

Candidates and Agents Briefing

UK Parliamentary General Election –
4 July 2024

Introduction

The
Electoral
Commission



Returning Officer



Depute Returning Officers

Topics

This briefing has been updated to cover changes as enacted by the Elections Act. It will outline:

- who's who
- key dates of the election timetable
- agents
- voter ID
- postal votes
- polling day
- counting of votes
- candidate spending
- integrity issues
- contacts

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Who's who

- **The Returning Officer** is responsible for running the election. The Returning Officer is **Mike Newall**
- **The Electoral Registration Officer** is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters lists. The Electoral Registration Officer is **Magnus Voy**
- Contact details are provided later.

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Key dates

Timetable process:	Deadline:
Publication of Notice of Election	Published on 31 May
Close of nominations and notice of appointment of election agents	Closed at 4pm on 7 June
Publication of statement of persons nominated, including notice of poll and situation of polling stations	Published after 5pm on 7 June (as no objections)
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Midnight – 18 June
Deadline for new postal vote applications/ changes to existing postal or proxy vote arrangements	5pm 19 June
Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm 26 June

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Key dates

Deadline for applications for Voter Authority Certificate or Anonymous Elector's Document	5pm 26 June
Deadline for new postal vote applications/ changes to existing postal or proxy vote arrangements	5pm 19 June
Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm 26 June
Appointment of polling and counting agents	27 June
Deadline for notification of appointment of sub agents	2 July
Polling day	4 July 7am to 10pm
Deadline to apply for an emergency proxy	5pm on 4 July
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	5pm on 4 July
Return of election expenses	9 August (if result is declared on 5 July)

Other agents

- Other agents can be appointed to attend postal vote openings, polling stations and the count on your behalf:
 - You must give notice in writing of any people appointed as polling and counting agents by **27 June**. We will provide forms.
 - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of each session.

Free candidate mailing

- All candidates who are validly nominated are entitled to send one election communication, free of charge, to electors across the constituency.
- It must include matters relating to the election only.
- You can choose to send either:
 - one unaddressed election communication of up to 60 grams to every postal address, or
 - one election communication of up to 60 grams addressed to each elector
- contact Royal Mail to make arrangements

Access to electoral register / absent voting lists

- Access by candidates – once you **officially** become a candidate:
 - earliest, on 30 May 2024 if you, or others, have declared yourself a candidate on or before this date
 - After 7 June 2024, once you or others have declared yourself a candidate or you submit your nomination papers, whichever is earliest
- Make **written** request to the ERO – forms are available from the registration office

Access to
electoral
register /
absent voting
lists

- 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 **18 June**.
- Individuals can apply to 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 / cannot retrieve 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

- Highlight that electors can now apply online at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote or www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote
- When talking to electors about applying to vote by post or proxy, you should make them aware of the relevant deadlines and advise them to apply early
- You will need to make them aware that they will need to provide their National Insurance number, date of birth, signature and address to register.
- People who do not have / cannot retrieve their National Insurance Number or cannot provide a signature can still apply, but they may need to provide further information. If so, they will be contacted by the ERO.
- If you are encouraging people to apply for a postal (or proxy) 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 elections.

Absent voting - campaigners

- Campaigners cannot handle postal votes for other electors who are not close relatives or someone for whom they provide regular care
- Campaigners may handle postal voting documents if that's a feature of a job they hold (for example, a postal worker)
- New limits on the number of postal votes that can be handed in – a maximum of five plus their own for each poll

Absent voting – A campaigner is:

Who is a
campaigner?

- a candidate at the election(s)
- an election agent (or sub-agent)
- employed by the candidate (for the purposes of the candidate's activities at the election)
- a member of a registered political party who is carrying out activity to promote a particular outcome at an election
- someone employed by a registered political party in connection with that party's political activities

Voter Identification

- Voters in this election will need to provide a form of accepted photographic ID if they wish to vote in person at a polling station.
- Voters will be able to present out of date photographic ID so long as the photograph is still a good likeness.
- If a voter fails to present a form of accepted photographic ID they will not be issued with a ballot paper.
- This includes those who act as a proxy for another person.

Accepted forms of Voter ID

- Voters should be encouraged to check whether they have one of the forms of accepted photographic ID well in advance of the election
- If a voter does not have an accepted form of photographic ID, they can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate either online <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate> or using a paper application form.
- Electors who are registered anonymously must have an Elector's Document to vote in person
- Any applications must be received by the ERO by 5pm on the 6th working day before poll.

Accepted forms
of Voter ID (1)

International travel

Passport (issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a Commonwealth country)
Irish Passport Card

Driving and Parking

Driving licence (issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state)

A Blue Badge

Accepted forms of Voter ID (2)

Local travel

Older Person's bus pass funded by the UK government

Disabled Person's bus pass funded by the UK government

Oyster 60+ Card funded by the UK government

Freedom pass

Scottish National Entitlement card for the purpose of concessionary travel

60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card

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Disabled person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card

Senior SmartPass issued in NI

Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in NI

War Disablement SmartPass issued in NI

60+ SmartPass issued in NI

Half Fare SmartPass issued in NI

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Accepted forms of Voter ID (3)

Proof of age

Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)

Other Government issued documents

Biometric immigration document

Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identify Card)

Nationality identity card issued by an EEA state

Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland

Voter Authority Certificate
Anonymous Elector's Document

Campaigning dos and don'ts

- Do use imprints on all your campaign material
- 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)
- Do not handle any postal voting documents you are not entitled to

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
 - Ensure electors are aware they can apply to register or for an absent vote online
 - Include the EROs address for the return of any paper 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
- **Voter Authority Certificate applications:**
 - Should not handle paper based Voter Authority Certificate applications and should encourage electors to send them directly to the ERO

Code of conduct for campaigners

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

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Polling day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm.
- Office open 6.45am to 10pm for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
 - for queries relating to election finance issues, contact the Electoral Commission (*contact details shown later*)
- Voters in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station at 10pm can apply for a ballot paper
- Voters in this election will need to present photographic ID in the polling station
- Voters can request to have their ID checked in private

Completed postal votes handed in to polling stations

- Postal votes can be handed into polling stations within the voting area
- Anyone returning postal votes by hand must complete a Postal Vote Return Form, otherwise the postal votes will be rejected
- Polling station staff may assist anyone wishing to hand in postal votes to complete the relevant form
- An individual may hand in a maximum of 6 electors' postal votes (their own and five others) per poll
- If the individual is a campaigner they may only handle their own postal vote and those that belong to close family members or people for whom they provide care
- Polling station staff will not be able to provide advice about whether someone is a campaigner, but they may reject postal votes if they have reasonable cause to believe an individual is a campaigner
- If postal votes are handed in not in accordance with the rules, then they will be rejected

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Completed postal votes handed in to council buildings

- Restrictions on the numbers of returned postal votes and who may hand in postal votes are the same as for polling stations
- An individual may hand in a maximum of 6 electors' postal votes (their own and five others) per poll
- Postal votes for all contested electoral areas may be returned by hand to South Ayrshire Council Headquarters, County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr, KA7 1DR, or to an elector's polling place on 4 July.
Anyone who hands in a postal vote **MUST complete a Postal Vote Return Form, otherwise the postal vote will be rejected. Where possible, postal votes should be returned using the Royal Mail service**

Completed
postal votes
handed in to
council
buildings

- Staff authorised by the Returning Officer may assist anyone wishing to hand in postal votes to complete the relevant form
- Postal votes dropped off to reception or other council office desks or locations or any posted into council letter boxes without completing the Postal Vote Return Form will be rejected and will not be counted

Counting of votes

- The count will be held in:
 - Citadel Leisure Centre, South Harbour Street, Ayr, KA7 1JB
- Count centre will open to candidates and agents from 10pm
- Candidates, election agents, counting agents and one other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend
 - limits to counting agents: 8

Spending issues

Candidate spending

- Defined as certain expenses 'used for the purposes of the candidate's election' during the regulated period
- Responsibility of **election agent**
- Limit on expenses: See next slide
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20)

The spending limit



Regulated period	Fixed amount	Constituency type	Variable amounts (per registered parliamentary elector)
Short campaign	£11,390	County	12p per registered parliamentary elector

Candidates' spending returns

- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election
- Returns made public by **Returning Officer**
- Sample of returns may be reviewed by the **Electoral Commission**
- Failure to submit an expenses return is a criminal offence enforceable by the police
- No spending will be reimbursed.

Contacts

Contacts

The Electoral Commission

- Elections Office –
01292 612300/ elections@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
- Electoral Registration Office
01292 612221/ ero@ayrshire-vjb.gov.uk
- Building Faults
07971 120371
- Electoral Commission contacts
www.electoralcommission.org.uk/contact-us/our-offices
For questions on election spending, contact 020 7271 0616

Questions

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Thank you