

Returning Officer & Electoral Registration Officer event

Preparedness for the Scottish Parliament elections 2026

9:30 – 16:00 | Tuesday 7 October 2025 | Stirling Court Hotel

09:30	Registration and refreshments	Silver Glen room
10:00	Welcome Setting the scene, lessons learnt & challenges	Sue Bruce & Malcolm Burr
10:10	Roles & responsibilities ERO, CRO and RRO responsibilities accountability, planning and collaboration	Robert Nicol & Malcolm Burr
10:20	Legislation update & EMB Directions Key legislative takeaways from new Electoral Reform Act & Conduct Order 2025, EMB directions SPE26	Chris Highcock & Alison Davidson
11:15	Absent voting – managing divergence Absent Voting divergence, impacts on electors who want to apply, new emergency proxy impacts	Robert Nicol
11:45	Planning & Communicating Accessibility provisions Change in legislation and updated accessibility guidance, Work of the EMB Accessibility sub-group, development of the Tactile Cardboard Overlay / Audio	Jim Savege & Alison Davidson
12:15	Questions & Discussion	Panel
12:30	Lunch Coffee / Accessibility & ePolling supplier displays	Restaurant / Silver Glen room
13:30	Print supply & postal vote considerations Lessons learnt, risk & resilience, practical plans and interventions, contingency and Royal Mail reform	Chris Highcock
14:00	Communication & awareness for stakeholders Your role in communication and awareness, key messages for SPE 2026, resources and support	Sarah Mackie & Natalie Mauchline

14:20	Management & delivery of a safe election Issue management and escalation, your role in supporting candidates and agents & security considerations	Peter Hesselst
14:50	Finance & funding Scottish Government approach to the funding of the election and the claim process	Maria McCann
15:20	Looking ahead Future reforms, Dual mandates, UK Pilots, Local government elections 2027	Chris Highcock
15:35	Closing remarks Takeaways / Actions for ROs and EROs	Sue Bruce & Malcolm Burr

Speakers

Dame Sue Bruce	Commissioner for Scotland, Electoral Commission
Malcolm Burr	Convener, Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB)
Alison Davidson	Senior Officer, Electoral Practice & Performance, The Electoral Commission
Peter Hesselst	Member, EMB & Returning Officer, West Dunbartonshire Council
Chris Highcock	Secretary, Electoral Management Board for Scotland and Depute Returning Officer for The City of Edinburgh Council
Sarah Mackie	Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland
Natalie Mauchline	Senior Communications and Engagement Officer, The Electoral Commission
Maria McCann	Head of Elections Team (Policy and Review), Scottish Government
Robert Nicol	Member, EMB & Electoral Registration Officer, Renfrewshire VJB and Chair of the Scottish Assessors Association - Electoral Registration Committee
Jim Savege	Depute Convener, EMB & Returning Officer, Aberdeenshire Council