross constituency covers an area of 8,752 km².
16. The Commission could retain the Revised Proposals as its final recommendations. The Revised Proposals had proposed: a smaller constituency in the north of Highland, named Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross; and Moray was divided between two rather than three constituencies and as a consequence the boundaries were amended in the north of Aberdeenshire.
17. The new alternative option aims to improve arrangements following comments made during the revised consultation but does revert to the Initial Proposals in Wester Ross where approximately 60 responses to the initial consultation had criticised the proposed Highland North constituency.
18. The Commission will have the opportunity to review all constituency names and designations once it has agreed its Final Recommendations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

19. Taking into account all of the evidence arising from the public consultation on the Revised Proposals, the Secretariat invites the Commission to decide whether:
 - to adopt the alternative Option as its Final Recommendations for Argyll and Bute, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Moray Council areas, subject to consideration of all other constituencies (see Appendix A);
 - to adopt without amendment the Revised Proposals as its Final Recommendations, subject to consideration of all other constituencies (see Appendix B); or
 - to adopt the Initial Proposals as its Final Recommendations for Argyll and Bute, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Moray Council areas, subject to consideration of all other constituencies (see Appendix B).

Secretariat
March 2023

Appendix A – Option



Appendix B
Initial and Revised Proposals

