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Convener  
Finance and Constitution Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

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Dear Bruce

When I was providing evidence on the Referendums (Scotland) Bill to the Finance and Constitution Committee on 25 September, in response to a request from Angela Constance, I undertook to furnish the Committee with a timeline for the referendum process.

I attach a timeline which sets out the order in which actions need to be carried out, starting with the earliest and finishing with post referendum day events. I also attach an annex which sets out in slightly more detail the timings etc, which would have been difficult to show on the timeline.

When considering the timeline, there are some points which should be noted:

- The timeline is based on the Bill as introduced and obviously does not take account of any amendments which might be agreed.
- There are basically two processes which run concurrently: the campaign process and the administration of the poll process.
- Timings for the campaign process are in calendar days whilst those for the poll process are in working days, i.e. excluding weekends and bank holidays.

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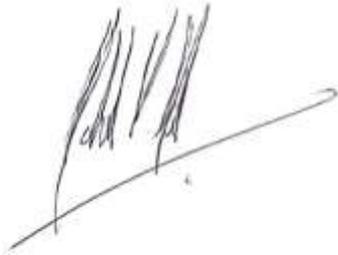
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- The first action in the campaign process is the start of the application period for designated organisations. This starts 45 days (approx. 6½ weeks) before the first day of the referendum period, which will be set by legislation under section 1 of the Bill. For example, if a 4 week referendum period is set, then the application process must start about 10½ weeks before the date of the referendum.
- The first action in the administration of the poll process is the publication of the Notice of Referendum. This must take place at least 25 working days (5 weeks) before the date of the referendum.

Angela also commented that she had been advised that “printing of the ballot papers occurs fairly late in the process”. This is not the case at referendums. Since the date of the poll and the question are set out in legislation, printing of the ballot papers can take place more or less as soon as the legislation is in place. This differs from elections, where printing can’t take place until after the nomination process is completed.

I hope that the Committee finds the attached information helpful but, if there are any questions, my officials would be happy to assist.



**MICHAEL RUSSELL**

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**Draft Timetable for a referendum based on the provisions set out in the Referendums (Scotland) Bill as introduced.**

<b>Campaign actions</b>	<b>Poll actions</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
The application period (for applications to be a designated organisation)		Sch 3 Para 8(6)	28 days ending at noon on the day before the first day of the decision period
The decision period (for determination of applications to be a designated organisation)		Sch 3 Para 8(6)	16 days ending with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> day before the first day of the referendum period
Referendum period		Section 1(2)(c)	Set by legislation under section 1
	Publication of Notice of Referendum	Sch 2 Rule 1	Not later than the 25th working day before the date of the referendum
	Deadline for receipt by CO of appointment of local referendum agent by permitted participant	Section 19(3)	Before noon on the 25th working day before the date of the referendum
	Publication by CO of Notice of appointment of referendum agents	Section 19(6)	As soon as practicable after notification of the appointments
	Dispatch of poll cards	Sch 2 Rule 11	As soon as reasonably practicable after the publication of the Notice of Referendum
“Purdah” period		Sch 3 Para 27(4)	The period of 28 days ending with the date of the referendum
	First issue of postal ballot packs	Sch 1 Para 21	As soon as it is practicable to do so

	Deadline for registration	Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001, Reg 29(4)	Midnight on the 12th working day before the date of the referendum
	Deadline for receipt of postal and postal proxy vote applications	Sch 1 Paras 7(2) and 18	5pm on the 11th working day before the date of the referendum
	Deadline for CO to give notice to referendum agents of each opening of postal voters' boxes	Sch 1 Para 30	Not less than 48 hours' notice in writing specifying the time and place and the number of agents that may attend.
	Deadline for receipt by CO of appointment of postal ballot agents	Sch 1 Para 19(5)	No later than the time fixed for the opening of the postal voters' box.
	Deadline for receipt of ordinary proxy vote applications by the ERO	Sch 1 Para 7	Before 5pm on the 6th working day before the date of the referendum
	Deadline for receipt by the CO of notices of appointment of polling and counting agents	Sch 2 Rule 14(4)	No later than the 5th working day before the date of the referendum
<b>Day of Poll</b>			
	Deadline for replacement of spoilt postal ballot packs	Sch 1 Para 27(3) and (8)	5pm on the date of the referendum. Note that after 5pm on the day before the referendum the replacement can only be made by hand.
	Deadline for receipt of emergency proxy applications by the ERO (attestation required)	Sch 1 Para 7(9) & (10)	5pm on the date of the referendum
	Deadline for correction by the ERO of clerical errors on the Polling List	Sch 2 Rule 26 and Sch 1 Para 17(3)(d)	9pm on the date of the referendum

	Start of verification and count	Sch 2 Rule 29(1)	As soon as reasonably practicable after the close of the poll.
	Declaration of local totals by CO	Sch 2 Rule 35(2)(a)	When authorised by CCO
	Sealing up of ballot papers and related materials	Sch 2 Rule 36	On the completion of counting
	Delivery of referendum materials to proper officer of the council	Sch 2 Rule 37	After sealing the materials
	Publication of local totals by CO	Sch 2 Rule 35(2)(b)	As soon as practicable
	Declaration of national result by CCO	Sch 2 Rule 35(3)(a)	Following certification of national result
	Publication of national result by CCO	Sch 2 Rule 35(3)(b)	As soon as practicable
	Permitted period for lodging of any petition for judicial review of the number of ballot papers counted or votes cast as certified by a CO or by the CCO	Section 39	The permitted period is the period of 6 weeks beginning with the day on which the CO or CCO makes the certification (or the last certification if more than one is made)
Last date for the delivery of returns of referendum expenses (less than £250,000) to the Electoral Commission		Sch 3 Para 24 (3)	Within the period of 3 months beginning with the end of the referendum period
Last date for the delivery of returns of referendum expenses (more than £250,000) to the Electoral Commission		Sch 3 Para 24 (1)&(2)	Within the period of 6 months beginning with the end of the referendum period

	Period for retention and public inspection of papers held by the proper officer	Sch 2 Rule 38	The proper officer must retain for one year all papers received
	Expiry of retention period when papers must be securely destroyed	Sch 2 Rule 38(5)	After the period of one year
	Period for retention and public inspection of certifications (by COs and by the CCO) held by the CCO	Sch 2 Rule 39	One year
Period for public inspection of expenses returns held by Electoral Commission		Sch 3 Para 26	Two years from when each return is received by the Electoral Commission

# Pre-poll actions

## Campaign actions

28 day application period to be a designated organisation

One day period between close of the decision period and the start of the referendum period

Length of referendum period dependent on legislation

16 day decision period for appointment of designated organisations

Start of Referendum period, set by legislation

Poll action timeline starts here at -25 working days

28 days before Poll "Purdah" period

DAY OF POLL  
Deadlines for replacement postal ballot papers, emergency proxy vote applications and correction of polling list errors

## Poll actions

-25 days  
Appointment of local referendum agents and Notice of referendum

To be carried out as soon as practicable after Notice of referendum

Despatch of poll cards

-12 days  
Deadline for registration

Timing dependent on local arrangements

Notice of opening of postal ballot boxes

-6 days  
Deadline for receipt of ordinary proxy vote applications

Ongoing Registration and absent vote applications

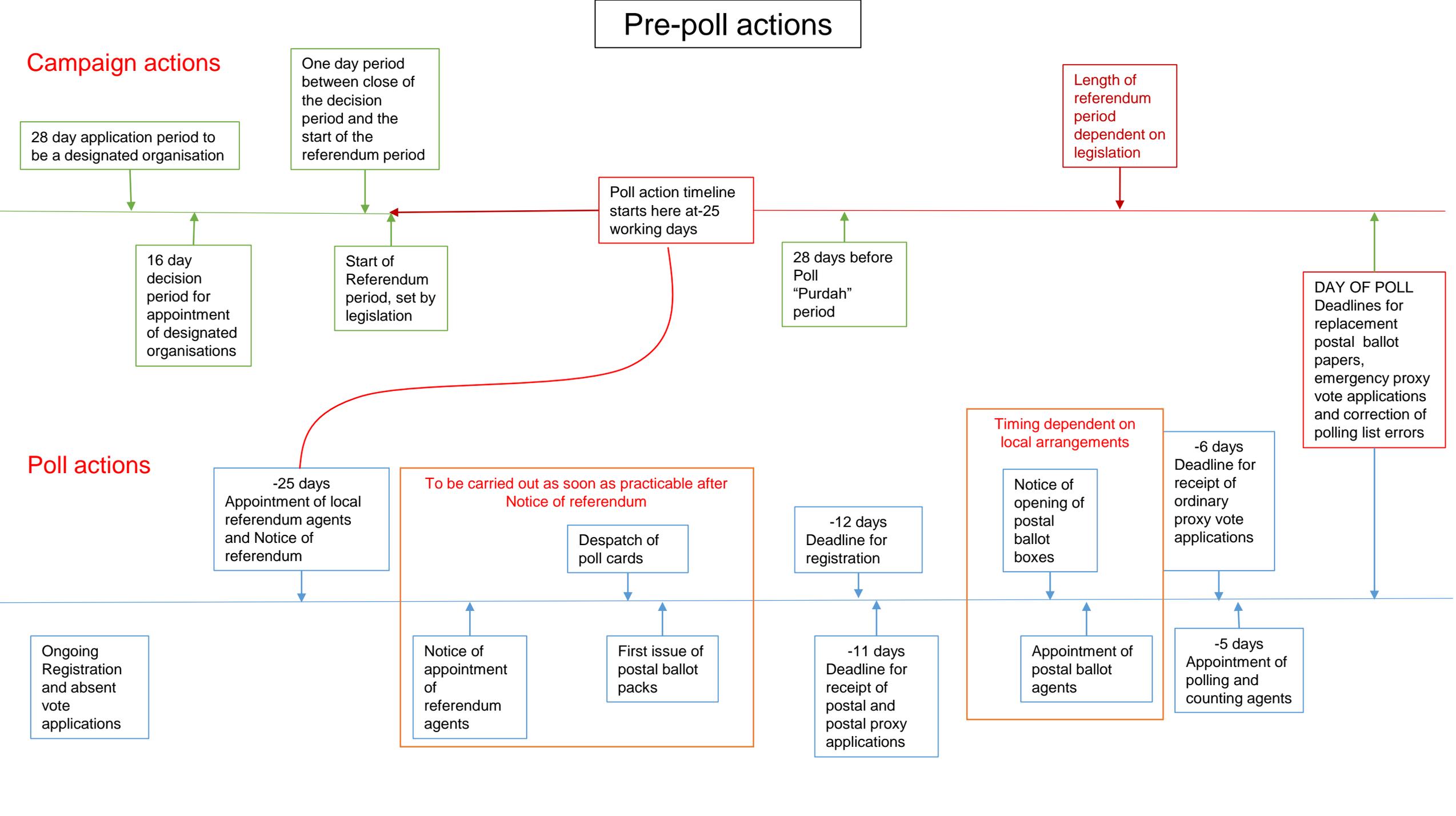
Notice of appointment of referendum agents

First issue of postal ballot packs

-11 days  
Deadline for receipt of postal and postal proxy applications

Appointment of postal ballot agents

-5 days  
Appointment of polling and counting agents



# Campaign actions

# Post-poll actions

# Poll actions

DAY OF POLL

To be carried out as soon as practicable after close of poll

- Declaration and publication of local totals
- Delivery of documentation to proper officer
- Start of verification and count
- Sealing of Ballot papers and materials
- Declaration and publication of national result

6 weeks  
Period for lodging petitions

3 months  
Delivery of expenditure returns if less than £250,000

6 months  
Delivery of expenditure returns if over £250,000

2 years  
Public inspection of expenses returns