

# Candidates and agents at the constituency election

Scottish Parliament election





## Topics

- Who's who
- election timetable
- qualifications
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- agents
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- polling day
- counting of votes
- candidate spending
- integrity
- contacts



## Who's who

- The **Constituency Returning Officer, Jim Savage**, is responsible for the constituency election and managing polling stations.
- The **Regional Returning Officer, Angela Scott**, is responsible for the regional election and the allocation of regional seats.
- The **Electoral Registration Officer, Mark Adam**, is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists.
- Contact details are provided later.



## Election Timetable

| <b>Event</b>  | <b>Deadline</b>  |
|---|--|
| Publication of Notice of Election   | Monday 16 March  |
| Nominations Commence  | From the day after the publication of Notice of Election |
| Close of nominations and deadline for withdrawals of candidature                              | 4pm – Wednesday 1 April                                  |
| Notification of appointment of election agents  | 4pm – Wednesday 1 April                                  |
| Publication of statement of persons nominated and notice of poll (if no objections)           | 5pm – Wednesday 1 April                                  |
| Publication of statement of persons nominated and notice of poll (if objections are received) | 4pm – Thursday 2 April                                   |
| Deadline for applications to register to vote   | Midnight – 20 April                                      |
| Deadline for new postal votes or to make changes to existing postal or proxy votes            | 5pm – Tuesday 21 April                                   |
| Deadline for cancelling existing postal or proxy votes  | Tuesday 21 April   |



Election  
timetable  
(cont'd)

| Event   | Deadline                       |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Deadline for applications for new proxy votes     | 5pm – Tuesday 28 April         |
| Appointment of counting and polling agents        | Wednesday 29 April             |
| Appointment of sub agents                         | Tuesday 5 May                  |
| Polling day                                       | 7am to 10pm                    |
| Deadline to apply for an emergency proxy          | 5pm – Polling day              |
| Replacement for spoilt postal votes ends          | 5pm – Polling day              |
| Replacement for lost postal votes ends            | 5pm – Polling day              |
| Alterations to register to correct clerical error | 9pm – Polling day              |
| Return of spending returns to the CRO             | + 35 calendar days from result |



## Qualifications

- To qualify as a candidate you must (on the day you are nominated and on polling day):
  - be at least 18 years of age
  - be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a qualifying foreign national



## Disqualifications

- A person cannot be a candidate if, at the time of your nomination or your election:
  - you are a full-time member of the judiciary
  - you are a civil servant
  - you are a member of the armed forces
  - you are a member of the police force
  - you are a member of a legislature of any country or territory outside the Commonwealth (other than the Republic of Ireland)
  - you hold an office that is mentioned in the Scottish Parliament (Disqualifications) Order 2020



## Disqualifications (con't)

- Also, you cannot be a candidate if:
  - your estate has been sequestrated by a court in Scotland and you have not been discharged; or you are currently subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or debt relief restrictions order made by a court in England, Wales or Northern Ireland
  - you are currently serving a prison sentence of more than one year
  - you have been disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which relates to corrupt or illegal practices and offences relating to donations)



- Dual candidacy**
- You can be a candidate for both a constituency and a region, but the constituency must be within the region
  - You must stand for the same party in both contests, or be an independent in both contests
  - You cannot stand in more than one constituency or in more than one region
  - If you are elected at the constituency election, your name will be disregarded at the allocation of regional seats



## Nominations

- Nomination papers must be submitted to the Constituency Returning Officer by **4pm on Wednesday 1 April**
- Nomination papers must be delivered at one of the following addresses, **by prior appointment**, between the hours of 10am and 4pm on any working day:
  - **The Faithlie Centre, 1 Saltoun Square, Fraserburgh**
  - **1 Harlaw Road, Inverurie**
  - **Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen**



## Completing nomination papers

- Take care when completing your nomination papers, as mistakes may invalidate your nomination.
- Complete nomination papers early and arrange for us to provide an informal check.
- Informal checks can be arranged with the Elections Team in advance of submission.



## Nomination form

If you wish to stand as a constituency candidate, your form must contain:

- your **full name**
- your **full home address**
- the name, address and signature of a **witness** to your nomination

You also have an option to include on the form:

- a **registered party name** (if authorised to use one)
- the description 'Independent' (or no description at all)
- any names you commonly use (and which you wish to appear on the ballot paper).



## Submitting nomination papers

- **Anyone** can deliver the nomination papers on behalf of a constituency candidate, but it should be someone you trust.
- The nomination form and the consent to nomination must be submitted by hand.
- Party candidates - the certificate of authorisation and emblem request form may be submitted by post, but may not be submitted by fax, email or other electronic means.



## The deposit

- A candidate must deposit **£500** with the CRO so that their nomination is valid.
- The deposit should be paid by BACS direct to the bank details below, quoting reference 'SPE 2026':

**Aberdeenshire Council General Account**  
**Sort Code 82-60-11**  
**Account 40002003**

- If a candidate obtains more than 5% of the valid votes cast, the deposit will be returned.



## Consent to nomination

- All candidates must consent to their nomination.
- On the consent to nomination form candidates are asked to confirm that they are not disqualified from being a Member of the Scottish Parliament
- The form must also contain:
  - the candidate's name and address
  - the candidate's date of birth
  - the signature of a witness



## Descriptions you can use if you are standing for a political party

- You can use the party's name as registered with the Commission.
  - If authorised, the party name can be preceded by the word 'Scottish' if it is not already part of the name. If the party name begins with 'The', then 'Scottish' would be inserted after that word.
- To use a party's name you must have a **certificate of authorisation** signed by the party's Nominating Officer (or someone authorised to act on their behalf).



## Certificate of authorisation

- Party candidates must have written permission to use the party name/description from the Nominating Officer (or a person authorised to act on their behalf)
- **A certificate of authorisation may:**
  - Allow the use of the party name or a particular description
  - Allow candidate to choose whether to use the party name or any of the descriptions registered with the Electoral Commission
- Must be submitted to the CRO by **4pm on Wednesday 1 April.**



## Joint descriptions

- As a constituency candidate, you can stand for election for more than one party and use a joint description
- You will need a certificate of authorisation from the Nominating Officers for both parties
- You decide the order in which the party names appear



## Emblem requests by party candidates

- If you are standing on behalf of a party, you can also request to have a party emblem appear on the ballot paper.
- The emblem must be registered by the party and published on the Electoral Commission's register of political parties.
- The request must be made in writing and must be received by the close of nominations – a form is included in the nomination pack.



## Election agent

- The election agent is the person responsible for the proper management of the campaign, and particularly its financial management.
- All constituency candidates must have an election agent, but you can act as your own agent if you wish.
- The appointment of the election agent must be declared to the Constituency Returning Officer before **4pm on Wednesday 1 April**.
- You can request that the agent's home address is not published on the Notice of Election Agents and a correspondence address is published instead



## Election agent office

- The election agent must have an office address to which legal notices can be delivered
- The office address must be a physical address – PO boxes cannot be used
- The office address must be declared to the CRO at the same time as the election agent's appointment



## Other Agents

- **Sub-agents**

The election agent may appoint sub-agents to act on their behalf in the constituency, as long as those parts do not overlap. The agent must give written notice to the **CRO by Tuesday 5 May**.

- **Polling and counting agents**

**The CRO** requires notice in writing of any people appointed as polling agents and any persons nominated to attend the counting of the votes **by Wednesday 29 April**.

- **Postal vote agents**

The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session. We will give 48 hours' notice.



## Access to the electoral register / lists of absent voters

- Access by candidates – once you officially become a candidate:
  - Earliest, 27 working days before polling day
  - Once you or others have declared yourself a candidate after this date / date you submit your nominations paper
- Make written request to the ERO – forms are included in your nomination pack.



Access to the  
electoral  
register /  
lists of absent  
voters

- Only use data for permitted purposes!
  - to complete the nomination form
  - to help you campaign
  - to check that donations/loans are permissible



## Registration

- As a candidate you are uniquely placed to encourage people to register to vote.
- You should encourage people to register as soon as possible.
- The deadline for applying for the election is Monday 20 April 2026.
- Individuals can register online at **<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>**. It only takes a few minutes.



## Registration

- When discussing registering to vote with individuals, you will need to make them aware that they will need:
  - their National Insurance number,
  - date of birth and address to register.
- People who do not have or cannot find their National Insurance Number can still register, but they may need to provide further information. If so, they will be contacted by the ERO.



## Absent voting

- When talking to electors about applying for an absent vote, you should make them aware of the relevant deadlines and advise them to apply early
- If you are encouraging people to apply for an absent vote, make sure you explain that they will only qualify for one if they are (or will be) registered in time to vote at the election.



## Campaigning dos and don'ts

- Do use imprints on all your campaign material, including social media.
- Do comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners.
- Do make sure outdoor posters are removed 2 weeks after the election.
- Do not produce material that looks like a poll card.
- Do not pay people to display your adverts (unless they display adverts as part of their normal business).



## Code of conduct for campaigners

- Campaigners are an essential element of a healthy democracy, but their activities should not bring into question the integrity of the electoral process.
- Electoral registration and absent vote applications:
  - Ensure forms fully confirm to the requirements of electoral law
  - Include the EROs address for the return of forms
  - Ensure unaltered applications are sent to ERO within **two working days**.
  - Make sure electors understand implications of applying for an absent vote.
  - Do not encourage postal ballot pack redirection.
  - Do not encourage electors to appoint a campaigner as proxy.



## Code of conduct for campaigners (cont.)

- **Postal ballot packs:**
  - Never touch a postal ballot paper
  - Never observe electors completing their postal vote.
  - Never handle or take any completed ballot paper or postal ballot pack from voters
- **Campaigning outside polling stations:**
  - You are allowed to put your messages to voters on polling day, including public spaces outside polling places
  - Keep access to polling places and the pavements around polling places clear to allow voters to enter.



## Polling day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm
- Office open 9am to 5pm for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
  - contact the Electoral Commission for any queries about a candidate's campaign literature (contact details shown later)
- Voters in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station at 10 pm can apply for a ballot paper
- Postal votes – can be handed into polling stations within voting area or delivered to the elections office until 10pm.
- A person in a queue at a polling station at 10pm waiting to hand in postal vote can do so after 10pm.



## Counting of votes

- The counting of Scottish Parliamentary election votes will take place on Friday 8 May from 9am.
- Count centre will open to candidates, agents and spectators from 8.30am
- The count will be held in:
  - P&J Live (TECA), East Burn Road, Stoneywood, Aberdeen AB21 9FX.
- Make sure appointments for counting agents are submitted to the **CRO by Wednesday 29 April.**

# Spending issues



## Election spending

- The time when spending and donation rules apply is called the 'regulated period'.
- The regulated period for the Scottish Parliament election is divided into two periods: the '**long campaign**' (started 7 January and stops on the day you officially become a candidate) and the '**short campaign**' (begins the day after you officially become a candidate and ends on polling day).

## Election spending

You must keep within the spending limit for each period and keep separate records of spending for each period.

### **Long campaign:**

Burgh constituency = £21,500 + 4.2p per elector

County constituency = £21,500 + 6.3p per elector

### **Short campaign:**

Burgh constituency = £8,700 + 6p per elector

County constituency = £8,700 + 9p per elector

No spending will be reimbursed

Details about the spending limits for candidates can be found in **the Candidate Spending section of the Commission's guidance for candidates and agents**



## Spending returns

- Election agents must deliver a constituency candidate's spending return to the CRO **within 35 calendar days** of the declaration of result of the election
- Election agents and candidates must deliver declarations vouching for the candidate's election spending return to the CRO
- The election agent's declaration must be delivered at the same time as the return. Generally all candidates' declarations must be delivered **within 7 working days** of the election agent submitting the return.



## Security Guidance for Elections & Defending Democracy

- Police Scotland – Candidate Security Pack
  - Police Scotland Online Candidate Security Briefings
- Defending Democracy | National Security Act | NPSA
  - Security Guidance for Election Candidates

## Election Maps

- **Scottish Parliament boundaries** - an interactive map
- Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICE) - **How will seats change at the 2026 Scottish Parliament election?**
- ***Ordnance Survey*** - <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/index.html>.

# Contacts



## Contacts

- Elections office of the CRO –
  - Telephone: 01467 539311
  - Email: [elections@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:elections@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)
- Regional Returning Officer –
  - Telephone: 01224 045450
  - Email: [Elections@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:Elections@aberdeencity.gov.uk)
- Electoral Registration Officer(s) –
  - 01224 068400
  - Go to [www.voteaberdeenshire.org](http://www.voteaberdeenshire.org)
- Electoral Commission contacts
  - [infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk)
  - Tel: 0131 225 0200

# Questions

Thank you