

Mr Ronnie Hinds
Chair
Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD

Your Ref:
Our Ref: CE/SB
Date: 18 May, 2015

Dear Mr Hinds

**Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements
Highland Council Area – Proposals for Wards**

I refer to the consultation published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland on proposals for wards in the Highland Council area.

The Commission's proposals were carefully considered at a meeting of the Council on 14 May, 2015 during which members acknowledged that while the Commission has broadly sought to ensure parity in terms of electors per councillor, it had largely recognised the special geographical circumstances that exist in the Highlands. It was also acknowledged that identifying proposals for this area are complex given the geography and demographics of the Highlands.

While the Council was content with the majority of the Commission's proposals, the Council unanimously agreed to a number of alternative suggestions which it was felt would enhance the Commission's proposals.

These alternative proposals relate to Caithness, Black Isle, Nairn/Cawdor, Culloden/Ardersier and the Central ward in Inverness, and these are detailed in the attached submission.

The rationale behind the proposals for the Black Isle, Nairn/Cawdor and Culloden/Ardersier is based on maintaining current community ties and to provide for better recognisable boundaries.

In relation to the proposals for Caithness and Inverness Central, the Council felt that the Commission had not given sufficient weight to the fact that these wards contained areas of deprivation, and as I indicated in my previous letter of 16 April, 2014, members were keen that those wards that have high levels of deprivation did not see a reduction in representation, which would increase the workload for the remaining Councillors.

It was also felt that proposals for the Caithness wards would result in a disproportionate reduction in elected representation and that there were special geographical factors which should also be taken into account.

The Council's revised proposals would therefore see an increase in Councillor numbers from the proposed 74 to 76. (An extra member for the wards in Caithness and an extra member for the Inverness Central ward).

I do hope that these alternative proposals contained in the Council's submission are helpful and will be seen as a positive contribution by the Council to strengthen the Commission's proposals for the Highland Council area.

I would be happy to discuss this further with you if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely



Steve Barron
Chief Executive

**The Highland Council Submission to the consultation from the Local Government
Boundary Commission for Scotland on the Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements
Highland Council Area – Proposals for Wards**

Caithness

In relation to Caithness, it was felt that the Commission's proposals resulted in a disproportionate reduction in elected representation and that insufficient weight had been given to both the geography of Caithness and the areas of deprivation that exists in parts of Caithness. It was therefore agreed that the Council would recommend to the Commission the creation of three wards with three members for Caithness instead of the Commission's proposals of two wards of four members.

In order to create three wards with three members in Caithness whose electorate totals would be as close as possible to the 10% of parity figure, the following is proposed using electorate data from 2015:

- Polling Districts C04I, C04J and C04K would be moved from Landward Caithness to Wick, increasing Wick's electorate from 5,692 to an estimated 6,490, 12.2% below parity.
- Polling Districts C04B and C04N would be moved from Landward Caithness to Thurso, increasing Thurso's Electorate from 6,294 to an estimated 7,483, 1.3% above parity
- In consequence, Landward Caithness's Electorate would decrease from 8,600 to an estimated 6,613, 10.5% below Parity.

This proposal would result in an additional member for Caithness and a revised boundary map is attached at appendix 1.

Black Isle

With regard to the Commission's proposal for the Black Isle, it was felt that in order to retain what is a recognisable boundary and to maintain local community ties, that there should be no change to the boundary for the Black Isle.

It was therefore agreed that the Council would recommend to the Commission that the Black Isle ward remain as it is currently configured. To effect this change from the Commission's proposals, the following is suggested using electorate data from 2015:

- The Redcastle Polling Districts R10A (S) & R103 (W) with an estimated electorate of 366 would be transferred back from the Dingwall and Seaforth ward, which would result in the Black Isle ward having an estimated electorate of 8,647 which would be 17% above parity with the proposed three member ward.
- The Dingwall and Seaforth ward would be reduced by an estimated 366 electors, which would result in it being 2.6% below parity.

A revised boundary map is attached at Appendix 2.

Nairn & Culloden

There is a strong view within the community and this was echoed at the Council meeting, that Cawdor should be included in the Nairn ward and that Ardersier should remain in the Culloden ward. This would better reflect local and community ties, school catchment areas and provides more recognisable boundaries.

It was therefore agreed that the Council would recommend to the Commission that Cawdor should be included in the Nairn ward and that Ardersier should remain in the Culloden ward. To effect this change the following is proposed using electorate data from 2015:

- Move Polling District I18G with an estimated 594 electors from the proposed Culloden ward. This would create a Nairn and Cawdor ward with an estimated 10,182 electors, 3.3% above parity.
- Move part of polling District I18F with an estimated 1,157 electors in Ardersier from the proposed Nairn and Ardersier ward to the proposed Culloden ward. This would create a Culloden and Ardersier ward with an estimated 8,305 electors, 12.4% above parity.

In addition, the Council also agreed to recommend to the Commission that in the interests of maintaining local community ties and a recognisable boundary that the Retail Park & Resaurie area be transferred back into the Culloden ward. To effect this change the following is proposed using electorate data from 2015:

- Move part of Polling District I18 with an estimated 268 electors in the Retail Park & Resaurie Area from the Inverness Millburn ward to the Culloden and Ardersier ward which would result in an estimated electorate of 8,573, which would be 16% above parity with the proposed three member ward.
- This would result in a reduction of 268 electors for the Millburn ward which would give the ward an estimated 6,510 electors, 11.9% below parity.

A revised boundary map is attached at Appendix 3.

Inverness Central

Members were concerned that insufficient weight had been given to the high levels of deprivation that exist in parts of the Inverness Central ward, and when coupled with the significant number of residents over 18 years old who are not on the electoral register has resulted in a particularly high case load for each of the Councillors in that ward.

The Council therefore agreed to propose that the Inverness Central ward retain four members and remain as it is currently configured other than the part of the Ballifeary community council area in the Central ward being transferred to the Inverness West ward to better reflect community ties and provide a more recognisable boundary.

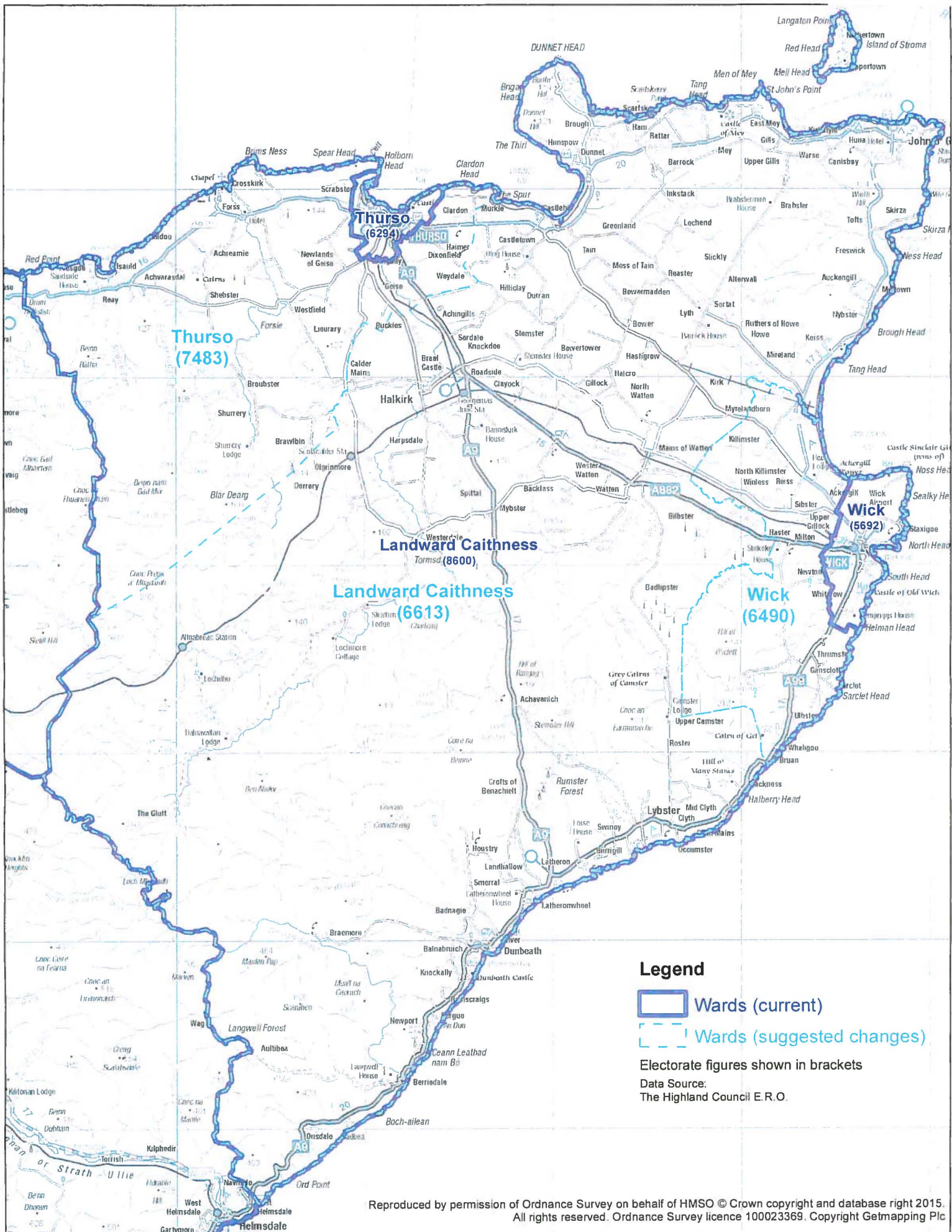
It was therefore agreed that the Council would recommend to the Commission that Inverness Central ward retain four members.

To effect this change the following is proposed using electorate data from 2015:

- Transfer part of Polling District I15D and part I15F which contains that element of the Ballifeary Community Council area which is currently in the Central ward to the Inverness West ward. This would result in an estimated additional 8 electors which would give an estimated electorate of 7,232, 2.1% below parity.
- Inverness Central would become a four member ward which would result in an estimated electorate of 10,328, 4.8% above parity.

This proposal would result in an additional member for Inverness Central and a revised map is attached at appendix 4.

The Highland Council
18 May, 2015



Legend

- Wards (current)
- Wards (suggested changes)

Electorate figures shown in brackets
 Data Source:
 The Highland Council E.R.O.

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO © Crown copyright and database right 2015.
 All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licence 100023369. Copyright Getmapping Plc

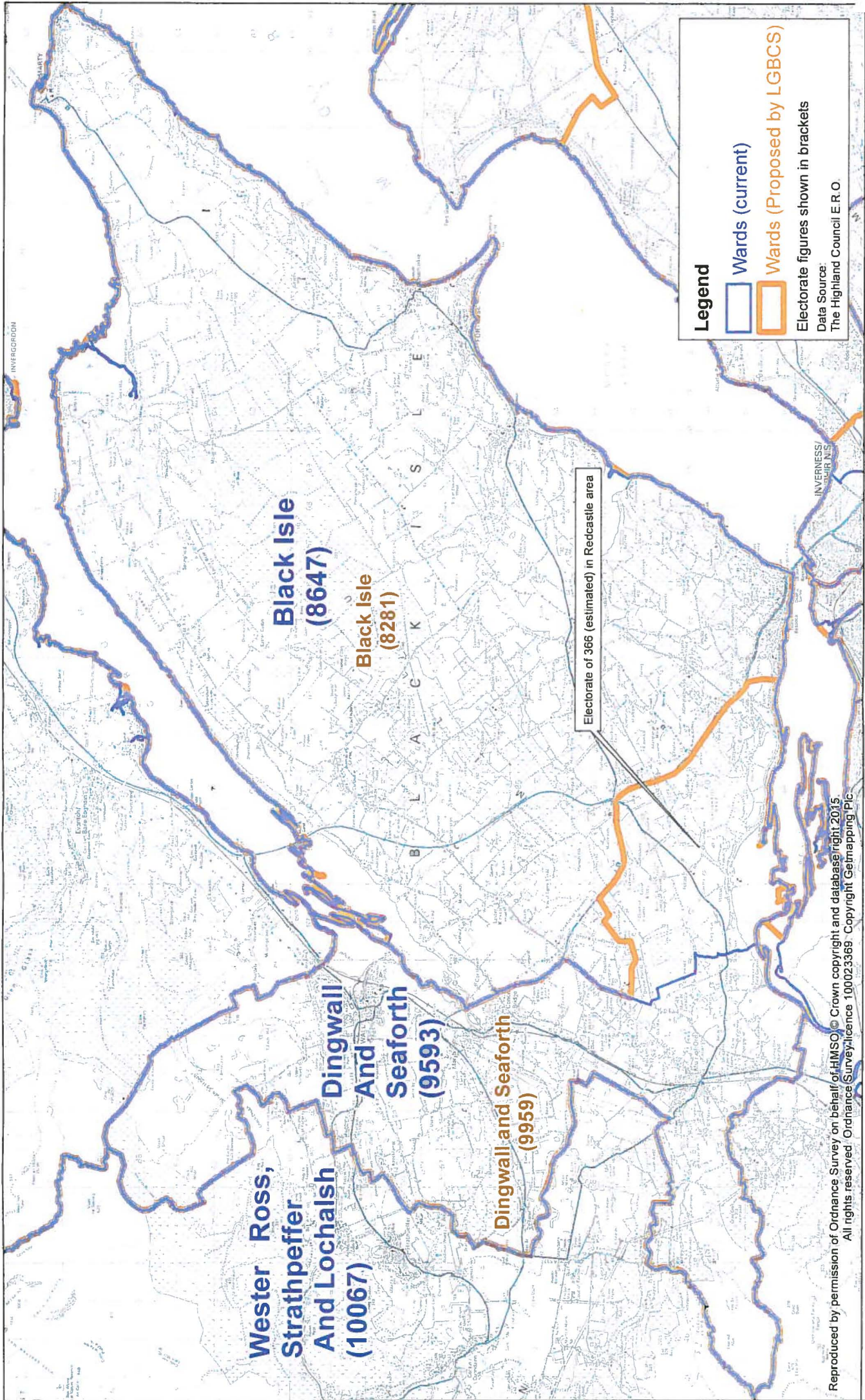
Suggested Boundary Changes

Wards



Ref: gis632
 Date: 21 April 2015





Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO © Crown copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licence 100023369. Copyright Getmapping Plc

Legend

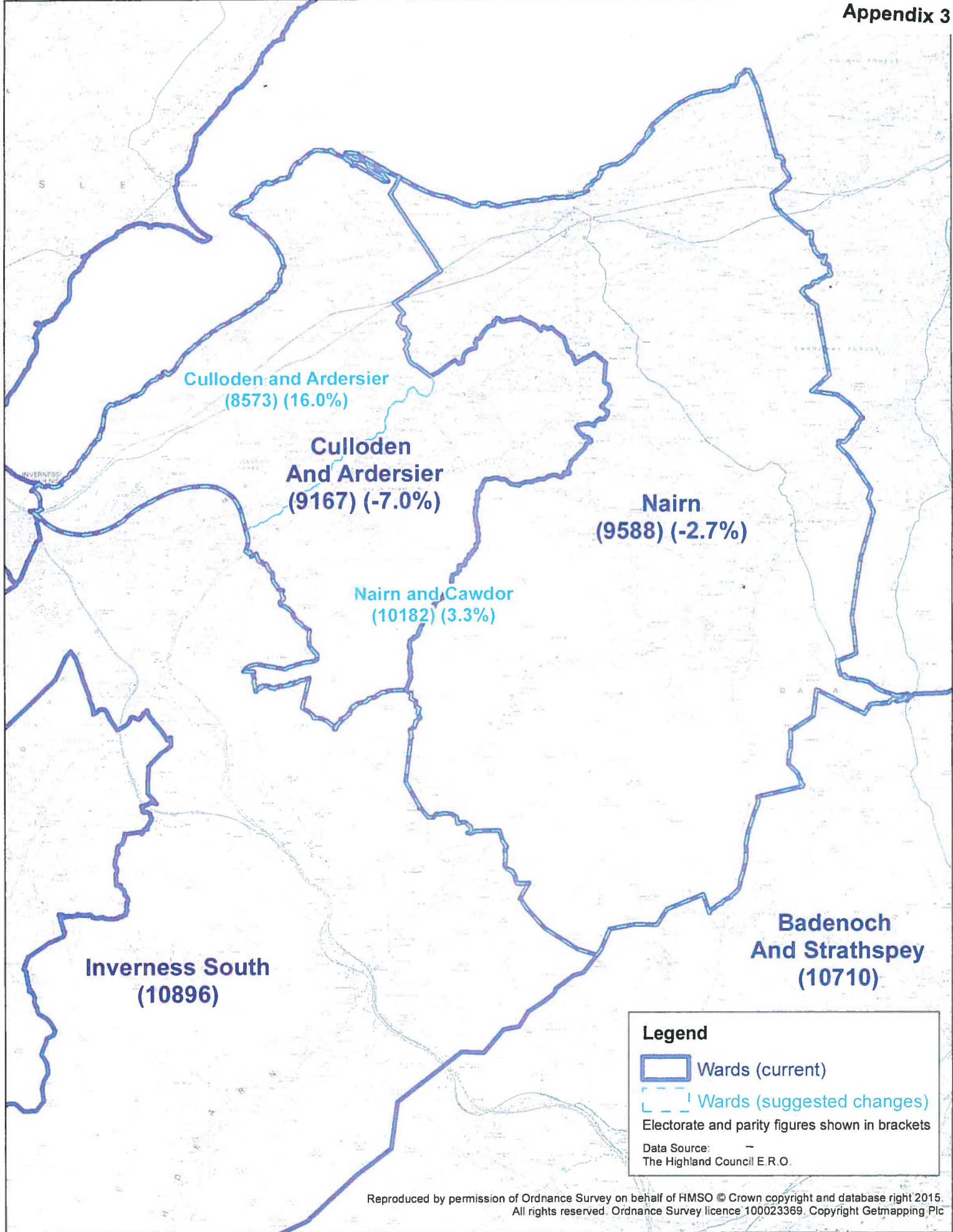
- Wards (current)
- Wards (Proposed by LGBCS)

Electorate figures shown in brackets
 Data Source:
 The Highland Council E.R.O.

Proposed Boundary Changes (Redcastle transfer only)



Wards



Legend

- Wards (current)
- Wards (suggested changes)

Electorate and parity figures shown in brackets

Data Source: The Highland Council E.R.O.

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO © Crown copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licence 100023369. Copyright Getmapping Plc

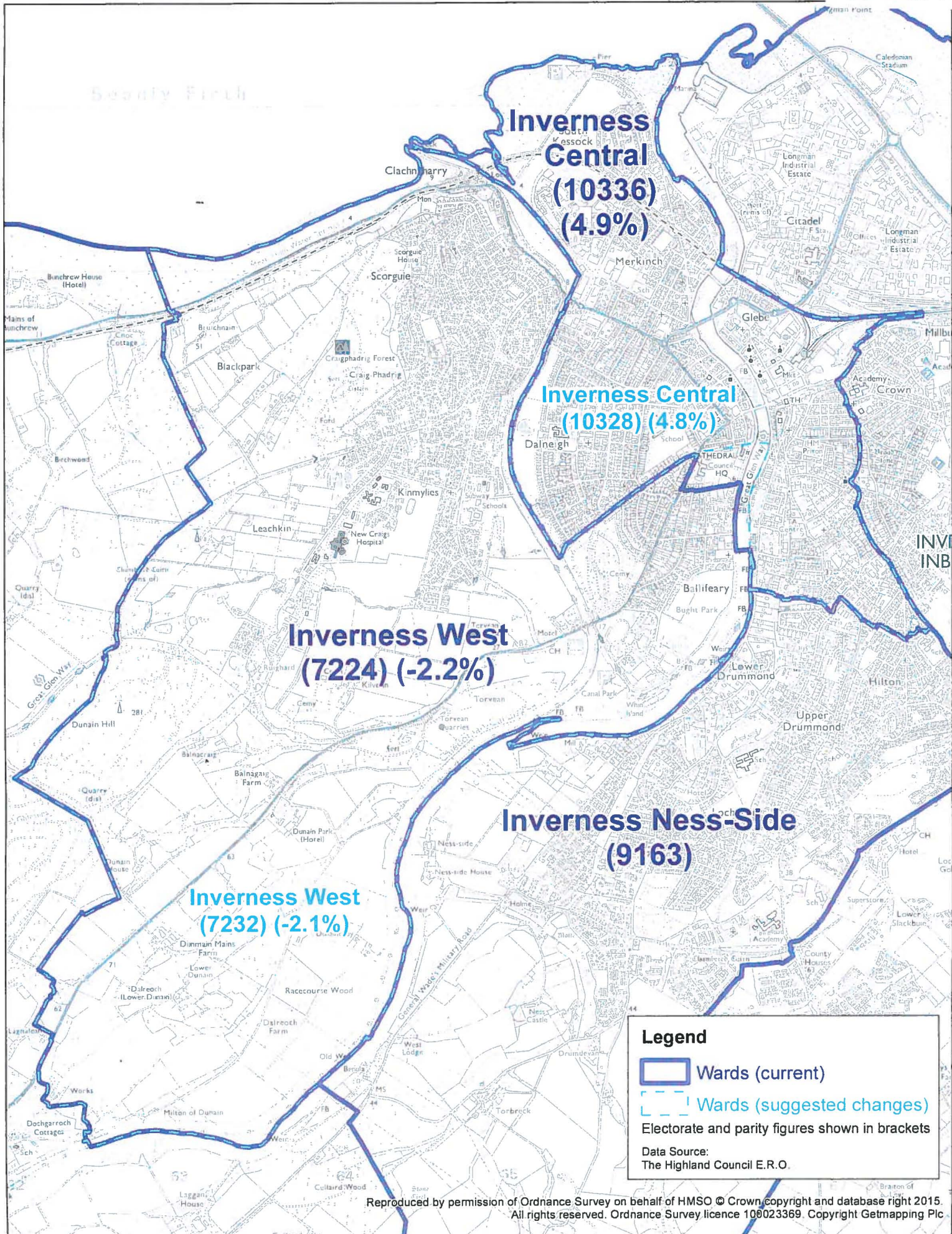


Suggested Boundary Changes

Wards



Ref: gis632
Date: 18 May 2015



Legend

- Wards (current)
- Wards (suggested changes)

Electorate and parity figures shown in brackets

Data Source:
The Highland Council E.R.O.

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO © Crown copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licence 100023369. Copyright Getmapping Plc



Suggested Boundary Changes

Wards