From: FOI
Sent: 04 October 2024 14:49
To: [redacted]
Subject: FOI 121-24 - Response

Dear [redacted]

Our Ref: FOI 121-24

Thank you for your email to the Electoral Commission dated 16 August 2024.

We contacted you on 18 September to advise that we were extending your response deadline by 20 working days to 17 October 2024 due to the Public Interest Test.

The Electoral Commission aims to respond to requests promptly and has done so within the extended time frame.

Your request is shown in bold below followed by our response.

You have asked for the following information:
All correspondence (emails, memos, letters, texts, minutes of meetings, any other records) between Highland Council staff and the Electoral Commission between May 22, 2024 and August 16, 2024.

All correspondence (emails, memos, letters, texts, minutes of meetings, any other records) between Highland Council staff and the political candidates, (including their election agents and/or affiliated staff) for the Inverness, Skye and West Ross-Shire constituency between July 4, 2024 and August 16, 2024

On 21 August we sought clarification from you as the 2nd part of your request sought information between Highland council staff and the political candidate.

On 21 August you replied: Please accept my apologies, this is a casualty of my poor proofreading! The second part should read "the Electoral Commission", rather than Highland Council staff.

For completeness your revised request is as follows:

All correspondence (emails, memos, letters, texts, minutes of meetings, any other records) between Highland Council staff and the Electoral Commission between May 22, 2024 and August 16, 2024.

All correspondence (emails, memos, letters, texts, minutes of meetings, any other records) between the Electoral Commission and the political candidates, (including their election agents and/or affiliated staff) for the Inverness, Skye and West Ross-Shire constituency between July 4, 2024 and August 16, 2024

Our response is as follows:

We hold the information you have requested.

To access these documents, you will need to use our secure document-sharing system, Objective Connect. You will receive an 'Invitation to Objective Connect Email Notification' (sent to the inbox of [redacted]). This notification will contain a link to enable you to start accessing your information. Please find below details on how to access the specific area we have set up for your documents.

1. Click on the link in the email.
2. You will be prompted to set up your username and password. Your username will be your email address, and your password can be whatever you like.
3. With your username and password, enter both details at the login screen and click 'login'.
4. You will now see your personal page, which will show the Share 'FOI 121-24'.
5. By clicking on the name of the share, you will find your documents.
6. You may view any of these documents.
7. In addition, you may download a copy to your personal computer by selecting the 'download' option and then 'save'.

This service will be closed one month from our response date, this is **4 November 2024**.

Included are the documents we hold. The documents we are releasing include a number of emails between staff at Highland Council and the Commission that fall within the specified period.

This includes an e-mail with Highland Council which notes a phone call between us and one political candidate. There are no other records relevant to this portion of your request as we did not have contact with any of the other candidates or their agents during the timeframe you have specified.

You will notice that certain personal details have been redacted from the document we are releasing. Section 40(2) of the FOIA provides for an exemption where the information requested constitutes personal data as defined by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), and where release of the information requested would breach one of the data protection principles. Some of the information contained in the document falls within the description of personal data as defined by the DPA because the information relates directly to an identifiable living individual. This includes names and contact details of individuals in some instances. The individuals in some cases are junior staff members and they would not reasonably expect their information to be released.

The Commission strives to be an open, transparent authority and I trust that this information satisfies your request. If you are not satisfied with this response, please note that the Commission operates a review procedure, details of which can be found on the Commission website at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/freedom-information/make-a-freedom-information-request.

Please also note that if you have exhausted all internal Commission review procedures and you are still not satisfied you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. Details of this procedure can be found on the ICO website: https://ico.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Information Team
FOI@electoralcommission.org.uk

The Electoral Commission
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted]
Bcc: [redacted]

Subject: EC Request: RO emergency mobile numbers
Date: 02 July 2024 18:40:31
Importance: High

Dear Election Team
We are missing an emergency contact mobile number for the Returning Officer in your area.
We require to collect a mobile phone number, (not a landline number) which allow the Commission to use a SMS text service to send out alerts. If you could provide this information to me as soon as possible it would be much appreciated.

Local Authority	RO Name	RO Mobile Number
Aberdeen City Council	[redacted]	
East Dunbartonshire Council	[redacted]	
Highland Council	[redacted]	
Midlothian Council	[redacted]	
Perth & Kinross Council	[redacted]	
Scottish Borders Council	[redacted]	
Stirling Council	[redacted]	

Many thanks

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission
Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted]
Bcc: [redacted]

Subject: Electoral Commission public awareness campaign
Date: 24 May 2024 15:09:52

Dear Returning Officers and Depute Returning Officers
I'm getting in touch with an update on the Commission's public awareness plans for the UK Parliament general election.

Voter ID

Since 22 April, we have been running paid advertising on voter ID across digital and print press, including local and national newspapers, to make voters aware of the requirement to bring photo ID when voting in person for an MP, and that free voter ID is available to those without an accepted form of photo ID.
Now that the date of the election is confirmed, we will be launching an extensive voter ID campaign, which will run across TV, video on demand, out of home and digital channels in two phases:

- Launch to 26 June: alongside our key message of the requirement to bring photo ID to vote in person, this phase will focus on raising awareness of the option of applying for free voter ID.
- 26 June to 4 July: after the deadline for applying for free voter ID has passed, our campaign will move on to a final push to remind voters to bring photo ID on polling day.

You can watch our voter ID television advert from our previous campaign in England here.

Voter registration

Our new voter registration campaign is designed to encourage voters to register ahead of the deadline on 18 June. Like our voter ID campaign, the voter registration campaign will run across mass media and targeted digital channels.
You can watch our voter registration television advert from our previous campaign in England here.
We are currently working to get both the voter ID and voter registration campaigns live across the various channels as quickly as possible.

Resources for local authorities and other partners

To complement our campaigns, we are producing date-specific resources that local authorities, electoral registration offices and civil society partners can use to promote voter registration and raise awareness of the need for photo ID when voting in person. These will be shared in the week commencing 3 June and will include:

- Voter ID booklet
- Voter ID guide for staff
- A5 insert, for inclusion in mailings
- Posters
- Social media graphics and template social copy
- Information in various languages and alternative formats
- Template press releases

In the meantime, our undated voter registration and voter ID resources are available to download and use across your channels.

Resources for engaging with young people

As well as the learning resources we currently have available for schools and others working with young people, we will be publishing a UK general election lesson plan and school assembly presentation, as well as videos and activities created by young people. Once these have been published we would be grateful for your support in sharing these with schools and organisations in your area.

Polling station handbook and FAQs for frontline staff

We also wanted to make you aware that the polling station handbook and quick guide, and FAQs for frontline staff, are currently being finalised and we will be in contact via the Bulletin with an update when these have been published, including information on ordering polling station handbooks and quick guides.

If you have any questions, please get in touch. We will also be sharing updates on our public awareness plans with council comms staff via the local authority comms network.

Best wishes

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission

[redacted]

electoralcommission.org.uk

Press office: [redacted]

Press out of hours: [redacted]

From: [redacted]
Bcc: [redacted]

Subject: Electoral Commission survey - UK general election communication resources
Date: 22 July 2024 15:36:06

Dear all

I hope you're doing well and are managing to get a break over the summer period. Following the election we're keen to gather feedback from council communications staff and members of the Electoral Registration Comms & Outreach Network on the communication resources the Commission provided ahead of the election. I would be grateful if you could complete the short survey linked below, which will be open until **Monday 19 August**. Your feedback will help shape future resources and support from the Commission.

You can complete the survey here.

If you have any questions, or would like to provide feedback via email or phone, please get in touch.

Best wishes

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission

[redacted]

electoralcommission.org.uk

Press office: [redacted]

Press out of hours: [redacted]

Form K : statement as to postal ballot papers Report
REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLES ACT
United Kingdom Parliamentary General Election 2024

Name of Contest: Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Constituency

Date of poll: 04/07/2024

A. Issue of postal ballot papers	Number
1. Total number of postal ballot papers issued under regulation 71	20376
2. Total number of postal ballot papers issued under regulation 77 (spoilt and returned for cancellation), regulation 78 (lost or not received) and regulation 78A (cancelled due to change of address)	67
3. Total number of postal ballot papers cancelled under regulation 86A (where the first ballot paper was cancelled and retrieved)	2
4. Total number of postal ballot papers issued (1 to 3)	20445
5. Total number of postal ballot papers cancelled under paragraph 78A	3

B(1). Receipt of and replacement postal ballot papers	Number
6. Number of covering envelopes received by the Returning Officer or at a polling station before the close of poll (excluding any undelivered or returned under regulation 77(1)(spoilt), regulation 78(1)(lost) and regulation 86A(cancelled ballot papers))	
7. Number of covering envelopes received by the Returning Officer after the close of poll, excluding any returned as undelivered	
8. Number of postal ballot papers returned spoilt for cancellation in time for another ballot paper to be issued (original returned)	0
9. Number of postal ballot papers identified as lost or not received in time for another ballot paper to be issued (original returned)	0
10. Number of postal ballot papers cancelled and retrieved in time for another ballot paper to be issued (cancelled returned)	1
11. Number of postal ballot papers returned as spoilt too late for another ballot paper to be issued	
12. Number of covering envelopes returned as undelivered (up to the 25th day after the date of poll)	
13. Number of covering envelopes not received by the Returning Officer (by the 25th day after the date of poll)	
14. Total numbers 6 to 13 (this should be the same as that in 4 above)	

B(2). Receipt of postal ballot papers - Personal Identifiers	Number
15. Number of covering envelopes set aside for the verification of personal identifiers on postal voting statements	15883
16. Number of postal voting statements subject to verification procedure rejected as not complete (excluding prior cancellations)	70
17. Number of postal voting statements rejected following verification procedures due to the personal identifiers on the postal voting statement not matching those in the personal identifiers record (excluding prior cancellations)	149

C. Count of postal ballot papers	Number
18. Number of ballot papers returned by postal voters which were included in the count of ballot papers	15644
19. Number of cases in which a covering envelope or its contents were marked 'Rejected' (cancellations under regulation 77, 78, 78A and 86A are not rejections and should be included in items 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 above)	

D. Summary of postal ballot packs	Number
1. Number of postal voting statements received by close of poll without the corresponding ballot paper	20
2. Number of ballot papers received by close of poll without the corresponding postal voting statements	16
3. Number of postal voting statements where required personal identifiers were verified as valid	15664
4. Number of postal voting statements rejected because there was no signature	14
5. Number of postal voting statements rejected because there was no date of birth	4
6. Number of postal voting statements rejected because there was no signature and no date of birth	52
7. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatched signature	62
8. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatched date of birth	83
9. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatch of both identifiers	4
10. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to a deceased elector	0
11. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to suspected fraud	0
12. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to signed by power of attorney	0
13. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to being handed in at the polling station	0
14. Number of ballot papers received by close of poll	15878
15. Number of signature waivers granted (as per the personal identifiers record)	140
16. Number of proxies appointed	24

Date:.24th July 2024.....

Signed: [redacted] ..... [redacted]

Authority: The Highland Council.....

Form K : statement as to postal ballot papers Report
REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLES ACT
United Kingdom Parliamentary General Election 2024

Name of Contest: Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire Constituency

Date of poll: 04/07/2024

A. Issue of postal ballot papers	Number
1. Total number of postal ballot papers issued under regulation 71	21309
2. Total number of postal ballot papers issued under regulation 77 (spoilt and returned for cancellation), regulation 78 (lost or not received) and regulation 78A (cancelled due to change of address)	120
3. Total number of postal ballot papers cancelled under regulation 86A (where the first ballot paper was cancelled and retrieved)	3
4. Total number of postal ballot papers issued (1 to 3)	21432
5. Total number of postal ballot papers cancelled under paragraph 78A	3

B(1). Receipt of and replacement postal ballot papers	Number
6. Number of covering envelopes received by the Returning Officer or at a polling station before the close of poll (excluding any undelivered or returned under regulation 77(1)(spoilt), regulation 78(1)(lost) and regulation 86A(cancelled ballot papers))	
7. Number of covering envelopes received by the Returning Officer after the close of poll, excluding any returned as undelivered	
8. Number of postal ballot papers returned spoilt for cancellation in time for another ballot paper to be issued (original returned)	0
9. Number of postal ballot papers identified as lost or not received in time for another ballot paper to be issued (original returned)	2
10. Number of postal ballot papers cancelled and retrieved in time for another ballot paper to be issued (cancelled returned)	1
11. Number of postal ballot papers returned as spoilt too late for another ballot paper to be issued	
12. Number of covering envelopes returned as undelivered (up to the 25th day after the date of poll)	
13. Number of covering envelopes not received by the Returning Officer (by the 25th day after the date of poll)	
14. Total numbers 6 to 13 (this should be the same as that in 4 above)	

B(2). Receipt of postal ballot papers - Personal Identifiers	Number
15. Number of covering envelopes set aside for the verification of personal identifiers on postal voting statements	16073
16. Number of postal voting statements subject to verification procedure rejected as not complete (excluding prior cancellations)	97
17. Number of postal voting statements rejected following verification procedures due to the personal identifiers on the postal voting statement not matching those in the personal identifiers record (excluding prior cancellations)	152

C. Count of postal ballot papers	Number
18. Number of ballot papers returned by postal voters which were included in the count of ballot papers	15807
19. Number of cases in which a covering envelope or its contents were marked 'Rejected' (cancellations under regulation 77, 78, 78A and 86A are not rejections and should be included in items 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 above)	

D. Summary of postal ballot packs	Number
1. Number of postal voting statements received by close of poll without the corresponding ballot paper	17
2. Number of ballot papers received by close of poll without the corresponding postal voting statements	21
3. Number of postal voting statements where required personal identifiers were verified as valid	15824
4. Number of postal voting statements rejected because there was no signature	15
5. Number of postal voting statements rejected because there was no date of birth	4
6. Number of postal voting statements rejected because there was no signature and no date of birth	78
7. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatched signature	75
8. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatched date of birth	74
9. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatch of both identifiers	3
10. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to a deceased elector	0
11. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to suspected fraud	0
12. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to signed by power of attorney	0
13. Number of postal voting statements rejected due to being handed in at the polling station	0
14. Number of ballot papers received by close of poll	16074
15. Number of signature waivers granted (as per the personal identifiers record)	129
16. Number of proxies appointed	8

Date:24th July 2024.....

Signed: [redacted] ..... [redacted]

Authority:.The Highland Council.....

From: Andy O"Neill
To: [redacted];[redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire
Date: 05 July 2024 17:47:31

Dear [redacted]

As you will be aware, staff in the Commission's Scotland Office have been in conversation with your election team regarding the count for the Inverness, Skye and West-Ross constituency. We understand that in the Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire constituency there is a discrepancy with the reconciliation of the counted ballot paper totals with the verified total number of ballot papers issued. You have suspended the stopped the count and will reconvene on Saturday 6 July at 10.30am.

Subsequent to the conversation with the member of your election team we considered the situation and offer the following advice with the aim of assisting you in maintaining the transparency of the count process.

We would suggest, you as Returning Officer should, at the recommencement of the count explain the following to all candidates and agents:

- The steps taken on Friday, 5 July to identify any possible sources of the discrepancy. This may have included:
    - Checking the storage area and check to ensure that all ballot boxes had been opened and were empty
    - Checking all floors and surfaces for ballot papers that may have been dropped in the count venue
    - Re-checking the verification figures and reconciliation for calculation mistakes
    - Ensuring that all rejected ballot papers had been accounted for
    - Checking that all bundles and part bundles had been counted
    - We have no knowledge of the detailed layout of your count centre in Dingwall but are aware that you also counted the Caithness, Sutherland and Easter -Ross constituency there. If you thought it necessary, you could consider seeking legal advice in relation to getting a court order to inspect the other count's sealed envelopes.
- The steps taken on Friday, 5 July to secure the ballot papers overnight before the count is reconvened on Saturday, 6 July.
- We would suggest the following proposed approach on Saturday, 6 July.
    - When determining the process to be followed, you should consider counting the returned ballot papers to establish a new 'verification' total. Whilst this will not be based on the polling station and postal voter ballot paper accounts, this will provide an accurate figure of the ballot papers to be counted in the second stage of the count to check against.
    - Having established a new 'verification' figure, the ballot papers can then be sorted by candidate and you can adjudicate on any doubtful ballot papers.
    - Once you are satisfied that you have undertaken all reasonable steps to deliver an accurate result, you should declare the result.

We would suggest that it is important that a clear audit trail of all decisions and all actions is kept by you. This will assist you in any subsequent petition process. Transparency of process is of course always important. We would suggest that you advise all candidates that where any appointed counting agents are not able to attend the count on Saturday, 6 July, new counting agents can be appointed to attend in their place – this is provided for in rule 30 of the Parliamentary Election Rules (Schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983). Notice in writing must be given immediately to you of the name and address of the counting agent appointed.

Please note that in relation to counting agents:

- what is permitted is the appointment of replacements (so if the number of agents had been restricted, the appointment of replacements would need to stay within the permitted number)
- candidates can themselves do anything a counting agent was appointed to do
- non-attendance of counting agents doesn't invalidate any action taken by the RO.

Finally, to support you in the recommenced count we would like to offer that the Commission's [redacted], who [redacted] and has worked with your elections team in the past, attends the count as an Electoral Commission Representative to act as a potential source of advice to yourself immediately in the count centre and as a conduit to the Commission's wider advice service if you felt the need to seek any further advice.

I hope you find this of assistance and we would be happy to discuss further. We assume you may wish to discuss with [redacted] this matter. [redacted] is contactable on [redacted].

Andy O'Neill
Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland
The Electoral Commission
[redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted]
Bcc: [redacted]

Subject: Messaging for candidates - Commission candidate survey and spending return support.
Date: 11 July 2024 16:04:48

Dear Returning Officers and Depute Returning Officers,
The Commission has opened a survey for candidates and agents to gather information on their experiences at the UKPGE.
We are also organising an online webinar to support candidates with completion of their spending returns, and offering 15 minute advice surgeries so candidates can come to us for one-to-one advice sessions, again focusing on completion of candidate returns.
We would be very grateful if you could **please share the following information with UKPGE candidates, on behalf of the Commission**. If you have any questions about this, please let me know.

Electoral Commission candidate survey, and support with your spending return

Dear Candidate,
The Electoral Commission wants to better understand the experiences of candidates to enable us to support you effectively. Please take the time to complete out survey by clicking here. It will take around 15 minutes and must be completed in one session. The deadline for responses to be considered as part of our election reporting is 4 August 2024.

We are also running the following events for candidates and agents who stood at the UK Parliamentary General Election 2024.

- **Candidate webinar**: ***Walking you through your spending return* | Thursday 18 July, 13:00-14:00** This one-hour session will provide an overview of the spending return and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. If you'd like to attend, please register here.

- **Candidate advice surgeries | Monday 29 and Tuesday 30 July** These one-to-one, 15-minute slots are available for those who have questions about completing their spending and donations return. If you'd like to attend,

please register here.

If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with the Commission via email to infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk, or by calling 0333 103 1928.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission
Tel: [redacted]
www.electoralcommission.org.uk

From: Infoscotland
Bcc: [redacted]
Subject: Polling station handbook - minor correction
Date: 20 June 2024 16:54:05
Attachments: Polling station handbook erratum insert - UKPGE.pdf

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Dear Returning Officers, Depute Returning Officer and election teams,
As advised in a previous Electoral administration bulletin, the hard copies of polling station handbook and quick guide for the UK Parliamentary election are now being distributed to local authorities. Unfortunately, there is a minor typographical error in **Appendix 5a** of the handbook, relating to the prescribed questions for individuals applying to vote by proxy for an anonymous elector. Specifically, the follow up instructions action required when a Presiding Officer asks the question 'Have you already voted as proxy at this election, whether here or elsewhere in this constituency or in any other constituency, on behalf of four or more electors?' has been amended to include the word **'not'**, to read 'If the answer to this question is 'yes', a ballot paper must **not** be issued'.
Please can you share this update with your Presiding Officers, to ensure that they are aware of the correction to this prescribed question. We have also provided an insert (attached) which can be printed out or shared as required.
Please accept our sincere apologies for any inconvenience caused. If you have any queries regarding this, please get in touch.
Kind regards

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission

Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: by-elections
Date: 12 August 2024 12:46:41

Thanks for letting me know

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission
Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Monday, August 5, 2024 11:42 AM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>
Subject: by-elections

Hi [redacted],

[redacted] Keeping you informed - besides the Inverness Central (1) and Cromarty Firth (2) by-election on 26 September I will also have now one this year for Fort Willliam with [redacted]. Potentially looking at end of November

Best regards, [redacted]

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk"
Cc: Andy O"Neill; [redacted]
Bcc: [redacted]
Subject: RE: General Election -Count - [redacted]
Date: 24 July 2024 19:38:22

Dear [redacted] and team,
As [redacted] may have advised, I have had a conversation with [redacted] today, who has contacted us separately and made a telephone complaint to us regarding the count/recount in the Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire constituency. His complaint centres on the sealing of the ballot boxes at the point of suspension in the absence of agents and the corrected verification statement following the second recount. He indicated that he had first complained directly to you and thank you for providing prior sight of the responses you made to him. This allowed me to be sighted in advance on the issues he had raised.
To summarise,

- I understand C&A were not present at the point ballot papers were sealed into boxes in preparation for suspending the count on Friday morning, as they had been asked to leave the hall, while the RO team briefed the count staff. As you will be now aware, Candidates and Agents are, and should be permitted to be present at the sealing of the ballot papers into boxes at the suspension of the count. They may apply their own seals should they wish to do so. I understand that no challenge was raised at the time of exit by the agents, but on reflection [redacted] understood that agents could have chosen to be present, but they hadn't been invited to be present. I do not believe in my discussion with [redacted] or with [redacted] this afternoon to understand further the course of events, that this situation was intentional nor that agents were actively 'removed' from this element of the count as was suggested. As we reflected on during our conversation, everyone including C&A was very tired and wished to leave and take rest following a long night.
- With regard to the security of the ballot papers sealed on Friday morning and then unsealed on Saturday, we discussed the steps that you had demonstrated and explained to the candidates and agents at the commencement of the Saturday recount.
- In addition, [redacted] raised issue with us regarding the correction of the verified votes, however I understand that he was not present at the Saturday recount, however his agent was. In resolving this aspect, I have discussed this issue with him and the explanation which was conveyed by you and your team during the pre-declaration (at which I was also present), to which he has now indicated satisfaction in understanding the statement corrections.

I have passed no comment on the process and discrepancy that led to the decision to the recount, this is currently subject to your internal investigations and with respect to earlier correspondence this week, as you have acknowledged your team are due to provide us with a short summary about this for our review.
To conclude, more generally I advised [redacted] that we will continue to offer support to you and your team in Highland in your review of this count, and your consideration of future processes and restoration of confidence with your

stakeholders, as you require it.
As I am going on leave at the end of this week, and to ensure that Andy [redacted] and [redacted] were similarly sighted - it was prudent to record this by email for all, in the event that [redacted] had any follow up contact. If you require any further information or wish to discuss further please do get in touch by return or with the team next week.
I hope this is of assistance.
Kind regards

[redacted]
The Electoral Commission
Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, July 24, 2024 3:52 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: General Election -Count

[redacted]
Here is [redacted] email to [redacted] as requested. For completeness I will send on the initial email separately.
Regards

[redacted]
Highland Council
Council Headquarters
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX
[redacted]

Any internal legal advice provided herein is for the Client Service only. Written permission must be sought from the author prior to any disclosure to an external organisation or third party.

From: [redacted]
Sent: Friday, July 19, 2024 12:58 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]>
Subject: General Election -Count

Dear [redacted]
Thank you for your email. I am sorry that you feel disappointed having received a response directly from [redacted]. There was absolutely no discourtesy intended on my part when I asked [redacted], one of the [redacted], to respond directly to you. In his reply [redacted] has addressed a number of the concerns you had raised but I note you have identified a number of specific issues you seek comment upon.

1. The Returning Officer asked that the candidates, agents and media be asked to leave the Count Centre. I wanted to speak directly with the count staff remaining in the

Count Centre to update them on the position and seek their continuing support on Saturday when the count was to resume.

2. I explained in considerable detail to all candidates, agents and party representatives prior to the resumption of the count on Saturday 6th July both the process that had been followed in securing the ballots on Friday 5th July and the arrangements that had been put in place to ensure the security of the ballots between Friday and Saturday. The process was undertaken by members of the Elections Team with HLH Records Management staff. All candidates and agents in attendance on Saturday morning were satisfied with the process followed and were content that the count should resume.
3. There was communication with officers of both the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Management Board. An officer from the Electoral Commission was invited and did attend the Count Centre on Saturday. The Electoral Commission officer was fully briefed and kept informed. The officer observed preparations for the resumption of the count and all briefings and interactions with candidates and agents including those which shared details of the process followed to secure the ballots.
4. No advice has been offered.
5. Your position is noted. An internal debrief is undertaken after every major election to identify issues and any lessons learned.

A full and very detailed explanation on the total number of verified votes being corrected from 48,221 to 48,224 was offered to candidates and agents on Saturday. All candidates and agents in attendance accepted and understood the explanation that was offered. Further prior to declaration all candidates and agents were advised of the provisional result and offered a further opportunity to seek clarification of the figures and processes followed up to and including the provisional result. No concerns were raised. The declaration records that a total of 48,224 were counted. There was no discrepancy. On that basis candidates and elections agents present, as well as the Electoral Commission representative, were happy to move to declaration.

I am happy to discuss this further with you in person should you wish.

Very best wishes

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
<[redacted]>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2024 1:03 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Fwd: General Election -Count

CAUTION: This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear [redacted],

I am writing to express my disappointment that you did not respond directly to my e-mail dated 6th July regarding my serious & legitimate concerns about the handling of ballot papers and the recount process for the Inverness, Skye & West Ross-shire constituency. Given the gravity of these concerns, I expected a direct and prompt response from you, as the Returning Officer.

In my previous correspondence, I raised several critical issues which [redacted] addressed, albeit insufficiently. I believe it is important to raise these matters directly with you:

1. Directive for Removal: Who specifically directed [redacted] to remove candidates, agents,

and media members from the Count Centre before the ballot papers were secured?

2. Procedural Non-Compliance: Why were the established procedures not followed? Were these procedures overlooked intentionally or due to a lack of awareness?
3. Electoral Commission Notification: Have you informed the Electoral Commission that candidates and their agents were not allowed to ensure the ballots were secured, as required?
4. Guidance from the Electoral Commission: What advice, if any, has the Electoral Commission provided regarding the future conduct of elections in Highland?
5. Independent Review: In light of these events, I request that an independent review be commissioned to investigate the handling of the ballot papers and the discrepancies in the vote counts to ensure such mistakes are not repeated

Furthermore, I would like further clarification on the following

Significant Discrepancy: I was advised at the end of the first and second counts that a "significant discrepancy" prevented a declaration. However, at the end of the third count, this discrepancy was only three votes. What accounts for this sudden change?

Vote Count Discrepancy: The first stage of the count recorded 48,221 ballots, yet when the result was declared, the total number of votes cast was 48,224. How do you explain where these ballot papers came from?

These issues raise serious questions about the transparency and integrity of the electoral process. I expect a thorough and detailed response from you, as the Returning Officer

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]
Post: [redacted]
Follow me on Facebook at: [redacted]
Follow me on X (Twitter) at: [redacted]

Begin forwarded message:

From: [redacted]
<[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Date: 12 July 2024 at 17:15:17 BST
To: [redacted]
Subject: General Election -Count

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email of 6th July to the Returning Officer drawing his attention to your concern about the actions taken to secure the ballots.

Before commenting I would like to thank you and your Election Agent for your support over the course of the count in the Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire constituency.

The Returning Officer has spoken directly with me and I have confirmed that,

under direction, I was involved in ushering a number of candidates, agents and also members of the media from the Count Centre on Friday morning. Unfortunately, this did take place prior to the securing of the ballot papers and you are correct that candidates and agents should have had the opportunity to observe this process.

As I hope you will appreciate the Returning Officer found himself in the position of having to suspend the count. Having shared this information with candidates and agents the Returning Officer was then anxious to address the count staff directly to update them not only upon the position but to seek their support in assisting with the resumption of the count on Saturday morning. On reflection it would have been more appropriate to have undertaken this briefing following the securing of the ballots.

On Saturday morning the Returning Officer ensured that a full briefing was offered to candidates and agents on the steps that had been taken to preserve the integrity of the count including the securing of the ballots, the process involved, the records that had been kept and the security arrangements that had been in place with the support most significantly of Police Scotland and our own contracted security and CCTV.

I hope this is helpful and you are reassured about the process undertaken on the morning in question.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
Highland Council
Council Headquarters
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX
[redacted]

Any internal legal advice provided herein is for the Client Service only. Written permission must be sought from the author prior to any disclosure to an external organisation or third party.

From: Infoscotland
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: RE: HIGHLAND COUNCIL - Form K return for the Secretary of State
Date: 06 August 2024 12:12:17
Attachments: FORM K (ISWR 030724).pdf
FORM K (CSER 030724).pdf

Good afternoon
I can confirm these have been received.
Best wishes

[redacted]
The Electoral Commission
[redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk
Press office: [redacted]
Press out of hours: [redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: Monday, July 29, 2024 8:56 AM
To: Infoscotland <Infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk>
Subject: HIGHLAND COUNCIL - Form K return for the Secretary of State
Please find enclosed the respective Form K for the Constituencies Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire and Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross
The Highland Election Office

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Highland: Recount CCM:0620018
Date: 25 July 2024 14:03:27

Good afternoon [redacted],
Thank you for this information and summary of this issue as requested. We may come back to you next week, if we have further questions.
Many thanks for coming back to me, and hope you have a restful weekend when it comes.
Regards

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission
Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, July 25, 2024 1:22 PM
To: [redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] [redacted] @highland.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Highland: Recount

Dear [redacted],
Thank you again for your support at the resumed count on Saturday 6th July. The review of the recent general election is currently ongoing but I am happy to share some initial comments/findings which I hope are helpful.
I think the first point to be made is that the same process was to be adopted across both Highland constituencies. One count was delivered successfully. It is clear that differential human behaviour and interactions must have led to issues in the count for the Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire constituency. It is all but impossible to identify with confidence what led to the errors and it seems plausible that a number of factors including distraction, lack of focus and ultimately fatigue contributed over the course of an extremely busy evening.
The original count resulted in the accountants having a counted votes total that was 451 fewer than the verified votes total. This discrepancy required to be addressed and reconciled to my satisfaction. The initial approach taken was to ask the accountants to undertake an arithmetical exercise to establish if it was possible to achieve reconciliation of the two totals. This process was followed but did not lead to any change in the recorded shortfall.
Therefore the decision was made to undertake a second count and candidates and agents in attendance were advised of the position. I believe the decision was appropriate in light of the discrepancy between the verified and counted votes totals. The recount was conducted in the morning of the 5th of July. The recount resulted in there being a difference of 25 votes between the verified votes total and the counted votes. There was no explanation for the continuing shortfall. Given the continuing discrepancy it was agreed it was not appropriate to proceed to consider the possibility of a declaration. It was of note that the accuracy of the

respective totals would be instrumental in determining individual candidate's entitlement to return of their deposit. Accordingly, it was explained to candidates and agents that as we did not have confidence in the respective totals it was necessary to undertake a second recount.

The second recount was held the following day, Saturday 6th July. A number of additional controls were put in place, principally to control movement of both count staff and ballots around the count centre. The recount proceeded at a slow pace. Following this process the second recount delivered a result which achieved a complete reconciliation between the verification and counted votes totals. Prior to the declaration all candidates, agents and party representatives were offered an opportunity to raise any concerns about the process that had been followed and the provisional result. No concerns were identified and all in attendance were content to proceed to declaration.

As part of this review, an Improvement Plan will be established with all of the actions incorporated into the delivery of future elections. It is also an appropriate opportunity to review the continuing suitability of the count model deployed in Highland. Work will be undertaken to evaluate alternative count models including the one known as "mini-counts".

Should any more information be required, we are most happy to provide it, and to work with the Electoral Commission in future to verify our revised processes, should you wish to do so.

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>

Sent: Tuesday, July 23, 2024 11:53 AM

To: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Highland Council) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>

Subject: Highland: Recount

CAUTION: This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning [redacted] and [redacted],

Now the dust has settled a little, we are working through the review and follow-up here and recording of issues that arose during UKPGE. We need to better understand, in a few lines, what the process issue was that triggered the recount(s) in the Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire, and the discrepancy between the counted and verified totals.

We were focussed during the Recount in dealing with that count and declaration which was appropriate at that point. I understand you and the team have now had time to investigate and review the underlying process issue that caused the discrepancy leading to the recount. The information you provide will form part of our record that goes to the EC moderation panel who consider RO and ERO issues that arose during the July poll.

Please could you provide the EC with a short summary of the process issue that caused the discrepancy for me, by **CoP this Thursday?** If there is any issue with this or you wish to discuss further by call or meeting, please do get in touch soonest.

Kind regards

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission

Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted] (Highland Council)
To: [redacted]
Cc:
Subject: RE: Highland: Recount
Date: 23 July 2024 12:07:25
Attachments: image001.png

Hi [redacted]
We will make sure that you have this.
Thanks for your support on the day.
Best wishes
[redacted]
[redacted]
Chief Executive | Àrd-Oifigear
The Highland Council
[redacted]

NOTE: I sometimes send emails outside of normal working hours. I do not expect you to read, reply or action it until your normal work time, whenever this may be.

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, July 23, 2024 11:53 AM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Highland: Recount

CAUTION: This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning [redacted] and [redacted],
Now the dust has settled a little, we are working through the review and follow-up here and recording of issues that arose during UKPGE. We need to better understand, in a few lines, what the process issue was that triggered the recount(s) in the Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire, and the discrepancy between the counted and verified totals.
We were focussed during the Recount in dealing with that count and declaration which was appropriate at that point. I understand you and the team have now had time to investigate and review the underlying process issue that caused the discrepancy leading to the recount. The information you provide will form part of our record that goes to the EC moderation panel who consider RO and ERO issues that arose during the July poll.
Please could you provide the EC with a short summary of the process issue that caused the discrepancy for me, by **CoP this Thursday?** If there is any issue with this or you wish to discuss further by call or meeting, please do get in touch soonest.
Kind regards
[redacted]
The Electoral Commission
Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]

Subject: RE: Leaflets which will be included in our poll cards
Date: 28 May 2024 09:36:25
Attachments: image002.jpg
image003.gif
image004.png

Hi [redacted]
Apologies for the delay, I wasn't working yesterday.
I'd recommend keeping as is for simplicity, as all the contact details will be included in the poll letter, unless there's another reason this would be needed which I'm not understanding, which may well be the case!
On poll letter/card, the wording should be kept as 'poll letter'.
Best wishes
[redacted]

From: [redacted]@idoxgroup.com>
Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 1:30 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]
<[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]
[redacted] <[redacted]>; [redacted]

Subject: RE: Leaflets which will be included in our poll cards

Hi [redacted]
I will leave this with you to let me know if there are changes to be made as I have already sent the agreed proofs to the printer, however nothing has been printed yet as I'm still waiting on 2 councils to let me know if they want them.
If these need to be changed I will need to have confirmation by 4pm this evening.
Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted]

Idox Software Ltd
25d Bishop Street
Londonderry
BT48 6PR

[redacted]
www.idoxgroup.com

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Please consider the environment before printing his email.

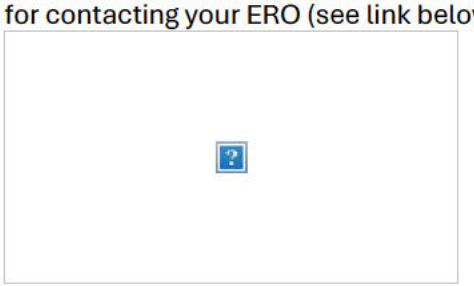
From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>

Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 1:06 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>; [redacted]
[redacted]
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]
[redacted]; [redacted]>; [redacted]
[redacted]>; [redacted]>;
[redacted]
Subject: RE: Leaflets which will be included in our poll cards
Importance: High

Hi [redacted], I discussed these changes with [redacted] and concur to conclude the EC site and change to poll card – do you agree with this amendment?
Hi [redacted], are we still in time to make these changes?
Thanks [redacted]

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 12:53 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]
[redacted]>; [redacted]
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]
<[redacted]>; [redacted]>; [redacted]
[redacted]>
Subject: RE: Leaflets which will be included in our poll cards

Great thanks [redacted]
Just a couple of points. On the Voter ID flyer it would be good if we could add in the EC's link for contacting your ERO (see link below).



When you click on Contact your local Electoral Registration Office, it gives upcoming election information. Once a postcode is added it gives info on elections happening in your area. For Ward 7 it provides info on the by-election and the UKPGE. You might want to check this out before amending but I think you might get feedback from recipients on how they can contact their ERO if there aren't contact details there
https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voting-and-elections



Secondly, for point of clarification, is the poll card now referred to as poll card or poll letter? I want to make sure we are consistent in any confirmation letters that we are sending to electors where we refer to poll cards.
Thanks [redacted]
[redacted]

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>

Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 12:33 PM
To: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]>; [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]>; [redacted]>
Subject: RE: Leaflets which will be included in our poll cards

Hi [redacted], just for info confirmed with our boundary colleagues already and we are all sending the inserts

Thanks [redacted]

From: [redacted] <[redacted]>
Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 12:30 PM
To: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]>; [redacted]>
Cc: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]>; [redacted]>; [redacted]>
Subject: FW: Leaflets which will be included in our poll cards

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for your e-mail. As previously advised, I think it would be useful for the ERO to know if you are taking a co-ordinated approach with Moray and Argyll & Bute for this election to avoid elector confusion. If you intend to send leaflets with your poll letters, are the other Councils sending the same leaflets so that messaging across the "Highland" area is consistent.

I have attached a copy of an AEA workshop guide from conference in 2023 on cross-boundary working which gives some suggestions of what to think about.

Many thanks

[redacted]

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 8:15 AM
To: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Leaflets which will be included in our poll cards

This has been designed by [redacted] (EC) and will be used by a number of IDOX customers in Scotland.

The QR code points to the EC

From: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Proxy limits
Date: 03 July 2024 14:28:32

Hi [redacted],
I need to call you about this advice, which I will do after I send it but I will be in the car so apologies in advance.
==========

Managing proxy voters in the polling station – what to do if a proxy is appointed to act for more than the permitted number of electors

We are aware that there could still be instances of proxies attending polling stations on polling day, who are acting for more than the maximum permitted number of electors.

Where polling station staff suspect that an individual may be acting as proxy for more electors than they are entitled to, they should ask the prescribed questions and follow the process detailed in Appendices 3b and 5a of the polling station handbook.

When asking the prescribed questions, the Presiding Officer must inform the proxy that a ballot paper will be refused if the person fails to answer each question satisfactorily and that giving false information may be an offence. If the proxy answers the questions satisfactorily an ordinary or tendered ballot paper must be issued as appropriate. However, if the Presiding Officer suspects that the proxy has provided false information, the Presiding Officer should record the details and inform the Returning Officer for any potential referral to the police.

Regards

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission
Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, July 3, 2024 1:18 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Proxy limits
Importance: High

Can you advise below please [redacted]
KR
[redacted]

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, July 3, 2024 1:07 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Proxy limits
Importance: High

Hi [redacted]

As discussed earlier, we have two instances in Highland of electors who are acting as proxy for more than 2 domestic or 2 overseas electors. Unfortunately, neither the ERO Portal nor our EMS flag these so when processing, especially at the proxy deadline, we weren't aware of these. It is only because we have been contacted by the electors who are going on holiday today who wanted to check if their arrangements are ok, have we carried out a manual search.

I would be grateful if you could seek guidance from the Electoral Commission as soon as possible so that we can advise the electors who are going on holiday.

Hopefully these can be accepted and dealt with after the election.

Thanks

[redacted]
The Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board
Moray House
16-18 Bank Street
Inverness
IV1 1QY
E-mail – [redacted]
Tel - [redacted]
Mobile – [redacted]
www.saa.gov.uk/h-wi-vjb

Details of the Assessor for the Highland & Western Isles Privacy Notice and how the Assessor collects and uses personal information are available at https://www.saa.gov.uk/h-wi-vjb/privacy-notices/

Details of the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) for the Highland & Western Isles Privacy Notice and how the ERO collects and uses personal information are available at https://www.saa.gov.uk/h-wi-vjb/privacy-notices/

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]; [redacted]
Subject: RE: Single Transferrable vote video
Date: 23 May 2024 15:29:13
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png
image003.png

Hi [redacted]
We won't have capacity to make changes to this anytime soon, given UK general election resources taking priority, but we will be carrying out a programme of work ahead of the 2027 election looking at how we can reduce spoilt ballot rates, likely carrying out research and creating new voter information resources, so it's something we can look at in future.
Hope you're getting on well.
[redacted]

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 9:10 AM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]>
Subject: Single Transferrable vote video

Hi [redacted],

Hope you are well. We had feedback from a voter (previously a candidate for some of our elections) that the video Electoral Commission - Single Transferable Vote - YouTube (external link) is not accommodating any information what happens if the quota is not a round number (e.g. 64.5) and the fact that there is a rounding element by the system and what rules apply. As far as I am aware it is the arithmetic rounding rules that apply. Could something be added to the slide with the formulate to accommodate that?

We play this video a lot during our by-election count broadcasts and also add it to our website as it is such a good video

Thanks [redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
The Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness IV3 5NX
Email: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk
Contact: [redacted]
Employment at an Election - Join the Team!

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Yesterdays abandoned count
Date: 24 July 2024 16:03:46

Thanks [redacted].

[redacted]

The Electoral Commission
Tel: [redacted]
electoralcommission.org.uk

From: [redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, July 24, 2024 3:55 PM
To: [redacted]@electoralcommission.org.uk>
Subject: FW: Yesterdays abandoned count

2nd email

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, July 24, 2024 3:54 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Yesterdays abandoned count

[redacted]

The email below is the original email received from [redacted]. I replied initially and this response appears at the bottom of the previous chain.

Thanks

[redacted]

Highland Council
Council Headquarters
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX

[redacted]

Any internal legal advice provided herein is for the Client Service only. Written permission must be sought from the author prior to any disclosure to an external organisation or third party.

From: [redacted]

Sent: Saturday, July 6, 2024 4:14 PM
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Yesterdays abandoned count

CAUTION: This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear [redacted],

I hope this finds you well.

I am writing to express my concerns about the handling of ballot papers following the decision to arrange a recount for the Inverness, Skye & West Ross-shire constituency.
After the count was abandoned, yesterday, my election agent and I were hastily ushered out of the hall by [redacted], before the ballot papers were secured. This goes against the guidance provided by the Electoral Commission and the requirements set forth in the Representation of the People Act 1983, which stipulate that ballot papers must be sealed in the presence of candidates or their agents.
While I am not alleging any fraudulent activity, the lack of opportunity to observe the securing of the ballots affects the integrity of the process.
I would like to know what steps you will take to address this oversight and ensure that the election process remains transparent and trustworthy.
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
[redacted]
Parliamentary Candidate
Inverness, Skye & West Ross-Shire
[redacted]
Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]
Post: [redacted]
Follow me on Facebook at: [redacted]
Follow me on X (Twitter) at: [redacted]

The Electoral Commission

Template UK general election press release for Scottish councils

Voters urged to prepare for upcoming UK general election

Residents in <Name of constituency> are being urged to prepare ahead of the UK parliamentary general election taking place on Thursday 4 July.

Anyone who wants to have their say in the UK general election must be registered to vote by Tuesday 18 June. It only takes five minutes to register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

For the first time, voters in <name of constituency> will need to show photographic ID to vote in a UK general election. Residents are being advised to make sure they are ready to vote by checking they have an accepted form of ID.

Accepted forms of ID include a passport, driving licence, older persons or disabled persons bus pass, and Young Scot card. Voters will be able to use expired ID if they are still recognisable from the photo.

Anyone who does not have one of the accepted forms of ID can apply for free ID online at www.voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk/ or by contacting their local electoral registration office. The deadline for applying ahead of the UK general election is 5pm Wednesday 26 June. Voters wishing to apply should first make sure they are registered to vote.

Andy O'Neill, Head of the Electoral Commission, Scotland said:

"It is important that those who want to vote at the UK general election are registered to vote by the deadline, and have an accepted form of photo ID. We are urging voters to understand what types of ID they can use, and how to apply for free ID if they need it. Checking now rather than later means you will be ready when it's time to vote."

"You can find more information about the ID requirement, including the full list of accepted ID and what to expect at the polling place, on the Electoral Commission's website."

<Name>, Returning Officer at <name of council>, said:

"Residents who do not have one of the accepted forms of ID can apply for free ID either online or by completing a paper application form and sending this to <name of electoral registration office>. If you need any help with applying for the free ID or want to request an application form, contact <name of electoral registration office> on <contact details for electoral registration office>."

The full list of accepted ID is available on the Electoral Commission's website, along with more information about the requirement and details of how to apply for the free ID, at electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID.

Voters also have the choice to vote by post or proxy. The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 5pm Wednesday 19 June. The deadline for a proxy vote is 5pm Wednesday 26 June. For information on elections in their area, how to register to vote or how to apply by post or by proxy, voters can visit www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Ends

For more information contact the <council's communications team contact details or> Electoral Commission press office on 0131 225 0211, out of office hours 07789 920414 or press@electoralcommission.org.uk.

Notes to editors

- The requirement to show photo ID at the polling place, is a requirement introduced by the UK Government's Elections Act.
- The legislation requires voters at polling places to show an accepted form of photo ID before they receive their ballot paper. The requirement applies to UK parliamentary elections, including parliamentary by-elections, local council elections in England, and police and crime commissioner elections in England and Wales. It does not apply at local elections in Scotland or Wales, or elections to the Scottish Parliament or Senedd. The requirement already exists in Northern Ireland.
- The UK Government's Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities is responsible for the voter ID policy and for the free voter ID application system. Enquiries relating to the application system or the policy itself should be directed to the Department.
- The Electoral Commission is responsible for ensuring voters are aware of the voter ID requirement, and for supporting local authorities with the process. Questions related to the public awareness campaign should be directed to the Electoral Commission.
- Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers are responsible for implementing voter ID at the local level in Scotland.
- To apply for the Voter Authority Certificate, voters will need to provide a photo, full name, date of birth, the address at which they are registered to vote and their National Insurance number.