

Counting of votes at the UK Parliamentary election: statement by (Acting) Returning Officer

Please complete and return this statement to [your](#) local Commission team if you did not start the UK Parliamentary election count within four hours of the close of poll. Please submit the statement within 30 days after the close of poll.

Constituency name:	Angus and Perthshire Glens
Date of election:	4 July 2024
(Acting) Returning Officer's name:	Kathryn Lindsay, Returning Officer
Required information	
Time counting of votes began: (hh/mm)	05:20 (5 July 2024)
Describe the steps you took to start counting the votes before 2.00am:	<p>Geography and Transportation of Boxes</p> <p>The geographical extent of this new constituency is substantial. It extends from Montrose in the east, to Luncarty in the south, to Tigh na Cruach to the west and beyond Glenshee to the north. This is the first election to take place in this new boundary area.</p> <p>The Returning Officer and team for the Angus and Perthshire Glens constituency is also responsible for the Arbroath and Broughty Ferry constituency. Combined, the total electorate for the two areas is 152,817. (Angus and Perthshire Glens 76,668/Arbroath and Broughty Ferry 76,149).</p>

The count centre for this constituency is the Saltire Centre, Arbroath which was identified due to the size of the Centre and because it has been used successfully for numerous counts in the past. The Saltire Centre provides accommodation and facilities including a large sports hall used as the count centre, with numerous other areas used for the registering and receipt of ballot boxes and other materials, opening of accepted postal votes and the verification of unused ballot papers. The Centre also provides a public gallery overlooking the sports hall which is used as the media gallery, sufficient floor space for candidates and agents to view proceedings and an area for candidates and agents outwith the count hall, and a separate area for staff. Colleagues managing the centre have proven experience of delivering the necessary facilities and support. Concentration of resources and experience in one venue enables resource and expertise to be re-directed wherever most required. The advantages of using this location far outweigh the use of multiple locations as the logistics of getting people, equipment and stationery in the right quota to a number of venues is far more problematic, as is the issue of maintaining security.

As part of the project planning, it was considered necessary, due to a significant number of changes being implemented at this election, for some areas of consistency with past arrangements to be retained. The count being undertaken in Arbroath was a necessity for staff members and the smooth running of the election day.

Having determined to retain the Saltire Centre as the count venue, it was also determined that ballot boxes from the furthest point in the new constituency boundary were unlikely to be received until 2am or after thus exceeding the 4 hour window. However the benefits to retaining the past arrangements were considered necessary to ensure that the new election team and those staff employed previously at the count venue were comfortable with proceedings.

Mini-Count

As part of the project planning and risk assessments, consideration was given to the possibility of undertaking a mini-count. The Returning Officer, together with the election team determined that due to a number of factors, including a new election team, new constituency boundaries, staffing resource and the time constraints in terms of making the necessary arrangements for this election, not to commence a mini-count on this occasion but to consider this for future parliamentary elections.

	<p>Staffing Resources</p> <p>Due to the substantial increase to the size of this constituency, it was necessary to employ more staff than ever before to assist with the run up to and the day/night of the election.</p> <p>On this occasion around 80 enumerators undertook the verification and counting of votes cast with additional support staff on hand to assist where required. Following conclusion of the opening of postal votes, staff were utilised to assist with the counting of votes, increasing the staff by a further 10 people.</p> <p>As already alluded to, many of the staff employed on this occasion were new and had not worked on an election before. The date of the election coincided with Scottish school holidays which resulted in many experienced staff being on annual leave. It is therefore the case that for the count to be success, staff required to take time to complete the tasks before them in a methodical manner to prevent errors occurring, ensuring accuracy at every stage of the process.</p>
<p>Explanation of why the counting of the votes did not start by 2.00am:</p>	<p>Angus Council was responsible for two new large constituencies with the Angus & Perthshire Glens constituency extending to Montrose in the east, to Luncarty in the south, to Tigh na Cruach to the west and beyond Glenshee to the north. This is the first election to take place in this new boundary area. As a result of the boxes from the Perthshire Glens area only being received after 2am, the verification process and therefore the counting of votes did not commence by 2am. The counting of votes was further delayed due to the increase in the number of postal votes handed in to polling stations following a national problem with the delay in issuing postal votes. Angus complete a sweep of polling stations across the area to collect postal votes handed in and commenced an opening at 8pm. However, again as result of the geographical location, the postal votes received from the Perthshire Glens area increased significantly and were opened upon receipt and after 2am. This further delayed the conclusion of the verification process and the start of the counting of votes.</p>

	<p>Staffing for the Parliamentary election has been challenging with many late call offs. The staff used were fully briefed with detailed instructions. The Returning Officer also briefed staff on the evening of the Count. The impact of using new staff combined with the requirement to complete two large counts concurrently in the same venue thus reducing the staff for the Angus & Perthshire Glens constituency contributed to the counting of votes at a later than expected timeframe however the sheer geographical area covered in this constituency was the main factor.</p> <p>A full review of the count and lessons learned, will be undertaken and will provide useful information in planning for any future parliamentary election.</p>
Date of this statement:	2 August 2024