

Scottish Parliament Elections

7 May 2026

Briefing of Candidates and Agents

12 March 2026

Almond Valley & Bathgate Constituencies

Welcome and Introduction

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Purpose of Briefing

- **Nominations process**
- **Briefly explain key election processes and stages**
- **Answer candidates' and agents' questions**
- **Identify further information sources**

Who's Who

- **Constituency Returning Officer (CRO)**
- **Regional Returning Officer (RRO)**
- **Electoral Registration Officers (ERO)**
- **Electoral Commission (EC)**
- **Electoral Management Board (Elections Scotland)**

Key Dates

Event	Deadline/Time
Publication of Notice of Election	16 March
Dispatch of Poll Cards to Royal Mail	17/18 March
Nomination Period	17 March to 4pm on 1 April
Deadline for appointing an election agent	4pm on 1 April
Statement of persons standing nominated/notice of poll	1 April
First Issue of Postal Votes	Around 16 April
Applications for registration to vote	20 April
Application for new postal/postal proxy	5pm on 21 April
Opening of Postal Votes	Around 24 April (TBC)
Deadline for new proxy applications (except emergency proxies)	5pm on 28 April
Deadline for notification of polling and counting agents	29 April
Polling Day (emergency proxies before 5 pm)	7am to 10pm on 7 May
The Count	8 May

Nominations – where, when and how

- **Weekdays, 10 am till 4 pm, 17 March to 1 April, inc.**
- **To CRO at Elections Office (not posted)**
- **Anyone can do it – but prefer candidate or agent**
- **Essentials – nomination paper, consent form, deposit**
- **Party candidates – certificate of authorisation and emblem request**
- **Use EC guidance and RO's hints (in Pack 1)**

Nominations - Qualifications

- **On the day you are nominated and on polling day - aged at least 18 years old**
- **On the day you are nominated and on polling day – either a British citizen, an Irish citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, or qualifying foreign national**
- **No requirement to live in Scotland**
- **No requirement to be registered as an elector in Scotland**

Nominations - Disqualifications e.g.

- Holders of specified public offices or posts
- Sequestration/bankruptcy - if undischarged, etc.
- Imprisonment for more than a year, in prison, unlawfully at large
- Guilty of corrupt/illegal electoral practice or offence relating to donations (time-limited)
- You are subject to any relevant notification requirements or a relevant sexual harm or risk order
- You are subject to a Scottish disqualification order under section 8 of the Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Act 2025
- You have been convicted of an intimidatory criminal offence motivated by hostility towards a candidate, future candidate or campaigner or holder of a relevant elective office.
- Standing in more than one constituency or in more than one region – but can you can be a candidate for both a constituency and a region, so long as the constituency is within the region.

Nomination Paper

- **Constituency – Almond Valley or Bathgate**
- **Full name – nothing added or missed out**
- **Commonly-used name(s) – optional, as well as or instead of or a combination**
- **Description for non-party candidate – blank, or Independent**
- **Description for party candidate - registered party name NOT description, can add “Scottish”**
- **Signed and witnessed, addresses for candidate and witness – no home address form**

Consent to Nomination

- **Full names and address – must match other forms**
- **Office address in case candidate becomes own agent**
- **Signed by candidate – not before *1 March 2026***
- **Declaration of qualification and not disqualified**
- **Date of birth**
- **Witnessed, with their details given**

Authorisation of Party Name and Emblem

- **Can come separately by post, but signed, not by email**
- **By registered party – use of registered name**
- **By or on behalf of Nominating Officer – at least the last link in chain of authority to be signed**
- **Must match nomination paper, so better to have all to hand and delivered at once**
- **Party authorises use of name, candidate chooses to use a registered emblem**

Deposit

- **£500 per constituency candidate**
- **Guidance in your nomination pack**
- **Deposit forfeited if not poll more than 5% of all good votes cast for all candidates (excludes rejected votes)**
- **Need to tell us how it is to be returned when you submit your nomination paper.**

Inspection, objection, withdrawal

- Attendees can be person delivering, candidate, agent, party's authorising officer
- Inspection and objection rights come with that
- Objections on last nomination day (5pm latest)
- Withdrawal by delivery of signed form to CRO by 4 pm on 1 April
- Deemed to stand nominated and then confirmed after objections are dealt with (if any)

Agents

- **Election agent – written notice to CRO by 4pm on 1 April**
- **No geographical constraint on where election office can be**
- **Sub-agent – written notice to CRO by 5 May**
- **Postal voting agents – notice to CRO before opening of postal voters' ballot boxes**
- **Polling agents – written notice to CRO by 29 April**
- **Counting agents – written notice to CRO by 29 April**

Candidates Spending

- **Long Campaign and Short Campaign**
- **Electoral Commission Guidance**
- **Must keep within the spending limit for each period and keep records for each period**
- **Long campaign - £21,500 + 6.3p per elector**
- **Short campaign - £8,700 +9p per elector**
- **Candidates Spending Returns must be submitted within 35 days of the declaration of result**

Registration

- **Access to Electoral Register and AV Lists**
- **Registering to Vote – deadline midnight on 20 April 2026**
- **Can register online**
- **All Registration Queries to the ERO**

Absent Voting

- **EC Code of Conduct**
- **Deadlines**
- **CANNOT apply online for this election**
- **Three issues - 16, 18, 27 April**
- **Openings - timings TBC**
- **Replacements – latest time to get a replacement has moved to 5pm on polling day**
- **Emergency Proxies**

Polling Day

- **Polling Scheme**
- **Voting Processes**
- **Accessibility Supports & Assistance**
- **Polling Agents**
- **A-Boards / Campaign Materials**
- **Campaigning**
- **Close of Poll**

Security and Integrity

- **Seriousness of Electoral Offences - Integrity is fundamental**
- **Guidance from Electoral Commission on preventing and detecting electoral malpractice**
- **Strong partnership between Local Police SPOC and CRO**
- **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 CRO**

Voter Awareness & Encouraging Participation

- **Statutory duty on RROs, CROs and EROs**
- **National campaign by Electoral Commission**
- **Local Voters Awareness Promotional Plan**
 - **Integrated Impact Assessment**
 - **Local awareness raising activities**
 - **Highlight awareness of boundary changes, no need for voter ID, two ballot papers, voting with a cross 'X', postal vote deadlines, accessibility and eligibility**

Count

- **Count venue**
- **Timing of the count**
- **Layout**
- **Constituency and Region**
- **Who can attend**
- **Detailed procedures – separate briefing note to follow**

Further Information available from

- **RRO**
- **EMB**
- **Electoral Commission's guidance to candidates and agents available on web site**
- **ERO**
- **Contact details for Election Team – in nomination pack**
- **Feedback form – please complete and return**

Questions

■ **Any Questions?**