

## RETURNING OFFICER GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF A-BOARDS AT POLLING PLACES ON POLLING DAY IN THE CITY OF EDINBURGH

1. There is a city-wide ban on “A-boards” and other temporary advertising structures in Edinburgh. On 17 May 2018, the Transport and Environment Committee approved a citywide ban on all temporary on-street advertising structures, such as advertising boards, also known as “A-boards”. This was agreed primarily to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility.

### ***Campaign Material around Polling Places***

2. The Returning Officer allows candidates and their agents to put their message to voters on polling day. However, this must be done in the spirit of fairness and equal access between all parties and in line with [the Code of Conduct issued by the Electoral Commission](#).
3. No election bills, posters or advertisements are to be displayed within the Polling Place where voting takes place. The polling place is the **building** in which the polling stations are situated. **It includes any entrance halls, car park or boundary walls or fences.** The Polling Place is a politically neutral area and it is essential that voters are able to vote free of influence. This right is protected by law. The Returning Officer has control of the Polling Place and will enforce the rule that there is to be no campaigning within it. Outwith the Polling Place any rules that apply are for the Council to apply.

### ***A-Boards at Polling Places***

4. While there is a city-wide ban on advertising structures on streets, which includes A-boards and would extend to the streets around polling places, it has been custom and practice that the rules have not been enforced on polling day due to the temporary nature of the adverts and the general role of the council in supporting participation in electoral events.
5. This operational waiving of the rules required the following terms of use:
  - A-boards would only be erected during the hours of polling – 7am to 10pm;
  - They must be sited off the pavement whenever possible;
  - They must be sited so as to avoid any obstruction to pedestrians; and
  - They must be sited so as to avoid any obstruction to access to the polling place.

6. Following discussion with Group Leaders the operational dispensation for the use of A-boards on polling day is to be reviewed. Pending that review, A-boards will be permitted at polling day on 7 May 2026 with the same terms of use as above.
7. In addition, the following requirements will be enforced:
  - A-boards should be no larger than 1010mm x 914mm;
  - The overall height of any A-board should not exceed 1010mm from ground level;
  - Where required, A-boards may be securely weighed down by sandbags or affixed into grass with tent pegs where permissible (wind can make boards dangerous and they will be removed if not secure); and
  - Each candidate and/or political party may erect **only one** A-board at each polling place entrance.
8. A-boards must not obstruct the pavement nor the entrance to the Polling Place and the Returning Officer will not be liable for any loss, injury or damage that may arise from the presence and/or securing of such boards.
9. A-boards must not obstruct any signage erected by the Returning Officer directing voters to the Polling Place.
10. Where any dispute arises on the day, parties should approach the Presiding Officer in charge of a polling place for resolution. Presiding Officers are in charge of a polling place and all candidates and agent should act on any lawful request made by a Presiding Officer to remove or relocate campaign material. Candidates and agents are reminded that failure to act on such a request by a Presiding Officer is a criminal offence.
11. If necessary, Presiding Officers or Polling Place Inspectors will remove any A-boards that do not meet the rules above or which are causing obstructions.

### **Tellers**

12. Tellers are people who stand outside polling stations on behalf of candidates and parties. There should be no more than one teller at a polling place for each candidate or party at any time. Candidates and agents are asked to ensure that the Electoral Commission's Code of Conduct and Guidance for Tellers ([Tellers guidance SP SLG Senedd LGW](#), [Tellers dos and donts SP SLG Senedd LGW](#)) is made available to anyone attending a polling place on their behalf on polling day. The Returning Officer has made copies of both these documents available to election agents.

***In particular, candidates and agents are asked to note that Tellers must not:***

- Impede, obstruct or intimidate voters on their way in or out of a polling station
- Wear, carry or display any headwear, footwear or other apparel that carries any writing, picture or sign relating to any candidate or party apart from a rosette or badge. The rosette/badge may display the name of a candidate and /or an emblem or description. The rosette/badge should not bear a slogan and must not be oversized.
- Display or distribute election material other than the A-board permitted above.

***Review post-election***

13. The Election Team will report to Transport and Environment Committee within 3 cycles of the 7 May 2026 election, with an update on any incidents around A-boards impacting on accessibility at that election, and identifying options for exemptions and enforcement of the council's current ban on A-boards and other temporary on-street advertising structures on polling day, including, consideration of extending the enforcement of the A board ban to include election days.

***Enforcement***

A-boards are classed as on-street advertising structures. Enforcement of rules on advertising is undertaken by the Council not by the Returning Officer.

There are further details at [On-street advertising structures – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)

***Electoral Management Board for Scotland Guidance on Campaigning in and around Polling Places***

The Electoral Management Board for Scotland has also produced [Guidance on campaigning in and around polling places](#) which the Returning Officer in Edinburgh will be following.