

Preparing for a UK Parliamentary general election and beyond

A joint Electoral Management Board for Scotland /
Electoral Commission conference for Scotland's
Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers

Friday 6 October 2023

10.00am – 3.30pm

Purpose of the event

Preparing for and delivering the next UK Parliamentary general election will see significant changes and challenges for Returning Officers (ROs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs). Preparedness and planning are key to successful delivery against a backdrop of the Election Act 2022 changes implementing voter identification, online absent voting applications, postal vote handling changes, increased accessibility provisions, funding and capacity/resilience issues alongside constituency boundary changes.

We will be administering multiple strands of change throughout the electoral process. The need for effective engagement and communication with our stakeholders has never been more critical.

The Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB) and the Electoral Commission are jointly hosting this event for Scotland's ROs and EROs; setting the scene, stimulating discussion and collaboration, informing your plans and actions and providing resources to effectively navigate the changes and successfully prepare for, and deliver this poll.

What can I expect?

The broad theme of the conference is 'what is to come and what have we learnt so far'. You will have opportunity to learn from administrators who observed or implemented Voter ID in their authority and taken a renewed approach to accessibility measures and those that have experience of cross constituency working.

You will also hear from the EMB on the sub-group work being undertaken on accessibility in Scotland. The Commission will update on guidance and resources to assist you in delivering the polls.

Sessions will involve input from key stakeholders including EMB, the Commission, Police Scotland, DHLUC and the Scottish Government. The conference will allow for discussions and question sessions about many of the issues you face and potential solutions.

Key outcomes

In attending, you will:

- review your roles and responsibilities as RO / ERO
- examine challenges surrounding capacity and resilience issues
- be informed about changes to, and timing of, the legislation for this poll
- learn from the collective and individual experience of other administrators arising from Voter ID the May 2022 elections and cross constituency working
- become familiar with the sources of support and guidance available to you published as a result of the Elections Act 2022 changes
- develop further understanding of accessibility issues and consider the new measures to be implemented.

As a community there is much to be considered, planned and prepare for before this widely anticipated poll. This conference will assist in focussing on the tasks and challenges ahead and equipping you with the insight and resources to inform that process.

We look forward to seeing you at the event.

Malcolm Burr

Convener,
Electoral Management Board for Scotland

Andy O'Neill

Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland

Programme

10:00am Registration and Coffee

10:30am Welcome and introductory remarks

Malcolm Burr - Convener, EMB & Dame Sue Bruce, Electoral Commissioner, Scotland will open the event and give an overview of the day

10:40am The roles & responsibilities of the RO & ERO

Introduction to new ROs and EROs to the Scottish electoral community. This session will highlight and review the personal importance, insight, involvement, and direction required of your team to meet your responsibilities and collaborative working to deliver multiple strands of change.

Chair: Dame Sue Bruce, Electoral Commissioner, Scotland

Speakers:

- Malcolm Burr - Convener, EMB
 - Pete Wildman – ERO, Central Scotland VJB
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11:10am Preparing Scotland for the next UKPGE and implementation of the Elections Act 2022

An outline of what the Elections Act 2022 will bring to Scotland for both voters and administrators. We will examine the timing of the implementation of both tranches of the Act, convey experiences, lessons learnt and feedback from May 2023 in England and Welsh local elections and the recent recall petition in Scotland. The session will highlight considerations and resources to support planning and the consultation and engagement to successfully deliver at this poll.

Chair: Malcolm Burr - Convener, EMB

Speakers:

- Alison Davidson - Senior Officer, Electoral Practice and Performance, Electoral Commission
 - Tracey Hurst - Electoral & Business Services Manager / Deputy Returning Officer, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
 - Mairi Copeland - Elections Co-ordinator, Dumfries & Galloway Council
 - Sarah Mackie - Office Manager (Scotland), Electoral Commission
 - Chris Highcock – Secretary, EMB
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12:10pm **Constituency Boundary changes & implications**

New UK parliamentary constituency boundaries will add a further dimension to your delivery plans. We will examine the resources and issues in reviewing polling places and districts in light of the Election Act 2022 and consider administration of constituencies crossing local authority/VJB boundaries.

Chairs: Kenneth Lawrie - Returning Officer / Chief Executive, Falkirk Council & Robert Nicol - Electoral Registration Officer, Renfrewshire VJB

Speakers:

- Dale Robb - Business and Members' Services Manager, Falkirk Council
 - Caroline Burton - Elections Officer, West Lothian Council
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12:30pm **Fees, charges and funding**

An update on DHLUC's plans for fees, charges and cost recovery for UKPGE/Elections Act 2022 implementation and the digital provision for accounts submission.

Chair: Malcolm Burr - Convener, EMB

Speaker: Chris Highcock - Secretary, EMB

12:35pm **Preparing for a UKPGE – Electoral fraud and integrity**

A refocus on security at the election and continuing the theme of electoral integrity, we hear from Police Scotland on the support they provide. We will look at evolving security issues such as staff confrontation over Voter ID and cyber security threats to integrity.

Chair: Andy O'Neill - Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland

Speaker: Chief Inspector Jamie Allan - Police Scotland

12:50pm **Lunch**

Opportunity to view a showcase of accessibility aids

1:30pm **Capacity building & resilience***

This facilitated workshop session will examine and set out questions relating to issues affecting capacity and resilience in the delivery of the electoral process. We will lead discussions and ideas on developing mitigations specific your local needs, in four regional groups.

2:15pm **Accessibility**

The Elections Act 2022 sets out additional responsibilities for accessibility and we will provide an overview of the enhanced responsibilities for polling places but factoring in the end-to-end voter journey. Speakers will provide experience of their approach during the May 2023 and update on the work of the EMB sub-group on accessibility.

Chair – Monica Patterson, Returning Officer / Chief Executive, East Lothian Council

Speakers:

- Chris Highcock - Secretary, EMB
 - Sarah Mackie - Office Manager (Scotland), Electoral Commission
 - Tracey Hurst - Electoral & Business Services Manager / Deputy Returning Officer, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
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3:05pm **And beyond the UKPGE**

Update on Scottish electoral reform plans from the Scottish Government and eCounting for Council elections in 2027

Chair: Malcolm Burr - Convener, EMB

Speakers:

- Maria McCann - Head of Elections Team, Scottish Government
 - Chris Highcock - Secretary, EMB
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3:20pm **Closing remarks**

We will sum up the key learning points that ROs and EROs should take away from the seminar and highlight the suggested next steps.

Chairs: Malcolm Burr - Convener, EMB & Dame Sue Bruce, Electoral Commissioner, Scotland

*Pre-event material will be circulated before the event for your consideration in advance of attending.

All times are approximate.

Slides and links to resources will be distributed after the event.