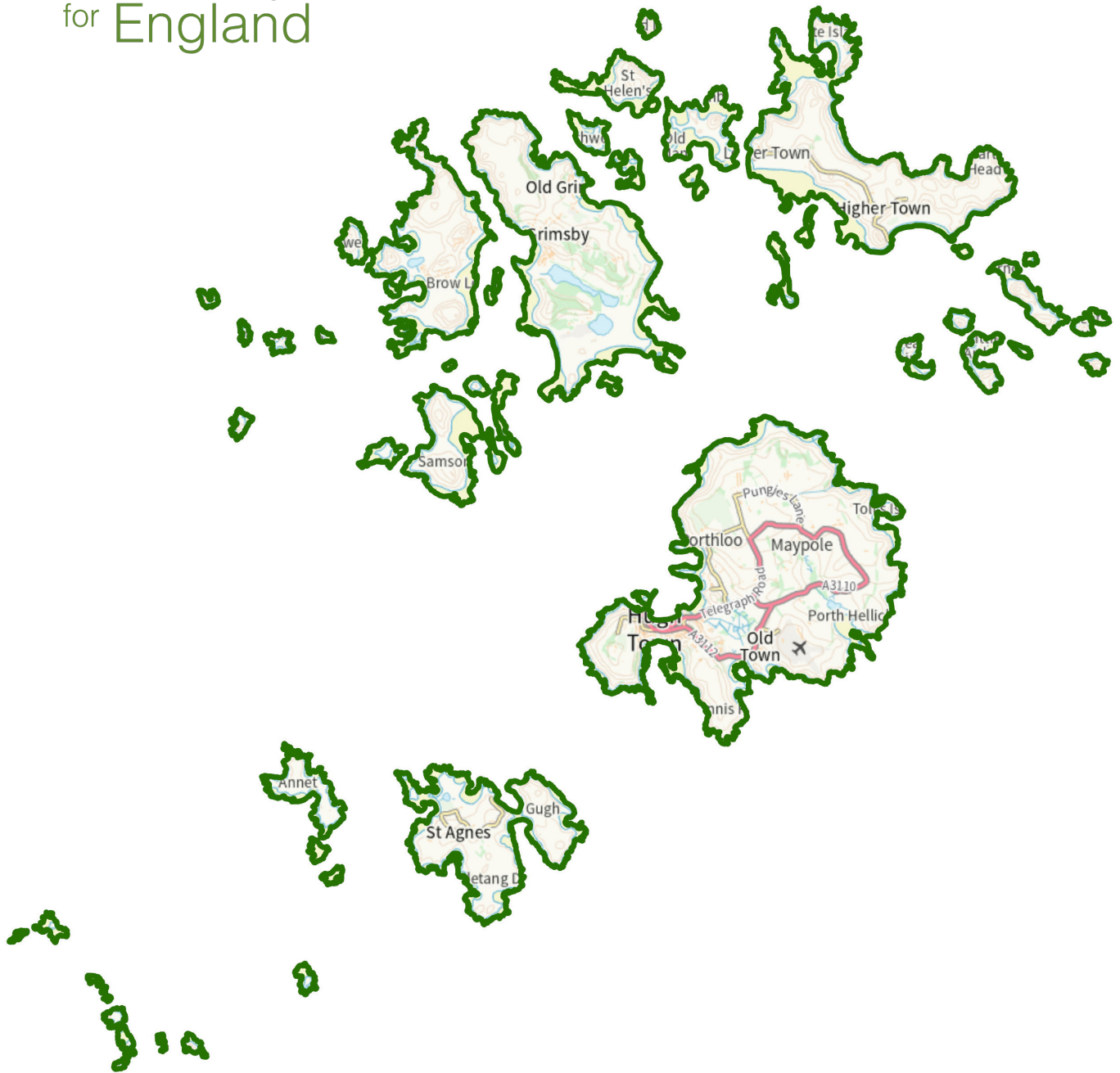




New electoral arrangements for Council of the Isles of Scilly Draft Recommendations

August 2026

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Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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A note on our mapping:

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹ We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Bev Smith (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Dame Gillian Guy
- Wallace Sampson OBE
- Liz Treacy
- Janet Waggott
- Ailsa Irvine (Chief Executive)

What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More details regarding the powers that we have, as well as further guidance and information about electoral reviews and the review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why the Isles of Scilly?

7 We are conducting a review of the Council of the Isles of Scilly ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2016, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.² Additionally, some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible while balancing this with our other statutory criteria.

Our proposals for the Isles of Scilly

8 The Scilly Isles should be represented by 16 councillors, the same number as there are now. It should also have five wards, the boundaries of which should all stay the same as they are now.

How will the recommendations affect you?

9 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in and which communities are in that ward. Your ward name may also change.

10 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the authority or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or house insurance premiums and we are not able to consider any representations which are based on these issues.

Have your say

11 We will consult on the draft recommendations for an eight-week period, from 25 August 2026 to 19 October 2026. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed wards as the more public views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be in making our final recommendations.

12 We ask everyone wishing to contribute ideas for the new wards to first read this report and look at the accompanying map before responding to us.

² Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 56(1).

13 You have until 19 October 2026 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 17 for how to send us your response.

Review timetable

14 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for the Isles of Scilly. We also asked the Council to submit its views on the warding arrangements for Scilly. These submissions have informed the proposed number of councillors and our draft recommendations.

15 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
18 August 2026	Number of councillors decided
25 August 2026	Publication of draft recommendations; start of consultation
19 October 2026	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
1 December 2026	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

16 Legislation³ states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors⁴ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

17 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible while balancing all of our statutory criteria.

18 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2026	2031
Electorate of the Isles of Scilly	1,564	1,559
Number of councillors	16	16
Average number of electors per councillor	98	97

Electorate figures

19 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2031, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2026. These forecasts predicted that the electorate would remain largely the same by 2031.

20 We considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our draft recommendations.

Number of councillors

21 The Council currently has 16 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council in its submission and have concluded that keeping this number the same will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

³ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

⁴ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

Draft recommendations

22 We asked the Council to submit an initial pattern of wards that would be represented by the number of councillors it recommended. The Council suggested retaining the existing warding arrangements for Scilly, including evidence of why alternative arrangements were not as appropriate for the islands.

23 Our draft recommendations are based upon the submission from the Council.

24 We have not visited the Isles of Scilly at this stage, as we considered that the Council's submission and its suggestion to retain the existing arrangements did not require an investigation on the ground. We may choose to visit the islands in person once the consultation has ended and before we finalise our recommendations, depending on the evidence we hear from respondents. This will allow us to focus in detail on any areas where we receive strong evidence and feedback.

25 We considered how we could improve electoral equality on the off-islands, noting that combining two islands into a two-member ward would result in slightly better electoral equality for the two resulting two-member wards. For example: a two-member Tresco & Bryher ward would have a forecast variance of -13% and a two-member St Agnes and St Martin's ward would have a forecast variance of -9%.

26 However, we were persuaded by the Council's proposal to maintain specific off-island representation to respect the distinct communities that live there and their individual needs and characteristics. We consider that combining the smaller islands together in a single ward to minimise electoral inequality would not reflect community identities or provide for effective and convenient local government for off-island residents, who have a strong association to their own island.

27 We have also had regard to our duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023), which requires us to seek to further the purposes of National Landscapes. In relation to the Isles of Scilly, which is coterminous with the Isles of Scilly National Landscape, we are satisfied that our recommendations provide councillors with a coherent geographic framework through which they can understand and discharge their responsibilities in respect of this protected landscape.

28 Our draft recommendations are for one 12-councillor St Mary's ward and four one-councillor wards; one for each of the off-islands. We consider that our draft recommendations reflect community identities and interests as well as the islands' natural geography, including navigation between the islands; these points were emphasised in the Council's submission on warding arrangements.

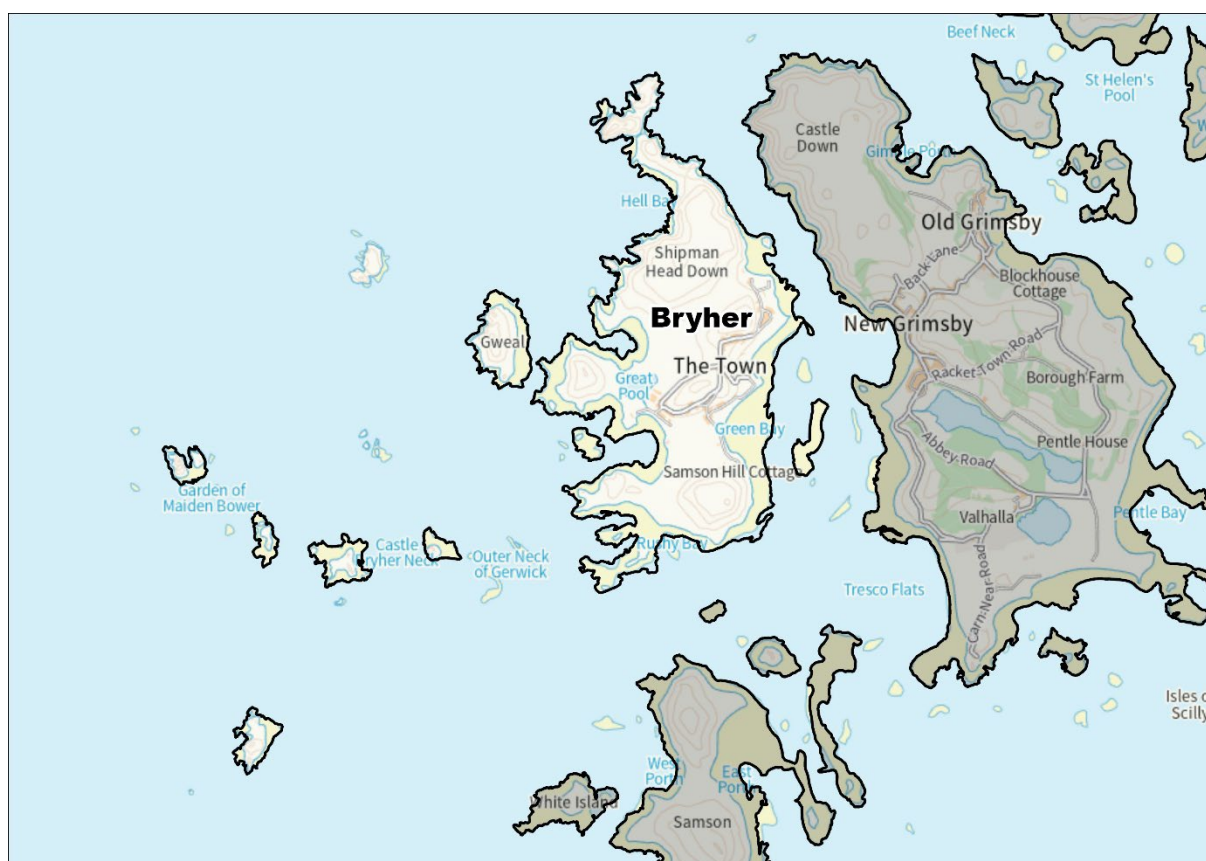
29 The tables and maps on pages 8–14 detail our draft recommendations for each of the islands. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁵ criteria of:

- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

30 A summary of our proposed wards is set out in the table starting on page 21 and on the large map accompanying this report. We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations.

⁵ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Bryher



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2031
Bryher	1	-25%

Bryher

31 The Council suggested retaining Bryher as a single-member ward. It considered that Bryher is a distinct community from the neighbouring island of Tresco, although it noted that there are in some cases closer links between Bryher and Tresco than between the other off-islands, such as their single school base and their combined cricket team and pilot gig rowing club. It noted that Tresco is leased in its entirety by a single family, where nearly all residents of the island are employees of Tresco Estate, warranting its separate consideration from Bryher.

32 We agree with the Council's assessment that, as an off-island, Bryher should continue to have its own individual representation. Although Bryher's forecast of 73 electors in 2031 results in electoral inequality, we consider that a ward combining Bryher and Tresco with improved electoral equality would not reflect either the local community identity of Bryher, which has its own amenities and concerns, or allow for effective and convenient local government on the island.

33 We propose a single-member Bryher ward as in the existing arrangements.

St Agnes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2031
St Agnes	1	-34%

St Agnes

34 The Council suggested retaining St Agnes as a single-member ward. As with its consideration of the other off-islands, it emphasised that St Agnes has all of its own amenities. This includes St Agnes Community Hall, St Agnes Post Office, St Agnes Church, and a local resident Facebook group dedicated to concerns on the island. St Agnes is the most southerly of the populated islands that make up the Isles of Scilly and can only be reached by boat. Additionally, the local councillor carries out their representational duties by way of informal conversations arising from day-to-day encounters in the community. A councillor on another island could not have this sort of regular contact with St Agnes residents.

35 The Council noted that, in particular, a pairing of St Agnes and St Martin's in a two-member ward (which is one resulting consideration of an adjacent two-member Tresco & Bryher wards) would be inappropriate as the two islands lie at opposite ends of the authority and are the greatest distance apart of any of the inhabited islands, with limited or no boat services between them in off-peak months.

36 As in our consideration of the other off-islands, we agree with the Council's assessment that each off-island should continue to have its own individual member. We note that the 64 forecast electors of St Agnes would result in poor levels of electoral inequality, but we consider that they would be best represented by one councillor for the island.

37 We propose a single-member St Agnes ward, which we consider best reflects community identity and effective and convenient local government on the island.

St Martin's



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2031
St Martin's	1	16%

St Martin's

38 The Council proposed retaining St Martin's as a single-member ward. It noted that St Martin's has its own grocery store, the St Martin's Island Hall community centre, and a local post office. St Martin's additionally has both an Anglican church and a Methodist church. As noted in our consideration of all the off-islands, the role of a single St Martin's councillor is delivered primarily by means of everyday conversations with residents in the community. A councillor living on another island could not sustain this kind of relationship with residents living on St Martin's.

39 As noted in our consideration of the other off-islands, we agree with the Council that St Martin's should continue to have its own individual representation. The 113 forecast electors on St Martin's result in a slightly greater variance than average, but we consider that a 16% single-member island ward is the best reflection of St Martin's distinct community identity and allows for the most effective and convenient delivery of local government for the island.

40 We propose a single-member St Martin's ward as in the existing arrangements.

St Mary's



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2031
St Mary's	12	4%

St Mary's

41 The Council proposed retaining St Mary's as a 12-member ward. It noted that this arrangement, where the island is represented by many more members than would be recommended by the Commission's typical policy of proposing wards with three or fewer councillors, is an anomaly in English local government. It also noted that although it would be possible to divide St Mary's into four wards electing three members each, or some other further subdivision of the island, such a pattern would not reflect local identity on the island. It emphasised St Mary's as one community, not four communities, as reflected by its village-sized electorate of 1,212.

42 It detailed that the island has in almost all cases only one of each amenity. This includes one school (The Five Islands Academy main campus), one health centre, one leisure centre (Carn Gwaval Wellbeing Centre), and one shopping area in Hugh Town, and that the main morning church services all take place in Hugh Town. Additionally, none of the island's community or sports groups cover only one part of the island. It argued therefore that a warding arrangement on the island dividing it into separate wards would not reflect the island's community identity.

43 We agree with the Council's assessment that dividing St Mary's into any grouping of smaller wards would not reflect community identities on the island. We also consider that sub-dividing St Mary's into more than one ward in any pattern would result in less effective and convenient local government because any resulting boundaries on the island would not be as clear and identifiable as the island's easily understood current boundary, which makes the most sense to residents.

44 The Council additionally laid out a case for the retention of 12 members continuing to represent the island. It calculated how a different allocation of councillors on St Mary's could influence the electoral equality of the off-islands. It noted that a reduction to 11 members in St Mary's councillors could increase the number of off-islands with electoral equality within 10% of the average in 2031 from two to three. An increase to 13 or 14 councillors for St Mary's, however, would result in no off-islands with variances more than 30% from the average by 2031. In light of these contrasting ways of considering electoral equality, the Council resolved that the current arrangement with 12 members is an appropriate compromise on the criterion of electoral equality.

45 We recognise the Council's consideration of alternative numbers of councillors for St Mary's and we consider that any improvement of electoral equality resulting from a shift in that number is negligible given the number of electors impacted. We also consider that the Council has provided strong evidence in its submission on councillor numbers for the whole authority, indicating why 16 councillors overall is appropriate for it to carry out its duties. We consider that evidence, as well as the specific considerations about the retention of 12 councillors on St Mary's, sufficient to support the Council's suggestions for St Mary's.

46 We therefore propose a 12-member St Mary's ward in line with the existing arrangement for this island.

Tresco



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2031
Tresco	1	0%

Tresco

47 The Council proposed retaining Tresco as a single-member ward. As noted in the Bryher section above, it recognised that there are in some cases closer links between Bryher and Tresco than between the other off-islands. In addition to the amenities listed above the Council noted that the Hell Bay Hotel on Bryher is owned by the Tresco Estate. It maintained that these two islands are still very much distinct communities. Tresco is leased in its entirety by the Dorrien-Smith family, and nearly all residents of the island are employees of Tresco Estate. The Council concluded it is appropriate that Tresco continues to be represented separately from Bryher.

48 We agree with the Council's assessment that Tresco should continue to have its own individual representation, as with the other off-islands, as this arrangement allows for good delivery of effective and convenient local government for the island. Tresco is forecast to have 97 electors by 2031, resulting in ideal electoral equality. We consider Tresco's community is also best reflected in a single-member ward.

49 We propose a single-member Tresco as in the existing arrangements.

Conclusions

50 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in the Isles of Scilly, referencing the 2026 and 2031 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found in Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided in Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2026	2031
Number of councillors	16	16
Number of electoral wards	5	5
Average number of electors per councillor	98	97
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	3	3
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	2

Draft recommendations

The Council of the Isles of Scilly should be made up of 16 councillors serving five wards representing one 12-councillor ward and four single-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for the Isles of Scilly. You can also view our draft recommendations for the Isles of Scilly on our interactive maps at www.lgbce.org.uk

Have your say

51 The Commission has an open mind about its draft recommendations. Every representation we receive will be considered, regardless of who it is from or whether it relates to the whole authority or just a part of it.

52 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for Scilly, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

53 Our website is the best way to keep up to date with progress on the review and to have your say www.lgbce.org.uk

54 Each review has its own page with details of the timetable for the review, information about its different stages and interactive mapping.

55 Submissions can also be made by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk or writing to:

Review Officer (Isles of Scilly)
LGBCE
7th Floor
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8YZ

56 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Scilly which delivers:

- Electoral equality: each councillor represents a similar number of electors.
- Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

57 A good pattern of wards should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors.
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
- Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.

58 Electoral equality:

- Does your proposal mean that councillors would represent roughly the same number of electors as elsewhere in Scilly?

59 Community identity:

- Community groups: is there a residents' association or other group that represents the area?
- Interests: what issues bind the community together or separate it from other parts of your area?
- Identifiable boundaries: are there natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries for your proposals?

60 Effective local government:

- Are the proposed wards too large or small to be represented effectively?
- Are the proposed names of the wards appropriate?
- Are there good links across wards? Is there any form of public transport?

61 Please note that the consultation stage of an electoral review is public. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations will be placed on deposit at our offices and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

62 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers. This includes your name, postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

63 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

64 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the all-out elections for the Isles of Scilly in 2029.

Equalities

65 The Commission is satisfied that it complies with its legal obligations under the Equality Act and that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for the Isles of Scilly

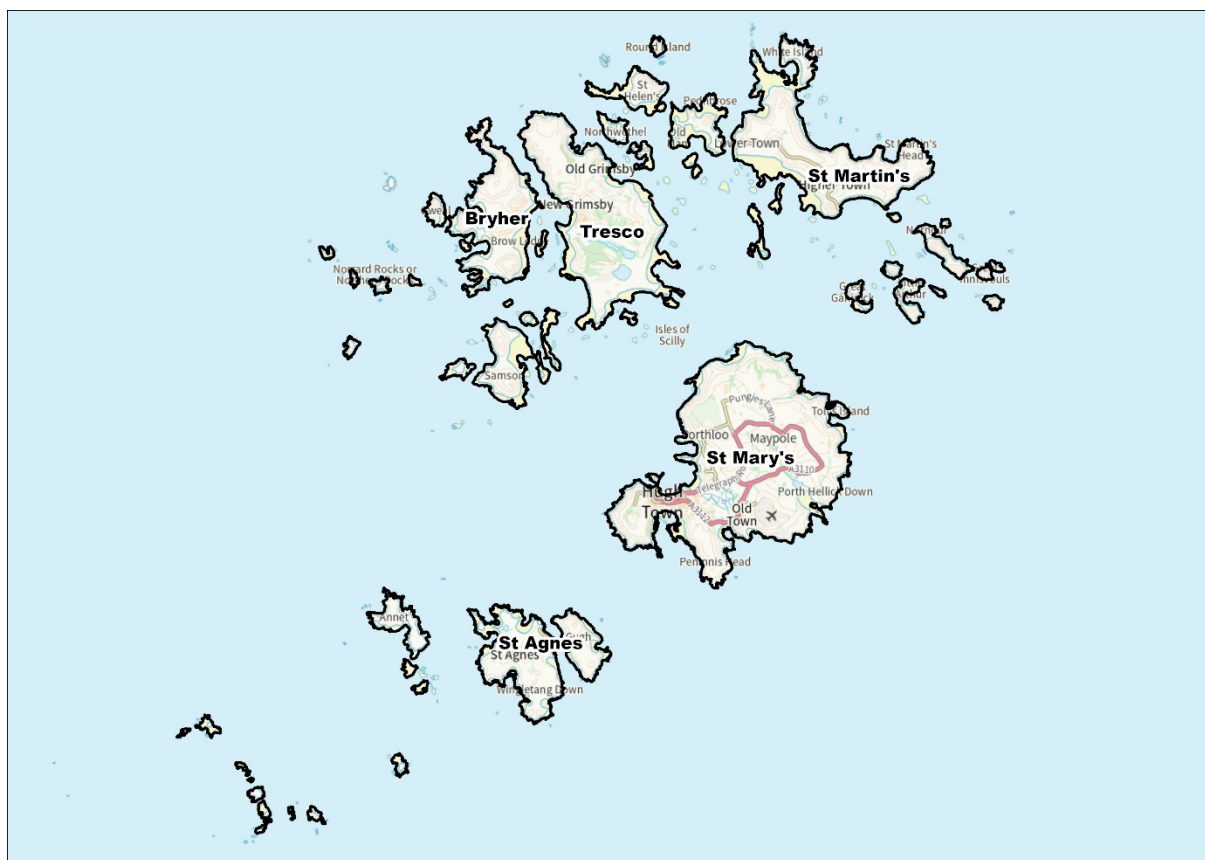
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2026)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2031)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bryher	1	72	72	-26%	73	73	-25%
2	St Agnes	1	61	61	-36%	64	64	-34%
3	St Martin's	1	111	111	14%	113	113	16%
4	St Mary's	12	1,218	102	4%	1,212	101	4%
5	Tresco	1	102	102	4%	97	97	0%
Totals		16	1,564	–	–	1,559	–	–
Averages		–	–	98	–	–	97	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by the Council of the Isles of Scilly.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the authority. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/isles-scilly

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:

www.lgbce.org.uk/isles-scilly

Local Authority

- The Council of the Isles of Scilly

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Councillor numbers	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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