

# **METHODOLOGY FOR REVIEWING POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING STATIONS**

**Date: Monday 2 October 2023**

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# BACKGROUND

A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election.

In England, each parish is to be a separate polling district and, in Wales, each community should be a separate polling district, unless there are special circumstances. This means that a parish or community must not be in a polling district which has a part of either a different parish or community within it, or any un-parished part of the local authority area within it, unless special circumstances apply. Those special circumstances could arise if, for example, the parish/community has only a small number of electors and it is not practicable for the parish/community to be its own polling district.

In Scotland, each electoral ward must be divided into two or more polling districts unless there are special circumstances. Given the size of wards in Scotland and the Highlands, it is difficult to envisage what those special circumstances might be in practice.

When a parish or community is not a separate polling district or a Scottish electoral ward is not split into two or more polling districts, the special circumstances and the recommendation resulting from these should be clearly set in the review document for the council or relevant committee to consider.

**A polling place** is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.

We are aware that some authorities designate the entire polling district as the polling place. However, Section 18B(4)(e) of the RPA 1983 states that 'the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station'. We therefore consider that polling places should always be defined more specifically than simply the polling district - for example, by designating the name of the polling place (normally a particular building or area and its environs).

**A polling station** is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.

Unlike polling districts and polling places, which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are selected by the relevant Returning Officer for the election. The Returning Officer will allocate between around 800 and 1,200 electors per polling station, depending on the election.

**A Polling Scheme** details the division of various electoral areas into Polling Districts and the Polling Place allocated for voters in that particular area.

## METHODOLOGY

- Retain, as far as practical, the current scheme of polling places and districts to minimise disruption to voters
- Consider amalgamation of polling places with very low levels and a decreasing electorate
- Increase the number of double/triple polling stations where possible
- Work to Electoral Commission ratio guidelines whereby no more than 2,500 electors are allocated to each polling station
- Seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances

- Seek to ensure that the polling place has appropriate accessibility for electors who are disabled so far as is reasonable
- Electorate figures (register of 1 May 2023) are utilised to include both in person and absent voters and 100% turnout
- As we have a number of unscheduled elections for which we cannot organise an in-service day e.g. UK Parliamentary and Local Government By-elections, limit the use of schools where possible unless complete separation is in place e.g. community school
- Help to facilitate the safe and efficient delivery of elections

## REVIEW METHOD

- Review the polling districts per ward. We have 21 local government wards in the Highlands
- The order of the review is:
  - Review wards with schools in the first instance and find alternative venues
  - Review the ward with a by-election (ward 7)
  - Review wards with UK Parliamentary cross-boundaries
  - Review remaining wards
- When assessing each ward the method deployed was:
  - Per ward confirm the number of polling districts
  - Check the total number of electors (in person/ PV) for the ward, each individual polling district and polling place
  - Check previous polling schemes for alternative venues
  - Consider previous turnouts, if available
  - Consider local [planning development plans](#) and future planning
    - [Housing Land Audit 2022 \(arcgis.com\)](#)
    - [House Completions Dashboard \(arcgis.com\)](#)
    - Estimate of 1.78 electors per dwelling in new development (research data Fife Council)
  - Assess per district if change or no change. This could mean the amalgamation of some districts or the creation of additional ones.
  - Overlay the districts with the UK Boundary changes ([GIS map](#))
  - Consider levels of electorate and nearby polling places
  - Check for public transport/ change of access roads/ area/ school catchment area
  - Confirm polling place and accuracy of the suitability assessment
  - Identify any other polling place potentials for contingency purposes
  - Appropriateness for democratic use
  - Cost-effectiveness of the venue
  - Availability of facilities for polling station staff
  - Availability of the venue
  - Assessment accessibility category (green/amber/red)

## INFORMAL CONSULTATION

Prior to the Notice which will be published on 2 October 2023, an informal review was undertaken to inform the proposal. This informal review included previous feedback on venues, lessons learnt from elections, meetings with ward managers, members and disability groups.

# NAMING CONVENTION FOR POLLING DISTRICTS

C01A – currently UK Parliamentary (C) ward (01) letter A,B,C,D etc

Following **UK Parliamentary** boundary review, the Highland Council constituencies are as follows:

- Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross County (C)
- Inverness-shire, Skye and West Ross-shire County (I)

For cross boundary purposes:

- Moray West, Nairn and Strathspey County (M)
- Argyll, Bute and South Lochaber County (A)

## Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies

- Caithness, Sutherland and Ross (C)
- Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch (S)
- Inverness & Nairn (I)

New naming convention:

| UK Parliamentary | Scottish Parliamentary | Ward Number | Polling District<br>If repeat AA |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| C                | C                      | 01          | A                                |

This new naming convention captures all relevant data which reduces the risk of error when creating the polling scheme for a particular election.

Polling places will be plotted on a map which will contain the data as presented below:

| Proposed Polling Places Sep2023  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Existing PPD                     | I19D                                |
| Updated PPD                      | II19D                               |
| 2019 Polling Place(s)            | CRADLEHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL           |
| 2023 Polling Place(s)            | CRADLEHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL           |
| Ward Name                        | Inverness South                     |
| Ward Number                      | 19                                  |
| UK Parliament Constituency       | Inverness, Skye and West Ross-Shire |
| Scottish Parliament Constituency | Inverness and Nairn                 |
| Easting                          | 270527                              |
| Northing                         | 844585                              |
| What3Words                       | ///bluff.incur.spades               |
| UPRN                             | 000130107695                        |
| Status                           | No Change                           |