

#SP2021 – record number of postal votes registered

People who have registered for a postal vote will either have received those today, or will receive them in the next few days.

Provisional figures show that around 1.01 million voters have registered to vote by post. This is almost a quarter of the electorate, and is the highest number ever registered for the alternative way of casting a ballot.

Postal votes must be returned by 10pm on 6 May 2021 for the votes to count.

Malcolm Burr, Convener of the Electoral Management Board for Scotland said: “We can’t count any votes that come back to us after 10pm on 6 May so if you have a postal vote make sure you send it back in plenty of time. If you do leave it late then you can drop your completed pack at your local polling place on election day.”

As well as marking their ballot papers, postal voters must also complete and return a statement with their date of birth and signature. These are checked against the ones they provided when they first applied for the postal vote and is an important measure to keep their vote safe.

Andy O’Neill, Head of the Electoral Commission in Scotland said: “With many people voting by post for the first time this May, it’s really important that they follow the instructions in their postal ballot pack to make sure their vote can count. Half of all postal votes rejected at the last UK general

election were because the signature or date of birth did not match their application, so extra care needs to be taken when filling in these parts of the postal voting statement.”

While the postal vote deadline has now passed, it is still possible to apply for a proxy vote where a voter can appoint someone they trust to cast their vote.

The deadline to apply for a proxy vote is 5pm on Tuesday 27 April 2021. More information is available at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voter

The security of the system is based on signatures provided on registration and with the ballot paper when it is returned. Candidates, party workers and campaigners should not undertake to return the postal voting pack on behalf of voters.

All postal votes are actually opened and checked by the Returning Officers before polling day but are not counted until the polls have closed. This leads to a photo opportunity for the press when the first postal votes are tipped out onto the tables where staff are waiting to begin counting. Usually that takes place just after 10pm on the Election Day but this year arrangements will be different.



Votes are tipped onto the counting table by council workers at the EU Election PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter