eCounting 2022

2022

eCounting 2022 – Q&As

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CONTENTS   PAGE

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COUNTDOWN TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION ON 5 MAY 2022

153 days

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Project Status Update: Summary

PROJECT GOVERNANCE

- The Project is proceeding well and everything that should be in place at this point is already delivered or on track.

- Bulletins which are sent to the Council User Group are available on the EMB website at eCounting Bulletins 2022

- The EMB met on Thursday 28 October 2021 and a subsequent email was sent to Councils on Thursday 4 November 2021 attaching a letter from the Convener of the EMB, Directions and the Print timetable available at link. As required by legislation the Directions have been the subject of formal consultation with the EMB, which includes both ROs and EROs, and with the Electoral Commission. The final Directions reflect comments from those consultations.

- Briefing Event - A Joint Seminar with the Electoral Commission for ROs and EROs will be held on Thursday 27 January 2022 which will address a range of issues related to planning and delivery of the elections next year.

Project Status Update: Upcoming Dates - 1

Print Timetable

Live Election available on EasyPrint   Monday 15 November 2021

Project Status Update: Upcoming Dates - 2

eCount Face to Face Training

P&J Live, Aberdeen   Monday 14 February – Friday 18 February 2022
Silvan House, Edinburgh   Monday 21 February – Friday 25 March 2022
Lagoon Leisure Centre, Paisley   Monday 28 February – Friday 11 March 2022

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

eCount - Questions and Answers

EasyPrint

Q.   What do I use EasyPrint for?

A.   EasyPrint is an online portal which allows users to order and proof all election materials. Some Councils will already be Idox customers and be familiar with EasyPrint and others will not. EasyPrint training is available from your Idox Print Manager to ensure your Council details, data uploads, proofing of print materials all runs smoothly.

Printing for the Election

Q.   What's the timetable for the various print items?

A.   The timetable was circulated to the User Group on 9 November 2021 and a copy of the Print Timetable is available on the EMB website.

Q.   What are the arrangements for print materials for those who are not currently Idox customers?

A.   The Idox team are currently working with contractors and customers to ensure appropriate arrangement are in place. More information on this will follow shortly.

Q.   What are the arrangements for print inspection?

A.   The print inspection process will be advised shortly.

eCount Team

Q.   What are the roles for eCounting?

A.   **Registration/Verification Operator** – To register each tray and then verify the number of ballot papers scanned matches the number of ballot papers registered.
Scanning Operator – Scan ballot papers for processing by the eCounting system
Marshall – moves ballot paper trays from awaiting scanning racking to Scanning Operators and then to scanning complete racking.
Scanning Supervisor - Will solve any issues at a scanning station and will be required to use their credentials in order for scanning to continue when the issue has been resolved.
1st Level Adjudicator – To adjudicate on ballot papers which cannot be processed by the system. Acceptance only or defer to RO adjudication.
RO Adjudicator – Adjudicate on ballot papers which cannot be processed by the system and 1st level adjudicators.
RO/DRO/Count Centre Manager – responsible for overseeing the Count, final decision on doubtful ballot papers, escalation management and direct interface with the RO/DRO, ensures the Count is administered in accordance with the roles, declares the results.

Q.   How many operators should there be at each Workstation?

A.   This varies from Council to Council, however, the following is recommended as a minimum:
- Registration/Verification - 2 per workstation – one for keying and the other for checking
- Scanning Operators – one per workstation
- Scanning Supervisors – one for small Councils and two for larger Councils
- 1st Level Adjudicators/RO Adjudicators – one per workstation, some Councils opt for two Adjudicators per workstation – one for keying and the other for checking.
- Count Centre Manager – one as a minimum, more for larger Councils. This role can be undertaken by the Returning Officer, their Depute or Election Manager/Co-ordinator/Officer – usually someone who is key to the election team with knowledge of the poll, postal votes and Count arrangements.

eCount Training

Q.   What have been/are the training/familiarisation opportunities for eCounting Teams?

A.   There have been/are a number of training opportunities provided as follows:
- Software changes demonstrations (online) – August/September 2021
- Drop-In Sessions – September 2021
- End to End Count Demonstration (online) – September 2021
- Performance Testing – November 2021
- eCounting System Videos are available at https://vimeo.com/showcase/9004620 (password is available from your User Group member. **The videos must not be made publicly available.**
- eLearning for Roles – scheduled for January 2022
- Face to Face Training scheduled for:
  - ✓ P&J Live, Aberdeen – Monday 14 February – Friday 18 February 2022
  - ✓ Silvan House, Edinburgh – Monday 21 February – Friday 25 March 2022
  - ✓ Lagoon Leisure Centre, Paisley – Monday 28 February – Friday 11 March 2022
- Familiarisation Session at Council Count Venues – Wednesday 4 May 2022

Count Centre Venues

Q.   What arrangements need to be in place in preparation for the eCounting system set up and removal of equipment?

A.   The following should be in place:
- Count Venue Availability – the set-up of the eCounting system will commence at 9am on Monday 2 May 2022. Councils must ensure that power, tables, chairs and racking are available by 9am on Monday 2 May 2022.
- End of Election – we expect that in almost all circumstances the eCounting equipment will be removed from the premises by 10pm on Friday 6 May 2022. Council are asked to ensure their premises are available until that time.

- Contingency days – You should consider whether to include any addition/ contingency days in your booking in case of unforeseen delays or where it is unlikely your eCounting equipment can be removed by 10pm.
- Delivery of equipment – an appropriate delivery schedule for your equipment should be discussed and agreed with your Regional Manager
- Count Centre Security – as a general rule, we would advise that your Count venue should have one of the following security arrangements in place for the whole of Count week when the Count venue is unoccupied:
  - ✓ A monitored CCTV/intruder alarm system; or
  - ✓ An external security guard presence/patrol; or
  - ✓ Internal security guard/patrols.
- Please advise the Project Team or your Regional Manager if these requirements cannot be met and we will aim to agree a practical alternative with you.
- Additional Equipment – where a Council has agreed to provide their own additional equipment e.g. large screens, these should be in place in the Count Venue on Monday 2 May 2022.

Q   What power needs to be in place at Count Venues?

A   It is the responsibility of each Council to ensure that power supplies are sufficient to support your Count. Your RM will provide support to work out the power requirements for the eCounting system. If you have any concerns about power, please let your RM or the Project team know.

Q.   Can the Postal Vote Management System be in the same location as the eCount set up?

A.   Yes. There is no problem in principal with setting up PVMS/doing opening sessions in the same hall that the count centre is located in, so long as the 2 activities can be fitted into the space. We suggest that rope/tape barriers or similar should be used to separate the Count area from the PVMS area wherever possible. But please bear in mind that candidates and agents may be present at PVMS opening sessions, so they need to be kept away from the count centre itself.

Q.   Can a Polling Place be run in the same building at the Count Venue?

A.   Yes. However, if you have a Polling Place in your Count Venue you must ensure separate entrance/exits are in the place with tight security at the count venue and no permissible access from the Polling Place to the Count Venue.

eCount Process: RO Preview App

Q.   How can the RO privately preview ballot papers requiring RO adjudication?

A.   Returning Officer Application – All RO users will have access to a browser which provides them with the functionality to preview/inspect all the ballots in the RO queue on a contest by contest basis. This is a viewer only and no actions can be taken in it. ROs will need to go through all doubtful ballot papers in their queue using the eCounting system as normal.

Q. **What are the agreed recommendations by the User Group for dealing with Ballot Paper Accounts at the eCount?**

A. The User Group supported the Ballot Paper Account Working Group's recommendations which were as follows:

- A full set of Ballot Paper Accounts should sit with Registration/Verification Operators in addition to any other copies of the Ballot Paper Account at the Count venue.
- Returning Officers to choose how they record their discrepancies and ensure discrepancies are available to the Registration/Verification Operator.
- A copy of Ballot Paper Account should be placed in Ballot Paper Trays as per arrangements for eCounting in 2017.
- The Returning Officer's team are responsible for ensuring barcodes are on the Ballot Paper Accounts in the Folder for Registration/Verification (and also on the Ballot Paper Trays).
- Checking Barcodes - in terms of checking the barcodes are accurate, whether this is from the label or from the Ballot Paper Accounts the process is the same as it has always been i.e. you can scan the barcode in notepad or excel (if you have a handheld scanner) and the information will be displayed OR if you use Idox PVMS this check can be done at that point using the Idox equipment OR on the week of the poll once your eCount is set up the labels can be checked at that point. It may be helpful to know there haven't been issues with labels in the past and the important task would be for councils to ensure the correct labels go onto the correct trays and Ballot Paper Accounts.
- Note that barcode labels are available from Easyprint for download and printing from Monday 4 April 2022.
- Printing barcodes on documents – if you wish to print your barcode directly onto your Ballot Paper Account the following may be of assistance to you:
  - ✓ Good tutorial here with a link to download the font - https://www.majorgeeks.com/content/page/barcode_word.html
  - ✓ Alternative download link - https://www.barcodesinc.com/free-barcode-font/
  - ✓ Online Code39 barcode generator - https://www.barcodesinc.com/generator/index.php
- Registration/Verification Operators should be provided with as much poll and count info as possible and is helpful.

eCount Reports

Q. **What reports do I have to publish once the Count is completed?**

A. There are 7 eCount Results Reports for publication, as directed by the EMB, namely:

- Declaration of Results (pdf)
- Candidate Votes per Stage (pdf)
- First Preference (pdf)
- Preference by Ballot Box (pdf) (also in csv to merge boxes under 200).
- Preference Summary (pdf)
- Transfers (pdf)
- Preference Profile (blt file)

Q. **How do I access the Preference Profile report which is a .blt file?**

A.   Open the .blt file in 'notepad'.

Candidates and Agents

Q. **Will candidates and their agents get an opportunity to review the e-counting system before the actual elections?**

A.   Yes. In each of the Count Centres there will be a Candidates and Agents demonstration of eCounting on Wednesday of election week (i.e. 4 May 2022). However, if you feel that any of your prospective candidates might like an earlier opportunity to see the eCount system and are willing to come to Edinburgh, we will be arranging 1 or 2 demo days in Silvan House during the training period in February/March, subject to demand being sufficient. We will provide further information on general demo days in due course.

National Results

Q. **In 2017 each Council had to complete and submit a data collection form to Scottish Government for the purposes of collating National Results - will Councils be required to do this again in 2022?**

A.   The information requested in 2017 i.e. candidate, turnout, party affiliation, postal voting, etc will now be taken directly from the Results Reports by Fujitsu staff once your election is complete, so you will no longer be required to do anything after your election to support the collation of National Results. The new naming convention for ballot boxes is key to enabling the publication of National level data on postal voting. Once all elections have been completed the National Results data will be published to the EMB website.

Payment to Fujitsu for eCounting

Q. **What are the payment arrangements for eCounting?**

A.   Councils are responsible for payment all elements of print and this will be invoiced directly by Fujitsu to each individual Council based on order quantities. Contract print prices were advised in an email to the User Group on Friday 10 September 2021 to allow Councils to forecast costs for printing.

Q. **When will Fujitsu invoice me?**

A.   Fujitsu will invoice each council on conclusion of the election in May 2022 for all print material.