

Response ID ANON-CRUN-TZXR-G

Submitted to **Islands Review - Argyll and Bute council area Public Consultation**

Submitted on **2021-01-04 09:34:04**

Making a general comment

What general comments would you like to make regarding the Commission's proposals for councillor numbers and wards in Argyll and Bute Council area?

Please type your answer in the box below:

Tiree Community Council believes that Tiree and Coll need increased representation not less. Reducing the total number of councillors seems counter-intuitive.

Ward 4 - Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree

What comments would you like to make regarding the number of councillors and ward boundaries for the proposed Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree ward?

Please share your views below:

Tiree Community Council welcomes the Commission's proposals to break up the existing Oban South and The Isles ward in favour of an islands-based ward.

This is not because of poor service by our existing councillors – on the contrary, they have all been exemplary. However, the part-time nature of the councillors' work, their duties on committees and attendance at council business in Kilmory – added to the once-daily and four-hour ferry journey to Tiree – meant that we have only been able to see our Argyll and Bute councillors in person – a handful of days a year.

Not relevant to this survey by the Commission, but relevant to our political dis-enfranchisement, we have had absolutely no contact with – or a visit from – the Council Policy Lead for Island Affairs since TCC was re-instituted in 2014. We believe that Tiree has suffered from a severe democratic deficit since 2007, being geographically and politically peripheral to Argyll and Bute Council.

This lack of presence of Argyll and Bute councillors has meant that Tiree Community Council has had to carry a very heavy burden compared to other community councils: issues such as population decline, falling use of the Gaelic language, cuts in our air service, and a ceiling on building projects due to a limited mains water capacity. All done by volunteers with an annual grant of £400.

We therefore welcome change. And because of the generic problems that island life brings, we do believe that 'islanders best represent islanders'.

However, we do have reservations about the proposal by the Commission for a two-council ward including Mull, Iona, Coll and Tiree.

If it was time-consuming to visit Tiree from Oban, it is even more so to travel from Mull to Tiree and back, involving at least one night spent in Oban. This leads us to worry that we will see less of our councillors rather than more. We want to know our councillors, for them to know us, our businesses, our community and our landscape.

And we believe that, although Tiree and Mull have many historical and cultural ties, the two islands have some crucial differences today. In particular, both Tiree and Coll are suffering from an existentially threatening population decline, with an inter-censile drop 2001-2011 on Tiree of 15%.

We have therefore concluded that the interests of Tiree and Coll would be better served by a return to the system that served the islands well from 1890 to 2007: a single councillor dedicated to these islands.

This would also bring a job back to the islands, something that is desperately needed.

We have had discussions with Coll, Iona and Mull Community Councils. They are supportive of this approach.

Tiree Community Council has discussed this issue publicly for since October. We set up a SurveyMonkey poll to see what islanders thought about this issue: 88% of its respondents agreed that Tiree would be better served if the four islands broke away from the mainland. 80% then agreed that it would be better if Tiree and Coll had their own councillor. A typical comment was: 'Tiree Community Council must resolve to argue and debate with the Boundaries Commission, and consequently with the Scottish Government, the entitlement of Coll and Tiree to be properly represented at Argyll and Bute Council level by a dedicated and locally-based councillor.'

At the December public meeting, we therefore passed this motion unanimously:

'Tiree Community Council welcomes the proposal from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland to break up the existing Oban South and the Isles ward to create an islands' ward in Argyll and Bute Council. We urge the Commission to go further and create a new single-councillor ward for Tiree and Coll on their own.'

This position was also backed unanimously by all seventeen members of the public who were at the public meeting.

We believe the Islands (Scotland) Bill 2018 gives the Commission the powers to over-ride the duty of electoral parity in the exceptional case of Tiree and Coll, where travel times make it impossible to produce representational parity.

Personal Details

What is your name?

Name:

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Please tell us your postcode. This information is requested so the Commission can understand whether your comments relate to where you live and see the geographic spread of responses.

Please enter your postcode here:

PA77 6UE

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation please provide the name of it?

Organisation:

Convenor, Tiree Community Council

It is helpful to the Commission to find out how people hear about this review. How did you find out about the consultation?

Word of Mouth

If you answered other, please give details here: