## **DELAYED DELIVERY OF POSTAL VOTES: STATEMENT FROM THE ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND (EMB)**

The Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB) ([www.emb.scot](http://www.emb.scot) )is committed to supporting the delivery of electoral events in Scotland which produce results in which there can be full confidence.

Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers across Scotland have been dealing with many questions and concerns about this UK Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE), particularly around the late delivery of postal votes in many areas of Scotland. We are acutely aware of voters’ and others’ concerns and share the frustration of anyone who has not received a ballot paper that they were expecting.

This Election has been extremely challenging for everyone involved. UK Parliament Elections are always run on a tight timescale with key deadlines defined in law, and many complex logistical operations to be completed within a limited period. Election legislation dictates the schedule in which voter information can be produced and issued. There are very clear deadlines set for each stage of the election process which cannot be changed. In Scotland, these pressures were further exacerbated as Polling Day fell within the school holidays.

The Board has been working with Royal Mail and the specialist secure printing contractors who create the individual postal vote packs unique to each voter, to identify the reasons for the delayed deliveries. The pressured timescale, a significant increase in demand, a new national IT system and some production problems all seem to have contributed to this outcome, and the EMB continues to gather information on specific issues and causes throughout Scotland. No postal votes remain to be delivered to voters in Scotland.

The EMB called last week for a major review of capacity and systems after this Election and is pleased to note that the Electoral Commission intends to undertake a full review. Its findings will be publicly reported and will inform the delivery of future elections and any revisions to electoral law. The EMB is planning to hold its own evaluation and will develop recommendations for Government.

### **Putting the Voter at the centre**

Returning Officers and their teams have been working very hard to address the challenges with creative and lawful solutions. Teams have gone the extra mile to make sure that eligible voters are able to exercise their democratic rights.

Undelivered or lost postal votes can be reissued by the Returning Officer right up until 5pm on polling day. Many Returning Officers across Scotland have set up facilities to reissue packs over the weekend to assist voters who were about to leave on holiday and had yet to receive their papers. Where geography or circumstances were different other options were offered always with appropriate security measures in place so that papers were only give to the correct people.

### **Postal votes cannot be replaced with an Emergency Proxy**

Once an individual has selected to use a postal vote, the law prevents a Returning Officer from offering any alternative ways for them to vote - an emergency proxy cannot be granted to a postal voter.

### **Returning Postal Votes**

Postal votes should be posted back as soon as possible through Royal Mail which has given assurances that any votes in their systems right up until the evening of 4 July will be given to Returning Officers so they can enter the Count. Postal Votes can also be returned:

* to any polling station in the Council area between 7am and 10pm on polling day; or
* to the Council Office stated in the postal vote pack.

Anyone handing a postal vote in will need to fill in a short return form, but will not need to show ID.

### **Polling Day and the Count**

While around 24% of electors in Scotland have a postal vote the remainder will be voting in person on 4 July and many thousands of committed staff will be operating polling stations from 7am to ensure that they can cast their vote securely and in secret, with results coming through the night as further thousands of staff verify and count the papers. The Board is confident that Returning Officers and their staff across Scotland will again operate to the highest professional standards to ensure that every vote will be counted and that the democratic process can be implemented across the 57 constituencies in Scotland.

2 July 2024