

General election: Advice for voters in West Lothian

The country goes to the polls on 4 July in a long expected, but still surprising election date just as many families will be heading off on holidays.

Here's a guide to what's going to happen. We also provide a current list of who is standing in the two constituencies which cover West Lothian.

As with many constituencies there has been a slight redraw in boundaries and a change of names. Livingston covers the largest, south eastern area of the county.

Bathgate and Linlithgow, formerly Linlithgow and East Falkirk, takes in the northern and western areas of the county including Bathgate, Armadale and Whitburn, as well as a part of eastern Falkirk.

Three local councillors are among the candidates in both constituencies so far.

In Livingston the former sitting SNP MP Hannah Bardell who has held the seat since 2015 will face a challenge from Conservative group leader on the council Damian Doran-Timson.

In Bathgate and Linlithgow the SNP's Martyn Day will defend the seat he has held since 2015 against a bid by Labour's depute council leader Kirsteen Sullivan, and the Linlithgow Liberal Democrat councillor Sally Pattle.

On the day polling stations will open at 7am and close at 10pm. Registered voters will soon receive polling cards which advising them of their polling station.

These are usually schools, churches or community buildings in the council wards, with around 8 to 10 per ward.

A full list is available here:- <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/ge2024>.

The big difference in this General Election is that voters will have to show photo ID to be able to vote. That and other changes mean that the traditional poll card "postcard" voters receive beforehand will be replaced in this election by a A5 sized letter explaining the new rules.

The count for both West Lothian constituencies will start soon after 10pm in West Lothian College, Livingston. Candidates and their supporters can gather to observe the count.

Unlike local council elections in which votes are now counted electronically, the General Election relies on the traditional first past the post system and an actual tally by hand of the voting papers.

If you are on holiday when the election comes there are options to vote before you go or have someone vote in your place- a proxy.

However, there are a number of options available to voters to ensure they can still cast their vote even if they won't be in the country come 4 July.

Firstly, you need to be registered to vote. Registering to vote will mean you are on the Electoral Register and will be able to attend a polling station and vote in person.

Anyone who is not registered to vote should visit www.gov.uk/register-to-vote or call the Lothian Electoral Registration Office on 0131 344 2500. The deadline

for voter registration is midnight on Tuesday 18 June.

Anyone who is registered to vote in this election can apply to vote by post. Applications for new postal votes (including postal proxy votes where someone else submits the postal vote on your behalf) or changes to postal vote details must be made by 5pm on Wednesday 19 June 2024.

Applications for changes to existing postal or proxy votes must be made by 5pm on Wednesday 19 June 2024.

You can now apply for a postal vote online at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote?step-by-step-nav=ff81c31c-3282-49df-85a4-013887130110>

The first day that a replacement for a lost or undelivered postal vote can be issued is Friday 28 June. If you will be away before that date then consider whether you wish to appoint a proxy instead.

A proxy vote is when you appoint a nominated person to vote on your behalf either in person or by post.

If you are already registered for a proxy vote but need to make changes to your details then this must be done by 5pm on Wednesday 26 June 2024.

Applications for new proxy votes (except for emergencies) must also be made by 5pm on Wednesday 26 June 2024.

Applications for emergency proxy votes can be made until 5pm on polling day (4 July 2024).

You can now apply for a proxy vote online at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote?step-by-step-nav=ff81c31c-3282-49df-85a4-013887130110>

Applications for both postal and proxy votes can also be made to the Electoral Registration Officer at www.lothian-vjb.gov.uk or by sending complete applications

to 17A South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9FL or calling 0131 344 2500.

Declared candidates so far:-

Livingston

Hannah Bardell, SNP.

Damian Doran-Timson, Conservative.

Gregor Poynton, Labour.

Caron Lindsay, Liberal Democrat.

Cameron Glasgow, Scottish Green Party.

Debbie Ewen, Alba Party.

David McLennan, Reform UK.

Danielle Mclean, Workers Party of Britain

Bathgate and Linlithgow

Martyn Day, SNP.

Kirsteen Sullivan, Labour and Co-operative.

Sally Pattle, Liberal Democrat.

Simon Jay, Scottish Green Party.

John Hannah, Independence for Scotland Party.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter