

Date set for Independence referendum



Scotland's referendum will be held on 18 September 2014, First Minister Alex Salmond announced in the Scottish Parliament this afternoon.

The date is contained in the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill, introduced to the Parliament and published today, which also confirms that voters will be asked the question: "Should Scotland be an independent country?".

[The Scottish Independence Referendum Bill](#)

The legislation provides that the referendum will be:

- preceded by a 16-week formal campaign period, during which limits will apply to the amount of money any registered participant may spend on campaigning, aimed at ensuring a level playing field for both sides of the debate
- overseen by the independent Electoral Commission, responsible for regulating the campaign rules, informing the public about the referendum and reporting to the Scottish Parliament on the conduct and administration of the referendum
- conducted under the direction of a Chief Counting Officer responsible for appointing local Counting Officers to run the poll in local areas

Mr Salmond said:

"On 18th September 2014 people across Scotland will vote to determine their country's future. It will be a historic day,

and one on which this ancient nation decides its place in the world.

“People will be able to choose if they want a Scotland that is independent and able to make her own decisions – with a Scottish Parliament that is responsible for making the most of Scotland’s rich resources to benefit its communities and safeguard the welfare of our most vulnerable citizens and accountable for how we engage other nations around the world.

“Devolution has shown how we can use Holyrood’s powers to improve lives in the policy areas where we are already effectively independent.

“Scotland has made great strides since our national Parliament was reconvened in 1999 after almost 300 years. We are a more confident country, secure in the knowledge that when we take decisions for ourselves we can help make this a better place to live for all our citizens.

“Landmark policies introduced since devolution have made Scotland a safer, healthier and fairer country. Throughout the Parliament’s history, we have used our powers for progressive purposes – such as free personal care, pioneering homelessness legislation, an end to tuition fees, and protecting the National Health Service.

“But we can and must do more – and only the powers of an independent Parliament with control of the economy, of international representation and of security will allow us to make the most of our huge national potential.

“Scotland now faces two futures: continuing with an outdated political entity that ill-serves the interests of the people of Scotland – a system that will continue to give us governments we didn’t vote for. Or independence, where Scotland will get a Parliament that is both fully-empowered and fully-accountable to those whose lives are affected by its actions.

“With full economic levers and access to our huge natural resources, we can not only defend the progress made with devolution but we can become a fairer, more prosperous society. And one where a new, 21st Century relationship is forged between the nations of these islands and with the wider community of nations.

“18 September 2014 can be a date which becomes etched in our nation’s story as the day Scotland took a decisive step forward to a better, fairer future.”

[The Scottish Independence Referendum Bill \(and supporting documents\)](#)

The Chief Counting Officer will be the convener of Electoral Management Board for Scotland.

The Bill sets out the details of how the referendum will be organised and regulated.

Details of who can vote in the referendum, are included in the [Scottish Independence Referendum \(Franchise\) Bill](#) published on March 12 this year

The costs of running and regulating the referendum, funding a mailshot for each of the designated organisations and running public awareness campaigns is broken down as follows:

- £8.6 million for running the referendum
- £2.4 million to pay for a free mailshot for the two campaign organisations (which was included as part of the Edinburgh Agreement (paragraphs 22 and 23) at the request of the UK Government)
- £2.4 million for the Electoral Commission providing regulation and oversight of the referendum. Scottish Government has accepted the Commission’s recommendation that £1.8 million should be used for public awareness

campaigns)