



Information Paper

Local government electoral arrangements in  
Scotland: 1974 to 1996

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## Local government electoral arrangements in Scotland: 1974 to 1996

Boundaries Scotland, previously named Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, was established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, with responsibility for keeping under review local government areas and electoral arrangements in Scotland. Under the terms of the Scotland Act 2016, responsibility for reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries passed from the Boundary Commission for Scotland to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland with effect from May 2017. Section 28 of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020 renamed the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland as Boundaries Scotland and came into force on 14 May 2021.

The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 created the 9 Regions, 3 Islands Areas and 53 Districts that existed in Scotland between 1974 and 1996. Our Information Paper *Local government area boundaries in Scotland: 1974 to 1996* gives more detail of the definition and development of those local government areas.

Each Region and Islands Area was divided for electoral purposes into a number of Electoral Divisions. Each Electoral Division for a Region had to fit within one of the constituent Districts. Each District was divided into a number of District Wards, with each District Ward contained within an Electoral Division for the parent Region.

To allow the formation of the Councils, Electoral Divisions and District Wards were set out in a series of Directions by the Secretary of State for Scotland in November 1973, under powers in Schedule 2 to the 1973 Act, and were used in the initial elections on 7 May 1974. In the period 1974 to 1976 we conducted a small series of interim reviews of the external boundaries of Districts and Regions in areas where we were directed by the Secretary of State or we were requested by the councils involved. As a result of these interim reviews, there were changes to the number of District Wards in a small number of Districts for the 1977 elections. These formation electoral areas continued in use until we completed our Initial Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements, with any necessary amendments made by further Directions by the Secretary of State.

The 1973 Act specified when elections would take place. During the 1970s, elections always took place on the first Tuesday in May, but after the passage of the Representation of the People Act 1983 this was changed to be the first Thursday in May. For Region and Islands Area Councils elections took place every 4 years, i.e. 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990 and 1994. For District Councils the interval was 3 years at first to separate them from the Regional elections, and then every 4 years: elections took place in 1974, 1977, 1980, 1984, 1988 and 1992.

We carried out our Initial Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for each local government area between 1976 and 1985. Islands Area Electoral Divisions resulting from those Initial Reviews were used for elections every 4 years from May 1978 up to and including May 1990.

We completed our Initial Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for Regions in time for the elections in May 1982, and the resulting Electoral Divisions were also used in subsequent elections in May 1986 and May 1990.

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We completed our Initial Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for Districts between 1978 and 1985, with the resulting District Wards for 20 Districts used in the election of May 1980, and those for all Districts (except Gordon District whose review was not completed until 1985) used in the elections of May 1984. These District Wards were also used in the elections of May 1988 and May 1992.

After our Initial Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements for a local government area, in some cases we completed an interim review of one or more Electoral Division or District Ward boundaries. These interim reviews resulted in a change to the number of Electoral Divisions or District Wards, or modification to an Electoral Division or District Ward boundary.

In addition to amendments arising from our Initial Reviews and Interim Reviews, amendments were made to Electoral Divisions and District Wards whenever a local government area boundary was modified as a result of one of our administrative area reviews. Amendments to local government area boundaries are detailed in our Information Paper ***Local government area boundaries in Scotland: 1974 to 1996***.

We carried out our Second Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for each local government area between 1989 and 1994. The revised Electoral Divisions for Regions and Islands Areas were used in the elections of May 1994. The resulting District Wards had been intended to be used in elections in May 1996, but the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 resulted in the abolition of Regions, Islands Areas and Districts before that date. However, the District Wards recommended in the Second Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements did form the basis of the wards used in 1995 for elections on the formation of the local government areas established by the 1994 Act, as detailed in our Information Paper ***Local government electoral arrangements in Scotland: 1995 onwards***.

The table below lists the numbers of Electoral Divisions in Islands Areas and Regions at each set of elections. Appendix A gives greater detail, including figures for each local government area.

Electoral Divisions	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
Islands Areas	75	79	79	79	79	84
Regions	432	432	441	445	445	453

The table below lists the numbers of District Wards in Scotland at each set of elections. Appendix B gives greater detail, including figures for each local government area.

District Wards	1974	1977	1980	1984	1988	1992	2nd review
Scotland	1,116	1,117	1,127	1,152	1,158	1,158	1,214

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## Appendix A - Number of Electoral Divisions by local government area

The tables below list the number of Electoral Divisions for each local government area. The 1974 Electoral Divisions were defined by Direction by the Secretary of State. The 1978 Islands Area Electoral Divisions and 1982 Region Electoral Divisions resulted from our Initial Reviews of Electoral Arrangements, and the 1994 Electoral Divisions resulted from our Second Reviews of Electoral Arrangements.

We completed Interim Reviews in Fife and Grampian regions after our Initial Reviews, and as a result the number of Electoral Divisions in these 2 regions changed for the 1986 elections.

Our website includes copies of the Directions by the Secretary of State, our reports and the associated legislation which resulted in these Electoral Divisions.

Islands Area Electoral Divisions	Formation 1974	Initial Review 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990	Second Review 1994
Orkney	23	24	28
Shetland	22	25	26
Western Isles	30	30	30
Scotland total	75	79	84

Region Electoral Divisions	Formation 1974, 1978	Initial Review 1982, 1986, 1990		Second Review 1994
Borders	23	23	23	27
Central	34	34	34	35
Dumfries and Galloway	35	35	35	35
Fife	42	45	46 <sup>1</sup>	46
Grampian	53	54	57 <sup>2</sup>	57
Highland	47	52	52	54
Lothian	49	49	49	49
Strathclyde	103	103	103	104
Tayside	46	46	46	46
Scotland total	432	441	445	453

The following table shows the distribution of Electoral Divisions between the Districts within each Region.

Electoral Divisions by District	1974	1978	1982	1986, 1990	1994
Borders Region					
Berwickshire	4	4	4	4	5
Ettrick and Lauderdale	8	8	8	8	9
Roxburgh	8	8	8	8	9
Tweeddale	3	3	3	3	4
Central Region					
Clackmannan	6	6	6	6	6
Falkirk	18	18	18	18	18
Stirling	10	10	10	10	11
Dumfries and Galloway Region					

<sup>1</sup> LGBCS interim review - report 93

<sup>2</sup> LGBCS interim reviews - reports 95 and 98

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**Appendix A - Number of Electoral Divisions by local government area**

Electoral Divisions by District	1974	1978	1982	1986, 1990	1994
Annandale and Eskdale	8	8	8	8	9
Nithsdale	14	14	14	14	13
Stewartry	6	6	6	6	6
Wigtown	7	7	7	7	7
Fife Region					
Dunfermline	15	15	17	17	17
Kirkcaldy	18	18	19	20	20
North East Fife	9	9	9	9	9
Grampian Region					
Aberdeen, City of	24	24	25	26	25
Banff and Buchan	9	9	9	9	9
Gordon	6	6	6	8	8
Kincardine and Deeside	5	5	5	5	6
Moray	9	9	9	9	9
Highland Region					
Badenoch and Strathspey	3	3	3	3	3
Caithness	8	7	8	8	7
Inverness	12	12	14	14	16
Lochaber	5	5	5	5	5
Nairn	2	2	3	3	3
Ross and Cromarty	10	10	11	11	12
Skye and Lochalsh	3	3	3	3	3
Sutherland	4	5	5	5	5
Lothian Region					
East Lothian	5	5	5	5	6
Edinburgh, City of	32	32	31	31	29
Midlothian	5	5	5	5	5
West Lothian	7	7	8	8	9
Strathclyde Region					
Argyll and Bute	5	5	5	5	5
Dumbarton	3	3	3	3	3
Glasgow, City of	36	36	33	33	30
Clydebank	2	2	2	2	2
Bearsden and Milngavie	2	2	2	2	2
Strathkelvin	3	3	3	3	4
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2	2	3	3	3
Monklands	4	4	5	5	4
Motherwell	6	6	6	6	6
Hamilton	4	4	4	4	5
East Kilbride	3	3	3	3	4
Eastwood	2	2	2	2	3
Lanark	3	3	3	3	3
Renfrew	8	8	9	9	9
Inverclyde	5	5	4	4	4
Cunninghame	5	5	6	6	6
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3	3	3	3	4
Kyle and Carrick	5	5	5	5	5
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2	2	2	2	2
Tayside Region					
Angus	10	10	10	10	11
Dundee, City of	22	22	22	22	20
Perth and Kinross	14	14	14	14	15

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## Appendix B – Number of District Wards by local government area

The table below lists the number of District Wards for each District during its existence. Our website includes copies of the Directions by the Secretary of State, our reports and the associated legislation which resulted in the definition of these District Wards.

The wards defined on the formation of the Districts in 1974 continued to be used for elections until we had completed our Initial Review for a District. The District Wards from the Initial Reviews were used in the 1980 elections for some Councils, in the 1984 elections for all others, except Gordon where they were first used in the 1988 elections.

We completed Interim Reviews in a number of Districts after our Initial Reviews, and as a result of this, and the different dates when District Wards from our Interim Reviews were first used, the number of District Wards varied at each set of elections.

The District Wards recommended in the 2nd Review were never used for elections to the District Councils. The figures are included here for completeness.

District Wards by District	Formation		Initial Review <sup>3</sup>			2nd Review <sup>4</sup>
	1974	1977	1980	1984	1988, 1992	
Borders						
Berwickshire	12	12	12	12	12	10
Ettrick and Lauderdale	16	16	16	16	16	18
Roxburgh	16	16		16	16	18
Tweeddale	10	10	10	10	10	12
Central						
Clackmannan	12	12	12	12	12	12
Falkirk	36	36	36	36	36	36
Stirling	20	20	20	20	20	22
Dumfries and Galloway						
Annandale and Eskdale	16	16	16	16	16	18
Nithsdale	28	28	28	28	28	26
Stewartry	12	12	12	12	12	12
Wigtown	14	14	14	14	14	14
Fife						
Dunfermline	30	30		34	34	34
Kirkcaldy	36	36		40 <sup>5</sup>	40	40
North East Fife	18	18	18	18	18	18
Grampian						
Aberdeen, City of	48	48		50	52 <sup>6</sup>	50
Banff and Buchan	18	18		18	18	18
Gordon	12	12			16	16
Kincardine and Deeside	12	12		12	12	13
Moray	18	18		18	18	18
Highland						

<sup>3</sup> The total number of district wards recommended in our Initial Reviews was 1,153.

<sup>4</sup> Not implemented – see text.

<sup>5</sup> Kirkcaldy: number of District Wards proposed by Initial Review as 38 (LGBCS report 45), but increased to 40 before the 1984 elections (LGBCS report 93).

<sup>6</sup> City of Aberdeen: LGBCS interim review - report 95

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District Wards by District	Formation		Initial Review <sup>3</sup>			2nd Review <sup>4</sup>
	1974	1977	1980	1984	1988, 1992	
Badenoch and Strathspey	10	10	10	11 <sup>7</sup>	11	11
Caithness	16	15 <sup>8</sup>	16	16	16	14
Inverness	24	24	28	28	28	32
Lochaber	12	12		15	15	15
Nairn	10	10	10	10	10	10
Ross and Cromarty	20	20		22	22	24
Skye and Lochalsh	10	10	11	11	11	12
Sutherland	12	14 <sup>9</sup>	14	14	14	14
Lothian						
East Lothian	17	17		17	17	18
Edinburgh, City of	64	64	62	62	62	58
Midlothian	15	15	15	15	15	15
West Lothian	21	21		24	24	27
Strathclyde						
Argyll and Bute	26	26		26	26	27
Bearsden and Milngavie	10	10		10	10	10
Clydebank	10	10		12	12	11
Clydesdale	14	14		16	16	16
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	10	10		12	12	15
Cumnock & Doon Valley	10	10		10	10	10
Cunninghame	24	24	30	30	30	30
Dumbarton	15	15		16	16	17
East Kilbride	15	15		16	16	20
Eastwood	12	12		12	12	15
Glasgow, City of	72	72		66	66	90
Hamilton	20	20 <sup>10</sup>		20	20	25
Inverclyde	23	23		20	20	20
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	16	16		18	18	20
Kyle and Carrick	25	25		25	25	25
Monklands	20	21 <sup>11</sup>		20	20	20
Motherwell	30	29 <sup>12</sup>		30	30	30
Renfrew	40	40		45	45	45
Strathkelvin	14	14		15	15	20
Tayside						
Angus	22	22		21	21	22
Dundee, City of	44	44		44	44	40
Perth and Kinross	29	29		29	29	31
Scotland total	1,116	1,117	1,127	1,152	1,158	1,214

The following table shows the total number of District Wards in the Districts within each Region at each election. The number of District Wards in each Region arising

<sup>7</sup> Badenoch and Strathspey: LGBCS interim review - report 88

<sup>8</sup> Caithness: LGBCS interim review - report 11. Recommendations for change had previously been made in LGBCS report 6, but not implemented.

<sup>9</sup> Sutherland: LGBCS interim review - report 11. Recommendations for change had previously been made in LGBCS report 6, but not implemented.

<sup>10</sup> Hamilton: number of wards recommended to be increased to 21 (LGBCS report 3), but that recommendation was not implemented.

<sup>11</sup> Monklands: LGBCS interim review - report 7

<sup>12</sup> Motherwell: LGBCS interim review - report 7



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**Appendix B – Number of District Wards by local government area**

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from the Initial Reviews is as shown in the column for 1984, except where indicated by a footnote.

District Wards by Region	1974	1977	1980	1984	1988, 1992	2nd review
Borders Region	54	54	54	54	54	58
Central Region	68	68	68	68	68	70
Dumfries and Galloway Region	70	70	70	70	70	70
Fife Region	84	84	84	92 <sup>13</sup>	92	92
Grampian Region	108	108	108	110 <sup>14</sup>	116	115
Highland Region	114	115	121	127 <sup>15</sup>	127	132
Lothian Region	117	117	115	118	118	118
Strathclyde Region	406	406	412	419	419	466
Tayside Region	95	95	95	94	94	93

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<sup>13</sup> Fife Region: 90 District Wards from Initial Reviews.

<sup>14</sup> Grampian Region: 114 District Wards from Initial Reviews.

<sup>15</sup> Highland Region: 126 District Wards from Initial Reviews.