

Apply for a postal or proxy vote

Before you can apply for a Postal or Proxy vote, you must be registered to vote.

If you have already registered to vote, then click on the sections below for more information on Postal and Proxy Voting.

The deadline for registering to vote in this by-election was midnight on Tuesday 5 November 2024.

Voting by Post

It is possible to vote by post in an election. However, to vote by post you will have to be registered at your current address. If you applied to vote by post you will receive a postal pack around Monday 11 November 2024 (1 ballot paper, postal voting statement and return envelope) at the address you have requested.

When you receive your postal pack, it should contain:

- Envelope A / Postal Voting Statement
- Ballot paper
- Return envelope (Envelope B)
- Guide to completing your postal vote

The ballot paper and the postal voting statement will both be numbered, and these numbers should match.

If you have a postal vote you will not be able to vote in person at a polling station. However, it is possible to hand your complete postal pack into a polling station within the ward if you are unable to post it in time.

If your circumstances change, for example if you have moved to a new house or changed your name, your previous postal vote will no longer be valid. You have missed the deadline to re-apply for a postal vote at your new address and must inform the Electoral Registration Office of your new contact details this can be updated for future elections – this can be done at the same time as you register.

Please note that at elections, postal votes cannot be issued immediately. Due to production deadlines, there will be a delay in issuing postal packs. Additionally, the mail service to and from overseas countries cannot always be guaranteed and you should seek advice at the time as to whether or not it is practical for a postal vote to be sent and returned before election day or whether you would be better arranging a proxy vote for the election.

Someone voting on your behalf (proxy vote) –

If you can't vote in person, you can apply to vote by proxy. However, to vote by proxy you, and the person you ask to vote on your behalf, will have to be registered before a proxy application can be approved. Anyone can be your proxy so long as they are eligible to vote in the election and are willing to vote on your behalf.

You have to provide a reason for needing a proxy vote.

For example:

- you are going away on holiday
- you have a physical condition that prevents you from getting to the polling place
- the kind of work you do means you can't get to the polling station
- you have to attend an educational course
- you are a Crown Servant or a member of Her Majesty's Armed force.

To apply for a proxy vote please complete the correct form by 5pm on Wednesday 13 November 2024 which you'll find [here](#) and it must be returned to the Electoral Registration Office.

Contact details are on this page.

Even if you have a proxy vote, you will be able to vote in person if you arrive to vote before your proxy.

If your circumstances change, for example if you move to a new house or change your name, your previous proxy vote will no longer be valid. You will need to re-apply for a proxy vote at your new address – this can be done at the same time as you register.

PROBLEMS WITH POSTAL PACK

I haven't received my postal pack –

If you haven't received your postal pack by Friday 15 November 2024, please contact us on 01349 886657 for a replacement pack.

The law requires us to seek confirmation of your identity before issuing a replacement pack – this could be your passport, driving licence, bus pass or student card.

If you don't have any of these documents, then we can advise what other forms of identification can be used.

We will cancel the original pack once we've issued you with a replacement.

I am missing the return envelope "B" –

Please carefully check contents of your postal pack again. We can send you a replacement envelope or you could use a spare envelope with the address of the Returning Officer. Please call 01349 886657 to arrange.

I am missing my ballot paper/Postal Voting Statement –

Please check contents of your postal pack again as the ballot paper can get caught up in other documents.

If one or both are still missing, we can send you a replacement after you send us back all contents of original pack for cancellation. (This can be done by post but may be easier in person). Please contact us on 01349 886657 to arrange for a replacement pack.

The ballot paper number does not match the number on the Postal Voting Statement (PVS) –

You should receive one white ballot paper in your pack.

The number on the ballot paper should match with the number on your Postal Voting Statement (PVS).

If the ballot paper number does not match the number on the PVS, if there are other voters in the household, please check if ballot papers have been mixed up.

Otherwise please call 01349 886657 for a replacement pack.

You will need to return all of the contents of the pack before the pack can be replaced.

I've received more than one ballot paper –

If you have more than one ballot paper, please check if either of the numbers on the ballot papers match the number on the postal voting statement.

If one does, you can complete and return that ballot paper as normal but please include the additional paper(s) in a separate envelope in the envelope B.

Common Mistakes when completing a Postal Vote Statement -

When signing your postal vote statement please ensure you enter your date of birth and not the date you have filled in the form.

Please ensure you sign and enter your date of birth on your postal vote statement.

Your postal vote will not be processed if you fail to follow any of the above.

I'VE MADE A MISTAKE

I've accidentally destroyed/damaged my postal pack (e.g. shredded, spilt coffee, dog has chewed ballot paper etc) –

If the damage is only superficial (e.g. a coffee spill) this won't invalidate your vote. Let it dry then clearly mark the ballot paper, complete your date of birth and sign the Postal Vote Statement.

If the ballot paper has been damaged **and cannot be used**, you will need to return the damaged pack and apply for a replacement pack by contacting us on 01349 886657.

We can reissue a pack any time after postal votes have been issued.

I've detached the PVS from the Envelope A although it says not to detach it –

Don't worry, this isn't a problem. Put the Postal Voting Statement (PVS) and envelope A, containing the completed ballot papers, into envelope B **making sure that the Returning Officer's address is showing in the envelope window** and send it back.

I've filled in the wrong date of birth –

Score it out and enter the correct date of birth above the boxes if necessary. Do not use Tippex as this may invalidate your vote.

I've signed the wrong PVS (e.g. spouse's) –

Score it out and sign the correct PVS, out with the signature box if necessary. Do not use Tippex as this may invalidate your vote.

I've filled in the wrong box/I've made a mistake on my ballot paper –

Score out your vote. Make it very clear who you wish to vote for. Do not use Tippex as this may invalidate your vote. Do not sign or initial the change as this may identify you as the voter.

Then -

- Place your ballot paper in the envelope A,
- sign the Postal Voting Statement,
- add your date of birth to the Postal Voting Statement and;

return the envelope and Postal Voting Statement (with your signature and date of birth on it) in envelope B.

I've sealed envelope B without putting all the documents in it –

Open it carefully and put the rest of the documents in and re-seal the envelope B. Sellotape is fine.

I've received my vote back, what should I do? –

Please open envelope B and turn the envelope A/Postal Voting Statement around so that the Returning Officer's address can be seen in the window.

There may be orange franking marks on the envelope B – score these out and return the postal pack.

What's the deadline for applying for a replacement postal voting pack? –

The deadline for applying for a replacement postal pack is 10pm on Thursday 21 November 2024 but please be aware that, by law, any requests for a replacement postal vote pack after 5pm on the day before polling (Wednesday 20 November 2024) can only be dealt with in person.

So, after 5pm on Wednesday 20 November 2024 you will have to return the replacement pack in person. Please call 01349 886657 to arrange to do so.

Can I cancel my postal vote and vote at the polling station instead? –

Yes, but you can only do so if you have not returned your postal pack and you must have contacted us on 01349 886657 by 5pm on Wednesday 6 November 2024 to have let us know this is what you want to do.

Remember that you can also drop your pack off to your nearest polling station if you've left it too late to post back.

I've changed my name since I applied for a postal vote. What do I do? –

If you have changed your name (e.g. married/divorced) you can still vote but must use the signature that appears on your postal vote application form. Otherwise the signature on your Postal Vote Statement will not match when it's scanned.

I have a postal vote but I am not at my registered address at the time of the election e.g. holiday, work commitments. What do I do?

Besides appointing a proxy or postal proxy you can also request the postal ballot pack to be redirected to a different address. Make sure you return your postal vote so that it arrives by the close of poll, otherwise it will not be counted. If you no longer want your postal vote to be sent to a different address, you will need to notify the ERO in writing (along with a signature) or complete a new postal vote application form by the postal vote deadline. For further information please contact the ERO on 0800 393783.

My husband/wife is ill and can't sign the Postal Voting Statement –

Unfortunately, no one can sign a Postal Voting Statement on behalf of another voter, not even under a Power of Attorney.

For future elections, our Electoral Registration team can issue the voter with a “waiver”. This means the voter does not have to sign the Postal Vote Statement. To arrange a waiver, call 01349 886657.

What do I do if I need help to complete my postal vote? –

There's a step-by-step picture guide with the “Quick Guide to Postal Voting” leaflet in your pack. We hope this helps, but if you need further help call 01349 886657 or ask a friend to help you. However, this person must not disclose how you have voted to anyone.

I've forgotten to return my postal vote, what can I do? –

You can return your postal vote to your nearest polling station on polling day up until the polls close at 10pm.

Where is my nearest polling station to hand in my postal vote? –

Please call 01349 886657 and the person handling your call will be able to confirm your nearest polling station or the list can be viewed on the council's web-site www.highland.gov.uk/byelection.

I can't find an answer to my question on this page, who should I contact? –

Please call 01349 886657.