

COMMUNICATIONS and ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on Local Authority to divide the local authority area into polling districts based on ward boundaries, and to designate a polling place for each district. Local Authorities also have a duty to keep these polling arrangements under review.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced amendments to the 1983 Act (which in turn has been superseded by The Electoral Administration Act 2013) and the most recent legislative change of the Election Act 2022, further introduced changes regarding accessibility and the voting process.

In accordance with legislation, The Highland Council requires to commence its statutory duty in the review of polling districts, places and polling stations on 2 October 2023 and must be completed before 31 January 2025.

Representations on the proposals are invited from electors, elected representatives, political parties, local community groups within The Highland Council area and persons or organisations with expertise in respect of access to premises or facilities for persons with any type of disability.

The consultation period for the Review will commence on Monday 2 October 2023 and will conclude on Tuesday 14 November 2023.

We encourage anyone making representations to suggest alternative polling districts or places to those proposed where appropriate, along with their reasons, so that they may be given full consideration.

A methodological process will be utilised in the review and part of this will consider the impact of the next four years' worth of planned residential developments on existing electoral arrangements.

Representations should be made in writing by submitting the online form via (<https://forms.office.com/e/kcwJE1rvKk>), or alternatively submitting a

representation by email or by post to the address below. Please get in contact 01349 886657 if you require the information in an accessible form.

Online: <https://forms.office.com/e/kcwJE1rvKk>
Email: election@highland.gov.uk
Address: The Highland Council, The Election Office
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness IV3 5NX

Any representations received will be published on the Highland Council website and will be available for public inspection at the Highland Archive and Registration Centre, Bught Road, Inverness IV3 5SS. The Highland Archive and Registration Centre is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 1000hrs to 1630hrs.

After this deadline, and consideration of all representations received, a report containing the final proposals for polling districts and polling places will be submitted for consideration at a meeting of The Highland Council.

Any changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places as part of the Review will be incorporated in a forthcoming publication of the Register of Electors, ahead of a UK Parliamentary election.

KEY DATES

MILESTONE		DATE
Publication of Notice of Review		Monday, 2 October 2023
Publication of Consultation paper including Returning Officer's proposals		Monday, 2 October 2023
Open public Consultation		Monday, 2 October 2023
Closing Date for Representations		Tuesday, 14 November 2023
Council Meeting - ratification of polling district and polling changes		Thursday, 14 December 2023
Publish New Polling Districts and Polling Places		Friday, 15 December 2023
Name of consultation: Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Places		Key dates/activity/info
Why do you need to consult?	Statutory review - the length of the review process is not prescribed, provided all the steps required by the legislation can be undertaken within it. However, the time allowed for consultation should be sufficient to enable interested persons and groups to read and understand the proposals, gather comments and respond with any alternative arrangements that they may wish to submit. The local authority may wish to have regard to any council guidelines on public consultation when carrying out the review.	From Monday 2 October until Tuesday 14 November 2023 6 weeks
What are the main aims and objectives?	Ensure messaging is clear, correct, and accessible for all stakeholders GIS interactive map	By 22 September 2023
Who will you consult with?	Within The Highland Council area: Political parties and Elected representatives	From 2 October 2023

	(MPs, MSPs, MEPs and Councillors) Community Council Secretaries and Local Community groups Religions organisations Electors and Members of the Public Disabled Access Interest Groups and persons or organisations with expertise in respect of access to premises or facilities for persons with any type of disability Returning Officers from Moray and Argyll and Bute because of cross boundary constituencies	
How will you consult? How will the consultation be communicated/ publicised?	Notice on website Intranet Public display Press releases and social media Individual letters and emails Ward Management Business Meetings and Information Table at Highland Council committees Schools intranet and Community councils and community groups contacted as part of regular Policy team update	Website prepared by 22 September 2023 and plan prepared
Who will monitor, analyse responses and provide updates on results?	The election officers	Ongoing
Who will act on the consultation?	The election officers	Ongoing
Who will the results be reported to and when?	The election officer will report the considerations of all representations received, the background documentation and a report containing the final proposals for polling districts and polling places will be submitted for consideration at The Highland Council Committee.	Thursday, 14 December 2023

How will you provide feedback to respondents and when?	Any representations received will be published on the Highland Council website and available for public inspection at the Highland Archive and Registration Centre.	From Thursday, 14 December 2023
Who will evaluate how successful the consultation has been and when?	The election officers	Ongoing

STAKEHOLDERS AND CHANNELS

STAKEHOLDERS	CHANNEL/MEANS	DATE	OWNERSHIP
Service Centre staff	FAQs Briefing	Thursday, 26 October 2023	Election Team
Politicians (Cabinet Member/ Leader/Members/Parties/ MPs/MEPs)	Direct comms towards portal Email Website Press Release	Monday, 2 October 2023	Election Team and Corporate Comms
Highland Council Members	Engagement table at Highland Council meeting	Thursday, 26 October 2023	Election Team
Community Councils	Email to all community councils	Monday, 2 October 2023	Election and Policy Team
Partner organisations and other public agencies e.g. HIE, NHS	Communication email	Monday, 2 October 2023	Election Team
Staff	The review is ongoing and if you are a resident please go to the portal to take part. Staff news intranet	Monday, 2 October 2023	Corporate Comms

Disability Groups	Email and inclusion of slides in weekly circulation list	Monday, 2 October 2023	Election Team and Corporate Comms
Electors	Website, Press Release and Social Media – consultation open	Monday, 2 October 2023	Election Team and Corporate Comms
Electors	Website, Press Release and Social Media – consultation to be closed on Tuesday 14 November 2023	Monday, 6 November 2023	Election Team and Corporate Comms

KEY MESSAGES

MESSAGE	DATE
Notice of the Review and consultation open. We want to know if you have any thoughts about where you go to vote. The consultation is open and this is how you take part - Are you an in-person voter and want to continue to vote in person at a polling station - Check if your polling place has changed	Monday, 2 October 2023
The consultation will close this week	Monday, 13 November 2023
The consultation is now closed	Tuesday, 14 November 2023
Ratification by the council on the new polling scheme. The Council approved – voter check if your polling station has changed	Thursday, 14 December 2023
Publication of the Electoral Register with the changes	At forthcoming publication Electoral Register
The electoral register has been published following the review of the Polling Places/districts. Check if your polling place has changed. The boundaries for the UK parliamentary boundaries have changed – check if your polling place has changed and for which constituency you will be able to vote at the next UK Parliamentary Election.	From Monday, 5 February 2024