

RHU & SHANDON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Local Government Boundary Commission *Please reply to:*

for Scotland

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Jean Cook, Secretary

Rhu & Shandon Community Council

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Jack.Rudram@btopenworld.com

Dear Sir

Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements Argyll & Bute Council Area: Proposals for Wards July 2015

Rhu and Shandon Community Council have reviewed the Proposals for Wards put forward by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland for public consultation in your Guidance Booklet dated July 2015 and wish to make the following representations with respect to the proposals:

1. Throughout the document emphasis is placed on “parity of representation”. Whilst this is clearly important our view is that other factors should be given a much higher weighting than is the case. The ultimate objective is that residents should feel that they are being properly and fairly represented. For example: geographical, social and economic ties within and across wards are as important as the basic number of councillors per resident.
2. It is important that individual wards are coherent and manageable if good representation is to be achieved. Wards that are essentially urban have different issues from wards which are essentially rural. Mixing rural and urban areas together is liable to lead to the problems of a potentially significant minority being drowned out by the larger party.
3. Geographically extensive wards which are difficult to move around lead to councillors having to travel large distances, possibly to attend meetings of many communities. Driving large distances because rural areas have inadequate public transport, and attending numerous geographically dispersed meetings will inevitably lead to tired councillors who will be accordingly less effective and, as a consequence, more prone to making poor or ill-informed decisions to the detriment of their residents and the Region as a whole.

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4. The requirement for Councillors to drive long distances to meetings, over poor mountain roads, often late at night at the end of a long day, raises health and safety issues. Overnight stays are not always an option in remote communities. As a responsible authority Argyll & Bute Council should not be placed in a position where they are unable to properly exercise due care and diligence towards the members.
5. If the nature of the wards leads to excessive and arduous demands on councillors then fewer will be attracted to the role. The resulting smaller pool from which Councillors are drawn could potentially then result in poorer representation and inadequate performance of the Regional Council, already an issue in Argyll & Bute.
6. With particular respect to the Helensburgh and Lomond areas the extension of Helensburgh & Lomond North into Cowal defies logic and belief. The areas are geographically distant, linked by an inadequate road over the Rest & Be Thankful, and have few common historical, social or economic links. The proposals result in local Councillors representing 9 Community Councils instead of the current 4 (it might even be 10 Council if point 8 below is considered). This is a clear example of points 2, 3 and 4 above.
7. The argument that Argyll & Bute should have only one ward within the National Park area does not seem to hold water. So far as can be discovered having multiple wards within the National Park has never been an issue, and both Perthshire and Stirlingshire have multiple wards within the National Park.
8. The proposed re-alignment of Helensburgh & Lomond North, Helensburgh Central and Helensburgh & Lomond South forces village communities into urban areas (Rhu & Shandon into Helensburgh Central), and cuts off urban areas into rural areas (east Helensburgh into Helensburgh & Lomond South). A clear example of point 2 above.
9. Whilst the proposals reduces the number of A&B C wards overlapping the National Park to only one the Rhu and Shandon Community Council area would now extend from Helensburgh Central into both Helensburgh & Lomond North and the National Park at Glen Fruin. This would appear to compound the problem of Councillors having to represent multiple communities or, in this case, part of a community.
10. A specific concern of local Rhu and Shandon residents is the subsumation of small village communities into a larger urban area where they would represent a small proportion of the electorate. The concern is that the unique requirements of our communities will become secondary to the needs of the larger urban area. The current arrangement whereby our Councillors represent only village communities means they have a clearer and better understanding of the issues important to our residents.

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In conclusion, the overall pattern of wards and representation proposed makes no sense and Rhu & Shandon Community Council urges the LGBCS to re-consider the proposal in the light of our representations above, and those of others such as Argyll & Bute Council.

Yours sincerely,



Jack Rudram, Convenor, For Rhu & Shandon Community Council

By email copy to:

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