

# UK PARLIAMENTARY GENERAL ELECTION 2024

## Briefing for Candidates and Agents

Bathgate & Linlithgow  
Livingston

31 May 2024

### Welcome and who's who

- **Returning Officer (RO)** - runs the election for both constituencies (Graham Hope)
- **Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)** - maintains the register of electors and absent voters' lists (two, due to cross-over)
- **Election Team (DROs)**– supports the RO
- **Electoral Commission** - issues guidance to candidates and agents, and ROs and EROs; RO performance management
- **Electoral Management Board** and its **Convener** – recommendations only for this contest, not directions

## Covering

- What's changed
- Timetable
- Standing
- Nominations
- Agents
- Voter ID
- Count
- Spending
- Absent votes
- Registers
- Campaigning
- Security and Integrity

## What's changed since 2019

- Parliamentary constituency boundaries
- Poll card design
- Introduction of Voter ID
- Voter Authority Certificates
- Online Postal Vote Applications and identity checks included in process
- Postal vote Handling Rules
- New arrangements for handing in postal votes
- Changes to proxy arrangements

## Timetable

Event	Deadline/Time
Publication of Notice of Election	31 May
Nomination period (including appointing election agent)	3 June to 7 June (10 till 4)
Statement of persons standing nominated/notice of poll	7 June (late afternoon)
Dispatch of poll cards to Royal Mail (indicative)	10 June or 11 June
First issue of postal votes (indicative)	19 June
Deadline for applications to register to vote	18 June (midnight)
Deadline for applications for new postal/proxy postal	19 June (5 pm)
First opening of postal votes (and week days thereafter) (indicative)	24 June
Final issue of postal votes (indicative)	25 June
Deadline for new proxy and voter authority certificate applications	26 June (5 pm)
Deadline for notification of polling and counting agents	27 June (midnight)
Deadline for appointing sub-agents	2 July (midnight)
Polling day	4 July (7 am to 10 pm)
The count	4 July (after 10 pm)

## Can you stand?

- On the day of nomination and polling day
- Must be/have - aged 18; nationality/citizenship
- Must **not** be/have - designated political/public office, bankrupt, conviction of serious criminal or electoral offences
- Can only stand in one constituency
- RO will not investigate or advise – personal responsibility, declarations as to accuracy, criminal and electoral offence to get it wrong

## Nominations - general

- Monday 3 June to Friday 7 June, inc., 10 till 4
- Read the EC guidance
- Use Returning Officer's crib sheets (in Pack No.1)
- Start preparing early – 10 signatures to be found
- Assemble all the forms and bring them all at once
- Send in advance by email for informal check, confirmation of register numbers, and general advice
- Appointment please – avoids congestion and delay for all
- Don't leave it to the last minute!

## Nomination paper

- Hand delivered to Election Office by candidate, agent, proposer or seconder
- Full names and/or commonly-used name(s) – almost anything goes for commonly-used names
- Description – Independent, blank or registered party name, party description (must match party certificate)
- Signatures of qualified proposer, seconder, 8 assenters
- Subscribers cannot sign more than one nomination paper

## Home address form

- Hand delivered to Election Office by candidate, agent, proposer or seconder
- Home address goes on Notice and ballot paper – must make a positive choice to withhold
- If not, ballot paper shows constituency or local government area where home address is located (or country for overseas voters)
- Home address – as a matter of fact, where do you stay? No business addresses
- Signed only if address to be withheld

## Form of consent and deposit

- Signifies agreement to stand as candidate as nominated
- Signed and witnessed, not more than a month before close of nominations
- Declarations as to accuracy of information and entitlement to stand
- Can only stand on one constituency
- £500 – cash, UK banker's draft, BACS transfer (no card payments accepted)

## Certificate and emblem – party candidates

- Can come separately by post, but signed, not by email
- By party registered to operate in Scotland – use of registered party name or a registered description
- By or on behalf of Nominating Officer – last element in chain of authority to be signed, others less formal
- Must match description on nomination paper
- Party authorises use of name/description, then candidate chooses to use a registered emblem

## Election agents

- Notification of appointment must reach the Returning Officer by 4 pm on Friday 7 June
- Agent must sign to show acceptance of responsibility
- Office of election agent must be in the constituency or an adjoining constituency
- You will become your own agent by default if none is appointed
- RO must publish the names and addresses of election agents

## Other agents - optional

- Notice in writing (email) of polling and counting agents by midnight on 27 June – can be replaced later
- Postal voting agents notified in writing (email) before the start of the opening session being attended
- Sub-agent to help in a designated geographical area (one per area) by midnight on 2 July
- Sub-agent appointed by election agent, signed form and acceptance needed, office in designated area

## Electoral register & AV list

- Access by candidates – once you **officially** become a candidate
- Earliest, on date of dissolution of Parliament (30 May) if you, or others declared yourself a candidate
- Or, once you or others have declared yourself a candidate after this date or the date you submit your nomination papers
- Make written request to the ERO, via Returning Officer is desired
- Only use data for electoral purposes including to help you campaign

## Candidate spending

- Responsibility of election agent
- Electoral Commission guidance – EC function, not RO
- Defined as certain expenditure used in the regulated period for the purposes of the candidate's election after the date they officially become a candidate
- Spending limits increased - £11,390 plus 12 pence per elector on register in force on last day for publication of notice of election
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20)
- Returns due 35 days after result of election

## Polling places

- Bathgate & Linlithgow:
  - 40 polling places, 78 polling stations, 78 ballot boxes
- Livingston:
  - 45 polling places, 81 polling station, 81 ballot boxes
- Polbeth Village Hall crossover
- Some changes to past polling places
- Poll cards will include information on polling places
- Signage at “old” polling places to redirect voters



## Voting in person

- First past the post – one cross in one box message
- Acceptable prescribed form of photographic ID to vote in person - voter authority certificate available via ERO if required
- Must present ID to polling station staff, for them to determine if accepted, can consider other documentation to clarify doubts
- Can return later with alternative form
- “Family voting” – offence to influence voting at or near a polling booth
- Will slow the voting process down, impact on start of count due to additional record-keeping

## Campaigning

- Be familiar with Electoral Commission’s Code of Conduct
- Use imprints on all your campaign material, including digital media and websites
- Comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners
- Comply with each council’s policy and RO guidance on campaigning, tellers and rosettes & badges
- 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)

## Postal voting

- Election is during a popular holiday period
- Deadline for applications is 5pm on 19 June
- Identify checks may delay progress of applications
- Online postal vote applications for UKPE ONLY
- First date a replacement can be issued is 28 June –  
Appointing a proxy is an alternative
- At least two issues of postal votes
- Openings start on 24 June (tbc) and then daily, including  
polling day
- Appointment of postal vote agents – before session being  
attended

## Postal vote handling and return

- Familiarise yourself with the Electoral Commission's Code  
of Conduct for Campaigners
- New rules about campaigners handling postal vote papers
- Can only be returned via Royal Mail or handed in to polling  
station in the constituency or to RO's authorised officer
- When returned by hand, MUST come with a completed  
form which must be checked by authorised person and  
retained
- Can only hand in own postal vote plus 5 others

## Proxy voting

- Deadline for new proxy vote applications is 5 pm on 26 June
- After that, emergency applications possible until 5 pm on polling day
- Grounds are medical emergency, work reasons, loss of voter ID, voter authority certificate not materialising
- Grounds must have arisen after 5 pm on 26 June
- Cannot vote as proxy for more than four electors, and no more than two electors can be domestic (non-overseas)

## Count

- Start as soon after close of poll as possible
- Count duration could be longer due to additional paperwork at polling stations and postal vote opening
- Venue will be West Lothian College, refreshments available
- Constituencies counted in same hall at different tables
- Further information available later (e.g. count process, access arrangements, box allocation)
- Number of counting agents notified asap after nominations

## Security and integrity

- Seriousness of electoral offences - integrity is fundamental
- Electoral Commission Guidance on electoral malpractice
- Guidance from other national agencies – e.g. counter terrorism and cyber security
- Critical role for Candidates, Agents and campaigners to ensure integrity and confidence in the electoral process
- All allegations of electoral fraud will be investigated robustly by Police Scotland in consultation with the RO
- New offences
- Home Office private security offer for candidates

## Security and integrity plan

- Plan prepared in partnership with Police Scotland
- Risk of electoral malpractice assessed as low
- Arrangements for storage and handling of ballot papers, election documentation and ballot boxes
- Measures to control access to polling places and the count centre
- Details of security and integrity training for staff
- Consideration policing levels for the poll and count
- Communication protocols between the RO and Police Scotland and appropriate points of contact

Any Questions

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