

**Supporting Good Decisions**

**Promoting Equality & Human Rights, Reducing Inequality and Protecting the Environment**

**Integrated Impact Assessment Form**

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**Promoting Equality, Human Rights and Sustainability**

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| **Title of Policy/ Proposal** | Statutory Review of Lothian East Constituency Polling Districts and Places 2024 |
| **Timescale for Implementation** | After next UK General Election - 2025 |
| **IIA Completion Date** | 4/4/24 |
| **Completed by** | Election Team |
| **Lead officer** | Hazel Boak, Team Leader – Democratic Services |

**Section 1: Screening**

**1.1 Briefly describe the policy/proposal/activity you are assessing.**

Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the policy/ proposal/ activity being developed or reviewed (e.g. objectives, aims) including the context within which it will operate.

Local authorities are required to review their polling districts and polling places for UK parliamentary constituencies every five years.

They must consider the accessibility of polling places and seek to ensure that:

* All electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
* So are as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.
  1. **What will change as a result of this policy?**

The proposals include:

* UK boundary changes determine the bulk of ELMN1C move to Edinburgh East Burgh Constituency for UK Parliamentary Elections, leaving under 300 electors within Lothian East Constituency. Proposal to move those electors to ELMN1D
* Altering two polling districts (Longniddry/Port Seton) to move electorate from the Blindwells area from Longniddry to Port Seton.
* the merging of polling districts, resulting in the closure of polling places:

EL4D Fenton Barns to merge with EL4C Dirleton Church Hall

EL5B Fletcher Hall to merge with EL5J Trevelyan Hall

EL5F Morham Village Hall to merge with EL5H Garvald Village Hall

EL6A Allison Cargill House to merge with EL6D Stenton Village Hall

EL6C Tyninghame Village Hall to merge with EH6B East Linton Hall

EL6G Spott Community Centre to merge with EL6F Bleachingfield Centre

EL6I Oldhamstocks Village Hall to merge with EL6H Innerwick Village Hall

* Relocating polling place in Pencaitland from Trevelyan Hall to Pencaitland Bowling Club
  1. **Deciding if a full Impact Assessment is needed.**

Please answer the following questions:

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes** | **No** |
| 1. The policy/ proposal has consequences for or affects people e.g. how they can access a service? | 🗸 |  |
| 1. The policy/proposal has potential to make a significant impact on equality? |  | 🗸 |
| 1. The policy/proposal is likely to have a significant environmental impact? |  | 🗸 |
| 1. The policy/ proposal has implications for the storage/ collection of personal data? |  | 🗸 |

* If you have answered yes to questions 1 and 2 above, please proceed to complete the Integrated Impact Assessment. If you have answered No then an IIA does not need to be completed. Please keep a copy of the screening paperwork.
* If you have identified that your project will have a significant environmental impact, please proceed to complete the Integrated Impact Assessment. You will also need to consider whether you need to complete a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Please contact
* If you have answered yes to question 4, please seek further advice from the Data Protection Officer.

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**Section 2: Integrated Impact Assessment**

* 1. **Have those who are affected by the policy had the opportunity to comment on new proposals?**

Yes, a public consultation took place on the proposals.

The consultation period ran from 4 December 2023 – 29 January 2024.

Links to the documents in the Consultation Hub, on East Lothian Council’s website, were sent direct to all Elected Members, Constituency MP & MSPs, Political Parties, Community Councils, Area Partnerships, Connected Communities and Disability Groups along with promotion through social media. Copies of the documentation were made available for public view, at John Muir House, Haddington and Brunton Hall, Musselburgh. Representations on the proposals were invited by 29 January 2024.

* 1. **What information/data have you used to inform the development of the policy to date?**

The criteria used to assess polling places was:

* Availability of polling places
* Accessibility of polling places
* Safety of polling places, for both voters and staff
* Current electorate
* Projected electorate
* Number of postal voters

All polling places were visited and assessed as part of the review.

* 1. **What does the evidence/ research suggest about the policy’s actual or likely impact on equality groups and those vulnerable/ or experiencing socio-economic disadvantage?**

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| **Evidence** | **Comment** |
| Which groups are in in particular need of this service? | East Lothian electors who wish to vote in person. Postal & proxy votes can be applied for by anyone who does not wish to go to a polling place.  unknown  Feedback from poll staff has not alerted us to any issues.  Poll staff are trained to assist all voters and have aids (tactile voting devices for visually impaired, magnifiers, large print sample ballot papers)  The consultation was public and was sent directly to disability groups |
| What level of service uptake/ access is there from protected and vulnerable groups? |
| Can you identify positive outcomes for service users |
| What is the service user experience of those from protected or vulnerable groups? |
| What opportunity have those from protected groups had to co-produce or comment on the service/ plans? |

* 1. **How does the policy meet the different needs of groups in the community?**

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| **Equality Groups**   * Older people, people in the middle years      * Children and young people children * Women, men and transgender people (includes issues relating to pregnancy and maternity) * Disabled people (includes physical disability, learning disability, sensory impairment, long-term medical conditions, mental health problems) * Minority ethnic people (includes Gypsy/Travellers, migrant workers) * Refugees and asylum seekers * People with different religions or beliefs (includes people with no religion or belief) * Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people * People who are unmarried, married or in a civil partnership | All polling places have been assessed to ensure they are as accessible as practical for all.  Toilet facilities and seating is available in polling places.  Poll staff are trained to assist all voters, where needed.  By law, no one under the age of 18 can vote at UK elections. |
| **Those vulnerable to falling into poverty**   * Unemployed * People on benefits * Lone Parents * Care experienced children and young people * Carers (including young carers) * Homeless people * Those involved in the community justice system * People with low literacy/numeracy * Families with 3 or more children * Those with a child/ children under 1 | Poll staff are trained to assist all voters. |
| **Geographical communities**   * Rural/ semi rural communities * Urban Communities * Coastal communities * Those living in the most deprived communities (bottom 20% SIMD areas) | The proposals include the merging of some rural polling places, having considered the criteria used to assess polling places. The availability of postal and proxy votes will be well publicised in the areas affected.  No changes have been proposed in the main towns. |
| **Communication Needs:**   * Gaelic Language Speakers * BSL users * English as a Second Language * Other e.g. DeafBlind, Plain English, Large Print | Electors can request information in other languages.  We provide tactile voting devices (to enable visually impaired voters to vote in secret) along with magnifiers and sample large print ballot papers.  Poll staff, or a companion, can assist voters. |

* 1. **Are there any other factors which will affect the way this policy impacts on the community or staff groups?**

no

* 1. **Is any part of this policy/ service to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?**

If yes, how have you included equality and human rights considerations into the contract?

no

* 1. **Have you considered how you will communicate information about this policy or policy change to those affected e.g. to those with hearing loss, speech impairment or English as a second language?**

Information on the changes will be published on the council website and through social media. Contact details will be made available for anyone to get in touch for further help/information.

* 1. **Please consider how your policy will impact on each of the following?**

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| **Equality and Human rights**   * Promotes / advances equality of opportunity e.g. improves access to and quality of services * Promotes good relations within and between people with protected characteristics and tackles harassment * Promotes participation, is inclusive and gives people control over decisions which affect them * Preserves dignity and self-respect of individuals (does not lead to degrading treatment or stigma) * Builds support networks, resilience, community capacity |
| Comments:  Use of accessible polling places.  Trained poll staff to ensure all voters can participate.  Promotion of postal and proxy voting for voters who do not wish to go to a polling place. |
| **Reduces Poverty**   * Maximises income and/or reduces income inequality * Helps young people into positive destinations * Aids those returning to and those progressing within the labour market * Improves employability skills, including literacy and numeracy * Reduces the costs of taking part in activities and opportunities * Reduces the cost of living |
| Comments :  The merging of some rural polling places may result in additional travel costs for some people who want to vote in person. However, people have the option of applying for a postal vote which will incur no cost. |
| **Protecting the Environment and Improving Sustainability**:   * Reduces the need to travel or increases access to sustainable forms of transport * Minimises waste / encourages resource efficiency / contributes to the circular economy * Ensures goods / services are from ethical, responsible and sustainable sources * Improves energy efficiency / uses low carbon energy sources * Protects and/or enhances natural environments / habitats / biodiversity * Promotes the transition to a low carbon economy * Prepares and/or adapts communities for climate change impacts |
| Comments:  Ability to vote by post. |

**Section 3.Action Plan**

What, if any changes will be made to the proposal/ policy as a result of the assessment?

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| **Changes to be made** | **Expected outcome of the change** | **Resources Required** | **Timeline** | **Responsible person** |
| An increase in publicity to make people aware of, and promote the greater take up, of postal voting, especially in areas affected by the merger of polling stations in rural areas. | Increase in number of postal voters | Staff Time – Election Team & Comms Team | The changes take effect after the next UK General Election.  Increased publicity will take place in the lead up to the election following this. | Election Team |
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**For consideration of the Head of Service**

Can you identify any cumulative impacts on equality groups or vulnerable people arising from this policy, when considered alongside other changes across other services?

**No**

**Sign off by Head of Service**

Name: Morag Ferguson

Date: 8th April 2024